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JANE EYRE'S CHILDLIKE, AVIAN FAIRY RISING ABOVE THE NOVEL'S NEGATIVITY

Gillian M. E. ALBAN*

Abstract

This paper attempts to penetrate the linguistic gloom and negativity which pervades the novel *Jane Eyre* through deaths and disappointments on the protagonist's personal journey to the dénouement. Despite linguistic negatives and negatively presented images of children, the novel also contains inspiring, heavenly visitations of the moon surveying winged creatures, fairies, birds or angels, which richly leaven the text, piercing the gloom of the prevailing atmosphere of negativity against which the narrative is set.

Key Words: *Jane Eyre, Death, Never, Negative, Disappointment, Nothing, Child, Bird, Messenger, Fairy*

JANE EYRE'İN ÇOCUKSU KANATLI PERİSİNİN ROMANIN OLUMSUZLUKLARININ ÜSTÜNE YÜKSELMESİ

Özet

Bu makale *Jane Eyre* romanında baş karakter kendi kişisel yolculuğunda ilerledikçe ortaya çıkan ölüm ve hayal kırıklıklarının ötesine geçen dilsel kasvet ve olumsuzluğa irdelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tekrar kullanılan olumsuz dilin ve gerçek ya da hayal ürünü çocukların genelde olumsuz yorumlanan simgesel ifadelerinin aksine, romanda kanatlı yaratıklara, perilere, kuşlara ya da meleklerle tepeden bakan ayın ilham verici göksel ziyaretleri ile zenginleştirilmiştir. Bu tür gerçek ve simgesel öğelerin bir araya getirilmesi anlatıya yayılan dilsel yokluk atmosferini mayalamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Jane Eyre, Ölüm, Asla, Olumsuz, Hayal kırıklığı, Hiçbir şey, Çocuk, Kuş, Haberci, Peri*

* Assistant Professor Dr. Istanbul Aydın Üniversitesi, Florya Halit Yerleşkesi, Beşyol Mahallesi İnönü Caddesi No. 38 Küçükçekmece, İstanbul.
e-mail:gillialban@aydin.edu.tr

1.CONTEXTUALISATION OF JANE EYRE'S NEGATIVITY IN THE VICTORIAN ERA

The powerful *bildungsroman* and abidingly popular novel of Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847), is dense with an extraordinary accumulation of repeated negatives, like “never”, “nothing”, “nobody”, “none”, “no one”, “neither – nor” and “without”, which are often reversed as they are doubled, “not without”, “not ... disregardful”. Brontë also uses a large number of negatives created by prefixes or suffixes, such as “unkind”, “disagreeable”, “degradation” “intemperate” and “powerless”. In addition to linguistic negatives, she employs thematically dark words of death, dread, suffering and humiliation, the references to death far exceeding the physical deaths in the novel. Thus a gloomy atmosphere, together with the theme of disappointment, frustration and despair, accumulates around the protagonist’s traumas, undercutting her aspirations, pervading the setting and accompanying Jane on her psychic journey. Against the negative aura of *Jane Eyre* thus created in both language and theme, certain repeated key motifs enrich the reader’s sense of the eponymous heroine’s sufferings, while also offering her mental or spiritual outlet from her torments. Jane herself represents or is burdened with a metaphorical, dream child, and she interprets such dreams of a “baby phantom” as a certain sign of trouble (Brontë, 1996: 249), while children also suggest her childish vulnerability or her own inner child which accompanies her through life. Brontë presents Jane’s crises under the backdrop of heavenly light, frequently the moon, which Heilman, in his discussion of Reason and the Moon in Brontë, believes represents the writer’s nonrational perspective on her life at certain junctures. On occasion heavenly messengers, angels or fairies encourage, oppress or confuse her, and birds symbolise and accompany her. Whether actual or symbolic, these winged creatures and avian elements recur in Jane’s narrative, accompanying her with such messengers, or representing her struggle to rise into flight above her tribulations. These aspects of the symbolism of this novel which have not been discussed elsewhere, with the action occurring under moon or sun, are here evaluated against Brontë’s intensely negative language. Teasing out the significance of these features illustrates and sheds light on the abiding power of this feminist masterpiece, so thoroughly reinterpreted in Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic*, this work of Brontë’s to which we yet return for fresh insights. The Gothic aspects and gloomy atmosphere of this novel are at times accentuated while also elevated by avian elements. The orphan child of the novel also becomes an aspect of its omens and foreshadowings, while the natural setting of the novel places the protagonist’s struggle under heavenly forces, both encouraging and also threatening her. Thus against the dark linguistic backdrop of the novel, such elevating avian aspects enable Jane to work through and rise above the many oppressions which she faces.

