



MISS JANE AND MISS EYRE: FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER IN *JANE EYRE*

MISS JANE AND MISS EYRE: DE ALUMNA A PROFESORA EN *JANE EYRE*

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Abstract

Jane Eyre is considered to be one of the most significant Victorian novels within the English literary canon as well as a governess novel. However, apart from her experience as governess, it must not be forgotten that, first of all, Jane was a student. Education has shaped the protagonist's life and the plot of the novel making it one of the main topics of *Jane Eyre* and other Charlotte Brontë's literary works such as *The Professor* (1857) and *Villette* (1853). The main aim of this essay is to study how education has shaped Jane Eyre both as a student and a teacher and how it has affected the outcome of the novel. In order to do so, a close reading of the novel is carried out along with a sociocultural background of Victorian society.

Key Words: governess; education; role model; *Jane Eyre*; Charlotte Brontë

Resumen

Jane Eyre es considerada una de las novelas más significativas tanto del canon literario inglés como de la 'novela de institutriz'. Sin embargo, aparte de su experiencia como institutriz, no se debería olvidar que, antes que todo, Jane era una alumna. La educación ha moldeado la vida de la protagonista y el argumento de la novela haciendo que sea uno de los temas principales de *Jane Eyre* y otras novelas de Charlotte Brontë como *The Professor* (1857) y *Villette* (1853). El objetivo principal de este trabajo es estudiar como la educación ha moldeado a Jane Eyre tanto como alumna y profesora y como ha afectado a la resolución de la novela. Con este objetivo, se ha llevado a cabo una lectura detallada de la novela además de una contextualización sociocultural de la sociedad victoriana.

Palabras clave: institutriz; educación; modelo a seguir; *Jane Eyre*; Charlotte Brontë

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1. INTRODUCTION

Formal education is considered a *de facto* right in most countries in the 21st century; generally, from age five to sixteen people are set to enter the school system or other similar option, which will lead students to gain knowledge and skills for a future successful career and to become useful individuals for society. Formal education became universal in the 19th century, but only those who could afford it were prepared; thus, paving the way for new realities and professions such as the governess.

These social changes were based on the rise of a burgeoning upper-middle class whose riches originated in trade and ‘genteel’ jobs such as lawyers and doctors, in contrast to the aristocracy whose main source of income were rents. At the time, women (mothers and daughters) and their role within their own homes would be a reflection of their husband’s or father’s social status: women were supposed to provide an “oasis of domestic comfort” (Hughes, 2001: 13), away from the capitalistic and ‘work-conscious’ society. Menial chores like cleaning, cooking and taking care of children were not tasks for middle and upper-class women: “the ladies of the house now had little involvement in the mundane, tiring and sometimes dirty activities” (2001: 13). Hence, these tasks fell to servants and, in regard to children’s education, the governess.

The role of the governess became very important and their significance reached such level that a new subgenre, the *Governess novel*, was born. The Victorian governess novel had its beginnings in 18th-century works such as H.S.’s *Anecdotes of Mary; or, the Good Governess* (1795) and Maria Edgeworth’s *The Good French Governess* (1801). In regards to these early portrayals of governesses, Wadsö (2000) pointed out that these:

have a clearly didactic purpose and present highly appreciated teachers, a noticeable shift in attitude seems to have taken place in the 1830s. From then on, the governess heroine was usually depicted as a victim of circumstances at the mercy of inhospitable or even hostile employers. Economic and social changes in the mid-1800s affected the position of governesses (2000: par. 3).

This later shift towards the governess role fills the Victorian governess novels with social realism; unless they were married, middle class women had to look for means to support themselves, specially taking into consideration the economic distress of the 19th century (much like Charlotte Brontë and her sisters had to do). Due to their social status, most of them had been provided with an education and would have been able to work, but these educated ladies “would have felt humiliated to be seen serving in a shop or working in a factory alongside working-class girls. The only possibility open to them was to get a job as a teacher, either in a small girls’ school or in someone else’s home” (Hughes, 2014: par. 3). Concerning the role of the governess, Alton states:

A governess often provided *the interim step between a girl’s education in manners and morals* at the hands of her mother, and *the more formalized education* that she would receive from her teachers at school. Moreover, the governess was responsible not only for continuing to form the mind, character, and conduct of her charges but also for instructing her female pupils in both academic and non-academic subjects [...] through instruction and example [my italics] (1995: 87).

