

Love and Desire in *Jane Eyre*:
A Theoretical and Character-Based Analysis



الحب والرغبة في "جين آير": تحليل نظري ودراسة للشخصيات

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المخلص:

في هذا البحث، تُدرَس العلاقة بين الحب والرغبة في رواية جين آير في ضوء النظرية التحليلية النفسية لـ جاك لاكان. ومن خلال توظيف مفهوم لاكان للرغبة بوصفها بنية قائمة أساساً على الغياب والنقص اللامتناهي، تؤكد هذه الدراسة أن الروابط العاطفية والتواصلية بين جين آير وإدوارد روتشستر تتأثر بتوق غير محدد إلى الاكتمال. وبدلاً من تحقيق الإشباع عبر الاتحاد الرومانسي، تُصوّر الرواية الرغبة باعتبارها مساراً لا ينتهي ويقاوم الوصول إلى خاتمة نهائية.

ومن خلال تحليل عدد من اللحظات المهمة التي تتجلى فيها مشاعر الانجذاب والانفصال واللقاء من جديد، تكشف الدراسة أن تشكّل الهوية في الرواية يرتبط ارتباطاً وثيقاً بالنقص، وسوء الإدراك، والسعي نحو «الأخر» الذي يظل بعيد المنال. كما توضح الدراسة أن القيود الاجتماعية والاعتبارات الأخلاقية تعيق رغبات الشخصيات، مما يدعم طرح لاكان القائل بأن الرغبة تنوَسَطها البُنْيَة الرمزية وتخضع لهيكلها. وفي النهاية، تبين هذه الدراسة أن رواية جين آير ليست مجرد قصة رومانسية، بل هي أيضاً



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سردية معقدة تتمحور حول عدم اكتمال الرغبة بوصفه سمة جوهرية فيها، ودورها المحوري في تشكيل الذات والهوية

Abstract

In this research, the association between love and desire in *Jane Eyre* is examined in light of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. Through using Lacan's notion of desire as essentially systematized around absence and boundless lack, the present analysis asserts that the emotional and communicating ties between Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester are under the effect of an indeterminable craving for fullness. Instead of bringing about satisfaction through romantic incorporation, the novel speaks of desire as a never-ending route that resists closure. By investigating some important moments of attraction, separation, and reunion, the article reveals how identity formation in the novel is intensely entwined with lack, misrecognition, and the search for the unreachable "Other." The paper also shows how social limitations and moral agendas thwart the characters' desires, thus supporting Lacan's claim that desire is arbitrated by symbolic structures. Eventually, this study shows that *Jane Eyre* is not only a romantic story, but also a multifaceted narrative that revolves around the desire's integral incompleteness and its prominence in modelling subjectivity.

Introduction

After its publication in 1847, *Jane Eyre* succeeded in becoming a book that gave a voice to the voiceless, gave strength to the weak, and gave a spirit of honest activism to the seemingly inferior sex. *Jane Eyre* is the story of a girl from the age of ten to marriage and adulthood. Having lost her parents in childhood, she lives with her aunt and her children in Gateshead Hall mansion. A hard and unpleasant life that has filled her childhood with sorrow and anger. Jane is punished for her misdeeds and is treated like a house servant. Mrs. Reed, Jane's aunt, seeks to get rid of Jane by sending her to Lowood boarding school. Jane grows up there, Lowood has a strict and religious environment, the religious aspects of Jane's personality take root there, and her acquaintance and friendship with a character named Helen Burns and the headmistress there, Miss Temple, strengthen Jane's religious principles. Principles that will accompany her for a long time.

There, Jane learns French and painting and becomes an independent and patient person. Jane stays in Lowood for eight years, but Lowood does not provide Jane with more room to grow, and she decides to enter another world. She goes to Thornfield and appears as a teacher to a little girl named Adele who lives there. The lord of Thornfield Manor is a





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young man named Rochester. Jane gradually falls in love with Rochester and a new horizon opens in her life. Jane, who has never tasted love before, falls in love with Rochester. On the other hand, Rochester, who is many years older than Jane and is considered a man with experience and time, also sees Jane's simplicity and honesty and becomes attached to her. Jane and Rochester's love is considered an unconventional phenomenon because Jane is from the lower class of society and Rochester is a wealthy man from the aristocratic class. Despite their personal fears and concerns, they proceed from this marriage to the stage of concluding the marriage contract in the church, but suddenly, due to a pre-planned event, it becomes clear that Rochester has been married before and his wife is alive, and therefore he cannot marry again.

