

On the Symbolism in *Jane Eyre*

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Abstract:

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* has attracted special attentions to readers and enjoyed increasing popularity since its publication in 1847. In spite of enormous reviews and comments it has received, the present paper focuses on the writing technique of symbolism employed in the novel, which not only provides us a brand new point of view to analyze the character of Jane Eyre, but also contributes to the academic and aesthetic values of the novel.

Keywords:

Symbolism, Jane Eyre, Functions, Characters, Plots, Themes

1. Introduction

Since its publication in October 1847, *Jane Eyre* has enjoyed increasing popularity. As one of the acknowledged world's classics, *Jane Eyre* has received various criticisms, both favorable and unfavorable. For the originality of the novel in form and content, recent feminist literary critics have given much new attention to the revaluation of the significance of Charlotte Brontë's attempts to depict some of the problems of the women in the nineteenth century. Attitudes towards *Jane Eyre* illustrate the history of feminist criticism. Virginia Woolf[1] and Kate Millett represent their views of feminism in their works respectively. In addition to feminist criticism, other literary critics have also made *Jane Eyre* the subject of their studies. For instance, Lord David Cecil[2] once analyzes the limitations of Charlotte Brontë's character drawing and Walter Allen criticizes the plot of *Jane Eyre*, which he finds melodramatic and absurd, while Lawrence and E. M. Hanson praise the vitality of both plots and characters in *Jane Eyre*.

In spite of numerous criticisms and comments, this paper would like to explore the beauty of the world-classic from another aspect. Based on the feminist studies of *Jane Eyre*, this paper will lay stress on the symbolic use of characters, settings and different events in the novel, which helps to demonstrate the obstacles for Victorian women to achieve economic independence, spiritual freedom and sexual equality.

The symbolism employed in the novel are prevalent in narrative elements such as characters' names, place names, dreams, visions, landscapes, colors, fire, food and so on. The symbolic techniques used in the novel provide us a brand new point of view

to analyze the character of Jane Eyre, and contributes to the academic and aesthetic values of the novel as well.

2. The Symbolic Meanings of the Main Characters

One of the literary feats of Charlotte Brontë's masterpiece *Jane Eyre* lies in the fact that she creates a heroine, Jane Eyre, who dares to fight against adversity and obtains independence, freedom and equality. Recent literary critics have given much new attention to the heroine from the feminist point of view. Yet the heroine Jane Eyre is a literary figure and a symbolic character as well. As far as Jane's own surname is concerned, Eyre comes from the name of a historic house in which a mad woman lived, but Brontë also intends it to mean being a free spirit. Jane indeed has a frightening experience and actually sees herself as a spirit in the red room mirror at Gateshead, where she subsequently has a fit.

2.1. The Symbolic Meaning of the Heroine Jane Eyre

The symbolic meaning of the character Jane Eyre can be explored from two perspectives. On the one hand, Jane Eyre is an individual symbol that represents the writer herself, who experiences the same or similar schooling life and romantic life. Elizabeth Gaskell[3] retells something Charlotte Brontë said concerning the character of *Jane Eyre*. As a matter of fact, she wishes to realize her own dream by means of creating a literary figure. Through the narrator Jane, readers are convinced of the scenes and events of *Jane Eyre*. Everything is seen through the eyes of Jane herself, and she is intensely real. Charlotte Brontë projects herself without reserve into her leading characters and allows her inmost feelings, her secret impulses, to color her narrative. Her aim is not simply to provoke sympathy for her heroine but rather to express or realize her dreams. Through the character of Jane, Charlotte Brontë presents some of her own most deeply felt convictions, convictions of permanent importance in human life, the right of the humblest person to affection and self-realization, honesty and integrity, and the right to speak out frankly. By creating the symbol of Jane, Charlotte Brontë narrates her long struggle to attain these values and becomes a person who is admired, respected, and cared for without compromise. On the other hand, Jane Eyre is also a social symbol --- a woman representative who is dissatisfied with her present status and who dares to challenge the class-ridden, money-orientated and male-dominated society in Charlotte Brontë's day. Through continual struggles and enormous efforts of the symbolic Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë realizes her dreams regardless of social rank and gender. Jane Eyre's success is not merely an individual triumph, but also a symbolic declaration that all women can achieve social status, economic independence, spiritual freedom and sexual equality through fighting.

