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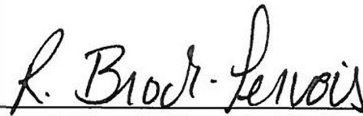
The Reality of Happily Ever After: Charlotte Brontë's Revision of Fairy Tales in *Jane Eyre*

Sarah Rice

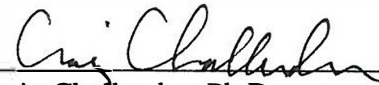
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in English

Longwood University

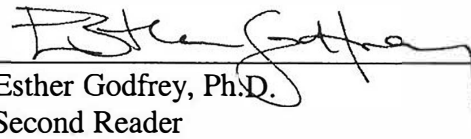
May 2008



Rhonda Brock-Servais, Ph.D.
Thesis Director



Craig Challender, Ph.D.
First Reader



Esther Godfrey, Ph.D.
Second Reader

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"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

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Introduction

Although numerous studies have been done to show the similarities between several well-known fairy tales and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, particularly in regard to theme and structure, this study attempts to take a different direction and investigate the connections between these stories and the novel in light of contemporaneous culture. Namely, the objective is to show that fairy tales can be viewed as expressing certain observations and concerns about Brontë's England. In order to fully realize what societal concerns are being expressed, a brief introduction to the early Victorian period, as well as those periods and notable events which preceded it, is necessary. Furthermore, a quick preface to fairy tales, their history, their most notable contributors, and their prevalence in *Jane Eyre* is provided as a necessary backdrop to this study.

To begin, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, men turned to science and reason for explanations of truth in religion and self-knowledge in the movement known as Rationalism. Utilizing math, chemistry, and other sciences as methods of exploration, several monumental figures of this time, including Rene Descartes, John Locke, Francis Bacon, and Robert Boyle, sought scientific answers to ancient questions of creation and existence and challenged previous theories through dedicated fact collection, observation, and experimentation. This decision to question previously accepted Biblical doctrine led to an entire revision of the nature of man and thus what was known about "self." No longer viewed as inherently evil, scientists believed that men were born with a *tabula rosa*: "Man was no longer to be pictured as an Adam, created by God in His own image, with all his faculties, for good and ill, fully implanted. Rather, the coming myths of the Enlightenment promoted self-made (and God-usurping) man, and, thus, they made their mark on Marx and

the Victorian prophets of progress” (Porter 8). With God taking a back seat in this new world of reason and tangible proof, these questions not only changed views of the nature of man, but also helped to inspire Romanticism and its perpetual quest for individualism.

Contrary to eighteenth-century Rationalism, nineteenth-century Evangelicals believed that individuals are born with an inherently sinful nature, whereby humankind is corrupt from birth. The Evangelicals’ main priority was salvation, or conversion. Because man was perceived as incapable of attaining morality from personal merit, the Evangelicals were driven by the realization that they must seek forgiveness, and the only way to express this realization of depravity was in the form of conversion. Evangelicals, after accepting the fact that they were sinful and therefore immoral, relied on God’s mercy while entrusting Him with their souls in an act known as “the great change” (Bradley 21). This insight provoked a consuming passion regarding eternal life and resulted in an intense concern for the eternal status of their souls. Evangelicals were “concerned less with doctrine and the forms of worship than with the way men should live [...and] preparation for eternity” (Altick 165). As a result, Victorian Evangelicals became devoted to personal introspection. This movement, like its predecessor Rationalism, appealed to reason. G.M. Young describes the movement as consisting of “‘the eternal microscope’ with which it pursued its argument into the recesses of the heart, and the details of daily life, giving to every action its individual value in this life, and its infinite consequence in the next” (1-2). Although good deeds, also known as works, were not required to gain entrance into heaven, they were usually perceived as an indication of true conversion.

Using the Bible as a guide to morality, Evangelicals strived to eliminate personal vices. However, their movement transcended a solely personal experience; they were

determined to eradicate immorality from their communities as well. In an attempt to accomplish this, Evangelicals fought against fiction, believing that it was detrimental to mental development. Because they could not completely eradicate fiction from society, they did everything in their power to monitor its content, especially in regard to sexual allusion: “Even if they could not ban all irregular sexual activity, the moral reformers could at least make sure that no references to it were allowed to intrude into literature” (Bradley 98). One man, Reverend Thomas Bowdler, actually edited Shakespeare’s works so they would be appropriate to read to a family. He took great liberty in censoring certain words and phrases he labeled offensive.

Following the Bible’s command to “make disciples of all the nations,” Evangelicals felt led to spread their message to other countries besides England: “The Evangelicals did not confine their attentions to their fellow-countrymen. Their zeal to secure converts extended to the entire population of the world and led them to concentrate especially on those countries which still dwelt in spiritual darkness” (Matt. 28.19, Bradley 74). This societal concern did not pass unnoticed by Charlotte Brontë who instilled in St. John River’s character an overwhelming yearning to convert other nations at the cost, willingly paid, of his own life. Furthermore, he strongly encourages Jane to follow suit and become his missionary wife in India, a practice which became increasingly popular in the early nineteenth century. As Linda Peterson states, “When St. John Rivers proposes that Jane accept his offer of marriage and missionary work in India, he is in effect proposing that Jane model her life on a new kind of women’s autobiography that emerged in the 1820s, ’30s, and ’40s: the life story of the heroic female missionary” (92). It was not uncommon for men, women, and married couples to travel to India and other countries to preach the good news of their religion.

While religion was undergoing inspection, which resulted in spiritual disorder due in part to the Age of Reason, so too was England experiencing turmoil at the onslaught of the Industrial Revolution. This revolution, which began in the mid-1700s and flourished in the latter part of that same century, was a time of great change for England, bringing great wealth and power as well as uncontrollable city growth rates, which resulted in new cities and new levels of degradation. R.J. Evans describes the Revolution as a time of “vast, uncontrolled, inchoate, thrusting, surging growth and change, in which adventurous, masterful men gained place and fortune, and the country as a whole moved to new pinnacles of wealth and power” (18). Two important effects of such growth were the creation of railroads and factories.

Between 1843 and 1849 England participated in “Railway Mania”; railroads were constructed at an astounding rate (Evans 96). The introduction and consequent national infatuation with the railways necessitated new factories and more workers; however, these new cities became squalid and disease-ridden due to poor planning and over-population. Consequently, England suffered from cholera outbreaks, two of which occurred in 1831 and 1848. The consequences of this revolution affected England’s inhabitants physically as well as psychologically: “The industrial revolution had transformed an agrarian population into an urban one. Compelled to work and live according to a profit motive and competitive market conditions, people became accustomed to think instrumentally about gain and exploitation” (Zipes *Victorian* xxviii). In response, the Romantics fought against the ideals established during this chaotic movement.

Unlike the Victorians, who experienced the full effects of Industrialism and the consequent depreciation of the individual, the Romantic Movement, which flourished in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, occurred alongside and responded against the

Industrial Revolution. Romantics placed importance on emotion, imagination, childhood, and individuality. In literature, Romantics sought to express things in terms of the emotional, allowing the reader to empathize with the characters instead of rationalizing with them. They also idealized childhood, which “came to be seen as the time when we see things as they really are, before education, prejudice, and habit blind us to the truth” (Thaden 10-11). In a similar manner, the Romantics celebrated individualism and esteemed a person’s personal thoughts, emotions, and characteristics. As Barbara Thaden makes evident, “Romantics valued the individual’s rights over society’s needs, and they often celebrated the iconoclast and the heroic rebel. The heroic rebel is also called the Romantic hero” (10). Lord Byron and the consequent idea of a Byronic hero personify the Romantic hero to whom Thaden alludes. According to Helene Moglen, author of *Charlotte Brontë: The Self Conceived*, “Byron was [...] the embodiment of the Romantic movement. In his life and in his work he was its spokesman and its symbol. He represented the possibility of escaping from or rebelling against the pressures exerted by a society in the process of radical change: an increasingly industrialized society which decreasingly valued the individual” (28). The Byronic influence is most notable in *Jane Eyre*’s male protagonist, Mr. Rochester. Moreover, partly because of the Romantic movement, fairy tales began to gain popularity in Europe. According to Jack Zipes, “[T]he literary institutionalization of the fairy-tale genre had to wait until the Romantic movement asserted the value of imagination and fantasy” (*Victorian* xiv).

The Romantics, most notably Byron and his works, greatly influenced Charlotte Brontë and her five siblings. Moglen establishes Byron’s initial impact:

The children's first memorable contact with Byron has been traced back to August, 1825, when, in a *Blackwood's* review of Parry's *Last Days of Lord Byron*, they first learned the circumstances of the poet's death and began fitting his legend into one pattern of the Napoleonic wars which had already kindled their imaginations. From this time 'Byron's name was synonymous with everything that was forbidden and daring'. (26)

Patrick Brontë raised his children to act as his companions, frequently discussing with them current events and politics and allowing them to peruse his extensive library, which included *Blackwood's Magazine*, and later *Fraser's*, as well as "Homer and Virgil in the original (although only Branwell, the son, was educated in the classics), Milton's works, Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Thompson's *Seasons*, Goldsmith's *History of Rome*, Hume's *History of England*, Scott's *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, and the works of Cowper, Southey, and –most importantly—of Byron" (Moglen 25). Patrick Brontë instilled in Charlotte a love for literature and imagination, due in part to his refusal to censor what was read.

As a young child, Charlotte expressed her creativity, imagination, and love for literature by the creation of her own juvenilia co-written with her brother Branwell. The Brontë children created *The Islanders* by adopting an island and placing their favorite characters on it. Soon, however, the children divided: Charlotte paired with Branwell and created Glasstown and later the kingdom of Angria, while Emily and Anne produced the imaginary land called Gondol. Angria incorporates Romantic principles: "At the deepest, the most archaic, level of Brontë's fiction resides the vision of an idealized romantic love" (Chase 66). *Jane Eyre*, likewise, expresses the fulfillment of romantic love, after a difficult attraction and engagement, which ultimately unites Jane and Rochester at Ferndean.

As an adult, Charlotte Brontë kept a close circle of literary influences, most notably those of her sisters Emily and Anne. After the tragic and scarring deaths of her two older sisters Maria and Elizabeth as a result of the poor conditions at the charity-driven Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, which later served as a model for Lowood, Charlotte felt an obligation to her younger siblings and at eight years old placed herself in the role of Mother. Despite her own wishes and the drudgery of the school, she became educated at Roe Head to teach Emily and Anne. Between 1847 and 1848, Emily, Ann, and Charlotte all became published authors, and Charlotte was heavily involved with their projects:

“Accordingly, at various points Charlotte acted as agent, editor, advocate, and critic for her sisters, and provided assessments of their work which were often both clear-sighted and frank” (Nestor *Female Friendships* 83-84). Their shared happiness in success, however, was short lived as Branwell died in September of 1848, Emily in December of that same year, and Ann in May of 1849.

Charlotte Brontë did, however, maintain literary friendships outside of the comfort of her home, including those with biographer Julia Kavanagh and authors Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau. Brontë and Martineau exchanged drafts of books on several occasions; however, their friendship became strained because of the oscillating criticism. Brontë did not think highly of Martineau's *Oliver Weld*, which caused Martineau to burn it and later criticize Brontë's *Villette*. Unlike her relationship with Martineau, Brontë's relationship with Elizabeth Gaskell withstood their differences. They participated in friendly discussions and enjoyed each other's company:

As writers who achieved success at approximately the same time, Brontë and Gaskell compared notes on the 'lionizing' process and their impressions of

London and its literary life, and in the way of friends they exchanged books and discussed matters of interest such as Harriet Taylor Mills' *Westminster Review* article on the emancipation of women and the visit of Harriet Beecher Stowe to England. (Nestor *Female Friendships* 91)

Gaskell even went on to publish a biography of Brontë's life, although it was highly controversial for its numerous literary liberties and hearsay, most notably in her treatment of Brontë's father.

Charlotte grew up in an extremely religious household due to the influences of both her father, Patrick, and her aunt, Elizabeth. As an Evangelical preacher, Patrick instilled in his children a sense of sin and the need for repentance; however, he is described as a man involved in "a group of what we would now call establishment pastors who had the strongest leanings towards the tones and tenets of Charles Wesley" (Barbara and Gareth Evans 98). As such, Patrick believed that salvation was a "free gift," whereby all people have the choice to receive salvation. These ideals contradict the more severe terms and conditions of Calvinism, the branch of faith Elizabeth participated in. Unlike the Wesleyans, Calvinists believe that only a few predetermined "elect" groups of people are chosen for salvation. Because the most prominent parental figures in her life held such strong beliefs, Charlotte Brontë had no choice but to be immersed in it: "Charlotte was a daughter of the manse. Her religious education was both intensive and comprehensive. Moreover, regular and committed observance of religion was required as a constant and natural element in everyday life" (Barbara and Gareth Evans 98). While her father showed an inclination towards the grace of God, Elizabeth relied heavily on the laws and retribution of God, a trait which ultimately affected all of the Brontë children: "Elizabeth Branwell was a severe character, ill-

suited to the role thrust upon her, and her strict Calvinism has frequently been blamed for the morbid fear of damnation that dogged Anne and Branwell, her favourites, and tinged even Charlotte's view of the world" (Nestor *Charlotte Brontë* 3). It is apparent in *Jane Eyre* that Charlotte struggled with some of these conflicting religious concepts.

The most obvious way Charlotte Brontë handles some of the conflicting ideals in *Jane Eyre* is through her depiction of religious figures, most notably those of Reverend Brocklehurst, St. John Rivers, and Helen Burns. All of these characters represent, in some form, a view of religion that Jane, and arguably Charlotte Brontë, cannot accept. Reverend Brocklehurst represents a hypocritical and stifling Calvinistic approach to Christianity, which causes Jane to claim she simply must not die. St. John, on the other hand, fully embraces the Calvinistic doctrine of the elect while following the calling put forth by the Evangelicals. However, he presents a cold and rigid view of religion and appears to lack the "peace of God" and the "joy and peace Christianity should bring" (408, 407). Again, Jane cannot accept his religious doctrine, as is made obvious by her refusal to accompany him to India. A third view of religion is presented in the novel by Helen Burns, who demonstrates a passivity in her faith that causes Jane to question whether or not God even exists.

Switching to the second topic of fairy tales, references to this genre are both named and implied in *Jane Eyre*. Fairy tales provide an excellent means for authors to question the common and accepted practices of their society. To start, consider the origin of folk tales.

The origin of fairy tales is highly debatable and nearly impossible to verify due to a lack of data accumulated over hundreds, arguably thousands, of years. Authorities disagree as to whether it was oral or written communication that allowed the tales to survive. Some authorities, such as Albert Wessleski, Rudolf Schenda, and Elizabeth Harries, author of the

book *Twice Upon A Time*, argue that fairy tales withstood time not because of an “ancient oral expression of the spirit,” but instead because of a “complex literary and written process of winnowing, simplifying, and selection” (Harries 78). Other authorities, however, including Zipes, argue for the transmission of fairy tales initially and predominately through oral methods. In his book, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, Zipes compares fairy tales to a living organism grounded in oral history which flourished because of increased access to written communication: “The literary fairy tale is similar to a special biological species that was cultivated slowly in an oral tradition and then suddenly flowered at one point in history with the help of the printing press and new social and technological forms of transmission” (2-3). Regardless of the exact and unidentifiable origin of fairy tales, they, as well as literature in general, experienced an exponential growth in distribution (and consequently eventual popularity) in the mid-fourteen hundreds due to the invention of the printing press, which allowed works to be carried by both booksellers in larger cities and peddlers in the country.

The printing press provided educated storytellers a way with which to reach a wider audience, and, because written works leave a trail, scholars are accurately able to document the written development of the tales beginning in the fifteenth century. Although fairy tale themes are evident throughout history, the genre did not truly develop and fully bloom until the seventeenth century, and it did not become popular in England until the Romantic Era. Zipes argues that elements of fairy tales are present throughout history. He states:

Certainly, fairy-tale motifs can be found in ancient Indian, Chinese, and Arabic scripts, the Bible, and Greek and Roman literature, and there are numerous fairy-tale features and themes in medieval literature [...]. However, there was no distinct and distinguishable genre in literature called the fairy

tale until the seventeenth century, first in Italy and more importantly in France. (*Stick* 21)

Both Italian and French authors greatly influenced this genre.

Giovan Francesco Straparola, who lived from 1485-1557 in Venice, is attributed with creating a collection of “the first European fairy tales” as well as being the first “to create coherent order from existing narrative chaos in magic tales” (Bottigheimer 62). He also published numerous fairy tales in his own collection, entitled *Le piacevoli notti*, and these tales achieved success in Italy, France, Spain, and later Germany. Straparola’s stories also influenced Giambattista Basile, who lived from 1575-1632 in various Mediterranean places including Naples, Crete, and Venice, and whose writings have been described as “hilarious ironical tales” which showed that he was “deeply acquainted with the folklore of a vast region around Naples and was familiar with Oriental tales” (Zipes *Stick* 63). More important, however, is the fact that Basile’s works provided the model from which Charles Perrault molded his own collection of stories.

