

“Sugar and Spice, and Everything Nice”: A Brazilian Reading of Jane Eyre

Sandra Sirangelo Maggio¹, Luciane Oliveira Müller² and Valter Henrique Fritsch³

ABSTRACT

In 2012 the novel *Jane Eyre* was studied by a group of undergraduate English Literature students from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil. Negotiation was needed on the part of the teachers so that a number of reception issues could be managed and the experiment eventually be deemed successful. To set the tone of this exercise, the group borrowed a metaphor from Umberto Eco, and compared literature to some woodland where every reader can enter, provided they carry a rucksack. The better equipped the rucksack is, the longer the readers can stay in the woods. Therefore, the group determined to learn as much as possible about the historical and cultural aspects of Victorianism, so that they could carry heavier rucksacks and profit as much as possible from their journey, becoming well informed readers, capable of avoiding some of the culture gaps that inevitably occur.

The aim of this paper, thus, is to retrace that reading journey, reporting the discoveries made and the hindrances met by the group, while examining the strategies used to move forward. Difficulties ranged from simple lack of current daily life knowledge (What does a horse chestnut tree look like? What does heather look like? What does a manor house look like?) to denser, more abstract matters. The central concern was the intriguing clash between the moralistic and romantic aspects of Victorianism. In what possible ways could the novel solve the unsolvable predicament of the protagonist, who pledges allegiance simultaneously to two irreconcilable masters, morality and passion? To solve this puzzle, the group used the theory of the Orders of the Image, by Gilbert Durand, as an aid. Special attention was paid to the symbolic images of the sun and the moon, here approached in connection to Celtic tradition. At the end of the work, the group construed an idea about a sort of dialectical movement performed by Brontë, which not only solved the protagonist's dilemma, but also contributed new stylistic resources to the development of the novel as a genre.

Keywords: Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Victorianism, Reception, Empirical Reader

¹ Associate Professor at UFRGS – The Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul – Brazil. E-mail maggio@cpovo.net. Phone number: 00215551-33955512

² Doctorate Student/Trainee Professor at UFRGS – The Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul – Brazil. E-mail: lu.muller@hotmail.com. Phone number: 00215551-33869916

³ Doctorate Student/Trainee Professor at UFRGS – The Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul – Brazil. E-mail: valter.fritsch@yahoo.com.br. Phone number: 00215551-81704378

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INTRODUCTION

In the book *Six Walks into the Fictional Woods*, Umberto Eco - to emphasize the responsibility of the reader - creates the image of literature as a forest, filled with woods that readers can visit, provided they carry a rucksack (Eco 1994). The quantity and quality of the assets inside the rucksack determine how long the visitors/readers can stay in the woods, and the merit of the expedition. This was the metaphor we adopted when we formed a group of three teachers and sixteen undergraduate students of English Literature, in Brazil, that studied, during four months, the novel *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë (Brontë 2001). Through that corpus of experimentation we were able not only to enjoy one of the greatest classics of English Literature, but also to explore several different aspects of British culture and history. We voted for an empirical response to literature to meet the inescapable circumstance that, as foreigners in space and time, we would be constantly facing basic problems of interpretation, as our individual and social conventions often differ from the ones found in the text. We decided for a “talking aloud” protocol, and started every class with a session where doubts would be presented and discussed, and hypotheses be made. In one of these random brainstorming talks, we found ourselves playing with the nursery rhyme “What Are Little Boys Made Of?” (Roud, 2013). When we reached the “What are little girls made of?” stanza, we changed it into “What are authors made of?”, and determined to find out the techniques and resources adopted by Charlotte Brontë, that made of *Jane Eyre* such a pleasurable and gratifying experience to the readers.

We borrowed two expressions from Eco’s book: “the actual world” and “the fictional world” (Eco 1994), and used them a portal to move consciously to and fro different spheres in the discussion, that kept colliding and mingling during the conversations we held in class. We felt the need to use that code when we started having problems with the use of the word “she”. “She” evoked different referents to different speakers, in the same conversation. Sometimes we shifted from the life of Charlotte Brontë, in the actual world, to the life of Jane Eyre in the fictional world. We identified at least four different Charlotte Brontës: (1) the (temporal) person; the (timeless) author; (3) the cultural icon, part of the Brontë Family myth, who has been used many times as a character by other authors, in (4) fictional derivative productions. We have an example of that in Blake Morrison’s play *We Are Three Sisters* (Morrison 2012).

There are as many Jane Eyres as well: (1) the fictional writer, a woman in her thirties, author of the book *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*; (2) the narrator in that book, as autobiographies are told in the first person; the protagonist, at two stages, (3) as a child, wild and daring; and (4) as a young woman, more balanced, coming to terms with life and adulthood. There are of course numberless other Jane Eyres in appropriations of the character by other authors in adaptations of the novel, prequels, sequels, and the like. An example is the novel *Mrs Rochester*, by Hilary Bailey (Bailey, 1997).

