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Disrupting Dominant Discourses:
Hybridity in *Jane Eyre* and *Get Out*

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Nimrod Numan
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Abstract

This study examines the theme of hybridity in Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre* and Jordan Peele’s film *Get Out*. Both the narrative text in the novel and the script with visual elements of the film use the concept of hybridity through Gothic motifs: a mad non-white woman in the attic in *Jane Eyre* and a psychological place in *Get Out*, where members of a white family hypnotise black people in order to exploit their physical capabilities. This is employed to disrupt dominant discourses of authoritative class, revealing the ways in which these discourses are constructed through the exclusion of certain identities. Bertha Mason, the Creole wife of Edward Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, and Chris Washington, the African American protagonist of *Get Out*, both embody a sense of hybridity that challenges established norms of individuality and representation. Through a comparative analysis of these characters, this essay argues that hybridity serves as a means of exposing and subverting the power structures that reinforce presiding stereotypes of othered characters. By deconstructing these sovereign discourses, hybridity creates space for alternative voices and perspectives that are often excluded from ascendant literatures. Ultimately, this essay accentuates the importance of inspecting the intersectional identities of characters in literature and film, as a means of challenging prepotent discourses and promoting social justice.


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1. Introduction

Hybridity, in the context of literature and film, refers to the blending of different cultural, racial, or social elements within a character or narrative. It plays a crucial role in the performance of race, challenging conventional notions of identity and highlighting the complex interplay between different cultural backgrounds. *Jane Eyre* and *Get Out* are two compelling examples that explore this concept.

Charlotte Brontë’s career in the 19th century spanned several notable works that captivate readers to this day. Her novels delve into the depths of human experiences, touching upon several social issues, such as identity, class and gender roles. Scholars have recognized the significance of these aspects in Brontë’s writings that, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note, “encode and confront the psychological contradictions experienced by a woman writer in the nineteenth century” (10). Scholars have also explored connections between Jane Eyre and her creator while others have written about the character of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* due to her significance to the story since she “functions as a powerful symbol of the female writer’s rage and rebelliousness, as well as of the way in which female creativity has been imprisoned and thwarted” (Gilbert and Gubar 46). Brontë’s portrayal of Bertha has been criticised for perpetuating stereotypes; some scholars argue that there are deeper layers to her character. Samantha Harvey suggests that Bertha’s qualities are permeated with the implication of the ‘Other’ to project anxieties of the dominant culture (11). Mary Jean Corbett states that Bertha’s marginalisation reflects the intrinsic inequality in colonial spaces (*Representing Femininity* 156). Gilbert and Gubar claim that Bertha and Charlotte Brontë have emotional needs and social agonies in common as both are oppressed by patriarchal power (358).

Jordan Peele is a filmmaker known for his ground-breaking work in the horror genre, particularly his directorial debut, *Get Out*. Peele’s career has been marked by a fresh and distinct approach to storytelling, captivating audiences with his thought-provoking narratives and social commentary. As a director, Peele has garnered significant attention for his ability to explore themes of race, identity, and social issues, offering a unique perspective on the experiences of people of colour. Mark R. Reid notes, “Peele’s films offer a potent mix of horror, humour, and social commentary that resonates with audiences, particularly people of colour, who have historically been underrepresented in the horror genre” (39). *Get Out* delves into the complex dynamics of race and explores
racism through exposing the exploitation of black qualities by white dominance when racial identities intersect. Scholars have discussed the protagonist’s role, Chris, in portraying hybridity. According to Robin R. Means Coleman and Tananarive Due, “Chris’s journey in Get Out embodies the complexities of hybridity” (186). Kaplan, E. Ann suggests that the film highlights Chris’s struggle in a hybrid atmosphere (92).

While there are other 21st-century horror films featuring racialised characters, Get Out stands out for its unprecedented idea: black people are depicted as ordinary citizens enjoying desirable physical qualities that appeal to white exploiters; any other intellectual potentials are not considered. Including both Jane Eyre and Get Out in the same essay explores the theme of hybridity in the context of race whose historical perspective exhibits colonial legacies which continue to influence contemporary racial dynamics.

Although, in this essay, I do not wish to expand on Brontë and Peele’s personal experiences, the aspect of hybridity and how it represents a challenge in two different periods will be explored through Bertha and Chris’s similarities as well as differences. Jane Eyre and Get Out approach hybridity, and the representation of Bertha and Chris is a part of the author’s and the director’s self-representation, which despite the span between the Victorian and contemporary periods, still affects societies where hybridity, otherness, and racism prevail. Judith Butler notes that “Bertha Mason may be read as a figure who represents . . . the wild, uncontrolled, and uncontrollable female . . . aspects of Brontë’s own life and her own disruptive energies” (126). Bertha’s position, as Elaine Showalter notes, in the narrative displaces, partly, the writer’s anger and antagonism (223). In discussing Peele’s intentions in creating Chris, Adam H. Woodward suggests that “Peele’s film speaks not only to the African American experience but also to his own experience as a biracial person in America. The film reflects his own exploration of identity, belonging, and the challenges faced by people of colour” (53). Similarly, Anna Backman Rogers states: “Peele has spoken of his own experiences and perspective as a mixed-race individual . . . Chris’s experience in the film resonates with Peele’s own grappling with racial identity” (95).

1.1 Frame for the study
This paper will compare and contrast the classic novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë with the contemporary horror film Get Out, directed by Jordan Peele. At first glance, these works may seem vastly different, but both explore themes of race, class, and gender. Despite their differences in style and setting, they utilize Gothic literary tropes to feature
protagonists as well as non-protagonists experiencing societies that are hostile and oppressive to outsiders. Many scholars employ feminist, Marxist, or colonial approaches to Jane Eyre, considering how gender, class, and subjection are portrayed. Other scholars examine how the film uses the experiences, history, and perspectives of African Americans to shed light on broader issues of implied racism, discrimination, and cultural identity. This essay also places itself in two of these theories: colonialism and African American, focusing on how hybridity and othering are operated in both gothic and horror themes.

How hybridity is processed in Jane Eyre and Get Out and what scholars write about it will be discussed in the following analysis. Similarities and differences will be explored between Bertha and Chris since both are people of colour trapped in white people’s social contexts. They are from different cultures–Victorian England and the United States in the 21st century. Bertha, who is Creole and isolated in an aristocratic manor, is not the protagonist, but plays a significant role in the novel as she represents the themes of Gothic and hybridity, while Chris lives in a city and visits the suburbs, encountering modern racial exploitation that seeks to confine him.

1.2 Research question

This essay will reveal how the characters of Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre and Chris Washington in Get Out embody hybridity and challenge dominant discourses of race and otherness in their respective narrative within their contexts.

By employing theoretical frameworks related to colonialism and African American studies, as well as conducting a comparative analysis of Bertha and Chris, this study aims to demonstrate that hybridity serves as a tool for exposing and undermining power mechanisms that perpetuate dominant preconceptions of othered characters. The essay will also explore how hybridity offers room for alternate voices and viewpoints that are frequently excluded from dominant literature. Finally, this paper will emphasise the significance of scrutinising the intersectional identities of characters in literature and cinema in order to challenge prevailing discourses and promote social justice. Analysing the two works next to each other in this thesis will disclose that the deep-seated fears and anxieties about race and people of colour, which underlie social and cultural structures in two different centuries, the 19th and the 21st century, have changed formula but not the
content: they grapple, through different approaches, with the same fundamental issues of oppression, domination, and resistance.

