



THE PEDAGOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S 'JANE EYRE' ON THE FORMATION OF THE FEMALE INTELLECTUAL

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Abstract: This thesis explores the features of the Bildungsroman genre in Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre", focusing specifically on the diverse educator characters who influence the orphaned protagonist's development. It examines the impact of Mrs. Reed's unjust upbringing, Bessie Lee's complex emotional support, and the sharply contrasting pedagogical models at Lowood School, represented by the oppressive Mr. Brocklehurst and the enlightened Miss Temple. Furthermore, the study analyzes the spiritual mentorship of Helen Burns as a "peer-educator" and the authoritarian, duty-driven influence of St. John Rivers. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates how the novel critiques the systemic failures of 19th-century Victorian education while proposing a progressive model for female intellectual and personal autonomy.

Key words: Bildungsroman, Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, educator characters, pedagogical models, Victorian education, personal autonomy, spiritual formation.

As one of the specific features of Bildungsromans, in most cases, an abandoned orphan image or a child who loses one or both of the parents is chosen as the main character. The writer's goal is to show the hero's difficulties caused by orphanhood, as well as his growth as an individual, his understanding of the world, his ability to learn from the mistakes, and ultimately his transformation into a successful person. At the same time, the author vividly illustrates the socio-political environment of that time through the descriptions of orphans' life, the conditions created or not created for them, and the attitudes of various people in society towards them. Therefore, in the Bildungsroman, many educator characters enter the hero's life and contribute to his upbringing to a certain extent. The same approach can be seen in Sh. Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre".

In the mid19th century, the English writer Charlotte Brontë started the first female-character oriented Bildungsroman with her work "Jane Eyre". That is, in all the novels created in this genre until then, the main character was a young boy.

In "Jane Eyre", an orphan girl Jane remains with her uncle's wife and grows up under the "cruel educational measures" of Mrs. Reed, who is rude and unkind, like Mr. Murdstone in "David Copperfield". This woman also shows a cold and



harsh treatment towards the orphan relative, like Mrs. Dursley in “Harry Potter”. However, she spoils her own children excessively. She especially loves her son John and is indifferent to his violence and stupidity. Her character reflects the values of the Victorian era, namely the superiority of sons over daughters.

Jane Eyre is portrayed as a lonely but a proud girl who strives for independence from her youth, a person who is able to resist the oppression and injustice of the world in which she lives. Jane’s interest in reading and education is shown to the reader from the very beginning of the work. It is because of this that a serious argument arises with Mrs. Reed’s spoiled son, John Reed. It should be mentioned that Jane’s reading of books infuriates John. In his opinion, a poor orphan like Jane, who has no one else, has no right to read books, and even to live in the same house with such noble children as they.

One day, Jane sits on the windowsill, hiding behind a curtain, and reads a book called “The History of English Birds” with great interest, imagining herself in those distant lands described in the book. Searching for her John enters the room angrily and insults Jane for taking his book, and hits her on the head with a book. Unable to control her feelings, Jane throws herself at the boy. For this incident, Jane is severely punished. Mrs. Reed’s reaction towards this incident has been described as follows:

“Jane, I don’t like cavillers or questioners; besides, there is something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent.”¹

Here we can see that she even didn’t listen Jane, didn’t let her to explain her innocence. The author vividly describes Jane’s daily abuse and the fact that she has no one to take her side in the following passage:

“There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence, more frequently, however, behind her back.”²

The image of John Reed is depicted in this passage as a cruel, aggressive and completely uncontrolled child. The phrase “the terror he inspired” shows that he is a source of fear for those around him, especially Jane. He not only physically attacks (“strikes”), but also exerts psychological pressure (“menaces”, “abuse”). The most important thing is that he is not afraid of punishment for his actions, because he has a privileged position in the family. The servants’ statement “did not like to offend

¹ Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 6.

² Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 11.





their young master” shows his social and family superiority. This allows us to interpret John Reed not only as a product of personal evil, but also as a product of improper upbringing.

