

A Psychoanalytic Reading on Jane Eyre

Mr. G. Antony Anbu Jayan
II M.A. English
St. Joseph's College (Autonomous)
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University
Tiruchirappalli - 620 002

Abstract

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is not just a story about emotional resilience and moral development but also presents profound psychological issues. This article gives a psychoanalytic interpretation of unconscious desire and the idea of the double self in the text. Using Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis, it investigates Jane's conflicts, repression of feelings, and the role of Bertha Mason as Jane's own repressed self. The treatment argues that *Jane Eyre* acts as a psychological process of self-repair and integration.

Keywords: Unconscious desire, Double self, Psychological issues, Moral development, Repressed self, Self repair.

Introduction

Jane's journey is marked by a constant negotiation between passion and principle, often at great personal cost (Brontë, 248).

Unlike today, when countless readers approach *Jane Eyre* simply as a feminist or Gothic bildungsroman, it was found very early on to be purposive psychoanalytic text. At the heart of it, *Jane Eyre* is the story of a young woman who is confronted with her external reality pressing views about hierarchy of class, gender, and morality while negotiating her own internal dilemmas of identity and desire.

The article makes use of Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories to illustrate two pressing psychological preoccupations. The first preoccupation concerns the repression of unconscious desires and particularly those having to do with sex, aggression, and self-agency. The second preoccupation is that of the duality of self, as most eminently exemplified in the case of Bertha Mason, whom Rochester had virtually married. Moving beyond these themes, we employ energies of Jane's advancement for not only feeling socially accepted or romance as fulfilment but rather for attaining psychological wholeness.

Basics of Psychoanalysis: Freud and Jung

According to Freud, repression conceals unacceptable desires from the conscious mind, yet these desires continue to influence behavior indirectly (Freud, 112). Freud proposes that the personality is organized into the id, ego and superego. The id is a set of instinctual drives, the ego is 'in the middle', negotiating means between wish-fulfilment and reality, and the

superego is the internalised expectations of society. If we experience repression, the non-acceptable or 'problematic' desires or emotions are held in contradiction in the unconscious, and ultimately exist as some form in behaviour. These desires or emotions will come to the surface most often in dreams or in the symptoms of the unconscious.

Jung adds a layer of complexity with the idea of the 'shadow', the unconscious, indifferent and dark side of the person's personality the form of which is not identified with the conscious self. Jung's focus was on individuation the process by which the unconscious is integrated as part of the project of achieving personal wholeness.

The psychological theories will both be important for analysing Jane Eyre's psychological struggles because the novel exhibits the tensions between rationality and irrationality, repression and expression, self-control and passion's more untamed impulse.

Repression and the Formation of Jane's Identity

From the beginning of the novel, Jane Eyre establishes a protagonist who is deeply imbued with repression. As a child at Gateshead, Jane is disciplined for expressing anger and passion. The Red Room is the first psychologically important space that Jane recomposes with respect to discipline. The Red Room is not just physically disciplinary, but also represents the first instance of Jane's emphasis on social norms and her own rejection of instinctual fundamentals.

As the novel progresses and Jane matures, her emotional disengagement becomes clearer. When Jane arrives at Lowood School, she begins to learn Christian acceptance and humility, which serve to develop her moral agency but deepens her rejection of passion and rebelliousness. Jane's relationship with Helen Burns, who advocates for full submission to suffering, characterizes her acceptance of stoic repression.

Nevertheless, Jane is not entirely subdued. Her passion still brews below the surface, especially when she meets Mr. Rochester. Her love for Mr. Rochester incites strong desires in her - emotional, intellectual, and sexual - that she struggles to transcend according to her morals. When Jane discovers that Rochester is already married, her leaving Thornfield illustrates her struggle to balance her desires (id) and her morals (superego) - ultimately Jane's ego chooses to flee in order to preserve her integrity.

The Double Self: Bertha Mason and the Shadow

In Jung's terms, Bertha embodies the "shadow," the repressed and chaotic side of Jane's personality that she must eventually confront (Jung,131).

The figure of Bertha Mason likely represents the most interesting psychoanalytic element of Jane Eyre. Bertha, Rochester's first wife, is hidden in the attic and when presented to the reader, she is immediately shown to be irrational and dangerous. Yet, Bertha is more than one of the obstacles to the plot or an abusive gothic character movement-wise within the novel; she is Jane's double or "shadow self" psychologically.