2. Background

The Gothic genre emerged in the late 18th century in Europe and has remained popular throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The Gothic is characterized by a dark, mysterious, and sometimes paranormal atmosphere, as well as elements of horror, romance, and suspense. Mary Jean Corbett states, “Gothic fiction dramatizes the fears, anxieties, and uncertainties that beset human life in any period of rapid social and cultural change” (“Jane Eyre and the 19th-century” 11). Diane Hoeveler claims that Jane Eyre deals with many of these elements and it is “very much about reproducing gothic tropes, about taking them and reconfiguring them to suit the needs of the heroine” (42). This genre often features haunted castles, gloomy landscapes, supernatural beings, and psychologically complex characters. In the 19th century, it evolved to incorporate new themes and motifs; the Victorian Gothic often dealt with issues of social class, gender, and sexuality, and it presented more realistic characters.

Horror films can visualise such tropes, offering a rich ground for exploring of hybridity, identity and otherness in order to reflect the increasing diversity and complexity of modern society. One of these films is Get Out directed by Jordan Peele and released in 2017. Ryan Poll notes that “for African Americans, horror is not a genre, but a structuring paradigm” (70). While Get Out may not adhere to traditional gothic horror conventions, it incorporates elements and themes that visualise unsettling atmosphere connected to gothic horror, trapped within an unending narrative of domestic racialised terror.

2.1. Summary of Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre follows the life of its eponymous protagonist Jane Eyre from her difficult childhood to her adulthood. Orphaned at a young age and raised by her unsympathetic aunt, Mrs. Reed, Jane endures a lonely and oppressive upbringing at Gateshead Hall. She is then sent to Lowood School, where she experiences deprivation and mistreatment but also finds solace in her friendship with Helen Burns and the guidance of the kind teacher, Miss Temple. As Jane grows older, she secures a position as a governess at Thornfield Hall, owned by the brooding and mysterious Mr. Rochester. A complex and
unconventional romance develops between Jane and Mr. Rochester, despite their differences in social status and the secrets that haunt Thornfield. However, their happiness is jeopardised when Jane discovers a dark secret about Mr. Rochester’s past: a hidden wife in the attic kept in confinement. She is Bertha Mason, daughter of Jonas Mason, and Antoinetta (Brontë 442). Bertha is a character who is of mixed Jamaican and English heritage. She is depicted as a figure of chaos and instability. She is locked away in the attic of Thornfield Hall, and is revealed to be the wife of Jane’s love interest, Mr. Rochester. She is described as having animalic actions: “[She] snatched and growled like some strange wild animal” (Brontë 446). Leaving Thornfield behind, Jane encounters St. John Rivers and his sisters, who offer her shelter and the opportunity to find a path to personal growth through missionary work. In the later stages of the novel, Bertha dies after setting fire to Mr. Rochester’s mansion and “lay[s] smashed on the pavement” (Brontë 654), and Jane reunites with Mr. Rochester who becomes blind as a subsequent injury of the fire in his manor. Jane marries Mr. Rochester, they have a child and find domestic contentment. At the end, Jane narrates her happiness in having found love, companionship, and a sense of belonging.

2.2. Summary of *Get Out*

In the film *Get Out*, Chris Washington is a young African-American man who grew up in an inner-city neighbourhood. He is a talented photographer and is dating a white woman named Rose Armitage. Chris visits the family of his girlfriend for the weekend when he begins to notice strange and unsettling behaviour from the Armitage family and their predominantly white guests. However, things take a sinister turn as Chris discovers a dark secret about her family and their unusual behaviour towards him: he suspects that “something is weird about this place. . .can feel it” (00:17:35-00:17:39), and that the family’s servants are not who they seem to be; they have all been hypnotised by his girlfriend’s mother. The maid Georgina looking at herself in a mirror crying and the groundskeeper Walter sprinting across the yard in the middle of the night, seemingly without reason, lead him to tell his girlfriend, Rose, “You are right, it is like Stepford” (00:32:13-00:32:16). “Stepford” refers to the novel *The Stepford Wives*, in which wives are transformed into obedient and submissive beings. He discovers a horrifying truth: the Armitages are involved in an ominous conspiracy that targets African Americans. Through hypnotism and brain transplantation, they seek to exploit and control the bodies
of black individuals to extend their own lives. Chris becomes a victim of this disturbing scheme and must find a way to escape before it is too late. As the plot progresses, it is revealed that Chris lost his mother in an accident when he was 11 years old, and he blames himself for not calling for help sooner. This traumatic event has had a profound impact on Chris, leaving him with feelings of guilt and inadequacy. However, he fights back against his captors and ultimately triumphs over the Armitages and their associates. In a climatic sequence, Chris faces the final antagonist, Rose Armitage, who had pretended to be his ally throughout the film. He manages to overpower her and escape together with his friend Rod who rescued him.

3. Literature review

*Jane Eyre* is a novel by English writer Charlotte Brontë, first published in London in 1847. The novel is typically categorized as a bildungsroman, a genre that focuses on the protagonist’s moral and psychological growth from childhood to adulthood. However, it also incorporates elements of Gothic fiction and romance. Scholars approach *Jane Eyre* from various angles depending on their specific interests and research focus.

The feminist undertones, and the depiction of class structures are often explored. Gilbert and Gubar describe the novel as “a...modern feminist text” (210). They examine the feminist elements stating that the novel “blends the realistic [and] the presentation of women . . . [into] the narrative” (452). Social-historical context, gender and religion are also among the aspects that have been focused on in *Jane Eyre* by many scholars. In her book, Sally Shuttleworth discusses the intertwining of these themes in the novel that “reflects and interrogates contemporary debates surrounding religion, and social context. Brontë’s novel delves into the complexities of female identity, challenging traditional gender roles and highlighting the restrictions placed on women in Victorian society” (153).

Moreover, Gothic elements and themes such as mysterious occurrences and ominous settings are likewise explored. Several scholarly works analyse the Gothic as a source of instability in *Jane Eyre*. Mary Jean Corbett describes Bertha Mason as “Gothic principle” (*Tulsa Studies* 45): a source of fear and otherness. This sense of precariousness is the Gothic atmosphere in *Jane Eyre*, and one of its key Gothic elements, especially the presence of Bertha. Likewise, Arvind Nawale states that, “Bertha is the representative of the Gothic, which signifies the disturbing element of the Victorian age . . . women were
also considered as the ‘Other’ in the patriarchal society of Victorian England. . . She represents the instability of Victorian society, which is full of conflicts and contradictions” (“The figure of Bertha” 2). Linking Gothic to colonialism, Gilbert and Gubar argue that Bertha’s life and death symbolise the consequences of repression and invite discussions about colonialism and mistreatment of marginalised other (273). Since this paper focuses on Bertha and the Gothic theme she represents which intersects with hybridity, a cluster of scholarly works will be added to the ones mentioned above to assist the analysis of hybridity disrupting the dominant discourse.

While much of the scholarly discourse surrounding Get Out focuses on themes of hybridity, racism, and otherness, there are scholars who have analysed the film from different perspectives, exploring surveillance and control. Amanda Howell states, “Through its use of surveillance tropes and strategies, Get Out offers a powerful critique of the mechanisms of control and manipulation in contemporary society” (227). David Simmons explores the film’s narrative structure and its relationship to genre conventions. He notes: “Peele’s masterful blending of horror, suspense, and social commentary in Get Out challenges generic boundaries and offers a fresh approach to storytelling within the horror genre” (212). Director Peele, in 2017 during an interview on MSNBC’s All In, has described Get Out as a “social thriller” that explores the ways in which African Americans are often viewed as “other” in American society (00:02:20-00:02:24). Brooks, Kinitra D. and Kameelah L. Martin claim that Get Out refutes the notion of black people as category and delivers a variegated view of blackness (14).

