

The Defying Protagonist in *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte

*Poonguzhaly. R, #Dr. Tara Tripurasundari

#Professor (Research supervisor), PG and Research Department of English, Vivekanandha College of Arts and Sciences for Women (Autonomous), Elayampalayam, Tiruchengode, Namakkal, India.

Abstract - This research paper aims to focus on the protagonist's defying nature in the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. It also aims to picture the nineteenth century woman nature from various perspectives. It is not a single thought emerging from a single discipline. This paper defines the life of helpless woman all over the world. Bronte (1831-1855) belongs to British literature. She is a nineteenth century novelist. Bronte in her novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) exposes the urbanity of puritans. During Victorian era feminist ideas spread among the educated middle class women and inequitable laws were repealed. The women's suffrage movement gained momentum in the last years of the Victorian era. Women rights were extremely limited in this era. Charlotte Bronte belongs to this era but, she pictures her women character in a strong manner. In *Jane Eyre*, the protagonist acts as one women army in her life against the men whom she faces in her life. The protagonist and speaker of the novel is Jane Eyre. Jane is an intellectual, truthful, plain-featured young girl forced to encounter with oppression, inequality and hardship. Although she meets with a series of individuals who bully her autonomy, Jane frequently succeeds at asserting herself. She maintains her principles of righteousness, human dignity, and integrity. Her strong belief in gender and social equality challenges the Victorian bias against women and the poor. The main male character in this novel is Rochester. He is unusual, prepared to set aside polite behavior, maintain decorum, and consider of social class in order to relate with Jane frankly and directly. Other male characters are John Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, St. John Rivers.

Key words: Jane Eyre, defying protagonist.

I. INTRODUCTION

The male Victorian ideal characteristics are loyalty, intelligence, honor, moral uprightness and also they have good income. While this characterization is not horrific realistic, it is the general ideal. Many contemporary writers depicted their heroines who could only marry their men and thereby defined happy life. Agni spray was demonstrated by Anne Bronte despite Charlotte Bronte's male characters works do not follow any tradition. Bronte creates male characters by the inspiration of Alpred the Duke of zamorna in her juvenila. Her maid characters failed to meet the high standards but they were ideal. Charlotte Bronte believes in gender inequality and she was very strong woman widely known. It shows that this need ridicule her male characters, at least from that social relations ideal. This comes from a greed to make her female characters relieve their male supplement, while still sustain their propriety and their "proper" place in society. [7]

Scope of methodology :

The scholar has employed *post feminism* theory. Many people incorrectly believe that feminist theory focuses exclusively on girls and women and that it has an inherent goal of promoting the superiority of women over men.

In reality, feminist theory has always been about viewing the social world in a way that illuminates the forces that create and support inequality, oppression, and injustice, and in doing so, promotes the pursuit of equality and justice.

Psychoanalytic feminists attempt to explain power relations between men and women by reformulating Sigmund Freud's theories of human emotions, childhood development, and the workings of the subconscious and unconscious. They believe that conscious calculation cannot fully explain the production and reproduction of patriarchy.

Radical feminists argue that being a woman is a positive thing in and of it, but that this is not acknowledged in patriarchal societies where women are oppressed. They identify physical violence as being at the base of patriarchy, but they think that patriarchy can be defeated if women recognize their own value and strength, establish a sisterhood of trust with other women, confront oppression critically, and form female-based separatist networks in the private and public spheres.

So, *post feminism* is a term used to describe a societal perception that many or all of the goals of feminism have already been achieved, thereby making further iterations

and expansions of the movement obsolete. Post feminism can be seen as a hazy middle ground between feminism and anti-feminism, supporting gender equality and female empowerment but declining a rigorous feminist critique of still-existing patriarchal norms and institutions.

II. VICTORIAN MALE CHARACTERS

From Master John, Brocklehurst, Rochester and St. John in *Jane Eyre* to Dr. John Graham and Paul Emmanuel in *Villette* we have male characters that are either desire, prone to jealousy, deceitful, deceptive, or some horrible amalgamation of the above. These characteristics, not only partition with the Victorian ethics and give us more pragmatic heroes, but also serve another, more important, purpose for Charlotte. They give Jane and Lucy models to learn from and enemies to fight against. In the end, allow them to exceed the ethics male "hero" and create a new feminine hero for the Victorian age.[3]

The idea of the gentleman was changing during the Victorian era. It was no longer strictly a title given to those of high birth. The word gentleman began to take a diversion on a moralistic sensibility as well. The role and duty of the gentleman was focused more on conduct than on property wealth or station in life. One still would not call a coal miner a gentleman, but the dominant male characters in both *Jane Eyre* and *shirly* hold positions in life (clergymen, property owner, doctor, professor) that would have required what is so called theme gentlemanly code. [1]

2.1 John Reed:

The first male character presented in *Jane Eyre* is young Master John Reed. It is obvious from the start that he is not what we would call an ideal Victorian. This is expressed by the Jane Eyre's words as:

John had not much affection for his mother and sister, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in a day, but continually: every nerve I he had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near [2],(6).

