

Five British Writers

Day 23
(of 28)



The End of Jane Eyre

- Jane is not a beggar—why is the distinction important?
- Jane is not a beauty—what role does beauty play in this text?

(Rosemond Oliver, 406, ch. 31)

- Jane Eyre, J. E., Jane Elliot—what significance to these aliases have?

Repeated elements

- Jane continues to draw...
- How does the supernatural return?
- How does the return to Thornfield/Ferndean mirror the return to Gateshead?

Compare the two proposal scenes

Two Famous Divorce Cases

- Insanity only becomes a legal ground for divorce in 1937...but divorce law is under intense scrutiny at the time *Jane Eyre* appeared. There are two celebrated cases which drew particular attention:

Queen Caroline

Caroline Norton

- In the 1820's, there is a national issue raised by the divorce trial between King George IV and Queen Caroline. Parliament ultimately did not consent to the divorce.
- In Caroline Norton's 1836 divorce case, she was not an active party—the case lay between her husband Norton and the peer he accused of alienating her affections. He lost the case but her situation was not improved. At this point in British legal history, only the husband could sue for divorce on the grounds of infidelity, not the wife, and all property rights and infant care rights were retained by the husband.

The concept challenged by Caroline Norton in subsequent writings is *coverture*: a legal term describing a married woman's legal identity as subsumed into that of her husband. No contract can be transacted between husband and wife because the wife has no separate legal identity, and, until 1870, no right to her own earnings.

- There are political and social links between abolitionist movements and women's suffrage movements in the nineteenth century.

Next Week: Jane Eyre Day of Discussion

Remember: No class this Thursday,
and no postings Monday. Enjoy the holiday.

Next week, we'll discuss the contemporary
and recent responses to Jane Eyre on
Tuesday and have a day of discussing your
posted questions/comments on
Thursday...

then we start on our last author!