Upsetting Binary oppositions in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre

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Introduction

Ever since it was first published in 1847, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* has been the object of uncountable analyses, extreme criticism, praise and hatred. One reason for the extensive interest in and various opinions on the work is the feminist aspect that is present in the novel. Considered controversial at the time; it has even been argued that “*Jane Eyre* has been involved in changing people’s notions of femininity” (Grey 145). According to Gilbert and Gubar, “*Jane Eyre* is a work permeated by angry, *Angrian* fantasies of escape-into-wholeness” (336), which suggests that the protagonist moves towards a complete being and a complete identity through her feelings and actions. Furthermore, the abovementioned authors emphasize the revolutionary “barely disguised rebelliousness” found in the novel, stressing an idea of a norm-breaking behavior found in the central character (Gilbert, Gubar 337). Themes such as power relations and the breaking of traditional gender roles are the focus of this essay and by presenting and analyzing these themes I will argue that the protagonist disturbs what has traditionally been seen as female characteristics and behavior and thus challenges long-established gender roles and gains control of control of her life.

Method and Approach

By highlighting traits and characteristics that have traditionally been associated with men/women respectively and analysing how the protagonist moves away from the traditional expectations placed upon women I will attempt to account for Jane’s journey towards self control and independence. To point out and define female/male traditions a structuralist view has been applied to the novel using binary oppositions to bring out the main themes. In an attempt to decide what is traditionally considered male/female in these binaries they have been compared to feminist texts and where suitable the idea of the Byronic Hero as a mould to define the male ideal. Finally, an account of the central character’s attitude and actions in relation to these binary oppositions will be presented. In order to clarify the method and approach of this essay, a brief explanation of the two literary theories structuralism and feminism will now follow.

According to Peter Barry, structuralism can be seen as the idea of how phenomena must be put in a larger context to be understandable. Everything is a part of a larger structure and
by analyzing this structure we can get to know more about each specific case. Structuralists also argue that in the process of defining the arbitrary symbols that words really are we compare them to other expressions and in relation to these find out the meanings of the words. Barry refers to the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure who claimed that “the meaning of words are (what we might call) *relational*” (42). Furthermore, Barry states that “[i]f we have paired opposites then this mutually defining aspect of words is even more apparent” (42). This suggests that words such as ‘dark’ would have little meaning if not compared to the word ‘light’ (Barry 42). The aspect of structuralism that will dominate the analysis of the novel is the idea of binary oppositions.

According to Peter Barry, the 1960s women’s movement is the origin of today’s feminist criticism (121). This movement emphasized the importance of books and texts as a means of carrying out the “images of women promulgated by literature” (Barry 120). Within feminist criticism there is a disunity regarding the involvement of other literary theories; this has resulted in a variety of different kinds of feminist criticism focusing on women’s questions from partly separate point of views (Barry 124-126). The aspect of feminist criticism as a means of analyzing and pointing out gender roles and power relations will be in focus in this essay.

The reason for choosing binary oppositions as a means of analyzing feminist aspects of *Jane Eyre* is that it is a novel that has been frequently discussed in several feminist writings. Subjects such as independency, poverty and madness have often been dealt with. These subjects are words that obtain a more evident meaning when contrasted to their counterparts. By bringing out these words’ binary opposition the intention is to make “the mutually defining aspect of words” more prominent and thus highlight the protagonist’s ‘disturbance of expectations placed on women (Barry 42).

As the choice of binary oppositions, and the definition of female/male characteristics and behaviour, are involved in an arbitrary process, there is always a risk that the subjects will not be covered in a satisfactory way. However, several binary pairs have been chosen and they consist of entities often referred to in feminist texts. These binaries have also been compared to the idea of the Byronic Hero as a male ideal. Through this procedure a too narrow description is hopefully avoided and a relevant account of the hitherto presented theory concerning Jane Eyre’s transgression of the binary oppositions achieved.
The reason for including the Byronic Hero in the comparison of male/female roles is that the figure is often referred to in terms of “the model for the behaviour of avant-garde young men” and that he “gave focus to the yearnings of emancipated young women.” Thus it seems relevant to compare, this seemingly generally accepted ‘male ideal’ to the feminist texts in order to achieve a more historically accurate picture of expected gender roles (W.W. Norton & Company). In The Norton Anthology of English Literature the Byronic Hero is defined as an alien, mysterious, and gloomy spirit, superior in his passions and powers to the common run of humanity, whom he regards with disdain. He harbors the torturing memory of an enormous, nameless guilt that drives him toward an inevitable doom. He is in his isolation absolutely self-reliant, pursuing his own ends according to his self-generated moral code against any opposition, human or supernatural. And he exerts an attraction on other characters that is the more compelling because it involves their terror at his obliviousness to ordinary human concerns and values. This figure, infusing the archrebel in a nonpolitical form with a strong erotic interest; was imitated in life as well as in art and helped shape the intellectual and the cultural history of the later nineteenth century. (480)

