

LITERARY CONTRASTS IN *JANE EYRE*: A MIRROR OF THE PROTAGONIST'S JOURNEY

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ABSTRACT

Literary contrasts are rhetorical devices which, by combining disparate ideas, states, and scenes, consolidate authors' tableaux and render them more impressive and pithy. This invigorating effect comes from the unexpectedness of intertwining elements that usually do not coincide. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* abounds with contrasting situations and constituents. This paper discusses the nature of these contrasts and their contribution to Brontë's chef d'oeuvre. Analysis reveals the significant role of literary contrasts in portraying interactions between characters and their surroundings including human beings, nature, and society. Tracing contrasting imagery depicting the progress of the protagonist's character, one discerns a variety of messages about human experience. Of special significance is Brontë's skill in showing how the ugly face of domestic violence can poke shamelessly into the vulnerable and innocent world of childhood. Brontë's contrasts evoke a tinge of shock at the way humans can orchestrate miseries of their fellow humans. These miseries can cause more harm than those caused by harsh natural factors like extreme weather conditions. In addition, contrasts in *Jane Eyre* send strong messages about evils like hypocrisy and social inequities. As the novel unfolds, more contrasting scenes introduce internal conflicts, future prospects as well as themes relating to true love, marriage, and connections going beyond sensory experience. Fortunately, Jane manages to overcome the obstacles and work out the contradictions she faces throughout her long journey of self-fulfillment. Uncertainty and inferiority give way to confidence and sound judgment.

Key words: Rhetorical devices, Contrasts, Victorian Fiction, Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

1. INTRODUCTION

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is a Bildungsroman tracing the development of a female protagonist from childhood to adulthood. Jane, an orphan child appears in the opening scene as a nuisance and an outsider rather than a family member living with her relatives. Exercising solitary activities like reading and immersing her mind in her own flights of imagination spare her neither emotional nor physical abuse. Oddly enough, she is further severely punished for quarrels she never starts. The intolerable situation leads Jane to Lowood where she perseveres "to make so many friends, to earn respect, and win affection" (Charlotte Brontë 1994, 70). These aims reverberate throughout the different stages of Jane's growth in Thornfield and Moor House. Amid myriad inconveniences and temptations, she never relinquishes her right to have connections with people, society and nature within a context of respect and warm feelings. In this regard, the path of development of the protagonist's character is marked by decisive junctures wherein male figures leave unforgettable marks. Examples include the bully John Reed, the hypocrite Mr. Brocklehurst, the mysterious Mr. Rochester, and the stubborn St. John Rivers. Jane's encounters with male figures can be seen as echoes of the intellectual atmosphere woman of the Victorian Age lived in. Literary criticism indicates that women in the nineteenth century are mostly excluded from the world of literature. Writing is considered as a masculine privilege which women are incapable of commanding. This situation leads to writings portraying women from perspectives envisioned or imposed by men. In their discussion of literature written by women in the nineteenth century, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979,13) state that, in a patriarchal society, women acted in spaces physically and

intellectually dominated by men. Women not only lived in households wherein men had the upper hand in management affairs, but they also faced the power of men in the available readings. However, submission and silence do not last forever. Putting limitations upon human potential is no guarantee to get everlasting invincible walls. On the contrary, these limitations may turn into challenges that one should face and overcome.

Charlotte Bronte assumes the role of an active participant who accepts the challenge. In her attempts to draw a new image of women other than that presented by men, Bronte puts women in a noteworthy context. From her perspective, woman is a no celestial figure created to please man by her beauty and to emphasize his superiority by obedient listening and attending to his orders and desires. In addition, Bronte intimates that woman is not a "pawn" of the least significance in its range of action. Producing works worthy of reading is indeed a big achievement considering "the pervasive Victorian notions about the weakness of the female intellect and the narrowness of women's experience of life" (Susie Campell 1988, 83). It was common that female writers had their works published under male pseudonyms to spare themselves gender related inconveniences and challenges. Charlotte Bronte had doubts about the objectivity of criticism on female writings at that time. She herself and her sisters used pseudonyms as they "had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice" (Elizabeth Gaskell 1857, 269). Thus, neutralizing the gender factor was needed for better evaluations and better possibilities of publication. Discussing the notion of "literary paternity," Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) emphasize the dominance of men's ideas about women. The man author appears as the owner of his characters (including women characters). Gilbert and Gubar (1979) explain the uneasy task of dealing with "literary paternity" which reflects "the patriarchal structure of Western society and the underpinning of misogyny upon which that severe patriarchy has stood" (13). Herein can be noticed the skill of Bronte in criticizing society and conveying universal messages through the experience of her female protagonist.