Some scholars point to Chris’s victimhood being amplified as he realises the extent of the horror and manipulation he has been subjected to; he is victimised by systemic racism and white exploitation disguised in false acceptance of black people. Richard Dyer suggests that Get Out’s “central horror is not so much that racism still exists but that it exists alongside appropriation and integration” (White 13). Darnell Hunt reads the film from the perspective of a black man’s dependent identity stating: “Chris’s experience in Get Out is an example of what can happen when someone who is used to having their identity affirmed is forced to confront the fact that their identity is constructed in part through the gaze of others” (Cultural Studies-Critical Methodologies 135). This reflects Toni Morrison’s statement: protagonist of Afro-American literature [as] a complex figure, moving out of a world of enforced cultural isolation and silence into a realm of language and visibility. But he has not done so unaltered. His new voice carries with it the
memory of his former captivity, and that memory lends him a peculiar strength, a hybridized power born of his mixed cultural heritage, his combined African and American histories (*Michigan Quarterly Review* 3).

One scholar who offers a unique perspective on *Get Out* beyond racism, otherness, and oppression is Sarah Berry. In her article “The Aesthetic of Abjection: Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*”, she explores the theme of abjection in the film. Sarah Berry states, “while racism and social commentary are prominent aspects of *Get Out*, it also operates on a deeper level of abjection. Peele’s film confronts the unsettling nature of the self, pushing boundaries and challenging viewers to confront their own fears and desires” (49).

From Leland Monk’s viewpoint, both protagonists in *Get Out* and *Jane Eyre* share common elements despite their different genres and time periods: “Chris’s experience as an outsider... mirrors Jane Eyre’s struggle for identity and autonomy” (112). Although Monk does not expand on the comparison between the two protagonists, he indicates self-sufficiency as a common motivation; they both experience at least one type of social exclusion since they are trapped in a white dominant culture.

**4. Theoretical background**

**4.1. Dominant discourses**

Shaping and controlling the way people think, communicate, and understand the world makes the dominant discourse comprehensively diverse. For instance, Bell Hooks argues that sexism is reliant with dominant power and supportive of otherness (22). This suggests that sexism, the discrimination or prejudice based on a person’s sex or gender, is closely connected to structures of power and authority. However, the essay projects only the dominant discourse of race that positions whiteness as the norm and coloured people as ‘others’.

As a term, dominant discourse refers to the prevailing or authoritative system of beliefs, values, and ideologies that shape and govern a particular social, cultural, or political context. Michel Foucault argues that the dominant discourse often holds power and influence, determining what is considered normal, acceptable, and legitimate, while marginalising or silencing alternative perspectives (92). This discourse is not only an instrument of power, but also a point of resistance—there is always an “outsider” when an “insider” prevails (Foucault 99). Outsiders are often related to hybridity and otherness as sources of unease.
Dominant discourses of race position whiteness as the norm or ideal, while other racial identities are constructed in relation to this norm. Stuart Hall states: “the dominance of the white subject position in the discourse of race means that it is rarely articulated as a problem for white people, as though racism were something that happens to others” (244), which normalises and perpetuates racial hierarchies. In films, the dominant discourse is seen rather than read–black characters can be treated as objects of desire or curiosity by the white characters who customise blackness according to their interests: they simply request to stay the dominant race. Richard Dyer states, “Whiteness in film and in the dominant visual media is still too often the unmarked, the human, the norm, and everything else is the marked, the non-human, the abnormal” (*The Annotated Screenplay* 92). Dyer provides insights into the aspect of dominant discourse in films in relation to racial representation. He discusses how whiteness has been historically constructed as the norm, perpetuating power imbalances and reinforcing racial orders.

4.2. Othering

Othering refers to the process of perceiving or treating individuals or groups as fundamentally different from oneself or one’s own group. It involves the creation of an ‘other’, who is viewed as distinct, often inferior, and sometimes even threatening. This concept is deeply rooted in social and cultural contexts and can manifest in various forms such as racism and discrimination. The term has its roots in social psychology and sociology; it gained prominence through the work of French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault, who examined how knowledge and power are used to define and marginalise certain groups in society. Edward Said is one of many social theorists who have explored the concept of othering; he examines how Western societies have historically constructed the “Oriental” as the “other”, portraying it as exotic and inferior. He argues that “the Orient is. . .[Europe’s] deepest and most recurring images of the other” (9).

4.3. Gothic

While the Victorian era (1837-1901) is known for its significant contributions to the Gothic genre, Gothic literature has a much broader historical scope. Gothic literature is broadly characterised as work that utilises dark and scenic settings, striking and theatrical narrative tactics, and an overall sense of exoticism, mystery, horror, and dread. Fred
Botting notes that “Gothic ...express[es] the strange and the supernatural, the violent and the ghostly, the grotesque and the ghastly, the irrational and the inexplicable; it can be enchantingly beautiful and horrifyingly terrible” (4). A Gothic novel or narrative will frequently focus around a vast, ancient home that hides a frightful secret or serves as the sanctuary of a particularly terrifying and scary character. This is relevant to *Jane Eyre*, predominantly in relation to the character of Bertha Mason and Mr. Rochester’s mansion where she is confined. Mystery, suspense and darkness are Gothic elements contribute to the atmosphere around the source of Gothic. Scholars Gilbert and Gubar emphasise the purpose of Gothic: marginalisation that challenges the dominant culture (130). Scholars often associate Gothic characters and elements with disrupting dominant cultures. Botting states that “in Gothic fiction, certain stock features provide the principle embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties. ...Gothic [are] suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats” (2). Gothic endangers the system of these cultures since they are based on power and control the other.

Stereotypical characters of Gothic in literature often embody certain powerful attributes and petrifying appearances that contribute to the overall Gothic atmosphere. These figures are described by scholars in various ways. David Punter is a scholar who delves into the multifaceted nature of Gothic characters. He states that, “there are other more important aspects which justify defining [Gothic characters] as a sub-genre: ...the ambiguous emotional effects [and] unexpected sympathy” (98). His analysis examines the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of these characters, shedding light on their allure and impact in Gothic literature–Bertha represents this multifaced depiction which is analysed in this essay.

4.4. Hybridity

Hybridity, in a general sense, refers to the mixing or blending of different elements, ideas, cultures, or identities to create something new and complex. This concept is often used in various academic fields, including literature and cultural studies. One of the key theorists associated with hybridity is Homi K. Bhabha, who states that hybridity refers to the ways in which different cultures and identities incorporate and interact with each other, producing new and complex forms of individuality that challenge established categories and boundaries, such as “in creole culture of the Caribbean, identity is matter of becoming as well as being” (112). Bhabha notes that “hybridity is the strategic reversal of the process of discovery, which fixes the colonial subject” (74). Hybridity emerged as a
response to colonialism and the cultural encounters that occurred during colonial periods. It suggests that when different cultures come into contact, they do not remain static or unchanged; instead, they interact and merge in ways that produce hybrid cultural forms and identities.

