

The Application Of Symbols To Depict Women Liberation In Jane Eyre

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1. Abstract

This paper investigates the portrayal of women's liberation through symbolism in *Jane Eyre* which is identified as the masterpiece of Bronte, published in 1847. In *Jane Eyre*, the author employs number of techniques to depict different meanings and themes. The most prominent figure used in this novel is symbolism. This research study is motivated by the research questions that the author deliberately constructs appropriate symbols in the text to discuss how emancipation of women is represented? Application of symbols in the novel proves the skillfulness of the author when she conveys ideas that she cannot express directly, apparently and not even under a masculine society. Some symbols used in *Jane Eyre* help greatly to highlight significant characters, develop the thematic structure and to forecast future happenings of the novel. Though Bronte exerted the mastery of her writing and the style to add several major themes such as family, religion, social class, position, and the gender inequality, women's liberation is the most highlighted thematic depiction of the novel. The overall research study tries to find out available symbols in the text and to interpret found symbols with respect to women liberation. The text is permeated with both personal and arbitrary symbols to represent emancipation of women with highly significant phenomena. This illustration of women's liberation has achieved its success with the effective application of symbolism.

Keywords, Emancipation, Liberation, Symbolism, Women,

2. Introduction and research problems

English Literature has acquired its success and reached to the top by passing many eras. Among them, Victorian era is the most significant and reputed in history. Although this was the age of peace, prosperity and the new inventors, the status and the condition of the women were extremely harsh. When the Victorian society is man-oriented, man- controlled and man –dominated, women were discriminated and underestimated. Women were subjected for the voice and the orders given by men. The structure of the society determines the position of the female entities. Therefore some considerable women characters take their pens to raise the voice for the emancipation of women. Among these figures Charlotte Bronte achieved prominence by writing *Jane Eyre* which is included a plucky heroine who has indomitable spirit and fight against the rigid restrictions of the society to feel the taste

of the independence. The social background parallel with the author's era and her real life experiences has made the axis for Bronte to employ an indomitable theme in her creation.

With the influence of the social background of Victorian era, the author has become careful to build up the notion and present the new concept "Women Liberation" by using strategic literary choices. Mainly in the novel, Bronte allocates a large space to employ symbols considering the social and the cultural conditions of the women in a male dominated society. This research study tries to find out answers for the following questions.

1. What are the symbols that the author used in the text?
2. How these symbols represent women liberation?

To supply answers for these questions, the researcher has done a text analysis. And also using symbols in the text, the author supplies her security by avoiding unwanted problems that can throw towards Bronte after publishing the story.

3. Research Methodology

In case of methodology, this study uses a textual analysis that explores research questions and objectives. The data were collected for the study through referring the particular text and understanding the whole content of the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. The researcher has caught out all the possible symbols from the text that are capable of representing women emancipation. The collected data have been analyzed and discussed by the researcher with her own perceptions and ideologies but related with the text. Here the textual analysis becomes an effective method for data collection since it makes the way to investigate the reliability of the evidences for all the readers and reviewers.

4. Result and findings

The study has been conducted with two types of symbols to represent women liberation with highly significant phenomena. They are personal and arbitrary symbols. Mainly personal symbols can be the characters and places that the author creates with his or her ideas to give specific information. Arbitrary symbols are used in literary creations to give general meanings. In this study it is going to give the consideration for three personal symbolic characters such as Jane Eyre, Helen Burns and Bertha Mason while it takes care about the arbitrary symbols like Books, Red Room, Curtain, Fire, and the Wealth. Through this every strategic symbol in the text, Bronte wants to address not just the readers but to notify her heroine with the highlighted theme "Women Liberation".

Jane Eyre is the identified protagonist of the text. She is poor, small in body and obscure but aspiring, intelligent and self-assured. Jane symbolizes entire female society, which has courage to fight for their rights. She represents women who cry for equal status in the society with the men and her behavior of the novel explicates that women are equal to men without any doubt about the personality, social status and economy. It is clear that she steps towards

the superiority from the inferiority through her every relationships and struggles until she gets independence and equal status in the society. Helen Burns is the extreme friend of Jane who meets in Lowood. While Jane fights and struggles for her rights, Helen tries to achieve her freedom and independence through her poise, partiality and tolerance. Bertha Mason is called the insane wife of Mr. Rochester. She is corpulent and florid in appearance but violent in behavior. Ten years of imprisonment of Bertha makes her furious like a caged beast when she realizes the relationship between Rochester and Jane. Anyhow the behavior of Bertha tells readers, how she is going to gain her independence from Rochester's cage. It is evident that the retaliatory behavior of Bertha presents her eagerness for liberation.

