

國立政治大學英國語文學系

碩士學位論文

反轉之男子氣概：

夏綠蒂·勃朗特《簡愛》中男性的脆弱

Up-ended Masculinity:  
Male Weaknesses in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

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To me, myself, and I  
and lovely persons in my life



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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班  
碩士論文提要

論文名稱：反轉之男子氣概：夏綠蒂·勃朗特《簡愛》中男性的脆弱

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論文提要內容：

在浪漫時期，女性在兩性議題中通常都是被壓迫的那一方，而男性則是有權力的壓迫者。在維多利亞時代，女性已經有能力去反抗這樣的壓迫。而許多的評論家把夏綠蒂·勃朗特的《簡愛》視為是講述女性主義以及父權壓迫的小說。Sandra Gilbert 和 Susan Gubar 在 *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) 的書中評論《簡愛》裡羅徹斯特對伯莎的壓迫是一種父權對女性的壓迫，女性像是永遠會被社會價值觀束縛只能掙扎存活。然而，我認為以上評論太過著重在男性對女性的壓迫，我們不能只看男性強壯以及有能力的那一面。我想著重男性在《簡愛》中男子氣概的展現。除了強壯的形象與父權之外，男性也能展現出脆弱、弱小的一面。在社會上，男性必需要成為一位完美的紳士、遵守各種社會規範，以符合社會大眾對男性的期待。在家庭中，男性還需要展現男子氣概(Masculinity)、身負養家活口的重任…等才能被稱為好男人。

夏綠蒂·勃朗特在《簡愛》中重新定義了男子氣概，把男性的脆弱與無力也視為一種男子氣概的要素，推翻了維多利亞時代既有的男性價值。這篇論文會揭示社會期待與規範對男性造成的壓迫與限制，以及夏綠蒂·勃朗特在《簡愛》中對男子氣概的新思想與描寫。總體而言，這篇論文試圖探討維多利亞時代與《簡愛》中的男性價值與壓迫，並連結夏綠蒂·勃朗特塑造之新男性價值。

關鍵詞：夏綠蒂·勃朗特、《簡愛》、男子氣概、壓迫、男性脆弱

## Abstract

The gender issue is an important one in critical studies of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and many critics have pointed out patriarchal oppression of women in their readings of the novel. For instance, in their influential *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar believe that women seem to be everlastingly shackled by such a patriarchal socio-ideological chain. In this thesis, however, I argue that critics overemphasize the absolute male oppression of women. We can't only focus on the powerful and strong figures of the male characters. I wish to revise this reading by suggesting the value of man in *Jane Eyre*. Instead of being endowed with absolute power and male chauvinism, men in the novel exhibit fragility and vulnerability. Men need to follow the rules of masculinity to be a wonderful man, and gentlemen also have their gentlemanly qualities to obey. In the domestic part, Men are expected to support the whole family and deal with the domestic things. Men, likewise, have great senses of stress by what society wishes them to be. They are forced to behave as wonderful gentlemen with masculinity to fit the social expectations. The family restrictions and social expectation to Mr. Rochester, which started from his childhood, caused his suffering today.

My thesis argues that Charlotte Brontë redefines the meaning of masculinity in *Jane Eyre*, and that she depicts men's weakness and effeminacy. She uncovers the pressure which exists beneath the surface in Victorian men. This thesis examines the socio-ideological oppression of men, and offers a new value of masculinity in the Victorian era through *Jane Eyre*. Last but not least, it scrutinizes how Brontë characterizes her ideal(ized) man in the Victorian era, which follows a new idea of masculinity in the Victorian Period.

Keywords: Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Masculinity, Oppression, Effeminate male

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* has attracted intense critical attention over the years. Most of the critics take a feminist approach and analyze the female characters in *Jane Eyre*. Daniela Garofalo's *Dependent Masters and Independent Servants*, for instance, discusses Jane Eyre's power. Her power is weak at the beginning but becomes stronger and stronger through the story. Brontë represents "woman's influence" in *Jane Eyre* by instituting "liberal equality" and preserving "the master's power" (Garofalo 146). Garofalo thinks that Brontë represents the power of women and also the patriarchal constraint on women in *Jane Eyre* (137). When critics mention the male characters, they always depict the male characters as the "despotic patriarchs" to show "the horrors of the patriarchal home for women" (Garofalo 147). In Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's famous book, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), the authors argue that the male characters in *Jane Eyre* are powerful and strong figures who oppress women. Rochester is described as being similar to Bluebeard, the fairy-tale character who imprisons his wife in his castle. Rochester has a "doll-like daughter Adele" (Gilbert and Gubar 355) and a mad wife Bertha whom he treats as his possessions, locking them in Thornfield. Also, he sees Jane as "a virginal possession" (Gilbert and Gubar 355). His behaviors are like Bluebeard, who imprisons women in his attic. Rochester declares that he has a spiritual equality with Jane, but actually, he cheats on her, and Jane has no choice but to leave the hall. St. John is another male oppressor. He tries to persuade Jane to marry him because he needs help with his missionary work in India. "At first, it seems that St. John is



offering Jane a viable alternative to the way of life proposed by Rochester” (Gilbert and Gubar 365). St. John abandons his true love, Rosamond Oliver, and asks Jane for a loveless marriage which would result in Jane’s imprisonment inside society’s rules rather than her own. Jane “will be entering into a union even more unequal than that proposed by Rochester” (Gilbert and Gubar 366). Gilbert and Gubar argue that men are always the controllers or the oppressors in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

However, I have a different point of view from the critics mentioned above. In my opinion, the male characters in *Jane Eyre* not only show their patriarchal power, but they also experience fragile and vulnerable moments. Even though Rochester appears to be a wonderful gentleman of gentle birth and ample wealth, he nonetheless suffers from the rules and pressures of Victorian society. In Mrs. Fairfax and Jane’s talk, we can see Rochester’s family problem. He is forced to be the master of Thornfield Hall. According to Mrs. Fairfax and Jane’s conversation, they talk about Rochester’s situation that “[w]hy should he shun it?” “Perhaps he thinks it gloomy.” (Brontë 128). Thornfield Hall represents an oppressive familial and social pressure, so he is trying to escape from it. Also, when Rochester loses Thornfield Hall, he hides himself in Ferndean House to get away from the public world. He sighs that “I was desolate and abandoned — my life dark, lonely, hopeless — my soul athirst and forbidden to drink — my heart famished and never to be fed” (Brontë 434). Rochester loses his power and ability, becoming a fragile and disabled man in Ferndean. Rochester doesn’t have the determination to fight the trouble in his life; he only struggles to live under the depression. Jane, however, is unlike the conventional opinion of woman, who can control her own life by herself. As for St. John, his duty

to the church makes him powerless and restricted. Moor House is a symbol of what St. John really wants and yearns for; it includes his love for his family and love for Rosamond, but he is too weak to keep the house. His internal weakness of character is the reason that he gives it up, and it is for the same reason that he gives up what he really wants and loves. In *Jane Eyre*, men do not always have power; they can be weak and even be oppressed by their families or their duties. These weak men in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* are different from the conventional Victorian masculinity. I think this conflict between Victorian expectations of men and the weaknesses of the men in *Jane Eyre* is an interesting topic that is worthy of more research. I would also like to research Brontë's depiction of an ideal man in the novel.

### **Methodology**

The ideal Victorian gentleman is an important topic that many critics have researched into before. When talking about the Victorian gentleman, we need to get back to the English gentleman first. In David Castronovo's *The English Gentleman: Images and Ideals in Literature and Society* (1987), David Castronovo mentions five key elements of being an English gentleman. First of all, a gentleman needs to be well born and has the name of high class. Blood race plays a vital role to the English gentleman, because good birth means their status and power in the society.

Castronova argues that "Sir Walter Elliot in *Persuasion* is the quintessential man of birth and property" (7) and as such, Elliot despises young Mr. Wentworth because of his lower status and lack of property. Second is the property of gentleman. Castronova again confirms that "[w]ealth made a larger and vaguer base of power for the upper classes" (19). However, a true English gentleman of this time must be both well-born

and wealthy. The third important criterion is honor. Honor includes both virtue and honesty, which is key to being a gentleman. If a man is well-born and wealthy but lacks honor, he fails to be an English gentleman. Another key point, which is related to gentleman's honor, is breeding. Breeding is also an essential point to an English gentleman, because good breeding can make good honor. Masters will encourage their sons to fulfill the standards that society expects from men of good breeding in order to be fine gentlemen. Duty is another element in the making of an English gentleman. A gentleman is expected to be the master of his estate and land. Mr. Knightley in Jane Austen's *Emma* is the epitome of an English gentleman. Of good birth and in charge of his family's vast wealth, Mr. Knightley is an honest and virtuous man, and he instructs Emma in many ways. Mr. Knightley is kind to everyone in the village, so his reputation is quite solid. Mr. Knightley is the typical fine English gentleman.

The Victorian gentleman follows the rules of the English gentleman. "Moving into the Victorian era, the rise of industry brought a focus on hard working, encouraging men to be strong and aggressive while simultaneously in control of their natural passions" (Quinn 9). Working hard is part of the duty of man. Regardless of whether he is a gentleman or a priest, all men have duties that they need to obey and follow. Gentleman should engage in social contact with other gentlemen and ladies to consolidate their connections to other great houses or wealthy family. A priest must piously worship God, and take care of the people in his parish. Men's duties are important elements of masculinity, and therefore are instrumental in maintaining the status of men in society.

In the Victorian era, being well-born is no longer the most important criterion for

being a gentleman, but they focus on a man's hard-working, aggressive attitude. People are admiring a man, who is a self-made man rather than inherited family wealth. Puk Speckens also emphasizes "the building blocks for the Victorian masculine identity" are men's "[s]trength and self-control" (10). Breeding is also not an element of a gentleman, because there are many merchants from middle class or working class background, who rise up in the Victorian era. For example, in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), "Heathcliff has no family and therefore no property to call his own in the beginning of the novel," (Quinn 18), but he has passionate and aggressive characteristics to live his life. On the contrary, Edgar Linton is well-born and has inherited family wealth, but he is "a weak and effeminate man" (Quinn 18). Significantly, Catherine is still influenced by the idea of the English gentleman, so she chooses Linton to be her husband because of his status, power and sensitive characteristics. However, social status and economic power doesn't make Catherine's life happy, but instead makes her miserable and inevitable.

I will not research into *Jane Eyre* in woman's point of view. In my opinion, male characters also play a vital role in this novel, and we need to stand in their shoes in order to feel the oppressions and pressures upon them. Actually, they are not always having the controlling power in the society. The social expectation and masculine rules make men imprisoned like a caged bird. They are having big pressures to satisfy the social expectation and to behave like a wonderful man or fine gentleman. The pressures or oppressions from the society chain the men in a dark prison. However, Charlotte Brontë doesn't take weakness or fragility out of the value of masculinity. She thinks weakness and fragility are valuable features for an ideal man in her novels.

Charlotte Brontë pictures her ideal gentleman in *Jane Eyre*. As Puk Speckens points out “how a man should truly look, behave or what his personality should be like” (4). Brontë combines the features of the English gentleman and the Victorian gentleman to create her new gentleman. Mrs. Fairfax and Jane both think that Rochester is a wonderful gentleman, but they have different reasons. Mrs. Fairfax sees Rochester as a wonderful gentleman because of his status and wealth. Jane, however, “does not show concern for these genteel traits, and in wishing to know more about his personality, she shows another, less socially influenced view of what traits a man should embody” (Quinn 30). Charlotte Brontë gives Rochester a new style. I would like to research into the new gentleman that Charlotte Brontë creates in *Jane Eyre*, and her redefinition of ideal masculinity.