We even found a third territory, between the spheres of the actual and the fictional. One instance of that is Currer Bell: in the fictional world, the editor of the novel written by Mrs Jane Eyre Rochester; in the actual world, the pen name adopted by Charlotte Brontë. Another instance is the image we form after we read Mrs Gaskell's biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, in so many ways a fictional construct, in spite of its author's commitment to veracity (Gaskell 1997). Ultimately, as we all know, each reading of a text - whether fictional or not - is a unique construct, grounded half in the reader's imagination, half in the materials he carries in his rucksack. As Brazilian readers, we were aware of the restrictions imposed by our foreign locus of perception when reading an English 19th Century Victorian Novel. There were many gaps to be filled before we could interact properly with the text. Things that a British or a European reader would take for granted were sometimes difficult for us to apprehend.

Whenever we read the description of some scenery in a book - a landscape, for instance - we form the respective image in our minds. If a Brazilian reader is offered a Brontë setting, with elements like heather on the Yorkshire moors, or a manor-house like Thornfield, with a horse chestnut tree in the orchard, this reader will either go for further factual information, or imagine things in his/her own way. Suppose you don't know what the moors look like. Can you substitute the Gaucho Pampas for them? If you have never seen purple heather, can you fill your imagined setting with your local yellow wildflower? Can you read a large fig tree in Thornfield's orchard, instead of the horse chestnut tree you have never seen? Evidently, these questions are rhetorical. Different people have different philosophies about that. A comparativist would probably say this is inevitable, as each single reader has a specific private image database mental file. A translator would comment on the

possible choice for domestication, when as much as possible of the foreign context is transposed into the comfort zone of the reader.

For the purpose of our enterprise, we decided to get as close to the original as possible, for two reasons. Firstly, because the group consisted of future professionals of English, and the more you know about your subject matter, the more proficient you become. Secondly, because we decided to follow the methodology adopted by literary critic Antonio Candido, who believes that readers approach the text as if it were a sculpture, moving around it, considering it from all angles, passing our hands on its relief and giving, to each part, what it demands. To treat a complex work like *Jane Eyre* that way demanded hard work. We first went to the internet and to the movies in search of all visual concrete information, such as the shape of the aforementioned heather and horse chestnut tree. Then we selected some renowned essays about *Jane Eyre*, from different theoretical trends, and distributed them among the students, according to their preferences. We read articles and chapters on that novel written by John Maynard (1987, psychoanalytical approach), Gilbert and Gubar (1979, feminist approach), Richard Chase (1948, mythological approach), Terry Eagleton (1975, Marxist approach), and Robert Heilman (1958, structural approach). Then we shared our different perspectives, using them to give the text the response it demanded.

The first abstract issue to be mastered concerned the distinction between *class* and *money*, which does not exist in Brazilian Culture, where the notions of being “rich” and being “noble” go together, as synonyms. Whereas European culture is based on tradition, Americans tend to cherish what is new. When Brazilian students talk about an old house, they mean a house that is about 30 years old. It is difficult for them both to envision a manor house like Thornfield, and to understand what it means. Where does the place stand? Surrounded by what? Where does the money to keep such an expensive property come from? It takes some work to grasp the notion of what a stately manor house means, with all the intricacies in the entail and property laws, and the responsibility each local squire has to keep the estate whole and prosperous to be handled to the following generation. This code has direct associations with the novel. It accounts for the fact that Jane was raised as an outsider in Gateshead Hall only because property was transmitted on the male line in the families. Gateshead, thus, passed from Uncle Reed (Jane’s mother’s brother) to his only

male son, Cousin John Reed. That is why Mrs Reed, mother to the heir of Gateshead, is the lady of the house, whereas Jane, a real Reed by blood right, is considered inferior even to the servants, because her mother has been disinherited for marrying below her position.

As to the masters of a stately house, there is no greater shame or disappointment as the catastrophe of losing or ruining the property, as is the case with John Reed, who squanders all he has in gambling. Even Mr Rochester - although the narrative treats him in a favourable light - fails in his duty of keeping his mentally deranged wife, and Thornfield, his property, (both under his responsibility) under control. The result of his negligence triggers both her death and the fire that destroys the house.

Moving from issue to issue proved a priceless adventure. Students loved to be challenged to come to the following class bringing possible answers to queries such as: How come Jane can survive by earning thirty pounds per year? Why is Rochester sent to the West Indies to marry an heiress worth a dowry of thirty thousand pounds? What philosophical, social, economic statements can be taken from the fact that Jane inherits twenty thousand pounds from her “poor” relatives, and finds it wiser to share the money with her three cousins, because it is safer for a woman in her condition to possess five thousand pounds than twenty thousand pounds?

