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Marble Under a Strange Spell: St. John Rivers' "Long-Cherished Scheme" to Wed Jane Eyre

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Abstract: For most readers, the third volume of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is the least gratifying of this great literary achievement of the Victorian era. Thornfield Hall and its passionate proprietor Edward Rochester are distant memories to "Jane Elliott" as she materializes half-starved and delirious on the steps of Moor House where Diana, Mary, and Rev. St. John Rivers live. Spurning the advances of the beautiful heiress Rosamond Oliver, St. John makes a puzzling and insulting proposal of marriage to Jane instead, under the pretense that he needs a helpmeet to aid him in his forthcoming missionary work in India. In the following article, I argue that St. John Rivers is in denial of his true motives in pursuing his cousin and that ultimately he has both professional and intensely personal reasons for wanting to marry Jane Eyre.

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Though long since promoted to that lofty category "literature," Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* nevertheless holds pride of place in any genealogy of the romance novel (Osland 85). Authoritative surveys of the romance novel's development such as Pamela Regis's *Natural History of the Romance Novel* (85-91) and Kristin Ramsdell's *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre* (7) acknowledge the artistic debt modern romance writers owe to pioneers such as Brontë, as do many of these popular romance novelists themselves (Barlow and Krentz 22; Clair 66). Indeed, written at a time when the romance novel "was all but synonymous with the English novel" (Regis 16), *Jane Eyre* is considered a "mother-text" (Frith 172) of the genre. As such, the heart of this masterpiece's narrative is a love story – a love story between the orphan protagonist Jane and her Byronic employer, Edward Fairfax

Rochester, a character who will go on to become the prototype and "ancestor of all contemporary romance heroes" (Cohn 51).

The barriers to this courtship are myriad, even by the byzantine standards of the Victorian novel. Obstacles to the union range from the social (differences in status between the hero and heroine, an age gap, Jane's position in Rochester's household as governess), to the geographical (Jane's flight to Morton after Rochester tries to make her his mistress, Rochester's removal to Ferndean after the fire at Thornfield), to the introduction of several false heroines and heroes into the courtship. In the case of Rochester, this includes a "stage managed" (Regis 87) pursuit of the haughty and arrogant Blanche Ingram intended to make Jane jealous, as well as an all-too-real marriage to mentally ill first wife Bertha Mason intended to be hidden from Jane.

Notwithstanding her self-deprecating remarks about her lack of good looks, Jane too receives attention from a false hero, her frigid clergyman cousin St. John Rivers, whose pursuit contributes to the barrier between the main characters. Traditionally, critics have seen the brooding young pastor's singular function in the novel as foil and stock rival to the true hero Mr. Rochester. Whereas the latter is supposed to represent passion, Rivers is said to embody Rochester's antithesis – reason (Blom 99). Or, if one likes, would-be bigamist Rochester offers Jane love without marriage, while St. John apparently proposes a marriage without love, intending to make Jane the submissive drudge of his convenience in India (Martin 88). Perhaps Jan Cohn gives the best explication of the differences between Jane's officious suitors in the following observation:

> Where Rochester is dark, St. John is fair. Rochester is nearing forty; St. John is not yet thirty. Rochester is sexually experienced; St. John virginal. Rochester is moody, passionate, capable of cruelty; St. John is emotionally controlled, incapable of violence. And whereas Jane must struggle to establish equality between herself and Rochester, she does not doubt that she is the equal of St. John Rivers. (54)

Conventional belief has it that Brontë invites her readers to interpret Jane's admirers as opposing doubles (much like Jane and Bertha), with Rochester being the one who actually wants and loves Jane. Yet drawing such an inference poses a new difficulty in that it does not satisfactorily explain why an intelligent man like St. John would desire Jane to go to India with him as his wife if he had such violently romantic feelings for another woman, the majestic Rosamond Oliver. Why not allow Jane to remain single while serving in India with him, or why bother to involve his platonic friend in these missionary projects at all?

However, his vigorous, confident pursuit of Jane becomes more plausible if, as John Sutherland hints, St. John actually loves Jane "in his cool way" (328). If readers dismiss the possibility of St. John's desire for a companionate marriage with Jane merely because she lacks the beauty of a Rosamond Oliver, then it is only fair to question equally Rochester's passion for Brontë's protagonist, as Rochester appears more shallow in his sexual proclivities than does St. John. Moreover, it would be an understatement to suggest that the claustrophobic Rivers is repressed psychologically and lacks the capability of speaking about his emotions with much honesty. If what Sutherland says of St. John's interest in Jane is true, St. John may not even be aware of the depth of his true feelings for her.

I do not wish to contradict the interpretation that St. John Rivers is Rochester's foil, as both men do offer Jane a clear choice between radically different and symbolic life partners. But I also think that Rivers is a more complex creation than he is traditionally made out to be. Since the critical consensus is that his character is the amalgamation of traits Brontë perceived in two actual men, the Revs. Henry Martyn (1781-1812), a famous English missionary to India and college contemporary of Charlotte's father Patrick, and Charlotte's former suitor Henry Nussey (1812-60), perhaps this blending of prototypes accounts for some of St. John's complexity. With this idea in mind, I wish to focus specifically on Henry Nussey's possible contribution to the composition of Rivers' character, as Henry was known to Charlotte personally and was the main biographical inspiration for the St. John character. I believe a careful analysis of Henry's two-year correspondence with Charlotte, which significantly commenced only *after* she declined his marriage proposal, reveals that his regard for her was less dispassionate than he perhaps led her to believe. If this interpretation is correct, I think it also reasonable to infer that Brontë might have delineated Nussey's fictional counterpart St. John, even unconsciously, with a similarly genuine romantic interest in Jane too.

Henry Nussey: The Inspiration for St. John Rivers

The Rev. Henry Nussey was one of many siblings to Brontë's lifelong friend Ellen Nussey (1817-97), with whom Brontë first became acquainted at the Miss Woolers' School, Roe Head, near Huddersfield in 1831. Ellen's deceased father John had made his fortune as a cloth merchant, and his well-connected widow Ellen lived, at the time of Brontë's meeting the younger Ellen, in a grand country estate called Rydings, near Birstall (fictionalized in *Jane Eyre* as Thornfield Hall). Brontë visited the posh Rydings for the first time in 1832 and surely met Ellen's brother Henry while staying there. Henry began attending Magdalene College, Cambridge, early that year on scholarship, with the ultimate goal of entering the ministry after earning his BA in 1835. While an undergraduate at Cambridge, he became acquainted with Patrick Brontë's favorite preacher, Rev. Charles Simeon, who was a leading figure in the Anglican Church's evangelical movement at that time. Henry also reports with alacrity joining a weekly Bible study hosted by a clique of "religious men, who may meet at each others rooms on a Saturday Even[in]g for spiritual edification & improvement by praise prayer & at present Study of the Scriptures" (Henry Nussey Diary f. 21r).

