



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Jane Eyre as an Independent Cinderella

Parallels between the Fairy Tale and the Novel

Ritgerð til BA í Ensku

Eyrún Ýr Hildardóttir

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Abstract

This essay draws parallels between the fairy tale *Cinderella* and Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* (1847). At first, the Cinderella motif is examined in detail and its elements explained. The versions referred to are *Cendrillon* (1697) by Charles Perrault and *Cinderella* (1812) by Brothers Grimm. Common themes are then compared between the fairy tale and the novel. The emphasis is on similar childhoods, patriarchal environment and a presence of an ally. Later on, the focus shifts on the religious and spiritual views and their influence on the protagonists' values. The last part of the paper deals with differences between two stories, analyzing the idea of marriage and Prince Charming. And finally, comparisons are made with a full regard to Victorian era in which *Jane Eyre* is set, as well as the patriarchal set of values present in both stories. The paper concludes with the idea that the novel *Jane Eyre* is the story of an emancipated Cinderella.

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the presence of the *Cinderella* motif in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* novel. First the element of the Cinderella motif is presented in details and it is explained how this motif is applied in *Jane Eyre*. Similarities and differences between both works are established, with particular attention on how the stories end. With this in mind, the circumstances of the Victorian Era, in which the novel was written, are reviewed by focusing on the patriarchal system of values and the position of women in it. In the end, the idea of Prince Charming and the way in which Charlotte Brontë breaks away from the traditional Cinderella storyline is analyzed.

The story of Cinderella has been transmitted orally through the centuries and was first recorded in book in late seventeenth century. The fairy tale Cinderella is structured on the motif of rising from rags to riches, and the concept of being rescued by a Prince Charming. The standard elements of the rags to riches plot consist of an abandoned orphan, a cruel family, magical interventions that are life changing and a marriage and wealth in the end. Brontë uses two versions of *Cinderella* as her inspiration: the Charles Perrault version, "*Cendrillon*" (1697) and more often, the Brothers Grimm version (1812).

Both Cinderella and Jane are victims of the envy and cruelty of their custodians, Cinderella's evil stepmother and Jane Eyre's Aunt Reed. However, they have an ally against their enemies. For Cinderella, this help is in the form of a fairy godmother in Perrault's version, while in the Brothers Grimm version it is in the form of the birds and the hazel tree on her mother's grave. These allies provide Cinderella with the right attire and accessories to charm her future provider of happiness and abundance; her Prince Charming. Comparatively, Jane Eyre's fairy godmother is Helen Burns, the woman who gives Jane the perspective of hope, forgiveness towards her oppressors and the aspiration to become self-reliant. Adopting these values enables Jane to gain the independence, self-esteem and self-control that lead her to her "Prince Charming", Rochester. He is a man of fortune, a nobleman, experienced in life and older than her. It can also be said that Mr. Rochester is Jane's perfect answer to freedom from poverty and the way to a better life. However, Jane strives in a different direction. Jane wants autonomy and independence. She does not want a

marriage based on insuring security nor gaining material wealth. She wants romantic love. She wants an equal partner in a man, a relationship based on mutual respect. This is in direct contrast to Cinderella whose love aspirations consists of marrying the Prince Charming who will then give her the freedom and security she seeks.

Overall, it will be established that Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was written following the main tenets of the classic fairy tale *Cinderella* and that Brontë also completely broke away from the Cinderella motif by making Jane an independent and autonomous persona. Parallels are drawn in reference to both women being motherless and destitute orphans who are raised by oppressive and callous families. Both live during times where education and social status were out of women's control and expectations of appearance influence their lives, their religious and patriarchal societies. Finally, a spiritual, symbolical event guides both of them to their final destinies. Also highlighted in this paper is Brontë's decision to break away from the traditional story and create a Jane who not only rejects the classic Cinderella destiny of marrying Prince Charming, but who also breaks away from the traditional view of marriage.

II. The Cinderella motif

The *Cinderella* fairy tale is a well known story to generations of readers and is still influential to this day. The story has been around since the antiquity and the version known to the modern world made its first appearance in Giambattista Basile's collection "Il Pentamerone". It was published in Naples, Italy in 1634 under the name "*Cenerentola*". Charles Perrault further expanded it in 1697 that wrote one of the most popular versions, "*Cendrillon*", adding the pumpkin, the fairy godmother and glass slippers to the story. In 1812, the Grimm Brothers in their famous book "*Grimm's Fairy Tales*" republished *Cinderella*. It continues to be the basis for numerous new fairy tales, novels and movies. There are multiple versions of this story and even more related narratives, as author Bonnie Cullen stated in her 2003 article about the origins of the *Cinderella* fairy tale:

Studying more than 300 related narratives from Europe and Asia, Maria Roalfe Cox identified *Cinderella* stories according to the presence of certain themes: an abused child, rescue through some reincarnation of the dead mother, recognition, and marriage. (Cullen 2003)

The main story line of the *Cinderella* fairy tale can be summarized as follows; like a phoenix that rises from the ashes, a young girl rises from “rags to riches” and conquers her oppressors. In all versions, the same ingredients are present: a destitute orphan, the heartless oppressor, an absent mother and a marriage in the end. The Italian writer Giovanni Francesco Straparola (1480-1557) came up with a groundbreaking definition of a classic fairy tale: “poverty through magic leads to marriage and then money” (Bottigheimer 21). This definition helped describe the concept of a “rise” fairy tale. Its structure is in essence: “a rise tale begins with a poor and lowly hero or heroine who rises dramatically up the social ladder” (Bottigheimer 13). In other words, *Cinderella* is a classic fairy tale.

