“Madness” and Desire: *Jane Eyre* and *Wittgenstein’s Nephew*

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**Abstract:** This comparative study of “madness” applies David Mitchell’s concept of “narrative prosthesis,” by which is meant that “disability has been used throughout history as a crutch on which literary narratives lean for their representational power,” to *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and *Wittgenstein’s Nephew* by the Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard. In particular, it examines the ways in which cognitive disability in one character is instrumental in the development and success of other characters’ undertakings, and argues that the treatment of madness highlights first and foremost the two novels’ emphasis on social achievement.

As one critic argues, “disability pervades literary narrative, first, as a stock feature of characterization and, second, as an opportunistic metaphoric device” revealing “social and individual collapse.” For instance, the literary representation of madness often echoes social prejudice, yet means something else than what it is, and by acquiring a symbolic function within the text, makes for a “reserve of meaning,” an expression which Michel Foucault uses in “Madness: The Absence of Work.” However, this “reserve of meaning” is a limited one, not just because it relies on mostly negative views of disability circulating in social discourse, but also because the “purpose [of social mythology] is to create the adjusted, that is, the docile and obedient citizen,” while the literary medium is equally subjected to various constraints in its narrative structures as well as in its modes of characterization and descriptions. The literary treatment of madness is about restrictions at all levels in the creative process, and in this sense, deserves the critic’s full attention.

Examples illustrating this problematic abound and sometimes explicitly show how much the “disruptive potentiality” of madness is indeed little more than a potentiality never fully actualized. This is the case, for instance, in *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë and *Wittgenstein’s Nephew* (1982) by the Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard. Clearly, these two novels differ in several respects: a nineteenth-century love story, *Jane Eyre* is a work of fiction set in Victorian England with all the romantic mores that it connotes. Referring to real-life events and individuals (among other elements, the narrator is identified as being Thomas Bernhard himself); *Wittgenstein’s Nephew* is the critical account of a friendship, and on a larger scale, of Austrian intellectual circles. Nonetheless, both novels engage essentially in a reflection on what it means to be socially and emotionally able, the opposite of which is depicted as being “madness.” In fact, both novels emphatically highlight the “potentially disruptive” quality of madness in order to reinforce their all-encompassing celebration of
“ableness.” In addition, their strategies, rooted in traditional unfavorable images of disability, are strikingly similar. For one, their treatment of cognitive disability reduces the mad character to a mostly functional role, not only because madness triggers the plot and moves it forward to its climax, but also because in the eyes of the other characters, madness is a dehumanizing experience. Another strategy involves the non-medical meaning of the word “madness” as a synonym for unrestrained emotions or social behavior. From this perspective, madness, a symptom of social inadequacy, affects all characters in various aspects of their lives and forms a particularly cogent counterpoint to these two novels’ focus on the importance and value of social norms.

First and foremost, Brontë’s and Bernhard’s novels feature a character whose madness fosters desire or admiration in another character for yet a third person. In Jane Eyre, Edward Rochester is a wealthy landowner married to a woman, Bertha, who having lost her sanity, is prone to violence and has been constrained in a room depicted as a “wild beast’s den.” Under such circumstances, Rochester, craving for companionship, falls in love with Jane, a young governess. Jane is not aware that Bertha is Rochester’s wife and, accordingly, the two plan to get married. Similarly, in Wittgenstein’s Nephew, the first-person narrator, a successful author going through a period of self-doubt, expresses his admiration for the world-famous philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein by often comparing him with his nephew Paul Wittgenstein. Paul is a close friend of the narrator who, at the beginning of the story, is hospitalized in a mental-health unit for an unknown condition, possibly a manic-depressive illness that has affected him his entire life. Furthermore, both Rochester and the narrator in Bernhard’s novel are physically disabled, at least temporarily. Significantly, Jane Eyre first meets Rochester, the proud master of Thornfield, when he has just sprained his ankle after falling from his horse. Later, as Thornfield burns as a result of Bertha’s insane attempts to hurt her husband, Rochester not only loses his hand, but is also disfigured and becomes blind. For his part, the narrator in Wittgenstein’s Nephew is recovering from a life-saving lung operation and complains about his distended body and his moon-like face due to the medical treatment he has been prescribed. In each novel, the physically disabled individual is eager to overcome his bodily limitations and, even more so, the social obstacles he is facing, be they an unhappy marriage or a momentary lack of self-confidence, and in such a situation, takes as his object of admiration or desire, someone who has evidently been able to accomplish what she or he most wished to attain. Rochester sees in Jane, a resolute young woman who has received an excellent education and achieved financial independence despite her humble origins, the one person whose company will bring him contentment. In Bernhard’s novel, the narrator indulges in the evocation of the philosopher Wittgenstein and of his enviable reputation among intellectuals, through the portrayal of his friend Paul, a longtime psychiatry patient.

