

**Women's Autonomous Identity and the Role of Sexual Selection in
Female Choice of their Partners in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane
Eyre***



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Partners in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre***

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



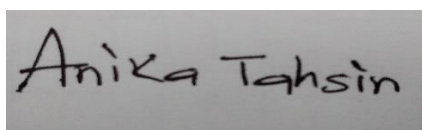
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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature reads "Anika Tahsin" in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, brother, and my friends who have always supported and encouraged me at every step of my life. I also dedicate this dissertation to my cat who is always there to improve my stressful days just with her mere presence.

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I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Arifa Ghani Rahman. I am grateful for her constant support and insightful suggestions throughout my entire dissertation journey. Her guidance, constant encouragement, and kind words helped me carry out this research effectively and come up with a satisfactory paper.

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Abstract

In the human world, according to the evolutionary psychology of mate choice, both men and women are active participants in the selection of a long-time partner. As one of the main concepts of evolutionary psychology is to survive and eventually propagate genes, the balance between partners which derives from both parties initiation to cooperate, plays an important role. This thesis focuses on four women characters (Charlotte, Elizabeth, Jane, and Bertha) from *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*, their process of selecting partners, and how evolutionary fruitful is their relationship. The reviewed articles in this research support that the evolutionary approach has affected the character's decision of selecting their partners. Alongside these articles, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution has been used as a framework. Based on these articles and theories, this thesis has demonstrated that women's autonomous identity and sexual selection have the most dominant role in determining the partners of these characters in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*. Moreover, this research will give a new direction to other researchers to see women's choice of partner selection and the possibility of a successful marriage in literature from evolutionary psychologists' perspectives.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The subject of selecting a partner or marriage is universal and from prehistoric times till now has served a practical purpose to human beings. Although having a practical purpose in life, marriage is complemented by our psychology to live up to the aesthetic sense of the human world. What's more, marriage is often affiliated with love, social and monetary stability, culture, and society and thus is considered to be an important phase of human life. And so, marriage and selecting partners are some of the popular motifs used in literature. *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* are two novels where we find some marriages occur because of financial or social needs and some for love and commitment as a manifestation of the author's idealistic picture of marriage.

Pride and prejudice is a novel that reflects the anxiety of the girls in the Regency period that they faced to secure a stable married life. We get different types of marriages in this novel. We find Charlotte and Mr. Collins's marriage which is a marriage of convenience and also we get Elizabeth and Darcy's marriage which is for love and cooperation. Charlotte and Mr. Collins' relationship is often considered to be one of the most realistic marriages in these two novels (*Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*). But this marriage is also one of the marriages in this novel that is thought to be an unhappy one. Although they marry each other of their free will, there is an intellectual gap between them. This imbalance is what makes them one of the weakest couples in this novel. Even though their marriage is considered to be the weakest on an average person's standard of a good marriage, to Charlotte a happy marriage means getting a comfortable home. Elizabeth on the other hand marries for love which on the surface seems like unconditional marriage compared to Charlotte because they come together for financial and social benefits.

However, Elizabeth and Darcy also benefit from their relationship, that is, they come together because of emotional and psychological needs.

Two couples from Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* (Jane- Rochester and Bertha- Rochester) have been analyzed to see how evolutionary beneficial their marriage is. Much like Elizabeth and Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice*, the female protagonist is beneath the social class of the male protagonist in *Jane Eyre*. But, this social and monetary issue has less influence on these two couple's lives, rather the issue of cooperation, psychological and emotional needs have become the main idea. There is a clear distinction between Bertha and Jane that makes one a good candidate for marriage and another a failed candidate, that is Jane is emotionally available to Rochester whether Bertha's predicament fails her to do so. Jane shows her capability of becoming a survivor in the real world which is one main idea of evolutionary psychology but emotions also have survival benefits which are also in action in Jane and Rochester's relationship.

This research has been conducted using qualitative research, which is by analyzing different studies on emotion, sexual selection, secondary sexual characteristics, human behavior, and their affiliation with evolutionary psychology. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution has been used as a framework theory. In both novels, one main aspect is that the women, mainly Elizabeth, Charlotte, and Jane choose their respective husbands. Women's choice in partner selection holds an important place in evolutionary psychology because contrary to the general belief women are not passive entities but their choice of partner determines the longevity of their 'gene line'. Genes are a big influence on human choices but those are not the only factors involved. Much depends on their culture, education, upbringing, and free will, things that we call our nurture. Although *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* are two popular novels that have been studied from a feminist point of view, there is very little to no study has been done on women's identity from an

evolutionary point of view. So, this research has explored if the female choice of their partner has any effect on the prospect of a successful marriage through the lens of evolutionary psychology.