In addition to the limitations imposed by the social and literary atmosphere surrounding her life, Bronte may have had to handle certain inconveniences at home. According to Rosamond Landbridge (no date), the Bronte's children suffered from a depressing life as their father was obsessed by extreme religious ideas which deny man's right to enjoy life. Landbridge (no date) explains the strict measures of the father who believed toys divert the kid's souls from achieving spiritual refinement. Thus, "luxuries" like toys had no place in his home. However, other viewpoints show that Patrick Bronte was a considerate man interested in enriching the experience of his kids, polishing their talents, and boosting their potential. For instance, being aware of his daughters' unpromising prospects of marriage, he gave them the opportunity to receive education that may qualify them for somewhat reasonably agreeable life. In this respect, Jane Sellars (1997) refers to the father's readiness "to provide them[his daughters] with the feminine accomplishments needed to make them more attractive marriage prospects or the qualifications to become governesses" (13). This indicates the limited social and economic horizons the Brontes had. In fact, Charlotte Bronte's correspondence with some friends sheds light on issues like "the financial crises in households of women" (Margaret Smith 2007, xviii).

To conclude, regardless of the disparities about the atmosphere in which Bronte worked, she introduces an image of a woman who can express her own attitude, thoughts, and feelings. According to Bronte, woman's major assets go beyond physical beauty. There is always something attractive behind her plain countenance. Of special significance is the power of her mind and its vivid imagination. In other words, Bronte's writing is an attempt to gain confidence in woman's intellectual potential.

2. DEFINITION

Definitions reveal distinctive features of contrasts in literary works. They highlight their role in enriching these works and enhancing their appeal to readers. This enhancement arises from encompassing jarring or contradictory elements that are usually incompatible. Connections made between apparently discordant elements are likely to capture readers' attention. The unexpectedness and surprise involved in literary contrasts work as refreshing forces adding to works' attractiveness which, in turn, strengthens reader-text relationship. Contrasts, by combining disparate elements in a logical manner, boost the coherence and unity of texts. Effective contrasts contribute to the way a literary work is received.

C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon (1980) define contrast as "A rhetorical device by which one element (idea or object) is thrown into opposition to another for the sake of emphasis or clarity. The effect of the device is to make both contrasted ideas clearer than either would have been if described by itself" (100). Thus, a contrast includes two sides which can be two states, two characters,

two places or other entities. Contrasts emphasize certain views, emotions, or attitudes about life in general, a certain group, or a state of affairs in particular. Holman and Harmon (1980) add, "Skillfully used by an artist, contrast may become, like colors to the painter or chords to the musician, a means of arousing emotional impressions of deep artistic significance"(100).

Similar to contrasts in real life, i.e. the scenario of day and night, contrasts in literature give the work a tinge of charm as it creates harmony from difference. The definition also suggests that contrasts can be more effective than direct explanation or description, because contrasts usually bring together two or more different aspects of one situation in a way that captures one's attention more strikingly than does a direct narration of the same situation. Writers can utilize this technique to evoke readers' emotions, to express characters' moods, to convey themes, and to reveal significant aspects of place or any other elements of their works.

3. LITERARY CONTRASTS IN *JANE EYRE*

Charlotte Bronte includes various contrasts in *Jane Eyre*. Right from the opening scene, Bronte creates a highly charged atmosphere encompassing her heroine's life. Contrasting aspects not only smoothly involve readers with action, but they also arouse feelings of sympathy towards Jane on one side, and feelings of anger towards her abusive relatives on the other side. From the beginning, it is evident that Jane's position in the Reed household is insecure and shaky. Physically they live together under the same roof, but emotionally she has her own world that is mountains apart from them. Analysis of the retrospective narration reveals the protagonist's unfortunate condition. At the same time, it shows the special merits that enable her to survive. Different aspects of Jane's character can be discerned from the very beginning of the novel.

In childhood, it is natural to find playing with peers a joyous exercise. Thus, as a child, Jane is expected to enjoy physical activities like taking outdoor walks. However, different reasons make her relieved when plans to go outside are cancelled due to weather conditions. She complains about coming back from these walks with "nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed"(Charlotte Bronte 1994, 9). Jane suffers physically and psychologically. Her hands and feet are not well protected from the cold. However, her pain does not stop at this point. Getting inside and sitting close to the fire can end her physical pain. As for Jane, she has to deal with more misfortunes. Instead of coming home refreshed and spiritually invigorated she feels rueful because of Bessie's reprimands. Using the plural of "chidings" reflects that she has been repeatedly chided not only once. The child's frustrations deepen as she is made clearly conscious of her inferior physical appearance compared with her cousins. In an abusive atmosphere, exercise can become physically and emotionally burdensome. The magnanimous misery of the speaker is distinctively expressed by turning a naturally and commonly empowering activity into an irritating or dispiriting inconvenience.

