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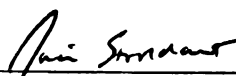
LIVING IN JANE EYRE'S SHADOW:  
JANE'S INTERTEXTUAL PRESENCE IN WORKS BY  
MAYA ANGELOU, BHARATI MUKHERJEE, MICHELLE CLIFF,  
AND JAMAICA KINCAID

presented by

Patricia Ruth Payette

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
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Major professor

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By

Patricia Ruth Payette

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

### LIVING IN JANE EYRE'S SHADOW: JANE'S INTERTEXTUAL PRESENCE IN WORKS BY MAYA ANGELOU, BHARATI MUKHERJEE, MICHELLE CLIFF, AND JAMAICA KINCAID

By

Patricia R. Payette

Charlotte Bronte's 1847 novel Jane Eyre has sustained a remarkable level of interest among readers, critics and writers since its original publication over one hundred and fifty years ago. In recent decades, the novel has been revised, revisited and revamped by playwrights, screenwriters and novelists who see in Jane a compelling figure of young womanhood whose struggles and desires seem both timeless and dramatically specific to the Victorian era. My interest in the longevity and legacy of Jane Eyre is centered around its intertextual appearance in four contemporary texts that are written by women from a variety of cultural contexts: Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1969), Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine (1989), Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy (1990) and Michelle Cliff's No Telephone To Heaven (1987). Each of these texts possesses a plot that repeats--to varying degrees--the story at the center of Bronte's novel: a young female protagonist growing up amid oppressive social circumstances who struggles toward personal and social fulfillment. However, this study delves below the plot in order to examine the complex and subtle ways in which these female protagonists—an African-American, an illegal immigrant from India, and two Afro-Caribbean women--perceive their identity and clarify their life choices through a culturally-influenced understanding and appreciation of Jane Eyre.

Some studies have concluded that Jane Eyre appears in these books because the novel and its heroine serve as a source of escape and inspiration for the four contemporary women. My study reveals, however, that as these women mature, their relationship to Jane Eyre evolves. They develop an ambivalent relationship toward the

Bronte novel and its paradigm of "universal" female development that does not consider their complex emotional lives and marginal social status. When Jane Eyre is alluded to in these narratives, it becomes a textual manifestation of the postcolonial female's ambivalent connection to her cultural inheritance and points to her ongoing struggle with low self-esteem, racial politics and familial relationships. Each of these young women can only begin to claim control over her life and self-image when she begins to identify and accept her racial identity and cultural past, rather than look to a fictional model of Anglo English womanhood that Jane Eyre embodies.

This study builds upon the recent work of postcolonial critics who have uncovered the racial and gendered "exclusions" that are integral to Jane Eyre's success. These exclusions are evidence of the racial bias and nineteenth-century imperialist ideology that are embedded in the novel and that pave the way for Jane's rise to personal and social success. Chapter one identifies the presence of exclusion, contradiction and ambivalence in Jane Eyre in order to link these subtextual narrative elements with similar subtextual tensions in texts by Angelou (chapter two), Mukherjee (chapter three), Cliff and Kincaid (chapter four). These analyses illuminate how and why the colonial relationships and imperialist ideology contained within Bronte's novel are present within, and transformed by, the contemporary narratives and psychological journeys of the four twentieth-century heroines.

My dissertation explores the various ways in which the four postcolonial protagonists handle the difficult task of identifying and challenging the cultural and class biases, social norms and familial expectations that threaten to limit their life choices and undermine their self-esteem. To move forward in their lives, they must learn to look beyond the idealized, white femininity of Jane Eyre in order to identify and value Bertha Rochester—not as the brutish madwoman Bronte constructed, but the silenced, long-neglected "dark" female who lies buried in their consciousness and is part of their postcolonial inheritance.

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To Ed and Molly, who made this journey a joyful one.

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## INTRODUCTION

Over one hundred and fifty years after its first publication in 1847, Charlotte Bronte's novel Jane Eyre continues to sustain a remarkable level of interest among readers, critics and writers. Across continents and cultures, the text is generally considered a literary classic that captures the quintessential experience of a young woman's growth and development as she searches for her place in the world. In recent decades, the novel has been revised, revisited and revamped by playwrights, screenwriters and novelists who see in Jane a compelling figure of young womanhood whose struggles and desires seem both timeless and dramatically specific to the Victorian era.

Critical discussions of Jane Eyre's longevity frequently focus on the novel's generic characteristics. It is assumed to be the prototypical Gothic romance, the orphan's rags-to-riches saga, the original feminist Bildungsroman, or a combination or mutation of these literary types. I believe Jane Eyre resembles each of these generic types and yet cannot be neatly confined within their parameters. Jane does indeed marry her soulmate, claim her inheritance, and declare her independence, but these plot points and life choices are built upon a series of contradictions, compromises and exclusions that have been overlooked in many critical discussions. My study of Jane Eyre will build upon the recent work of postcolonial critics who have uncovered the racial and gendered "exclusions" that are integral to Jane's success. I will articulate these exclusions as evidence of the racial bias and nineteenth-century imperialist ideology that is embedded in the novel and that paves the way for Jane's rise to personal and social success. I identify the presence of exclusion, contradiction and ambivalence in Jane Eyre in order to link these narrative elements with similar subtextual tensions in the work of contemporary ethnic women writers; this allows me to explain how our understanding of the colonial relationships and imperialist ideology contained within Bronte's novel are

present within, and transformed by, the narratives and psychological journeys of contemporary postcolonial heroines.

My interest in the longevity and legacy of Jane Eyre is centered around its indirect and direct appearance in four contemporary texts written by women from a variety of cultural contexts: Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1969),<sup>1</sup> Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine (1989), Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy (1990) and Michelle Cliff's No Telephone To Heaven (1987). Each of these texts possesses a plot that repeats--with varying degrees--the story at the center of Bronte's novel: a young female protagonist growing up amid oppressive social circumstances who struggles toward personal and social fulfillment. However, my examination of these works delves below the plot in order to examine the complex and subtle ways in which each of these protagonists--an African-American, an illegal immigrant from India, and two Afro-Caribbean women--perceives her identity and clarifies her life choices through a culturally-influenced understanding and appreciation of Jane Eyre. On one level, Bronte's novel serves as a source of escape and inspiration for each young women, yet my analysis will reveal that as these women mature, they begin to maintain an ambivalent relationship toward the Bronte novel and its paradigm of "universal" female development that does not permit them to recognize the truth of their complex emotional lives and marginal social status. Jane Eyre's presence in these narratives does not help the protagonists consolidate a sense of self, but rather points to the protagonist's "identity crisis": Bronte's text symbolizes each woman's shifting attitude toward her racial and social marginalization as she moves through the world at large.

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<sup>1</sup>This text is distinctly different from the other three works used in this study in some key ways. Angelou's work is an autobiography rather than a novel, and she is not generally categorized as a postcolonial writer. However, I examine this text alongside other novels and borrow terminology from postcolonial criticism in order to fully explain the important role that Jane Eyre plays in Angelou's reporting of her childhood awakening to race relationships and her self-identity. Bronte's novel plays a similar role in the lives of the fictional protagonists in Mukherjee, Kincaid and Cliff and so I place Angelou's autobiography with this grouping of postcolonial texts and authors.



Although Jane Eyre is alluded to on only a handful of pages in each of these modern postcolonial texts, Bronte's novel and her orphaned heroine are potent symbols of female potential and Anglo perfection in the minds of these young women. I will explicate the ambivalent process of identity construction that each contemporary protagonist undergoes as her aspirations toward "Jane-hood" are tempered by the external and internal reminders of her "Bertha-ness." In Bronte's novel, Jane and Bertha symbolize the two extremes of the nineteenth-century female: Jane is the epitome of the white, pure, and moral lady and Bertha is the sexualized, immoral "other" woman. The Jane and Bertha binary resonates within a colonial dynamic in which the success of Jane is made possible by the identification, marginalization and elimination of Bertha.

The challenge facing these modern protagonists is to come to a level of self-awareness that breaks down this binary constructed by Bronte and perpetuated by the racial and social strictures of their childhood cultures. Rather than work to eschew the "otherness" that threatens to displace and disempower them as young women, as Jane does in her story, the task for these postcolonial heroines is to identify and openly challenge the social norms and familial expectations that limit their options and undermine their self-esteem. They must learn to look beyond the idealized, white femininity of Jane Eyre and learn to see Bertha's presence and value her experience—not as the brutish madwoman Bronte constructed, but as the silenced, long-neglected "dark" female who lies buried in their consciousness and is part of their postcolonial inheritance.

My reading of how Jane Eyre appears within these contemporary texts relies on an understanding of Jane Eyre as what Patsy Stoneman calls as "intertextual archetype" (150), borrowing the term from Umberto Eco's discussion of intertextual play within books and movies that have achieved cult status. I believe Jane Eyre has achieved the status of a "cult object," in which all of the text's characters—especially Jane, Rochester and Bertha— and its main episodes have "archetypal appeal" (Eco 446). As my first chapter will explicate more fully, Jane Eyre contains a hodgepodge of generic literary

types, from the Bildungsroman, to the fairy tale, to the romance, that help neatly resolve the narrative tensions within the plot. The text employs these types in a way that has made Jane Eyre an archetypal story itself. As Stoneman observes, "the formula of mass market romances is also recognizably the plot of Jane Eyre" (136). Jane Eyre appeals to postcolonial protagonists (and their authors), then, because she represents the archetype of the ugly duckling who is really a swan, but also because the Bronte text itself is a "cult object" of colonial female subjectivity. Without really understanding the racial implications of how Jane is constructed as the "good angel" next to Bertha's "bad devil," these postcolonial protagonists--as well as several critics--have assumed that the Bronte text is alluded to in contemporary narratives because Jane is an appealing figure of female independence. In order to promote a more accurate understanding of how and why Jane Eyre is present in these "other" texts, my study will offer an intertextual reading of four contemporary novels that examines the interplay between their "archetypal" Jane Eyre plot and the subtextual, ambivalent dialogue that undercuts it.

Postcolonial critics generally agree that the formidable literary reputation of Jane Eyre is built upon the celebration of English womanhood, a celebration grounded in a colonial ideology of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> But no scholar has yet examined why there are repeated references to Jane Eyre in late twentieth-century novels by postcolonial authors or fully explored the implications of the novel's appearance within these texts. My examination of the large number of books and articles written on each of these

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<sup>2</sup> Over the past two decades, postcolonial studies has brought with it a debate that has left its exact definition and concerns uncertain. Since Edward Said's groundbreaking Orientalism (1978), critics have not been able to agree as to which historical, geographic and academic formulations can be considered postcolonial. Leela Gandhi believes that postcolonialism is the proper term to describe the theoretical attempt to "engage with a particular historical condition" and that the condition it engages with is best described as "postcoloniality" (ix). While I will use this definition as part of the basis for my theoretical discussion, I also understand the complications inherent within postcolonial theory. I will use the term "postcolonial" because although it is problematic, it is currently the most accurate way to describe the psychological and geographic situation of my heroines and the critical dialogue in which they are frequently discussed.

contemporary works reveals that one or two scholars attempt to speculate on why Jane Eyre appears, however briefly, in each text. However, most discussions tend to focus on the surface parallels between Jane Eyre's plot and the lives of Angelou's Marguerite, Mukherjee's Jasmine, Kincaid's Lucy and Cliff's Clare, or to assume Jane Eyre simply serves as a remnant of their colonial education. My careful scrutiny of the multiple references to Jane Eyre within these texts uncovers a much more complex relationship between the Victorian novel and the modern stories. I will show that when Jane Eyre is alluded to in these narratives, it becomes a textual manifestation of the postcolonial female's ambivalent connection with her cultural inheritance and points to her ongoing struggle with low self-esteem, racial politics and familial relationships. For Marguerite, Jasmine, Lucy and Clare, Jane Eyre is a contradictory figure. They identify with Jane because she symbolizes the dignity of the outcast orphan and yet she magically achieves a level of wealth and social prestige that is out of their reach. Jane is a complicated role model because she unashamedly declares her desire to be autonomous and exercise her free will, but she participates in the oppression of the colonized female. While this ambivalent connection to Jane Eyre is not expressed directly in the texts themselves, my study traces how the protagonists' stance toward Bronte's novel--and the female potential and colonial values she represents--signals their shifting attitudes toward their own self-image.

The underlying colonial dynamic of the relationships within Jane Eyre drew the attention of postcolonial critics throughout the 1980's and 1990's. Prior to this, Jane Eyre scholarship came primarily from feminist critics. Most readings from these circles proclaimed Jane as fiction's first feminist, "the first woman to achieve her goals on her own terms" and forever extend the range of possibilities offered to literary heroines (Mink 9). The interpretation of Jane's story as a triumphant feminist journey gained prominence at this time due to Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing (1977), and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The

Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (1979). Showalter attempts to correct what she sees as previous male-centered readings of Jane Eyre by proclaiming that Bertha is present in the text in order to capture the full range of the female psyche. She claims Bertha's presence and elimination help establish Jane's journey toward maturation: "the mad wife in the attic symbolizes the passionate and sexual side of Jane's personality" (28) that must be tempered if she is to find happiness. Gilbert and Gubar follow a similar path, suggesting that Bertha is a "monitory" figure (78) whose outbursts function as the textual embodiment of Jane's suppressed anger that must be quelled and controlled if Jane is to secure her appropriate place in the middle-class household. Both books helped promote the idea that Jane's story is the paradigmatic journey of the oppressed female fighting for recognition. Although some feminist critics pointed out the inconsistencies in the novel which throw Jane's feminism into question-- including an ending that confines Jane to conventional roles of nursemaid, wife and mother--for several years Showalter's and Gilbert and Gubar's reading of Jane Eyre appeared to stand as definitive. This was the case until Gayatri Spivak's essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" appeared in 1985.

Spivak's essay opened the floodgates for the postcolonial analyses of Jane Eyre; the author questioned those readings which devalued and dehumanized Bertha Rochester and diminished her to being merely a "dark" side of Jane's personality. Even Gilbert and Gubar's title reduces Bertha's existence to a mere metaphor to describe the secret "self" of the nineteenth-century woman. According to Spivak, Jane Eyre's role as heroine is limited by the "active ideology" of imperialism, which constructs her most significant goal as acceptance into the "closed circle of the nuclear family" at the expense of Bertha Mason's life (248). The colonial forces at work in Jane Eyre create Bertha as a barely human figure whose outbursts are both inexplicable and proof of her "madness." The portrayal of Bertha as a wild animal is designed to "blur the lines between human and

animal" in order to weaken her rights under the Law, and "support the mission of colonization" (249), says Spivak. She takes issue with Jane Eyre's reputation as a "cult text of feminism," (244) because the novel, and the Showalter/Gilbert and Gubar brand of feminism, are in collusion with imperialism in their efforts to efface and dehumanize Bertha Rochester, who becomes "the woman from the colonies . . . sacrificed as an insane animal for her sister's consolation" (251). By declaring Jane's story as the universal female Bildungsroman, Gilbert and Gubar and Showalter, and other feminist critics, ignore the perspective and reality of "other" women. Penny Boumelha asserts that "contemporary feminist critics must not, surely, reproduce the silences and occlusions of nineteenth-century English culture in allowing the white, middle-class woman to stand in as its own 'paradigmatic woman' " (63). A postcolonial reading of Jane Eyre, then, must take into account the colonial values that shaped Bronte's portrayal of Bertha, as well as the way in which interpretations of this creole woman have been limited by Anglo critics and writers who focused exclusively on Jane as representative of all women. My dissertation looks at the power and persistence of Jane Eyre to remain a classic figure of female independence despite the racial biases on which this reputation is built.

Jean Rhys presented her own postcolonial critique of Jane Eyre with her 1966 novel Wide Sargasso Sea in which she aimed "to write [Bertha] a life" (Baer 132). Rhys's novel privileges what she imagines is the personal perspective and family dynamics of Bronte's Bertha Rochester. Wide Sargasso Sea offers the "other's" side of the story, which reveals that it is not Rochester who was duped into marriage with a promiscuous, insane subhuman figure, but rather it is Bertha who is the victim of Rochester's plan to marry her and take ownership of her money and, ultimately, of her life. Rhys attempts to restore Bertha's "humanity" by using her given name--Antoinette Cosway--and turning her death into an act of rebellious suicide. Although Rhys's book clearly paints Antoinette as Rochester's victim, she remains a victim, a prisoner of literary tradition, with no possibility for escaping the fate that Bronte originally penned for her

(Hite 42). Rhys stays within the narrative bounds and character constructions of the "Mother" text by transforming Bertha from "Jane Eyre's 'foul German spectre--the Vampyre,' but does it merely by substituting the zombie in her place" (Newman 6). The postcolonial texts I take up, following in the wake of Rhys's Sargasso Sea, engage with Bronte's text in a less explicit style, leaving room for a more complicated discussion of how Jane and Bertha both live on in literature and in the lives of "other" women.

Given that Jane Eyre's happy ending is built upon the silencing and elimination of Bertha Rochester, how are we to understand the invocation of Jane Eyre in the work of ethnic writers such as Maya Angelou, Bharati Mukherjee, Michelle Cliff and Jamaica Kincaid? More than mere coincidence, Jane Eyre's recurring presence in contemporary works and its impact on their protagonists speak to the way in which Bronte's novel has become what Stoneman calls a "fairytale" and "modern myth" featuring a seductive tale of a "Cinderella-type heroine" who triumphs against all odds to secure her happy ending (4). Marguerite, Jasmine, Clare and Lucy align themselves with Bronte's "fairytale" because they perceive their young selves to be like Jane--underprivileged, undervalued and socially alienated through no fault of their own. In their eyes, Jane's story appears as a template for securing self-fulfillment against all odds. The novel provides them with a retreat from the real-life difficulties of facing the racial, social and class oppression without offering a practical solution for overcoming these injustices. Trying to live out their Bronte-inspired fantasies brings them face to face with harsh disappointment and blatant discrimination, making their situation more akin to Bertha's, although Clare is the one who problematically acknowledges this kinship. Ultimately, identifying with Jane Eyre merely romanticizes their feelings of alienation and offers no real blueprint for gaining self-respect and control of their life choices. It holds up a model of white femininity that they cannot replicate; Marguerite, Jasmine, Clare and Lucy must step back from the colonial spell that Jane Eyre casts over their consciousness if they are to secure a positive and progressive racial and female identity for themselves.

Each of the following chapters features a literary analysis that is informed by the belief that attitudes of ambivalence saturate the dynamic between the colonizer and the colonized. I use Homi Bhabha's articulation of the colonial encounter to support these analyses. In "The other question," Bhabha describes the colonial stereotype as a "complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive" (47). The colonizer's stereotyping of the colonized--as less than human, as irrevocably "other"-- is achieved only through a recognition and simultaneous misrecognition of that "other" in relation to the self. It is "assertive" because the colonizer's stereotyping and diminishment of the colonized subject is an active attempt to contain the threatening difference of the "other," and it is "anxious" due to the very identification of that threatening difference. I will explain how ambivalence is present in the subtext of the colonial encounters, racial relationships and social hierarchies within the five texts. As the colonizing figures Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester work to establish their sometimes tenuous grasp on authority and privilege in Bronte's novel, they are inextricably and ambivalently connected to that other whose access to authority and privilege they would deny.

This ambivalent tension lives on, in various ways, in the work of Angelou, Mukherjee, Kincaid and Cliff. Each of their heroines maintains a mixed attitude toward the white, Anglo power structure that symbolizes all that is denied to them and all that they desire to achieve. Jane Eyre is an ambivalent figure because she offers the promise that the poor, plain and obscure girl can be worthy and can claim success, yet she is a figure of white, English womanhood whose life and lifestyle is not only denied to them, but is dependent on their exclusion. Their racial, social and class differences from the married heiress Jane Rochester forever preclude them from claiming their fantasied Jane Eyre ending, and the protagonists achieve varying levels of awareness about this issue. These young women have looked to Jane Eyre because they are anxiously attempting to deny their "otherness." Although Clare Savage is the only one to consciously place her

choices in these terms, I will show that they each believe they have to choose between assimilating to white norms as a Jane-like heroine or being forever doomed as the oppressed "other," a Bertha figure. As my dissertation will demonstrate, they can only begin to claim control of their life and self-image when they begin to identify and accept their racial identity and familial past as something other than negative and undesirable. In each book, I identify a muffled, inner voice that expresses the confusion and displeasure of the protagonist who is beginning to reject the Anglo cultural norms she had earlier internalized and is no longer willing to blindly accept her second class citizenship, her "Bertha-ness." In order to dismantle the binary that makes them believe they must act like Jane, even if they feel like Bertha, these young women need to listen to, and respect, this inner voice. They need to look beyond the colonial dichotomy to see new postcolonial possibilities for themselves.

Jane Eyre is a loaded figure, then, as opposed to being merely a beloved literary heroine of Marguerite, Jasmine, Clare and Lucy. Jane embodies the perfection of white English womanhood that is exalted by the mother country's cultural norms, and that is part of the traditional colonial education that Jasmine, Lucy and Clare undergo as young women. This education is built upon a long history, for during England's expansion of its empire throughout the nineteenth-century, the English novel was vital to maintaining its imperial rule. Firdous Azim explains that the novel's rise in Europe as a genre around this time is "tied to the historical task of the colonial, commercial and cultural expansion" (7). English literature was widely taught in India and other English colonies, and was a particularly effective carrier of colonial ideology, as it "works primarily by emotions and experiences," (Eagleton 26), which made its "kidnapping" of the native "intellect" (Dhawan 9) a subtle and invisible process.

Jane Eyre, appearing in the middle of the Victorian age, served the imperialist project by celebrating the quest of the white English woman whose success is dependent upon exploitation of colonial lives and colonial wealth. The significance of English



literary texts did not die when England and Europe no longer controlled commerce and politics in places such as India and the West Indies. The availability of Jane Eyre, as well as other European prose and poetry, and its prominent role in the education of Jasmine in rural India, and in the lives and the education of Caribbean figures Clare and Lucy, permits colonial ideologies to be passed down to postcolonial individuals in the guise of compelling, "classic" fiction. Marguerite's introduction to Jane Eyre suggests a similar kind of colonial conditioning into dominant Anglo values because the novel comes to her in the American South from an "aristocratic" black woman who represents, in Marguerite's eyes, an appealing Victorian lifestyle that is out of her reach.

With this in mind, the word "postcolonial" becomes a misnomer of sorts, because neocolonial forces are alive and well in formerly colonized countries such as India and the West Indies. My discussion of these twentieth-century texts will show that just as twentieth-century educational systems and literary standards are tainted by a colonial bias, so the present-day cultural, social and economic relationships in these novels depend on the acknowledgment and predominance of white, Western "norms." This Western bias is made plain in the subconscious assumptions and conscious desires of young women like Jasmine, Clare and Lucy who have internalized the values and racial hierarchies of the neocolonial forces and racial hierarchies that shape their lives at home and in the mother-country. Although Marguerite did not grow up in a colonized country, her revelations about the racial oppression, low self-esteem and family difficulties in the American South in the first half of this century--as well as her education through English literature--explains her placement alongside the other protagonists.

If Jane Eyre serves to express the desires of the postcolonial female, and yet represses the truth of her emotional and psychological reality, as I argue, then it would seem these protagonists must only learn to put down Bronte's novel. Perhaps they might find release if they would only look beyond the sunny fantasy of being Jane and see and hear their "darker" selves. This is how Clare Savage deals with the limited choices

offered to her by family and society--by imagining the choices in terms of being Jane or Bertha, and she chooses to be Bertha. She attempts to decolonize her mind, her past and her mother country of Jamaica by embracing all that is wild and indigenous and in opposition to the colonizer. Tellingly, she ends up dead, like her role model.

This attempt at decolonizing herself by shaking off the chains--and claims--of the colonizer fails to truly liberate Clare because it doesn't consider one aspect of the postcolonial condition: one may be temporarily and geographically separated from the colonizer's explicit laws and limits, but the influence of imperialism is apparent in present-day postcolonial societies and remains in the individual's psyche. In their introduction to Postcolonial Criticism, Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley state that the effects of colonial occupation shape the past, present and future of the colonizer and the colonized. They assert that "no simple oppositional model can capture the relationship between colonizer and colonized. Assimilation, integration, and collaboration prolong the colonial experience" (5). Clare is caught up in the false dichotomy, an "oppositional model" that tells her to choose between Jane or Bertha, without offering her other choices. Her challenge, and the task of the other three postmodern heroines, is to assimilate and integrate imperialism's influence into a broader understanding of themselves and their options. Unlike Jasmine, who tries to assimilate into American culture in order to establish a firm boundary between a limited, Indian self of the past and a progressive, Western identity of the future, the postcolonial female must find a way to live in the present that doesn't deny the reality of her colonial past and its influence on her self-image, but doesn't allow this past to circumscribe her options and colonize her self-image. She can acknowledge that she has read and even loved Jane Eyre, but it doesn't have to be the only story available to her.

Jamaica Kincaid imagines the internal struggle of the postcolonial female as a clash between the mother and the mother country. Lucy's mother represents the powerful African traditions of her home country, but this power is undermined by her mother's

obedience to the sexist standards endorsed by the colonizing center. Lucy comes to see her life in terms of a choice between two "mothers": to enjoy the familiarity of home but feel subjugated by its patriarchal values, or to enjoy the freedom of living in North America, but be continually diminished by its racism that reminds her of her colonial childhood. Lucy's task is to demystify the power of both "mothers" through a process of acknowledging their powerful influence in her life but not allowing them to control and constrain her. At the end of her story, she has made emotional progress by beginning to identify the ambivalence that repels her and holds her fast to both "mothers." At the ends of their stories, Marguerite, Jasmine, and Clare show some signs of untangling their relationship with Bronte's "mother text" and its messages, which paralyzed them and silenced them rather than offering them a map for a better future.

My first chapter demonstrates how Jane's identity formation and "progress" are centered upon multiple disruptions of Jane's race, class and gender subject positions which are replete with the (mis)recognition that is at the heart of the colonial encounter. Jane styles her own form of colonial discourse: in the process of moving out into the world, she articulates the social and class distinctions between herself and "other" characters through physical characteristics and a metaphorical discussion of racial difference. This discourse serves to make her ascension into middle-class domesticity seem "natural" and inevitable. Jane comes to need Bertha, and the working-class women around her, in order to distinguish herself--and Rochester--as everything they are not. Whereas Jane is able to effortlessly slide into her preordained position of female colonial power, these "other" heroines must identify and contest these exclusionary tactics of the dominant Anglo power structure if they are to secure their own happy ending.

In chapter two, I look at Maya Angelou's autobiography. Angelou shapes her text through the use of a dual narrative voice--the adult, knowing narrator, and the voice of her younger self, Marguerite. Reading the text through the gaps and discrepancies of this double voice allows me to demonstrate how ambivalence shadows the telling of this life

story, which is frequently considered to be an uncomplicated story about a black girl's triumph over oppression and low self-esteem. I borrow the language of postcolonialism in order to explicate the complicated power relations that limit Marguerite's ability to honestly and openly challenge the demands, disappointments and biases imposed by family and society. Furthermore, I argue that Marguerite's growth echoes the pattern of "awakening to protest" that is prevalent in the classic slave narrative genre. This second chapter considers Angelou's unspoken concerns as narrator and her limited presentation of her child self as an outgrowth of the colonized female's internalization of the dominant Anglo norms that tell her she is a dehumanized, unworthy Bertha figure. She initially uses Jane Eyre as an escape and rationalization for her disappointments, but gradually begins to leave this text behind as she claims mastery of a body and identity that earlier brought her shame.

Chapter three examines Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine. As a peasant girl in rural India, Jasmine turns to Jane Eyre for justification and realization of her dreams to rise above the limits of her assigned social and racial position. Jasmine seems to have accomplished her fantasy of identification, even so far as to be like Jane in name and social situation. Her move toward assimilation in the United States is the concrete goal that allows her to pursue her Jane Eyre-inspired quest for validation and fulfillment according to white, Western norms. This assimilation is not complete, for Jasmine's self-identity is always bound by the stereotypes of a series of men on whom she relies for financial security, social prestige and personal freedom. Her grasp at autonomy and fulfillment is always undermined by an attitude of ambivalence about her compromises and her choices. On one level, Jasmine seems content to exploit her Indianness and shed her alterity for the approval and benefit of the colonizer. But by tracing the narrator's inner voice of discontent and its relationship to the narrative structure of the novel, I bring to the surface the sensibility of the woman who resents this life of lies she created for herself. My reading of this novel contradicts the many critics who view this novel as an

immigrant's success story by identifying the submerged psychological truths of Jasmine's journey through India and the United States, a journey that leaves her forever suspended between being the displaced "other" and the actualized self.

My final chapter brings together Cliff's No Telephone To Heaven and Kincaid's Lucy in order to examine Jane Eyre's effect on the lives and minds of two young protagonists from the Caribbean. Cliff's Clare chooses to lose herself in Jane Eyre and in an education in London because she has difficulty living in the United States with her mixed racial identity and her conflicting national and familial loyalties. Embracing a solitary life and the English culture in the "mother country" is a temporary escape, for Clare's literal and metaphorical "darkness" prevents herself and others from letting her claim her place as a Jane Eyre figure. Clare feels that turning back to her black maternal roots--claiming her place as Bertha--is her only choice. Caught up in the binary created by Bronte, and enforced by the cultural stereotypes around her, Clare denies her racial and cultural heterogeneity in a suicidal act that prevents her from finding a productive outlet for the ambivalence, anxiety and anger of the postcolonial female.

Kincaid's Lucy finds anger to be a useful route toward self-definition when faced with the prejudices of the Anglo world that dominate her life. Feeling bitterly disillusioned by the inability of her Jane Eyre-esque fantasies to come true once she leaves home and becomes an au pair, Lucy "protects" herself by standing in opposition to the white lifestyle and ideals that seem to exclude her. My analysis of Lucy's year-long experience as an au pair reveals the struggles of the colonized "other" who grapples with the almost overpowering, contradictory feelings of fear and disdain and admiration and envy that are most clearly embodied in her relationships to her mother and to her employer, Mariah. My reading of the novel will show that as she begins to deconstruct the myths that she has created in her mind concerning her role as the angry "other," and Mariah's role as the privileged beneficiary of all that Lucy lacks, Lucy begins to gain a new perspective on her past and conceive of a potential for her future. Lucy's drive

toward meaningful independence begins to take shape only on the last pages of the novel as she expresses the full range of emotions--fear, disappointment, sadness, hope and relief--that formerly remained submerged inside her. She begins to express the difficult feelings that were largely suppressed or muffled in the stories of Marguerite, Jasmine and Clare, making her ending an appropriate alternative to the ambiguous endings of the other texts.

Lucy is venturing into new territory at the conclusion of her story, continuing the effort she began at the start of her story to decolonize herself. Decolonization is the ongoing process by which the postcolonial individual attempts to sort out her relationship, both political and personal, to a difficult familial and cultural past that was shaped by an imperialist power. However, the move toward decolonization is never a definitive, clearcut venture: "Decolonization is always a multidimensional process rather than a homogenous achievement," according to Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith (xix). Therefore, this "multidimensional process" cannot be aimed toward an absolute recovery of a genuine self and an indigenous place because identity and home are multilayered concepts in which the postcolonial individual must come to recognize a mixed cultural heritage. Azim notes that "the search for national identity often seeks expression in pre-colonial forms, ignoring the way that colonial identities and history have been irrevocably affected by the colonial experience" (12). Clare Savage's story exemplifies this tendency, as she seeks to reconnect with "pre-colonial forms" of her national and maternal past without understanding how these choices and her self-identity are permanently altered by the influence of the colonizing center and its racist standards. The task for the individual intent on decolonizing the self must involve a recognition of her personal and cultural colonial past and its inextricable involvement in the present condition of postcoloniality.

Why is there an intertextual awareness of Jane Eyre in so many contemporary stories about young women? As Stoneman has described it, Bronte's novel is a "modern myth" that survives not because of any fixed quality of its narrative, but it persists

because it is constantly generating new meanings as a result of its various readers. Taking a reader-centered view of *Jane Eyre*'s intertextual longevity, she says, if "the reader is the place where the meanings of a text meet, he or she is also the place where new meanings may be generated. Every writer (or painter or film-maker) is also a reader who transforms previous texts into new shapes" (5). By bringing these five texts together in this way, I am generating a new understanding of their relationship to Jane Eyre, as well as to each other, and transforming them into "new shapes" as individual texts. My particular perspective, which is grounded in a postcolonial analysis, does not claim to be the definitive analysis of these works, but contributes new "meanings" in order to reformulate the importance of Jane Eyre to existing scholarship.

Stoneman also points out that A.S. Byatt's The Game (1967) and Margaret Drabble's The Waterfall (1969), employ Jane Eyre as a literary "mirror" for the development of their heroines. The relationship of these heroines to *Jane Eyre*, however, is not one in which the mirror reflects back to them an acceptable image. She describes their relationship to *Jane* along the same lines that I will use to explain the postcolonial women's ambivalent connection to this Victorian novel: "these texts suggest that women's control of self-representation is not always a process by which they find 'mirrors' of themselves in older texts or in other women, but is sometimes an unpleasantly aggressive process in which older texts and other women appear monstrous, so that the writer must at all costs separate herself from these mothers or sisters who are at the same time too much like themselves and too horribly unlike what they want to be" (151). For Marguerite, Jasmine, Clare and Lucy the "unpleasant" process by which they search for self-representation and try, but fail, to see themselves reflected back in their Jane Eyre "mirror," is largely an unspoken one. This process gives birth to their ambivalent relationship to those other maternal forces in their lives, which are "too much like themselves and too horribly unlike what they want to be." For postcolonial writers and their protagonists, the need to affirm one's female identity and yet also separate from the

"mother" text like Jane Eyre is additionally fraught with racial anxiety and limited by social strictures that make their relationship to the text distinct from that of Anglo writers like Drabble or Byatt. What I have done, in my intertextual analysis of these novels, is to examine how this "unpleasantly aggressive process" of relating to Jane Eyre plays itself out in a myriad of complex and subtle forms in the minds and lives of these postcolonial protagonists.



## CHAPTER ONE

A complicated literary legacy has grown up around Charlotte Bronte's 1847 Jane Eyre as a result of the debates surrounding the significance of Bronte's novel. The multiple textual tensions that make up Jane's story have prevented any single reading of the novel from attaining critical dominance. Jane Eyre remains, over 150 years after its publication, not only a popular novel, but a vital text for postcolonial authors whose work responds to the textual and subtextual assumptions in Bronte's text. Early postcolonial scholars have centered their discussion of Jane Eyre on the colonial connection between Jane and Bertha, claiming Bertha is emblematic of the subaltern voice, the colonial life which must be silenced in order to make way for Jane's social and economic success. My work will expand on the work of critics who have also begun to discuss the myriad and complex ways in which a variety of relationships in the novel, not only that of Jane and Bertha, enact the ambivalent relationship of the colonial encounter.

I will focus my discussion of Jane Eyre by demonstrating how Jane's identity formation and "progress" in the novel are dependent upon multiple disruptions of Jane's race, class and gender subject positions which recall the identity formation of the colonial individual. This chapter will demonstrate that the resolution of Jane's struggles is not derived from her newfound maturity, but from her (dis)connection to other women in the novel and Rochester, against whom she is able to claim her position of colonial power and secure her place within the middle-class family. My reading of the novel will explain the importance of Jane's struggles within and against the dominant cultural order, and rather than categorize this novel as a classic feminist Bildungsroman, I will explain how the novel can be read as one white woman's inscription into the social hierarchy of imperialist England.

Jane Eyre's longevity is due, in part, to the fact that the text has been caught in a critical flux over recent decades. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the novel's endurance

was attributed to the way its heroine prefigured feminism. Elaine Showalter paints Jane as a "revolutionary" Victorian heroine, who inspired countless similar portrayals of "plain, rebellious and passionate" fictional governesses (123). Joanna Mink insists that Jane represented not just nineteenth-century governesses, but "all women of the common, ordinary, middle class" (9). Furthermore, Mink declares that Jane was an important step in the evolution of the nineteenth-century hero because her "secret triumph" was founded upon her "insistence of self, that she will be what she wants to be and what she can be" (10). This reading of Jane's legacy, suggesting the revolutionary feminism of an ordinary woman who reaches extraordinary heights by will alone, a pioneer figure for later feminist fiction, was advanced by numerous scholars. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's Madwoman in the Attic (1979) and Showalter's A Literature of Their Own (1977) popularized this image of Jane and opened the floodgates for other critical responses that painted Jane as literature's first feminist. Both books portrayed Jane's journey from penniless orphan to married heiress as the development of the feminist Everywoman, a classic female Bildungsroman. Gilbert and Gubar insisted that Jane's "rebellious feminism" was ahead of its time:

Her story, providing a pattern for countless others, is . . . a story of enclosure and escape, a distinctively female Bildungsroman in which the problems encountered by the protagonist as she struggles from the imprisonment of her childhood toward an almost unthinkable goal of mature freedom are symptomatic of difficulties Everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression (at Gateshead), starvation (at Lowood), madness (at Thornfield), and coldness (at Marsh End) (339).

This interpretation of Jane Eyre, in which she overcomes the social and cultural barriers to reach "mature freedom" focuses on Jane's triumph over external barriers rather than on her route toward self-knowledge through inner growth. It places the emphasis on Jane's physical momentum--the "enclosure and escape"--instead of on the psychological and social development, which is the heart of Bildung narratives. Additionally, Gilbert and

Gubar label Jane an "Everywoman," which elides the fact that Jane's success and freedom is dependent on the alienation and marginalization of the oppressed and working class "Everywomen" in the novel--Adele Varens, Grace Poole, and Bertha Rochester.

Oblivious to this implication, Gilbert and Gubar point out that Jane's "ambiguity of status" which she shares with women like Adele Varens, Grace Poole and Blanche Ingram is finally resolved because Jane learns to curb her "constitutional ire" (349) by witnessing the negative example of these other ambiguously situated women: "All are important negative 'role models' for Jane, and all suggest problems she must overcome before she can reach the independent maturity which is the goal of her pilgrimage" (350). My reading of Jane Eyre supports those critics who have demonstrated that Jane actually avoids the victimization these other females suffer at the hands of men, money or society's prejudices, by learning to profit from and participate in the alienation and manipulation of these same marginal women. Our heroine's movement up the social ladder is facilitated by her claim to a position in the "hierarchy created between Jane and the non-middle-class women in the novel," as evidenced in her condescension toward Bessie, Grace and Hannah, as well as her rejection of the "working-class children" in St. John Rivers's school (Kucich 106). Jane comes to learn that even in her most humbling moments, she can still define herself against those "others" who are racially and socially marginalized.

As Jina Politi observes: "the novel's movement is not towards liberation. It is towards a tidying, consolidating of class positions" (66). I believe the real dramatic momentum in the novel is not Jane's quest for self-fulfillment but is centered upon the tensions created as Jane struggles to secure a privileged position in the social, class and racial constructions of her culture. My reading of Jane's social ascension is closely tied to Jane's ability to style her own form of colonial discourse: to demarcate and negotiate social and class distinction between herself and other characters, manifested in the plot through physical characteristics and a (sometimes metaphorical) discussion of racial

difference, thereby clarifying her own position, and seemingly "naturalizing" her movement up the class ladder and into middle-class English womanhood.

There is general agreement among scholars that Bronte's Jane and Bertha are vitally linked to each other, although I believe it is not in the way that Gilbert and Gubar theorize. They believe Jane's coming-of-age depends on a "secret dialogue of self and soul" (339), the process in which Jane deals with her anger, rebellion and rage that Bertha symbolizes. Jane's "anomalous, orphaned position in society" (349) dictates that she will find happiness and her proper social place only after Bertha's death, the purging of her rage and rebellion, that paves the way for her union with Rochester. This reading of Jane Eyre is problematic on one level because it suggests that Bertha's death does not presage wholeness for Jane, but implies "the further fragmentation of her personality, as Bronte casts out the 'bad, mad and embruted' side to leave only the persona of the good wife, Rochester's 'prop and guide' " (Heller 52). This colors the entire concept of Jane's final development as a woman, as it suggests that real progress is made only after she leaves behind the angry and outspoken parts of herself. On a more troubling level, Gilbert and Gubar's reading serves to deny Bertha independent identity in the novel. Reading Bertha as Jane's "dark double," actually "erases Bertha's identity by incorporating her negatively into the white middle-class woman's psyche," according to John Kucich, who cites Gayatri Spivak's similar observation (107). When Bertha is seen entirely as a negative aspect of Jane, she is dehumanized and subsumed by the identification process of the white woman, recalling the imperialist construction of subjectivity in which the colonized are perceived and understood solely as an "other" in relationship to the colonizer.

Despite these obvious obstacles in reading Jane Eyre as the quintessential tale of feminist independence rewarded, and in part due to Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar's analyses, Jane Eyre is still frequently cited as the classic model of female development. Firdous Azim reminds us that Jane's subject position has symbolized, and continues to symbolize, the glorification and potential of the universal self in the world of the

nineteenth-century novel and recalls Spivak's claim that "the Other woman cannot be given the central role in the novel, which remains a discourse of the Enlightenment subject" (107). However, there is more at stake in Jane Eyre than the necessary consolidation of cultural values which might explain why Jane remains "perhaps the most celebrated female Bildungsroman in English literature." Azim suggests the novel's notoriety is rooted in Jane's confrontation with crises that were ignored "in the conception of the rational Enlightenment subject," such as "sexuality, childhood madness and savagery" (172). I believe this begins to get at the popular success and critical longevity of Jane Eyre: the presence and continued threat of the "Other," embodied in cultural tensions throughout a novel that must continually invoke a variety of archetypal narrative models, and stereotypes, in its attempts to consolidate these struggles. This chapter will examine the tensions of race, class and gender at the heart of Jane's struggle in order to later explore how similar tensions are transplanted in contemporary postcolonial texts, dramatizing the complexity of postcoloniality and identity formation.

The race, class and gender tensions present in Bronte's work are manifested on a variety of textual levels, contributing to a dynamic interplay among competing narrative models. Among literary critics, the depiction of Jane Eyre as a heterogeneous collection of generic literary types is common. However, many of these readings set up the novel as a blend of two genres, with one type ultimately fixing Jane in place as the paradigmatic feminist success story. The novel is described as the "female Bildungsroman . . . a significant innovation in a nineteenth-century context--and the tale of the woman and man, represented by the romance" (Heller 49), an autobiography (not only of Jane, but of Bronte via Jane) and the "entangled woman breaking free" (Freeman 37), as well as the "governess novel" that is also a "Christian feminist bildungsroman" which "sees God as both masculine and feminine and advocates the values of love, sexuality and a marriage of partnership" (Gallagher 67). By continuing to harken back to the Bronte novel as a feminist Bildungsroman, while acknowledging the other familiar plot devices, critics

have been able to sustain the myth of the figurative feminist Jane Eyre without uncovering why these narrative tensions exist and questioning their magical resolution in the end.

It is not the familiar appeal of a certain Romantic or Victorian novelistic type, made fresh with the innovation of the feminist Bildungsroman, that can adequately explain the sustained interest in Jane Eyre. Rather it is the unresolved narrative tensions, and the uneven conglomeration of familiar genres that gives this white, English feminist figure her peculiar power and lasting significance. Penny Boumelha explains that Jane's "heroic narrative consciousness" is a

fantasied female power [which] is continually tethered and troubled by the realist narrative of social determination and patriarchal imbrication. It is the tension between the two--sometimes seen as an opposition between Gothic and realist elements, or Romantic and realist, or fairy-tale and novel--that gives this novel its peculiar intensity and force, acting out as it does at the very level of form the mutual dependencies and incompatibilities of desire and restraint (77).

The narrative disjunctures in the text and the story's disparate archetypal elements are frequently explained away in terms of the oppositional forces that Boumelha names, without a thorough critical look at how these novelistic elements grow out of a conflict of desire and restraint below the level of plot. Jane's purposes, or "desires," are not negotiated harmoniously within or next to another generic story that dictates she demonstrate certain "restraint," but are revealed in the crossfire between the surface and subtextual levels of the novel, and her feminist journey is disrupted as her spoken desires and objections actually depend upon unspoken privileges and loyalties.

In Misreading Jane Eyre, Jerome Beaty understands that the proliferation of generic types in Jane Eyre invites various, extensive critical examinations of the text. Beaty believes that there are so many novel types that "infiltrate" the text--Gothic novels, Godwinian feminist novels, religious novels, orphan or foundling novels, Byronic novel, Bildungsroman--and each with their own "ideological presumptions," that the "familiar

literary and social norms have in Jane Eyre been defamiliarized" (154). This defamiliarization of familiar norms allows readers to see the novel "from the outside, seen as it could not see itself," and this paves the way for those who wish to secure a specific novelistic mode to the text, such as the feminist Bildungsroman (155). As a result of the "heterogeneity and contradictions of the dialogue" between and across narrative points and plots, Beaty claims that all readings must be "misreadings" (Beaty 218). Beaty's assessment does not mean that all readings are valid or invalid, but it does shed light on the reasons for the multiple interpretations and approaches to Bronte's novel. Beaty recognizes that the novel's "unfinalizable" meaning, and critical relevance, grow out of the tensions and "social 'incoherencies' . . . implicated in Bertha and the mystery of Thornfield" (155). I agree with Beaty, although my reading will demonstrate that the relevance of the novel does not rest just with Bertha and the "mystery" of her existence, rather, it is embodied in the visible and invisible presence and of many racial, social and cultural "others" and Jane's countermovement to them.

Social and racial differences are intertwined in Jane Eyre and interactions between Jane and other characters are imbued with the colonial dynamic. In the novel, the Victorian hierarchies of social difference, class distinction and racial and sexual prejudice are enunciated and enforced through physical traits and racial/national difference, and appear normalized by a presumption of innate or "natural" characteristics. My interpretation of the novel will demonstrate that plain Jane's progress from penniless outcast and "racial" and social "other" to a privileged position as white, feminine English woman in the middle class home, reiterates the project of colonial discourse as described by Homi Bhabha in "The other question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism." Bhabha describes colonial discourse as "a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization" (67). This discourse is an ambivalent one as it "turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical

differences" which, he explains, "produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (70-71). Jane adopts this discourse as a way to understand herself and her cultural context--her ambivalent social status provides frequent opportunities to exercise the ambivalence of the colonizer: needing differences to redefine her racial, class and gendered situation according to women she rejects and terms as "other."

The plot and progress of Jane Eyre, which has popularly been read as a young woman's manual for how to gain independence and the respect of the right man, is actually fraught with a disjunctive and uneven plot trajectory which demonstrates that social displacement is eventually smoothly satisfied with money, privilege and status, and that escape from oppression and alienation depends on transferring those experiences to "others." This dynamic prevents any meaningful psychological maturity or development from occurring on Jane's journey and recalls the colonial encounter, as my reading will explicate. Although several critics have attempted to gloss over the ruptures in the narrative by ascribing competing generic types to the book, my work will demonstrate that Jane's ambivalent stance toward her cultural positions stems from the cultural, social and racial biases in the novel, reflecting Bronte's authorial situation within nineteenth-century, middle-class British ideology. By highlighting the significant lapses and assumptions in the novel, I will underline what has been disguised by those who feed the myth of Jane and her triumphant, paradigmatic journey. These lapses are significant because they help explain why Jane Eyre appears in the work of contemporary postcolonial writers. Their protagonists share Jane's desires and a keen ambivalence that rises from the pursuit of these desires: to develop a strong sense of identity despite social and racial displacement, to fight oppressive forces in their lives while searching for a comfortable psychological space and a proper "home" place. I will discuss each of these desires and its presence in Jane Eyre, beginning with the issue of racial/social displacement.



One of the most compelling aspects of Jane's journey is her movement from alienated orphan and neglected dependent to beloved and moneyed cousin, niece and wife. Many readers have chosen to focus on Jane's early protestations against the Reed family's prejudices and her defiant self-assertion as proof of the mature instincts and admirable mettle that guide her through life. Adrienne Rich cites Jane's experiences in the Red Room as the moment from which her independent character is solidified. She had stood up to John Reed's "irrational violence" and had been subject to "general opprobrium" and as a result:

'Unjust--unjust!' said my reason, forced by the agonising stimulus into precocious though transitory power; and Resolve equally wrought up, instigated some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable oppression--as running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die (12).

This inner moral bedrock, hardened by resolution, will continue to press Jane into action in her growing years, and, as this quotation suggests in regard to her "reason" and "Resolve," her instinctual drives frequently appear as separate parts of herself, animating themselves in order to alert her conscious mind at key moments in her story. This particular moment in the Red Room, according to Rich, is the "moment that the germ of the person we are finally to know as Jane Eyre is born: a person determined to live; and to choose her life with dignity, integrity and pride" (465). For a poor orphan, the "dignity, integrity and pride" are the currency with which she makes her way through life--from Lowood to Thornfield, to Moor House and finally to Ferndean. Rich notes that Jane's early "inner clarity" helps her separate her "intense feelings which can lead to greater fulfillment, and those which can only lead to self-destructiveness" (467). This inner clarity, Rich asserts, serves to balance her passionate and intense feelings later with Rochester and St. John Rivers, who each present a moment of crisis for the adult Jane.

This popular perception of the young Jane, who matures and develops clarity and inner strength by surviving the horrors of poverty and oppression, makes her a very attractive role model for women, such as the postcolonial fictional heroines, who experience similar confusion and doubt as socially alienated young women.

However, a closer look at Jane's early struggles reveals that her self-determination and self-respect are not solely the quest for justice they appear to be, for they are problematized by her ambivalence about her cultural and social position. In Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontes, Terry Eagleton notes the "ambiguities of equality, servitude and independence" that permeate Jane's life. I will begin my discussion by examining how Jane describes her earlier status in terms of racial otherness and physical difference. While young Jane vociferously protests against the Reeds' marginalization of herself due to her orphaned and dependent status, and "disowns" her connection to them and their "miserable cruelty" (31), the adult Jane, narrating her own story, perceives the inevitability of her marginalization due to her inescapable difference:

I was a discord at Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there: I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children . . . They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathise with one among them; a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or adding to their pleasure; a noxious thing, cherishing the germs of indignation at their treatment, or contempt of their judgment. I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child--through equally dependent and friendless--Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently (12).

