

Jane eyre and a tale of two cities: love theme

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“ I'm not supposed to love you, I'm not supposed to care, I'm not supposed to live my life wishing you were there. I'm not supposed to wonder where you are or what you do... I'm sorry I can't help myself, I'm in love with you. ”

(Quote from Lord Byron) What is love? Scientists would simply call it a magnificent chemical war inside the brain causing us to feel the way we do about another person. Famous poets Lord Byron and Shelley would argue that it is beauty that makes us feel love but isn't it in fact love that opens our eyes to what's truly beautiful about a person.

Many would agree that love is blind but if this is so, how can it have the ability to allow us to see and feel things untouched by any other emotion. The only way to describe it that genuinely serves it any justice at all is to say love is magic. It has the power to make any given person do extraordinary things, the ability to transform or destroy anybody completely all in one emotion, one thing is for sure, it gives people a greater purpose for existence, a reason to live and die for, something beyond themselves to devote their life to.

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These constructions of love are repeatedly promoted in two of the most well known novels of the Victorian period, Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte and A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens. ‘ She walks in beauty, like the night, Of cloudless climes and starry skies; And all that's best of dark and bright, Meet in her aspect and her eyes: Thus mellow'd to that tender light Which heaven to gaudy day denies. One shade the more, one ray the less, Had half impair'd the nameless grace Which waves in every raven tress, Or softly

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lightens o'er her face; Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow, So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow, But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below, A heart whose love is innocent! ' (Lord Byron,
She Walks in Beauty) Lord Byron, a famous poet from the 17-1800's,
frequently promoted love as being linked to appearance and beauty, judging
from his poems where whenever he would talk about love he would either be
describing a beautiful women or the beautiful features of a women of his
desire.

There's no doubt that these poems were popular and appealing to the public,
however, whether they are true or not is a different story all on its own. Both
novels, Jane Eyre and A Tale of Two Cities correspond and contradict this
idea of love. For example in Dickens' work Lucie Manette is made to be an
object of innocence and beauty, she's very pretty yet she's virtuous, she's
very generous and kind, willing to give her time to help anyone in need of
her help, including her father whom she nurses out of insanity after he is
freed from the Bastille.

The fact that Dickens made the ' leading lady' of his novel this way, shows
that he believes what's on the ' inside' is just as important if not more, than
the appearance of a person. These same ideas are portrayed in Bronte's
work, but in her version the roles are reversed, as she makes Rochester very
handsome also giving him a particularly strong magnetism to his personality.

People, more specifically women, are drawn to him, and to Jane his most prominently attractive feature is his eyes, which have been said to be, by many, 'the window to the soul', so what does this mean?

Does the fact that he has smouldering eyes mean that he has a beautiful soul, or does it work the other way around, maybe it goes hand in hand but the author making this distinctive statement about eyes alone, shows that this is of particular significance. Jane, however, is described as rather plain, so if Bronte didn't believe the same as Dickens why would Rochester be so drawn to her, fall in love with her so easily and refuse a superficially beautiful woman in order to have Jane instead.

Both novels agree to the fact that beauty is sometimes an aspect of love but its most definitely not everything, personality is the main object of importance when it comes to true love. However the ideas of love that Lord Byron offered to the public were not uncommon in the time they were created. The fountains mingle with the river, And the rivers with the ocean, The winds of Heaven mix for ever, With a sweet emotion; Nothing in the world is single, All things by a law divine, In one spirit meet and mingle -Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high Heaven, And the waves clasp one another; No sister-flower would be forgiven, If it disdained its brother; And the sunlight clasps the earth, And the moonbeams kiss the sea - What are all these kissings worth, If thou kiss not me? (Percy Bysshe Shelley, Love's Philosophy)

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) the second poet mentioned earlier,

promoted the same ideas of love in his works, the only difference between him and Lord Byron is that he used personification a lot more, comparing and describing the beauty of women and love, to the beauty of nature and aspects of the world.

However in this poem shown above he talks about his longing for love, a theme also featured in Jane Eyre which shows that when love is found it has the power to transform a person, their life and the world through their eyes as a whole. The transformative power of love is established in the course of both novels through characters including Jane Eyre's love interest, the dark handsome Edward Rochester whose life changes in a dramatic way after meeting Jane.