The negative aura of Brontë’s writing may be contrasted with a contemporary poem to illustrate the Victorian *zeitgeist*. The negatives and gloomy suggestions of language, subject matter and motif in *Jane Eyre* eerily infiltrate the text, shadowing Jane’s ecstasy as well as expressing her grief, weaving a subtext of failure and disappointment, against the fervent expression of her passionate experiences which are commonly noted. As Virginia Woolf states, Jane’s emotions are central to this novel; Jane Eyre is emotion personified, asserting: “‘I love’, ‘I hate’, ‘I suffer’” (1984: 157). The novel culminates in Jane’s marriage with Rochester, yet this romantic desideratum of the anti-climactic final chapter notoriously comes across as lacking,

with Jane herself admitting that passions ultimately defy realization. The novel ends under the shadow of St John River's approaching death, reaching his apotheosis in anticipated union with God, which detracts from the somewhat subdued joys of Jane's marital life. An inability to achieve one's desires expresses a distinctly Victorian mood of lack and failure even in achievement, of missed dreams concurrent with the powerful forces of development. Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" of 1851, written four years after the publication of *Jane Eyre*, expresses this very atmosphere. Under the moon which lightens and blanches the straits, Arnold invites the reader to listen to the endlessly recurring pattern of life:

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles in his dramas reflects "the turbid ebb and flow/ Of human misery", while Arnold's persona only hears

Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

This leaves him in a world possessing

... neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain. (Greenblatt, 2006, Vol. 2: 1368-69)

The poet only finds partial relief from this melancholic burden in the lulling panacea of personal love and faithfulness. This theme is also expressed in *Jane Eyre* through the protagonist's longing for a consummation which will evade and surpass all earthly griefs. In this respect *Jane Eyre* partakes of the spirit of its age, at times even exceeding the general gloom of the age. I'd like to illustrate how the negative weaves through a specific climactic moment of disappointment, as Jane is cheated of marriage with Rochester. Her calmly understated reception of the devastating announcement of his attempted bigamy is replete with negatives: "the transaction in the church had not been noisy; there was no explosion of passion, no loud altercation, no dispute, no defiance or challenge, no tears, no sobs" (Brontë, 1996: 330). Here Brontë personifies their love as a child which she declares he created, seeing how it "shiver[ed] in [her] heart, like a suffering child in a cold cradle; sickness and anguish had seized it; it could not seek Mr Rochester's arms" (331); it is utterly destroyed and blighted:

Oh, never more could it turn to him; for faith was blighted — confidence destroyed! Mr Rochester was not to me what he had been; for he was not what I had thought him. I would not ascribe vice to him; I would not say he had betrayed me; but the attribute of stainless truth was gone from his idea, and from his presence I must go ... Real affection, it seemed, he could not have for me; it had only been fitful passion: that was balked; he would want me no more. (331)

Brontë expresses Jane's desperate devastation through a plethora of negative statements, with the symbolic child here presented as a negative embodiment of their relationship. This paper aspires to appreciate Brontë's work by analysing the tropes of child, bird, angel and fairy, as they occur under heavenly emanations of the moon personified, within overwhelming negative language. This analysis thereby hopes to achieve some fresh insight into this work, after the considerable amount of ink which has already been spilt on the novel, and its passionate extremes of grief and self-assertion.

2.JANE EYRE'S CHILD JANE PITTED AGAINST SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS IN DEATHLY NEGATIVES

The third word of *Jane Eyre* is "no":

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day.... I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons: dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority. (Brontë, 1996: 13)

The novel opens with Jane the debased, inferior and excluded child in the Reed household, dragged down by John Reed's tyrannical wounding. John, she says, "bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in a day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near ... I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions" (16). Felled and wounded by his throwing at her the book she was quietly reading, she bursts out against him as a "murderer [and ...] slave-driver" (17). Her emotions range from terror to pungent suffering and consternation, while she is denied any status as a person: "I was a discord [there]; I was like nobody there; I had nothing in harmony with [them]. If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them" (23).

This physical abuse leads to the consequent psychic torment of imprisonment in the red-room of the long-dead Mr Reed. Words like "dread", "death", "dead", "departed", "buried" and "vault" are repeated, as Jane desperately contemplates escaping from this prison by never eating or drinking and letting herself die (22). Despite the fact that her uncle had favoured her in that distant, unremembered time, the possibility of his returning now as a vindicating ghost is terrifying to her. The gleaming light which she sees crossing the room is not the moon, but rather appears to her as "a herald of some coming vision from another world" (24), whose terrifying "rushing of wings" she hears as she cries for help, oppressed, suffocated: "I cannot endure it — let me be punished some other way! I shall be killed if —" (25), as this terrifying emissary threatens to carry her off to another or nether world through the first of the novel's various Gothic visitations. Refusing her plea for release, Mrs Reed obstinately thrusts her back into the room as Jane collapses in a fit of terror. The only other time she faints is before the terrifying appearance of Bertha Mason when she looms over her in her sleep on the eve of her wedding. Jane's first visitation of the dread angel of death in the red-room, with her own self-abasing "nobody", "inferiority" and "dependent", psychically petrify and destroy her. However, despite her wretched

suffering at Gateshead, she dare not change her slave status there for the poverty that killed her parents of typhus fever. Although her relatives abuse her, they convince that any other relatives must be poor and low, with Jane assuming poverty is “synonymous with degradation” (32). Oppressed by this situation, her only escapes are mental, as with books like Bewick’s *History of British Birds* which fill her imagination, as later revealed in her paintings of aquatic scenes of birds against a backdrop of death. Surviving the physical ordeal of the book she is reading being used as a missile against her, and her psychic terror in the red-room, she finds a crumb of relief in sharing her breakfast with a hungry little robin (39). Declared by Bessie a little, helpless, “troublesome, careless child! (39), she thus escapes the restraints of her situation through birds, visual and real, offering her imaginative flight above her torments.