In fact, the pattern of bringing together the three characters in each novel is reminiscent of René Girard’s authoritative study Desire, Deceit and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure, in which the critic contends that the plot of a considerable number of well-known novels hinges upon “triangular desire” and involves a desiring subject, an object of desire, and crucially, a mediator. Girard understands such triangular desire to be a “systematic metaphor, systematically pursued,” that is, a structure rather than a theme, and he provides numerous examples of its various forms. In truth, if the mediator typically appears to be a model worthy of imitation, she or he may also arouse resentment, even hatred. Girard observes insightfully that “only someone who prevents us from satisfying a desire which he himself has inspired in us is truly an object of hatred.” However, no matter what light is shed on the mediator’s role, she or he is “radiating toward both the subject and the object,” influencing their actions and leading the story in a most definite direction. Bertha Rochester and Paul Wittgenstein are two such mediators, as it is their madness which prompts the action. Looking at his “lunatic” wife, Rochester says of Jane: “I wanted her just as a change after this fierce ragout... Look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder,” while
the narrator in *Wittgenstein’s Nephew* renews his self-assurance only through his monologue on his problematic friendship with Paul.

As a matter of fact, Bertha and Paul once emblematized a desirable status. Bertha is a woman whom Rochester admits having felt attracted to when he was younger. As a wife, she is the character who should provide the nurturing love traditionally associated with marriage. Bertha is also a suitable party as long as Rochester, young and naïve, does not realize that there is more to marriage than status and a much coveted inheritance. The first signs of insanity bring an end to the illusion that such a rapidly arranged marriage could work. At that point, Mrs. Rochester becomes a non-person as no one at Thornfield knows of her presence. Although Rochester takes care of his wife, even risking his life as Thornfield burns down, he erases her presence and literally obliterates her from social existence. In his mind, she is an obstacle and no longer a human being. When the truth finally comes out, he refers to her as a “hideous demon” and an “embruted partner.” In *Wittgenstein’s Nephew*, Paul is an admired mentor to the narrator as long as health issues remain in the background. Thanks to his name and his intimate knowledge of the Viennese cultural elite, Paul opens up an affluent world to Bernhard, who enjoys accompanying him to the opera as much as he values his opinion on musical and literary events. Such appreciation changes drastically when the aging Paul becomes more frequently subject to bouts of depression. His friend then complains that the display of distress is inappropriate in an older man, while the hospital stays deprive him of all human dignity: locked in a “cage, that is to say in one of the hundreds of beds that are barred not only at the sides but on top; here he would be confined until he was broken, until he was finished—after weeks of shock therapy.” Like Paul’s relatives, the narrator slowly resolves to ignore him. The narrative is a story of guilt, as is poignantly pointed out in the epigraph quoting Paul on the first page of the novel: “Two hundred friends will come to my funeral and you must make a speech at the gravesite.” The sentence appears again in the last paragraph, this time with the mention that only a few people attended the funeral and that the narrator was absent from the ceremony. The former mentor and best friend dies as an unwanted acquaintance.