Sexual selection deals with the evolution of qualities that lead to mating success. Darwin identified two possible processes by which successful mating occurs. One is intra- sexual and another is intersexual selection. He thought about it as a contest competition where the males will fight, and the victor will gain sexual access to the female. But, the human species do not usually have a face-to-face fight to get mates. Rather, we often compete for positions and status hierarchies, so we engage in intrasexual competition without taking part in physical competition. In intersexual competition or female choice men possessing the desired qualities are chosen by women. Although humans have mutual mate choice in long-term relationships, women tend to be choosier than men when selecting their partner. Women invest more in offspring than males, for this reason, men tend to be more competitive for access to those desirable members of the opposite sex. But, to produce one child women have a nine-month pregnancy but men could produce that same child with simply just one act of sexual intercourse. This is what makes women the choosier ones because the cost of making a bad mating decision is much more severe for women than for men (Triver). But, to evolutionary psychologists, although gene propagation is the driving force behind this act of marriage, human emotions also have an important role. Despite having a fairytale ending, both of these novels show us the ups and downs of marriage, and its connection with evolutionary benefits has been analyzed in this thesis.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Human perception of marriage or choosing a partner has been for many years associated with mere cultural or religious customs across the world. However, in many 19th- century texts like Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, and Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, it might seem society and culture affect the decision-making of the characters when choosing their partner. But, a more analytic exploration of the text suggests that society and culture are merely acting as a backdrop of the story. Apart from culture and society, marriage and mate choice in human life can be explained through various factors. Thus, sexual selection and mutual selection, two of the concepts under evolutionary psychology have been applied to understand the choice of mate among some characters in *Pride and Prejudice* (Elizabeth- Darcy, Charlotte Lucas- Mr. Collins) and in *Jane Eyre* (Jane- Rochester, Bertha- Rochester). Several pieces of research have been done on these novels addressing some concepts of evolutionary psychology. But, an extensive analysis of marriage and its relation to women's own identity in regard to the evolutionary root is still to be done. Similar articles regarding evolutionary psychology and marriage in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* which have been useful while doing this thesis are reviewed below.

When choosing a companion, the majority of people focus on whether that other person's qualities meet their preferred characteristics in a partner. Exploring this issue, Michael J. Stasio collaborated with Kathryn Duncan in their article "An Evolutionary Approach to Jane Austen: Prehistoric Preferences in *Pride and Prejudice*." In this article, they used the lens of evolutionary psychology to understand the theme of marriage and choosing a partner in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. This article focused on the men characters in the novel and their credibility

of becoming good candidates for marriage from an evolutionary point of view. They argued that there are some innate human qualities that we have been carrying since the time of evolution, influencing the character's decision-making while choosing mates (133-146). And these details have proven to be beneficial for this research as it intends to show how natural selection can be a way to explain the subject of marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Similarly, the personality of a character often tells us which partner they are going to choose. This is what Daniel J. Kruger and his collaborators of "*Pride and Prejudice* or Family and Flirtation?: Jane Austen's Depiction of Women's Mating Strategies." tried to show in their article. The authors analyzed the personalities of different women characters in the novel by using social evolutionary theory. They researched a group of students and tried to show the mating strategy taken by the women in *Pride and Prejudice*. They also showed that the women's personality affects their decision-making while choosing partners (A114-A128). Thus, this article explores the universal and central human problem of choosing partners and all these experiments and research works have been beneficial to identify the reasons that made the men in *Pride and Prejudice* select their mates. Moreover, it also gives further scope for studying the commitment that the characters are willing to put toward their marriage and children.

Likewise, it has been noticed that people often choose their partner based on their partner's capacity of looking after their children. Sarah L. Strout and her collaborators in the article, "Pride, and Prejudice or Children and Cheating? Jane Austen's Representations of Female Mating Strategies" did research on the topic of mating strategy by looking at the women's capability of becoming a mother. Some authors of this research are also a part of the previous research which was on four of Jane Austen's women characters, their mating strategies, and their capability of becoming a lover and wives. They chose Jane and Lydia from *Pride and Prejudice* and researched

several psychology students investigating who they prefer as mother and lover. Almost all of the students prefer to marry the mother because they believe the lover would be more likely to cheat on them (317-331). In sexual selection, both men and women look for a partner who can give them and their child protection and security which has been shown in this article. So, all these aspects of this article can be drawn to discuss the mate selection of the characters in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Moreover, Joseph Carroll takes Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* for his article "Human Nature and Literary Meaning: A Theoretical Model Illustrated with a Critique of *Pride and Prejudice*" to connect the literary meaning with the organization of human nature. To analyze the life history in *Pride and Prejudice*, Carroll proceeds to understand the author's understanding of human nature and how she used that in the characterizations of different characters in the novel. Carroll notes that when the novel was written, the field of evolutionary psychology had not developed yet. However, Austen was successful in that she made her characters based on her understanding of human nature and we can see that by the way, the characters choose to value individual qualities while selecting mates (187-216). This argument of his has been used to analyze the mating strategy of the characters in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Dennis Allen's article "No Love for Lydia: The Fate of Desire in *Pride and Prejudice*." argues that it is the repression of desires of the four main characters (Elizabeth, Darcy, Jane, and Bingley) in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* that leads to a happy ending of their life. To prove his point, he gave the example of Lydia, who breaks social customs by accepting her desires and thus projecting a danger to the social order. It also notes that Austen does not completely reject desire but keeps it under control and with the help of society, presents some situations within the social and cultural boundaries where desires can be expressed without disrupting any social order.

(425-443). These customs which Dennis called “secondary symbolic pleasures” are related to sexual selection and gene propagation and have been analyzed in more detail in this research.

In contrast, Joel Weinsheimer, in his article “Chance and the Hierarchy of Marriages in *Pride and Prejudice*” stated that all the choices that the characters of *Pride and Prejudice* are making or all the events are happening because of chance. He compared this chance with gambling and said Darcy and Elizabeth have to discover how the dice are constructed while being blindfolded to find each other, meaning they have no choice over their action (404-419). So, although Joel’s hypothesis contradicts this research’s hypothesis, it can be said that some chance events complement the choices that the characters made and thus this research tries to prove this with the help of evolutionary psychology.

