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ENG 220

11/14/2024

The Violence of "Gentlemen's Children":

How John Reed's Abuse Reflects Real-World Hatred

Abstract

One of the most striking parts of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is how it begins. In one of the book's earliest scenes, we witness our protagonist, a 10-year-old Jane Eyre, have a large book flung at her by her older cousin, John Reed, and hit so hard she begins to bleed, all for the oh so heinous crime of reading in the family library. The scene thrives in being shocking but not gratuitous and sets the tone of the overall story, it tells our audience that this is a story where the heroine has to lose before she can win. However, the overall story of **Jane Eyre** is not what is to be discussed here, rather the focus of this essay is John Reed himself, more specifically his hatred for his cousin and how it can be compared to the hatred we see outside of books and there are quite a few similarities. Namely, John Reed's prejudice against Jane is similar to real world prejudice in that it is reactive, it is socialized, and it is violent.