The image of Mrs. Reed is presented as a symbol of indifference and injustice. The phrase *“blind and deaf on the subject”* means that she deliberately turns a blind eye to her son’s violence. She is not blind and deaf in the literal sense, but morally “blind” – that is, she does not want to recognize the truth. Even when the violence is happening right in front of her, she does not pay attention to it. This shows that she is not fulfilling her maternal duties and is not able to properly raise her child. One more character created by the author is Bessie Lee, who appears as one of the first and most important educators in Jane Eyre’s life. Despite being a low-status servant, she plays a significant role in the emotional and spiritual formation of the heroine.

However, Bessie’s character is complex and two-faced. On the one hand, she is sometimes strict and demanding, scolds Jane, reproaches her as a “wrong” child. On the other hand, Bessie’s position does not allow her to openly defend her from the unfair treatment of family members. For example, she says to Jane:

*“You are a strange child... you should be more sociable and childlike.”*³

With this statement, Bessie criticizes Jane for not conforming to the model of the “ideal child” accepted in society. This shows that her educational views are partly based on social stereotypes.

However, on the other hand, Bessie is one of the few people who shows affection for Jane. She reads her stories, sings songs, and sometimes protects her. In such cases Bessie appears not only as a servant, but also as a substitute mother. Her songs and attention become a source of spiritual comfort for Jane. This is especially important in the cold and unloving Reed family.

Bessie also plays an important role in the development of Jane’s imaginative world. Through the fairy tales and stories she reads, Jane develops an interest in literature and a rich inner world. This later lays the foundation for Jane to grow into an independent, sensitive, and creative person. Another important aspect of Bessie is her sense of justice. Although she does not always protect Jane, in some situations she is relatively gentle and understanding towards her. This allows Jane to feel the existence of human love and justice.

In short, through the image of Bessie Lee, the author shows that upbringing is not only about strictness, but also about love, attention, and emotional support. She is a person who has a small but very significant positive impact on Jane’s life, laying the foundation for her mental stability and the formation of her inner world.

³ Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 56.





After the conflict with Mr. John Reed, Jane is sent to Lowood, a school for poor and orphaned girls. She hopes to escape injustice and live a happier life there. Prior to that event, Jane had heard a little about the school from their housekeeper Bessie, and was aware that young ladies were brought up “*extremely genteel and precise*” (which meant with strict rules) there.⁴

So, hoping that the pain in Jane’s heart would subside, she goes to Lowood school. However, things get even more complicated there. After Mrs. Reed describes Jane to the school’s headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, as “*a liar, ill-mannered and disobedient girl*,” the “*educational measures*” against Jane continue in a more public and stricter form. Jane describes her first days at school as follows:

“*As yet I had spoken to no one, nor did anybody seem to take notice of me; I stood lonely enough: but to that feeling of isolation I was accustomed*”.⁵

This passage is one of the important episodes that reveals the process of the main character’s upbringing. Through Lowood school, Charlotte Bronte criticizes not only individual fate, but also the Victorian education system.

We should admit that, Mrs. Reed’s negative description of Jane to Mr. Brocklehurst (“*liar, ill-mannered and disobedient*”) has a strong impact on the character’s later life. Here, the upbringing process is based not on truth, but on false stereotypes. Jane is labeled as a “*problem child*” even before she comes to school. This is a pedagogically incorrect approach that further aggravates the child’s psychological condition. The phrase “*I had spoken to no one, nor did anybody seem to take notice of me*” indicates social isolation. Jane is not only physically isolated here, but also emotionally. This shows another shortcoming of the educational environment - the lack of attention to individual needs. In general, through this passage, Bronte reveals an important problem in the educational system: if upbringing is built on false ideas, strict control and lack of love, it leads to spiritual isolation instead of developing the individual. The image of Jane is formed as a person who, even in such conditions, preserves her identity through inner strength.

