Experience Makes Life--Jane Eyre’s Attitude Towards Wealth and Love

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Keywords: Confidence, Dignity, Firmness, Independence, Equality.

Abstract. Every piece of literature works is created from life or the writer’s experience. Jane Eyre, is one of the most representative works, which attract experts to study it. Jane Eyre the character in Charlotte Bronte’s novel in some ways reflects the woman writer’s experience and life attitude, but more positive and independent. In this article the writer compares Jane Eyre with Charlotte Bronte and describes how Jane’s attitude towards wealth and love comes from her life experience and how it’s important to modern women.

Introduction

In English literature, there are many great works which exist forever. “Jane Eyre” is one of them, which has rooted in people’s spirit and soul. It is the attractive love story that cannot be resisted. It has a great influence on people’s spiritual world and even their whole life especially the modern women.

Jane Eyre is an autobiography, which expresses a topic: value of human beings = dignity + love. As people discuss nowadays, Jane Eyre’s three points of view are equality in spirit, equality in marriage and independence in personality. These are the features that modern women need.

The author of the novel Jane Eyre is Charlotte Bronte, one of the three sisters in the history of English literature. She was born in a poor family in the little village of Haworth, Yorkshire, in Northern England. Her father is a clergyman. Her mother died when she was five years old, leaving five girls and one boy. She ran wild upon the moors, read literature and wrote childish stories. In 1824 all the sisters except Anne, the youngest, were sent to a charity school, a veritable prison where the poor children were cruelly treated, which was written into her novel. The two eldest sisters died there, and Charlotte and Emily were brought home to be educated by their father. So they did not get much formal schooling in their youth. They worked as governesses in rich families for some time, and planned to start a private school of their own but got no pupils. For some time Charlotte and Emily went to Brussels to work in a boarding-school. Poor health forced them to return home where they devoted themselves to literary work. It was because of this early experience that the famous piece Jane Eyre was created and became one of the best and most popular women works in English literature.

In 1845 Charlotte discovered the manuscript of Emily’s poems, and persuaded her to have them published. All three sisters contributed to a small joint volume, entitled ‘Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell,’ the pseudonyms of Charlotte, Emily and Anne. It was published in 1846, but only two copies were sold in that year. Each sister then started novel writing. Charlotte’s maiden attempt at prose writing, the novel “Professor”, was rejected by the publisher, but her next novel Jane Eyre, appearing in 1847, brought her fame and placed her in the ranks of the foremost English realistic writers. It was the only piece of works that made Charlotte became one of the greatest woman writers and a representative of independent woman in the world.

But misfortune came to the sisters. “In the very heat and burden of the day, the laborers failed over their work.” Emily died in the year following the publication of her novel. According to Charlotte Bronte’s description, Emily was clever, benevolent, but very stubborn: “Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone.” She died a victim of consumption, contracted during their early years of hard life. Their youngest and gentlest sister Anne followed Emily to the grave in 1849, dying of the same illness. Their brother Branwell also died of consumption in 1848,
Charlotte, the only surviving child of the family, outlived her sisters and brother for some years. With restless energy, she wrote two other novels, “Shirley” and “Villette”, besides looking after her old father. In 1854 Charlotte married her father’s curate A. B. Nicholls, but she died less than a year later. Her fortune was not better than her other two sisters. From the writer’s experience we can see the misery of Charlotte Bronte and her sisters, which made them the creation source of their great works. It is their great works that will be remembered by people all over the world.

The Miserable Childhood Made Jane Firm, Independent and Confident

Like Charlotte, the character Jane Eyre was just like a copy of the author, but she had a more positive life attitude and independence towards wealth and love, so her fortune was quite different from Charlotte’s.

Being a daughter of a poor parson and an orphan, Jane Eyre was sent to her aunt’s home. Her aunt, Mrs. Reed, a harsh, unsympathetic woman, was rude and unjust to the orphan. Mrs. Reed’s children also found pleasure in teasing and mocking Jane. One day, unable to bear the ill-treatment any longer, Jane told straight to her aunt’s face what she thought of her. Mrs. Reed was furious and got rid of Jane by sending her to a charity school for poor girls in Lowood. Lowood was like a hell, where all of the pupils were girls and were maltreated by the authorities and leading a half-slaved existence. Jane stayed there for eight years, six in studies and two in the capacity of a teacher. It was because of the miserable experience there that made Jane have a definite sense loving and hating. It is because of the unfair treatment that gives her the endless confidence, firmness and dignity, which made her independent on economy and spirit.