Despite a zeal worthy of St. John Rivers, Henry seems to have had a rather checkered, short-lived career in the pulpit. Margaret Smith reports that Henry's clerical legacy was "marred by dissension over the setting up of a school [at Hathersage], by other disputes with his parishioners, and by his own ill health" (131). He eventually retired to the Continent in July 1847 with his wife Emily after only twelve years in ministry, hoping to convalesce to the point of being able to preach again, though his health never did fully improve.

Like St. John Rivers, Henry was an adventurer and missionary at heart, aligning himself with missionary movements and participating in their fundraising efforts even before he set off for Cambridge in 1832. One diary entry recounting a Birstall missionary meeting Henry attended in June 1830 hints at his deepening commitment to a missionary vocation:

> I shall be called to the Ministry, & should it be the Lord's Will, I would for Christ's sake gladly be called to be a Missionary; if I could in any degree be an instrument in God's hands, of promot[in]g the salvation of mankind. (f. 2v)

Sadly, Henry fell off a horse and hurt his head some time during his six-month curacy at Birstall, resulting in an injury that caused him considerable discomfort for the rest of his life. The concussion appears to have affected both his nerves and public speaking abilities, effectively putting an end to any missionary dreams. Additionally, his injury-related oratory problems could have been one of the reasons his third vicar, the Rev. Charles Lutwidge of Burton Agnes (Yorkshire), asked Henry to relinquish the curacy "on acc[oun]t of the inadequacy of my powers to fulfil its duties" (HND f. 36r).

Not one to accept defeat easily, Henry procured his fourth curacy at Donnington and Earnley, Sussex, in December 1838. Deeming it high time he settled down and found a wife, the "perfectly eligible" (Barker 352) Henry, perhaps perplexingly, wrote two letters in February 1839 proposing marriage to Margaret Anne Lutwidge (1809-69), the sister of the vicar who had just fired him, Charles Henry Lutwidge. Henry identifies the young Miss "M. A. L." in his diary as a "sedate, intelligent sensible & I trust, good girl" (f. 45r) whose "soundness of judgment & . . . staidness of character, w[it]h a possession of [Christian] charity" (f. 31v) he deemed ideal virtues to be found in a clergyman's helpmeet. Henry journals his reaction to Margaret's second refusal as follows:

> On Tuesday last received a decisive reply f[ro]m M. A. L's papa. A loss, but I trust a providential one. Believe not her will, but her father's. All right. God knows best what is good for us, for his Church, & for his own Glory. This I humbly desire. And his Will be done, & not mine in this or in anything else. Evermore give me this Sp[iri]t of my Lord & Master! Wrote to a York[shire] Friend, C. B., Brothers John & George also. (f. 62r)

Henry did, doubtless with the nudging of his sister Ellen, write promptly to Charlotte Brontë on 1 March 1839 proposing that they become yoked together in wedlock, as he so chronicled in the above journal extract. Although Henry's unexpected and matter-of-fact marriage proposal came out of the blue to Charlotte, and its unromantic pragmatism amuses many twenty-first century readers, John Maynard holds that such sudden proposals would have seemed less of an unheard-of innovation among the Victorians (16). Indeed, within a few months of Henry Nussey's proposal, another man, an Irish parson by the name of David Pryce, sought Charlotte's hand in marriage after meeting her for only one evening.

As Henry's missive to Charlotte no longer exists, scholars must rely on Brontë's own reply to guess at the kind of offer of marriage the young pastor made to her. There is little doubt that Henry was the complete opposite of the imaginary heartthrob of Brontë's juvenilia, the Duke of Zamorna, though Clement Shorter seems to think Henry found Charlotte "singularly fascinating" (293). In a famous letter dated 5 March 1839, Charlotte half-heartedly softens the blow of her rejection by giving Henry the Victorian equivalent of the "it's-not-you-it's-me" line:

> It has always been my habit to study the characters of those amongst whom I chance to be thrown, and I think I know yours and can imagine what description of woman would suit you for a wife. Her character should not be too marked, ardent and original – her temper should be mild, her piety undoubted, her spirits even and cheerful, and her "personal attractions" sufficient to please your eye and gratify your just pride. (qtd. in Smith 185)

She then goes on to warn the twenty-seven-year-old curate of her own church that he does

> not know me, I am not the serious, grave, cool-headed individual you suppose – you would think me romantic and eccentric – you would say I was satirical and severe – however I scorn deceit and I will never for the sake of attaining the distinction of matrimony and escaping the stigma of an old maid take a worthy man whom I am conscious I cannot render happy. (qtd. in Smith 185)

Understandably, Henry formed a misguided impression of Brontë during her extended visits to Rydings and clearly mistook the painfully shy public Charlotte for the private woman. Critics often cite Henry's diary entry upon receiving Brontë's demurral as evidence of his lack of esteem for her: "Received an unfavorable report f[ro]m C. B. The Will of the Lord be done" (f. 64v), though his stoical response could just as easily be explained by Nussey's pious Calvinism.

More importantly, her letters to Ellen Nussey insinuate that the real reason Charlotte turned down such a handsome, educated man like Henry is that her instinct warned of his controlling nature. In a message to Ellen dated 12 March 1839, Charlotte confesses candidly,

> Moreover I was aware that Henry knew so little of me he could hardly be conscious to whom he was writing – why it would startle him to see me in my natural home-character he would think I was a wild, romantic enthusiast indeed – I could not sit all day long making a grave face before my husband – I would laugh and satirize and say whatever came into my head first . . . (qtd. in Smith 187)

Here, Brontë may be implying that Henry would be apt to criticize and scold her if he saw her in her own element (and especially if he read her scandalous Verdopolitan sagas about the Duke of Zamorna and his bevy of slavish mistresses). Additionally, Charlotte's ensuing correspondence with Henry demonstrates that she sometimes worried about shocking him with her tempestuous thoughts and meriting what St. John Rivers might call "severe reproof" (JE 368). In October 1839, Charlotte refrains from gushing in a letter to Henry about her and Ellen's recent seaside holiday, lest "I should fall into my besetting sin of enthusiasm" (qtd. in Smith 204) and unsettle Henry with her effusions over the pretty beach scene. Also, while working as governess for John and Jane White in Rawdon in May 1841, Brontë hastily explains why she is writing a letter to Henry on the Sabbath:

> You will perhaps think this hardly right and yet I do not feel that I am doing wrong – Sunday evening is almost my only time of leisure, no one would blame

> me if I were to spend this spare hour in a pleasant chat with a friend, is it worse to spend it in writing a friendly letter? (qtd. in Smith 255)

Lacking the bantering tone characteristic of her usual correspondence, the above letter comes off as defensive and humorless.