French author Charles Perrault (1628-1703) was an educated man and came from an educated family. His father and older brother were lawyers, and Perrault, likewise, obtained a law degree; however, fables and folk tales greatly interested Perrault. He formatted many of his stories after older versions, such as those by Basile, and he wrote some original fables, including “The Crow Cured by the Stock.” The most important thing about his tales, however, is the fact that he incorporated a strong sense of morality into them: “I believe that my Fables are more worthy of being recounted than most of the ancients’ Tales [...] which were created only to please, without regard for sound morals, which they greatly neglected” (Perrault 18). He began recreating several fairy tales for publication as children’s tales in the

late seventeenth century, and in 1697 he published his own anthology of fairytales entitled, *Stories or Tales of Times Past*, which included retellings of “Blue Beard” and “Cinderella” among others. According to authors Iona and Peter Opie, “[I]t was this volume [Histories, or Tales of Past Times], advertised in June 1729 as being ‘very entertaining and instructive for children,’ that introduced the tales that have become the most loved in the English language” (30). More important is the fact that Charlotte Brontë would probably have been most familiar with his versions of “Bluebeard” and “Cinderella.”

In England, children’s literature initially introduced fairy tales for didactic purposes in the eighteenth century, and, although viewed skeptically until the end of that century into the beginning of the nineteenth century, they embraced several appealing characteristics. Eighteenth-century children had access to fairy tales both through widely accepted didactic literature and the not as accepted form of chapbooks. During this century, several authors, including Sarah Fielding, Eliza Haywood, and Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont, believed that they could incorporate these tales into other works as a method to educate children, especially young women, about proper morality. Beaumont served as a governess and wrote “out of deep involvement with the young, genuinely seeking to engage the mind of her pupils, and doing so intelligently and not too earnestly” (Opie 31). Her version of “Beauty and the Beast” has been the foundation for the various well-liked English renditions broadly distributed even in the present day (Zipes *Breaking* 10). It probably also served as the version with which Charlotte Brontë was most familiar. However, during this time in Europe, fairy tales were continually viewed skeptically and “were not considered the prime or appropriate reading material for children. Nor were they considered to be ‘healthy’ for the development of children’s minds” (Zipes *Stick* 85). It was not until the nineteenth century,

when children were no longer viewed as adults trapped in small bodies, that there was a national realization that fairy tales could be considered appropriate reading material for children to foster their imaginations, and that when done, the children's minds would not be harmfully affected.

The tales appealed to English audiences, which allowed them to gain popularity throughout the nation. Krappe argues that although the land frequently portrayed in fairy tales contains negative elements, "it is yet quite ideal, for the wicked meet with their due punishment, whilst the good and brave, and sometimes even the fools and cowards, invariably come out happily" (32). For a generation locked securely between the rigid constraints of Evangelicalism and the constant turmoil and uncertainty produced by the Industrial Revolution, fairy tales provided a sense of fairness and integrity.

Most important, however, is the fairy tales' ability to adjust and adopt rather than resist the ever-changing culture and consequent new social concerns, something that united people of different social and economic classes. Zipes mentions, "In the period between 1840 and 1880 the general trend [...] was to use the fairy tale form in innovative ways to raise social consciousness about the disparities among the different social classes and the problems faced by the oppressed due to the industrial revolution" (*Victorian* xix). Utilizing simplistic themes, such as rising beyond a low social class, the tales frequently expressed "common human experiences, hopes, and fears that transcend[ed] nation and class [...] and provided] some binding force" (Harries 3). These hopes, fears, and experiences mentioned allude to the constant change presented with each new generation. Authors perceived the opportunity present in fairy tales to express these concerns: "Serious artists created new fairy tales from folk motifs and basic plot situations. They sought to use fantasy as a means for

criticizing social conditions and expressing the need to develop alternative models to the established social orders” (Zipes *Breaking* 18-19). Perrault stressed the necessity of morals in his alterations—something he considered necessary to include for his generation. Likewise, the Grimm brothers included concerns in their translations and adaptations: “Any modern reader of the Grimms’ collection will notice how important is the subject of food (magic tables and the like), how ever-present is the forest, how far it is necessary to walk, and the passion to have children” (Brewer 28). Through the inclusion of fairy tales, *Jane Eyre* likewise encourages questions in the minds of Victorian readers.

Along with specific references and unmistakable thematic similarities with several well-known fairy tales including “Bluebeard,” “Beauty and the Beast,” and “Cinderella,” the novel reveals Brontë’s inclusion of general folklore and fairy-tale elements. As a child, Jane is introduced to fairy tales primarily through the servants. As Jacqueline Simpson notes, “How Jane’s mind was formed is shown in the first three chapters, where we see the imaginative child surrounded by servants whose preoccupation with the supernatural inevitably affects her” (47). On winter evenings when Bessie feels so inclined, she tells Jane tales of “love and adventure taken from old fairy tales” (13). Conversely, Miss Abbot, who is very verbal about her dislike for Jane, uses fairy tales to frighten Jane. At one point Mrs. Abbot tells her, “Say your prayers, Miss Eyre, when you are by yourself; for if you don’t repent, something bad might be permitted to come down the chimney and fetch you away” (18).

These stories and images seemingly help mold Jane’s perceptions of reality, as becomes evident in the red room. Greatly affected by these supernatural tales, Jane imagines she sees “tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp” in the mirror while in reality it is her own

reflection (20). Furthermore, her superstition besting her, Jane believes it possible that “Mr. Reed’s spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister’s child, might quit its abode—whether in the church vault, or in the unknown world of the departed—” and come to find her in the red room (22). It is no wonder that this poor child should allow her imagination to turn to such frightening and paranormal visions and thoughts, especially upon overhearing the servants’ conversations. Immediately after her ordeal in the red room, Jane hears Bessie and Miss Abbot talking of a “great black dog” and a “light in the church-yard” over Mr. Reed’s grave. As a child, Jane’s perception of folklore as possible reality causes her to believe that fairies really exist, although perhaps contained within “some savage country” (28). Even Georgiana’s toys contain “fairy plates and cups,” and Jane is seemingly surrounded by these images of folklore (38).

As the novel progresses and Jane grows into maturity, she cannot escape supernatural and fairy-like elements. Upon Miss Temple’s departure from Lowood, Jane, an eighteen-year-old woman, suspects a “kind fairy” of recommending that she advertise for a new position (103). After arriving at Thornfield, Jane thinks she sees “a fairy place,” which turns out to be a drawing room (123). However, the fairy tale motif is most readily observed, and intentionally so, in Jane’s relationship with Rochester. Jane and Rochester’s first meeting is of fairy tale proportions; Jane believes a Gytrash accompanies Rochester, while Rochester asserts that Jane quite possibly bewitched his horse to make him fall. As Gilbert and Gubar maintain, this meeting provides them with equality: “[T]hough in one sense Jane and Rochester begin their relationship as master and servant, prince and Cinderella, Mr. B. and Pamela, in another they begin as spiritual equals” (*Madwoman* 352). As their relationship progresses, Rochester insistently defines Jane as a “sorceress,” “elf,” “changeling,” “shade,”

and “sprite.” However, after Jane’s broken engagement, Simpson notes that “all such imagery ceases, nor is there anything of the sort in the chapters about the Rivers family, for they, fond as she is of them, have not the key to her inner life” (51). Indeed, not until Jane and Rochester reunite do they resume their fairy tale endearments.

When viewed with a modern mindset, the inclusion of fairy tales in *Jane Eyre* subversively questions specific societal concerns, including “Bluebeard” to address the female quest for knowledge, “Beauty and the Beast” to indicate the struggle for what may be conceivably labeled true love in a society presenting obstacles of hierarchy, appearances, and wealth, and “Cinderella” to express a concern with popular religious views, the consequences of a male dominated society, and a desire for equality in a relationship between a male and a female.

“Bluebeard”

Perrault’s “Bluebeard” was first published in 1697 in his collection of stories entitled *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*. The tale was popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so much so that it was made into the opera *Raoul Barbe-bleue* and first performed in 1789. Because it gained such momentum in the previous century and was soon translated into English, Brontë’s England was familiar with the tale. Although many studies have attempted to link Perrault’s tale with an original source, nothing conclusive has been discovered, yet some scholars believe Bluebeard’s character is based on Gilles de Rais, a man hanged for murdering approximately 140 people in the fifteenth century. There are similarities, however, with other stories circulating in the early nineteenth century including the Grimms’ “The Fitcher’s Bird,” which was first published in 1812 in their collection entitled *Kinder und Hausmärchen*, and the biblical story of Adam and Eve.

Perrault’s “Bluebeard,” the Grimms’ “The Fitcher’s Bird,” and the numerous other fairy tale versions share similarities regarding a woman’s curiosity and her discovery that her fiancé or husband is a murderous fiend. In the Grimms’ version of the tale, a sorcerer, disguised as a beggar, travels around the town stealing women. He brings one of three sisters back to his house, where he gives her an egg and the key to a door she must promise not to open. Unable to curb her curiosity, the sister unlocks the door and sees a room with bloody bodies; surprised, she drops the egg, which becomes covered with blood that will not wipe off. The sorcerer discovers her disobedience and kills her. He returns to her house to steal one of her other sisters, who like the first unlocks the door, is discovered, and is murdered as a result. Travelling back once more to the same house, the sorcerer takes the youngest daughter, who, unable to repress her own curiosity, safely hides the egg and enters the

forbidden room to see her sisters' chopped-up bodies. She puts them together, and her sisters magically come alive. The youngest manages to smuggle her sisters back home where they get help, return for her, and kill the sorcerer.

In Perrault's tale, Bluebeard is a frightening man because of the blue color of his beard; however, he manages to win over one woman because of his seemingly infinite wealth. Shortly after they are married, Bluebeard departs for a business trip assigning his wife a key to a locked room and the strict commandment not to enter it. Unable to fight her curiosity, the wife ungraciously leaves her company to explore the forbidden chamber; she finds pools of clotted blood on the floor and dead women hanging from the walls. In her shock, she drops the key into a puddle of blood and is unable to remove the stain. Bluebeard returns from his trip, asks for the keys, and becomes enraged at her disobedience. Knowing that she is about to die, the wife buys time by going upstairs to pray; however, she eventually cannot stall any longer and must go downstairs to face Bluebeard. Raising his sword to kill her, the wife's brothers miraculously enter just in time to kill Bluebeard and save her. She inherits Bluebeard's wealth, marries off her sister, and makes her brothers captains, and she marries a "very honest gentleman."

There are several interpretations of Perrault's "Bluebeard," one of which pertains to the evils of female curiosity. As Alexander Krappe states, "It is hard to avoid the conclusion that it has served for centuries to drive home the useful lesson that intellectual curiosity is sometimes out of place" (13). Because Perrault purposefully included didactic lessons in all of his tales, it is difficult not to view his version as a cautionary tale. After all, because of her insatiable curiosity, Bluebeard's wife would have experienced the bloody fate of all of her predecessors if not for the miraculous intervention of her brothers. Even Perrault himself

claims at the end of his version, “Curiosity [...] can bring with it serious regrets” (148).

However, this genre of cautionary tales serves a deeper purpose than merely to inform readers of the evil of a certain behavior. Tatar asserts that cautionary tales “masquerade as educational tales but are in reality sadistic stories aimed at controlling behavior” (*Heads!* 31).

In a period of history when women existed to be docile and domesticated in their relationships and at home, certainly this tale not only warns the readers against exhibiting intellectual curiosity but also encourages them to do the opposite of the protagonist or suffer the deadly consequences.

Closely related to the suppression of female curiosity is the perceived necessity of female obedience in a male dominated relationship. As Tatar reiterates, “‘Bloody key as sign of disobedience’—this is the motif that folklorists customarily and insistently refer to in their explications of ‘Bluebeard.’” (*Heads!* 111). After Bluebeard returns home, he immediately asks his wife to return the keys to gauge whether or not she has obeyed his command not to enter the room, seemingly aware of their magical ability at stain preservation. The test the wife must undergo is the factor that Zipes declares makes the tale “about male power and calculation based on the instinctual drive for power that misfires” (*Stick* 157). Indeed, it is a calculated risk that Bluebeard takes, giving his wife the command not to enter a room while at the same time providing her exactly what is necessary to do so. Furthermore, combining the temptation to enter with the warning that there will be consequences if he is disobeyed portrays Bluebeard’s desire to remain the dominant figure in the relationship. What Bluebeard cannot foresee in his plan, however, is the impeccable timing of his brothers-in-law and his consequent death. Other critics, including Bruno Bettelheim, maintain that the wife’s disobedience in entering the room against Bluebeard’s strict orders is representative of

sexual infidelity: “[T]he blood-stained key that Bluebeard’s wife is obliged to surrender to her husband clinches the argument that she has had ‘sexual relations’ and symbolizes ‘marital infidelity’” (Tatar *Facts* 161). However, nothing within the context of Perrault’s story states or even implies that Bluebeard’s wife is sexually active or curious outside of her marriage. What is implied, however, is the danger of disobedience.

Perrault’s tale of Bluebeard incorporates an apparently innate inclination towards disobedience and curiosity into the character of Bluebeard’s wife, following in the footsteps of the most well known example of feminine disobedience and curiosity, the biblical story of Adam and Eve. In the story of Adam and Eve recorded in Genesis, Satan, disguised as a serpent, tempts Eve to taste the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Eve disobeys God, eats the fruit, and then proceeds to give it to Adam. Because of their willful disobedience instigated by Eve and her insatiable curiosity, they both obtained the knowledge of their nakedness and were cursed by God, bringing sin and death to the world:

What orthodox readings of the episode from Genesis make clear is that a predominantly male interpretive community has relentlessly projected onto women a kind of innate hypersensuality and seditiousness that must be contained to prevent the human race from falling into a state of deeper sin. The biblical punishment for Eve’s act of defiance takes the form of pain in childbearing along with perpetual subordination to her husband. Woman must henceforth live under the sign of labor and obedience—her untamed, unstable nature must be held in check through physical degradation and the demand for blind submission. The biblical authority that established Eve as subservient to Adam was gradually converted to natural law that admitted no contestation; it

was ‘a hidden law of nature’ or man’s privilege ‘by nature’ that fixed male superiority in the hierarchy of gender. (Tatar *Heads!* 98)

For thousands of years, women were held accountable and blamed for Eve’s curiosity and consequent sin.

Likewise, Brontë, having been raised in a very religious family, makes several references to this biblical story as she was undoubtedly familiar with it. In the time of Jane’s life when she and Mr. Rochester are participating in their wordless love affair and Jane can claim to actually be happy, Jane describes his garden in terms of Eden: “No nook on the grounds [were] more sheltered and more Eden-like” (209). Just as Eve experienced innocent bliss in the garden before the fall, Jane’s naiveté is openly expressed as Brontë prepares both Jane and the reader for Jane’s own imminent fall. Furthermore, to eliminate any doubt as to the connection between Jane and Eve and obliquely the story of “Bluebeard,” Mr. Rochester pointedly compares Jane’s questioning upon their engagement to the dangerous curiosity of Eve, exclaiming, “Don’t long for poison—don’t turn out a downright Eve on my hands!” (306).

In both “Bluebeard” and *Jane Eyre* the biblical story and its common ideas of curiosity and disobedience are expressed: a woman yearns for knowledge, obtains it, and then suffers calamitous consequences as a result. In the fictional tales created by Perrault and Brontë, however, this knowledge eventually acquired by the women proves liberating and grants their independence. Furthermore, the narratives include a commentary on attraction and issue specific warnings about engaging in a relationship built on superficiality. By incorporating the themes and values expressed in “Bluebeard,” *Jane Eyre* expresses the idea that although society’s proclivity was towards a male-dominated society that based

relationships on superficial elements and needlessly suppressed the female quest for knowledge and condemned curiosity, women were (and are) both intelligent and self-sufficient.

To begin, both Bluebeard and Rochester share common characteristics in regard to appearance and their preferred method of attracting the opposite sex. Bluebeard, as his name implies, has a very unusual physical characteristic; namely, his beard is blue. In fact, the beard gives Bluebeard a terrifying appearance, “which made him so frightfully ugly that all the women and girls ran away from him” (137). Likewise, Rochester is not granted a handsome appearance. When Jane meets Rochester for the first time in the woods, she remarks that he has “a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow,” all unattractive features to have in the Victorian period; she continues by stating his unattractiveness endows her with the strength to help him: “Had he been a handsome, heroic-looking young gentleman, I should not have dared to stand thus questioning him against his will, and offering my services unasked” (135). Throughout the novel, Jane continually reminds the reader that Rochester is in no way considered an attractive man.