Jane is spared the pain of the cold weather outside. However, the fire which is able to dissipate the coldness of that winter day stands helpless before the emotionless icy ocean between Jane and the Reeds. Jane is insulted and denied joining her cousins in the drawing room. She is accused of being not "contented", "a caviller, and a questioner." In other words, Jane lives in an environment where she is required to accept things as they are without complaining or questioning. No full compliance with these requirements of acceptance by the Reeds deprives her of the privilege of sharing the company of the kids. Thus, Jane seems to be expected to keep silent and show satisfaction/contentment rather than respond naturally. In this regard, Mrs. Reed dictates her code of manners in "Be seated somewhere; and until you speak pleasantly, remain silent" (Bronte 1994, 9). These orders further illumine readers about the uncertain and narrow space available to Jane. Requested to sit "somewhere," she has no special place to settle in or to feel sense of belonging to it. The options she has range between silence and pleasant talk. She should keep silent if she cannot please those around her regardless of how she really feels. Her aunt's commands put her in a paradoxical situation; Jane needs to sham satisfaction in order to show "more natural" manners. According to Sally Shuttleworth (2012) Victorian writings "helped to create a new sensitivity to the potential sufferings of childhood, and the life-long impact of these experiences"(213). The unloving atmosphere inside combines with the dreary November weather outside to paint a bleak image of Jane's world. She feels lonely although she is physically surrounded by a good number of people in the same house. Lacking fulfillment in human company, she resorts to reading books to assuage her loneliness. Silencing her tongue by no means silences her mind. In one of the scenes, Jane is forced to find a spot to keep herself out of the sight of the Reed's family. Sitting by the window with a book in her lap, she resembles a "captive, yet with the liberty of adventure in imagination—a window to look out of, a book to read and picture on which to build fancies. The double impression of constraint and

freedom is burnt into the mind in those first few paragraphs" (Kathleen Tillotson 1954/1995, 28). The child has her own way to handle her physical confinement. Jane's independence and resourcefulness provide her with an outlet to smooth out the extremities of her position.

While reading, she observes the view through the window: "Afar, it offered a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long lamentable blast" (Bronte 1994, 10). She glimpses two levels, afar and near. The far expanding horizon is hazy and mysterious while the nearby area is clearly tempestuous. These observations, which provide neither reassurance nor consolation, foreshadow Jane's future experiences. The far future is unclear and the immediate one is unhelpful. Indeed, holding her peace and engaging in the solitary activity of reading do not relieve her for long. She has an encounter with her bully cousin who shamelessly hits her with a book injuring her and causing her to fall. This encounter shows a stark contrast between Jane's mind and that of her cousin. In the former's world, books are for reading and learning, whereas they become tools for bullying in the latter's hands. Here, things are turned upside down; an object relating to enlightening mental activities becomes a means of physical pain. This is not the end of the contradictions the place offers. The situation rather gets more pathetic as Jane is severely punished by being shut up in an isolated room. By contrast, the bully child is showered with expressions of sympathy.

The unbearable horror of the red room causes Jane to break down and lose consciousness. When she wakes up, she does not feel secure until she realizes that a stranger is in the room. In ordinary circumstances, it is family atmosphere that provides a haven from the insecurity of strangers and outsiders. For Jane, it is the other way round. While none of her relatives seems to care about her, her unfortunate situation is noticed by the Reeds' associations and workers like Bessie's mother and the porter's wife. These women express sympathy and concern about Jane. As for Mrs. Reed, things take another totally different course. Jane's suffering as a result of the shock she experienced in the red room never softens her aunt's heart. Instead of remorse and amendment, the woman never slackens in building walls of isolation around Jane. Mrs. Reed's suffocating hatred goes beyond spoiling Jane's present. She rather plants more seeds of indignation in future avenues the girl may take. Even when arrangements are made to send Jane away from Gateshead, none of Jane's merits is mentioned. Mrs. Reed rather alerts Mr. Brocklehurst, the manager of the school where Jane will spend a few years, to the deceitful nature of the child. The harsh feelings cause her to enter a war of words with her aunt. However, this encounter brings Jane nothing but a transient relief. Unlike the aunt who seems never to regret her tough inconsiderate treatment of Jane, the child has an internal conflict about the righteousness of what she did, i.e. answering back an older person. She seems intolerably torn between vengeance and respect for the old. According to Zoe Brennan (2010) "the narrator struggles to negotiate between these, traditionally antagonistic, dualisms, creating a sense of tension and drama in the novel" (16). Jane's internal and external conflicts render her life cold, dark, and sad.

Unless Jane accepts humiliation and be thankful for the mere merit of keeping body and soul together, she cannot continue living in Gateshead. Her inquiring mind makes her a repulsive "questioner" deserving banishment and having little opportunity of smooth interaction with the Reeds. Jane relates her frustrations, "From every enjoyment I was, of course, excluded: my share of the gaiety consisted in witnessing the daily appareling of Eliza and Georgiana" (Bronte 1994, 30). This contrast between the treatment Jane receives and that her cousins receive highlights the injustice prevailing in Gateshead. At this point, Jane stands distinguished. She does not feel jealous of her cousins despite all the privileges they enjoy. She is aware of her inferior physical beauty when compared with that of Eliza and Georgiana Reed. However, she never wishes to be in their place. The warmth, ease, and beauty the Reeds' daughters enjoy seem of no appeal to her. It is true that the unfair bad treatment at the hands of relatives arouses her resentment and dissatisfaction, but they can be seen as factors enhancing her learning and maturity. Her mind seeks contentment in a different way somewhere else.