He is described as muddy and feeble, chunky and excessive. He has an apparently autocratic presence, at least for Jane and, as we soon learns, for his mother and sisters too. He is dominant and oppressor to Jane simply because she is a stray and not worthy of him or what he believes he provides for her. He is pampered in this behavior by his mother who indulges to his every whim and feels that he is the wronged party in any contradict. Jane is very aware of this privilege and how it affects her. She is dutiful to John even though she knows she will come to harm. For example, when he tells her to go stand by the window she does and the following happens.

Jane is thus threatened repeatedly by various forms of oppression. A key aspect of this oppression involves pressure placed on her to conform to standard roles and to identify with the roles which others would have her assume. Such pressure is a direct threat to the integrity of her true self. Jane's primary weapon for defeating the economic and gender-based oppression she encounters in order to maintain the strength and integrity of her identity is her voice.[6][P-16]

These feelings Jane talks about turn out to be fury and a feeling of inequality. She strikes back at John with her only available weapon; words. For her eruption, she is sent to the red-room. After this experience, Jane feels true indignation for the first time. She knows the way she is treated in the Reed family is not what she merits and she looks for a way out. This first leading male character gives Jane an understanding of her own delight and an understanding of righteousness in general that she may not have had if she had been treated kindly by Master John. John, in his turn, sees an end that fits his life. He dies in scandal of alcoholism and extravagance with many sum unpaid and nothing actual to show for his life.

2.2 Mr. Brocklehurst:

Jane is then introduced to Mr. Brocklehurst, the most deceitful of all of the characters in *Jane Eyre*. He attests to his ethics and donations and that all men, and especially young girls should be brought up in a way that teaches them modesty and admiration for their betters. He uses God and the Bible to make his points. He scares his "wards" with hell and dooms if they don't walk the line that he put on to walk him. Yet, he does preserve some of the ideals of the Victorian gentleman. He attempts charity and supposedly, as a priest, that should mean his understanding of charity and his attempts to help would be genuine. However, that his benevolent actions are no more than a display for what he believes will get him into heaven and a means to uphold his supremacy, his family and their wealth. When Jane first looks at him, she is scared of him. She is aware the Mrs. Reed has told him things about her that is not true. She worries when he finally makes an appearance at Lowood and he will do something to her. While this does take place, it is his actions towards the entire population of students that witness his deceitful nature. After ordering only one clean outfit per week per girl and the cutting of their hair he gives a speech about his duty.[8]

2.3 Mr. Rochester:

Thus far in the novel, the forceful men in Jane's life have caused her misery, scare and fury. From the beginning of their social contact, Jane and Mr. Rochester seem to enjoy a cordial, if not always easy, relationship. Granted, later there are hardship and misunderstanding, but for the most part they speak with ease and share each other's companionship

and thoughts. They become, in turns, equals. Finally, Jane becomes the hero of the story. The supposed "hero" of *Jane Eyre*, Mr. Rochester, does not follow the Victorian ultimate. His look is not heroic in any way. He has a pathetic past that we soon come to know. When Rochester is introduced, he is absolutely not the white knight riding in to save the day. In fact, Jane has to rescue her hero rather than being motivated or awed by him. She finds him unexceptional.

In almost any other romantic novel, one would expect the lovers first meeting to illegal fireworks or exchanged looks of understanding. But none of this occurs because Rochester is not influenced at least not at the first look. At their first meeting Jane, not Rochester, offers assistance. She guesses the man's role and guides her would-be hero to a safe place.

Rochester grows in Jane's value, which is easily seen as the story unfolds. However, there are many factors of his character that leaves the reader. Jane, question his virtue, his history and thereby his anticipation. Unlike most Victorian heroes and heroines, Jane and Rochester do not flirt in the real sense. They don't share coy glances or have polite conversations about the weather. They are both plain speaking, frank and honest in their day to day conversation. In this sense, Rochester almost follows the ideal. He does not hide the truth about Adele's origins, and he is honest with Jane about his feelings for her and her capacity. In fact he even tells Jane about his faults and his dislike to repent. However, that confirmation does not make him the ideal gentleman.

Her feminist intention cannot be doubted for she clearly insists that "women feel just as men feel" and that they need faculty for expression of their suppressed feeling. Though Rochester is "no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut tree in Thornfield orchard" with his "crippled strength" and "seared vision," he will still give a "bountiful shadow," dependence to Jane. Marriage also makes it "impractical" for Jane to teach Adele. This is not a loophole in Jane's "bright visions...of life, fire, feeling," her feminist ambition. This is a very realist portrayal of the boundaries, limitations of the Victorian woman in marriage.[9]

Rochester shows himself the definite contrary of the proper Victorian nobleman. In fact, he sounds almost riotous. Rather than accepting what life has given him, as Jane has done, Rochester is suborned to tempt fate and throw forewarn to the wind. He remarks about his calamity and his trials. But he dislikes resigning him to them and reforming his life. Jane seems to realize his feelings and rather than warn him for his friction to change. She uses logic to show him how he will ultimately have to pay for the sins of his past. Her reasoning is strong because she takes his own words and uses them to oppose him. Jane

looks for Rochester to approve of himself. She does not look for him to change for her sanction or for society or for the good of his ward, but simply for himself. It is reasonable that if Jane had quarreled for his change for her profit, the consultation would have had no benefit to Rochester. Jane understands her role in his life and how she can profit him. She has placed herself as an equal and gives him guidance, as a friend would, not the way an employee would advise an employer. Her constancy makes up for his doubtful nature and his paradoxical nature. This is represented by Jane Eyre as:

Gentlemen, my plan is broken up!-what this lawyer and his client say is true: I have been married, and the women to whom I was married lives! You say you have never heard of a Mr Rochester at the house up yonder, wood; but I daresay you have many a time inclined your ear to gossip about the mysterious lunatic kept there under watch and ward [2] (P-287).

Jane's final step to freedom also derives from Rochester's failure as an ideal nobleman. His deceit leads to her running away and urge her to be self-regulating, really for the first time in her life. Until this point, Jane has had another adult to rely on or a plan to follow. When Rochester's true history unwraps, Jane has no plan of action. She reacts and leaves. She does not know where she is going or what will become of her. But she understands the need to be free from the hazardous position that was shaped.

Because of Rochester's deceit, Jane is forced into a situation where she finally finds friends and family of her own. She is found to be independently wealthy and she finds herself, if not happy, at least with satisfied her life. However, she still feels a strong correlation and a duty to Rochester. He shaped part of her life and allowed her, through his failing, to become the heroine that Charlotte Bronte needs. Jane returns to Rochester, after he is fully calmed down and she takes the heroic role. She is not reliant on his money or his situation in society. He is now dependent on her for her sight and her tending skills that he has acquired. As she told him he would, reform. They depend on each other, however, for mutual love and support. This relationship would not have been possible, however, without Rochester's dishonesty and his immobilizing nature.

2.4 St. John Rivers:

Before this happy ending occurs, however, Jane is met by another dominating male figure. St. John, whom we later discover is Jane's cousin, is oppressive and dictatorial in a way no other male character in this book has been. While, like Brocklehurst, St. John uses tenets and religion for his power, he is not pretending about his practices. Nor is he like Anne Bronte's Mr. Weston; the good, handsome,

caring and diffident clergymen. St. John Rivers uses religion like a weapon and is impulsive to the point of wound. He wants to use what he can around him to make his quest to God more dynamic. Somewhat like Rochester, he is brave of the pain he may cause himself and those around him. The physical confession of St. John is delaying almost a full chapter after he is introduced due to Jane's illness. When it comes, however, it is not consequently what we would expect of her rescuer.

... seeking for equality is another important theme through Jane Eyre's struggle for self-realization as a feminist. People in Victorian age have the idea that people are not born equally, people in high rank despise people in low rank and men are superior to women. Consequently, women like Jane are treated unequally in every field. When Jane realizes the unfair situation, she rebels constantly for the basic right of equality. It well reflects Jane's resolution and persistence in struggle for self-realization as a feminist woman.[4].

St. John is physically something like Brocklehurst, only younger. Instead of being portrayed as a dark sculpture; he is more ivory. Still, just as inactive and set in his ways. It seems that in some ways, St. John represent again what Brocklehurst could have been.

For Jane, St. John becomes a family member, a provider and then a creeper. He urges Jane to marry him because, when a Victorian man and woman married, the rights of the woman were officially given over to her husband. Under the law the married couple became one entity represented by the spouse, placing him in control of all assets, income, and currency. In addition to losing money and material goods to their husband, she may go along with him on his messenger work to India. Jane, knowing that he does not love her and her not loving him, resists. Instead of tolerant or plying her like a nobleman would, St. John forewarn her with eternal messenger. His hardness and resist to compromise with Jane take her as a sister rather than a wife whom again puts Jane in a difficult position. If she goes with St. John, it will be as an equal, never as his wife because, as she has scrutinized, he does not have the character of a husband. He is utterly too egotistical and paying attention on his goal. If she goes with him as his wife, it is completely likely he will work her to death and then pray for her expel soul rather than working with her, keeping her out of harm's way. Jane understands this before bending to his will, she remains strong and steady in her will.

It defies social convention for a woman to be dominant over a man such as Bertha is to Rochester as she even "almost throttled him, athletic as he was," and their marital relationship

becomes disastrous when man is not the one upholding power[5]

Jane knows to herself to consign herself to fate that does not agree with her physically, or spiritually. St. John's unwillingness to bend only strengthens Jane's determination and she argues further. Jane knows her abilities, and she is able to see St. John for who he truly is. Her past encounters with pretender and liars and her experience with inequality gives her strong missiles with which she can defend herself and her honor against any man who might try to suppress her. St. John will not be successful because he is not truthful and Jane, it seems, despises hypocrisy more than something else.

III. CONCLUSION

Jane surpasses the entire nobleman in the novel to become the character with the truest individuality. The talent to deal with any situation is obtainable to her with elegance and distinction. She becomes a heroine in the true sense that she not only saves herself multiple times, but she saves her hero from a life of distressed solitude.

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