Much like in *Pride and Prejudice* Austen shows how marriage has a part in shaping women’s autonomous identity, Charlotte Brontë also brings this issue to the spotlight through the characters of Jane and Bertha in her novel *Jane Eyre*. Nancy Easterlin took Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* to analyze mate selection based on evolutionary psychology in her article “From Reproductive Resource to Autonomous Individuality? Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.” One of the main focuses of this novel is the conflict between male control over women as a sexual resource and the desire for autonomous individuality. This book chapter explains that the main reason for taking different strategies by men and women across different cultures and economic conditions is for evolutionary benefits. It also explains that the two male characters who are interested in Jane exhibit controlling behaviors toward her. When there is control in a relationship the question of equality comes (390-405). To establish this equality (which is important for any long-term relationship and thus for evolution) between Jane and Mr. Rochester, the direction that Brontë took

was essential. This analysis of the way to acquire that mental balance between the two main characters in this chapter has been beneficial for this thesis.

It has been seen that men and women universally look for a long- time partners who are mentally compatible with them. Taking this idea into consideration Sandra M. Gilbert in a book chapter “Plain Jane’s Progress” took a feminist psychologist’s role and showed the metaphorical journey of Jane from imprisonment to freedom. She claimed that Jane had to find freedom from Rochester’s misfortune (779-804). Although her claim seems a bit exaggerated, it has to admit that Rochester’s blindness made him value Jane more. The author also through various examples suggests that Bertha is Jane’s secret self. So this idea indicates that Jane could also have been in Bertha’s position if Jane and Rochester had not been intellectually compatible (which later roused Rochester’s interest in Jane romantically). But, the monetary issue is also resolved by Brontë at the end of this novel. So, although in sexual selection it is generally theorized that the man had to be wealthy and the woman had to be physically fit and attractive, this article shows mental compatibility also has an evolutionary advantage which has been used in this research.

According to evolutionary psychology, between a married couple, if the wife is younger than the husband (because a younger wife’s reproductive time is longer), then their offspring will get the benefit of getting protection from both their parents. But if the age gap between them is big like Jane and Rochester, then there might occur a power inequality. Esther Godfrey in her article “*Jane Eyre*, from Governess to Girl Bride” how the age gap between Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester creates a power inequality between them. She says that the Victorian obsession with this kind of marriage (where the husband is much older than the wife) where a power dynamic is being created, reinforces the idea of women as victims and men as aggressors (853-871). Godfrey then applies the Oedipus complex to this idea. The age of a married couple is important to

understand where a couple's marriage stands if we want to understand its evolutionary root of it. Because to rear children, both father and mother are needed, and for that to happen mental understanding or compatibility plays a big role. So, Godfrey's analysis of the age difference between Jane and Rochester and how it affects their relationship have been used in this research.

Godfrey mentioned in her article that the big age gap between Jane and Rochester reinforces the idea of not a husband-wife relationship but rather a child-father relationship (Oedipus complex). This behavior can be explained using Darwin's theory (natural and sexual selection) because any behavior that developed in that period had to be adaptive, and evolutionary theory says that this big age gap between couples might also have some evolutionary advantage. Tamas Bereczkei, and Petra Gyuris's article "Oedipus Complex, Mate Choice, Imprinting; an Evolutionary Reconsideration of a Freudian Concept based on Empirical Studies" reinterpreted Freud's theory with evolutionary psychology. They hypothesized that it is the imprinting-like mechanism during a child's birth that makes that child's opposite sex's parent a template which later in their life shapes their future long-time mate (71-94). To prove their hypothesis the authors conducted research and found some favorable results which are close to their hypothesis. This refreshing new way of looking at the theme of selecting a partner is seldom used in literature apart from the frequently used sexual selection which has been proven beneficial while analyzing mate selection in both novels.

Markus J. Rantala and Urszula M. Marcinkowska in their article "The Role of Sexual Imprinting and The Westermarck Effect in Mate Choice in Humans" reviewed some experiments which include Bereczkei's study where they applied the concept of positive sexual imprinting in human mate choice. But according to them, most studies done on positive sexual imprinting are not reliable because there was an involvement of genetic inheritance (859-873). Although

Bereczkei's 2004 study tried to rule out any effects of genetic inheritance by using adoptive females, the authors are speculating that the methods of this study might have been flawed. Therefore, the author of this article leaned towards alternative explanations for assortative mating such as competition in both sexes for long-term mates. Preferences for similarity in personality are also another factor that the authors pointed out in human mating strategies. Both of these have evolutionary benefits and are related to the mate selection in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*.

Positive sexual imprinting or making a mental model of one of the child's parents might happen on an unconscious level while choosing a partner. But some other techniques have been proven to help choose a partner which got adopted by both men and women in their behavior through generations. In intra- sexual competition, for selecting partners the techniques taken by men and women are different. Characters that are preferred by the opposite sex are beneficial for intra- sexual competition and men and women try to enhance those characters through different tactics. Maryanne L. Fisher addresses in her article "Women's Intersexual Competition for Mates" how women obtain the men they prefer through indirect social aggressions, verbal attacks, low-risk strategies. So, to be particular, women's tactics are more subtle, disguised, and hidden compared to men's. On top of that, she also tried to explain that, most men tend to be promiscuous and while looking for a partner they look for physical attractiveness, women look for wealth and these have a deep evolutionary root in it (19-42). Some points that Fisher made such as women only do makeup or dress up in a particular way simply to attract men even though it is unconscious, seem a bit generalized and exaggerated. But again, some of her other arguments such as women's hidden weapon which Fisher considers the indirect social aggression is to secure their preferred men have been helpful for this research.