The *Cinderella* story fulfils all the components of a fairy tale and so does the novel *Jane Eyre*. This is demonstrated later in the paper. While the *Cinderella* story perpetuates the illusion of a Prince Charming coming to the rescue, the *Jane Eyre* novel describes a pilgrimage of a young woman seeking an equal partner. Despite this difference, both *Cinderella* and *Jane Eyre* endure the pre-determined ways of a patriarchal society.

Lives lived by the rules of androcentric societies subdue women seeking their independence. To emphasize the idea that romantic fairy tales and romantic fantasies are a member of the agent that suppresses women, Rudman and Heppen conducted three experiments to investigate the relationship between woman’s pursuit of personal power and romantic fantasies and published their outcome in the article “Implicit Romantic Fantasies and Women’s Interest in Personal Power: A Glass Slipper Effect?” Part of their conclusion is that they see fairy tales as a deceiving and devious tool to keep women from claiming their rights and seeking their power, and this, consequently, maintains patriarchal values:

There are two reasons why implicit romantic beliefs may be especially insidious. First, the fact that romance idealizes partners may prevent even egalitarians from targeting it as potentially harmful to women’s progress. Second ... If women are unaware of the linkage between implicit romantic fantasies and their aspirations, it will be difficult for them to counteract it when they ponder decisions that affect their future. (Rudman and Heppen 2003)

Fairy tales resonate with the society and culture of the times in which they were written. The fairy tale elements can be seen as an instrument to condition children from an early age to behave appropriately according to the social values of the patriarchy. As Parsons clearly states, fairy tales are used as a means to maintain patriarchal principles:

The embeddedness [*sic*] of appropriate gendered behaviors masks the fact that fairy tales are created and reproduced through the dominant discourse. A primary goal of gender construction in patriarchal culture is to prepare young girls for romantic love and heterosexual practices. (Parsons 2004)

For centuries, young girls have been and still are motivated to be prim, proper and humble. The *Cinderella* motif suggests that woman's mission in life is to prepare for marriage to a Prince Charming, and show submissiveness towards him. As stated by Parsons, “Fairy tales in the patriarchal tradition portray women as weak, submissive, dependent, and self- sacrificing, while men are powerful, active and dominant” (Parsons 2004). Fairy tales provide hope of a better life and abundance to the common man or woman. Therefore, they tend to create the illusion of a happily ever after ending, with the help of magic. Bottigheimer’s study on the origin of fairy tales, emphasizes this element:

Fairy tales, which speak in a language well understood in the modern world, remain relevant because they allude to deep hopes for material improvement, because they present illusions of happiness to come, and because they provide social paradigms that overlap nearly perfectly with daydreams of a better life. (Bottigheimer 13)

For the purpose of the paper, two specific versions of *Cinderella* are used in comparison to the *Jane Eyre* novel. The first, published in 1694, is *Cendrillon* by Charles Perrault. The second one is a rewrite of Perrault’s tale by the Brothers Grimm, *Cinderella*. The Brothers Grimm version was published 1812 in Grimm’s Fairy Tales folktale collection. The relation between the versions of *Cinderella* is apparent. According to Bottigheimer, who studied the root of the German fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, they originate from the French fairy tales: “The German fairy tales in the Grimm collection rest on a rich layer of French fairy tales” (Bottigheimer 13).

It is widely thought that Brontë mainly uses the motif of the Brothers Grimm version of Cinderella. As Clarke notes: “Jane Eyre is the classic Cinderella: poor, despised, and mistreated. Bronte would have known both the French and the German versions of the tale, and it is significant that she specifically chose to deploy the German version in *Jane Eyre*” (Clarke 2000). The Brothers Grimm version not only gives Brontë the opportunity to assess the women’s position within the Church, it also gives her the opportunity to entwine the story with mystical and pagan elements. As explained by Clarke:

The structure in *Jane Eyre* is a complex fusion of classical mythology, allegory, and fairy tale, resulting finally in a feminist allegory, a woman’s Pilgrim’s Progress, in which those elements of Christianity that demean woman’s intelligence, will, desire, and integrity are assessed and found wanting. Brontë’s is a Christianity reclaimed by the (re) insertion of a maternalist respect for women’s work ... It is the insertion into the novel of the Grimm Brothers’ Cinderella, with its resonance of the supernatural and the mythic, that conveys this feminist ethic. (Clarke 2000)

III. Cinderella and Jane Eyre: Parallels

There are many motifs in the *Cinderella* fairy tale that can be recognized when reading *Jane Eyre*, a “rags to riches” story with themes of a deceased mother, an oppressive environment represented by a wicked step-family, religious beliefs, social status, appearances and marriage.

In *Cinderella*, the oppressors are the wicked stepmother and the two stepsisters. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane’s Aunt Reed is the wicked stepmother and her two daughters, Georgiana and Eliza, together with her son John, play significant parts as Jane’s tormentors. Aunt Reed’s emotions towards Jane are fuelled with spite and jealousy. She sees Jane as a threat to her husband’s affections and she passes this animosity on to her children. This can be seen in volume II, when Jane asks her aunt about the reason for her malice against her: ““A strange wish, Mrs. Reed: why do you hate her so?” ‘I had a dislike to her mother always; for she was my husband’s only sister, and a great favorite with him’” (Brontë 232). Similarly, in *Cinderella*, the stepmother is competing for the attention of Cinderella’s father and the stepsisters go to great lengths in order to win the prince’s love. They go so far as to cut their heels

off just so they can fit into the golden shoe. As explained by Clarke, “The other female principle is represented by the stepmother and is male centered, always in competition with women for male approval, hoping for idleness” (Clarke 2000). It is evident that the androcentric environment sets these women against each other in order to keep them in their place, and has them fighting for their position in the world. As Brontë wrote in a letter to her friend Elizabeth Gaskell dated August 27, 1850:

Women by contrast either become ruthlessly competitive and pettily cruel, (Georgiana Reed, Mrs. Reed and Blanche Ingram), 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 (Helen Burns, and Miss Temple). (qtd. in Clarke 2000)

From the beginning, Jane Eyre and Cinderella’s living conditions are not in their favor. The Aunt and the evil stepmother perpetuate the patriarchal structure, “Women in Jane’s world, acting as agent for men, may be the keepers of other women” (Gilbert and Gubar 315). The future does not look bright for either Jane or Cinderella. They are oppressed into submission by the forces of the patriarchal society and live in hostile environments. Gilbert and Gubar explain Jane’s situation thus:

Her story begins, quite naturally, at Gateshead, a starting point where she encounters the uncomfortable givens of her career: a family which is not her real family, ... a foolish and wicked “stepmother,” and two unpleasant, selfish “stepsisters.” The smallest, weakest, and the plainest child in the house, she embarks on her pilgrim’s progress as a sullen Cinderella. (Gilbert and Gubar 342)

Cinderella is a slave in her home and sleeps next to the hearth in the ashes. Her position is even lower than that of the servants. This is echoed in the first part of *Jane Eyre*. Jane’s cousin, John Reed, has just attacked her and when she fights him back, she is the one that gets all the blame. Moreover, while Jane is carried kicking and screaming to the Red Room where she is required to spend time alone and reflect upon her actions, a maid tells her: “No, you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep. There sit down and think over your wickedness” (Brontë 12). This sentence reflects Jane’s place in the world during her childhood.

Like Cinderella, Jane is a penniless and destitute orphan. As Clarke states: “Jane Eyre is the classic Cinderella: poor, despised, and mistreated” (Clarke 2000).

Jane's break in life came through the education she received at Lowood boarding school, a charity school for girls. Though the living condition where harsh at Lowood, it gave her the opportunity to become a governess.

In Victorian times, women were discouraged from educating themselves because it was generally believed that women were intellectually inferior to men (Purchase 74). The only possibility for a young woman to gain education tantamount to men's education was to become a governess and teach the richer children. Brontë's decision to make her protagonist Jane a governess, gave her a better opportunity to gain independence, as discussed by Adams about the status of the governess in Victorian literature: "Employment as a governess was one of the very few forms of independent economic agency available to middle-class women" (Adams 58). Her profession gives Jane the advancement to seek her power.

Another notable aspect that Jane faces with is the importance of dressing "properly", which has been evident through the ages and to this day. Fairy tales do their part in preaching the importance of having the right appearance. "A high premium is placed on feminine beauty, which is equated with virtue in the majority of tales in the canon" (Parsons 2004). In the Brothers Grimm's *Cinderella*, Cinderella's stepmother denies her wish to go to the ball for the following reason: "No, Cinderella, you have nothing to wear, and you do not know how to dance. Everybody would just laugh at you" (Tatar 118). Cinderella then charms her prince with the right attire; a beautiful dress that she got from the birds of the trees located on her mother's grave. When wearing the right dress, Cinderella becomes visible to the Prince, but when wearing her ragged garments and working in the kitchen, she is invisible to him. It is therefore clear that nobility and wearing proper attire is important in the *Cinderella* story. However, Brontë disliked the vanity in fashion. She saw it as a tool to diminish women. As noted by Purchase: "In Charlotte Brontë's novel women's clothing is associated with both sexual repression and the wider restrictions men placed on women throughout society" (Purchase 27). This aspect can be seen in volume II, where Jane's insecurity towards Mr. Rochester is obvious. Not only does she doubt his true feelings for her, but she also experiences feelings of inferiority. This is evident when Jane considers her relationship with Mr. Rochester, "He is not of your order: keep to your caste; and be too self-respecting to lavish the

whole heart, soul and strength, where such gift is not wanted and would be despised” (Brontë 162).

Furthermore, Jane struggles with her self-image when she faces her rival Blanche Ingram, who enters the story through a temporary stay at the Thornfield Mansion with a group of noble people. At first, Jane considers herself inferior to Blanche in looks, social rank and good etiquette, as Blanche is beautiful, well dressed and comes from a noble lineage. In Jane’s own words, “If he liked majestic, she was the very type of majesty: then she was accomplished, sprightly. Most gentlemen would admire her...” (Brontë 173). Moreover, and much to Jane’s dismay, there are allusions to Rochester’s and Blanche’s wedding. In contrast to Blanche, Jane is just a poor and plain looking governess. Her desire to be more beautiful is evident, when she says to herself earlier in volume I: “I ever wished to look as well as I could, and please as much as my want of beauty would permit. I sometimes regretted that I was not handsome” (Brontë 98).

Although Jane’s feelings for Mr. Rochester are strong, she keeps up a calm and reserved appearance. In fact, her impassiveness makes her enigmatic and challenging to Mr. Rochester. This can be seen in volume II, when Rochester disguises himself as a gypsy fortune-teller demanding to read Jane’s future and thereby attempting to find out the true nature of Jane’s feelings towards him. During most of the scene, Mr. Rochester indicates that he is getting married to Miss Ingram. Nevertheless, Jane does not cave in but rather asks the fortune-teller, ““But mother, I did not come to hear Mr. Rochester’s fortune: I came to hear my own, and you have told me nothing of it”” (Brontë 200). This episode shows Mr. Rochester’s insecurity towards Jane’s feelings and how he uses Blanche to provoke her.

Later on, Jane comes to terms with herself and finds her strength in her love for Rochester. She does not love him for his wealth, but loves his inner man and finds herself equal to him in spirit. As Gilbert and Gubar note: “[Jane] begins to fall in love with him not because he is princely in manner, but because, being in some sense her equal, he is not only qualified critic of her art and soul” (Gilbert and Gubar 352). This is apparent in Jane’s speech when she confronts Mr. Rochester in volume II just before their first kiss: “’ ... 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”” (Brontë 253).