### **Literature Review**

Gender is an important issue in the Victorian era. During this time, class, love, and sexuality are redefined; these issues also strongly affect gender.

Many critical essays have been written about gender issue and woman’s power shifting in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. One well-known work is Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). The authors don’t see *Jane Eyre* as a feminist novel, telling the story of a “new” woman, but rather one about repression and patriarchy. According to Gilbert and Gubar’s argument, women in *Jane Eyre* are enclosed in the patriarchal mansion and should make their whole effort to escape from or conquer the patriarchal repression. Brontë describes Thornfield Hall as a “gloomy mansion”, such as “Otranto or Udolpho” (Gilbert and Gubar 347), and the mirthless laugh in the attic illustrate the lack of peace at Thornfield. On the

surface, Rochester is a kind and moral master in his estate, but actually he is a tyrannical master. Rochester has many unequal relationships with the female characters. Jane once mentions that she can't afford to dress like a doll by Mr. Rochester (Brontë 355). It is impossible for Jane to be equal to Rochester in Thornfield because he sees her as a servant. Rochester cares more about his fortune and status than his true love. When Jane first meet Rochester, he has fallen down on the ice and needs her help. But he seems more defensive in his mastery, as when he informs Jane that "necessity compels me to make you useful" (Brontë 352). The most important part about Rochester is his imprisonment of Bertha Mason in the Thornfield Hall. He married Bertha "for sex, for money, for everything" (Brontë 356), but not for "love and equality" (Brontë 356). Although he says that he was forced to marry Bertha, he's mistreatment to her is cruel and painful. In addition, St. John also shows his patriarchal power by trying to imprison Jane Eyre, even though he is different from Mr. Rochester. Mr. Rochester is like fire, and St. John is like ice. He has a cold attitude toward the social rules. Even though he might not see it this way, St. John's proposal would imprison Jane in a loveless and conventional marriage. He wants to put Jane's free spirit into the social cage (Brontë 366). Although Jane refuses St. John's proposal of marriage, which he offers because he is search of a helpmeet for his religious mission, the proposal also inspires Jane to think about her true love, Rochester. Through Gilbert and Gubar point out, Charlotte Brontë doesn't describe male patriarchy directly, but she uses the oppression on female characters, especially of Bertha, to show the power vested in men.

Although most critics argue that men have strong power over women in *Jane*

*Eyre*, there are more and more critics who have turned their focus to the other side of men. They argue that Victorian men were not so powerful and strong, and that they still oppressed by the society. Emma Foye Quinn argues that “the women brought frailty and elegance, the man imposing strength and intelligence” (8) in the past, but now “men and women share a similar propensity for passionate love” (8). They are no longer on opposite sides. To Emma Quinn, Mr. Rochester is not always the one with the most power. Mr. Rochester shows his vulnerability to Jane in their romantic love. Mr. Rochester’s effeminateness makes Jane powerful and even stronger than he is. For example, when Mr. Rochester loses his belongings and estate in the fire, he is symbolically castrated. After the fire, Rochester sacrifices his masculine pride to his dependence on Jane. Emma Foye Quinn feels that Charlotte Brontë has created Mr. Rochester with weakness and Jane Eyre with the controlling power and that Jane, consequently, is trying to break the Victorian social rules. Although Victorian men and women are not same gender, they can share same features. Women can be strong and intelligent, and men also can express their sensitivity and vulnerability.

Due to the rules for both the English gentleman and the Victorian gentleman, Emma Quinn not only talks about the weakness of men, but also the oppression on them. Both Brontë sisters uncover the oppression on men in their novels. In *Wuthering Heights*, “Heathcliff, who lacks the money, title, or family to be considered a gentleman, is unable to please Catherine because he does not have this unknowable gentlemanly quality” (Quinn 27). This “gentlemanly quality” seems to represent society’s expectation. If they want to maintain their status as “gentlemen,” gentlemen are not allowed to express their true feeling or woo their true loves. In order to fulfill

the social expectation, they must follow the social rules.

In *Jane Eyre*, gentlemanly quality is more difficult to define, because Mr. Rochester appears in the beginning as a wonderful gentleman, but in the end he loses a large part of his wealth and social status. He only keeps gentility to fit the gentlemanly quality (Brontë 29). In order to maintain his wealth and social status, Mr. Rochester is forced by his father to marry Bertha, and he does not like to live in Thornfield. Rochester's "refusal to marry a gentlewoman further rejects traditional roles of gentility, as he forgoes beneficial social matches to pursue his romantic feelings towards Jane" (Quinn 34). Rochester is oppressed by the society and the conventional rules. He is unable to live his own life, and he is struggling between trying to be a fine gentleman and escaping from the social cage.

Puk Speckens pushes Quinn's ideas further to uncover the truth under the patriarchal society and find out the ideal Victorian men through Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. "Charlotte Brontë clearly tries to enlighten the reader on how a man should truly look, behave, or what his personality should be like" (Speckens 4). Speckens argues that Rochester is a Byronic hero of Brontë style, because of his vulnerability and anti-hero behaviors in *Jane Eyre*. Rochester's passion and romantic love to Jane is the key to break the traditional gentleman rules. In contrast to Rochester, St. John has deep faith to God and he needs to help others. His politeness and charming personality make him a perfect English gentleman. St. John can't be an ideal Victorian gentleman because he obeys the social arrangement without control over his own life (Speckens 15-16). He doesn't have romantic and passionate love over his marriage, and he only follows the "social arrangement" (Speckens 16). Although Mr. Rochester is an



aristocrat, who has wealth and status, Jane Eyre doesn't love him for his good fortune and status. "Rochester whose outside has been tainted by fire, his physicality has not changed" (Speckens 19). When Mr. Rochester loses his power, Jane still loves him and is willing to take care of him for the rest of his life. "She prefers Rochester's ability to change for romantic love and passion instead of St. John's control that serves the work of God" (Speckens 33). Brontë argues that the value of a gentleman is not just based on his fortune or social status, but also on his character and what he really intends to do. She differs from the traditional rules and creates new value for the "new gentleman" through *Jane Eyre*.

### **Chapter Organization**

I agree with the ideas of Emma Foye Quinn and Puk Speckens. There are many rules for the English gentlemen to make sure they can become a fine gentleman, so men have been oppressed by social expectation for many years. Charlotte Brontë interprets men's struggle under the conventional rules through the male characters in *Jane Eyre*. The contradiction between the masculinity in *Jane Eyre* and the conventional Victorian gentlemanly quality attracts my attention. I think Charlotte Brontë represents her ideal gentleman in *Jane Eyre* as a new style of the Victorian gentleman. She creates a different point of view to see men and gentlemen. Brontë not only uncovers the suffering and agony for the Victorian men, but also redefines the value of weakness and fragility to men.

To explain these more clearly, I plan to organize my thesis in the following chapters. The first chapter of my paper moves back to see the history of the masculine norms in the Romantic and in the Victorian eras. I explore the social expectation and

duty for gentleman in the Romantic period. To be a fine gentleman, man needs to follow some key elements, such as birth in the noble family and having good breeding. The higher the gentleman's level is, the more pressures there are on them. Gentleman's duty and rules are things that keep them in the upper positions of the society, but also the heavy burdens on their shoulders. The masculine rules for men have changed in the Victorian era. Due to the industrial revolution, the middle class became richer and will following values different from aristocrats. Men should be powerful and brawny to express their masculine values. Weakness is not an option for the Victorian men. However, Charlotte Brontë emphasizes the importance of weakness in her novels. She uncovers the gentlemen's struggle and redefines the conventional Victorian gentleman through the male characters in *Jane Eyre*.

In Chapter Two, I will research into the repression from the society on Edward Rochester. Rochester is seen as a perfect bachelor in his town. He has the noble position and high-class family. He is well born, and has good fortune. He is the honorable gentleman in the society. Actually, Rochester is forced to inherit the wealth and duty of his family. Thornfield Hall represents the power of Rochester's father and brother, which oppresses him and makes him detest Thornfield Hall. Rochester's family also forced him to make the unfortunate marriage with Bertha, which is another expected pressure on him. Thornfield hall to Rochester is darkness and full of gloomy oppressions.

I will uncover the inner side of Mr. Rochester when he hides himself in Ferndean house in Chapter Three. When Rochester loses most of his belongings in the fire, he moves to the small house, Ferndean. Most people think that the fire causes

Rochester's depression, and makes him fragile. He is no longer the wonderful and powerful gentleman. Nevertheless, I think Ferndean is a sheltered place for Rochester, which is in the forest away from the madding crowd and from public ridicule. He can escape from the social expectation and family forces from the public world, and cure himself in this small shelter. Jane comes to find him and is like the prince to rescue the Sleeping beauty in the fairy tale.

I would like to add St. John's struggle with the conventional rules in Chapter Four. St. John is also said to be as a flawless priest in the village. He always follows the social rules and does what he is expected to do. In order to maintain his missionary life, St. John should give up his relationship with Rosamond Oliver. Moor House represents St. John's powerless position to his lover, his family and his house. He wants to protect people and things around him, but he's unable to keep them with him.

I will conclude the thesis by considering how Charlotte Brontë reveals the painful and powerless side of men and why Charlotte Brontë creates a new gentleman, which is different from the Victorian main stream. The weakness of the gentleman is part of the new masculinity in *Jane Eyre*, but weakness is not a useless or ridiculous feature of masculinity. On the contrary, I think Charlotte Brontë sees man's weakness as a valuable element for masculinity. Weakness and power are both important for being a fine gentleman in *Jane Eyre*.

## Chapter Two

### Edward Rochester and Gentlemanly Expectations

“Oh! I could not forget his look and his paleness when he whispered: ‘Jane, I have got a blow—I have got a blow, Jane.’ I could not forget how the arm had trembled which he rested on my shoulder”

— Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

How to become a man with masculinity is the key point for every man in the world? “Because men have historically been dominant in the public sphere, masculinity carries public meanings of great political moment, in addition to its bearing on personal conduct and self-imagining” argues John Tosh (61). The definition of masculinity changes over time, and each period will have its own masculine rules. The masculinity in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is inheriting from the masculine rules of both the Romantic and the Victorian eras.

When it comes to the Victorian era, the elements of being a masculine man have changed. In the Victorian era, the industrial revolution makes the middle class and working class rise, and they break the social hierarchy. In her essay, *Sexing the Male: Manifestations of Masculinity in Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, and Villette*, Emma Foye Quinn discusses the style of the Victorian gentleman. “The industrial revolution led to a popularization of the self-made man, a more robust and physical character than the eighteenth-century idealization of man” (9). The points of the Victorian gentleman are quite different from the English gentleman. The Victorian gentleman is

expected to be aggressive and passionate; whether or not they are well-born and their family fortunes are no longer important. John Tosh talks about the Victorian manliness and gentlemanly qualities in his essay, “Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain,” to emphasize the new features and values of the Victorian gentleman: “[b]irth, breeding and education were secondary, compared [with] the moral qualities which marked the truly manly character” (86). Social status and hierarchy are not the key point for a gentleman. People focus on new personality to distinguish gentlemen. Sylvia Crowhurst mentions that “[p]oliteness, refinement, and a good education” (9) are main requirement for a man to be a fine Victorian gentleman.

The above critical essays describe the perception of masculinity in the Victorian era as aggressive and strong features for men. In the late Victorian era, Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) advocates the gender norms by talking about the natural competition with the progress of human being. Darwin mentions that men “are generally stronger and larger than the females, and are endowed with the requisite qualities of courage and pugnacity” (608). His argument supports the Victorian norms for men and also the masculine rules in that time. Aubrey L. Mishou mentions in *Surviving Thornfield: Jane Eyre and Nineteenth-Century Evolutionary Theory* that “Darwin’s principles of sexual selection and survival of the fittest are alive in the Victorian imagination long before Charles Darwin gives them a name” (266). Through Darwin and Mishou’s arguments, we can see that the “Victorian notions [have] already [been] established and in practice” for a long time (Mishou 266). Charlotte Brontë, however, publishes new thoughts against

the traditional gender notions in the early Victorian era. Charlotte Brontë creates her own ideal gentleman, which innovates the masculine features of Romanticism era and the Victorian times, in *Jane Eyre*.