The role of the governess was defined by its dual nature as an educated role model, but also a 'genteel' employee: not a servant or an equal to a master's eye. The governess did not belong with the family nor did they belong with the servants, so this situation would place them in an uncomfortable position within the household (Thormählen, 2007: 48). Nevertheless, it represented the only way (apart from becoming writers) for middle-class women with no dowry (or non-substantial dowry) to support themselves. This is part of the subplot in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), an orphan who goes to a charity school sponsored by her rich and cold aunt to study and later becomes a governess.

Despite the fact that the text focuses on Jane's role as a governess in several instances, many scholars have pointed out that this is not a Governess novel due to the fact that "[i]t is not a piece of domestic realism but the story of a questing spirit seeking self-improvement by arduous routes that test her unusual faculties and inner strength to the utmost" (Thormählen, 2007: 54) and "[i]t does not tell the story of a teacher, or a governess, but the story of a believer who seeks and then follows her Vocation" (Craina, 2015: 42). However, the roles of teacher (and student) in *Jane Eyre* should not be overlooked.

Jane Eyre's education is instrumental to her following professional career as an educator; without formation Jane would have not had a means to support herself and find a home. Education has shaped the protagonist's life and the plot of the novel making it one of the main topics of *Jane Eyre* and other Charlotte Brontë's literary works such as *The Professor* (posthumously published in 1857) and *Villette* (1853). Therefore, the main aim of this essay is to study how education has shaped *Jane Eyre* both as a student and a teacher, and how it has affected the outcome of the novel. In order to do so, a close reading of the novel is done, along with a sociocultural background of Victorian society.

2. THE VICTORIAN GOVERNESS, EDUCATION AND JANE EYRE

Firstly, it needs to be mentioned that governesses were employed by the upper-classes as a status symbol. Although the lady of the house was proficient, her social position was too 'genteel' to do such a job as it was educating children. Concerning the social status of the governess and their presence in *Jane Eyre*, Godfrey points out that "governesses served as a hole in the invisible wall between working-class and middle-class gender identities. As governess, Jane bridges the gap between the dangerous androgyny of working-class homogeneity and the fragile stability of middle-class separate spheres" (2005: 857). Hence, the governess found herself between two worlds and that would make her a 'wild card' in such a class conscious society such as the Victorian society. In fact, despite her fondness for Mrs Fairfax and her pupil, Jane Eyre feels isolated at Thornfield Hall until she meets her intellectual equal: Mr Rochester. However, this would clash with the 'social reality' of the time as the master of the house and a servant (no matter their level of education) should not have any sort of relationship apart from that of an employer and employee.

This feeling of not belonging is often found in the text: from Jane's lonely and even abusing childhood in Gateshead Hall to Jane's feeling of awkwardness among Mr

Rochester's party in Thornfield Hall. This is further evidenced by the Ingrams' harsh comments on their many governesses who were their victims when Lord Ingram and Blanche were pupils: they boast about having made their governesses and tutors lives difficult by using physical and psychological abuse. At the moment, Jane is present and has to endure their harsh comments while no one came to her defence. This feeling of not belonging and feeling out of place also resonates with Jane's orphan hood: "the perception of orphanhood specifies the notion of existing as a stranger, and Jane is unrooted from her primary family or attachment to it" (Alqahtani 2018: 10), but it also brings "the idea of independence and freedom, along with the sense of doubt and deficiency for the orphan" (11). Hence, Jane is not constrained by her family connections, though she is missing someone to support her both financially and emotionally, thus, her role as a governess/student may nurture these needs.