Rochester's wife is a madwoman who lives on the top floor of Thornfield Mansion and has been kept hidden from the eyes of all the residents of the mansion until that day. Rochester married her when he was young at the suggestion of his greedy and money-loving father for the wealth of his wife Bertha's father, but soon he realized that she had numerous mental problems and that he could not continue living with her. So he hid her from everyone's eyes and set out on a journey in search of another life and made plans to meet other women, but none of them could be a suitable partner for Rochester.

Eventually, Rochester falls in love with Jane and wants to marry her, but when this truth is revealed, this will no longer be possible. After knowing this truth, despite her intense love for Rochester, Jane sees no other way but to leave, and overcomes her doubts about staying and decides to leave. Jane sets out alone and without any savings and endures many hardships. Jane has neither money nor acquaintances. She goes to the point of losing her life, but eventually meets a family who accept her and help her.

The man of the family is a young priest named St. John, who is the village priest and is very religious. He has two sisters named Diana and Mary, who live with him at that time because their father has recently passed away. Jane is very loved in that house and her emotional roots with those siblings become deep. Jane becomes a teacher in the same village and teaches her students who are inferior children and from the lower social classes. St. John intends to go to India and spread Christianity and asks Jane to marry him and accompany him, but Jane still has her heart set on Rochester and does not accept St. John's proposal.

Jane learns that her uncle, whom she has never met, has left her a large fortune, making Jane his sole heir. Jane also learns that her uncle was the

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uncle of St. John, Diana, and Mary, and that Jane's family ties to them are more valuable to her than the wealth she will receive, as she has never experienced the concept of family. So Jane divides her inherited wealth between them. Throughout her life with that family, Jane has been deeply concerned about Rochester and is worried about him. One day, she hears a voice from the unseen world, Rochester's voice asking Jane for help.

Jane can no longer stay away and returns to Thornfield to visit Rochester. But what she sees is the ruins of that large and beautiful mansion. Everything is destroyed, Rochester's wife Bertha has died in a fire and Rochester has also gone blind, and Lee Jane, her love for Rochester has not diminished in the slightest and remains by Rochester's side lovingly and takes care of him. They finally get married after going through many hardships on this long and winding road, and Rochester regains his sight after a while. Jane narrates this story after marrying Rochester and several years have passed. A passionate and enduring love story.

Through *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë's best-selling novel, society was awakened to the need to address issues related to gender. *Jane Eyre* is regarded as one of the best books that has been ever written. Set in a rural 19th century England, Brontë has created a fictional account of Jane Eyre's early life that no reader can fail to enjoy. The novel rotates around the conflicts between love and independence, conscience and passion, and a young girl's struggle to maintain her self-respect. These were all prominent themes in the patriarchal society of Victorian England in the 1800s.

Jane Eyre's message of gender equality, individuality, and women's empowerment is the foundation of why the original text is considered a feminist novel. Charlotte Brontë decided to eradicate customary stereotypes with the intention of producing a novel that authorizes females. Eyre's character discards the basic standards of women being acquiescent and in need of men's supremacy. This character stresses the importance of autonomous thought and equivalence while also criticizing the compliant picture of women in literature. As a result, the ideals of equal opportunity, women's authorization, and self-governing identities that the text shows are why it is at the focus of feminist discourse.

As revealed previously, since the year *Jane Eyre* was published, it has been regarded a valuable literary book due to narrating a story about emotional growth, moral spirit, and romantic contentment. Still despite its ostensive resolution, we can see a more multidimensional structure of desire and incompleteness that necessitates a more thoughtful inspection. This paper accordingly aims to do this via the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, whose conception of desire as continuously deferred and





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engrained in lack offers a worthwhile standpoint for re-examining the emotional lives of its characters. In other words, rather than observing love as a stable or reachable endpoint, this study displays desire as a forceful concern that persistently impacts and challenges identity.

