

# A QUEST FOR HOME IN *JANE EYRE*

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## 摘 要

Charlotte Bronte在簡愛 (*Jane Eyre*) 中，描寫一孤女於惡劣環境中成長，最後獨立為一堅強女性，快樂地與年紀夠當她爸爸的主人結婚。很多心理分析都以佛洛伊德的理論架構來探討，認為女主角陷於戀父情結 (Electra Complex)，對父親形象的留戀，導致對母親產生敵意，進而與父親角色 (Mr. Rochester) 結婚，完成其內心潛意識的近親亂倫 (incest)。但細讀小說，卻發現此種心理分析簡化了女主角的成長。與其說她是渴望父親的愛，不如說她是對家的執著——父母親的親情，兄弟姊妹的呵護，而且更重要的是異性伴侶的真愛。本文試圖反駁傳統的心理分析閱讀，視本小說為女性心理成長小說 (Psychological Bildungsroman)，討論女主角如何類化其周圍的人物為其親人 (如父親，母親，姊妹，兄弟)，進而從其強烈的慾望中解脫出來，尋找足以與其心智相當之男性伴侶。本文將證明追求家的動機 (quest motif) 乃是這本第一人稱小說的精髓。

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte portrays an orphaned little girl struggling in a hostile surrounding and later maturing into an independent woman, who lives happily with her aged husband. Many psychoanalytic studies of Jane Eyre's love lead to a Freudian conclusion that Jane, involved in an Electra complex, cultivates a strong passion toward a father figure and hostility toward a mother figure.<sup>1</sup> In such readings, Jane is torn by a conflict between sexual passion and

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<sup>1</sup> Among these psychoanalytic studies are David Cowart's "Oedipal Dynamics in *Jane Eyre*," *Literature and Psychology* 31 (1981): 33-38; Adrienne Rich's "*Jane Eyre*: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman," *Ms.* 11 (Oct., 1973): 68+; David Smith's "Incest Patterns in Two Victorian Novels," *Literature and Psychology* 15 (1965): 135-62; Lucille Dooley's "Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Bronte, as a Type of the Woman of Genius," *American Journal of Psychology* 31.3 (July 1920): 221-72; Martin S. Day's "Central Concepts in *Jane Eyre*," *Personality* 41 (Oct. 1960): 498-505; and John Maynard's *Charlotte Bronte and Sexuality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

a fear of incest. Freudian interpretation, indeed, offers a good basis in making clear Jane's psychological development and some of her relations with the people around her.

However, Jane's desire for love is oversimplified and a bit distorted in Freudian criticisms. Her quest for love is more complicated and subtle. She is desirous of not only a love of a father but also a love of a home—parental affection (both father and mother), brotherly or sisterly care, and, more important, a female attachment to a mate. This paper is going to study Jane's narrative as her psychological *Bildungsroman*, focusing its discussion on the heroine's quest for father, mother, siblings, and husband in the process of maturity from an orphaned girl to an independent woman.

The novel starts with Jane's first-person narrative of her miserable orphaned childhood in the house of her aunt, Mrs. Reed, where she suffers "all John Reed's violent tyrannies, all his sisters' proud indifference, all his mother's aversion, all the servant's partiality."<sup>2</sup> In this hostile surrounding, the fatherless and motherless Jane is naturally longing for comfort of parents or siblings. Since Mrs. Reed, a mother surrogate, has a great repugnance to her, Jane appeals to her nice memory of Mr. Reed, who plays a role of father to her. In her loveless and persecuted life, her child's violent emotions toward parental affection raise so high that she seems to develop a perverted passion toward her father figure, Mr. Reed (Maynard 101). Punished and confined in the red-room of Mr. Reed, she is unconsciously involved in an incestuous passion. Yet she is frightened by "the swift-darting beam—a herald of some coming vision from another world" (*JE* 11). In his "Incest Patterns in Two Victorian Novels," David Smith interprets this red-room scene as a confrontation between a child and parents, in which the child yearns for the paternal love, intruding into "a site of the parental conjugal relations" (137). The light which scares Jane is identified as the evil mother, Mrs. Reed. Jane's trauma in her child's longing for love in the red-room continues in her later relationship with Blanche Ingram and Bertha Mason at Thornfield.