Charlotte Brontë doesn't want to overemphasize the powerful traits of men, so she uses other ways to describe the manly norms. On the other hand, she is focusing on men's weaknesses and fragility. Brontë discloses men's pain under the patriarchal society in *Jane Eyre*. She not only creates a new point of view from which to see man's weak masculinity, but also defines masculinity in a new way. Masculinity is no longer limited only to someone who is powerful or strong, but can embodied by anyone. The most important element of masculinity is to be yourself, so everyone can have masculinity, when you are true to yourself and will not limited by the social values and social rules. Brontë values weakness and sensitive emotions for man of masculinity. It is a new interpretation of the masculine gentleman in the Victorian era.

Charlotte Brontë reveals the weakness of men through the male characters, Edward Rochester and St. John, in *Jane Eyre*. Brontë creates Rochester as a wonderful gentleman, who is powerful and of a high social status. John Tosh mentions in *Manliness and Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* that, the masculinity of men should compare with other fellows, in order to test the best one. Villagers think that Mr. Rochester is a strong and powerful figure. When Jane Eyre first arrives at Thornfield Hall, the housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax proudly introduces Mr. Rochester to her. Mrs. Fairfax seems to regard Rochester's "existence as universally understood fact, with which everybody must be acquainted by instinct" (Brontë 100). Rochester inherits Thornfield Hall, which is a "fine old hall" and a "respectable

place” (Brontë 97) in the Millcote, so he is master of the whole land surrounding it. To Jane, Thornfield Hall is a comfortable and cozy place. When she first arrives at Thornfield Hall, she sees a “cozy and agreeable picture” (Brontë 97) presented in front of her. They show the stately and beautiful entity that Thornfield Hall is. When she enters Thornfield Hall, Jane is invited to a “sunny, small room” with “a cheerful fire” and an “imaginable elderly lady” (Brontë 95). In Jane Eyre’s description, there is a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in Thornfield Hall. Thornfield Hall also represents Rochester’s ability and personality. As the master of Thornfield Hall and the leader of the Rochester family, Edward Rochester is serious and vigorous. “Masculinity is seen as unitary, fixed in time, and oppressive in equal degree” (Roper and Tosh 10). Most of time, the judges of masculinity are women, which puts them in a position to dominate men. Adele says that Rochester “was always kind to me and gave me pretty dresses and toys” (Brontë 105), and he has also asked Mrs. Fairfax to find a governess for Adele. Rochester’s behaviors show his efforts in taking care of Adele. Mrs. Fairfax praises Rochester for having a “gentleman’s taste and habits” (Brontë 104) and affirms that Rochester is a “good master” (Brontë 105) of Thornfield Hall. People who live in Thornfield Hall all depend on Rochester, they need his accompaniment and direction. When Jane comes to Thornfield Hall as a governess, she is also dependent on Mr. Rochester. Not only Jane’s professional life as a governess, but her heart is also tangled up with Rochester. Rochester represents his sturdy power to be in charge of people and things in Thornfield Hall. Mr. Rochester’s responsibility for his family and taking care of people in Thornfield Hall embody a gentleman’s manly ideals. These clues prove that Rochester is a wonderful gentleman, who is masculine.

Rochester's marriage with Bertha Mason is an example of his patriarchal power. Rochester secretly locks the mad Bertha in the attic after they are married, and takes her wealth away. Bertha is the woman Eugenia C. DeLamotte argues that Bertha is the woman "whom Rochester married for money and lust rather than love" (212). Rochester's patriarchal behaviors toward Bertha are reasons why he is said to be Bluebeard by Gilbert and Gubar. Bertha is "the night side of Rochester, a thing of darkness he refuses to recognize as 'a part of me'" (DeLamotte 212). Rochester controls Bertha's liberty and hides her in the attic of the Thornfield Hall in order to maintain his wonderful appearance in public. He plays the role of a tyrant who dominates Thornfield Hall. Eugenia C. DeLamotte describes Thornfield Hall as a "Gothic mansion complete with battlements", and also "Bluebeard's castle". Even though Mrs. Fairfax and Adele are living in Thornfield, they are not aware of the locked mad woman in the attic. It seems that Rochester is powerful not only in public but also in the domestic side.

Although Mr. Rochester has inherited family wealth and holds great power in society, he still has his weakness that Charlotte Brontë brings to light in *Jane Eyre*. When Rochester first meets Jane Eyre, she helps him to cope with his trouble. One day, Jane is taking her winter afternoon walk to Hay. On her way back to Thornfield, she stands on the top of the hill to appreciate momentousness of Thornfield Hall. She sees "the grey and battlemented hall", which is "the principal object in the value" (Brontë 111). The great size of Thornfield Hall shows Rochester's power on the village. While Jane is praising Rochester's great estate, she hears a "rude noise" and "whisperings" from far away but so clear (Brontë 111). Also, "a positive tramp" and



“a metallic clatter” are heard by Jane Eyre (Brontë 111). Finally, the horse appears, and approaches to Jane’s direction. Because the road is narrow, Jane needs to “let it go by” first (Brontë 112). Jane hears these sounds and noises, which are a prelude to Rochester’s appearance, and showing his threatening manners to seen as a “Gytrash”, which is a horrible monster, in Jane’s thought. Rochester not only rides a “tall steed”, but also has a “great dog” of a “black and white colour” (Brontë 112). Riding on the tall steed makes Rochester looks majestic and noble, and his hunting dog represents Rochester’s masterful atmosphere. Through Jane’s eyes, we can see that Rochester is a confident and very masculine man. He rides the biggest horse and he is accompanied with a great dog, which emphasizes his level of social status and his powerful appearance. Jane, however, needs to make a concession for Rochester, which shows the disparity between them. Jane’s strength, social status and momentum are lower than Rochester’s, but even so Jane is the one who saves Rochester when he falls.

After Rochester goes by Jane, his horse suddenly falls down because they slip the ice on the causeway. Rochester falls down from the horse and sprains his ankle. His dog is nervous to see his master in the dilemma and “the horse groan” (Brontë 112), so it runs to Jane for help. When Jane sees Rochester’s situation, she hears his swearing. Rochester, however, switches to “some formula which prevented him” from replying too severely (Brontë 113). Rochester fulfills the expectations of gentlemanly behavior here. Even though he wants to swear at his predicament, he still keeps his gentlemanly demeanor when talking to Jane.

Rochester asks Jane to stand aside, because he wants to raise himself up. He not

only quiets his dog from barking, but also checks his situation and tries to raise himself up. It seems like Rochester shows his calm and power to deal with the accident without others' help. Unfortunately, Rochester's ankle hurts badly, so he is unable to stand up by himself. His "dark face" with "stern features and a heavy brow" (Brontë 113) appeals to Jane and she is willing to help him. When Rochester tries to stand up and tests his foot, his "involuntary "'Ugh!'" (Brontë 113) shows his fragility and helplessness. Jane tells him that "I cannot think of leaving you, sir, at so late an hour, in this solitary lane, till I see you are fit to mount your horse" (Brontë 114). Seeing Rochester's fragile behaviors, Jane is unable to leave him, but instead willing to help him with her own power. The accident switches their positions: Rochester, the man, becomes weak and helpless. On the contrary, Jane becomes strong because she has the power to help and to take care of Rochester in this moment.

Rochester mentions that "I cannot commission you to fetch help; but you may help me a little yourself, if you will be so kind" (Brontë 114). Although Jane is a little afraid of touching Rochester's large and volatile horse alone, she is still brave enough to do what Rochester asks her to do. Jane is like a knight who is worried about the princess's safety, and Rochester is the delicate princess, who needs the knight's rescue. This is the first time that Rochester asks Jane to help him and admits his weakness. It seems like Rochester wants to maintain his appearance as a powerful gentleman or master, so he doesn't want to be helped by Jane, a woman. Since Self-made is one of the important elements of masculinity, so that's why Rochester doesn't want others, women in particular, to realize his helplessness. The undeniable fact is that Jane's help saves him from an embarrassed situation. After Rochester's first meet

with Jane, his attitude toward Jane still as a patriarchal man and he still perform the character of a master, but we can't deny the implication that Jane Eyre is having power over Rochester.

Another example is the accident with midnight fire in Rochester's bedroom. Hearing a strange laugh in the house at midnight, Jane walks out of her room to take a look. It shows Jane's brave personality. Although she is afraid of the odd laugh, Jane is courageous and tries to tell Mrs. Fairfax about what has happened. Jane only wants to find the odd laugher, but when she notices there is a fire in Mr. Rochester's chamber, and she runs nervously to rescue him. Jane tries to wake Rochester up, but he lays "stretched motionless, in deep sleep" (Brontë 148). When Jane finally is able to awaken Rochester, he is angry and mistakes Jane for a witch who is going to kill him. In spite of Rochester's hostility, Jane doesn't abandon him but instead helps Rochester to get up and provides him with candles. "I will fetch you a candle, sir; and in Heaven's name, get up. Somebody has plotted something: you cannot too soon find out who and what it is" (Brontë 148). In this fire accident, Jane Eyre has the power to direct everything, however, her master plays the weak role. When she notices the fire, she doesn't run from it or ask for others' help. She takes action to stamp out the fire on the moment. Even though Rochester misunderstands Jane Eyre and blames her as a "sorceress", she still helps him to get away from the fire by using her logic and deliberation. After their escaping from the fire, Jane even infers that the fire maybe related to the strange laugh that she heard in the gallery. It clear that Jane Eyre has a sober brain and can competently to deal with emergencies. On the contrary, Mr. Rochester shows his incompetence in this accidental event. When Rochester

realizes that the fire was an accident, he blames Jane Eyre first for plotted to drown him rather than planning to put out the fire or save themselves. During the fire accident, Rochester keeps asking Jane “[w]hat is it? and who did it?” (Brontë 149). His questions show his panic and incapability during this accident. Through these two events we can see that Jane Eyre is unlike a traditional Victorian woman. She is strong, brave and clam, and Jane manages lots of things in a proper way. Rochester, however, is revealing some hidden weaknesses gradually. His gentlemanly mask is beginning to slip.

In Rochester’s falling down accident, Charlotte Brontë describes Rochester as a strong gentleman, who rides a tall steed and is followed by a great dog. The force of his motion is so strong that Jane needs to yield the road for them to pass by. Jane is alone on her trip and needs to walk on foot. There is an obvious difference, both physically and socially, between Jane’s and Rochester’s positions. However, when the powerful Rochester suddenly falls off his horse in front of Jane, their positions are reversed. The strong man suddenly becomes a helpless man, who needs the weak woman’s help. At first, Rochester rejects Jane’s kindness, because he wants to prove his masculine power and doesn’t want to admit that he needs to rely on woman to get rid of this predicament. Brontë uncovers the struggles under the strong masculinity of men. Rochester is making his effort to perform a masculine gentleman. Even though he needs help, he still refuses other’s kindness in order to maintain his masculine figure. Rochester’s masculine power is strong outside, but his inner mind is full of pain and wounds. Mrs. Fairfax talks to Jane about Rochester’s “painful thoughts”, which “harass him, and makes his spirits unequal” (Brontë 127), to Jane Eyre. Jane

starts to realize Rochester's suffering from the family force when he inherits Thornfield Hall. Edward Rochester is the second son in his family, so he is unable to inherit any family wealth. His family abandons Rochester for many years, until his brother dies. Rochester is expected to return and be the master of Thornfield Hall, but he needs to follow the family forces. The respectable Thornfield Hall represents the identities of gloomy and repression to Rochester, so he seldom stays at the estate.