Jane's new found self-confidence leads her to feel superior to her rival Blanche Ingram. This is shown when Jane concludes about Blanche's true intentions toward Rochester. Blanche's aim is to marry Rochester for his wealth and prestige: "He must love such a handsome, noble, witty, accomplished lady; and probably she loves him: or, if not his person, at least his purse" (Brontë 200). Jane wins the battle with her self-image and comes to terms with her plain looks. She does not need to become a decorated possession of Mr. Rochester, and this is apparent in volume II after she agrees to marry him. Mr. Rochester becomes excited and starts showering Jane, with expensive gifts and lavish clothes. This leads to Jane feeling like a dressed up doll. She refuses taking part in it because she finds it degrading: "if I had ever so small an independency; I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester, or sitting like a second Danae with the golden shower falling daily round me" (Brontë 268). Jane does not want to become his trophy wife. As Clarke states, "Allusions to Arabian Nights furnished by Jane herself as she resists Rochester's attempts to shower her with luxurious gifts, suggest parallels between the power of a sultan over his harem and the power of the English gentleman over women" (Clarke 2000).

In contrast to Jane, Cinderella's salvation lies in marrying her Prince Charming. Furthermore, in order to get his attention and a marriage proposal, she needs to look her best and be prim and proper. That seems to be her only ticket to a better life. As Parsons states: "When the heroine is beautiful she need not to do anything to merit being chosen by the prince; she is chosen simply because she is beautiful" (Parsons 2004). On the other hand, Jane abandons the Princess element and follows her own persuasion: you find true happiness within you. She chooses to wear modest clothing in order to focus on her personality and virtues, and be free from being a slave to fashion. Jane's appearance is quite plain, but the endowment she relies on are her wit, intelligence and her strong emotions, or as Gilbert and Gubar claim: "And dispossessed Jane, who is not only poor, plain and little, but also fiery and ferocious, correctly guesses that she can no more become such a woman than Cinderella can become her own fairy godmother" (Gilbert and Gubar 345).

Though their childhoods are miserable, there is hope for Jane and Cinderella presented in the fairy godmother. In Perrault's *Cendrillon*, a fairy godmother takes Cinderella under her wing and gives her the beautiful dresses that allow her to catch the Prince's attention. The fairy godmother possesses magic and, is the force that

helps Cinderella, while Cinderella herself is passive and subservient. As Cullen notes regarding Perrault's creation of the fairy godmother in *Cinderella*, "Perrault's *Cendrillon* is the least active, and he shifts the spotlight to the fairy godmother, whose magic is as amusing as it is powerful" (Cullen 2003). Brontë echoes the fairy godmother element in some of the female characters that appear during Jane's childhood, for example. Miss Temple, the young sympathetic teacher at Lowood, and Helen Burns, Jane's friend at the dreadful boarding school, help Jane but contrary to Cinderella's fairy godmother, they do not take Jane's matters into their own hands. Instead, they teach Jane compassion and give her guidance that enables her to take on the world in her own way. As pointed out by Gilbert and Gubar:

This is not to say that Miss Temple and Helen Burns do nothing to help Jane come to terms with her fate. Both are in a sense mothers for Jane, as Adrienne Rich pointed out, comforting her, counseling her, feeding her, embracing her. (Gilbert and Gubar 346)

Furthermore, these fairy godmothers may also be seen as an embodiment of Jane's deceased mother. Miss Temple is the closest thing to a mother that Jane has ever had. She shows genuine affection for Jane during her stay at Lowood. Gilbert and Gubar explain Temple's part in the story as follows: "she is closer even to a fairy godmother than anyone else Jane has met, closer even to a true mother" (Gilbert and Gubar 345). Jane's affection for Temple is profound; she stands out in Jane's mind as a saint, "Miss Temple, through all changes, had thus far continued superintendent of the seminary: to her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements; ... she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess and latterly, companion" (Brontë 84).

In a way different from Miss Temple, Helen Burns has a long-lasting influence on Jane. Helen marks Jane's perception of life. Helen is introduced in volume I when she becomes Jane's best friend at Lowood. The gift that Burns gives Jane is the philosophy that she had adopted for her own harsh life. Her views place emphasis on being humble, showing compassion towards your tormentors and having faith in God. This can be seen when Helen is telling Jane to forgive her Aunt Reed, "Life appears to me too short to be spent in nursing animosity, or registering wrongs" (Brontë 58). Helen rises above her tormentors and forgives them as highlighted by Lamonaca in her article: "Helen models for Jane independence of thought on matters of theology and doctrine. Unable to reconcile her belief in an all-benevolent God with

the concept of eternal damnation, Helen professes a personal belief in universal salvation” (Lamonaca 2002).

Helen’s teachings are reflected in volume II when Jane goes back to Gateshead to face her Aunt Reed who is on her deathbed. Jane grants her Aunt absolution for the abuse towards her as a child and the words she utters to her Aunt capture the essence of Helen’s philosophy: “‘Love me, then, or hate me, as you will,’ I said at last, ‘you have my full free forgiveness: as now for God’s and be at peace’” (Brontë 240). Helen’s philosophy helps Jane free herself from the past and move on with peace in her heart and faith, in herself.