The author has used curtain in the novel to represent symbolic empowerment of Jane's life. Though it stands for isolation and lack of security when Jane is in Gateshead, later it becomes the symbol of gaining strength of Jane to crown her emancipation. Red Room plays the role of fertile fight of Jane to quarry her freedom when she was little and struggle without knowing her position and status in the society. The furious nature of her feelings that she got after her punishment in the Red Room leads Jane towards the shadow of freedom. Books represent knowledge and intellectual ability which are essential for women to win the liberty. Fire conveys the burning desire and the greediness of protagonist to have equal rights in society. Anyhow these application symbols in *Jane Eyre* contribute greatly to strength the notion of women liberation effectively.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this study, it has attempted to investigate symbols that the author used in *Jane Eyre* to depict the notion of women liberation with different interpretations and perspectives. However the study has condensed with two major types of symbols. Author has wisely employed these symbols to add little about her life story to give the realistic nature for the novel. Some symbols cleverly keep women-oriented characteristics within the line of the story. It is evident in this study that Bronte uses symbols in an intelligent way to create a new and provisional concept in the society through her *Jane Eyre*.

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Extended Abstract

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Dismantling Society and Networked Individualism: A New Sociological Perspective to Understand Social Interactions of Adolescents K.A.S.

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1. Abstract

“Self”, which is considered to be the core of individual’s social behaviour, has been divided into two complementary parts, i.e. online and offline, thereby increasing new patterns of social interactions, due to the prevalence of Social Network Services (SNS). The dividing line between online sphere and offline sphere of the self, continues to dissolve, as online activities become predominantly intertwined with almost every aspect of the social interactions. More than any other age group, adolescents are mainly subjected to the effects made by SNSs in modern societies.

The study strive to understand how adolescents perceive their self and construct self-understanding within a networked society. It also studies the effects of that new self-conceptualization on modern day society, Sri Lanka. Grounded Theory (a qualitative methodology) was used as the methodology, and 8 cases were studied preceding a focus group discussion. Collected data, thus were analysed using codifying and concept categorization approach.

Analysis reveals that, many unmet needs and inclinations of the offline life are strived to be satisfied along with the online self. Also, the skills needed for the offline existence of life have been decreased, due to the lack of awareness about the strategies necessary to perpetuate in the

offline life. On the other hand, substantial portion of the monthly budget of an individual has subjected to be spent in order to maintain the online life. Though these effects seem to be quite negative on the society, there are some positive aspects as well. The online life is more accompanied with community activities and more politically engaged. Therefore, newly organized communities become strengthened in getting social support for many activities.

2. Introduction and research problem/issue

As SNSs become more prevalent, social behaviour of the people has changed dramatically adopting new facets necessary to continue within a networked society in which unprecedented global norms and values are accommodated. Therefore, previous arguments of the social behaviour of people have been challenged by many sociological theorists, since its inadequacy to understand the individual in a

networked society. As Bauman (2000) specified, there are no solid structures around the social beings on which they can rely and invest, resulting liquid fear in a modern society where every institutions are networked using virtual relationships. People's lives of this society have divided into two, as online part and offline part.

The sense of being lived or so called the "self" is the core of social interactions of an individual, though sometime it has maladjustments due to the imbalance of perceived self and ideal self (Rogers, 1980). Probably, as the SNSs are prevailed, ideal self has associated with the online part and perceived self has accompanied with the offline part of the life. SNS is not just a simple platform in which the persons are attended, since it makes complex forms of social actions in a networked society (Castells, 2004).