Mrs. Fairfax tells Jane, "I don't think he has ever been resident at Thornfield for a fortnight together, since the death of his brother without a will, left him master of the estate: and, indeed, no wonder he shuns the old place" (Brontë 128). The adage says that "an Englishman's home is his castle", but it is not the case for Rochester. Under the familial pressure, Thornfield Hall is not a comfortable and relaxing place for Rochester, but instead a place full of pressure. Rochester is ruled to perform as a gentleman with masculinity, and also he needs to satisfy Adele's, Mrs. Fairfax's and Jane's expectations. As they see him as the mainstay of the family, they also expect that Rochester should embody the gentleman that they hold in their imagination.

When Rochester comes back to Thornfield Hall, Adele keeps "running to the door and looking over the bannisters to see if she could get a glimpse of Mr. Rochester" (Brontë 118). Mrs. Fairfax also says, "I always dress for the evening when Mr. Rochester is here" (Brontë 119). Their behaviors represent Rochester's vital role in their mind. To successful fulfill that role, he needs to be a good master and guardian. Moreover, ladies from the bourgeois class also see Rochester as a wonderful bachelor, and look forward to the possibility of marrying him. When he stays in Thornfield Hall, he is like a caged bird, and chained by people's expectations. Rochester keeps

up appearances as the gentleman who is loved by the people around him, but this does not represent his real personality. Even though Rochester is said to be a wonderful bachelor, who owns lots of benefits in the society, his mind is in a painful position and he is not always strong as he looks.

The male weakness of Mr. Rochester also represents on the gypsy episode in Thornfield Hall. During a party, a gypsy woman visits Thornfield Hall. She tells the guard that she is a fortuneteller, and she insists upon “tell[ing] the gentry their fortunes” (Brontë 192). Miss Ingram and other single ladies in the party meet with the gypsy sorceress in the library alone. They believe the gypsy’s words, and believe that she “knows all about us” (Brontë 194). Finally, it’s Jane’s turn to do the fortune telling. The gypsy asks Jane Eyre about her life and her attitude toward love. The gypsy says to Jane that “you are cold; you are sick; and you are silly” (Brontë 196), and she talks about the coldness and indifference in Jane’s life. Jane confesses to the gypsy that she is alone during her lifetime but she is trying to save money to set up “a school some day in a little house” (Brontë 198) by herself. They also talk about Jane’s love relationship and her feeling of love. Jane finds out that the gypsy is Mr. Rochester. Jane is very tactful that she notices the gypsy’s voice sounds familiar and her fingers are so smooth not like an old lady. Also, Jane finds a gem, which she “had seen [a] hundred times before” (Brontë 202). Due to these clues, Jane sees through Rochester’s disguise.

Rochester pretends as a gypsy stranger to visit Thornfield Hall. Why should an established gentleman visit his own house disguised as a gypsy woman? This situation shows the pressure and social expectation upon Mr. Rochester. Rochester is

always performing to be a wonderful gentleman, and he has his family, his villagers, who are relying on him. He is expected to be a gentleman, or forced to meet the social standards for masculinity. To be a wonderful gentleman, however, is not Rochester's lifestyle, but he is allowed no opportunity to change his character. When he is forced to become the heir to Rochester family fortune, he is affirmed to behave as the wonderful figure that his family needs. Rochester once mentions that "I had determined and was convinced that I could and ought" to get married (Brontë 310). In order to get Bertha's family fortunate, Rochester's father pushes his son into a terrible and loveless marriage. Rochester seems having power in the society, actually, there are many constraints and pains behind his achievement. In order to get rid of the social pressure, Rochester pretends to be a gypsy, who isn't known by anyone in Thornfield Hall. When he dresses up as a gypsy sorceress, he doesn't need to follow the rules for gentlemen, and to satisfy the social expectations. He can release himself from playing the character of Mr. Rochester. Janet H. Freeman talks about Rochester's disguise in *Speech and Silence in Jane Eyre*. She says that although Rochester is a liar, he "is most himself when he is in disguise as the old gypsy woman" (Freeman 694). In his gypsy costume, Rochester now appears to be a strange woman, so masculinity and other people's expectations are no longer important things to him. He is free from the social rules for a moment and also can kind of control others' lives by fortunetelling.

After being exposed by Jane, Rochester is anxious to ask Jane about people's discussion in the drawing room. He says that "[l]et me hear what they said about me" (Brontë 203). I think it shows Rochester is taking to heart about how do people think

about him. He is afraid of being judged by others, so he keeps performing as a wonderful gentleman. Even though he pretends as a gypsy fortuneteller to free himself from the gentlemanly character, he still worries about people's thoughts about him. It is difficult for a gentleman to accurately know the true feelings of others. When Rochester is no longer the powerful Rochester and becomes a gypsy woman, he can hear the truth and notice the thoughts of others. The pretense of Mr. Rochester shows the male weakness to see the truth. When a man is strong and powerful, he is unable to notice some things that happened in beside him. As for Rochester, he needs to change into other character in order to know the concealed opinions of others. To be a fine gentleman is powerful, but also blinds him too much of what surrounds him. He seldom sees or understands the true feelings of people around him. Rochester's "strange idea" of disguising himself as a fortuneteller (Brontë 202) can be consider as a reaction to the pressures exerted on gentlemen, the strength of which makes him want to jump out of his role as gentleman to take a breath. Significantly, it also shows the blindness inherent in being a gentleman. In the Greek drama *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus is shown to be powerful and strong, but he can't see the real truth. Although Oedipus is the king who manages the whole country, he is still too weak to see the truth. I would argue that Rochester is the model of Oedipus. Mr. Rochester is powerful enough that he should be able to see everything but, like Oedipus, he is also blind to see something real.

Thornfield Hall plays a vital role in Mr. Rochester's life. The estate represents gentleman's power and also the chain from the social expectation. Mr. Rochester is locked in Thornfield Hall while he inherits it from his family, and he should obey the



family force. Thornfield Hall represents the power of his father and brother, which oppressed him and forced him to make that unfortunate marriage. Jennifer Jordan talks about the father-son relationship in *To Make a Man Without Reason*. She argues that a father is the earliest masculine teacher for his son. Father is always the masculine model for his son to learn about how to act like a man. Father plays the vital role in a boy's life when he is growing to a man. However, Rochester's father hasn't taught him anything about masculinity, he doesn't even spend much time with his son. Unfortunately, Mr. Rochester is not fond of his father, so he is only "provided for by a wealthy marriage" (Brontë 304). It is the main point that Rochester breaks up with his family. Without his father's guidance, Rochester hasn't learned how to be a masculine gentleman or how to be strong and handle the whole family. The estate to Rochester is "a mere dungeon" (Brontë 215), which makes Rochester a caged bird and sticks him in a "silk draperies cobweb" (Brontë 215). Thornfield Hall entangles his liberty tightly. That's why Rochester always wondering outside rather than staying at the estate. Mrs. Fairfax comments at one point that Rochester "seldom stayed here longer than a fortnight at a time (Brontë 147). In *Manliness and Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2005), John Tosh talks about the importance of home to a man during the 1800s. He says that there were "a growing minority of comparatively well-paid skilled workers who entirely supported the household and spent much of their leisure time there" (Tosh 41). Things are different for Rochester, however. His home is not a place for him to take his ease. There are pressures from his died father and brother, and also expectations from people who lives in the Thornfield Hall. When Rochester is roaming around far away, things in Thornfield Hall is coping up

with by women. Mrs. Fairfax maintains everything in the estate, Jane Eyre helps to govern Adele, and Adele also lives her life normally without Rochester. Although Adele yearns for Rochester's company, she still can afford the days when Rochester is out of the town. When Rochester comes back to Thornfield, he doesn't even know that Jane is the new governess for Adele. Rochester seems like spiritual master in their minds, these women love the expected Rochester in their brain but not the real one. Basically, Rochester is the owner and master of Thornfield Hall, in fact, women who live in Thornfield Hall, are the real operators.

After Thornfield Hall burns, Rochester finds himself in a position in which he can finally live his life for himself rather than his family. "Thornfield Hall is ruin[ed]" (Brontë 426); the dungeon which has imprisoned Rochester has collapsed. Bertha's fire burns down Thornfield Hall and also herself. Rochester loses his wife and estate at the same time, it looks like he has a big loss, but I think the burning situation is a rest for him. He no longer needs to take responsibility to his family and take care of his mad wife. Even though Rochester has lost his inherited wealth, his social status and becomes a powerless gentleman, he has gotten his freedom back. When Rochester inherited wealth and status from his family, the responsibility of his family oppressed on him at the same time. He needs to be strong to deal with all the problems that happened beside him, and in order to protect his family. Rochester is seen as a powerful gentleman in the society, but this is not the point that is important to Charlotte Brontë. She cares more about the things behind the powerful gentleman. To be a powerful gentleman is tough, and a man must undergo many difficulties in order to be a masculine gentleman. Moreover, Rochester not only should satisfy people in

Thornfield Hall, but also needs to fit the social expectations that from people in the society. People always praise “the romanticized image of young, handsome, gallant gentleman” (Warner-Gonzales 54), and the praises might attract men to grab the position of masculine gentlemen. Charlotte Brontë creates Rochester to break free from the historical stereotype of the masculine man. Without the pressure of Thornfield Hall, Rochester doesn’t need to keep up the strong appearance to satisfy social expectation. On the other hand, Rochester can express his sensitive feelings and can allow himself to be vulnerable. Weakness and fragility are inside his mind but not nonexistent. Their pains are sometimes invisible but still there. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë uncovers the weakness and wounds, which are deep in men’s minds, to emphasize the oppressions on the so-called oppressors. The social rules and masculine notions restrain men’s behaviors and thoughts. However, there are no correct norms for the masculine rules in *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte Brontë has unlocked the restraints that the masculine conduct books and the social rules place on men, and allows them to be themselves. For Brontë, no matter how weak or strong a man is, he can be one of the models of masculinity. Brontë’s bold try gives the Victorian gentlemen chances to transcend the conventional perception of masculinity and be themselves. Women in *Jane Eyre* can fight against the patriarchal society, while men also can advocate being free from the social rules. Not only strong and powerful men can satisfy the elements of masculinity, but also sensitive and effeminate men can have the same honor.