IV. Religion, Church, the Supernatural and Symbolism

The usage of the fairy tale element gives Brontë the opportunity to shed a light on women’s place at that time, especially within the Church, and weave mystical elements into the novel. As Clarke notes:

Like the Cinderella tale, *Jane Eyre* is structured upon two competing religious systems, one female-centered and pre-Christian, the other patriarchal and Christian. It is only when the two are viewed together that we can understand Brontë’s particular dialectic of fierce independence and romantic, seemingly anti-feminist, ideas about women, duty, and altruistic caretaking. (Clarke 2000)

The Christian influence is present in the Brothers Grimm version of *Cinderella*. The story starts with Cinderella’s mother dying and last words to her daughter are: “‘Dear child, if you are good and say your prayers, our dear Lord will always be with you’” (Tatar 118). This sentence emphasizes the importance of Christian values for young women, that they should behave properly, and put their faith in the heavenly father. The Christian element plays a significant role in *Jane Eyre* likely because of Brontë’s background. She was the daughter of a clergyman in the Evangelical church and this had a great influence on her writing. The Evangelical Church was very powerful in the Victorian social structure and had a strong impact on the social awareness at that time. The essence of their doctrine was to focus on the sin in humanity and that people should approach God with humbleness and piety. As Moran explains:

Evangelicalism shaped the nineteenth-century cultural imagination. Emphasis on fallen nature of humanity etched introspection and guilt on the Victorian personality. Self-awareness meant knowing one’s

wickedness and being constantly attuned to the dangers of temptation that lurked everywhere. (Moran 27)

It is thought that Brontë mainly use the Brothers Grimm version of Cinderella motif. The Brothers Grimm's *Cinderella* is a portal to Christianity and the mystical elements. The usage of the fairy tale element gives Brontë the opportunity to shed a light on women's place at the time, especially within the Church, and twine mystical elements within the novel. As Clarke notes:

The fairy tale element that is so important a part of *Jane Eyre* allows Brontë to include elements of magic and fantasy, and thus to escape the epistemologically restraining effects of realism. More importantly, fairy tale enables Brontë to reach beyond the moral and ethical constraints that Christianity sometimes enjoins upon women and to convey an alternative religious vision. (Clarke 2000)

Mysticism plays a significant role in *Jane Eyre*, but Brontë took the opportunity to elevate Jane as a strong and a spiritual woman:

Discerning God's will through seemingly direct contact with the supernatural, Jane demonstrates that women-true to one facet of Evangelical doctrine-must experience God directly, 'through the heart,' despite Evangelical models of femininity and gender which, paradoxically, denied women this very possibility. (Lamonaca 2002)

This is demonstrated in volume II when Jane and Rochester are about to tie the knot. The marriage is called off because Rochester's secret is exposed. He is already married and his mentally ill wife is held against her will in the attic. Rochester then makes Jane a tempting offer to become his mistress, but she refuses. This betrayal takes Jane to the brink of a breakdown. Symbolically, the following night of this breakdown, Jane has a mystical dream about the moon that encourages her to run away from these dramatic circumstances: "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'" (Brontë 319). This is an important turning point for Jane. Jane casts herself at the mercy of Mother Nature as she wanders destitute and despair over the moors. Jane also addresses Nature as a mother and asks for her mercy: "I have no relative, but the universal mother, Nature: I will seek her breast and repose" (Brontë 323).

This is echoed in the Brothers Grimm's *Cinderella*, when Cinderella puts her faith in her absent mother. She does so by planting a hazel tree on her mother's grave. The tree grants her wishes and helps her as a divine spirit: "Now, that no one was at home any longer, Cinderella went to her mother's grave under the hazel tree and called: 'Shake your branches, little tree, Toss gold and silver down on me'" (Tatar 119). In addition, a reference can also be made to the old Roman goddess Vesta: "Cinderella's association with the hearth and her thrice-daily ritual visit to her mother's grave link her in particular to Vesta, goddess of the hearth" (Clarke 2000).

Both stories make use of birds as symbols. In *Cinderella*, the birds play a prominent role. The birds in *Jane Eyre* echo the birds in *Cinderella*. The birds in *Cinderella* play a role as a medium for her late mother. They bring her the dresses and help her in every way to get to her Prince Charming. For instance, they help her with the task given by her stepmother: "And finally the birds in the sky came swooping and fluttering and settled down in the ashes. ... peck, peck, peck and put all the good lentils into the bowl. Barely an hour had passed when they were finished and flew back out the window" (Tatar 118).

In *Jane Eyre*, the birds symbolize Jane's passions. They also appear as a guiding and a figurative force at a critical moment in her life. We can see an example in volume II, when Jane is roaming around the moors in anguish and terror, because of Rochester's betrayal. She then notices some birds singing. The birds symbolize her broken hopes and dreams: "Birds began singing in brake and copse: Birds were faithful to their mates; birds were emblems of love. What was I? In the midst of my pain of heart, frantic effort of principle, I abhorred myself" (Brontë 321). It is also apparent in volume III, where Jane finds herself content and is reflecting on her situation. She is a governess in her own school for peasant girls and having her own living quarters. For this reason, she experiences satisfaction with her earlier decision to leave Rochester. She finds confidence in following her inner voice:

Yes; I feel now that I was right then when I adhered to principle and law, ... God directed me to a correct choice ... Having brought my eventide musings to this point, I rose, went to my door and looked at the sunset ... The birds were singing their last strains "The air was mild; the dew was balm" (Brontë 360).

With these elements, Brontë seeks to bring femininity into the Christian religion and emphasize that the purest approach to God is through the heart, as pointed out by Clarke:

The mother in heaven, her suffering daughter on earth and the birds that mediate between them suggest a female holy trinity that parallels Christian Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are joined to the pre-Christian symbolism of a tree growing out of the mother's grave of the hearth, and of the peas and lentils that signify connection with a powerful, benevolent mother-half divine, half-human. (Clarke 2000)

V. Marriage in Victorian Era: Jane Eyre and her Emasculated Prince

In both stories, marriage is viewed as the best option for women to gain happiness. Marriage in the Victorian era did not give women independence, as they had no power within the matrimony. It can be said that they moved from one prison to another. As Purchase refers in his book to an article in the *Edinburgh Review*:

However, the Victorian patriarch was dominant in the 'interior' sphere as well. Due to the man's status as husband, father, breadwinner and owner of all family 'property', including his wife, he reigned supreme, to all intents and purposes, throughout Victorian society.