After the development of genetics and psychology, the evolutionary approach has been quite helpful while addressing certain questions of human behavior and nature. The articles reviewed above provide the author's stance on different characters' behavior which goes with the nature of this research. Moreover, the evolutionary evidence found in these articles ensures the hypothesis that evolution and women's own identity plays a part while deciding the character's partner in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*. This thesis is focusing on the evolutionary approach of selecting a partner which principally argues that men look for a partner who will not only look for his children but also a partner for whom he will get the opportunity to do adultery. Yet, an extensive analysis suggests that both Elizabeth and Jane, the female protagonists are empowered by the authors and this gives us a couple who are mentally compatible. This is in fact, beneficial for gene propagation because if a child gets compatible parents who have the same share of taking care of their children, the possibility is that that child in the future will produce more healthy offspring.

Chapter 3

Elizabeth and Charlotte: Surviving the Game of Marriage

Marriage, one of the most critical steps of human life, has become an essential theme of understanding human behavior. As a result, this theme is widely used in literature, especially 19th-century women writers have given much importance to this theme in their writing. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel best known for its realistic depiction of how women had to go to extreme lengths to secure their marriage with a financially stable man in the Regency period. Among the characters in this novel, Elizabeth and Charlotte possess views on marriage very different from each other, and thus their way of approaching their potential husband is also different. Thus, this chapter focuses on Elizabeth and Charlotte's marriage to their partners and evaluates their potential of being a successful marriage using evolutionary psychology.

Charlotte and Mr. Collins's relationship is one of the most realistic relationship dynamics in literature and we can at least find one Charlotte and one Mr. Collins who make a marriage of convenience even in today's society. Charlotte Lucas is a friend of Elizabeth who is described as "a sensible, intelligent young woman, about twenty-seven" (Austen 18). Twenty-seven was an age at that time which was considered quite late for getting married. So, naturally, Charlotte and her family were doing everything to save her from spinsterhood because neither a girl nor her family would want her to lead her life depending on her brothers. Hence, for Charlotte marriage becomes a means of survival in society. Struggle for existence or survival is one of Darwin's mechanisms which postulates that those who can adapt best to a change in environment will have the benefit of surviving and eventually breeding and propagating genes. This also applies to Charlotte who seizing the opportunity makes herself a survivor in her society. As a realist Charlotte believes love has very less to do with a successful marriage. Contrary to her beliefs, love is an evolutionary

emotion, and it has some evolutionary benefits. As love is an altruistic behavior, two people in love will share an emotional attachment and similarity which will be beneficial for a marriage to be successful. But that does not nullify the probability of a marriage being successful without love. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet do not seem to have love between them but they are still going on with their marriage. However, as known from Austen's life, she did not want a marriage for convenience and thus did not marry. We also know from her personal letters that she advised her friends to marry for love. This gives us the idea that her definition of a successful marriage is when two people marry for love. However, from an evolutionary perspective, Charlotte and Collins are considered a successful couple, and further discussion in this chapter explores this issue.

In the novel, when we meet Charlotte she is already twenty-seven and is heading toward spinsterhood. So, naturally, she is getting pressured by society, family, and her survival instincts to find a husband, which she takes into her own hands. Previously we have seen that her parents made an effort to present Charlotte in front of Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy but as it was a matter of competition, unfortunately, Charlotte was not a successful competitor. Darwin explained the theory of sexual selection as “a struggle between the males for possession of the females... the result to the unsuccessful competitor is a few or no offspring” (Darwin). Here this selection is explained from the animal world's perspective, but in humans, this selection is mutual, which means it is common for both men and women to have a hand in whom they are going to select as their partners. Nonetheless, in this competition, “victory will depend not on general vigor, but on having special weapons, confined to the male sex [and female sex for humans]” (Darwin). Darwin gave examples of how a hornless stag or spurless cock would have less chance of finding a partner than a horned stag and furred cock. Similarly, in human life, for both men and women, even after not having any direct relation to reproduction, some characteristics have become a reproductive

advantage to have. For women, such general characteristics are often regarded as being attractive or beautiful and being young. These are adaptations that have been favored through sexual selection. Charlotte is “plain” looking and twenty-seven years old. So she does not quite fit into the beauty standards of that time. Moreover, Austen shows how her reality is, even Mrs. Bennet taunts that Charlotte is not going to find a husband when she says “first of all, he [Mr. Bingley] asked Miss Lucas [for a dance]... but, he did not admire her at all: indeed nobody can” (Austen 13).