2.2. The Symbolic Meaning of the Hero Edward Fairfax Rochester

Edward Fairfax Rochester in *Jane Eyre* is another figure that has aroused the enthusiasm of many critics. Allen speaks of him as a "symbol of virility", another master figure in the master-pupil relationship which Charlotte Brontë finds so appealing, a symbol of a figure over which Jane triumphs, in that at the end of the novel she is stronger than the helpless Rochester. Actually, Rochester is not mere a literature figure but also a multi-symbolic character. On the whole, Rochester conveys three levels of symbolic meanings: the victim of patriarchy, the product of patriarchy and the reformed masculine.

As the second son of a large estate owner, Rochester is deprived of the right of inheritance, for his father cannot bear the idea of dividing his estate. Yet his father also cannot endure that Rochester should be a poor man. When he is young, Rochester's father and elder brother Rowland urge him into his marriage for the sake of thirty thousand pounds --- a sum that would permit Rowland to inherit his father's estate intact. Rochester's wife Bertha is the daughter of a Jamaica planter. Being inexperienced and attracted by her beauty, Rochester marries her, unaware that there is insanity in the family and that Bertha's mother and brother are already mad. Four years after their marriage, Bertha is proved to be lunatic as well. His life ruined, Rochester almost falls into despair. In this sense, he is the victim of patriarchy.

Rochester is also viewed as the product of patriarchy. After the death of his father and his brother, Rochester inherits his family estates and becomes a cynical unconventional and unrestrained rich estate owner. Symbolically speaking, Rochester is a representative of patriarchy male dominance over its counterpart, which can be seen from his treatments to his wife Bertha and his mistress Jane Eyre. Rochester's male dominance can be reflected in his way of living and his treatment to his wife Bertha. He hides his wife in the attic of Thornfield just for covering the secret of his own marriage to a lunatic woman. To a Victorian gentle, his reputation undoubtedly outweighs his respect to a woman. After meeting Jane, Rochester is greatly changed, yet his masculine superiority can still be traced. After years of roaming and degrading life, Rochester realizes that love is a kind of mutual need and founded on respect for individuality. Jane acquires a function, dignity, affection and something like a home at Thornfield. Yet because of her gender, Rochester's dominance over her can be found through the novel, which can be best reflected in his language--- he speaks like a Sphinx and assumes that she is a bird in the fowler's net. Without economic independence, women should never expect to gain equal footing with men in a family. To marry a man with economic superiority, a woman has to sacrifice her self-esteem. That is why Jane chooses to leave Rochester. Only when she has acquired her economic independence does she come back to her beloved man.

In the end of the novel, Rochester symbolizes a reformed man, who finally accepts women as his equal counterpart and thus obtains happy marriage. Charlotte Brontë makes a symbolic use of Jane's first encounter with Mr. Rochester, which implies the development of the romantic story. Rochester is made blind at the end of the novel. Many critics interpret Rochester's mutilation as a symbol of a figure over which Jane triumphs. This paper argues that it symbolizes the changed concept of Rochester's towards women. It is the necessity of humility that brings close relationship between man and woman. Blindness shows that Rochester is capable of loving and accepting love. It is contrition and humility that allows Rochester to become closer to Jane than any other couple could become.

3. The Symbolic Meanings of the Settings

Setting is one of the essential elements in novel, which helps greatly to depict the characterization of the heroes in the novel. Various critics have explored the settings in *Jane Eyre*, yet the symbolic functions of the settings seem to be neglected.

Charlotte Brontë depicts her main character's feelings and aspirations for the future by carefully arranging those settings to match the differing circumstances Jane finds herself in. As R. B. Martin points out: the setting of the story is carefully divided into five distinct locales, each of which has its particular significance in Jane's history

and each of which is like an act in a five-act drama.[4] And each setting embodies symbolic meaning, which helps to depict the characters and convey the theme of the novel.