(Purchase 73-74)

In 1847 during the Victorian era, Brontë attempts to deconstruct the theme of a "Prince Charming" coming to the rescue, a main tenet in *Cinderella*. The Victorian era is marked by the power of the patriarchal culture and Christian values. Men were the dominant force in all aspects of the social sphere and women were subservient to men in all classes. Ironically, women were inferior in a society ruled by a woman, Queen Victoria. As explained by Purchase: "The Victorians ordered their lives around a hierarchy of gender relationships which they constructed to suit themselves. With the obvious exception of Queen Victoria, men dominated every available public or social sphere" (Purchase 73).

Brontë takes a young governess, Jane Eyre, on a journey through this social hierarchy, and combines the mystical and Christian references. On this quest self-realization, Jane claims her right to be independent as well as emotionally intimate, in this rigid society of Victorian times. As explained by Lamonaca:

Despite Charlotte Brontë's struggles to reconcile her heroine's spiritual integrity with female desire and with the rhetoric of nineteenth-century femininity, she cannot, in the end, give equal weight to all claims: Jane imagines a life that will accommodate both her passionated desires and her ambitious nature; her spiritual integrity, however, ultimately demands that she frame both passion and ambition within the constraints of Victorian domesticity. (Lamonaca 2002)

Young women were encouraged to get married and take charge of the affairs of the household in support of maintaining the patriarchal structure. Men had immense power in all areas of the social sphere, including in the political, religious and financial spheres. As Purchase states:

The economically self-sufficient family functioned to define and preserve the well-being of the working patriarch, the role of a woman as "angels in the house" and the successful nurture of obedient children who were born and bred to keep the whole process going.
(Purchase 66)

In Jane's case, the situation is more complex. Her situation involves two suitors: Rochester, the seducer and superior of Jane, and St. John, her pious cousin. Jane gets to have a choice. Brontë is able to criticize the patriarchal religious value system, one where a woman is inferior to a man, and the Church that serves as a medium to God. As seen by Lamonaca:

Jane's religious convictions are presented as the primary force behind her resistance to conventional female subject positions, whether as Rochester's mistress or St. John's spiritual helpmate. Moreover, Jane's insistence on a direct, un-mediated relationship with her Creator [...] Evangelicals championed the liberty of discernment of conscience for all believers, but also prized a model of marriage in which wives were spiritually subordinate to their husband. (Lamonaca 2002)

Cinderella on the other hand, only has one choice (the Prince), while Jane is provided with an opportunity to make choices based on her values and critiques towards the Church as an institution when facing her suitors.

A new suitor approaches Jane in volume III. He is her cousin St. John. In the Victorian era, St. John would be the ideal partner for Jane. They share the same social

circle. St. John is a minister, pious, stern and true to his beliefs. He denies everything that serves the pleasure of the flesh and soul, and he is a dedicated servant of God. St. John proposes to Jane and invites her to follow him as a missionary to the Indies. This is a perfect opportunity for Jane to travel and become a decent missionary's wife. She considers it seriously but decides to follow her heart. She loves Rochester.

Jane rejects St. John's proposal because she sees a marriage to him as union to his values and not to him as person. In her view accepting St. John's proposal would equate to becoming a slave to the doctrine of the Christian faith. In volume III, Jane states her reasons to St. John about her decision to refuse the proposal: "I am not formed for marriage. Would it not be strange, Die, to be chained for life to a man who regarded one but as a useful tool?" (Brontë 416). By rejecting St. John, she disavows the Christian doctrine that supports the structure of the patriarchy. As explained by Lamonaca: "Classic feminist readings have tended to view St. John as a one-dimensional patriarchal villain. Accordingly, Jane rejects not only her pious cousin, but also the Christian worldview he represents" (Lamonaca 2002).

Brontë challenges the fairy tale motif by revealing the misconceptions behind it. This can be seen in volume II when Jane is about to get married to Rochester, she is skeptical and tells him: "It can never be, sir: it 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 day-dream" (Brontë 258). This sentence demonstrates Jane's lack of belief in the fairy tale marriage. Brontë uses obvious motifs from *Cinderella* to deconstruct the fairy tale element and to create her own version of an independent Cinderella. In contrast, Cinderella preserves the romantic idea of the princess in distress and Prince Charming coming to the rescue. Typically, Cinderella is the perfect role model for the ideal Victorian bride: "Cinderella's virtues then, the ethos she represents, are exactly those the Victorians held to be peculiarly women's virtues" (Clarke 2000).

Brontë diverges from this ideal and develops a much more complex worldview. In Jane's view, Rochester's material superiority is an obstacle rather than a blessing. This is illustrated in volume II, when Jane explains to Rochester her terms concerning their marriage:

I only want an easy mind, sir; not crushed by crowded obligations. ...
of the diamonds, the cashmeres you gave her? I will not be your

English Céline Varens. I shall continue to act as Adèle's governess: by that, I shall earn my board and lodging, and thirty pounds a year besides. I will furnish my own wardrobe out of that money, and you shall give me nothing but. (Brontë 270)

Because of their financial and social imbalance, Jane wants to create a certain amount of leverage between them by continuing to work as Adèle's governess. This gives her a platform to be self-reliant within the marriage, and her position as a plain and poor governess reduces their chance of building a marriage on an equal ground. Furthermore, it is evident that Jane sees herself truly in relation to their upcoming marriage: "Don't address me as if I were a beauty: I am your plain, Quakerish governess" (Brontë 259). Even if Rochester is Jane's superior, both financially and socially: "She wishes to be his equal in size and strength, so that she can battle him in the contest of their marriage" (Gilbert and Gubar 359). No matter how she tries to create a balance, she continues to be defined as an inferior in their marriage. It is symbolic, when Rochester describes to her how he wants to chain her like a jewel in his watch chain "I'll just-figuratively speaking-attach you to a chain like this (touching his watch-guard). [...] I'll wear you in my bosom, lest my jewel I should tyne" (Brontë 270). This sentence sheds a light on Rochester's obvious dominant position within their coming marriage. In such a scenario, Jane would be his prized possession and his subordinate.