This definition is relevant to include since it gives an idea of the expected roles of men in literature at the time when Jane Eyre was written and seems to capture many of the characteristics of Rochester in Jane Eyre.

Previous Research and Material

Jane Eyre is considered to be a ‘classic feminist text’ and thus there is a great amount of previous research to be found on the subject. As previously mentioned, the novel was first published in 1847. The edition used as the primary source in this essay is from 2001. Jane Eyre has been considered a controversial novel and according to Matthew Arnold, Charlotte Brontë has a mind that “contains nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage” (qtd. in Gilbert, Gubar 337). It is thus not unexpected that both the novel Jane Eyre and the author Charlotte Brontë attracted a great deal of attention and that secondary sources dealing with Jane Eyre are numerous. Elaine Showalter’s A Literature of Their Own, a study of novels written by women, and Debra Teachman’s Understanding Jane Eyre both present a picture of the life of women in nineteen century England, and can be mentioned as examples of literature on the
subject. As a well known source often referred to in literary essays dealing with Jane Eyre, The Madwoman in the Attic can also be brought up; a text interpreting great female authors of the nineteenth century. The text is written by Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar and was first published in 1980.

**Presentation of the Analysis**

The analysis is divided into sections representing the different binary oppositions. In the analysis I will use four sets of binaries to highlight Jane’s worrying of expected gender roles. The initial binary pair dealt with is Master/Servant.

**Jane Worries the Master/Servant Binary**

The binary opposition master/servant will be discussed both metaphorically and literally. In Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex the reader is told that women can often be found in positions of obedience “for she has been thought to accept masculine authority” (Beauvoir 611). Beauvoir also describes women as servants in the way that they are products of the abovementioned patriarchal system and that their chores are of the kind that teach the woman “patient and passivity” while waiting “for the sugar to melt” and “for the dough to rise” (Beauvoir 609). The fact that men are seen as the dominating part and women as responsible for traditional chores in the household shows how the role of women in comparison to men is more the one of a servant than a master.

The theme of master/servant is present in the novel from the very beginning, and is very evident in the power relations between John Reed and Jane. Even though Jane is supposedly a family member of her foster family, she is often treated like an outcast. In the first chapter when John Reed enters the room where Jane is reading and finds her behind a curtain, Jane asks, “What do you want?” whereupon John Reeds replies, “‘What do you want, Master Reed?’” (Brontë 7). A strong inferiority is here expressed from John Reed’s side; he proclaims himself as the master although he is only a fourteen year old “schoolboy” (Brontë 7). Merely a child and still given the possibility to act as if the master of the house, John Reed is an example of how gender is important in power relations. John Reed has, after the death of his father, taken on the role as the patriarch in the home. He considers it his right to punish and insult Jane. After lecturing Jane on her “impudence in answering mama a while
since” Jane’s cousin carries on by telling her: “Now I’ll teach you to rummage my book shelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years” (Brontë 8). Through actions like these John Reed shows his superiority; he believes himself to be the master.

Evidently, the idea that John Reed is the master of the house is not just his own view; the lack of disciplinary measures taken from the mother in question indicates that the rest of the people surrounding the Reed family also consider John to be the family’s leader. Furthermore, after the altercation between Jane and John, Jane is the one who is forced to explain herself and her behavior: “’For shame! For shame!’ cried the lady’s-maid. ‘What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress’s son! Your young master’” (Brontë 9). To this accusation Jane replies, “’Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?’”(Brontë 9). Judging from the answer she receives her ranking in the household is even lower than so: “’[Y]ou are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep. There, sit down, and think over your wickedness.’” (Brontë 9). John Reed is said to be Jane’s master since he is the male in the household. His father is dead and he has not got any brothers. He is perceived as the master because he is the only male in the family. Jane is seen as his subordinate because she is female and because she is poor. Mrs. Reed however, is not called Jane’s mistress. Thus, the argument that Jane is seen as less than a servant does not seem to be the reason why she should treat John Reed as her master. Mrs. Reed is referred to as Jane’s ‘benefactress’ whereas John is referred to as ‘master’. John’s title appears in other words to be the result of an attitude towards men’s power position in relation to women. Thus, this quotation and the attitude expressed towards the binary oppositions master/servant indicates that men are more likely to be perceived as a leader and thus the master than are women.