Adolescents are often inspired to embrace the social network services, as they are provided with new and thriving experiences. They are more actively engaged in SNSs compared to other age groups (Boyd, 2015). Therefore, this research strives to understand how adolescents perceive their self-identity and construct self-knowledge within a networked

society. Even though the social behaviour is determined by the collective conscious, individual's self has a substantial role to be played, since the self of an individual is constructed responding to the societal interpretations (Cooley, 1998). Because of the self's predominance in social behaviour, effects of the mode of thought (self-construction) on the code of conduct (Social behaviour) will also be studied in the research.

3. Research Methodology

Grounded theory was employed as the methodology and 8 cases were studied, since this is a qualitative study. Grounded theory holds the constructivist epistemological consideration and involves understanding human experiences referring to an actor's perspective. First, a focus group discussion was conducted using a purposive sample, and then being directed by the informants, 8 cases were studied. Each one of the participants is 19 years old and freshmen to university studies. An unstructured questionnaire was constructed using the experiences obtained at the focus group discussion, and interviewed the other 8 informants subsequently. Some of the categories (Theoretical units/information) drawn from the first stage had been theoretically analyzed, once four of the cases were studied. Therefore, it highly considered the emerging categories in the second stage of the study. From the beginning of the study, analysis was started using codifying and concept categorization method.

Disposition or the habitus of the university students is considerably different from the outside adolescents owing to the different environments in which they are exposed. This informed the research that emerging patterns of data would be limited to a particular arena.

4. Results and findings

More than any other circumstance, Networking society make the necessary platform for adolescents to achieve unmet inclinations in the offline life within the online life. The needs and inclinations hold different positions; probably needs are associated with the real self and inclinations with perceived self. Since the perceived self is hard to be achieved in most cases, online self is adopted as the platform in which those unmet needs are achieved, at least virtually, giving a selfsatisfaction. Despite being satisfied, this will make an imbalance between offline life and online life.

Social beings, including adolescents live in the real world (offline life) at least for the purpose of physical existence. The offline world is

comprised of spontaneous risks, so the adolescents cannot avoid meeting strangers and catastrophes. In dealing with those situations, adolescents have to develop some skills, though the online self does not permit the person to do so (due to unreal practices). Most of SNSs are used, not in order to learn and understand different people with different habitus (mode of thought) so as to deal with them in unexpected situations. But strangers (those who are not matched with the concerned person) removed off to create a comfort zone where no strangers are present. Therefore, adolescents forget the skills which are absolutely necessary in the offline life and this will result in unexpected social problems in the present society.

On the other hand, substantial portion of the monthly budget of an adolescent is devoted for maintenance of the online life. Though they are not earners, money earned through the offline activities by parents is being spent on the adolescents' online life, which is not productive at many times.

Real life community organizations are dismantling, as the online communities are strengthening and absorbing more and more adolescents due to its attractiveness and other sophisticated features. However, online communities are not always real but represent a real common-interest shared by a virtual community, thereby giving opportunity to the adolescents a preferable platform for discussing and enjoying their interests. These communities are more politically engaged. New way of social capital is relied on SNSs activities, and the participating members are getting more benefits (Such as education support, information sharing etc.) compared to those who are not participated in SNSs.

Identity, alongside the self-actualization is more important when the adolescents are dealing with social institutions. Identity is also divided into two parts, such as online and offline. The offline identity is more prominent and visible to the community in real life and hard to forge. On the contrary, the online identity can be different from the offline identity, since it is the representation of the ideal self. Therefore, it is easy to forge

the online identity, as it is not quite visible to the online community, also it is not an important requirement in many cases. However, the practice which is obtained by the individual through online life is not always compliant with the offline norms. Normal structure in the online life can be an abnormal structure in the offline life, so the adolescents quite often get used to the online life and become alienated from the normal life structure in the offline life.

5. Conclusions, implications and significance

Prevalence of the usage of SNSs among adolescents as a result of network technology sophistications has been a prominent fact influencing their social interactions in the modern day. There are many advantages of using SNSs, though there are some harmful effects on the everyday life. A person's life cannot be identified only by the offline part, but the online part must be taken into consideration, as it plays a vital role constructing the self which is the core force of mutual human interactions within the society. Probably, the identity of a person is highly associated with both the online self and offline self upon which the social interactions are dependent. Therefore, it raises a question as to what extent the classical sociological theories can be used in understanding the above phenomena.

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