Their plans to marry are abandoned because of Rochester's betrayal. This incident can be seen as a blessing in disguise, as faith led Jane to the River siblings at Marsh End: the sisters Diana and Mary and their brother St. John, who turn out to be her family. Furthermore, she also inherits five thousand pounds from her uncle in Madeira. The wheel of fortune finally turns in her favor. Her newfound family strengthens her social background, and she decides to share her inheritance with them. For Jane, the greatest solace is to feel part of a family. This can be seen when she reasons with St. John about her decision to divide her inheritance between the four of them: "And you', ... cannot at all imagine the craving I have for fraternal and sisterly love. I never had a home, I never had brothers or sisters; I must and will have them now: you are not reluctant admit me, and own me, are you?" (Brontë 387)

Jane is no longer a poor and a destitute orphan. Consequently, now surrounded by family and financial independence, Jane finally finds her self-confidence, enough

so to face Rochester on equal ground. When she meets Rochester in volume III, she is her own master. She declares her independence to him: “‘No, sir; I am an independent woman now.’ ‘Independent! What do you mean, Jane?’ ‘My uncle in Madeira is dead, and he left me five thousand pounds’” (Brontë 434). Jane’s inheritance gives her a chance to be fully autonomous. As Gilbert and Gubar explain:

Jane Eyre is now the heir of that uncle in Madeira, whose first intervention in her life had been appropriately, to define the legal impediment to her marriage with Rochester, now literally as well as figuratively an independent woman, free to go her own way and follow her own will. (Gilbert and Gubar 367)

Cinderella does not have options. Her only way out of her suffering is to give herself to Prince Charming, a common theme in fairy tales. As explained by Parson, “In many traditional tales, being rewarded with the prince and the security of a marriage is the result of the heroine’s submission and suffering, along with her beauty, rather than her agency” (Parson 2004). Brontë takes her heroine, Jane Eyre and gives her a chance to meet her prince, fully self reliant.

Although Jane has gained financial independence and a new family, it is important to consider Rochester’s situation. At a first glance, he is the embodiment of nobility and abundance, but with further examination, it is apparent that Rochester is strained at the fetters of the Victorian era. From childhood on, there were obligations that Rochester had to meet. His marriage to Bertha was his father’s machination in order to enlarge the family wealth. The Thornfield Mansion was his father's legacy and he passed it on to Rochester with all its obligations. Rochester is far from being free to act on his hopes and desires, as his arranged marriage is a burden on him. This can be seen in volume I, when he hints at Jane that he is a man of misfortune. “... but where is the use of thinking of it, hampered, burdened, cursed as I am? Besides, since happiness is irrevocably denied me, I have a right to get pleasure out of life: and I will get it, cost what it may” (Brontë 136). Rochester is a prisoner of his past and to his obligations as a patriarch. In other words, for Jane, it is not enough that she is fully independent. Rochester also has to redeem himself and go through a purgatory in order to free himself from his past. Prior to this in volume II, Jane leaves Thornfield after the realizing Rochester is already married. She reasons with herself about whether she should fulfill her desires and swallow her integrity to become

Rochester's mistress. She tells herself: "No; you shall tear yourself away, none shall help you: you shall, yourself, pluck your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim; and you the priest, to transfix it" (Brontë 297). To her, their tainted love does not fit with her virtues, but little does she know that these words are to be metaphorically fulfilled later in the tragic destruction of the Thornfield Mansion.

After Jane's departure, Rochester is injured when Thornfield burns down. He loses his left hand and becomes blind. His wife dies in the same fire. Consequently, through this dramatic event, he gains his freedom. The destruction of Thornfield represents the release of the chains of patriarchy and his injuries can be seen metaphorically as a castration that redeems him from his past, or as Lamonaca writes: "Although Bertha's death enabled Jane to return to Rochester, the couple's happy union seems first to require a mutual spiritual purging. Like Jane, Rochester has been chastised through suffering extremes, self-indulgence and self-restraint, must be purged from the text before Jane and Rochester's domestic paradise can be realized" (Lamonaca 2002).

Jane finds herself in charge of her maimed husband because his injuries give her power. This can be seen when she is describing their marriage in volume III: "Mr. Rochester continued blind the first two years of our union; perhaps it was the circumstance that drew us so very near that knit us very close; for I was his vision, as I am still his right hand. Literally, I was (what he often called me) the apple of his eye" (Brontë 451). Jane is in full control as Rochester's medium, so he becomes fully dependent on her, or as Lamonaca describes: "Jane, by taking on the role of divine intermediary for Rochester, ironically renounces spiritual autonomy for a reciprocal dependence" (Lamonaca 2002). Brontë has Rochester and Jane go through suffering and reformation.

In the *Cinderella* story, the heroine has to go through the ordeal and suffering alone. The Prince does not have to make any sacrifices before marrying Cinderella. In comparison, Jane is not willing to sacrifice herself and play the role expected of her by the patriarchal system. In order for them to unite, Rochester has to fall from his pedestal and start depending on Jane.