This potent description, in which Jane the narrator terms her younger self a "heterogeneous thing," suggests the otherness which she, as the older, wiser autobiographer can now see as inevitably divisive, for she perceives that self as essentially different, portrays her alienation as inescapable and even natural, as she was a

"useless thing." Jane employs the language of the colonial system, perceiving herself as the other by objectifying her youthful self and describing herself in opposition to "civilized" and normal characters of the Reeds. Furthermore, she mentions that she is not "handsome," so her features support her inevitable ostracization and difference from the Reeds; Jane will continue to refer to her "plain" features in the novel, as part of the novel's metaphorical use of physical "otherness" to explain eccentric personalities or abnormal characteristics. This description serves to set up the contrast between the outsider Jane and the woman she will become only after resolving her ambiguous social status, giving up the "indignation" and rebellious characteristics in order to become a "unified" English subject, a proper middle-class lady who is rewarded with family and money. This passage is also significant because very similar language is invoked in Rochester's racially loaded descriptions of Bertha, the Creole "mad" woman he describes and objectifies as an animal, whose nature and behavior he compares to the quiescent, adult "civilized" Jane. He claims that Bertha is a "hideous demon" (277), which he justifies in his explanation that her nature is "wholly alien" to his own, resulting in a "pigmy intellect" and "giant propensities" (269). Clearly, as Jane grows older and learns to adapt her urges and behavior in socially appropriate ways, her identity, and relationship to Rochester, is authorized by her opposition to the racially "other" Bertha, who is described along the same lines--"noxious thing" and "useless thing" --which Jane termed herself as a child.

Jane's celebrated *Bildung*, her movement from "dependence to autonomy or from division to wholeness" (Nestor 92) is therefore contingent upon the banishment of her emotional discord and her inscription into her proper English woman's role. This can only be achieved, however, with the resolution of her uncertain "racial" status through its transference to "other" women like Bertha. However, the dialogue around Jane's status in terms of racial difference is often found "beneath" the text, located below her awareness of class and gender inequities: "As narrator of her life story, Jane demonstrates a self-

consciousness about class and gender hierarchies; however, race operates as a transparent category of self-representation" (Sharpe 28). This transparent category is made known by references to physical or racial characteristics which come to light as Jane gradually secures her gender and class position. The dialogue of race is increasingly foregrounded as Jane gradually resolves her social ambiguity, and the stigma and displacement of her status as an "other" are erased as she develops a cultural consciousness and recovers her "natural" place in the social and moral order.

However, Jane's ascension into middle-class respectability is fraught with risks, as her position is made precarious by her ambiguous role as orphan, and later, governess. The ambivalence which colors Jane's attitude toward social acceptance and class difference has been documented by Eagleton as well as Politi and Kucich, who cite several instances of Jane's class struggles conveyed in racial terms. Kucich cites examples of Jane calling John Reed a " 'slave-driver' " and feeling like a " 'rebel slave' " as she is dragged off to the Red Room, evidencing how Jane "often characterizes her own oppression in terms of racial exclusion" (107). Susan Fraiman strengthens this connection between class uncertainty and racial difference when she suggests that Jane's position stems from a kind of class miscegenation; Jane's parentage is "mixed," for her mother was a "disobedient daughter of the middle class" who married far below her with a "penniless clergyman," passing on a "socially ambiguous" status to Jane (96). As neither a servant nor a daughter of Mrs. Reed, Jane is painfully aware of being a "heterogeneous thing," or as Bessie terms her, a "queer, solitary thing" (33), whose "otherness" is a result of parental heritage, and subject to social biases, similar to the situation of a racial minority. My reading of the novel explicates this connection between race and class, in which race is employed as a metaphor for class difference, appearing to "naturalize" the hierarchy of both categories. The metaphor also serves to authorize Jane's path to success, in which her class and "racial" status clarified through her juxtaposition to other women, facilitating the recovery of her proper social and familial position.

Jane's early uncertainty about herself and her place in the world reflects the beginning of her internalization of the biases of the dominant social system. The young Jane is painfully aware of her otherness and yet seems to see the logic in the prejudices of social and racial "caste." Although Jane rails against her aunt's mistreatment of her, at one point she even sympathizes with Aunt Reed's rejection of her, as both Eagleton and Kucich have indicated. Confined to the Red Room, the young Jane begins to question her actions and softens her attitude toward her aunt, pondering: "but how could she really like an interloper not of her race, and unconnected to her, after her husband's death, by any tie?" (13). Jane's mixed feelings about her ambiguous position at Gateshead reflect a growing class consciousness which is expressed in terms of racial consciousness, one reinforcing the unalterable nature of the other. When Mr. Lloyd asks Jane if she might prefer to live with her father's side of the family, Jane admits that she was told she might have some " 'poor, low relations called Eyre' " but is uneasy about living with "poor" and "working people." She tells Mr. Lloyd: "I should not like to belong to poor people' " and then thinks: "to learn to speak like them, to adopt their manners, to be uneducated, to grow up like one of poor women I saw sometimes nursing their children or washing their clothes at the cottage doors of the village of Gateshead: no, I was not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of a caste" (20). Quite frequently overlooked, this statement, in which Jane admits the limits of her own independent spirit, is significant because it illustrates the limited options Jane has come to believe she must choose between: the indignity of her possible "poor relations" or the abuse of her rich relatives. It is also significant because the adult Jane's final "liberty" comes not in the form of social independence or self-determination despite her poverty, but financial freedom as a result of her birthright within the "caste"--the abundant inheritance from her assumed "poor" Uncle John Eyre. Penny Boumelha notes the particular nature of Jane's Gateshead protests: "at the outset Jane begins less as a conscientious objector to the patriarchal organisation of society than as an outcast from it" (64). Jane objects to the cruelty of the

social order, and her place in it, and yet never challenges the inevitability of that social order, which eventually paves the way for the final acceptance of her new status in it.

The beginning of Jane's story relates the dilemmas posed by her ambiguous social status, and the ending relates the triumph of her inheritance and her middle-class wifehood and motherhood, leaving the majority of the novel to trace the trials that bring Jane to restore her appropriate place in her social order. These trials are necessary in order to relate exactly how Jane moves from "interloper and alien" (57) which Brocklehurst names her, to her legendary happy ending. Her experiences at Lowood teach Jane to become self-conscious about her aggressive and "noxious" self, which allows her to tame and control her impulses and begin to attain an appropriate social position. Early in the novel, Jane's recollections of her protestations and rebellions, in which she objects to mistreatment, inequity and injustice, are frequently remembered in language that positions Jane as a warrior who is fighting for respect: at one point she describes her verbal sparring with Mrs. Reed as fighting a "battle" with a short-lived "victory" is born out of her taste for "vengeance" (32). Jane's entrance into Lowood marks the start of her education into the proper ways to function--to give up this impulsive "war" and the angry outbursts.

At the start of chapter six, Jane recalls: "hitherto, I had only been a spectator of the proceedings at Lowood, I was now to become an actor therein" (45). As an "actor" and agent in her own life's choices, Jane learns from Helen that it is not "violence that best overcomes hate--nor vengeance that most certainly heals injury" (50). Jane learns that she will not gain retribution for wrongs done to her and so must check the expression of her feelings in order to find friendship and acceptance. The young Jane forges a confidence with Miss Temple by tempering her emotions: "I resolved, in the depth of my heart, that I would be most moderate--most correct . . . I told her the story of my sad childhood. I infused into the narrative far less 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). The suggestion in Jane's reflection is that the truth of her experience must be altered to others if she is to find social acceptance. She must modify and adjust her feelings about her own life experience if it is to seem "credible," and allow her entry into a gendered and "civilized" space. This throws into question the narrator's presentation of the entire story that creates the novel: how much truth telling is part of this autobiography and how much is manipulated by the narrator for a desired effect?

In a similar vein, while at Lowood the young Jane also learns from Miss Temple to channel her formerly rebellious energy into productive means and the telling of this experience is carefully edited. At the opening of chapter 10, the novel now presents the eighteen-year-old narrator reflecting that the education during her eight years at Lowood was not purely academic in nature. She recalls Miss Temple's influence:

I had imbibed from her something of her nature and much of her habits: more harmonious thoughts: what seemed better-regulated feelings had become the inmates of my mind. I had given in allegiance to duty and order; I was quiet; I believed I was content: to the eyes of others, usually even to my own, I appeared a disciplined and subdued character (73).

What Jane has had to give up and gain in order to take on this new nature and these dutiful habits are not made clear. Instead of offering the reader a portrayal of Jane's transformation from the outspoken orphan to the introspective, obedient young teacher, the narrator alludes to the passage of eight years in her story. At the start of chapter 10 the narrator confides to her readers why she has left out the passage of her teenage years: "But this is not to be a regular autobiography: I am only bound to invoke memory where I know her responses will possess some degree of interest" (72). This narrative and temporal gap at the beginning of chapter ten, in which she must now "pass a space of eight years almost in silence" because nothing of interest occurs (73) both acknowledges and closes the gap; it refers to the influential presence of Miss Temple without fully explaining the inner shift that must have occurred to bring about her "allegiance to duty and order." The narrator's claim that she is silent about those years because her memories

would be of no interest signals her excuse for her conscious editing of events in order to create certain responses from her readers. Furthermore, as the novel continues, the narrator's distance from herself as autobiographical subject disappears, and "the two discourses blend into one" (Politi 56). I believe that this occurs because the adult narrator no longer sees the need to separate her "educated" self from the impulsiveness of her youth, for as her life moves forward and she modifies her actions in socially appropriate ways, the temporal line between memories and current commentary blurs so that reporting her life is the simultaneous act of sanctioning it, allowing the appropriateness of her inscription into the social order to appear self-evident, normal.

In a similar way to the start of chapter ten, a troubling textual and temporal gap is opened at the start of chapter 38, the novel's conclusion, when the narrating Jane announces she has been married "ten years" and provides no explanation for her adaptation to the roles of mother and wife. Instead, she reports that she is a "mate" who is "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" (397). The narrator offers to give the reader "one word respecting my experience of married life" before her "tale draws to its close" (396). Like the silence over the eight years at Lowood, the missing ten years contain the details that would explain how Jane learns to move into a new social role. In both incidents, the presence of a temporal rupture prevents the exploration of the details that might accompany a significant change in life of the protagonist and disguises the compromises or limits which a woman like Jane must face when she is indoctrinated into traditional gender roles. Her reporting of her marriage reveals that the union has limited her life and she tellingly describes it in terms of losing a sense of separateness--she reports her "time and cares" are completely subsumed by her husband's needs and "I am my husband's life as fully as he is mind" (496). This "spin" on marriage is a fantasy ending, suggesting an "Imaginary symbiosis" (Nestor 73), and appears after a textual gap that leaves no evidence to explain Jane's transformation into perfect mate and mother or the resolution of her ambivalence toward her earlier social struggles. The novel's



"disharmony and heterogeneity . . . [are] finally eliminated only by recourse to fantastical evasion in the novel's ending" (Nestor 76). This also applies to the start of chapter ten, in which any "disharmony" between the child Jane and the young woman who emerges at the beginning of chapter ten is eliminated by the allusion to eight years of "education" that she claims holds no "interest" for her reader. Interestingly, these breaks in the narrative appear as "forgettable" or unremarkable for the narrator yet they represent her momentous movements into appropriate gender behavior, the loss of independent spirit and a singular voice, making her silence appear as avoidance: she refuses to revisit the details of those years and yet does not disapprove of the changes they forced upon her.

In these examples of textual fissure, Jane the observing narrator closes the gaps and keeps hidden the complications that Jane the troubled autobiographical figure had earlier opened in her struggle for a place in society. Boumelha notices this significance of this narrative move:

What has troubled many readings of the novel has been precisely this coincidence of the narrating and narrated Janes, the sense that no textual space is left for consideration of the way in which the oppressed and rebellious child turns into the lady, the victim of the Red Room into the keeper of the keys in the patriarchal household (59).

The lack of "textual space" to portray Jane's development from one position in life into another, concealed by a narrator who both recognizes and dismisses the missing years, is the space into which critics have placed their interpretation of this novel. This is because these crucial moments in the text, at the start of chapter ten and chapter 38, are also the points at which the generic style of the novel is transformed. At the start of chapter ten, our realistic tale of the young orphan struggling with the limitations of her opportunities and the internalization of her ambiguous social status gives way to the story of a young woman's freedom of movement and success in the outer world.

As she veers away from a straightforward telling of her struggles during the first ten years of her life ("the events of my insignificant existence," the narrator calls them

despite the fierce spirit she displays), she then announces: "this is not to be a regular autobiography" (72). This acknowledgment signals a generic shift, creating tension between the "realist" elements of the narrative and what Boumelha calls the "Gothic," "Romantic" and "fairy-tale" elements. The desiring young Jane must now confront the restrained adult Jane, creating dramatic conflict that invites the development of psychological maturation. However, this opportunity to explore her psyche is lost, as Jane's gaze is not inward, but is focused outside her for meaning. On the cusp of her departure from Lowood, the eighteen-year-old Jane stands at the window and ponders her future:

I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication; for change, stimulus: that petition, too, seemed swept off into vague space: 'Then,' I cried, half desperate, 'grant me at least a new servitude!' "(74).

This reflection reinforces the contradictory nature of Jane's yearnings and reality--when liberty seems unreachable, she considers change and stimulus, and when self-determination appears to be lost in "vague space" she settles for a new servitude, reflecting the uneasy awareness she has toward her ability to secure "liberty." Like the young Jane who resents the Reeds' mistreatment, and yet who cannot imagine living with the distant Eyre relations because of their poverty, this Jane wants more than to be an obscure schoolteacher but must frame her desire in terms of "servitude," for she is a woman and has neither the means nor situation to be "granted liberty." Jane's stance at the window is telling because she is on the threshold of a new life and her initial launching into the world in which she must locate a place for herself. This moment, near the start of chapter ten, coincides with the shift in the novel's narrative tone from what Politi calls the "realist mode" in favor of the "a-temporal fantasy mode" that introduces Jane's movement into the world and up the social ladder and the temporal gap at this point helps conceal this change. The realistic depiction of the frustrations of the poor

orphan is taken over by the longing of the newly educated and "reformed" young woman. Politi also notes: "The 'between the narrative modes' is perhaps a reflection of the 'between classes' in which Jane is caught" (64). Jane's "inbetweeness" is a ripe moment in which Bronte might explore the development of her heroine's desires and her limitations, but by initiating the narrative shift and having Jane settle for being "granted a new servitude," Bronte defers important psychological exploration of how a woman confronts the disparity between desire for "liberty" and her reality as a penniless woman. From this point on in the novel, Jane's "servitude" is her devotion toward re-establishing her lost middle-class respectability.

The first sign that Jane has made strides toward this goal is the visit from Bessie as Jane prepares to leave Lowood. Jane has become " 'genteel enough' ", notices Bessie, and adds: " 'you look like a lady' " (80). Jane's newly won accomplishments and refined appearance situate her above the working-class Bessie, beginning a chain of encounters in which Jane's social and gendered identity is constructed by her juxtaposition to women who are not the middle-class white English mother and wife she inevitably becomes. After remarking that Jane's education and accomplishments mark her as "quite a lady!", Bessie reveals that Jane's Eyre relations, who the Reeds had insisted were " 'poor and quite despicable' " are actually " 'as much gentry as the Reeds are,' " which she discovered because Jane's uncle, John Eyre, came looking for her at Gateshead on his way to Madeira and Bessie's husband supposes he was " 'a wine-merchant' " (81). Jane's new status is made plain by Bessie's visit, for it clarifies that she is not like the working-class servant, and the visit from her Uncle Eyre reveals that her natural place is not as a poor, unconnected woman.

Upon leaving Lowood, Jane's real work is before her: to resolve the remaining ambiguity of her social status as a woman who is a poor governess and recover her lost middle-class "ladyhood." Jane's developing sense of self will be articulated through her relationship to other women and to Rochester. Increasingly, her progress will be marked

by the language of essentialized difference and colonial encounters. Jenny Sharpe describes Jane's position upon her departure from Lowood in this way:

the first stage of Jane's education draws to a close, having established an irreconcilable conflict between her desire for self-assertion and her preassigned gender role of self-denial, the educational novel moves into a new phase that shows her negotiating a socialized space that does not negate a female space. And it is the civilizing mission that provides the grounds for her negotiations (43).

Jane's path to fulfillment is one that attempts to consolidate female identity and femininity through colonial power structures that place her as naturally superior to Bertha and the other non-white, middle-class English women in the novel. This path is facilitated by her growing access to money and middle-class norms, for in order for Jane to secure her stable social identity, the physical, social and racial "difference" that marked her youth must be displaced onto women who are distinct from her newly evolving identity. Jane's participation in the "civilizing mission," writ plainly in the conclusion of the novel, allows her to retain authority, a "socialized space that does not negate a female space," despite her disappearance into the domestic realm.

This reading helps explain why the ambivalence of Jane's early position between classes, and the tension between the narrative modes that marks chapter ten, is never adequately resolved or explained, leaving only the awkward machinations of "accidental, miraculous, chance" in which Jane is "made to re-discover her original position in" the leisure class (Politi 66). However, these machinations are only set in motion after Jane has successfully struggled with her ambiguous position as a governess, which harkens back to the difficulties of her youth. The metaphor of Jane's racial otherness is renewed at the juncture in her life in which, as in her relationship to the Reeds, she longs for respect, love and acceptance--in this case, it is from Rochester--but knows she cannot not have it because although she may be "akin to him" in her "brain and heart," there is a difference of "rank and wealth" which inevitably separates them (154). After this silent reflection in the

drawing room in Thornfield, Jane hears the Ingram family renounce governesses and their "tribe" as a "nuisance"; Jane listens quietly and labels herself one of the "anathematized race." (155). Her position as a governess marks her as working-class woman, yet her work is supposed to embody the same "natural" qualities as a middle-class wife and mother. Her "racial otherness" stems from this social displacement, for Jane represents two Victorian social realms--the working class woman and the middle class mother-- and their conflicting values:

the governess was both what a woman who should be a mother might actually become and the woman who had to be paid for doing what the mother should want to do for free. The governess was the figure who ought to ensure that a boundary existed between classes of women, but she could not, precisely because she was like the woman from whom she ought to have differed (Poovey 47).

She is neither completely the working class servant nor a natural mother, so Jane is both dangerous and necessary at Thornfield, although as Poovey also points out, Bronte manages to elevate Jane above her "race" by "subordinating her poverty to her personality and to the place it has earned her in Rochester's affections" (137). This is evinced in the novel's portrayal of their engagement, when Mrs. Fairfax warns Jane, " 'Gentleman in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses' " (233), although Rochester's proposal had earlier informed Jane that " 'your station is in my heart' " (231). At this point, Jane's only access to social betterment is through a union with Rochester, and Bronte complicates their marriage in order to allow Jane an opportunity to gain social respect and moral authority as a proper English lady. As a poor governess, Jane's "difference" is presumed to be erased by a sexual and social relationship with a spouse, which is the lie that trapped Rochester and Bertha into marriage.

Jane can only establish her rightful place at Rochester's side, and in society, by not allowing their relationship to disrupt her movement toward middle-class respectability and its moral certainty and recovery of her "pre-ordained" class position,

although she is not yet aware of her social and financial inheritance. This preoccupation explains why she rejects Rochester's offer that she become his mistress on the Continent. Earlier, in his description of his failure to find happiness with a European mistress, Rochester admits that " 'Hiring a mistress is the next worst thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior' " (274). Again, the metaphor of race and social difference is employed and "naturalized." There can be no question that Jane's principles and morals allowed her to resist the temptations of inferior station of mistress and "slave" and the fate of this "other" woman, Celine Varens. In her days at St. John's school she silently poses a rhetorical question: "is it better, I ask, to be a slave in a fool's paradise . . . or to be a village schoolmistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England?" (316). This reverie recalls a colonial language in which the "healthy heart of England" and its moral superiority, sanctified by nature, is contrasted to the sexual and moral decadence of the Continent. Adele is the figure who best represents this dynamic--she provides the opportunity for Rochester to exercise this same kind of English superiority and objectification of the colonial subject: " 'I e'en took the poor thing out of the slime and mud of Paris, and transplanted it here, to grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden' " (127). Adele also provides an opportunity for Jane to display her moral authority that supports Sharpe's claim of Jane's "civilizing mission" whose governess job requires her to teach Adele proper behavior. Jane reports on being a governess: "no injudicious interference from any quarter ever thwarted my plan for her improvement, she soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable" (95). Both Celine and Adele Varens are "other" females against whom Jane is able to identify herself as morally proper and socially stable; they help establish the appropriate feminine behavior that will reinforce Jane's authority in the social order in the "healthy heart of England."

Other interactions between Jane and both upper class and working women shape her identity. Jane is keenly, and painfully, aware of the gulf between herself and Blanche

Ingram and her wealthy family. Bronte manifests this difference in both social, physical and racial terms when Jane draws a stark self-portrait in chalk, writing "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain" underneath it and follows it by rendering Blanche's "Oriental eye" and "Grecian neck and bust" in the "softest shades and sweetest hues," and marks it, "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank" (141). Jane's caption reinforces the fact that Blanche's beauty is tied to her social status, and this beauty is marked in terms of a racial exoticism that reinforces the rarefied nature of her social status; these differences appear pronounced in terms of their comparison to Jane. While these disparities initially discourage Jane in her pursuit of Rochester, and appear as Blanche's advantage, when Jane meets the Ingram family, she is repulsed by the arrogance of the Ingram family and Blanche's haughty and money-hungry attitude. Jane comes to reverse her opinion concerning Blanche's beauty and rank. Their physical and social differences become a signifier of the more meaningful difference in their inner nature which shows Jane to be superior to Blanche, who is invested with "pride and self-complacency" (164). This allows Jane to realize her "natural" superiority over her: "Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy: she was too inferior to excite the feeling . . . her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature" (163). Just as her "superior" nature saved her from a fate similar to that of Celine Varens, her solid moral goodness marks her as superior to, and essentially different from, the wealthy but shallow Blanche Ingram.

Although Jane rejects the upper-class prejudices of the Ingram family, she does not align herself with other working women, as their fate represents a life far below the "lady" she is learning to become. Household female servants represent the working class fate she must escape, and she takes a condescending attitude toward Bessie, Grace and Hannah. In considering Grace Poole, Jane makes assumptions about Grace's connection to the first fire that ignites Rochester's bed and then reflects on Grace's "flat figure, and uncomely, dry, even coarse face," and admits: "I compared myself with her, and found we were different. Bessie Leaven had said I was quite a lady; and she spoke truth: I was a

lady. And I looked much better than I did when Bessie saw me: I had more colour and more flesh; more life, more vivacity" (137). In this case, it is not only Jane's suspicions about Grace's "eccentric" behavior, but again, it is physical difference, combined with a moral certitude, that separates the two women and anchors Jane's position above the coarse-looking, working woman and makes Jane's plain appearance favorable by comparison. When the servant Hannah at Moor House refuses Jane shelter, it is Jane's Rivers cousins who take her in. As a respectable, middle-class family, and her long-lost kin, they can see that despite Jane's appearance as a "poor, emaciated, pallid wanderer," she has a "pure" accent --St. John comments on Jane's "unusual physiognomy; certainly not indicative of vulgarity or degradation" (298). Once again, physical difference and its link to one's inner nature are noted, and Jane's disheveled appearance as the social "other" is temporary and her looks are merely unusual, for she is seen for her natural position as one of their class. Only Hannah, the servant, who is not kin to Jane literally or socially, is unable to identify Jane as a middle-class lady, and this disparity cements Jane's alignment with the middle-class Rivers family. Jane's independent movement between and within households provides her with opportunities to favorably compare herself to "others" as a way continually signify her upwardly mobile path within the middle-class domestic milieu.

These women, whom Jane encounters on her path to marriage and motherhood, each provide an opportunity for our heroine to resolve the ambiguity of her social place. However, the two most important relationships which shape Jane's final ascension into her appropriate cultural context are with Rochester and Bertha. Both figures bring into sharp relief Jane's struggle as a powerless woman in the world seeking a stable social sphere in which to exercise autonomy, and her relationship to these two people allow that struggle to be clearly voiced in terms of a colonizing project. Sharpe describes it this way:



Jane's struggle for independence involves finding a socially acceptable form for rejecting the restrictions imposed upon poor relations, governesses, mistresses and wives. In other words, she requires a domestic form of resistance, a language that can bring the force of political insurgency into the 'woman's sphere' of the home. The doctrine of 'feminine influence' and 'woman's mission' provides one possible mode of articulation (43).

Jane's education in the novel begins with Lowood, where she learned "socially acceptable" ways in which she might not only confront her "restrictions," but find more feminine, appropriate goals on which to focus her energy. Her experience at Lowood facilitates her gradual inscription into the social order because it teaches her that accessing "feminine influence" will only come after she rejects roles which compromise her domestic femininity and threaten the natural and moral authority her English womanhood can grant her, her only viable "woman's mission." The civilizing mission of the nineteenth-century and its colonial discourse create the dialogue through which Jane comes to understand her place in the social, racial and gender hierarchy of her culture, and Rochester and Bertha are the catalyst for her progress.

As the man who confines and defines his creole wife, Edward Rochester clearly takes on the role of the English colonizer who dehumanizes the "other" woman in order to assert his mastery over her. However, as Bhabha has explained, the colonizer's position to the colonized is one of ambivalence, a relationship defined by "colonial mimicry" which is rooted in the desire "for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" ("Mimicry" 86). Just as Jane needs the presence of other women to understand her own position apart from them, Bertha's presence in his life may appear to be one of legal necessity, but she functions narratively to prop up Rochester's identity and justify his actions. As Elsie Michie points out, Jane describes Bertha and Rochester in terms that hint at their physical similarities: Rochester has a "dark face" and "heavy brow" (99) with "jetty eyebrows," "black hair" and a "grim mouth, chin and jaw" (105), while Bertha has "thick and dark hair" with "black

eyebrows" with a "blackened inflation of the lineaments" (249). Rochester must differentiate himself by declaring her intellectually and emotionally inferior--a "madwoman"--and subjugating her with an authority that is rooted in gendered and national prejudice. Clearly, the construction of Rochester represents the colonizer's power and ambivalence. Michie explains: "In Jane Eyre, ambivalence about British colonialism is articulated through the figure of Edward Rochester, who has successfully amassed money in the colonies but must continue to exercise brutal mastery over a Jamaican wife who differs little from himself in terms of skin color" (587). Rochester is aware of his link to Bertha and must objectify Bertha and label her as mad in order to separate himself from the threat of her otherness, and his brutality allows him to control her and maintain the appearance of superiority. As the colonial figure, Rochester is invested in perceiving Bertha's unfeminine and non-English "otherness" and clings to Jane for the pure English femininity she symbolizes to him: he explains to Jane that his travels around Europe were centered in his search for the "antipodes of the Creole." (274). He articulates his connection to Jane in terms of what she represents within him: " 'You are my sympathy--my better self--my good angel'," whereas Bertha is the "hideous demon" (277) whom he blames for corrupting his life and his soul. By locating these two women in opposition to each other, and in relationship to his split self, his colonizer's ambivalence is obvious and necessary for reasserting his masculinity, his Englishness, his sense of control.

Jane's feelings for Rochester are also imbued with ambivalence, for she is continually wrestling with her need for him and the reality of their social differences. Just as Jane must continually monitor her place next to "other" women in order to ensure her own feminine autonomy and social mobility, she must regulate her position to Rochester to ensure that her identity does become defined solely in relationship to his male authority and wealth. Her ambiguous position as a governess allows her to recognize herself as a " 'paid subordinate' " but one who will not bear " 'insolence' "

because " 'nothing free-born would submit to' " such treatment (118). By using her ambiguous social position, neither servant nor wife, as a source of independent speech and freedom of movement, she can move about the house in a manner the servants cannot. Jane gains mobility by shaping her relationship to her employer. The problem is that being in love with Rochester does not offer her the appropriate position from which to become his wife, yet she is clearly no longer a mere employee. The same position that gave her access to his house now prevents her from taking her natural place at his side and in his home in a legally and socially acceptable way. Shortly before Rochester proposes, Jane bitterly recalls the reasons for their separation: "wealth, caste, custom intervened between me and what I naturally and inevitably loved" (22).

Even after Rochester proposes to Jane and declares that social custom does not matter because she is his "equal" and "likeness" (223) in terms of class and spirit, Jane must be wary of the affections that attempt to transform her place in the home. Rochester's marriage plans actually do not make them social equals, but compromise her freedom of movement and dictate her subordination to Rochester. As Rochester threatens to change her-- her clothes and her class position--in accordance with his desires, she insists that she retain her place. She has learned to define herself, and to exercise her moral authority and independence, in relative terms according to her plain appearance, her job, and her middle-class ambitions; she is not ready to surrender her sense of self to Rochester and his " 'aristocratic tastes' " which " 'masque your plebian bride in the attributes of peeress' " (247).

As Rochester insists that he will lavish "jewels" upon her and treat her as a "peer's daughter," his language suggests entrapment and ownership. He promises Jane to place a " 'diamond chain round your neck, and the circlet on your forehead . . . and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists ' "; Jane dismisses his plan: " 'Don't address me as if I were a beauty, I am your plain, Quakerish governess . . . ' " (227). Invoking both physical and social differences once again, Jane insists on retaining her self-chosen role and her

"inferior" position and the freedom, albeit limited, it affords her. Jane's displacement from wealthy circles and social power has been part of her claim to "otherness" and it serves her needs as long as she is able to use that marginalization as a site from which to assert and stabilize her own image of herself. She has learned to see herself against other women whom she cannot be like, and she is clearly not a peeress. Jane is determined to remain the plain governess until she is given appropriate leeway to finally claim her natural post within the middle class; this does not come until she is restored to the inheritance that was temporarily lost to her: "Quite shrewdly, she will . . . refuse all along to emit false class signals, until the estate which she inherits automatically gives her the right to assume the stereotypes" (Politi 57).

As Rochester continues to try to shape the nature of their future relationship, in an attempt to secure his own dominance and diminish her freedom, their courtship banter recalls the language of racial difference and colonialism. Rochester insists that she give up her "governessing slavery," and she refuses, as this "slavery" is actually her freedom and gives her grounds on which to decide how she spends her time; and she insists she will come to see him in the evening, "but at no other time" (238). Kucich notes the way Jane rejects Rochester's attempt to dominate her: "She rejects his smile 'such as a sultan might . . . bestow on a slave' and his talk of 'seraglio' " (108). She is irritated by another "Eastern allusion" when he compares himself to a "grand Turk" and compares her favorably to an entire "seraglio" (236). She insists that she will " 'go out as a missionary to preach liberty to them that are enslaved--your harem inmates amongst the rest' " (237). In rejecting his attempts at placing himself in these racially-charged and legally authorized positions of power, Jane must grasp for the limited sources of autonomy she can find within the colonial contexts that Rochester invokes. Her skillful use of language, in which she carefully positions herself as a woman with agency, reflects her subtle understanding of the power dynamics surrounding gender, race and class. When Rochester orders her to give up her "governessing slavery," she refuses, for she

recognizes that as a working woman who is neither the silent servant nor obedient wife, she is granted some independence within the household. When Rochester asserts his masculine privilege through the threat of sexual domination, Jane invokes her privilege as the white woman who can rise above his threat of sexual oppression through the authority of imperialism's racial hierarchy. Sharpe asserts that Jane's position is shaped by her newly-forming identity as a middle-class, white domestic woman: "The contradictions to white femininity are more evident in a colonial context where the middle-class woman, oscillating between a dominant position of race and a subordinate one of gender, has a restricted access to colonial authority" (12). Rochester's references to slavery in his discussion of their relationship force Jane to face the reality of her future as a middle-class domestic woman: she sees the reality of the sexually subordinate role of wife, leading her to assert her only privileged position within the colonial context: that of the white woman as missionary.

This supports the ongoing process of identity formation in which Jane learns to see herself in contrast to "other" women. What is new is Jane taking on the position as the colonizer whose civilizing mission grants her power. The ongoing construction of her femininity and social station, which earlier invoked racial difference in a covert way, is now constructed overtly through her superiority above racially distinct and powerless women. The trajectory of our heroine into an upwardly mobile situation, but only through her relationship to a man, highlights the difficult dynamic of gender and power in Jane Eyre in which marriage makes her subject to her husband's demands. Calling on her "superiority" as a white woman allows her to regain some degree of influence. Reading Jane Eyre in this way "makes it impossible to ignore the contradictory social positioning of white, middle-class women as both colonized patriarchal objects and colonizing race-privileged subjects" (Donaldson 6). This contradictory position, in which Jane is subjugated by her position in the patriarchal hierarchy and granted social privilege by her racial status, is the backdrop against which Jane finally learns to stake her claim in the

English domestic drama. The presence of Bertha Rochester in the plot, as "mad wife" and displaced Creole woman, is the colonial figure who gives Jane the opportunity to reposition her relationship to Rochester and to firmly establish her authority as a white English woman.

Jane Eyre celebrates the progress of the social-climbing orphan but only through celebrating Jane's place in the patriarchal order as a result of the white English woman's place in the imperialist power structure. This dynamic is crystallized in the connection between Jane and Bertha, which is dialectical because it recreates the colonial encounter. In Bronte's novel, Bertha's connection to Jane is one fraught with racist and imperialist assumptions--their relationship is "resonant with the discourses on the status of the Other" (Azim 178). Rochester's description of Bertha in the novel makes the racially mixed woman appear as inherently dangerous and depraved, and his claims "appeal to both racial and sexual prejudices" (Newman 14). He claims her "vices" and "giant propensities" brought on her insanity, inherited from an "infamous mother." He labels her "intemperate and unchaste" with a "nature" that is gross, impure, depraved" (269-270). After describing Bertha's innate or "natural" characteristics, Rochester further employs his biases to point out physical differences. He explicitly contrasts Jane and Bertha against one another in a gesture born out of colonial ambivalence and stereotyping. When Rochester takes Jane to Bertha's attic "cell" after the aborted wedding ceremony--he compares "my wife" to "this young girl . . . looking collectively at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout . . . look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder--this face with that mask--this form with that bulk" (258). Rochester's description of Bertha further distances her from Jane with a terminology (such as "red balls," "mask," and "bulk,") that turn her body into an inanimate object and dehumanize her. Azim points out that "Savagery, madness and sexuality, defined as Other, merge in the figure of Bertha Mason . . . A mimetic relationship is set up between the two women. The process of mimesis is as

much doubling as opposition and serves to destabilise, as well as to secure, Jane's identity" (178). This mimesis suggests Azim's description of the colonial encounter, so that if Bertha is to be Jane's "antithesis," there is "a type of initiation . . . in which, momentarily, they are the *same*" (179). Just as Bronte has supplied a cast of other women for Jane to be "alike," in both her nature and appearance, in order for her to decide they are "not like," Bertha's presence is necessary for Jane to become the "other" wife; it is their link as potential wives and their acknowledged differences which define Jane as a "proper" mate for Rochester.

Azim's mimesis recalls Bhabha's theory of the dialectical nature of the connection between the colonizer and the colonized, in which identity is consolidated by the presence and denial of the "Other": "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" ("Mimicry" 86). The nature of the Lacanian mirror-image relationship is emphasized, as Azim points out, when Jane looks into the mirror and sees Bertha's face for the first time and describes it to Rochester as " 'Fearful and ghastly to me--oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face--it was a savage face' " (249). The colonial woman sees the "savage" face in the mirror and it is refracted, as Bhabha suggests, rather than reflecting back the image of her own plain but sensible and "civilized" face. Bertha and Jane's relationship, in both of these instances, is created through Rochester's imperialist lens; their relationship is "mediated by the figure of Rochester, white, English and male" (Azim 178). By constructing his perception of the two women in relationship to himself and to each other, Rochester embodies the masculine colonizing force, extending his power as the subject defining and classifying his object(s). This is facilitated by the fact that Bertha cannot represent her own past, so there is only Rochester's recollection to Jane of his first marriage which is described as the colonizer's struggle to control and contain the "foreign-ness," the "Otherness," of the Creole woman. Rochester narrates to Jane the story of his first marriage and justifies his incarceration of Bertha by marking her as the

Other, sexually, racially, mentally: her "nature wholly alien" to his with a "pigmy intellect" and "giant propensities" that drove her to madness just as he rationalizes his desire to be with Jane as his natural urge for restoring what has been lost to him as an Englishman. Incarcerating her for her "madness" is an example of what Michel Foucault calls a "mechanism of exclusion" that is a form or "technique" of exercising power. Weilding power in this way over Bertha allows Rochester to not only confine her physically, but define her psychologically; using his social privilege to construct the "truth" of his Creole wife, his power is exercised through what Foucault calls the "formation and accumulation of knowledge" (Power/Knowledge 102-03).

Although she is of mixed paternal English and maternal Creole heritage, Rochester perceives Bertha as an inheritor of a maternal insanity fed by a "gross, impure, depraved" nature (269-270). On a "fiery West Indian night" Rochester claims he was saved from suicide by a "fresh wind from Europe" (271). Clearly, Rochester voices the xenophobic imperialist stereotypes and prejudices, so that Bertha becomes dehumanized, the "maddening burden of imperialism"; Bertha is, according to Boumelha:

Dark, but not black: while the word 'Creole' marks a double displacement of origins, Bertha is white by her status as daughter of settler planters. Maddening, but not maddened: the intrinsic, racial/familial nature of Bertha's 'moral madness' serves to exculpate Rochester, and with him the English gentry class, from so much as complicity in her plight (61).

The "burden" of imperialism for Rochester is enacted in his continuous disavowal of Bertha's Englishness and his continual reference to the "intrinsic, racial/familiar nature" of her "inherited" madness, as well as denial of her access to rational rage, rebellion, human nature. This is the imperialist's fear of racial contamination, his need to identify his own superiority which reinforces his English identity, and the justification for his denial of her personhood. Bertha's mixed race ancestry suggests the mimetic aspect of her connection to Jane, for her paternal English lineage further heightens the possibility that she is "Jane" and "not Jane." Just as Jane's social movement upward rests upon her



ability to eschew a position of social ambivalence, her place in Rochester's home is dependent upon the elimination of any trace of racial ambiguity or heterogeneity within herself, Rochester or Bertha.

Rochester and Jane's relationship, then, is only possible after identifying and eliminating Bertha on the literal level, but also by negating the similarity she has to each of them. Any similar ambiguous social resemblance between Bertha and Jane is elided in order to maintain the separation between them. Critics like Kucich are attuned to this double standard that Bronte uses in her construction of Bertha and Jane:

Jean Rhys has shown in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, for instance, how Jane's rags-to-riches story excludes the parallel plight of the Creole woman. Both women are viewed by Rochester as property, for example, both are literal or figurative prisoners, and both have an unequal share in basic legal and economic rights (106).

Bronte gives us Jane and Bertha, both abandoned and powerless orphans, susceptible to Rochester's manipulations and sexual desires, and vulnerable according to their precarious place on the margins of their culture. It is true that they risk becoming "literal or figurative prisoners," but Jane easily overcomes the lack of family and money in moments of crisis, and her liminal position actually aids her as the "pre-social atom" who can freely find a new place in the world (Eagleton 491). Bertha's ambivalent racial status, as a white woman of European origin born in the colonies, is brought about by "colonial/imperialist ventures" (Azim 182) and cannot be compensated by family or money, as those are the very forces that positioned her as a victim to Englishmen like Rochester. It is necessary for Jane to distance herself from the Creole woman, to accept the silenced and oppressed woman as the other so she may construct the image of herself as autonomous and free. The formulation of Jane's character is engaged with the "eradication of Other subjects . . . the movement is always towards the obliteration of the Other, represented in terms of class, race, or sex. Yet while it seeks to obliterate the Other, it is only in a dialectical relationship with the Other that it can define its own

subject-position" (Azim 108). For Jane and Rochester, establishing their subject position involves acknowledging the West Indian woman in order to eliminate the threat she represents to these position; ultimately, Bertha's presence serves to normalize the establishment of their socially acceptable racial, social and sexual selves.

Recently, postcolonial critics have pointed out the many ways in which imperialism figures into Jane's "success" story, complicating her reputation as fiction's first feminist. There is much evidence to challenge the "tendency to see Bronte as a romantic, prefeminist writer" (Kucich 104). Jane's famous rooftop reverie has been often used to assert Jane's, and Bronte's, feminist agenda:

Women are supposed to feel very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for 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 (96).

Jane's thoughts are interrupted by Bertha's "low, slow 'ha! ha! ' ", which earlier scholars explained as a "bitter refrain" from Jane's denied "passion" (Gilbert and Gubar 349), or Bronte's rage which likely "twisted and deformed" her text (Woolf 1080), and recently, imperialist oppression. Azim points to the important placement of Bertha's laugh during this articulation about female freedom, for it "connects the reverie . . . to the figure of the Other woman, the real source of the laugh, against whom, and in relation to whom, the central subject in the narrative is to form itself, and to progress on what has been regarded as a triumphant march" (176). When Jane's journey is characterized as a woman's "triumphant march," it is frequently ignored that Jane's identification and progress, and final marriage, is bought by the Creole woman's elimination. The laugh can be read as a mocking one in which Jane's sentiments are shown to reflect the racial prejudices of the patriarchal structures she appears to denounce. Jane only reaches happiness at the expense of another woman's freedom: "Bertha's incarceration allows Jane to fall in love with

Rochester; Bertha's escape terminates Jane's engagement; Bertha's death enables the marriage that constitutes the happy ending" (Hite 39). Although freedom is frequently purchased at the price of another's freedom, in this case, the white woman's happiness is secured only once the racially mixed woman, whose voiceless presence in the text has been presented solely in terms of a hindrance, is dead. This view shifts the tension in the novel away from Jane's feminism and struggle with her "insistence on [asserting] self" (Browne 6) to her single-minded determination to secure her birthright, her place in middle-class domesticity by avoiding and/or benefiting from the victimization of other marginal female figures in the novel.

Throughout Jane Eyre, these marginal female figures are constructed, metaphorically and literally, as the racially "different" figures against whom Jane can gauge her progress from social outcast to wealthy heir, domestic wife and mother. In adopting the behavior and beliefs of the dominant social order during her journey, Jane proceeds from the place of the oppressed "other" to employing the colonizer's tactics and enjoying the privileges of the colonizer. Many critics have noted in the novel that Jane's happy ending is firmly settled upon the colonial project. Kucich points out the "centrality of colonial sources for identity, both economic and psychological" in the novel, such as Jane's "inheritance, Rochester's first marriage and fortune, and St. John's spiritual mission" (105). Moreover, Jane's Madeira uncle is connected to the same firm that Richard Mason represents in Jamaica, as Newman points out, and the imperialist "taint" of the money is furthered by the fact that "Jane shares out this loot, appropriately, between the church (her cousin Mary's husband), the military (her cousin Diana's husband) and the forces of cultural imperialism in the shape of her cousin, St. John" the missionary in India. With Bertha dead, Jane and Rochester find their place in middle class domestic tranquility, settling into a "happy married life on the proceeds of the Empire" (Newman 14). Jane's social and financial security are purchased by, and

reinforce, imperialist ventures just as her marriage is built upon the negation of the colonized individual embodied in Bertha.

Jane's relationship to St. John is also part of the colonial dynamic at work in the novel. Although she rejects the role that St. John prescribes for her, "the role of the European as missionary and teacher" (Azim 181), Bronte concludes the novel with two paragraphs devoted to St. John, giving his missionary work the final "word" in the novel. She describes his work in India with imperialist pride: "Firm, faithful, and devoted; full of energy, and zeal, and truth, he labors for his race: he clears their painful way to improvement" (398). It is significant that Bronte appears to give the "white man in India" what Janet Freeman calls the "heroic last lines" (40); however, I believe that Bronte complicates this because Jane is clearly aware of the "stern," "exacting," and "ambitious" nature of the man whose religious fervor is matched only by his coldness (398). The reader is left with the impression that St. John's missionary work is an exercise of the intellect and ego, far from the spirit of selfless love that Jane characterizes as her own work on the domestic front. Furthermore, the final section of this "half-ironic apostrophe" (Gilbert and Gubar 371) does not glorify his imperialist work, but instead states that "the toil draws near its close," referring to St. John's impending death; Jane acknowledges that St. John is prepared to embrace this union with his "Master" (398).

As the narrator recalls, with some trace of irony, St. John's life and work coming to a close, her own activities in Ferndean suggest the continuation of the colonial project. The conclusion provides revealing clues as to how Jane perpetuates the cycle of domesticating and "civilizing" young women and simultaneously controlling the foreign presence of the other. This is seen in her description of Adele's life: "As she grew up a sound English education corrected in a great measure her French defects; and . . . I found in her a pleasing and obliging companion: docile, good-tempered, and well-principled" (396). Just as Jane's Lowood experience curbed her "alien" nature and her "defects," she is leading Adele toward the proper path of docile English womanhood. Furthermore, it is

Jane who frees Rochester from the taint of Bertha's "Otherness," working to oust the last of her influence. She tells him, upon their Ferndean reunion: " 'It is time some one undertook to rehumanise you' " (384). Secured, at last, in a home of her own choosing, Jane's work is now made clear: her moral authority is embodied in the colonial mission she now deploys on the domestic front; now that she has replaced the Creole woman, she rescues the arrogant, English colonizer who is otherwise dehumanized, disfigured even, by the West Indian woman he tried to "colonize" through marriage. Sharpe describes our heroine's newly won power in these terms: "Jane's appeal to the moral mission of colonialism for asserting her own autonomy indicates a triangular relationship whereby English women's bid for domestic power passes through the racial hierarchy of colonialism" (55). Jane's happy ending and "fulfillment" comes in the form of her project to make him "whole" again in every sense of the word (the deformities he suffered in the fire which are the physical manifestation of his formerly divided self), to enjoy the life that was literally and figuratively bought through the imperialist project, to remove the last of the "other's" taint and any remaining "disgust, hate and rage" that he said made him "half mad" (228) as Bertha's "better" half.

The narrative and plot tensions in Jane Eyre, be they based on social, cultural, or racial "otherness" are swept away by the final conclusion, in which Jane reports on the success of her marriage and her retreat to Ferndean with Rochester. The early emotional and social ambiguities within the text are silenced by Jane's magical inscription into the middle-class household and her participation in the "colonization" that paved the way for her story: "By the device of the ending, bourgeois initiative and genteel settlement, sober rationality and Romantic passion, spiritual equality and social distinction, the active affirmation of the patiently deferential self, can be merged into a mythical unity" (Eagleton 396). The dialogue between generic types, and Jane's interest in telling her own life, are silenced by the disappearance of Jane into Rochester's home and his life. Nestor believes that one possible reading of the text reveals "a disharmony and

heterogeneity that is finally eliminated only by recourse to fantastical evasion in the novel's ending," (76) and as the conclusion's narrating voice merges with the Jane being recalled, "there are signs of Jane's retreat from identity or subjecthood" (92).

Jane's life story, which began by invoking the voice of the outspoken orphan, is not a tale of a young woman's maturation, but represents a conventional story of a woman finding ultimate happiness and fulfillment in the limited domain of the domestic arena. This is a "profound regression," according to Pauline Nestor, who declares that Jane's return to Rochester is a "triumph of romance over realism, a choice for a fantasy of completeness and power which involves the forsaking of movement for stasis" (94). Because of this "stasis" implied in the novel's conclusion, the novel's ending has been has been a sticking point for critics who champion Jane as a feminist. Mink explains that "Jane Eyre exhibits the capacity for heroism and, up until the end of the novel, generally fulfills that capacity," and that although her announcement of her marriage is "triumphant, we, the readers are left to decide her true happiness" (11). Other scholars have refused to see the ending as anomalous with the rest of Jane's choices. They often choose to explain the marriage as a "union of equals" (Showalter 124) and a marriage of "true minds" (Gilbert and Gubar 371), interpreting that as an appropriate ending to a novel they refuse to see as anything other than classic example of the female Bildungsroman

My reading of the novel's conclusion posits that the text, which the narrator claimed is "not to be a regular autobiography" (72), moves from realism to fantasy precisely because the heroine's life maps out a movement from objection to subjection, from outcast "other" to proper lady and morally upright wife, recovering her "natural" place as a middle- class mother by participating in the ideology of her colonial English society and relying less on self-direction than Providence and Fate. In Jane Eyre, there is a neat and tidy fantasy ending for our heroine through marriage because this novel of a woman's awakening to her own ambition is actually the story of her awakening to the roles that awaited the nineteenth-century English woman. In subsequent chapters, I will

demonstrate that the narrative journey of the postcolonial heroine is one that moves counter to this assessment--it is a journey from the romance of Jane Eyre to the realism of postcoloniality, the sacrifice of the fantasy of Jane Eyre completeness and power for the acceptance of the contradictions and complications of a newly forming female identity.

## CHAPTER TWO

At first glance, Maya Angelou's 1970 autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings does not seem to have much in common with Charlotte Bronte's 1847 novel Jane Eyre. Although, as one Angelou scholar notes, references to Bronte's novel are "peppered throughout the text" (Danahay 71), there has been scant discussion on the significance of Bronte's text in Angelou's recollections of her life as a young black girl struggling with low self-esteem, oppression and social displacement. The majority of critical discussion on Caged Bird has focused broadly on the plot, themes and characters in the book without delving into an analysis of its narrative voice and structure.