For Lacan, desire is not a response to a perceptible thing that can be measured and satisfied; instead, it is rooted in an essential lack. For that reason, human beings are restrained due to a boundless consideration of gratification that can never be entirely attained, as desire is always arbitrated by the symbolic order and the indefinable presence of the "Other." The bond between Jane and Edward Rochester confirms this pattern of desire as their double-sided captivation is renowned by forceful attraction, but uninterruptedly distressed by public restraints, ethical brawls, and disguised realities. These disturbances do not only adjourn satisfaction, but also lead to desire by sustaining absence and difference.

Statement of the Problem

Although *Jane Eyre* has attracted the attention of so many researchers to date, these articles have largely sought to debate that desire leads to resolution through unification and solidity. Accordingly, they have not analyzed the prospect that desire in the novel may persist profoundly unsettled thanks to working as a never-ending force molded by lack rather than satisfaction. Hence, it is necessary to reassess the essence of love and identity in the text from a novel standpoint. Employing the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, this paper refers to the problem of how desire in the novel is viewed as something essentially unsatisfied. Lacan's view of lack denotes that identity is never in-depth, but instead formed through an unrelenting practice of longing for what is unceasingly impossible. This leads to such imperative questions as: To what extent do the experiences of Jane Eyre embody a desire that cannot be fully satisfied? How does her relationship with Edward Rochester reinforce or confront the view that love is organized around lack and deferment? And in what ways does the novel obfuscate the idea of a resolved conclusion? The problem is thus the tension between old explanations of the novel as a finalized love story and a Lacanian interpretation that accentuates the perseverance of lack and the uncertainty of identity.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws from the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, whose revision of Freudian thought provides us with an influential framework for interpreting desire as a condition of perpetual lack rather than fulfillment. In this regard, one of the most important points is that human subjectivity is not incorporated or complete; instead, it is created through



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absence, disintegration, and an unending pursuit of entirety that can never completely be accomplished.

Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) was a prominent French physician, philosopher, and psychoanalyst, best known for his treatise in which he structured the unconscious as a language. Lacan was an influential figure in French philosophy. In addition to Sigmund Freud, he was also influenced by the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the structural ethnology of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lacan's first scientific treatise in the field of psychoanalysis was his thesis on paranoid personalities as people who suffer from conspiracy delusions, and the author then organized psychoanalytic training seminars to examine topics such as anxiety, the unconscious, the subject, metaphor, and irony.

As an analyst of Sigmund Freud's theories, Lacan continued to introduce and analyze his works in the following decades and put forward important theories in the sciences of clinical psychology, philosophy, politics, art, and society, most of which were also published in book form. Lacan wrote in a complex tone and language, believing that the recovery of the fundamental importance of language in clinical and metapsychological analysis played an important role in advancing Freud's revolutionary approach to the human subjectivity. Although he was fascinated by surrealism in his youth, he adopted a psychoanalytic and Freudian approach in the middle decades of his life. On the other hand, his attention to some left-wing and feminist intellectual perspectives caused him to be criticized by the traditional and religious society of the time after the protest movement of May 1968.

As the most important figure of Sigmund Freud's supporter, Lacan also rejected the common understanding of the unconscious, believing that psychoanalysis is a procedure that confronts individuals with the most radical dimension of human existence. In 1966, a collection of Lacan's writings, *Écrits*, was published. Published by the prestigious Éditions du Seuil, this work was instrumental in establishing Lacan's reputation with the general public. The success of the publication led to the publication of two further volumes in 1969.