Similarly, Arvind Nawale describes hybridity as a constant dynamic process that reveals the intricated and unsettled certainties of postcolonial societies (Postcolonial Text 16). Toni Morrison views hybridity as a central feature of African American culture and an important element in American literature. She suggests that hybridity is not simply a matter of race, but also encompasses form, history, and identity. Morrison states that:

Hybridity, the combination of elements previously thought to be separate or opposed, has long been a feature of African American culture. The Africanist presence in American letters is neither ornamental nor illusionary. It is not a decorative presence, nor is it simply an organic one. It is absolutely central to any understanding of our national literature and should not be dismissed (Time 48).

In her critique of narratives that separate white life from black life and black history from national history, she argues that such narratives rely on a “historylessness” that fails to fully capture the complex and multifaceted nature of American cultural hybridity.

Hybridity, as a word used in literary texts, is merely a descriptive concept of people whom the dominant power believes are different, which genuinely should be neither evocative nor a challenge initiator. Bhabha suggests that “the exotic cure to Eurocentric objectification is not hybridity. It is the dilemma of colonial discourse that arises from problematic forms of cultural representation and connotation that emerge during periods of historical transition in the contact area where the colonialis impose and the colonized resist” (4-5). The way the colonial discourse dealt with different cultural interpretations during the critical time of colonisation is the essential source of the obstruction.

4.5. Double consciousness

Double consciousness describes the experience of being both black and American in a society that often sees these identities as incompatible. One scholar, to whom this concept is closely associated with, is W.E.B. Du Bois. He argues that double consciousness refers to the psychological experience of black Americans in a society that views them as “other” through the eyes of both themselves and their oppressors. He notes:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking
at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. . .One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (2).

Double consciousness, as articulated by W.E.B. Du Bois, imposes a dual awareness on marginalised individuals: own identity and how they are received by a prejudiced society.

4.6. White privilege

White Privilege originates from critical race theory and sociological scholarship. The concept is used to describe the systematic advantages and opportunities that comes with being perceived as white in a racially unequal society. Peggy McIntosh claims that “white privilege [is] an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (11). Racism is characterized by the white privilege that permits white individuals to move through the world with greater ease and access to resources, while also perpetuating a system that disadvantages people of colour. Dyer explains that:

Whiteness works to give white people the benefit of the doubt, to suggest that what they do is normal and natural, and that it is other people who are different, strange, or deviant. It allows white people to see themselves as individuals rather than as representatives of a race, and to avoid having their individual actions reflect on their racial group. This is white privilege (Essays on Race and Culture 20).

Although white privilege can manifest inexplicitly in different ways, such as access to education, employment opportunities, housing, and healthcare, it is still distinguished by racial performance.

4.7. Racial performance

Racial performance connotes that race is as much performed as it is inherent. As a term, racial performance is used by Hunt, who argues that race is not a fixed identity, but rather a performance that is influenced by social and cultural factors. Hunt explains that:

The concept of racial performance suggests that there is no one essential way to be black or white or any other racial category, and that these identities are not simply expressions of immutable biological traits or natural differences. Rather,
race and racial identity are social constructs that are produced and reproduced through discursive and performative practices that involve a wide range of cultural signifiers, including language, style, dress, gesture, and other embodied practices (Cultural Studies-Critical Methodologies 280).

Thus, race is not a fixed and immutable biological characteristic, but rather a social construct that is shaped and maintained through a range of cultural practices subject to negotiation. Therefore, the way people perform their race is not only influenced by individual choices and actions, but also by larger social and cultural factors.

The relationship between hybridity, double consciousness, white privilege and racial performance is multifaceted. Hybridity is “emergence of something new and original” (Bhabha 37), and double consciousness is the “sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others” (Du Bois 8), and both provide a space for individuals to resist fixed notions of identity and embrace the fluidity of cultural characteristics. White privilege creates expectations for how people of colour should perform their racial identity in ways that are not available to people of colour, as noted by Stuart Hall: “Race is a matter of performing identity, of being seen to be something. . .to be recognised by others as such” (275). Overall, they all are interconnected and based on the comprehension of the ‘Other’.

4.8. Visual metaphor

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain that “the essence of metaphor is understanding one kind of thing in terms of another” (5). Visualisation represents nouns through visual images that propose specific connotations or resemblances–visual metaphors that create a meaning in order to establish a specific theme. This rhetorical device uses visual elements, such as images, symbols, or visual representations to transport a figurative meaning. The nature of metaphor and its connection to our conceptual systems is explained by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, arguing that metaphors are not merely linguistic expressions but fundamental to how we think and understand the world. They state, “Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action (3). They further explain that metaphors are not limited to words but extend to visual representations as well (Lakoff and Johnson 6).

Charles Forceville suggests that the criteria for constructing visual metaphors in a film relies on unusual camera movement and moving images, shifting the shots between the two things to convey similarities (4). These metaphors allow the film to engage with
complex and taboo social issues, such as race, in a way that is both provocative and accessible to audiences. Visual metaphors in traditional cinematic horror scenes disseminate negative stereotypes and contribute to the systemic oppression of people of colour in society, as Hunt discusses that “[t]he continued use of the dangerous black male metaphor serves to reinforce white America’s fear and loathing of black men, and in so doing, perpetuates the myth of black male criminality that has been so destructive to the African American community” (Race and Ethnicity in America 55). Commonly, horror films in which actors of colour play major roles use visual metaphoric strategy to convey the theme of racism. Sarah Donovan suggests that: “Horror films have long relied on metaphor to reflect societal fears and anxieties. . .of a conservative society” (6). Similarly, Dyer states that metaphors are frequently used to portray an unsettling notion inarticulately: visualisation. Employing extra-terrestrials, abnormalized incarnations and aggressive mutated characters that exemplify marginalized groups is the most prevalent sort of metaphor in horror. These groups are portrayed in the film to signify the danger they bring: it is a message conveyed through utilized images (Jump Cut 135).

Visual metaphor in written text involves using words and phrases to bear sensory experiences, colours, shapes, and other visual elements, even though the medium itself is not visual—visual metaphors are born from words which govern our thoughts (Lakoff and Johnson 6): the application of visual attributes or qualities to non-visual concepts or ideas. Metaphors as “linguistic expressions” are used to frame our conceptual system and to guide our reasoning by the use of descriptive terminology (Lakoff and Johnson 5). These visual metaphors create a multi-dimensional involvement, enabling the reader to connect with the text on a more visceral level.

5. Analysis

5.1. Analysis of the similarities between Bertha and Chris

This study examines similarities between Bertha in Jane Eyre and Chris in Get Out in relation to the theme of hybridity. Both characters are people of colour who are marginalized and oppressed because of their hybrid identities. In Jane Eyre, Bertha is a Creole woman brought as a spouse to Mr. Rochester from an English colony. Likewise, Chris in Get Out is African American, which means his ancestors were probably brought to America as slaves, yet this assumption is not explicitly specified in the film. Thus, Bertha and Chris or their forefathers were either brought or transported from their
homelands by colonisers, both are people of colour, and brought into an almost completely white environment, where they experience being the “other”.

According to Nawale, Bertha’s physical characteristics, such as her dark skin, frizzy hair, and wild features, are used to underscore her otherness in the eyes of the English colonisers—a stereotype frequently associated with non-white individuals in Western literature (“Postcolonial Fictions” 88). Elizabeth Better notes that Bertha’s cultural and racial identity is problematic because it is not easily definable within the social context of the novel. Better suggests that “Bertha is a problem for the English because they cannot categorize her within their existing racial hierarchies” (353). She argues that Bertha’s Jamaican Creole heritage, her mixed-race background, and her social status as a colonised subject complicate her identity and make it difficult for her to fit into the existing power structures.