## Chapter Three

### “Effeminate male”: Rochester’s Fragility in Ferndean

“Mr. Rochester now tries to walk about: vainly, — all was too uncertain. He groped his way back to the house, and, re-entering it, closed the door”

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

After hearing Rochester’s familiar crying voice, Jane Eyre feels Rochester’s desperate need in an almost physical sense. Actually, Rochester is in pain every day after Jane leaves Thornfield Hall. His life is hopeless and like hell, when he lives with the mad wife. Only Jane can comfort his depressed mood and weak mind. Rochester once said, “Little Jane’s love would have been my best reward,” and “without it, my heart is broken” (Brontë 319). When Jane realizes that Rochester is bigamist, she decides to leave Thornfield Hall right away. “You will not be my comforter, my rescuer? My deep love, my wild woe, my fantastic prayer, are all nothing to you?” Rochester says in an “unutterabl[y] path[etic]” voice (Brontë 318). Rochester tells Jane that he will be in anguish if he must live without her, but Jane is still determined to leave. Rochester hopes to appeal to Jane’s emotions by discussing his miserable experiences and family forces. Rochester’s father and brother are attracted by the wealth of Mason family, so they came up with a plan to trap Rochester into marrying Bertha even though she was mad. Rochester tells Jane that “[m]y father, and my brother Rowland, knew all this; but they thought only of the thirty thousand pounds, and joined in the plot against me” (Brontë 305). Rochester also talks about his

hopeless life because of Bertha's manic behaviors. He says that marrying Bertha is like being married to a "gross, groveling, mole-eyed blockhead" (Brontë 305), but he has only learned his mistake after the marriage. Andrew Smith points out that "Rochester has been manipulated into marrying Bertha for financial reasons, but realizes he has been duped when he discovers the presence of insanity in the family" (80-81). Trying to explain his actions, Rochester nonetheless again reveals his love to Jane. He says, "I was wrong to attempt to deceive you; but I feared a stubbornness that exists in your character" (Brontë 315). He even admits that he is a cowardly person in hopes of persuading Jane into stay. However, Jane still refuses to accept Rochester's bigamy, so she leaves him. Rochester chooses to show the white feather to beg for Jane's forgiveness and implores her not to leave him. It shows his weakness that Rochester doesn't use his power or masculinity to attract Jane to stay, but he shows his dependence upon Jane that much. He is trying to beg for Jane's pity and consolation to cover his deceived event. Weakness is potentially a very powerful element in a man's emotional arsenals. Sometimes being weak can attract people's attention and pity, and also can transfer the situation and emotion into different side. Rochester doesn't talk to Jane in a strong and aggressive way. On the other hand, his attitude is soft and sincere to talk about his tragedy and his love to Jane. Although Jane still feels sad and wants to leave Thornfield Hall, her mood becomes much more reflective after Rochester's soft apology and emotionally affecting speech. Even though Jane left Thornfield Hall in a sad mood, when she hears the painful voice from Rochester, she rushes back to rescue Rochester without hesitate. Rochester's voice is pain and woe, which is weak and suffering, but it encourages Jane's feeling of tender

and protective toward Rochester. Charlotte Brontë emphasizes that men are not always be aggressive. Weakness and fragility do not have to be disadvantageous for truly a masculine gentleman; on the other hand, they are valuable components of his masculinity.

In the event of marriage, Rochester seems powerless, and has no choice to make. His father and older brother seriously control over his life, so he is unable to fight back. I have a different point of view about Rochester's weakness. Rochester's family possessed a high social status and was held in esteem by society, while the Mason family is extremely wealth. Before being asked to marry Bertha Mason, Rochester is a useless second son, who is wondering outside. In order to get the social status and wealth, Rochester accepts the marriage and takes responsibility of the Rochester family. Although Bertha Mason is mad, her family still gives the family wealth to Rochester. I think Charlotte Brontë represents the constraints of social rules by using Rochester's choice. He gives up his free but poor life, and agrees to have the loveless marriage and to satisfy the social rules. It is the power of social expectations and rules which allowed men to be wonderful gentlemen with high status and good wealth. That's the powerful reason why Rochester submits to his family force and project the appearance of a man in control of his own life..

Jane decides to start a long trip to go back to find Rochester in Millcote after she hears Rochester's helpless cry. She is praying with St. John when suddenly Jane hears voice crying "Jane! Jane! Jane!" (Brontë 419). Jane realizes immediately that it is Rochester's voice and is struck by the anguish and woe in his voice. "Wait for me! Oh, I will come" (Brontë 420) Jane says, running anxiously to find Rochester.

Rochester's weak and painful voice stimulates Jane's mind. Because of Rochester calls Jane for help, she decides to go back to rescue Rochester. Even though Jane agrees to marry St. John at that moment, she doesn't care to break up with St. John and runs to Rochester. Jane even said that her spirit "is willing to do what is right" (Brontë 421), so she considers returning to the helpless Edward Rochester rather than staying with the more powerful St. John.

Understandably, when she finally arrives at Millcote, Jane is a little bit anxious about seeing Rochester and the other familiar people at Thornfield Hall. She peeps "with timorous joy towards a stately house," unfortunately, she sees a "blackened ruin" (Brontë 424). The portal of Thornfield Hall is a "yawn[ing] void" and its wall is "very high and very fragile looking" (Brontë 424). Jane sees the miserable situation for Thornfield Hall that it is "no roof, no battlement, no chimneys" and "all had crashed on" (Brontë 424). Thornfield Hall is no longer the beautiful and majestic estate in the village. It becomes silent death, and all the brilliant days are over. Through Jane's points of view, she finds out that "Thornfield Hall is quite a ruin" (Brontë 426). The old butler of the Thornfield Hall describes the burning event is a "dreadful calamity" (Brontë 426), and also the "immense quantity of valuable property destroyed" (Brontë 426). Bertha, who is the confidential secret for Rochester, was exposed in public. Bertha's fire burnt down the fortune of the Thornfield Hall, especially strike at Rochester. As the master of Thornfield Hall and also the Rochester family, Mr. Rochester loses Thornfield Hall is like loses his whole power in the society. He is having "none else. He is quite broken down, they say" (Brontë 429). Rochester loses wealth, and his power and influential decreases. People

think it is a tragic situation for Mr. Rochester, because a gentleman's power, status and estate symbolize his position in the society. The butler comments that "some say it was a judgment on him for keeping his first marriage secret, and wanting to take another wife while he had one living" (Brontë 428). The words of the old butler represents people's points of view to think that Mr. Rochester is "helpless, indeed-blind and a cripple" (Brontë 429). The butler pities Rochester but he also points out that "he is alive; but many think he had better be dead" (Brontë 429). Rochester is fragile because he loses some features of being a masculine gentleman, so he can't maintain his higher position in the society. Rochester's weakness is emphasized clearly through these miserable situations, and makes people see him in a new point of view.

Through Jane's eyes, Brontë depicts the ruin of Thornfield Hall. There is nothing left inside the house, only the ruined furniture. The ruined Thornfield Hall also seems to represents Rochester's situation. Rochester is trying to perform his strong and powerful, in order to get men's respect and women's love. However, to be a wonderful gentleman is a shackle, which limit his behaviors and mind. The performative figure is unable to tolerate tests of destiny in the life. When it talks about Rochester's spirit and original feeling, we finally find out that there is no spirit and no life inside the wonderful gentleman. Although he is strong in the appearance, Rochester is still weak inside his mind. After the conflagration, only "the grim blackness of the stones" (Brontë 425) left in the destroyed estate.

The fire accident burns up Rochester's wealth and power and makes him weak. Rochester is forced to move to another small house, originally built for hunting,



Ferndean House. Ferndean House is simpler than Thornfield Hall, which represents Rochester's reduced economic and social circumstance. He is unable to live in an estate, which is having manager and servants, and moves to the house hid in the darkness forest. Furthermore, Ferndean House's position in the far forest illustrates the fact that Rochester is no longer the center of the village. He gives up his social status and moves to the house, which is far away from city. The house is covered by many trees and is hard to reach. In addition to Rochester's new position, the house's location illustrates Rochester's wounded mind and his need to hide himself away from society. Also, he even gets physical injuries: one of his eyes is "stone-blind" (Brontë 429) and the other one is inflamed. He also hurts his hand, which needs to be amputated by the surgeon. Rochester is no longer a vigorous and independent gentleman; he has become a wounded person who needs someone to take care of him now. Avalon Warner-Gonzales' essay, "I Had Dreaded Worse. I Had Dreaded He was Mad': Reading the Intersections of Mental Illness and Masculinity in *Jane Eyre*" argues that Rochester's impairment is a symbol of castration. For Warner-Gonzales, Rochester's "severed limb acts as a permanent reminder of his mental illness" (47). Castration removes a man's sexual power, which is an important symbol of masculinity. Rochester's wounds make him powerless, and losing Thornfield has taken his masculinity away. Thornfield Hall is the origin of Rochester's masculine power. When Thornfield Hall collapsed, Rochester has no supporter to prop up him in the society, so his downfall is quick and complete. Rochester becomes seriously depress after Jane leaves Thornfield Hall. "Rochester has secluded himself and reverted to a taciturn state, withdrawing completely from society and from his duties"

(Warner-Gonzales 48). In my opinion, Rochester becomes depressed and loses his personal charm when Jane is not with him. Without Jane, Rochester is unable to live his life well, and even worse, he loses his wife, his estate and his status. After losing his power, Rochester becomes a melancholic, and hides himself in the forest to sigh in despair every day. If Jane doesn't come back to comfort Rochester, he will not open his heart again. Through the discussion above, we can clearly notice that innate character of Rochester is not like his personality in public. He is performing to satisfy the social rules and social expectations. If there are no people and no responsibility on him, his real characteristic is sensitive and smooth, and sometimes a little bit heavy-hearted. Although the loss of Thornfield Hall is terrible, Rochester can back to his natural personality and no longer oppressed by his family and the society.

Rochester moves to Ferndean House, which is a “desolate spot” (Brontë 429), after the burning of Thornfield Hall. Ferndean House is Mr. Rochester's shelter. Ferndean is a “building of considerable antiquity, moderate size” (Brontë 429), which located deep in the woods, and has “no architectural pretensions” (Brontë 429). That is, Ferndean is a small, old, ordinary house with low-level, unlike the gorgeous Thornfield Hall. In comparison with Thornfield Hall, Ferndean House is simple and “remained uninhabited and unfurnished” (Brontë 430). Jane Eyre describes Ferndean House as having narrow windows and doors. Furthermore, it has no flowers or garden-beds (Brontë 430). Ferndean House is not built for showing off, but instead is a place for a hunter to rest. Its appearance and style makes people feel plain and natural, just as Rochester's current emotional state. When taking off the noble position, Rochester is free to behave as a normal man who can allow himself to

experience fragile moments. The pressure from his family and the society has forced him to appear as a powerful gentleman who can easily handle different situations. He needs to take responsibility for his family and the estate, so he should stay strong to deal with those things. Rochester, however, is not always formidable to everything, and he still can be lack of strength in his life.

In Ferndean House, Rochester can allow himself show his weakness and to embrace his real personality. Jane Eyre describes Rochester as a “fettered wild-beast or bird” (Brontë 431), who lives in the hunting house. Her description shows that Rochester’s true identity is wild and natural, instead of the overcautious gentleman in the Thornfield Hall. In order to face those troubles that happened in the society, Rochester needs to hide his natural identity when he is the master of Thornfield Hall. The social expectation and family forces limit Rochester to express his true feeling and makes him becoming an oppressed gentleman. Yu-wen Su points out that “[i]t is only when Rochester repents of his wrongdoings by cleaning up his contaminated nature ‘in anguish and humility’ (447) that he can be realigned with nature” (Su 73). Rochester loves natural house more than the grand estate. He once mentioned that the “leafy enclosure” (Brontë 215) in front of Thornfield Hall is “real, sweet and pure” (Brontë 215), and not like the gloomy Thornfield Hall, which chained his life. Different from Thornfield Hall, Ferndean is “a place ordinarily conceptualized as the sanctuary of the happy couple” (Beattie 502). Jane and Rochester can express their true feelings to each other, and they don’t need to worry about the judgments upon their romantic relationship. Ferndean is not as beautiful as Thornfield, but it is comfortable enough to heal Rochester’s physical and emotional injures. Ferndean also

provides Rochester a blank space within which to relax and think about his next steps. It is the reason why Rochester moves himself to Ferndean House to away from the noisy city. Ferndean House is far from the city and located in the deep forest. There are “grass-grown track descending the forest aisle” (Brontë 430) and “all was interwoven stem” (Brontë 430) without opening, when Jane Eyre is trying to get to Ferndean House. She also mentions that Ferndean House is hard to reach, because it located in the very end of the woods and covered with “columnar trunk”, “dense, summer foliage” (Brontë 430). The remote house gives Rochester a place to hide himself, so that he can get away from public ridicule and console himself in the woods with nature. Rochester having been free from the duties and social expectations placed on his as a gentleman is also freed from the necessity of continuing his loveless marriage with Bertha. Rochester licks his hurting wounds in Ferndean House and only nature could offer him solace now.