Though modern critics do justifiably laugh off Henry's brainstorming efforts to find a wife as a "spring chicken pecking about the yard for a suitable and palatable grain" (Raymond 109), Henry did press Brontë to keep up a one-sidedly flirtatious correspondence with him after she declined his proposal in March 1835. It may surprise those who would dismiss Henry Nussey as an unfeeling prig that he often broaches topics involving matters of the heart in these billets. Perhaps this exchange of at least five letters with Henry over the course of two years indicates that he "remained rather fascinated by Charlotte" (Fraser 121) and hoped she would reconsider her rebuff of his hand.

Perhaps realizing that Brontë was more susceptible to romance and honeyed words than she had initially let on, Henry tried a new tack and endeavored to engage Charlotte's obvious intellectual abilities, hoping to commence a "literary" correspondence with her. In a letter dated 26 May 1840, Charlotte communicates a "polite and patronizing" (Spark 19) answer to Henry's request that she humor him with a discussion of bookish topics such as science and language:

> You must not again ask me to write in a regular literary way to you on some particular topic – I cannot do it at all – do you think I am a Blue-stocking? I feel half-inclined to laugh at you for the idea, but perhaps you would be angry what was the topic to be – Chemistry? or Astronomy? or Mechanics? or Chonchology [sic] or Entomology or what other ology? I know nothing at all about any of these – I am not scientific, I am not a Linguist – you think me far more learned than I am – If I told you all my Ignorance I am afraid you would be shocked – however as I wish still to retain a little corner in your good opinion I will hold my tongue. (qtd. in Smith 220)

In the end, Charlotte's languid tone did not have the desired effect of throwing cold water on his attempts to draw her out, as Henry subsequently offered to send her some poetry and asked for her own rhymes in return. Although Charlotte tells him in a letter dated 11 January 1841 that she would enjoy receiving some of his lines, he should not expect her to reciprocate the favor:

> I shall be glad to receive the poetry which you offer to send me – you ask me to return the gift in kind – How do you know that I have it in my power to comply with that request? Once indeed I was very poetical, when I was sixteen, seventeen eighteen and nineteen years old – but I am now twenty-four approaching twenty-five – and the intermediate years are those which begin to rob life of some of its superfluous colouring. At this age it is time that the imagination should be pruned and trimmed – that the judgment should be cultivated – and a few at least, of the countless illusions of early youth should be cleared away. I have not written poetry for a long while. (qtd. in Smith 245)

Brontë's laughably disingenuous denunciation of verse reminds the reader of Rev. Philip Elton's (from Jane Austen's *Emma*) refusal to dance with Harriet Smith at a ball on account of his being "an old married man" whose "dancing days are over" (307). Margaret Smith documents that Charlotte's assertion that she had not written stanzas since she was nineteen is simply not true, as Charlotte composed many works between 1833-37 (from seventeen to twenty-one years old) (245). Charlotte then penned thirteen poems in 1838 and four in 1839, possibly reducing her output because of the famously condescending and sexist response she received from poet laureate Robert Southey in 1837 deriding female wordsmiths. Likely, by choosing not to swap poems with Henry Nussey in the above letter, Charlotte was trying to avoid cultivating an intimacy and friendship with a discarded suitor, as Henry was possibly pledged to a woman with the last name Follett by this time.

Juliet Barker has questioned the propriety of a minister engaged to another woman corresponding with a single woman like Charlotte Brontë who had previously refused him as a husband (410). Even worse, when the austere Henry was not requesting poetry and such from Brontë, he was chatting to her about both his and his sister's matrimonial prospects. Six months after making overtures of marriage to Charlotte, Henry wrote to her informing her that he hoped to marry a woman Margaret Smith does not believe was the moneyed Emily Prescott (1811-1907) Henry eventually wedded on 22 May 1845 (202). In a letter dated 28 October 1839, Brontë congratulates Henry on finding a prospective wife, though "fortune is not amongst the number of the young lady's advantages" (qtd. in Smith 204), indicating that Henry's "bride-elect" was unlikely to be the wealthy Emily Prescott mentioned above.

Brontë also became embroiled in some drama involving Henry's admittedly eccentric college friend Rev. Osman Parke Vincent's (?1813-85) romantic pursuit of Ellen Nussey. Ellen evidently suspected Charlotte of taking her brother Henry's side in the matter and trying to pressure Ellen to marry Vincent. In November 1840, Charlotte had written to her friend advising against the fatuity of waiting for the kindling of "*Une grande passion*" (qtd. in Smith 233) to settle down with a presentable man, assuming that is what Vincent was. In the same letter, Charlotte adds with some sarcasm that "His reverence Henry expresses himself very strongly on the subject of young ladies saying 'No' when they mean 'Yes' – He assures me he means nothing personal. I hope not" (qtd. in Smith 235). Charlotte must have feared Henry was still bitter about her rejection of him and intended his remark about teasing coquettes as a veiled swipe at her for turning him down. Perhaps to emphasize that her refusal was sincere and not a ploy, Charlotte swore to Ellen that toying with a beau's feelings was a tactic "of which I for one confess myself wholly incapable – I would not tell such a lie to gain a thousand pounds" (qtd. in Smith 235). As it happened, Charlotte urged Henry a few weeks later (11 January 1841) to meddle as little as possible in Ellen's affair with Vincent and to defer to Ellen's own good judgment of Vincent's fitness as an admirer. In one interesting passage in this note, Charlotte writes to her former suitor that it would be no grievous loss if Ellen remained celibate, as "We know many evils are escaped by eschewing matrimony" (qtd. in Smith 245).