In an analogous way, Hunt notes that: “Blackness, in particular, carries symbolic weight in America” (Race and Ethnicity in America 77), something that involves both desire and fear. Although Chris is classified based on his appearance, his blackness is part of a cultural complex that is both feared and desired in white American society. Dean, Rose’s father, tells Chris that he admires him for his natural gifts and athleticism, saying that “black is in fashion” (00:15:45-00:15:47). Such approbation is a form of objectification and commodification of Chris’s body based on his race. Similar praise occurs in the scene where Jeremy, a son of the Armitage family, tells him, “I want those eyes. I want them for me. I want to be a whole person” (01:07:12-01:07:18). This comes after Jeremy and Chris have a conversation about Chris’s eyes and their unique colour. Jeremy believes that Chris’s eyes would be a beneficial addition to his own intellectual characteristics since he is a skilled neurosurgeon, revealing how white characters view Chris’s blackness as desirable and valuable. However, the white characters also fear Chris and his potentiality for rebellion or resistance. In the scene where Chris is strapped to a chair and subjected to hypnosis, the white character Missy talks to Chris ordering him to “Sink into the floor. Fall into the void of your own mind” (00:53:25-00:53:28), and together with her husband Dean who hypnotises Chris by saying: “Imagine yourself in a peaceful forest, at the bottom of a serene lake. You’re completely paralyzed. You can’t move a muscle” (00:53:33-00:53:38), trying to erase his consciousness and turn him into a passive vessel whose thoughts and actions are controlled for the whites’ own fear of blackness.

Bertha is likewise categorised and portrayed as the embodiment of racial treatment. She is chosen to be a wife, something suggests assimilation with the colonisers, not
because the colonisers agree to assimilate, but rather they retain a desire for controlling the other to reserve their colonial interests. This is evidenced when Mr. Rochester marries Bertha, in an attempt to defend the altruistic side of the English patrons who promote the notion that people of colour are desired not just to serve, but also to be loved and integrated. Corbett notes that once the motif of integration fails, the mood turns Gothic, and Bertha represents fear and danger—a threat that bases on an apparent estrangement and alienation between the people of colour who are vicious (Representing Femininity 131). Jane, in this respect, is not excluded. Although she is orphan and considered an ‘other’ who struggles to be socially accepted, she is beloved by Rochester, something that falls within the attempt of the assumed integration. However, her discourse is changed once she discovers that Bertha is Rochester’s wife.

In Get Out, the Sunken Place is a psychological state that Chris is forced into after being hypnotised by his white girlfriend’s family. The Sunken Place is portrayed as a dark, lonely, and suffocating place where Chris is unable to move or speak, and his consciousness is trapped. As a cinematic technique, Peele uses this image of the Sunken Place parallelly with close-up shots of Chris’s face which is also dark and lonely. Sarah Donovan claims that Chris’s quest through the sunken place is a metaphor to represent how black people are forced to be alienated and detached from eloquent discourse in society (6). Missy, the hypnotist in the film, symbolically suppressing black voices in the Sunken Place by manipulating Chris saying, “You were one of the lucky ones, Chris. You’ve been blessed with a certain... genetic makeup” (00:34:20-00:34:25).

For this reason, Sunken Place metaphorically demonstrates the subjugation of black bodies and speech within white settings. This metaphor is introduced early in the film when Chris is hypnotized by Missy, and his consciousness is shown sinking into a black void: a process, revealed later in the film, to symbolize the historical and ongoing exploitation of black individuals.

The white picket fence that surrounds the Armitage family’s estate is another metaphor. The fence represents an acceptance that ultimately serves to perpetuate racist attitudes and deeper prejudices: a superficial attempt to create an inclusive diverse society, while eventually upholding systems of oppression and exclusion, as Chris states: “They’re still scared of the unknown, the other, the outsider” (00:41:15-00:41:18).

Similar to the cinematic metaphors carried by the Sunken Place and the white fence, Jane’s narration falls in the framework of visual metaphor in written text, a figure of speech that serves to underscore the setting. Jane narrates:
Abed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the centre. . .covered with a crimson cloth. . .the chairs were of darkly polished old mahogany. . .the head of the bed. . .looking, as I thought, like a pale throne. This room was chill because it seldom had a fire. (Brontë 16-17).

Brontë employs Jane to use metaphorical language to create a sense of foreboding and danger around her, especially when it comes to Bertha. Descriptions like “old mahogany”, “a pale throne”, and “chill” create a Gothic mood. Jane has also a dream which is not a dream which she describes as “fearful and ghastly”. Bertha, in this vision, removes Jane’s “veil from its gaunt head, rent it in two parts, and flinging both on the floor, tramped on them” (Brontë 432). The veil, with its echoes of secrecy, deception, and obstacles, serves as a visual metaphor in text for the challenges that Bertha, as ‘other’, creates in the course of the relationship of Mr. Rochester and Jane.

Metaphors in the text rely on imaginative and descriptive language to evoke vivid images and convey abstract concepts—visualisation is stimulated. Using modifiers in an informative context entitles Brontë to metaphorically transport an illustration of a personage, something that asserts the character’s own worth and identity. This can be observed when Jane asserts: “Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!” (Brontë 386). These words are metaphorical descriptions for her humbleness, lack of wealth, unremarkable appearance, and relatively low social standing—metaphors of social and physical status as marginalised and disadvantaged. Jane uses these metaphors to counter the assumptions and stereotypes the society might place upon her due to her impoverished and plain appearance. Juliette Atkinson notes that “[this] rich array of metaphorical language convey[s] the complex emotions and inner struggles. . .[and] serve[s] as a means of expression, allowing Jane to articulate her thoughts and feelings in a vivid and evocative manner” (112). Here, “soulless” and “heartless” are metaphors for the lack of empathy and humanity that society might wrongly attribute to Jane. She metaphorically speaks to the depth of her character, suggesting that despite her external circumstances, she possesses a rich inner life, compassion, and emotions.

Analysing the narrative of Jane Eyre and Get Out manifests similar aspects of race, colour, and identity. Both characters are subjected to the oppressive force of dominant discourses rooted in colonial legacies and white privilege. Their experiences are marked
by the metaphorical language used to portray their otherness within their respective environments.

5.2. Analysis of the differences between Bertha and Chris

Both, Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre* and Chris in the film *Get Out*, embody hybridity in different ways: Bertha as a mixed-race Creole woman who personifies the cultural hybridity of the colonial Caribbean, and Chris as a black man who struggles with his identity as both black and ‘white’ in a society that often defines individuals in rigid racial classifications.

*Jane Eyre* is narrated primarily from the protagonist’s first-person perspective which permits the reader to see through Jane’s eyes and be privy to her opinion and feelings. In contrast, Bertha is introduced by a third-person narrator, predominantly Mr. Rochester, whose perspective is dominant since Bertha makes only incomprehensible noises and acts out with violence. Nawale observes that “Bertha’s narration is restricted to what is allowed to be expressed by the white characters” (“The figure of Bertha” 32). This prohibits full comprehension of what Bertha thinks of or feels: a typical unreliable narration that establishes a discourse representing an English person viewing the colonised Other as “savage”. In *Get Out*, Chris’s story is mainly narrated from an external point of view, through the camera lens, and the perspective of other characters in the film. However, Dyer suggests that the film is realised from Chris’s perspective (*The Annotated Screenplay* 73). Unlike Bertha, Chris’s actions and dialogue with white actors expose his perception and reveal the racial prejudice that operates in the American society. Hunt states that this film is captured from Chris’s angle, which favours his encounters and confirms the view of the world (*Black Camera* 108).