Precociously rejecting her cousins as “not fit to associate with [her]” (36), she is declared by Mrs Reed to be the most “wicked and abandoned child ever reared”, to which she assents that she “felt, indeed, only bad feelings surging in [her] breast” (36). Mrs Reed proceeds to obliterate any hope Jane might place in a different future by branding her as deceitful, which forces Jane to vehemently shake off such imputations in declaring the ugly truth against her aunt: “I am not deceitful ... I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed;... I am glad you are no relation of mine. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you” (45). Voicing her suppressed feelings which burst explosively to the surface, and refusing her aunt’s mollifications, her words literally drive her aunt from the room: “I am not your dear; I cannot lie down.... I hate to live here” (46). Her final outburst against Mrs Reed’s fake offer of friendship is concluded with her resounding non-statement of “Nothing”, as she turns her face towards the wall instead of bidding her aunt farewell (50). But Jane’s passionate victory against her aunt remains short lived, as its outrageous excess burns her out, leaving her like “a ridge of lighted heath” ... “black and blasted after the flames are dead” (47); David Lodge illustrates the diametrically opposed fire and air tropes of this novel in his “Fire and Eyre: Charlotte Brontë’s War of Earthly Elements”. Jane’s daring and liberating declaration of vengeance against her oppressors destroys her, even as she relieves her crushed emotions in embittered self-assertion, bringing metaphorical death on herself in this self-conflagration.

Her hopes of a fresh start at Lowood are savagely dashed by Mr Brocklehurst’s branding her “a bad child for ever” (73) on a pedestal of infamy which publicly declares her an alien, castaway and liar (78) again prostrating her with grief from which she feels she will never be able to rise again. She impulsively tells the angelic Helen: “if others don’t love me, I would rather die than live — I cannot bear to be solitary and hated” (81). Cast down under Brocklehurst’s humiliation, the heroic and martyred Helen passes Jane twice simply in order to smile at her: “What a strange light inspired” [her eyes ...] like a reflection from the aspect of an angel” (79), Jane appreciates. But the angelic Helen is not long for this world, and her death is only one of the multiple deaths that overwhelm the school with typhus, as the very trees metonymously turn to “ranks of skeletons” (89). Splitting her from this soul-mate, modelled on Charlotte’s dead sister Maria (Brontë, 1966: note 6.1, p. 483), Helen’s triumphant rising from death is asserted in the marble tablet covering her: “Resurgam” (1996: 96), as Helen victoriously rises above her fate. Thus the helpless orphan Jane sets out on her bleak, oppressed

journey, and while she learns to be inspired and also endure suffering through Helen's angelic spirit, heavenly messengers of death terrorise her, while birds present her ghastly visions, even as they present the possibility of flight from her oppressions. Jane is no bird, as she later declares to Rochester (284), but she will learn to fly above and away from the threats facing her on her path through life.

3.FAERY MEETING AFTER DISAPPOINTMENT AND FRUSTRATION AT THORNFIELD

Seeking escape from Lowood into a new form of servitude, Jane rapidly falls back into disappointment and frustration in her work at Thornfield, from which she often climbs to the third floor for escape. Searching the horizon, she longs "for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen" (125). Jane scarcely achieves such a fuller, richer life in this novel; restless and disappointed, she continues to live largely within her frustrated imagination. In this she is like her author, Charlotte Brontë, for whom success is followed by the tragic deaths of her siblings, or her desire for mutual love with M. Heger is finally resigned to marital life with Arthur Bell Nicholls (Beer 6-8). "Who blames me? Many, no doubt; and I shall be called discontented. I could not help it; the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes" (Brontë, 1996: 125). The stultifying female tasks Jane describes: "making puddings and knitting stockings, ... playing on the piano and embroidering bags" (126) give ample cause to her frustration: "Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth" (125) she expostulates. Virginia Woolf found this interjection wrenching against the smooth integrity and transparency of the novel (in Greenblatt, 2006: Vol.2, 2130), while in fact it actually forcefully expresses Jane's frustration, enabling the reader's empathy with her.

Jane's first meeting with Rochester takes place under a rising moon, and is accompanied by "the little brown birds which stirred occasionally in the hedge, look[ing] like "russet leaves that had forgotten to drop" (127) bringing to mind Shakespeare's wintry yellow leaves that hang shaking against the cold" in "Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang" with a foresight of "Death's second self", as the poet Shakespeare feels himself lying "on the ashes of his youth" (Sonnet 73 in Greenblatt, 2006: Vol. 1, 1068). But this wintry meeting thaws the ice of the novel into romantic potential. Rochester later compares Jane's delicate offer to help him when he was fallen and injured as like a tiny inadequate linnet hopping to him and offering to bear him on its dainty wing (Brontë, 1996: 351). She meets the approaching horse that evening with the legendary Gytrash tales of Bessie in mind, yet immediately squashes her own "goblin" fantasy negatively: "Nothing ever rode the Gytrash: it was always alone; ... No Gytrash was this — only a traveller taking the short cut" (128). After this adventure, replete with masculine, beastly and pretercanine magical elements, a return to normality crushes her: "I did not like re-entering Thornfield. To pass its threshold was to return to stagnation; to cross the silent hall ... was to quell wholly the faint excitement wakened by my walk — to slip again over my faculties the viewless fetters of an uniform and too still existence" (132), but on this occasion the mystery and magic precede her to Thornfield.