The most delicate issues to cope with were the ones involving morality, sexuality, and the codes of Victorianism. Our contemporary ethos - especially if you are a young adult living in Brazil - is radically different from that common to the characters in the book. In the first reading of the novel, the students simply concluded - according to their 21st Century (tropical) code of behaviour - that the proper thing for Jane to do, after their ill-fated attempt to marry, was to stay with Rochester because they loved and suited each other, they were better together than apart, and their transgression would not harm or hurt anyone else (to the possible exception of Bertha Mason). Actually, each of these arguments had been, at one point or another, presented by Rochester in the novel. With the difference that, if the students came to that decision naturally and spontaneously, to Rochester that discourse is rational and problematic. He never takes action in that respect; on the contrary, he constantly pushes Jane into forcing him to action. First, he throws a number of obscure innuendoes during their habitual sessions of conversation; then he brings the whole Ingram clan into the house to

make Jane jealous; next he disguises himself as a gypsy to extract her secrets; until she finally loses control, through rage, when she thinks that he is sending her away to Ireland. Rochester, as well as Jane, is so immersed into the code of conduct of his time, that it is difficult also for him to commit such a violent act of transgression as bigamy is.

The whole exercise of reading would be lost, had not the students been able to make the movement of dislocation towards the ethos of that fictional universe. So that this delicate effort could be accomplished, we had to distribute some further readings among the students. We went to René Wellek (1955) for the history of the Romantic Movement in Europe; to George Macaulay Trevelyan (1985) for an understanding of the social practices of that time; to Walter Allen (1980) for the impact of the notion of Respectability upon the new emerging middle classes; to Valentine Cunningham (1977) for a notion of the different branches of the Church of England, the impact of Evangelicalism and the effect these trends held upon Victorian codes of morality and social behaviour. The formidable website created by Prof George P. Landow, *The Victorian Web* (2012) allowed us to accompany the transition from that kind of mentality to the one that exists nowadays.

After all that toil, the group could finally grasp the extent of Jane's problem. They could even identify the symptoms of the progressive incompatibility involving heart and reason by referring to the 18th Century Gothic narratives - all heavily drawn in dichotomies - they had studied in the previous semester. The knowledge students gathered from other subjects converted into the study of *Jane Eyre*. They could find echoes of Jane's predicament in their readings of Nietzsche, in Philosophy, when we are informed that God is dead (Nietzsche 2005); or when he mentions the conflict between the Dionysian and Apollonian aspects of perception. (Ibid, 1992). Also, in Psychology, the whole basis of Sigmund Freud's thought is grounded on oppositions (Eros vs. Thanatos, the Double, the *Doppelgänger*, the *Unheimlich*) (Freud, 1989). That same cleavage is observed in *Jane Eyre*, which is both a Romantic and a Victorian construct. It is Victorian in the historical contextualization and in the treatment of the theme. It is Romantic not only in the rebellious, stubborn independence of the protagonist, but mainly in the direct, emotional narrative format and in the way it addresses and affects the reader. As a result to that, we respond by becoming as anxious as Rochester and Jane to find a way out from the impasse they are

arrested in, to establish some conciliation between the Dionysian and Apollonian poles of that blind alley.

At the end of the novel, in spite of the price Rochester pays to achieve his moral atonement, and in spite of the flamboyant coincidences, with preternatural and *deus ex machina* twists of the plot, the readers are usually pleased with solutions concocted by the author. As we sought to understand why that happened, we decided to investigate the matter further, using the ideas of Gilbert Durand about the Orders of the Image as a theoretical support.

In *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, Durand (1999) shares with his mentor Carl Jung the notion that - contrary to Cartesian logics - images have precedence over reason. To him, Neoclassical thought mistakenly underestimates the importance of imagination, restricting it to the “fringe-area bordering on sensation, known as the after-image” (Durand 1999, 24). He believes that, quite the reverse, consciousness comes as a second step in the process, representing the first manifestation of the power of the image: “the first characteristic of image revealed by phenomenological description is that of consciousness and, consequently, the image is transcendent, as is all consciousness” (Ibid).

Durand is one of the co-founders of the *Centre of Studies of the Imaginary*, at Grenoble, in France. That school proposes a method of analysis that is carried out in three steps. First, there is the analysis of the symbolic procedures (which, in Durand’s case, investigates instances of occurrence of the diurnal and nocturnal orders). Next, these procedures are connected to the social, historical, cultural environment in which they occur. That process is called *myth-analysis*. And finally, in the case of a literary text, the elements are identified that determine the major traits in the style of an author. This is known as *myth-criticism*. In the case of a study of *Jane Eyre*, this methodology helps us understand the ways in which, in that society, the major driving forces operate in opposite directions. This is one of the chief traits of Victorianism, the fact that a period of moral sternness and strictness coincides with a period of romanticism and passion. Durand’s concept of the diurnal and nocturnal orders makes it easier for us to develop the thesis that the secret of Charlotte Brontë’s success comes from the effortless way in which she moves from the rational into the instinctive modes of expression, which may possibly account for her technique of

poetical prose, enhancing the effect of imagination as a means of transcending the limits imposed by this conflict between morals and passion.