However "slight" (Gaskell 126) a resemblance may exist between Henry Nussey and Brontë's character St. John Rivers, many parallels do undeniably emerge between the two men. Both clergymen had a reputation for taciturnity, both men proposed to a plain woman under the guise of asking for help in establishing a school, and both reported a fervent call to missions. Also, if the above passages from Charlotte's posts to Henry suggest that he was

more taken by her than his business-like marriage proposal let on, is it possible that Brontë unconsciously delineated St. John Rivers with a legitimate romantic interest in Jane Eyre too?

St. John Rivers: In Pursuit of a Companionate Marriage

Brontë, Jane Eyre, and St. John Rivers himself certainly go out of their way to persuade the reader and other characters in the novel that nothing untoward is going on between the cousins – protesting a little too much, perhaps. For his part, St. John makes a marriage proposal so pragmatic as to come off as insulting, understandably leaving our narrator Jane with the impression that he "has no more of a husband's heart for me than that frowning giant of a rock, down which the stream is foaming in yonder gorge. He prizes me as a soldier would a good weapon; and that is all" (361). Since she, in spite of Brocklehurst and Sarah Reed's accusations to the contrary, is frank and outspoken to point of bluntness, Jane naïvely assumes St. John likewise means exactly what he says when he emphasizes her plain looks and his lack of attraction to them in his bid for her hand. She is, as Rochester's housekeeper Alice Fairfax correctly observes, "so little acquainted with men" (237) and is unable to intuit what St. John is really saying to her underneath his conceited rhetoric.

Other characters in the novel also tend to jump to the "wrong" conclusion that St. John has made a pet of Jane for more than just pragmatic purposes. When Jane returns home from refusing St. John a second time, Diana is standing by the window, unabashedly spying on the pair as they do battle. Diana confesses,

> That brother of mine cherishes peculiar views of some sort respecting you, I am sure: he has long distinguished you by a notice and interest he never showed to any one else – to what end? I wish he loved you – does he Jane? (369)

Jane insists that St. John does not love her "one whit" (370), the same turn of phrase she used when doubting the sincerity of Rochester's own marriage proposal (228). Diana remains unconvinced and inquires, "Then why does he follow you so with his eyes – and get you so frequently alone with him, and keep you so continually at his side?" (370). She then asks ingenuously, "What makes you say he does not love you, Jane?" (370). Jane operates to set Diana straight and pronounces that since humorless St. John professes no love for Jane himself, he must therefore be telling the truth.

At the end of the novel, Rochester also "mistakenly" concludes that Jane may be the object of St. John's genuine fancy. When Jane heeds Rochester's supernatural summons and flees to Ferndean to locate her beloved master, she finds a broken Rochester missing an eye and hand. Fretting Rochester "out of his melancholy" (390), Jane baits him by delineating St. John Rivers, who took her in after she escaped Thornfield, as a handsome, learned, and respectable man. In one of the most delicious scenes in literature, Rochester cross-examines Jane about her relationship with Rivers and wonders for what purpose he would have her learn Hindustani:

> "Rivers taught you Hindostanee?"

> "Yes, sir."
> "And his sisters also?"
> "No."
> "Only you?"
> "Only me."
> "Did you ask to learn?"
> "No."
> "He wished to teach you?"
> "Yes."
> A second pause. (394)

As Jane fully expects, Rochester susses out Rivers' intention to marry her and in a fit of pique orders her off the knee she has been sitting on. Giggling at his jealousy, Jane assures her lover that Rivers "sees nothing attractive in me; not even youth – only a few useful mental points" (395). Rochester, only too happy to believe that Jane and her ecclesiastical cousin have no real regard for one another, drops the painful subject and determines that Jane must "become one flesh [with Rochester] without any delay" (397).

Notwithstanding her assertion that St. John sees only a "few mental points" in Jane, the nature of St. John's true feelings for Jane is certainly a matter open for debate. J. Jeffrey Franklin, for one, posits that both Rochester and Rivers pursue Jane for the same reason:

> Precisely what St. John lacks, then, is "sympathy," and it is Jane's capacity for sympathy that St. John is most critical of and, I would suggest, that most strongly attracts him to her. What St. John sees in Jane – beyond the prospect of a fellow missionary workhorse, and though he may not be conscious of it – is just what Rochester sees in her: a sympathetic spirit. (467)

St. John reveals himself quietly to this sympathetic "Jane Elliott" (her alias) over their months together in Morton, buying her an expensive copy (Eliot 197) of Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion* and lending her other titles from his library as a token of his high regard for her. It is St. John who first asks Jane if she is married when she materializes as a charity case on his doorstep one rainy night and ridiculously calls the nineteen-year-old a spinster when he finds out she is unwed. It is St. John who ceases visiting his erstwhile sweetheart Rosamond Oliver and her father at Vale Hall once Jane enters his life and moves back in with his sisters to his childhood home Moor House once it becomes obvious Jane has become ensconced there. It is St. John who stalls in securing employment for Jane because *his sisters* have become attached to her and her company gives them, as he says, "unusual pleasure" (315). Also, it is St. John who puts Jane under his forbidding surveillance at Moor House (though unsuccessfully hiding his cold, voyeuristic eye), and it is he who derives "a certain charm" from questioning Jane's "eyes piercingly" (355) as he kisses her every night before bed. Significantly, the only time St. John laughs or smiles is around "Jane Elliott," not Rosamond Oliver (though it is certainly true part of the awkwardness he evinces around her can be explained by his keen awareness of their difference in social class).

But why would Rivers wish to hide tender feelings for Jane if he is, as my reading alleges, truly partial to her? One obvious reason is that he is a man after Rev. Brocklehurst's

own heart in that St. John deems, like Lowood's inflexible superintendent, that the human body is vile and that natural human desires require repression. Gilbert and Gubar contend that both Brocklehurst and his counterpart St. John Rivers form "the personification of the Victorian superego" (343) in the book. Brocklehurst in particular has a sinister need to starve and "mortify . . . the lusts of the flesh" (JE 61) in his "naughty" female charges at Lowood Institution where Jane attends school in the novel's first volume. Perversely, he ogles the school's pupils for minutes on end and evinces a complete horror of little Julia Severn's naturally curly hair, which he orders cut off in a "distorted castration of female sexuality" (Hoeveler 118). He routinely helps himself to the girls' garments drying on the line and informs Miss Maria Temple that the children's black stockings are full of holes and in need of repair after he inspects them. Indeed, the twisting of both Brocklehurst and Rivers' "sexual nature has warped their entire way of relating to other people, leading them to turn sexual energies into suppression of others rather than expression of themselves" (Maynard 213).

