

Katsa's Rochester: The Parallels of *Jane Eyre* and *Graceling*

Kristin Cashore's *Graceling* was published in the same year as *The Hunger Games*, and has been sorely overlooked. The story of Katsa, a unique orphan girl with the physical prowess to take down the most experienced fighters, *Graceling* has everything a great Young Adult fantasy novel calls for: action, romance, and rebellion. What a reader may not observe, however, is its parallel with the classic novel, *Jane Eyre*. *Graceling* is worth examining more deeply, not only in terms of its themes of women's physical, emotional, and sexual empowerment, but also in light of its resemblance to *Jane Eyre*. I argue that through Katsa, a more deadly Jane, *Graceling* creates a refreshing adaptation of the beloved classic, and that Cashore's subtle connections are most notable in one inversion of the timeless plot: the Rochester of Katsa's world, a rebellious prince called Po, is blinded not by fire, but by water.

Water and sight, then, become important symbols and recurring themes in the novel. One quirk of this fantasy world is the way in which "graced," or magically skilled, individuals are marked: different colored eyes make the graced characters, like Katsa, easily recognizable. Po, who becomes Katsa's lover, is injured, and upon returning to camp, plunges off a cliff and lands face-first in a body of water. Over the course of the novel, it is revealed that he is blinded, but recovers through the use of his grace.

While this particular instance is the most striking similarity between the two novels, other similarities abound; the importance of these similarities is not simply in their existence, but in the way that Cashore reshapes the tale for a modern audience, one that is aware of the flexibility of gender. Though fire took Rochester's sight, water takes Po's; Katsa is not the healing nurse/lover in her story, but a deadly fighter. The story of *Jane Eyre* finds a new life in this modern fantasy, and modern ideals are put to the test through the reshaping ability of water, rather than the destructive force of fire.