3.1. The Symbolic Meanings of the Setting in Gateshead

Gateshead may stand out from the novel as a brilliant symbolic projection of an oppressive system that calls for a radical response. As a young girl, Jane is essentially trapped in Gateshead. This sprawling house is almost her whole world. Her life as a child is sharply delineated by the walls of the house. She is made to feel unwanted within there and continues throughout the novel to associate Gateshead with the emotional trauma of growing up under its hostile roof with a desperate and embittered heart.

Brontë begins the novel with the picture of the countryside and Jane's outlook on life: "There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so somber, and a rain so penetrating, that the outdoor exercise was now out of the question..."[5]The cheerless, wretched climate becomes a symbol of Jane's position outside the social order. The "so somber" winter wind and "so penetrating" rain at Gateshead symbolizes Jane as a reviled foreigner in the unwelcoming Reed household. Charlotte Brontë uses much space to describe the horrible red room with a view to make the reader understand how hard it is for an intruder from outside the community to break through the deep-rooted social bar. They confine Jane in the red room in order to dismiss her ideas and thereby transform her into what they expect her to be. Refusing to yield to the social norms, Jane leaves Gateshead, which symbolizes her first step toward independence and she fights her way to the next Stage--- Lowood.

3.2. The Symbolic Meanings of the Setting in Lowood

Charlotte Brontë grants much space to describe the buildings and living conditions in the Lowood, not merely in that these scenes reflect the poor educational conditions for poor children at her day, but also in that they carry abundant symbolic meanings.

Jane describes the large building and many rooms of the Lowood School in her account of her first day there. "There was now visible a house or houses --- for the building spread far --- with many windows, and lights burning in some; ...there was no candle, but the uncertain light from the hearth showed, by intervals, papered walls, carpets, curtains, shining mahogany furniture...passes from compartment to compartment, from passage to passage, of a large and irregular building... the garden that is a wide enclosure, surrounded with walls so high as to exclude every glimpse of prospect." [5]The far spread building is a symbol of religious shackle that confines the spiritual freedom of the confinees. The depiction of these scenes in such details has the functions to bring to mind assumptions that a reader already has by using certain markers as indicators of deeper social messages and beliefs. The description of Jane's ravenous hunger and of the burnt porridge informs the readers of the poverty at this supposedly esteemed school for girls. Implicit in these realistic depictions of Jane are larger social criticisms. Brontë is especially aware of the conditions in schools like Lowood because her sisters die in such a school. An article about a Victorian charity school in the 1850s suggests that Lowood might even portray the precise details of an existing school.

3.3. The Symbolic Meanings of the Setting in Thornfield

If Lowood is a prison with shackles of religion, Thornfield is another prison with shackles of masculinist.

As Jane moves to a new world, Charlotte Brontë devotes much more space to the landscape, building and nature, which differs from the two preceding ones because it is made at once more personal and more symbolic. When Jane arrives at Thornfield as a governess, she finds that “the chamber looked such a bright little place to me as the sun shone in between the gay blue chintz window curtains, showing papered walls and a carpeted floor, so unlike the bare planks and stained plaster of Lowood...” [5] This passage is an embodiment of Jane's future. Charlotte Brontë's wording foreshadows all that will come. Jane wishes to have a fair life with flowers and pleasures a symbolic life of equality between upper class and lower class; of equality between man and woman. Yet her “field” will also be filled with thorns and toils: in order to achieve this kind of life, a woman has to struggle for equality. The words “hope” and “indefinite” leave readers with notions of an uneasy long struggle.

The Thornfield Hall is a symbol of the history of the English ruling class. “Thornfeld Hall is a fine old hall, rather neglected of late years, perhaps, but still is a respectable place... one can't converse with them on terms of equality; one must keep them at due distance for fear of losing one's authority” [5], Mrs. Fairfax tells Jane. With long history of class determination, it is somewhat different from the other aristocrats. Charlotte Brontë draws an analogy between the personality of Rochester and the arrangement of the house: “Great houses and fine grounds require the presence of the proprietor” [5], which makes a symbolic identification of house and master. The third floor of Thornfield Hall, to which “furniture once appropriated to the lower apartments, had from time to time been removed here, as fashions changed.” [5] The symbolic language suggests that Mr. Rochester treats women like furniture that is subjected to the owner's decisions about their use, replacement, and display. The women's position is interpreted within the structure of power that organizes them.

