



"Caged Bird" and "Creeping Vine": On the "Cinderella" Image in *Persuasion* and *Jane Eyre*

Jiamin Liu

Department of foreign languages, Honder university, Hohhot, 010070, China

2918396137@qq.com

Abstract. Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte's works achieved a breakthrough of the "Cinderella" pattern, presenting an ascension of female power, making women the saviors of male characters. It is worth noting that the way of salvation is different, which must contain different feminine qualities and reflect different female growth. And how the happy ending of Cinderella should be achieved is still a thought-provoking question.

Keywords: "Cinderella image", *Persuasion*, *Jane Eyre*, Feminine growth

1 Introduction

Generally speaking, when discussing the "Cinderella" archetype, we have to trace it back to the fairy tale of *Cinderella*, which has been widely spread in folklore and has formed various different versions. However, in the process of spreading and transformation, the general image of "Cinderella" has been confirmed, and sometimes it becomes an unconscious prototype for some writers to refer to in their literary creations, appearing repeatedly. [1]We believe that "Cinderella" usually means a young girl who experiences the following situations: losing her mother - suffering from life's hardships - experiencing ups and downs in love - a happy ending of love.

Jane Eyre and Anne Elliot have surprisingly similar lives and backgrounds to Cinderella. Jane Eyre was an orphan, even her uncle passed away, and finally she was left to the marblehearted Mrs. Reed. Jane's childhood at Gateshead Hall was dark, which cast a shadow over her entire life. Later, Mrs. Reed sent Jane to Lowood Charity School, where she endured a time of hunger. Later, Jane, an unassuming governess, caught the attention of the owner of Thornfield Hall, Mr. Rochester, a star-like figure in the entire manor. Ultimately, the lowly governess Jane Eyre married the "prince" of St. John's Park. Anne is also a typical "Cinderella": her original family was not perfect. Her mother died early, and her father and elder sister paid no attention to her. In their eyes, Anne was just a plain little girl who could be sacrificed at any time and her feelings ignored. At the age of 19, Anne met naval officer Frederick Wentworth and made an engagement with him. However, [2]Anne's father opposed the marriage, and Mrs. Russell also thought that Wentworth had no wealth or noble background, which was not worthy of Anne. Anne listened to Mrs. Russell's advice and ended the relationship. And

eight years later, Anne and Winthrop reunited, but their identities had reversed. Anne's family had fallen on hard times and was deeply in debt. Winthrop, however, had become a colonel and had become a genuine "golden bachelor." The two renewed their romance.

But, Austen and Bronte's protagonists transcended the traditional “Cinderella” image. The two female characters were not rigid, stereotyped templates, but were infused with fresh blood. Among them, how their love with their beloved ones was forged was unique, but they all expressed the "lack" in the individual life of women, from a deep level reflecting human beings' endeavor to overcome "lack" and the social and ideological constraints on women's narrow living space.

2 Cinderella's Princes: Who is the Savior?

Cinderella Sindyla finally won the love of the prince, enabling her to escape from her misery, which is undoubtedly a paradigm of "hero rescues damsel in distress." It also conveys a message of long-standing tradition: men are strong, women are weak, only men can save women and bestow happiness upon them. This traditional literary writing pattern clearly places women in the position of being rescued. However, Jane Eyre and Anne are not traditional Cinderellas.

2.1 Jane Eyre Vs. Rochester

At first glance, Bronte seems to have followed the same pattern in allowing Jane to interact with Rochester before inheriting it: Jane is a poor, humble governess, while Rochester is a wealthy and noble landowner, forming a clear contrast between "weak" and "strong". However, this inherent contrast between the two is gradually rewritten and ultimately subverted in their interactions. Jane first rescues Rochester when he falls down on the road leading to Thornfield Hall (Figure 1). Due to a sprained ankle, the proud Rochester has to rely on Jane's slender shoulders to move forward. When Rochester, who is sound asleep at midnight, is unaware that the curtain on his bed is burning fiercely, it is Jane who extinguishes the fire in time, saving Rochester's life and winning him the praise of "my beloved savior".