Bronte's skill in employing literary contrasts figures in weather imagery. The sun makes his first appearance in her protagonist's language only shortly before leaving to Lowood. Jane is never ingrate. Although her life seems to be reduced into a lengthy frosty and gloomy winter, some shiny spots bring some hope. She sometimes feels happy and fascinated by Bessie's stories and songs. These tranquil times reflect Jane's ability to enjoy life and live in harmony when she is given the chance to do so. Reading also attests to her eagerness to learn. In addition, reading helps her preoccupy her mind with useful errands despite the unfriendly surroundings. For example, Jane is capable of distinguishing between fairy tales and other more down to earth works like *Gulliver's Travels* whose reading used to arouse her curiosity about diminutive people as well as giants. It also inspired dreams of travelling to the worlds explored in this work. However, instead of being appreciated for her merits, Jane is abused and misinterpreted. In a biased atmosphere, the way she manages to spend her time without

interfering in others' affairs or causing any harm only makes her perceived as "a tiresome ill-conditioned child, who always looked as if she were watching everybody, and scheming plots underhand" (Bronte 1994, 28). As a child, she is vulnerable, and this makes her an easy target to suspicions and distortions rather than an object of compassion and sympathy. Positive perceptions of her behavior are the exception rather than the rule. Not allowed to touch the toys of Georgiana, Jane clears a spot on the window glass to have a landscape view. The situation confirms the narrowness of space she can act in as well as the restrictions encompassing her existence. Here, she is never at loss to find free connections with the world. While the physically warm room with the scattered toys denies her rapport, the tranquil frosty scene outside interferes to give a hand. She notices "a little hungry robin, which came and chirruped" (Bronte 1994, 32). The stimulus is strong enough that Jane's positive response never taries. Immediately, she offers help by offering the remains of her breakfast to the unexpected comer nature offers. Failure of communication and understanding with humans is juxtaposed with meaningful and compassionate interaction with a friendly realm, unspoiled by fellow humans. However, the incident, in which Jane needs to open a window, does not pass without Bessie's chiding remark about Jane's carelessness and possible "mischief" (Bronte 1994, 33). Gateshead seems to turn into a prison with Jane presumably acting as a suspect. It is doubtful that she will have any regrets about leaving the Reeds. Departure scenes are usually full of emotion, but the parting of Jane and the Reeds is completely different. The scene lacks feelings of sorrow and longing commonly experienced when leaving a place of living. Jane seems to feel like getting rid of an enemy rather than leaving a family that has sheltered her for years.

It is no wonder to have this emotionless goodbye scene in an environment offering striking and confusing contrasts. Of special significance are the contrasts in the troubled relationship between Jane and Mrs. Reed. The latter never flinches to inflict severe punishment on Jane for fights not uncommon among peer children. It is strange how the supposedly mature mother never questions her own children to discern the circumstances in which these encounters happen. Readers understand that Jane is not someone picking quarrels, but she is always the one to put the blame on. The contradictions resulting from discrimination and unjust treatment render Jane's childhood emotionally burdened with prejudice. During her convalescence from the shock her nerves suffered from in the Red Room, an apothecary is summoned to attend her, similar to servants. By contrast, her cousins and aunt deserve the care of a physician in similar conditions. Even, when arrangements are made for Jane to leave to Lowood, a heart-rending apathy is what the woman conveys. The best she could do is making sure to implant in the mind of the school manager the image of the girl as a lair. Sending the child alone far away to face whatever challenges the unknown offers never awakens any tenderness. Instead of helping her grope her way to the future, Mrs. Reeds goes too far in darkening the narrow path Jane needs to tread after the apparent failure of compromise at Gateshead. Surprisingly, with all these setbacks, the aunt wants the girl to consider her as her friend. In Jane's condition, the request itself is full of contrasts. It is uttered at a time when the child is asked to leave, probably for good, without bothering the Reeds with her departure. None of them cares about waking up in the morning to say goodbye. The contexts in which Mrs. Reed refers to friendship in Jane's presence show how the speaker strips the word "friend" of its semantic import. Jane's interactions with abusive and cunning interlocutors put her in an unenviable situation. It is doubtful that the world of friendship and the world of the Reeds would intersect at any point. Child abuse and friendship have nothing in common. There is no doubt that Bronte excels in fusing unexpected elements in a way that "from the scattered, distorted fragments of experience which managed to penetrate her huge self-absorption, she created a world" (David Cecil 1934/1995, 25). Put differently, Bronte brilliantly shows the disparities in her protagonist's life. One has but to abhor distortions of reality and the language used to conceal them.

