

Jane eyre: rochester as a byronic hero



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Rochester is clearly an unusual love Interest for a romantic novel. He has an abrupt, selfish and arrogant nature, and is far from handsome. Mr.

.. Rochester is stern, rude, and demanding and has a dark and somewhat mysterious personality. However, with the gothic atmosphere of Jane Rye, it seems almost suiting for the hero to embody many such attributes of a Byronic hero One of the most prominent literary character types of the Romantic period, the Byronic hero is not conventionally “heroic” and his dark qualities tend to reject the image of a “traditional” hero.

We see the influence Byron’s poetry had on Brontë’s writing; when in Jane Rye, Brontë makes a reference to one of his works, *The Corsair*, “Here then is a Corsair-song. Know that I dote on Corsairs; and for that reason, sing it ; con spirits!” (ch. 17). In Chapter 11 of Jane Rye, Jane asks of Mrs.

.. Fairfax, “What, in short, is his [Mr... Rochester’s] character?” To this Mrs.

.. Fairfax replies, “He is rather peculiar, perhaps: he has traveled a great deal, and seen a great deal of the world, I should think. I dare say he is clever”. This account of Mr..

. Rochester by Mrs...

Fairfax establishes him as a sort of wanderer. Her description agrees with the traits usually related to a Byronic hero.

The Byronic hero tends to be unsociable and isolated from the society, either voluntarily or due to impositions placed by some other influence. He is usually well traveled, and has often come into conflict during his journeys.

This is found to be true for Rochester's trip to Jamaica and the consequences that came of his meeting Bertha Mason there. An example of the Byronic hero, Rochester is a passionate man, guided more by emotions than by reason.

For Instance, when he first met Bertha Mason, his Immediate attraction to her lavish qualities resulted In their tragic marriage.

In the same way, he allows himself to be lead by his desire for Celine Varela, despite its immorality. Rochester's tendencies to reject the values and moral codes of society lead him to despise himself as well as his lifestyle. As a result, he becomes bitter and detached. Often the Byronic hero is characterized by a guilty memory of straying sexually in the past.

Rochester has a lasting reminder of his life of indulgence as Adele is the daughter of French opera-dancer, Celine Varela, towards whom he had once cherished what he called a "grandee passion" (chapter 15). Jane questions Mrs.

.. Fairfax about his behavior in Chapter 13 when she first comments: "[H]e is very changeable and abrupt. " [to which Mrs..

. Fairfax replies] " True: no doubt, he may appear so to a stranger, but I am so accustomed to his manner, I never think of it; and then, if he has peculiarities of temper, allowance should be made,".

When Jane Inquires as to why, Mrs...

Fairfax continues, “ Partly because It Is his nature-and we can none of us help our nature; ND, partly, he has painful thoughts, no doubt, to harass him, and make his splats unequal. ” (chi. 13) This exchange reveals that it is evident to others that Rochester is burdened with guilt and painful memories. An additional feature of the Byronic hero lies in a dark secret from his past. Rochester’s past includes his mad wife, Bertha whom he married purely for her looks, and who now lives in the attic of Threefold.

The Byronic hero is also known to be prone to moodiness.

This Is clearly typical of Rochester, as we see his first few encounters with Jane at Threefold Hall. At first he Is Nas something in the forced stiff bow, in the impatient yet formal tone, which seemed further to express, What the deuce is it to me whether Miss Rye be there or not? At this moment I am not disposed to accost her. ’” (chi. 13) While cold and aloof some times, other times Mr.

.. Rochester appears to be caring and attentive.

He did indeed choose to raise Adele Varies, knowing full well that she wasn’t his child. He does refer to her as “ a French dancer’s bastard – not my own child” and yet he makes sure that Adele receives the finest education and care.

This shows his compassion, integrity and exhibits traits of a good father. He has also provided similar care and room for Bertha, who contributes nothing more than painful memories of his past and proves to be a burden. Instead

of sending her off to live in an institution, he chooses to keep her in his home.

Furthermore when Bertha sets the house on fire, Rochester neglects his own safety in trying to save her.

This illustrates his courage and nobility. He thinks of her safety before his own and such an act redeems him in Jane's eyes. Rochester is surely quite passionate about Jane. This is seen in Chapter 7, when Rochester is speaking to Jane about his love for her, " Then you are mistaken, and you know nothing about me, and nothing about the sort of love of which I am capable.

Every atom of your flesh is as dear to me as my own". Another example of Rochester's capacity for displays of affection is shown when Jane exclaims: ' He kissed me repeatedly' (chapter 23).

What sets Rochester apart from the Romantic heroes of his time is the fact that Bronze depicts him as not classically handsome, ' with his broad and jetty eyebrows; his square forehead, made squarer by the horizontal sweep of his black hair. I recognized his decisive nose, more remarkable for character than beauty... " (chapter 13).

The significance of Rochester's overall appearance seems to be summed up in Jane's comment, " his decisive nose, more remarkable for character than for beauty".

This reflects Charlotte Brontë's image of her hero and heroine. Her representation of them is consistent with a deep exploration into their personalities rather than a perfect appearance. This adds realism to her

characters and makes them seem genuine. Even though Rochester is considered a social outcast of sorts, he is exceptionally charismatic, and people seem ran to him despite his lesser qualities.

While hosting the blanched Ingram party, He appears uncomfortable and is only seen feeling at ease when talking alone with Jane by the fireside.

Rochester's ignorant arrogance is seen as he pursues Jane while still married to Bertha.

Rochester considers Bertha to be merely someone under his care rather than his wife because he has convinced himself that his marriage to Bertha is practically invalid. Rochester's near bigamy grants us with yet another example of his ' Byronic" qualities: his thoughts on morals and ethics are twisted.

Due to a tough life lull of struggle, Rochester feels trapped in his circumstances. He refuses to think of moral principles as absolute and unchanging, rather he believe them to be dependent on one's situation. This is how he Justifies his indulgences. Rochester likes to make excuses for himself: as he says, "[S]nice happiness is irrevocably denied me, have a right to get pleasure out of life: and I will get it, cost what it may.

Much like a Byronic hero, Rochester is not afraid to ignore social conventions when he falls in love with Jane. He has complete disregard for social rank. This is also hint when he marries a former governess: and obscure, and small and plain as you are; I entreat to accept me as a husband" (chapter 23) However, upon meeting Jane, Rochester is looking to renew himself and

improve his lifestyle, but his passions and materialism need to be disciplined before he can be the proper husband for Jane.

In the end, when Bertha sets fire to Threefold, he is blinded and loses a hand. Having thus symbolically paid for his sins, Rochester is now guided morally and is repentant. “ I did wrong.

.. Divine Justice pursued it's course; disasters came thick on me..

. Rochester proves to possess self-awareness – a characteristic that is consistent Ninth those of a Byronic hero. He learns from his mistakes and turns towards God, “ Of late, Jane – only – only of late – I began to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom.

I began to experience remorse, repentance; the wish for reconciliation to my Maker.

I began sometimes to pray: very brief prayers they were, but very sincere.

13. 11. 248) Thus making himself pure and fitting as a husband for Jane.

Rochester proves to be reformed, and the flawed character that Bronze first introduces to us at the beginning of the novel has achieved his growth in order to overcome his sins and start afresh.

In my opinion, Bronze's presentation of Rochester is something between an “ appealing hero” and a “ melodramatic fantasy character”. While Rochester's traits maintain a real and human side of him that allows him to make mistakes and then learn from them, they also tend to lean towards extreme. There is certainly a sense of drama about this character, but Bronze uses

this to make Rochester an appropriate hero for a gothic novel and an even more apt husband for Jane.