
Jealousy in Jane Eyre, 'For My Lover Returning to his Wife', and 'After the Lunch'

Across *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte and 'For My Lover, Returning to His Wife' by Anne Sexton, jealousy is presented as both resulting in self-deprecation and anger. Whereas in 'After the Lunch' by Wendy Cope a form of love that does not contain jealousy, but does present love in a similar way to the form of love which jealousy takes over in the other texts. Bronte presents jealousy as causing self-deprecation, while the other, modern writers maintain radically different views.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane becomes jealous of Mr Rochester's courtship of Miss Ingram. Bronte presents to us that Jane has not yet realised her self-worth. Contextually the society of 1848 would have negatively viewed the marriage of two individuals from different classes, so Jane's jealousy is emphasised through society's expectation of Mr Rochester to marry Miss Ingram. This jealousy manifests itself through a comparison by Jane of herself to Miss Ingram in which she focuses on Aesthetics. Bronte emphasises this jealousy of aesthetics through Jane's portraits, where Jane excessively emphasises the material differences between the two women. Underneath the portrait of herself, Jane writes 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain' and underneath her portrait of Miss Ingram she writes 'Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank'. This shows that Jane hasn't yet learned the value of her own spiritual and intellectual superiority. Jane describes herself, "I am poor, obscure, plain, and little" showing clear self-deprecation as a direct result of her jealousy.

Sexton also presents jealousy as causing self-deprecation in the individual. 'For My Lover, Returning to His Wife' presents the mistress' jealousy of her lover's wife. The jealousy itself can be seen in the possessive nature of the title, through Sexton's use of 'my' and 'his' which are possessive pronouns. This jealousy leads her to blame herself, Sexton presents this through a semantic field of self-deprecation. During the 1960s when this poem was published the sexual revolution was affecting western culture and influencing society. This poem presents a side to an affair rarely before seen due to the sexually repressed society that existed before the mid-1900s. While this poem presents sexual liberation, it also presents the consequences of this love that the mistress has for her lover cannot continue as he is already married, leading to her jealousy. A contemporary reader would view the presentation from the mistress' view as shocking as adultery was no longer seen as taboo but still disapproved of. Equally, due to the sexual liberation of the era, they may not be surprised by the voice of the mistress shown within the poem.

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However, jealousy is presented as causing anger in these texts also. In 'For My Lover, Returning to His Wife' the speaker seems controlled, but occasionally explodes, "bitch" is used by Sexton to show her rage escaping from the steady and controlled structure of the poem. Additionally, Sexton wrote this in free verse which allows the rambling thoughts that are comorbid with jealousy to be presented through the voice of the mistress. In this way, anger is presented as being caused by jealousy. Furthermore, in *Jane Eyre*, Jealousy also manifests itself in anger and rage. Bertha resents Jane and Rochester's love as she is held captive by Rochester making their love impossible. In regarding Jane and Rochester, Bertha sees their love develop and this causes her to become jealous. Bertha's "unchaste" sexual desire results in her jealousy of Jane, as it is Jane who Rochester wishes to marry. Bertha sees this desire of Rochester's to marry Jane as a direct threat to herself as Mr Rochester's first wife. Bertha's jealous rage is presented by Bronte in the destructive fires that Bertha lights. In Bertha's final and successful attempt to burn down Thornfield, she starts the fire in Jane's old room. This act directly reflecting her resentment of Jane and Rochester's love through her jealousy, "Bertha escaped and set Jane's old bedroom on fire." Contextually, the fires would be blamed on Bertha's insanity due to the repression of sexuality that led to Bertha's imprisonment in the attic. However, it can be argued that Bronte uses the metaphor of fire to show the destruction jealousy can cause. Although in 'After the Lunch' Cope presents a preliminary form of love, in which the speaker realises they're in love. This is presented through a battle between the head and the heart, "The head does its best but the heart is the boss". The speaker rejects reason and logical thought as love here is presented as not being logical. The speaker here in rejecting their "head" and following their "heart" puts themselves in a position similar to the character driven by jealousy in the other texts due to jealousy being emotional and illogical also. However in this poem Cope emphasises a preliminary form of reciprocated love and falling in love. This directly contrasts to these other forms of love that are presenting a further stage of love where jealousy has taken control.

In all three texts, jealousy is presented as having different consequences. No single text took one approach to jealousy. Both *Jane Eyre* and 'For My Lover, Returning to His Wife' looked at anger and self-deprecation in relation to jealousy. Additionally in 'After the Lunch' Cope also presents a jealousy but contrastingly through a lack of jealousy but with the emotional vulnerability presented through the other texts.

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