An important idea in Lacanian theory is that of desire as lack. Human desire, according to Lacan, is always complemented by a lack, since we can never achieve our ultimate desire; this desire is guided by social and linguistic structures (Bowie, 1993, pp. 17-35). In fact, for Lacan desire is never satisfied because desire always belongs to something that is originally lost. In stories and novels, this unfinished desire often drives the narrative structure. Lacan refers to desire as essentially different from need or demand. While needs can be fulfilled and demands can be



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uttered, desire persists precisely since it is entrenched in what is absent. This absence or lack arises as a crucial feature of the human condition. As stated by Lacan, individuals enter the symbolic order as the realm of language, law, and social structures through a procedure that separates them from any sense of original unity. Consequently, the subject is endlessly described by incompleteness, and desire becomes the apparatus through which this lost entirety is constantly, yet unproductively, pursued. A dominant idea in this outline is the prominence of the "Other," which implies both the social world and the symbolic structures that develop identity. Desire is not autonomous as it is intermediated by the Other, meaning that human beings decide to desire what they perceive as cherished or established in this symbolic system. This causes misrecognition, where the subject inaccurately ponders that satisfaction can be reached through external objects or links, when in fact desire is continually deferred.

Employing this model to study *Jane Eyre* results in a reinterpretation of its fundamental themes of love and identity. The experiences of Jane Eyre can be read as affected by an obstinate feeling of absence, which affects her desires and her sense of self. Her exchanges, mostly with Edward Rochester, do not settle this lack but instead disclose how desire lingers through distance, barring, and unreachability. Consequently, this Lacanian framework enables us to understand that love is not a state of achievement but a site where lack is both experienced and replicated. As well, identity is not a fixed or steady entity but an enduring procedure formed through the relationship between desire, absence, and symbolic structures.

Discussion

1. Desire and Lack in the Development of Jane Eyre's Identity

Jane Eyre is a novel by English author Charlotte Brontë, published under the pen name Currer Bell in October 1847. *Jane Eyre* lost her parents as a child and lived with her aunt. She also had a difficult time at the charity school in Lowood, but she never lost her spirit, honesty, and integrity. Jane forms a romantic relationship with a man named Mr. Rochester and uncovers the problems and obstacles in her way to a legal marriage. The story revolutionized the writing of melodrama, depicting a passionate and determined woman's quest for a better and freer life in a traditional and discriminatory Victorian society. This creative and enduring novel by Charlotte Brontë, with its hardworking and unyielding female protagonist, is a romance that continues to have a profound impact on literary audiences.

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Jane Eyre can be considered one of the first novels to introduce a woman's voice independently into literature. Contrary to the female stereotypes of her time, Jane's character is outspoken, self-aware, and bold. These same characteristics have led this work to be included in contemporary readings as a novel with a feminist orientation. What makes this novel more than a typical romance is not just the narrative, but the quality of the relationship between Jane and Edward Rochester, a relationship built on constant tension, curiosity, and power play.

Now, the discussion section seeks to analyze this novel from Lacan's viewpoint. As mentioned, Lacan is a prominent post-structuralist thinker who, inspired by the views of Saussure and Lévi-Strauss, created a remarkable transformation in contemporary psychoanalysis. But the fact is that his influence on structuralist ideas created a new view of the unconscious. In Lacan's view, the unconscious has no identity of its own and has a linguistic structure. In addition, he offers a new definition of subjectivity that is based on lack.

In Lacan's theory, the subject is not fundamentally a single or homogeneous concept. The "Other" is the main focus of the subject's identity: it is with the "Other" that the subject takes shape, understands itself with the "Other" and comes to know with the "Other". In the field of poststructuralist criticism, Lacanian psychoanalytic analysis has a special place. Two important features of this criticism, object-centeredness and decentering, distinguish it from classical psychoanalytic criticism.

Jane's childhood is filled with emotional abandonment, segregation, and an obstinate feeling of not belonging, which can be read through Lacan's view that subjectivity is rooted in lack. At Gateshead, Jane is regarded as an outcast, deprived of any warmth and affection, which implants in her a foundational sense of absence. This deficit is not only social but also mental, which affects her desires and self-image. Her own words show this early estrangement, "I was a discord in Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there" (Brontë, 1847, p. 41).

This feeling of being like nobody denotes what Lacan hints at as the disorganized subject, established through downgrading rather than unanimity. As he says: "Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second" (Lacan, 1966, p. 70). Here, Jane's unfulfilled need for love and courtesy alters into a more bottomless desire that contains not only care, but also recognition in a symbolic structure that has previously left her out. Her chastisement in the red room furthermore intensifies this lack as a result of functioning as an upsetting moment that marks absence in her identity.