It is not bizarre to say that the governess would rise as a nurturing and, in some cases, motherly figure. In the novel, Jane Eyre is an orphan who lives with her aunt by marriage, Mrs Reed, who could have stood as a mother figure to Jane as she promised to her husband but she views her as "a strange child she could not love" (Brontë 1994: 18). Motherless, Jane turns to other female figures such as Bessie (the maid) but their different statuses do not allow anything more than a caring but somewhat unequal relationship: Bessie belonged to the working class while Jane, despite her impoverish state, was part of the middle class (her father was a poor clergyman, but her mother was from the upper-middle class). Furthermore, Bessie's 'loyalty' would ultimately lie with the person who pays her wages, Mrs Reed, so it could not have been possible for Bessie to become a motherly figure to Jane.

However, Jane's search for acceptance has just begun and it is not until the mention of school is introduced in the novel that Jane realises how different her life could be outside Gateshead Hall:

[I]f Bessie's accounts of school-discipline (gathered from the young ladies of a family where she had lived before coming to Gateshead) were somewhat appalling, her details of certain accomplishments attained by these same ladies were, I thought, equally attractive. She boasted of beautiful paintings of landscapes and flowers by them executed; of songs they could sing and pieces they could play, of purses they could net, of French books they could translate [...] school would be a complete change: it implied a long journey, an entire separation from Gateshead, an entrance into a new life (1994: 27).

This desire for a new environment is based on Bessy's good opinion on schooling and her desire to emulate these achievements seems to rely to some extent on Jane's intention to please Bessy, the only maternal figure up to this point. It also resonates with Jane's fear of academic failure: "[t]he fear of failure in these points harassed me worse than the physical hardships of my lot, though these were no trifles" (1994: 62). Jane relies on her academic achievements to find acceptance as in Lowood School as she writes:

I had meant to be so good, and to do so much at Lowood; to make so many friends, to earn respect, and win affection. Already I had made visible progress: that very morning I had reached the head of my class; Miss Miller had praised me warmly; Miss Temple had smiled approbation; she had promised to teach me drawing, and to let me learn French, if I continued to make similar improvement two months longer:

and then I was well-received by my fellow-pupils; treated as an equal by those of my own age, and not molested by any (1994: 70)

These words are very significant in order to understand Jane's desire to fit in and find the affection she had not known up until the moment she begun at Lowood School. In this charity school is where Jane draws a link between contentment and academic pursuits fuelled by her amazement on the new contents and skills she learned:

They conversed of things I had never heard of; [...] they spoke of books: how many they had read! What stores of knowledge they possessed! Then they seemed so familiar with French names and French authors: but my amazement reached its climax when Miss Temple asked Helen if she sometimes snatched a moment to recall the Latin her father had taught her, and taking a book from a shelf, bade her read and construe a page of Virgil; and Helen obeyed, my organ of Veneration expanding at every sounding line (1994: 75).

Helen and Miss Temple are Jane's closest confidants in Lowood: Helen is an emotional support to Jane in her first days at school, but it is Miss Temple, one of the teachers, that "to her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements; her friendship and society had been my continual solace; she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and, lately, companion" (1994: 86). The connection between mother figure and educator is explicit in this quote, even after Jane stops being a pupil and becomes a teacher in Lowood for two years. According to Davis, Jane describes Miss Temple as a kind of 'demi-goddess' as she "demonstrates for Jane that an earthly life is worth living and can be negotiated through a carefully chosen path of morality, education and self-knowledge" (2009: 7). During her stay at Lowood, Miss Temple turned out to be what Jane needed, a confidant/mother: "She [Maria Temple] nurtures Jane emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, and she provides her with a model of moral behaviour that Jane learns to emulate while she remains at Lowood" (Alton, 1995: 124).