All things considered, the mediator (Paul; Bertha) is the object of desire until, in Girard’s words, the “desiring subject” (Bernhard; Rochester) “finds that he is grasping a void” and that the mediator’s presence is hindering his plans. The function of the mediator in both novels is thus best understood in its relation to the notion of sacrifice. Rochester’s and Bernhard’s fate seems determined by the role of Bertha and Paul in their lives, as if they were their victims. Conversely, their well-being is presented in large part as being contingent on the sacrifice of the two insane characters. Because of their madness, Bertha and Paul serve as anti-models, obstacles, and sacrificial figures, thus providing Rochester and Bernhard with the opportunity to exert their agency. In Georges Bataille’s view, sacrifice is undeniably about empowerment, as it is one means to “dramatize” the representation and practice of authority. From this perspective, sacrifice has a liberating function. The very condition of sacrifice is that an individual be “rejected from the human cycle… and altered in an altogether troubling way,” so that “the one who sacrifices is free” to act as he pleases, possibly in a way as “troubling” as the one that characterizes the victim. Assuredly, Bertha’s and Paul’s insanity enables the master of Thornfield and the Austrian writer to conveniently break with them. Rochester feels vindicated for rejecting his wife and wishing for an unlawful marriage with Jane; the narrator in *Wittgenstein’s Nephew* has no misgivings about abandoning his friend. Having deemed Bertha and Paul to be not quite human, they readily forsake the principles that they usually uphold and act in a way that is morally questionable. This element may explain why the act of confession is central in *Jane Eyre* and *Wittgenstein’s Nephew*. On one hand, Rochester’s and Bernhard’s unfortunate interaction with mentally ill individuals is the cause of some guilt resulting in the need for atonement. On the other, the encounter with madness motivates them to articulate their desire for a situation embodied in a person whom they admire. If one considers, like Catherine
Belsey, that “desire [is] probably always citational,” then these two characters’ wishes find expression because they are able to tell – cite – the stories of, respectively, Bertha and Paul. Rochester’s wife and Wittgenstein’s nephew are thus reduced to mere pawns within the story; their presence enjoins the other protagonists to act and find meaning in their lives. The mediator’s madness allows Rochester and Bernhard to come to terms with their deepest wishes. In substance, it frees the way for others to accomplish their plans.

Most of all however, mental illness evokes another type of madness, one that can be described as a feeling of being at odds with social norms. Indeed, Jane Eyre and Wittgenstein’s Nephew suggest that the medical condition of madness is to be feared, not because each one of us is vulnerable to it, but primarily because it symbolizes social inadequacy. Madness is thus a “travelling concept,” one whose meaning shifts depending on the situation. Certainly, the most compelling element about the mediator is that the ostracism from which she or he suffers might be the fate of the other actors in the story if they ever gave up striving to adjust to social rules, especially since madness, in the sense of social unbalance, is alluded to as being a pervasive element and permanent weakness lurking in all of the characters. Rampant in society, this type of madness, construed as the opposite of success, flares up when social difficulties become unbearable. It is therefore not surprising that any deviation from social norms is compared to the medical symptoms of mental illness displayed in Bertha and Paul. In their seminal study The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar concur that Bertha is an “avatar of Jane”:

*It is disturbingly clear from recurrent images in the novel that Bertha not only acts for Jane, she also acts like Jane.* For instance, in the opening scene, Jane, still a child, is being punished for being naughty by Mrs. Reed, a relative with whom she lives, and is carried into a room where she is locked in. She fights like a “mad cat,” and once locked in the room, screams at night, just like Bertha frequently does during episodes which frighten the residents of Thornfield. If not to a cat, Bertha is compared to a “tigress.” Mrs. Reed also accuses Jane of having a “tendency to deceit,” a fault found precisely in Bertha, who is said to be cunning as she knows how to deceive her keeper. The association of madness with Jane is a lasting one. At the height of despair, she fears that she is becoming “quite insane.” Arguably, the sustained analogy between Jane’s and Bertha’s lives calls attention to Jane’s most difficult moments in her struggle toward success.

In turn, the novel suggests that the two meanings of madness intermingle, not just because social ineffectualness is comparable to mental illness, but also because emotional vulnerability results from social causes. In this regard, the image of travel is particularly instructive. Jane is often seen traveling. As a child, she is sent to a school fifty miles away from Mrs. Reed’s residence, remote enough that a servant muses over her guardian’s decision to have her travel by herself: “What a long way! I wonder Mrs. Reed is not afraid to trust her so far alone.” The mention of long distances and of related dangers appears whenever Jane leaves a place, for instance when she moves from Lowood School to Thornfield, where she is to assume the position of governess. Later, on discovering that Rochester is already married, she flees from him and, not knowing where to go, takes the stagecoach as far away as she can pay for. She spends two harrowing days alone, having to beg for food and shelter, before finding refuge with the Rivers family. She eventually returns to Thornfield, only to find out that it has burnt down. In reality, her peregrinations are hardly an initiation to life or the experience of freedom. On the contrary, they show distinctly that Jane’s social status is for a long time a fragile one and, more importantly, that before settling down to the role of wife and mother, her sense of independence is likely to isolate her from her fellow beings. The vocabulary illustrating Jane’s situation is telling. As she and others note, she wanders from one “asylum” to the next. First locked in Mrs. Reed’s home, then an “inmate” at Lowood School, she later describes her room at Thornfield as an “asylum.” When it becomes clear to all that Jane and Rochester cannot marry, the latter offers to look for a suitable “asylum,” a place where she could find adequate work.
evocation of insanity is all the more powerful as travel and madness are tightly entwined in the novel. Bertha, whom Rochester first met in Jamaica, is described as an exotic foreigner. More precisely, xenophobic and racist comments occasionally appear in Jane Eyre, and Bertha’s foreignness, as well as her Creole, non-white background are identified as being the cause of her madness.48