On the other hand, Bertha plays out everything that Jane keeps buried. When Jane exhibits reason and restraint, Bertha is dynamic and chaotic; when Jane represses her sexual desire, Bertha embodies unrestrained sexuality. Bertha being imprisoned in the attic is a gesture of denial and repression of Jane's darker sexual urges. By Jungian terms, Bertha is the rejected "shadow" self that Jane must engage with and integrate.

This notion of doubling is apparent from the corroborating incidents. When Bertha tries to rip Jane's wedding veil, she is validating Jane's fear and internal resistance to becoming Rochester's wife on the pretext of being working class. When Bertha set Thornfield on fire, this is reminiscent of the destructive rite of cleansing, and this also serves as symbolic death for Jane's old self, so that she can be birthed into a more integrated individual.

Bertha's eventual death corresponds with Jane's return to Rochester, and at a point in their marriage where they can intermarry on something resembling an equal playing field. It is only once the shadow is "burned away" that Jane can begin to marry without compromising her independence or her conscience.

Dreams, symbols, and the Unconscious

The discourse frequently addresses dreams and symbols as devices to illustrate Jane's hidden fears and unconscious wishes. We have Freud's ideas that dreams are the polite road into the unconscious, which Jane Eyre is cognizant of.

One of Jane's significant dreams relates to carrying a child across a barren landscape. This image reappears before significant traumatic revelations, for example, learning of Bertha. The child can be seen as the representative of emotional burden or an unacknowledged responsibility. The surrounding ruins capture Jane's feelings of inner desolation and disorientation.

Fire and ice represent other significant symbols. Fire depicts passion, danger, and transformation. Bertha is linked to fire, she sets Rochester's bed on fire and ultimately destroys Thornfield. Ice is the opposite of fire and represents constraint and emotional coldness. Jane uses icy metaphors to illustrate her emotional repression. The connection and interplay of these two symbols delineates Jane's conflicted inner turmoil.

The recurring motif of mirrors has an important role as well; any time that Jane sees herself in mirrors, she almost never recognizes the person she sees—significantly representing her feelings of fractured identity. The disjointedness is only resolved when she confronts her fears, acknowledges her wishes, and accepts all of herself.

Gender-Social Constraint

Jane's psychical distress does not only have an internal umbrella. Her circumstances in life are determined by rigid gender and social stratifications of Victorian England; as an orphaned, poverty-stricken woman, she is routinely made to see her social powerlessness.

Her preconditions for love, agency, and dignity are controlled due to her combination of internalized repression and external institutionalized oppression.

Rochester, as a privileged male subject of wealth, can stir in Jane both the allure of free will and the threat of it. For Jane to leave Thornfield, after professing love for Rochester, might still be viewed as an expression of her freedom from a compromised position as dutiful wife. However, Jane's decision to rejoin Rochester, after his fall, cannot be thought of as an act to submit to him, instead it will occur between equals.

From a psychoanalytic point of view, Jane's refusal to enter into a mistress subservient position among equals displays the moral strength of her superego will and ego. Her journey toward independence required a creative struggle to overcome both her unconscious, and socially scripted motives of desire. Her story, therefore, is a personal while cultural subversive rewriting of femininity as a self-governing disposition, rather than passivity.

Conclusion

At the end of the novel, Jane experiences something that echoes Jung's own description of individuation, at which point her relationship with both her conscious and unconscious emerges reconciled; contradictory selves integrated; wholeness restored. Her final union with a now-blind and needy Rochester demonstrates the balance of their rational and passionate, authoritative and instinctual selves.

Lacan's theory of the fragmented self mirrors Jane's inability to reconcile her passionate desires with the moral and social codes of her world (Lacan 92).

Jane's development is not only moral or emotional; it is also deeply psychological. The multifaceted character of Jane Eyre is complete, as she accepts her distinctions; her meetings with Bertha, her dreams of Bertha, and her deferred desires and reflections represent differently angled facets of a woman on her path to psychological wholeness. Brontë's Gothic frameworks allow for a psychologically aware treatment of profound truths, meaning that Jane Eyre (while providing an extensive social critique) can become an extension of the psychological unconscious.

While an exegesis of the psychoanalytical perspective demonstrates the psychologically rich text on Jane Eyre in an elaborate treatment of the oppositions to the human condition, it also reinforces that the true journey is an interior journey- towards reconciling the split self and the acceptance of the self as totality- including all of its desires.

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