Jane starts a new phase of her life in Lowood which also has its contrasts. Due to inadequate school facilities, struggling with cold weather continues outside school as well as inside it. The rooms lack the fire needed to dispel the cold. Thus, Jane seems to lose one of the advantages she used to have at Gatehead, rooms with good temperatures in winter. At the same time, she has the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends. Interacting with teachers and students, she becomes more enlightened with her mind exploring broader horizons. First, she meets Helen Burns who behaves in a way that surprises Jane. Helen never gets angry nor feels offended even when she is humiliated or treated badly. This attitude and mode behavior differs from Jane's way of dealing with offences and injustice. In this respect, Jane tries to persuade Helen to fight back because otherwise "the wicked people would have it all their own way; they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse." (Bronte 1994, 60). Thus, Jane and Helen differ in their modes of thinking regarding the best way to handle transgressions of law or appropriate code of manners. Helen's mode draws on passive endurance and forgiveness, while Jane's mode depends on active

resistance to show transgressors their faults and consequently stop them. However, this difference in opinion does not flaw their friendship.

Another contrast can be noticed in Lowood, revealing the hypocrisy of Mr. Brocklehurst, the manager of the school. Not fed or dressed well, the girls always suffer from hunger and cold weather. Mr. Brocklehurst justifies deprivation as a way of “teaching” that polishes the girls’ souls and enables them to resist sins. This policy advocates suffering as a path leading to virtue. The surprise comes when one finds different standards and policies applied in the man’s home. When his wife and daughters come to Lowood, they are “splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs” (Bronte 1994, 67). The discrepancy between the principles this man defends and the way his family lives is apparent. He seems to use religion as a pretext to justify his closeness as well as the inadequacies in his institution. Bronte seems to hurl her criticism on people and institutions which do not practice what they preach. However, this treatment of social injustice is sometimes viewed as “a murmuring against God’s appointment” (G.H. Lewes and Lady Eastlake 1848/1995, 15). This point of view indicates that the dissatisfaction Bronte expresses regarding rigid social distinctions is an anti-religious protest against God’s will. Related to this point, G. Vaidyanathan (2008) indicates that “Jane’s autonomy of spirit is seen as implicitly questioning the class structure”(41). The researcher pinpoints the significance of social criticism in *Jane Eyre* as it can hopefully draw attention to evils and instigate reform. Reducing social inequities is a noble goal aiming at better human existence.

Jane’s journey continues as her restless soul seeks change. She tries her fortune in Thornfield where she is supposed to work as a governess. Discrepancies pervade the scene painting a marvelous image of Bronte’s heroine. Her reflections on her first coming to the place are not devoid of uncertainty and apprehensions. Jane says, “Reader, though I look comfortably accommodated, I am not very tranquil in my mind” (Bronte 1994, 95). This remark is just one example among other ones representing contrasts between appearance and reality. Fortunately, Mrs. Fairfax’s warm welcome dissipates her discomfort. Mrs. Fairfax kindly addresses Jane, “You must be cold; come to the fire” (Bronte 1994, 97). Contrasting imagery of light and darkness appears throughout her depictions of the mysterious mansion of Thornfield. In addition, imagery of fire and snow/cold has its significance in Jane’s world. They suggest various internal conflicts as well as encounters between her principles and those of people around her.

Bronte’s contrasts convey place features. Descriptions of the landscape surrounding Thornfield include “Farther off were hills: not so lofty as those round Lowood, nor so craggy, nor so like barriers of separation from the living world” (Bronte 1994, 101). Hills loom in the horizon of both Lowood and Thornfield. However, the hills seen from the latter make an impression completely different from the ones surrounding the former. The series of negations intimates a clear contrast between the two places. Compared with her previous abode, Thornfield seems less isolated, less hard, and less lacking in life. The scene is imbued with optimism and hope of a better and easier life for Jane. Interestingly, imagery of fire and snow appears again. Describing the dining room, Jane says, “Large mirrors repeated the general blending of snow and fire” (Bronte 1994, 105). These reiterated contrasts foreshadow the possibility of the place as a stage where Jane has to act the most decisive roles in her life. However, before she really assumes this role, Jane remains unsatisfied and bored. She feels no real excitement in the stagnant air in Thornfield with the company of the tranquil Mrs. Fairfax. She again longs for change, for a storm that can dispel this stagnation and break the heavy silence she feels. Bronte carefully chooses the circumstances to quench her protagonist’s longing. Going to post a letter, Jane feels “The ground was hard, the air was still, my road was lonely” (Bronte 1994, 112). Amid this stillness and loneliness, Mr. Rochester appears. Jane connects his appearance with “rude noise” (Bronte 1994, 113). The first encounter with the man marks a special experience for Jane. He needs her help as he falls off his horse. From this moment on, she seems unable to resist thinking of Rochester. The difference he has made is clearly expressed in “Thornfield Hall was a changed place. No longer silent as a church” (Bronte 1994, 120) as more lights and movement of people could be seen and heard.