Rochester is likewise a born traveler. First sent by his father to Jamaica in order to marry Bertha, he then returns to England, but abhorring Thornfield, where his wife is locked in, he spends much of his time abroad, especially on the continent. As is the case with Jane, travel is, in his situation, a way of addressing or escaping from difficulties. In fact, it is essential to note that madness (which a number of feminist critics have studied in relation to the female characters in Jane Eyre, mostly to demonstrate that it evokes the social constraints imposed on women)49 is also affecting Rochester.40 Rochester’s madness derives mostly from his unwise decision not to conform to marriage laws, a choice bound to upset his association with Jane, but also with his friends and acquaintances. Like Jane and Bertha, he is a “fettered wild beast,” a “caged bird,” entangled in a complicated situation and caught in conflicting duties and emotions.41 For instance, when he realizes that his marriage with Jane will not be possible as long as Bertha is alive, he is heard pacing up and down his bedroom at night, muttering to himself, an “inmate… walking restlessly from wall to wall,”42 just like Bertha, retired in her room, has been heard despairing. When Jane disappears from Thornfield, a servant reports that Rochester is growing “savage” and “dangerous,”43 like Bertha, also described as savage and dangerous and indeed behaving savagely and dangerously. Rochester, the servant continues, has “lost his senses” and is acting “mad.”44 When Jane returns to him, Rochester, hearing her voice, feels madness again, this time “sweet madness.”45 In Jane Eyre, madness, whether it is a social or medical dysfunction, is a synonym for the non-respect of social norms, these being Englishness, whiteness, as well as moderation and propriety. Although Bertha is not quite like Jane and Rochester, and Jane and Rochester are not “quite insane,” the definition of madness is fluid enough to allow various amalgamations and to destabilize meanings.