Aside from their shared uninviting appearance, both Bluebeard and Rochester attract women based on their love of the superficial. In Perrault’s tale, Bluebeard’s marriage with his new wife is not based on love but rather on a superficial attraction to wealth and beauty. The color of Bluebeard’s beard is significant because blue “can be seen as a mark of aristocracy” (Tatar *Secrets* 18). Indeed, Bluebeard is a wealthy man and therefore of high social status. In fact, it is his wealth that eventually allows him to seduce a woman. Perrault makes mention of the extent of Bluebeard’s wealth a number of times throughout this relatively short tale. Immediately, he is introduced as a man who has “several fine houses

both in town and country, a good deal of silver and gold plate, embroider'd furniture, and coaches gilt all over with gold" even before his physical description is given, thereby placing the emphasis on material things (137). The only way he is able to seduce and ultimately attain a wife is by flaunting his wealth. His astute calculation allows him to succeed in seducing one of the daughters he wishes to marry, who convinces herself that Bluebeard "had not a Beard so very Blue, and that he was a very civil gentleman" (137). While she allows herself to marry Bluebeard on account of his great financial assets, Bluebeard does not care which woman he marries, so long as she is beautiful. In fact, he leaves the decision of which of the two women he marries to their mother: "He desired of her [the mother] one of them in marriage, leaving to her the choice of which of them she would bestow upon him" (137). Neither love nor respect causes these two adults to marry; rather, their relationship is built solely on shallow factors.

Rochester participates in the same trivial sorts of relationships as does Bluebeard, most notably in his relationship with Bertha and his many mistresses. The lust of beauty and wealth initially build the relationship between Rochester and his wife Bertha, except Rochester is the one who is seduced. Bertha Mason was esteemed in Spanishtown for her beauty and by Rochester, a fact that he can and does not deny. He tells Jane that in his youthful naiveté, he was overcome by her attractiveness and failed to notice her true character: "I thought I loved her. [...] I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her. I was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature. I had marked neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candor, nor refinement, in her mind or manners" (356). Enticed by the things Bertha has to offer, namely her beauty and inheritance, Rochester participates in a marriage to a woman he does not know; however, not long into the marriage,

Rochester realizes the secret Bertha is carefully guarding: “Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family—idiots and maniacs through three generations. Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad-woman and a drunkard!” (340-41). Had Rochester placed any amount of value on Bertha as a person and not a mere fulfillment of sexual desire, he would have been able to see her as she was.

After his disastrous marriage, Rochester attempts to satiate his desire for female companionship and sexual fulfillment by engaging in numerous love affairs. Rochester was attracted to each of the women in the same way Bluebeard was attracted to his wives: by their appearance and not because of their substance. He quickly tires of them, a fact he openly admits to Jane:

I tried the companionship of mistresses. The first I chose was Celine Varens [...] She had two successors; an Italian, Giacinta, and a German, Clara, both considered singularly handsome. What was their beauty to me in a few weeks? Giacinta was unprincipled and violent; I tired of her in three months. Clara was honest and quiet, but heavy, mindless, unimpressible; not one whit to my taste. I was glad to give her a sufficient sum to set her up in a good line of business, and so get decently rid of her. (363)

Rochester spends a large part of his life attempting to secure a relationship that provides only physical satisfaction.

Once engaged in a serious relationship, both Bluebeard and Rochester are discovered to have considerable secrets. After their short and superficial courtship, Bluebeard marries and soon leaves his wife for a business trip. Bluebeard’s wife discovers the horrifying secret

he has been hiding, witnesses firsthand both his sexual and homicidal past, and quickly recognizes she has married a murderer. Indeed, as soon as Bluebeard realizes his secret has been uncovered, he attempts to murder his latest wife as well. Similarly, after Rochester begins his relationship with Jane and they are about to marry, his terrible secret is revealed. Jane has not been at Thornfield very long before she makes the connection that Rochester's house looks "like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle" (127). And indeed, Thornfield contains a terrible secret much like Bluebeard's. After Rochester marries Bertha, *her* secret is soon revealed. Four years into their marriage, the physicians establish her madness, and Rochester is forced to assume Bluebeard's role and become the keeper of wicked secrets; Rochester feels he has no choice but to lock Bertha away and keep her madness and his shame a secret. He hires Grace Poole to guard both his wife and this terrible secret; however, just as Bluebeard's secret is revealed and the heroine is saved from a horrible situation, so too is Rochester's secret before he and Jane marry, thereby saving Jane from a fate that for her is worse than death.

However, unlike Bluebeard, who is a serial killer and is, as Tatar explains, "a beast in all but the figurative sense of the term," Rochester does not kill the women he is involved with (*Facts* 156). He disconnects from his mistresses, including Celine, Giacinta, and Clare, secreting some of them off to new residences and thereby emotionally executing them. Moreover, he refuses to place Bertha in his damp forest home and tells Jane that he is incapable of "indirectly assassinating, even...what I most hate" (351). He ultimately proves this by attempting to save Bertha from the fire that destroys Thornfield and takes her life.

Unlike Bluebeard and his wife, Rochester's and Jane's attraction is based on their spiritual and mental connection. Jane's attraction to Rochester is obviously not physical; she

is attracted to him because of something “in [her] brain and heart, in [her] blood and nerves, that assimilates [her] mentally to him” (208). Likewise, Rochester’s attraction to Jane is not physical, as is made painfully obvious by the way Jane describes herself and others describe her. As a child, Abbot calls Jane “a little toad,” and Jane is small for her size (33). As an adult, Jane constantly alerts the reader to the fact that she did not outgrow but retains her level of unattractiveness. She also reminds Rochester of this fact, who is blinded by his love, telling him, “Don’t address me as if I were a beauty; I am your plain, Quakerish governess” (303). After Rochester’s secret is unlocked, he reveals that her infallible character drew him to her: “I was for a while troubled with a haunting fear that if I handled the flower freely its bloom would fade—the sweet charm of freshness would leave it. I did not then know that it was no transitory blossom, but rather the radiant resemblance of one, cut in an indestructible gem” (366). Furthermore, he declares that his love for her is a different type than he has ever experienced. He confesses, “I have for the first time found what I can truly love—I have found you. You are my sympathy—my better self—my good angel; I am bound to you with a strong attachment. I think you good, gifted, lovely” (367). Jane’s value transcends physical attributes to those truly worthy of commendation; however, because of his overtly sexual and deviant past along with his unquestioned dominance, Rochester cannot yet marry Jane because they are not truly equal. Nevertheless, partly due to the fact that they experience attraction on a significant and realistic level, and, after establishing true equality, Rochester and Jane experience the joy of marriage.

Part of the reason *Jane Eyre* contains elements of “Bluebeard” threaded throughout is because Perrault offers a clear look at the dangers of marrying based on the attraction of wealth and (or) physical attractiveness. He implies that women who value these things and

who are willing to overlook the obvious signs of danger, such as Bluebeard's highly noticeable blue beard, his proclivity to frighten all of the women, and the fact that her sister does not jump at the chance to marry him, are destined for a doomed marriage. Even Jane appears to ignore her own warning signs, such as her ready parallel between Thornfield and Bluebeard's castle, which implies there is a large secret, as well as the mysterious cries and activities she realizes she is excluded from; however, although she does not actively seek to discover Thornfield's secret, she does prepare herself to respond to its consequences, as is the case after Bertha attacks Mason. Her willingness to believe Rochester's poor lies might very well have saved her from a fate similar to that of Bluebeard's wives. More importantly, however, *Jane Eyre* demonstrates that if attraction based on important characteristics initiates a relationship, while there may be trials in the relationship, the binding forces will be strong enough to support the relationship. *Jane Eyre* compares this Bluebeardian type of marriage with one built on a union of mental and spiritual connectedness, and the end result is a marriage in which Jane proclaims to experience true bliss.

In the fairy tale versions of "Bluebeard," it is not the murderous nature of the man that is the focus, but rather the curiosity of the woman to discover what he has deemed a secret. As Tatar points out, "The homicidal history of the husband often takes a back seat to the disobedience of the wife" (*Secrets* 20). While this is true in the fairy tale versions, *Jane Eyre* uses the theme of curiosity to express a genuine concern about women's education. After all, in the fairy tale the protagonist lives a fabulous life with a "gentleman" due to the inheritance of Bluebeard's wealth. Likewise, in *Jane Eyre*, only after Rochester's secret is revealed and Jane escapes can she return to a marriage of true equality at Ferndean.

Bluebeard's wife's curiosity is a reoccurring theme expressed in an extremely negative light in Perrault's account. The unnamed wife's desire to feed her curiosity about Bluebeard's forbidden room leads her to leave her company hastily and pursue her own desire at their expense. Perrault describes her alacrity: "She was so much pressed by her curiosity, that without considering that it was very uncivil to leave her company, she went down a back pair of stairs, and with such an excessive haste, that she had like to have broken her neck two or three times" (138). Foregoing societal propriety, she disregards the accepted norms and allows herself to chase her instincts. Furthermore, her curiosity urges her to disobey her husband willingly: "Being come to the closet door, she stopt for some time, thinking upon her husband's orders, and considering what unhappiness might attend her were she disobedient; but the temptation was so strong she could not overcome it" (Perrault 138). Like Eve, Bluebeard's wife is unable to resist the "temptation" of the knowledge of something forbidden. Ultimately, her actions pertaining to her curiosity cannot be undone once she makes the conscious decision to follow it: "Having observed that the key of the closet was stain'd with blood, she tried two or three times to wipe it off, but the blood would not come out" (139). The bloodstained key, the only truly magical element in this tale, alerts Bluebeard to the instinctual actions of his wife and almost results in her gruesome murder.

Bluebeard's wife's curious nature nearly kills her, and it is easily surmised that Perrault cautions women against imitating her actions. Although Bluebeard's wife is chastised for her curiosity and almost dies as a result, she actually demonstrates her ability to survive a perilous situation and gains independence after she unlocks his secret and secures the knowledge therein. Faced with death, the wife brilliantly creates new diversions that provide her with enough time to be rescued. Initially, she asks for time to prepare herself to

meet God: “Since I must die, said she, looking upon him with her eyes all bathed in tears, give me some little time to say my prayers” (140). After gauging from her sister how long it will be before her brothers arrive, she returns downstairs and looking at Bluebeard “with dying eyes, desire[s] him to afford her one little moment to recollect herself” (140).

Furthermore, once she possesses the knowledge Bluebeard had forbidden her to discover, she finds her independence. In the end of the story Perrault states, “The Blue Beard had no heirs, and so his wife became mistress of all his estate. She made use of one part of it to marry her sister Anne to a young gentleman who had loved her a long while, another part to buy captains commissions for her brothers, and the rest to marry herself to a very honest gentleman, who made her forget the ill time she had pass’d with the Blue Beard” (141). Driven by her curiosity, she unlocks Bluebeard’s terrible secrets and ultimately gains her independence.

Much like Bluebeard’s wife, Jane’s knowledge of Rochester and his secrets ultimately results in her independence. Out of respect for herself as a woman, Jane leaves Thornfield and seeks her new and unknown future. This journey eventually leads to Jane’s encounter with her surviving cousins, St. John, Mary, and Diane. Coincidentally, St. John learns of Jane’s fortune of twenty thousand pounds left to her from their shared uncle, and Jane becomes a self-supporting woman. Now financial independence pairs with her education, and she is finally able to go to Rochester as his equal in all aspects and become his true soul mate.

Perrault’s tale, whether intentionally or not, establishes a woman’s independence as reliant on the acquirement of knowledge. By heavily alluding to Perrault’s creation, *Jane Eyre* expresses a concern for contemporary females, their education, and how society views

them. In Brontë's England, women's education was intentionally inferior to that of their male counterparts, an observation threaded throughout the novel. In the early nineteenth century, the relatively popular Evangelical movement influenced most of the education for women, which taught that women could not hold authority roles in the church and were to be submissive to their husbands, among other things. As Joan Perkin, author of *Victorian Women*, notes, "In the first half of the century the emphasis was on religious teaching which emphasised [sic] the subordination of women" (31). If the educational system taught women to value compliance and blind obedience, they would fail to achieve personal liberty and remain in ignorance and thus without voice: "Education was more than simply an antidote to the boredom of the female middle-class existence; ignorance spelt continued subordination where education posited the possibility of independence" (Levine 28). Some education went beyond teaching mere moral principles; however, even this structure condemned women to failure because the majority of subjects taught were irrelevant in the practical world and included learning a foreign language, playing the piano, singing, drawing, and learning how to foster other fanciful talents. According to Perkin, "For most of the nineteenth century, the majority of English girls had little or no formal schooling, and what they managed to get was not of an intellectual kind. Girls at all levels of society were educationally deprived, as compared with boys of their own class" (27). This dichotomy of education is expressed in the differences between Bessie's former student's schooling and John Reed's early in the novel. Jane states, "I scarcely knew what school was. Bessie sometimes spoke of it as a place where young ladies sat in the stocks, wore back-boards, and were expected to be exceedingly genteel and precise; John Reed hated his school, and abused his master" (32).

While the females experienced almost barbaric training methods, John Reed, because a male, had exceptional freedoms in his education, even to the point of disrespect.

In the novel, women are accomplished if they possess the extraneous skills obtained in formal education. As a child, Jane is enthralled at the idea of becoming formally educated at Lowood: “[I]f Bessie’s accounts of school-discipline [...] were somewhat appalling, her details of certain accomplishments attained by these same young ladies were, I thought, equally attractive. She boasted of beautiful paintings of landscapes and flowers by them executed; of songs they could sing, and pieces they could play, of purses they could net, of French books they could translate; till my spirit was moved to emulation as I listened” (32). Later, when Bessie and Jane meet as adults, Bessie inquires as to whether or not Jane is truly a sophisticated woman and her expectations of Jane’s education are clear: “‘Can you play the piano?...and can you draw?...and have you learned French?’” (108-109). Upon hearing an affirmative answer, she replies, “‘Oh, you are quite a lady, Miss Jane!’” (109).

Blanche Ingram, the model of a superficial and accomplished Victorian woman, most certainly has had the best education that her family’s money can afford; however, Jane comments on the fact that even her education is deficient. Upon seeing Blanche and Rochester together, Jane states, “She had a fine person, many brilliant attainments; but her mind was poor [...] She was not good, she was not original. She used to repeat sounding phrases from books; she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own” (220). Blanche represents the so-called educated higher class, but even her intellectual accomplishments are wanting. If she is the model for the proper Victorian woman, the system is most definitely flawed.

More troubling than this pseudo-education is the fact that women who were more completely educated existed as governesses. Governesses populated England and although considered educated, they were not highly esteemed for their profession and their survival depended on employment with a wealthy family. England experienced a shift in the occupations of women from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries; instead of working as manual laborers, women began assuming other roles, including that of governess. In fact, women who chose to become governesses increased at such a rapid rate that many had to vie for few open positions. Fully aware of the abundance of candidates for their positions, many employers expected governesses to provide services well beyond what should have been required: "The overcrowding these conditions produced within the teaching profession drove salaries down and competition for place up; at the same time, employers could and often did demand an increasingly wide range of services from would-be governesses, ranging from childcare for the very youngest children to instruction in French, music, and paper-flower-making for older daughters" (Poovey 127). General awareness of this problem of the superfluous governess was inevitable and eventually affected women's education in a great way. According to Levine, "In the late 1840s, in the wake of much public scandal over the plight of England's 25,000 governesses, two women's colleges [Queen's College and Bedford College] were founded in London, which were to play an important role as pioneer institutions" (32). These "pioneer institutions" for women's education influenced other colleges either to allow women to join them or establish their own women's colleges. Although women experienced a gradual triumph in the educational realm, the role that they played as governess in the working realm was far from ideal. As an educated woman, the governess demanded respect; however, as an employee, she reeked of a

lower class. This duality of situation led to the governess's seclusion: "The life of a governess was particularly unhappy and isolated because she was neither a servant nor part of the family; therefore, her only companions were the children, who usually knew that the governess was beneath them in status and had no real power over them" (Thaden 66). Not only did they frequently feel secluded, but both the parents and their children often treated them poorly.

Jane Eyre addresses this harsh journey of a governess through Jane, who lives and survives despite the numerous concerns, fears, and attitudes of this time. Like so many English women in the nineteenth century, Jane becomes a teacher out of necessity. Initially seeing no better alternative than her present condition, Jane decides to stay on at Lowood and teach the younger pupils. Eventually, however, Jane longs for something new and different. True to the nature of a governess, Jane desires freedom but is constrained by reason and necessity to a life of service:

A new servitude! There is something in that [...] I know there is, because it does not sound too sweet; it is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment; delightful sounds, truly; but no more than sounds for me; and so hollow and fleeting that it is mere waste of time to listened to them. But servitude! that must be matter of fact. Any one may serve; I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere. Can I not get so much of my on will? (102)

Her innate intelligence, cultivated by her education, allows Jane to achieve what she seeks—a new position in a different place.

Jane enters her new role of an employed governess expecting to encounter prejudices from her employers about her vocation, as was typical in Victorian England. She is tremendously surprised when Mrs. Fairfax, whom she supposes to be the Lady of the house, welcomes her with kindness: “‘She treats me like a visitor,’ thought I. ‘I little expected such a reception; I anticipated only coldness and stiffness; this is not like what I have heard of the treatment of governesses’” (114). Jane has apparently been familiarized with the typical treatment of governesses. However, Mrs. Fairfax, like Jane, is a hired employee as well, and her treatment of Jane is, deservedly, that of an equal.