She is soon engaged in a fantastic conversation with Rochester about her having bewitched his horse under the moonlight while awaiting her fairy community, the “men in green” who had once inhabited those parts, but alas, she calmly asserts, no longer, neither “summer or harvest, or winter moon, will ever shine on their revels more” (139). Throughout the novel Rochester calls Jane his fairy or elf, an emissary from an alternate, faery world, possessing the bewitching power of transporting him beyond the quotidian into a world of magic. Jane seriously conducts this conversation with him before Mrs Fairfax’ mystified bemusement. Rochester peruses Jane’s paintings that illustrate the unearthly scenes suffusing her morbidly rich spiritual vision. A drowned corpse’s bracelet is grasped by a cormorant on a half-submerged ship under a gleam of light; a huge head crowned with the Evening Star and reflecting the moon, expresses despair in dark, wild eyes and bloodless brow; and a colossal head with glassy, morbid eye broods under a diadem of northern lights before an iceberg piercing the sky (142-43). As Rochester admits, these Gothic scenes are far from the ordinary visions of an inexperienced girl. They are “elfish”, with their ghastly sights of icy horror and death, their unearthly birds exposed under moon and stars, like Bewick’s paintings showing wrecks and deaths under a “cold and ghastly moon” (15).

Rochester initiates a puzzling series of half-confessions and wrangles which confound Jane, as she permits him to order her about: “No, sir ... but, on the ground that you did forget [their mercenary relations] and that you care whether or not a dependent is comfortable in his dependency” (153), you may hector me a little, she allows. Having previously denied his being handsome (149), she asks herself if he still seems ugly to her: “No, reader ... Yet I had not forgotten his faults; indeed I could not, for he brought them frequently before me” (166) she reasons, laden with negatives. Rochester threatens to continue in a state of degeneracy, and teasingly and enigmatically welcomes an inspiring, visionary “angel of light” or “bonny wanderer” to his arms; Jane dashes his heavenly vision by calling it a “fallen seraph of the abyss” or seducer (156). Throughout this baffling conversation he titillates and intrigues her, anticipating his future deception of her with impossible hopes through his Sphinx-like speech (157). He calls Jane a “curious sort of bird through the close-set bars of a cage: a vivid, restless, resolute captive ... were it but free, it would “soar cloud-high” (158); however the only offer of escape he is able to make her would compromise her integrity. He further confuses Jane by expostulating against his home as a “great plague-house” in a “paroxysm of emotion” (162, 165), while haranguing with the hags of his destiny.

Where Jane is a fairy or elf, Bertha Mason is a goblin, with her demoniac laughter at Jane’s keyhole, her fingers groping past her room before Jane discovers Rochester’s bed burning, but when Jane calls out: “Nothing answered” (167). Jane was not fated to sleep; she could see nothing; there was not a moment to be lost as she douses Rochester in the flood which she denies having made. This nocturnal scene is replete with counter-acting negatives laced against the emotional bond developing between them. He grants that she is “no talking fool”, but he accuses her “in the name of all the elves in Christendom ... witch, sorceress”, of drowning him, while ordering her to say nothing (169-70). This highly dramatic, climactic scene expressed with a superabundance of negatives, undercuts and slashes the emotional peak which

frustratingly beckons Jane. As she tries to leave the room, he insists: “not without taking leave; not without a word or two of acknowledgement and goodwill: not, in short, in that brief dry fashion” (171), after she has snatched him “from a horrible and excruciating death!” (171). She insists that there is no debt, while he expresses his gratefulness to her as a good genie; her eyes “did not’ — (again he stopped) — ‘did not (he proceeded hastily) ‘strike delight to my very inmost heart so for nothing’” (171), he asserts with fire and energy against his repeated use of negatives. She can scarcely free her hand from his grasp, and when she does finally return to her bed, she “never thought of sleep” (172). Now her imagination is released, but in spite of her ardent hopes of achieving union in Beulah, she “could not reach it, even in fantasy — a counteracting breeze blew off the land, and continually drove [her] back. Sense would resist delirium: judgement would warn passion”; her scepticism refuses even a dream fulfilment (172).

Any imagined bliss is further dashed by the very real disappointment of Rochester’s leaving Thornfield the next day. As the servants talk of the attempted murder by arson with his bed set on fire, Jane is left with a preponderance of nothings: nothing unusual happened that morning, as the servants wonder how he awakened nobody (175). Deflated in learning of his departure, she derides herself for her stupidity: “That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life: that a more fantastic idiot had never surfeited herself on sweet lies, and swallowed poison as if it were nectar” (183). Knowing Rochester to be her superior, and hence without any possible intention of marrying her, she realizes that her love for him must remain unreturned and unexpressed, doomed to devour her from within, otherwise it would lead her, “*ignus-fatuus*-like, into miry wilds whence there is no extrication” (183). Experiencing “a sickening sense of disappointment”, she rebukes herself with having indulged in impossible fantasies (185). But she remains entirely powerless against the overwhelming emotions that flood her, expressing her sense of estrangement, agony and poison while admitting: “I had not intended to love him.... He made me love him without looking at me” (198).