Nevertheless, a novel like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, told from Bertha’s perspective, can probably provide more explicit interpretation of Bertha’s focalisation, since she is allowed to express resentment due to chronic oppression to be conveyed to the reader—the author, Jean Rhys, uses flashback memory to reach this message: “I lay there and remembered: the tall dark man with ‘a pale face that looked like a mask’, the man with eyes like black holes, the man I had hated so long” (35). Inversely, R. J. Hill notes that Chris’s specific focalisation is inadequate in terms of him being a protagonist who should subjectify his sentiments rather than objectifying them (*Journal of Popular Culture* 30). Chris’s portrayal in the narrative does not allow him to express his own feelings. Instead,
his sentiments are presented in an objective manner, where he is treated more as an object or a passive entity rather than a fully developed character with his own thoughts and emotions. However, his own involvement and awareness, which are heavily influenced by experiences as a black man provide focalisation in scenes related to his quest for acceptance in his own country. Dyer states in this regard that “Chris is caught between his desire for acceptance and his awareness of the racial dynamics of the society he lives in” (The Annotated Screenplay 15)—a search for adaptation to entail a conflict between a black figure, who struggles to rarefy his blackness, and a white power that drives people of colour to recall their inferiority in order to expedite the exploitation process.

Pertaining to characterisation in Jane Eyre, Bertha, as Nawale claims, is not permanently reduced to a stereotypical “madwoman in the attic” trope, a monstrous other, a threat to the limpidness and constancy of the white supremacy (Indian Journal 77), but she is also humanised by Jane. This categorisation facilitates dual interpretation: the character displays aggression as a self-defence mechanism that suggests a petrifying effect, or sensationalising human sufferance to provoke empathy as “she advocated a high tone of sentiments” (Brontë 283). Jane, in her attempt to generate sympathy for Bertha, asserts her own fellow-feeling as both a human and a woman. She narrates:

She didn’t know the sensations of sympathy and pity; tenderness and truth were not in her. Too often she betrayed this, by the undue vent she gave to a spiteful antipathy she had conceived against little Adele: pushing her away with some contumelious epithet if she happened to approach her; sometimes ordering her from the room, and always treating her with coldness and acrimony. Other eyes besides mine watched these manifestations of character—watched them closely, keenly, shrewdly. . .this obvious absence of passion in his sentiments towards her, that my ever-torturing pain arose (283).

This discourse reveals Jane’s growing awareness and empathy for Bertha’s situation, as she begins to recognise the reasons behind her behaviour. Through cinematic practices, the director connects the audience with Chris on a deeper level due to his character’s complications in a way that allows them to understand his motivations as well as his fears. Unlike Bertha, Chris is not portrayed as a stereotype, he is rather an individual who experiences prejudice and manipulation by his girlfriend’s family whose racial intentions are implicated. Therefore, according to Dyer’s statement, “the film represents black people as people rather than as the sum of their racial stereotypes or as mere victims of white racism is important” (The Annotated Screenplay 158).
Character’s voice, in any work of literature, should in fact be scrutinised to reveal how a character decodes and responds to the sequence of events. In Bertha’s case, the sinister silence and sensory imagery are used as literary devices to engage a reader’s mind with Gothic theme. Her voice is limited to haunting laughter that serves the purpose of the Gothic theme: a conspicuous noise defined first by Jane as “mirthless” (Brontë 163), and “tragic, as preternatural a laugh as any I ever heard” (Brontë 164); Jane also describes Bertha’s voice eloquently as “demoniac laugh-low, suppressed, and deep-uttered” (Brontë 225)—a voice to be recognised through other characters’ voices, especially Jane’s. Gilbert and Gubar argue that melancholy laughter and a gothic act of violence establish a motif of Bertha’s otherness and that “the inaudibility of [Bertha’s] utterance represents the complexity of communication between cultures” (361). This reveals that non-voiced Bertha embodies the sufferance of people of colour whose voice is not heard, and this can entail violence. Chris’s voice explicitly reflects his involvements and emotions throughout the film. Therefore, the script gives Chris a voice of a caring human, who is empathetic for others and therefore worthy of empathy. Chris becomes increasingly concerned about his friend Andre, who has gone missing, and is determined to find out what happened to him. This determination reflects his caring nature and his empathy for others in distress. Another characteristic in his voice is the scepticism towards white people who try hard to appear non-biased; Chris expresses discomfort with Rose’s family when he meets them for the first time saying, “It’s like they’re trying too hard to be cool or something. I don’t know” (00:24:15-00:24:18). This discourse highlights Chris’s knowledge of the mechanisms of racism and his doubt that white people’s intention is free of discrimination. A further distinctive property of Chris’s voice is defiant tone: saying “Get Out!” repeatedly during the hypnosis scene in the Sunken Place. This line becomes a rallying cry for the film and encapsulates Chris’s desire to escape the oppressive authorities that are attempting to control him.

Bertha is “a victim and a sufferer, a woman denied any active role or agency, silenced, both literally and metaphorically, by the patriarchal order into which she has been born, which has made her a victim of male oppression, sexual desire, and economic exploitation” (Gilbert and Gubar 129). It is not stated in Jane Eyre whether Bertha is aware of this patriarchal supremacy; nevertheless, Chris is aware of the racial stereotypes and expectations that are projected onto him, but he struggles to reconcile these external perceptions with his own sense of self. Hill claims that Get Out uses hybridity and double consciousness to explore the complexities of contemporary black identity (Journal Of
Although he is successful in his own right as a photographer, Chris is still subject to the systematic racism and discrimination that is embedded in American society. Morrison notes that “Chris’s double consciousness is a representative technique of recognizing and navigating the world” (*The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 12). In one scene, when Chris and Rose hit a deer while driving, the police officer immediately assumes Chris is the aggressor and demands to see his ID. Chris, who is shaken by the incident, tells Rose that he experiences this kind of racism all the time.

Additionally, the characters of Chris and Bertha differ significantly in terms of gender roles. Hunt argues that the male Chris actively resists his oppressors, and determines to break free from the insidious grip of the white liberal elite (*Black Camera* 101). The female Bertha is a product of the patriarchy and colonialism of her time. Her monstrosity is intimately connected with her gender, and with the patriarchal society that oppresses her. Bertha’s madness is not simply a result of heredity or racial inferiority, but is a product of the specific circumstances of her life as a woman in a sexist and racist society” (Gilbert and Gubar 65).

Bertha and Chris represent different experiences of marginalization and oppression due to each character’s special conditions and settings.

5.3. Discussing Hybridity as a challenge to dominant discourses

Hybridity challenges dominant discourses because it defies binary categorisation and disrupts established power structures whose ideologies seek to maintain supremacy and control. This challenge is based on refuting the notion of fixed classifications of race, gender, and culture foregrounding the complexity and fluidity of identity. Bhabha suggests that “Hybridity is the strategic reversal of the process of ‘discovery’, which fixes the colonial subject in a time-bound, ethnically-closed archaism, and a space-bound hierarchy, both of which are signified by the notion of care” (37). This emphasises how hybridity allows for subversion of dominant discourses, which often rely on the construction of secure, essentialised identities.