However, she does not give up, does not become discouraged, does not tire of fighting, and at the end of the work she finds her way and becomes a successful governess (a woman hired to educate and raise the children of a rich family and living in their home). Although she is a poor orphan girl, she is a self-respecting character who is able to stand firm in her views.

In “*Jane Eyre*”, Lowood School, described by Charlotte Bronte, is not only a place of education, but also an environment where different pedagogical views clash. Such a contrast is reminiscent of the environment described in “*David Copperfield*”. Here, especially through the characters of the headmaster Mr. Brocklehurst and the

⁴ Charlotte Bronte. *Jane Eyre*. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 27.

⁵ Charlotte Bronte. *Jane Eyre*. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 53.





teacher Miss Temple, two different educational approaches are revealed and their influence on Jane Eyre's life is deeply demonstrated.

At first, the character of Mr. Brocklehurst appears as a person who supposedly establishes justice, but in the course of events he is exposed as a hypocritical educator. He believes that education should be carried out through strict discipline, restraint and self-denial. In his opinion, girls should be humble, obedient and physically resistant to difficulties. For example, he speaks about the hair of girls at school, evaluating even natural beauty as a "propensity for sin" and orders it to be cut off. Through these decisions, one can see an attempt to completely deny girls the opportunity to gain self-confidence or be proud of something.

Let us pay attention to the following passage:

" And why has she, or any other, curled hair? Why, in defiance of every precept and principle of this house, does she conform to the world so openly – here in an evangelical, charitable establishment – as to wear her hair one mass of curls?"

"Julia's hair curls naturally," returned Miss Temple, still more quietly.

"Naturally! Yes, but we are not to conform to nature; I wish these girls to be the children of Grace: and why that abundance? I have again and again intimated that I desire the hair to be arranged closely, modestly, plainly. Miss Temple, that girl's hair must be cut off entirely."⁶

Here Brocklehurst's main idea is to suppress naturalness and force girls to absolute obedience. He says that "*we are not to conform to nature*" and considers the natural beauty of children (curly hair) to be wrong. In his opinion, girls should be "children of Grace", that is, modest and simple in appearance, therefore, he considers even natural curly hair to be an "excrescence" and orders it to be cut off.

We can understand a lot related to his personality. Firstly, for Brocklehurst, education means the destruction of individuality. Hair is a sign of individuality and naturalness, but by destroying it he wants to bring all girls into the same, "obedient" form. Secondly, he misinterprets religion. He associates the concept of "Grace" with external appearance, forcing external simplicity instead of internal moral purity. This shows his hypocrisy (because he himself lives a luxurious life). Thirdly, his orders imply a repressive management similar to military discipline. This is not education, but a system based on control and punishment.

On the contrary, Miss Temple's calm response "*Julia's hair curls naturally*" expresses a completely different pedagogical approach - she accepts naturalness and tries to understand the child. The contradiction between these two views reveals the entire system of Lowood School.

The image of Miss Temple is depicted as a humane, fair and enlightened educator. She builds education on the basis of kindness, understanding and an

⁶ Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 96.



individual approach. After Jane's accusation, it is Miss Temple who investigates the situation and establishes the truth. As a result, she vindicates Jane and restores her honor. This shows the reader the importance of a fair teacher in a child's life. Miss Temple not only provides knowledge, but also moral education. She teaches Jane to be patient, restrained, and develop inner strength. Under her influence, Jane gradually gains self-confidence and recovers spiritually. Along with Helen Burns, Miss Temple plays an important role in Jane's spiritual formation.

Thus, the images of the headmaster and teacher at Lowood school represent two opposing pedagogical models: one is a repressive system based on fear and punishment, and the other is a humane approach based on love, justice, and understanding. The clash of these two forces in Jane Eyre's life strengthens her character, shaping her as a patient, fair, and independent person.