When Jane Eyre returns to Thornfield at the end of the novel, she notices a change in the house and Rochester, which symbolizes Rochester's new concept of relationship between men and women, which leads to the equal union of the couple.

3.4. The Symbolic Meanings of the Setting in Marsh End

A closer examination of the precise details in the chapter of Marsh End provides the key to a fuller understanding of the symbolic function of Jane's wanderings that take on a profound significance and so contribute to the realism of her psychological journey to maturity.

Jane struggles all the way from Gateshead to Thornfeld, from a ten-year-old orphan to an eighteen-year-old governess. Unfortunately, she is still alienated in Marsh End: “Not a tie holds me to human society at this moment---not a charm or hope calls me where my fellow-creatures are ---none that saw me would have a kid thought or a good wish for me. I have no relative but the universal mother, Nature. I will seek her breast and ask repose.” [5] The inhabitants treat her as an alien literally because she does not fit into any recognizable category. She begs food but is not a beggar. She looks like a lady but has no money. When she offers to trade belongings for food, they rebuff her. When she seeks employment, they answer her evasively. When she seeks out the clergyman, he is unavailable. When she attempts to gain

entrance to the Rivers home, Hannah, both literally and symbolically, shuts the door on her. Her desire to achieve a satisfying equality in a society seems to have no place for her and her dream of being equal seems a utopia. The isolation she experiences in Morton is a symbolic isolation from all aspects of life. Finally St. John takes her into the Rivers' home and offers her another symbolic choice of life. Then an extraordinary event occurs: Jane receives a fortune of twenty thousand pounds from her uncle, the John Eyre of Madeira, which serves a symbol of Jane's economic independence. Charlotte Brontë uses this opportunity to show that economic independence is the essential element for a woman who hopes to gain equal footing with man. With the fortune, Jane returns to Rochester as an economic independent.

3.5. The Symbolic Meaning of Setting in the *Ferndean*

Escaping from St John, Jane goes back to Mr. Rochester. When she arrives there, she discovers that the circumstances have changed: Thornfield has burned to the ground. Mrs. Rochester has died. And Rochester has sightless eyes. The ruin of the house symbolizes that the barrier that lies between the upper class and the lower class is removed. The death of Bertha and the fortune from Mr. Eyre of Madeira means that all the barriers once hindered her are now gone. The maimed Rochester is no longer a chauvinist but a changed man with new ideas that men and women are equal in a family.

After so many hardships and sufferings, Jane finally becomes the person that she truly is. The fearless heroine has made her last journey reunion with her master, the changed Rochester. By leaving behind the settings significant symbolic meanings, Charlotte makes her heroine Jane's story so touching.

4. The Symbolic Meaning of Events

Besides the use of symbolic characters and settings, Charlotte Brontë employs rich symbolic events to depict the mental development of the heroine, among which the reading of books, the frequent mentions of animals, the recurrences of dreams, and the fire imagery throughout the novel deserve fully exploring on.

4.1. The Symbolic Meaning of Reading Books

In the novel, Charlotte Brontë mentions several times of Jane's reading books which connote symbolic meanings.