In my discussion of the book, I borrow from postcolonial criticism the vocabulary of ambivalence which can enhance our understanding of how self-identity and "otherness" construct race, gender and social hierarchies. This allows me to discuss the subtle but complex emotional dynamics which undergird Angelou's narrative, but are often overlooked by Caged Bird scholars. The thread of race and ambivalence I trace throughout the autobiography recalls the identification of self and other I outlined in the preceding chapter on Jane Eyre. My reading of Caged Bird reveals that what appears to be an uncomplicated story about one young black girl's victory over the social burden of being labeled the racial "other" is actually fraught with textual contradictions and a narrative style that speaks to Angelou's ambivalence as a child protagonist and an adult autobiographer.

My analysis shows that through various authorial controls, including the arrangement and editing of her memories and her commentary upon them, Angelou both reveals and conceals a great deal of complex emotional truth while discussing her youth and adolescence. The presence of Jane Eyre and Victorian literature in Angelou's text are emblematic of the ambivalence and complex feelings that are woven throughout this autobiographical text. Additionally, her younger self's relationship to Jane Eyre is representative of her stance to the larger white world: it is source of refuge and



identification, yet it is also an entity which belies her social reality, devalues her physical self and silences her emotional truth. Only after she leaves behind the Bronte text in her childhood can she begin to face the difficulties in her life and act on her own behalf.

Buried within Angelou's famous narrative about the poor, outcast black girl who begins to find a place for herself in the larger world is the more complex story of the racial "other" coming to terms with her love-hate relationship with the powerful forces of "blackness" and "whiteness." Angelou shapes her story to resemble the generic contours of the classic slave narrative, leaving the more difficult and ambiguous elements of her past and her experience to become the subtext of her autobiography.

On the surface, Jane Eyre and Caged Bird appear to tell a similar story. Joanne Braxton's description of Angelou's text recalls similar descriptions of Bronte's plot: "In Caged Bird, Maya Angelou does not progress only from a state of semi-orphanhood to one of motherhood; she develops through various stages of self-awareness" ("Song" 186). Both young protagonists perceive themselves as outcasts in their youth, yet each believes she was born for a better life. Although shunned by the rich Reed relatives, Jane rejects the idea that she belongs to " 'poor people,' " (Bronte 20) and indeed the novel rewards her class aspirations with an inheritance. In the case of Caged Bird, the young protagonist renounces her displacement by rejecting her blackness, believing "the birthright she would one day claim is her own whiteness" (Fox-Genovese 224). This points to the most profound difference between the circumstances and the fate between the two young women: while Bronte can simply alter Jane's fate and social identity through restoring Jane's "natural" position in the class hierarchy, the young Marguerite cannot shrug off her racial and social displacement as easily, despite her attempts at denial of, and escape from, this predicament.

My discussion of Caged Bird will differentiate between the author and her autobiographical younger self by referring to the adult narrator as "Angelou," and the young protagonist as "Marguerite," recognizing, along with critics like Braxton, that the

book "employs two distinct voices . . . that of the mature narrator and that of the girlchild" ("Symbolic" 5). The vast majority of critics have muddled their analyses of the text by offering no distinction between Maya Angelou as author, as adult narrator of her own story and as a young child protagonist. They use "Angelou" and "Marguerite" or "Ritie" interchangeably. This critical tendency often reflects their inability to perceive the moments of distance established between author and protagonist and the meaning embedded in these textual maneuvers.

The techniques which Angelou uses to tell her story of herself as the young Marguerite, negotiating ambivalent moments of racial, class and gender crisis during the construction of self, are the points around which my discussion is centered. I will employ the language of postcolonialism I established in chapter one because it allows me to articulate how ambivalence shapes the dynamics of race and identity, and self and "other," that have been largely ignored in critical discussions of this book. As a woman who is nonwhite, poor and "unfeminine," Marguerite cannot simply erase her social differences by securing her position in colonial constructions of power relations, in the same fashion as Bronte's heroine, because Marguerite has internalized those dominant social norms of her era that portray her as "other." Marguerite's psychological struggle around her displacement derives from a deep-seated ambivalence in which she is divided between the socialization that tells her what she "should" be and the internal impulses that tell her who she is and what she wants. Unlike Jane, no amount of social climbing can resolve the painful feelings of "otherness" in the woman who has internalized the expectations that she is unable to fulfill.

Although there has been no previous analysis of Caged Bird in terms of its reenactment of the colonial encounter, there is some scholarly discussion on how the African American experience recalls the dynamics of imperialism. Selwyn R. Cudjoe believes "one essential condition characterized both slavery and imperialism: the violation of the personhood of the Afro-American because he was too helpless to defend

himself consistently, and the further degradation of his social being as the nature of the system worked toward his further diminishment" ("Autobiographical Statement" 7). Angelou uses Caged Bird to illuminate the realities of Cudjoe's "system" at work in her childhood in the deep South during the first half of the twentieth century. This system, accepted by the Blacks and Whites around her, enforced racial segregation and disparities in every aspect of life. Angelou's autobiography itemizes the internal "diminishment" of the young black girl and the psychological burden that accompanies the dominant culture's colonization of her self-image. Cudjoe also contends "the entire social development of Afro-Americans has been conditioned by their struggle to liberate themselves from the crippling social and psychological effects of the dominant ideology and culture" and believes this struggle is manifested largely through the tradition of Afro-American autobiographies ("Updated" 273). Angelou's text portrays her own childhood conditioning that taught the only escape from feeling the "crippling social effects" of the "dominant ideology and culture" was through acceptance and endurance of the social order (and occasional "safe" and subversive action). This attitude cripples her emotionally and psychologically, but my analysis uncovers how and why Angelou wishes to silence this experience. The "crippling" psychological effects of her childhood in the small, segregated town of Stamps, Arkansas are buried under her story of hard-fought social victories. I will use the language of the colonial encounter to trace the dialogue of ambivalence around her participation in the identification and (mis)identification with the stereotypes and roles assigned to her by the dominant social structures.

Homi Bhabha explains that ambivalence derives from the "recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences," which are "central to the stereotype" that shapes colonial discourse ("other question" 70). Using Bhabha's concept of ambivalence and "colonial discourse," I explain how and why Angelou reports her experiences with racial and social displacement with one narrative voice and contradicts and complicates that reporting with another. It is in the interplay between these

competing narrative intentions that I "read" the implications of Angelou's ambivalence toward her first autobiography. Furthermore, my analysis will explain how ambivalence is built into Angelou's self-representation through her characterization of Marguerite, her young self. Marguerite's internal struggles with self and "other" are made visible through her ongoing difficulties with mastering and accepting her own body and her voice, as explained by Mary Vermillion, who believes that Caged Bird "indicates that both rape and the dominant white culture's definitions of beauty disempower the black woman's body and self-expression" (67). While my analysis will also focus on her childhood traumas, including the rape, I will elaborate upon Vermillion's conclusion by demonstrating that Marguerite's "disempowerment" of her body and her self-expression is rooted in a deep-seated ambivalence toward more than just the dominant white culture. Marguerite's difficulties with accessing speech and bodily control reflect her growing inability to neatly conform to familial and cultural expectations.

The tendency of literary critics to invoke generic categorizations to label Caged Bird recalls those analyses of Jane Eyre, in which the depiction of the text as a heterogeneous collection of literary types is common. And, like Bronte's text, I believe that scholars' diverse categorizations of this autobiography are an attempt to explain away the tensions and disruptions in the narrative that they do not wish to acknowledge because it complicates their idea that this book is anything less than a "literary masterpiece, the story of this one black girl declaring 'I can' to a color-coded society that in innumerable ways had told her 'you can't, you won't' " (Moore, 49). There is a much richer and more meaningful story to be found by reading what lies buried within this "literary masterpiece"--the black girl's internal struggle with self-awareness and self-direction which are an important component of her external difficulties with the larger world. In focusing on the surface dynamics of racial conflict in the text, critics have missed the profound drama between "self" and "other" that echoes through Angelou's autobiography.

Caged Bird is often analyzed in terms of its autobiographical content and literary style, and it is commonly acknowledged to have its roots in the African-American slave narrative.<sup>1</sup> In a 1987 interview with Carol E. Neubauer, Angelou declared that she is interested in the autobiography for its " 'literary form' " and she connected this to the work of Frederick Douglass: " I love the idea of a slave narrative, using the first person singular, really meaning always the third person' " (286). In another interview, she further emphasizes the wide scope of her approach to telling her own life when she claims that in approaching Caged Bird (the first of five in her autobiographical series of books), " I wasn't thinking so much about my own life or identity. I was thinking about a particular time in which I lived and the influences of that time on a number of people' " (Tate 151). Angelou's admitted "historical" focus of her autobiography, and its slave narrative influence, acknowledges the long tradition of African American autobiography from which her story is born. I believe it is also influenced by the political context, just after the Civil Rights Movement, in which she wrote Caged Bird.<sup>2</sup> Through her admissions, Angelou is clearly and consciously presenting life events in a certain way that favors literary and historical interests over a more highly personal presentation of the details and complexity of her memories. My analysis of Angelou's book shows that by shifting her narrative into this more "political" and literary voice at key points, she avoids directly expressing negative, ambivalent or difficult personal feelings and experiences around important episodes from her life.

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<sup>1</sup> In the early 1970's, literary critics, beginning with Stephen Butterfield's Black Autobiography in America (1974), explored the narrative similarities between the classic antebellum slave narrative and contemporary African American autobiographies. Sidonie Smith (1974) was the first of many to discuss Caged Bird in the tradition of slave narratives. Smith declared that slave narratives "established certain prototypical patterns, both thematic and structural, that recur again and again and again in subsequent black autobiographies" ("Black Womanhood" ix).

<sup>2</sup> During the 1960's, highly visible writers like Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver used the autobiographical form to heighten the consciousness of "liberal white America," and there was a surge in interest in black autobiographies and slave narratives, bringing out-of-print texts back into circulation and historical discussion (Eakin 196-199). Angelou's autobiography, appearing in 1970, grew out of this literary climate and is often considered the "representative" black female autobiographies of the post-civil rights era (Braxton, "Song" 181).

Angelou's labeling Caged Bird as a "literary autobiography" is also problematic in light of contemporary critical theory that does not distinguish between the "literary" and "autobiographical."<sup>3</sup> Although recent Angelou scholars, like Pierre Walker, have acknowledged the difficulty of separating the author's "literary" intentions from her "autobiographical" truth-telling (77), most Angelou critics have not addressed the contradictory nature of the author's attempting to tell both her own story and that of the Black community or her claim to writing a " 'literary biography.' " Instead, the overwhelming majority have explained the textual tensions--the dual narrative voice and the distancing techniques, the personal moments countered by political observations on collective Black experience--in terms of aesthetics.

Scholars of Caged Bird frequently insist the text is rooted in a slave narrative as well as a more "modern" generic style. Elizabeth Schultz likens the text to an oral slave narrative and a traditional blues song, coming up with the hybrid term "blues autobiography" (81). Susan Gilbert claims the book's impulses grow out of several literary traditions that she assumes are self-evident and mutually compatible, claiming the book is rooted in "Southern literature," and then proceeds to neatly categorize the various aspects of the book by claiming that its literary heritage comes from the Western Bildungsroman, whereas the autobiographical aspects are centered in Afro-American traditions (41-45). Braxton claims Angelou's autobiography represents the female "tradition within the tradition" of African-American autobiography and explains away the shifting tone of the text by asserting that Caged Bird "shows the influence of myriad folk forms, including the sermon, the ghost story, the preacher tale, the tale of exaggeration, a

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<sup>3</sup> Understanding this inevitable "fictionalizing" aspect of creating an autobiography makes Angelou's claim that she can "distance" her authorial self from her youthful self to tell the story of herself and her community with objectivity difficult to believe: "That is the difficulty in writing autobiography as literature. You have to keep that distance and not imply that this person knew what she was doing from the vantage point of 1987 . . . That difficulty is probably the horn . . . of the dilemma from which I spin, to try to keep that distance" ( Kay 195). Although she does acknowledge the difficulty of trying to tell an objective "truth," she sustains the idea that she can write truthfully and objectively by " 'set[ting] myself back in that time' " (Kay 195).

children's rhyme, and secular and religious songs" ("Song" 191). Braxton and these other critics make their literary assessments without questioning how these generic forms and templates inform or complicate one another. By putting forth various literary hybrids to explain away tensions and "loose" narrative threads, they perform the same dismissive critical moves as Bronte scholars frequently do with Jane Eyre.

The "doubled" authorial voice in Caged Bird is the most prominent source of tension in the text and has received some important scholarly attention. Although many critics have been quick to point out this presence of this dual voice--the two "personae" made up of the child "who describes poignantly the incidents in her childhood and adolescence" and the "near adult who is somewhat introspective, more objective and less personal" who is used by the author to "make general observations or to editorialize" (Hagen 66-67)--most of these critics have not delved into the significance of the dual voice on the autobiographical project. The "adult" Angelou's ironic or humorous narrative techniques to distance her reader from painful memories is noted by several critics who have then glossed over the use of humor by simply claiming that she is inspired by folklore and "Mother Wit" (Hagen 2). Lillian K. Arensberg astutely argues that Angelou's use of humor and irony "seems a conscious defense against the pain felt at evoking unpleasant memories," but then seems to excuse Angelou's avoidance by asserting that "the adult's writer's irony retaliates for the tongue-tied child's helpless pain" (114). This avoidance is actually very revealing, for Angelou uses irony as the narrator to make pointed remarks about her childhood that she does not want to make openly, and thereby avoids dealing with, or placing blame for, the depths of the "helpless pain" of her childhood. Another perceptive view of the book is offered by Marion M. Tatum and Marjorie Smelstor, who claim that Angelou's narrative shifts alternately invite the audience into her view and then abruptly make them the "Other," but rather than exploring the racial and literary implications of these moves, these scholars claim that it is solely connected to "the battle between detachment and involvement that is the

challenge of modern art" (88). My analysis will not explain away the narrative shifts, but focus on them in order to demonstrate how Angelou seems to invite the reader into an understanding of the challenges of growing up an "other," and then prevents the reader from directly seeing the more ambiguous and ambivalent aspects of that process.<sup>4</sup>

I am interested in how the dual voice conveys the varied emotional and psychological processes of the child persona as well as the opinions and feelings of the adult persona. Braxton is representative of the many critics who have chosen to overlook the contradictions of this double-voiced tone of the book by claiming that the authorial self and the remembered child's self can merge seamlessly: "the mature woman looks back on her bittersweet childhood, and her authorial voice retains the power of the child's vision. The child's point of view governs Angelou's principle of selection. When the mature narrator steps in, her tone is purely personal" ("Song" 184). In addition to the difficulty with believing that a "child's point of view" or "vision" can actively dictate an adult author's text, I would argue that the mature narrator's intentions are not "purely personal" in the sense of conveying an intensely private subjectivity, but merely personal in that they promote her larger literary agenda. The adult narrator's observations use the memory of her "child's" experience and places them in a larger context of black experience which echoes the plot trajectory of the classic nineteenth-century slave narrative.

Slave narratives "traced the flight of the slave northward from slavery into full humanity" (Smith, "Song" 367) and Angelou's text traces her movement from the South (Stamps) to the North (San Francisco) and uses incidents to discuss the "evils" of

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<sup>4</sup>Cudjoe is the only Angelou scholar to notice how her dual narrative voice compromises the portrayal of her childhood memories : "the shortcomings of the text revolve around the manner in which the story is told from the point of view of an adult who imposes the imagination, logic and language of adult upon the work and thus prevents the reader from participating in the unfolding of childhood consciousness as it grows into maturity" ("Updated" 291). However, he does not explore the ramifications of these shortcomings, which is what my chapter is designed to do.



segregation, oppression, racism as she recounts her journey toward personal "liberation." My work looks at Angelou's conventional slave narrative plot with an appreciation of liberation as a multi-dimensional process that plays itself out internally as well as externally. I share the interests of late twentieth-century critics who examine slave narratives and analyze the enslaved individual's psychological battles with cultural colonization, personal autonomy and self-image. Cudjoe asserts that in modern black autobiographies, "Afro-American liberation must contain both an internal and external dimension" ("Updated" 289), and certainly Angelou's story of liberation tells of her growing maturity and confidence that parallels her achievements in confronting oppression and racial injustice. I am interested in uncovering the more unpredictable process of personal liberation in which Marguerite is engaged. It is a multi-dimensional, nonlinear and inward-directed journey marked by ambivalence and doubt as much as autonomy and self-expression.

My reading of Caged Bird elaborates on the work of Walker, the only Angelou scholar to notice the intended "political impact" of Angelou's arrangement of scenes from her life to demonstrate a movement from "helpless rage and indignation to forms of subtle resistance, and finally to outright and active protest" (80). While I agree with Walker's evaluation of Angelou's conscious arrangement of scenes, I will tease out the recurring psychological patterns of the "othered" black girl that is a necessary part to understanding her more public move from helplessness to active protest. I will integrate this with Vermillion's assertion that Marguerite's struggles in Caged Bird are linked to her acceptance of her "body" and "her words" (70). Marguerite's ambivalence is reflected in her inability to trust the impulses of her physical body and the truth of her voice. Her ability to take control of her physical body and her voice is linked to her power to openly seek out and achieve recognition in the larger world--mastery of one invites the other one to emerge.

Early on in the book, the young Marguerite displays her tendency to escape into fantasy when the world cannot provide her with the security and meaning she craves. Literature is a useful vehicle for her flights into fantasy and Victorian fiction and Jane Eyre make their first appearance in Caged Bird in chapter fifteen. Angelou recalls her important childhood relationship with Bertha Flowers, "the aristocrat of Black Stamps" whom Angelou claims "threw me my first life line" (77) after her rape and emotional withdrawal. Flowers is portrayed, in many Caged Bird analyses, as the angelic black mother figure who releases Marguerite from her emotional and verbal withdrawal after her rape through the power and magic of the written and spoken word: "Mrs. Flowers ministers to Maya's growing hunger and quest for individuality by giving her books of poetry, talking to her philosophically about books, and encouraging her to write poems" (McPherson 36). While this is true, Marguerite's relationship to Flowers is complicated by issues of race. Much of Marguerite's fascination with this woman is grounded in the familiar appeal of the white "other." Flowers's difference is described physically: she has the "grace of control" to regulate her body temperature almost supernaturally, her "printed voile dresses and flowered hats" are her middle-class feminine uniform, and she is, according to Marguerite, "our side's answer to the richest white woman in town." (78). Her exoticness is visible and coded as privileged and "white." Vermillion explains that Flowers is presented as the "direct opposite of young Maya" as she "magnificently rules over her words and her body" (68). They are opposites because Marguerite's rape resulted from her inability to gain control over her words or her body and the rape trial exacerbated this condition. This opposition to Flowers is not threatening to Marguerite, however, because while Flowers possesses the similar psychological and physical allure Marguerite feels for her absent mother Vivian, Flowers is emotionally and physically available to Marguerite.

Angelou describes Flowers as a "gentlewoman," her younger self's attraction to Flowers becomes the lure of the "other"--the white woman who feeds her escapist fantasy of the perfection of femininity:

She appealed to me personally because she was like people I had never met personally. Like women in English novels who walked the moors (whatever they were) with their loyal dogs racing at a respectful distance. Like the women who sat in front of roaring fireplaces, drinking tea incessantly from silver trays full of scones and crumpets. Women who walked over the 'heath' and read morocco-bound books and had two last names divided by a hyphen. It would be safe to say that she made me proud to be Negro, just be being herself (79).

Flowers embodies the appeal of "difference" on the level of race, class and gender identification. She represents a white aristocratic lifestyle that Marguerite comes to admire through "English novels." The last sentence is ironic because Flowers makes her "proud to be Negro" not by her blackness, but by ability to disguise her "Negro-ness" in the cloak of "aristocracy" and English white womanhood. In writing about this passage, Vermillion observes: "Although Maya begins to respect and admire the black female body, white heroines still provide her standard for beauty" (68). The difficulty with this assessment is that it doesn't take into account the fact that Marguerite only admires Flowers' "black female body" for the characteristics she associates with "white heroines," her graceful movements and flowered dresses. Her body only appeals to Marguerite because it is literally and figuratively clothed in white ideals of beauty.

Moreover, the ambivalence within Angelou's mental creation of Flowers as a fantasied role model of the upper class is revealed in her confession that although Flowers "acted just as refined as whitefolks," if she ever saw Flowers in the company of "powwhitefolks" and spoken to "commonly as Bertha," then "my image of her would have been shattered like the unmendable Humpty-Dumpty" (79). The adult narrator explains this by claiming that "powwhitefolks" tend to use their "whiteness as an evenizer," and young Marguerite would be unable to reconcile the privilege of race that the

"powwhitefolks" would have over the claim to higher class with the "white" persona she has ascribed to Flowers. In this way, Bertha Flowers's link to refinement and "white Englishness," conceived in Marguerite's imagination, makes her a twin to Bronte's Bertha Rochester in more than name. Each Bertha's "otherness" is constructed relative to her position to the whites around her. Each of these "dark" women's gendered identity and social status within the text is undermined by the positioning of Whites, marking them as socially subordinate and unequivocally "other."

The ambivalence of the white "other" also saturates Angelou's description of how Flowers brings her out of her self-imposed exile by introducing her to the importance of the language, literacy and the human voice through English and European novels. Flowers does tell Marguerite that in the "homely sayings" of "mother wit" was "couched the collective wisdom of generations," yet this bit of wisdom is quickly overshadowed by Flowers' recitation of a passage from A Tale of Two Cities, which Marguerite describes as "poetry" and "singing" with "sounds cascading gently" (84). Access to the beauty and the importance of language here is drawn not from the "mother wit" of the black community, but from the prose of white English men, allowing Marguerite to retreat farther into the fantasy of a world that is far removed from the emotional repressiveness of Stamps.

Victorian English literature is the basis of her "enchantment" through words that the adult Angelou says she cannot explain but can only describe in its "aura":

To be allowed, no invited, into the private lives of strangers, and to share their joys and fears, was a chance to exchange the Southern bitter wormwood for a cup of mead with Beowulf or a hot cup of tea and milk with Oliver Twist. When I said aloud, 'It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done . . .' tears of love filled my eyes at my selflessness (84).

Reading about the "joys and fears" of those "others" with whom she can identify allows Marguerite to transport her own isolation and disappointments--the "Southern bitter

wormwood"-- into a romantic tale of "selflessness" and suffering that protects her from feeling and dealing with her real life disappointments. By superimposing their words and their "private lives" for her experience, she avoids listening to the real dialogue and experience of her own life. Many of those who have written on Caged Bird have noted that the positive influence of Flowers and literature is that Marguerite "regains her speech" (Hagen 63); however her access to words is problematic because it is not her own words that she takes possession of. Awakening to a renewed sense of self-expression through the words of Victorian white male writers makes Marguerite's victory over muteness a questionable achievement because it substitutes "others' words" in place of her own experiences and ideas.

Noticeably, it is the adult Angelou who places her youthful identification in the form of an inexplicable "aura," thereby avoiding the obvious contradiction of her younger self finding approval and validation through the words of white men and women. In reading the autobiography as consistent with the patterns of the slave narrative genre, Marguerite here is mired in the first of four chronological stages a slave passes through in the text. The first stage includes the initial awareness of "what it means to be a slave"-- or for Marguerite, what it means to be a poor black girl growing up in the South--and includes "purgation" in which the slave tries to "purge himself of those elements that would facilitate enslavement" (Foster 85). While Caged Bird's prologue illustrates Marguerite's painful initiation into awareness of her condition of "enslavement," her love of Victorian literature exemplifies her desires for escape from feelings of alienation and exclusion. In transforming the difficulties of her life experiences into the common, melodramatic struggles of white literary figures, Marguerite is using literature to "purge" from her life the stigma of racial rejection and the pain of isolation. This act of "purgation," in the manner of the slave genre, is couched in Marguerite's newfound sense of identity through words and literature. It is designed to appear to empower her in the similar manner of nineteenth-century slaves, whose access to literacy becomes a

significant milestone on their way to liberation from slavery. Crispin Sartwell explains that slave narratives served as evidence of the truth and intelligence of the slave before the master, that is, by the insertion of the slave by the slave into the realm of mind, knowledge and language" (30). Although Angelou portrays her younger self's access to "truth and intelligence" as empowering, the difficulty with this achievement is that the realm of "mind, knowledge and language" into which she is inserted is that of the Victorian literature, representative texts which celebrate the ideology and values of a distant white culture.

Later, in chapter twenty, Marguerite associates Bertha Flowers with Louise Kendricks, and perceives Louise as a Jane Eyre figure. Louise is a girl of Marguerite's age who lives with her mother "in a neat little bungalow behind the school. Her cousins, who were in our age group, were wealthier and fairer, but I had secretly believed Louise to be the prettiest female in Stamps, next to Mrs. Flowers" (118). Part of Louise's appeal is that she is an "outsider" who is unlike her family, and this invites Marguerite to identify with her as well as romanticize Louise's situation as that of Jane Eyre's. Marguerite's initial attraction to Louise, despite her "wealthier and fairer" cousins, recalls Jane's "worthiness" despite the "wealthier and fairer" Reed cousins. The comparison to Jane Eyre is made obvious in the text:

Louise reminded me of Jane Eyre. Her mother lived in reduced circumstances, but she was genteel, and though she worked as a maid I decided she should be called a governess and did so to Bailey and myself (Who could teach a romantic dreamy ten-year-old to call a spade a spade?) (118).

The young Marguerite is re-imagining their poverty as "reduced circumstances" and labeling Louise's mother as "genteel" and a "governess" as a way to deny and resist their social marginalization, thereby reconfiguring the meaning of her own experiences of alienation. If Louise and her mother are framed in Marguerite's mind as merely suffering from the same "temporary" displacement as Jane Eyre (with the implication that injustice

will always be overcome by the happy ending), then she can view her own personal and social deprivation as lightly as she views the travails of the lonely heroine who finds salvation in the end of her story. This projection of fantasy on Marguerite's part recalls Jane's growing determination to assert her "natural" class position in the face of her ambiguous social status. The difference, of course, is that Marguerite will not be able to "replace" her marginalization onto another woman; she must learn to accept her social predicament in order to challenge it.

Both adult and child narrators are clearly present in this passage on Louise Kendricks. The adult Angelou, as narrator, indirectly acknowledges the unreality in which as a child she retreated into a novel. Marguerite likens their situation to that of Jane Eyre in order to avoid the unpleasant truth that the problems Louise and her mother faced were due merely to their racial position. Angelou signals her knowledge of this through her use of the parenthetical question, "Who could teach a romantic dreamy ten-year-old to call spade a spade?" She describes herself in the third person as a way of distancing her older self from the illusions of her youth. By naming her denial as "dreaminess," she can rationalize her younger self's tendency to retreat into fantasy. The question also coyly brings race into the discussion through the word "spade," letting Angelou obliquely suggest that she could not accept blackness--her own or Louise's. Interpreting alienation and rejection through the "romantic" lens of Jane Eyre's unfair predicament is much more palatable for the young Marguerite.

Patsy Stoneman uses this same passage about Louise Kendricks to support her assertion that Jane Eyre is a viable role model for women of color; she states that Jane's "individualist feminism is not . . . without resonance for black women" (189). Not only is this critic's claim of Jane's "individualist feminism" on shaky ground, as my first chapter illustrated, but Stoneman's statement offers merely a surface reading of the brief passage which ignores the inevitable contradictions of a white fictional woman "resonating" in the lives of black women. Arensberg notes Marguerite's "dependence" on books, and

comments on the comparison of Louise to Jane, and Bertha Flowers to the Victorian women "who walked on the moors," by writing: "As artifacts creating complete and meaningful universes, novels and their heroes become means by which Maya apprehends and judges her own bewildering world" (113). The difficulty with this assessment is that the "meaningful universe" of novels never aids Marguerite in making sense of her own life and "bewildering world," but only creates false judgments and expectations that she can never live out.

Danahay is the only writer on Caged Bird to offer a better understanding of how Victorian literature and Jane Eyre function in the text. Danahay explains that for the young Angelou, English novels "provide . . . [a] model of value, yet are also a distraction from seeing people as they really are"--namely, Mrs. Flowers and Louise. I would add that they also prevent her from seeing herself as she is and instead allow her to reframe her personal condition as melodramatic and mythical, thereby overlooking her real deprivations, the pain they cause, and the opportunity to take action for herself. Although he doesn't describe the danger of Marguerite's escape into English fiction in this specific way, Danahay does note that the "cultural hegemony embodied in novels about upper-class English life" only serve to "alienate" her "further from her social context, from which she felt distant in the first place" (70). I believe this distance, albeit dangerous, is comforting to the child Marguerite, not only because it provides a mental escape from Stamps, but because the "cultural hegemony" in the novel reflects the values of a white world that is attractive and "other"-worldly to her.

Danahay goes on to argue that Angelou's story is a "contemporary reenactment" of Bronte's novel because Angelou (and, by association, Jane) "rejects the names imposed on her and asserts her own identity and independence" (71). This is problematic because, like Stoneman, Danahay is giving a cursory interpretation of both plots. In fact, Marguerite retreats into fiction not because she finds a model of strength in it, but because she has difficulty handling her feelings of social alienation, and feels ugly and



unwanted. Sympathizing with the plight of plain, orphaned, downtrodden Jane Eyre soothes her own misery in the same way that reading Dickens gave her "a chance to exchange the Southern bitter wormwood for . . . a hot cup of tea and milk with Oliver Twist" (84). Although Marguerite gladly "loses" the sense of herself, and Mrs. Flowers and Louise, by identifying with white English heroines, the adult Angelou is aware of the contradictions inherent in this childhood tendency to seek meanings in a distant fictional world that denies her own social reality. She subtly signals her awareness of this in her earlier discussion of the inexplicable "aura" that drew her into English fiction, in the parenthesis in the passage on Louise, and in the fragility of Mrs. Flowers's "whiteness" which can only be sustained as long as she remains in the black community.

The ambivalence which characterizes Angelou's relationship--and Marguerite's admiration for--English fictional heroines is articulated more directly at the start of the next chapter. As adult narrator, Angelou tells of recently dismissing the suggestion of a white woman who infers that since Momma owned "the only Negro general merchandise store since the turn of the century," Angelou must have been a " 'debutante' " (87). She is quick to point out the misconception here by commenting on the shared situation of those Black girls who attempted to live the life they read about in books about white women:

But Negro girls in small Southern towns, whether poverty-stricken or just munching along on a few of life's necessities, were given as extensive and irrelevant preparations for adulthood as rich white girls shown in magazines. While white girls learned to waltz and sit gracefully with a tea cup balanced on their knees, we were lagging behind, learning the mid-Victorian values with very little money to indulge them (Come and see Edna Lomax spending the money she made picking cotton on five balls of ecru tatting thread. Her fingers are bound to snag the work and she'll have to repeat the stitches time and time again. But she knows that when she buys the thread) (87).

By beginning this passage in the third person and using "we," Angelou can critique the "irrelevant preparations" and the "mid-Victorian values" that were part of her young fantasies without speaking directly to the problems of her own tendencies to avoid the

reality of life in Stamps by imposing a Jane Eyre fantasy over it. Angelou uses the preconception of the white woman and the example of Edna Lomax to point out the difficulties that race imposes upon one's desire for class ascension without examining her own ambivalence about how class and race hierarchies restricted her own desires despite Momma's unique position in the Black community, owning both land and a store. This passage also allows Angelou to problematize her own identification with Jane Eyre indirectly without invalidating her earlier reporting that English literature was important to her. It demonstrates that she clearly understands the "destructive effects of white upper-class cultural hegemony" (Danahay 71) on poor black women whose lives can never measure up to the values and ideals presented in the novels, but is uncomfortable with questioning the deeper implications of her childhood alliances and tendencies.

Throughout other sections of Caged Bird, Angelou utilizes this same double-voiced writing style to cover over and simultaneously uncover her ambivalent attitudes. A great deal of ambivalence is present in all of Marguerite's relationships: her attitude toward her own self-image, her complicated family relationships, and her stance toward both the black community and the larger white world. Understanding Jane Eyre's presence in her childhood gives one the ability to understand the denial and emotional confusion of the young black child who seeks validation but believes what is valuable is that which is "other." Danahay astutely notes: "Angelou's text dramatizes her ambivalent attitude to her socialization" (71). Although he is discussing this ambivalent attitude only in relationship to her socialization regarding English literature, my reading of other significant incidents in Caged Bird reveals the ways in which Angelou has fashioned a text that quietly dramatizes how this same attitude shaped all of her childhood relationships.

Marguerite's lack of self-worth and troubled relationship toward her own identity, as well as tendency to escape through the fantasy of the "other," are well established in the prologue of Caged Bird. Marguerite's painful feelings of parental rejection and her

status as a poor and displaced outsider in Stamps are made visible by her "physical" flaws that she understands as tied to her "blackness." In the prologue at the church Easter pageant, Marguerite stands before the congregation and retreats into fantasy in order to escape the reality of her Easter dress, a "plain ugly cut-down from a white woman's once-was-purple throwaway" and the "skinny legs" that look like "dirty like mud." She reflects:

Wouldn't they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly dream, and my real hair, which was long and blond, would take the place of the kinky mass that Momma wouldn't let me straighten? My light-blue eyes were going to hypnotize them, after all the things they said about my daddy must of been a Chinamen ( I thought they meant made out of china, like a cup) because my eyes were so small and squinty. Then they would understand why I had never picked up a Southern accent, or spoke the common slang, and why I had to be forced to eat pigs' tails and snouts. Because I was really white and because a cruel fairy stepmother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty, had turned me into a too-big Negro girl, with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between her teeth that would hold a number-two pencil (2).

For Marguerite, the fantasy is not only a denial of her "unfeminine" black body, but one in which she takes back power from those in the community of Stamps who have controlled and defined her body and self as "other": Momma, who will not let her straighten her hair, the unnamed "them," her peers who fit into their surroundings, who made fun of her "small and squinty" eyes and did not understand that she wouldn't eat a Southern delicacy like pigs feet or speak like them because she did not grow up in Stamps. Similar to her escape into Jane Eyre and Victorian fiction, she retreats into the fantasy of whiteness because she feels rejected and misunderstood by those around her and the only suitable way to deal with this crisis of self-image is to embrace the "other" image--the idea of a secret "white" self that should "naturally" be hers. This fantasy is the consciousness of self built on the recognition and denial of difference that suggests the colonial encounter. In Marguerite's case, she both recognizes and denies her "otherness" to create a white identity that makes sense of, and repudiates, the social displacement she

blames on her physical differences. Marguerite's splitting of the self is an integral part of the dynamic between the colonizer and the colonized, in which the identification of self is bound up in a dual acknowledgment of what one "is" and "is not."

Angelou concludes the prologue by shifting abruptly from relating the Easter memory in first person to the voice of the narrator commenting: "If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult" (3). This is the adult voice that inserts itself into childhood recollections as a didactic, distancing tool. Tangum and Smelstor have noticed that when "First person becomes third, pronouns are almost entirely omitted" (86). In this case, the author's didacticism teaches the reader about the "Southern black girl" through her own example. This political stance at the end prevents a personal conclusion from emerging in which Angelou might have explained more clearly about the bind of the internal "cage" in which she was trapped as a young girl. Instead, she relies on the metaphor of the rust, the "unnecessary insult" of realizing one's "otherness," that appears on the razor, standing as the dominant ideology that threatens her right to exist.

Danahay describes Caged Bird as a book about violence, meaning "the symbolic violence of white cultural hegemony that metaphorically threatens Angelou's intellectual as well as physical existence" (70). I would add that this "rust" on the razor of "symbolic violence" can be likened to the colonial encounter, in which the colonized becomes aware of the stigma of her "otherness" after internalizing the white ideal. Yet denying this awareness and embracing the ideal cannot sustain Marguerite because her racially othered self is too socially "visible" and "different"--she cannot ignore it because it shapes every aspect of her life and those around her. Walker observes that part of Marguerite's problem is that she "separates her sense of self from her sense of race, and this is part of her identity crisis" (84). She only begins to perceive herself clearly and conquer her identity crisis when she stops denying the reality of her racial position and her

participation in the oppression that is based upon that position. This process is not without its ambivalent aspects, as my analysis shows, because a mature acceptance of her racial self is accompanied by a painful awareness of a marginalized social position that she can neither ignore nor accept.

The coda of this prologue recalls the pattern of the slave narrative. The "rust" on the "razor" represents the awareness of one's displacement, and this signals the initial awakening to one's condition of enslavement in the traditional genre. In the slave narrative, there can be no pursuit for freedom without the initial "realization that one is different and deprived" (Dixon 306). Angelou places this realization for Marguerite in the prologue--her difference is driven home to her at the moment in which she is forced to acknowledge her deprivation, her physical lack. Angelou describes this personal moment of awakening as the metaphor of the "razor that threatens the throat," using a physical reference--the threat to the "throat"-- to capture the simultaneous mental and physical estrangement she experiences as an outsider who can't live up to white cultural norms. Consistent with the slave narrative, the rest of the book can be seen as her pursuit of liberation from the insidious nature of white cultural hegemony, white power and prejudice.

Subsequent early memories in Caged Bird demonstrate that Marguerite learns her class position through racial encounters with the white "other," or what Braxton terms the "frequent intrusions of " 'white reality' " ("Maya Angelou" 2). Braxton, like many of those who have written on Caged Bird, asserts that Marguerite follows her grandmother's (known as "Momma") example in dealing with these intrusions, but in fact, Marguerite has great difficulty in accepting Momma's coping strategies. Momma invests a great deal of energy in teaching her grandchildren about silence and denial when it comes to dealing with Whites. Angelou reports that Momma taught them to "use the paths in life that she and her generation and all the Negroes gone before had found, and found to be safe," (39), which are the paths of silent acceptance and sometimes sneaky subversion. Angelou

believes Momma would justify this stance by explaining that she is a "realist" (39), suggesting that her reality is contained within the boundaries between Blacks and Whites that clearly demarcate who she is and what she can do. This means Marguerite is faced with her own form of social conditioning through race restrictions and expectations. These "recognized patterns of etiquette between the races asserted white superiority and black inferiority. This etiquette served as a form of social control that pervaded the daily experiences of blacks, who negotiated narrow path of safety" (Braxton, "Song" 182). These rules of etiquette and their "safe paths" are enforced in Marguerite's life by Momma, but also by both Blacks and Whites in her life. Early in her life, Marguerite attempts to obey these "social controls" but as she matures, she questions her socialization and the belief that she is essentially inferior due to her skin color. Yet the questioning Angelou performs, both as a young adult in the text and as an author, is marked by a great deal of ambiguity. She is ambivalent not only about the experience of her racial conditioning but about her impulse to give voice to those feelings. One significant way in which this ambivalence is expressed is through Angelou's portrayal of Momma's influence in her childhood.

Momma and the black community teach Maya to make sense of money and class disparity in terms of essential differences between blacks and whites. Angelou recalls the extent to which segregation during her childhood was "complete," and that all black children know of whites was that they were "different, to be dreaded, and in that dread was included the hostility of the powerless against the powerful, the poor against the rich, the worker against the worked for and the ragged against the well dressed" (20). This reference to "difference" and its representation of Whites as "rich" and "powerful" and the "well dressed" and "worked for" and Blacks defined as "poor" and "powerless" "ragged" and the "worker," points to the creation of class definitions as intertwined with racial definitions. It also suggests the dualistic understanding of "self" and "other" in which blacks define themselves as "have nots" purely in contrast to the whites who become the

"haves." In slave narratives, according to Sartwell, "the blackness of black people was not a matter of skin color but of social location" (43). This is clearly true in Angelou's description of her understanding of "blackness" as the opposite of social characteristics that are coded "white." This construction is marked by the mixed feelings that recall the colonial experience of the "other" as that which provokes desire and denial; it is expressed here in the mixture of "dread" and "hostility" that Angelou reports comes with these ideas of white and black differences.

Angelou further alludes to the ambivalence wrapped up in her understanding of race and class, without specifically naming it as such, when she describes the "fear-admiration-contempt" that develops for all "white 'things' " such as "cars" and "glistening houses," but "above all, their wealth that allowed them to waste was the most enviable" (40). The "fear-admiration-contempt" Marguerite felt can be explained as her ambivalent feelings toward the "other" and their possession of "white things" that mark them as different, and yet this difference is privileged. Sartwell contends Angelou's "fear-admiration-contempt" as a "desperately conflicted and complicated want, and it runs both ways" (112). He suggests that the contradictory pulls of "proximity" and "distance" which Whites use to contain the threat of "Blackness," also works in the same way for the Blacks: "Each culture approaches the other in a posture of simultaneous loathing and need" (112). Marguerite is conflicted by her envy and attraction of that which she cannot have--"white things"--and what she cannot be--"white." She is socialized to define herself by what she is denied. Again, I connect this to the "recognition" and "rejection" that exemplifies the ambivalent colonial encounter.

These many difficult issues surrounding race, class and status come to a crisis for Marguerite in the scene Angelou recalls with the "powhitetrash" girls, whose very label suggests the ways in which color and class are embedded in social standing. In the young Marguerite's mind, Momma deserves respect from the "powhitetrash" adolescents who come into the store because they lived on "Momma's farm land behind the school" (22),

but instead is forced to deal with the "impudent" children who familiarly refer to Momma by her first name, "Annie" (23). When children refer to Momma as her first name, they are further complicating the ambivalent social Marguerite perceives she is in--caught between the race, class and age boundaries of the black and white communities.

When the small troupe of "powhitetrash" girls arrives in front of the store to mock Momma, Marguerite is inside the store, watching through the screen door as Momma sits like a "stone" humming a spiritual tune (23). Upon spying the powhitetrash girls' arrival, she wants to "beg" Momma to retreat into the store, but Momma sends her inside. The girls "ape" Momma's body and stance (24), followed by one performing "puppet dance" and another doing a "hand stand" displaying that she "had on no drawers" (25). Being forced into the store, silent and passive while Momma sits humming as the girls mock her and her body forces Marguerite to stifle the raging impulses inside her that she cannot express while she watches the scene: she considers the "rifle behind the door," but knows she has no access to it (24), she sheds silent tears (25) and holds back her impulse to "throw a handful of lye on them, to scream that they were dirty, scummy peckerwoods, but I was imprisoned behind the scene as the actors outside were confined to their roles" (25). This sentence is revealing because it demonstrates the extent to which Marguerite and her body are "imprisoned" by the limited range of roles she is being taught as a powerless black girl. By sitting impassive, humming a spiritual, while "impudent powhitetrash" girls mock her, Momma is "acting" her "role" as the black individual who must refrain from any negative reaction to whites "acting" their superior to her--even as they are appropriating her gestures and her "body."

The way these roles are played out "on" the body is significant, for Marguerite is confused by Momma's refusal to challenge those whose social standing is below her own, suggested by the fact that they may be "white" but they are "trash" because they are poorer than Momma, and this is evidenced in the dirt that covers their "cotton dresses [and] continued on their legs, feet, arms and faces to make them all one piece" (25).



Despite their dirt and "whitetrash" label, the girls, by mocking Momma's physical characteristics, assert the freedom of "movement" they have as whites while relying on the restricted movements that Momma may make against them. As Momma plays her role by stoically "ignoring" their abuse, Marguerite is being taught to stifle her own physical urges to strike out against the girls and to suppress her words that want to shout out her real feelings.

Angelou ends the scene with Momma soothing Marguerite and writes:

"Something had happened out there, which I couldn't completely understand, but I could see she was happy" (26) and then recalls "I know Momma had won" the "contest" (27). Most critics have focused on these sentences and interpreted this scene along the same lines as Walker, who claims that Marguerite and Momma can claim victory over the taunting girls because Momma resisted the girls' "attempts to goad her into descending to their level of impudence" and "another part of the victory lies in maintaining personal dignity through the symbolic importance of cleanliness and politeness" (82). However, by claiming that Momma resists sinking to the girls' level, they ignore how Momma has earlier endorsed her "role" of the black woman who takes the "safe path" and is willing to suffer insults at the hands of Whites.

There is evidence of Angelou's ambivalence about Momma's refusal to challenge the "powhitetrash" girls when Marguerite wonders at the end of the scene: "What did she prove? And then if they were dirty, mean and impudent, why did Momma have to call them Miz?" (26). Often ignored by critics, these kinds of questions are Angelou's doubts and ambivalence about the lessons that Momma is teaching her about dealing with Whites. Braxton believes that Marguerite learns to deal with these difficult encounters by "following her grandmother's example," ("Maya Angelou" 2), and critics like McPherson assert that Marguerite is internalizing the "silent lessons" of Momma's enduring injustice by "centering one's being in God" (27). My reading of the autobiography shows there is a rejection of Momma's reliance on the seemingly "safe

path" of silent suffering and religious faith. Throughout the text, Momma demonstrates to her grandchildren that they ought to endure hardship and bear injustice by trusting in God. At the end of the powhitetrash scene, Momma walks away and hums, "'Glory, glory hallelujah, when I lay my burden down" (26). Finding this response to injustice inadequate, the young Marguerite is confused and the adult Angelou allows her reflections and questions --"What did she prove?" --to obliquely express her dissatisfaction with Momma's handling of the incident.

Angelou also expresses dissatisfaction about Momma's style of mentoring and mothering, but does it indirectly, for Momma did provide her important emotional shelter as a forlorn child. Angelou's ambivalence can be seen in this description of Momma: "Her world was bordered on all sides with work, duty, religion and 'her place.' I don't think she ever knew that deep-brooding love hung over everything she touched" (47). Angelou is describing the tightly regulated life that controlled Momma's movements and choices, but the second sentence is actually softening the first one, rationalizing Momma's actions while suggesting that as a child it is she--not Momma--who did not know the "deep-brooding love" that accompanied Momma's attitude toward her. Mary Jane Lupton is one of the few who have written on Caged Bird and noticed the ambivalence Momma represents: "both strength and weakness, both generosity and punishment, both affection and the denial of affection" (133). Momma gives Marguerite gifts of love and attention, but socializes her to accept her "inferior" position as a black Southern girl. Her feelings toward Momma's mixed "gifts" to her are why Angelou is reluctant to criticize her own upbringing. However, Angelou's questioning of Momma's "safe" and silent approach to racism serves to underline Marguerite's growing determination to confront racism directly. Momma develops "a realistic strategy of submission that Maya finds unacceptable" (Lupton 132). Subsequent episodes with Whites in the book become revelations in which Marguerite gradually adopts a more acceptable "strategy" of dealing

with racism which is more progressive than Momma's so-called realistic techniques, because it allows Marguerite to identify and act upon her real feelings and needs.

This same ambivalence which shapes Angelou's reportage of her memories of Momma shapes her presentation of her mother, Vivian and Marguerite's rape in St. Louis. The mixed feelings--the reverence, rejection, and fear-- in her portrayal of Vivian's absence and presence in her life resembles her attitude toward herself and her racial identity. Marguerite's actions and her ambivalence toward both of her parents is centered in the same dynamic from which the concept of "whitefolks" claims its power over the young Angelou: they represent the "other" as an object of both fear and fantasy.

The estrangement and awe which she feels upon her initial reunion with her mother echoes her ambivalent stance toward "whitefolks." She describes her mother with the language of physical difference, complete with inferences to her "whiteness":

We were both fearful at mother's coming and impatient at her delay. It is remarkable how much truth there is in the two expressions: 'struck dumb' and 'love at first sight.' My mother's beauty literally assailed me. her red lips (Momma said it was a sin to wear lipstick) split to show even white teeth and her fresh butter color looked see-through clean.. . I was struck dumb. I knew immediately why she had sent me away. She was too beautiful to have children (49).

The "fearful" and "impatient" feelings, followed by her feeling of being "struck dumb" and "assailed," as well as immediate "love" point to her complex feelings toward Vivian and her differences. It is the admiration of the dark-skinned girl who equates whiteness with beauty--her mother's "even white teeth" and the "see-through" skin--yet she is "struck dumb." Marguerite is silenced by feeling this woman is "too beautiful" to have children, especially a dark, "ugly" child like herself, which helps explain to Marguerite the reasons Vivian sent them away to live with Momma. Marguerite has internalized an understanding of race and femininity which equates femininity with "whiteness" and "whiteness" with social status, and therefore experiences an intense longing and a diminished sense of self-worth in her mother's presence. She is frozen and stands mute;

this loss of movement and speech is symptomatic of her difficulty in identifying with a woman who appears to be almost "white." Similar to Marguerite's loss of control of body and voice in the church at Easter, her longing for Vivian is compounded with her yearning for that she is not, all that is "white." Vivian has at last become physically present in her life, but that presence threatens her by its very difference and distance from her own sense of self.

Angelou's report of her rape at the hands of Mr. Freeman speaks most directly to Marguerite's inability to express herself when under the threat of her mother's presence/absence. Although Angelou never speaks of this childhood event in this way, her vulnerability is clearly connected to her inability to claim ownership of her body and to speak the truth of her needs and feelings. Marguerite initially feels sorry for Mr. Freeman because she identifies with him (60), sitting lonely at home waiting for Vivian to come home and give him attention. Estelle C. Jelinek reads Freeman as "sitting inanimate until the mother appears. He seems to be useful only for sexual purposes, and he uses Angelou as an extension of her mother" (85). Freeman may perceive Marguerite as an extension of Vivian, but more importantly, Marguerite uses Freeman as an extension of Vivian--to be the loving parent she does not have. Alone together, he molests Marguerite and then he holds her "softly" and she feels the safety and comfort she longs for from her parents: "This was probably my real father and we had found each other at last" (61). She makes sense of these physical experiences with a strange man by rationalizing that he must be her "real" parent, which also justifies in her mind why she has not had this experience with her father. Finding solace in Freeman's arms begins a set of traumatic experiences, including rape, in which Marguerite seeks approval and love by suppressing her own needs.