Charlotte’s predicament made her situation difficult for her to survive in society. That is where we find her trying to take agency of the situation in her favor. Even though it might seem that Mr. Collins was Charlotte's only option, we cannot disagree that it was Charlotte Lucas who choose her husband and through her actions leads Mr. Collins to propose to her. Mr. Collins is described by Elizabeth as “narrow-minded and silly” (Austen 143) yet, Charlotte sees him as a good match for her because he can provide her with a good and respected life. Having been a weak competitor in terms of looks and age, Charlotte still manages to survive and get a stable life for her. Unlike Elizabeth, Charlotte is an opportunist, and that quality helps her tremendously in her situation. The survival of a weak competitor is explained through evolutionary game theory, which John Maynard Smith explained through the animal world. He showed through the example of dove-hawk competition that a single dove might be at an advantage in a population of hawks because while the hawks are too busy fighting to reproduce successfully, the dove taking that opportunity will then increase their gene frequency (42- 44). If we apply this theory to Charlotte's case, then we can see that when Elizabeth rejects Mr. Collins, Charlotte simply takes that chance and approaches Mr. Collins. According to Maryanne L. Fisher, “women compete, but in a different way than men ... Women’s competition is often subtle and, thus, difficult to quantify” (21). This

also implies that women's techniques to attract their potential partners with time become part of their normal behavior and this she addresses in her article "Women's Intersexual Competition for Mates" (21). Nonetheless, in the case of Charlotte, she uses some techniques consciously for her benefit towards Mr. Collins without taking part in the competition. She simply pushes Mr. Collins by creating different situations for her, for example, her accidentally on purpose meeting with Collins and through various events making him realize that they could be a good match. Similarly, Mr. Collins was looking for a wife according to the given template of Lady Catherine de Bourgh as she said "Choose properly, choose a gentlewoman for my sake; and for your own, let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way" (Austen 111). Here Lady Catherine proposes a vital quality to have for Collins's wife which is being active. This quality is also important in survival. Darwin later in his life gave importance to active women as they have a significant role to play in childbearing and rearing which is not an easy task considering they have a higher stake in this compared to men. If we return to Lady Catherine's advice to Collins, the first two choices of him, Jane and Elizabeth are nothing like what Lady Catherine described. But, it was when Mr. Collins got rejected by both sisters, he starts considering Charlotte. Interestingly, Lady Catherine understands what kind of woman can handle Collins as she mentions in her above advice to Collins and it has to admit that Lady Catherine helps Charlotte and Collins in their survival mission.

Whether Charlotte and Collins are a good match is open to interpretation. Elizabeth's statement about Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins "she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage" (Austen 132) does not seem to have ground because Elizabeth's visit to the married Charlotte's house gives us the knowledge that Charlotte is quite content in the life she

chooses. So, from Austen's explanation, Charlotte is not sacrificing "every better feeling" rather with these "worldly advantages" she is making the best life she can under her circumstances.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, can be called Charlotte's foil, where we can consider Charlotte a realist, and Elizabeth a romantic. Elizabeth is described as the most sensible and intelligent among the five sisters and Mr. Bennet is also a bit partial towards her, in his words "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls, but Lizzy has something more of a quickness than her sisters" (Austen 5). Although Elizabeth is described as sensible, her decision to not marry Mr. Collins and reject Mr. Darcy's proposal seems not so sensible considering her situation. It is because as the Bennet's do not have any sons, after Mr. Bennet's death their house will be transferred to Mr. Collins. For this reason, Mrs. Bennet wants all her daughters to be soon married to a good stable man. So, where it was considered a matter of fortune for most unmarried girls at that time to get a proposal from Mr. Collins or even better from Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth finds it reasonable to reject both of these proposals.

As a fortuneless woman in the Regency period who does not have any income of her own, it may seem to be a foolish decision to reject a good proposal even from an evolutionary perspective because rejecting such a proposal is quite equivalent to rejecting to live. Nevertheless, a research conducted by Todd K. Shackelford in 2005 shows that women tend to rank the desired traits in their partners in the order of kindness, intelligence, self-confidence, accomplishments, reputation, health, vigor, reliability, and handsomeness and these characteristics work as courtship adaptations. On account of this, if we look at Elizabeth's rejection of both men (Collins and Darcy), it seems logical that in her eyes, both of them lack some qualities which to Elizabeth is an important factor to have in a partner. Elizabeth's first impressions of Darcy and Wickham are different. Darcy often finds himself in a social predicament because of his introverted personality. It can be noticed

that Darcy feels uncomfortable in a place with unfamiliar people. Still, as Mrs. Reynolds, the housekeeper says how good Darcy is to his servants or how good a brother he is, the readers get that the previous assumptions about Darcy being “proud” and “disagreeable” are merely prejudiced. In addition, Darcy’s letter to Elizabeth gives us a clear picture of his true personality as we see he explains his part quite better in his letter than in a face-to-face conversation. In contrast to Darcy, Wickham is an extroverted person who deceives people with his charm. To a prejudiced Elizabeth, Wickham’s superficial quality seems attractive. But, as the novel progresses and Elizabeth could see past Darcy’s introverted personality she starts to see him as a long-term companion. As Joseph Carol says, “As in many novels, one main plot line involves the long-term discrimination among superficially attractive qualities and the qualities that will wear well—a difference relevant to the basic distinction between short-term and long-term mating strategies” (208). For this reason, we can conclude that Elizabeth’s rejecting Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy is rational.

