

Short Research Article

Confrontation between Apollo and Dionysus—Re-read of

Jane Eyre

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Abstract

Jane Eyre, the masterpiece of Charlotte Bronte, a famous British writer in the 19th century, is generally regarded as her autobiographical work, showing her “poetic life”. *Jane Eyre*, the protagonist of the novel, was orphaned at an early age and suffered a lot in her growing up. However, she pursued freedom and equality tirelessly, defended her personality and finally achieved her own happiness. In the process of creation, Charlotte Bronte is always in a dilemma, in order to let her passion and pursuit of the heart through the review of the patriarchal culture, she can only hide in the book, by creating a female image resisting and having to suppress her own inner passion to veil her ambiguous self and ambiguous attitude towards women passion. This article probes into *Jane Eyre*’s mind journey from the angle of the confrontation between the spirit of Apollo and the spirit of the Dionysus.

Keywords

Jane Eyre, Spirit of Apollo, Spirit of Dionysus, Resistance

1. Introduction

Jane Eyre is the representative works Charlotte Bronte, a famous British female writer. It successfully creates a new female image who is brave to fight for freedom and equal status in the face of adversity. As a representative figure of female awakening consciousness of resistance, her spirit of independence and self-reliance has long been deeply rooted in people’s hearts.

Interpreting *Jane Eyre* from the perspective of the spirit of The Sun and the spirit of the Dionysus, we can draw a conclusion that the formation of Jane’s character is the result of the interaction of these two forces. Apollo and Dionysus are two contradictory gods in ancient Greek mythology. Apollo is regarded as the symbol of wisdom and reason, while Dionysus represents joy, emotion, and everything. Apollo represents the western rational spirit, which realizes the scientific and critical spirit by emphasizing rationality. Therefore, the spirit of Apollo represents the rational order, clarity, moderation,

analysis and control. Dionysus, on the other hand, plays a counter-judgment role, always representing the free, original and rebellious impulses of the culture, emphasizing emotional expression and perceptual experience. Thus, the Dionysian spirit represents human passion, spontaneity and instinct. As Jung pointed out in *Psychology and Literature*, “The Dionysus spirit means the unrestrained liberation of instinct, the simultaneous outburst of animality and divinity” (1988, p. 234). The Apollonian impulse leads to a state of mind equivalent to a dream, and the Dionysian impulse leads to a state of intoxication. The mind of the latter was ruled by Apollo. He is the god of all formative forces, representing norms, quantities, limits, and the power to make all wild honey or uncivilized things. So Apollo is also described as the divine figure of the solemn principle of individuation. In *Jane Eyre*, the formation of the character of the hero is the result of the interaction of these two forces.

2. Dionysus VS Apollo

2.1 At Gateshead Hall

Jane’s rebellious character was in its infancy at Gateshead House. At this time, she was completely controlled by the Dionysian spirit: passion, courage and daring to resist. Jane lost her parents when she was young and was brought up by her uncle. Later, when her uncle died, she lived with her aunt’s family. But Mrs. Reed, her aunt, was a thorn in Jane’s side, and her children often bullied and abused the orphan. In such an uncaring environment, young Jane learned to protect herself, and the Dionysian spirit in her body rapidly expanded. In confronting “tyrant” cousin John, Jane gave him the strongest response to Reid’s struggle: “I felt a few drops of blood running from my head to my neck. I felt a terrible pain. All of a sudden, these feelings overpowered my fear, and I fought him in desperation. I don’t know what my hands did, but I heard him call me a rat!” (2001, p. 5). Jane was instinctively rebellious, impulsive and passionate, even reckless. From the strong will to fight back in the face of bullying, Jane is the incarnation of Dionysus.

Because of her defiance, Mrs. Reed wanted to send her to Lowood Boarding school. After learning that her mother had lied to the principal about her defamation. Jane challenges the ruler of her family with courage and impulse beyond her age, and once again it embodies the passion, rebellion and releases without restriction and instinct represented by the Dionysian spirit. At this time, in Jane, we do not see any of the temperance, rationality and norms advocated by the Apollo spirit.

2.2 At Lowood School

When she first arrived at Lowood school, the Dionysian spirit still prevailed. When Helen, a good friend, was scolded by her teacher for no reason, her anger was even stronger than that of the person involved. “If she struck me with that whip, I would take it from her hand, and break it in her face” (2001, p. 50). At this time, Jane’s spirit of resistance is just in the ignorant and impulsive stage, which is the outbreak of the spirit of Dionysian revenge without consequences. The counterpart of Jane is Helen’s tolerance and reason, the spirit of Apollo. Helen was well aware that if she lost her mind like Jane, she would only be thrown out of school, which would bring shame on those who supported her,

so “since it is inevitable, it must be endured” (2001, p. 50).