The nineteenth-century English novel frequently served as a crucible for debating the societal role of women, the rigidity of the class structure, and the efficacy of various pedagogical models. Through a complex hierarchy of educator characters – ranging from the institutional tyranny of Mr. Brocklehurst to the rational mentorship of Miss Temple and the self-taught independence of the Rivers sisters – Bronte constructs a comprehensive critique of the systemic failures of 1840s education while proposing a radical model for female intellectual and personal autonomy.⁷

The writer also deeply expresses the pedagogical and spiritual significance of the image of Helen Burns in Jane's life. Through this girl's ideas, she shows not the traditional (external discipline), but the internal, spiritual form of upbringing. In a certain sense, Helen can be interpreted as a "peer-educator", that is, a peer teacher. This is very important, because she is not a formal teacher, but one of the people who has had the greatest influence on Jane's inner world. Her main pedagogical idea is tolerance and forgiveness. For example, Helen once says to Jane:

*"It is not violence that best overcomes hate – nor vengeance that most certainly heals injury."*⁸

Through this idea, she teaches Jane that evil should not be responded to with evil, but with patience and love. This is contrasted with Jane's naturally sharp and emotional character. The image of the "mad cat propensity" presented in the work is precisely this – Jane's quick temper and tendency to resist. Helen urges her to be balanced and to control her emotions.

Another important aspect is that Helen's views have a somewhat religious basis, but this is not formed through the official church, but through personal faith.

⁷ D'Amica, Cameron N., "Jane Eyre and Education" (2018). Student Publications. 651. https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/student_scholarship/651

⁸ Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 86.





For example, she says: *“I can so sincerely forgive the first while I abhor the last: with this creed revenge never worries my heart, degradation never too deeply disgusts me, injustice never crushes me too low: I live in calm, looking to the end.”*⁹

Here she advocates rising above worldly injustices, and seeing the real reward in the afterlife. She also instills in Jane the idea:

*“Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you.”*¹⁰ – which is one of the main principles of Christian morality. However, through the image of Helen Bronte shows not only the ideal person, but also the limitations of such a character. It is known that Helen is constantly punished by Miss Scatcherd. She continued to treat Helen Burns with unmerited severity.

Despite these unfair treatment Helen never objects to this, preferring to endure it in silence. This may seem like her inner strength, but in reality, it is her weakness. That is, although she is mentally strong, she cannot protect herself physically and socially. Helen teaches Jane inner purity and patience, but Jane does not fully accept her path. She combines Helen’s spiritual strength with Miss Temple’s rational and balanced approach.

In “Jane Eyre”, the character of St. John Rivers, although not a traditional teacher, appears as an important spiritual and educational (didactic) figure. He is not a mentor in Jane’s life, but rather a spiritual guide and ideological “pressurer”. His character is cold-blooded, determined, and completely devoted to religious duty, and Charlotte Bronte describes him as an image who prioritizes duty and faith over human feelings. St. John wants to initiate Jane into the missionary path and even tries to determine her life purpose saying:

*“God and nature intended you for a missionary’s wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary’s wife you must—shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you – not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign’s service.”*¹¹

This approach shows that his educational method is authoritarian and prescriptive, that is, he aims to mold her into a certain mold, rather than to freely develop the individual. He also prepares Jane for a future missionary life, but in this process moral coercion and religious pressure prevail over encouragement. In his eyes, duty is more important than love; he offers Jane not love, but “cooperation”, which represents an ascetic approach to upbringing based on the suppression of emotions. Jane ultimately opposes these views and defends her independence, saying “I am not an automaton”.

⁹ Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 88.

¹⁰ Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 86.

¹¹ Charlotte Bronte. Jane Eyre. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, Third Edition, 1857. – 539. P – 613.





In this respect, the image of St. John acts as a decisive test in Jane's life: through him the heroine realizes her "ego" and chooses personal freedom. Thus, St. John Rivers can be assessed as an educational figure within the novel, but he does not represent a humane, but rather a model of upbringing based on strict discipline, religious duty and emotional restrictions.

In conclusion, the system of main characters occupies a central place in both English and Uzbek Bildungsromans. The following table presents a comparative analysis of the protagonists and educator figures in the selected works.

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