Elizabeth, a romantic by heart, will not marry someone she is not in love with. She finds Mr. Collins particularly imbecile and seeing him “making two offers of marriage within three days” (Austen 132) again confirms her judgment about his character being shallow. In addition, both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy’s lack of communication causes a misunderstanding between them. On top of that, while making his first proposal to Elizabeth, Darcy makes some insulting remarks about Elizabeth’s family, “His sense of her inferiority— of its being a degradation—of the family obstacles which had always opposed to inclination” (Austen 197) and implies that Elizabeth should feel lucky about this marriage proposal. This also shows the mentality that Darcy had at that moment. He was at that time under the influence of pride and prejudice which made him fail to see beyond his beliefs. So, the question of mental compatibility between Elizabeth and Darcy

comes here. Mental compatibility has a similar influence as a secondary sexual characteristic like kindness or generosity which promotes likeness and eventually love among potential mates. This issue is also brought up by Elizabeth's father when he says "I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable unless you truly esteemed your husband; unless you looked up to him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage" (Austen 384). Again, later in the novel when Elizabeth found out how Darcy helps her sister and helps their family to regain respect by marrying Lydia and Wickham, Elizabeth had a change of heart and she starts to see Darcy in a different light. This mental compatibility is also pushed by the fact that both Darcy and Elizabeth are educated. As Joseph Carol puts it, "one chief attraction that Darcy holds for Elizabeth is that he is himself educated and holds out the promise for her of helping her to continue cultivating her own mind" (212). By this, we can expect that both of them will get the opportunity to grow as a person. At this point, Elizabeth also finds their pair compatible as far as mentality is concerned when she points out to Lady Catherine "He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal" (Austen 363). Sandra M. Gilbert argued that the prospect of a successful marriage depends not only on the husband's fortune and wife's age but rather mental compatibility is also an important factor (336-371).

While the above analysis may suggest that Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is based on only some characteristic traits (which are favored by sexual selection) and emotions, some statements of hers might indicate otherwise. When Elizabeth visits Pemberley, after seeing its grandness she wonders "and of this place, I might have been a mistress" (Austen 252). Again, after she is engaged with Mr. Darcy she casually answers "I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley" (Austen 381) when asked how long she has been in love with Darcy. This might seem a casual remark but this also suggests that the grandness of Pemberley

makes an impression on Elizabeth. This implies that although it was Darcy's personality that attracts Elizabeth more, Darcy's fortune also plays a role here which is why she made that statement. So, her statement about Charlotte being "she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage" (Austen 132) seems ironic here because Elizabeth is also somewhat influenced by "worldly advantage".

The above analysis shows that despite possessing different viewpoints about marriage, the survival instinct affects both Charlotte's and Elizabeth's decisions. This realization of survival was essential for Charlotte which she needed for herself. This also might be something that is derived from fear of exclusion which eventually leads to not existing. In contrast, Elizabeth's survival instincts are coated by her psychology to live up to the aesthetic sense of the world. Nonetheless, it is probable that the partner they choose will lead to a long-term commitment and thus both of them made a successful marriage.

Chapter 4

Jane and Bertha: The Winner Takes It All

Jane Eyre is another novel by a nineteenth-century woman writer, Charlotte Brontë. In this novel, the female protagonist Jane Eyre, much like Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*, takes authority over her life decisions especially her choice of partner by going against all the odds and surviving in the real world. This reflects one of the main principles of evolutionary psychology, which is “survival of the fittest”. We get to see two female characters in this novel who have completely different lives, one Jane Eyre, and the other Bertha Mason. Throughout the novel, Bertha is constantly contrasted with Jane and thus Bertha is seen to be the “secret or submerged” self of Jane which needs to be defeated for Jane to survive. Hence, this chapter explores the mental difference between Jane and Bertha, in addition to how this difference shapes their relationship with Rochester.

A recurring idea that we find mentioned in the novel is physical beauty. In sexual selection, the importance of physical beauty has been emphasized as it has evolutionary benefits. Jane often mentions that she is not good-looking as she says to Rochester “I am your plain, Quakerish governess” (Brontë 295). This statement is made by Jane herself, so it seems possible that Jane is rather humble or for her, morality is more important than beauty which is why she attempts to hide her beauty. Many characters in this novel, including Edward Rochester when he first meets Jane, described her as “plain”. St. John Rivers who seems to be a stoic, straightforward, and non-judgmental person states “She [Jane] looks sensible, but not at all handsome... she would always be plain” (Brontë 389). As mentioned earlier, beauty has a significant role in sexual selection because in later ages of human civilization when patriarchy started to dominate society, the final

verdict of choosing a marriage partner started to go with the male. For this reason, “women are everywhere conscious of the value of their beauty; and when they have the means, they take more delight in decorating themselves with all sorts of ornaments than do men ” (Darwin), so that they could be chosen. At first sight, Jane does not fit very well with these qualities. On account of this, although it appears that Jane was at disadvantage here by not having the preferable beauty or any fortune, she not only rises above these challenges but progresses in life. Jane lost her father and mother at a very young age. But, she has been a survivor from a very young age and we first witness this in her fight with her cousin John Reed over reading a book, where Jane protests against her cousin's misbehavior towards her. And after her fight when the maid reprimands her over a fight with “her young master” Jane again protests saying "How is he my master? Am I a servant?" (Brontë 8). This indicates that even though growing up in an unhealthy household where she is constantly reminded that she is living at the mercy of her aunt, Jane shows great resilience toward her harsh conditions. Moreover, she is from the very start aware of her position and thus never compromises her rights. We again witness her fight for her rights in her argument with Rochester about leaving the job. When losing his composure Rochester asks her for the money that he offered to Jane, and she politely refuses (which is her wage) to give. This gives us the impression of her being a survivor for being the fittest.

Jane's survival instinct is again tested when she leaves Thornfield. On the day of Mr. Rochester and Jane's wedding when she learns about Rochester's first wife, she runs away from there without any money. When Rochester thought that without any proper money Jane would not survive, Jane survives with her will to live despite being in a situation where she was homeless and starving for some days. Here, we can see Jane has a great survival instinct and shows that marriage is not the only way to survive for women. That is why Brontë most probably emphasizes

the fact that Jane is not pretty, because to her, being pretty is not the only weapon for women in that era to survive.