Fig. 1. Salvation

Jane's rescue of Rochester is more evident in the spiritual realm. In the ten years when Bertha was confined to the attic of Thornfield Hall under the pretext of madness, Rochester "wandered aimlessly in exile, seeking comfort in senseless pleasure" and also made him see the hypocrisy and cruelty of the upper classes. When he returned to the estate, Jane's fresh, healthy, warm, and independent spirit, as well as her unyielding dignity and self-respect, was like a breath of fresh air, stirring his longing for a better and nobler life and inspiring him to start anew. Jane's loyalty and trust not only helped the once wild and unruly Rochester to reform himself, but also brought him rich spiritual wealth. Jane thus gradually became Rochester's spiritual pillar and dependence. At the end of the novel, when Rochester, who had lost his sight, arm, and leg, lived alone in Thornfield Hall, Jane miraculously appeared in front of him. Bronte not only made Jane the ultimate savior of Rochester, but also completely subverted the traditional patriarchal cultural narrative of the rescuer/rescued. In daily and spiritual life, Jane always served as a powerful supporter and dependent of Rochester, a relationship that was exceptionally unique. Bronte rewrote the traditional gender relationship between the rescuer and the rescued in literary tradition in *Jane Eyre*, creating a female strongman image who was not dependent on men but made men dependent on her, thus powerfully subverting the writing pattern of "hero rescues beauty" in male-dominated society and the traditional concept of "male superiority".

2.2 Anne Vs. Wentworth

In the fairy tale of *Cinderella*, Cinderella escaped from the prince three times due to the limitation of time set by her fairy godmother, and finally became his wife after going through many ups and downs. In the narrative structure of *Cinderella*-style stories, Austen deliberately subverted the relationship positioning of the guide and the one being guided. In traditional *Cinderella* texts, women are all influenced by men to gradually "improve themselves and become mature," and ultimately become the wife of this man, achieving a happy ending. The female protagonists in Austen's works are mostly also stumbling in their love journey due to a lack of complete self-awareness. [3]Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* is full of prejudice against Darcy, Catherine in *Northanger Abbey* regards the real world as the fictional world of Gothic horror novels, and Emma is arrogant and vain, ignoring her own real needs. Therefore, self-improvement has become a prerequisite for their happy marriages. The subsequent "male guide" once again reflects the dependence of women on men, and the importance of male culture in shaping women's characters. From the overall narrative structure of *Persuasion*, Anne still obtains a fulfilling marriage ending by marrying Winthrop, who rose to power and wealth in the war. But in the writing of this complete story, the wisdom and strength of female self-awareness played a decisive role. The male protagonist, Winters, matured and perfected himself under the influence of Anne. He was misled by Anne and, out of anger, pursued Louisa, whom he did not like, and almost lost his freedom of choice due to "moral responsibility." "At Lyme, he learned to distinguish between disciplined calm and uncontrolled stubbornness, and between rash courage and wise decisiveness." Everything he saw there made him exclaim in his heart, "Wow, Anne!" It was this famous "Lyme incident" that lifted the veil of gender stereotypes and male vanity that had

blinded Winters' eyes, enabling him to understand the differences between the sexes and the diversity of human nature, and thus willing to set aside male pride. He proposed to Anne for the second time and thus obtained his happiness.

The wicked were punished and Cinderella walked into the palace, living happily with the prince from then on. Marriage was the only principle of happiness. Elizabeth, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, married Darcy, bringing vitality to Pemberley, and Fanny, the heroine of *Mansfield Park*, became the female head of Mansfield Park with hope and blessings. Marriage became the only ending of happiness, and the ancient manor became the center and destination of the characters' activities. This is the virtue of "Cinderella" and the best outcome that dependent women in patriarchal society have no choice but to acknowledge. In the ending of "Persuasion", Anne also became the wife of a sailor who rose to a high position through his intelligence, no longer to be taken lightly. However, before her was the vast and unknown world.

3 Happy Endings of “Cinderella”: Violent Revolution and Moderate Reform

Jane Eyre is not a caged bird. Jane Eyre scorns the idea of becoming a subordinate to patriarchy and repeatedly states in her conversations with Rochester that she is not an angel and will never be one, even if she dies or becomes a lifeless "thing". When she realizes that a sacred marriage is not equal, and her former lover Rochester wants to force her to give up her independent personality and dignity in the name of love, Jane Eyre's fighting spirit leads her to a more distant horizon, where she listens to the mission of reason and emotion, possesses the right to govern her own fate and the freedom of mind to leave the comfortable circle at any time, it is Jane Eyre, or more accurately, Charlotte Bronte's dream beyond the times.