Another reason St. John may wish to deny his fondness for Jane is simply due to pride. St. John appears to suffer an exaggerated fear of the vulnerability that people generally experience when falling in love, making it difficult for him to give voice to this compartment of his inner life without feeling shame. In one representative *tête-à-tête* with Jane, St. John professes a contempt for sentiment, giving the reader a good indication of the kind of wall he has built around his heart where fragile emotions are concerned:

> Reason, and not Feeling, is my guide: my ambition is unlimited; my desire to rise higher, to do more than others, insatiable. I honour endurance, perseverance, industry, talent; because these are the means by which men achieve great ends and mount to lofty eminence. I watch your career with interest, because I consider you a specimen of a diligent, orderly, energetic woman; not because I deeply compassionate what you have gone through, or what you still suffer. (335)

St. John certainly has sufficient cause to guard his heart with even greater diligence in volume three of the novel once he discovers Jane's real identity and her previous engagement to would-be bigamist Rochester. Reacting rather predictably to the existence of this unforeseen rival, St. John dismisses Rochester in a not unbiased way as a "bad man" (340), an accusation Jane casts down with considerable warmth.

But what about Rosamond Oliver – does the narrator Jane not continually emphasize how this delicate "Rose of the World" is Rivers' great love? Would not traipsing around with such a rich, gorgeous trophy on his arm afford St. John a life of status and ease? While it is true that Rosamond is beautiful and St. John is fond of her, she nevertheless has the "miniature charms of bloodless dolls" (Martin 104) and is ill-matched with St. John spiritually and in every other way:

> It is strange . . . that while I love Rosamond Oliver so wildly – with all the intensity, indeed, of a first passion, the object of which is exquisitely beautiful, graceful, and fascinating – I experience at the same time a calm, unwarped consciousness that she would not make me a good wife; that she is not the partner suited to me; that I should discover this within a year after marriage; and that to twelve months' rapture would succeed a lifetime of regret. (JE 334)

Even Jane eventually comes to understand that his infatuation with Rosamond was "but a love of the senses" after Jane judges, with some dramatic irony, it would be a "trying" (350) thing to be St. John's wife. Joseph Dupras argues that Jane misinterprets the depth of St. John and Rosamond's feelings for one another, projecting the earnest love Jane's star-crossed parents once shared onto St. John and Rosamond's superficial bond (399). Indeed, Rosamond's affections for St. John appear to be just that – superficial – as the young lady abandons her fruitless quest for him at the drop of her bonnet and becomes engaged to wealthy Sir Frederic Granby's grandson within two months of knowing him. Equally undisturbed at the end of their courtship, St. John remains "serene as glass" (353) when he apprises his sisters of Miss Oliver's betrothal, maintaining his *sang-froid* and barely batting an eyelash at the rather juicy piece of gossip. At that moment, Jane perceives that St. John "seemed so little to need sympathy, that, so far from venturing to offer him more, I experienced some shame at the recollection of what I had already hazarded" (353).

Nonetheless, Rosamond's attachment to St. John serves his purposes in that he trifles with the comely young heiress to stoke Jane's jealousy, never fully spurning Rosamond's obvious advances. Though much more subtle in his two-timing than Rochester, St. John luxuriates in his attraction to Rosamond Oliver in front of Jane, just as Rochester buttonholes her with his boastings about the sniffy Blanche Ingram and the womanizing of his previous mistresses Céline, Giacinta, and Clara. When St. John visits Jane's cottage on Guy Fawkes Day, he notices that Jane has been sketching and is glad she is not frittering away her holiday in gloom. Seeing little harm in offering herself as a confidant, Jane attempts to draw St. John out by asking him what he thinks of the becoming portrait she has reproduced of Rosamond Oliver. In response, all he can do compliment Jane's artistic skill in capturing Miss Oliver's likeness: "A well-executed picture, . . . very soft, clear colouring; very graceful and correct drawing" (332). Shaking her head at his stubbornness, Jane tells him that she is sure Rosamond adores him, and St. John indicates his wish to hear more: "It is very pleasant to hear this, . . . very: go on for another quarter of an hour" (333). Taking out his watch, he actually means to time their conversation.

At this point in the interview, St. John's actions toward Jane become strangely seductive: breathing "fast and low" (333), St. John sits in a chair in Jane's house, fantasizing about Rosamond Oliver and using Jane's flattering portrait of the pretty yet vapid girl as a visual aid. St. John then asks Jane to picture him

> stretched on an ottoman in the drawing-room at Vale Hall, at my bride Rosamond Oliver's feet: she is talking to me with her sweet voice – gazing down on me with those eyes your skilful hand has copied so well – smiling at me with these coral lips. She is mine – I am hers – this present life and passing world suffice to me. Hush! say nothing – my heart is full of delight – my senses are entranced – let the time I marked pass in peace. (333)

According to Debra Gettelman, the watch on the table represents Jane's surveillance of his daydream as St. John "actually tries to get Jane to picture these images with him, asking her to 'fancy [him] yielding and melting,' and proceeding to elaborate his own vision in an attempt to lure Jane into the vision as well" (575). After the allotted fifteen minutes have passed, Rivers gets his hat to leave and steals one last glance at the portrait before he goes.

Curiously, he pulls a piece of scrap paper over Rosamond's face, tears off the part of the blank page where Jane has absent-mindedly scribbled her real name, and gives her a quick stare before he leaves abruptly. Patricia Johnson catches the irony of St. John scorning a copy of Rosamond's likeness while purloining a shabby scrap of paper with Jane's real name written on it (178).