Brontë does not fail to incorporate within her plot, however, the typical, prejudiced attitude frequently encountered by a governess from a high-class family by whom she is employed. The Ingram family portrays the most evident account of a wealthy family that demonstrates a proclivity towards prejudice against governesses. Blanche Ingram, intentionally speaking in front of Jane, claims that governesses are worthless and proudly recounts the mean-spirited acts she and her siblings performed against their numerous governesses:

You should hear mamma on the chapter of governesses; Mary and I have had, I should think, a dozen at least in our day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, and all incubi...I have just one word to say of the whole tribe—they are a nuisance. Not that I ever suffered much from them; I took care to turn the tables. What tricks Theodore and I used to play on our Miss Wilsons, and Mrs. Greys, and Madame Jouberts! (209-210)

Through her portrayal of the Ingram family, Brontë provides an unashamed depiction of the conflict and degradation that sadly was common and expected in the life of a governess.

In addition, Jane's cousins symbolize a desire to free educated women from the constraints placed on them by the Ingrams and other arrogant Victorian families who employ them. Jane deeply enjoys the company of both Diane and Mary, but she craves even more their intellectual wealth of knowledge and yearns to listen to their in-depth analysis of her topics. She feels incensed when:

Diana and Mary were soon to leave Moor House, and return to the far different life and scene which awaited them, as governesses in a large, fashionable, south-of-England city; where each held a situation in families, by whose wealthy and haughty members they were regarded only as humble dependents, and who neither knew nor sought one of their innate excellences, and appreciated only their acquired accomplishments as they appreciated the skill of their cook, or the taste of their waiting-woman. (408)

Jane, like Brontë, has the ability to gauge the true value of such educated and learned women while the "haughty members" of wealthy families have only the ability to seek them as "humble dependents." Upon the collection of her inheritance, Jane experiences an intense passion to unbind her cousins whom she views as being "under a yoke" from their unappreciated stations (447). *Jane Eyre* argues, at the very least, for the approval of governesses who have more to offer the world than simply babysitting ungrateful children for condescending parents.

Indeed *Jane Eyre* closely resembles Perrault's "Bluebeard," most notably in plot. By deeply embedding the well-known tale of Bluebeard into the narrative, *Jane Eyre* asserts specific concerns regarding the female search for knowledge through education. Bluebeard's wife yearns for the knowledge kept locked away from her, but once knowledge is attained,

she experiences liberation. *Jane Eyre* furthers the idea that women should have the ability to become educated and that when so, they deserve to be treated equally, both in employment and in academics.

“Beauty and the Beast”

Like many other fairy tales, the history of “Beauty and the Beast” is complex, and similar stories have existed for centuries. “Cupid and Psyche,” a precursor to “Beauty and the Beast,” can be found in Apuleius’s *The Golden Ass*, which was written in the second century A.D. Similar beast marriage stories can be found in both Straparola’s “The Pig King” (1550) and Basile’s “Serpent” in his *Pentamerone* (1634). During Brontë’s lifetime, and throughout England during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, the most popular version of this beast marriage tale was written by Madame de Beaumont in 1757 and included in her collection, *Magasin des Enfants*. She based her didactic version on the very lengthy 362 page narrative written by Mme. De Villeneuve in 1740 and placed great importance on the value of virtue. As Zipes states, “Her emphasis was on the proper upbringing of young girls like Beauty, and she continually stressed industriousness, self-sacrifice, modesty, and diligence in all her tales as the qualities young ladies must possess to attain happiness” (*Beauty* 132). Beaumont was a prolific author, creating and publishing numerous books in her lifetime, and an educated woman who served as a governess in England for several years.

While each of the versions of “Beauty and the Beast” revolves around a similar plot (a young, beautiful girl marries a beast or someone presumed to be so), the motivations behind the marriages differ. In some accounts, including Straparola’s, greed and the desire for wealth motivate the family. In others, including Basile’s, a father’s desire to keep his word after making a promise that his daughter will marry a serpent serves as motivation. In “Cupid and Psyche,” a different motivation encourages the marriage, namely that of female jealousy. In this tale, Psyche has many visitors because of her great beauty, which causes

Venus to become jealous and command her son Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with a wild beast. Psyche's parents lead their daughter to a cliff and seal her fate. She marries and travels to a rich palace where she is daily aided by unseen servants. Likewise, Psyche is not able to see her husband, and her sisters, jealous because of her wealth and beauty, tell her she is married to a deadly serpent full of poison. Despite being warned by her husband that her sisters would doom their marriage, Psyche believes their lies and observes her husband while he is sleeping. She discovers she is married to Cupid, but because of her desire to see him and her disobedience, she jeopardizes their marriage.

In Beaumont's version of the tale, Beauty goes to Beast motivated by self-sacrifice. Beauty's father, a rich merchant, loses his entire fortune with the exception of a country house. After a year, the father gains some of his fortune back, and on his way home from procuring his wealth, he gets lost and finds Beast's castle where he takes a rose for Beauty. Because Beast thinks Father ungrateful for stealing the rose, he demands either his life or the willing sacrifice of one of his daughters. Beauty, determined that Father "shall not suffer upon my account," decides to sacrifice herself on her father's behalf, happy to think that her death will be proof of her "tender love" for him (187). Like Psyche, unseen servants in the castle serve Beauty; however, Beauty is actually in the company of a true beast. After spending some time with Beast, Beauty desperately desires to see her father, who now lives alone because her sisters are both married and her brothers are in the army. Beast allows her a one week leave. Despite her jealous sisters' attempts to postpone her departure back to Beast, Beauty arrives at the castle just in time to save Beast from starving himself to death. After seeing her sisters' failed marriages and deciding that she does love Beast, Beauty agrees to marry him. At this decree, Beast turns into a handsome prince, and Beauty is

rewarded for her prudent decision, clearly demonstrating the importance of personality over outward appearance.

There are three primary interpretations for this tale; the first regards the fear of arranged marriages. As Tatar affirms, arranged marriages have both positive and negative aspects: “In agreeing to marry a suitor chosen by her parents, a young woman could bring prosperity and honor [...] But arranged marriages had an obviously disagreeable side to them. The woman who was to make the match had every right to feel frightened by an alliance of such sudden intimacy to a stranger; hence it is no wonder that fairy tales turn the grooms of these unions into beasts” (*Heads!* 141). Seemingly implied is that the family demonstrates positive aspects, such as respect or duty upheld, while the bride-to-be displays negative aspects, including the fear of the unknown. Beaumont’s tale presents this idea, whereby the father keeps his word and delivers his daughter thereby retaining his honor, while Beauty must face the Beast, her indefinite future, and even possible death. Furthermore, as John Reed establishes in his book *Victorian Conventions*, “Marriages, especially in the well-to-do classes, were frequently arranged by parents” and were not uncommon in the Victorian period when marriage was considered the ultimate goal for a woman (106).

A second interpretation of this story relates to the idea that good behaviors in females, such as those advocated by Beaumont including obedience and self-sacrifice, are ultimately rewarded. Beauty’s obedience to her father and sacrificial nature receive praise throughout the tale, most notably in comparison to her sisters. Immediately, Beaumont establishes that Beauty is not only prettier than her sisters, but that she also surpasses them in goodness, which provided the Victorian audience with examples of both good and bad behaviors.

Furthermore, Beauty willingly takes the place of her father and goes to Beast's castle, a decision that the "fine lady" in Beauty's dream praises and explains "shall not go unrewarded" (188). Indeed it does not, as Beauty becomes a queen while her sisters, examples of unacceptable behavior, are punished for their actions and transformed into statues.

Closely related to the second interpretation is the third, which proclaims the importance of becoming engaged based on compatibility and not appearances. As Tatar states, "Madame de Beaumont's version of 'Beauty and the Beast' [...] uses the tale to preach the transformative power of love, more specifically the importance of valuing essences over appearances" (*Classic* 27). Indeed, when Beauty sees disasters that are her sisters' marriages, she realizes she has fallen in love with Beast, despite his frightening and animalistic appearance, because of their foundation of friendship. As a result of her rational decision and love, Beast transforms into a handsome prince and they marry.

To start, Brontë draws very clear connections between the characterization of her main characters and those found in "Beauty and the Beast." First, both Beauty and Jane are hard working and self-sacrificing. Beauty is immediately established as an industrious and therefore virtuous individual. She allows herself to bear the majority of manual labor after her father loses his fortune and they must move to his country house. While her brothers and father perform outdoor labors and her sisters dejectedly roam about the house, Beauty awakes and single-handedly performs all of the required indoor labors: "Beauty rose at four in the morning, and made haste to have the house clean, and dinner ready for the family. In the beginning she found it very difficult, for she had not been used to work as a servant, but in less than two months she grew stronger and healthier than ever" (183). Through the

comparison of Beauty with her sisters, Beaumont provides both correct and incorrect views as to how a lady should view work. This is further portrayed by the decisions Beauty makes in regard to her free time. While Beauty spends “the greatest part of her time in reading good books,” her frivolous sisters spend every day “upon parties of pleasure, balls, plays, concerts, &c” (182).

Like Beauty, Jane is characterized by a willingness to work. At Lowood she works exceedingly hard to present herself as agreeable and teachable, a feat she accomplishes as evidenced by her position as teacher. At Thornfield she takes great care to teach Adele, despite the fact that she has “no great talents, no marked traits of character, no peculiar development of feeling or taste, which raised her one inch above the ordinary level of childhood” (129). Upon her return to Gateshead as an adult, Jane dutifully attends to her dying aunt while her cousins fail to do anything constructive. At Moor Head Jane ensures she does not take the generosity of St. John and his family for granted, an intention she demonstrates immediately by helping Hannah in the kitchen the day after she has recovered from her illness. Furthermore, she agrees to accomplish what St. John asks of her, including learning Hindostanee and teaching at the local village school. Even after her return to Rochester, Jane exhibits a helpful disposition and a willingness to work.

The most prominent example of virtue in Beaumont, however, is Beauty’s willingness to sacrifice herself to Beast in her father’s place. Upon hearing the news of her father’s encounter with Beast and his consequent demands, Beauty states, “I will deliver myself up to all his fury, and I am very happy in thinking that my death will save my father’s life, and be a proof of my tender love for him” (187). Her virtuous nature demands she make this decision, and she is esteemed because of it. Beaumont ensures that Beauty receives

constant praise and rewards for her giving attitude in order to provide Victorian women with a model to hold in the highest regard.

Like Beauty, Jane has a proclivity towards becoming a willing sacrifice on a man's behalf; however, unlike Beauty, Jane does not actually allow herself to become one, whether morally or physically, for a man's sake. Rochester requests Jane's moral sacrifice. After Jane discovers Rochester's carefully guarded secret marriage to Bertha and her own wedding never takes place, Rochester passionately desires Jane, even at the risk of turning her into his mistress. He informs her that she will still be his: "You shall be Mrs. Rochester, both virtually and nominally. I shall keep only to you so long as you and I live. You shall go to a place I have in the south of France—a white-walled villa on the shores of the Mediterranean. There you shall live a happy, and guarded, and most innocent life" (354). To accept his offer, however, would be to accept a life of moral degradation and become no better than his previous mistresses. Jane realizes, "[I]f I were so far to forget myself and all the teaching that had ever been instilled into me [...] to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory" (363-64). She holds steadfast to her convictions and resists the temptation of so appealing an offer of sacrifice because she survives and thrives on her self-respect, which is worth more to her than the tainted love Rochester offers. Facing her darkest fear, that of complete isolation from love, Jane claims, "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained, I am, the more I will respect myself" (369). For Jane, her value as a person is more important than immediate gratification; this leaves her with no other choice but to leave Rochester and his temptations.

After Jane's escape from Thornfield, she journeys to Moor Head and meets St. John, who immediately senses Jane's virtues as well as her desire to be a part of a family, and he uses his knowledge for his personal advantage. Because his final goal is to travel as a missionary to India with Jane as his wife, St. John begins by asking Jane to give up learning German and instead learn Hindostanee. Jane agrees, but she "did not love [her] servitude [and] wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect [her]" (461). Eventually Jane discovers that John wants more than a study partner; he wants a wife. Unable to marry a man she does not love, she agrees to go with him as his cousin, an offer he repeatedly refuses. Jane realizes that to go with him would lead to her death: "God did not give me my life to throw away; and to do as you wish me, would, I begin to think, be almost equivalent to committing suicide" (479). While she is willing to die for God as a missionary, she is unwilling to die for St. John as his unloved wife. Although Jane possesses many of the same qualities as does Beauty, Brontë changes the story to enable Jane to remain a self-sufficient, self-respecting woman, and one who escapes becoming a needless sacrifice in order to fulfill the needs of a man.

Similarly, Brontë carefully molds Rochester's character in Beast's image. Both Beast and Rochester lack physical beauty. Beast is "frightful" and has a "terrible voice;" moreover, he resembles an "ugly monster" (186). Beauty also tells Beast that he is physically unattractive: "[B]ut tell me, do not you think me very ugly? That is true, said Beauty, for I cannot tell a lie, but I believe you are very good-natured" (190). Likewise, Brontë portrays Rochester in unattractive and animalistic terms. When Jane first meets Rochester in the woods, he is described in terms of fur, steel, and darkness: "His figure was enveloped in a riding-cloak, fur-collared, and steel-clasped. Its details were not apparent, but I traced the

general points of middle height, and considerable breadth of chest. He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow” (135). Rochester’s initial appearance as some sort of strange animal is reiterated throughout the novel, as Jane describes him in terms of darkness and severity of features. Furthermore, mirroring Beauty’s truthful response about Beast, Rochester asks Jane about his physical appearance with the same response: “‘You examine me, Miss Eyre,’ said he; ‘do you think me handsome?’[...] ‘No, sir’” (157).

With both characters, however, their personality and internal characteristics overshadow their physical flaws. Beauty is able to see past Beast’s outer appearance into his true character, which leads her to tell him, “I own I am pleased with your kindness, and when I consider that, your deformity scarce appears” (190). Eventually, she realizes she is indeed in love with him. Jane experiences the same appreciation for Rochester, and she grows to love his outer appearance: “And was Mr. Rochester now ugly in my eyes? No, reader. Gratitude, and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I best liked to see. His presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire” (175). Later, she reiterates this sentiment: “Most true is it that ‘beauty is in the eye of the gazer.’ My master’s colorless, olive face, square, massive brow, broad and jetty eyebrows, deep eyes, strong features, firm, grim mouth—all energy, decision, will—were not beautiful, according to rule, but they were more than beautiful to me...” (207). His mind and their intellectual compatibility draw Jane to him. Just as Beast meets with Beauty at nine o’clock every evening in the dining room, causing Beauty to begin to know him better and develop feelings for him, so too does Rochester frequently call Jane into his presence for conversation. These conversations cause Jane to develop feelings of mental assimilation with him: “I had a keen delight in receiving the new ideas he offered, in imagining the new pictures he portrayed, and

following him in thought through the new regions he disclosed [...]. The ease of his manner freed me from painful restraint; the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him" (175). Eventually, like Beauty, Jane realizes that she loves him, which allows her to overlook his unattractive exterior.

Once Rochester's similarities with Beast are established, the analogy can be extended beyond physical appearance and Jane's ability to look beyond the outer flaws; Rochester is then equated with a beast because of his untamed passions. Rochester is undoubtedly a man defined by passion. In his previous relationships, he allowed himself to be overtaken by sexual passion and lust, which resulted in numerous failed love affairs and one disastrous marriage. In his relationship with Jane, Rochester, now older, somewhat wiser, and without question more experienced, has learned to control his sexual passion, which instead is perverted into elaborate testing and manipulations. Upon learning Jane's feelings, Rochester experiences the thrill of overtaking and conquering his prey and has a "look of exultation" that Jane describes as "savage" (299). However, when Jane discovers his Bluebeardian secret and insists on leaving, Rochester regresses in to untamed passion. Having lost his conquest, he resorts to brute force and threatens Jane with physical power: "'Jane! will you hear reason?' (he stopped and approached his lips to my ear); 'because, if you won't, I'll try violence.' His voice was hoarse, his look that of a man who is just about to burst an insufferable bond and plunge headlong into wild license" (353). As his torment at the thought of Jane leaving increases, Rochester digresses further, his voice like "the pant of a lion rising," and his face "fierce" (368, 370). Forced to escape at night, Jane passes his door and hears Rochester "walking restlessly from wall to wall; and again and again he sighed," like a caged beast of passion himself (372).

In a theme common to many fairy tales, namely that of domestic oppression, Beauty lives with two jealous and envious sisters who attempt to make life as difficult as possible for their youngest sister. These evil actions and blatant desires for her unhappiness stem from their passionate jealousy. The primary reason for this resentment is due to Beauty's innate virtues: "Beauty insisted on setting out for the fine palace, and her sisters were delighted at it, for her virtue and amiable qualities made them envious and jealous" (187). At one point, these depraved siblings "rubbed their eyes with an onion to force some tears" when Beauty leaves to sacrifice herself to Beast (187). But despite their cruel behaviors and actions towards her, Beauty is extremely gracious and desires for them their happiness. In one instance, after Beauty's father returns from Beast's castle with a trunk overflowing with gold, Beauty begs her father to give some of the money to her sisters to enable them to marry: "[S]he begged her father to consent to their marriage, and give them fortunes, for she was so good, that she loved them and forgave heartily all their ill usage" (187). Because of her high merit, Beauty is willing to forgive them and proceed with her life. In return for her good deeds, Beauty's sisters turn into statues in front of her castle, forced always to see her happiness. Beauty reigns supreme, and they are obligated to observe.