One different interpretation is that the maid’s reference to John reed as master could have another meaning than ruler; she could mean master as in ‘young gentleman’. The fact still remains though; John Reed acts as if he is the master of the house and Jane questions it by answering back: “How is he my master?” suggesting that Jane too believes that John acts like he is her master. (Brontë 8). In addition, the idea of the man as the master and the women as unofficial servants recurs in several contexts throughout the novel as well as in feminist criticism and thus these counter-arguments seem plausible.
When Jane is taken to the “institution for educating orphans”, Lowood, John Reed is no longer the master, but Mr. Brocklehurst is (Brontë 42). He does not actually work at the school but his influence is still noticeable. Mr. Brocklehurst is the one who makes the decision that Jane should go to Lowood, he is in a power position because he is in charge. Mr. Brocklehurst is a man and thus he is the master of Jane, the other girls at school, the female teachers of the school and his daughters. Even though Mr. Brocklehurst proclaims that he has “a Master to serve whose kingdom is not of this world,” he seems to put himself in his Master’s position in order “to mortify in these girls the lust of the flesh; teach them to clothe themselves with shamed-facedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel” (Brontë 54). This is his attitude towards the Lowood girls and yet his own daughters are reportedly dressed in “velvet, silk and furs” (Brontë 54). Mr. Brocklehurst’s idea of the need to ‘mortify’ the girls thus seems like a creation of his own mind; a result of the fact that he sees himself as the master of the school and thus the girls. Mr. Brocklehurst is a servant of God. The girls and teachers of the school are however both servants of God and of Mr. Brocklehurst.

Later in the novel Jane arrives at Thornfield and is introduced to a new master; Mr Rochester. This relationship between master and servant is however slightly different from the hitherto described. Up to this point Jane has had strong feelings of dislike for her ‘masters’. Jane’s feelings for Mr. Rochester however are of another character. Mr. Rochester is nevertheless the master since he owns the house and Jane is his employee. According to Debra Teachman, “[t]o a man like Mr. Rochester, who is not used to restriction or argument from those dependent on him, a woman like Jane Eyre is an enigma” (Teachman 11). Teachman points out how Jane “performs her duties as Adele’s governess admirably and is a help to Mrs. Fairfax in other ways as well, but she does not show Mr. Rochester the degree of deference to which he has been accustomed” (Teachman 11). By breaking the expected pattern Jane worries the binary opposition; time after time she refuses to be regarded as a servant, or at least to view the men as her masters. She answers back when told that John Reed is her ruler. At Lowood she refuses to settle in and believes that she is of less worth than anyone else. When she experiences the proposed marriage to Mr. Rochester as likely to be one between unequal parties she decides to leave Thornfield in order to become the master of her own life. Furthermore, as Edward Medelson points out, even before finding out about Mr. Rochester’s marriage Jane has questioned him and their equality. She has “perceived him as a master of
female slaves” (97). Mendelson presents the following quotation that can be seen as an example of how Jane cannot agree with the power relation between the two:

He huckled; he rubbed his hands. “Oh, it s rich to see and hear her!” he exclaimed. “ Is she original? Is she piquant? I would not exchange this one little English girl for the grand Turk’s whole seraglio; gazelle-eyes, houri forms and all!”

The eastern allusion bit me again: “I’ll not stand you an inch in stead of a seraglio,” I said, “so don’t consider me an equivalent for one; if you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you, sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul without delay; and lay out in extensive slave-purchases some of the spare cash you seem at a loss to spend satisfactorily here.”

“And what will you do, Janet, while I am bargaining for so many tons of flesh and such an assortment of black eyes?”