Escaping after the glorious musical duet that she witnesses between Blanche Ingram and Rochester, as he catches up with Jane outside, she denies her evident emotion which she yet reveals through her swimming tears: “Nothing — nothing, sir. I am not depressed” (204), while he insists she is not to neglect his wish of appearing nightly in the drawing-room. When it is Jane’s turn to hear the Sibyl gypsy tell her fortune, she affirms that she is not afraid, she has no faith, she is not cold, nor sick, nor silly (221-22). She denies any personal interest in the inevitably monotonous theme of courtship running to the same catastrophe of marriage which reverberates around her; all of this is nothing to her, she derides, with a strong dash of sour grapes (224). When asked about Mr Rochester, she replies that he is not at home, as if that blots him out of existence. Rochester in disguise offers her a mystifying fortune, reading on her brow that she “need not sell [her] soul for bliss”, and that “she will not let the feelings burst away and hurry her to wild chasms” (227). His reading presents her adamantly thus: “I do not want sacrifice, sorrow, dissolution — such is not my taste. I wish to foster, not to blight — to earn gratitude, not to wring tears of blood — no, nor of brine” (227). Revealing his disguise and throwing “off [his] lendings”, she accuses him of not

genuinely playing the role of gipsy with her (228). But when she announces Mason's arrival, he literally staggers under the blow of this news, a spasm catching his breath. He asks Jane what she would do if his guests all came and spat on him, while she asserts her indifference to their ban, prepared to dare censure for his sake (230).

That night, as the moon shines her gloriously beautiful, "silver-white and crystal clear" but solemn gaze over Jane, she is awakened by the sharp shriek of Mason, which a wild-winged condor could scarcely yell from its eyrie (232), and when Rochester asks Jane whether she would faint at the sight of blood, she answers negatively: "I think I shall not: I have never been tried yet", with a thrill but without coldness or faintness (235). She bathes Mason's wound all night long outside the door of the masked "carrion-seeking bird of prey" who has bitten him (237), unable to utter a word to the man who might die in her hands, under Rochester's intensifying deceit. Her confusion continues as Mason describes his predator worrying him like a tigress, sucking his blood, draining his heart (239). Rochester is represented as a "fierce falcon" in contrast to Mason's "sleek gander" (215), and Jane's preference for the bird of prey will cost her dear.

She is left preoccupied and pondering the nature of the "blow" Rochester had suffered with Mason's arrival; clearly no light matter to have been able to "bow the resolute spirit and thrill the vigorous frame of Fairfax Rochester" (238). She is also mystified as to why Rochester cannot direct Mason, who "will not defy me ... but, unintentionally, he might in a moment, by one careless word, deprive me, if not of life, yet for ever of happiness" (244), he suggests enigmatically. Assuming Jane would not circumvent morality, he anticipates her negative response to an immoral liason: "No, sir; that is impossible: I cannot do it, because it is wrong" (244) she would retort. When he probes her response: "To attain this end, are you justified in overleaping an obstacle of custom — a mere conventional impediment which neither your conscience sanctifies nor your judgement approves?" (245) she has no clue how to answer, and "no gentle [winged] Ariel" speeds to help her respond, any more than the birds which carol inarticulately around her, without offering her a clue to this mystery (246). When he changes his tone to taunting sarcasm and asks her to watch with him before his assumed marriage to Miss Ingram, her fingers freeze and her face pales, devastating her in a way that being trapped outside death's door the previous night had failed to do.

Jane's dream of an infant foreshadows John Reed's frightful death by suicide, certainly a dreadful, untimely end of her young tyrant, however poetic this justice. On Sarah Reed's own deathbed which speedily follows, her aunt relates how she had wished Jane dead of the fever at Lowood. She describes the unchildlike behaviour with which Jane had burst out under her cruelty as like an animal which had turned and cursed her with a human voice, avenging herself on the helpless child who had refused to die as she wished: "but I said she did — I wish she had died!" (260) she declares, thus spitefully depriving Jane of any chance of rising to prosperity (268). In order to escape the unpleasantness crowding her out of Gateshead, Jane paints a Bewick scene of rising moon over a ship and naiad, showing an elf sitting in a hedge-sparrow's nest (262).

Rushing headstrong back to Thornfield Hall from her dead aunt, Rochester suggests she is an elf returning from the world of the dead, or a “blue *ignis fatuus* light in a marsh, and he asks for angels to guard him apotropaically from her unearthly, elfish powers. For herself, she compares herself to any “stray and stranger birds” who feed on Rochester’s scattered crumbs, despite the fact that this is not her home (275). She struggles throughout this meeting with a metaphorical child who is born of her hope despite her reason; she dare not allow this creature to live, and aborts the very possibility of its existence: “strangl[ing] a new-born agony — a deformed thing which [she] could not persuade [her]self to own and rear” (274). Rochester’s presence unstrings her nerves, despite his not being a ghost, before he breaks into a rare, warm smile, extending “the real sunshine of feeling — he shed it over [her] now” (276), and later “the sunshine of his presence” (277) over her. This sun shines briefly during this balmy period, in contrast to Jane’s climaxes which mostly occur under the moon. During this peaceful interlude, in the absence of any wedding preparations, she discerns: “Never had he called me more frequently to his presence; never been kinder to me when there — and, alas! never had I loved him so well” in her despair of any desired end (277); his very presence and behaviour is here asserted with “never”.