These dominant discourses of race are distinguished by confining and suppressing people of other cultures as a protective procedure in order to prevent defiling the untainted race of the dominators. Although the dominant discourse in *Jane Eyre* is gender and class, Charlotte Brontë supplements it with race by employing the character of Rochester as a homodiegetic narrator, conceitedly asserting: “[Bertha’s] family wished to
secure me because I was of good race; and so did she” (Brontë 465). This discourse suggests that Bertha’s family are portrayed as inferior to the English, and that Bertha’s marriage to Rochester is an attempt to elevate their social status. He is also ashamed of being part of this matrimony and has no respect for himself when he thinks of his deed (Brontë 465). Thus, Mr. Rochester conceals his hybrid wife in the attic to protect his image of superiority and class in society.

Studying Bertha from a postcolonial perspective illuminates the representation of the “other” in the text, embodying the fears and prejudices of the colonial powers. Esther Better notes that Bertha’s characterization is tied to her Creole heritage, which marks her as inferior in the eyes of the colonisers. Moreover, Bertha’s destiny exemplifies how inextricably linked imperialism and patriarchy were in the Victorian era, when patriarchal and imperialist ideals converged to create the spectacle of the insane, violent West Indian lady (Better 112). Nawale states that this character, which Rochester connects to her madness, embodies the repercussions of the colonial encounter: a history of subjugation, cultural transplanting, and the resulting hybridity, which results in her Creole identity (International Journal 4).

Colonialism, by its very nature, creates a space for hybrid identities to reveal the ambiguous process of cultural transformation and compromise of divergence, as Bhabha states: “The hybridity of the colonized subject is always a problematic, ambivalent process of cultural translation and negotiation of difference” (8). Since Bertha is, as Corbett notes “neither fully African nor fully English” (Tulsa Studies 104), her lack of a fixed identity characterizes a figure of distress for the policy of imperial conquest that believes in bringing efficacious culture to inferior colonised people to guarantee its permanency.

Bertha’s imprisonment in the attic further emphasizes her marginalization and reinforces the power dynamics of colonialism. Corbett describes her presence in Jane Eyre as a riposte to the imperial proposal (Representing Femininity 156). This imprisonment in the attic reinforces the vitality of colonialism since it symbolises the oppression of colonised people by colonisers. Bertha represents the ‘Othering’ of colonial subjects who are neither entirely European nor entirely indigenous, but caught in between.

Bertha’s hybridity, the result of cultural contact and colonialism, is not celebrated in the novel, but rather presented as a source of anxiety and conflict. Her Jamaican Creole identity is employed in text to intimidate the superiority of English society. Brontë uses
Gothic imagery to represent the otherness associated with Bertha’s Jamaican Creole origins, and she employs a range of tropes and metaphors to evoke the sense of Bertha’s difference, such as her animalistic portrayal: “It seemed...tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back...I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly in the dark oblong glass...fearful and ghastly to me...It was a discoloured face—it was a savage face...reminded me of the foul German spectre—the Vampyre” (432). This depiction, narrated by Jane to Rochester, is meant to be petrifying so as to trouble the rigid colonial hierarchy that privileges the white English race. In this respect, Susan Better argues that Bertha’s “very blackness” is a challenge to the dominant discourse of Englishness and colonialism, stating that “Bertha’s blackness...serves as a powerful metaphor for the anxiety felt by the colonizing power about its own vulnerability to the forces it seeks to control” (187).

Similarly, Nawale claims that Bertha’s “monstrous” appearance and “uncivilized” behaviour threaten the colonial project of civilizing and taming the non-white other, stating that “Bertha’s hybridity disturbs the narrative of imperial progress” (Postcolonial Hybridity 1). Corbett notes that Bertha’s primitive attributes as well as manners encounter the colonial discourse of racial superiority and the myth of the civilized white colonizer, asserting that “Bertha destabilizes the very categories of race and gender that English colonial discourse had constructed” (Representing Femininity 144). The fear of this colonial difference is the product of a double predicament that exposes the inconsistency of colonial discourse that implies: separation is weakness and unity is hazard (Bhabha 127), and this apprehension over others’ hybridity disrupts the account of the imperial project of assimilation and cultural domination (Bhabha 127).

Losing one’s own language, culture, and tradition to a culture, either by force or assimilation, is a danger which potentially results in resistance and aggression, as Gilbert and Gubar note: “Bertha’s resistance to her confinement and oppression culminates in her ultimate act of agency and self-determination” (300). Colonial and racist societies face this danger since both are, by their nature, obliged to subjugate people of race and colour in order to retain their own culture pure and keep power eternally. However, oppression and violence yield resistance. Toni Morrison suggests, in this regard, that the resistance of black people against the racist society is not only due to their desire to preserve their language, culture, and tradition, but also due to the oppressive and violent nature of racism itself. She states:

The practice of no-race, while it sometimes sprang from a desire to keep the
precious information of culture and tradition intact, was more often a reaction to the violence of racism, to its insults, provocations, its humiliations. . . It was a reaction to the ways in which racist definitions of black life systematically overwhelm all else, parasitically attaching themselves even to definitions of whiteness (as what black was not), so that blackness they identified became, as a result, nothing more than a lack of sexual restraint, a lack of intelligence (Time 48). Particularly, Morrison specifies that violence and denigration, which seek to reduce black people to a mere lack or absence of whiteness, are the main reasons behind challenge provocation.

The challenge that hybridity provokes has forced the dominant race to change the discourse of arrogancy in the colonisation period to a more democratic approach in modern literature. Mr. Rochester exemplifies this self-conceited attitude: “you can fancy I was a happy man. I went through rich scenes! Oh! My experience has been heavenly if you only knew it!” (Brontë 445), and even then, when violence and oppression are involved, a tone of fear is invoked—the fear of people of race employed in Rochester’s discourse:

I could bend her with my finger and thumb; and what good would it do if I bent, if I uptore, if I crushed her? Consider that eye: consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying me, with more than courage—with a stern triumph. Whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it—the savage, beautiful creature! If I tear, If I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose. Conquer or I might be of the house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place (Brontë 484-494).

Rhetorically, this imagery enhances the Gothic atmosphere by depicting Bertha as “beautiful” in order to function as a pitiable victim, and as “savage” to refer to the threat she presents to an extent that Rochester is physically unable to harm her without causing harm to himself, which suggests he may fear her power or resistance. Sarah Sillin notes that Bertha “functions simultaneously as subject and object, as she is acted upon by others and acts upon them in turn. She is a force of chaos, a reminder of the destructive potential that lurks beneath the surface of the polite society represented by the novel’s other characters” (62). This demonstrates the process of reducing people of race and colour to a disrespected product, yet acknowledging and appreciating their worth as human beings, which probably serves Brontë’s purpose of representing the characters of race as equal to the white.
Hill claims that the protagonist of the film *Get Out*, represents the African American experience of hybridity (*Journal of Popular Film and Television* 86): intersection of two cultural backgrounds, black and white. Jane Chi Hyun Park states that black man’s persona represents a transitional area of racial hybridity, caught between two worlds and susceptible to both white and black cultures’ gaze-mixed identity due to cultural hybridity (133). Thom Donovan notes that Chris’s African American identity is emphasized in the film through various visual and thematic elements as he is, involuntarily, antagonised by everyday racism (17). This double consciousness can be a tool for challenging dominant discourses since black people struggle against a biased society where white people represent the dominant discourses innately. Morrison accentuates this notion: “White authors are “ethnic” too, after all, and on top of that, white American authors can’t help but respond to the U.S.’s very complicated ethnic and racial identity” (“Black Matters” 29).