Like Beauty, Jane suffers at the hands of her cousins; however, even as a child Jane senses her self-worth and eventually rebels. Jane experiences physical and verbal abuse by her cousin John, who at one point refers to her as a "bad animal"; moreover, she is subject to Georgiana and Eliza's "proud indifference" and exhibitions of superiority towards her (13, 20). Jane, however, devoted to reason but overtaken by passion, does not allow herself to remain captive in the role assigned; rather, she actively demands an improved position. At one point, after hearing Mrs. Reed proclaim her inferiority, Jane discloses her passion:

“Don’t talk to me about her, John; I told you not to go near her; she is not worthy of notice; I do not choose that either you or your sisters should associate with her.’ Here, leaning over the banister, I cried out suddenly and without at all deliberating on my words, ‘They are not fit to associate with me’” (35). From childhood, Jane redefines the role of a fairy tale heroine and establishes her personal value in “an extraordinarily self-assertive act of which neither a Victorian child nor a Cinderella was ever supposed to be capable” (Gilbert and Gubar *Madwoman* 343). After all, heroines are not typically allowed the liberty of self-assertion.

As Beauty’s sisters must live miserable lives, so too must Jane’s siblings. John dies at an early age after wasting his mother’s small fortune, and, after returning to Gateshead as an adult to nurse Mrs. Reed during the weeks preceding her death, Jane witnesses firsthand the pathetic women her sisters have become. Eliza, a “selfish, heartless creature,” needs to fill every waking moment with mindless activity; whereas Georgiana, a “vain and absurd animal,” flops about with feeble lamentations about her lost social life (277, 276).

Furthermore, they are too self-involved to care for their dying mother, leaving that responsibility to Jane. Georgiana “never once adverted either to her mother’s illness or her brother’s death,” consumed with reliving past memories, and “passed about five minutes each day in her mother’s sick room, and no more” (274). Eliza, on the other hand, had so carefully divided her time into neat increments that she failed to visit her mother as well. Neither woman experiences true happiness nor real love, but they must experience Jane’s accomplishments and the virtuous woman she has become, if even only through the acknowledgement of her skills at painting.

Like Beauty, Jane exhibits a gracious and forgiving attitude towards her cousins who so greatly wronged her in childhood. Even though no love can be said to exist between them,

Jane serves them when requested with quiet dignity. After Mrs. Reed's death, she even delays her journey back to Thornfield to help both Georgiana and Eliza pack for their various destinations, Georgiana to her new life with an older, rich man and Eliza to a convent.

Aside from familial struggle, *Jane Eyre* includes another structural similarity with that of Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast," namely the supernatural element of dreams. Beauty has two very important dreams that provide insight into some greater event. Her first dream consists of a "fine lady" who states, "I am content, Beauty, with your good will, this good action of yours in giving up your own life to save your father's shall not go unrewarded" (188). This dream endows Beauty with the strength to stand firm in her decision to sacrifice herself to Beast. Her second dream vision parallels one included in the updated fairy tale, that of Beauty's dream of Beast's near death: "The tenth night she spent at her father's, she dreamed she was in the palace garden, and that she saw Beast extended on the grass-plot, who seemed just expiring, and, in a dying voice, reproached her with her ingratitude. Beauty started out of her sleep, and burst into tears" (193). Beauty hurriedly returns to Beast's castle just in time to save him from dying of starvation; this causes her to realize that she loves him, which in turn breaks the spell, and they are married and live happily ever after.

Dreams, likewise, play an important role in Brontë's novel, for they serve to reflect Jane's inner conflict during her relationship with Rochester. The majority of Jane's dreams include a vision of a child, something Jane once overheard Bessie say is "a sure sign of trouble, either to one's self or one's kin" (259). The first time Jane mentions dreaming of a child, she experiences problems: "[F]or during the past week scarcely a night had gone over my couch that had not brought with it a dram of an infant [...]. It was a wailing child this

night, and a laughing one the next—now it nestled close to me, and now it ran from me” (259-60). Jane awakes from her dream by Bertha’s demonic cries and attends to Mr. Mason’s wounds. The very next day she hears about John’s death and Mrs. Reed’s illness. As Bessie predicted, Jane’s dreams of a child bring danger to her family.

Likewise, after her engagement to Rochester, Jane has a series of negative dreams that include this mysterious infant and express her anxiety about her upcoming marriage. In the first dream, Jane experiences “a strange, regretful consciousness of some barrier dividing” her and Rochester (328). She soon discovers that it is Bertha who divides them. Furthermore, Jane states, “I was burdened with the charge of a little child [...] I thought, sir, that you were on the road a long way before me; and I strained every nerve to overtake you, and made effort on effort to utter your name and entreat you to stop, but my movements were fettered, and my voice still died away inarticulate; while you, I felt, withdrew further and further every moment” (328). Rochester does, indeed, grow farther away from Jane both spiritually and physically after she discovers his terrible secret. Initially, Jane soon views Rochester in a different light: “[F]aith was blighted—confidence destroyed! Mr. Rochester was not to me what he had been; for he was not what I had thought him” (345). In addition, she places a great deal of tangible distance between them due to her departure. Jane continues by relating another dream to Rochester involving an infant; this time “Thornfield Hall was a dreary ruin, the retreat of bats and owls” and as Jane hurries to catch Rochester, “[she] climbed the thin wall with frantic, perilous haste, eager to catch one glimpse of [Rochester] from the top; the stones rolled from under [her] feet, the ivy branches [she] grasped gave way, the child clung round [her] neck in terror, and almost strangled [her]” (330). After Jane has these dreams, Bertha shreds her veil. Feeling weighted down by an

unknown force in her dreams parallels Jane's situation in life, whereby Bertha prevents Jane from marrying Rochester. Gilbert and Gubar connect Bertha's materialization to Jane's anger and further note that "it seems suspiciously clear that the specter of Bertha is still another—indeed the most threatening—avatar of Jane. What Bertha now does, for instance, is what Jane wants to do. Disliking the 'vapoury veil' of Jane Rochester, Jane Eyre secretly wants to tear the garments up. Bertha does it for her" (*Madwoman* 359). In addition, the dreams predict the destruction of Thornfield by Bertha's own hand.

In another instance, Jane dreams about Rochester and Blanche's relationship. Jane envisions Blanche forcing her to leave Thornfield and consequently Rochester, while he cruelly watches without interference: "I dreamed of Miss Ingram all the night. In a vivid morning dream, I saw her closing the gates of Thornfield against me and point me out another road; and Mr. Rochester looked on with his arms folded, smiling sardonically, as it seemed, at both her and me" (284). This dream serves to paint a clear picture of Jane's fear of having to leave the man she loves as well as her concern about Rochester's proposed marriage. It also foreshadows her departure from Thornfield upon learning of Rochester's secret wife.

The most closely linked dream to that found in "Beauty and the Beast" involves Jane's supernatural "daydream" of Rochester after the fire at Thornfield. Like Beauty, Jane envisions her beau in trouble and in need of her help, a cry to which she immediately responds. In the midst of her decision regarding India, Jane states, "I saw nothing, but I heard a voice somewhere cry, 'Jane! Jane! Jane!' nothing more. [...] I had heard it [...]. And it was the voice of a human being—a known, loved, well-remembered voice—that of Edward Fairfax Rochester; and it spoke in pain and woe—wildly, eerily, urgently. 'I am

coming' I cried. 'Wait for me! Oh, I will come!'" (485). Jane rushes to Thornfield and later to Ferndean to rescue her beast, and they, too, get married and live happily ever after. Like Beauty, Jane returns in time to save her beast from self-destruction.

In Beaumont's tale, wealth and class play important roles in emphasizing the idea that character is more valuable than appearance; this importance of virtue in a potential marriage partner, especially in regard to courtship, is a concept actively utilized in the novel.

Beaumont begins "Beauty and the Beast" with a description of Father's status, stating, "There once was a very rich merchant" which, as is the case with "Bluebeard," places the focus initially on his social and economic class (182). When Father loses his entire fortune, Beauty and her family must perform manual labor to survive, thus lowering their social status. Beast, on the other hand, is a prince, and thereby secure in his place as royalty. The rich and vast appearance of his castle and wealth is mentioned several times throughout the story. When Father, on the verge of dying from either the cold or hunger upon being lost in the woods, first sees the castle, he finds a "table plentifully set out with but one cover laid [...and] several grand apartments with magnificent furniture" (184). Furthermore, in his bedroom is "a great quantity of broad pieces of gold" (186). There is no doubt that the prince, even as a Beast, is a very wealthy creature and lives in a class much higher than that of Beauty and her family.

Just as Beauty must function at a station below what her virtuous nature deserves, Jane, despite her intelligence, virtue, and hard work, exists as a member of the "lower orders" in a position that Richard Altick describes as being "ranked with the superior servants" (33, 56). Jane's relationships express the existing inequality between classes and the rise of the merchant class. The aristocracy was firmly in place in the nineteenth century and was

comprised typically of land owners and others simply born into wealth. This class found its place in the social system directly under royalty; however, according to author Richard Altick, the nineteenth-century experienced a significant increase in the middle class due in part to the industrial revolution: “Below the gentry, and ambitious to join them, lay the middle class, whose expansion and rise to power was the great phenomenon of nineteenth-century social history” (27). The industrial revolution, although supplying squalid living conditions which promoted sickness and disease, also provided many with the opportunity for financial, and consequently social, advancement.

Having attained as much schooling in the prestigious areas of singing, painting, and speaking a foreign language as is proper for a Victorian woman, and, being an orphan and of a lower class, Jane survives by becoming employed by Rochester, her own member of a higher social order, specifically the landed gentry. Class struggle is an evident theme throughout Brontë’s novel and is cemented through Jane’s relationships. As a child, Jane is constantly placed in a lower social class than that of her cousins, regardless of their blood connection. At one point, Bessie tells her, “And you ought not to think yourself of an equality with Misses Reed and Master Reed, because missis kindly allows you to be brought up with them. They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none; it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them” (18). Bessie, as a member of the lower order, divulges her belief that without money, one cannot be classified as a constituent of a higher class. Furthermore, she expresses her conviction that people belonging in lower classes must be “humble” and “agreeable” to survive in the world.

In Jane’s adult life, she personally struggles not to place others in predefined roles. When Jane serves as a teacher for St. John at the local village school, she must remind

herself that these villagers, who are of the lower order and work as farmers and are cottagers, possess the same innate virtues as people belonging to higher classes: “I must not forget that these coarsely-clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy, and that the germs of native excellence, refinement, intelligence, and kind feeling, are as likely to exist in their hearts as in the best-born” (415). Even Jane struggles with class; despite her own desire to be excluded from class prejudice, Jane has a difficult time not applying it to others. *Jane Eyre* essentially problematizes the issue of class without resolution.

Jane’s relationship with Mrs. Fairfax is different, however, because it is one built on equality of station. Despite the fact that Jane initially mistakes Mrs. Fairfax as the lady of the house, Jane welcomes her friendship. Mrs. Fairfax voices her desire for companionship with people belonging to her own class: “Leah is a nice girl to be sure, and John and his wife are very decent people; but then, you see, they are only servants, and one can’t converse with them on terms of equality; one must keep them at due distance, for fear of losing one’s authority” (115). She openly admits that there is a very clear distinction between classes and that she bases her friendship with others on social status. Furthermore, because Jane and Mrs. Fairfax are of equal social status, they form a desirable and genuine friendship. Jane expresses her appreciation for this fact because it allows her freedom in her role as governess and as friend: “The equality between her and me was real; not the mere result of condescension on her part; so much the better—my position was all the freer” (119). Equality in relationship is something that Jane values not only in female friends, but also in relationships.

Whereas similar class status allows Jane to form an authentic relationship with Mrs. Fairfax, the distinction of classes hinders Jane's relationship with Rochester. Initially, Jane sees the social order as a hindrance for their relationship. As Jane finds herself falling in love with Rochester, she admonishes herself for dreaming of building a relationship with someone above her class: "He is not of your order; keep to your caste; and be too self respecting to lavish the love of the whole heart, soul, and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised" (193). She realizes that their dissimilarity is a problem and needs to remind herself that the idea of a relationship between two different social classes is implausible. Later, Mrs. Fairfax views the difference in their classes as a barrier. When Mrs. Fairfax sees Jane and Rochester kiss, Jane is aware that Mrs. Fairfax believes she has forgotten her membership to the lower order and expresses this belief to Rochester: "I believe she thought I had forgotten my station; and you yours, sir" (308). Soon after, when Jane sees Mrs. Fairfax, Mrs. Fairfax states the common perception surrounding marriages in the Victorian period and tells Jane, "Equality of position and fortune is often advisable in such cases" (309). In fact, Mrs. Fairfax mistakes Rochester's announcement of their engagement for a dream vision. However, it is quite possible that Mrs. Fairfax, knowing about Rochester's current marriage, brings these issues to attention to hide her real concern about Bertha.

The marriage between people of equal economic and social status was a common practice in Victorian England and one that Jane comments on. When she believes Rochester to be in love with Blanche, she can hardly believe that a man with Rochester's character could conform to such base social practices:

I have not yet said anything condemnatory of Mr. Rochester's project of marrying for interest and connections. [...] I had thought him a man unlikely to be influenced by motives so commonplace in his choice of a wife; but the longer I considered the position, education, &c., of the parties, the less I felt justified in judging and blaming either him or Miss Ingram, for acting in conformity to ideas and principles instilled into them, doubtless, from their childhood. (222-23)

Although Jane accepts this decision as merely a social formality, she does not agree with it and believes that if she were a man, she "would take to [her] bosom only such a wife as [she] could love" (222). Jane provides a new insight into the male-female relationship by claiming that love, when correctly motivated by friendship and not mere appearances, has the right to overrule the shackles of social standards.

In "Beauty and the Beast," Beauty's sisters' behaviors before marriage, their marriage expectations, and their resulting marriages, which all revolve around wealth and social status, are in direct opposition to that of Beauty and her relationship with Beast to provide both negative and positive examples regarding the characteristics on which a relationship should be built. Beauty's sisters are prideful, lazy, and self-serving. While Father is still wealthy, these women, proud because of their economic status, paraded around the town, "gave themselves ridiculous airs, and would not visit other merchants daughters, nor keep company with any but persons of quality" (182). After Father loses his entire fortune and the family moves to the country, the sisters sleep in and lament the fact that they are no longer attired in rich costume or associating with the elite while Beauty performs all of the inside duties of a servant. Furthermore, their marriage expectations mirror the way in which they view

themselves. Proud and inflated with visions of grandeur, the sisters claim that “they would never marry, unless they could meet with a duke, or an earl at least” (182). The sisters are certain, having spent all of their time masquerading as crucial members of their social circles and convincing themselves that they are better than what they actually are, that they should remain in town because they are well loved; however, they “were mistaken, for their lovers slighted and forsook them in their poverty” (182). They do eventually marry, but their relationships, built on appearance and wit, do not bring them happiness; in fact, their marriages are disastrous. Beaumont writes, “They were both of them very unhappy. The eldest had married a gentleman, extremely handsome indeed, but so fond of his own person, that he was full of nothing but his own dear self, and neglected his wife. The second had married a man of wit, but he only made use of it to plague and torment every body, and his wife most of all” (191-92). Because these sisters value appearance and pride over character and true virtue, they become trapped in loveless, unhappy relationships.

Georgiana and Eliza closely resemble the attitudes and behaviors of Beauty’s sisters. As children, both cousins believed in their superiority over others. Georgiana, a beautiful girl with “pink cheeks” and “golden curls,” was “universally indulged” because of her outward appearance despite her impertinent disposition (20). Eliza gained respect in spite of her selfish and obstinate nature. Mrs. Reed ensured that they had every amenity possible; however, this injures rather than helps them as adults. Georgiana, who is accustomed to receiving things she desires on demand, is unable to cope with the realities of life. Eliza calls her a “weak, puffy, useless thing” who must be “admired [...] courted [...] flattered” and have “music dancing, and society” or she is in a state of constant despair (276). Eliza, on the other hand, is represented in adulthood as “cold, impassable, and assiduously industrious”

(277); however, her work is self serving and Jane has trouble ascertaining “any result of her diligence” (274).

Georgiana was, at one time, to be secretly married to Lord Edwin Vere, but Eliza “acted the spy and informer, and ruined [Georgiana’s] prospects forever” (277). Focusing intensely on retaining her customary life of indulgence, Georgiana makes “an advantageous match with a wealthy worn-out man of fashion” (283). This man, no doubt, has had the time to accumulate the financial means to continue to accommodate Georgiana’s selfish demands. Eliza, conversely, is never mentioned as having participated in a relationship. As a result, she “took the veil” and became the superior of her convent (277). Micael Clarke suggests that “Eliza and Georgiana Reed represent the dilemma many women confront regarding marriage or spinsterhood” (704). Certainly neither Georgiana nor Eliza dreamed of settling for these lifestyles, and their relationships (or lack thereof) represent a bleak outlook. However, because of their selfish desires and consequent actions, Eliza and Georgiana, like their counterparts, receive their due punishments.

