The Other in Jane Eyre

By: Sydnee Tuggle, Kaitlin Ellis, Katrina Weiss, Kenzie Wallace
Thesis

Charlotte Brontë uses different aspects of gothic literature throughout the novel *Jane Eyre*, in order to better establish darkness within personalities and the desperate relationships the main characters hold with one another especially the morality of these relations, Brontë utilizes elements such as the supernatural, grotesque, and decay to accomplish this in an engaging and captivating manner.
Gothic themes in literature are based around the physical surroundings of the story and how they relate to the characters psychological health and imagination.
The Supernatural:

A component of literature often used in Gothic works to intensify them. The supernatural can appear in a text in many ways from actual events or beings that are unearthly or through the imagination of a character perceives one thing as another.
The Grotesque:

The grotesque is present in literature through the physical disfigurement of a form. This is meant to gain the reader's sympathy and interest yet repulse them at the same time.
Decay is another motif used in gothic literature and is quite literally the breakdown of the setting or one's person or moral status.
“All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit.” (pg 8)

“I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp.” (pg 8)
The Red Room

- Symbolize Death, Jane’s deceased uncle
- Imprisonment
- Haunted
- Memory
- The Color Red

“This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent, because remote from the nursery and kitchens; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered.” (pg 7)
Lowood

“The afternoon came on wet and somewhat misty: as it waned into dusk, I began to feel that we were getting very far indeed from Gateshead: we ceased to pass through towns; the country changed; great gray hills heaved up round the horizon; as twilight deepened, we descended a valley, dark with wood, and long after night had overclouded the the prospect I heard a wild wind rushing amongst trees.” (pg 35)
Chapters 11-20

Summary:

Jane makes the move to Thornfield from Lowood, she arrives at Thornfield in the night. She is introduced to Adèle and is being shown around the house when she first encounters Grace Poole’s strange laugh. Jane begins to adjust to life at Thornfield intrigued by Poole’s laugh and behavior. Jane is out to post a letter when she encounters a rider who falls from his horse, she aids him and upon returning to Thornfield finds him to be Mr. Rochester. Jane becomes more acquainted with Rochester and learns bits and pieces of his past. When Rochester is drunk he makes comments about Jane and his relationship being different the one between a servant and master. Jane learns of Adèle’s past. Jane saves Rochester from a fire. Rochester leaves and returns with a group of high class people. Rochester forces Jane into socializing with the group. Mr. Mason arrives and is later stabbed.
Chapter 11:

“I liked the hush, the gloom, the quaintness of these retreats in the day; but I by no means coveted a night’s repose on one of those wide and heavy beds: shut in, some of them, with doors of oak; shaded others, with wrought English old hangings crusted with thick work, portraying effigies of strange flowers, and stranger birds, and strangest human beings---all which would have looked strange, indeed, by the pallid gleam of moonlight.” (pg 97)

“I lingered in the long passage to which this led, separating the front and back rooms of the third story---narrow, low, and dim, with only one window at the far end, and looking, with its two row of small black doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard’s castle.

While I paced softly on, the last sound I expected to hear in so still a region, a laugh, struck my ears. It was a curious laugh---distinct, formal, mirthless. I stopped. The sound ceased, only for an instant. It began again, louder---for at first, though very distinct, it was very low. It passed off in a clamorous peal that seemed to echo in every lonely chamber,” (pg 98)
Chapter 12:

“I remembered certain of Bessie’s tales, wherein figured a North-of-England spirit, called a “Gytrash”; which, in the form of a horse, mule, or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers, as this horse was now coming upon me.

It was very near, but not yet in sight; when, in addition to the tramp, tramp, I heard a rush under the hedge, and close down by the hazel stems glided a great dog, whose black and white colour made him a distinct object against the trees. It was exactly one mask of Bessie’s Gytrash---a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head: it passed me, however, quietly enough; not staying to look up, with strange pretercanine eyes, in my face, as I half expected it would. The horse followed---a tall steed, and on its back a rider. The man, the human being, broke the spell at once.” (pg 103-104)
Chapter 15:

“I could not sleep for thinking of his look when he paused in the avenue, and told how his destiny had risen up before him, and dared him to be happy at thornfield.