In her convalescence from the fit in the red-room, Jane is still hungry for care and affection. Her continuous longing for a father figure is reflected in Bessie's conciliatory song:

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<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (New York: Bantam, 1981) 8. Hereafter, all the passages quoted in this study are from this version with the mark of *JE* and the page number(s) in parentheses.

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Ev'n should I fall o'er the broken bridge passing,  
Or stray in the marshes, by false lights beguiled  
Still will my Father, with promise and blessing,  
Take to His bosom the poor orphan child. (*JE* 15)

With this strong hunger for a family, Jane tends to compare the adults around her to the parent surrogates. While she is unable to develop an affectionate tie toward her real relatives, the image of the benevolent father first associated with her uncle now falls on Mr. Lloyd, the family apothecary (Smith 138). She states: "I felt so sheltered and befriended while he [Mr. Lloyd] sat in the chair near my pillow; and as he closed the door after him, all the room darkened and my heart again sank: inexpressible sadness weighed it down" (*JE* 12).

Since the forlorn girl is eager to embrace love from parents, several father and mother figures emerge in her mind throughout her growth. However, Freudian classification of the father and mother roles in the child's psychological development is overgeneralized. Not all father figures are benignant and kind nor all mother figures are repelled by the daughter heroine. In actuality, Jane Eyre neither admires the father figures nor fights against the mothers all the time. To Jane, Mr. Brocklehurst embodies a ruthless tyrannical parent while Miss Temple at Lowood is a benign mother-protector. Appearing as a "black pillar . . . the grim face . . . like a carved mask," Mr. Brocklehurst represses and humiliates the young Jane as Mrs. Reed has done. He punishes and scolds Jane like a stern father: "Teachers, you must watch her; keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinize her actions . . ." (*JE* 59).

Miss Temple, on the other hand, "is maternal in a special sense: not simply sheltering and protective, but encouraging of intellectual growth" (Rich 70). Not like an antagonistic mother figure in Freudian theory, Miss Temple teaches Jane self-discipline, obedience, and chastity. Jane Eyre's first impression of Miss Temple is her ideal image of a mother:

While the direction was being executed, the lady consulted moved slowly up the room. I suppose I have a considerable organ of veneration, for I retain yet the sense of admiring awe with which my eyes traced her steps. Seen now, in broad daylight, she looked tall, fair, and shapely; brown eyes with a benignant light in their irids, and a fine pencilling of long lashes round, relieved the whiteness of her large front; on each of her temples her hair, of a very dark brown, was clustered in round

curls, according to the fashion of those times, . . . ; her dress, also in the mode of the day, was of purple cloth, relieved by a sort of Spanish trimming of black velvet; a good watch shone at her girdle. Let the reader add, to complete the picture, refined features; a complexion, if pale, clear; and a stately air and carriage, . . . —Maria Temple, as I afterward saw the name written in a Prayer Book entrusted to me to carry to church. (*JE* 40)

Jane loves her: “She had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and latterly, companion” (*JE* 76).

Another elder pupil, Helen Burns, also brings Jane intellectual and spiritual growth. Sharing with Jane her “transcendent philosophical detachment” (*Rich* 72), Helen responds to Jane’s hunger for contact with a sister. With instruction and love of Miss Temple and Helen Burns, Jane “appeared a disciplined and subdued character” (*JE* 76), with her vehement passion under restraint.

When Helen dies of consumption with Jane held in her arms like a little child and when Miss Temple marries, Jane loses her first real mother and sister. With no more repression, her pungent passion stirs up. She is anxious to grow and to explore like a passionate woman: “My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue speaks. It was those I longed to surmount, all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits” (*JE* 77). Losing her mother and sister and suppression of her passion, Jane is ready to experience the passionate encounter with Mr. Rochester, the most important father figure in her life.

As a governess at Thornfield, Jane Eyre feels unsatisfied with a static life, longing for a growth and new experience: “I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen; that then I desired more of practical experience than I possessed” (*JE* 100). Her quest to be a real and independent woman requires a guide—most of the time, a father—to show the world to her.