Though St. John finds Jane intriguing even before she renounces her alias and resumes her real identity, once she "see[s] the justice" (345) of sharing Uncle John Eyre's twenty-thousand pound inheritance with her cousins, St. John recognizes her truly remarkable spirit and angles to make such a fine exemplar of womanhood his wife. A close reading of his response to her request that he become her figurative brother conveys an oddly frustrated understatement of his feelings for her:

> I think I can. I know I have always loved my own sisters; and I know on what my affection for them is grounded, – respect for their worth and admiration of their talents. You too have principle and mind: your tastes and habits resemble Diana's and Mary's; your presence is always agreeable to me; in your conversation I have already for some time found a salutary solace. I feel I can easily and naturally make room in my heart for you, as my third and youngest sister. (346)

Yet despite his promise to embrace Jane as his third sister, St. John conversely draws a perplexing distinction between her and his biological sisters. When Jane informs him around Christmas that she intends to "*clean down*" (348, emphasis in original) Moor House in time for Diana and Mary's return to Morton, St. John exhorts Jane to look beyond "sisterly society" (349) for enjoyment, conspicuously avoiding referring to himself as her brother. Jane also complains that since discovering her real identity and vowing to treat her as a sibling, St. John has gone back on his word:

> He had not kept his promise of treating me like his sisters; he continually made little chilling differences between us, which did not at all tend to the development of cordiality: in short, now that I was acknowledged his kinswoman, and lived under the same roof with him, I felt the distance between us to be far greater than when he had known me only as the village schoolmistress. When I remembered how far I had once been admitted to his confidence, I could hardly comprehend his present frigidity. (353)

If we come to these lines having read the novel at least once, we realize that St. John does not withdraw from Jane as described in the above quotation because he dislikes her, but because he means to erase their biological relationship as an impediment to marriage. His behavior indicates Rivers wants a bride in Jane, not a kinswoman.

To this end, St. John delights in snatching Jane away from Diana Rivers, who is tutoring Jane in German, ostensibly to claim her as his Hindustani study partner. In reality, of course, St. John is executing his "long-cherished scheme" (JE 364) to train Jane to become his wife and colleague in missionary labors in India, though Jane has yet to agree to become either of those things. Both Diana and Mary laugh that St. John would never have been able to browbeat them into making such a change, and St. John replies quietly, "I know it" (355),

indicating that he both senses and relishes his ability to dominate Jane. St. John shrewdly guesses Jane would feel guilty not giving into his whims, saving her life as he did when she appeared on his rainy doorstep at the novel's "point of ritual death" (Regis 35, 88) – the moment in the romance novel's narrative when the union between hero and heroine appears most in jeopardy. Jane's description of Rivers' pedagogical methods affords proof of his despotic nature as both a human being and mentor:

> By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind: his praise and notice were more restraining than his indifference. I could no longer talk or laugh freely when he was by, because a tiresomely importunate instinct reminded me that vivacity (at least in me) was distasteful to him. I was so fully aware that only serious moods and occupations were acceptable, that in his presence every effort to sustain or follow any other became vain: I fell under a freezing spell. . . . I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me. (355)

Clearly Rivers had no drift of seriously considering either Diana or Mary for his pupil, as his intention from the start was to eliminate Jane's possible objection to going to India with him that she does not understand an Indian language.

Interestingly, St. John's formal bid for Jane's hand in marriage begins on something of a promising note: in declaring himself before a seated Jane, with the rolling Marsh Glen countryside and a coruscating stream as backdrop, St. John intones, "Jane, come with me to India: come as my help-meet and fellow-labourer" (358) – a proposal likely crafted to resonate with a woman of Jane's spiritual and romantic sensibilities. Nevertheless, as Jane's irresolute demurrals mount, his rhetoric becomes increasingly coercive as he attempts to "buy her body with the coin of spirituality, hypocritically posing as God's agent" (Moglen 138). Affecting a dislike for sentimentality, St. John insists that he wishes only to marry her for her industrious work habits, not her person. Foreseeing Jane's initial objections to such a ghastly union, St. John says that

> God and nature intended [Jane] for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must – shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you – not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service. (359)

Without actually using the words, St. John throws her plainness in her face and proclaims that he only has a utilitarian purpose in mind for their marriage. He eschews soft speech not to communicate his real feelings to Jane, but to avoid the vulnerability that would go with declaring himself to a beloved.

Whether or not Jane is unconsciously aware of St. John's true motivations for wanting her for his wife, she is positive she cannot marry her cousin. Notwithstanding St. John's disingenuous claim that Jane is "formed for labour, not for love" (359), Jane apparently instinctively knows that St. John would insist on consummating their marriage, on "scrupulously observ[ing]" all conjugal "forms of love" (361) in their dreadful life together. Yet Jane also knows she would be committing adultery in her heart for her "lawless and unconsecrated" (369) devotion to Rochester and harboring "recesses in my mind which

would be only mine, to which [St. John] never came" (363). St. John, meanwhile, suffers no similar worries over marrying Jane while indulging in secret fantasies of Rosamond Oliver. Jane thus grasps at any excuse she can think of (save that she does not know Hindustani!) to budge St. John from his "matrimonial scheme" (371) involving her. First, she overstates their biological relationship, calling him her "adopted brother" and protesting that she regards him "as a brother – you, me as a sister" (361). Mary Jean Corbett avers that Jane's objection that the two cousins cannot marry because such a match would be incestuous is merely an excuse:

> By constantly referring to her Rivers cousins as her brother and sisters, moreover, she installs a rhetorical impediment to marital union with St. John where no actual impediment exists: although cousin-marriage came under increasing scrutiny after 1860, roughly coinciding with the early stirrings of eugenics, it remained perfectly legal in England (though not in the United States), and fairly common, especially among elites. (110)

To Jane's dismay, St. John will not be diverted from his course of love by such spurious excuses that he is Jane's figurative brother. He tells Jane plainly that she is not his sister, otherwise he claims, he would not make their traveling together to India as apostles of Jesus contingent upon their marriage.

Jane, on the other hand, stands firm that she is "ready to go to India, if I may go free" (361), which is to say she is willing to go with St. John to India as his aide only, not his spouse. A flustered St. John sputters, "How can I, a man not yet thirty, take out with me to India a girl of nineteen, unless she be married to me?" (364). Jane counters that they could travel "Very well" together and "quite as well as if I were either your real sister, or a man and a clergyman like yourself" (364). It appears history is on Jane's side of this debate, as Clare Midgley reports that the Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India, and the East (FES) had assigned dozens of single female "agents" to India and beyond by the time *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847 (340). This, and the fact that St. John concedes to send Jane to India with another missionary's wife as a coadjutor, proves that there was nothing impracticable in a single woman like Jane serving as a deacon abroad. His real problem with Jane's counter-proposal is that St. John could not rule over Jane as his sister (nor would he have sexual access to her) the way he could were she his wife, and he acknowledges as much: "I, too, do not want a sister; a sister might any day be taken from me. I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life and retain absolutely till death" (362).