‘Why not?’ I asked myself.” (pg 137)

“This was a demoniac laugh---low, suppressed, and deep---uttered, as it seemed, at the very keyhole of my chamber door. The head of my bed was near the door, and I thought at first the goblin-laughter stood at my bed---or rather crouched at my pillow” (pg 138)

“Something creaked: it was a door ajar; and that door was Mr. Rochester’s, and the smoke rushed in a cloud from thence. I thought no more of Mrs. Fairfax; I thought no more of Grace Poole, or the laugh: in an instant, I was within the chamber. Tongues of flame darted round the bed: the curtain were on fire. In the midst of blaze and vapour, Mr. Rochester lay stretched motionless, in deep sleep.” (pg 139)
Chapters 21-28

Jane is at Gateshead and hears of Rochester going to London. It is widely believed he is planning on marrying Blanche. While going back to Thornfield, Jane fears what is going to happen to her after he marries. When Jane and Rochester speak, Rochester speaks of the “cord of communion” he believes they share, and how he is afraid of it breaking. This is also where we are introduced to the horrible proposal. Then the writing to John, asking to become his heir in order to give her better holdings with Rochester.

In chapter 25, Jane is roused from her sleep by the terrifying woman, who rips her wedding veil. When trying to find an explanation, Rochester only offers to explain after a year and a day.
The wedding day has finally arrive, only to end in destruction. The wedding is interrupted by Rochester's brother in law. As a result the wedding party rushes back to Thornfield and is treated to the discovery of Mrs. Bertha Rochester. Jane now confines herself in grief as she wonders what her life will now be.

Jane decides that she must leave Thornfield even though she has forgiven Rochester. We discover now, the past of Rochester. He married Bertha out of Financial need, and he felt too bad to institutionalize her. Now Jane is torn and feels bad, but Rochester emotionally abuses her trying to convince her that nobody will love her. Jane flees and is taken in by St. John.
Standing at god’s footsies

“I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal-- as we are!” (240)
The stormy setting of the Proposal contains many gothic attributes.

“But what had befallen the night? The moon was not yet set, and we were all in the shadow: I could not scarcely see my master’s face, near as I was. And what ailed the chestnut tree? It writhed and groaned; while wind roared in the laurel walk, and came sweeping over us… a livid, vivid spark leapt out of a cloud at which I was looking, and there was a crack, a crash, and a close rattling peal,” (243)
“Fearful and ghastly to me-- oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face-- it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!” (269)
Chapter 29-38

Chapter 33- “When Mr. St. John went, it was beginning to snow; the whirling storm continued all night. The next day a keen wind brought fresh and binding falls; by twilight the valley was drifted up and almost impassable.” (Pgs. 359-360)

Chapter 35- “I had heard it—where, or whence, forever impossible to know! And it was the voice of a human being— a known, loved, well-remembered voice—that of Edward Fairfax Rochester; and it spoke in pain and woe, wildly, eerily, urgently.” (Pg. 401)
Chapter 37- “To this house I came just ere dark, on an evening marked by the characteristics of sad sky, cold gale, and continued, small, penetrating rain.” (Pg. 411)

“I am no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut-tree in Thornfield orchard,” he remarked ere long. “And what right would that ruin have to bid a budding woodbine cover its decay with freshness?” (Pg. 425)
Conclusion

Throughout *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë uses gothic style literature to engage the reader, draw attention to the connection Jane holds to her physical surroundings, and highlight the morally ambiguous relationship Jane and Rochester share. Gothic style literature includes the supernatural, grotesque and decay. These motifs produce within the story dramatic occurrences that highlight the major issues with Jane and Rochester’s love, being mostly that he is hiding a wife, also Jane’s mood and stage of life is often reflected in her surroundings or the weather following these themes.
Cites Used