The miserable event gives Rochester a chance to express his true feeling and personality. For people in the society, they think that the losing of Thornfield Hall and Rochester’s fragility are key reasons for lose his masculine power in the society. Masculine power is an important element for an ideal gentleman in the Victorian times. However, Charlotte Brontë changes man’s fragility as a valuable element for the ideal gentleman in *Jane Eyre*. Rochester is not so powerful as people expected. Jane Eyre is aware of Rochester’s fragile moments from the beginning of the novel, but she sees Rochester’s weakness from different viewpoint than most Victorians. Rochester faces accidents emotionally: for example he fall down from his horse on the road and the midnight fire accident in the Thornfield Hall. Furthermore, Rochester

also has mental pressures from his family, which depressed him in an expected cage, so he disguises himself as a gypsy witch to temporarily escape these expectations. In spite of Mr. Rochester's less powerful appearance in Thornfield, Jane Eyre still falls in love with him. Rather than accept the more powerful St. John's marriage proposal, Jane agrees to take care of fragile Rochester for life. Jane loves Rochester not because of his physical power, such as social status or his family's wealth, but because of his personal appeal. In *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain* (2005), John Tosh also mentions "the term denotes a situation in which the traditionally dominant forms of masculinity have become so blurred that men no longer know what is required to be a 'real man'" (45). John Tosh discusses the idea of a "crisis" in masculinity. There is an important difference between an individual man's conflicts and the undermining of the entire idea of masculinity. That's what Charlotte Brontë wants to highlight in *Jane Eyre*. Masculinity is changeable, so we can't decide which element can be the most important in our view of masculinity. All kinds of personalities are special, and we need to respect all of them. Jane is attracted by Rochester's "pleasurable and genial" (Brontë 146) attitude, and he treats Jane like a relation rather than the governess. Rochester treats Jane in an equal position, also his ease manner free Jane from the serious constrain. The weakness for Rochester doesn't make him failing in Jane's point of view. On the other hand, his weakness shows Rochester's sensitivity toward people's feelings and some detailed things in life. Brontë creates Rochester as a sensational gentleman to argue that sensitive is no longer belongs to women. Brontë gives new masculine value to the weakness of men. Ideal men can also express their sensitive and tender attitudes to others in Brontë's

*Jane Eyre*. The fragile parts of men are also play important roles in being a wonderful gentleman. Moreover, Rochester's fragility becomes obvious when he moves to Ferndean House.

The situation in Ferndean House becomes acute. Ferndean House shows Rochester's weakness more clearly. Rochester not only meets the physical hurt, but also his mind becomes ill when he lives in Ferndean House. Facing this kind of fragile man, Jane Eyre doesn't feel shame or antipathetic. On the contrary, Rochester's social status or estate means nothing to Jane, she only cares about Rochester himself. Jane thinks Rochester is a "fettered beast or bird" (Brontë 431), which is hard to touch his "sullen woe" (Brontë 431), when she first sees Rochester in Ferndean House. Jane is not afraid of Rochester's "blind ferocity" (Brontë 431), because she understands his pain and is willing to accompany him through his suffering life rather than abandoning him and their relationship. Rochester is like Sleeping Beauty, who is shackled in the castle and waiting for her prince. Jane Eyre is the prince, and going deep into the forest to rescue Sleeping Beauty, Rochester. Rochester's fragility doesn't means disgusted man to Jane, instead, man's weakness attracts Jane to take care of him. Rochester's fragility ensures that Jane will pity him: "[i]t was mournful, indeed, to witness the subjugation of that vigorous spirit to a corporeal infirmity" (Brontë 439). Jane doesn't revolt against her love to Rochester when she sees Rochester's blind eye and "scar of fire" (Brontë 437) on his forehead. She feels sad and pities Rochester, but she doesn't despise him. Because Rochester expresses his natural sensitivity and vulnerability to Jane, "the powerless[ness] of the strong man" (Brontë 439) touches her heart. The powerless of male can inspires pities

of female and makes her stronger to take care of men. Brontë shows that not only the powerful man can be attractive to women, but the less powerful man also has his appeal. Rochester shows his real fragility and it touches Jane's heart deeply, so that Jane follows her mind to her true love. This sort of male vulnerability is one of the valuable elements of the Victorian man.



## Chapter Four

### St. John's Painful Struggle

When talking about the important male characters in *Jane Eyre*, we should also point to St. John, which is the second important male character in *Jane Eyre*. St. John is a wonderful priest with an attractive appearance and a kind heart. He is not only “a handsome man: tall, fair, with blue eyes, and a Grecian profile” (Brontë 441) but also inherits his father’s parsonic life and works very hard for the missionary in the village. Rochester also describes St. John as a “graceful Apollo” (Brontë 441), which shows that St. John is cultured and elegant. Hannah, The nanny in Moor House tells Jane that St. John seldom lives at home, because “a large proportion of his time appear[s] devoted to visiting the sick and poor among the scattered population of his parish” (Brontë 351). We can see that St. John is a responsible person, and he is clearly focused on his duty. Moreover, St. John builds schools for boys and girls of poor families in Morton. He sacrifices his whole life to God, and does the religious duty. St. John also inherits the old name, Rivers, from his family. The “Old Mr. Rivers“ was “a plain man” but “ a gentleman” (Brontë 353) during his lifetime. Old Mr. Rivers’ son, St. John inherits the old family name and the parsonic career in addition to the house and gentlemanly features. His old name and priest’s position support him with great social statues in the society. To *Jane Eyre*, St. John is the savior of her life. After Jane leaves Thornfield Hall, she roams around to St. John’s house. She sees Mary and Diana talk to each other happily in the house; Jane feels excited and couldn’t control to knock the door. However, Hannah is indifferent, and



she doesn't want to help weak Jane. Although Jane cried to her "I must die if I am turned away" (Brontë 335), Hannah still forces Jane to leave. Fortunately, St. John gives Jane a big hand. When Jane is starving to death, St. John saves her and takes care of her in Moor House. Although St. John's attitude toward Jane appears cold, he is still concerned with Jane's health and circumstances. Through the above situation, we can notice St. John's power. His power is strong and not only in his parsonage, but also in Moor House. People think that St. John lives a great life of parson, who has an old family name, social status and a house. He is not only focused on his religious duty, but his domestic life is satisfactory; in addition, he is loved by the villagers. It shows his powerful strength that he controls his life very well and can decide himself what he wants to do. In spite of these circumstances, however, St. John must fulfill the same masculine expectations as other men in the Victorian society.

Although St. John seems to have power and status in the society, he is also controlled by the masculine rules in the Victorian times. The most manifest situation is the religious conventions to St. John. The inheritance makes him grow up to be a parson just like his father and grandfather, and he also inherits the bankrupt. St. John's father "is not rich enough to give them [a fortune]", so "they must provide for themselves" (Brontë 343). Charlotte Brontë's father is the prototype for St. John. Dudley Green points out that Patrick Brontë was a "dedicated clergyman who took a keen interest in the affairs of his parishioners" (39). St. John's ambition and conscientious attitude is related to Brontë's father. As a village priest, St. John is expected not only to take care of villagers in his parish, but also to look after his father's parish to satisfy people's expectations. He does a "large proportion of his

time appeared devoted to visiting the sick and poor among the scattered population of his parish” (Brontë 351). Consequently, St. John is too busy to take care of his family in Moor House. He tries so hard to follow his father’s steps, that forgets how to be himself. St. John once says to Jane “I shall not stay long at Morton, now that my father is dead, and that I am my own master” (Brontë 361). St. John performs as a priest, who is expected by people, in the society. St. John seems like a wonderful and powerful figure; actually he is oppressed by the masculine rules and social expectations. He needs to be a wonderful minister to win the social status and masculine power in the society. In fact, religion sometimes makes him suffering, and he mentions that the “uniform duties wearied me to death” (Brontë 361). The pressure of religious expectation presses heavily on St. John, and makes him struggle every day.

St. John can’t protect and take care of his family because of his religious duty. Jane Eyre mentions that St. John is seldom at home, and that most of his times is spent taking care of the poor or someone in need in the village. Things happen at Moor House are mostly dealt with by Diana, Mary and Hannah, all females. Although St. John endeavors to be a successful priest, he is unable to protect his family and house at the same time. Diana and Mary will leave Moor House to be governesses in other families, and Moor House is going to shut down after they leave. St. John, however, will go to India for the mission of missionary. In choosing to be a successful clergyman, St. John is forced to give up lots of things around him. We can see that St. John, a man, is too weak to retain his family members and his house. On the other hand, Jane Eyre, seen earlier as a “weak” female, becomes the savior both for St.

John's sisters and for Moor House. Jane successfully inherits bequest from her uncle, and she starts to have her power. She buys Moor House and asks Diana and Mary to come back to there. Jane says to St. John "[m]y purpose, in short, is to have all things in an absolutely perfect state of readiness for Diana and Mary" (Brontë 390), "and my ambition is to give them a beau ideal of a welcome when they come" (Brontë 390). When Jane gets the bequest, she suddenly becomes the master of Moor House. She exposes her aggressive immediately. Jane tries to protect her family members and friends, and has the ambition on controlling everything. Jane's ambitious behavior reflects St. John's powerless toward Moor House, and also shows that St. John is too weak to look after his sisters. The religious duties give him social status but also take away some precious things beside him.

St. John is constrained by the religious duties, so that he is limited in his ability to woo his true love. His romantic relationship with the Lady, Rosamond Oliver is an unfortunate love affair. Rosamond Oliver is St. John's friend and a great helper in the school St. John has founded. As the heiress to the Oliver family fortune, Miss Oliver is not only the precious daughter in her family, but she also has "a face of perfect beauty," as described as by Jane Eyre (Brontë 362). St. John, a sober man with the outward appearance of detachment, feels a glow rise to his face and "his solemn eye melt[s] with sudden fire" (Brontë 364). When St. John is talking to Rosamond, he is too shy to look into her eyes. It seems that St. John's cold heart is provoked into life by Rosamond and becomes warmer when she stays with him. Rosamond cares about St. John very much. She is concerned about St. John's mood when she knows that Moor House is going to be locked up. Rosamond is always having her eyes gazed at

St. John with a lovely mood and she is trying to introduce St. John to her father, Mr. Oliver. Luckily, Mr. Oliver agrees with St. John's "good birth, old name, and sacred profession" (Brontë 370), which are the "sufficient compensation for the want of fortune" (Brontë 370). Rivers is well-established name worthy of "great respect" (Brontë 369) and "all Morton had once belonged to them" (Brontë 369). St. John is under the great pressure of being reviewed by Mr. Oliver. Mr. Oliver's attitude toward St. John represents the conventional Victorian social expectations and masculine rules for men. The most important elements for being a good man are being well-born, an old and respected family name, and wealth. Men are living under these masculine rules, and are struggling to satisfy people in order to win social status. Mr. Oliver gives St. John "great respect" (Brontë 369) because of St. John's family name and family wealth significantly are features which belong to him individually. Most of the time, people care about a gentleman's family name or wealth rather than his personality or working ability.