“I’ll be preparing myself to go out as a missionary to preach liberty to them that are enslaved- your harem inmates amongst the rest…” (Brontë 229, 230)

Mr. Rochester refers to Jane as his “little English girl,” which suggests that he sees Jane as an inferior. It is also evident that Jane will not let Mr. Rochester compare her to a ‘slave-purchase’. Instead of accepting this treatment Jane tells him that she will “go out as a missionary,” an offer that she later rejects from her cousin since the forms of it could not be on equal terms. In other words, Jane makes sure she is treated the way she wants to be treated. When something appears to stand in the way of her equality she objects. This goes against the idea of men as masters and is an example of how Jane worries the binary.

By breaking loose from the traditional behaviour usually expected from women, and instead starting to make her own money and live in a house of her own, Jane becomes the master of her life.

However, it can be argued that Jane herself maintains the expected male/female power roles. Before going to Lowood she does tell her benefactress Mrs. Reed that the late Mr. Reed would not have liked the treatment Jane receives; this shows how despite the death of Mr. Reed, Mrs. Reeds should still consider what her husband (or her master) would have thought of her actions. According to Gilbert and Gubar, this shows how Mrs. Reed too “is surrounded by patriarchal limits” (343). I would argue that even if this is some vague form of momentary
expression of support for patriarchal power, Jane’s stubborn refusal to yield to the men around her and the dissociation from the role as a submissive servant must lead to the conclusion that Jane, by challenging the binaries, also challenges traditional gender roles. I would also argue that the dominate feature of Jane’s outburst against Mrs. Reeds could be seen not as much as a reminder of patriarchal rule, but more of an example of how Jane transgresses the prevailing idea of girls/women of the time as quiet and submissive.

Jane Disturbs the Dependence/Independence Binary

The possibilities of independence for women during the nineteenth century were, as shown in Jane Eyre, limited. However, to be able to discuss this matter in a more explicit manner and to accurately develop the previous statement further, a definition of the word independency as it is used in this essay seems relevant. In this essay the word independence will henceforth be used as a description of freedom from external domination.

In Norton’s third and critical edition of Jane Eyre Adrienne Rich discusses the history of women as inferior to men by commenting on Phyllis Chesler’s statement “women are motherless children in a patriarchal society.”(qtd. in Brontë 470). According to Phyllis, this means that women “have been dependent on men as children are on women; and the most they can do is teach their daughters the tricks of surviving in the patriarchy by pleasing, and attaching themselves to, powerful or economically viable men” (Brontë 470). This shows how dependence is associated with women whereas independence is associated with men. In The Second Sex Simone de Beauvoir emphasizes the difference between the sexes as follows: “Woman herself recognizes that the world is masculine on the whole; those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it today are men” (Beauvoir 609). She also adds that “[t]he lot of woman is a respectful obedience” (Beauvoir 609). Together with the definition of the Byronic Hero as “absolutely self-reliant” the binaries dependent/independent can in this case be analyzed as follows; women are regarded as likely to be dependent on a man whereas men are not likely to be dependent on women (W.W. Norton& Company).

In Jane Eyre, women and men do not have the same role in society. Both Jane and other women in the novel can be said to be dependent on men; young Adele needs Mr. Rochester since he is supposedly her father. The servants working at Thornfield Hall also need Mr. Rochester; they are his employees. In a way, Bertha who is locked in the attic is also put in a dependent situation; she cannot get away, and even if she had not been considered mad, her
marriage to Mr. Rochester would still have made her dependent on him. Jane is also dependent on other people, the Reeds, Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester and also St. John. Throughout the essay Jane experiences and struggles against different forms of dependence. There is the economical dependence that Jane experiences before she starts making her own money that effects her situation when living with the Reeds and as a student at Lowood. There is a parental dependence that Jane experiences when living with the Reeds: she has no real parents but because she is left with the family she is in a position of dependence. In addition to the abovementioned forms of dependence that Jane encounters there is also the dependence that comes with marriage; the husband is the master and the wife thus dependent on him. In the society described in the novel a woman is from the day she is born dependent on different people.

However, there is something that makes the protagonist in Jane Eyre stand out from the traditional idea of women as dependent. The protagonist’s actions and conduct have throughout the years provoked people, and given Jane the status of a feminine hero.