The feeling of comfort abruptly ends after he accuses her of "peeing in the bed" and threatens to kill Bailey if she reveals what happened. Despite her confusion over the incident, she feels lonely for the "encasement of his big arms" (62) but is unable to

approach him. This echoes the ambivalence she feels toward her mother: the intense need for love, but her inability to express this need for fear of rejection. Later, when he corners her, preparing to rape her, he says " 'You like it before, didn't you?' " and Angelou recalls: "I didn't want to admit that I had in fact liked his holding me or that I had liked his smell or the hard heart-beating, so I said nothing" (65). Silence is the only answer she can give, as she is unable to reconcile his threat and the adult sexuality she does not understand with the safety and physical feelings of comfort he gave her. Her inability to respond to him verbally is symptomatic of her muteness when Marguerite is caught between others' expectations and her sense of self.

Her silence precedes the rape; her inability to access words to explain her desires is accompanied by her inability to protect her body. Vermillion contends the rape in the text "primarily represents the black girl's difficulties in controlling, understanding, and respecting both her body and her words" and connects this to the "violence" of "white definitions of beauty" that paralyzed Marguerite in the church on Easter Sunday and in her reunion with Vivian (251). While Vermillion clearly understands the manner in which Marguerite's inculcation into white ideals leads to a betrayal of her vocal and bodily impulses, Vermillion does not notice how this betrayal is linked to the emotional split that Marguerite experiences at key moments in the book. In the case of the rape, Marguerite loses control over both her body and her ability to speak because of her deeply ambivalent feelings toward Freeman: torn between what she knows is wrong and her desire for the fantasy of his love and affection, just as she is caught between her feelings of emotional violation by her mother and her need for her mother's approval. The rape at Mr. Freeman's hands can be seen as the fault of both Freeman and Vivian, for Vivian has been unable to provide emotional security for her troubled daughter. Lupton makes Vivian culpable by suggesting that Vivian uses her daughter "knowing that in her own absence Maya will keep her lover amused" (136). While I do not believe this to be Vivian's intention, she demonstrates obvious disregard for her children's well-being by

being in close proximity to them, but emotionally unavailable to them. She brings Marguerite to the bed she shares with Freeman when her daughter suffers from "horrifying nightmares," rather than address the trauma and fears that cause the nightmares (60). Left alone with Freeman, Marguerite is vulnerable--both emotionally and physically--and she seeks solace in his attention.

The rape trial is further evidence of Marguerite's complicated relationship with Vivian, as well as her inability to claim ownership over her words and body. Her lie--by answering "no" to the question of whether Freeman touched her before the alleged rape--is representative of the larger lie that she is living. She longs to admit her real feelings and experiences and is unable to express them, whether they concern her confused attraction to Freeman or her desire for her mother's attention. This inability to speak her truth is centered in her fear that speaking her truth means she will forever remain an "other," an outsider--shunned by her relatives, and "stoned" like a harlot, and, most of all, she fears of disappointing Mother, who thinks she is a "good girl," and disappointing Bailey from whom she had never kept a secret (71). McPherson reads Marguerite's dilemma rather simplistically by stating that she lies about Freeman because "she is convinced of her own complicity in the two sexual episodes but more because of her lifelong desire for her mother's love and approval" (35). While on one level this is true, for Angelou recalls her younger self's fears in terms of her mother's perceptions that she might not be chaste, her deeper unspoken fear is that if she admits to the earlier touching and the fact that she liked it, she would be admitting to her desire for something that she is not "supposed" to express--her need for absent mother's love and affection which she seems unable to even admit to herself.

The fear of being shunned for appearing to "like" Freeman's advances merely obscures her real fear that she cannot confess that she submitted to him because of her need for adult affection, implicating her mother as inadequate. Hagen understands that the impulse for Marguerite to "idolize" Vivian comes from what he mildly terms the

"imperfect" relationship she has with both parents: "Even if not openly acknowledged, this would have a dire effect upon her sense of worth . . . She does not seem to dwell upon any rejection of lack of love" (72). He suggests that by not expressing the truth of her parents' rejection of her as a child, Angelou is suppressing the damage it had on her self-esteem. Although the adult Angelou is clearly not ready to openly acknowledge her "imperfect" and difficult relationship with her mother in her autobiography, my analysis demonstrates that Vivian's "dire effect" on her self-image can still be uncovered in Angelou's styles of presentation of her herself as a needy and vulnerable child.

Angelou protects her reader from the losses she felt as a child as she protects her mother from taking blame for those losses. One way she accomplishes this is to move into the third person to provide distance between herself and Vivian and her adult realizations. In an interview she does this while speaking about her mother when she says: " I've come to the conclusion that some adults are not really qualified to be parents of young children. They make much better parents of adults. My mother is that type' " (Elliot 87). She uses this distancing strategy to conclude that some adults are just not able--through no fault of their own--to be parents of children. It shows that the emotional ambivalence and the complicated dynamics of her childhood are still in effect for the adult writer of that childhood who is unable to directly blame Vivian for her inability to "mother" her and the damage it caused.

Marguerite's choice to remain mute after Freeman's release and subsequent death at the hands of her relatives is explained by Angelou in terms of her guilt over lying about Freeman, which then leads to his release and death: "I could feel the evil flowing through my body and waiting, pent up, to rush off my tongue if I tried to open my mouth. I clamped my teeth shut, I'd hold it in. If it escaped, wouldn't it flood the world and all the innocent people?" (72). However, the choice to remain mute points to more than her experience of guilt over the lie; it is also the chance to "pent up" her words which might express the need for affection that she is unwilling to name. Her self-imposed muteness

uses the body to both express and repress the rape's damage to her self-image and loss of self-control. She turns her feelings of violation inward: "Angelou internalizes the violence of the rape and turns herself into the source of violence rather than its victim" (Danahay 68), just as she internalizes her mother's rejection of herself. While I agree with Danahay's conclusion that Marguerite's silence is in part because she internalizes the image of the female as "sexual and therefore dangerous" (68), her self-blame, and silence, also serves to disguise the desires she cannot speak of honestly and openly. By convincing herself that she is the source of violence and that there is "evil" inside of her, she does not have to confront or admit her more ambivalent feelings for Vivian or Freeman.

In concluding the chapter about her rape, the adult narrator elides any difficult or negative feelings about her mother's decision to send her back to Stamps after the trial. Angelou simply reports: "I have never known if Momma sent for us, or if the St. Louis family just got fed up with my grim presence. There is nothing more appalling than a constantly morose child" (74). Jelinek is the only Caged Bird scholar to notice Vivian's blatant insensitivity to her daughter's pain: "in the most shocking callousness one could adopt toward a child, the mother returns her daughter to Momma because Maya is depressed after the rape" (198). While I concur with Jelinek's judgment, I would add that Angelou uses her position as narrator to deflect any blame from her mother. By speculating that the "St. Louis family" might have gotten "fed up" with her, she conceals Vivian's thoughtless rejection of her in a time of emotional crisis. Furthermore, she excuses their frustration by labeling herself as a "grim presence" and by moving into the distancing third person and proposing that their rejection of her and her traumatized state was natural or normal, for "nothing" is more appalling than a "morose child" (74). This is similar to her maneuver of both pointing to, and excusing, Momma's questionable practices of raising children.

It is at this point in Marguerite's life that she turns to Bertha Flowers, Jane Eyre and Victorian fiction. Each of these provides a temporary escape from loneliness and



alienation for the young black girl who wishes to align herself with the fantasy of white domestic ideals and dominant white values. These escapes prove merely transitory because they are followed by Marguerite's brief encounter with Mrs. Viola Cullinan, who opens her eyes to her real "place" within a white household. Marguerite's verbal re-awakening into the world and into the white world in the form of Mrs. Cullinan's kitchen --which Angelou ironically calls her "finishing school" (88)--begins an important shift in the book in which she begins to claim ownership of her black identity. However, making this claim to an autonomous self is not without its complicated aspects, as my analysis of her ambivalence toward "white" language and texts revealed. Marguerite initially finds the Cullinan job appealing due to the exotic "differences" of Mrs. Cullinan's elaborate place settings: "Soup spoons, gravy boat, butter knives, salad forks and carving platter were additions to my vocabulary and in fact almost represented a new language. I was fascinated with the novelty, with the fluttering Mrs. Cullinan and her Alice-in-Wonderland house" (89). The wealthy lifestyle, represented by the many utensils, is a "new language" that draws Marguerite in by its "whiteness" and "otherness." The comparison of Mrs. Cullinan's house to Alice in Wonderland demonstrates that Marguerite continues to make sense of her world through Victorian fiction.

Viola Cullinan clearly holds the upper hand through the power of language, however, and uses it to objectify Marguerite when she begins to call her "Margaret" because she can't pronounce "Marguerite" and then uses "Mary" because Cullinan's friend suggests that Margaret is " 'too long' " (90). Marguerite silently fumes at the presumption of these women, and when Cullinan's longtime Black maid, Miss Glory, explains that she herself didn't mind getting renamed by her employer, Marguerite doesn't know whether to "laugh" or "cry" (92), but is too angry to do either. Marguerite refuses the position of the black "subordinate" who is renamed by the white "authority," and is refusing the fate of "other" women such as Antoinette Mason who is renamed Bertha and whose identity and name are "colonized" when she is victimized by Rochester in Jane Eyre. But Marguerite's

black skin dictates that she cannot protest Cullinan's audacity and stand on the privilege of white femininity, as does the newly engaged Jane Eyre does with Rochester, and refuse a subordinate position. She knows that Momma won't let her quit her job "for just any reason" (92), so she must come up with a way to get fired. Marguerite is taking an important step toward expressing herself and confronting racism by identifying her anger and deciding to act on it, rather than swallowing it silently and suffering, as she did with the "powhitetrash" girls. In this scene, she is moving forward in what Walker describes as Angelou's "lessons about resisting oppression," for she is moving from "helpless rage and indignation to forms of subtle resistance" (80). She is refusing to follow the model of acceptance and forbearance set down by Momma and exemplified in Miss Glory; She decides to express her anger at being dehumanized by Cullinan by breaking some of her prized dishes in order to get fired.

Wishing to refuse a white woman's idea of who she ought to be, but feeling unable to do it openly, she subversively protests against subordination using the "new language" she learned concerning the value of dishes. Upon breaking down and crying over the broken dishes, Cullinan is forced to angrily acknowledge Marguerite as independent from her control by (re)calling her by what she believes is her 'real' name: " 'Her name's Margaret, goddamn it, her name's Margaret!' " (93), giving Marguerite a measure of victory over the issue of language and recognition of her individuality. The fact that she does not openly challenge Mrs. Cullinan demonstrates the ambivalence Marguerite continues to have toward white privilege and black coping strategies and racism. Hagen writes: "Angelou 'accidentally' breaks a piece of prized china. The youngster thus finds an accepted way to even a score and retain her pride" (41). However, this "accident" is chosen because being fired would be the only "acceptable" way that Momma would let her leave the job, and Marguerite can only secretly retain her pride, for to do so openly would challenge both the behavior expectations of the black and white communities, and she is not ready to do that.

The complexity of her feelings around the Cullinan incident are only hinted at in the text, and Angelou as the adult narrator explains her childhood anger and her motivation for breaking the dishes by connecting her rebellion against being called "Mary" in terms of Black history. She explains that everyone has a "hellish horror of being 'called out of his name.'" It was a dangerous practice to call a Negro anything that could be loosely construed as insulting because of the centuries of their having been called niggers, jigs, dinges, blackbirds, crows, boots and spooks" (91). Angelou does not go on to tie this example to slave narratives, but the connection can clearly be made. Cullinan's decision to call her "Mary" is reminiscent of the "slave state practice of depriving Africans of their true names and cultural past" (Moore 56). Moving away from a state of repressed anger to action, Marguerite is beginning to emerge from the states of painful awareness and "purgation," in which she perceives and then wishes to expunge from her life all that attempts to enslave her, to the next stage in the slave's narrative journey: "the realization of alternatives to bondage and the formulation of the resolve to be free" (Foster 85). In the case of Cullinan, the alternative to bondage is freedom through subversive action. Smith describes the Cullinan incident as significant in this internal shift: "The black girl is assuming the consciousness of the rebel as the stance necessary for preserving her individuality and affirming her self-worth" ("Black Womanhood" 131). Her rebellious actions are coded within an "accident," but I believe that the victory is most significant because of its reflection of this newfound consciousness and affirmative "self-worth" that Smith cites. This event is the start of her flight to freedom from the inside out; Marguerite only gradually acquires the confidence to confront blatant racism.

Shortly after this episode, Jane Eyre appears briefly again in Angelou's narrative to signal Marguerite's departure from the mental retreat of a fictitious world to action in the larger world. In chapter twenty-two, as the storm brews outside one night, Marguerite sits down to re-read the Bronte novel and is quickly caught under its "spell." She

describes George Taylor's arrival: "A rattle and knock, a knock and rattle. But suspecting that it might be the mad wife in the tower, I didn't credit it" (129). Fulfilling her fears, Taylor appears a "mad" neighbor, rambling on about his dead wife haunting him through the image of a fat, white cherub in order to ask for the children they never had. Marguerite is both mesmerized and terrified by this "ghost story" that pulls her away from Jane and Rochester (133). The story of the dead wife, Florida Taylor, draws her away from the absorbing love story just as Bertha's "haunting" as Rochester's wife draws Jane away from her romantic love story.

In the middle of the chapter, seeking release from George's rantings, Marguerite remembers her own story about Florida Taylor, whose death earlier that year interrupted the "golden" summer stretched before her--a summer in which she "met and loved the Bronte sisters" (133). The summer would allow her to indulge in her tendency to escape into fiction and "lose" herself in it. Florida's death shakes her out of her Bronte reverie when Florida wills a "yellow brooch" to Marguerite, who then must attend the funeral and "waste" a summer afternoon sitting in church (134). Dragging her feet through the wake, Marguerite reluctantly forces herself to look upon the dead woman's face and confronts the inevitability of mortality: "Instantly I surrendered myself to the grimness of death. The change it had been able to effect in Mrs. Taylor showed that it could not be resisted" (137). Marguerite notes that her "high-pitched voice" was "forever stilled" and her "plump brown face had been deflated" (137). Witnessing Florida's face is the start of her internal surrender to accepting the "grimness" of death in her young life, identifying and accepting the reality of her own black face and black identity, breaking the spell of denial and romanticism that Jane Eyre promotes.

The funeral memory "haunts" Marguerite that night as Taylor reports his own "haunting," and as she moves into the other, unoccupied and dark areas of the house, she forces herself to confront the darkness just as she was forced to push through her unarticulated fears of death and peer into Florida's coffin. Once she returns to the living

room to find George's story is over and dismissed by the other listeners, "Shadows which had lengthened and darkened over the bed in the corner had revealed themselves as dark images of familiar chairs and such" (142). Confronting shadows, fear and death directly permits Marguerite to see threatening shadows for what they really are--merely familiar "dark images" that she has re-imagined in her own mind as threatening. Florida's face in the coffin is merely "deflated" by effects of death and Marguerite takes it in, despite her impulse to escape back into a carefree summer of reading the Brontes. I believe that in George and Marguerite's story of their lives, Florida is emblematic of Bertha Rochester: relegated to being the "dark" and shadowy "other" who is cast aside, but who demands recognition.

Marguerite begins the chapter by wishing to "discredit" the "mad woman" at the door, to ignore the story of Florida's "haunting" her husband in the same way that Florida's death haunted her the previous summer. This chapter reinforces the idea that Marguerite is haunted by her wish to ignore her own blackness, and she does this by escaping into the novel of "Jane Eyre in the cold English mansion of a colder English gentleman" (129). By the end of the chapter, Marguerite has successfully confronted the metaphorical and literal presence of darkness in her house and in her life, and this becomes the prelude to confronting and accepting her own "darkness," the skin color she wished to deny.

This chapter, ignored by those who write about Caged Bird, is important because it shows Marguerite is ready to give up her identification with Jane Eyre by demystifying the "darkness" in herself she saw as "other" and alienating. She does this through acknowledging the presence of the "dark" woman in her various guises: the "mad wife" who turns out to be George Taylor interrupting her Jane Eyre-induced "reverie" that evening; Florida Taylor, whose death she must face despite a golden summer in which she "met and loved the Brontes"; and her own blackness which haunted her throughout her childhood and caused her to turn to the Bronte novel for escape. The experiences

contained in this chapter indirectly show that Marguerite can defuse the power of the Bronte's novel to haunt her life and her self-image, for in effect, seeing the "dark woman" is like identifying Bertha Rochester's presence in the novel for the first time, making room for the "other" woman's voice and reality. This paves the way for her own ability to value her words and experience as a black female. I believe this chapter signals the end of what Angelou terms the "romanticist period" (129) of her childhood.

In the very next chapter, Angelou is able to demonstrate this inner growth when Marguerite comes to a new sense of racial consciousness at eighth-grade graduation. Mr. Donleavy, the white school superintendent and graduation speaker explains the improvements to the white schools will include a "well-known" artist to teach art, as well as "the newest microscopes and chemistry equipment," while he praises the black school for producing fine athletes (151). Marguerite is crushed by the implication that has ruined an otherwise joyous occasion: "We were maids and farmers, handymen and washerwomen, and anything higher that we aspired to was farcical and presumptuous" (152). Donleavy's racism is reminiscent of the colonial encounter in which those in power construct the idea of black potential and promise by how it is "different" from that of Whites. He recognizes the black self and simultaneously devalues it by circumscribing its abilities to be only a body with no intellectual potential. During her growing up years, Marguerite's struggle with a positive self-identity was exacerbated by her strained relationship to her physical self. Nurturing her intellectual life and mental powers through learning and literature gave her a route of escape from her the reality of her "racially marked" body and identity, and Donleavy's observation undermines her ability to perceive herself beyond her black body and the "physical" implications of that body: "The meticulous maps, drawn in three colors ink, learning and spelling decasyllabic words, memorizing the whole of The Rape Of Lucrece--it was for nothing" (152). Mastering literature and enjoying the power of words had become not only an escape from the limits

of her life in Stamps, but also, in her mind, a way to reassure herself and prove to the larger world that she had worth as a human being.

Listening to Donleavy, Marguerite is consumed by anger and frustration but does not speak out, she only silently reflects: "It was awful to be a Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my color with no chance of defense" (153). She is identifying with outrage the limits which are imposed upon her--and her race--by the bias of Whites. This reflection also acknowledges the ways in which those limits have controlled her physically and silenced her-"trained to sit quietly and listen" so as to have "no chance of defense." This statement reveals ambivalence, for Angelou's language indicates she is reluctant to place blame squarely on either Donleavy or herself. She places her observation in an impersonal, passive voice--"It was awful to be a Negro"--and portrays herself as the victim of circumstances and larger forces outside her control, rather than perceiving that she is playing a part in the larger power dynamics set up between Blacks and Whites, just as she perceived herself as trapped and powerless in earlier confrontations with white racism.

She feels her mastery of language and literacy are now irrelevant, for they will bring her no future in the white world that only sees her in terms of manual skills. "The accomplishment was nothing," Marguerite reflects about graduation (152). The poetry and literature that had once given her a retreat from the problems of her world now seem to mock her identification with them: she wants to "cry at the impertinence" of the recitation of "Invictus" which declares "I am the master of my fate" (154). Classmate Henry Reed's recitation of Hamlet's famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy invokes the bitter reflection: "Hadn't he heard the whitefolks? We couldn't be, so the question was a waste of time" (154). Marguerite had begun to believe that she can reach for accomplishment and refinement through learning but she now is told these standards are not applicable to her--they are "white" texts and "white" words that do not speak to the

lives of blacks. No longer able to sustain the Jane Eyre fantasy that her life can be seen as one of romantic suffering that will bring reward, she now finds herself defined and confined by the fact that Whites only and always see her as they choose to see black identity. The white ideal and the white text is no longer a fantasy to escape into, but is revealed to be the measure against which she is found--by Whites as well as herself--to be inadequate.

The scene ends with Marguerite uplifted in words that speak to Black experience, the song "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," which is the "Negro national anthem" (155). For the first time, Marguerite finds power and comfort in the words of a black writer, rather than a white author, and a song that speaks to survival and endurance rather than suffering and pain. Although ending the scene with the song appears to "counter" the speech by Dunleavy, the white man is not directly confronted by Marguerite or other Blacks. Walker believes this scene is one that marks the "transition from subtle resistance [of the Cullinan episode] to active protest [of later scenes]" (88) because the "resistance is still not exactly an outright protest and it still avoids open confrontation, since the white insulter has left and does not hear the singing" (89). Furthermore, the song is about survival and doesn't contradict Dunleavy's assumptions about race, it only allows blacks to share and empathize in their plight together: "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,/We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered" (156). Marguerite has progressed from suppressing her feelings of outrage at racism to expressing them in a nonconfrontational manner. While this expression may give her some personal comfort, it doesn't allow Marguerite to revise her social position against the racism of the white power structure and avoid being victimized in the future.

After the song, at the end of the chapter, Angelou shifts the perspective--moving into the role of the spectator ("the tears that slipped down many faces were not wiped away in shame")--and speaks as "we," which sidesteps the ambiguity of the "happy ending" of the scene in order to present a triumphant, collective slant on the experience.



She writes: "We were on top again. As always, again. We survived" (156). Not only has she lost the thread of a more personal perspective, but asserting one's dominant position through the willing endurance of suffering embraces the burden of oppression rather than rebelling against it. Walker explains the contradiction in the graduation scene this way: "there is the action on the part of the black community--Henry Reed's improvised leading the audience in 'Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing' (155)--that at the same time avoids an irreversible confrontation with the white oppressor and permits the black community to feel its dignity and superiority" (89). Just as the breaking of Cullinan's dishes allowed Marguerite to feel a secret pride and avoid confrontation, the black graduation audience gains a fleeting feeling of superiority and self-righteousness but gives up the opportunity to directly refuse racist assumptions.

Once again, Angelou ends a chapter by pulling her narrative back from the perspective of her younger self and enlarging her scope of experience to include "the" black experience of survival despite disparagement. Survival is attributed, in part, to the power of the black poets who have come before them: "Oh, Black known and unknown poets, how often have your auctioned pains sustained us?" (156). Rather than recall black defiance and action that ensured survival, Angelou praises the poets for "sustaining" and comforting blacks by sharing their own pain. This can be linked to the slave narrative's portrayal of a slave's life "as a series of attempts to discover and proclaim his validity in spite of his perceived defects" (Foster 13). The aim of the slave, and for Marguerite at this point, is to "discover" her validity--to establish a sense of self-worth in spite of degradation--and to "proclaim" that validity in the face of oppression. Angelou's book serves the purpose of illustrating Marguerite's life as a series of events in which she must learn to act out against racism. My analysis uncovers the levels on which acquiring these abilities rest: she must secure an inner confidence in order to establish a place from which to act and to speak. By ending the chapter in this rhetorical manner, Angelou portrays

Marguerite's experience as part of a collective struggle and obscures the more ambivalent and limited aspects of her reaction to the speaker and the song.

However, this graduation scene is a significant milestone for Marguerite because it continues her awakening to an inner strength and movement toward protest--however ambiguously--that began with the Cullinan experience. The preference for confrontation, albeit circumscribed, is related to Marguerite's growing maturity. The final chapters in the book, describing Marguerite's teenage years in California, present an important contrast to her life and experiences in Stamps. Key episodes in California demonstrate her growing access to healthy self-image revolves around challenging the rules of etiquette taught to her in Stamps. The adult Angelou explains her affinity with San Francisco as a young teenager this way: "The air of collective displacement, the impermanence of life in wartime and the gauche personalities of the more recent arrivals tended to dissipate my own sense of not belonging. In San Francisco, for the first time, I perceived myself as part of something" (179). Identifying with "collective displacement" is an opportunity for Marguerite to lose her own sense of displacement, felt acutely in the rigid life of Stamps, by seeking freedom of movement in the disorder and upheaval of the city: "In Stamps the way of life remained rigid, in San Francisco it ran fluid . . . The fluidity of the new environment matched the fluidity of her emotional, physical and psychological life" (Smith, "Song" 372). The fluidity of San Francisco facilitates geographical and psychological movement into a new phase of her life. She escapes the social desolation and race restrictions of the South and is granted the space and freedom to be herself outside of the social strictures of her childhood. This is similar to the movement of the slave who moves to the North in the slave narrative, seeking legal and psychic freedom. Caged Bird resembles a slave narrative in that "a maturation of consciousness parallels geographical movement (south to North and East to West)" (Braxton, "Song" 185). In addition to physical momentum accompanying the expansion of her psychological "horizons," I believe the book also resembles a slave narrative by

moving its heroine from the second stage to the third stage of the pattern in the traditional slave narrative: from her growing "realization of alternatives to bondage and the formulation of a resolve to be free" that results in an "escape" (Foster 85). California represents liberation on both the external and internal levels in Marguerite's life.

In San Francisco, Marguerite's white high school teacher Miss Kirwin is partly responsible for her growing confidence because as the teacher who is "in love with information," she "never seemed to notice that I was Black and therefore different" (183). As Kirwin "overlooks" Marguerite's race, this allows Marguerite herself to overlook it as purely difference. Given the opportunity to pursue an education, personal interests and a public life that is not bound by difference and "otherness," Marguerite thrives as a student, and takes on drama and dance "along with white and Black grownups" at the local college (182-83). This new relationship to her body and voice reflects her newfound freedom to be comfortable with expressing herself openly and learning with whites who had formerly been the "others" who were intent on holding her back in life.

Within these descriptions of Marguerite's newfound sense of autonomy in California, Angelou's adult narration continues to assert itself into the text in order to express the ambivalence that is part of letting go of familiar identity patterns. Rather than confront her father for "abandoning" her in Mexico or force him to acknowledge her stab wound inflicted by his jealous girlfriend Dolores, Marguerite is silenced and shamed by the unspoken expectations that accompany her father's attempt to secure his prestigious social and racial rank. She imagines the public implications of the "scandal" on her father's life: "He was after all a Mason, an Elk, a naval dietitian and the first Negro deacon in the Lutheran church. No Negro in the city would be able to hold his head up if our misfortune became common knowledge" (212). Her internalized sense of "proper" Black behavior prevents her from speaking out on her own behalf, just as it had silenced her in the rigid atmosphere of Stamps. Angelou, as adult narrator, explains away this compromise of self by insisting that at age fifteen, life had shown her that "surrender, in

its place, was as honorable as resistance, especially if one had no choice" (212). But at fifteen, Marguerite did have a choice to insist that her father, or her mother, be responsible for their actions. Just as she was unable to confront them as a young girl who was both angry and needy when it came to her parents, as a teenager, and adult narrator, she is still unable to express her feelings openly. Marguerite's decision not to return to her mother in her wounded state speaks to this same ambivalence; she insists that her mother would notice the wound and we "were certain to experience another scene of violence. I thought of poor Mr. Freeman, and the guilt which lined my heart, even after all those years, was a nagging passenger in my mind" (213). Marguerite is turning the blame of this new injury inward, just as she did with the rape and Freeman's death, unable to express her need for her mother's love and support for fear that she will not get it. She rationalizes, at the cost of her own comfort, the neglect she anticipates and experiences from both parents.

Two significant events that allow Marguerite to transcend the race, class and gender class restrictions and limitations within the family circle and the black community are her experience in the junkyard and at the streetcar office. Moving out into the world allows her to begin to establish a new identity, based on her own instincts and desires. Retreating to the junkyard with other "underage" wanderers of disparate racial backgrounds, where everyone works and the money is "used communally" (215), she begins to see that class division is not a necessary consequence of race. She learns to drive, to curse and to dance (215), discovering how to verbally and physically open herself up to her surroundings. The experience allows her to live outside the social structures that had formerly defined her and her way of thinking:

The unquestioning acceptance by my peers had dislodged the familiar insecurity. Odd that the homeless children, the silt of war frenzy, could initiate me into the brotherhood of man. After hunting down unbroken bottles and selling them with a white girl from Missouri, a Mexican girl

from Los Angeles and a Black girl from Oklahoma, I was never again to sense myself so solidly outside the pale of the human race (216).

The majority of those who have written about this episode have focused on the role her peers and her newfound freedom played in transforming Marguerite: "Her peers' unquestioning acceptance dislodges her familiar feelings of insecurity; moreover, the unrestrained life that she experiences within the group expands her spiritual horizons and initiates [her] into the brotherhood of man' " (McPherson 42). Although even Angelou describes herself as changed due to the "unquestioning acceptance" from others, the month in the junkyard points to a significant internal shift in which she is initiated into perceiving herself and others as equals, connecting with "others" despite the old race and class structures that had restricted her point of view. Sensing herself outside the "pale" of the human race can be read as a sly reference to the "white" part of the human race, it speaks to her newfound ability to see herself and other people as more than merely those who are "white" and those who are "other."

The junkyard episode gives Marguerite the confidence to pursue the streetcar operator position despite her mother's reminder that " 'They don't accept colored people on the streetcars.' " Upon hearing her mother's dismissal of her desire, Marguerite climbs what Angelou describes an internal "emotional ladder": she moves from "disappointment" to "haughty indignation" and finally to "stubbornness where the mind is locked like the jaws of an enraged bulldog" (225). Although Angelou does not explain how and why she can ascend the "emotional ladder" that lifts her from internalizing her mother's reminder of familiar limits, to questioning those limits, to refusing to accept those limits, I believe her empowering experiences in California taught her to refuse to perceive herself only in terms of a "colored person," and her "stubbornness" derives from her anger and determination to make others (including her mother) see her as more than that.

Marguerite's presence at the streetcar office is where she focuses this "stubbornness," yet like all of her battles, the battle is especially important because it has a complicated, internal aspect. Faced with "going through the paces" of racism with the white secretary who consistently denies her access to the personnel manager with flimsy excuses, Marguerite plays along, pretending not to notice the discrimination (226). Falling back into old patterns of denial and resignation, Angelou reports: "The miserable little encounter had nothing to do with me, the me of me, any more than it had to with that silly clerk. The incident was a recurring dream, concocted years before by stupid whites and it eternally came back to haunt us all." She even absolves the white clerk from blame: "I went further than forgiving the clerk, I accepted her as a fellow victim of the same puppeteer" (227). By denying the personal responsibility and choice that she and the clerk have for this "encounter," she is able to excuse herself and the clerk both as victims of bias of the dominant white power structure. She sees herself as the same young girl in Stamps, standing powerless behind the screen door watching the "roles" being played out by Momma and the "powhitetrash" girls, an unseen "puppeteer" taking the blame for their own participation in the dynamics they perpetuate as racist Whites and oppressed Blacks.

The difference between the young Marguerite and this teenage Marguerite is that the latter has established a stronger self of self-worth through her accomplishments in California. She has come to believe she is an individual with agency, not a victim of circumstance who has no choice but to obediently conform to the social roles offered to Blacks. Consequently, after resigning herself to being a powerless player in the racism game, she goes to board a streetcar and is confronted with the sight of the white conductorette and the "hard eyes of white contempt" (227) and she has a moment of awakening. For the first time she is literally face to face with white racism and what she sees is hate and anger. Suddenly the power of the white "other" is not one of special privilege or social status but of arbitrary exclusion and bias that attempts to dehumanize

Marguerite. The white conductorette with the "Southern nasal accent" (227) has no skills or ability that she herself does have, but is only part of the "humorless puzzle of inequality and hate" that Momma wanted to protect them from by sending them away from Stamps when they got old enough to question white motives (168). "The Truth" that Momma did not want to divulge to her grandchildren is that there is no rationale or explanation behind white racial bias, segregation, and discrimination. Rather than allow the arbitrary nature of white hate to make her feel hopeless, it galvanizes Marguerite and clarifies in her mind the role she has been playing by buying into the myth of white power and privilege: she becomes the "other" who is always lacking, denied, limited, and diminished. She is suddenly hit with the realization of the baseless nature of Whites' view of her as Black --in the case of the white conducterette, it is a literal "look"-- and she has allowed it to make her feel powerless and victimized.

Marguerite also perceives at this moment her own part in perpetuating oppression by pretending to ignore it. She understands that racism is built on a lie that perpetuates a view of individuals as racial stereotypes, and by pretending she can't see beyond that stereotype, she is part of the charade, she is a liar: "All lies. All comfortable lies. The receptionist was not innocent and neither was I. The whole charade we had played out in that crummy waiting room had directly to with me, Black, and her, white" (227). By owning her own part in the "charade," she is able to change her actions. Her renewed determination to land the conductorette job becomes a determination to undermine the assumptions that permit the charade--and her denial-- to continue. Walker describes the dynamics of self-awareness that occurs at this moment: "Maya decides that the rebuffs, which have everything to do with her race, also have everything to do with her personally, and this is because her personal identity and her racial identity cannot be entirely separated" (84). She has learned to accept her racial identity and see beyond the stereotypes she had earlier allowed to intrude on her consciousness. Walker explains Marguerite had refused to accept who she was and had longed for a "foreign identity that

is a compound of received ideas of white feminine beauty" (84). This is connected to her admiration for Jane Eyre, and in order to fully give up her dream of identification through fictional white femininity, she had to embrace racial identity as an inseparable part of herself. The personal growth demonstrated in Marguerite's attitude toward the streetcar rebuff is partly the acceptance of her personal identity that is a racial identity, as Walker outlines, but it is also the awakening to her right to openly struggle against those people and those social practices that see her only in terms of that racialized "other" and who dictate how that racial self shall be defined. This knowledge allows her to move from earlier forms of "subtle protest" to participate in her own form of "outright and active protest" (Walker 80). Persisting in her pursuit of the job is her form of actively protesting their discriminatory hiring practices.

Although landing the job is an important personal and social victory for Marguerite, it is not without its ambivalent aspects. She may have uncovered the lie upon which discriminatory practices of the status quo--the "charade"--are based, but she is not quite ready to completely unmask the players, herself included. While her mother offers only a steady stream of aphorisms to cheer her on in her job efforts, Marguerite continues to visit the streetcar office and make known her resistance to their rules, her protest is passive, for she never directly challenging the employees at the office. Although she is eventually given the job, the victory is not complete. Marguerite comes to the job with some amount of deception and restraint. When it comes time to fill out an application form, she creates "a cat's ladder of near truths and total lies" (229) to suit what the white employer's expectations, and does not speak out when her supervisors give her "haphazardly" designed split shifts and she suspects they are being malicious (229).

Regardless of these signs of ambivalence, earning the job is an important milestone for Marguerite because it reflects self-determination and an active stance in the white community that had excluded her. While I believe that Angelou portrays her teenage self at the end of Caged Bird as beginning to carve out a space for herself on that



path to freedom, she cannot forget the upbringing that never showed her that path, but only offered the "safe paths" of obedience and silence. The classic slave narratives concluded with reflections on the nature and state of slavery (Olney 153). Angelou's autobiography performs a similar function in order to convey the author's attitude regarding the challenge of escaping the psychological enslavement of her youth. She concludes chapter thirty-four, the story of her battle for the conductorette job, by noting the chasm that suddenly opened up between her classmates and herself after she started her job: "I had gone from being ignorant of being ignorant to being aware of being aware" ( 230). Marguerite's profound understanding of racism showed her the unfounded and illogical nature of white hate, but also included a self-awareness concerning her own ability to perpetuate or refuse the discriminatory practices that stem from that hate. She may revert to the "safe path" of silence and "ignorance," but now she knows it is no longer the only option open to her. Her new awareness is a responsibility of making a choice to remain enslaved or to seek out freedom of thought and action.

Angelou looks back at her journey from insecure black girl to knowing young woman with a remark that encapsulates an underlying current in her autobiography--the tension between the childhood ambivalence and adult awareness:

To be left alone on the tightrope of youthful unknowing is to experience the excruciating beauty of full freedom and the threat of eternal indecision. Most surrender to the vague but murderous pressure of adult conformity. It becomes easier to die and avoid conflicts than to maintain a constant battle with the superior forces of maturity (231).

This remark suggests the innocent and "unknowing" nature of Marguerite's solo walk on the "tightrope" of her youth, her attempt to manage a balance between a yearning for free expression and full personhood and the ambivalence that complicated that yearning and stifled her. She suggests other Blacks "surrender" to "adult conformity" in the form of the choosing the paths that avoid conflict, such as self-righteous indignation, silent endurance or subversive action when faced with the reality of racism. Survival, in this instance, is

the survival of the oppressed spirit to thrive in the face of growing pressures to accept one's plight and conform to social stereotypes and cultural expectations, which is "to die" spiritually. The "constant battle" is with mature acceptance of one's choices as a Black American: you can choose to conform to social expectations or challenge them, but either way, the burden of awareness and responsibility is a heavy one.

The end of this chapter is Angelou's commentary upon the ambivalent state of her experience of enslavement and freedom, but more importantly, she is once again indirectly judging her own upbringing. Her remarks about surviving the "murderous pressures" of adult conformity points to deep-seated but unspoken feelings of disappointment in those adults--her parents and Momma--whose spirit "died" when they began to avoid racial, social and familial conflicts and chose the easy route of denial, deliberate silence and disengagement. They modeled this behavior for Marguerite throughout her childhood, and while she learned how to stand up for herself in the face of discrimination, Angelou uses those same characteristics--denial, silence and disengagement--to disguise the ambivalent and difficult aspects of her autobiographical project. Her text becomes reflective of a struggle for liberation beyond that of the slave who seeks social and racial equality: the freedom of the adult author to honestly voice the full range of her emotional experience with psychological enslavement.

The last chapter of Caged Bird, like the ending of Jane Eyre, contains a great deal of textual ambivalence. Both books' conclusions have been widely read by critics as "happy endings" which provide conclusive evidence of the protagonist's inner growth and personal progress, despite the difficulties found in the final pages. Disregarding the uncertainties that Marguerite faced with her first sexual experience and her new motherhood, Suzette Henke assesses the ending this way: "Ritie has proved her womanhood to herself and to the world, and the results of her carefully choreographed defloration are palpable and life-transforming. On graduation from high school, she simultaneously becomes a mother and an adult member of black society" (214). I believe

Marguerite's race into bed with her male neighbor is not a "carefully choreographed defloration," but a young woman's misguided attempt to "prove" her womanhood in the face of doubts about her femininity. The only "transformation" it accomplishes is Marguerite's abrupt movement from insecure schoolgirl to insecure mother.

Hagen also simplistically reads the pregnancy and birth as evidence of Marguerite's personal growth. He notes: "The book ends with the birth of her son, symbolic of the end of childhood," and claims a "certain increase in worthiness accompanies motherhood and is an affirmation in Maya's value as a person" (58). In fact, the pregnancy and childbirth seem to diminish Marguerite's newfound sense of autonomy and control over her life and her body. It is an experience of confusion and ambivalence. After giving birth, Marguerite reflects: "Just as gratefulness was confused in my mind with love, possession became mixed up with motherhood. I had a baby. He was beautiful and mine." (245), but then admits "I was afraid to touch him" (245). The narrator recognizes the immaturity of her understanding of love and motherhood, yet this is followed by Marguerite's claim to her new sense of purpose through her baby, her "possession." Ultimately, however, this claim is countered by the admission of her feelings of fears and inadequacy to handle him. Her physical actions are once again hampered by her emotional insecurities. This ending supposedly "celebrates the harmonious interaction of her body and will" (Vermillion 71), in a reversal of the opening scene, yet Marguerite doubts herself and her body when she protests that she cannot sleep with the baby for fear that she will "roll over and crush out his life or break those fragile bones" (245). Marguerite feels clumsy and ill-equipped to watch over him, but Vivian once again dismisses Marguerite's fears and needs and insists that she can naturally protect and "mother" him. The final scene appears to paint a picture of resolution and trust: Vivian reassures her with a whisper about trusting herself and her maternal instincts and Marguerite goes back to sleep. Despite this seemingly comfortable closure to Marguerite's anxieties and concerns, the tension exists between Marguerite and her son

(she does not know how to be a mother) and Marguerite and her mother (Vivian insists that she must act like a mother).

The book ends after Angelou reports on the birth of her child and her newly-awakened anxieties and doubts, suggesting an abrupt end to the introspection and confidence that was being "born" out of Angelou's teenage experiences. Lupton is one of the few critics to recognize the nature of the troubled narrative voice in the final pages: "She is a mother who is herself a child, a daughter torn by her notions of mother love; an uncertain black teenager hardly capable of the heavy burden of closure placed on her by" other critics. I concur with Lupton's assessment and would add that this "heavy burden of closure" comes from Angelou's construction of her autobiographical self. She is unable to convey the ambivalence at the end of this first autobiography, which is consistent with her inability to portray the ambiguous and difficult moments of her childhood.

Critics who have been unable to locate the ambivalent subtext within Angelou's narrative are unlikely to read the ending as anything other than evidence of her personal success. This is like the Bronte scholars who have interpreted Jane Eyre's marriage and motherhood as evidence of the maligned orphan's accomplishments; they ignore the narrative and plot tensions in the text by viewing the conclusion through the lens of a conventional Romance, whether it is appropriate to that text or not. Sounding like some of those who have written on the Jane Eyre plot, Helen M. Buss asserts that Angelou's Caged Bird offers the reader a "happy ending of the traditional realistic novel" which "plots the young girl's growing consciousness of her body, the shedding of illusion and the entrance into heterosexual activity and maternity" (103). My reading of Caged Bird, like my analysis of Jane Eyre, demonstrates that the "happy ending" and the "young girl's growing consciousness" is marked by ambivalence, doubt and repressed desires. In both books, paying close attention to subtle narrative maneuvers and abrupt shifts in the

narrator's voice allows a more thoughtful, complex reading of each woman's experience of hardship and success.

Clearly, Jane Eyre and its mythology of the triumphant outsider is an attractive but unsuitable role model for Marguerite. Race and class discrepancies aside, the plot structure of Jane Eyre rewards its heroine for refusing to accept her outcast status and obscure fate as a governess so that she might enjoy a position of privilege. Marguerite's success is dependent upon her ability to challenge her marginal position in the dominant culture by gaining a renewed sense of self-worth and independence in order to privately and publicly resist the strictures, stereotypes and expectations placed upon her by both the black and white communities. Whereas Jane's journey is one which repudiates her earlier outcast status by revealing the "other" woman as the outsider, the subtext of Angelou's story reveals that the "other" woman as protagonist can only improve her lot in life and achieve meaningful personal growth by challenging and disarming the internal and external forces that relegated her to social and racial "otherness" in the first place.

Why is this story limited to the subtextual level of Angelou's book? Locating a "true" authorial voice from which to speak authentically of one's subjectivity can be a daunting task for any autobiographer. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson explain that autobiographies are drawn from already familiar narratives: "In telling their stories, narrators take up models of identity that are culturally available" (10). My dissertation examines what happens when Jane Eyre the novel and Jane Eyre the figure are taken up as cultural models by nonwhite women such as Maya Angelou. My work aims to assess the various ways in which Jane Eyre is interpolated by autobiographical and fiction writers and their protagonists. As this chapter has demonstrated, Jane Eyre's presence in a text has the power to both clarify and undermine the "other" woman's story. The slave narrative was one "culturally available" model to Angelou when she set out to write her autobiography, just as Jane Eyre was the culturally available and comfortable model for her childhood self. In examining the allure of Jane Eyre, its presence in a text and its

potential to show us what goes on underneath the surface of the narrative, we can locate and learn from the "other" stories of the non-white female.

### CHAPTER THREE

Bharati Mukherjee's novel Jasmine was published in 1989. The glowing rounds of reviews it received are now featured prominently on the back cover and the front and inside cover of the novel's Fawcett 1989 paperback edition. The book reviewers describe and praise this "vivid," "exotic" and "poignant" book in terms of the title character's dramatic transformation from an impoverished young girl in India to a free-thinking American woman.<sup>1</sup> This brings to mind the similar descriptions of the empowerment-against-all-odds plot line that has been simplistically ascribed to both Bronte's Jane Eyre and Angelou's I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings. As my previous two chapters have shown, there is often a more complex and ambivalent narrative voice embedded in these texts, and this chapter will explore how the ambivalent narrative voice functions in Mukherjee's novel to conceal and reveal the dark edges of the young Indian immigrant's postcolonial journey toward American womanhood.

Mukherjee's young protagonist, Jasmine, shares with Jane Eyre and Marguerite Henderson a profound determination to shake off the stigma of her underprivileged childhood so that she can claim the appropriate and acceptable social identity that she believes is her destiny. At first, the novel Jane Eyre represents for Jasmine, as it does for Marguerite, a promise of certain struggle and personal fulfillment, but eventually Jasmine begins to grow restless while living under her Jane Eyre-inspired illusions as she realizes that imitating this fictional white woman's story requires that she smother her deeper wants and needs. My analysis will show how Jasmine internally struggles with her postcolonial position and its accompanying ambivalence, as Marguerite wrestled with

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<sup>1</sup> Kristin Carter-Sanborn believes these reviews reflect the "readers' complicated investment in the racial and cultural otherness of the narrator (and, of course, her author)," and that the book's "selling power seems . . . to stem from its simultaneous exoticism and domesticability" (435). Carter-Sanborn's observations begin to touch on my argument regarding Mukherjee's construction of a narrator/protagonist who alternately denies, objectifies and confronts her "otherness" in the process of struggling to assimilate.

accepting her blackness in Caged Bird, by participating in her own colonization and then chafing under the colonized position she has chosen for herself. As I explained in my first two chapters using Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial discourse, ambivalence structures postcolonial discourse because the discourse "turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences" ("other question" 70). Whether she is in the role as the colonizer or the colonized, Jasmine's self-identity is centered on the "recognition" of her Indianness as well as the "disavowal" of this "otherness." As both protagonist and narrator, Jasmine experiences and indirectly expresses a great deal of ambivalence about her racial, social and sexual identity that has not been fully explored by most scholars of this novel.

Some postcolonial critics have pointed out, in refuting those who have seen only progressive personal transformation in the plot of Jasmine, that Jasmine's journey and first-person narration suggest her internalization of English and American cultural colonization of the Third World individual. Indeed, as my chapter will demonstrate, Jasmine attempts a social-, racial- and gender-defining feat similar to those Jane Eyre performed in her story by establishing her (dis)connection to "other" women around her as she moves from household to household in her quest for freedom and fulfillment. However, there is another voice heard in the background of this colonial project that speaks for the ambivalence the colonizer feels toward the colonizing forces around her and her internal impulse to assimilate. As I demonstrated in my discussion of Caged Bird, the racially "other" protagonist's inability to neatly abandon her racial self and subjectivity produces struggle, shame and simmering anger, and the contradictory feelings and confusion about her predicament haunts the text in several important ways.

This chapter will extend the analyses of the first two chapters by explaining how Jasmine's postcolonial position reflects more than a geographic transition in which she escapes from the "feudalism" of India to the freedom of the United States, but is embodied in her emotional and psychological condition which shapes all of her



relationships in the novel. The novel is structured around the narrator's look back at the life events that brought her to her present position as a pseudo-housewife living in a small Iowa farming town. Once she has willingly begun to "lose" herself in order to leave behind her identity and fate as a young, powerless Indian widow in order to "become" like Jane Eyre in name and lifestyle, the narrative is subtly disrupted by her repressed anger, dissatisfaction and resentment. This is the suppressed voice of the ethnic individual who is awakening to the cultural colonization and pervasive stereotypes of the Western ideals which earlier only held out to her the promise of individuation and fulfillment. The second half of the book reveals the compromises, complexities and colonial ambivalence that paved the way to this Jane Eyre self, for as she tries to deny and purge the stigma of her "otherness," she also learns to identify, exploit and "exoticize" racial difference--her own and that of other women--to her social advantage.

Jasmine's racial and cultural context dictates that Mukherjee cannot simply borrow the plot of Bronte's novel and make Jasmine an heiress who gains new social status by learning to speak in the language of the British colonizer. Instead, Jasmine uses the idea of living and blending into America to make possible her Jane Eyre-inspired dreams of self-improvement and fulfillment. The novel also echoes Jane Eyre in that Jasmine's progress from an illegal immigrant and racial "other" to an "ordinary" American woman is dependent on the way in which she distinguishes her difference from "other," non-Anglo women around her and simultaneously manipulates her difference in order to secure the sexual attention and social privileges that men can give her. This novel centers its heroine's pursuit of assimilation, Americanization and class ascension upon a discourse of colonial domesticity which invokes, directly and indirectly, Jane Eyre's bid for personal progress and redemption through the recognition and disavowal of the heroine's racial "difference" from women around her. However, Jasmine's ability to locate her "difference" within and among Western and non-Western women and men is complicated by her ambivalence as the ethnic "other." Jasmine's journey to secure an

American identity requires that she engage in the ambivalent colonial discourse that enacts both violent erasure and self-denial of her Indian identity for the sake of personal "progress," but it is also built upon her willingness to domesticate and exoticize that Indian self for the approval of the Western colonizer. Although studies of Jasmine have tackled all of these issues to some extent, there has been no sustained examination of the novel that identifies the novel's subtextual story: the ambivalence of the "other" woman's dissatisfaction with the "white" life she has claimed for herself in America, her internalization of the colonial impulses that placed her there, and finally, her problematic attempt to move beyond the Jane Eyre-esque "happy ending" that threatens to suffocate her.

The structural and narrative tensions in the text are linked to the subtextual ambivalence in the novel. From the first chapter of the book, Jasmine is caught between her Indian past and the astrologer's prediction of her destiny as an exiled widow, and her determination to establish her own future. Mukherjee's text problematically equates Jasmine's Indian past with violence and chaos and contrasts this with a Western future and its promise of personal freedom. The first chapter of Jasmine serves a similar function as the prologue does in Caged Bird, and as the first chapters do in Jane Eyre: to establish the heroine's struggle with her racial/social identity and her innate refusal to bow to those in authority around her who would have her accept her powerless position as an "other."