As a black man dating a white woman and entering her predominantly white world, Chris struggles to navigate the pervasive racism he encounters. The film employs themes of racial identity, belonging, and cultural assimilation to convey Chris’s hybridity, emphasizing his involvement as a black man in a primarily white environment. According to Hunt, Chris’s ‘blackness’ is attached to the definitions of whiteness “as what black was not” (*Race and Ethnicity* 48). This positions him as both a subject and object of the white gaze, further highlighting his hybridity and vulnerability to racial performance, as in the scene where Chris states: “I hate when they say no offense, then they say something offensive” (00:23:02-00:23:06). In the film, Chris is forced to perform a certain version of his identity in order to fit in with the white-dominated environment of Armitage family.

In *Get Out*, Peele employs hybridity to transcend the limitations of traditional storytelling by relating genre to narrative together with various modes of representation in order to illustrate indirect oppression. Grace Heneks states that the “hybridity of the genre and narrative of *Get Out* allows Peele to utilize various modes of representation and storytelling to challenge the dominant gaze and subvert the systemic oppression that white supremacy perpetuates” (49). By incorporating elements of horror, comedy, and social satire, *Get Out* creates a space for the exploration of complex themes, such as the authentic racial identity of black people from the perspective of the white gaze. This combination of Gothic scenes and sarcastic discourse elevates a critical assessment from the vantage point of people of colour who have been historically marginalized. Heneks emphasises that Peele “offers a challenge to the dominant gaze by utilizing the lens of
satire and, in so doing, offers up a critical counter-narrative that disrupts and challenges mainstream norms” (48). This satire is applied to mask white characters’ underlying racist beliefs as well as actions, and serves to emphasise the hypocrisy and insincerity of white liberal attitudes towards race, which ultimately enables systematic racism. Jim Hudson’s performative virtue that is on display when he claims: “I would’ve voted for Obama for a third term if I could” (00:31:32-00:31:35), and Missy Armitage, cynically, asserts that she is “not a racist” (01:11:40-01:11:42), which hints at the sinister events to come. Peele utilises this verbal irony to expose and challenge the prevailing cultural standards that reify racism. Peele’s “use of humour in Get Out functions as a weapon against the dominant gaze” (Heneks 50).

The hypotonisation process reflects hybridity, in which the attractive abilities of blackness are blended into the bodies of the white to fit their superiority. Chris discovers that a group of white people are using hypnosis to transplant their consciousness into the bodies of young healthy black people, a metaphor for creating hybrid super humans or immortal soldiers who have healthy black physiques that entitle them to be dangerous and white awareness that enables them to control the threat of other—an allusion to superiority of the white and the inferiority of the black. Jim Hudson in the film emphasizes the previous suggestion by demanding black human parts: “I want your eyes, man. I want those things you see through” (01:16:50-01:16:52). This reveals Jim’s desire to appropriate the unique perspective of the main character, Chris; Jim would gain access to a different way of seeing the world, highlighting the theme of hybridity which is not dangerous other but incorporating of that other so as to improve the self.

Essentially, the film demonstrates the description of what a final product of hybridity looks like metaphorically: ‘It’ will successfully function according to the master’s determination, as in the case of the character of Walter, who has been brainwashed by the Armitage family. Walter has been transformed into a subservient version of himself, whose physical blackness is used to serve the interests of his white “employers”: visualisation in which colour is involved to expose the white influence. Walter prefers the white over Chris and the other people of colour, declaring “You were one of my favourites. But you know, I gotta give it to the guy—he’s good” (01:38:20-01:38:25). This visualisation can be allegorically interpreted as a production that intersects with internalised racism as Walter accepts the negative stereotype about himself.

Despite the difference in gender, Chris and Bertha have physical qualifications that entitle them to be a source of attraction for white rapacity: she is beautiful like her land’s
resources, and he is physically robust. As they are trapped in white domestic spaces, Bertha is driven mad, and Chris is deprived of his conscience. Although it is not explicitly stated in *Jane Eyre* that Bertha was not mad in the beginning, some critics interpret that Mr. Rochester, out of his patriarchal practices, mistreated her, something that led to her mental instability. David Bolt suggests that “Bertha is depicted as not having been insane from birth, but rather as having been driven to madness by the social and emotional constraints imposed upon her by the patriarchal society into which she was born” (59). Keith B. Mitchell notes that Chris’s mind is a threat to the white characters because he challenges their belief in their own superiority and exposes the violent as well as the exploitative nature of their attempts to appropriate black bodies. This challenge moulds “Chris’s consciousness [into] a potential weapon against the system of white supremacy, and his loss of control over his own mind and body represents a desperate attempt to contain this threat” (Mitchell 57).

Arvind Nawale writes about Bertha’s hybridity in the context of colonialism and imperialism, arguing that Bertha is an object of the hybridisation of European and Caribbean cultures and that her presence in the novel reflects the tensions and contradictions of colonialism. He notes that “Bertha is a product of a hybridity. . .[It] makes her a figure of threat, inasmuch as she embodies the potential for resistance and subversion of colonial system” (*Postcolonial text* 3). Bertha irritates the white colonisers; her presence threatens their prestige, and her act of violence entails a risk of challenging their colonial system, which fears destabilisation from indigenous populations—any rebellion could disrupt colonial control and authority. In relation to the film, Grace Heneks notes that “the film’s central metaphor of sight challenges the post-racial paradigm: ‘It is Not About Race.’ Because, as Chris’s tear-filled gaze shows us, it is” (9). Chris exposes the racial white people who consider black people’s physical properties a threat. Racial society occupies these optimal properties in order to prevent any resistance as well as to obtain superiority and continue to prevail.

This analysis has explored how Bertha’s Creole origin and Chris’s blackness are considered threats to colonial and racial society respectively, yet discussing hybridity as a challenge requires more extended research in order to embrace the complexities of hybrid identities and to know how such a threat converts to protests and armed resistance seeking freedom and justice. Studying the history of colonialism may offer a wider analysis of the way in which hybridity is used in *Jane Eyre* and *Get Out* to challenge the dominant discourses.
6. Conclusion

This essay has explored the concept of hybridity in Charlotte Brontë’s work *Jane Eyre* 1847, and Jordan Peele’s film *Get Out* 2017. It has studied the narrative text in the novel and the script incorporated with visual elements in the film. The notion of hybridity via Gothic themes is employed to undermine established discourses. Similarities and differences have been analysed between Bertha Mason, Edward Rochester’s Creole wife in *Jane Eyre*, and Chris Washington, *Get Out*’s African American protagonist. This comparison has been conducted due to these characters’ sense of hybridity that disrupts established conventions of white exclusivity and representation. The comparative examination in this paper has explored the effect for utilising hybridity in literature and film. Finally, this thesis has emphasised the significance of scrutinising the intersectional identities of characters in literature and cinema in order to reveal how biased cultures approach these people.

Further research could focus on the evolving nature of hybridity in literature and film, its intersections with broader socio-political contexts, and its potential to inspire societal transformation. Analysing the ways in which hybridity interacts with other literary and cultural theories, such as postcolonialism and feminism, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of its impact on disrupting dominant discourses.

Works cited


Nawale, Arvind. “The Figure of Bertha in Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea.” CLCWeb: 