In this sense, Durand's theory suits our purposes, because it specializes in reconciling the irreconcilable, in re-uniting the forces represented by Dionysus and Apollo that, in Nietzsche's time, were regarded rather as opposites than as the complementary aspects of a healthy psyche (Nietzsche, 1992). To Durand, the power of symbols comes from the fact that they "surmount natural contradictions and bind together irreconcilable elements, social partitions and segregated periods of history. It becomes obvious, then, that the motivating categories of symbols are to be sought in the elementary behaviour of the human psyche (Durand 1999, 39)". To undertake this analysis of contradictory elements, we examine the elements selected considering the diurnal and nocturnal two orders of the image. To do so, we must first discard our notions that the word *diurnal* relates to all things proper and good and the word *nocturnal* to all things forbidden and evil. The orders of the image are primeval and a-moral.

The diurnal order is defined by Durand as the "order of antithesis" (Ibid, 66). It addresses the symbol on the level of daily life (social) experience, under the perspective of polarized values, ideas and images. The diurnal order is marked by dichotomies such as to be or not to be, to do or not to do. In Jane's case, to obey or not to obey the dictates of each of her masters, the heart (to oppose or not to oppose Mrs Reed and Rev Brocklehurst; to leave or not to leave Lowood; to stay or not to stay with Rochester) and reason (to try or not to try to integrate in Gateshead and in Lowood; to repress or not to repress her feeling for Rochester; to marry or not to marry St. John Rivers). The diurnal order comes closer to the rational aspects of existence, to the kind of behaviour we are expected to have when dealing with other persons. It relates to action elements, it is there that judgment values operate. The diurnal order involves dichotomies that are sometimes Manichaeic. This is the territory in which the forces that separate Jane and Rochester are stronger. He is rich, powerful, intellectually and sexually experienced. She is not. The scenes in the novel that involve Lady Blanche Ingram, when Rochester is feasting with his equals and forces Jane to be present, though socially invisible, well illustrate the abyss that drives them apart. Concerning the criticism about *Jane Eyre* that we read during the term, as empirical readers we formed the

theory that the more specific a critical approach is, the more it belongs into the diurnal order of the image. The gap that separates Jane and Rochester, for instance, is attributed different explanations if analysed through a Freudian or a Marxist line. In the nocturnal order, on the other hand, all these views, and none of them, can be included together.

The nocturnal order is the sphere where all differences mingle, where all is acceptable. It “is constantly characterized by conversion and euphemism” (Ibid, 191). If we consider the case of the Molly Bloom section in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (Joyce, 2000), in which we follow the flow of her thoughts for about one hundred pages, we have to acknowledge that it is not Molly who is obscene or lascivious: after all, she is in her bed, falling asleep, passively subjected to the flow of images that arise. It is us, the readers, who are intruding her privacy as we peep into her dreams. That, we believe, is a good instance of the nocturnal order of the image. In it, judgment values are off, differences are minimized. The nocturnal order predominates in the Thornfield section of *Jane Eyre*. At the moments they are together and alone, near some element of nature - indoors, the fire by the fireplace; outdoors the orchard - all differences seem to vanish, and impossible things seem to become possible.

It was not the purpose of the course to perform a close reading of *Jane Eyre* having in mind the orders of the image, although we felt strongly tempted to do that. Instead, we only selected two symbolical images, the sun and the moon, and decided to play with them in Durand’s fashion, as they are presented in Chapter XXIII of the novel (Brontë, 210-19), with one difference. When Durand refers to mythology, he uses primarily references that come from Greek tradition. We, instead, determined to direct our discussion, as much as possible, to Celtic myths. As Brazilian students we are well acquainted with the Greco-Roman school, but hardly know a thing about Celtic legends; which we should, as students of English. *Jane Eyre* offers a rich variety of access to that world, especially through the imagery Brontë brings from her Irish heritage and fairy folklore.

Jane Eyre is predominantly a nocturnal composition, one that should be savoured more through intuition than through reason. The more rational we become, the less well the novel responds. We stumble at a number of implausible circumstances. How can a ten year old child overcome by emotion win a discussion over an articulate adult, as happens in the

confrontation between Jane and Mrs Reed? What are the probabilities of one the following facts (let alone all of them) happen to *one* person: (1) Jane sends a letter to an uncle whom she has never contacted before, and who lives in Madeira (on the outskirts of Europe), telling him she is about to get married to an English gentleman called Edward Fairfax Rochester; at the moment the uncle reads the letter, he is doing business with a man from the West Indies (in Central America), and tells him about the news. This man happens to be brother to the living wife of the said Mr Rochester, who is thus caught in his plan to commit an act of bigamy. (2) When Jane learns the truth, she runs away from Mr Rochester. She travels by coach to as far as her little money allows her to go. When the money ends, she keeps walking as long as possible, until she finally faints - an allusion to the cycles of the moon that alternate and represent “the mythical drama of death and rebirth [Durand 1999, 283]”. She is rescued by a family, at an unknown place, to eventually discover that they are her paternal cousins. (3) The solution proposed in the novel is that Rochester shouts for Jane when he is at Ferndean. She, who is hundreds of miles away, not only listens to his voice, but goes to him immediately, after taking such pains for almost one year to hide from him.