In the first chapter, on a somber chilly dreadful November afternoon, while her cousin are playing happily round their mother, the unloved orphan is sent off and takes refuge from a hostile world behind the curtain, consoling herself with *Bewick's British Bird*. Although the child cannot tell exactly what the letters mean, she is particularly interested in the passages about the haunts of sea-fowl; of the solitary rocks and promontories...of these death-white realms. The significance of the detailed descriptions of some of the *Bewick's* text will be lost if the symbolic meanings of them are not explored. The images of storm, shipwreck, and disaster, Arctic desolation and Alpine heights, death and mysterious evil, all serve as a symbolic expression of her bewildered sense of what life should be in future. In the Reed household, she is cruelly oppressed both physically and morally and above all suffering in her from a passionate sense of injustice. She feels like a rock standing alone, "a broken boat stranded on a desolate coast... Why was I always suffering,

always beaten, always accused, forever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win anyone's favor?"[5]

Another book Jane draws comfort from in Gateshead is *Gulliver's Travels*. Released from the red-room, Jane Eyre is still so badly ill that Bessie tries to comfort her in every way. When Bessie asks if she would have a book, the word "book" acts as a transient stimulus, and she begs for *Gulliver's Travels* from the library. "This book I had again and again perused with delight. I considered it a narrative of facts, and discovered in it a vein of interest deeper than what I found in fairy tales..."[5] The symbolic meaning of the book cannot be neglected. It seems to show that Jane is not subdued to her present living condition and dreams of other kinds of life in the world that she could perhaps escape to, even though there might be many obstacles and dangers. This foretells Jane's following journey to her next stage --- Lowood.

Arabian Nights is another book that carries symbolic meanings. In chapter 4, Mrs. Reed decides to send Jane to Lowood School. Before leaving Gateshead, Jane quarrels with Mrs. Reed. Jane feels she has gained the first victory in her life. Instead of asking for Mrs. Reed's pardon, Jane takes down a book --- some Arabian tales and tries to read. "I could make no sense of the subject; my own thoughts swam always between me and page I had usually found fascinating." [5] As we know, Arabian Tales often introduce the idea of magic. Since the little Jane begins her fight for the first time against the Reeds oppression, it is impossible for her to continue to live with the Reed obediently, yet she has no idea of what to do in the following life. By reading her favorite book Arabian Tales, she imagines that magic powers would transform the condition of her life. Thus the reading of *Arabian Nights* symbolizes the unexpected magic change in her subsequent life.

4.2. The Symbolic Meaning of the Frequent Mentions of Animals

Animals do not follow the laws of our social world throughout the novel. Charlotte Brontë employs animal imagery to symbolize the character's resistance to social conventions, implying Jane Eyre's and Rochester's unconventional characters.

Right at the beginning of the story John Reed calls Jane a rat and the servants refer to her as a mad cat. According to social conventions, a dependent ought not to think of her as on equal terms with her master and should try to be useful and pleasant. Jane made no use any of the various social conventions for protecting the feelings of someone with whom she had a disagreement. A rebel like Jane is undoubtedly portrayed as an animal.

At the night of the proposal, when Jane thinks that Rochester would marry Miss Ingram and insists her staying as a mistress, she struggles furiously. Mr. Rochester views Jane as a "wild frantic bird" when she refuses to be contained by him and his ways. His self-labeling moves him into the non-human world inhabited by Jane and thus allows in his mind for the progression of their relationship because Jane too picks up this labeling. She says that Rochester's hair is "raven-black" and that he is a "fierce falcon", a "wild-beast or bird", a "caged eagle". As a consequence of this labeling, they begin to inhabit the same world. Once their engagement occurs, Rochester says that wherever he stamps his hoof, Jane's sylph's foot shall step as well. When Jane returns to him in a sense sealing their engagement, she tells Rochester that he talks of her being a fairy but she is sure that he is more like a brownie". Later, she continues this idea when she says that Rochester is like a royal eagle and his hair reminds her of eagles' feathers. According to Christian legend, the eagle, when it

"becomes old and its eyes are dimmed...flies towards the sun, so that the film is burned away from its eyes and its plumage is renewed by the sun's scorching rays". Here Mr. Rochester shares some similarities with the eagle. Two years after their happy union, Mr. Rochester regains his vision and he can also conceive children. It is their animal-like characterization that brings about their happy union.