Although Rosamond's father doesn't stop her from marrying St. John, St. John's relationship with Rosamond still limited by his missionary position. As a priest, St. John thinks that Rosamond is too wonderful to be his wife, because she doesn't understand his aspiration and unable to cooperate with his undertaking (Brontë 374). St. John even says "Rosamond a sufferer, a labourer, a female apostle? Rosamond a missionary's wife? No!" (Brontë 374). He doesn't believe that Rosamond can bear the hardships and hard work which are part of a missionary's life. Actually, St. John doesn't want Rosamond to live a difficult life like his will be. Jane Eyre comments that St. John "need not be a missionary", raising the possibility that he "might

relinquish that scheme” (Brontë 374) in order to marry Rosamond. To the readers’ surprised, St. John agitatedly refuses to give up his ministerial position. St. John says, “I do not pity myself. I scorn the weakness” (Brontë 375). St. John is willing to give consideration to his family and priest career, but he’s fragility stops him to do so. Sadly, he inly can focus on his career of priest, and sacrifices his family. Even though St. John is tortured by maintaining the priest’s position, he still inherits parsonic position from his father and grandfather and fulfills social expectation of masculinity. Charles Kingsley makes the argument that Christian manhood “is equated with restraining the self, putting the “self” in the service of a larger social body that may not materially provide for one, but that expects one’s labor” (Hall 55). St. John’s missionary ambition will satisfy his vocation, but unfortunately, in order to achieve his goal, St. John must abandon his love for Rosamond Oliver. He even mentions that “Miss Oliver is ever surrounded by suitors and flatterers: in less than a month, my image will be effaced from her heart” (Brontë 374). St. John tries to pretend that he is indifferent with Rosamond, but actually Jane feels his struggling and “suffer in the conflict” (Brontë 374). St. John’s weakness is representing by the force from the masculine rules and the inheritance from his family. To keep his masculine power, St. John can’t relinquish his job, because he needs to finish the mission and satisfy the expectations from people to the priest. As a result, St. John appears to be a wonderful priest, however in his inner mind he is plagued by feelings of ineffectuality and constraint. His religious duty stops him from marrying his true love. And I think it is people, who make St. John suffers from acting as a wonderful priest. When Jane tries to use her uncle’s inheritance to help St. John to stay at England and get rid of the

dilemma, St. John refuses her proposal and pretends that he is strong enough to face this situation (Brontë 386). St. John can't allow himself to accept Jane's financial help, because he is ashamed of needing help from woman, especially a governess. He is afraid that people will judge his weakness, so he tries to pretend strong. Another reason is he decides to keep his mind on the religious job. St. John says of himself, "my ambition is unlimited; my desire to rise higher, to do more than others, insatiable" (Brontë 375). For these reasons, St. John has no choice but sacrifice his family and lover.

After abandoning his relationship with Rosamond Oliver, St. John focuses on the duty of priest seriously. St. John in order to satisfy his mission as a priest, so he forces Jane to be his wife and accompanies him to go to India. St. John said to Jane that "God and nature intended you as a missionary's wife" (Brontë 402) and "[a] missionary's wife you must—shall be" (Brontë 403) to persuade her to agree to the marriage. To Jane, because they don't love each other, the result would be a loveless marriage. Jane mentions that she's totally "not fit for it" (Brontë 402) because she has "no vocation"(Brontë 402). St. John asks Jane to learn to be a missionary's helper, and to work on understanding a missionary's life in the following days. St. John believes that Jane's assistance will be valuable to him, if she becomes a "conductress of India, and a helper amongst Indian women" (Brontë 404). Nevertheless, St. John's attempts at persuasion are motivated only by his desire to benefit his missionary life in India but not the true love for Jane Eyre. When Jane talks to Rochester about St. John, she even tells him that "[h]e wants to marry me only because he thought I should make a suitable missionary's wife" (Brontë 444), which Rosamond couldn't.

Jane says that St. John doesn't care about her that much, if she is in danger, St. John will resign her and also grab her freedom away (Brontë 404). Finally, Jane refuses St. John in a solemn way, and reproach for St. John's compelling attitude toward her. She says, "[f]ormerly, I answered, because you did not love me; now, I reply, because you almost hate me. If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now" (Brontë 412). St. John's threat almost kills Jane and puts her in a predicament, but Jane still insists on her own resolution rather than surrendering to the power that St. John attempts to wield over her. Even though St. John uses God's power to suppress Jane by saying "if you reject it, it is not me you deny, but God" (Brontë 409), it doesn't change her mind for finding true love. St. John's behavior only shows his weakness that he is powerless in asking for a marriage. The only way he can see to make Jane accept his proposal is either by threatening her with God's power. Moreover, this marriage is not for himself, not for true love, but for the duty and responsibility of being a priest. Charles Kingsley argues that the muscular Christianity can get out of control sometimes: "[t]he cathedral freezes, crusts over, and crushes passion, robbing humans of their God-given shape and distorting good activity, making it monstrous and sinful" (Rosen 34). Such as St. John's forceful behaviors to Jane, he uses God's believing in a wrong way. St. John's whole life is tracing to be a wonderful priest and he finally succeeds, but what he loses in his life are more than he could image.

After seeing St. John's forceful behaviors to Jane, we may interpret his actions as those of as a cruel patriarchal man at first. Most of the critics and critical essays emphasize women's rebellion against men in *Jane Eyre*, but overlook men's hidden

feelings and sufferings. In my opinion, it is the weight of social expectation which makes St. John try to force Jane into a loveless marriage. The terms of muscular Christianity are “boldness, honesty, and plainness; defiance of authority; stoic patience; and violent energy” (Hall 19), severe terms for St. John. St. John is really focused on his career as a missionary, and in order to be successful priest, he needs to go to India. In order to be a high social status priest, he is unable to give up his position, but keep torturing under the priest’s life. St. John looks very strong and powerful in the society; actually, he is also oppressed by society. In James Eli Adams’ *Dandies and Dessert Saints* (1995), he mentions that the model for masculine priest will be think as “incarnation of an ascetic regimen” (Adam 2), and related to self-discipline. “Such discipline is familiar enough in accounts of Victorian repression, where Victorian ‘manliness’ often figures as one more mechanism for enforcing continence” (Adams 2). People’s expectations for the priest are severe and stern, which makes St. John tiring of following those rules. He is ruled by the opinions and voices of the public, and has no choice but abandon some valuable things in his life to satisfy people. Charlotte Brontë’s description of St. John reveals the suffering behind the many successful men. As we can see here, they are not as strong as they appear, and there are many internal struggles in progress.

On account of St. John’s priest position, he should follow the Victorian masculine rules to prove that he is a wonderful missionary. In the Victorian people’s point of view, St. John really is a successful priest, who takes care not only about his parson but also his father’s. Nonetheless, St. John’s powerful figure is showing to cover his weakness. St. John is said to hide “a fever in his vital” (Brontë 356) by his



sister, Diana Rivers. Also, Jane Eyre mentions that St. John is “good and great, but severe” (Brontë 444) and “cold as an iceberg” (Brontë 444). Even though the problem of whether or not he should marry Rosamond is tearing him up on the inside, St. John still keeps his apparently cold and rational attitude toward it. In order to find a wife who can fit a missionary’s life, St. John ruthlessly abandons the relationship with Rosamond. It seems like St. John is really focuses on his religious position, only Jane is able to see St. John’s inner sadness. She says to him, “You speak coolly enough; but you suffer in the conflict. You are wasting away” (Brontë 374). It shows the concealed conflict in St. John’s mind, and also the weakness which prevents him from controlling his life. The social expectation, masculine rules and religious duties are oppressions and burdens, which make St. John weak. His pretended strength, however, shows his fragility obviously. St. John is too weak to protect what he loves and yearns for, so he chooses to hold back his religious job and gives up something around him. St. John is suppressed by those duties and rules in the society. Those duties and rules for men not only make him weak, but also encourage St. John becomes strong in a cold and cruel way to fight back. St. John tells Jane and his sisters about Rosamond’s new marriage with a mood “serene as glass” (Brontë 395). St. John knows that it is the losing that he shall suffers from, so he faces it in a peaceful way. Most of the times we don’t care about how many abandoned parts are there behind a successful man. However, Brontë cares, so she uncovers the darkness side behind a successful priest, St. John, to show the inner fragile of a man.

As a wonderful priest, St. John makes all his efforts to maintain his position. The position not only grabs valuable things away from him, but also makes him suffer so

much. St. John once said “I was myself intensely miserable, because I thought I had made a mistake in entering the ministry” (Brontë 361). His words show that St. John is not that fond of being a priest, he just inherits this job from his father and grandfather and tries to do the job as good as possible. Unfortunately, St. John inherits his father’s position and social status, and also his father’s debts, so there is no choice for St. John in that situation. Although he thinks that he is not suitable for being a priest, St. John should take his father’s responsibility to live his life and retain the Moor House. Those situations are the oppressions from the inheritance and family pressures on St. John’s shoulders. When St. John finds the vocation in his mind and has the determination to be a wonderful priest, he falls in love with Rosamond Oliver. It is a miserable situation for St. John, because he is powerless to handle the religious duties, the relationship with Rosamond Oliver, and also the protection of his family and Moor House at the same time. In the religious part, St. John is weak and fragile to maintain his relationship with Rosamond. Also, the loveless marriage and power of God are unable to force Jane Eyre to be his wife. Jane Eyre fight against the social rules to win her freedom, however, St. John is ruled by the religious rules and he fails to protect what he really loves.

In the familial context, St. John’s weakness becomes more apparent. It represents St. John’s powerless condition that he is incapacitating to deal with the family affair and also retaining Moor House. Moor House symbolizes St. John’s struggle over how to live his life in a fulfilling manner while protecting his beloved person at the same time. St. John is in predicament, because he is constrained by his job and must rely on Jane to save his house and sisters. Moor House is located at a solitary place and

surrounded by moors. I would argue that the moor represents St. John's suffering and conflict between fulfilling social expectations and his own desires for his lover and family. St. John is trapped on the moor and unable to get out of it. He wants to take care of his beloved sisters and Rosamond, but the masculine rules make him believe that his only option is to be a cold and bloodless man. The social constraint puts St. John into a dilemma, which is like the moor. The "dark roof and hoary walls" (Brontë 351) of Moor House symbolize St. John's religious job. Being a priest can increase St. John's social status, but he needs to sacrifice valuable things encircle him. To be a priest is kind of a shelter in the society for St. John, but in fact, it is a dark and gloomy roof, which suffer St. John. Jane Eyre once describes the garden of Moor House is "dark with yew and holly and where no flowers but of the hardiest species would bloom" (Brontë 349). The unyielding trees in the garden are an illustration of St. John's serious and stern personality. No matter how many frustrations are there in his life, St. John is always like an invincible tree. He perseveres in achieving his ambition and tasks till the end. St. John maintains his strong power in public in order to conceal his weakness from people. In the view of society, a wonderful man cannot show his weakness in public, so St. John can only hide it and comfort himself alone. St. John's acted strong power is based on his fragilities and sufferings, which are Charlotte Brontë wants to uncover and shows to readers in *Jane Eyre*.

From the above descriptions of St. John, it is clear that St. John's attitude toward his weakness is quite different from Rochester's. St. John doesn't want to confess his weakness or fragility to others, so he silently tolerates all the pressures silently. St. John's weakness is different from Rochester's. Rochester tends to show more

weaknesses in his life than St. John. Rochester even disguises himself as a gypsy woman, making his fragility quite obvious. St. John, however, he tries hard to hide his weakness in private, and pretends that he is strong enough to afford setbacks. Jane Eyre describes that St. John looks like “a statue instead of a man”, because “he could not have been easier” (Brontë 344). His sister also mentions that St. John always hides his true feelings inside his mind and refuses to talk to others. It not only shows St. John’s serious and solemn characteristic, but also his ability bear difficult situations. St. John is forced to inherit his position as a minister. Actually, he doesn’t like to be a priest, but he still takes responsibility to finish his job. Even though there is an unfavorable day, St. John insists on doing “pastoral excursion[s]” (Brontë 351) to take care of the villagers. His insistence shows his focusing attitude to the religious ambition. It seems like St. John had no choice but to inherit the job from his father, but I think St. John is also forced by himself to truly embody the role of an effective minister, finishing the hard tasks.