The master of Thornfield, Mr. Rochester, first shows up accompanied by great dark dogs, like Mr. Reed, Jane’s another father figure. In their first encounter, Jane Eyre perceives “a dark face with stern feature and a heavy brow” (*JE* 105). In Brontë’s portrayal of a commanding father figure, a grim and dark appearance is always given: Mr. Brocklehurst looks like a black pillar; Mr. Rochester has a dark face. After the first meeting, Jane Eyre is pleased to have “a master” (*JE* 109). In their following contacts or courtship, Jane tends to regard Mr. Rochester

as a kind relative, not a real lover. She confesses that there emerges no youthful passion toward an ideal love she perceives: "The ease of his [Mr. Rochester's] manner freed me from painful restraint; the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him. I felt at times as if he were my relation rather than my master" (*JE* 137). She immediately senses a strong attachment to this father figure: "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" (*JE* 137).

This old relative-like master is stern, dominating like most of the parental authorities. According to David Smith, there are four evident facts to prove that Rochester is beheld and admired as a father figure by the orphaned love-seeking Jane. First, Jane acts as a governess, playing the role of "an interloper between mother and father" (139). Second, "her role as a servant to a man" is like "a daughter to her father" she wishes to serve. Jane always says, "Whenever I can be useful, sir" (*JE* 207). The third fact suggesting this father-daughter relationship is "age disparity" (140). Mr. Rochester is supposed to be twenty years older than Jane. He himself says that he is old enough to be her father. The last proof is Jane's perception of Rochester as a father (Smith 139-40). She is always obedient to the order of this grim father: "All I had now to do was to obey in silence" (*JE* 233). Philip Rule in his "The Function of Allusion in *Jane Eyre*" even compares the relationship between Rochester and Jane with that between King Lear and Cordelia by presenting the paralleled diction employed by two authors.

Mr. Rochester is unconsciously and subconsciously recognized as a father by Jane. Therefore, when she observes Mr. Rochester's courtship of Blanche Ingram, Jane can analyze this relationship with an objective and detached manner. She is not really hostile to her father's mate. In actuality, she is "not jealous" (*JE* 174), feeling superior to Miss Ingram intellectually and spiritually. It seems that the scene of Electra triangle returns to Thornfield. However, Jane's present need is not really a desire to take the place of an "evil" mother, but a quest for a home even with a mother in it. She declares her intention to Mr. Rochester: "Thank you, Mr. Rochester, for your great kindness. I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home—my only home" (*JE* 233). Later, Jane agrees to marry Mr. Rochester, who proposes her protection and care as a father. He says, "I love you as my own flesh. You—poor and obscure, and small and plain as you are—I entreat to accept me as a husband. . . . Will I not guard, and cherish, and solace her [Jane]" (*JE* 241-43).

However, in her discovery of existence of Mr. Rochester's mad wife, Jane is in terror, feeling the impossibility of setting up a home for herself and Mr. Rochester. The father-like Rochester cheats her in offering a false home without marriage. Deserted by one parent, Jane appeals to the other parental love, mother's. A remote voice from mother nature—perhaps associated with Miss Temple—urges her to “flee temptation” (*JE* 304). Wandering in “white, broad, lonely” roads, the fatherless Jane has “no relative but the universal mother, Nature” (*JE* 307). She will “seek her breast and ask repose” (*JE* 307).

As an orphan, Jane seeks the parental love, yet as “a nubile female,” she also looks for a mate to found her own home (Cowart 34). In this sense, her need for love becomes complicated with her female passion for a husband (Rich 70). At Thornfield, she is sexually inspired by Mr. Rochester, maturing into a woman with piercing emotions which she has already been conscious of when she leaves Lowood. Though the kindly mothering and affection of Miss Temple and Helen have suppressed her vehement passion, her feminine longing for a mate is awakened by the masculine Mr. Rochester. Her later perception of Mr. Rochester fluctuates between a father and a mate. In her contact with him, even she herself cannot clarify what love she is in need of. When Mr. Rochester offers her a proposal, she finds herself in the shadow: “The moon was not yet set, and we were all in shadow: I could scarcely see my master's face, near as I was” (*JE* 243). In fact, Jane is always under the shadow of Mr. Rochester's fatherly love though she is also struggling to be a mature woman: “I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester, or sitting like a second Danae within the golden shower falling daily round me” (*JE* 255).