Many critics, starting with Richard Chase, have seen Rochester's injuries as "a symbolic castration," a punishment for his early

profligacy and a sign that Charlotte Brontë (as well as Jane herself), fearing male sexual power, can only imagine marriage as a union with a diminished Samson. (Gilbert and Gubar 368).

Balance is established, and their marriage is prosperous and filled with happiness as Jane describes it:

To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk, I believe, all day long; ... all my confidence is bestowed on him; all his confidence is devoted to me: we are precisely suited in character, perfect concord is the result (Brontë 451).

Though the happy ending element is apparent, the reason why Brontë chooses to portray the successful conclusion in a remote environment raises questions. It appears, to lead to conclusion that their love is frowned upon by the Victorian society, because of their unequal social status. Therefore, their love can only survive and grow in the rural environment of Ferndean. As explained by Gilbert and Gubar:

Ferndean is notably stripped and asocial, so that the physical isolation of the lovers suggests their spiritual isolation in a world where such egalitarian marriages as theirs are rare, if not impossible. True minds, Charlotte Brontë seems to be saying, must withdraw into a remote forest, a wilderness even, in order to circumvent the structures of a hierarchal society. (Gilbert and Gubar 369)

They are able to live happily in Ferndean, away from the society governed by patriarchy. In this context, Jane is able to choose an unorthodox path. Though, Brontë takes on the Cinderella motif in *Jane Eyre*, the ending suggests that, due to the strength of the patriarchal social structure and the strong legacy of the hierarchal values, their relationship would never be accepted because Jane is a governess and Rochester is her former master and a man of nobility. Although it appears in the end that Jane still has to adhere to the rules of social hierarchy, her journey makes her an independent Cinderella.

VI. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to demonstrate the presence of the Cinderella motif in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. This was done by highlighting various essential motifs found in the *Cinderella* fairy tale, and then comparing them with similar themes in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

Among the motifs studied are those of a motherless and orphaned child living at the mercy of an oppressive family, outside allies that help the protagonist, the near impossibility of pursuing an education as a woman, a patriarchal social structure that promotes a strict and predictable behavior of women and a social status determined by appearances, noble lineage and wealth. These motifs show correlations between both heroines. Both Cinderella and Jane are destitute orphans that are raised by oppressive caretakers. In Cinderella's case, it is a stepfamily, and in Jane's, the Reed relatives. Both characters receive help along their way, which turns out to be instrumental to their endeavor. When it comes to the concept of education, there is a major difference between the two stories. While in *Cinderella* story the education is not even an option, in *Jane Eyre* it is a very influential factor in Jane's life. When her relatives decide to abandon Jane at the Lowood boarding school for orphans, she gets a chance at proper education. Even the miserable times endured at the school, turn out to be a blessing. She is educated to become a governess, which at the time was the highest level a woman could aspire to. Proper appearance also plays an important role in both narratives. While Cinderella finds her way to marriage through beautiful dresses she is given, Jane rejects the notion of the importance of appearances. This is contrasted in the character of Blanche Ingram, Jane's rival for Rochester's attention. At first, Jane is intimidated by Blanche and insecure about gaining Rochester's love because of her plain appearance and comparative lack of social skills. Blanche uses the conventional etiquette and subtle demeanor to her advantage, while Jane views this as diminishing to women. Jane believes that a woman should be educated rather than keeping up a "proper" appearance.

Another key parallel between *Cinderella* and *Jane Eyre* discussed at length in this paper rests in the spiritual and religious symbolism present in the two stories. Both heroines are able to draw inspiration, and learn values that lead them to gain their true happiness, from the outside influences. For Cinderella, it comes in either the form of a fairy godmother or in the form of Nature, symbolized by the birds and the trees. The hazel tree on Cinderella's mother's grave, in particular, gives Cinderella a

spiritual connection to her mother that comforts her and gives her composure, hope and kindness. Jane's spiritual lessons come from her friend Helen Burns, who teaches her how to be resilient, pursue life with an open heart and offer true forgiveness to her oppressors. She learns of compassion and the importance of being humble and realizes that true beauty is on the inside. In a mystical twist, Jane also decides that the right approach to religion is not through the Church as an institution, but rather through direct contact with God.

The last theme, that is compared, addresses marriage and the dream of a Prince Charming. This crucial difference makes Charlotte Brontë's Jane stand apart from the classic Cinderella character. Jane is the embodiment of a woman wanting to be in charge of her life. Although Cinderella was written many centuries before Jane Eyre, they are both set in patriarchal societies. In such a society, Cinderella is the perfect role model. She is passive, pious and modest. She dreams of a husband that will bring her the life she always wished for. In contrast, Jane, having been raised in a similar environment, decides to be an active participant in her destiny. Unlike Cinderella, Jane values marriage between equal partners. When Jane first meets Rochester as the governess of his foster child, she falls in love with him. She is happy when he proposes marriage while still reluctant because of social status differences. She then finds out that he is already married. Because of her values, she neither agrees to marriage, nor to become his mistress. Jane later inherits a substantial amount of money. This empowers her to be autonomous. At the same time, Rochester suffers crippling injuries that cause him to retreat into a solitary life. Due to insecurities instilled in her while growing up in a patriarchal society, Jane now feels that she can establish an equal relationship with Rochester. In the Victorian Era, this is unconventional.

This paper also posits that Charlotte Brontë mainly breaks away from the Cinderella motif in that Jane is an autonomous Cinderella. Jane is emancipated in comparison to Cinderella, because she chooses education rather than appearances, develops an unorthodox view of religion and adopts unpopular rigid values. Having done this, Jane makes decisions that are very different than the ones Cinderella would have made in a similar story. This is precisely why Jane can be considered an emancipated Cinderella, or in other words, an independent Cinderella.

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