Jane's orphan hood and search for acceptance and guidance are key elements to understand the character's psychological profile. As Nestor pointed out "[a]ll these women in Jane's life, then, suggest the need for, and importance of, a nurturing supporting female presence" (1985: 106). Nevertheless, there is a change in Jane after Miss Temple marries and moves out of school with her husband; without her guidance Jane becomes restless and writes:

I had had no communication by letter or message with the outer world: school-rules, school-duties, school-habits and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases, and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies: such was what I knew of existence. And now I felt that it was not enough: I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty (Brönte, 1994: 87).

This desire for a change becomes only possible thanks to her academic formation and her experience as a teacher. Jane's physical need to leave Lowood is a breakthrough point and it signals her change from pupil to student that is unavoidable once Miss Temple leaves Lowood: "It is evident that Jane merely thought of Lowood as a home because of the motherly devotion Miss Temple had towards her" (Alqahtani, 2018: 11). However, in order to get closure for her childhood, a scene arises where Jane meets with her old maid Bessy: this chapter is significant as Jane says goodbye to her childhood 'mother'. Their talk is focused on the Reed family but it rapidly changes towards Jane's appearance and

accomplishments; on the former, Bessie comments that she is “genteel enough [...] look like a lady, and it is as much as I ever expected of you: you were no beauty as a child” (1994: 93). These words are not met indifferently by Jane that “[a]t eighteen most people wish to please, and the conviction that they have not an exterior likely to second that desire brings anything but gratification” (1994: 93). However, Bessie’s impressions change after asking Jane to play the piano and enquire after her other pursuits:

‘The Miss Reeds could not play as well!’ she said exultingly. ‘I always said you would surpass them in learning’ [...] ‘Well, that is beautiful, Miss Jane! It is as fine a picture as any Miss Reed’s drawing-master could paint, let alone the young ladies themselves, who could not come near it’ [...] ‘Oh, you are quite a lady, Miss Jane! I knew you would be: you will get on whether your relations notice you or not’ (1994: 93).

In Bessie’s eyes, Jane has not only surpassed the Miss Reeds’ talents, but she has become more genteel and accomplished than the most ladylike people Bessie knows. After being previously compared in the looks department to the Miss Reeds and coming up lacking, Jane shines due to her academic achievements and thanks to this she finds a position at a grand house: Jane’s *sound English education* at Lowood allows her to apply and get her governess position at Thornfield Hall. Concerning female education in the 19th century, Thormälhen considers that Charlotte Brontë was aware of the wider range of knowledge and skills an educated lady should know in the 1840s compared to the early century (2007: 60), hence, she prepared Jane accordingly in the following areas: English grammar and literature, geography, history, arithmetic, modern languages (French), drawing, needlework and music.

It may seem odd that religious instruction is not explicitly dealt with (apart from Helen’s comments on spirituality and God) considering the importance religious principles had in society (not to mention the fact that the Brontës’ father was an Anglican priest), but Charlotte Brontë believed that “spiritual progress comes from the individual” (2007: 100): this practical uptake on religious values and morals imbues the storyline. For instance, values such as humbleness and modesty are practiced by Jane in contrast to Blanche Ingram: even though both are musicians, Blanche relishes on the attention she receives thanks to her singing and playing “but everything about her, including her singing, is corrupted by her essential phoneyess” (2007: 109), while Jane does not show off her talents unless it is necessary—she only shows her drawings to Mr Rochester after being forced to do so. While Blanche uses her accomplishments to attract and entertain suitors (in this case, Mr Rochester), Jane uses hers without expecting recognition and as a means to improve and find a position.

Jane’s governess job brings her both financial security and some form of independence: having received an education paid by Mrs Reed, she is now free from any dues owed to her aunt and Lowood. Finally, Lowood became a means to an end: to find a place in which she would be valued thanks to her education. In fact, Thornfield Hall becomes the first place Jane has not been “trampled on” or “petrified” (1994: 251) and it is also the first time she comes to be the sole responsible for the education of a pupil, thus, becoming a governess. Her ward, Adèle, is described as

a lively child, who had been spoilt and indulged, and therefore was sometimes wayward; but as she was committed entirely to my care [...] she soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable. She had no great talents, no marked traits of character, no peculiar development of feeling or taste [...] but neither had she any deficiency or vice which sunk her below it. She made reasonable progress, entertained for me a vivacious, though perhaps not very profound affection; and by her simplicity, gay prattle, and efforts to please, inspired me, in return, with a degree of attachment sufficient to make us both content in each other's society (Brontë, 1994: 110).