4. FRUSTRATED CONSUMMATION DASHED BY BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT

A balmy Midsummer-eve follows southern days “like a flock of glorious passenger birds” (278), with sunset meeting moonrise under the evening star, alongside the Keatsian nightingale singing of forbidden love: “In such an ecstasy!”, “Where but to think is to be full of sorrow/ And leadened-eyed despairs” (“Ode to a Nightingale” in Greenblatt, 2006: Vol. 2, 903). Keats knew there was often no consummation in this life; Jane weeps to hear the bird warbling. While Jane rejects to be an automaton, she also refuses Rochester’s imputation of being a “wild frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation”, declaring “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me” (Brontë, 1996: 284). When Rochester tormentingly invites her to meet the blow of leaving Thornfield, with “brine and foam, destined ... to rush between” them, snapping the string that inextricably knots them together, as she is separated by “wealth, caste, custom [from what she] inevitably loves” (282), she sobs her wish never to have been born or never to have come to Thornfield, because there: “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”, since she has had communion with him, to lose whom is terror, anguish and death (283). Even if she is “poor, obscure, plain and little, [is she] soulless and heartless?” she protests, declaring her superiority to Rochester, a man low enough to marry the morally and intellectually inferior Blanche Ingram whom he scorns and does not love (284). After she declares her feelings and asserts their equality before God, he finally offers her his hand; by this point she is incredulous of his inconsistent offer, retorting that she can never come to his side. Rochester’s face works frantically and torturously as he affirms this offer: “Have I not found her friendless, and cold, and comfortless? Will I not guard, and cherish, and solace her? Is there not love in my heart, and constancy in my resolves?” (287); he insists his sincerity would expiate his deceit at God’s tribunal. But the moon under which she tries to read his face withdraws into shadow as nature violently rejects this union, tearing the chestnut tree in two:

“But what had befallen the night? ... what ailed the chestnut tree? it writhed and groaned” as a spark of lightning leaps from a cloud and cracks it into two halves as the rain descends (287).

Jane commences their month of engagement armed with negatives against him as she independently protests his degrading impositions of attempting to purchase her or impose his will on her — she will not be his jay in borrowed plumes, even if she is aërial; (291), while he reports how she glowed like a fire-spirit in the moonlight (294). Rochester offers to travel with her as sylph or angel, but she asserts that she will only be herself, nothing celestial (292). He proposes a fairy escape from Elf-land to the moon, which fairy-tale offer Adèle rejects; the very magic talisman of the wedding ring he proposes is illicit and beyond his power to offer. The natural wreck of the chestnut tree metonymously suggests both their taboo relationship and Jane’s psychological insecurity. Jane, who still refuses to call him handsome, no longer even appears plain. She should be blissfully happy, but is incredulous of any possible consummation: “It can never be, sir; it does not sound likely. Human beings never enjoy complete happiness in this world. I was not born for a different destiny to the rest of my species; to imagine such a lot befalling me is a fairy-tale — a daydream” (290). Mrs Fairfax immediately dampens Jane’s joy, finding “no charm powerful enough to solve this enigma” (297) of how she might have made Rochester love her. While not exactly finding Jane monstrous, she disillusions her: “Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marrying their governesses” (298). Under the caution of this chill, Jane loses her power over Rochester in their first wrangle over Adèle: “I told her no. I’ll have no brats!” (298). Their engagement passes with Jane thwarting him and afflicting him with hard words, eluding his kisses and receiving grimaces and tweaks, refusing his implied suttee of death for love which he carols to her, as she holds him off at a safe distance.

Their wedding eve is anticipated with doom-laden dreams and a terrifying visit from Bertha Mason. Ignorant of the existence of this Mrs Rochester, Jane is incredulous that any woman with this name could possibly exist (308). Jane releases her feelings of disappointment and impatience while tearfully awaiting Rochester’s return, believing her hopes are “too bright to be realized”, presciently feeling her fortune to be on the decline. She assures him that nothing is the matter; she is neither afraid nor unhappy, implying that she has been both (311). She explains that her fever was not because of the keenly anticipated marriage, running to him “not without a certain wild pleasure”, while he complains how elusive and slippery she has been (311-12), keeping him uncertain of his prize; throughout their engagement he has not been able to lay a finger anywhere on her without being pricked (312).

Emerging from behind cloud, the moon appears as confused as Mrs Fairfax, looking down on Jane “blood-red and half overcast; she seemed to throw on me one bewildered, dreary glance, and buried herself again instantly in the deep drift of cloud” (310). Jane’s wedding garments appear wraith-like to her (308). She relates her dream of carrying a burdensome little child (subsequently described as her still-born love, or her first-born hopes destroyed with plague; 330-31). This child impedes her as it clings to and almost strangles her, finally falling from her, while Rochester rides away from Thornfield, leaving them severed by a barrier, the hall a ruined “retreat of bats and

owls" (316). She recounts waking dazzled by the sight of the huge, spectral Vampire, Bertha Mason, in her room, catching sight in the mirror of the strange purple, savage face with bloodshot eyes trying on her wedding veil, then rending and trampling the veil in frustration at its marital suggestion. These terrors certainly seem to be more than the ghostly apparitions of her mind which he attempts to dismiss them as (317-18), as she relates how she fainted in terror as the "lurid visage flamed" over her (318). Only when she affirms she saw the veil torn in two the next morning does Rochester finally drop his nonchalance, embracing her in a stranglehold, fearful for "the nest of [his] dove" under this attack (348). His Bluebeard offer under the peaceful moon is to tell the whole story in a year and a day, but Jane reports: "satisfied I was not" (319).