In contrast, because of her virtue, Beauty marries Beast without regard for his outer appearance but with love for his inner characteristics and, as a result, experiences true love. Unlike her sisters, Beauty has many suitors who “would have married her, tho’ they knew she had not a penny” (183). However, out of concern for her father, she refuses them. Furthermore, unaffected by Beast’s outer appearance and drawn instead to his inner characteristics, which are in direct contradiction to those of her sisters’ husbands, Beauty decides to marry Beast: “I should be happier with the monster than my sisters are with their husband; it is neither wit, nor a fine person, in a husband, that makes a woman happy, but virtue, sweetness of temper, and complaisance, and Beast has all these valuable

qualifications” (193). Beauty loves Beast not for what he looks like, how intelligent he is, what he can give her, or because of his social status; rather, she loves him for his inner, unseen characteristics and is rewarded for her prudent decision of preferring “virtue before either wit or beauty and deserve[s] to find a person in whom all these qualifications are united” (195). Beauty marries Beast, becomes a queen, and finds true happiness.

Just as Beauty and Beast find happiness because of an attraction based on substantial inner characteristics, Jane and Rochester are attracted to one another because of a spiritual and intellectual equality that transcends social and economic status; however, Rochester at first tries to force Jane into becoming his idea of a typical, wealthy, Victorian woman and essentially attempts to destroy the relationship they build together. Jane and Rochester share a connection that surpasses physical attraction, as Brontë extinguishes any physical appeal that Rochester might have through his corporeal similarities to Beast. Throughout the novel, Jane asserts her mental connection to Rochester. At the thought of him marrying Blanche, Jane states, “‘He is not to them what he is to me,’ I thought; ‘he is not of either kind. I believe he is of mine; I am sure he is—I feel akin to him—I understand the language of his countenance and movements; though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him’” (208). The strength of the connection between their inner qualities encourages Jane to break the barrier of rank and wealth, thereby breaching the common and acceptable rules of society and enabling her to communicate with Rochester on a level of intellectual equality; this communication of the mind supersedes the physical attraction Jane believes Rochester feels towards Blanche. Later, before Rochester proposes, Jane states that Rochester’s mind is her delight: “I have not been buried with inferior minds, and excluded from every glimpse of

communion with what is bright, and energetic, and high. I have talked, face to face, with what I reverence; with what I delight in, with an original, a vigorous, and expanded mind” (296). Jane loves Rochester because of his intellectual capabilities, and she finds her joy in communicating with him through this medium. Likewise, Rochester asserts, “Your mind is my treasure” (351). He loves Jane because her intellect is equal with that of his own and he delights in it.

Furthermore, their relationship is one of kindred spirits. As their conversation in the garden continues, Jane’s passion increases and she tells Rochester:

And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal—as we are! (296)

Addressing what can only be described as a common observation for a woman of a lower class to make in regard to relationships of a higher class, Jane believes that Rochester is hindered by a need for beauty and wealth in a life partner, a myth she seeks to debunk through mentioning that their spiritual and mental equality is more important than the typical and superficial governing social constraints. Finally, Rochester ends his masquerade and confesses his true feelings for Jane: “‘My bride is here,’ he said, again drawing me to him, ‘because my equal is here, and my likeness’” (298). Their equality extends beyond the customary social practice of courting someone of equal class and wealth to a superior equality, that of the mind.

This mental and spiritual connection that Jane shares with Rochester is strong enough to destroy the shackles placed on it by society; however, before this Rochester seeks to make Jane conform to his image of a Victorian woman, ultimately attempting to transform her into someone she cannot recognize and someone with whom a relationship would not work. Rochester attempts to transform Jane into his idea of a conventional Victorian woman through physical adornments. After their engagement, Rochester desires Jane to play the role of a wealthy, superficial wife by strangling her with jewels, something Jane is adamant against: "Oh sir! Never mind jewels! I don't like to hear them spoken of. Jewels for Jane Eyre sounds unnatural and strange; I would rather not have them" (303). Despite her pleas to forgo this ceremonious procedure, Rochester insists: "I will myself put the diamond chain round your neck, and the circlet on your forehead, which it will become; for nature, at least, has stamped her patent of nobility on this brow Jane; and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings" (303). He maintains that Jane not only obey him, but also allow him to perform the task himself, thus allowing him the right to transform Jane by his own hand into his picture of the Victorian woman. He also coerces Jane into a silk warehouse so that she may rely on both the gowns and the jewels to proclaim her wealth and new social class.

Aside from mere physical changes, Rochester also seeks to transform Jane into his image of a Victorian woman through the loss of her identity and the acceptance of one he provides. Rochester begins this process of identification reassignment by giving Jane a new name, that of Jane Rochester, "Fairfax Rochester's girl-bride" (302). This name sounds strange to Jane and forces her to ponder the human quest for happiness. She states, "[I]t does not sound likely. Human beings never enjoy complete happiness in this world. I was not

born for a different destiny to the rest of my species; to imagine such a lot befalling me is a fairy tale, a daydream” (302). Jane cannot believe in true happiness at this point in their relationship, nor should she, as she soon discovers when Rochester’s carefully guarded secret is finally exposed. Furthermore, after attempting to make her dress the part of a dutiful woman and accept the name of one, Rochester begins to idealize Jane in this image he has created in his mind of the woman she is to become. Jane, recognizing this fatal error, remarks, “I am not an angel [...] and I will not be one till I die; I will be myself, Mr. Rochester; you must neither expect nor exact anything celestial of me, for you will not get it any more than I shall get it of you, which I do not at all anticipate” (304). Based on the English poet and novelist Coventry Patmore’s description of his wife in verse, the phrase “Angel in the House” described women in the Victorian Age who were standards of morality, purity, submissiveness, and love in their domestic roles. Jane, viewing their potential marriage relationship through the eyes of reason, is able to see Rochester’s defective calculations and warns him that she will remain the same flawed woman in marriage that he is currently courting, thereby refusing to become another woman to whom Rochester has been previously acquainted of inferior character. Finally, this image that Rochester creates for Jane completely eradicates her sense of self. His transformation, while not as grandiose as he would like, is sufficient to take away enough of Jane’s identity to make her question her own appearance. On their wedding day Jane states, “So I turned at the door; I saw a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger” (335). In the image Rochester creates, Jane almost loses her identity.

Unfortunately, when a Victorian woman married, it was common for her to lose a sense of her identity, whether psychologically or physically. In fact, according to Altick, it

was not until 1882 that married women could even claim to possess their own property after marriage (106). *Jane Eyre* comments on this Victorian image of marriage and the marriage relationship, and, as Gilbert and Gubar maintain, “Jane’s whole life-pilgrimage has, of course, prepared her to be angry in this way at Rochester’s and society’s, concept of marriage” (“Dialogue” 82). Although attracted to each other based on the equality of their mental and spiritual similarities, they are not true equals as Rochester’s sexual history and the physical embodiment of that history in Bertha tips the scale in his favor, leaving him the dominant figure. As such, they cannot be reunited until Jane’s visit at Moor Head provides her with financial independence and the fire at Thornfield helps to eliminate all other factors preventing their union.

Certainly *Jane Eyre* contains numerous similarities with Beaumont’s “Beauty and the Beast,” most notably in characterization. By using such an obvious connection between the tales, the novel reveals its potential to address societal issues of wealth and class. In addition, Brontë effectively parallels Beaumont’s assertion that relationships must be built on internal elements rather than external superficialities.

“Cinderilla”

The story of “Cinderella,” one of the oldest and most well-known throughout the world, is at least one thousand years old; as such, over 700 different versions have been discovered (Opie 158). According to Iona and Peter Opie, the origin of the tale is unknown, “[b]ut Arthur Waley has pointed out that ‘the earliest datable version of the Cinderella story anywhere in the world occurs in a Chinese book written about 850-860 A.D.’” (*Classic* 157). One of the first European versions is a story entitled “La Gatta Cenerentola,” found in Basile’s *Pentamerone*, which was first published in 1634. In 1721, Mme. d’Aulnoy published her version of the story called “Finetta the Cinder-girl” for an English audience. Likewise, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm collected a group of German tales and created “Aschenputtel,” which was recorded in their collection *Volksmärchen* and translated into English in 1826 in *German Popular Stories*. The most popular version of the tale, however, is Perrault’s “Cinderilla,” published in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* in 1697.

Although each of the tales includes a similar plot (the father remarries a woman who has her own children, the protagonist is involved in laborious work, through the help of a godmother or other magical form the protagonist is able to go to a ball, the Prince falls in love with the protagonist but only has her shoe as a clue to her identity, and the protagonist ultimately marries the Prince), each version attains this goal differently. In Basile’s story, Cinderella, or Zezolla, is a conniving daughter of a prince who plots to kill her first stepmother so that her father can marry her governess. After the death of her stepmother, Zezolla’s father does marry her governess, who has six daughters of her own, and Zezolla loses her status in the family; however, with the help of her godmother, Zezolla meets the Prince. Upon leaving a ball, Zezolla leaves behind a shoe, the Prince determines to marry the

shoe's owner, and Zezolla, after proving it is hers, marries the Prince. Mme. d'Aulnoy's version begins with three abandoned children in the woods. They seek help from and ultimately defeat an ogre, and the eldest siblings take his money leaving the youngest to work. The youngest sister attends a ball and leaves her shoe on the journey home, causing the Prince to desire to marry only her. Finally, with the help of her godmother, Finetta goes to the Prince, tries on the shoe, proves it is hers, and they marry.

The Grimm brothers' tale is one of the more violent stories. In their version, Cinderella's mother dies and her father remarries an evil woman with two mean-spirited daughters who constantly torment Cinderella. Her father brings her a hazel twig, which she plants on her mother's grave. Above the grave is a white bird that grants her wishes and ultimately provides the clothing for Cinderella to wear to the King's feast in honor of his son. At the feast, the Prince desires to dance only with her, but Cinderella leaves him before he can discover her identity. In an attempt to prevent her from running away from him yet again, the Prince covers the steps with pitch, and Cinderella's shoe remains behind. At the encouragement of their mother, Cinderella's stepsisters mutilate their feet in an attempt to fit into Cinderella's golden slipper that the prince has found, but they are both foiled by pigeons that later peck out their eyes while they are serving as bridesmaids in Cinderella's wedding.

While the Grimm brothers attempted to record stories created by common people, Charles Perrault catered his tales toward an aristocratic French audience. Until the 1690s, French folk tales were not recorded due to the fact that "most of the European aristocracy and intelligentsia considered the folk tale part of the vulgar people's tradition, beneath the dignity of cultivated people" (Zipes *Beauty vix*). Zipes further maintains that the folk tales were prevalent among the peasants and spread to even the upper classes through verbal methods

until “this talk became elevated, cultivated, [and] made acceptable” (*Beauty X*). As a courtier, Perrault changes the “Cinderella” story (that he has heard in court or salons or read previously elsewhere) and makes it a socially acceptable story, free from anything vulgar, violent, or risqué.

In his version, Cinderilla’s father remarries a wicked woman who has two daughters who share her nasty temperament. Cinderilla, a paragon of morality and goodness, performs her household duties patiently and even willingly advises her sisters with their best interests in mind. Upon being excluded from the ball, Cinderilla’s tears summon her godmother, who outwardly transforms her and allows her to attend the ball. She leaves behind a shoe in her hurry to make her midnight curfew, and the Prince vows to marry the owner of that shoe. He sends his men to find Cinderilla, which they do, and Cinderilla marries the Prince after forgiving her wicked stepsisters for their behavior.

Unlike the other Cinderellas, Bruno Bettelheim accuses Perrault’s protagonist of being “sugar-sweet and insipidly good, and [...] completely lack[ing] initiative” and cites Cinderilla’s decision to sleep by the fire (“self-debasement”), her willingness to happily dress her sisters for the ball, and the fact that she leaves the ball because instructed to do so as proof (par. 8). Perrault’s Cinderilla, does, however, take an active role in the story, although perhaps not as forcefully as other protagonists, by pretending to be asleep when her sisters arrive from the party and desiring to try on the shoe, telling the royal envoys, “Let me see if it will not fit me” (166). Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that Perrault had to appease a courtly audience and was therefore constrained by propriety; furthermore, many of his contemporaries, including Mme. d’Aulnoy, Mme de Murat, Mlle. De La Force, and

Catherine Bernard, were exiled or banished from court by Louis XIV for their literary social commentary.

Many Cinderella stories revolve around a unique and beautiful shoe that is found by the Prince and ultimately proves Cinderella worthy to be his bride. Scholars believe this tale's origins are in China, and in that culture a small foot was highly desirable and often resulted in foot binding. According to Huang Mei, "A pair of perfectly bound small feet became the symbol of a fragile feminine beauty, as well as of the highest female virtue—for it marked the woman's obedience to the existing order and promised her future dependence on a man" (4). The shoes are also representative of the "bride test," whereby the protagonist must prove herself to the Prince by verifying that the shoe is hers. In other versions, such as those classified as Catskin tales, Cinderella's father swears to his dying wife that the only woman he will marry must be able to wear her ring. In most cases, Cinderella is the only person whom the ring fits. Both tests, which share the necessity of finding the right finger for the prized ring or the correct foot for the coveted shoe, imply that there is only one special woman designed to fulfill the role of the Prince's or father's (as is the case in Catskin tales) wife.

Another common interpretation is that this story represents a "rags-to-riches" theme whereby a poor, mistreated servant rises to become a princess. Cele Otnes and Elizabeth Hafkin claim that "Cinderella is the expression of the dominant belief in success (she moves from rags to riches)" (28). Cinderella does, in fact, experience this fantastic transformation; however, she was always the true heir of her father's wealth. Furthermore, the tale implies that outer appearance is not nearly as valuable or important as inner qualities, which proves reassuring for girls who either feel or who are unattractive.

A third interpretation pertains to sibling rivalry:

Cinderella,' as we know it, is experienced as a story about the agonies and hopes which form the essential content of sibling rivalry; and about the degraded heroine winning out over her siblings who abused her. Long before Perrault gave 'Cinderella' the form in which it is now widely known, "having to live among the ashes" was a symbol of being debased in comparison to one's siblings, irrespective of sex. (Bettelheim par. 2)

Even in Perrault's mellow version, Cinderilla's stepsisters treat her poorly, scoff at her, and refuse to allow her to wear their least favorite dresses to the ball while she helps them prepare to go themselves. However, despite these circumstances, Cinderilla treats them with love and respect, showing them favor with fruit at the ball and ultimately forgiving them. Because of her morality, she triumphs over her mean-spirited stepsisters, eventually winning the love of the Prince and the title of the princess.

The last most common interpretation of this tale pertains to the jealousy of an older woman toward a younger woman. Sigmund Freud referred to this contention in his Oedipal complex, whereby a child experiences a sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex, and, at the same time, experiences a sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex. Some critics argue that Perrault's version masks this theme by "conceal[ing] Cinderella's Oedipal conflict behind the sibling rivalry and Cinderella's incomparable goodness" (De Vos and Altmann 47). Other less popular versions, such as Catskin tales, describe the stepmother's jealous actions which stem from the father's incestuous desires in detail.

Out of all the fairy tales, *Jane Eyre* is most similar to that of "Cinderilla" due in part to the shared thematic elements. The most easily recognized thematic similarity is that of the

family construct. While different tales vary on certain points, most of them create a horrifying home life for the protagonist. In Perrault's version, Cinderilla's mother dies, and her father remarries "the proudest and most haughty woman that ever was known" (161). This figure of the evil stepmother is common in fairy tales and her wickedness often emphasized:

In tales depicting the social persecution of a girl by her stepmother, the central focus comes to rest on the unbearable family situation produced by a father's remarriage. But while the father's responsibility for creating turmoil by choosing a monstrous marriage partner recedes into the background or is suppressed (even as the father himself is virtually eliminated as a character), the foul deeds of his wife come to occupy center stage. (Tatar *Classic* 102-03)

After their marriage, the stepmother can no longer hide her selfish and proud personality. She forces Cinderilla to take on the manual labors of the house, and "employed her in the meanest work of the house, she cleaned the dishes and stands, and rubbed Madam's chamber, and those of young Madams her daughters" (161). Cinderella, although quite beautiful, is covered and temporarily hidden by dirt from the tasks she must perform. This stepmother has two of her own daughters, who "were exactly like her in all things" (161). Together, they treat Cinderilla as hired help, and the favoritism between daughters is evident, as Cinderilla "lay on the top of the house in a garret, upon a wretched straw bed, while her sisters lay in fine rooms, with floors all inlaid, upon beds of the newest fashion" (161). Furthermore, they purposefully exclude Cinderilla from the royal parties while demanding that she help them get ready. They are mean-spirited, self-centered, and hostile towards Cinderilla.