Their mutual affection resonates with the idea of governesses as motherly figures but, in contrast to Jane's relationship of deep affection for Miss Temple, Miss Eyre and Adèle do not share a close bond. Both Jane and Adèle are orphans so Jane might have felt a kinship with her charge due to their similar circumstances. However, Jane did not have a mother figure during her childhood (her mother and father died when she was a child and Mrs Reed never showed any tender feelings for her), whereas Adèle was loved and cherished by her mother. Therefore, she may not want nor need a 'replacement' for her late mother as, unlike Jane, she lived in a healthy emotional environment during her childhood.

Jane prides herself on her pupil's achievements and she "recalls the humanity of Helen and Miss Temple, and dispenses it with equanimity to Adele" (Davis, 2009: 8) to make Adèle improve as much as possible, a fact that did not go unnoticed by Mr Rochester when he praises Jane's job: "Oh, don't fall back on over-modesty! I have examined Adèle, and find you have taken great pains with her: she is not bright, she has no talents; yet in a short time she has made much improvement" (Brontë, 1994: 123).

In regard to education, the narrator describes the more academic aspects of Adèle's (and all upper-class ladies) education and Jane ponders that:

it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex (1994: 111).

This is the first time Jane condemns the type of education girls received when focused on non-intellectual subjects (Shuttleworth, 2014) which resonates with the Brontës' "disapproval of another kind of frittering: the waste of women's time, energy and intellectual as well as physical faculties" (Thormälhen, 2007: 118). Making puddings and knitting were skills related to household management, one of the pillars of women's education in the 19th century. In regard to this, Rogers wrote that "debates about girls' education reflected the conviction that women needed both instruction in intellectual subjects and education in moral values for their special role within the family" (1995: 154). Jane goes further and, taking a quite feminist standpoint for her time, challenges society ideas of what women should study and what has been "pronounced for their sex" (Brontë, 1994: 111). Even though she does not outrightly defy the imposed system, her teaching mentality diverges from what education was and how it was understood.

However, Jane's 'revolutionary' ideas have to be set aside when she starts working at Morton School after her escape from Thornfield Hall. St John Rivers offers

her a job but says that “[i]t is a village school: your scholars will be only poor girls—cottagers’ children—at the best, farmers’ daughters. Knitting, sewing, reading, writing, ciphering, will be all you will have to teach” (1994: 351). Nevertheless, Jane accepts and sets aside subjects like Geography and Latin in order to teach the most basics which will be what her students need. The class is of twenty students of whom “three of the number can read: none write or cipher. Several knit, and a few sew a little” (1994: 355). Despite their ‘unrefinement’, she writes that:

I must not forget that these coarsely-clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy; and that the germs of native excellence, refinement, intelligence, kind feeling, are as likely to exist in their hearts as in those of the best-born. My duty will be to develop these germs: surely I shall find some happiness in discharging that office (1994: 355).

This resonates with the idea of educational equity, a universal concept in 21st century education, but not that common in the 19th century. Even though it may seem that Jane is condescending at times — “I had long felt with pleasure that many of my rustic scholars liked me, and when we parted, that consciousness was confirmed: they manifested their affection plainly and strongly. Deep was my gratification to find I had really a place in their *unsophisticated hearts*” [my italics] (1994: 385) — she is only stating society’s point of view on how children of this status were charity cases, as Jane was.