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As Jane gets older, her identity becomes structured around an unending search for belonging, which approves of Lacan's statement that desire is always intervened by the Other. Jane tries to find authorization not only through love but through being seen, accepted, and valued in societal and emotional circumstances. At Lowood and later at Thornfield, this desire is articulated even more. Her affiliation with Edward Rochester stands for a yearning for double-sided respect: "Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings?" (Brontë, 1847, p. 201).

This determination for emotional perceptiveness designates Jane's desire to be acknowledged as a subject rather than an object. Lacan's outline is largely appropriate here: "Man's desire is the desire of the Other" (Lacan, 1998, p. 29). Jane wants not just Rochester himself, but his acknowledgement of her as a correspondent. Still, this acknowledgement is never fixed as it is introverted by power, camouflage, and collective hierarchy, which approve that her desire is dissatisfied.

Furthermore, Jane's development does not lead to a complete or amalgamated identity; instead, it characterizes Lacan's argument that the self is all the time in process, structured by a complicated lack. Even moments that may offer gratification, like her reintegration with Rochester, do not resolve this substantial incompleteness. Jane articulates her inside dread in one of the novel's most mentioned excerpts: "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will" (Brontë, 1847, p. 273).

Even though this citation represents self-sufficiency, it also symbolizes a tension between nonconformity and desire. Her independence does not dispose of lack; rather, it redefines it within fresh symbolic positions. Lacan's depiction of the insistence of desire underpins this reading: "Desire is a metonymy of being" (Lacan, 2013, p. 35). This signifies that desire relentlessly oscillates and is never unconditionally pleased, therefore echoing Jane's tenacious concession of identity. Her sense of self is not an ultimate triumph but a course obstructed by absence, yearning, and the pursuit of something that is always not attainable.

2. The Dynamics of Desire in Jane and Edward Rochester's Relationship

Lacan believed that the absorption between Jane and Rochester is activated owing to misrecognition as the peculiarity that the other can gratify one's lack. Jane considers Rochester as a man that is deeply emotional and powerful, while Rochester looks at Jane as a source of moral simplicity and rejuvenation. Still, these views are not unchanging truths. Jane refers to the intensity of this connection and says, "I have for

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the first time found what I can truly love—I have found you" (Brontë, 1847, p. 231).

This statement implies discovery and fulfillment, but Lacan thwarts such moments and writes: "The ego is formed in the image of the other" (Lacan, 1991, p. 17). Jane's fascination can accordingly be measured as identification with an image of inclusiveness she observes in Rochester. Correspondingly, Rochester's attraction to Jane is less about who she is than what she embodies, a flawless person who looks to resolve his own disintegration. Their love is consequently controlled by delusion rather than true reciprocal acknowledgement.

Desire in the novel is not reinforced by fulfillment, but by hindrances such as distance, secrecy, and prohibition. Rochester's dominance over Bertha Mason engenders a chief barrier that prevents the relationship from being efficacious. This obscured truth does not only unsettle desire but also produces and fortifies it. Jane's emotional confusion echoes this issue: "My future husband was becoming to me my whole world" (Brontë, 1847, p. 242). However, this "whole world" is built on incomplete misapprehension and delusion. The interruption of the wedding reveals the unfeasibility of complete amalgamation, forcing departure and resuscitating desire through absence.

Lacan refers to this structure concisely: "Desire is always the desire for something else" (Lacan, 1998, 30). Even when Jane and Rochester are together, desire is displaced; thus, it is never fulfilled, but always deferred. Their departure, rather than ending desire, continues it by reestablishing lack. Jane's departure from Thornfield becomes an indispensable separation that emphasizes the Lacanian idea that desire thrives on what is missing.

Besides, the relationship between Jane and Rochester is also formed by power disparities and the effect of the "Other" such as the symbolic structures of class, gender, and morality. Rochester firstly holds a central status as employer, older male, and social superior, while Jane looks to be lesser. Nevertheless, this hierarchy is wobbly and incessantly exchanged. Rochester seeks to control the terms of their relationship, even disguising himself and testing Jane's outlooks. At one point, he tries to describe her identity through his gaze and power.