The only angel in the church is the stone one guarding Rochester's dead ancestors (323). Jane avers that never did couple step out to such a wedding day, as he drags her to church with neither of them aware whether the day is fair or foul, under his "glance fierce and fell" (322). Jane receives the violent shock of the impediment to their marriage as she had "never vibrated to thunder ... as [she] had never felt frost or ice". The resilient Jane is "in no danger of swooning"; she determinedly seeks out his wild glance which "disavowed nothing" as he defies all in spark and flint (324). "Without speaking, without smiling, without seeming to recognize in me a human being, he only twined my waist with his arm and riveted me to his side", as Jane's marital aspirations crumble under his exposed bigamous attempt (318). His perverse aim had been for her to "be entrapped into a feigned union with a defrauded wretch, already bound to a bad, mad, and embruted partner!" (327). This dread exposure kills her first-born hopes stone dead: "stark, chill, livid corpses that could never revive", her love now "like a suffering child in a cold cradle", Jane's persistent image of suffering and grief (330-31). The ardent bride is destroyed by a bitter winter frost, December overtaking June, killing and blighting all her hopes as they are struck down with the first-born plague of Egypt (330), a version of the deadly sickness Rochester had earlier attributed to Thornfield Hall (162). Under a crushing, deadly sense of prostration and drowning: "my life lorn, my love lost, my hope quenched, my faith death-struck" the torrent pours over her; she has not averted it, neither having joined hands, nor bent knees, nor moved her lips (331). Terror-struck at her lonely isolation in this trouble, she emerges from her room to collapse into Rochester's arms, wishing only that she could die there, without having to "crack [her] heart-strings in rending them from" his (337). He invites her reproaches: "Nothing bitter — nothing poignant? Nothing to cut a feeling or sting a passion?" (336). He attempts to explain his suicidal feelings after finding himself bound to an intemperate, unchaste and insane wife (345). While unable to marry again or to live alone, disappointed and dissipated, if never debauched, he felt sure that some woman would accept such a reasonable, if illicit, arrangement with him. Disappointed in his other choices, he selected Jane, yet feared that her stubbornness and the prejudices of her upbringing would make her reject his offer of cohabitation. Jane feels the torture of "a hand of fiery iron grasp[ing her] vitals ... blackness, burning!" even while she remains sure that "Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved ... I must renounce love and idol" (354), she determines.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* avers that the story of a young governess lured into bigamous marriage with her master was the motivating core of this novel; she "was left a year later with an illegitimate child (Brontë, 1966: note 11.3, p. 523). Hearing her duty to "Depart!" Jane refuses him: "I will *not* be yours" (1996: 355). He reproaches her: "you condemn me to live wretched, and to die accursed?" ... "Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law — no man being injured by the breach? for you have neither relatives nor acquaintances whom you need fear to offend by living with me" (355-56). George Eliot reproaches Charlotte Brontë with her refusal of this "diabolical law which chains a man body and soul to a putrefying carcass" (Showalter 102). Eliot embraced such a life with George Lewes, although for her there had been no deception and no fraudulent marriage attempt or attempted bigamy. As Rochester's reasonings fail, he posits the idea of rape, expressing Jane's physical frailty as he shakes her, her wild psyche seen as a bird trapped within the cage of her body. 'Never:

never was anything at once so frail and so indomitable ... Consider that eye: consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying me ... Whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it — the savage, beautiful creature! If I tear, if I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose. Conqueror I might be of the house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling place. (357)

He despairs of whatever he might do to her by force as useless, since it is herself he wants, "you, spirit ... not alone your brittle frame. Of yourself you could come with soft flight and nestle against my heart ... seized against your will you will elude the grasp like an essence" (357); love can never be forced.

As Jane returns to Gateshead and her childhood in a deep sleep, the strange light that had terrified her then in the red-room breaks forth once again, "as never moon yet burst"; mother nature bursts forth from the moon personified in "white, human form", gazing on her and whispering to her daughter to "flee temptation" (358). Adrienne Rich calls this symbolic intervention of mother nature "the matriarchal spirit and the 'Great Mother of the night sky'" (102); Heilman and Lodge both call it Robert Graves' White Goddess. Steeling herself to leave Rochester, Jane is tormented more by the despair that she fears he will fall prey to than her own grief, and is dragged into a world of her own guilt, execution and death. "No reflection was to be allowed now: not one glance was to be cast back; not even one forward. Not one thought was to be given either to the past or the future" (360). She steps towards the scaffold, axe-edge and gasping grave, in desperation wishing for her reader: "never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love" (361). Unlike the birds who are not desolate in their decay, because they share their love with comrades, she is disloyal to her love: "birds were faithful to their mates; birds were emblems of love. What was I?" she says, reproaching and despising her own unfaithfulness (360). She sets off on her lonely escape, and is speedily reduced to begging helplessly for food. Close to death, she collapses outside Moor House, and when she gains entrance and they ask her what she wishes, she asks of them "Nothing" (378); the sisters are happy to cherish her like "a half-frozen bird" (390) "with both wings broken".

When St John Rivers attempts to capture her within his own obsessions and insistently reiterates his proposal of marriage and a missionary life in India, she feels the summons of a visionary messenger as the hills spin round her (448), but nothing speaks to her in this summons, no accompanying light or life kindles in her; his guardian angel offers an entirely false message. Scorning St John's counterfeit idea of love, she asserts that he would kill her; "You are killing me now", which he condemns as "violent, unfeminine, and untrue" (459); one can scarcely imagine the agony of living with all spontaneous feelings suppressed as a woman in those days! But St John is the one to be disappointed, the May moon flooding the room while he talks of a new heaven and new earth, warning her or rather threatening her with the second death (464), as she is almost tempted to give up the struggle against him. Waiting for direction, Jane's heart almost stops and her senses thrill with an intense expectancy as she hears the voice of Rochester calling her name (467), and responds to his call. This heavenly messenger with its well-remembered voice speaks to her clearly, if "in pain and woe wildly, eerily, urgently" (467), as Jane adamantly refutes any imputation of superstition or witchcraft, calling this aural vision the work of mother nature, who first parted her from, and now restores her to Rochester.