In fact, Jane may have felt somewhat identified with them in their status of students. After her traumatic discovery in Thornfield Hall (Mr Rochester’s wife) she yearns for tranquillity and stability; she gets this by becoming a student. Her saviours at this time are St John and her sisters, Diana and Mary, who are also governesses. They take care of Jane in a motherly fashion when she is ill and Diana also takes the role of teacher: “Diana offered to teach me German. I liked to learn of her: I saw the part of instructress pleased and suited her; that of scholar pleased and suited me no less” (1994: 347). Here again the link between mother and teacher figure is further developed. With this, Jane reverts back to her childhood need of security based on scholarly means by becoming again a student. It is also significant that Jane’s emotional wounds have always been soothed by teachers; first, Miss Temple nurtured and gave Jane the confidence to flourish. Then, after having her heart broken, the Rivers’ sisters save her of dying in the cold but they also help Jane overcome her trauma with their affection.

Despite John St River’s assertions on how the teaching position to farmers’ children would not fulfil Jane (due to her educated upbringing), Jane is happy to accept the job as a schoolmistress:

In truth *it was humble—but then it was sheltered*, and I wanted a safe asylum: it was plodding—but then, compared with that of a governess in a rich house, *it was independent; and the fear of servitude with strangers entered my soul like iron*: it was not ignoble—not unworthy— not mentally degrading [my italics] (Brontë, 1994: 351)

This resonates with Jane’s need for a safe haven after her escape from Thornfield Hall. It must be pointed out how Jane’s escape was due to her failed marriage to Mr Rochester: she was leaving the governess title for that of a married woman like many

governesses before her. Her foray outside her governess role was met with pain and sorrow after discovering Mr Rochester's secret: his locked-up wife. Therefore, any kind of job in which she would have to answer to someone (like at Thornfield Hall) would not give her the independence she needs, both financially and emotionally. Furthermore, "Jane views teaching as both a refuge and an asylum, and she sees teaching as a sanctuary from the temptations of her own emotions" (Alton, 1995: 128); thus, after having suffered from the shocking truth of Thornfield Hall, Jane needs to 'regroup' and go back to a stable and safe place, that is, teaching.

Even though being a governess was obviously a means to support herself, Jane is not without any teaching vocation and prides herself in her pupils' improvement and accomplishments: "Jane's teaching career also fosters a sense of personal accomplishment, most notably pride in the educational development of her students" (Gruener, 2016: 3). Concerning vocation and Jane's roles, Craina argues that:

Vocation becomes conspicuous when Duty and Enjoyment are separable no more, and Jane's progress suggests that mature souls are not restricted to one side of life. Jane's Vocation manifests with her marriage and with motherhood, but its manifestations don't end there, and writing will soon follow (2015: 44).

In fact, education tempers Jane's spirited nature from the beginning: (1) she curves her anger towards her penurious situation at Lowood with Helen and Miss Temple's help; (2) she finds purpose in teaching Adèle (apart from having stimulating conversations with Mr Rochester) after she finds herself becoming apathetic and morose at Thornfield Hall and (3) her 'independent' teaching job as a headmistress in Morton allows her to focus on her job and her enjoyment on her pupils' progress instead of her traumatic experiences at Thornfield. It is not surprising that Jane would link education and accomplishment with positive input, thus, achieving enjoyment through duty, which would end up in vocation.

As mentioned above, this vocation evolves along the protagonist from her different roles in life into her ultimate role: the caregiver. After achieving her economic independence thanks to her late uncle's fortune, Jane is free not to work (or to marry) to support herself. When she finds herself in Mr Rochester's presence, she states: "I told you I am independent, sir, as well as quite rich: I am my own mistress" (Brontë, 1994: 429). However, she decides to take care of Rochester as she "love[s him] better now, when [she] can be really useful to [him], than [she] did in [his] state of proud independence, when [he] disdained every part but that of the giver and protector" (1994: 440).

Jane's nurturing tendencies are obvious in her role as a nurse/wife as well as in her role as a pseudo-mother to Adèle, her former, pupil:

I soon asked and obtained leave of Mr Rochester to go and see her at the school [...] Her frantic joy at beholding me again moved me much [...] she said she was not happy. I found the rules of the establishment were too strict, its course of study too severe (1994: 445).

