
How Does Charlotte Bronte Draw on the Conventions of The Gothic Novel in Jane Eyre

Charlotte Bronte draws on the gothic features of isolation, the supernatural, death and romance. Those features create a sense of mystery and rowse continuous questions flowing through the novel.

The isolation of characters corresponds to their internal loneliness and their social status, that in the context of the mid-nineteenth century would have been linked to their wealth. While residing at Gateshill, Mrs Reed makes a clear distinction between her children and Jane. During all celebrations and joyous events Jane “was, of course excluded” and sent to the nursery to only be in the company of Bessie, a maid. Jane is compared to a servant in the sense that they think less of her since her father was “a poor clergyman”. In the nineteenth century social class was seen highly, especially when it came for women to marry. This view is acknowledged by John Reed who states that “you have no business to take our books” towards Jane, he sees himself as the man of the house and that it is his duty to ensure Jane knows she is not equal to them. He is taught by his mother that Jane “is a dependant” and that she “ought to beg”, she is in debt to them for the generosity they show towards her. Even in adulthood Jane feels it is best for her not to be seen too much by the party at Thornhill. After an invitation to join Mr Rochester she immediately “retires to a window-seat, and takes a book”, she locates herself to a place where she won't be noticed. She feels she is just a governess whereas the guests of Mr Rochester are rich ladies and gentlemen, she continues to have the ideas that she is not worthy to be in their company because of the ideology ingrained into her from her childhood. Isolation is not just experienced by Jane, Bertha once married is locked away from view. Mr Rochester is embarrassed of her and does not want to be associated with Bertha because she is considered mad, so she is then kept on “the third storey: behind the low black door opened by Mr Rochester's master key”. Mental health was not well understood back, so it was shunned, where no one shall know of her other than Grace Poole the servant.

Charlotte Bronte uses Jane's vivid imagination to support supernatural occurrences. As a child with knowledge that her uncle Reed died in the Red room, Jane would be prone to imagining her uncle hauntes the Red room since he was confined to it. The red is a reflection of the anger the ghost would feel. Red can be associated with love but since this room “seldom had a fire”, all the warmth needed to maintain love would be lost; having a “strange little figure there gazing” at Jane would further make her believe that a presence wanted to harm her. Bessie adds to this by telling her tales of mythical creatures. When Jane sees Mr Rochester riding a horse “with long hair and a huge head”, she believes it to be the creature Gytrash. This makes Jane's initial reaction with Mr Rochester more memorable since it appears to her that he domesticated a Gytrash to ride. With Christianity being the main religion in 19th century England, the devil would be known as an iniquitous figure and being compared to it would be a substantial claim. Mr Rochester referencing that he is “little better than a devil” illustrates his shame in the revelation that he is still married to Bertha. Jane herself is a christian who believes in God and the Devil, hearing a “demonic laugh- low, suppressed and deep” would be terrifying. The creature in Jane's description is always described as subhuman. It has some human aspects such as “fingers that swept the panels” but her imagination of “the goblin laughter” allows herself to believe that a devilish beast is sneaking around Thornfield. Jane's imagination

forces her to believe supernatural creatures are at play rather than that a human could be up to this, this can also be blamed on the superstition of the time. The descriptions of the biting of Mr Mason continue to target someone in a bruteish manner, "its rest, was rent in twain by a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound". The alliteration of savage, sharp and shrilly sound implies a swiping yet jagged manner of attack. A time that the supernatural has been shown in a positive way however is when Jane hears Mr Rochester's spirit. It is described as "not like an electric shock ;but... as sharp, as strange, as startling", there was electricity in the nineteenth century however it was rare, their connection is compared to be just as rare.

Death is a milestone making key moments in Jane's life. The novel starts with Jane's parents being dead, from the beginning Jane is isolated from the prospect of a loving family. Moving in with the Reeds as a result introduces the male tyrant character in the form of John Reed. Male tyrants continue to appear since Mr Brockelhurst runs Lowood. Death has spread through lowood, resulting in the corridors feeling eerily quiet with possible ghosts of children haunting the location. Jane's visit to Helen during the night continues the themes of sneaking at night, feeling safe to break the rules during a period of time that is thought to be unsafe. Helen Burns' death further isolates Jane, leaving her to have no close friends at Lowood. The Death of the rest of the characters arouses strong emotions. With the passing of Mrs Reed, Jane is able to forgive her, allowing her to no longer have painful and angry memories of her childhood. She was once an impulsive child who would speak her mind but now glad "that time quells the longings of revenge". That death also reveals a family secret that was hidden by Mrs. Reed. Bertha's death differs in that it is more violent and unnatural. All the other characters died from illness or age. Her death is a suicide that would have been seen as sinful in the nineteenth century to match how her madness. The old house that restrained her during her life is gone in blazes, Bertha's death also permits Jane to marry Mr Rochester and for her to do it without moral guilt, Jane can have the love she has been longing for.

Romance presents the ideas of a heroic male antagonist saving the helpless female from unhappiness. This idea would have been extra popular since in the nineteenth century marriage was viewed as the ideal goal for women, the female characters that were interpreted by the readers as kind and intelligent were made to be married. Bessie who was kind to Jane during her childhood is married "nearly five years to Robert Leaven" and has a little girl. Mrs Temple, who was a mentor to Jane, married "a clergyman". Mr R's voice saves Jane from leaving with St.John which would have led her to an unhappy life with someone she did not love.