Fig. 2. Violent revolution

The charm of "Persuasion" lies in the fact that Anne is not a vine that needs the support and nourishment of a host to thrive, but the overthrow of the all-knowing and all-powerful male image. It is precisely because the two individuals have a soulful harmony and pursuit of spiritual and intellectual qualities beyond superficial appearances

that they can establish a marriage with absolute value alignment and mutual appreciation of talent and cultivation, which invisibly brings them closer together (Figure 2). Such a marriage based on spiritual equality and inclusiveness is most likely to bring satisfaction and happiness to women. This arrangement is exactly Jane Austen's rebellion against the dominant ideology.

However, the way in which Cinderella achieves a happy ending deserves distinction and examination: the passion of Jane Eyre and the gentle of Anne, both of which contain distinctly different female qualities.

A great fire at Thornfield Hall and an unexpected inheritance from an unseen relative directly overturned the unequal situation concealed by the wedding dress, and the unexpected arrival destroyed Rochester's physical advantage. Blindness deprived him of the right to gaze at Jane, and from then on, Rochester's lost health and self-esteem could only be made up for by Jane (Figure 3). At the same time, the unexpected arrival of 5,000 pounds made Jane ascend to the ranks of the property-owning class, bringing her into parity with Rochester, who had been financially weakened. In the perfect ending deliberately designed by the writer Charlotte, Jane assumes an absolute role as the female head of the household, even surpassing the male head of the household, and becomes the actual owner of the symbolic authority of the estate.[4] Jane's metaphorical marriage was like a French Revolution, a hurricane of "purification for the salvation of everything," aiming for the lofty ideal of gender equality through brutal and ruthless means, but without shaking the gender discrimination and social gender system. The radical revolution has not yet won victory, and it was crushed by the next wave. Countless individuals' happiness was sacrificed in the endless ups and downs. The indiscriminate emphasis on gender equality and status equality means that the feminist consciousness represented by Jane is based on the empty castle of equal external forms. And the equality of women in Jane Eyre is also the destruction of the mad woman on the attic, how is it not a sense of imperial colonial superiority? This Happy Ending method deserves our discernment.



Fig. 3. Moderate reform

One of the striking features of *Persuasion* is "filled with coincidences, accidents, and missed opportunities," and the characters' fates are largely determined by chance[5]. Although Austen created a happy ending, the coincidences along the way still make many readers uneasy. In the novel, four couples were brought together by chance: Anne

and Captain Wentworth, Louisa and Captain Benwick, Henrietta and Charles Hayter, and Lady Clay and Mr. Elliot. Each of them found a suitable partner. One can regard *Persuasion* as fate's intervention. However, Anne felt that she had done nothing wrong by following Russell's advice, but at the same time believed that persisting in the marriage would bring more happiness in such an "uncertain" situation. It seems that Austen's Anne thought that although Russell's advice was "wrong", it was right for her to follow this "wrong" advice. She thought that following Russell's advice was right because Russell was equivalent to her "parent", respecting a "reasonable and admirable" "mother" was right. However, Russell's advice was proved to be wrong only as a result of chance. In another possible world, this advice might have been right, and the novel constantly hints at this. Therefore, the female consciousness conveyed through Anne, who was guided by chance, is in harmony with the gentle and reformist British-style revolution. The struggle for freedom in Britain has long been a tradition in the process of long-term struggle and integration, in which both sides have been transformed by each other yet have managed to retain their true selves [6-7].

4 Conclusion

From these two novels, both of which are centered on female growth, self-awareness, and self-education, we can see two different paths of feminism with different styles. The growth of Bronte's style is like a raging fire that burns others and oneself. In contrast, Austen's feminism is more like the path of women's liberation in China, which is an attempt to integrate oneself into a broader social landscape and emphasizes the ethical status of women in marriage and family. Cinderella's story is also a story of female self-growth or a story of female happiness. So, how do women achieve happiness? The ways of salvation, growth, and equality are different, and the possible outcomes of a happy ending may also be different. From the characters of Jane and Anne, we can see the possibilities of two different paths of growth.

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