Jane’s childhood was hard and miserable, but she still found something or some one that she could never forget, those that made her learn how to love and how to hate. There was a girl called Helen who was very weak and kind-hearted. They helped each other and overcame the hardship and loneliness in the charity school. One day Jane was found that she had a curly hair, so the headmaster insisted on cutting her hair. Jane didn’t agree and tried to get away from him. At last her hair was cut and as a punishment she had to stand on a chair in the front of the classroom. Helen helped her take a chair, but the cruel teacher punished Helen and asked her to stand on a chair outside the classroom. They stood on the chair, one inside and the other outside. A heavy rain came down and Helen caught a bad cold. Since she had not been cured in time, Helen finally got pneumonia. Helen died after a long night talk with Jane, which made Jane quite sad and lonely. This experience made Jane form a definite concept of love and hate. She hated the school and the headmaster and hoped one day she could escape from the cage.

Thomfield---a Place Where Jane Fell in Love but Not Got Lost

Jane lived in this school as an orphan for about ten years and as a teacher for two years. Then she went to Thornfield Hall to work as a governess of a little girl. It was a turning point of her life—from hate to love and being loved. Thornfield was a very big house where Jane had never lived before. It was also a house which was full of mystery that Jane could not imagine. For days Jane did not see the host. One day, before dark Jane walked on the way from the town to Thornfield. The beautiful sunset attracted her so much that she forgot to give way to a coming horse. The owner of the horse fell down and got very angry. It was the first time that Jane had met her host, Mr. Rochester, which gave Jane a deep impression—noble and arrogant. At first Mr. Rochester regarded Jane as a poor teacher, so he talked to Jane in a scornful way. However staying with Mr. Rochester and working as a governess, Jane Eyre never felt self-abased. On the contrary she felt they were equal. No matter what they were, a servant or a host, they should be respected equally.

Living in Thornfield she heard a screaming sometimes at night, so Jane felt very strange and curious. One night Jane heard a sound outside her room, and then she found some smoke came out of Mr. Rochester’s room. She knocked the door and rushed to Mr. Rochester’s bed and woke him up. Mr. Rochester told Jane not to tell anyone what had happened. Jane felt puzzled but, she did so,
which made Mr. Rochester change his attitude toward Jane. He thought she was a person whom could be trusted, so that he relied on Jane more afterwards.

Day by day surprising things happened one after another. One day Mr. Rochester together with a lot of guests came to Thornfield to have a happy party. Jane took the little girl to the hall to wait to greet the guests. When the guests arrived, Jane sat in a corner of the hall. The guests talked and laughed, which made Jane felt that she was unnecessary. Among the guests there was a girl named Ingram, who was Mr. Rochester’s dear. When every one was in great joy, a guest came, who was not invited and called Mr. Mason. At the evening party Mr. Rochester and Miss Ingram sang a love song, which made Jane feel hurt. She couldn’t stand it and left the hall. Mr. Rochester followed her and asked why. Jane tried her best to keep herself calm, but tear drops fell down her face. It was at that moment that Jane realized that she had fallen in love with Mr. Rochester and she was jealous of Ingram. During the night everyone fell asleep, everything is silent, suddenly a scream came out of a room. Jane woke up. Mr. Rochester came and called her to give him a hand. Jane was taken to a room at the end of the corridor, where she saw Mr. Mason was bleeding seriously. He told the people, “She scratched me and bit me”. Jane didn’t ask anything and helped to deal with the wound. After sending Mr. Mason away, Mr. Rochester expressed his thought to Jane. “You are the only person that I can trust. I cannot live without you now,” said Mr. Rochester, “I love you”. Jane accepted his love and agreed to marry him. This completely showed that Jane married Mr. Rochester when he needed her and without any return. Jane felt only when they are equal could she feel she was the happiest woman in the world. It is opposite to the traditional concept that a married woman should always rely on her husband no matter he is poor or rich.