We must acknowledge that such flashy story turns, although quite odd, were popular at the time. It was considered appropriate that all elements in the plot and in the setting responded to the needs of the protagonist. Even so, they go against the minimum of rationality that the diurnal order demands. The more we ask the story to respond to statistics and probability, the more we are disappointed, and the more Rochester and Jane grow apart, like the sun and the moon, that cannot be joined because they belong in different spheres. On the other hand, on the nocturnal note, on the grounds of the imaginary, there is always a sort of emotional realism that overlooks these norms. It is in the nocturnal order that we have those beautiful myths about twilight time, the hour in which daily, the sun and the moon cross each other’s course. We decided to investigate further on that line.

Chapter XXIII starts as the sun sets. This chapter is positioned precisely in the middle of the novel, and presents the climax of Rochester and Jane’s line of the story. The language runs predominantly in the form of poetical prose. As the chapter opens, a train of circumstances lead Jane into the orchard of Thornfield Hall, a beautiful place invested with magical atmosphere. The sun is setting, the moon is rising, the sky is tinged in red and blue:

It was now the sweetest hour of the twenty-four: 'Day its fervid fires had wasted⁴', and dew fell cool on panting plain and scorched summit. Where the sun had gone down in simple state - pure of the pomp of clouds - spread a solemn purple, burning with the light of red jewel and furnace flame at one point, on one hill-peak, and extending high and wide, soft and still softer, over half heaven. The east had its own charm of fine, deep blue, and its own modest gem, a rising and solitary star: soon it would boast the moon; but she was yet beneath the horizon. (Brontë, 211)

Jane is enraptured in that "Eden-like nook", where she could "wonder unseen", feeling as if she "could haunt such shade forever" (Ibid). When Mr Rochester enters the garden, Jane tries to leave noiselessly, to avoid the embarrassing situation of being alone with him there, at that hour. Precisely at the moment Jane is stepping on his shadow, "thrown long over the garden by the moon, not yet risen high", Rochester talks to her: "(...) Turn back; on so lovely a night it is a shame to sit in the house; and surely no one can wish to go to bed while the sunset is thus at meeting with moonrise" (Ibid, 212).

The first line of this chapter opens with "A splendid Midsummer shone over England" (Ibid, 210). The second paragraph informs us that that is Midsummer Eve (Ibid, 211). Brazilian students do not usually know what Midsummer Night represents in British folklore, this is an aspect to be treated carefully when we study *Jane Eyre*. When Romeo and Juliet exchange words for the first time, the lines they pronounce, joined together, form a sonnet. The sonnet is a lyrical form, the highest mode of expression of romantic love. In the same way, it is appropriate that the climatic chapter of *Jane Eyre* happens at Midsummer Eve, in contact with nature, precisely when the sunset is meeting moonrise.

Midsummer Night (between June 20 and 22) marks the summer solstice in the Northern hemisphere, with the shortest night of the year, which is filled in folklore with magical associations. It corresponds, in Brazil, a country from the Southern hemisphere, to the winter solstice, when we have the longest night in the year. That, for us, is the time for St. John's Eve, a date especially cherished by children and people in the countryside, who usually throw outdoors parties with a bonfire. Underneath the Catholic format of the celebration, a number of pagan traces can still be identified, with several love rites and spells, so that girls may find out the name of the boys they will date in the future. After the

⁴ Jane borrows from the "The Turkish Lady", by the Scottish poet Thomas Campbell (1777-1844). Lines 5-8 read: "Day her sultry fires had wasted, /Calm and sweet the moonlight rose; /Ev'n a captive spirit tasted/ Half oblivion of his woes (Campbell, 2012).

Brazilian reader associates Midsummer Night with St. John's Eve, the rest follows naturally. It is probably one further coincidence that the name of the patron saint of the party is the same as the name in the character in the novel (St. John Rivers). As St. John the Baptist opens the way to Jesus, St. John Rivers opens the way to Jane's return to Rochester.

In both cultures, if lovers get in contact with nature on such occasions, they are prey to the magical forces of nature. Be they Robin Good Fellow in Britain, or the little Indian *Curupira*⁵ in Brazil, the effects of their doings are alike.

Jane is observably under the influence of these strong forces of nature. When she is provoked to the utmost by Rochester, she finally allows herself to speak, "I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, not even of mortal flesh; - it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, - as we are! (Ibid, 216)"

The word *solstice* refers to the sun. It marks the moment in which the planet's axis is most inclined towards the sun. As the night falls, the influence of the moon over the tides, and over all other elements of nature, increases as well. Durand associates the moon to one structure of the nocturnal order known as the agro-lunar drama, a reference to the cyclic works of nature. As "the moon has different phases that repeat themselves" (Durand 1999, 285), the agro-lunar drama can trigger a mythical, divine character that "exploits harmful situations and negative values in order to produce positive values by constructing an imaginary narrative or perspective" (Ibid, 289).