In contrast to his stoic acceptance of the discarded Rosamond Oliver's engagement to Sir Frederic Granby's grandson, St. John escorts Jane home after she balks at his first proposal rankling with "the disappointment of an austere and despotic nature, which has met resistance where it expected submission" (365). Postponing his departure to Cambridge for a week, St. John lingers in Morton in a mission to shoehorn Jane back into his narrative. During this interim, St. John applies bellows to the "slow fire of indignation, and a trembling trouble of grief" (366) burning within Jane by treating his own sisters better and Jane worse. The night before he leaves for Cambridge, Jane chases after him and pleads with him to "forgive" her for not marrying him. When Jane reiterates her offer to go to India as his assistant only, St. John repeats his sophistical claim that doing so would be an insult to propriety:

> I before proved to you the absurdity of a single woman of your age proposing to accompany abroad a single man of mine. I proved it to you in such terms as, I should have thought, would have prevented your ever again alluding to the plan. That you have done so, I regret – for your sake. (368)

Though Jane's ordeal is anything but funny, J. Jeffrey Franklin comments humorously on this scene by stating that Rivers'

> next-to-last trump card is to suggest that Jane's wish to accompany him to India as a "sister" and not as a wife represents her willingness to live with him "in sin," the very act that she refuses to commit even with Rochester, whom she loves. Here it is clear, if it was not already, that St. John is blind to his own motives and passions and that he has been cloaking them all along in sanctimonious rhetoric. (469)

Despite having a saintly name that alludes to St. John's College, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Divine, St. John the Evangelist, and the Apostle of Love, St. John Rivers satanically tempts Jane three times with his offer of marriage (Maynard 133). With "long-suffering" (JE 372) tenacity, St. John lays out the third snare of his trap to capture Jane by placing his hand on her head and praying for her soul, which she describes as having the following hypnotic effect: "I stood motionless under my hierophant's touch. My refusals were forgotten – my fears overcome – my wrestlings paralysed. The impossible – *i.e.* my marriage with St. John – was fast becoming the Possible" (373). Elizabeth Imlay remarks that this scene is fraught with "overtones of sexual menace" (64) that, she argues, would not be as obvious to twentieth-century readers as it would to Brontë's Victorian audience. Imlay quotes Robert Lee Wolff's analysis of Rev. William Cartwright's (*The Vicar of Wrexhill*) seduction techniques and compares them to St. John's prayer over Jane:

> Cartwright is given to extempore praying, especially in private and with pretty girls. For the anti-Evangelical writer, this practice was the equivalent of the confessional for the anti-Tractarian or anti-Catholic writer: it was by private interviews and heated praying, accompanied by caresses, that the Evangelical villains won their influence over unsuspecting women. (209)

Though Imlay grants that the seductiveness of St. John's intercession over Jane is less overt than in Cartwright's attempt, there are bizarre similarities between the two incidents, including the fact that both Cartwright and Rivers get interrupted before they become too successful with their victims. As St. John puts his arm around Jane "*almost* as if he loved" her (373, emphasis in original), Jane hears Rochester's supernatural cry and breaks free of St. John to find her heart's love at Ferndean and ultimately marry him. Tellingly, after Jane marries Rochester and writes to St. John in Cambridge about the wedding, he ignores her letter and fails to mention Rochester's name or Jane's nuptials in a subsequent letter written to her six months later. St. John's exile to India is surely a perfect example of the "scapegoat exiled" trope often (but not always) seen in romance novels in which a character who contributes to the barrier between hero and heroine "is ejected from the new society formed by their union" (Regis 39).

William Percy: A Double for St. John

Up until this point in this project, I have analyzed St. John Rivers from the perspective of Brontë's first-person narrator Jane Eyre. As invaluable as Jane's point of view is in helping readers form an interpretation of Rivers' character, I am sure we could all agree that having access to St. John's thoughts free from the filter of the novel's narrative voice would provide a very helpful context in which to make sense of this man's heart *vis-à-vis* Jane. Fortunately, material from Charlotte Brontë's juvenilia may furnish us with a fresh angle from which to analyze St. John Rivers' contradictory actions and statements in *Jane Eyre*.

From 24 February to 26 March 1839, Charlotte drafted a novelette entitled *Henry Hastings* around the time she received and turned down Henry Nussey's proposal of marriage that spring. In this adventure story, Elizabeth Hastings, a forerunner of Jane Eyre (Beer 27; Alexander 167), abets her profligate brother Henry in escaping charges of murder. To complicate matters, Elizabeth becomes smitten with the bounty hunter after Henry – a Captain William Percy, the disowned son of a powerful nobleman. Most authorities (Moglen 86; Bock 58) rightly see William Percy as the prototype of the reserved William Crimsworth from Brontë's posthumously published *The Professor*. However, I believe compelling clues also suggest that Percy is the fictional inspiration behind St. John Rivers from *Jane Eyre* in addition to William Crimsworth.

Just as St. John Rivers is unimpressed with her looks the first time he discovers Jane half-starved and delirious on his doorstep at Moor House, William Percy is less than captivated by the unalluring Miss Hastings when he sneaks glances at her during an Angrian concert one night. Whispering to his companion Charles Townsend seated next to him in the theater, the baronet Percy points to a woman sitting in an opera box opposite his with the resplendent Jane Moore and deadpans, "But who in heaven's name has she got at her [Jane's] side, Townsend? Who can the little blighted mortal be? Somebody she's hired at so much a night to keep near her for the purpose of shewing her off?" (324).

Despite his low first opinion of Elizabeth and his rather ungenerous remarks about her, Percy's attitude toward Miss Hastings improves after monitoring her conduct on another occasion at a dinner party a day or two after his opera engagement. Perhaps imagining the thoughts that went through Henry Nussey's mind as Henry watched her during her visits with the Nussey clan, Charlotte has William Percy jot the following in his diary about Miss Hastings' bearing that evening:

> When a tear trickled from her eyelash to her cheek, she hastily lifted her handkerchief to wipe it away, and then, roused to recollection, called into her face an indifferent expression, and turning from the picture, looked like a person without an idea, alien from those she was with. I took good care to seem engaged in deep discourse with Augusta Lonsdale, that she might not suspect what scrutiny she had been the subject of a moment before. (326)

Is it possible St. John Rivers treasures up and ponders similar sensations in his heart as he supervises his cousin at Moor House in *Jane Eyre*? Like Rivers' initially bleak assessment of Jane, Percy's opinion of the shy but kind Elizabeth elevates as the evening continues to the point Percy decides she "was by no means ugly. Her eyes were very fine and seemed as if

they could express anything" (327), even though nothing in her appearance has actually changed in their few hours together.