After using this first chapter to tell the story of her youthful defiance in the face of the astrologer's prediction, her angry dismissal of her sisters' dismay that the resulting wound on her forehead means she will never find a husband, and her plunge into the river and encountering the rotting dog corpse (3), the narrator suddenly announces her presence: "That stench stays with me. I'm twenty-four now, I live in Baden, Elsa County, Iowa, but every time I lift a glass of water to my lips, fleetingly I smell it. I know what I don't want to become" (3). As narrator of her own story, Jasmine is using the first chapter

to show us how the past haunts her in order to remind her of "what [she doesn't] want to become," which is the unfortunate Indian girl whose future is no better than the dog's--broken and drowning, out of control. Jasmine's self-concept is centered upon negating the otherness which she feels will overdetermine her life, just as young Jane identifies her own opportunities by articulating the conditions--poverty, powerlessness, silent obedience--under which she refuses to live.

The first chapter also recalls the Bronte novel because the text is constructed with a narrator protagonist who tells her life story in an episodic style from the perspective of where she is near the end of her story. Kristin Carter-Sanborn notices that both Jane Eyre and Jasmine tell their story "retrospectively," which allows Jasmine to "look back and reflexively assert her difference from herself as the narrator of the text" (442). Like Jane, the narrator's purpose in telling her story is, in part, to demonstrate how far she's come from her marginal position by highlighting the "difference" between her earlier self and the present narrator self. Also like Bronte's novel, this gives the novel's point of view over to the narrator-as-colonizer who is looking back and describing how she came to eliminate the stigma of her "otherness" and take her place in the mainstream, Western discourse of the dominant Anglo culture like Jane Eyre does. Aneja believes this is a form of "Orientalizing" in which the "text's desire to give shape to the orient through its own backward gaze seems to be in complicity with the imperialistic position" (79). The narrator of Jasmine stands as Jane Eyre in name and in her "backward glance" as storyteller, looking back at the alterity she has overcome by participating in the imperialistic project that places her in the difficult position as both the colonizer and the colonized. It is this ambivalent position that I will explore in this chapter in order to illuminate the more complex aspects of the text's engagement with colonial discourse.

This chapter will also explore the role of violence in the narrator's transformations. I will show how the moments of personal transformation and class and cultural assimilation for Jasmine--as she moves from being Jyoti to Jasmine to Jazzy to

Jase to Jane--are marked by abrupt shifts in attitude and circumstance which are often violent in nature. The violence is expressed literally in the text and metaphorically, for violent action in the plot and violent imagery work to repress and objectify Third World subjectivity of various characters and the protagonist herself. By associating and dismissing these violent moments with the objectification and repression of the "other," Mukherjee pushes her heroine through her plot and never gives her protagonist the opportunity to openly reflect on her predicaments and choices. Brinda Bose observes this disturbing trend in Mukherjee's creation of her fictional heroines: "More and more through Mukherjee's novels, as the trepidations and doubts get overtaken in the flurries of action and activity, what is glossed over in terms of psychological torment is compressed into desperate violent acts" (55). Using violent action and violent repression of the self to disguise and gloss over the "trepidations and doubts" lets Mukherjee simply maneuver Jasmine through difficult or complex transitions in life and simply label her a passive "survivor." This portrayal disguises the real problem that plagues Jasmine as she tries to find happiness in America: her tendency to become trapped in roles that confine her and define her when she thought they would lead to assimilation and acceptance.

I believe the subtle disruptions and contradictions that are heard in the narrator's voice, and that are apparent in the narrative timeline, are important clues in understanding the subtext of Jasmine's life story. The quiet doubts expressing Jasmine's assimilation difficulties are somewhat disguised by the novel's nonlinear timeline, as the narrator confidently moves us back and forth through her life story, pointing out what she wants to believe about her life and her choices. This creates the illusion that the narrator is in control of her life story from her position as a "storyteller" as well as in control of the meaning she brings to individual incidents. The jumps back and forth in time, and the narrator's shifts from past to present tense, have gotten scant attention from critics. As in my analysis of Jane Eyre and Caged Bird, I will show how these time shifts and the inconsistencies in the narrator's claims about herself can show us a great deal about the

artificial and troublesome aspects of her journey and the author's manipulation of that journey. I will show how the order of the narrator's movements between present and past are significant because they reveal Jasmine is partially motivated throughout her young life by her relationship to Bronte's heroine. I will highlight how chapters two through five establish Jasmine's present life as the Iowan housewife named Jane and her growing discontent with this life so that chapters six through twenty-three can become the narrator's opportunity to reflect how and why she took on this Jane Eyre persona through a process of assimilation and colonial conditioning. The final chapters of the novel take the reader back to Iowa where Jasmine is attempting to come to terms with the compromises she has made on her journey toward finding the self-fulfillment that living out the life of Jane Eyre, by becoming a middle-class American housewife, was supposed to guarantee.

My analysis will also demonstrate how Jasmine's personal difficulties and unhappiness are grounded in her willingness to take on various names and identities--in addition to that of "Jane"--that confound, rather than consolidate, her attempts to establish independence. Gurleen Grewal notes that as Mukherjee places Jasmine through various female identities with different names, Mukherjee "flattens what is, in effect, a long and complicated process of negotiating cultural dispositions, experiences, allegiances, and memories" (183). Jasmine's willing adoption of each persona--assigned to her by someone else-- says a great deal about Jasmine's unwillingness to take responsibility for her life and allows Mukherjee to quickly and quietly transition Jasmine from "Jyoti" to "Jane" without openly dealing with the inevitable and complicated postcolonial "experiences, allegiance and memories" that Grewal refers to. Grewal also comments on the "series of jump-cuts" by which the narrative

conceals the violent disjuncture at the heart of the novel: the (il)logic by which the identity of Jyoti, a peasant woman who has only just made the transition to an Indian city, yields--without the benefit of the requisite elite education--to the identity of the narrator, Jane Ripplemeyer, a middle-class

American woman consorting with a white banker. To the extent that the novel does not consider this an anomaly, it is complicitous with the myth of the American Dream: it suppresses the issue of class (183).

Grewal notices the way in which the narrative "jump-cuts" appear to eliminate the need for a logical explanation of Jasmine's sudden and successful climb through class system in America; I would add that this also applies to her rise above the caste system in India. By simply assigning her heroine a new name to signify each step of her geographical and class movement toward middle-class America away from Indian peasanthood, Mukherjee promotes the belief that one can simply transcend the limits and allegiances of one's ethnic past through sheer willingness to conform and believe in the "myth of the American dream." Jasmine's pursuit of the myth of the American dream is her attempt to access her childhood Jane Eyre fantasy in which the obscure and poor orphan makes progress and seeks redemption through assimilation and class ascension.

However, I will show, as I did with *Jane Eyre*, that this "progress" is dependent upon a subtle colonial discourse and textual moves that acknowledges/deny the heroine's racial "otherness." Grewal uses the term "violent disjuncture" to describe the jarring results of these narrative movements without explaining how literal and metaphorical violence facilitates and accompanies them, which I will do. Mukherjee portrays the Third World as a place of violence and chaos, creating a stifling environment which Jasmine appears justified in fleeing in order to find a better life in the First World. Mukherjee's portrayal of Jasmine's personal growth is created as merely a choice between two extremes--between rejection of total oppression in India or the adoption of the endless possibilities of America. However, access to these opportunities require Jasmine to continually betray her real feelings and interests through acts of denial and repression of the racial self. Jasmine simply moves on into the arms of another man and takes on a new name and role when she feels confused or unhappy. Because Jasmine never directly admits or addresses the true source of her restlessness, she is unable to resolve the ambivalent feelings she seems so anxious to silence.

Although most critics of Jasmine praise the adaptability and progress of its maturing heroine, my analysis will build upon the work of those who have critiqued the politics behind this so-called progress. Mukherjee describes Jasmine as a " 'village girl coming from a nothing family, from a nothing place, the audacity to even say 'I want' is the biggest rebellion possible' " (Connell, Grearson and Grimes 26). This implies that Jasmine's movement from Indian peasant girl, to illegal alien, to working-class nanny, to middle-class American housewife, is directed by an inner drive toward self-fulfillment. But, as with Jane Eyre and Marguerite Henderson, Jasmine's "progress" is questionable, because she grasps at social and racial betterment to escape her alterity and she relies on external forces to interpret her self-image and guide her fate. Anindyo Roy is critical of Mukherjee's creation of a heroine who is a "willing immigrant . . . poised on the American Dream, confident that she can freely refashion her life by obeying its dictates" (140). Jasmine's maturation, then, is doubtful in part because Mukherjee substitutes a westward migration (and metaphorical "West"-ernization) in search of the elusive American Dream in place of her protagonist's access to confidence and control. She pursues the American Dream of "freely refashion[ing]" herself by participating in a colonial project that requires her to play the role of obedient, assimilating immigrant whose "otherness" is recognized within the dominant culture only when it presents itself as non-threatening and exotic. Mukherjee is substituting Jasmine's victimization at the hands of British colonial discourse, which would fix the ethnic "other" in an oppositional and dependent relationship to its own self-identity, with a form of American colonization that is equally ambivalent because the "other" is required to erase her ethnic identity and yet also underscore her differences in order to "reinvent" herself in the image that the "new world" has for her.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sami Ludwig claims Jasmine "defines herself very much in terms of her male counterparts. Each one stands for a new life of hers" (Ludwig 106). This portrayal of Jasmine's transformation as a sequence of various "lives" is a common critical assessment of Jasmine's adoption of multiple names and identities. The contradiction in Ludwig's statement is that Jasmine can seemingly define herself according to "male counterparts" but also claim them as "her" lives. Some scholars (Powers, Wickramagamage) have

How does Jane Eyre fit into Jasmine's understanding of herself and her options? The brief but recurrent invocation of Bronte's novel in Jasmine serves in clarifying the postcolonial undercurrent in the novel, just as it did in Caged Bird. Jane Eyre represents the English language, Western culture, enlightenment and progress, which become embedded in Jasmine's consciousness and provide a template for escape from the limitations of her Indian girlhood. Debjani Banerjee observes: "Through her sojourn in the fictional worlds of Jane Eyre and David Copperfield, Jasmine learns to project herself imaginatively into landscapes beyond her parochial parameters, which, ensconced in her memory, control her desires" (169). This same observation could be made about Marguerite's girlhood affinity with both the Bronte and Dickens novel as described in Caged Bird. Victorian novels become both escape from one's "parochial parameters" as well as provide a map for self-improvement that colonize and control the young person's desires. Jasmine does appear to have secured her Jane Eyre-esque "happy ending," as she takes on the comfortable position of the middle-class wife, nursemaid and virtual colonizer. But this life as Bud's lover and caretaker cannot satisfy her—it eventually resembles the duty and oppressiveness of her life in India—and so Jasmine must live beyond the novel to try to find a real "happy" ending. Although throughout telling her story Jasmine purports to be searching for self-fulfillment, she is always merely surviving and adapting by merely replacing one role with another, and one man with another, which serves to suspend her in the ambiguous state of her postcoloniality. Like Jane Eyre's dubious claim of satisfaction with her limited married life at the end of her story, Jasmine's final flight into Taylor's arms is a misguided bid for freedom: "The Prince

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attributed Jasmine's various personas to her (and the author's) Hindu background, claiming that Jasmine takes a Hindu stance toward change and transmigration. What they overlook is that Jasmine's name changes do not free her Indian self and Hindu beliefs, but stifle them. I will show how each shift in name progressively moves her farther away from her Indian self and the Hindu concept of fate and reincarnation in which she has no control and toward a self-chosen role as the obedient, conforming immigrant. Jasmine passively accepts the many names given to her and their corresponding subjugating roles, and overlooks the more subtle discourse of assimilation which she willingly surrenders herself to as a colonial subject in the New World of middle-class American culture.



Charming ending romanticizes the western dream more than exposing it for its traps" (Aneja 78). Jasmine's "western dream" becomes a trap that she eventually begins to sense while living with Bud, but by moving westward in a romanticized escape with Taylor, her "Prince Charming," she is not escaping the trap but pushing herself further into it. Although she is dissatisfied with the Jane Eyre-eque middle-class domestic life in Iowa, she is unable to remedy the situation by replacing that initial Bronte-inspired fantasy with something more meaningful; accepting Taylor's pursuit perpetuates the self-denial which is the real source of her restlessness.

While several scholars have speculated on the narrative and colonial importance of Jane Eyre's appearance in Jasmine, none of them has been able to assess its impact on the narrative as a whole. The first reference to Jane Eyre is early on, when the narrator recalls the Bronte novel as one of the "thick" British books that she picked up but then abandoned as a poor but ambitious Indian child struggling to educate herself and learn English (35) and the novel comes up again when, upon feeling restless in Iowa, Jasmine begins to wonder if she ought to accept that she is Jane and Bud is her Mr. Rochester (210). Ralph Crane claims that Jasmine and Jane Eyre both represent models of female maturation: "I want to suggest . . . that the protagonist of this novel does grow up rather than down, and that Jasmine, like Jane Eyre, is a female bildungsroman. Indeed, Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre perhaps the most famous female bildungsroman, appears to provide a shadowy inspiration for Mukherjee's novel" (123). As my first chapter demonstrates, Jane Eyre's reputation as "the most famous female bildungsroman" is outdated and arguable, and while both Jane and Jasmine may appear to "grow up," they actually just ascend through cultural and social spheres by containing and marginalizing the "other." Therefore, I agree with Crane's claim that Jane Eyre appears to be a "shadowy inspiration" for Jasmine, but for different reasons and with different results, as this chapter will illustrate.

Additionally, Crane correctly observes that Jasmine creates her "own version of Jane Eyre; she lives a life which shows that the solutions of literary convention don't always work" (125). But I disagree with Crane's interpretation of why Jasmine departs from, and seems to subvert, the Bronte ending. Crane believes that Jasmine "resists closure" of the Bronte novel by letting Jane give up the "male power" as caretaker to Bud: "Instead, like Antoinette in Wide Sargasso Sea, she refuses this new-found power by deciding to leave Bud in favor of Taylor (Jane Eyres no longer marry Mr. Rochesters)" to continue her "journey west, towards assimilation and her fully-defined female identity" (127). This assessment of the ending of three novels--Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea and Jasmine--reflects an inadequate understanding of those texts. Neither Jane, Antoinette nor Jasmine find themselves in positions of "male power" at the end of their stories (although Jane has attained female privilege and control through several levels of "colonial" inheritance), but are in fact limited by their relationship to their respective "Rochesters." Furthermore, Antoinette "refuses" disempowerment--not power--through suicide and Jasmine's flight into Taylor's arms at the end represents a desperate escape from a confining life, rather than "fully-defined female identity."

Mukherjee's first mention of Jane Eyre in chapter six of Jasmine is part of the way in which the author sets up the contrast between Jasmine's Indian past, a place marked by poverty and violence, and Jasmine's potential for improvement and progress through Western role models such as Jane Eyre. There is no doubt that her choices are limited in India, for Jasmine faces violence upon her birth in Hasnapur. Her mother, whom she describes as a "sniper," tries but fails to choke her newborn and her fifth daughter whose unwelcome presence is a reminder of the requisite dowry they will not be able to afford: "She wanted to spare me the pain of dowryless bride. My mother wanted a happy life for me" (35). Mukherjee's India is a bleak place where marriage is the only goal for females and death is deemed as preferable over a penniless union outside of one's caste, yet Jasmine seems destined to rise above it.

As narrator, Jasmine immediately follows the details of her unwelcome arrival with a declaration of her refusal to capitulate to her Indian fate: "I survived the sniping. My grandmother may have named me Jyoti, Light, but in surviving I was already Jane, a fighter and adapter" (35). In perceiving her newborn self as "already" Jane-- not Jyoti-- Jasmine is asserting that her real fate, the person she was born to become, is a Jane Eyre figure, a "fighter and adapter" who refuses to accept the powerless position she is born into. As in the beginning of Bronte's novel, the heroine comes equipped with an a priori ability to rise above her lower class position and prove that she was born for greater things. As Jasmine's comparison indicates, Jane Eyre and Jasmine may appear to be noble "fighters" who are battling for their self-interests, but I understand them as "adapters" whose transformations are not about personal survival but are laden with racial, class and gender biases.

Mukherjee's invocation of the persona "Jane, a fighter and adapter," which misreads the Jane Eyre persona, is immediately followed by Jasmine's description of her childhood accomplishments as a girl who is not only beautiful but smart. While her Indian mother complains that God is "cruel" to "waste brains on a girl," Jasmine is eagerly proving that her "brains" are a blessing and not a curse because they introduce her to a world of education and opportunity (35). It is significant that Mukherjee portrays Jasmine-as-Jyoti's education and self-improvement specifically in terms of learning English and studying British and American books. Bhabha describes the moment of discovery of the book as a frequent scene in the "cultural writings of English colonialism." In these scenes, "The discovery of the book is, at once, a moment of originality and authority. It is, as well, a process of displacement that, paradoxically, makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced" ("Signs," 102). Mukherjee's Jasmine follows this pattern by making Jasmine's discovery of the heavy, authoritative books one that is "wondrous" and

confusing, intriguing and overwhelming, but above all, memorable. Jasmine recalls the impact of books in English on her young life:

I remember a thin one, Shane, about an American village much like Punjab, and Alice in Wonderland, which gave me nightmares. The British books thick, with more long words per page. I remember Great Expectations and Jane Eyre, both of which I was forced to abandon because they were too difficult (35).

The books represent the voice of the colonizer who intimidates Jasmine with its alien but important discourse, and in Bhabha's words, the Bronte novel will be ambivalently "repeated" by Jasmine--a model to try to live up to as well as source of compromise and "displacement."

Crane and Carter-Sanborn both focus on this passage in the novel, attempting to understand its relevance to Mukherjee's heroine's development. While Crane only touches on the scene by claiming that Jane Eyre is " 'too difficult' " for Jyoti because "the concept of independent womanhood contained in Bronte's novel is too difficult for her to understand," Carter-Sanborn more accurately describes the lure and challenge of the novel. She writes about the mention of the Bronte and Dickens novel:

[they] invoke for us the Victorian project in which their production was situated. Both of these earlier novels are indeed 'thick' with the voice of an ostensible progressive colonial authority, addressing issues of gender and class formation. The fact that Jyoti abandons the deciphering of that voice as 'too difficult' will signal to us that, as Homi Bhabha suggests, the site of that authority is vexed, compromised, and 'agonistic' (434).

This "site of authority" is "vexed" because young Jyoti has not yet learned to become the forward-looking Jasmine; the books merely represent an important challenge that she will strive to meet by shrugging off the stigma of her "otherness" and mastering their meaning and, with Jane Eyre, its paradigm of female independence. The presence of these novels in the text does invite us to interpret Jasmine's colonial education--and subsequent life choices--in terms of the mythology these books promote. Shane teaches her the legend of the singular hero of the American West whose authority and adventures cannot be

contained by the Punjab-like "village" of the text. While the stories of Pip and Jane are put aside because she cannot master them, the implication is that Jasmine is nevertheless indoctrinated into believing in the primacy and power (for no Indian books are proffered or mentioned) of these tales of obscure orphans who make their way toward a better life and class position. Jasmine lives out Banerjee's claim that she "learns to project herself imaginatively beyond into landscapes beyond her parochial parameters, which, ensconced in her memory, control her desires" (189). Jasmine's desires to move beyond these "parochial parameters" are shaped by the impact of both the British Jane Eyre and American Shane imprint on her imagination. As she grows up, Jasmine will begin to believe that she can live out her Jane Eyre fantasies of re-invention and restoration not by becoming a British subject, but by moving west to America. Mukherjee is using the myth of unlimited promise that the American West presents in a novel such as Shane to give direction to Jasmine's Jane Eyre fantasies.

However, when this first mention of Jane Eyre appears in Mukherjee's novel, the young Jyoti is not ready to read and claim Jane Eyre as a role model; she cannot read English and is too "other" at this point in her life to be Jane. Yet Mukherjee's mention of the novel serves to establish Jyoti's disadvantageous position in order to emphasize the progress she will achieve. Carter-Sanborn claims that "the very dismissal of Bronte's book is coincident with its introduction as a structuring 'presence' in Jasmine" (434) but then does not explicate how this "presence" makes itself known throughout the book. I understand that Jane Eyre stands as the epitome of English, independent womanhood in Jasmine's consciousness while the plot of Jane Eyre the novel is a tale of empowerment-through-imperialism that Jasmine subtextually repeats.<sup>3</sup> Jasmine, like Jane, must struggle

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<sup>3</sup> Grewal points out the "incongruity" of Jane Eyre's appearance in Jasmine: "Jyoti could not understand the Victorian novels her village tutor gave her to read. Yet, Jane Ripplemeyer (whose last name rhymes with Jane Eyre's) can make an intimate reference to Charlotte Bronte's novel" (193) later in the book. Grewal's main point is that as an "elite Indian woman," Mukherjee "grafts her own story onto the Punjabi peasant woman's" (194). While this may be true, Jyoti/Jane's inconsistent relationship to Bronte's novel is significant because it sets up what Jyoti "lacks" at first and then works hard to replace, only to become

to prove her worthiness and "natural" place in the racial and class hierarchy, in order to live arrive at her happy ending with her own Mr. Rochester. Even Jasmine's next explanation of her family's "lost" caste position in the chaos of the post-Partition Riots echoes Jane Eyre's own "lost" inheritance of her middle-class position: "In Lahore my parents had lived in big stucco house, with porticoes and gardens. They had owned farmlands, shops. An alley had been named after a great-uncle" (35-36). This revelation means that "difference is being used as a signifier to disguise and naturalize class distinctions" (Koshy 79), as I demonstrated its similar use in Jane Eyre. Jasmine is different from the other Indian girls because she really has been unfairly displaced in the caste system. Jasmine's father retreats into his Lahore memories to escape their displacement while Jasmine replaces the past with a dream of a better future that will become more defined over the next years: a self-colonizing project in which Jasmine learns English, and succumbs to the magical allure of America in order to live out her own Jane Eyre-esque transformation.

Chapters eight through twenty-three of Jasmine trace the protagonist's literal and metaphorical Western movement in a series of incidents that teach Jasmine to disassociate herself from the stigma of her "otherness." Mukherjee helps define Jasmine's persona by contrasting young Jyoti to all the other Indian women around her. Jasmine says that much to her mother's chagrin, she chose to stay in school to "daze myself with Masterji's hoard of English-language books" while everywhere in her district other women, whose only definition in life comes through marriage, suffered an inescapable fate: "bad luck dogged dowryless wives, rebellious wives, barren wives. They fell into wells, they got run over by trains, they burned to death heating milk on kerosene stoves" (36). This description of the other faceless, nameless Indian women helps Mukherjee construct Jasmine with the ambivalent attitude of the colonizer--needing the presence of

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engaged in a colonial paradigm that denies her, as Jane Ripplemeyer, the opportunity to express the darker, or "Bertha" sides of herself.

"other" women to show that Jasmine clearly is not them. Along with the stereotypical portrayal of the Third World woman, Mukherjee paints India as hopelessly backward and violent. Violence is presented as an inevitable and inescapable fact of life: her family's violent upheaval from their comfortable position in Lahore, the violent fate of Indian women around her, and the violence perpetuated by the Khalsa Lions, the Sikh boys' gang who threatens the unity of the village and her Muslim family.

Banerjee criticizes Mukherjee for portraying the aftermath of the Partition Riots in India without adequately contextualizing its violence, which makes the author guilty of "trivializing . . . the complexities of the postcolonial condition" (170). It seems that Mukherjee merely uses violence to simplify the choice of those caught up in the tensions of a postcolonial world, for the violence serves to fuel Jasmine's desire for betterment. Her English education cannot magically remove Jasmine from Punjab, but it can shape her dreams of what is possible beyond Punjab and appear as the proper antidote to the irrational, chaotic world around her. The history of violence--and violent action itself--become the catalysts that make it possible for her to take that leap into her dreams of going beyond her Jyoti-like existence. When her teacher is killed by the Khalsa Lions (43), her father is gored by a bull (51), and her mother retreats into silent, dazed widowhood (54), Jasmine is suddenly free from social ties and family restrictions so that her brothers can guide her toward marriage with Prakash, an English-educated, free-thinking man who is the next step in her colonial education.

By giving his young wife the name Jasmine, Prakash insists that Jyoti shed her feudalistic Indian self for a modern, more appealing one. Just as her teacher Masterji showed that an English education is the way out of the mud hut, Prakash becomes the next man who makes possible her ascension into a more privileged class and progressive gender identity by showing her how and why to abandon her racial and cultural self. Prakash insists that Jasmine live by his motto: "There's no room in modern India for

feudalism' " (69) and goes about wiping out all traces of feudalism that Jasmine's brought with her from her village, Hanaspur. She describes his efforts in British terms:

Pygmalion wasn't a play I'd seen or read then, but I realize now how much of Professor Higgins there was in my husband. He wanted to break down the Jyoti I'd been in Hanaspur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine. He said, " 'You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You'll quicken the whole world with your perfume' " (70).

Prakash is in the role of powerful male who is determined to "break down" and remake a "feudal" woman according to his own terms. Mukherjee describes his role in terms of Henry Higgins rather than alluding to the Greek context of the original Pygmalion legend. This British reference likens Prakash's mission to make Jasmine a more appealing "city woman" to the project of British imperialism in which the "other" is tamed for the sake of moral or racial "improvement." By renaming her and Anglicizing her name, he plays Edward Rochester to her Antoinette Mason, attempting to cleanse her of Third World taint. He wants her to be "small and sweet and heady," a fragile, appealing, sexualized figure.

Along with giving her a new name, Prakash teaches Jasmine that life in America is the only desirable choice for people in their situation. This begins the process of Jasmine's equation of freedom and individuation, represented in textual form through books like Jane Eyre, with life in the United States. At first she has no idea, other than images from Shane, of what to think of America. Prakash explains it in these terms: " I want for us to go away and have a real life. I've had it up to here with backward, corrupt, mediocre fools' " and she obediently responds: " 'if you want me to have a real life, I want it, too' " (74). But Prakash is frustrated and tells her, " ' You have to want to go away, too. You have to want to have a real life.' " Jasmine responds: " 'What is this real life? I have a real life.' " Prakash falls asleep, but Jasmine reports: " 'For the rest of the night, I faked sleep.' " (74). This exchange is the turning point at which Jasmine truly begins to lose her



Jyoti-like impulses and begins to learn that what she is supposed to want is a "real life," a worthy and meaningful life, which he teaches can only be lead in America. Again, the terms are laid out in the colonizer's binary construction of identity--if India is the land of "backward, corrupt, mediocre fools," then America is the antidote to their problems.

A dutiful student of self-improvement, Jasmine complies to Prakash's desires for herself. America becomes the route for her personal mission to escape her Indian past and her Indian fate which has promised her nothing but widowhood and exile: "If we could just get away from India, then all fates would be canceled. We'd start with new fates, new stars. We could say or be anything we wanted. We'd be on the other side of the earth, out of God's sight" (77). America, then, is a land of endless freedom and opportunity in which they can "say or be" anything or anyone, which is contrasted sharply to the straight jacket of their Indian selves, the grim fate that is predicted for them. America is constructed as an endless promise and personal freedom in direct opposition to the backward, static life in India which can never be a "real life." This dichotomy sets the groundwork for Jasmine's "natural" gravitation toward a new, American identity and into a middle-class status which requires her to shed her undesirable racial identity in a process of self-colonization that will never be complete because the pursuit of this "real life" ironically ignores her real self.

The liberal use of violence is one way in which Mukherjee avoids addressing the difficulties of Jasmine's one-way pursuit of an American identity. Prakash's violent death at the hands of Khalsa Lions is the method by which Mukherjee frees Jasmine from her marriage to Prakash. His death symbolizes the limitations of her Indian life while providing the motivation to escape that life; it serves Jasmine's Western trajectory by granting her both the freedom to continue her life independently and by giving her the "mission" to flee to America to commit sacrificial sati. Mukherjee uses Prakash's death and Jasmine's resulting restrictive widowhood as an emblem of the backwardness of the Third World: "Feudalism! I am a widow in the war of feudalism!" Jasmine, back at

home in Hanaspur, wants to scream (88). While this fate as a widow also appears to be a fulfillment of the astrologer's prophecy, Mukherjee skillfully uses his death to justify Jasmine's journey to America alone. Jasmine explains her motivation to escape with their savings to America this way: "Prakash had taken Jyoti and created Jasmine, and Jasmine would complete the mission of Prakash" (88). Although Prakash's vision was that he would study at the Florida International Institute of Technology so they could open Vijn & Wife, Mukherjee problematically terms Jasmine's mission as one in which she will take their precious belongings to the American campus, burn them, and then commit sati. It is problematic not only because it doesn't conform to Prakash's original dream for her, but because Jasmine has labeled her widowhood as proof of her victimization in the "war" of feudalism and therefore would be unlikely to choose sati to promote that victimization. Furthermore, in India, sati "is no longer an officially sanctioned religious rite" (Wickramagamage 185) making her "mission" appear hollow. Deepika Bahri believes that sati is a source of "Orientalist misinformation" that serves in this book as a "plot device" to show Jasmine as "an unfortunate victim ennobled by passive suffering" (146). While I agree with this assessment that sati portrays Jasmine as a victim of her Hindu background, I would add that by choosing sati and then eventually rejecting it once she reaches Florida, Mukherjee is able to firmly establish Jasmine's "real" destiny as a "progressive" American woman who chooses self-preservation over the powerless position of the "other." Sati is a plot device because Mukherjee is unable to find another way to get Jasmine to America, other than choosing yet another violent act that reduces the Third World self to a powerless victim and an outdated stereotype.

Jasmine's next transition, from the stunned, suicidal widow to the willing immigrant Jazzy, is also made possible through violent moments which rely on racially determined stereotypes and seem to defy logic. "Half-Face," the disfigured captain of the shrimping boat on which she arrives in America as an illegal immigrant, traps her in a Florida hotel room and prepares to rape her. He forces her into submission and pushes

her into the role of the backward Third World immigrant. When she says her husband is " 'a genius at repairing televisions' " he angrily replies " 'I been to Asian and it's the armpit of the universe,' " and " 'Don't tell me you even *seen* a television set.' " (100). After the rape, Jasmine is determined to kill herself, but is stopped suddenly by the thought that she cannot "*feel* the passionate embrace of Lord Yama," which turns a "kerosene flame into a lover's caress" (105). This sudden, mysterious refusal of suicide is followed by her displacement into another psychological state: she slices her tongue, stands over the sleeping Half-Face, her "mouth open, pouring blood," and stabs him to death and becomes "walking death. Death incarnate" (106). Mukherjee kills Half-Face in what Roy describes as a "divine frenzy" (139) and what Jasmine herself describes as a transmutation into Kali, the Hindu goddess of death and destruction. By invoking this mythical power to enact her revenge on her rapist, Mukherjee displaces Jasmine's conscious self with a divine, violent impulse which repeats the same "literal" and "metaphoric violence of Othering" (Carter-Sanborn 448) that Half-Face inflicted on her. Carter-Sanborn explains: "As Mukherjee represents her, the 'third world' woman cannot be violent without recourse to some original mythic, mystic 'presence'. . . that ironically blocks access to agency" (449). This allows the author to rely once again on "third world"-inspired violence, rather than on conscious choice, to account for her protagonist's most important decisions and actions. This act of disassociation also permits Jasmine to escape the psychological consequences of the murder for the sake of moving her story of progress and achievement forward, just as there are no consequences stemming from her earlier loss of connection to family and home in India.

After killing Half-Face, Jasmine "purifies" herself with a shower, escapes the hotel room, and with her "mission" now defiled, she burns the suit and the suitcase immediately and plans to throw herself upon them: "I had not given even a day's survival in America a single thought. This was the place I had chosen to die, on the first day if possible." (107). Mukherjee has moved Jasmine to Florida and to this moment by turning

her back into a helpless Indian victim, a woman trapped by the feudal restraints of her Indian upbringing who cannot see beyond the suicidal "mission" of her widowhood, and who can only act to save herself when she is possessed by a Hindu goddess. Mukherjee gives Jasmine no responsibility in the decision to either kill or save herself after the rape or after the murder. While standing beside fire, the moment of clarity again simply happens inexplicably: "Suddenly death was being denied" (108). As the suitcase and its contents burn in the trash can behind the motel, the last traces of Jyoti the feudal widow are finally destroyed. While she set the fire with the intention of being one of the "good wives of the Hindu tradition, she is performing a symbolic funeral ceremony for an identity that has ceased to have any attraction for her" (Wickramagamage 187). This "symbolic funeral ceremony" means that it is not only death that is denied, but so is any final vestige of her Indian self, although Mukherjee can offer no explanation for why this self seems to cease to be attractive. Just as suddenly--and unbelievably-- as she was turned into the single-minded, suicidal Indian widow, Jasmine inexplicably discards that self. Bose describes the destruction of Jasmine's Indian belongings, along with her racial identity, as necessary in order to meet the opportunity that is in front of her: to be an American woman. Jasmine had to "discard her identity" for "the only way that she can cope with the freedom of choices thrust upon her, intellectual and sexual, is to see herself within the construct of a new 'American' woman" (59). Indeed, Mukherjee has portrayed the Indian woman as superstitious, cautious and limited, so therefore the only way Jasmine can proceed with a new life is to "burn off" that racial identity so that she can embrace the "intellectual and sexual" freedoms of American womanhood.

By seeming to destroy the literal and metaphorical "baggage" of her past, Jasmine now appears to be free to re-envision her life and identity, to be a kind of "tabula rasa . . . onto which the names of Jase and Jane can be inscribed" (Grewal 188). As my analysis of Jasmine's journey toward becoming Jase and Jane will illustrate, she will never totally lose her "otherness" and this will become a source of ambivalence. She will need to be

able to exploit her "difference" even as it threatens to deny her needs, and the acknowledgment/denial of her difference will become an important marker in establishing her distance from other non-Anglo women who have not managed to lose their ethnic "baggage." This moment is similar to Bronte's creation of the Jane Eyre who stands at the window after her re-education at the Lowood School. Unable to find the unlimited freedom that she longs for due to Victorian gender norms, Jane settles for a "new servitude" of securing for herself the limited, colonial power of middle-class white womanhood. In Jasmine's case, she will learn to engage in an American form of the colonial dynamic that shackles her with a "servitude" of being the racial "other" who can lay claim to a middle-class identity and lifestyle only if she is willing to suppress her particular Third World subjectivity in order to support the fantasies and stereotypes promoted by First World society.

Like Jane, the task in front of Jasmine is to now position herself as a self-colonizing entity. She will do this in part by comparing herself against those "others" who lack what she can gain by assimilating into, and reinforcing the values of, the dominant, white society and its social and racial prejudices. Susan Koshy is the only critic to articulate the ambivalent relationship Jasmine has to the nonwhite women around her, from Hanaspur through her American adventures: "the celebration of Jasmine's singularity is dependent upon flattening out the subjectivities of other nonwhite women whom she encounters and identifies with, but from whom she is carefully distinguished" (86). Jasmine's progressive "singularity" echoes the colonial project, and Bronte's novel, when the threat of Jasmine's "dark" identity is eliminated through an act of fire and violence, repeating Bertha's self-immolation by fire. As Grewal succinctly states: "The pattern of Jyoti yielding to Jane is a colonial legacy; Mukherjee, however, does not acknowledge this psychic violence in the legacy she claims" (194). By tracing the nature of Jasmine's "colonial legacy" and her ambivalent relationships with ethnic women--and white American men--we can see how she uses the same formula Jane Eyre employs on

her way to becoming like Jane in name and in situation. As Grewal notes, there is no evidence of the "psychic violence" Jasmine suffers from at this point in the novel, but I believe violent action contained within the plot externalizes the process of erasure and denial of the racial self that Jasmine is constantly undergoing. Later, in Iowa, the "psychic violence" will make itself known through Jasmine's interior monologues of displacement and dissatisfaction.

Jasmine's next incarnation, thanks to Lillian Gordon, the "kind Quaker lady" who rescues her off the dirt road in Florida (114), is into the eager immigrant Jazzy. This name, given to her by Lillian, is symbolic of Lillian's instruction to Jazzy on how to improvise with American looks and behavior in order to blend in with other Americans and avoid detection by the INS. Lillian takes up where Prakash left off, teaching Jasmine how to realize her future of a "real life" in America. She shows Jasmine how to "walk American" and Jasmine confesses she "worked hard on the walk and deportment. Within a week she said I'd lost my shy sidle" (118). Her physical transformation into American clothes--"t-shirt, tight cords, and running shoes"--makes her question her ability to recognize any Indianness: "I couldn't tell if with the Hanaspur sidle if I'd also abandoned my Hanaspur modesty" (119). The beginning of her move into becoming Jazzy makes Jasmine a stranger to herself; while professing to be unable to figure out if she is losing her "Hanaspur" qualities, she is clearly learning to label as "other" and undesirable those things--her walk, her modesty--that earlier seemed natural, normal.

Jasmine, as Jazzy, perceives Lillian's guidance and instruction as merely a loving attempt to combat the world's "misery." Jasmine explains: "She wasn't a missionary dispensing new visions and stamping out the old; she was a facilitator who made possible the lives of absolute *ordinariness* that we ached for" (117). While this seems to imply that Lillian's work is not a colonizing project of a missionary, it misses the point that Jasmine has already begun the process of internalizing the cultural colonization and Lillian is the "facilitator" who makes the process of stripping away Third World

appearances and behavior seem to be natural, to be merely becoming a normal, "ordinary" American. Lillian's statement immediately following Jasmine's claim about Lillian not being a "missionary" also reveals Lillian colonial thinking: "I was lucky, she said, that India had once been a British colony. Can you imagine being stuck with a language like Dutch or Portuguese?" (118). The implication is that being colonized under one of those languages would make Western assimilation and progress much more difficult. Lillian points to the "poor Kanjobal" women she is also sheltering, who "barely speak Spanish," as the illustration to her point (118).

Although Lillian is determined to teach these immigrant women how to cook and clean so that they can find jobs as "domestics" (120), Lillian singles Jasmine out as a woman meant for more than a working-class fate. " 'Jazzy, you don't strike me as a picker or a domestic.' The Kanjobal women looked at her intently, nodding their heads as if they understood. 'You're different from these others.' " (120). Lillian is performing the role of the colonizer by using the Kanjobal women, these "different" immigrants, to establish Jasmine's seemingly natural place above these women who are doomed to a working-class lifestyle. Koshy describes the dynamic this way: "The Kanjobal women form a ground for a claim of Jasmine's exceptionality; thus, they are simultaneously central to the formulation of her difference and entirely peripheral to it" (79). Just as Rochester cites Bertha, the "other," as evidence of Jane Eyre's "exceptionality" and claim to white English womanhood, the Kanjobal women are used by Lillian, and Mukherjee, to consolidate Jasmine's identity under a sign of positive difference. Mukherjee began to signal Jasmine's "exceptionality" from birth by making nonwhite women around her the helpless, hopeless models of what she is not. The scene with Lillian is merely confirming that Jasmine is naturally destined for the kind of "real life" that Prakash taught her to want, and being a domestic does not qualify as a "real life." When Lillian sends Jasmine on her way toward a better future in New York, Jasmine's progress is clearly built upon

on the negation and neglect of the Kanjobal women. This continues the violent cycle of Third World repression that grants Jasmine her freedom and opportunities.

Life in New York gives Jasmine the chance to further differentiate herself from ethnic and racially "other" immigrants and move toward having what Jasmine calls a "real life, meaning America" (126-127). Jasmine labels New York "an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens" (124). Living in the Indian "ghetto" with the Devander Vadhera and his family, who cocoon themselves within their "alien" status and Indian lifestyle in order to sustain their sense of self, is a step backward in Jasmine's eyes. Working as their household servant, Jasmine is reluctantly thrown back into her widowhood and into a Jyoti-like existence: "In this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness, I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti-life" (128). Since Jasmine learned early on only to define her true self and her desired future in terms of how far she can distance herself from everything Indian, life with the Vadheras feels suffocating and depressing. The unspoken goal for Jasmine then becomes an immersion into a "real" American life that requires her to shed everything Indian about herself. This continues the subtle process by which violence against the self, through denial and repression of one's racial identity, requires Jasmine to engage in a form of self-colonization that appears to promise freedom through assimilation.

Filled with overwhelming "unnamed, unfulfilled wants" (131), Jasmine feels she must escape the Vadheras and the Indian "ghetto" lest she die of "*wanting*" (126). The Vadhera household is associated with stasis, complacency and resignation to forces so powerful and controlling--such as the caste system, rigid family relationships and roles, and one's Hindu fate--that they cannot be put aside, even in New York. Jasmine describes the Vadheras this way: "They let nothing go, lest everything be lost" (143). She has clearly tried to distance herself from India by letting everything Indian "be lost" so that she can free herself up for becoming, for desiring, for possibilities, which are all associated with being American and having a "real" life. Through adopting this



stereotypically American sensibility, Jasmine claims she has "jumped the track" of her predestined Indian fate (126) and cannot be happy at the Vadheras. Grewal criticizes Mukherjee's one-sided portrayal of the Vadheras' lifestyle and Jasmine's reaction to them. She claims the author is so intent on Americanizing Jasmine and "dress[ing] her up in the images of dreams" that she doesn't show a sympathetic or realistic picture of their relationship, and permits "little solidarity on the basis of their shared predicament as immigrants" (189). While Grewal identifies the difficulties inherent in these limited portrayals of Jasmine and the Vadheras, I understand these portrayals are necessary for Mukherjee's construction of the Jasmine's difference from those who are hopelessly "other." The author needs the insulated Vadheras to emphasize Jasmine's Americanization and enlightened position as an alien who sees the trap of the ghetto where her awakening American wants and needs are denied.

Jasmine's next transformation, into "day mummy" Jase in the Hayes family, is made possible by her abrupt discovery of Professorji Vadhera's secret. Mukherjee represents the plight of this New York immigrant, who wishes to maintain a handle on his self respect and sense of professional identity, as a hopeless participant in the objectification of his Third World self for the benefit of the First World. Professorji is forced to maintain the facade of his intellectual status to his family while he actually works by sorting Indian women's hair for use in scientific instrument and testing. Although he insists that America hasn't robbed him of his "self-respect," Professorji is ashamed of the compromise he has made, and is resigned to living his secret, second-class status (135). He secures Jasmine's silence by giving her the fake green card, so that her freedom from the "ghetto" is purchased by the maintenance of Professorji's social shame, professional demotion, and the utilization of Third World women's hair in service toward the "security of the free world" (135). Once again, Jasmine makes a violent, abrupt departure from one life into another through the diminishment of the Indian individual and sensibilities--in this case, those of Professorji.

This life provides an important contrast to Jasmine's life on Claremont Avenue near Barnard College, in a neighborhood of "true professorjis" (146). By becoming the "day mummy" to Duff Hayes, Jasmine's new job resembles Jane Eyre's move into the role of governess for Adele. Jasmine will enjoy the same ambiguous social status that Jane had at Thornfield, part servant and part "mummy," a woman who has both domestic access and financial freedom to secure the "wants" she craves to fulfill her "American" desires. Chapter twenty-three is the story of her life on Claremont Avenue that eventually drives her further west to Iowa. Jasmine begins the chapter by declaring, "I became an American in an apartment on Claremont Avenue" (146). Falling in love with Taylor Hayes is her route to becoming an American just as Rochester is the route of middle-class domesticity for Jane Eyre. Taylor symbolizes the social status she longs to secure for herself:

He smiled his crooked-toothed smile, and I began to fall in love. I mean, I fell in love with what he represented to me, a professor who served biscuits to a servant, smiled at her, and admitted her to the broad democracy of his joking, even when she didn't understand it. It seemed entirely American. (148).

She falls in love with his perception of her as one who is not "lacking" in any way. Just as Rochester declares that Jane's natural place is beside him as his "equal" (Bronte 223), Taylor is the representative of American democracy and equality who she believes can see the real person behind the day mummy. Yet, in truth, rather than discover who she really is behind her domestic role, he and his intellectual friends in New York treat her as a Third World informant. When his professor friends look at her, they attempt to guess her country of origin and then use her for her special ethnic "knowledge." "Even though I was just an au pair, professors would ask if I could help them with Sanskrit or Arabic, Devanagari or Gurumukhi script. I can read Urdu, not Arabic. I can't read Sanskrit. They had things they wanted me to translate, paintings they wanted me to decipher. They were very democratic in that way" (29). These First World intellectuals do not even

bother to find out more about her personal abilities but assume they can help her with their Eastern "script" and help them make sense of alien documents and paintings.

Although Jasmine claims that their assumptions make them "democratic" because they see Jasmine as an intellectual peer, in fact they are attempting to exploit her merely for her "otherness." Rather than completely deny her alterity, Jasmine learns to exploit her background for her own social and economic gain, for she becomes a language tutor to Western scholars and business executives (160). Just as she later learns to use her exotic appearance for Bud's pleasure, Jasmine can now decide to eschew her Indianness unless it allows her to gain favor and a foothold with white Americans. In this way, she exercises the ambivalence of the colonial dynamic in which her assimilation into America requires to exploit her racial "difference" for the purposes of those in the dominant culture while denying those aspects of her "difference" that might alienate or contradict the assumptions or stereotypes of those around her.

Furthering this process of transformation into the agreeable immigrant, Taylor christens her "Jase," which she receives as the indirect instruction of the person she ought to be. Like Rochester's attempt to put Jane in jewels and elevate her to his level and beyond her "plain, Quakerish" persona, Jasmine reads her new identity in terms of how she can change herself according to his desires by wearing feminine clothing and accessories previously denied to her: "I like the name her gave me: Jase. Jase was a woman who bought herself spangled heels and silk chartreuse pants. On my day off I took my week's salary . . . and blew too much of it in stores along Broadway and even in the big department stores" (156). The difference between Jane and Jasmine is that while Jane refuses Rochester's jewels because it threatens to place her into a subservient, objectified position, Jasmine embraces her "Jase" identity because how it distinguishes her from her "other" self, her Indian identity. "I should have saved . . . Jyoti would have saved. But Jyoti was now a sati-goddess; she had burned herself in a trash-can-funeral pyre behind a boarded-up motel in Florida. Jasmine lived for the future . . . Jasmine went

to movies and lived for today." (156). Despite her claim to have burned "Jyoti" in a trash-can-funeral pyre, Jasmine still invokes the Jyoti persona in an ambivalent dynamic that shows her how far she has come.

By becoming Jase, Jasmine feels she is at last acting the role of the American and no longer pining for that goal in her future, as Jasmine was. Being Jase, having a "real life," means to be simply free to pursue one's wants and desires when they occur. As Jase, she can "assert her economic freedom and the liberty to experience the true spirit of American urban life" (Roy 139). Economic freedom is not constructed in terms of seeking a living of one's own according to one's own terms, but only understood through purchasing things in order to be the kind of woman that Taylor perceives Jasmine to be. Mukherjee is equating free will and fulfillment with the abundance and rampant consumerism of an American lifestyle, in opposition to being Indian and suffering from poverty, chaos and lack of choice. Access to money and a comfortable class position are an essential part of Jasmine's Americanization which require that she forgo any link to her past and her ethnic identity which might complicate the smooth rise up the racial and economic ladder toward "mainstream" Americanness. This process smacks of the colonial dynamic from Jane Eyre in which the heroine's rise to a middle-class position is accompanied by a progression of incidents in which Jane's rightful destiny as an heiress is restored through a process of identifying and shedding her undesirable social and class differences through a language of racial metaphors.

Like Bronte's use of "other" women to showcase Jane's rise to wealth and power, Mukherjee also brings nonwhite women--other "day mummies"-- into Jasmine's circle on Claremont Avenue to distinguish Jasmine from the working-class roles they represent and resent. Letitia from Trinidad is a "grumbler" who feels her boss treats her like a slave, and Jamaica from Barbados is a "snob" with a "haughty British voice" who bristles at being treated as a "common person," "cries her heart out" every night, and is ashamed of working as a maid to Whites (158-59). Jasmine admits to the reader that she "felt

lucky" because the Hayeses "were family" (159). Letitia and Jamaica are racial and working-class peers, but Jasmine labels them as "grumbler" and "snob," suggesting that their complaints are unreasonable and they ought to accept their subservient roles. Although Jasmine attributes her difference "to luck," she has demonstrated the real difference is her ability to perform the role of willing, exotic caregiver who is eager to assimilate, making her pleasing to Whites.

Mukherjee cannot let Jasmine sympathize with these women, just as she couldn't have Jasmine relate to the Kanjobal women or the Vadheras, because in her novel "becoming American demands a rejection of both community and a political collectivity, and a validation of the official bourgeois authorization of America as the supreme melting pot" (Ray 230). To have Jasmine's loyalty, or emotional state, openly split between the Whites she admires and the "others" she relates to would be to question the premise that has carried her this far--that she can become an American by willingly jumping into the "supreme melting pot" and forgetting and neutralizing her ethnic self. By placing herself within the family circle, Jasmine, like Jane Eyre, signals that her true place is not in a working-class role as the racially marginalized (who seem to be at fault for their own unhappiness), but secure within the supremely American family itself.

When Wylie abandons Taylor and Duff in favor of her new life, Jasmine can at last begin to take her unofficial place as wife and mother in what she calls her "new, perfect family" (163). Jasmine says as this improvised family unit, they are "happy" (164) and remembers:

Taylor didn't want to change me. He didn't want to scour and sanitize the foreignness. My being different from Wylie or Kate didn't scare him. I changed because I wanted to. To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bulletproof vest, was to be a coward. On Claremont Avenue, in the Hayeses' big, clean brightly lit apartment, I bloomed from a diffident alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase (165).