4.3. The Symbolic Meaning of the Recurrences of Dreams

Dreaming is an imaginative process of the mind. Forms of dream include the frightening or upsetting nightmare and erotic dreams with sexual images and nocturnal emission. Dreams are, according to some psychologists, rich in symbolism and offer a window into the unconscious mind. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë also employs the dream psychology to manifest Jane's inner struggles. The symbolic meanings of Jane's dreams in different stages of life disclose her mental development throughout her life journey.

As King has suggested, Jane Eyre's dreams "are symbolic representations through which the author plumbs the heroine's psyche, rather than simply thrilling additions to the drama"[6]. The dream before the marriage symbolizes Jane's fear and resistance of the new identity. To Jane Eyre, Mr. Rochester was not only the man she loved, but also an emblem of the patriarchal society. Mr. Rochester has more than once manifested his desire for control as well as his sense of ownership toward Jane Eyre. Jane has screamed in heart that "If I had ever so small an in-dependency, I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester"[5]. Jane Eyre cherishes her freedom but at that era a woman in marriage must be submissive to her husband and could never fully enjoy liberty. As a result, Jane Eyre reveals her fear in her dreams when the marriage is around the corner. She is reluctant to accept the new identity and considers the identity of "Mrs. Rochester" as the biggest obstacle between Mr. Rochester and herself.

The dream of the baby represents her wavering emotions between resistance and compliance. In spite of all the fear and unwillingness, her deep love toward Mr. Rochester prevents her from escaping. In that case, the great terror and strong sense of imprisonment brought by this coming new identity nearly breaks Jane Eyre down the same as the child in her second dream "clung round [her] neck" and "almost strangled [her]". Under such circumstances, Jane Eyre's self-identity grows into one so uncertain and unfamiliar that she can't even recognize herself when she is asked to look into the mirror on the morning of the wedding day: "I saw a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger." [5]

Jane Eyre can't recognize herself because she knows that she has to be transformed into another person after this marriage. In spite of the ardent anticipation and intense happiness expressed during daytime, Jane Eyre is suffering from great terror and struggle in her deep heart. It is only through analysis of those seemingly absurd dreams, are we able to penetrate into Jane Eyre's real psychological state in face of her coming marriage.

The image of child also appears in her dream the night when Richard Mason announces Mr. Rochester's former marriage, which disengages Jane Eyre from the coming unequal marriage. This dream symbolizes Jane's escapement and compromise. As Homans has suggested, "the self has become a child, yet the wedding has failed to take place, and the dream child now is manifestly not Mrs. Rochester. Unable and

unwilling to give birth to that troublesome child, Jane regresses to a version of her own childhood” [7]. In this dream, the child is Jane Eyre herself.

From the successive images of dreams, we are able to penetrate into Jane Eyre’s deep sub-consciousness and understand her fear and hesitation. In adulthood, the protagonist encounters the issue of love and marriage. Jane Eyre is in love with Mr. Rochester, a man of much higher rank than her. Even though there is true love between them, Jane Eyre realizes that her inferiority in position and fortune makes her less able to live with Mr. Rochester as an equal. As Jane Eyre herself explains: if she had but a prospect of one day bringing Mr. Rochester an accession of fortune, she could better endure to be kept by him. Clearly economic issues becomes obstacles in their relationship. Facing of the predicaments, Jane Eyre chooses to escape from it in that Jane Eyre’s minds has been shaped by the prevailing conventional values that Mr. Rochester is already married with Bertha Mason. Another motivation behind her choice is that the protagonist is striving to establish or maintain a sound and integral self-identity. Respected by Mrs. Fairfax and loved by Mr. Rochester, Jane Eyre lives a relatively descent life being Adele’s governess. She has a means of living and therefore has a steady self-identity. If she stays and becomes a mistress of Mr. Rochester, she is in danger of losing her own self-identity and being in the same situations of Mr. Rochester’s former abandoned mistresses. Therefore, she escapes to avoid a possible fracture of her recently established self-identity.