The issue of marriage for Jane is not entirely for survival. As per evolutionary psychology, the ultimate reason for marriage is the survival and propagation of genes. However, the immediate or proximate reasons of marriage are considered to be for a better social life, social or familial pressure, or emotions such as love etc. Jane's marriage, which is for love, best describes the proximate reason for marriage. In Jane and Rochester's marriage, intellectual compatibility is given importance as it has been proposed by Sandra M. Gilbert's article "Plain Jane's Progress" which previously we saw also applies to Elizabeth and Darcy's marriage. From the start of their relationship, Rochester considers Jane as his equal as for when he proposes to Jane he says, "My equal is here and my likeness" (Brontë 290). Yet he thinks Jane as her property, for instance, after Rochester figures out that Jane will leave him when his first marriage is revealed, he says, "don't struggle so, like a wild frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation" (Brontë 289). In Sandra Gilbert's words, this contradiction in Rochester came from Rochester's "secrets of inequality" (792). According to Gilbert, Rochester gets his power over Jane from his secret marriage and his numerous romantic affiliations with his love interests. This gives him the satisfaction of being more experienced than Jane in terms of sexual matters. Again, Jane's monetary condition might have triggered such a superiority complex in Rochester, but at the same time, he thinks of Jane as his equal in terms of intellect. This is also addressed by Nancy Easterlin who says "This attitude, which Rochester acknowledges creates relationships of inequality, nevertheless motivates some of his behavior toward Jane in preparation for their marriage" (198). Therefore, this issue of inequality is resolved by the author to get an evolutionary beneficial relationship.

As Lee Alan Dugatkin and Jean-Guy J. Godin pointed out, “females may be more selective (about their partners) because they have more invested in each gamete and in the resulting offspring” (56). For this reason, females have more stake in reproduction. In addition, as men tend to be more promiscuous than women in marriage, it can be assumed that in the majority of cases if a marriage breaks, women have to be the ones taking care of their children. Therefore, it shows that for women, autonomous individuality is important because it gives them support in rearing children. Rochester's attitude of monopolizing Jane creates a threat to Jane's own identity. For this reason, when Jane found out about Bertha, she feels betrayed and perhaps feels that if she does not escape, Rochester will probably try to manipulate her into marriage. If that happened Jane's identity would have been forever imprisoned under the name of Rochester's “girl bride” (Brontë 294). On top of that, the balance between them would have never occurred. The incidence of Jane's running away, her not giving up on life, working as a schoolmistress, and inheriting his uncle's fortune, all helps her to find her ground as an individual. However, in the meantime, Rochester loses his fortune after Jane leaves. His wife Bertha sets fire to the house, and in an attempt to save his wife, Rochester gets blinded. In her article, Gilbert hinted that Rochester's blindness made him grasp Jane's situation better than when Jane was with him. It is because when Rochester fails to find Jane when she escapes, and after facing such tragedy of losing his eyesight, on top of that losing his only “equal” he perhaps had the chance to reflect on his actions. Moreover, in his words, he had to be “forced to pass through the valley of the shadow of death” (Brontë 512) to become the true equal of Jane.

Bertha, who is Rochester's first wife and is kept locked in the attic by Rochester, is an obstacle to Jane's path to marrying Rochester. Bertha acts as a rival here but her predicament makes her the weakest contestant. Apart from this, another factor that acts against Bertha and Rochester's

relationship is as Rochester mentions, “I have no respect for myself when I think of that act! ... I never loved, I never esteemed, I didn't even know her” (Brontë 350). Rochester, who was still young and inexperienced, was manipulated into marrying Bertha. The betrayal that Rochester felt after learning about Bertha’s illness and this relationship which started with manipulation took a toll on Rochester. Thus, perhaps unknowingly, he started to lose respect for Bertha even though knowing that Bertha is not at fault in this situation as her illness is controlling her. This caused a failed relationship between them. Another reason that perhaps Brontë wanted to show is that Bertha did not have an opinion in her marriage to Rochester, in fact, she did not have any control over her life. Her marriage was decided by her family. This is where Bertha differs from all the other three characters (Elizabeth and Charlotte from *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Jane Eyre*) who marries of their free will. After Jane arrived in Thornfield, even though Bertha tries to ruin Jane and Bertha’s marriage, it is essentially Jane's moral self that made her run away from Thornfield. Bertha is jealous of Jane as some critics argue because she does not harm Jane even after having the chance, she only tears Jane’s wedding veil. On the contrary, she tries to kill Rochester two times, first when she sets fire to Rochester's room and second when she again sets fire to the whole house. Hence, it seems Bertha’s rage is towards Rochester and the idea of a marriage between Jane and Rochester. Bertha probably did not want Jane to suffer the same fate as her by marrying Rochester. So, although Bertha is mentally unstable, her conscious mind still reacts to Rochester’s marriage to another woman. Thus, her action suggests that she is not jealous of Jane, rather she wants to save Jane from meeting her fate. It is because the stability and love Bertha was looking for were missing in her marriage, so her rage is directed toward Jane and Rochester's marriage.