The poem Jane thinks of as she reaches the garden makes reference to the moon. At that moment, the moon "was yet beneath the horizon (Ibid, 211)", but it is under its influence that Rochester's shadow becomes elongated ("thrown long over the garden by the moon [Ibid, 212]"), allowing him to acknowledge Jane's presence as her foot touched his shadow. Now, what is that that allows him to be sensitive to her touch?

"I had made no noise: he had not eyes behind - could his shadow feel (Brontë 2011, 212)?" One possibility - acceptable only on the domains of the nocturnal order - can be

⁵ In Brazilian folklore, Curupira is an Indian boy (whose feet are turned behind, so that his footprints may confuse the people he haunts) who, like Puck in Shakespeare, protects nature and likes to play tricks on people. (common knowledge)

traced in the symbolical references to fairy folklore, more specifically to the nature of the changeling. It is only when the moon is high that Jane loses control and contests Rochester.

Sir Edwin Sidney Hartland, in *The Science of Fairy Tales: An Enquiry into Fairy Tale Mythology* (Hartland, 1891) gives us his definition of what a changeling is: a creature from the British folklore that is similar to a human being, but in fact belongs to the fairy world. When fairies or elves have ugly babies, they sometimes steal fine-looking new born humans, leaving elf-children in their place. As a consequence, any strange-looking, awkward, homely child might be a changeling left by fairies in place of the pretty human baby they have taken away. According to Sir Hartland, although it is not easy to find out if an ugly child is a changeling, “under careful management it may be led to betray himself in speech or action”(Ibid, 8).

There are several references in *Jane Eyre* that connect our protagonist to the world of fairies. As a child, she would roam through the gardens of Gateshead Hall looking for elves under mushrooms and beneath wall-nooks, until she grew up and “at length made up my mind to the sad truth, that they were all gone out of England to some savage country where the woods were wilder and thicker, and the population more scant (Brontë 2001, 17).”

When Jane is arrested in the Red Room, in Gateshead, and it gets dark, she looks into the large looking-glass through illuminated by the moon beams that enter. She is scared as she sees a strange little creature, gazing at her with “glittering eyes of fear (Ibid, 11)”, that “Bessie’s evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers (Ibid).” Eight years later, Jane will appear before Rochester precisely in the same way.

Changelings, when roused, may betray themselves “in speech or action (Hartland 1891, 8).” Two scenes can illustrate the moments Jane, like a changeling, betrays herself through speech. The first takes place in Gateshead, in the confrontation with Mrs Reed, who denigrated Jane’s image by accusing her of being deceitful. Jane’s indignation increases, and finds a flow: “*Speak* I must (Brontë 2001, 30)”. Mrs Reed reacts “as if she really did not know whether I were child or fiend (Ibid)”. The second scene has already been referred, in the discussion about Chapter XXIII. When Jane feels she is being rejected by Rochester, “the vehemence of emotion, stirred by grief and love within me, was claiming mastery, and

struggling for full sway, and asserting a right to predominate, to overcome, to live, rise, and reign at last: yes, - and to speak (Brontë 2001, 215)”.

Jane’s emotional behaviour follows the same regular pattern throughout the novel, alternating between the extremes of calm passivity and action, intensity and rebellion. The older she gets, the more control she has over her behaviour. Still, the process remains the same. Hartland refers to “speech or action (Hartland 1891, 8)”. In the scenes with Mrs Reed and with Mr Rochester Jane verbalizes her emotions. There are two other scenes, though, where she simply acts, in silence. No words are used maybe because those circumstances reach beyond the sphere of words. The first occurs when Jane leaves Thornfield, at the end of Chapter XXVII. To her conscious mind, she is doing the only possible correct thing to do. Still, she feels guilty as she leaves. “Birds began singing in brake and copse: birds were faithful to their mates; birds were emblems of love. What was I? In the midst of my pain of heart, and frantic effort of principle, I abhorred myself. (...) I was hateful in my own eyes (Brontë 2001, 274). The second silent scene, symmetrical to the first, provokes the opposite movement, when Jane leaves St. John Rivers to return to Rochester. St. John simply embraces her and, almost as a direct consequence of that physical contact, Jane listens to Rochester’s urgent call. This “fantastic” dimension of their connection, which comes into play so intensely here, has always existed between Rochester and Jane, from the moment they first met, as if they from the start recognize that they belong in the same species.

Rochester and Jane first meet in chapter XII, at dusk, when “something of daylight still lingered, and the moon was waxing bright.” (Ibid, 96) There is a marked sense of magic in that passage. Jane appears to him exactly in the way the imp in Bessie’s story appeared “before the eyes of belated travellers (Ibid, 11)”. But she is as much unawares of that as she was of the fact that the creature she saw in the mirror was a reflection of her own self. Instead of considering her part in the action, Jane - as she hears the horse and senses the arrival of the dog - thinks of the “North-of-England spirit called a ‘Gytrash’, which (...) haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers, as this horse was now coming upon me” (Ibid, 95).