In his pains to gather intelligence on the whereabouts of Henry Hastings, Percy calls on Jane Moore to interrogate her *à propos* the Hastings pair, "taking care to throw in deprecating remarks and a general air of contempt and indifference" (327) about Elizabeth for good measure. So as not to give away his "freak of taste" (349) for Jane's young sidekick, Percy harps on and on about how a "very plain" (329) creature like Elizabeth is not a lady "to attract my attention much" (329). To her credit, Jane defends Elizabeth as one who is "so good and so clever. She knows everything very nearly and she's quite different to other people. I can't tell how" (329).

But Percy evidently can. As he crosses paths with Elizabeth more frequently over the course of the novella, he "chuckle[s] with internal pleasure at the recollection of the cold, indifferent mien he had assumed" (349) in her presence, trying to camouflage that he has become "marble under a strange spell" (349) around the girl. His manners double those of St. John who speaks frostily and formally to his cousin in Jane Eyre while possibly secreting deeper feelings for her. Finally, when Percy deems the opportunity right to make his move on Elizabeth, he takes his dog Carlo (Rivers also has a dog named Carlo) and seeks her out where he knows she takes her regular walk. Affecting to meet her by chance in the field where she is strolling, Percy nonchalantly accompanies her under the risible pretense of guarding her safety:

> it's highly improper that a young woman such as you should be wandering by herself in such a lot of solitary fields, I shall take the liberty of offering my protection whilst you finish your walk, and then seeing you safe home. (356)

In a striking twist, Percy and Elizabeth stumble upon the grave of a beautiful woman named "Rosamund" during their promenade, apparently one of the scoundrel Zamorna's many paramours while she lived. One wonders if the memory of the exquisite Rosamond Oliver lies dead in a similar way at the feet of St. John Rivers when he escorts Jane down the Marsh Glen road in the third volume of *Jane Eyre* and expresses his inclination to become her husband.

In his rendezvous with Elizabeth, Percy declares himself to her in such a way that may actually reveal what St. John Rivers really feels for Jane Eyre. Percy confides,

> It never was my habit to impart my thoughts much, especially those that gave me the most pleasure, so I wanted no companion. . . . I used to wish for some existence with finer feelings and a warmer heart than what I saw round me. I had a kind of idea that I could be a very impassioned lover – if I met with a woman who was young and elegant and had a mind above the grade of an animal. (359)

Here, Percy admits that chilly as his airs have no doubt appeared to her to be, Elizabeth may just the type of woman to thaw his icy reserve. Though tempted to become his mistress with such a heartfelt admission of his passion, Elizabeth disciplines her own mutinous ardency for Percy and wrenches herself away from this married man, just as Jane Eyre will later do to Rochester. Leaving "the thwarted Sir William to stew – much to our satisfaction – in his

own juice" (Beer 28), Elizabeth remains the only heroine in Brontë's juvenilia to refrain from falling into adulterous folly or similar romantic tragedy.

Puzzled at Rochester's seemingly mercenary pursuit of Blanche Ingram for money and connections in the second volume of the novel, Jane reflects,

> It seemed to me that, were I a gentleman like him, I would take to my bosom only such a wife as I could love; but the very obviousness of the advantages to the husband's own happiness, offered by this plan, convinced me that there must be arguments against its general adoption of which I was quite ignorant; otherwise I felt sure all the world would act as I wished to act. (169-170)

Indeed, while plenty of characters in the novel pursue marriage to better their social position or other pragmatic reasons, St. John Rivers is, I would submit, not one of them. He is, however, much better (and more interested in) than other characters at cloaking his real motives, reframing his missionary ambitions as a humble wish to serve Christ and transmuting his desire for a companionate marriage with Jane into pedestrian offers of employment. St. John does not burn with love for the elegant Rosamond Oliver despite her unfitness to accompany him as a missionary to India so much as he loves Jane precisely because of her ability to do so, as well as the other interests she shares with him. During his otherwise repellent marriage proposal, St. John offers Jane a blazon of the qualities he admires most about her, sharing his admiration of her tireless work habits and generosity in quartering Uncle Eyre's inheritance, rightly praising her as "docile, diligent, disinterested, faithful, constant, and courageous; very gentle, and very heroic" (360). The barrier to the St. John Rivers-Jane Eyre courtship is not his lack of love for her but, rather, her want of feelings for him.

While convenient for St. John, his "long-cherished scheme" to wed Jane Eyre proposes no mere marriage of convenience only. For someone so adamant that he prefers Jane's toil to her touch, it is peculiar that St. John bargains for Jane's sexual submissiveness with such energy, ludicrously demanding that God will not bless the "half . . . oblation" and "mutilated sacrifice" (362) of a sexless marriage between the two cousins. And while she may scorn *his* idea of love, St. John does assure Jane that "enough of love would follow upon marriage [with him] to render the union right even in your eyes" (364), insinuating subtly that it already remains perfect in his.

If Jan Cohn's assertion that Rochester is "ancestor of all contemporary romance heroes" (51) is correct, perhaps it not all that far-fetched to suggest that St. John has made his own mark on the history of the romance genre as well – as ancestor of that dubious army of false heroes who form at least part of the external barrier between heroine and true hero in many current works of popular romantic fiction. In this way, St. John survives as ironic "father" of those suitors whose outer trappings such as looks, charm, wealth, culture, or social position within the community have much to recommend them to the romance novel heroine, yet are ill-matched with her due to a serious moral flaw on the "Other Men's" part or a simple lack of compatibility. From cold, repressed Rivers, to forgivably unfrank Churchill (Jane Austen's *Emma*), to wicked Wickham (Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*), these and other ostensibly disparate romance novel rivals share the similar narrative function of threatening the happy ending of their respective stories precisely because of these characters' perceived respectability; but their too-good-to-be-true camouflage is eventually

pulled away to reveal the real men underneath to both audience and protagonist alike. Once this exposure occurs, and the remainder of the barrier between true hero and heroine crumbles, it is indeed "a moment of rejoicing for the reader, whose response to the heroine's freedom is joy" (Regis 33).

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