

ENGLISH: *JANE EYRE*

St John is unmarried: he never will marry now. Himself has hitherto sufficed to the toil, and the toil draws near its close: his glorious sun hastens to its setting. The last letter I received from him drew from my eyes human tears, and yet filled my heart with divine joy: he anticipated his sure reward, his incorruptible crown. I know that a stranger's hand will write to me next, to say that the good and faithful servant has been called at length into the joy of his Lord. And why weep for this? No fear of death will darken St John's last hour: his mind will be unclouded, his heart will be undaunted, his hope will be sure, his faith steadfast. His own words are a pledge of this –

'My Master,' he says, 'has forewarned me. Daily He announces more distinctly, "Surely I come quickly!" and hourly I more eagerly respond "Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!"

From *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë

In the context of your critical study, to what extent does your response to the closing scenes of *Jane Eyre* inform your judgement of this novel as a whole?

In your response, make detailed reference to *Jane Eyre*.

Jane Eyre is a text which not only explores the conceptions of gender roles amongst the Victorian era but furthers our understanding into the language of love and loyalty which play at the heart of the text. First and last impressions dominate the psyche of the responder hence the importance of *Jane Eyre*'s textual structure as a prose fiction novel with five succinct stages in her journey. The key ideas of marriage being more than a physical union is juxtaposed throughout the novel but is especially drawn upon in the closing scenes of the novel to reflect the humanist desire for an ultimate identity and goal being 'independence' for *Jane Eyre* and the Kingdom for St. John. *Jane Eyre* impacts deeply towards the responder with Charlotte Brontë's skilful selection of literal imagery and language which convey an emphatic tone of the pursuing of purpose in life.

Upon the closing stages of *Jane Eyre*, one is imprinted with a confrontation of the end results of two distinctive selections being the choice to follow the love of oneself or the loyalty and commitment to the greater cause. The characterisation of *Jane* can be contrasted with St. John whom are both divided but yet conquered by the various aspects of love and loyalty. *Jane* is literally swept away by love and romance, "All my heart is yours, sir: it belongs to you; and with you it would remain, were fate to exile the rest of me from your presence forever." In such a sense *Jane* has surrendered herself to the role of the humanist union and desire through her marriage to Mr Rochester. On the other hand, we receive the impression of St. John as a hard minded and unflattering soul persistent with seeking out his Christian duties as a missionary. St. John refers to God as "my master", as he seeks his higher calling. Throughout Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is the underlying resonance of the conflicting objectives of love and loyalty which thus implicates one's perception of the novel as a literary text.

As perceived by the Victorian Era at the time of publication, Charlotte Brontë was the outlier in the context of *Jane Eyre*'s society. Her writings from the female perspective underpin the notions of the female voice. For *Jane* to be in the reception of correspondence originating from a man other than her husband would have been one of hair raising commotions within the novel. *Jane* is different to the majority of women at her time; she is well educated and has developed a mature sense of direction in her life. Although *Jane* being as a self-independent woman for her time, she is repeatedly crippled by humanist cravings for love which affects her sense of loyalties, "He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for His creature: of whom I had made an idol." *Jane*'s

blatant idolatry of man in the form symbolised by Mr Rochester contradicts with her role of being true to herself. By planting Rochester as her idol, she consequently 'bows down' before him. Meanwhile St. John being a man of religion is willing to take up the struggle and remain committed but not tied down to his missionary work with "his incorruptible crown". Henceforth the tone of closing stages of Jane Eyre reflect the differing attitudes to life as viewed by Jane whom is peering into the 'what ifs' as she relishes the pondering of her past decisions involving love and loyalty.

The influence of language as directed towards the audience is the crucial backbone to ones understanding and judgement of the Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre. The modern contemporary reader hears the views as characterised throughout the novel are spoken through the literal language of Jane as an autobiography. Jane affirms her love and commitment to Mr Rochester as a token of her feminist choice, "I will be your neighbour, your nurse, your housekeeper. I find you lonely: I will be your companion—to read to you, to walk with you, to sit with you, to wait on you, to be eyes and hands to you. Cease to look so melancholy, my dear master; you shall not be left desolate, so long as I live." The distinctive word choice and repetition of the phrasing 'I will be' and 'your' reiterates that even though Charlotte Bronte through Jane Eyre professes to be of a utter 'feminist' stance, she succumbs to her human desires of the necessity of physical love which is highlighted through Jane and Rochester's union. Jane has allowed herself with the freedom and independence that she has acquired to metaphorically do away with such attitudes and play fit to the mould of a traditional conservative wife and woman for her 'man' of the Victorian Era. Although St. John 'demanded' Jane's hand in marriage, he was not loyal to the passions of the human heart but rather used his human soul to seek a true identity and independence which is a metaphor for the everlasting Christian religious freedom attained through Jesus Christ. Religion and gender roles are the pseudonym in the struggle between 'true' issues and 'liberal' matters. The reader is ultimately left to ponder the question of following one's heart for short term gains of a man or else everlasting reward with "divine joy".

The pairing of the closing scenes of Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre with the synopsis of the entire novel convey the focal themes of humanist desires in contrast with the ultimate independence of the spiritual realm. Love and loyalty are in conflict as played out by Jane, Rochester and St. John. With Jane taking every decision it is a sign of a wavering decision making and one emphasising her maturity which could be somewhat examined at times. St. John is the pinnacle of one's pursuit of the true independence. It is through the language which is the inner voice of the characters and the underlying tones of the novel that drive the emotion of the text upon the audience. Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre allows the development of one self's thought through the divergent metaphors that each character represents and aids in the reinforcement of the key judgement of its context along with themes especially of those of love and loyalty which make it a 'great text'.

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