Jane resists this issue by proclaiming her subjectivity: "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?" (Brontë, 1847, p. 238). This quote symbolizes a brawl for respect within the symbolic order. Lacan argues that identity is formed through the Other: "The unconscious is the discourse of the Other" (Lacan, 1966, p.





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62). Jane's resistance embodies her annulment to be distinguished as an object within Rochester's symbolic structure.

However, even this assertion does not escape lack; it reorganizes her in the same structure that provokes desire. Rochester himself is not exempt from this system. His desire for Jane is intermediated by public ideologies and internal scuffles, indicating that he too is subject to the Other. Hence, their connection becomes a site where authority, desire, and identity overlap, without ever accomplishing total resolution.

3. Interruption and Deferral: How Separation Produces Desire

The interrupted wedding at Thornfield plays a central part in the relationship between Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester. When Bertha Mason enters the novel, she discloses the made-up impression upon which their relationship was built, changing what looked like forthcoming gratification into a moment of extensive lack. This break is not only a narrative interfering but also essentially domineering in Lacanian terms, as it thwarts desire from crumpling into accomplishment. Jane's reaction embodies the failure of unreal concord when she says, "My hopes were all dead—struck with a subtle doom, such as, in one night, fell on all the first-born in the land of Egypt" (Brontë, 1847, p. 280).

This quote exhibits Lacan's declaration that desire is in need of prohibiting and impossibility: "Desire is constituted in the dialectic of demand beyond need" (Lacan, 1966, p. 54). The entrance of Bertha is a structural impediment or what Lacan would hint at as the law or prohibition that sustains desire. Without this disruption, the relationship could move toward conclusion; with it, desire is resuscitated through unfeasibility.

Correspondingly, Jane's decision to leave Thornfield, even with her strong love for Rochester, is a sign of a selfless moment in which lack is both experienced and reinforced. Her leaving is not only an act of moral veracity but also a symbol of following the symbolic order, which forbids her from satisfying her desire under prohibited situations. She utters the internal clatter that results in her leaving: "Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this" (Brontë, 1847, p. 291).

By selecting separation, Jane conserves her identity in the symbolic framework, but at the cost of emotional gratification. Lacan's citation of desire helps construe this discrepancy as "Desire is the metonymy of the want-to-be" (Lacan, 1966, p. 55). Accordingly, Jane's sense of self is attached to what she rejects. Her identity is not confirmed through amalgamation with Rochester; rather, it is shaped by the very lack that



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her departure makes. In Lacanian terms, she stays a subject of desire just since she does not gratify it.

After the departure, absence turns into a significant incident that reinforces desire for both Jane and Rochester. Distance transforms their association into something unreal, idyllic, and consequently more imposing. Jane's determined emotional attachment is perceptible when she states: "I could not, in those days, see God for His creature: of whom I had made an idol" (Brontë, 1847, p. 295). This "idolization" shows Lacan's concept of the unachievable object of desire.

Once separated, Rochester becomes less a real person and more a figure formed by yearning. Lacan (1998) states that, "The object of desire is never the object itself" (p. 32). Accordingly, absence does not depreciate desire but develops and alters it. By the time Jane comes back, the link has been restructured through loss, making their reintegration more meaningful. Nevertheless, from a Lacanian standpoint, this does not resolve desire; it only reconfigures it in a fresh outline of lack.

Conclusion

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Brontë, is one of the most important novels in English literature. After scrutinizing this novel through the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, the present analysis has discussed that love and desire in the novel are not resolved through gratification, but are instead systematized by an unyielding sense of lack. By employing Lacan's concept of desire as unremittingly deferred, the analysis has argued that the emotional journeys of Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester are delineated less by realization than by everlasting passion. Instead of utilizing a steady romantic finale, the novel's finale can be viewed as a moment that seems to reintegrate desire while still remaining entrenched in the structures that kindle it. Jane's sense of self, often understood as entirely appreciated by the end of the narrative, instead echoes an identity that is intermittently obstructed by absence, concession, and the desire for acknowledgement. Correspondingly, Rochester's transformation does not eradicate lack, but reconfigures it in a different symbolic and emotional structure.

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