With Taylor's wife Wylie, who might remind Jasmine of her "caregiver" status, out of the picture, Jasmine feels at last free to accept her position at Taylor's side. Interestingly, it is Jasmine who is compelled to "scour and sanitize" her own foreignness even though she doesn't have to (as she does with Bud) because Taylor is not frightened by her foreignness, but welcomes it. Crane explains that Taylor doesn't want to change Jasmine because he is "attracted to her exotic Otherness, which raises the possibility of a sub-conscious desire to colonize her" (126). Renaming her is evidence of this desire to colonize her, and Jasmine responds eagerly. Taylor clearly plays the role of the ambivalent colonizer and Jasmine the ambivalent colonized because while they both capitalize on her "exotic Otherness," it is a carefully domesticated, non-threatening "Otherness." The traces of Jasmine's ethnic identity are reduced to telling Duff Hindu tales and sharing her "skill with foreign cuisine" (Koshy 76). It is interesting to note that Mukherjee has Jasmine describe her ethnicity and her past in images of war--"bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bulletproof vest"--as if Jasmine, or any Third World individual, struggles with the threat of not properly killing off the past lest they frighten Americans with their difference. The message is that to retreat into, or hold on to, one's racial identity is cowardly and that one can either choose to remain "diffident alien" or become as assimilated and Americanized as "adventurous Jase." The language of this passage also suggests the Third World immigrant is facing the threat of metaphorical violence that might "sanitize" one's identity and Jasmine believes protecting one's identity and connection to the past is cowardly. This supports my analysis that describes Jasmine's assimilation as a form of violence and erasure of her ethnic self in which she is a willing participant.

Regardless of her earnest efforts to "scour and sanitize" her Indianness away, Jasmine's subsequent flight from New York to Iowa demonstrates that she cannot completely shrug off her status as an alien. Her past comes back in the form of New York hot dog vendor who is Sukhwinder, the Khalsa Lion who killed Prakash with a

bomb that was meant for her. Immediately, the American facade is stripped away and she is left vulnerable to the chaos and violence of the Third World. To Taylor's pleas that they call the police or they move away, Jasmine replies: " 'Don't you see that's impossible? I'm illegal here, he knows that. I can't come out and challenge him' " (168). She immediately decides to move west to Iowa, a place new to her and a place she once associated with "mystery" (151) and "miracles" (175). Jasmine's abrupt departure from Taylor's side recalls Jane Eyre's similar departure. Being forced to face her dark Indian past is like Jane's face to face encounter with the "other" in Bertha, an emblem of the Third World that has not been successfully been suppressed despite First World colonizing efforts. No matter how hard she has tried to move into the middle-class home where she belongs, Jasmine's illegal and alien status, like Jane's financial dependence on Rochester, prevents her from landing that position. Jasmine cannot claim her own Mr. Rochester, Taylor Hayes, until she has successfully erased all traces of her alterity and marginal social status. Like her other abrupt moves across cultural barriers, this act is tinged with a sublimated form of violence to the self, for it is "a sudden act of physically running away from one life to another, with all the guilt, painful memories, and the scars carried over into the next life" (Shankar 75). It is an acknowledgment and denial of the "guilt, painful memories and the scars" of the Indian past that she cannot accept. Fleeing to Iowa enacts a western geographical movement that seemingly will make her more "Western" and further distance her from the ethnic identity that she is trying so hard to eschew.

As I have illustrated here, chapters six through twenty-three represent the bulk of the novel and illustrate Jasmine's move away from Jyoti and toward an American life in New York and Iowa through a process of recognition and disavowal of her racial identity that repeats the similar colonial maneuvers in Jane Eyre. The three chapters directly proceeding Jasmine's recollection of this journey from Hanaspur to New York and then Iowa show us that her life in Iowa has succeeding in making her like Jane Eyre in name

and situation. However, I will show that the subtext of this section and the last sections of the novel, set in Iowa, suggest that Jasmine is highly ambivalent about the cultural colonization and personal compromises she has capitulated to along the way. In Iowa, Jasmine is known as Jane Ripplemeyer (although she and Bud do not marry) and is ensconced in her middle-class home in Ferndean-like isolation in Baden, Iowa. Jasmine is living the life of Jane Rochester: she has a crippled lover whom she must tend to (Bud), they have an adopted child, (Du), and a biological baby (she is pregnant with Bud's child). Jasmine's new name--Jane-- is a byproduct of her lover's determination to oust her Indianness, which is out of place in Iowa. Jasmine is willing to comply with this, recognizing that it makes her less threatening to him:

Bud calls me Jane. Me Bud, you her. I didn't get it at first. He Kids. Jane. Jane as in Jane Russell, not Jane as in Plain Jane. But Plain Jane is all I want to be. Plain Jane is a role, like any other. My genuine foreignness frightens him. I don't hold it against him. It frightens me, too. (22).

This confession is very revealing on several levels. Bud renames her to contain her difference, as Rochester did with Bertha, whose "foreignness" needed to be identified and controlled lest it threaten the consolidation of his English identity and that of Jane's. By associating Jane with Tarzan and Jane, Calamity Jane and Jane Russell, he attempts to Americanize her and sexualize her to secure his own masculinity and dominant position next to her. Thomas J. Carabas explains that these "American" Janes that he associates her with show that Bud is "never fully at ease with Jasmine's differentness . . . He tries to deal with Jasmine's foreignness by domesticating her, by making her seem more American than she is" (57). Carabas adds that there is a "colonial element in Bud's need to deny Jasmine's identity and to make her to conform to his needs" (57), and while this is true, it is also important to pay attention to Jasmine's mixed reportage of this "colonizing" move on the part of her lover. Jasmine claims she wants to be "Plain Jane" because it a generic, neutral female identity that whitewashes her own frightening "foreignness" and



allows her to conform to her surroundings. It is a "plain" name that suggests she has become a "nonentity" who is immersed into mainstream American society (Parekh 115). "Plain Jane" also evokes "plain" Jane Eyre, which is a role Jasmine has decided to live out in Baden, Iowa in a kind of self-colonizing move that obscures her "Jyoti" self. Her life in Iowa is replete with opportunities for her to participate in the negation and violence against her ethnic self and the suppression of her Third World sensibilities.

This suppression of the ethnic self is not completely successful, however, for immediately following her observation about becoming "Jane" is a single sentence: "In Baden, I am Jane. Almost." This statement, the "Almost," which no critics have noticed, signifies Jasmine's ambiguous position as the "other" who willingly appears to assimilate, but whose sense of difference simmers under the surface. In telling of her present life in Iowa, Jasmine frequently lets the reader see her mixed emotions about the new role she has conformed to--the same mix of "fear-resentment-contempt" (Caged Bird 40) that Maya Angelou spoke of secretly feeling toward Whites as a child. Samir Dayal labels Jasmine's fluctuating identity and her status as a "perpetual nomad and hybrid in the most radical sense" as "a form of resistance to colonial discourse" in the spirit of Bhabha's postcolonial "hybridity." However, a closer look at her life in Iowa reveals that Jasmine-as-Jane is emotionally torn by the colonized, American self she presents to the outside world and the "other" self that lingers inside her, leaving her "suspended between two worlds" (Bose 61). This shadowy, "othered" voice is clearly present underneath Jasmine's reportage of her life in Iowa. It expresses the sentiments of the woman who cannot completely be the happily assimilated immigrant or the Jane Eyre-like heroine whose life story concludes in a quiet, domestic scene, because of the compromises those roles require her to sustain.

Like Marguerite's internal dialogue of frustration and anger at witnessing bold acts of racism in Caged Bird, the reader can hear the buried frustration in Jasmine's telling examples of everyday life in Iowa which directly follow her qualifying statement that she

is "[a]lmost," but not quite, Jane. Jasmine tells of sitting in front of the television with Du, watching a news report showing the INS raid a shed filled with illegal Mexicans. The footage is followed by interviews with random citizens appearing to comment on the presence of immigrants in their environment: one woman says there are "too many of them" and another says she doesn't "know what to feel anymore" (whether she ought to feel sympathy or frustration, presumably) because her husband Steve lost his job and they're having trouble making "house and car payments," and she asks, " 'Are you listening, Mr. President?' " (23). She seems to be assuming that illegal immigrants take jobs from white Americans.

Jasmine watches quietly with Du, unsure as to his target when he mutters " 'Asshole' " during the raid (23), but unwilling to ask him. She projects her own mixed loyalties onto his comment: am I an illegal like them or an upstanding American citizen? After she hears the last woman's comments, she wants to express her outrage, but silences herself:

I wanted to shout to the lady, Mrs. Steve, Two years ago Bud got shot and will never walk again. Are you listening? What kind of crazy connection are you trying to make between Mexicans and car payments? Who's the victim here? And what about Du? Mr. President, what about Du? (23).

Jasmine's anger comes from realizing that Bud's loss outweighs "Mrs. Steve's" troubles, and his loss came at the hands of an angry white American, not an illegal immigrant. And she feels the "crazy connection" between Mexicans and car payments misses the point that Mexicans are the victims in need of help, not those responsible for the diminishment of a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. This touches on her own unexpressed guilt about "displacing" Bud's ex-wife Karen. Finally, in mentioning Du, Jasmine is pointing out that Du is an immigrant whose flight to the U.S. from the refugee camps in Vietnam saved him from death which makes his emigration permissible and heroic.

Furthermore, Jasmine identifies herself with Du and connects the two of them with the illegal immigrants, noting: "Du and me, we're the ones who didn't get caught" (23). Jasmine cannot ever completely become Jane because she is reminded of her own "otherness"---legal and otherwise--and secretly identifies with the immigrants, not the white Americans. However, she continually remains silent about her outrage at American narrow-minded thinking, reflecting her ambivalence toward white Americans. She wants to be "one of them," but she is acutely aware of their prejudices. She suppresses her desire "to shout" at the television not because she fears revealing her illegal status, but because she is not ready to give up her role as "Plain Jane," so quietly seething is her only option. Seething allows her to safely nurse her resentment about the suppression of her racial identity, and comparing herself with Du's situation as a "noble" refugee who escaped the clutches of the INS makes her self-chosen sacrifices also appear as heroic as his. Jasmine participates in an act of violence against her racial identity by withholding her anger about the prejudices around her and rationalizes her passivity by claiming the status of the noble, wronged victim.<sup>4</sup>

Directly following this incident is another moment in Iowa which reflects both Jasmine's suppressed anger and her (mis)identification with Du. Speaking privately with Mr. Skola, one of Du's high school teachers, Jasmine agrees with him that Du is a

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<sup>4</sup> Alpana Sharma Knippling questions Mukherjee's move to "homogenize" the "Other" by putting Du, the refugee, and Jasmine, the illegal immigrant, on the same plane without considering their social and political differences (153-155). By comparing her past to Du's past and speaking only with him about her the difficulties of her past Third World life, Jasmine attempts to develop a rapport with him and recognize their shared "otherness," which is again a reflection of her quiet ambivalence about being "Plain Jane." Being with Du is one way in which she can "sustain her identity as an 'immigrant' " (Parekh 115) among white, middle-class Iowans. In Baden, Du becomes her confidante as she tries to nurture their covert connection as "others": "I've told him my stories of India, the years between India and Iowa, hoping he'd share something with me. When they are over, he usually says, " 'That's wild. can I go now?' " (15). Knippling's claim that Mukherjee "homogenizes" Jasmine and Du doesn't consider the subtle way that Du resists Jasmine's attempt at unearthing his "racial" self for her own purposes. Du does not need to speak of his past as a token of his difference from those around him in order to feel better about himself and his "compromised" life in America, as Jasmine does. As Jasmine will discover--and learn from--Du knows how to live in America without losing touch with his past, and he eventually becomes a catalyst for her own break from the stifling life on the farm.

" 'quick study' " in his desire to " 'become all-American'." Jasmine silently reflects on what is lost in this process: "Once we start letting go--let go just one thing, like not wearing our normal clothes or a turban or not wearing a tika on the forehead--the rest goes on its own down a sinkhole" (24) and then recalls a "small shrine" that Du once kept in his room when he first arrived in America. By employing the word "we" rather than speaking of her own experience--literally burning her suitcase after arriving in Florida and adopting American clothes immediately in order to blend in--Jasmine, as narrator, is recognizing and defending her own easy "letting go" of her Indian past, reflecting the ambivalence that is just under the surface of her attempt to bury her past in a "sinkhole."

The rest of her interaction with Mr. Skola complicates this attitude when the teacher tells her that " 'I tried a little Vietnamese on him. . . and he just froze up.' "

Jasmine has an immediate reaction of repressed anger and bitterness:

I suppressed my shock, my disgust. This country has so many ways of humiliating, of disappointing. How dare you? What must he have thought? His history teacher in Baden, Iowa just happens to know a little street Vietnamese? Now where would he have picked it up? There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we are so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams. All this I should have explained to the red-faced, green-shirted, yellow-tied Mr. Skola. Instead, I said, 'Du's first few weeks with us, my husband thought we had an autistic child on our hands!' " (25).

This passage is important for many reasons. It demonstrates, once again, Jasmine's repression of her "disgust" at American thoughtlessness and its resulting "humiliating and disappointing" objectification of the outsider. Yet, in the prior paragraph, she admitted her own collusion in the process of burying her non-American self identity in a "sinkhole." In self-censoring her anger and merely offering a sympathetic remark to explain why Du " 'froze up,' " she is condoning the Western ignorance that secretly appalls her. Mr. Skola, it is assumed, fought for the United States in Vietnam; he is oblivious to the insensitivity of his use of Vietnamese and why it causes Du discomfort. Jasmine believes Skola's comments remind Du of American aggression in Vietnam and

the subsequent loss of his home and family. "The teacher reminds the refugee of his own role as colonial aggressor--the representative of the most recent line of colonizers" (Kehde 74). Perceiving Mr. Skola's ignorance as the "colonizer aggressor" prompts Jasmine to identify and sympathize with Du again and the Vietnamese past that Du has had to "murder" in order to "rebirth" himself as a "quick study" in mainstream America. This identification and sympathy is misleading, for Du's later move to California to be with his sister eventually demonstrates that his Vietnamese self has not been neatly dropped into a "sinkhole," in contrast to Jasmine's "murder" of one self after another in order to turn herself into the pleasing image of the assimilated immigrant. Du "froze up" at Mr. Skola's remark, thereby granting himself a "site of resistance" (Kehde 4), whereas Jasmine openly empathizes with the teacher's frustration, hiding her real resistance to his thoughtless attempts to reach Du. In this way, Jasmine is participating in the discourse of the colonizer who chooses to see and understand the "other" only in terms of difference and deviation from the central position of "normalcy."

Jasmine's willingness to repress her real responses to life in Iowa, and the disquietude that results, demonstrates Jasmine's increasingly uncomfortable awakening to the reality of her compromised, colonized identity as a Jane Eyre figure, bound to her supposed "happy ending." Bud owns a large farm, what Jasmine calls his "small empire of ownership" (6), while he also runs a bank and oversees the farm loans, doling out money and deciding the futures of his working-class neighbors. Mukherjee portrays Bud and the other white Iowans as the comfortably middle-class, privileged American whose lifestyle and attitudes are inextricably tied to their identity as Whites, just as she linked Jasmine's former poverty and helplessness to her Indian background. This racial binary permits Mukherjee to dramatize and externalize Jasmine's assimilation difficulties in terms of a clash of race and cultures. Yet my reading reveals that these clashes actually point to the real drama: Jasmine's internal struggle with the role she resigned herself to play: obedient, domesticated American.

After Jasmine's arrival in Iowa, Bud's mother, called Mother Ripplemeyer, takes an interest in Jasmine and assumes the young, displaced immigrant is a student. "I didn't disabuse her" Jasmine admits as Mother Ripplemeyer escorts her to the bank where Bud can give her a job. Upon her arrival, Bud exclaims, "Mother! Who have you brought us, a maharani? I hope you haven't eaten, Your Highness, because I'm just headed out the door" (31). From the beginning, then, Jasmine acquiesces to the roles that Iowans assign her. She doesn't correct Mother's assumption--or her charitable impulses--because it is more "acceptable" for her to be a jobless student rather than an illegal immigrant with no options. Bud's likening her to an Indian princess, and his subsequent pursuit of her for his domestic, sexual partner, transforms her from an "other" into an accessible middle-class woman whose exoticism is safely contained as sexual appeal. Bahri notes that Jasmine's lowly status in the "legal economy" as a "murderer, a forger, and larcenist" is overcome with her "high exchange rate" in the "libidinal economy" that wins her the "support and assistance of a series of men--Prakash, Taylor and Bud" (150). Jasmine seems unable to make any progress in the world without relying on her sexuality and femininity, and the libido of men, to restore her from a series of precarious legal, social and class positions. Securing her class and social status through adoption of an appealing racialized and sexualized identity conforms to the ambivalent colonial dynamic I mentioned earlier in which Jasmine learns to objectify her "difference" in order to conform to a pleasing stereotype for the male who is in control.

When Mukherjee constructs her heroine's "liberation" through this chain of man-pleasing roles, she is binding her supposedly free-thinking, rebellious protagonist to lifestyle choices that ultimately limit her movement and free expression. Bahri further comments on the "libidinal economy" on which Jasmine relies:

But the same libidinal economy that gives her valence as an attractive subject exposes her, as a woman, to the danger of being silenced, fixed and subjugated. Jasmine is continually extricated by the author from situations where she is becoming fixed in suppliant positions--whether it is as

compliant wife of Prakash, glorified maid to Devander Vadhera and his family, nanny to Taylor's daughter, or caregiver for a handicapped Bud (150).

This need to extricate Jasmine from "suppliant positions" helps explain why Mukherjee relies on images of violence to push Jasmine from one household to the next. She allows no room for Jasmine's self-reflexive exploration on the limits of her choices and instead allows abrupt action to be the driving force behind Jasmine's removal from the limited roles she finds herself in. Furthermore, the fact that Jasmine does not stay in any of these positions reveals that while she may willingly accept the role of the colonized in each of these relationships, on another level she is not satisfied with this continual game of charades. Bahri's claim that Jasmine is in danger of being "silenced, fixed and subjugated" is accurate, although it is important to note that the author has Jasmine position herself in these self-destructive roles only to suddenly give her an "escape hatch" in the form of a plot twist which delimits her opportunity for reflection on these internal processes.

Yet at various points in the text, the reader can hear Jasmine's acknowledgment that she is merely an actress playing roles with these various men. She recognizes to some extent that her relationship with Bud is one of artifice in which she will please him in order to secure her place in the middle-class home. After his injury, she is his caretaker and his sexual object. Jasmine reports that Bud "likes me to change roles, from caregiver to temptress, and I try to do it convincingly, walking differently, frowning, smiling" (31). Although she realizes she is merely acting to please him, she nevertheless tries to do it "convincingly" for she has learned to internalize the colonizer's expectations, and Bud's desires, for who she should be. While in Iowa, Jasmine learns to either to suppress her "otherness" so that it doesn't frighten Bud, or to perpetuate her own "exoticism" to titillate him by becoming the Indian princess he saw when she walked into the bank. Janet Powers describes Bud's attraction to Jasmine "as a form of Orientalism; to him she is exotic, mysterious, and intensely sexual" (103). Bud openly admits to

Jasmine that although she would have gotten a job in his bank if she hadn't been attractive, he wouldn't have pursued her as a lover (177). Taking on these various roles for different men becomes Jasmine's form of shaping the contours of her racial identity according to their desires for who she ought to be in their lives.

The other Whites in the Iowan community also perform a similar role of attempting to come to terms with the presence of Jasmine as "other." Jasmine describes Baden as a "basic German community" made of up descendants of immigrants who have safely blended into the American mainstream and are "fond of old ways of doing things. They're conservative people with a worldly outlook" (8). Jasmine offers no evidence of this "worldly" outlook, and appears to want to excuse their "conservative" attitude toward her presence. She confides as narrator that

the farmers are afraid to suggest I'm different. They've seen the aerograms I receive, the strange lettering I decipher. To them, alien knowledge means intelligence. They want to make me familiar. In a pinch, they'll admit that I might look a little different, that I'm a 'dark-haired girl' in a naturally blond country. I have a 'darkish complexion'. . . as though I might be Greek from one grandparent. I'm from a generic place, 'over there,' which might be Ireland, France or Italy (29).

What Jasmine labels as "conservatism" is the need for the assimilated descendants of immigrants to naturalize and neutralize Jasmine's differences so that her "alien knowledge" can be disarmed by a familiar, shared European heritage. Similar to Bud's renaming of Jasmine as all-American "Jane," they cannot fully comprehend or accept her foreignness so they seek to re-assign her according to European terms that bring her closer to an understanding of themselves. In this way, they are performing the role of the colonizer who wants to circumscribe the racial and cultural differences of "others" in order to contain the threat of those differences to undermine their own sense of mastery and control. In uncritically, matter-of-factly explaining their reaction to her, and by not challenging their assumptions, Jasmine is contributing to the misleading "Europe-ization" of her ethnic identity by the Whites around her.



For the Whites in the Baden community, it is more comfortable to see past Jasmine's foreignness and focus on the dark "other," those nameless people far away whom they can improve by exercising their power and privilege. The Lutheran Mission Relief Fund's quilting group raises money for needy people in Third World countries. Bud says that it depends on " 'the Christian conscience of strangers' " as to how much the quilt will raise and Mother replies, " 'Think how many people thirty-five dollars will feed out there' " (18). Bud and Mother are self-sacrificing armchair missionaries (Bud admits his desire to adopt Du came out of his desire to "make up for fifty years of 'selfishness' "), kind-hearted strangers with imperialist leanings toward helping those "out there" whom they do not have to know much about or experience directly, other than that they are those who "lack" what they have and who are essentially "different." Jasmine listens to their exchange without speaking and thinks: "Out there. I am not sure what Mother imagines. On the edge of the world, in flaming deserts, mangled jungles, squelchy swamps, missionaries save the needy. Out There, the darkness. But for me, for Du , In Here, safety. At least for now" (18). It is unclear whether Jasmine is empathizing with or criticizing Mother's Western stereotypes of the "darkness" of "Out There"--the uncivilized unknown that is the opposite of the well-lit, well-fed life they lead "In Here." Jasmine believes she and Du have escaped "Out There" but only "for now," which suggests the precarious, ambivalent position in which Jasmine views her own assimilation into the insulated American world "In Here." By adding the words "for now," Jasmine locates herself in a liminal and restless position, for they are appearing to live "In Here" but with the knowledge and memory of what it means to be "Out There." Florence D'Souza-Deleury claims that for both Du and Jasmine, "salvation lies in the fact of coming to terms with the Monsters and mastering the Demons that lurk Out There (in fact, a projection of the mind). This process of taming internal demons and widening the In Here appears several times" (12), as when Jasmine's memories continue to haunt her in the U.S.

This impulse D'Souza-Deleury describes, toward "taming" one's otherness by "mastering" one's memories and sensibilities from "Out There" (disturbingly represented in terms of the colonial's dehumanization of the other with "Monsters" and "Demons") is not the way toward salvation; it only results in emotional repression and psychological dissonance. These chapters in Iowa show that Jasmine's attempts to "widen" her life "In Here" don't relieve the "Monsters" and "Demons" of her past but actually become the source of psychic demons because she is aware that she is continually silencing herself and repressing her genuine reactions that would allow her to live more authentically by acknowledging her Indian self. True salvation for Du and Jasmine would come only if they can acknowledge and accept that "In Here" and "Out There" are only artificial barriers and false dichotomies within their minds and the minds of Americans which prevent them from fully integrating their past and present experiences and identities.

Jasmine's Iowa "demons"--the continual self-censorship of her Indian past, the suppression of her anger at American prejudice, and the denial of her "otherness"--begin to take their toll on Jasmine. While living with Bud, she experiences an "increasing sense of isolation and loss of self in this suffocating world" because she must hide her past and her Indianness. Jasmine admits that in Iowa, "Dullness is a kind of luxury" (4) because she is living the comfortable, middle-class life of the American housewife, and this uneventful, passive lifestyle is a far cry from the autonomy and freedom she claimed to be in search of. She claims she feels "potent, a goddess" by not marrying Bud and therefore saving him from the death that the astrologer predicted: "Bud was wounded in the war between my fate and my will" (9). However, this battle is only temporarily won by default, by leaving her suspended between her two worlds. Her current life means that she is in limbo, neither succumbing to fate nor obeying her own will just as she is neither willing to completely claim an assimilated American identity or fully acknowledge her Indian self.

As she narrates the details of her life in Iowa, the cracks in her "happily ever after" begin to show through as Jasmine, and the reader can see, "assimilation has its own ambiguities" (Dayal 8) and ambivalence. When Bud kisses the scar on her forehead, she thinks: "My third eye glows, a spotlight trained on lives to come. This isn't a vision to share with Bud. He is happy. And I am happy enough." Her scar and "third eye," the symbol of her refusal to give in to the astrologer's dour predictions and her closed-off Indian fate, reminds her of a future and a life of choice and free will that she seemed to want but that she has yet to find. Yet she is silent, as usual, so as not to disturb Bud's belief in her loyalty to his vision of their life. But the false sense of cheer in claiming to be "happy enough" is evidence of her attempt to be happy with her staid, domestic life and her growing discontent with this life.

Most Jasmine scholars have labeled her life in Iowa as evidence that Jasmine completely succumbs to the colonizing project of those around her, as in Grewal's assessment: "As exotic caregiver, homemaker and temptress, Jane is the model immigrant woman who says and does nothing to challenge the authority or ethnocentrism of the white American male" (191). Although Jasmine does not outwardly challenge the authority and ethnocentrism of the Americans around her, a subtle narrative voice belies her facade as the "model immigrant woman." At the end of chapter five, she lies next to Bud in bed in the dark, "listening" to the crops "pushing their way through the ground. This night I feel torn open like the hot, dry soil, parched" (33). Mukherjee follows this final sentence with several chapters in which Jasmine begins to tell her story from her childhood in India through her arrival in Iowa. In effect, the memories of the past are "pushing their way" through her consciousness, refusing to remain completely buried. She is "torn open" and "parched" by the continued denial of her Indianness and the shaky claim to being "happy enough." This metaphor of Jasmine's discontent--"torn open like the hot, dry soil"--evokes the violence against the self that she has been engaging in throughout her time in Iowa while also suggesting the forced cultivation of that which is

"natural." Clearly, no matter how badly Jasmine seems to want to blend in to an American lifestyle, this passage points to Bose's observation that despite Jasmine's eagerness to assimilate, it is not "painless to sever oneself from the roots and traditions of the culture that one comes from" ( 49). Living in Iowa, lying in the dark next to Bud, she feels exposed and unsatisfied with the choice she has made, although critics have never closely examined the subtle textual clues in these Iowa chapters that point to Jasmine's doubts and restlessness. Her dissatisfaction arose out of her choice to pursue her Jane Eyre-like dreams of success and betterment through blindly following a fantasy of what it means to live an American lifestyle and, in Bose's words, "sever" herself from the "roots and traditions" of her past.

The final three chapters of the novel take the reader back to Jasmine's life as the "Iowan Jane Eyre" so that Mukherjee can give her heroine a proper "happy ending" and resolve her discontent, but this ending actually further delays Jasmine's quest for a satisfying resolution to her psychic displacement as the ambivalent immigrant. In Iowa, Jasmine may appear to have successfully succumbed to the cultural colonization that this life seems to require of her, just as Jane must learn to accept and take on the role of obedient wife and colonizer at the end of Bronte's novel, but Jasmine's silent protests, her ambivalence about her choices, and the uncomfortable awareness of her compromises (which I explored earlier in the chapter) prove that she cannot completely deny the reality of her Indianness, her racial "otherness." Like Marguerite in Caged Bird, Jasmine is learning that denial of one's own dark skin cannot be sustained once one begins to move out into the world and confront the expectations and prejudices of those people she initially turned to in order to find acceptance and approval. Du provides the only way for her to find relief from these prejudices. At the end of the novel, Jasmine watches helplessly as Du leaves Iowa once his Vietnamese sister makes contact with him from California. Jasmine feels anger at his abandonment--"How *dare* he leave me alone out here?"--which speaks to the anger at herself for her own acts of self-denial which leave

her the solitary, lonely minority. Du's decision also awakens in her the idea that she might be able to leave the stifling whiteness of Iowa and act on her own behalf.

With Taylor sending hopeful but open-ended postcards with promises of reuniting them, and Du settled in California, Jasmine begins to think that she does not want to complicate her life by leaving. She thinks: "Maybe things *are* settling down all right. I think maybe I am Jane with my very own Mr. Rochester, and maybe it'll be okay for us to go to Missouri where the rules are looser and yield to the impulse in a drive-in chapel. I'm three months away from what the doctors assure me will be, in my wide-hipped way, an uneventful birth" (210). She is questioning her own restlessness and her dissatisfaction with Iowan life. The colonial legacy of Jane Eyre still lives on in her imagination, tempting her to settle for that novel's seemingly simple and peaceful happy ending of becoming wife to a wounded husband and mother to his child. But the doubt--the use of "maybes"--still lingers in the narrative voice, hinting at the shakiness of being able to maintain this facade.

The ending of Jasmine, when Taylor and Duff arrive in Iowa on their way to California and sweep Jasmine into the car with them, makes Bud appear to be her St. John Rivers, not her "very own Rochester." As she abandons the house and her life with Bud and runs toward their car, Jasmine thinks: "It isn't guilt I feel, it's relief. I realize I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane. Adventure, risk and transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through uncaulked windows" (214). Jasmine is no longer identifying with Jane Eyre because the "fighter, adapter" figure who represented the epitome of rebellion and female self-determination, has been shown to be, for this ethnic young woman, a colonial figure. A Jane-like life in Iowa has threatened to stifle Jasmine by what appears on the surface to be boredom and endless caretaking, but a careful reading of the text shows that what has made her unhappy is the unbearable weight of denying her real needs and her racial identity. However, in turning to the familiar lure of the American "frontier" to solve her problems and to provide a source of "adventure, risk

and transformation," Jasmine mistakenly equates freedom of movement and release from commitment as the path to finding and fulfilling one's inner self.

"Watch me reposition the stars," she whispers to the image of the astrologer who rises before her as she prepares to leave (214). This is her final challenge to the Indian fate that has dogged her from the first page of the novel; in running to Taylor and "repositioning" the stars, Jasmine is determined to wrench control of her life by leaving her Indian past completely behind her this time so that she can fully embrace the adventure of an unscripted future and listen only to her own desires. The last sentence of the novel reverberates with Jasmine's intention: "I am out the door and in the potholed and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor, greedy with wants and reckless with hope" (214). One difficulty with this new persona, this resolution of the "wanting" self, is that it doesn't define any particular want. Jasmine has believed in America, and in the power of becoming an American, only in terms of the country--and herself--as an endless font of choice and personal potential with no certain goal in mind. The promise of America is centered solely on an opposition to the lack of potential, possibility and choice that India--and now Iowa--represented to her.

This aimlessness has allowed her to be renamed and refigured in the image that men have for her as they provide her with opportunities to take a role in their own lives and goals. Therefore, another difficulty with Jasmine's flight into Taylor's arms in the end is that she is once again turning to a man to rescue her from a difficult and unpleasant life situation. "Defined against male figures, Jasmine remains the object of male violence, desires and lust, and is unable at the end to break the cycle that restrains her from coming into her own" (Aneja 77). The cycle of names given to the young Jyoti by men--Jasmine, Jase and Jane--supports this idea that our heroine is an "object of violence, desire and lust" as Aneja asserts and that by never openly claiming a place and a voice for herself as a subject with her own desires and opinions and dreams, Jasmine is never able to come "into her own." Like Jane Eyre's retreat into the obscure homestead of Ferndean as

mother and wife, Jasmine's move into Taylor's car allows for the illusion of movement and self-fulfillment while actually constricting her choices by merely being a choice between men.

By abandoning Bud, the man she thought was her "Mr. Rochester," Jasmine makes him her St. John Rivers and she embraces the romantic illusion of a "real" Mr. Rochester who promises to take her to California, to complete her "Western" transformation. In one of the final statements of the novel, Jasmine justifies her abandonment of Bud: "I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness." (213-14). This passage captures the ambivalence that pervades the novel. Life with Bud, which originally represented Jasmine's access to the domestic bliss and middle-class life of Jane Eyre, eventually became a colonial trap. Aneja critiques this passage this way: "This dichotomy of west and east reinforces the oppositional discourse that operates with the entire text" and positions "cultural differences" in a "hierarchical pattern" (77). This supports my analysis of the novel in which India and American are set up as a binary, with India as a burden that she must rid herself of in order to claim the "promise" of America. Jasmine's "old-world dutifulness" refers to both the Indian self-sacrificing womanhood that she refuses to capitulate to by tending to Bud's needs, and on a subtextual level, to the "old-world" colonial values and stereotypes which would have her dutifully take her place as the obedient "other." The "promise of America" is not America itself, but the dream of reinvention and self-determination that she erroneously assumes will honor her needs by not saddling her with "otherness" or Indianness or duty. As long as she builds up these two choices in this way and denies her past and turns to this mythic but empty promise--and to men to help her get it--she will never find contentment within herself.

I have shown that Jasmine's movement from Jyoti of Hanaspur to Jane Ripplemeyer of Iowa and beyond, which critics heralded as a triumphant transformation of the self, contains the sometimes violent colonial dynamic that I illustrated as the

subtext of Jane Eyre's move into social prosperity. Carter-Sanborn notes this connection between both novels when she states that just as Jane Eyre's "new female domestic identity" seems to be purchased upon the "violent repression of colonial subjectivity as figured by Bertha Mason," we must question "whether Jyoti-Jasmine-Jane's 'discovery' of an American selfhood covers up a similar complicity in the elision of the 'third world' women Mukherjee's narrator purportedly speaks as and for" (435). There is clearly a connection between Jane Eyre's project of social ascension and Jasmine's quest for an "American selfhood" grounded in the "elision" of her Third World subjectivity and the subjectivity of other immigrants and non-Anglo characters. However, as my chapter has demonstrated, this "elision" of the presence of the "other" is not comprehensive. Jasmine's participation in her own assimilation is ambivalent not only because it is constructed around a binary built on the recognition and disavowal of her Indian identity, but because this Indian identity and its sensibilities cannot be completely smothered. The discontented voice of the "other" is subtly apparent in Jasmine's internal narrative throughout this novel and it contests those externalized and internalized forces that would have her lose herself within a text of self-improvement and "Westernization," assimilation and personal progress within a colonial discourse. Yet, as the ending demonstrates, Mukherjee has created no psychic space for her heroine to respect and interpret this suppressed internal voice and its impulses. Jasmine is at last ready to move beyond the self-betraying exile of living as a Jane Eyre-like figure but is clearly not able to grant authority to her Indian selfhood and subjectivity, and so, through the ending, remains suspended in a colonial dichotomy that prevents her from becoming an enlightened, empowered postcolonial heroine.



## CHAPTER FOUR

Looking back at her childhood fascination with the novels of the Bronte sisters, Michelle Cliff wonders what it means when the Jamaican tomboy "finds herself drawn to Bertha when she is told to identify with Jane" ("Daughter" 44). Although Cliff is speculating about her own background, I believe her rhetorical question is addressed in her portrayal of the fictional Clare Savage in her 1987 novel No Telephone to Heaven. Clare's decision to identify with Bertha is her complicated response to the cultural and social forces that would have her choose between being "tame" Jane or "wild" Bertha. Jamaica Kincaid's 1990 novel Lucy also indirectly replies to Cliff's question by focusing on a young West Indian woman's psychological battles that arise from her colonial upbringing. Lucy's colonial past continues to shadow her as she attempts to establish an independent life and enact a social transformation that originally seems to be patterned after that of Jane Eyre's. These two novels treat the postcolonial female's "Jane Eyre dilemma" with a directness and sophistication that was lacking in the work of Maya Angelou and Bharati Mukherjee. This chapter will explore the ways in which the ambivalence of the young postcolonial female and her complex psychological reaction to oppressive forces--which I outlined as the subtext in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings and Jasmine--are present in No Telephone and Lucy in order to convey the difficult and ambiguous task of decolonizing the self.

I will continue to employ Homi Bhabha's analysis of the colonial encounter that I used in my first three chapters. Bhabha asserts that ambivalence is central to a theory of colonial discourse because this discourse hinges upon the ironies of mimicry in which there is the "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" ("mimicry" 86) in order to both contain and distance the threat of that Other. For the protagonists I have examined in earlier chapters and for Clare and Lucy, who are growing up as the "Other," the challenge is to come to terms

with the colonial ideologies that would render them as the powerless object. Jane Eyre is a "subject of difference" who symbolizes the colonial ideal of female identity that paradoxically serves as both opportunity for the self and escape from the self. It's how they come to terms--or refuse to come to terms--with the ambivalence of wanting to be, and yet not able to be, Bronte's heroine that determines how well they are able to transcend the various modes of colonial discourse which would have them remain the object, the "other." This chapter will examine how Lucy and Clare each handle their encounter with Jane Eyre and the racial, social and cultural power hierarchies it represents.

In No Telephone To Heaven, Clare Savage is a light-skinned Jamaican creole.<sup>1</sup> who ultimately chooses to resolve the ambivalence brought on by her mixed-race heritage and her polarized family background by joining a guerrilla group that chooses violence to resist cultural colonization, the neocolonial "takeover" of her homeland and its history. The novel portrays the many ways in which Clare suffers in silence as she tries to negotiate her multiple positions within the historical and social boundaries of class, race and gender that shift as she moves from Jamaica, the United States, to England and back to Jamaica. For much of the novel, she is confused about who she is and where she belongs. As the light-skinned granddaughter of a plantation owner (56) whose class and color grants her social privilege in the Caribbean but renders her a marginal figure in the U.S. and England. Clare is "both colonizer and colonized" (Renk 25).

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<sup>1</sup> In her discussion of No Telephone, Judith Raiskin points out the "unstable" definition of a creole. Depending on the context in which the term is used it can "signify full European ancestry (implying a claim of 'unsullied' whiteness), mixed 'racial' ancestry resulting from colonialism (usually implying some European ancestry mixed with African, Amerindian, or other so-called racial groups, depending on location), or syncretic cultural and linguistic practices . . . The conflicting meanings embedded in this term consequently cast the surrounding colonial vocabulary of nationalist and racial identity into confusion as well" (Snow 3). Clare and mixed-race parents fall into Raiskin's second definition of a creole and experience great difficulty in resisting the bias of the "colonial vocabulary" which continually attempts to fix them within a class and race hierarchy in order to resolve any contradictions or "cultural confusion" their creoleness represents. As my chapter shows, this difficulty prohibits them from challenging colonial discourse and limits their life choices.

Throughout the novel, Clare understands her dual legacy in oppositional terms which are modeled by her parents' life choices. Although her parents are the products of racial mixing in the Caribbean, they each decide to identify themselves with one race. In the novel, Clare's father, Boy Savage, comes to represent the "light-skinned conquerors" and her mother Kitty represents "the darker-skinned natives" (Bost 683). Clare eventually forgoes an identification with Jane in order to align herself with Bertha and dies in an act of resistance against the European and American neocolonizers; the novel can be read as Cliff's story of how one postcolonial individual escapes the psychic stress of her ambiguous social position and the ambivalence of her upbringing. In choosing to see herself as Bertha and attempting to restore her connection to the black history of her maternal family, Clare is able to make a self-defining choice, but this choice prevents her from challenging and transcending the dichotomies that constructed her as a colonial "other" in the first place.

In Kincaid's novel, Lucy is a young woman from a West Indian-like island who, like Clare, reaches adolescence with a painful sense of alienation and loss that is tied to her family background and the limiting racial, gender and class restrictions that were part of a childhood marked by imperialism. Lucy chooses to escape these limits by seeking refuge in a new life in North America where she will work as an au pair to a wealthy white family. What she comes to realize, however, is that she cannot leave behind her home and her colonial past because it continues to shape her sense of who she is. Furthermore, this past dictates how she deals with the neocolonial dynamics<sup>2</sup>

at home and in the "new world" of North America that work to position her as an "other." My analysis demonstrates how Lucy first denies, but then eventually begins to accept, her

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<sup>2</sup> In this chapter I use the term "neocolonial" to represent the imperialist ideologies that still dominate social and political relationships in the Caribbean and the U.S. and England. Kathleen J. Renk notes that writers such as Cliff and Kincaid "suggest that neocolonial forces, such as the United States, picked up where England left off" and they portray the Caribbean most accurately when showing that "independence has not been fully achieved" and "the remnants of colonialism still exist in cultural, educational, and political practices" (2). It is how these young women deal with neocolonialism and the "remnants of colonialism" at home and abroad that my chapter addresses.

ambivalence as a postcolonial woman who is psychically split by her complicated connection to her mother and the motherland, England. Lucy differs from Clare in that Lucy is able to learn to reject the dichotomous discourse that would make her either an obedient colonial figure or an angry but powerless colonized subject. Lucy's experiences and growing self-awareness allow her to gradually challenge the colonizer's construction of her self-image, and image of the colonizer figure, as opposites. Kincaid offers an optimistic solution to the postcolonial female's mixed loyalties to Jane and Bertha by demonstrating how Lucy begins to see the limits of both choices and then makes a move toward becoming the heroine of her own life story.

Originally, Lucy chooses the stance of active resistance that Clare chooses: if life circumstances will not let her seek escape by becoming Jane, then she will take a contentious, Bertha-like stance and embrace the name and attitude of "Lucifer." However, this choice means that she remains trapped within the colonial constructions of race, class and gender that make her an angry victim and threaten her bid for independence and authentic self-expression. Lucy gradually recognizes the realities that lie behind the facade and stereotypes that she and others create which leads her to begin to accept the difficult emotions--anger, love, ambivalence, sadness, loss--that will pave the way toward bridging her difficult past and present and her uncertain future.

My comparison of the novels includes an examination of each protagonist's powerful but problematic connection to her biological mother and the "mother country," England. In grappling with the nurturing yet threatening presence of these mothers in their lives, Clare and Lucy begin to work through their ambivalence toward their maternal and cultural inheritance and make a move toward emotional autonomy. Moira Ferguson asserts that in Kincaid's fiction, her protagonists' relationships to their homes and to their mothers are "conjoined," but "this relationship is always fraught with fear, alienation and ambivalence, is always about separation" (*Kincaid* 2). This also applies to *No Telephone*, in which we watch Clare struggle to work out her ambivalent feelings toward Jamaica

and her mother, Kitty, who abandoned her in the United States to return home with her darker-skinned sister Jennie. Lucy and Clare each deal with their "fear, alienation and ambivalence" toward the colonial motherland England through a process of uneasy separation that eventually allows them to clarify their connection to their biological mothers. Kathleen J. Renk writes that the ambivalent mother-daughter is prevalent in Caribbean women's fiction, like that of Kincaid's, because it reflects the Afro-Creole Caribbean culture in which the daughter feels torn between the strong and powerful "African mother-centered culture" and the expectations and influence of the Victorian "mother," England (47). In both texts, the daughters are confused and conflicted by their mothers' capitulation to the colonizer's definitions despite their mother's Afrocentric identity.

Both daughters resolve this confusing dual inheritance from the biological mother and the colonial motherland with the assistance of another character. Lucy has a substitute mother in her employer Mariah, who becomes a way for Lucy to continue to work out her relationship with her absent mother. In comparing Mariah to her own mother, "Lucy uses Mariah as a way of redefining herself against what has seemed a magical, omnipotent maternal power" (Simmons 129). As Lucy begins to see Mariah with some distance and appreciate their friendship, she can reconceive her responses and relationship to the powerful forces of imperialism and the biological mother. In No Telephone, Harry/Harriet is Clare's "friend, confidant and alter-ego" (Chin 138) who helps Clare restore her split consciousness by showing her how to re-connect with her maternal roots. It is Harry/Harriet who leads Clare to turn away from the colonial motherland and devote her life and her grandmother's land to the guerrilla group, rejecting one mother in favor of the other.

These two novels can be seen as an antidote to the sustained denial and repressed ambivalence that haunted the troubled protagonists in the work of Angelou and Mukherjee. Cliff and Kincaid portray the contours and complexity of the postcolonial

female's political, emotional and social reality with more authorial awareness and textual consistency than either Angelou or Mukherjee, although Cliff and Kincaid's final messages are quite different from each other. Lucy ultimately offers a more optimistic response to the postcolonial female's dilemma than No Telephone. Whereas Clare ends up dying in the act of rebellion, sending a mixed message about the choice of resisting imperialist forces, Lucy is able to confront and begin to come to terms with the forces and impulses that pulled her between silent and shameful acquiescence and bitter and defiant rebellion. Kincaid's ending, in which Lucy begins to accept and grieve a life that is inextricably bound by her colonial upbringing, allows her protagonist the potential for challenging the seemingly omnipotent imperialist ideologies that earlier dictated her sense of self. The valuable perspective that Cliff provides to her readers is an expanded view of the postcolonial experience that incorporates the subjectivity of many characters within an historical framework that includes racial and social upheaval of the U.S. in the 1960's to Jamaican resistance fighters of the 1970's. The focus on Clare Savage, and the dynamics of her family history, allow Cliff to give political messages a human context. Raitskin declares that Clare's dilemma illustrates that "race is not an essential biological category but one intricately connected to class and political choice," and Clare's challenge is to negotiate "between assigned place and political choice" (Snow 194). Cliff portrays a protagonist whose racial identity and social position shifts according to the various cultural and geographic contexts she finds herself in and she believes that it is only through extreme political action that she can defy the limits of essentialist racist definitions. As this chapter will demonstrate, Clare does not fully come to appreciate the complex social construction of her racial and class position, and her political choice requires personal sacrifices that prevent her from embracing the full range of her racial history and successfully defying those who would keep her in an "assigned place."

Although the two novels are quite different in terms of scope and voice, No Telephone and Lucy share a nonlinear narrative style that supports the postcolonial

sensibility of the texts as a whole in which the present is inevitably shaped by the past. No Telephone begins with a glimpse of Clare's final journey into the Jamaica mountainside and then moves back and forth through time, exploring the personal crises and choices of each of Clare's parents, the historical perspective of various people and cultures, including the colonizers' experiences, which shaped the present condition of Jamaica and the Caribbean as a whole. Renk explains that post-independent women writers of the Caribbean like Cliff "employ the subjective imagination to break the hourglass of linear and narrative time and delve into the past and the collective memory to see, hear and touch the lives of the people of the past" ( 21). Shuttling between past and present, and the multiple perspectives of various characters, No Telephone's third-person, disjunctive narrative style, which eventually circles the reader back to the opening scene for its conclusion, reveals the "collective memory" and the people of the past who influenced a young woman like Clare and then brought her to the mountainside.

In Lucy, Kincaid achieves a similar bridging of the past and present but explores this on the personal psychological level, rather than the collective, political level. She presents a year in the life of her protagonist but, as narrator, Lucy interrupts her observations about her new environment with stream-of-consciousness associations which connect her present life to her personal history. Both novels share a nonlinear narrative which conveys the multi-textured interior life of the postcolonial individual who cannot relegate her colonial background to being "post" for it remains active part of her consciousness as she interacts with the neocolonial forces around herself. Emilia Ippolito believes that a "fragmented structure" is a hallmark of Caribbean women's writing, for it is a "representation of complex psychological states produced by conflicting pressures on the female consciousness" (8). Bringing the "complex psychological states" of their heroines to the surface of the text is quite different from the works I examined by Bronte, Angelou and Mukherjee in which an inconsistent narrative voice and observations, as well as temporal leaps in the text, point to discrepancies between the logic of the

narrator's or protagonist's choices and the author's interests and intentions. The contradictions and tensions in the lives of Cliff's and Kincaid's subjects illustrate the particular struggles and emotionally tangled predicaments of their postcolonial heroines. Kincaid's Lucy attempts to distance herself from her painful past and a powerful mother but discovers that her expectations and experiences in the present are informed by her difficult childhood that granted her both anger and wisdom. In Cliff's novel, the young Clare battles the contradictory messages she received about herself and her place in the world and, in the end, makes a choice about where to belong, but she ends up dead. Both novels end with their protagonists on the brink of personal change or political revolution that does not guarantee the fulfillment they seem to be craving throughout their journeys; it is the ambivalence coded in the final scenes that I will explore as essential to understanding the characters as a whole.

Another distinction between Cliff and Kincaid and the writers I discussed in earlier chapters is the heightened self awareness that the Afro-Caribbean writers bring to their task as authors. Cliff is quite clear about the autobiographical nature of her work and about how her life shapes her texts. Critics have been quick to categorize Clare as a "semi-autobiographical" figure (Bost 681) and to label, or refuse to label, Cliff according to narrow national or racial categories, while others, like Maria Helena Lima, have problematically assumed that Clare's choices in No Telephone directly reflect Cliff's attitudes as a political author (O'Driscoll 70). In interviews, Cliff has been emphatic about how her life and interests inform her work but do not wholly determine the text's final shape. She calls herself a "political author" (Schwartz) and insists that her writing springs from the multiple perspectives that come from being an "Afro-Caribbean, Indian (Arawak and Carib), African, European" woman. She explains that Clare is not an autobiographical figure, but "an amalgam of myself and others. Eventually, she becomes herself alone. Bertha Rochester is among her ancestors" ("Daughter" 41). While Cliff seems astute at separating herself from her fictional protagonist, it is problematic to



assume that Clare "becomes herself alone" while also asserting her "ancestor" is Bertha Rochester. Bertha's creole persona is loaded with cultural and textual baggage that dictates that Clare cannot claim her unique heterogeneous racial background as comfortably and confidently as Cliff does in interviews. In fact, as my analysis will show, Clare's difficulties are centered in her inability to fully accept the disparate cultural and racial legacies in her life and are further complicated by her decision to "read" herself and her condition in terms of Bronte's Bertha Rochester.