Rochester is affected by her the same way she is by him. In their first conversation in Thornfield, when he learns about her years at Lowood, he says, “No wonder you have rather

the look of another world. I marvelled where you had got that sort of face. When you came on me in Hay Lane last night, I thought unaccountably of fairy tales, and had half a mind to demand whether you had bewitched my horse: I am not sure yet (Ibid, 105)”.

The ease with which they interact causes them to create their own style of communication, on a parallel level of reality that indicates the unuttered recognition of their likeness, and that renders their conversations so stirring:

‘And so you were waiting for your people when you sat on that stile?’

‘For whom, sir?’

‘For the men in green: it was a proper moonlight evening for them. Did I break through one of your rings, that you spread that damned ice on the causeway?’

I shook my head. ‘The men in green all forsook England a hundred years ago,’ I said, speaking as seriously as he had done. ‘And not even in Hay Lane, or the fields about it, could you find a trace of them. I don’t think either summer or harvest, or winter moon, will ever shine on their revels more (Ibid, 104)’.

As a result of this conversation, Mr Rochester complains that “she began by felling my horse (Ibid, 105)”, and calls her “an imp”. As their association develops, Rochester uses a number of expressions to refer to Jane, all of them beckoning to this parallel world of magic and enchantment. Depending on his mood, he calls her fairy, or witch, elf, sorcerer, changeling, or sprite. Once he calls her Mustardseed (Ibid, 220), the name of one of Titania’s fairies in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. (Shakespeare, 2000)

When Rochester tells Adèle what he felt when he saw Jane again, when she returned from her one-month’s stay at Gateshead, he is very explicit in his choice of imagery. He says he met a strange creature: “I never spoke to it, and it never spoke to me, in words; but I read its eyes, and it read mine; and our speechless colloquy was to this effect - It was a fairy, and come from Elf-land, it said; and its errand was to make me happy (Brontë 2001, 228)”. When they are reunited, in Ferndean, Jane tells Rochester he looks like a “brownie,” and he retorts that she is a “mocking changeling - fairy-born and human-bred (Ibid, 373)”.

All these instances serve the purpose of indicating that the narrative is so consistent in the treatment of poetical motifs and underlying themes that it strongly affects the readers on that level, mentioned by Durand, where the image has precedence over consciousness. In his analysis of the nocturnal order, Durand stresses the role of a group of minimized symbols he

calls the “symbols of inversion (Durand 1999, 191)”. They add to the process of euphemization and help neutralize, or minimize, the strong emotional value of an image of the diurnal order. In literature, this is usually worked out through symmetry and through foils. As the symbols of inversion provoke a reversal of the original meaning, they can incite a sort of counter-reaction such as what we see in Jane, when, provoked by St. John Rivers, she returns into a state of mind that makes her go back to Rochester. These devices are created, structurally, with the help of what Durand calls the “Doubles of the first names (Ibid, 294)”. If we consider the idea of symmetry in this novel, we will unveil a rich field of polarities. The narrative is built in five chapters, with the climatic apex in the middle, at Thornfield and with Rochester. The bordering parts oppose the Reed cousins and the Rivers cousins (names have an allegorical meaning). St. John Rivers works as a binary to many things in the novel. We move from John (Reed) to St. John (Rivers); from Rev Brocklehurst “a black pillar! (Ibid, 26)” to St. John Rivers, the white pillar: “Know me to be what I am - a cold hard man (Ibid, 319)”. Apparently presented as a paragon of virtue, St. John Rivers’ factual function seems to be to highlight Rochester’s qualities.

St. John and Brocklehurst, however different they may be, are two stern men of the Church who are severely criticized - although through different techniques - for their lack of true compassion, for their pride, and also for twisting the scriptures so as to fit their personal projects. The most subtle contrast, however, involves St. John and Rochester. Both are, in their way, worthy men and abject sinners. When St. John knows, through letters exchanged with Briggs, about the “fraudulent and illegal” (Ibid, 324) affair involving Rochester, he tells Jane that her former master “must have been a bad man (Ibid)”. Jane bluntly replies, “You don’t know him - don’t pronounce an opinion about him (Ibid)”. The more St. John insists on his own moral superiority, the less saintly he seems, and more clearly his coldness and intolerance are revealed.

Because of their differences in age and social position, Rochester is frequently considered a father-figure to Jane. Still, when she is with him, Jane does not feel repressed or controlled. On the contrary, she feels accepted and encouraged to express herself. That is basically what she says in her outburst scene with Rochester,

I love Thornfield: - I love it, because I have lived in it a full and delightful life, - momentarily at least. I have not been trampled on. I have not been petrified. I have not been buried with inferior minds, and excluded from every glimpse of communion with what is bright and energetic and high. I have talked, face to face, with what I reverence, with what I delight in, - with an original, a vigorous, and expanded mind. I have known you, Mr Rochester; and it strikes me with terror and anguish to feel I absolutely must be torn from you for ever. I see the necessity of departure; and it is like looking on the necessity of death (Ibid, 215).