Madness is equally perceived as being a pervasive threat in Wittgenstein’s Nephew. The narrator’s and Ludwig Wittgenstein’s inability at times to cope with social situations is equated with Paul’s mental illness. For instance, the narrator explains: “Paul went mad because he suddenly pitted himself against everything—the only difference being that he went mad, whereas I, for the selfsame reason, contracted lung disease. But Paul was no madder than I am: I am at least as mad as he was.”46 Consequently, Bernhard feels that he is treated like Paul, “isolated, shunted aside, and written off.”47 Most of all, the two Wittgenstein’s are identified as being both brilliant and subject to madness: “Ludwig was the born publisher (of his philosophy), Paul the born nonpublisher… Yet in their own ways both were great, original, revolutionary thinkers.”48 The narrator adds: “Paul the madman was just as philosophical as his uncle Ludwig, while Ludwig the philosopher was just as mad as his nephew Paul… But it may well be that the philosophical Wittgenstein is regarded as a philosopher because he set his philosophy down on paper and not his madness, and that Paul is regarded as a madman because he suppressed his philosophy instead of publishing it, and displayed only his madness.”49 Again, the metaphor of distance suggests that madness represents the failure to adapt to society. The mental-health unit where Paul is a patient is called the Ludwig Pavilion, a place which the narrator would very much like to visit in order to see his friend. At a symbolic level, the name of the pavilion and the narrator’s fascination for the neighboring mental-health facility, which looks “like a miniature imperial village” and whose more beautiful blocks “featured libraries, winter gardens, a jewel of a theatre, elegant reception and banquet halls, drawing and smoking rooms,”50 invokes the philosopher Wittgenstein. Paul’s friend frequently reiterates his wish to walk over to the Ludwig Pavilion. Yet, alleging tiredness, he always postpones his visit, as if to express the troubling connections he establishes between Paul’s mental illness and social inadequacy.
Altogether, disability, whether cognitive or physical, probably receives such a negative connotation of weakness and failure because the two novels thematize social and financial status in explicit terms. Brontë’s and Bernhard’s novels place significant emphasis on their protagonists’ ability to work toward social success. For one, the English novel retraces “the progress of Jane Eyre from dispossession to ownership” as the orphaned, impoverished young girl given to the care of Mrs. Reed achieves financial independence by becoming first a governess, and later an heiress. In this rags-to-riches story, her gradual access to privilege is made all the more evident as the more privileged individuals around her experience increasing financial difficulties: Mrs. Reed’s son squanders his family’s money while Rochester loses his property through a fire. A second claim to success for Jane is her growing authority. In her analysis of how “Charlotte Brontë’s romantic individualism and rebellion of feeling are... structured by an underlying social and economic critique of bourgeois patriarchal authority,” Nancy Pell contends that “the shaping consciousness is always Jane’s.” The narrator of the story, Jane tells her adventures at a mature stage in her life. Also, her indomitable character offers, in particular, a sharp criticism of gender inequality: “Throughout Jane Eyre Charlotte Brontë presents marriage in the context of equality between the partners.” Acutely aware of social status, hers and that of those around her, Jane both respects the social hierarchy—she is meticulous to never be too familiar with her employer—and disrupts it—her critical mind makes it unlikely that she will ever submit to whatever she believes to be an injustice. Her marriage to Rochester is exemplary in this regard: her recently acquired fortune will compensate for his financial losses and her able-bodiedness will complement her new husband’s disabilities, not to mention that Jane will probably correct Rochester’s views when she judges this necessary. Likewise, Wittgenstein’s Nephew focuses on social achievement. Although Paul is the “embodiment of bourgeois decadence and of the decaying ideal of the bourgeois cultivation of the arts” as well as an ineffectual artist and thinker, he is also an indefatigable critic of Viennese intellectual circles. Learning from him, the narrator takes the role of “the idiosyncratic Kunstrichter in Austria’s public arena.” He thus posits himself as a critic whose reputation is solid enough to voice such criticism without having to fear social isolation. In fact, there is never any doubt in the narrative that Paul’s friend is an established writer, and various passages make reference to the books that he has published and the awards that he has won.

In the end, the function of madness in these two novels is to ensure stability and perpetuate social conventions, whether in a successful marriage or a well-established literary career. Triangular desire, once shaped by the symbolism of disability, denies social and personal change. Girard concludes his analysis by saying that “all novelistic conclusions are conversions,” as they usually bring a change to the initial situation. Indeed, the hero has to “repudiate his mediator,” so that new developments can take place. Not so however in Jane Eyre and Wittgenstein’s Nephew: Although Jane, Rochester, and Bernhard repudiate Bertha and Paul, they are unwilling to relinquish their initial desire for social success. Bertha and Paul have to be abandoned—they both conveniently die—so as no to impede their fellow characters’ designs. Jane Eyre and Wittgenstein’s Nephew are not novels of transformation, but rather of dogged persistence. More to the point, they are about opportunism. Whether one looks at Jane, Rochester or Paul’s friend, the recurring motif in their lives and in their expression of desire is self-interest. From this point of view, disability, although usually perceived of as a problem in need of a solution, is also a solution to a problem. In effect, madness as a “social malady” seems in both novels to be averted only to the extent that the individual whose madness is a medically diagnosed condition is excluded from social interaction. Following the sacrifice of the mediator, life seems to finally fulfill the characters’ earlier wishes and their social expectations. Rochester recovers his vision and Bernhard leaves the hospital. The master of Thornfield gets married to Jane and Bernhard returns to writing. Both find strength by telling the story of their involvement with madness. More importantly, however, their opportunistic representation of
madness has allowed them to justify the actions they took, even the most problematic ones, in order not to fall apart.60