As a child, Jane experiences the same unloving and antagonistic environment as does Cinderilla. Unlike Cinderilla, Jane not only loses her mother but her father as well. She is taken in by her uncle and aunt, and Mr. Reed briefly acts as a loving paternal figure until he, too, dies when Jane is yet too young to remember him. And, characteristic of fairy tales, Mr. Reed disappears from the story before the novel begins (much like Cinderilla's father is dismissed after the opening lines), shifting focus to the wicked deeds of his wife who continues to house Jane only to keep the promise made while Mr. Reed was still alive. She aptly fills the role of the evil stepmother and makes Jane little more than a servant. Jane, much like Cinderilla, makes herself useful around the house, dusting and helping Bessie, who "now frequently employed [her] as a sort of under nursery maid, to tidy the room, dust the chairs, &c" (38).

Furthermore, Mrs. Reed cares and provides for her own selfish children over her undesired, and therefore unloved, ward, a flagrant favoritism that Jane, even as a young child, ponders:

Why was I always suffering, always brow-beaten, always accused, forever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win any one's favor? Eliza, who was headstrong and selfish, was respected.

Georgiana, who had a spoiled temper, a very acrid spite, a captious and insolent carriage, was universally indulged. Her beauty—her pink cheeks, and golden curls—seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault. John, no one thwarted, much less punished, though he twisted the necks of the pigeons, killed the little pea-

chicks, set the dogs at the sheep, stripped the hothouse vines of their fruit, and broke the buds off the choicest plants in the conservatory. (20)

In fact, the opening pages of the novel describe a scene in which Mrs. Reed, Georgiana, John, and Eliza are all sitting together contently while Jane is not allowed to join; she leaves and finds solace on her own, which she does by comforting herself with books.

Part of the reason for Jane's exclusion is due to her homely outer appearance, a characteristic paralleling Cinderilla's dirty outer appearance which hides her true beauty. From a very young age, and from the first page of the novel, Jane is aware that she has a "physical inferiority" to her cousins, and she understands that beauty affects the way people treat her as well as others (11). In one instance, after locking Jane in the Red Room, Bessie confides to Abbot that Jane was treated too harshly to which Abbot responds, "[I]f she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that" (33). Jane also realizes that Georgiana gains favor because of her pleasing appearance, despite her numerous character flaws.

Because of the example set by Mrs. Reed, all of Jane's cousins, who parallel the cruelty of Cinderilla's step-sisters as in the traditional story, treat her with contempt and disdain. John declares that she is below them in social status, although a blood relative, stating, "You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent mamma says [...] you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us" (15). After Jane's experience in the Red Room, Mrs. Reed makes the distinction between her children and Jane even more concrete by ostracizing Jane from the rest of her family and forcing her into isolation. All of Jane's cousins act accordingly: "Eliza and Georgiana, evidently acting according to orders, spoke to me as little as possible. John thrust his tongue in his cheek

whenever he saw me” (34). Even as adults, Jane’s surviving cousins continue to treat her as inferior and extend only feelings of apathy and indifference to Jane.

As both a child and adult, Jane, like Cinderilla, does not participate in organized festivities. At Gateshead, Jane is barred from the Christmas and New Year celebration. Instead, her amusement comes only from watching the participants from afar:

From every enjoyment I was, of course, excluded: my share of the gayety consisted in witnessing the daily appareling of Eliza and Georgiana, and seeing them descend to the drawing-room, dressed out in thin muslin frocks and scarlet sashes, with hair elaborately ringleted; and afterward, in listening to the sound of the piano or the harp played below, to the passing to and fro of the butler and footman. (36)

As an adult in Thornfield, during a party reminiscent of the one at Gateshead, Jane is once again initially excluded from the activities and amuses both herself and Adele in the gallery watching the servants “passing backward and forward” and listening to the music that “issued from the drawing-room” (200).

Just as Brontë changes her Cinderella from a beautiful girl in dirty clothes to an unattractive, plain girl in homely clothes, she also changes the method by which Jane finds happiness in her relationship. Unlike Cinderilla, who is able to meet, attract, and maintain her prince through the serendipitous actions of her godmother, Jane meets Rochester through her own initiative by placing an ad and finding employment outside of Lowood. However, both Jane and Cinderilla share a common event: the flight from the Prince.

In Perrault’s version, Cinderilla must obey time constraints and return home from the ball before midnight each night. She does not leave the Prince out of desire but rather out of

necessity, for if she stays past midnight, she will transform back into a dirty servant.

However, in the Grimms' tale, Cinderella makes a conscious decision to leave the Prince, who wanted to visit her house and "go with her to take care of her" (Grimm 83). She has the option to stay out as late as do her sisters, but she repeatedly "escapes" the Prince to return home alone. In all accounts, Cinderella flees from the Prince and returns to her original state of ashes before being ultimately reunited with him.

In Brontë's version, Jane flees from Thornfield and her prince to avoid compromising her integrity. Jane learns of Rochester's current marriage to Bertha and, obviously unable to marry him, refuses to share the fate of his previous discarded mistresses: "[I]f I were so far to forget myself and all the teaching that had ever been instilled into me as [...] to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory" (363-64). Her integrity outweighs her fleshly desires to be with a married man, and she, too, must "flee temptation." According to Micael Clarke, Jane and Rochester's relationship affects more than a moral decision: "The issue between Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester after the interrupted marriage ceremony and revelation of Bertha Mason's existence is not so much Rochester's deception, nor the moral question concerning his still-living wife, as it is a question of male power versus female integrity" (705). Rochester's power reveals itself in a variety of ways. Initially, he uses his experience and age to establish his dominance in their relationship, but Jane refuses it: "I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have" (160). Prior to Jane's departure from Thornfield, Rochester threatens to keep her with him through violence; however, Rochester's power does not simply manifest itself through physical means.

He also tries to control Jane with the power given him by wealth. Although Jane pleads with him to stop in order to retain her concept of self, Rochester attempts to change her with jewels and new dresses after their engagement. She does not want to be “an ape in a harlequin’s jacket—a jay in borrowed plumes” (303). At one point, after coming out of a silk warehouse, Jane thinks that her only option to escape is by acquiring financial independence: “‘It would, indeed, be a relief,’ I thought, ‘if I had ever so small an independency; I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester’” (313-14). Certainly, when Jane inherits her uncle’s fortune, she finds a small amount of independence. However, financial independence is not the only element necessary for Jane to be reunited with Rochester.

Rochester, like the Prince, must recognize Jane in her original, dirty form before they can experience their own happy-ever-after ending. Rochester attempts to change Jane’s outer appearance to transform her into an acceptable bride, as happens to Cinderella, without realizing the futility of his actions. While that might succeed in fairy tales, the relationship between Rochester and Jane must extend beyond the boundaries of fantasy and breach those of reality, whereby change occurs on the inside and not the outside. It is Rochester who needs to experience transformation, not Jane, and indeed he does before they can successfully reunite.

Jane must be equal with Rochester in every aspect important to a relationship, and Rochester must be able to recognize her in her true form before they can finally be together. Jane declares herself his equal spiritually and mentally both prior to and during their engagement in the garden. After she flees from Thornfield, Jane receives a significant inheritance, making her financially independent and consequently a more appropriate marriage partner in terms of economic status. However, Rochester’s current marriage and

his possession of power remain dividing factors until the fire at Thornfield. Bertha leaps off of the roof, despite Rochester's attempt to save her, and "lay smashed on the pavement," which eliminates one of the barriers (495). Rochester's physical and financial power is still a problem until that, likewise, is removed by the fire. He becomes physically impaired after a beam falls on him: "[O]ne eye was knocked out, and one hand so crushed that Mr. Carter, the surgeon, had to amputate it directly. The other eye inflamed; he lost the sight of that also" (496). In effect, it is Rochester who is physically transformed, not Jane. Furthermore, as his estate becomes nothing more than ruins, much of his financial power is also lost. It is in Rochester's state of decline that Jane can take the position of his help-mate and his true equal, while maintaining her integrity and her own identity; her character remains unchanged, and in its original state, when she returns to Rochester. When she comes back, however, it is she who "teases and manipulates, arouses his jealousy and bestows little endearments in as overbearing a manner as he used to employ. In a word, the truant Cinderella now returns a little queen" (Mei 114). They can be, as Jane happily announces, married and live happily ever after in their protected and private Ferndean house.

Cinderella loses her mother, who is replaced with a vile substitute, and her father disappears shortly after his introduction, leaving Cinderella orphaned. In Perrault's version, Cinderilla has a fairy godmother to fulfill her desires and present her with a sort of maternal care. Upon seeing Cinderilla cry, the godmother tells her to "be but a good girl," commands her to fetch certain items including a pompion or pumpkin, several mice, a rat, and lizards, and provides her with the means and attire to attend the ball over the course of several evenings (162). The godmother appears exactly when she is needed and presents Cinderilla with the material things she requires that ultimately enable her to meet the Prince, engage his

affections, and gain his love. On the other hand, in the Grimms' version, the mother's spirit in the form of a bird supplants the godmother figure. A white bird, residing in the hazel tree on Cinderella's mother's grave, brings her "whatever she had wished for" (Grimm 81). By including this naturalistic form of a maternal figure, the Grimms' tale demonstrates less interference in the relationship between Cinderella and the Prince while at the same time providing her with physical elements initially needed to meet him. Both of these elements, whether an actual godmother or a maternal spirit, provide her with the things, both physically and emotionally, that she, in the role of an orphaned protagonist, needs and desires.

Brontë's tale incorporates only a meager substitute of the fairy godmother character in *Miss Temple*. Jane faces disease and starvation at Lowood as well as persecution from Mr. Brocklehurst. Unlike Cinderella, who is given things she desires, Miss Temple supplies Jane with basic necessities of food and trust. Aside from Bessie, who showed very little affection and care for Jane as a child, Miss Temple demonstrates the closest example of a maternal figure to the young Jane. Upon hearing that Miss Temple is to be married, Jane reflects on their relationship stating, "[H]er friendship and society had been my continual solace; she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion" (100). When Miss Temple leaves Lowood, she also takes Jane's "settled feeling" and "every association that had made Lowood in some degree a home" (100). While Miss Temple's departure endows Jane with the courage and resolution to look for a new position, she cannot provide Jane an easy escape to happiness, for it is up to Jane to find happiness for herself and own her own terms.

By removing the position of the fairy godmother and help from nature commonly found in fairy tales, Brontë forces Jane to experience independence in her search of self and

in her relationship with Rochester with much less help than her Cinderella predecessors. Cinderella experiences a cruel home life but escapes from it with the help of a fairy godmother who also allows her to meet, and eventually marry, her Prince. As a child with only the inadequate Bessie as a friend and without intervention from a godmother figure, Jane is dependent on the Reeds, and later Lowood, for survival; however, this dependence for physical necessities does not stunt her sense of self. Jane asserts her identity and worth as a child, and the trials she faces with little to no help at Gateshead and Lowood actually allow her to establish her own identity. However, it is not until Jane is an adult that she realizes her independence. Jane meets Rochester because of *her* decision to look for an occupation outside of the walls of Lowood, not because of the provision of a fairy godmother. Furthermore, upon her resolution to flee from Rochester in what has been compared to the Egyptians' wilderness wanderings, Jane "trudges aimlessly on a northern English moor," and nature provides neither necessities nor wants for her in her journey (Peterson 91). Unlike other Cinderellas who receive help from nature, Jane receives little aid aside from a place to stay for the night, and as a result, she nearly starves to death. However, even this trial brings her a step closer to complete independence; after she is taken in by St. John, she gains a substantial inheritance and consequent financial freedom. As Rhonda Brock-Servais notes, "Because Jane successfully clings to her identity and a sense of self-worth throughout her trials, she is rewarded with a traditional 'happily ever after' marriage" (160). Without magical aid, Jane is able to face the world and its challenges, and because of this, Jane not only experiences personal growth but finds her independence as well.

Like Cinderella, Jane is an orphan and must overcome the trials she endures alone. Brontë immediately establishes Jane's lack of family in the beginning of the novel as the

Reeds and their household ensure that Jane understands she is a poor orphan, therefore of unequal status, and she must rely on their charity for survival. Jane's acceptance into Lowood furthers this idea. As Helen Burns states, "It is partly a charity-school. You and I, and all the rest of us, are charity-children [...] all the girls here have lost either one or both parents, and this is called an Institution for educating orphans" (61). However, as authors Reynolds and Humble fittingly state, orphans are useful because they:

[P]rovided the opportunity for showing what was wrong with social structures by contrast, rather than by naming ills directly, thus allowing readers to draw their own conclusions and to be less offended by a novelist's criticisms.

Orphans could and did do the unconventional and thus threw convention into relief for examination, but as most orphan-heroines are ultimately commendable and their novels end with fulfillment and harmonious, traditional resolutions such as marriage, their behavior is not regarded as compromising, ruinous or necessarily threatening. The orphan therefore provides the means of pricking consciences by the iteration of unofficial values while simultaneously making those values acceptable because ultimately the orphan conforms to traditional expectations and so never directly seems to incite those who are not orphans to radical behaviour [sic].

(30)

Brontë raises questions pertaining to religion, the male-female relationship, especially in regard to marriage and domination, and women's domesticity through her incorporation of an orphan protagonist.

Jane, as is typical for orphans, craves love and affection. Even as a child she tells Mrs. Reed, “You think I have no feelings, and that I can live without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so” (45). Later, at Lowood, she tells Helen that she would experience love at the risk of physical injury: “[I]f others don’t love me, I would rather die than live—I cannot bear to be solitary and hated, Helen. Look here; to gain some real affection from you, or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest—” (83). However, unlike Cinderilla, Jane does not have a fairy godmother to provide the affection and genuine love she desperately craves. What she does have, however, is a relationship with the moon, and more important, she has a relationship with God.

Despite not having a fairy godmother or the help from nature which other Cinderellas enjoy, Jane does have one natural force that seemingly, supernaturally watches over her—the moon. In the Grimms’ tale, before Cinderella’s mother dies, she says, “Dear child, be good and pious, and God will always take care of you, and I will look down upon you from heaven, and will be with you” (80). Cinderella dutifully visits her grave, and her God fulfills her mother’s promise to take care of Cinderella through his Creation, namely the hazel tree and white bird. For Jane, the moon fulfills the role of Jane’s heavenly mother. Personifying the moon, Jane relates what she calls the “trance-like dream” on the night she leaves Thornfield concerning a memory of the red-room:

She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud; a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away, then, not a moon, but a white human form, shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and

gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit; immeasurably distant was the tone yet so near, it whispered in my heart,

‘My daughter, flee temptation!’

‘Mother, I will.’ (372)

In this memorable instance, Jane mentally transforms the moon into the figure of not only a woman, but a mother who encourages her to leave Rochester before she has yet decided what to do.

In order to aptly fulfill its role as a mother-figure in this realistic yet fantastic tale, the moon is consistently associated with Jane and aids her during her encounters with Rochester. Immediately before Jane initially meets him, she sees on the hilltop “the rising moon; pale yet as a cloud” (133). However, after Jane’s imagination leads her to almost believe that Rochester is a Gytrash, a term heard in a story related by Bessie in childhood, the moon “wax[es] bright,” enabling Jane to see Rochester clearly and helping to eradicate any fear Jane may still be harboring (135).

Later, seemingly trying to help Jane, the moon wakes her immediately before Mason’s fearful cry when he is attacked by Bertha. Forgetting to close the curtains, the moon “which was full and bright [...] came in her course to that space in the sky opposite my casement, and looked in at me through the unveiled panes, her glorious gaze roused me. Awaking in the dead of night, I opened my eyes on her disk—silver-white and crystal-clear. It was beautiful, but too solemn” (243). Jane relates the tale as though she believes the moon was trying to prepare her with a warning for the events that follow.

On the night of their engagement, the moon appears to show her disapproval of the arrangement. Allowing her light to be used in order for both Jane and Rochester to see one

another's faces in the dark to gauge their reactions, the moon quickly recedes after Rochester alludes to his current marriage, saying, "For the world's judgment—I wash my hands thereof. For man's opinion—I defy it" (299). With this blatant disregard for the law, the moon leaves them in shadow.

Again, the moon appears the night before Jane marries Rochester. Worried because Rochester has not yet returned to Thornfield, Jane walks outside to meet him. As though aware of the events to come, the moon "appeared momentarily in that part of the sky which filled their fissure; her disk was blood-red and half overcast. She seemed to throw on me one bewildered, dreary glance, and buried herself again instantly in the deep drift of cloud" (323). The next morning, Jane discovers the Bluebeardian secret that Rochester has been hiding and leaves Thornfield.

In its final appearance before Jane and Rochester are reunited, the moon is present when Jane hears Rochester's voice cry out to her in pain. Almost agreeing to St. John's preposterous proposal to marry without love in the name of worldly and heavenly glory, Jane, in a room "full of moonlight," hears and feels Rochester's call and immediately leaves. In this case, the moon shines fully not only to illuminate the room, but to "shed light" on Jane's decision to leave as well. The moon seems to give Jane her full consent to return to Rochester.