He goes from being a bitter playboy in Europe , to being humble yet still strong man, even turning down a beautiful socialite of high class, to be worthy of Jane's love, showing also that beauty is not everything and it is what's inside a person that really matters. Jane in the same manner also undergoes change, after longing for love and family her whole life, she finally finds it with Rochester and even after she leaves, she doesn't encounter quite the same feeling until she returns to be with him. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. I know no weariness of my Edward's society: he knows none of mine, any more than we each do of the pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together. '(Jane Eyre, Chapter 38)

Another good example of how love can transform a person would be Sydney Carton from A Tale of Two Cities. His love for Lucie turns him from a drunk who takes no credit in his work as a lawyer to a man completely devoted to making the one he loves happy. ' It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known. ' (Sydney Carton, A Tale of Two Cities, Page 225) Not only is his love one of strength, it is also pure and selfless because even though she marries another man, he sacrifices his life to save that man in order for her to be able to live her life with whom she truly loves. I would embrace any sacrifice for you and for those dear to you. ' (A Tale of Two Cities, Chapter 19). This is the ultimate act of love and climax of the story, showing that love, even if one sided is capable of doing amazing things, that it is a thing worth dying for if necessary, that someone who's love is true and selfless towards another person will contentedly disregard their own happiness and well being just to ensure the happiness of the one who holds their heart.

One other character from A Tale of Two Cities who also goes through a quite extraordinary change is Dr. Alexandre Manett, an accomplished physician who gets wrongly accused of a crime he didn't commit and imprisoned in the Bastille for 18 years. In his trauma he loses his mind and spends his whole time in jail sitting in a dark corner making shoes. When he is finally freed his loving daughter Lucie Manett spends all of her time nursing him out of his insanity and eventually he falls out of madness and returns to normal again.

This shows that love is capable of reaching so deep into one's heart and mind that it can restore a man in a state of mind so distorted into a person

he used to be such a long time before. It has the power to sedate and possibly even heal mental trauma which is really quite incredible.

Unfortunately Dr. Manett is a tragic figure in the book and relapses to his original state of mind but this also shows that not every story has a happy ending and that some must suffer for others to triumph.

There is, however, a connection between Lucie and her father that can never be broken, after lovingly caring for him and bringing him out of madness there is a trust uncommon to this time and place that exists between the two that will almost certainly remain forever. “ He found the Doctor reading in his arm-chair at a window. The energy which had at once supported him under his old sufferings and aggravated their sharpness had been gradually restored to him. He was now a very energetic man indeed, with great firmness of purpose, strength of resolution, and vigour of action. ” (A Tale of Two Cities, Tyler, Chapter 10) It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way--in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (A Tale of Two Cities, Chapter 1)

In the clash between the French aristocracy and the revolutionaries, both sides employed spies to find out their enemies secrets and deal out harsh

punishments to anyone suspected of being a rival. In this sort of atmosphere you could imagine how distrustful people would naturally be of each other, anyone you met could've been the person who was going to have you imprisoned or even worse, murdered.

It seemed like everyone was on their own, however, even in this callous time and place love offered solace to the troubled people in need of someone or something to help them get through, it was the only thing that could truly bridge the gap between two individuals. This also somewhat applied in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre as the troubled young Jane spent most of her early life unaccepted and unloved by her family and peers, the only one person who showed her any form of affection at all was Bessie, and even then it was only occasionally.

When Jane and Helen become friends is the first time in the novel that she feels appreciated in any way as a person, she longs for love all this time because it is in fact the most cherished emotion that human beings feel. " 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" (Jane Eyre, Chapter 8)

Here you see how much Jane would really sacrifice just to feel that somebody loves her, this shows how valuable love really is because to live without it, is to live in longing for it. It is in truth, an emotion humans cannot live without and it's literally everywhere we look, it's what gives people hope, it's the

bigger picture on everyone's conscious, from the love of beauty to the way a person behaves and their personality, love will always be important to human beings, and in honest belief the world would be a rather dead place without it.