As her female passion rises up, she does not want to be Mr. Rochester's angel. After she discovers her surrogate father has betrayed her in his bigamy, she realizes that to stay as a mistress means to remain a slave to his passion and to sacrifice her soul: “He seemed to devour me with his flaming glance: physically, I felt, at the moment, powerless as stubble exposed to the draught and glow of a furnace: mentally, I still possessed my soul” (*JE* 302). On one hand, her discovery of Mr. Rochester's mad wife discourages her from a quest for a complete home. On the other hand, from this awakening, she can walk out of the shadow of paternal Mr. Rochester.

Away from her false father, Jane thrusts herself into the comfort of mother nature: “I would be her guest, as I was her child: my mother would lodge me without money and without price” (*JE* 308). Like Miss Temple, Nature does not play the role of Freudian “evil” mother. Both Miss Temple and Nature are the

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compassionate mother Jane is hungry for in her quest for a home.

Throughout her searching, her anxiety always lies in her failure to find a real parent. Parents appear with different faces: the grim figures like Mrs. Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, St. John and even Mr. Rochester; the affectionate ones like Miss Temple or Nature. Jane is searching among them to have a home. Later when Jane finds that she has three cousins, she exclaims: "Glorious discovery to a lonely wretch! This is wealth indeed!—wealth to the heart!—a mine of pure, genial affections. This was blessing, bright, vivid, and exhilarating . . ." (*JE* 368).

Though Jane's quest for parents fails to some extent, she now starts her searching for a mate as a woman. Her searching for a family is incomplete without a union with an equal man. Her choice of the mate falls on two male characters, St. John and Mr. Rochester. With austere appearance and Puritanical personality, St. John reminds us of the former grim father image of Mr. Brocklehurst. After her awakening with female passion from an illusory love for the father figure, Jane knows what she needs now; she no longer falls into the shadow of Electra passion. She meditates: "But as his [St. John's] wife—at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked—forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital—*this* would be unendurable" (*JE* 389).

Her "fire" is more responding to the voice from passionate Rochester. Unlike St. John, Rochester is full of powerful sexual energies and passion as he himself states in his dissipation. Cowart's comparison between Rochester and St. John provides us with a clear picture of Jane's choice of a mate:

But the older man, Rochester, is too husband-like, and the younger man [St. John] is too paternal. His calling, even is the same as that of Jane's real father. To marry Rivers Jane would have to sacrifice her hard-won independence, for though nominally a wife, she would in actuality be a co-worker, servant, amanuensis—and daughter. There is maturity, then in Jane's rejection of Rivers in his sternly paternal aspect in favor of the virile and husbandly Rochester. (37)

Away from Mr. Rochester, Jane feels the force of passion reviving in her heart. After her rehabilitation in her newly-found home, she seems ready to set out to find her husband. Her passionate nature catches a call from her ardent mate. At Ferndean, Mr. Rochester is no longer a master or a father, though he still maintains his masculine quality. His father image is totally ruined. He is blind and

crippled: “He descended the one step, and advanced slowly and gropingly towards the grass plot. Where was his daring stride now?” (*JE* 413). Only when Mr. Rochester is symbolically pulled down from his paternal authority can Jane Eyre feel free to accept his love. Now she really grows up—“marries a husband and not a father” (Cowart 36). She has gained her financial and intellectual independence. She describes her marriage by stating:

I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: even more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. (*JE* 431)

Since childhood, Jane’s obsession with the family unit has driven her to search for father, mother, siblings and later a husband. Mr. & Mrs. Reed, Miss Temple, Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. and Mrs. Rochester and St. John all become her illusions of parents. Her quest for a home is partly fulfilled in her friendship with Helen Burns and a union with her three cousins, St. John, Mary, and Diana. She talks to St. John: “And you cannot at all image the craving I have for fraternal and sisterly love. I never had a home” (*JE* 370). Her main concern throughout her life is with a home. The whole narrative is composed upon this quest motif. Bronte finally lets her questing heroine complete her searching in founding her own home with a real mate.

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