Bertha’s other identity could be that she is what Jane could have been, Bertha is the other side of Jane, which remains submerged in her, like the id. We already got a glimpse of Bertha's

madness in Jane at the start of the novel when two maids were forcing her to enter the red room. Seeing her acting mad, one maid even calls her “mad cat” (Brontë 8). This red room scene mirrors Bertha’s struggle in the attic. Considering this, we can say that Bertha is Jane’s double. Therefore, the voices that Jane hears from time to time guide her throughout her life, for example, after Jane’s confrontation with Rochester she hears “my daughter, flee temptation” (Brontë 367). This mother or the experienced self of Jane who from time to time guides her and whom many analysts call Jane’s moral voice is her own voice as Brontë suggests. In addition, this voice is also Bertha’s voice if we consider Bertha as Jane’s alter ego who wants to make sure that Jane also does not become one of “Rochester’s cast off women” (Jong 56). It is because if Jane listened to Rochester’s temptation, she could have been another Bertha trapped in the attic. Bertha’s eventual death symbolizes that perhaps her purpose has been served which is guiding Jane to her autonomous identity. Bertha as the loser in the game of survival had to die to give rise to the winner who is Jane. Thus, in that sense, Bertha, a failed competitor who acts as a double of Jane, helps Jane to survive Thornfield and eventually in life.

By sticking to her position Jane gains her autonomous identity and forms a balanced relationship with Rochester. Considering the ultimate reasons of evolutionary psychology, finding an autonomous identity is important because it helps with the later process of childbearing, which Jane and Rochester successfully did. Similarly, intellectual capability also plays an important role in deciding whether an intellectually balanced couple will be able to propagate more genes than an unbalanced couple. It is because if the children are getting a healthy environment in their later life they will also propagate genes more compared to a child growing up in an unhealthy environment. Again, it is through Bertha Mason that Brontë explores the idea of the imprisonment

of women's autonomous identity. Bertha is the other side of Jane whom Jane has broken free and survived.

Love, attachment, and compassion are some emotions, as this analysis shows, have a prominent role in Elizabeth and Jane's relationship with their partners. These emotions are also important for adaptive fitness and the justification of this claim is that those people who lack normal emotions or those whose emotions are disrupted by drug abuse etc. are profoundly disabled. Bertha is someone whose predicament made her emotionally unavailable to Rochester. The emotion that is in function in these two couples (Elizabeth- Darcy and Jane- Rochester) is love which is a universal emotion. It is because in love, "Two parties who can count on extended reciprocity exchanges that transcend opportunities for short-term gain by cheating or defection will have an advantage over individuals who cannot establish this type of relationship" (Nesse 276). Therefore, the mental understanding that Elizabeth and Jane are offering to their partners could have been different if their choice of partner was someone else.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The two very successful marriages that we find in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* are Elizabeth-Darcy and Jane-Rochester's marriages. In these couples, Jane has been proven to be a survivor from the point of view of the traditional evolutionary standard. Between these two marriages, one common thing is that they are mentally compatible and have intense and lasting emotional attachments. This attachment or love is often termed irrational according to evolutionary psychology. Even more, the author of "Evolutionary Explanations of Emotions" states this attachment or love, "must offer advantages to the individual in the long run, but they are 'altruistic' in the ordinary meaning of the word-they motivate behavior that benefits others with no obvious immediate benefit in return" (Nesse 276). This reciprocity exchange or advantage that is present between these two couples (Elizabeth-Darcy and Jane-Rochester) is emotional and psychological as we have seen and this consistent and fair exchange makes their marriage a stable and secure relationship.

What's more, the identity that Elizabeth and Jane create for themselves despite facing many obstacles proves them to be the winner and in evolutionary psychology terms, nature claimed them to be survivors. Evolutionary theory says nature selects its survivor which means the survivors are born with survival qualities. This might be true for Elizabeth, Charlotte and Jane, nevertheless it is their persistence and eventually, the metamorphosis that they went through that shapes them to be the fittest to survive. Moreover, the choice they make while selecting partners are also affected by their survival instincts. Darcy and Rochester also have a transformation of character for the

better and at this time Elizabeth and Jane finally choose them as their husband. This shows Elizabeth and Jane's judgment of character for evolutionary benefit.

We also find one character, Bertha Mason who succumbs to life. Unlike the three successful marriages that we see in this research, Bertha and Rochester's marriage is not successful. Bertha's disinvolvement with her own life choices is one of the major reasons behind her failure in life and in marriage. Moreover, what adds to her failed marriage is there is a significant difference in Jane and Rochester's psychological understanding, consequently, it makes the relationship unstable. Similarly, in Charlotte and Collins's relationship, this emotional attachment is seemingly missing. Though emotional attachment is an advantage to have in a relationship, it is not essential to have. Because the ultimate goal of evolutionary psychology is to survive and spread out genes as a form of offspring. And considering the definition of successful a marriage to Charlotte, this marriage can be called success from Charlotte's standard as she got the security she wanted.

This research has tried to explore the topic of women's autonomous identity and its effect on their marriage in terms of evolutionary psychology. The prospect of a successful marriage from an evolutionary perspective depends on how much genes are propagating. In relation to this, the two kinds of successful marriages that we find, one with romantic attachments (Elizabeth-Darcy and Jane Rochester) and the other, without any romantic attachments (Charlotte-Mr. Collins), will spread out their genes through their offspring. However, there are other factors that determine a successful marriage such as how promiscuity or familial environment affects the propagation of genes. Due to time limitations, these factors could not be explored. But, if in the future if there is an opportunity to extend this research, these issues will be surveyed.

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