It is not only place that has changed with the coming of Mr. Rochester. Jane’s behavior seems also to change. It is surprising how she obeys his orders without questioning. For her, “Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly” (Bronte 1994, 131). One wonders about the secrets of Jane’s response to Mr. Rochester’s orders. She has never been submissive. In fact, one of her traits that used to irritate her aunt in Gateshead is that she was a questioner. One might also think that the strict rules in Lowood made her obedient. Another possibility is that her mind may have become spell-bound by the magic of love. Jane not only obeys the orders of this man, but she also tries to find excuses for some of his irritating traits like “changes of mood” (Bronte 1994, 130). She does not mind these changes as long as they are not connected with her. As action proceeds, some contrasts appear between the pair. While Rochester has a sinful past,

Jane is free of such burden. His mental turbulence makes him suffer, and he feels jealous of her innocence and peace of mind.

Jane's inexplicable obedience does not keep her from playing an active role in her master's life. One night she rescues him from being burned by mysterious fire. The conversation that takes place in the same night reflects his gratitude as he now owes her his life. Jane gets so excited about what she has done that she never sleeps that night. Jane's act foreshadows her role in redeeming her master from his sinful past. However, contrary to Jane's expectations, Rochester leaves the following day to spend some time with some acquaintances. As a result, Jane has bitter feelings after the information she gets from Mrs. Fairfax about her master's company. They are a group of rich people and beautiful ladies whom he can choose a wife from. His apparent negligence of her makes her remember the reality of her position and relationship with him. She tries to convince herself that she is no more than a governess. When he treats her kindly, she should never think of further implications. Her suspicions about the real value of her existence in his life are emphasized by the conversation with Mrs. Fairfax about the possibility that Mr. Rochester may marry the pretty Miss Ingram. As a result, Jane draws two portraits, one of herself and the other is that of her supposed competition. Considering beauty, money, and social class, Miss Ingram wins as Jane is not but a plain, poor governess. However, the bitter feelings change into peace of mind, and consequently Jane is happy with her ability to control her feelings which could otherwise turn into destructive jealousy. At this point, Jane represents "the proper Victorian woman" (Beth Torgerson 2005, 61). Self-restraint and mindfulness give Jane the power to behave wisely.

Bronte introduces the theme of marriage. It can be based on beauty, money, or social class. It can also be based on true love. Bronte indicates the futility of relationships based on superficial and transient assets like physical beauty, money and people of authority. Amid the hypocrisy engulfing the gatherings Mr. Rochester takes part in, Jane remains in the shadow. She is incapable of joining them although her master invites her to the group. It is somewhere else where Bronte brings them together to talk about personal feelings. Nature provides a suitable frame to join the two characters. In their meetings in the garden, Jane expresses how much she loves nature. It is only far away from the noise of artificial social wheel that Jane enjoys her time with Mr. Rochester. Such meetings give her peace and relief after the excitement, fear, and confusion as a result of the fire "accident," the strange sudden laughs, and the injury of Mr. Mason. Bronte utilizes the calm of nature to smooth out the disturbance and tension of the gothic element. Explaining the significance of this element, S.P. Sengupta, S.C. Mundra and S.C. Agarwal (1995) state, "We are thrilled to listen to a wild cry piercing the calmness of a moon-lit night"(315). Suspense results from staging the peaceful and tranquil abruptly interrupted by the fearful and bizarre. A sense of relief is created when peace follows tempests. The balance achieved reinforces the structure of the novel giving it unity and continuity. Bronte captures readers' attention as they proceed eagerly till they reach the end.

Jane's experience in life brings change in her personality. Visiting Gateshead after the death of John Reed, she never feels inferior to her cousins as she used to do in the past. She relates this change in "I sat between my cousins, I was surprised to find how easy I felt under the total neglect of the one and the semi-sarcastic attention of the other" (Bronte 1994, 227). The cold reception her cousins give arouses no bitter feelings or embarrassment. The visit shows the forgiving nature of Jane. It also reflects the strong feelings she has about Mr. Rochester. News about the letter in which her uncle John Eyre wishes to adopt her and make her his heir does not change her attitude and longing for Thornfield and her master. Her mission in this sudden visit finishes after the death of Mrs. Reed. Thinking of returning to Thornfield, she entertains a medley of feelings. She is both happy and anxious at. Her fear is felt in: "I dreamt of Miss Ingram all the night: in a vivid morning dream I saw her closing the gates of Thornfield against me and pointing me out another road" (Bronte 1994, 241). According to Robert B. Heilman (1958/1995), "Jane's strange, fearful, symbolic dreams are not mere thrillers but reflect the tensions of the engagement period, the stress of the wedding-day debate with Rochester, and the longing for Rochester after she has left him"(34). At this point, Miss Ingram's presence appears in Jane's dream as a threat to her own existence in Mr. Rochester's life. Jane is unable to forget the lady completely although she previously indicates that Miss Ingram is not really the kind of woman who would make her feel jealous. Allusions are made to the artificiality and silliness of the concerns of the lady as well as her connections. Jane's mature thinking enables her to estimate the real value and worth of people by delving beyond physical appearances. Jane's worries are reminiscent of an important theme in the novel. Choices and decision making can be marred by the attraction of appearances that can obliterate reality. Again, the discrepancy between reality and appearances is not easy to handle.