According to Gilbert and Gubar, the “proud Byronic sexual energy of Rochester” is not what was shocking to the Victorian reviewers but instead Jane’s “Byronic pride and passion” (Gilbert, Gubar 2000). This pride and passion is what causes Jane to transgress the binary oppositions; she leaves the expected role of a dependent woman. The fact that Jane is referred to as Byronic also emphasizes her independence. As we have previously seen, the idea of the Byronic hero is that he is an independent individual. If Jane also is Byronic this means that she is closer to what is perceived as male behavior than to female. Gilbert and Gubar state that the “sexual vibrations” of the novel were not as controversial as “the heroine’s refusal to submit to her social destiny” (338). It appears as though the combination of both being a woman and independent is not possible without stirring strong opposition. Gilbert and Gubar further suggest that the strong reactions to Jane breaking the ‘rules’ that were set up for women could be expected. Jane’s strong feelings and striving for independence makes her more radical than the ‘sexual vibrations’ in the novel (338). Gilbert and Gubar claim that “what horrified the Victorians was Jane’s anger.” They continue to analyse the case by suggesting that perhaps they, rather than more resent critics were correct in the response to the book.

For while the mythologizing of repressed rage may parallel the mythologizing of
repressed sexuality, it is far more dangerous to the order of society. The occasional woman who has a weakness for black-browed Byronic heroes can be accommodated in novels and even in some drawing rooms; the woman who yearns to escape entirely from drawing rooms and patriarchal mansions cannot. (Gilbert, Gubar 338)

It is obvious that Jane because of the fact that she acts in a way that is expected from men and not women can reach independency since independency is a part of the ‘male norm.’ Ironically, the behaviour that is the norm and much desired from men is not accepted in women. Thus Jane’s anger is not considered positive.

Throughout the novel Jane struggles to reach independency: she talks back, leaves people that she believes treat her badly and she accepts situations only when she finds them satisfying and beneficial to herself. By turning down situations that she believes would hold her back Jane moves towards independency. The proposal from her cousin St. John is an example of this. Jane realizes that with him she would be “chained for life to a man who regards one but as a useful tool” and thus considers a marriage a disadvantage in her struggle to become independent and whole (Brontë 354).

The different forms of dependence Jane experiences in the novel are gradually overcome and Jane changes dependence to independence. Not until Jane believes that complete independence is reached she returns to Mr. Rochester. She reaches economical independence by working and inheriting money. She grows up and is thus not dependent on the Reeds. She leaves Mr. Rochester and does not return until she is in a more dominant position. The martial dependence is thus different from what it would have been had she married him earlier on in the novel. When Jane returns to Mr. Rochester she finds him injured after a great fire; he has lost his sight and one hand. This is one of the reasons why Jane ends up in a more powerful position; when losing some of his physical strength Mr. Rochester is forced to rely more on Jane and she proclaims: “I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you than I did in your proud independence, when you disdained every part but that of the giver and protector” (Brontë 379). Jane is in other words aware of the change in Mr. Rochester and can thus accept a marriage to him.
The injuries that Mr. Rochester suffers from is however not the only reasons for Jane’s acceptance of Mr. Rochester’s second proposal. Another reason for Jane’s return to Mr. Rochester is the fact that she gains economical independence.

Jane Upturns the Rich/Poor Binary

In *Jane Eyre* the binary pair rich/poor is ever present. There is a contrast between the rich people living in mansions with servants and the poor people living in cottages. In the beginning of the novel when Jane stays with her relatives it is obvious that she is poor and they are rich. Jane’s unknown relatives are referred to as “poor” and “low” and Jane is asked whether she is “silly enough to wish to leave such a splendid place?” (Brontë 20). The binary opposition rich/poor might traditionally be more connected to social status than to men and women respectively. There is however a strong link between gender and economical independence. The binary rich/poor could be seen as a branch of the independent/dependent binary pair; they are strongly related. As we have already seen, men are associated with independence whereas women are associated with the opposite. Independence is freedom and freedom is achievable, amongst other ways, through economical independence. Not only is independence as such more achievable for men; as we shall see, economical independence during the time of the 19th century is also more reachable for men than for women.

In *Understanding Jane Eyre* Teachman writes about inheritance in Victorian England. She points out how the oldest son always inherited the father unless a will had been written saying otherwise, this according to the law of primogeniture (158). In addition Teachman informs about how “the custom of primogeniture was of even greater importance than the law in terms of the actual transmission of property. It was generally accepted that all landed estates would, in fact, be left to the eldest son, and wills were written accordingly, leaving little, if any, substantial property to the younger sons—much less daughters—in the family” (158). This points in the direction that economic independency was far more difficult for women to achieve than for men. Jane Eyre is in The Victorian Web referred to as a middle class woman and it is expressed that “A single woman at this economic level still had only one option for respectable employment: working as a governess” in addition it is argued that “If she did not marry and had no relatives to care for her, a governess would have to remain a governess all her life, which of course would mean moving from house to house” (Jackson). The idea of
economical independence thus seems distant for most women and even if women were supported by their husbands and in that way could be considered rich, it cannot be argued that those women are independent.