Notes
4 Despite his strong conviction that “a text is an open-ended universe,” a critic like Umberto Eco admits, for instance, that “there are somewhere criteria for limiting interpretation.” Umberto Eco, “Interpretation and History,” in Interpretation and Overinterpretation, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 39-40.
5 This expression comes from Mitchell, “Narrative Prosthesis,” 15-17.
6 I thank here Mario Vötsch, University of Innsbruck, Austria for suggesting that I study this novel.
8 In Wittgenstein’s Nephew, the narrator recalls past events of his life, in particular his hospitalization for a serious lung disease in 1967. At the time, he had known Paul “for two or three years.” Ludwig Wittgenstein died in 1951. The narrator’s admiration for him is therefore based on the philosopher’s reputation alone. Thomas Bernhard, Wittgenstein’s Nephew: A Friendship, tr. David McLintock (Chicago: The University Press of Chicago, 1990), 18
9 Ibid., 37.
10 Ibid., 3.
11 René Girard, Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure, tr. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 4. After identifying “triangular desire,” Girard goes on to establish different types of this general structure. Of interest for the present study is the general triangular structure.
12 Ibid., 2.
13 Ibid., 10.
14 Ibid., 2.
15 Brontë, Jane Eyre, 439-40.
16 Rochester expresses his rejection of his wife on numerous occasions. However, he also indicates the following to characterize their first meetings: “I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited; and being ignorant, raw, and inexperienced, I thought I loved her.” (ibid., 457).
17 Ibid., 472; 437.
18 The novel “draws largely on the fame and shadow surrounding the industrialist family of the Wittgensteins, with its patronage of the arts (e.g., Klimt), its philosophical genius Ludwig Wittgenstein, and its extreme domestic tragedies (three suicides among Ludwig’s siblings).” Matthias Konzett, “Publikumsbeschimpfung: Thomas Bernhard’s Provocations of the Austrian Public Sphere,” The German Quarterly 68, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 253.
19 On their first meeting, the narrator realizes that Paul could be a source of inspiration and knowledge: “He had a fine artistic education, by no means confined to music, which differed from that of others in that, for instance, he would constantly draw comparisons, always verifiable, between works he had heard, concerts he had attended. Given all these qualities... I had no difficulty in recognizing and accepting Paul Wittgenstein as my new and quite extraordinary friend.” (Bernhard, Wittgenstein’s Nephew, 17).
20 The narrator confesses: “I hated it when he cried his heart out to me at the age of fifty-nine or sixty.” (Ibid., 32-33).
21 Ibid., 44.
22 Girard, Deceit, 164-65.
24 Bernhard’s narrative is suggestive: “A healthy person, if he is honest, wants nothing to do with the sick... While a person is sick, the healthy shun him and cast him off, in obedience to their instinct for self-preservation... The sick have forfeited whatever rights they once had.” (Bernhard, Wittgenstein’s Nephew, 48).
For the use of this expression, see Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).


Ibid., 361.


Ibid., 316.

Ibid., 44.

Ibid., 475.

Ibid., 56.

Ibid., 121.

Ibid., 247.

Ibid., 374.

Rochester’s words are revealing: Bertha “came from a mad family; -idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was a mad woman and a drunkard!” (ibid., 437).

Jean Wyatt, among other critics, remarks that “*Jane Eyre* has been a focus for feminist literary analysis from the first: early texts that have subsequently become models of feminist criticism, like Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of Their Own*, Ellen Moer’s *Literary Women*, Patricia Spack’s *The Female Imagination*, and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic*, all give *Jane Eyre* a central place.” Jean Wyatt, “A Patriarch of One’s Own: Jane Eyre and Romantic Love,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 4, no. 2. (Autumn 1985): 199.

Panama Roy makes the case that the “argument set forth in *The Madwoman in the Attic* is ingenious and largely well reasoned, but at least a little misleading” as Rochester acts and is often described in ways that are reminiscent of the actions and descriptions of Bertha. Panama Roy, “Unaccommodated Woman and the Poetics of Property in Jane Eyre,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 29, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 719.


Ibid., 479.

Ibid., 644.

Ibid., 645; 674.

Ibid., 653.


Ibid., 19.

Ibid., 63.

Ibid., 26.


Note that that there is a shift of point view depending on whether madness is considered to be a medical condition or a social ill. Jane, the narrator of the story, sets the tone by voicing her views on social status and success, whereas Rochester’s actions and comments put in perspective the role of the mad character.

The expression “rags-to-riches story” is, however, only partly accurate. Although Jane’s status dramatically improves over the years, the complex storyline of the novel is not typical of the usual straightforward plot in rags-to-riches stories.

I am grateful to Mathew Martin, Brock University, for this remark.


Ibid., 407. See also Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 355.

Konzett, “Publikumswidersprüfung,” 255-56. The Kunstrichter is a connoisseur or judge of art.

On this topic, see Mitchell, “Narrative Prosthesis,” 15.

This expression comes from Mitchell, “Narrative Prosthesis”, 15-17.

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