Despite her anxiety, Jane finds happiness in the mere notion of seeing Mr. Rochester. The following lines reflect Brontë's knack for creating memorable characters expressing complicated human feelings:

I know there would be pleasure in meeting my master again; even though broken by the fear that he was soon to cease to be my master, and by the knowledge I was nothing to him: but there was ever in Mr. Rochester (so at least I thought) such a wealth of the power of communicating happiness, that to taste but of the crumbs he scattered to stray and stranger birds like me was to feast genially. (Brontë 1994, 243).

Jane's reflections include a combination of happiness, fear, anxiety, and gratitude. Awareness of her position as a governess and of the influence of the refined social circles her master has strong connections with poses the possibility of losing him any moment. However, neither resentment nor indignation finds its way to her heart and mind. She is rather content and appreciative of whatever amount of joy he endows her existence with. Jane's feelings towards her master reflect on her mood when coming back to Thornfield. The experience is totally different from that when she comes back to Gateshead. Long years of separation never melt the ice of indifference between Jane and the Reeds. By contrast, she enjoys the company of Adele and Mrs. Fairfax and she appreciates their warm welcome. Feelings of being misplaced are absent in Thornfield. On the contrary, Jane gains the confidence and courage to ask her master: "Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? a machine without feelings?" (Brontë 1994, 251). Indeed, Jane has developed a complex character capable of asserting her humanity, womanhood, and right to have a special place in her master's world. Surprisingly, the moment Jane gives up hope of staying with her master, she comes to know about his plans to marry her, not any other woman. He does not want her to leave alone; they will leave together. The whole world seems to share her happiness. Arrangements are made for the wedding. Contrary to what is generally known about women's fascination with expensive presents, Jane does not rejoice in the bounty of gifts and jewels she gets on the occasion. For Jane, money can never give love the value it deserves.

Other contrasts appear in the novel. It is in the church where Rochester and Jane are supposed to be declared husband and wife that news comes shockingly proving the impossibility of continuing with the nuptial. The unfortunate surprise transforms Jane's dream of bliss into a big disappointment. She will not be able to live with the man who has made her feel the big value of her existence in his life. Doubts arise about the possibility of surviving the devastating deluge of despair. Jane faces a huge conflict about what to do regarding her relationship with her master. She is torn between alternatives ranging between religious commitment, personal desire, and her capability. She meditates, "I must leave him, it appears. I do not want to leave him-I cannot leave him" (Brontë 1994, 296). Thus, she has to choose between what she has to do, what she likes to do, and what she can do. It is evident that she does not like to leave her master, but her religious faith bans the bond under the current circumstances. Jane remains faithful to her religious principles and decides to leave Thornfield in the hope of finding peace. She is not completely satisfied with her decision as she leaves saying to herself, "Mr. Rochester, I will love you and live with you through life till death" (Brontë 1994, 317). This assertion intimates the possible power of connections going beyond sensory experience. Physical parting does not necessarily end relationships. This inexplicable realm gives Jane hope and power to continue.

Jane has to face more conflicts and challenges. Her fate takes her to the Moor's home where she has to struggle against the hard St. John. A combination of fire and ice imagery portrays the conflict. When Mr. St. John comes suddenly during a storm to see Jane, she describes him saying, "The cloak that covered his tall figure all white as a glacier" (Brontë 1994, 373). The description suggests the cold encompassing the man's world. His tendency to repress his feelings does not keep Jane from insisting on knowing the reason for his coming in such a stormy weather. His stubbornness is shown in the following conversation:

"But I apprised you that I was a hard man," said he, "difficult to persuade."

"And I am a hard woman-impossible to put off." (Brontë 1994, 379)

Both sides affirm their hardness, reaching no compromise. Considering the encounters between Jane and the two male figures who propose to her, one notices that neither the bleakness of St. John nor the immoral world of Mr. Rochester rise up to her expectations. It is clear that she does not want to lead a life of a nun. At the same time she cannot be oblivious to her faith. A contrast arises between her and Bertha who never controls her emotions. Giving free reign to her feelings ends her life and cripples Mr. Rochester. However, Bertha's death will make the difference in Jane's life. The balance Jane seeks is finally achieved. However, it does not come easily. Mr. Rochester has to suffer the burns of the fire of his sinful past in order to be redeemed. At this point, the reunion of the pair becomes possible.