Kincaid has also been vocal in interviews about her intentions behind the character Lucy. Lucy has often been categorized as a sequel to Kincaid's 1983 novel Annie John. James Nagel goes so far as to call the novels a two-volume "feminine Bildungsroman" (246) although he ignores the glaring differences between the protagonists and the ambiguous endings of both books that subvert the Bildungsroman genre which traditionally rewards the main character with social integration and successful individuation in the end. Kincaid's earlier novel tells the story of Annie John's colonized childhood on a small Caribbean island in the 1950's. At the end of the novel, Annie John leaves home for an education in London, determined to escape the twin yokes of family and culture that threaten to overwhelm her, just as Lucy leaves for North America to escape the pressures of her life. Although, as Nagel phrases it, there are "parallels that make them extremely close," it is significant to note that each book has its own protagonist (3). Kincaid admits to the autobiographical influence in these works but insists that Annie John and Lucy are not meant to be the same character at different points in one girl's life: "It's a continuation only in the sense that it's about my life and it's the same life I'm writing about, but they weren't meant to be the same person at all. In any case, a key to Lucy is the name Lucifer and she couldn't be called Annie at all" (Vorda 100). Like Cliff, Kincaid is acutely aware of how her life shapes, but does not determine, her fiction and her creation of protagonists. My reading of Lucy will explore the link between Lucy and Annie John in their indirect references to Charlotte Bronte. I will tie

this to an examination of the name "Lucifer" and explain how these shape Lucy's quest to separate herself from the childhood experiences that continue to haunt her.

Whereas Cliff does not seem fully aware of the implications of naming Bertha as Clare's "ancestry," Kincaid appreciates the contradictions and difficulties concerning Jane Eyre's influence in her life as an author--and in Lucy's imagination. As a child, Kincaid was fascinated with the reference to "gloaming" in Bronte's novel because this was not part of her own real life experience. Kincaid later used the term in an early work of fiction and thereby appropriated it for her own purposes, which "freed her of an obsession with a certain kind of language" that had both alienated and fascinated her while she was growing up (Bonetti 30). This is quite different from the tensions I explored in Caged Bird and Jasmine, in which the writer's portrayal of childhood incidents--including a fascination with Jane Eyre-- is contradicted by the adult protagonists' indirect expressions of suppressed denial, anger and ambivalence, which are the emotions that Kincaid says she taps into in order to bring honesty to her writing (Perry 133).

Jane Eyre is not merely a source of childhood fascination and an escape vehicle for Clare and Lucy, but reflects a cultural paradigm these characters and authors are compelled to reinvest with their own meanings. Cliff's and Kincaid's invocation of the Bronte text provides insight into their exploration and explanation of their protagonists' particular psychic struggles with their colonial heritage, which includes an English literary heritage. Maria Helena Lima asserts that both Cliff's Clare and Kincaid's Annie John understand their lives in terms of Bronte's novel, although she does not explicate this textual connection fully and connect it to Lucy, as I will do. Lima writes:

Clare, like Jamaica Kincaid's Annie John, exists in dialogue with Jane Eyre. Like Jane Eyre, Clare is motherless, she is solitary and left to wander, having 'no relations to speak of except [like Jane Eyre] an uncle across the water'. . . Cliff, however, goes a step further than Kincaid and incorporates Bertha Mason into Clare's intertextual identity (38).

Lima understands that part of Clare's path toward claiming a self identity is to move beyond the comforting fantasy that Jane Eyre promises and to see her racial similarity to Bertha. However, Lima doesn't seem to notice that by intertextually incorporating Bertha Mason into Clare's search for identity, Cliff is trading one stereotype for another. This chapter will fill in the gap in scholarly discussions of the novel by exploring the ramifications of Clare's choice of Bertha over Jane. My analysis of Lucy will explain how the novel furthers the "dialogue" that Lima says exists between Annie John and Jane Eyre so that the heroine is ultimately forced to reconsider the appropriateness of her relationship to the Bronte text and the image of English womanhood it promotes.

Jane Eyre first appears in chapter five of No Telephone when Clare travels to London to begin what the narrator describes as her "life-alone" (109). Clare seeks a comfortable emotional and physical place to resolve the alienation she feels in New York where her father urges her to "pass" and blend into the white mainstream. Kitty's sudden death in Jamaica severs Clare's ties to her black maternal roots. Clare turns to England to replace the loss of her biological mother and relieve the confusion of living with her father; she plans to live an independent "life-alone" in the arms of the mother country. Cliff begins the chapter this way:

Clare Savage began her life-alone. Choosing London with the logic of a creole. This was the mother-country. The country by whose grace her people existed in the first place. Her place could be here. America behind her, way-station. This was natural (109).

The "logic of a creole" refers to Clare's impulses that arise from her mixed race heritage and her colonized childhood. Boy is descended from the white family of plantation owner Judge Savage and an Indian and African mistress, and Kitty is of similar mixed ancestry, although her family does not "claim" their white roots (Raishin, Snow 183). Moving to London permits Clare to forget the torn loyalties that haunted her life in America (the "way-station" where she could not find a racial or cultural place) and to embrace England where she can "naturally" accept her place in the mother-country that gave meaning and

"graced" the lives of the colonized in the Caribbean. Choosing London with the "logic of a creole" comes to be the "logic" of the postcolonial individual who chooses one strand of her cultural or racial melange to simplify her identity and to give her life direction. Raitskin notes that "the creole position is highly ambivalent, situated as it is between national, racial and linguistic identities" (Snow 12). Clare is clearly searching to resolve her in-between status and embrace one of her "national, racial and linguistic identities." She rejects this "ambivalent" position as the creole and attempts to claim a "natural" and definite place (as the obedient, colonized subject in England) for herself in order to combat the confusion of being "other" or being "both/and" the colonizer and the colonized.

Part of Clare's plan to seek comfort in the arms of the mother-country involves immersing herself into the museums and cultural artifacts that make up a history of English civilization, including reading Jane Eyre. But Clare's total escape into English culture is not complete, for she is haunted by what she has decided to give up--her ties to her past, her Caribbean roots and her maternal ancestry. The narrator reports: "The days went by. The nights were more difficult" (114) and then follows with Clare reading Jane Eyre one night. Clare is aroused from her reading reverie by the sound of someone arriving at the front door of the boarding house, and she is certain that it is a person "carrying presents" for her, coming from "a long way away" and she eagerly goes to meet the visitor before realizing that it is merely an "African student" whom the landlady must turn away because of no vacancies (114-115). Clare retreats to her room, startled by her presumption that someone would arrive for her, for she tells herself: "Who was there in the world to seek her out in this room? No one. Not really" (115). Then she opens up Jane Eyre and Cliff reveals what Clare had been reading when she heard the visitor arrive: " 'My daughter, flee temptation.' 'Mother, I will, ' Jane responded, as the moon turned to woman" (115).

This scene points to the psychological pressures Clare is under while living in London. Although she has turned to the mother-country to heal the wounds of losing her tie to her biological mother, Clare secretly longs to be released from her self-imposed exile and loneliness. Hearing the visitor arrive while reading Jane Eyre triggers these deeper wants and Clare expects to be comforted and directed from her exile the way that Jane is suddenly given direction by the "moon mother" to escape the temptation of becoming Rochester's mistress. Clare wants someone to direct her from the "temptation" of losing herself to life in London and the colonizing ideologies it represents; like Jane, she is in danger of compromising her independence by surrendering to forces that represent a comfortable trap.

The African student, representative of her maternal black roots, is turned away by the English landlady, suggesting there is "no room" for this part of Clare's life as long as Clare is the acquiescing daughter of England. Clare retreats to her room, reminding herself that "no one" in the world would come and seek her out and she turns back to Jane Eyre and the "moon mother" passage, which suddenly offers an explanation and comfort for her impulsive reaction to the visitor: "The fiction had tricked her. Drawn her in so that she became Jane" (116). Clare uses the Victorian novel to explain away her reaction to the visitor and rationalize her deep feelings of loneliness. Like Marguerite in Caged Bird, Clare identifies with Bronte's noble heroine in order to give her suffering a noble cast and to avoid dealing with her real deprivations: "The parallels were there. Was she not heroic Jane? Betrayed. Left to wander. Solitary. Motherless. Yes, and with no relations to speak of except an uncle across the water. She occupied her mind" (116). Clare turns her self-chosen exile--and the loss of Kitty-- into a burden and betrayal that she must suffer with the same "heroic" attitude that Jane adopts. Her "life-alone" in the mother-country is a confirmation of Jane Eyre-esque status, a proper English self that obscures her creole identity and her feelings of loss. By subscribing to the persona of Jane, Clare can escape the anxiety of "otherness" and the uncertainty of the in-betweenness of being the

colonized who suffers the emotional and psychological loss of fully assimilating into English culture.

However, like Angelou's Marguerite and Mukherjee's Jasmine, Clare finds only temporary comfort in her identification with Jane Eyre because her racial identity ultimately cannot be denied. After she is "Comforted for a time" with the idea that her plight makes her like Jane, Clare "came to":

Then, with a sharpness, reprimanded herself. No, she told herself. No, she could not be Jane. Small and pale. English. No, she paused. No, my girl, try Bertha. Wild-named Bertha. Clare thought of her father. Forever after her to train her hair. His visions of orderly pageboy. . . She held to her curls, which turned kinks in the damp of London. Beloved racial characteristic. Her only sign, except for dark spaces here and there where melanin touched her. Yes, Bertha was closer to the mark. Captive. Ragout. Mixture. Confused. Jamaican. Caliban. Carib. Cannibal. Cimarron. All Bertha. All Clare (116).

This passage provides insight into the novel as a whole in demonstrating Clare's conception of her choices: she can either lose herself in the fantasy of white English womanhood and noble suffering that Jane represents or she can decide that she is the untamed "other" that Bertha symbolizes. When Clare "reprimands" herself that she cannot be the "small and pale" Jane because of her untamed hair and the "dark spaces" on her skin, she is classifying herself according to her physical characteristics while also reading those characteristics according to Bronte's novel. The creole Bertha Rochester is determined to be the colonized, the dark "other" so that Rochester, the colonizer, may separate and define his own white English identity (as well as Jane's) in opposition to her. The racial and cultural distinctions Clare makes between Jane and Bertha in order to classify her own skin as "dark" and her hair as untamed precludes her acceptance of her real cultural and racial position as part Jane and part Bertha.

Clare has learned to classify herself like this because, as we see throughout the novel, her relationship with her parents and her interactions with people across cultures teach her that she must choose between binaries: white or black, English or Jamaican,

Jane or Bertha. The engagement with a colonial discourse, as it is articulated by Bhabha, dictates either that Clare assimilate and take on the role of the colonizer by displacing and disguising those parts of her that would be "other" (as Jane Eyre does and as Clare's father urges her to do when he wants her to "tame" her wild hair) or that she accept her position as the opposing Other, one who is the "*subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" ("mimicry" 86). Clare is "not quite" Jane because of the taint of her skin, and her untamed hair, which leaves her, she believes, with the only choice of being Bertha. The way in which Cliff has Clare describe herself in this passage, and the order in which these words are presented, is significant: "Captive. Ragout. Mixture. Confused. Jamaican. Caliban. Carib. Cannibal. Cimarron. All Bertha. All Clare." The first three words represent Clare's awareness that she, and Bertha, are a blend of two cultures and two races, albeit due to colonial influence ("Captive"). However, this also means that they are "Confused," which is only resolved when Clare chooses to see herself in a chain of identifiers that moves her backward in time from the present day ("Jamaica") to connect her with some of her ancestors, the precolonial native inhabitants of the West Indies. This chain--"Caliban" to "Carib" to "Cannibal" to "Cimarron"--evokes the originary, undeniable "wildness" of the West Indies and her family background that Clare is claiming for herself. Clare's labeling of herself and Bertha as "Confused" creoles evolves quickly into completely categorizing themselves "All Bertha. All Clare"--as pure symbols of their indigenous and untamed Caribbean roots.

This passage is key to understanding Clare's past within the novel and her choices that subsequently take her from London to Jamaica. Clare has been taught to make narrowly-defined and dichotomous choices regarding her social and racial identity, and her description and alignment with Bertha is evidence of this. Several critics have cited this paragraph about Jane and Bertha as a path toward understanding Clare without carefully considering the way the paragraph delimits Clare and Bertha's personas. Renk claims that Clare identifies with the "woman-beast" who is Bertha by turning her

"wildness" and her reputation as a "Victorian madwoman" into an "empowering figure of rebellion, a creole mixture, a revolutionary ragout who is also herself" (88-89). Renk sees Clare and Bertha in the colonizer's terms, as a "woman-beast," and although Renk suggests that both figures defy the colonizer's racial categories, both Bronte's and Cliff's novels clearly show us that these women ultimately fail to become a "revolutionary ragout" and live their unique "creole mixture."

Thomas Cartelli claims that Clare's identification with Bertha is informed by Cliff's reading of Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea so that Cliff becomes invested in portraying "what has been rendered marginal by others as central to her own experience." Cartelli states that Cliff, like Rhys, is "demonstrating how a newly emergent postcolonial textuality may hope to engender new subject positions for West Indians to inhabit" (90-91). This analysis is problematic because Clare does not see herself as Rhys's Antoinette Cosway, which might restore Bertha's humanity and privilege her creole Caribbean subjectivity, thereby allowing Clare to do the same for herself. Instead, Clare invokes the name Bertha, the colonizer Rochester's name for this wife which underscores her image as the "other" who remains irrevocably different and marginal to the civilizing impact of the colonizer, to the image of English Jane. Rather than portraying a postcolonial sensibility and a "new subject position" for the West Indian woman as Cartelli claims, Cliff is simply recycling Bronte's Bertha by equating Clare's Afro-Caribbean heritage and dark skin with a "native" wildness that also makes her the anti-Jane.

Belinda Edmondson asserts that this same passage in No Telephone is how "Cliff shows Clare's direct relation to Antoinette Cosway, the madwoman in the attic of Jane Eyre who is the subject of Wide Sargasso Sea" and that the "misnomer Bertha" given to Antoinette in Jane Eyre reflects "the struggle between the imposition of hegemonic history and uncoded reality which it embodies" (184). However, Antoinette is never mentioned in Cliff's novel, suggesting that Clare is not aware of the racial implications of identifying herself as Bertha, rather than using the name Antoinette to indicate a West



Indian persona separate from that which is given to her by the colonizer. Bertha is indeed a "misnomer" which symbolizes "hegemonic history" and the colonizer's attempt to turn the colonial subject into an object. By seeing herself as "All Bertha," Clare is ignoring the colonial construction of this persona just as she tries to turn the "madwoman's" wild appearance and rebellious behavior into a validation of her physical self and her racial background. In fact, this "madwoman" persona is a byproduct of the colonial dynamic to objectify her and tell her that she cannot, must not, be Jane so she can only be Bertha. Edmondson's assertion does give us insight into the "name" issue when she claims that the surname Savage "represents a locus of struggle over identity" (184), just as the name Bertha does. Bertha's name is obviously one aspect of Rochester's determination to represent his creole wife as the animalistic, dark "other" whom he can rename and racially re-categorize at will. Some scholars have noted that Clare Savage's first and last name represent her racially mixed heritage; "Clare" signifies the "lightness" of her skin and her European background while "Savage" denotes her Afro-Caribbean roots. Edmondson points out the paradox in this construction of her name, for Clare's surname and Boy's influence are a legacy of "cultural and racial whiteness"; her first name comes from the black woman who saves Kitty's life and "the sign of good, therefore, is black" (184). I would argue that Clare's name and the contradictions of its origins reflect the multifarious nature of her creole identity and her postcolonial condition in which divisions of one's white and black ancestry and influences cannot be as easily divided and neatly traced as she has learned to do.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cliff explains the meaning of her protagonist's name by stating that while her first name "signifies" her light skin and colonial heritage, her last name "invokes the wildness which has been bleached from her skin," but this wildness is meant to be ironic, "mocking the master's meaning, evoking precolonial values, which are empowering and essential to survival, and wholeness, her wholeness" ("Daughter" 44-45). Although this may give the "All Bertha. All Clare." passage new meaning, it is problematic because ultimately Clare's identification with Bertha and her Caribbean ancestry does not permit her survival or her return to wholeness and instead works to limit her choices and divide her identity.

The paragraph directly following the often-cited passage on Jane Eyre is instrumental in understanding Clare's subsequent choices. After deciding that she cannot be Jane but must be Bertha, Clare closes the book, falls asleep and has a vivid dream: "Her mother was standing to the bed, looking down at her daughter. Moving as if to speak. Then drawing her hand across her mouth as if to wipe away her words" (116). Deciding that she is more Bertha than Jane has invoked her dead mother's presence, but Clare is not ready to claim Kitty's wisdom and guidance. Silenced by the presence of the "mother-country" and its influence on Clare, the Jamaican mother cannot exist as the Bronte version of the dead but magical mother who appears to guide her daughter to safety. The novel has earlier demonstrated that Kitty is a woman who cannot speak out on her own behalf as long as she is on the colonizer's racist territory; her influence cannot be "heard" by Clare as long as Clare remains in psychological stasis in England. The dream of her mother leaves Clare with a "longing" that she cannot shake, which is the longing to re-connect with her mother. When she waits each evening for a visitor but finds that "no one came" and she begins to imagine voices calling her from the street, she decides she must "end her solitude" (116). Clare's next move--enrolling in the University of London to study the classics--becomes her way to retreat back into the arms of the "mother-country" and shake off the yearning for Kitty and the feeling of isolation that comes from being Bertha in a culture that only recognizes the worth of being Jane.

This section of the novel that mentions Jane Eyre comes at the half-way point in Clare's journey and contributes to a better understanding of Clare's evolving relationship to her ambivalent racial and social position. Clare has learned to choose between being Jane or Bertha because she grew up with the understanding, from her parents and those in power around her, that she could not remain a creole who lives on the border between two cultures, two races. Race became a social construction that shifted according to Clare's geographic and cultural position and was ultimately determined by her conscious effort to locate herself with the least amount of effort within its shifting boundaries. Like her

decision to be Bertha and not Jane, the novel shows us that Clare has the power to name her racial allegiance, and claim its corresponding class position, but only according to the limited terms articulated by the colonial discourse around her. On this topic, Raiskin observes: "Both the fictive nature of racial systems and their very real effects become clear to Clare when she confronts the boundaries of racial identity and learns who has the power to assign racial positions" ( Snow190). While it is true that Clare suffers the "very real effects" of racial systems that would deny her the ability to claim her heterogeneous roots, the "fictive nature" of these systems never becomes clear to her, as she continually looks outside herself to untangle her confused creole identity. Even Clare's final decision to join a racially diverse group of guerrilla fighters is prompted by her blind faith that she can resolve her sense of rootlessness by clinging to her African ancestry and restoring the indigenous past to Jamaica.

Beginning with her parental relationship, Clare begins to learn her proper place in the larger world. She discovers that others have the "power to assign racial positions," as Raiskin describes it, and she learns what circumscribed behaviors accompany these racial positions. Like Marguerite in Caged Bird who watched Momma passively accept racism and quietly avoid confrontations with whites whom she secretly despises and tricks, Clare watches her father use denial and submissiveness and her mother use angry silence and subversive action in the face of their social powerlessness. This undermines their ability to dismantle the racial hierarchies put in place by those in power, which helps explain Clare's inability to directly confront the everyday racism of her youth and the neocolonialism that outrages her as an adult.

Boy Savage, Clare's father, moves the family to the United States in order to escape financial troubles in Jamaica and is determined to "pass" for white in order to ensure his success in the new country. Listening to the white men in a New York bar condemn the presence of Blacks in the neighborhood, Boy remains "[s]ilent in his mestee/sambo/octoroon/quadroon/creole skin." This description demonstrates that Boy's

racial identity is multivalent and socially constructed, just as Clare's is. However, his light-skinned appearance and his colonial Jesuit education allow him to hide his black ancestry and choose a single, more acceptable racial identity for his new life in the United States. As Clare informs her boyfriend Bobby later in the novel, everyone in Jamaica is Black, "it's just that some are blacker than others. It's a question of degree" (153). Boy realizes that in the U.S. there is no such flexibility, for black is the racial category assigned to anyone with a small amount of African blood. The principal of Clare's school in New York tells Boy and Clare that they may be "white chocolate," but there is not room for "in-betweens" in their system (99) and their black heritage means they cannot simply declare themselves as white. Boy tells Kitty it is more "practical" for him to try to claim a white identity (62) and attempt to "pass," but this is only because it helps him fulfill his racial, social and class aspirations. Boy takes on the role of the colonizer who polices the line between the white self and the dark "other" in order to establish a privileged position. Boy's move harkens back to Jane Eyre's movement from an oppressed, marginal orphan to a middle-class wife who clarifies her racial and social position by denying and repairing those "other" aspects of herself--through the metaphor of race and physical characteristics--through a network of relationships that reinforce colonial stereotypes and align her with the colonizer.

Dark-skinned Kitty does not condone her husband's choice to abandon his black roots in order to avoid racism and social marginalization, yet she does not directly confront Boy's choices or the racism she encounters in the U.S. Instead, Kitty stays with the family for a while but feels divided by her intense connection to Jamaica and her uncomfortable relocation to New York. Kitty looks back to her Jamaican home--where her family enjoyed social prominence-- to bolster her loss of place and prestige: "Her point of reference--the place which explained the world to her--would always be her island" (66). By refusing to cross the racial boundaries set up by whites in the U.S., and clinging to her Jamaican past by immersing herself in the neighborhood stores selling

Caribbean goods (65), Kitty is unable to reach out to the Italian immigrant women in her neighborhood (64) and to the African American women who work in the same laundry that she does (77).

Refusing to confront the racism of her new life that relegates her to menial jobs and social isolation, and unwilling and unable to assimilate as her husband chooses to do, Kitty finds that the only outlet for her anger is to scribble anonymous anti-racist messages on the "Mrs. White" notes which are sent out to the cleaner's wealthy clients. Her employer uses Mrs. White as its symbol of cleanliness and "purity" and Kitty is outraged by the "prejudice and privileging of whiteness that uses symbols of whiteness . . . where no white women live" (Renk 57). Kitty resents being the real face behind the "symbol of whiteness" and "purity" that symbolizes the erasure of her dark identity entirely. She eventually begins to darken Mrs. White's white face, writing: "HELLO. MRS. WHITE IS DEAD. MY NAME IS MRS. BLACK. I KILLED HER" (83). Kitty explains to Boy that these subversive acts are only a source of "entertainment" for her, but "killing" Mrs. White is the only release she has for her alienation and rage at the whites who have left her powerless to be anything but the "other."

Kitty finally decides to return to Jamaica when, despite her confession, her employer fires her estranged African-American coworkers for darkening the Mrs. White notes; he says that Kitty cannot be guilty because she is a " 'nice girl' " (84). The discovery of the notes and the stereotyping of both Kitty and her coworkers reinforces Kitty's helpless position in the face of white racism. Suddenly Kitty cannot separate herself from the oppression that African Americans face in the U.S. but she feels powerless to resist it. By retreating to Jamaica and taking her dark-skinned daughter, Jennie, with her and leaving Clare with Boy, Kitty is making a decision to divide the family in a way that will haunt Clare for the rest of her life. As a result of her parents' decisions either to quietly assimilate into the white mainstream or to retreat back to the safety of their Jamaican identity, Clare never has a model for how to embrace her "white

chocolate" heritage and challenge the racist power structures of those who would resign her forever to being an "other."

Although Clare does not have a healthy role model for coming to terms with her ambiguous racial and class position in the U.S., she first tries to reconcile the different paths her parents have chosen for themselves and for her by seeming to "blend in" while secretly holding on to evidence of her black identity. Boy "counsels his daughter on invisibility and secrets. Self-effacement. Blending in. The use of camouflage" (100). Clare seemingly obeys his guidance; she remains silent despite her incredulity that her classmates are oblivious to the church bombing in Alabama in 1963 but she carries a newspaper photo of the dead girls in her wallet. Even when her father takes away the photo, it remains in her mind, "Connecting her with her absent mother" (102). Clare identifies with the girls in the photo who are close to her age, for their death symbolizes her own martyrdom at the hands of white prejudice. By secretly keeping their image alive in her mind, Clare is able to sustain a forbidden connection to Kitty. Boy tries to distract Clare from the newscasts that report on the civil rights movement, but he does not realize that "his daughter could hold two things in her mind at once" (103). At this point in her life, Clare can "hold" in her mind both her father's instructions as to how to blend into the mainstream and yet retain her mother's anti-racist sensibilities. Bringing these opposing influences together in her mind in this way is merely a temporary delay from Clare's impending identity crisis not only because it requires that she suppresses her true feelings, but because Kitty's sudden death upsets the balance needed to sustain this coping mechanism.

The news of Kitty's sudden death in Jamaica leaves Clare a "motherless child" (104) who is left with only her final directive at the end of Kitty's last letter: "I hope someday you make something of yourself, and someday help your people. . . never forget who your people are. Your responsibilities lie beyond me, beyond yourself. There is a space between who you are and who you will become. Fill it" (103). This message

eventually becomes the center of Clare's quest to return to Jamaica and restore a spiritual link to her mother and her maternal past through political commitments. For now, it is all the affirmation Clare needs to refuse her father's lifestyle and insist to him "My mother was a nigger" as she herself is, too (104). But when her sister Jennie arrives with the news that Kitty left Clare in the U.S. because " 'you favor backra, and fe you Daddy' " and that her grandmother's land in Jamaican is grown over and abandoned (105), Clare feels that her tie to her black mother has suddenly unraveled. She feels Kitty meant for her to assimilate into a white lifestyle with Boy and that the overgrown land means there is nothing left in Jamaica for her. Suddenly, "Clare struggled within her city skin, birthright gone paler" (106). Clare's pale "city skin" is further "whitened" by what she feels was Kitty's decision to leave Clare behind in the U.S. in order that she grow up without the burden of being "other." This news from Jennie belies Clare's proud claim to Boy that she is a "nigger" and it undermines her mother's final directive that she has "people" in Jamaica with whom to build an alliance. Feeling adrift from her black birthright, Clare feels betrayed and abandoned by her biological mother and Clare turns to the "mother-country" for comfort.

As the obedient creole subject, Clare searches for a way to live up to the standards of this English mother, to prove her intellectual status, to "better herself" (117). As I explored earlier, Clare's loss of connection to her Afro-Caribbean roots haunts her as she attempts to lose herself in the colonizer's world. Clare has willingly identified herself as Bronte's Bertha, accepting her place as the "other" in race and class relationships set up by the English colonizer. She encounters social prejudices that attempt to define her according to her skin color and Jamaican background, just as she experienced in the U.S. Although in England her creole, or "white chocolate" status, is recognized, Clare is acceptable only if she can show that she has more Jane Eyre in her than Bertha Rochester. However, at first, Clare quietly claims the race and class privileges that come with her whitened skin and her uncle's money. She registers at the University of London and

provides proof of her financial independence, prompting the registrar to note that she is "not at all like our Jamaicans are you" (117) who are viewed as the welfare-dependent "others." Clare is further separated from the stereotype of the Jamaican "half-breed" by those people who begin to view her intellectual accomplishments as proof of her "good fortune in escaping the brain damage common to creoles" (117). Clare doesn't outwardly react to these offensive encounters until she is confronted by the ignorance of her classmate Liz, who dismisses Clare's indignation at the blatant racism around her by reassuring Clare that even if she is related by blood to the "niggers" (137) and "nig nogs" (138) who are being singled out on campus, "your blood has thinned, or thickened, or whatever" (139). Clare bitterly remarks that Liz finds her more acceptable because she is "lower down the tree, higher up the scale" (139) but she doesn't openly challenge Liz's, or the other students', racism. These incidents suggest the ambivalent move of the colonizers who must continually re-establish the hierarchy between themselves and the "others" by invoking stereotypes and strict definitions to mark difference. Clare appears acceptable to the colonizer because her light skin color, her access to money and her good grades demonstrate that she is less foreign and undesirable than her creole background suggests. After the incident with Liz, Clare feels she can no longer claim the social privilege of her lightened skin, as Boy has taught her to do, yet she feels stifled by internalizing her shame and anger as Kitty has taught her to do. Feeling she has no options left to her, Clare quietly drops out of school.

Clare's departure from school exacerbates her feelings that she has no home to claim. When Clare begins to wander Europe with Bobby, her black Vietnam veteran boyfriend, she complains that while her father taught her to be "the soft-spoken little sambo, creole, invisible nigger . . . blending into the majority with ease," she feels that she cannot connect with Kitty's relatives or her "homeland" because of her past connection to her father and his lifestyle and her guilt over betraying her mother's loyalty to Jamaica by choosing England (152). Bobby tells her: "Baby, you got to get to the place where you



are apart from your mother your father, while still being a part of them. For they made you, like it or not" (153). This wisdom might release Clare from her confusion over whether she is to live as black or white, as colonized or colonizer, as Boy's white daughter or Kitty's black daughter. By distancing herself from her parent's choices while still recognizing their inevitable influence, Clare could create her own "place" in which she does not have to be Jane or Bertha. She might acknowledge the legacy that her parents, and Bronte's two characters, contribute to her cultural construction of her subjectivity without solely determining it. However, Clare is not able to heed Bobby's advice and ends up turning to Harry/Harriet to resolve her feels of homelessness.

Harry/Harriet shows Clare how to heal her emotional wounds by turning her energy and attention back to the real "mother-country," Jamaica. Clare speculates that she feels at "home" with Harry/Harriet because they both "are neither one thing nor the other," referring to her mixed racial background and his biracial skin and double gender identity (131). In interviews, Cliff has stated that Harry/Harriet is the most "complete" character in the book (Adisa 276). She explains that he is enlightened because he has overcome the "self-hatred" and doubts that have plagued Clare and accepted the seemingly contradictory sides of himself: "He's the best of both: he's female and male, black and white, and he's managed to deal with it, managed to make a decision to say 'this is who I am' " (Schwartz 611). While Harry/Harriet does seem to be a progressive figure who lives comfortably within his dual race and gender identity, he does not show Clare how to accept her heterogeneous background but instead counsels her that although they may both be "neither one thing nor the other" right now, they must eventually choose a single identity: "the time will come for both of us to choose. For we will have to make the choice. Cast our lot. Cyaan live split. Not in this world" (131). Ultimately, Harry/Harriet does not help Clare accept the disparate influences of her past and live confidently with her biracial skin, but teaches her that they cannot live "split" because the larger world will not accept either of them that way.

Harry/Harriet instructs Clare to declare her loyalty to England or Jamaica. He says that if she cannot see England as " 'her place' " (127) then, he urges her, " 'Come home. I'll be here . . . Come back to us, once your studies are finished. Could help bring us into the present . . . Jamaica's children have to make her change' " (127). In this way, Clare is given a route to resolve her identity crisis and her feelings of fragmentation and homelessness, by rejecting England and returning to the Caribbean, taking action that she believes will in turn heal the fragmentation of the Caribbean and reinforce its unity and strength as a multiethnic nation fighting against the oppressive neocolonialism around them. Cliff explains that Clare ends up on the truck with the other soldiers because Cliff wanted to show her protagonist " 'inching toward wholeness' " (Adisa 276), and in another interview states that Clare's political commitment is rooted in a psychological need to recover the "mother-daughter bond" that was denied to her (Schwartz 610). By reclaiming her grandmother's overgrown farm (173), teaching students about the history of Jamaica (193), and eventually joining the soldiers, Clare is trying to fulfill her mother's final wish that she "help her people" and to begin to recover from the alienation and betrayal that marked her relationship with Kitty. This would also allow to disassociate herself from the mother-country, England.

Although Clare tells the leader of the resistance group: "I have African, English, Carib in me," she is careful to show that her loyalty and interests do not lie with her light-skinned father and her English education: "I owe my allegiance to the place my grandmother made" (189). This "place" is both her grandmother's farm and Jamaica itself. When the darker-skinned leader asks if Clare thinks she is morally, politically or intellectually superior to him because of her light skin, Clare reassures him by stating that " 'You are the color of my grandmother' " (190). Once again, Clare faces the social hierarchy dictated by skin color, this time in Jamaica, and she distances herself from her whiteness so she can conveniently claim a place for herself now that being in opposition to the colonizer is desirable, progressive, and does not marginalize her. Cliff's point that

Clare is "inching toward wholeness" while on the truck that will take her to the spot where she and the other soldiers will ambush the American and English film crews is problematized by the fact that Clare's "wholeness" seems to be dependent on claiming only part of herself and denying the multifarious nature of her racial, social and class background.

The group of racially mixed Jamaican soldiers decides to attack the film set because the American and English producers of the film about Jamaica are falsifying their indigenous language and distorting the image of their legendary Maroon fighter, Nanny. This fits a pattern that Clare saw Kitty begin in her childhood: taking a stance against the colonizer's racism through subversive action rather than confronting the stereotype directly. Like Bronte's Bertha, with whom Clare so readily identified as part of her "wild" ancestry, Cliff suggests that Clare must choose between being a silenced victim or facing death at the hands of the imperialists. Hidden in the brush, poised with weapons above the film set, the soldiers are killed in a hail of gunfire that erupts from helicopters that suddenly appear out of nowhere. Clare's seemingly noble choice ends in her ignoble death on the final page of the novel. Cliff accompanies the scene with a prolonged description of the sounds of the "bitterbush" and ruinate around her as Clare dies.

One popular reading of the end of the novel supports Cliff's claim that Clare "ends her life literally burned into the landscape of Jamaica" and in her death "she has achieved complete identification with her homeland" ("Daughter" 45). But viewing Clare and the other soldiers as martyrs for their homeland does not consider that despite their attempt at a unified front, the helicopters are able to locate them because of a "quashee" (208), a betrayer from their group. Clare's attempt to find "wholeness" through this act and to reconcile the tangled national, ethnic and social strands that have divided her throughout her life is undercut by the inability of the soldiers themselves to stand united, despite their racial, class and cultural differences. Raikin notes that the opening scene of the novel which introduces Clare's shared allegiance with the other guerrilla fighters seems to

suggest that what is "revolutionary" about them is their attempt "to forge their alliance on their similarities and work against the ways they have been forced apart" by the rigid and multiple racial and class categories of the Caribbean (188). By choosing to end her novel with the failure of their revolution, Cliff is suggesting the impossibility of the soldier's--and Clare's--ability to subvert the colonizer's damaging influence not only in terms of their cultural appropriation of their past through the film, but also in terms of the racial and social divisions in their own minds.

How are we to understand Cliff's final message about Clare's life and the possibility of the postcolonial individual resisting the various oppressive ideologies wrought by the colonizer at home and abroad? One view is promoted by Raiskin:

Although Clare has made her own choice to claim Jamaica and not England as her 'motherland,' Cliff uses the ending to dramatize the way individual choices occur within historical paradigms. Clare's and Harry/Harriet's choice, while they are important symbolic challenges to the hierarchical classification systems of race and sex, are no match for the force of these systems once set in motion. The betrayer of the band, identified by the slavery-era term *quashee*, exposes Clare's and Harry/Harriet's ambitions to create a new Jamaica overnight as a romantic dream, impossible at this time ( Snow 203).

In this assessment of the ending, Raiskin is not able to see that by choosing to claim Jamaica as her 'motherland,' Clare and Harry/Harriet do not present "symbolic challenges" to the "hierarchical classification systems of race and class" because they view themselves as being "split" between classification systems and are compelled to make a definitive choice. Clare disavows her English ancestry and the class privileges of her white skin in order to become a "magnanimous warrior" in the tradition of her biological grandmother and her cultural ancestor, Nanny. Eventually, Harry/Harriet chooses to become Harriet: ". . . the choice is mine, man, is made. Harriet live and Harry be no more" (168). It is not the "quashee" who is to blame for the revolution becoming a "romantic dream," rather it is their own binary thinking that has forced them into positioning themselves in helpless opposition, literally and figuratively, to the colonizer's representation of who they are.

The "romantic dream" is Clare's faulty thinking that she can connect with some pure representation of the past--and her maternal black identity--to restore a sense of wholeness, when this attitude actually serves to enforce cultural and racial divisions.<sup>4</sup>

Edmondson is the only critic to zero in on the difficulties inherent in the "dichotomy [of] the white father/black mother parallel" that Cliff sets up in the text (188). Edmondson asserts that Cliff has created Kitty and the other black women in the novel

as having a direct and unmediated linkage to a positive black history and consciousness. This contradicts the implicit logic of the narrative structure: it hopes to construct an historical identity from fragments and dislocations of identity, yet it leaves Clare as the sole embodiment of historical fragmentation without acknowledging that the imposition of colonial ideology and racial attitudes must have affected their relationship to black identity (188).

While I agree with Edmondson's critique that black women are portrayed as symbols of "positive black history and consciousness" who can help rescue Clare's self-image from the damaging racist influences of the colonizer, this seems to only function after Clare is separated from Kitty and Jamaica. My analysis of the Clare's "dislocations of identity" shows that Kitty's relationship to black identity is initially a troubled one. Kitty's inability to openly challenge the "colonial ideology and racial attitudes" while Clare is growing up in the U.S. illustrates Kitty's inability to take pride in and fully claim her black identity. By retreating to Jamaica with only her darker-skinned daughter because Clare can "pass" as white, Kitty effectively teaches Clare to disavow her blackness. It is only after Kitty's death, when Clare is told to "help her people," that Kitty functions as a link to healthy black "consciousness" which Clare must recapture to avoid the colonizer's influence.

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<sup>4</sup> Fiona Barnes and Sally O'Driscoll are two of the few scholars to identify the subtle clues that undermine Clare's search for validation through her black ancestry. O'Driscoll notices the "narrative stance" in the text that "questions Clare's nostalgic longing for identity" and the validation of Clare's "formulation of motherland/maternal/blackness" (65). Barnes claims the novel demonstrates that the "task of historical reclamation is not an easy one, and the uncontaminated 'return to history' . . . may well be impossible" (25). While my analysis supports their observations to a certain extent, I believe that Cliff's portrayal of Clare as a noble but doomed warrior--and Cliff's statements in interviews--demonstrates that the author is ambivalent about Clare's choices and the possibility of their success.

An accurate assessment of the novel must consider the impossibility of Clare's aim to restore a sense of wholeness to herself by simply "decolonizing" herself and Jamaica by escaping the reach of imperialism. Clare's disconnection from her biological mother and Jamaica is accompanied by her victimization at the hands of racist social systems in the U.S. and in England where people, and Clare herself, are unable to "read" her creole heritage and her physical characteristics as anything except evidence of either her whiteness or "otherness." Caught up in the ambivalent dynamic of colonial discourse--am I Jane or Bertha? am I my father's or my mother's daughter?--Clare is unable to recognize and accept the ambiguity of heterogeneous ancestry. She is unable to deconstruct the limits of her own thinking and see beyond the colonizer's "hierarchical classification systems of race and class," as Raitskin describes the forces she is up against. Therefore, she feels forced in the end to make a choice within these systems which ultimately leads to her death.

Is Clare's death evidence of the failure of her mission or does it validate her reclamation of her homeland? Cliff writes about Clare's death: "While essentially tragic, I see it as an ending that completes the circle, actually triangle, of the character's life. In her death she has achieved complete identification with her homeland" ("Daughter" 45). The "triangle" of Clare's life traces her journey from Jamaica, to the U.S. to England and back to Jamaica in a pattern that suggests the tragedy is part of her Jamaican heritage. If Bertha Rochester is among Clare's "ancestors," as Cliff has stated, then Clare's suicidal trip with the guerrilla group can be viewed as her textual and familial legacy. Clare's fate is not a "descent into madness," as Bertha's is, but "conscious resistance," although they both end up dying in the act of resistance (Edmondson 185). Cliff seems ambivalent about Clare's fate, acknowledging that it is "essentially tragic" but then stating it is a necessary part of Clare's journey toward home and wholeness, while in another interview she says that Clare "doesn't get a chance to become whole at all" because of her untimely death (Schwartz 601). I believe Clare doesn't get a chance to become whole because Cliff

has constructed her heroine's quest as one that forces her into the position of accepting an oppositional stance in relation to the colonizer in which she will always be "other" and must accept some degree of powerlessness that makes her a tragic victim to imperialism.

Cliff's decision to link Clare with Bronte's construction of the "untamed" Bertha Rochester seals her heroine's fate. Postcolonial critics, bolstered by Rhys's reclamation of Bertha through the rebellious Antoinette Cosway in Wide Sargasso Sea, have read the "madwoman's" leap off the Thornfield roof as an act of defiant rebellion, an "assertion of will by a hitherto passive victim" (O'Callaghan 105). Clare's death could also be seen in a similar light--the ultimate sacrifice in allegiance with the oppressed motherland, the desire for "identification with her homeland," as Cliff describes it. This undermines Clare's quest for restoration--and a move toward decolonization--by suggesting that her life achieves real meaning through self-sacrifice at the hands of the colonizer. In her analysis of Rhys's novel, Gayatri Spivak argues that Bertha's confinement and death are not reconceived as triumphant, but are "an allegory of the general epistemic violence of imperialism" (251), and that Sargasso Sea is "necessarily bound by the reach of the European novel" Jane Eyre (259) which dictates that Bertha must die in the end. Similarly, Cliff binds her heroine according to the limits of Bronte's idea of who Bertha is: she is a captive to the colonizer's imposition of "otherness" on her creole consciousness, the woman who is definitively not Jane Eyre, the postcolonial female whose death become proof of her ultimate powerlessness and proof of the ineffectuality of the rebel soldiers in Jamaica to transcend or resist the ideology of imperialism.

Jamaica Kincaid's novel Lucy presents us with a heroine who, like Clare, is deeply influenced by the English novels that were part of her colonial education. In the last chapter of the novel, entitled "Lucy," the reader learns for the first time the name of the protagonist (Harkins 54). This chapter traces the evolution of Lucy's feelings toward her full name, Lucy Josephine Potter, which is a clue toward understanding her progress in the novel. In this chapter, Lucy admits: "I used to hate all three of those names," and goes

on to explain why. "Josephine" comes from her mother's uncle, Mr. Joseph, who made a great deal of money in sugar in Cuba and "it was though that he would remember the honor and leave something for me in his will" but he died poor and homeless. Potter comes from the "Englishman who owned my ancestors when they were slaves" which her family doesn't like to talk about (149). Lucy feels her first name "seemed slight, without substance, not at all the person I thought I would like to be even then. In my own mind, I called myself other names: Emily, Charlotte, Jane. They were the names of the authoresses whose books I loved. I eventually settled on the name Enid, after the authoress Enid Blyton, because that name seemed the most unusual of the names I thought of" (149-150). Growing up on a colonized island, Lucy's role models are white, English authors: "Emily" and "Charlotte" suggesting two of the Bronte sisters and "Jane" suggesting both Jane Austen and Jane Eyre. These women's stories represent England's political and cultural presence on the island and in the minds of young women like Lucy who feel "slight, without substance" in comparison. Choosing the name "Enid" because it is the "most unusual" of the names of female authors she loved gives her a way to find the most distance from her own name.

At a young age, Lucy learns to adapt her self-image to conform to the standards of the colonizer, to escape her feelings of low self-image and "otherness" by fantasizing that she can become an English woman. In this escape fantasy she does not realize that longing to be "Enid" is a merely temporary retreat from accepting her given name and the very real and complicated racial and cultural position it represents. This is the same pattern that I traced in Caged Bird, Jasmine and No Telephone, in which the young heroine, saddled with the psychological weight of learning that she is the "other," chooses to escape into the fantasy that she is the English heroine Jane Eyre only to later be confronted with the difficult truth that she cannot live like Jane.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Diane Simmons is the only Kincaid scholar who has explored at length the influence of Jane Eyre in Lucy and in Annie John. Simmons astutely observes that although the two protagonists seem to share much in the common at the beginning of their stories--unjust social and political oppression--their



Lucy's fantasy that she can bolster her self-esteem by taking the name Enid falls apart when she tells her mother that she does not like the name Lucy and wants to change it to Enid:

She turned toward me, and she was no longer my mother--she was a ball of fury, large, like a god. I wondered then, for the millionth time, how it came to be that of all the mothers in the world mine was not an ordinary human being but something from an ancient book (150).

Later, Lucy learns her mother's fury stems from the fact that "Enid" is the name of a woman with whom Lucy's father has a child and who tried to kill Lucy and her mother through an obeah (150). After learning this, Lucy admits "I felt ashamed of the mistake I had made. Even to hurt my mother I would not have wanted the same name as the woman who had tried to kill my mother and me" (150). This passage suggests the tension between Lucy's relationship to the mother country and to her biological mother that is a central issue of the book. Choosing the name Enid is Lucy's way to feel important as an English subject, a daughter of the colonizing mother, but it represents a betrayal of her real mother whose furious reaction turns her into a "god" from an "ancient book" that obscures the weightiness and primacy of the English books that Lucy says she loves and loses herself within. Lucy is suddenly ashamed of her desire to be like the woman who tried to kill her and her mother; this is the shame of wanting to bolster her self-image through the colonizing fiction that devalues her black femininity and makes her disloyal to her black mother whose influence in her life remains mysterious and immediate. Kincaid's novel traces Lucy's ongoing power struggle to deal with the god-like sway her mother holds over her life while simultaneously dealing with the remnants of the social inequities originally established by the mother country. As Lucy reaches adolescence,

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difference is grounded in the resolution of their stories in which Kincaid's heroines "can never be magically transformed from rebel slave to master, for to do so, they would have to endorse the physical and psychological violence committed against them, not, as in *Jane Eyre*, against some mistaken apprehension of them" (70). However, I would add that Lucy remains ambivalent toward this "violence" and its erasure of the self until she can begin to fully accept her the legacy of this violence and the English texts that promote it. This means that Lucy is much more than a mere "rewriting" of Bronte's novel as Simmons suggests (72).

this power struggle reaches its peak and is manifested in Lucy's ambivalence toward the legacy of both mothers. She yearns for approval of both "mothers" who represent approval and perfection but also reinforce cultural standards she cannot live up to. The text is centered around Lucy's difficult struggle to distance herself from the "mother-land" and the "mother herself" who, as Allison Donnell describes them, "are revealed to be patriarchal" ("Daughters" 23). Throughout the novel, Lucy uses physical and emotional distancing techniques, with varying success, to contend with her ambivalence--her vulnerability and her resentment--toward the symbolic presence of these mothers in her life.

As this last section of the novel demonstrates, Lucy's stance toward her name is one way her ambivalence shows itself. After recalling the "Enid" incident, Lucy says that many years afterward, when she "no longer cared" how she made her mother feel, she brings up the issue of her name and asks her "bad-tempered" pregnant mother why she chose the name Lucy (152). Her mother answers under her breath: "I named you after Satan himself. Lucy, short for Lucifer. What a botheration from the moment you were conceived" (152). Lucy's reaction to her mother's statement is profound and immediate and what lies beneath this reaction illuminates her behavior in the earlier and later sections of the novel. Lucy recalls her feelings upon hearing her mother's dismissal of her:

In the minute or so it took for all this to transpire, I went from feeling burdened and old and tired to feeling light, new, clean. I was transformed from failure to triumph. It was the moment I knew who I was. When I was quite young and just being taught to read, the books I was taught to read from were the Bible, Paradise Lost, and some plays by William Shakespeare . . . I had been made to memorize parts of Paradise Lost. The stories of the fallen were well known to me, but I had not known that my own situation could even distantly be related to them. Lucy, a girl's name for Lucifer. That my mother would have found me devil-like did not surprise me for I often thought of her as god-like, and are not the children of gods devils? I did not grow to like the name Lucy--I would have much preferred to be called Lucifer outright--but whenever I saw my name I always reached out to give it a strong embrace (152).

Lucy's identification with "Lucifer" allows her to re-situate herself in a new relationship to the powerful authority of both her mother and the English fiction that excludes her. Lucy was feeling "burdened, old and tired" by the growing distance from her mother, whose pregnancy will bring Lucy a brother whose presence begins the process of unraveling the bond that ties her to her mother. Over time, Lucy begins to perceive her parents' favoritism of her younger brothers and to feel betrayed by a mother who appears "in tacit acceptance of the imperialist invasion of their culture" (Ty 124) by adopting its patriarchal values. In this "Lucifer" passage, Lucy is coming face to face with her mother's abrupt dismissal of Lucy's importance in her life which Lucy associates with the end of her childhood bond with her mother.

In order to cope with this dismissal, Lucy transforms her mother's flippant comment into a source of validation and affirmation: "It was the moment I knew who I was." This affirmation comes with a sense of power and clarity--"feeling light, new, clean"--found in opposing the negative energy of a force that threatens to exclude or diminish her. John Milton's Paradise Lost, a Western text that Lucy read as a child and was forced to partially memorize, is no longer alienating for her because she identifies herself as the "fallen," those marginalized "others" that she now will embrace because she herself feels that she has "fallen" from the paradise of her Oedipal bond with her mother.<sup>6</sup> Lucy feels the only way to combat the overwhelming influence of the "god-like" mother is to become the "devil-like" child Lucifer who claims a form of oppositional authority rather than remain the powerless victim. Her attitude toward her first name, then, is no

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<sup>6</sup> Some critics have associated Lucy's complex relationship with her mother with the psychoanalytic work of Nancy Chodorow or Lucy Irigaray in which the daughter's struggle to establish a separate identity is complicated by the fact that girls "experience themselves as inextricably linked to, defined, and completed by this connection" to the mother (Natov 2). My work considers Lucy's psychological bond with her mother as intertwined with her relationship toward the colonial mother, building upon the work of both Eleanor Ty and Allison Donnell. The normal difficulty daughters face in separating their subjectivity from that of their mother is "exacerbated" by the fact that "mothers often represent a cultural or racial other" (Ty 120). My analysis looks at Lucy's battle to contend with her mother's complex representation of "cultural and racial otherness" that is both powerful and exclusionary in Lucy's mind.

longer one of embarrassment or inadequacy because it does not invoke English identity as Emily, Charlotte or Jane do; instead, she will embrace "Lucy" as long as she believes it is imbued with its own contrariness as short for "Lucifer." Ferguson believes Lucy "embraces the antithetical name wholeheartedly. Lucy finds part of her postcolonial identity in that name, a female version of the quest for identity that involves confrontation with the mother-God" (Kincaid 125). Lucy does find "Lucifer" helps her adopt a "postcolonial" identity of rebellion against colonial ideologies both at home and in her new life in North America, yet the need to take on this identity demonstrates the difficulty she has with directly resisting the authority of the "mother-God," whether it is her own mother or Mariah, her privileged employer. Lucy copes with her ambivalent feelings over her need for approval and her feelings of unworthiness by embracing the "antithetical" stance of "Lucifer," but this is accompanied by another set of internalized expectations and roles that prevents her from living authentically. It is only in the final section of the book that we see Lucy beginning to finally accept her name--Lucy Josephine Potter--and the complicated link to family and the colonial legacy it represents.