In the novel Jane inherits money from her uncle and reaches economic independence. As we have previously seen, economic dependence is one of the forms of dependence that Jane has experienced in her life and by overcoming this she is even closer to wholeness.

**Jane Challenges the Sane/Mad Binary**

According to Elaine Showalter, Jane and Mr. Rochester become equals “not only because Mr. Rochester in losing his hand and sight has learned how it feels to be helpless and to accept help, but also because Jane, in destroying the dark passion of her own psyche, has become truly her ‘own mistress’” (Showalter 122). What these ‘dark passions’ are and how they relate to Jane becoming her ‘own mistress’ will now be presented.

The reader is introduced to madness for the first time when Jane is locked up in the “red-room” in the Reeds’ mansion at the beginning of the novel. Young Jane cannot stand being locked in the room, which she believes to be haunted, and the reader is told how she “was oppressed, suffocated” and that “endurance broke down” (Brontë 14). According to Elaine Showalter, Jane is being punished for the “’animal’ aspects” of her being- her body, with the unfeminine needs and appetites, and her passions, especially rage” (114). This is the beginning of Jane’s journey towards wholeness. Gilbert and Gubar develop the idea of Jane’s momentary madness by explaining why Jane reacts like she does: “For the spirit of a society in which Jane has no clear place sharpens the angles of the furniture, enlarges the shadows, strengthens the locks on the door“ (340) Together Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar paint a picture of how “the little drama enacted on ‘that day’ which opens Jane Eyre is in itself a paradigm of the larger drama that occupies the entire book: Jane’s anomalous, orphaned position in society, her enclosure in stultifying roles and houses, and her attempts to escape through flight, starvation, and- in a sense which will be explained-madness” (Gilbert, Gubar 341). The madness would be Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester’s mad wife who is kept prisoner in the attic of her husband’s mansion. It has been argued that Bertha is another aspect of Jane’s psyche; she is “Jane’s truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child,
the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress ever since her days at Gateshead” (Gilbert, Gubar 360).

As previously discussed in this essay, Jane’s angry features were frowned upon at the time the novel was published. Jane behaved in ways expected from men and not from women. Bertha also expresses these angry qualities and is considered mad. In A Literature of Their Own Showalter discusses the “attitude towards female passion” (119). When females worry the idea of women as inferior and timid they might be considered mad. Showalter argues that “[m]adness is explicitly associated with female sexual passion, with the body, with the fiery emotions Jane admits to feeling for Rochester” (122). Furthermore Showalter describes how Jane and Mr. Rochester discuss the matter and Jane states that she believes that Mr. Rochester would hate her would she be mad like Bertha. Because of this “it becomes inevitable that Bertha’s death, the purging of the lust of the flesh, must precede any successful union between Rochester and Jane” (Showalter 122). When Jane leaves Thornfield and eventually wins independency she also is freed from the ‘madness’. By disturbing the power relations she becomes a whole person and can thus worry the sane/mad binaries, and if Bertha is seen as Jane’s darker side her death is symbolic of Jane’s wholeness. Jane has overcome patriarchal rule and thus the trapped side of her stops to exist.

Conclusion
In the novel Jane Eyre several different binary oppositions can be found. Independence, Rich, Master and Sane are the parts of the binaries that have traditionally been associated with men. This essay has however attempted to show how by disturbing what has traditionally been considered male behavior and female behavior respectively Jane worries power relations and thus gains independence. Already from the beginning of the novel Jane talks back and questions why her young cousin is called her master. Jane turns down marriage proposals in order to become the master of her own life. Another step towards independence is when Jane leaves Mr. Rochester and Thornfield and starts working as a teacher. At the same time she also runs her own household and thus experience life without a master.

When receiving money from a deceased uncle, Jane feels stronger and not as dependent as before. Together with Mr. Rochester’s physical injuries the newly gained economical independence another step is taken towards wholeness for Jane. Throughout the essay it becomes clear that all binaries have to be worried before Jane can be in total control of her
life. This is symbolic for the fact that Jane is looking to become whole; after living an independent life she can return to Mr. Rochester and an equal life.
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