Jane cannot say the same about her cousin St. John Rivers. Even though he may be an excellent person, he has set his mind to dominate Jane and to use her according to his purposes. In this sense, because of this coercive aspect of his personality, he could be considered more of a father-figure than Rochester. He insists on her submitting to his guidance, for instance, in the scene where he explains that they must be married and go to India because “a sister might any day be taken from me. I want a wife: the sole helpmate I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death (Ibid, 346)”. Jane is worried at such prospect, and replies, “If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now (Ibid, 351)”. In his presence, she loses all spontaneity. St. John is the antithesis of Mr Rochester, who is therefore more clearly defined by contrast.

If we think of *Jane Eyre* as a Bildungsroman, we will acknowledge that the antipodal characteristics of Rochester and St. John Rivers serve the purpose of pushing the protagonist into action, forcing the plunge within that impels her into adulthood. At one point, Rochester exerts a colossal pressure so that Jane may do what her instincts tell her to do, rather than what she believes is the right thing to do. Later, in Marsh End, St. John Rivers exerts a similar force, now in the opposite direction, to persuade her to do what is right, and not what she wants to do. Jane, on both occasions, responds only to her own inner voice, which advises her not to fall into either extreme. She will only return to Thornfield, and to Rochester, in her won time, when all the necessary stages have been undergone so that she reaches the point of coming to her own conclusions about the facts that determine her life.

CONCLUSION

At the end of our four-month’s study of *Jane Eyre*, the time had come for us to answer the initial question “What is this author made of?” The answer we found was: “Poetical imagination.” Gilbert Durand’s model of the orders of the image made it easier for us to realize that the

challenge here consists of finding a compromise between two conflicting commitments. Through our “talking aloud” sessions, when we discussed the issues involved in Victorianism, we came to the idea that opposing forces that converge may provoke changes - like in the encounter of the diurnal and nocturnal orders in Durand’s model. This evoked the image of a dialectical movement capable of presenting some specific situations, evincing their conflicts and transcending them through a specific solution. In the case of Charlotte Brontë and *Jane Eyre*, the nocturnal order could be approximated to the influences of romanticism; the diurnal order to the elements of religion and morality. If we called the first the “thesis” and the second the “antithesis”, what might then be the synthesis to close and solve this dialectical shift? Her use of poetical imagination, that force that reaches beyond logics, that offers an appropriate aesthetic solution for the impasse, reaching a domain of interaction with her reader that is predominantly emotional. Percy Shelley, in his definition of poetry, calls it “the echo of the eternal music (Shelley 1977, 451)”.

The exchanges between Rochester and Jane, as well as the descriptions of nature and in imagery they evoke - like the references to the sun and to the moon here examined - are poetical, in the sense that they are woven in poetic prose. Along the run of its critical fortune, *Jane Eyre* has been abundantly praised and blamed for being written in that way. Because it is vitally metaphorical, poetic expression (the song of imagination) may offer an escape from this Victorian predicament of choosing between heart and mind. The artist apprehends the unuttered links and relations, and provokes the synthesis. According to Shelley (Ibid), that is the reason why poetry is more philosophical than philosophy: by being composed of images, it refers to truths that are indestructible. By codifying the song of imagination, the artist is capable of moving beyond reason, translating the nonverbal, natural wonder that being affected by the world exerts upon each living creature. The beauty of a dialectical movement lies in the fact that it contemplates the double trait of opposition and complementarity always present in contrary ideas. The unity of the analysed object thus resumed, the outcome of a dialectical conflict is change, either in the object, or in the eye of the beholder.

We were altogether pleased with the result of the *Jane Eyre* experiment, glad that we decided to make this effort to come as close as possible to the original cultural framework of the novel. We were also gratified that we allowed ourselves to move freely, as the empirical readers that we were, approximating our local thinkers, such as Antonio Candido, and the French and

Italian theoreticians that are so present in Brazilian universities, like Durand and Eco, to the great names in British critical theory. Through different paths, we seem to have reached the same keys to the perception of literature that so many other readers have. Only that we are happy because we did that in our way.

When the semester was over, we selected some members of the group to write this presentation and submit it to a symposium in England, so that we could both thank that country for having given the world some of its greatest literature, to tell them how much we appreciate that, and to offer a glimpse of the way *Jane Eyre*, when savoured from the tropics. If one day you read this text, that means our endeavour was successful and we managed to travel overseas to make this statement about how much we appreciate the work of Charlotte Brontë, and recognize that, after her, the novel was never been the same again: it gained in depth, in liveliness, in the intensity of its appeal to feeling and emotion.

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