4. CONCLUSION

Literary contrasts play a significant role in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. A web of contrasts pervades the novel consolidating its structure, strongly binding characters, themes, setting and action. The contrasts in the protagonist's childhood give strong messages about the abusive treatment Jane suffers from. This stage of her life is a sad one. Activities, like outdoor walks, children commonly enjoy and feel enthusiastic about become irritating and upsetting. Instead of coming home refreshed and energized, she feels heavy-hearted and humbled as her cousins are prettier than her. As entertainment becomes emotionally burdensome, it is no wonder to find Jane prefer solitary activities like reading. However, her quietness does not gain her peaceful rapports with her cousins and aunt. The contrasts drawn between Jane and those living with her under the same roof at Gateshead indicate that the worst miseries that man can suffer from are likely to be those orchestrated by fellow human beings. Indeed, the pain resulting from domestic violence can outstrip the pain caused by harsh weather conditions like frost and low temperatures. Unfortunately, Jane the child is continuously scorned. The books she enjoys reading become objects to hit her and injure her. When she loses her temper and fights back, she is so severely punished that she suffers from a nervous shock. By contrast, the perpetrator of the offence is showered with expressions of sympathy and support. Furthermore, Jane entertains various merits including her ability to preoccupy her mind with useful errands like reading. However, her behaviour only arouses suspicions rendering her a mere nuisance annoying others and being annoyed by them in return. Unfortunately, Jane is pitied only by those can do nothing to help her. These contrasts give rise to paradoxes arousing readers' sympathy towards the abused child, and fury towards her hard-hearted relatives.

Seeking better life, Jane leaves to Lowood. Despite the poor living conditions, she adapts and takes considerable strides in self-fulfilment. Here, she makes friendships. Of special significance is her relationship with Helen Burns. Each one of them seems to have her distinctive philosophy about handling injustices and offences. Helen is in favour of endurance and passive resistance, whereas Jane is a strong exponent of fighting back and taking action to stop transgressions. However, differences between the two friends do not flaw their relationship. Other contrasts in Lowood are noticed in the controversial character of the school manager. He does not mind that students are poorly dressed and fed. In fact, he claims that poor living conditions and strict rules are necessary for learning. However, the man does not practice what he preaches. Some of his family members visit the school lavishly dressed in silk and fur. Brontë's allusions to the hypocrisy of certain institutions and the injustice of the class system are differently received by critics. Some of them consider her protests and discontent as anti-religious. Others pinpoint that her treatment of the evils of social inequities is a representation of her independence of spirit.

Thornfield, where Jane works as a governess, has its contrasts. The surrounding hills differ from those round Lowood. This difference suggests a better life for Jane. Here, she meets the mysterious Rochester, the owner of the mansion. He makes his first appearance at a time when the stillness of the place starts to weigh her heart down. His coming is accompanied by noise. Thus, he is the one who makes the difference she longs for. Jane, who used to be a repulsive "questioner" at Gateshead, obeys her master's orders without questioning. She even finds excuses for his moodiness. Their relationship develops despite his strong connections with women of refined social circles. Actually, Jane chooses to remain in the shadow in situations of social sham. Her best meetings with her master take place away from the hypocrisy of the social wheel. Nature becomes the best scene for their meeting. Natural phenomena like the sun and clouds also provide hints to imbue their feelings in. When Jane needs to leave to Gateshead, she herself feels the change time and experience have brought. For example, she no more feels inferior to her pretty cousins. She is also forgiving and unwilling to dwell on past resentments. Knowledge of the possibility of her being the only heir of her uncle does not make her forget Thornfield and Mr. Rochester. Unlike the cold welcome she receives in Gateshead, she is warmly received by Adele and Mrs. Fairfax in Thornfield. This contrast emphasizes the widened gap between Jane and her childhood abode. Long years of separation seem to bring no significant change. Thornfield is likely to offer better prospects. However, Jane continues to have her concerns and anxieties which are reflected in her dreams. These dreams express her internal conflicts. Jane is capable of exercising self-restraint when thinking of the possibility that Miss Ingram may drive her away from her master's world for good. A contrast is felt here between Jane and Bertha. While the former controls her jealousy, the latter gives free reign to her emotions. Bertha's uncontrolled behaviour kills her and cripples her husband.

Unlike St. John who tries to impose his will on Jane, Mr. Rochester takes a different course. For example, the day following the fire "accident" he withdraws from Jane's world. In addition, he proposes to Jane only when she clearly declares that she cannot continue living in Thornfield if she remains

“nothing” to him. However, their nuptials stop suddenly, putting Jane in an internal conflict between what she must do and what she likes to do. Jane leaves Thornfield to avoid violation of her religious principles. At the same time she is sure that this separation will never end her relationship with her master. The power of connections going beyond sensory experience reverberates throughout the novel.

To conclude, various contrasts in *Jane Eyre* significantly contribute to the novel's tapestried matrix. They strongly convey themes and messages. Disparities between what is expected and what happens attract reader's attention and arouse feelings vis-à-vis characters and situations. Contrasts between characters reflect the possibility of strong friendships among people not necessarily adopting the same philosophies and modes of thought. In addition, discrepancies between words and deeds unveil social sham and hypocrisy. Contrasts between places also give hints about character's prospects. Internal conflicts and character development can also be expressed in contrasts. In brief, contrasts can be seen as the fibre holding various constituents of a literary work. When carefully built, contrasts consolidate text texture rendering it strongly unified.

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