During the eight years in Lowood School, the Dionysian imprint in Jane’s mind gradually faded away and was replaced by modesty, self-restraint, calmness and rationality under the influence of the Apollo represented by Miss Temple and Helen. When Aunt Reed dies, Jane gives up her previous hatred and kisses her before her demise, while the forgiveness of Apollo has repelled the revenge of Dionysus. In the conflict between Dionysus and Apollo sun, Jane’s character is becoming more and more perfect. It is worth noting that under the disguise of mature appearance and mind, Jane’s rebellious character never changes. Only the resistance is no longer superficial, no longer physical or verbal confrontation, but hidden in the heart of the rebellious spirit. So the Apollo spirit gains the upper hand only temporarily, and when enthusiasm is awakened again, the Dionysian spirit comes again.

2.3 At Thornfield Hall

Jane, a governess at Thornfield Hall, was engaged in a constant struggle between Apollo and Dionysus. At the beginning of Thornfield, Jane adhered to the rules of Apollo, self-discipline, low-key, moodiness in color. But little by little, she fell uncontrollably in love with her master, Mr. Rochester. Then, the passion and instinct represented by Dionysus gradually controlled Jane’s thoughts.

When Rochester summons him, Jane moves towards him almost subconsciously. Mr. Rochester’s love has become the trigger point of The Dionysian spirit in Jane’s love heart. Passionate love has completely dominated her. Jane even confers her feelings to Rochester at all costs, which is unimaginable in the Victorian era of the 19th century. Every word of this centuries-old declaration of love is filled with the Dionysian yearning for freedom and equality. What erupts in this state has more of the character of pure emotion, belonging to an instinctive or blind impulse. In other words, it is a concentrated expression of the Dionysian spirit.

Just as Dionysus was about to triumph, something unexpected happened. However, Jane’s enthusiasm was completely extinguished by Mr. Mason’s words at the wedding. Rochester also had a crazy wife who was locked in the attic, which meant that the new couple could not get married legally, and Jane could only be Rochester’s mistress forever. At this time, the most intense struggle between Apollo and Dionysus began. At last Apollo won and Jane took off her wedding dress. Despite her heartbreak, Jane left her lover in silence late at night.

2.4 In Morton

He left Thornfield, but the struggle between Apollo and Dionysus did not end completely in Jane’s love. She meets her cousin, St. John, with whom she tries to escape her pain with religious contemplation. Here, St. John becomes the messenger of the God of the Sun. He is self-denying, serious and orderly. Later, he wanted to marry Jane, not out of love, but because he thought she had the qualities of a missionary wife. He repeatedly called on Jane to join him as a messenger of God, a suitable helper in his hard work in India, and that was all.

Jane, too, was engaged in a violent struggle; the quiet life had almost swallowed up her inner passion; she had become meek and gentle again, as she had been at Lowood school. But St. John’s proposal tore

her heart again, making the image of Rochester more clear in her mind. However, it was also painful and difficult to refuse John's offer of marriage, for he invited her to do such a "noble" job in the name of God, and just when Jane was about to give in, the call of Dionysus came again.

2.5 Return to Thornfield

At last Jane returned to Thornfield, where she had been burned, and married Mr. Rochester. The ostensibly loving Dionysian wins: After a full circle, Jane is back with her lover. In fact, the so-called barrier between the two men was now gone: Rochester's wife had been burned to death, and Rochester's eyes had been burned out, and the two men were now equal. The conventional distinctions of position, appearance, and fortune had vanished; Mr. Rochester had gained his freedom. So in this battle between Apollo and Dionysus, Dionysus did not win, and Dionysus did not lose, and they finally reached unity. At this time, Jane not only has the enthusiasm of Dionysus, but also does not break the rules of Apollo, as Jane Eyre herself said "everything is perfect harmony".

3. Conclusion

From the beginning, the little girl who is completely dominated by the Dionysian spirit to the later mature Mrs. Rochester, Jane has experienced numerous conflicts between the Dionysian spirit and the Dionysian spirit, each time bringing her to a new environment and taking her mind to a higher level. The enthusiasm of Dionysian makes Jane always keep positive and optimistic in any difficulties, never give up attitude towards life; The reason and standard of Apollo makes her have self-respect, self-reliant and self-reliant character; And Apollo also make Jane Eyre out of the temper of tyranny, gradually become mature; Dionysus makes her stay in the face of true love, fight bravely. It was the interaction of these two attitudes that gave rise to the romantic and perfect ending in the novel, which made the artistic image of "Jane, Love" more real.

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