4.4. The Symbolic Meaning of the Fire Imagery

Charlotte Brontë gives a detailed description of fire in each setting. In *Jane Eyre*, one might say, the portrayal of a fully realized heroine who challenges social conventional roles for woman accompanies the portrayal of fire. The importance of fire imagery throughout the novel is self-evident. Except for the functions of satisfying daily need, the symbolic fire plays an important role in the representation of Jane’s characterizations. There have been many excellent discussions of Brontë’s use of fire in the novel: Some critics think that fire is a symbol of home and self-sacrifice; some believe that it is a symbol of conflicting between passion and reason; others argue that it symbolizes rebirth in the character of Rochester.

Actually the fire is used as a symbol of Jane’s need for inclusion, love and equality. Being kept away from the fire symbolizes Jane’s state of being excluded and bullied and lack of love. Being invited to the fire implies the realization of her need. Fire is so important to her that she is almost obsessed with them. A simple domestic hearth always attracts her notice: she can hardly enter a room without describing its fire. She tells us that in Lowood’s schoolroom there is a fire at each end”; on the way to Thornfield, she warms herself by the George Inn’s “excellent fire”. When Rochester first appears at his home, Jane notices that there is a genial fire in the dining room and one in Mrs. Fairfax’s room as well”. Led in for her first interview with Rochester, she sees that they will have their talk before a super fire”. Visiting Bessie on her return to Gateshead, Jane mentions that Bessie places her right at the fireside”.

The novel starts with a scene of exclusion: “The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mamma in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on a sofa by the fireside, and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarreling nor crying) looked perfectly happy. Me, she had dispensed from joining the group, saying, she regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie, and could discover by her own observation that I was

endeavoring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were ---she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy little children.”[5] Jane seeks a place by the fire as she seeks admittance to the family. A seat by the fire means warmth, belonging and inclusion; being kept from the fire means painful exclusion, a sign of her homeless and her orphan state. This exclusion is repeated at significant points in the settings of Lowood, Thornfield, and Marsh End as well.

The exclusion is sometimes compensated. At Lowood, Jane and Helen Burns are invited to Miss Temple's room, feasting on tea, seedcake, and affectionate attention. “Miss Temple again and again summoned us to the fire; we sat one on each side of her”. Never before in her life has Jane been admitted to the fire and never before in her life has Jane received inclusion and love. In fact, Jane's enjoyment is closely related to the state of being situated before a fire. Jane feels relieved and surprised by Mrs. Fairfax's reception of her on their first meeting, because of Mrs. Fairfax's repeatedly urging her to come closer to the fire. In Thornfield's dining room, Rochester asks Jane to come to the fire during their first interview, which symbolizes the love Rochester creates in her. Later, Rochester's bed is set on fire. After she saves Rochester's life and is about to leave, Jane notes a strange energy in his voice “and a strange fire in his look” and Rochester still holds her hand. Mr. Rochester finally relaxes his fingers, lets her go. This fire image symbolizes the fierce passionate love between Rochester and Jane. The quench of the fire symbolizes the quench of their ardent passion. When Jane finds that her groom-to-be already has a wife, she describes her thoughts as a hand of fiery iron grasped her vitals. “Terrible moment is full of struggle, blackness, burning. No human being that ever lives wishes to be loved better than she is loved”. This fire image embodies Jane and Rochester's uncontrollable passion. The next and final image of fire symbolizes the realization of equality between the couple. After Jane leaves Thornfield, a big fire is caused by Bertha, which makes Thornfield a ruin, burns away Rochester's wealth and destroys his power as a male host. All the barriers removed, Rochester and Jane unite happily.

5. Conclusions

As a world-classic, *Jane Eyre* enjoys tremendous critics and reviews. The possible thematic topics of the novel, including personal development, education, equality, the search for religion, the struggle for acceptance, even the conflict between the need for love and the need for independence, retain it a strong appeal to readers from Victorian time to the present day. Among all the themes discussed throughout the novel, the struggle for acceptance and equality is the most impressive. The key reason for its popularity is attributed greatly to the systematic use of symbolism throughout the novel.

The symbolic use of main characters, settings and events contribute to the successful arrangement of the plots and depicting the psychological development of main characters, which contributes to the ever-lasting theme of woman's uncompromising struggle for social acceptance and equality between genders.

Conflicts of Interest

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