Just as the Grimms' version incorporates both God and his Creation, so, too, does *Jane Eyre*. While the moon appears to impersonate Cinderella's dead mother by seemingly watching over Jane from heaven, that relationship is not enough to provide Jane with the love she requires. John Reed, author of *Victorian Conventions*, claims that "[l]iterary orphans, though often shut out from love themselves [...] establish their faith in God before they feel

the enticement of human love” (257). In Jane’s case, this notion seems to work in reverse. As a child, Jane grapples with the idea of religion, and when Jane is an adult prior to her flight from Thornfield, the references to religion are few. As Jane experiences love, however, she temporarily “shuts out” God. During her brief engagement to Rochester, she states, “My future husband was becoming to me my whole world, and more than the world—almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for his creature, of whom I had made an idol” (320). It is not until she is told the truth about Bertha that Jane petitions to God, makes the conscious decision to trust and obey in the morals instilled in her while at the same time embracing her own view of religion, and participates in her own spiritual and physical pilgrimage.

Jane Eyre explores types of religion common to Victorian England. Undoubtedly, Brontë was immersed in differing religious ideals presented by both her Evangelical father and Calvinistic aunt. Consequently, throughout the novel, Jane seeks to find a balanced idea of religion, often refuting other examples of stoic Christianity because of their hypocrisy, lack of spiritual joy, or passiveness. Even though presented with three differing sects of Christianity, Jane cannot fully accept any because not one version provides a completed picture of her idea of religion; rather, each lacks an essential component.

It is on a moonlit night that Jane, as a child at Lowood, first inwardly questions her religious upbringing and the consequent implanted ideas of heaven and hell. Faced with death from both starvation and disease at Lowood, many children were either dying or dead when Jane and her friend Mary Ann see the surgeon’s horse and realize that someone must be very ill to merit such a visit. As the “moon rose with such majesty in the grave east” and

Jane blissfully enjoys the evening spent in nature, she laments the fact that some are not able to enjoy it and questions where one goes after death (94). More importantly, she attempts to decipher her own beliefs on the subject: “And then my mind made its first earnest effort to comprehend what had been infused into it concerning heaven and hell, and for the first time it recoiled, baffled; and, for the first time, glancing behind, on each side, and before it, it saw all round an unfathomed gulf; it felt the one point where it stood-the present” (94). Up to this point in the novel, Jane has been introduced to two very different types of theology, and upon meeting St. John, she is introduced to yet another type.

Reverend Brocklehurst expresses the first branch of religion and represents a hypocritical and stifling Calvinistic approach to Christianity. When Jane first sees Brocklehurst as a small child, he appears as “a black pillar” standing erect and rigid on the rug. Brontë easily draws the comparison of Brocklehurst to the Big Bad Wolf in “Little Red Riding Hood.” Jane exclaims, “[W]hat a great nose! and what a mouth! and what large prominent teeth!” in direct parallel to Little Red Riding Hood’s encounter with her own wolf pretending to be her grandmother. Just as Little Red’s wolf desires to devour her, so too does Jane’s Brocklehurst. He interviews Jane, asking her questions that reflect the Calvinistic opinion of a Christian lifestyle including if she is a good girl, if she knows where naughty children go after death, what hell is, and whether or not she reads her Bible. Later, he proclaims his views on religion stating, “Humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood. [...] I have studied how best to mortify in them the worldly sentiment of pride” (43). However, in his own life, he practices none of the methods he forces his students to rigidly abide by; his family visits the school adorned with velvet, silk, furs, ostrich feathers, and false French curls (78). Brocklehurst’s religion focuses on

law without grace and condemnation of sinners, which only the elect are fortunate enough to escape, and his religion is one that Jane cannot accept and therefore questions on the above mentioned moonlit night.

In direct contrast to Brocklehurst's hypocrisy is St. John's view on the application of good works and Evangelism. Whereas Brocklehurst merely preaches Calvinistic doctrine while living a life of blatant sin, St. John embraces the doctrine fully, applying its mission regardless of the physical consequences. However, St. John, like Brocklehurst, presents a bleak picture of religion, as he too appears to have forsaken grace and love for rigid and controlled practices that seek to quench his own desires for glory, whether in heaven, on earth, or both.

Jane notes that he is "[z]ealous in his ministerial labors, blameless in his life and habits," insisting on completing his pastoral visits despite the weather and unfailingly delivering Sunday services, yet these sermons have "an absence of consolatory gentleness [and] stern allusions to Calvinistic doctrines—election, predestination, reprobation—were frequent" (407-8). St. John even permits the woman he loves to marry another man out of the hope of attaining heaven. However, as he tries to persuade Jane to join him in the mission field, Jane states, "Nothing speaks or stirs in me while you talk. I am sensible of no light kindling—no life quickening—no voice counseling or cheering. Oh, I wish I could make you see how much my mind is at this moment like a rayless dungeon" (467). Although the religion presented by St. John lacks the hypocrisy of Reverend Brocklehurst and demonstrates his religious fervor, Jane cannot help but notice that his view of religion, although outwardly irreproachable, still lacks the joy and peace Christianity should bring; he does not seem "to enjoy that mental serenity, that inward content, which should be the

reward of every sincere Christian and practical philanthropist” (407). Furthermore, Jane confesses, “I was sure St. John Rivers—pure-lived, conscientious, zealous as he was—had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding” (408). Again, Jane cannot fully accept the cold and hard religion presented by St. John.

The final type of religion to which Jane is introduced is patient, long-suffering, and passive Christianity presented by Helen Burns. Helen Burns represents a submissive religion, whereby she frequently suffers at the hands of others, especially Miss Scatcherd, without retaliation. Gilbert and Gubar believe that Helen represents “self-renunciations, of all-consuming (and consumptive) spirituality” (*Madwoman* 346). Upon being beaten by the rod one day in class, Helen tells Jane, “It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you—and, besides, the Bible bids us return good for evil” (67). Later, she refers Jane to the New Testament to “observe what Christ says, and how he acts—make his word your rule, and his conduct your example [...]. Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you” (70). Even though Helen, like St. John, presents a few respectable aspects of religion, Jane cannot fully accept her doctrine either, and she constantly either fights against it or questions it. When Jane witnesses Helen’s submissiveness towards Miss Scatcherd after being publicly beaten, Jane insists that she would “resist” Miss Scatcherd, take the rod, and “break it under her nose” (67). When Helen tells her to love her enemies, Jane replies, “Then I should love Mrs. Reed, which I cannot do; I should bless her son John, which is impossible” (70). Furthermore, Jane questions Helen about her religion, asking, “Where are you going to, Helen? Can you see?

Do you know? [...] Where is God? What is God?" (97). Even after Helen's gentle response, Jane inwardly questions, "Where is that religion? Does it exist?"

Brontë questions the accepted views of religion in the nineteenth century primarily through male characters, and she also uses them to express a social concern about male domination and suppression. According to Barbara Thaden, "Patriarchal oppression is directly tied to the theme of religious hypocrisy and self-righteousness" (64). Reverend Brocklehurst oppresses the poor children at Lowood, allowing them to come to the brink of starvation and to be exposed to various diseases, which results in "[f]orty-five out of the eight girls lay[ing] ill at one time," while he hypocritically clothes his own family in wealth and allows them to flaunt it around the school in the name of religion (91). Linda Peterson claims that Brocklehurst:

[C]haracterizes orphans as 'diseased,' a comparison that suggests he views poor young females like Jane as organically tainted. His extended commentary reveals that he discriminates against the girls because of their class and gender. His discrimination takes the form of refusing to allow their *self*-interpretation; he insists on his hermeneutic authority as a middle-class man and clergyman. (86)

He also needlessly oppresses Jane by forcing her to stand on a stool while he verbally accosts her, again claiming religion as his motivation. Likewise, St. John physically and emotionally oppresses Jane throughout the duration of her stay at Moor Head under the guise of his religious beliefs. A self-proclaimed cold, hard man, St. John forms Jane in his image of what a missionary wife should be. Under his rigid control, Jane becomes no more than a servant: "When he said 'Go,' I went; 'Come,' I came; 'Do this,' I did it. But I did not love my

servitude; I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me” (461). In the name of his religion, St. John almost manages to break Jane’s spirit and take her to a foreign land from which she knows she cannot return.

Even as Rochester, Reverend Brocklehurst, and St. John are all domineering characters in the story, the two later characters by using religion as a method to control, they are not alone in this pursuit. Most male characters in this novel are, in some way, controlling forces. John Reed, from childhood, senses the control he has not only over Jane, but also over his mother and house as well. In the first chapter John tells Jane, “Now, I’ll teach you to rummage my bookshelves; for they *are* mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years” (15). Mrs. Reed’s overindulgence of John results in his having “not much affection for his mother and sisters” as a child, and even less consideration for them as an adult. As Mrs. Reed lies on her deathbed, she speaks about the financial ruin he has caused the family, yet her speech is marked with praise still: “John is like me and like my brothers, he is quite a Gibson. Oh, I wish he would cease tormenting me with letters for money! I have no more money to give him; we are getting poor. [...] poor boy! [...] He threatens me—he continually threatens me with his own death or mine” (272). Even minor characters, such as Miss Temple’s husband, exercise control. As soon as Miss Temple is engaged, she and her husband move “to a distant county,” and as a result, Jane forever loses contact with her (100).

As the men are presented as domineering, the women are presented as either superficial and manipulative or weak and expendable. Micael Clarke notes, “Women, by contrast, either become ruthlessly competitive and pettily cruel [...] having in effect, cut off a part of themselves to please men, or they are swallowed up by a world that does not value

them” (706). Georgiana is a superficial character both as a child and adult. Surviving on her appearance, Georgiana eventually marries an older, wealthy man who can continue to provide her with the dances and clothing she desires. As a child, Eliza is a conniving girl who enjoys selling chicken eggs and bartering with the gardener, who has strict orders to buy anything she wishes to sell. As an adult, Eliza maintains her selfish spirit. Mrs. Reed is a cruel and wicked woman, even in death. Blanche epitomizes the competitive, superficial woman in a higher social class. Yet, on the other hand, characters like Helen, Miss Temple, Diana, and Mary allow themselves to be controlled to survive their hostile environments. Helen permits herself to turn her cheek well over the commanded seventy-times-seven recommendation. Miss Temple willingly leaves everything behind for her husband’s sake. Even Diana and Mary are offered positions of governesses for wealthy families, something Jane cannot wait to end with her inheritance.

Whereas Perrault’s Cinderella graciously forgives her superficial and cruel stepsisters and marries them to wealthy men in her kingdom thereby taking an active role in their fates, Jane’s family’s future has been secured for her upon what Paula Sullivan deems her “triumphant return to Gateshead” (69). Having forgiven her aunt for her abusive treatment as a child, Jane, very much the proper Christian, patiently cares for Mrs. Reed in the final days of her life. Jane, “devoid of guilt, is simply a witness as Providence destroys the hateful parent figure of the same sex. Jane is able to close this chapter of her life and of the novel with the comment, ‘Neither of us (Eliza or myself) had dropt a tear.’ (242)” (Sullivan 70). John Reed’s future, too, ends abruptly with his death and the financial destruction of his family. Even Jane’s wicked stepsisters, Eliza and Georgiana, have their bleak futures decided for them. Georgiana, much like Blanche and Rosamond, marries a man for

superficial reasons and most likely ends up like her predecessor, Bluebeard's wife, and Eliza confines herself to a rigid life in a convent.

While it appears Brontë implies that all men are domineering and women fall into a specific category, the relationship between Jane and Rochester shatters these expectations and presents an evolved example that supersedes all social conventions, due in part to the freedom Brontë has by utilizing an orphan to explore the dominions of the male-female relationship unhindered. Jane and Rochester are attracted to each other based on more than external appearances, as Brontë makes painfully obvious by her comparison of Rochester to Beast, they form a relationship based on internal characteristics and mental sameness, and they share equality in every aspect necessary to build a strong relationship. And, because she is an orphan, she experiences no interference from family regarding her marriage and little difficulty crossing the social boundaries of class.

Furthermore, by using a strong comparison of Jane to the Cinderella type, *Jane Eyre* is able to comment on women's work: "Jane Eyre's humble social position has, like Cinderella's, a double function. As emblems of unjust limitations placed on women, Jane's poverty and her life of service as under-housekeeper, governess, and teacher offer a social critique of women's subjection. But Brontë also asserts the worth of women's work" (Clarke 705). Although Jane is cast out of her family, forced to go to a school to learn a trade to be able to provide for herself, and required to work at jobs below her skill and intelligence levels, like Cinderella her diligence is ultimately rewarded when she is willingly able to put to use those same skills to use in her relationships with both her cousins and the maimed Rochester.

Jane Eyre essentially asserts a woman's right to decide her occupation. Similarly, Jane proclaims that men and women are equal and should share the same rights to make decisions:

[W]omen feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do [...] and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them; if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (131)

Often deemed a precursor to the Feminist movement, Brontë clearly advocates her view that a woman should be able to make her own choices regarding her life, as does Jane in her decision to remain domesticated.

As a child, Jane works along with Bessie as a sign of her degradation and lowered social status inflicted by the Reeds. As an adult, however, Jane demonstrates those same characteristics liberally and joyously because she is doing so of free will and for those whom she loves. One of the clearest examples of this is when St. John first tells Jane of her inheritance. St. John immediately asks Jane, "What aim, what purpose, what ambition in life, have you now?" to which Jane replies, "My first aim will be to clean down (do you comprehend the full force of the expression?) to clean down Moor House from chamber to cellar" (452). After accumulating enough wealth to be financially independent for the rest of her life, Jane's first decision is to invest both time and effort into cleaning her cousins' house for their return. St. John, blatantly unhappy with her decision, desires her to "look a little

higher than domestic endearments and household joys,” but Jane considers these domestic activities “[t]he best things the world has” (453). Because she is able to apply her talents for her beloved family, she declares herself “disposed to be as content as a queen” and spends Christmas week in “merry domestic dissipation” (453, 457). As an orphan who has spent the majority of her life craving familial affection, Jane is pleased to work in the house for her new family who loves her and whom she loves.

Likewise, after returning to Rochester and seeing his debased state, Jane willingly offers her services to him in love. Upon her first visit with him she declares, “I will be your neighbor, your nurse, your housekeeper. I find you lonely; I will be your companion—to read to you, to walk with you, to sit with you, to wait on you, to be eyes and hands to you” (504). That same night, Jane rearranges the room so as to be “in more cheerful order,” and they spend the evening enjoying one another’s company (506). Later, after visiting Adèle, Jane wishes to resume her role as governess but realizes she cannot because “[her] time and cares were now required by another—[her] husband needed them all” (522). However, she again strongly desires to devote her time in this way, and as a result feels “blessed beyond what language can express” (522).

Undoubtedly, *Jane Eyre* contains a strong connection to the beloved stories of Cinderella, most prominently in theme. By utilizing such a strong parallel between the novel and this tale, *Jane Eyre* has the ability to address several contemporary concerns, namely those regarding religion, a male dominated society, and the value of women’s work. In addition, Brontë effectively manipulates and changes the story to make Jane’s relationship with Rochester one of equality, and one in which the prince must transform to realize Cinderella’s true value.

Conclusion

In closing, the prevalence of fairy tales throughout *Jane Eyre* does more than merely indicate a particular form of characterization, plot development, or theme codified in this genre by the Victorians. While these structures certainly help the reader to establish certain similarities and connections with favorite tales (is it possible to overlook Reverend Brocklehurst's similarity to the big bad wolf or Mrs. Reed's position as the evil stepmother?), the reason for their inclusion extends beyond these rudimentary comparisons to serve as a creative and relatively safe outlet for Charlotte Brontë to express several societal observations in a period of turmoil and rapid change in English history. As Zipes mentions, "Indeed, the Victorians became more aware of the subversive potential of the literary fairy tale to question the so-called productive forces of progress and the Enlightenment" (*Victorian* xv). More than questioning just these historical movements, however, *Jane Eyre* examines and questions socially accepted attitudes towards women's occupations and education, social classes, and the male-female dynamic in a relationship.

What is different about the approach in this study is the fact that it does not only seek to clarify the similarities between *Jane Eyre* and several beloved tales, but also to explore the reasons behind their inclusion. Admittedly, numerous studies (many more, in fact, than one might imagine) have been done regarding this subject, but none have been devoted to exploring Brontë's possible motivation for incorporating the tales into her own work. When the historical context, the social ills of the time, and Brontë's personal history are taken into consideration, *Jane Eyre* becomes a fascinating and complex composite of justifiable frustration and hunger for reform, most notably expressed in Jane's relationship with

Rochester. In this, Brontë participates in what Zipes has identified as an urge to utopianism that manifests itself in the Victorian fairy tale.

Interestingly, this study began with a focus on the use of fairy tales to comment solely on specific social iniquities, but as it progressed, the focus widened to include an observation about human relationships, especially in regard to women and men. The novel utilizes several different, well-known fairy tales with which the reader would be immediately familiar to emphasize certain aspects of a marriage relationship, including attraction (“Bluebeard”), courtship (“Beauty and the Beast”), and marriage (“Cinderella”). However, in order for Cinderella to marry her prince as his equal, the story had to be rewritten. At first glance, it may seem odd to find such stories so deeply embedded in a realistic novel. However, clearly the presence of these fairy tales adds to *Jane Eyre*’s richness and complexity and provides the reader with additional information for contemplation.

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