**How did Jane Understand What True Love Was**

On the day of their wedding, Jane went to the church with Mr. Rochester. They were very happy and imagined their future. While the priest was holding the ceremony, the man called Mr. Mason rushed in and shouted, “They can’t get married. Mr. Rochester has a wife at home.” Jane was shocked and disappointed. Mr. Rochester took Jane’s hand and rushed back home. They together got to the room where Jane had been to before and helped Mr. Rochester. There sat a mad woman with hair covering her face. “This is my wife,” said Mr. Rochester, “When I was young, I was very dissipated. This woman’s parents forced me to marry her without telling me that she was a mad woman.” At that night Jane had a talk with Mr. Rochester and told him that she had to leave because she couldn’t marry a man who had already had a wife. “I love you, Mr. Rochester,” said Jane, “but I can’t marry you because I don’t want to be a substitute.” When we read this part, we surely know Jane’s character. That is she didn’t want to be a person who live on being given alms. She couldn’t live with a man whose wife lived next to him. She didn’t want to live under the shadow of the mad woman. Compared with some girls now who break others’ families in order to get wealth, Jane Eyre annotated what a true love was.

Jane left Thornfield when Mr. Rochester was very rich. She said, “I will follow the acceptable laws set by the God. I will follow the rules which can be accepted when I am awake, not when I am mad. I will keep this in my mind.” This is the reason that Jane Eyre told Mr. Rochester that she would leave. Actually Jane thought that she had been cheated both on spirit and on dignity because she loved Mr. Rochester deeply. No one can stand being cheated by a person whom he/she trust and love very much. Jane Eyre tried her best to keep awake and made a decision to leave Rochester. She gave up the rich life and her love and chose to insist on protecting her dignity. It is the most attractive point of Jane Eyre, which is worth learning by modern women.

Jane left Thornfield and went to a strange place where no one knew her. She walked and walked on a wild field for a long time and being hungry and tired she finally fell down on the field. At the moment she woke up again, Jane found that she was lying on a clean bed surrounded by two girls and a man. They were a brother and two sisters. Jane started a completely different life in this small village which is separated from outside world. The man called Saint John was a clergyman and her two sisters were at home. Jane became a teacher of about twenty village children. Life was simple, but it made Jane felt calm and comfortable. It was when Jane watched John’s speech in the church
that she felt John was full of religiosity that he could devote everything to God. John asked Jane to go with him to India and he told Jane he loved her. Jane respected John, but she knew it was not love. She could not marry a man whom she did not love. Meanwhile she heard a voice from far away and from her heart. It was Mr. Rochester calling her “Jane, Jane …” Jane had a sense that Mr. Rochester was looking forward to her help and love. Without hesitation Jane collected her luggage and went back to Thornfield, which had been ruined by a big fire. To her great surprise Jane was told that Mr. Rochester’s wife made the fire and burned herself dead. In order to save his wife Mr. Rochester was hit by a piece of burning wood and lost his eyesight. Jane was shocked and decisive at the same time. Jane found Mr. Rochester and his dog on a path near the ruin, very lonely and hopeless. He sat on a long chair, blind and pale. He felt that someone was in front of him and called Jane’s name. Jane walked slowly and quietly towards him and sat next to him and told him, “I’m here to accompany you for ever.” Both of them fell in the river of happiness.

**Independence and Equality Required in Modern Society**

This is Jane Eyre. When Mr. Rochester was rich, Jane left him because she wouldn’t like to be a woman who lived on other people’s almsgiving. She wanted independence and equality both on economy and spirit. At the moment when Mr. Rochester lost his family and wealth, Jane thought they were totally equal, so she returned to him and lived with him. It shows how great and selfless Jane Eyre was especially for love. She was a representative of equality and independence on wealth and love. That’s why this great works is loved by people especially modern women all over the world. Compared with money worship today, Jane’s love is a kind of exalted, equal love and dedicatory love.

**Summary**

In English literature there are many famous writers such as Shakespeare, Bronte sisters, Charles Dickens, William Morris, etc. People like Charlotte Bronte because her works is the description of her experience which comes from real life. In her novel she described Jane Eyre’s experience and her attitude towards wealth and love. Women like this piece of works mainly because they can learn something important and use it as a guide in modern life, for example Jane Eyre’s dignity and independence. The most important point is that they all have a happy ending, which I like best.

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