In Moor House, St. John plays as a steady and stable character as if there is nothing can touch his mind. St. John’s sister even says “You would think him gentle, yet in some things he is inexorable as death” (Brontë 356). Also, when Moor House is going to shut down, St. John is quite calm and focused on his mission abroad. When Jane writes to him about her wedding, he doesn’t reply immediately but rather waits for six months. When he does reply, he is also calm and serious and talks about God. Although it seems that St. John is a very cold-blooded person who is only focused on his religious ambitions, in fact, his indifference is artificial. St. John hides his true worries and feelings in private. Although he appears cold in the Moor House, he

really cares very deeply about every member of his household. St. John is quiet and clam in Moor House, but he is willing to sit in the parlor to keep Jane and his sisters company. When Moor House is going to shut down, St. John makes sure that all the women who live in Moor House, will have jobs and places to stay once Moor House is shut down. He even helps Jane to find a teaching job in his school. When St. John's does finally reply to Jane's letter, he doesn't complain about his lonely situation but is only concerned about Jane's marriage and wishes her happiness. St. John "is unmarried: he never will marry now" (Brontë 452), and he is bearing toil and loneliness in India.

When it comes to St. John's romantic life, we can remember his cruel attitude towards Rosamond Oliver. Jane finds that St. John speaks to Rosamond "like a automaton" (Brontë 365), when Rosamond asks St. John to meet his father. St. John also doesn't seem to care about Rosamond's moods and feelings. Rosamond turns "twice to gaze after him, as she tripped fairy-like down the field", but St. John strides "firmly across, never turn[ing] at all" (Brontë 365). It seems that St. John remains sternly cool and unmoved person to Rosamond. Another example of St. John's coldness is his attempt to persuade Jane to marry him. St. John thinks Rosamond would not be capable of being a missionary's wife and accompanying him to India, so he asks Jane to be his wife. His proposal is a coerce of suffering for Jane, as she realizes that to accept would constrain her freedom. Based on the descriptions above, we may think that St. John is a hardline and patriarchal man in the relationships, who only thinks of himself. Brontë reveals St. John's painful parts, which is behind his hardliner and forces. St. John knows Rosamond is the heiress to the Oliver family

fortune, so he doesn't want her to be with him in his life as a missionary. He refuses her to go abroad with him is one way to protect Rosamond, so that she will not experience the painful trip. He pretends that he is indifferent to the relationship with Rosamond and also acts as if his ambition is more important than his lover. In reality, he keeps his inner pain away from the public gaze. After St. John learns that Rosamond Oliver has married someone else, he says to Jane that "[y]ou see, Jane, the battle is fought and the victory won" (Brontë 396). His words show that he still cares about Rosamond, but he has given up her because of his professional ambition. Sadly, St. John's career is not chosen by himself but by his family in light of social expectations. St. John's choice to give up marriage with Rosamond illustrates the oppression and struggle to him. Also, his proposal of marriage with Jane shows the force from social expectations exert on to St. John.

As a clergyman, he needs to go abroad to finish his mission, which means that he should marry a woman who is strong enough to handle the hardships in a missionary's life. That's why St. John abandons Rosamond and asks Jane Eyre to marry him. We can consider St. John as a selfish patriarchal man, but we cannot ignore the reason and the cause for his patriarchic behaviors. Charlotte Brontë emphasizes St. John's powerlessness in *Jane Eyre* to encourage readers to see the oppressions weighing on men. Because men are most often taught to be strong and powerful in society, weakness is not an option for them. Men are expected to hide their weaknesses and true feelings in order to meet the standards of masculinity in public. Just because men's pain is not obvious does not mean that it doesn't exist. Even though he may feel oppressed or constrained, St. John also pretends that he is

powerful and ambitious in his career. It seems that the pain felt by men is important to Charlotte Brontë, so she creates St. John. Unlike Rochester, St. John rarely talks about his feeling, so his sisters, Jane and Rosamond cannot truly understand the hardships he experiences. His performance, however, makes him lose all his family members and friends around him and he finds himself lonely in India. Although his religious career is so successful and he has a high social status, he lives alone. I would argue that Brontë not only points out that man's weakness is one of the valuable element for masculinity, but it also encourages man to be sensitive in his life. An authentic masculinity should mean that a man can be weak or fragile in public rather than always trying to appear as a powerful figure. The most important thing in masculinity is to be true to one's self. No matter how weak or strong you are, just be yourself. Charles Kingsley also argues that "men had every right to declare their maleness and not to be ashamed of it" (Rosen 27). It is the same idea as Charlotte Brontë's, and also she supports men's own masculine features. There are many men who lose themselves in their attempts to achieve careers that can satisfy other people. People start to accept the real personality of men, but not measure men by using the traditional masculine rules. Changing the traditional definition of masculinity through innovative thought seems to be a central mission for Charlotte Brontë. That's the real masculinity that Brontë wants to advocate in *Jane Eyre*.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

David Rosen remarks that “[a] man shall and must be valiant; he must march forward, and quit himself like a man” (21). Masculinity is what makes a man a real man. It is an important gender issue in both the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century. In a patriarchal society, masculinity is the key point by which men maintain their power and the standard according to which people judge those masculine men. The patriarchy ensures that men appear powerful as they attempt to meet the judgment and fulfill social expectations. In light of this fact, certain type of masculinity has become the norms for men, both in society during these years and in the literature. Most of the critics argue that masculinity is representing the power of a man. A man is expected to be powerful and strong in order to be seen as a masculine man. Weakness and fragility are not options for being a masculine gentleman. Masculinity is the key point in a man’s education about how to be a real man, and it is also the standard by which people gauge their satisfaction with a wonderful gentleman’s public appearance. To be a wonderful gentleman can be glorious to a man, but most of the people only see their honorable lives rather than the misery in their mind. Society expects men to take responsibility for things in public domain. Rochester and St. John must both manage their households and their families. Although Rochester is seldom at home, Mrs. Fairfax and Adele still rely on him and look forward to Rochester’s return. In Moor House, Mary, Diana and Hannah also depend on St. John. It is his duty to take care of them and also the family house. Often the pressure on men is too heavy to handle. Charlotte Brontë, however, considers gentlemen’s hidden painful



situations and advocates a new definition of masculinity, most clearly in *Jane Eyre*. In *Jane Eyre*, the two main male characters, Rochester and St. John, live different lifestyles and suffer in different situations. Brontë uncovers the sufferings under the wonderful gentlemen, and in doing so creates her own version of an authentic gentleman in *Jane Eyre*.

Rochester is said to be a wonderful bachelor in the village. His power and wealth ensure his social status. Most of the ladies want to marry him and he is considered to be a model gentleman. St. John is another good man in society. He is a wonderful priest, who obey the duties for priest and also inherits his father's job. St. John works very hard and cares about all the people in his care. His neighbors always praise his kindness and passion. Charlotte Brontë, however, uses Jane's perspective to show the emotional fragility they experience and to reveal the inner workings of their mind. Rochester is forced to marry a mad woman, so that he can get the wealth and estate. With this wealth he is expected to maintain the public appearance of a wonderful gentleman handling all the things within his family, and also takes care of people who live in Thornfield Hall. People's expectations of being a wonderful gentleman are a heavy burden on Rochester's back. He has no choice but to satisfy them. St. John is in the same situation. He lives to satisfy people's expectations. St. John has inherited his father's and grandfather's profession, although he is constrained by the rules for priest. In order to finish the priest's mission, St. John refuses to marry his lover, Rosamond, and asks Jane for a loveless marriage. Finally, he sacrifices all chance for love and goes abroad alone for his missionary work. Charlotte Brontë creates different perspective for readers to see the fragility and sufferings for men. In fact, behind their

power appearances, men are also oppressed. Living under the high social expectations is sick and intolerant, only the wonderful and glorious appearances can be seen by people, but the serious limitations for gentlemen are unknown. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë reveals the pain involved in being a gentleman, and shows the invisible fetters of masculine rules. Brontë's work encourages readers' to reconsider their view of men; she reveals the weakness which can often exist under gentlemen's strong power. Men are forced to perform on masculinity, and can't show their tenderness and sensitivity in society. Readers can feel the helpless and fragility of men in *Jane Eyre*.

Brontë not only exposes the frailty which can exist for even vigorous men, but she also interests a new and valuable component of masculinity in the Victorian era. Fragility also can be a valuable element for masculinity. Brontë advocates that men should be themselves, even at the cost of revealing their fragility. For Brontë, it seems that authentic masculinity not only includes strong power, but men's weaknesses or fragilities are also worthy of inclusion. Rochester is not a typical gentleman in *Jane Eyre*. When he is in Thornfield Hall, Rochester always evades the duties of gentleman and wandering outside of the estate. Moreover, Rochester shows his inability in the face of accidents and when dealing with things in the estate. He is not that strong but pretends to be a powerful figure in order to hold his family. When Rochester moves to Ferndean House, his situation has become serious. He loses his estate and wealth, and also is physically wounded. He is too weak to be the master of the Rochester family. *Jane Eyre*, however, is aware of Rochester's weakness when she lives in Thornfield Hall, but she still falls in love with him. Jane comes back to find Rochester only

because she hears Rochester's helpless voice. Rochester has lost his estate, his wife and his power in the accident, but Jane doesn't abandon him. On the contrary, she comes back to accompany Rochester when he is weak and in need. Also, she decides to marry Rochester and takes care of the rest of his life. Her decision shows that Jane doesn't care about man's masculinity or gentlemanly public appearance. No matter Rochester is strong or weak, Jane won't change her attitude toward him. Jane loves his authentic personality but not the performance, which is act for society.

Reversely, St. John lives a different lifestyle than Rochester. St. John is the conventional strong man, who sacrifices for his career as a missionary. He gives up the idea of marrying his lover, but do the forced marriage with Jane to benefit his work. In his opinion, his job represents his power and status in society. If St. John loses his job, his efforts and ambition will all disappear. St. John chooses to believe in God and follows the priest's duty. However, Jane doesn't care about his duty or status; she only cares about a man's personality and attitude. Ultimately, St. John achieves his ambition lastly, but he loses some priceless things in his life.

Charlotte Brontë overthrows the traditional definition of a gentleman not only in *Jane Eyre*, but also in her other works. In *Shirley* (1849), for example, Charlotte Brontë talks about the relationship between the poor Louis Moore and the rich Shirley. Only a weak tutor who lacks power and money, Louis nonetheless falls in love with his student Shirley. Shirley is the heiress of the family property, so she is rich and of high social and economic status. Although Louise sometimes doubts his power and wishes to be a gentleman, Shirley doesn't care about his wealth or status. Through their successful marriage, Charlotte Brontë emphasizes the breakthrough of

gender stereotypes creating atypical male and female characters to illustrate her new thoughts about masculinity. “Many of the Brontë’s enigmatic characters work to challenge such social scripts in the very novels that seem to endorse them” Tara MacDonald argues (498).

It is no longer necessary for men to maintain the appearance of being powerful figures in society. Brontë implies that to be himself is the most important element for a masculine gentleman. There is no need to follow the social expectations or any conduct books for gentleman, but just be true to who you are. Although most critics emphasize that women fighting for their rights in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, sometimes things are different. In fact, women can even affect men’s behaviors. In this way, Brontë also encourages her readers to consider masculinity from a new perspective. Sensitivity and vulnerability can also represent masculinity. Every man can have his masculine elements. Whether a man is strong or sensitive, Brontë seems to stand for showing his real personality. Men are free from the masculine norms or social expectations. A man can be who he wants to be and no need to worry about the judgments from the society. It seems that in Brontë’s thought there are no any rules that masculine gentleman must follow, which creates the foundation for a change in traditional stereotypes. If a man can truly be himself, that represent the real masculinity.

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