Having seen how Adèle was mistreated at school (and probably recalling her own experience at such establishments), Jane takes Adèle with her to reprise her role as governess. However, she later admits that it was impracticable due to her time being occupied by taking care of Rochester, so she found a more indulgent school near home so to allow for visits. We can appreciate in this excerpt the change of roles, Jane has

become the mistress of a house rather than a paid governess whose sole attention would be her pupil's progress. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Jane has 'forgot' about Adèle's education:

I took care that *she should never want for anything* that could contribute to her comfort: she soon settled in her new abode, became very happy there, and made fair progress in her studies [...] *a sound English education* corrected in a great measure *her French defects*; and when she left school, I found in her a *pleasing and obliging companion* [my italics] (1994: 445).

Jane's position as a first person narrator allows her to conduct the story (similarly to what a teacher does) and it also gives her the power to write her own story, thus, playing with the teacher/student dichotomy: Jane being the teacher and the reader being the student. However, as with any first-person narrator, the reader must be weary. As Hampe points out: "just like a textbook, Jane's narrative presents subjective opinions as objective truths, and her cultural biases and concern with plot points reproduce English principles of superiority and the pedagogical method of fact-based instruction" (2016: 73). Therefore, the reader only knows what Jane (the teacher) wants to impart: this proves the importance and power of the educator as the 'source of knowledge'.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Jane's education has not only shaped her character but it has also influenced the plot and the outcome of the book. Jane's emotional state is quite related to education, whether she is a student or a teacher. In fact, her accomplishments do not only provide a source of income, but her education also helps her rein her emotions, thus, common sense and reason –along with Jane's strong moral principles—moderate Jane's temper and emotions and prevent an "emotional shipwreck" (2007: 210). This is exemplified by her leaving Thornfield Hall when she finds herself in danger of accepting Mr Rochester's offer, and when she rejects St John Rivers' proposal knowing that she would not be a suitable wife for him — despite her many other qualities which would suit a missionary life.

Although *Jane Eyre* is not an autobiography by any means, it cannot be missed how Charlotte Brontë's own forays into the governess world would influence Jane's story. Having been a governess herself, Charlotte knew first hand of the tribulations a governess would face and how they would feel in a strangers' home and, what is more, she would have been taught from an early age obedience and self-denial in order to prepare her for her future role as a governess (Hughes, 2001: 177), principles which are reflected to some extent on *Jane Eyre*. Furthermore, the author expresses her opinion on education throughout what Jane says and what she implies: Charlotte Brontë believed that a remedy for poverty would be education and it is an educated person's obligation to aid in the process (Thormählen, 2007: 17), therefore, Jane's work with the children at Morton is further commented and analysed by Jane than her teaching years at Lowood.

In regard to role models, the relationship between teacher and mother figure plays a great role in the novel and in Jane's emotional growth. It cannot be lost in regard to the educational aspects of *Jane Eyre* that, despite her status as a teacher and governess, the

main character does not stop being a student after leaving an academic institution; Jane studies and learns new skills (e.g. German) throughout the book, thus, making for a great example of a lifelong learning education. This also reflects on the role of teachers as constant students in an *adapt or die* fashion. It is worth mentioning that Jane's reversion towards her 'student' role in the story is due to some sort of emotional turmoil or a feeling of helplessness: this supports the idea of the governess as a nurturing presence in their pupils' lives.

Finally, Jane also reflects on the educational system (especially on its flaws) – much like Charlotte Brontë did in her other writings— and she challenges her own work in order to achieve a teacher's main goal: a meaningful learning experience for their students. It cannot go unnoticed Jane's vocation towards her profession and her pupils' improvement as these are her highest priority and pleasure: "Sir, you have given me my 'cadeau'; I am obliged to you: it is the meed teachers most covet; praise of their pupils' progress" (Brontë, 1994: 123).

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