Lucy opens with its protagonist's disillusionment upon her arrival from a tropical island home to a large North American city that are both unnamed.<sup>7</sup> She admits that her surroundings do not live up the "daydream" (3) she had of her escape from home. The bleak weather of January and the "disappointment of reality" (4) leave her feeling "cold inside and out" (6) and she longs to return the tropical island home which she had just escaped. Lucy attempts to outrun the negative experiences of her past by taking the au pair position in North America and starting a new life: "Oh, I had imagined that with my one swift act--leaving home and coming to this new place--I could leave behind me, as if it were an old garment never to be worn again, my sad thoughts, my sad feelings, and my

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<sup>7</sup> Many critics, like Giovanna Covi, have suggested that Lucy comes from the West Indies and arrives in the U.S. in a large city that seems to be New York. However, Kincaid makes it clear in an interview that she doesn't name the either place--or even give the protagonist a name [until the end]--because "I didn't want any preconceptions about the place" (Perry 140).

discontent with life in general as it presented itself to me" (7). Although Lucy doesn't elaborate on the nature of her "sad thoughts," "sad feelings," and "discontent with life in general," the novel unfolds to show us that Lucy finds it increasingly difficult to cope with her growing awareness of the gender and racial biases that restrict her life and her opportunities. She assumes that accepting the au pair job in North America will facilitate her retreat to a "new place" that is supposed to allow her to abandon, like an "old garment," these oppressive relationships so that she can reinvent her relationship to the larger world.

Kincaid does not specifically connect Lucy's move into the role of au pair with the life of Jane Eyre, but I understand Lucy's decision to leave home for the governess-like job and her subsequent disappointment upon arrival in terms of her later confession that she loved English fiction and tried to escape into it by desiring to change her name to "Emily, Charlotte, Jane" (149). Jane Eyre finds escape from her limited life at Lowood through a governess job that eventually releases her from the lowly social and class position and grants her the freedom of a new life, which helps inspire Lucy to escape the "discontent" of her childhood environment through living the "daydream" of slipping into the privileged life like one the heroines in those books that she loved and never looking back.

Although Lucy is not a sequel to Kincaid's Annie John, as I discussed earlier, Annie John's love of Jane Eyre and desire to live like Charlotte Bronte, can contribute to a better understanding of this first section of Lucy. In a chapter in Annie John entitled "Somewhere, Belgium," Annie begins to identify a deep unhappiness that she cannot name (85); it is her growing need for differentiation and autonomy from her best friend Gwen and her mother. As she reaches adolescence, Annie chafes at the enveloping presence of these two people in her life but is not able to name it as such. Instead, she fantasizes about leaving home and begins to have a daydream that she is living alone in Belgium, "a place I had picked when I read in one of my books that Charlotte Bronte, the

author of my favorite novel, Jane Eyre, had spent a year or so there. I had also picked it because I imagined that would be a place my mother would find difficult to travel" (92). Annie uses Charlotte Bronte, and indirectly Jane Eyre, as European models of independence that represent the possibility of resolving her confusion and confinement through travel. They symbolize the fantasy of reinventing oneself by escaping one's past simply through relocation to the seat of colonial power. Annie John ends with Annie's departure for school in England, a step toward the mother country, a "cold place and the home of colonizers--the antithesis of Antigua, familiar and despised" (Ferguson, "Glossing" 130), a move that places her closer to her Bronte/Jane Eyre fantasy.

Lucy's departure for her au pair job in North America can be seen then as a variation and continuation of Annie John's fantasy that she can escape her unhappy life simply by relocating herself physically into the world of her daydream. Moving into the position is also a symbolic recreation of Jane Eyre's move into a governess job that she believes will grant her freedoms previously denied to her. Like Jasmine's rush to America because it represents the potential for reinvention and assimilation into a life that will free her from the burden of "otherness," Lucy believes the job in the "New World" will give her the opportunity to escape the race, class and gender expectations that her real mother and the mother-country impose upon her life. What Lucy does not understand is that her impulse to abandon her past in order to deny the burden of colonialism reinforces the binary divisions that will situate her in America in the role of the "other" who seeks to embrace a new identity by denying those parts of herself that do not meet the standards of the dominant culture. By doing this, Lucy is caught up in a neocolonial dynamic that is just as restrictive as the colonial dynamics of her homeland.

Imagining her past at home as undesirable and her future in a foreign locale as unlimited, Lucy has left herself no room to manage the reality of her disappointing arrival. She experiences an intense wave of alienation when she realizes that transporting herself physically to a new locale does not magically transform her feelings

about herself but, in fact, underscores her feelings of being an outsider. Her new job does not guarantee her integration into the new social order where she can reinvent her position to the larger world. Lucy, like Jane Eyre at Thornfield and Jasmine in the Hayes household, inhabits a socially ambiguous position as neither servant nor family member. She is assigned to the "maid's room," which she compares to "a box in which cargo traveling a long way should be shipped" and adds: "But I was not cargo. I was only an unhappy young woman living in a maid's room, and I was not even the maid. I was the young girl who watches over the children and goes to school at night. How nice everyone was to me, though, saying that I should regard them as my family and make myself at home." (7). In comparing the maid's room to a "box" that ships "cargo," Lucy evokes the image of an objectified, anonymous working-class entity who is shipped in from far away simply to serve a function that those who live in the dominant culture will not do. But Lucy also recognizes her ambivalent position in the home as not quite a servant and not quite a family member, and although she is told to "make herself at home," she becomes increasingly aware of the cultural, class and racial differences that necessarily divide her lifestyle and perspective from those of Lewis and Mariah and their four young daughters. Kincaid's text shows us that "the closure or fulfillment of that old colonial tale which depicts the 'other' land as the site on which to achieve aspirations and desires inaccessible at home is still dependent upon economic and social power" (Donnell, "Dreaming" 47). As postcolonial witness to Mariah's words, actions and choices, Lucy comes to realize that both her "aspirations and desires," and those of wealthy Mariah's, are undeniably shaped by the degree to which each of them can assume "economic and social power." The novel can be read as Lucy's movement toward economic and social independence through decolonization of her desires, an experience that is facilitated by her gradual ability to disengage herself from the binary relationship in which Mariah's access to happiness and privilege and economic and social power—at the expense of Lucy—is proven to be illusory.

At first, however, Lucy must grapple with her disillusionment about her new position. She reports that at first it was all so new, "I had to smile with my mouth turned down at the corners" and despite her homesickness, she writes home and pretends to be enthralled with her new life (10). This places her in the same situation as Angelou's Marguerite and Mukherjee's Jasmine and Cliff's Clare who each, at various points in their stories, decide to suppress their real feelings of outrage or disappointment that their lives cannot live up to the freedoms and opportunities they have imagined for themselves. The fantasies they constructed for themselves in order to escape their difficult or oppressive childhoods--fantasies promoted by Victorian fiction such as Jane Eyre--are undermined by their realization of the external and internal limits their racial and social position puts upon them. Each protagonist deals with the prejudices of the dominant social order in her own way, choosing various forms of denial, assimilation and resistance, but always with a great deal of ambivalence that eventually limits her ability to fully come to terms with the cultural or familial legacy of her "otherness."

Lucy makes some emotional progress in severing herself from the fantasies and rationalizations not by finding some form of "salvation," but by facing her disappointment and finding the "means of surviving and dealing with it" (Oczkowicz 145). Her initial coping mechanism, however, is to protect her vulnerability by creating emotional distance between herself and her employers, Louis and Mariah, as well as those relatives and friends from home that she eagerly left behind. Louis and Mariah tease Lucy about the fact that she doesn't "seem to be part of things" and she doesn't laugh at Louis's jokes, so they call her "the Visitor" (13) and "poor Visitor" (14). These names emphasize her "inbetweenness" within the household as neither a resident nor a servant and they support the colonial dichotomy Lewis and Mariah seek to manage through a nickname that signals Lucy's difference and distance from themselves. Lucy feels misunderstood by their reaction to her, but she doesn't protest openly because it suits her own diminished feelings of being the outsider. Later, Lucy simmers with silent anger



after Mariah's haughty friend Dinah greets her with a generic, dismissive comment--" 'So you are from the islands?' " --which makes her feel like "a piece of nothing" (56). And Lucy experiences quiet discomfort and shame at the party in which Lewis and Mariah's friends identify her home merely as a vacation destination (65). These scenes support Ippolito's description of Lucy's relegation to being the "native other": "Lucy is simultaneously fetishized and condescended to in a new form of old power relations between the colonizer and the colonized" (42). Lucy chafes at being "fetishized and condescended" to by her employers and their friends, but her silence at their objectification signals her ambivalence over accepting the role of the powerless, the colonized that makes her feel both angry and ashamed. Part of Lucy's task is to learn to refuse the "old power relations" enforced by the colonized that dictate that she must be the mute, objectified colonized figure.

Lucy's interactions with the sheltered and naive Mariah also invoke a colonial dynamic that prompts shame and disdain in Lucy. Lucy copes with these ambivalent feelings through offhand, angry comments and emotional withdrawal. Her many experiences with Mariah remind her that she is, in fact, the "other"--a familiar role in which she grew up but then attempted to escape and must now contend with once again. Lucy confides to Mariah her negative association with daffodils: that at Queen Victoria Girls' School she was forced to memorize a Wordsworth poem about a flower she had never seen, so that she was "at the height of my two-facedness" in obediently performing for the colonizer while secretly resenting it (18). When Mariah attempts to surprise and please her by taking her to a daffodil field, Lucy is overcome by the desire to want to "kill" the flowers and displays her deeply-rooted anger to Mariah when she tells her about her association with the poem. The foreign flowers represent the enforcement of imperialist values and aesthetic standards that Lucy had upheld as a child even as she quietly detested these alienating values.

In this scene, Mariah becomes the symbol of imperialism and Lucy is compelled to claim her place as the victim of imperialist prejudice even though she knows these are merely roles that they play. Lucy confesses, "I felt sorry I had cast her beloved daffodils in a scene she had never considered, a scene of conquered and conquests . . . It wasn't her fault. It wasn't my fault. But nothing could change the fact that where she saw beautiful flowers I saw bitterness and sorrow" (30). While Lucy recognizes that the misunderstanding between them is not "their fault," she also feels powerless to change the nature of this relationship that aligns Mariah with those who achieve the "conquests" and identifies Lucy as one of the "conquered." Lucy appears resigned that they will play their designated roles, hiding her sorrow at their interaction and in this way she continues to be "two-faced" in her presentation of self to the colonizer. Donnell identifies Lucy's "two facedness" as a child in the school as evidence of her "ambivalent position as black and female in relation to colonial cultural authority, which is represented by the poem, the poet and institution of the school" ("Dreaming" 50), but I see this same ambivalence in the older Lucy who recognizes and resents their superficial participation in a colonial drama but feels it is beyond their control to change it. Lucy's ambivalence about being the victim of the unjust but seemingly omnipotent colonial dynamic prevents her from revealing her deeper, more complex feelings about herself and her past with Mariah.

In another, similar scene, Lucy reacts to Mariah's blithe innocence and presumption of privilege with an emotional distance that protects her from expressing her ambivalent feelings about the race and class distance that lies between them. On the train ride to Mariah's summer home on the Great Lakes, Lucy notices in the dining car that the "people sitting down to eat all looked like Mariah's relatives; the people waiting on them all looked like mine" (32) and, more importantly, that Mariah doesn't notice these distinctions. Later, as they gaze out of the train window, Mariah "points out the freshly plowed fields she loved so much." Lucy reports: "when I saw mile after mile of turned-up earth, I said, a cruel tone to my voice, 'Well, Thank God I didn't have to do that.' I

don't know if she understood what I meant, for in that one statement I meant many different things" (33). As in the scene with the daffodils, Lucy begins to identify Mariah's inability to see beyond the narrow view afforded by her upper middle-class status, which enlarges the gap that Lucy perceives between them. Ferguson describes the scene this way: "Once again, Mariah's blithe ethnocentric attitudes enable her to find joy in something that marks cultural atrocity for Lucy's ancestors" as the plowed field "illuminates another basic troping of colonialism" (Kincaid 114). The plowed field does signify the forced cultivation of nature and smacks of colonialism, yet Lucy says she means "many things" with her statement of relief to Mariah. I believe her bitter comment suggests her identification with the laboring class whose work Mariah can safely acknowledge from an aesthetic distance, but it also reflects her ambivalence about this identification because Lucy would rather be a passenger on the train than a dining car waiter or a farm laborer. As in the daffodil scene, Lucy's is reminded that her subjectivity is always colored by her race, class and cultural marginalization next to Mariah's central, secure position and the rigidity of this binary relationship, in Lucy's mind, prevents her from sharing her real feelings.

Lucy's negative and angry comments that punctuate her interactions with Mariah both conceal and reveal her ambivalence at being consigned to the position of the "other." Like Jasmine and Clare, she finds that her inner self and deeper needs cannot be completely denied although she has tried to escape into the lifestyle of the Western, idealized images of the Jane Eyre fantasy. If Lucy cannot claim the social position and success of Jane Eyre, then she will embrace a reactionary "Bertha" persona, in a move of self-preservation similar to the one that Clare makes in No Telephone. Just as Lucy embraces the name and "negative" power of "Lucifer" in order to stop herself from feeling the painful loss of her biological mother's affections, she uses angry distance to shield herself from the more difficult and ambivalent feelings of the colonizer's attempts to negate her experiences and perspective with their own needs and values.

Lucy makes Mariah painfully aware of the distance that remains between them when Mariah attempts to clumsily bridge the abyss between them. When Mariah confesses to Lucy, "I have Indian blood in me," Lucy notes that the statement is made "as if she were announcing her possession of a trophy" (40). Lucy finds it ironic that her employer is now claiming to take possession of the racial "otherness" that clearly divides their world views and wonders: "How do you get to be the sort of victor who can claim to be the vanquished also?" (41). Mariah's claim to Indian blood reveals her participation in the colonizer's ambivalent relationship to the colonized in which the colonizer objectifies and appropriates the identity of the "other." By establishing her proud possession of "Indian blood" Mariah attempts to contain and control Lucy's "otherness" in order to neutralize its ability to exclude her. Just as she did in the scene with the daffodils and the plowed field, Lucy refuses to allow "the victor's" limited view of the world to circumscribe and control the subjectivity of "the vanquished." Simmons compares Lucy's resistance to Mariah's colonial impulses with that of Bertha's actions in Jane Eyre: "Like Bertha, who always manages to escape her attic prison at just the right moment to upset Rochester's plans to proceed as if she does not exist, Lucy is always there, refusing to allow her history to be either ignored or romanticized" (71). Lucy is clearly a modern day Bertha who is bent on making her existence and her history known, although her comparison to Bertha also extends to her limited ability to openly or successfully challenge the colonizer. After Mariah's comment, Lucy merely refuses to accept Mariah's embrace and coldly asks, "How do you get to be that way?" (41) without expecting an answer. Rather than engage in a real discussion that would explore how Mariah did "get to be that way," Lucy wants to punish this symbol of colonial privilege by making her experience some of the disenfranchisement that Lucy feels is forced upon her as the "other."

At the end of this passage, Lucy notices: "The anguish on her face almost broke my heart, but I would not bend. It was hollow, my triumph, I could feel that, but I held on

to it just the same" (41). Lucy's "triumph" is "hollow" because it is grounded in simply attempting to reverse the exclusionary tactics of the colonizer and because she is beginning to see, as she did in the daffodil scene, that Mariah's pain and discomfort at being misunderstood are genuine. Lucy cannot reach out to Mariah, however, because she feels that to do so would be to deny the history of her own pain and discomfort. Lucy uses her "Lucifer"-like coping strategy in which she will "ground whatever she sees in an alternative vision that resist the domination of the colonial setting" (Ferguson, "Mark" 239). Although this decision may give her exclusive rights to that "vision," it forces her to uphold the binary in which one of them will play the role of the powerless in opposition to the powerful and Lucy is determined to claim her contentious power as "Lucifer."

It is only gradually that Lucy begins to see her relationship to Mariah with a fuller, more mature perspective that begins to release them from the binary relationship of the privileged colonizer and victimized colonial subject that Lucy has established in her mind. In other words, "Lucy has to transcend the colonial dichotomy in order to appreciate Mariah as an individual" (Oczkiewicz 150). Initially, however, Lucy's own search for individuality by cultivating a friendship with Peggy gets in the way because Lucy uses Peggy to challenge the middle-class norms and propriety that Mariah seems to live by. Her friendship with Peggy also gives Lucy distance from the influence of her absent mother, who looms ever-present in Lucy's psyche. Lucy is drawn to Peggy because Peggy models what she imagines she would like to be: a jaded, guarded young woman who refuses to meet others' expectations: "Peggy smoked cigarettes, used slang, wore very tight jeans, did not comb her hair properly or often, wore shiny, fake-snakeskin boots, and generally had such an air of mystery that it made people who did not know her well nervous" (60). Because Peggy insists on a taking a defiant stance toward "proper" behavior expected by the outside world, Lucy relishes this friendship that validates her

own decision to live in contradiction to others' expectations even though Lucy knows that Peggy is merely playing the part of a "difficult and hard-to-please woman" (60-61).

Even when their friendship begins to come apart, Lucy admires Peggy for her indifference toward her family, which Lucy would like to emulate: "She couldn't wait to get away from her family, she said; they were a bunch of absolutely nothing. How I envied the contempt in her voice, for I could see that her family held no magic over her" (91). Lucy has begun to struggle with the "magic" that her absent mother holds over her life. By refusing to open her mother's letters she is "rejecting" the maternal pull while, in reality, reading the letters would make her "die from longing for her" (91). This is the same emotional distancing technique Lucy performs with the "other" mother Mariah, who evokes an ambivalence that threatens to overwhelm Lucy unless she can keep her distance from that mother.

Eventually, Lucy's friendship with Peggy facilitates Lucy's quest for independence on a more meaningful and lasting level although it is not in the way that Lucy anticipates. Lucy reports her friendship with Peggy "drove Mariah crazy" because Mariah thinks Peggy is a "bad influence" and doesn't want her to be in the house or around the children. Lucy continues to spend a great deal of time with Peggy and Mariah finally concedes that Lucy " 'really should have a friend' " (63). Lucy notes: "This was a way in which Mariah was superior to my mother, for my mother would never come to see that perhaps my needs were more important than her wishes" (64). In the process of trying to establish her distance from Mariah and her mother, Lucy ironically begins to see them both in a more realistic light. Lucy sees Mariah as an individual, a woman who is genuinely kind, and although she is flawed, she can provide the support to Lucy that she couldn't find from her own mother whose reach has previously seemed inescapable to Lucy.

As their lives become intertwined, Lucy finds she can no longer force onto Mariah the role of the colonizer because she realizes that Mariah is genuine in her love and thoughtfulness, misguided though it may be: "Mariah was the kindest person I had ever

known. Her concern was not an unexpected part of her; it could be said that her kindness was the result of her comfortable circumstances, but many people in her position were not as kind and considerate as she was" (73). By enlarging her perspective to see that Mariah's acts of "kindness" are a reflection of a well-meaning but sheltered upbringing rather than the false front of a manipulative and ethnocentric bias, Lucy can begin to let herself appreciate and love Mariah for her real acts of thoughtfulness. Lucy no longer can claim any satisfaction in making caustic remarks to contradict what she used to see as Mariah's hypocritical world view. She finds that she is unable to point out to Mariah that her impassioned desire to save vanishing wildlife might be at odds with "Lewis's daily conversations with his stockbroker" and observes, "Ordinarily that was just the sort of thing I enjoyed doing, but I had grown to love Mariah so much" (73). Alienating and diminishing Mariah no longer gives Lucy satisfaction because Lucy can see that people like Lewis and Dinah, who are conducting an affair behind Mariah's back, are the real villains whose selfishness and arrogance are not tied to any particular culture or social status. "A woman like Diana was not unfamiliar to me, nor was a man like Lewis. Where I came from, it was well known that some women and all men in general could not be trusted in certain areas" (80). Mariah's ignorance about the causes of the vanishing wildlife and about the state of her marriage discloses to Lucy her own unique wisdom about the world. Mariah's losses and flaws demystify what Lucy once saw as Mariah's unblemished life of white privilege. Lucy's perceptions about Lewis and Dinah's betrayal, long before Mariah is aware of it, gives Lucy something important that seemingly perfect Mariah does not have: a knowledge about human nature, albeit a generalization, that is part of Lucy's world view.

Lucy's brief sexual relationships with men are a way for her to "flex" this unique knowledge while also continuing to establish her difference from Mariah and her mother who, as Lucy describes it, uses her love "to make me into an echo of her" (36). Her sexual relationship with Paul, the young artist whom Peggy disparagingly calls a

"pervert," is prompted by Lucy's need to choose the forbidden path as proof of her independence. She finds Paul's dilapidated neighborhood "quite thrilling" (96) and immediately becomes aware of the sexual attraction between them: "I said, 'How are you?' in a small, proper voice, the voice of the girl my mother had hoped I would be: clean, virginal, beyond reproach. But I felt the opposite of that, for when he held my hand and kissed me on the cheek, I felt instantly deliciously strange; I wanted to be naked in bed with him" (87). Lucy rejects the role of the "clean, virginal" girl that her mother has raised her to be. She wants to enjoy sex for its "deliciously strange" physical pleasure, defying her mother's teachings that sex is something to feel "indifferent" about (114). Her brief flings with Dinah's brother Hugh and the camera salesman Roland are also opportunities to "lose" herself in a physical pleasure in which she has no emotional investment. Lucy relishes these relationships not only because they defy her mother's admonitions, but because they prove that she is not like her mother who married her father, an "old man" who would "leave her alone" and support her. Lucy bitterly observes: "in marrying a man, my mother had thought very hard not so much about happiness as about her own peace of mind" (81). Turning her relationships with men into matters of pure pleasure is Lucy's technique for proving to herself that she can resist the "magic" of her mother and for refusing to be blinded, as Mariah is, by her love and dependency on a man. The purely sexual nature of these relationships supports the emotional withholding techniques Lucy has cultivated in order to protect herself from becoming a powerless victim in her personal relationships.

The real foundation on which Lucy can begin to solidly rebuild her self-image is derived from her growing awareness of the fragility of Mariah and Lewis's picture-perfect lifestyle that she had earlier resented and envied. The race and class differences between Lucy and her employers had been a foundation upon which Lucy built a wall in her mind, with unhappiness and longing on her side, and happiness and fulfillment on their side. She saw herself as the "other" whose perpetual lack was highlighted by their seemingly



abundant confidence and claim to advantages that she could never have. Like Marguerite, Jasmine and Clare, Lucy felt diminished and intimidated by the colonizer's white, Western world that seemed inaccessible but desirable. The ambivalent nature of the colonial dichotomy pushed them into this world while it also silenced their deeper feelings and limited their ability to re-imagine their relationship to that world. Unlike these other women, Lucy's begins to see through the mythical perfection of the dominant, white world that has seemed out of her reach. Looking at Mariah's crumbling life, Lucy notices: "She had too much of everything, and so she longed to have less; less, she was sure, would bring her happiness. To me it was a laugh and a relief to observe the unhappiness that too much can bring; I had been so used to observing the results of too little" (87). By seeing the "unhappiness that too much can bring," Lucy is coming to understand the contradictions in the colonizer's world which means she must no longer take the role as the helpless victim who has "too little." Simmons describes her realization this way: "She is no longer awed and threatened by the apparent perfection of the lives in the Western world" (130). Lucy begins to decolonize her thinking by upsetting the balance of the binary relationship that placed her in the position of the "other" who wants, but cannot have, the "apparent perfection" symbolized by the colonizer. This is quite different from Jane Eyre, whose colonial-centered inheritance is an integral part of her apparent "happy ending," making the restoration of money an integral part of the validation of Jane's worthiness and personal success.

In realizing that her colonial past and her present position do not entirely construct her identity, Lucy can slowly begin the process of identifying her deeper needs and pursuing opportunities on behalf of meaningful personal progress. While becoming friends with Mariah and deciding to find another job are important milestones for Lucy in her quest for independence, Lucy remains emotionally "highjacked" by her ambivalent relationship with her absent mother. Like Clare, Lucy's young adulthood is fraught with feelings of longing and betrayal in which the loss of the mother's love and approval

prompts the daughter toward action that will repair this void within the self. Initially, Clare and Lucy both seek out the promise of individuation and selfhood that the "colonial mother" offers only to be confronted with their "otherness" and disappointed by the neocolonial relationships that suspend them in a disappointing relationship with this other mother. While Lucy is able to reimagine her connection with the "neocolonial mother" in the form of her relationship to Mariah, she has not unpacked the emotional baggage surrounding her biological mother that she brought with her from home. Lucy's relationships with Peggy and Paul, and her refusal to open her mother's letters, are evidence of a lasting ambivalence over the absent mother's ability to dictate her behavior and self-image.

It is only upon hearing of her father's death that Lucy can finally begin to purge her powerful but suppressed feelings concerning her mother. After coming to America to inform Lucy that her father is dead, Maude Quick notices that Lucy does not react, but only stands in shocked silence. Maude interprets this as a show of strength and says to Lucy: " 'You remind me of your mother.' " At that moment, Lucy feels pride at the comparison which proves her undeniable attachment to a woman whose "god-like" power over her has caused Lucy to question her own worthiness and abilities. Lucy reacts this way: "I was dying, and she saved my life. I shall always be grateful to her for that. She could not have known that in one careless sentence she said the thing that could keep me alive" (123). Lucy is "kept alive" by the reassurance that she has the awesome power she ascribes to her mother when faced with the sudden loss of her father and an important link to home. But what Lucy says to Maude is: " 'She and I are not alike . . . She should not have married my father. She should not have had children. She should not have thrown away her intelligence. She should not have paid so little attention to mine' " (123). Finally, the repressed resentment toward her mother is crystallized in Lucy's articulation of her mother's betrayal. Her mother's teachings and admonitions were undermined by Lucy's belief that her mother broke the sacred mother/daughter bond when Lucy was still

in need of her mother's love and approval. Additionally, her mother's capitulation to traditional gender roles reflected, in Lucy's mind, a collusion with the colonial forces which denied both Lucy and her mother access to full personhood.

In mourning her father's death, Lucy is released symbolically from the dominating presence of the patriarchal and colonial values that have silenced her until now. "Her father's death frees her from speaking the patriarchal language of subjugation and accepting its terms" (Ferguson, Kincaid 25). Lucy confides to Mariah the details of her parents' betrayal: they favored her three younger brothers and planned for their great futures, while pinning no similar hopes on Lucy. Lucy holds her mother responsible for ignoring her potential and for dismissing her important female connection to her only daughter which Lucy cannot retrieve. When Mariah attempts to console her, Lucy realizes she cannot be comforted: "'for ten of my twenty years, half of my life, I was mourning the end of a love affair, perhaps the only true love in my whole life I would ever know" (132). Although Lucy says she has been "mourning" the end of her attachment to her mother, her use of anger and emotional distancing--her "Lucifer" stance toward the world--has actually prevented her from coming to terms with the corruption of that connection to her mother that was so vital to her identity.

The dissolution of Lucy's bond with the mother was also achieved through her parents' enforcement of colonial values. Not only do her parents imagine her brothers' success, they describe it in terms of European standards, in which each son "would go to university in England and study to become a doctor or lawyer or someone who would occupy an important and influential position in society" (130). This compounds Lucy's resentment of both her real mother and the mother-country for, as Ferguson describes it, "Lucy acts as if she wants to throw off the two massive weights at once; the gendered, personal burden of knowing how her family favored her brothers that is inextricably fused with the burden of living as a female in a colonized country" (Kincaid 250). Carrying these personal and political "massive weights" in angry and saddened silence has colored

all of Lucy's relationships. She begins to "throw off" the "burden" of the "colonized country" when she reconfigures her relationship to Mariah and claims back some of the personal power that she had given over to Mariah. However, Lucy has continued to use silence and anger and a "Lucifer"-like attitude to stave off the feelings surrounding her parents' enforcement of oppressive values. It is only after her father dies that Lucy can begin to resist the burden that her parents helped placed upon her, that of "living as a female in a colonized country." In her "Lucifer" mode, Lucy writes her mother a "cold letter" that matches her "cold heart," detailing the reasons for her anger and distance, as well as reporting on her activities as a "slut" (128). She begins the first step in bridging the emotional distance from her mother by sharing her long-repressed feelings of bitter resentment but she has not achieved a state of self-acceptance and confidence that would allow her to forgive her mother and move on with her life.

The last chapter of the book brings Lucy around to the end of her first year in North America and Lucy says she is "making a new beginning again" (133). Yet this "new beginning" resembles her earlier escape to the city in order to avoid those forces in her life that she can no longer condone or completely resist. She reports that the process of "leaving" her life with Lewis and Mariah began on the night she heard of her father's death (138); shortly after, Lucy finds a new job and prepares to move in with Peggy. Her father's death, and her mother's destitute status as a result, begin to release Lucy from the binary relationship in which she identified herself as a powerless victim to her mother's omnipotence. Lucy has the opportunity to see her mother as vulnerable and fragile, in the same way that Lucy reconfigures her relationship to Mariah only after she witnesses her employer's personal losses. However, Lucy retains some ambivalence and distance toward her mother, as she sends her mother money and reassures her that she will return home but provides a fake address and refuses to say she loves her (140). Lucy no longer needs to completely reject or deny her mother's presence in her life in order to maintain a sense of independence, but she is not ready to grant her mother access to her physical self

or her emotional truth. Lucy still requires emotional boundaries to protect herself because she has not yet achieved a solid sense of self that would permit either a complete separation or maintain an open, honest connection with others. Lucy also begins to see the superficiality of her relationship to Peggy and Paul but she has not shared with her reasons for beginning to seek distance from them or tried to move on without them. Peggy and Paul are each out alone by themselves and Lucy suspects they are with each other but merely thinks: "I only hoped they would not get angry and disrupt my life when they realized I did not care" (163).

Although Lucy's "new life" moves her toward economic and social independence, it comes only when she enforces a physical and emotional separation between herself and all the people and influences which she used to identify with or define herself against. Lucy observes: "I was alone in the world. It was not a small accomplishment. I thought I would die doing it. I was not happy, but that seemed too much to ask for" (161). Lucy's accomplishment in becoming "alone in the world" required her to untangle herself emotionally and physically from the powerful cultural and personal forces of her colonial childhood--signified primarily by her relationships with her mother and Mariah--that shaped every aspect of her self-identity. However, the reason Lucy is "not happy" is because she can never be truly "alone in the world" as long as her independence is based on a certain amount of denial of the past and its present influences. As Nancy Chick describes it, Lucy is not happy because "she fails at her persistent attempts to become self-actualized by running from her past" (97). As long as Lucy runs from the past, rather than first fully accepting the full range of experiences and emotions that the past brings to her present, disappointment will shadow her and she will remain emotionally "locked" off from others, and to a certain extent, herself. This explains why, in the final scene of the book, Lucy begins to cry as the feelings she repressed throughout the entire novel begin to surface.

In this final scene, Lucy is alone in her new apartment and appears at last to be free from the relationships and obligations of the past year. Earlier that day, she has dinner with Mariah and says goodbye to her, not knowing if they will ever see each other again. Mariah gives Lucy a book of blank pages to begin a journal, reminding Lucy that when she was leaving her job, "I had said to her that my life stretched out ahead of me like a book of blank pages" (163). Lucy busies herself with small chores around the house and then lies on the bed "for a long time doing nothing." Then she sees the journal from Mariah and her fountain pen:

I picked up both, and I opened the book. At the top of the page I wrote my full name: Lucy Josephine Potter. At the sight of it, many thoughts rushed through me, but I could write down only this: 'I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it.' And then as I looked at this sentence a great wave of shame came over me and I wept and wept so much that the tears fell on the page and caused all the words to become one great big blur (163).

This final paragraph of the novel is important for several reasons. From her early desire to rename herself "Emily, Charlotte or Jane," Lucy has sought the power to reinvent herself and lay claim to a life that dispenses with the familial and colonial associations that all three of her real names represent to her. Alone in the apartment, she has at last achieved the psychological and physical space she has craved throughout the novel and the "blank pages" of her life can be now inscribed in any way she chooses. As she writes out her full name, in an act of assessing the identity and life she was born into that she has tried so hard to escape, Lucy is overcome by "many thoughts" but is suddenly overwhelmed by her desire to "love someone so much that I would die from it." Lucy is unearthing her need to connect and to care for someone, a deep-seated desire she buried inside herself when her mother began a process of separation by calling her "Lucifer." Likewise, Lucy has felt the sting of rejection from the colonial "mother" who has taught her, from her earliest memories, that she is the "other." During the past year, Lucy has avoided more personal risk and pain by refusing to allow herself to freely love and enjoy

emotional intimacy but now she faces the emptiness of this choice and she longs to "die" -to lose herself in emotions so that she does not have to hold on so tightly to anger and resentment and continue to hold back her real self and needs. Managing the ambivalence of her relationships by hiding her contradictory and complicated feelings behind a facade of cool control has required Lucy to hide her need for intimacy and unconditional love.

The love Lucy wants to direct is actually love toward herself which would allow her to accept the complicated legacy and personal feelings that "Lucy Josephine Potter" evokes. The "great wave of shame" comes from many years of denying that name and identity and is at last released in the tears that let her mourn the selves--the innocent, beloved daughter, the English heroine, the powerful Lucifer--that she will never be completely. The tears represent her healthy grief over a troubled childhood and her colonial heritage while also signaling the "processing" of emotions that she has held at bay throughout the novel. The tears cleanse her of her feelings of shame surrounding her name while the blurring of her name on the page suggests that her name does not have to dictate who she is and how she feels about herself. The writing of her name and the tears represent Lucy's opening up to the process of accepting and grieving a colonial identity; this can then allow her to acknowledge the full spectrum of emotions of her troubled childhood which can lead her to develop more authentic, complex relationships with those around her. Lucy is on the brink of a new understanding--the "blurring" of that name--of herself and the past that might pave the way for her to claim authorship of a life that moves beyond the limits of that name and that past. The blank book is symbolic of the challenge that now faces Lucy: to write authentically about herself outside the bounds of those cultural and familial "texts" that suppressed her voice and feelings.

Critics have tended to read the conclusion of Lucy, and Lucy's tears, as unequivocal proof of her success at battling the identity crisis that has plagued her throughout the novel. For instance, Ferguson writes: "Lucy has begun to dispense with surrogates, positively announcing to herself a personal capacity to abandon not just

Mariah and Peggy, but Jane and Enid too. Instead, she tunes into herself" (Kincaid 128). While I agree that the ending demonstrates Lucy's newly acquired ability to shed the "surrogates" that she used to prop up an uncertain sense of self, I also believe those females--Mariah, Peggy, Jane and Enid--mark points of development and self-awareness that she cannot completely abandon. Lucy is at last "tuning" into herself, but this requires that she come to terms with the ways in which "surrogates" have made her who she is in order that she move forward on her own behalf. Clare Savage's decision to identify exclusively with her maternal ancestry and Jamaican roots prevents her from "tuning" into the full range of her experiences and influences that might have led her to a path of self-acceptance rather than a one-way path toward opposition and self-obliteration. The healthy challenge for the postcolonial heroine is to recognize and accept the influence and presence of individuals and cultural forces in her life without allowing them to dictate her behavior and self-perception. She doesn't have to be caught in the binary construction of the colonizer/colonized that would have her be an obedient subject to the colonizer or a resistance fighter--an angry "Lucifer" figure, a doomed and silenced Bertha. Instead, she can look beyond the Jane Eyre text and inscribe an identity for herself that is true to her complex cultural context, but is not culturally prescribed.

Lucy's acceptance of her given name and her simultaneous gesture of moving beyond the limits of that name signify that she is ready to accept the ambivalent tensions that suspended her in a Jane Eyre/Bertha Rochester double bind of repressed longing and angry outbursts. Ippolito believes the end of the novel demonstrates that by claiming her name, "the process of reversing and rejecting Otherness is complete." This process requires that Lucy reject the stigma of Otherness and accept her colonial past on her own terms and reverse the internal and external judgments that would classify her race, class and gender identity as a sign of "Otherness" for the purposes of exclusion, control or manipulation. Lucy's final gestures--of naming, of acceptance, of grief and emotional release-- is moving her toward this point, but the end of the novel does not show it to be



"complete," as Ippolito states. Lucy does offer the most optimistic ending of all the novels I have discussed, for Marguerite, Jasmine and Clare reach the end of their stories and remain, to varying degrees, emotionally and psychologically bound by their belief that they are "other," the undesirable Bertha. If they can't be Jane Eyre, their stories seem to ask, then who are they? Only Lucy begins to make some move toward finding some progressive acceptance of a complex identity that means she is neither Jane nor Bertha but a new kind of postcolonial fictional heroine who acknowledges the cultural power of Charlotte Bronte's text but is poised on the brink of being the author of another life story--her own.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of her story, Lucy is beginning to remove the armor of distant coolness and bitter hostility she used to shield herself from the emotional rejection she experienced from her mother, from Mariah, and from the "mother country." During her first year away from home she learns to demystify the power of these seemingly omnipotent mothers and begins to discover an identity that allows her to be more than a dissatisfied, disobedient, angry daughter. Marguerite, Jasmine and Clare also experience an emotional rejection and literal separation from their mothers--both real and figurative ones--that hinders their quest for autonomy and maturation. Separation from the mother is part of the condition of marginalization they experience as "others." Since these women cannot restore their relationships with their real mothers, they seek to repair this loss by uniting with the mother country through an identification, and subsequent struggle with, a mother text Jane Eyre. I have shown how these protagonists indirectly and directly speak of their dreams and their disappointments through an evolving relationship to Jane Eyre and the values they believe it represents.

My reading serves to correct the assumptions put forth by other scholars who have read these four postcolonial texts as tales of acceptance, of assimilation or of resistance and return to the indigenous self. I also complicate the intertextual reading of those who attempt to explain Jane Eyre's presence within these stories by asserting that these novels are "revising" or updating or correcting the assumptions of the original text. Newman claims that Mukherjee plays with an "updated, American Jane" (149) in Jasmine and places Jasmine at the end of a list of texts that are intertextual revisions of one another: "In the Caribbean Rhys revises Bronte, Naipaul revises both [in Guerillas], Mukherjee revises Naipaul [in Jasmine]" (192). It is problematic to assume that there can be a neat, linear connection between these texts, for while Rhys is explicit about her text being a response to Bronte, Mukherjee's novel, as I have demonstrated, has a more complicated

textual stance toward Jane Eyre than simply being an "updated, American" version. Jasmine's admiration for the Victorian text leads her to betray her cultural and racial identity for a fictional model that does not, and cannot, reflect her true self and sensibilities.

This is also true about No Telephone To Heaven. While Michelle Cliff asserts that Bertha Rochester is Clare Savage's literary ancestor, and Kathleen J. Renk praises Clare for identifying with the "woman-beast" Bertha rather than with Jane Eyre (88), I argue that Clare's story is not simply a celebration of the formerly maligned creole woman. Rather than challenge the racial and cultural biases in Bronte's construction of Bertha, Cliff has Clare betray her complex cultural heritage in a futile attempt to restore her connection with an indigenous, maternal homeland.

When Jamaica Kincaid tells an interviewer that "the great influence" on Lucy's life comes from sections of the Bible and Jane Eyre (Vorda 100), it perhaps encourages writers like Diane Simmons to offer a comparative analysis of Jane Eyre and Lucy that focuses primarily on plot similarities. Simmons believes that Kincaid is "rewriting" Bronte's texts for her own postcolonial purposes (58) and that as the novel comes to a close, Lucy begins to resemble Bertha, rather than Jane (71). My analysis shows that the Jane Eyre legacy is more complex than this. Lucy stifles her real self when she tries to be either Bertha (or "Lucifer," as she names her oppositional stance) or Jane. At the end of her story, she is beginning to give up the fantasy that she must choose between being either figure and accept that they--and the colonial stereotypes they represent-- are both part of her past. My reading of Caged Bird followed a similar track not by simply tracing the similarities between Bronte's and Angelou's books, but by offering a intertextual reading that delves into how and why Jane Eyre appears on certain pages of Angelou's memoirs. Jane is a source of both solace and of self-denial for Marguerite, rather than simply a figure to identify with, as Patsy Stoneman claims (188-89).

My intertextual readings of all of these texts refuse to see Jane Eyre either as a burdensome textual ancestor or as a colonial role model for these writers and their protagonists. While Judie Newman claims that intertextuality "demands a degree of knowledge on the reader's part--or it is simply non-existent" (191-92) she means that readers must be familiar with the earlier text to which newer texts allude, or which they revise. My chapters have demonstrated that a thorough knowledge of Jane Eyre is not enough to fully explore how and why Bronte's novel lives on in postcolonial works. When Jane Eyre appears in the stories of these young women, or when it is alluded to by the narrator, it signals the protagonist's identity crisis. Reading, remembering, and "escaping into" the Bronte text reflects each woman's impulse to resolve her confusion, displeasure and denial about her life through a familiar colonial paradigm. The Victorian text becomes a contested site of racial and cultural identity within each postcolonial text. The Bronte novel, and the cultural condition it symbolizes, is reinvested with new meaning as each protagonist attempts to understand her unique postcolonial condition.

Instead of utilizing Newman's idea of revision and intertextuality, in which a reader uses knowledge of the earlier text to understand or influence the later text, my analysis is aligned with Julia Kristeva's well-known understanding of intertextuality. In Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, every text is a "mosaic of quotations" and intertextuality is an " 'impersonal' process of blending, clashing and intersecting" (Friedman 149). With this in mind, an intertextual reading of a work such as Jasmine or Lucy is not limited to being a "revision" of Jane Eyre, as some critics have concluded, but is a collection of ideas and influences from a variety of sources. It is a "mosaic" of impressions that reflects and refracts these influences, of which Jane Eyre is only one. Although reference to Jane Eyre is a deliberate choice of the author, I have looked at the way in which these references resonate through the text on a variety of levels--"blending, clashing and intersecting"--with the story being told on the surface of the text as well as through the subtextual assumptions and experiences of the protagonist.

Furthermore, my study of these works permits a better understanding of Bronte's novel as a nineteenth-century text with colonial undercurrents that retain contemporary relevance--it is a "mother" text with twentieth-century postcolonial offspring who are not bound by literary apron strings, but who clearly acknowledge the maternal presence in myriad ways that can inform and complicate our understanding of literary "influence." Contemporary intertextuality studies like mine are challenging traditional notions of influence, so that the perception of Jane Eyre--as well as the analyses of its supposedly "revisionary" texts--is transformed when one considers how these later texts incorporate or challenge its values, assumptions or racial paradigms. According to Susan Stanford Friedman,

The interesting question for the critic has been how the successor(s) adapted, assimilated, revised, transformed, altered, reshaped, or revised the precursor(s). This dialogic element has probably been foregrounded in studies focused on the successor, while work on the influential figures often emphasizes the power of the originator (154).

My dissertation employs this type of "dialogic element" to bring forward an explanation of how these postcolonial "successors" can inform our understanding of Jane Eyre as a paradigmatic and influential originator of the myth of the universal female subject--the English female who is everything that the "madwoman in the attic" is not. Jane is not a timeless model for female empowerment, but a figure of racial and social privilege who becomes a confusing and contradictory figure for postcolonial women whose quest for independence and identity is undermined by the illusionary "power" of this original text. Rather than argue that these texts "resemble" or "revise" the "mother" text Jane Eyre, my study demonstrates that literary inheritance is never clear-cut, as allusions and similarities to the Bronte novel actually signal the (dis)illusionment and (dis)similarities of the postcolonial protagonist.

Although other studies offer an explanation for how each of these four contemporary texts invoke Jane Eyre in name or in plot structure, I am the only scholar to

juxtapose these specific works in order to point out why Bronte's novel appears with such frequency, and to examine what this can tell us about the postcolonial protagonist's inner life and life choices. Although she does not mention Jane Eyre specifically, Rosanne Kanhai writes about how she uses Jasmine and Lucy in her literature classroom so that students can gauge "to what extent they become Americanized" (120). Kanhai's assessment of these two immigrant figures supports my conclusions about these books--that Jasmine makes moves to assimilate to American expectations and values at the cost of her postcolonial self and that Lucy struggles to avoid this fate by openly undermining American assumptions and stereotypes that she believes deny her own reality. Kanhai writes that Lucy and Jasmine represent "two options for the immigrant woman": "We can, like Jasmine, embrace the goals and trajectory of mainstream America, or like Lucy, we can utilize our place of separation from the mainstream and from our own cultures of origin to forge a decolonized consciousness" (12). While my analysis of these novels supports Kanhai's separation of these two protagonists based on their individual stance toward American "mainstream" values, my work extends postcolonial studies like Kanhai's by highlighting the more complex motivations and subtle voices that exist behind their life choices and attitudes. As I have shown, Jasmine does "embrace the goals and trajectory of mainstream America," but there is a restless, contradictory narrative voice in the novel that questions her participation in the American mainstream and her pursuit of goals that require her to silence her real needs and Indian identity. We see this same narrative strand of discontent woven through Angelou's telling of her childhood in Caged Bird in which the dual-voiced narrative subtly questions the values and attitudes thrust upon her by both the black and white communities.

It is tempting to conclude, as Kanhai does, that Lucy forges a "decolonized consciousness" that reflects her separation from "mainstream America" and her culture "of origin." My dissertation undermines the "all or nothing" tendencies of postcolonial scholars who describe figures like Clare Savage or Lucy Potter as either decolonizing

their consciousness or finding peace within their culture of origin or within mainstream America. By highlighting the temporal shifts, contradictory logic and ambivalent attitude of the narrative voice in these works by Angelou, Mukherjee, Cliff and Kincaid, I demonstrate that the postcolonial fictional female's attitude toward her cultural and racial identity is more uncertain and "messy" than most readers would like to believe. Furthermore, as Lucy's conclusion tells us, the move toward decolonizing oneself (which is never complete or comprehensive) requires that one not separate from the colonizing forces and the place of origin (as Kanhai suggests), but rather recognize these entities as part of oneself in order to accept them and demystify their seemingly omnipotent power to decide one's self-image.

As I have argued, Jane Eyre does not illustrate fiction's first feminist, but is a textual promotion of the social norms and racial values of nineteenth-century colonial England which are integral to Jane's quest toward individuation and self-expression. My explanation of the contradictions and ambivalence in Jane Eyre permits my subsequent analysis of how and why the novel and its heroine are intertextually "alive" in postcolonial texts. Jane Eyre's literal and suggestive presence in these works speaks for the colonial dreams, and points to the postcolonial ambivalence, of the young woman whose childhood has left her feeling confused about her racial identity, confined by familial loyalties, and silenced by dominant social norms that devalue her sensibilities. Marguerite, Jasmine, Clare and Lucy read Jane Eyre in hope of escaping or resolving their confusing feelings and restrictive environment, but, as I have shown, any meaningful emotional growth will only occur once they begin questioning Bronte's rigid construction of female identity and racial binaries--enforced by the social structures at home and abroad--and look inward to accept their heterogeneous cultural inheritance as postcolonial women. Lucy Potter is the protagonist who comes closest to acknowledging her mixed cultural inheritance and accepting the disparate parts of herself, although she will never be free of the colonial influence. Her journey toward self-understanding and self

acceptance will be an ongoing project, for "the quest to defeat, escape or circumvent the pattern of binaries which has been identified as foundational to Western thought . . . is seldom, if ever, attained" (Tiffin and Lawson 10). But what can be attained is a greater understanding of how binaries--the Jane/Bertha binary, for example--limit our protagonists' abilities to appreciate the complexities of their postcolonial selves. Similarly, there appears to be no way to "circumvent" the power and presence of a Western text such as Jane Eyre in contemporary literary contexts. Instead, we can explore what its intertextual longevity reveals about the text itself, and about the authors who invoke the text and explain the reasons for, and the ramifications of, their protagonists' fascination with the Bronte's text.

My dissertation is designed to be a testament to the complex reality of the postcolonial experience by deepening and extending the discussion of colonialism and its effects as it appears in its literary guises. These four modern novels become both inheritors of the Jane Eyre literary legacy and shapers of its postcolonial legacy, supporting a new notion of intertextuality that moves beyond the idea that Jane Eyre merely influences twentieth-century writers. Future studies that examine how "classic" Western texts remain intertextually present within contemporary works by postcolonial authors will need to consider the ways in which the texts intersect one another on a variety of narrative and theoretical levels. We cannot simply assume that when we find narrative allusions to Jane Eyre (or other English nineteenth-century texts) in twentieth-century texts that these latter works present a direct challenge to, or an uncomplicated admiration for, the earlier text. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson declare that postcolonial writers are engaging with "canonical texts" and describe the dialogue this way: "It may not be a pure or unrefracted discourse, but it is a vigorous and inventive one" (11). I have begun the task of listening for this innovative, heterogeneous "discourse" that can inform our understanding of a canonical text like Jane Eyre and provide a new appreciation for the "vigorous and inventive" voice that is present in so many recent postcolonial texts.



Jane Eyre is a "mother" text that serves Maya Angelou, Bharati Mukherjee, Michelle Cliff and Jamaica Kincaid, and their female protagonists, as a colonial predecessor and literary ancestor who provides fruitful, intertextual ground on which authors can construct original narratives of race, class and gender development. Their relationship to Bronte's novel, like their relationship to the colonizing center itself, remains a powerfully ambivalent one. This ambivalence reverberates throughout their texts in complicated and interesting ways. Identifying the tones and nuances of these literary "reverberations" gives new depth and meaning to these postcolonial texts and brings them out from under Jane Eyre's shadow, providing us with the opportunity to see them in a new light.

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