5.REUNION AND PARTIAL RELIEF WITH THE FAIRY'S RETURN

Returning to Thornfield, Bronte compares the horror of discovering the "blackened ruin" of the old house with the shock of seeing a dead lover, and she is told appallingly of a late Mr Rochester (472). She quickly grasps that Rochester is not dead, but has become savage and shut himself up in disappointment and despair at losing the governess who bewitched him, until Bertha's conflagration of the house and her death. When Jane reaches the blinded, blighted Rochester, she sees him as a "wronged and fettered wild beast or bird ... the caged eagle, whose gold-ringed eyes cruelty has extinguished (479; referencing the blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear*), or a sightless Samson; rather a diminished bird of prey humbled before her as skylark (488); as if "a royal eagle, chained to a perch, should be forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor". He welcomes her back as a fairy, "mocking changeling — fairy-born and human-bred!" (487); she is the only one with any capacity to draw him out of his quotidian misery. His life is empty: "Doing nothing, expecting nothing; merging night in day; feeling but the sensation of cold when I let the fire go out, of hunger when I forgot to eat; and then a ceaseless sorrow" (486). He is incredulous of Jane's presence, which had so often appeared in dreams, only to flee on waking. Even in expressing her joy in their final reconciliation, Jane here speaks through indirect avoidance of the negative: "There was no harassing restraint, no repressing of glee and vivacity with him; for with him I was at perfect ease, because I knew I suited him" (485). While a fine description of the comfortable ease of love, it is indicative of Brontë's style here to state their love in such negative terms. He declares there is nothing to wait for and they must marry in three days; "never mind fine clothes and jewels, now; all that is not worth a fillip (495).

Even as Rochester loses his blindness, instead of saying he reads and writes a little, Jane describes what he cannot manage, what he no longer lacks: "he cannot now see very distinctly; he cannot read or write much; but he can find his way without being led by the hand: the sky is no longer a blank to him — the earth no longer a void" (501).

Attempting to express their idyllic state, she declares: “No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ... I know no weariness of my Edward’s society: he knows none of mine”, even as she alludes to the weariness she refutes (500). He accepts his physical fate as punishment for attempting to force her purity (495), while she has become the stronger of the two, an independent self-mistress. While it is true that previously she had enjoyed her power over him, as her soft, silken skein “sends a thrill up my arm to my heart. I am influenced — conquered” (293) he confessed; and she could have offered Blanche advice on how to charm him: “to answer what he asked without pretension, to address him when needful without grimace” (212), now he is so thoroughly crushed, any balance in their relationship has been reversed, with him dependent on her leading him and needing her eyes for reading and observing every aspect of life. Within her indirectly stated positives that deny their lacks, they live in a contracted world of his lost health and vision, without the longed-for travel or wider life Jane had so much anticipated and desired.

The novel ends with St John’s implied if unstated disappointment, avoiding all mention of the personal in his letters. He is the master spirit without fault, never to marry, whose “glorious sun hastens to its setting” (502). Brontë may have offered a higher, religious tone here to counterbalance the novel’s passions, and thereby refute the anticipated criticisms of crudeness or coarseness which in any case fell on her. An anonymous review of 1848 describes the work’s “masculine power, breadth and shrewdness, combined with masculine hardness, coarseness, and freedom of expression”; a fuliginous or dirty work written by a woman (O’Neill 14). Certainly the St John coda drops an anti-climactic pall over Jane’s personal love story. “No fear of death will darken St John’s last hour: his mind will be unclouded, his heart will be undaunted” (Brontë 1996: 502), she declares. This insidious fanatic who nearly subjugated Jane, rushing her “down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, ... there [to lose her] own” (465) goes towards his exemplary death with undying faith, cooling any rapture of the lovers and their apparently blissful union.

This wonderful book, my very first novel, expresses an extraordinary range of laden emotions battled through to the finale. The negatives of vocabulary and theme, doubled in indirect excess, the overriding references to death and disappointment, never, nothing and despair, present a bleak backdrop to the novel. The symbolic trope of the child progresses through the novel, whether the young child Jane or her inner child who never leaves her and whom she carries psychically throughout the novel. The motif of the doomed or abortive child who struggles to be born against her reason, child of her false hopes and love, expresses Jane’s heavy plight, with such creatures’ dooms weighing down the narrative. In contrast to this, messengers come to Jane from another world under the light of the moon, visiting Jane as she struggles to free herself from the obstacles threatening to hold her down, while she flies her perilous way through life as a fairy or bird, or encounters birds or heavenly messengers who may free her from her oppression, frequently offering relief against darkness, while also terrifying her. As Queenie Leavis states in explaining Brontë’s use of the name Eyre as being the “historical house with the madwoman’s room, the knowledge that it belonged to the Eyre family ... provided her with the kind of name *she must have* for her heroine — one free as *air* in herself, an *Ariel*-like spirit living, in her inaccessible

world, the life of the imagination, to which the spelling with its suggestion of the eagle's *eyrie* is so appropriate" (Brontë 1966: 27; emphasis original). Thus the weighty gloom of this novel is enlightened with such symbolism, breaking out of the ultimate melancholy and disappointment which spreads an Arnoldian "eternal note of sadness" to the final page. It is as Jane pronounces: "Humans beings never enjoy complete happiness in this world" (Brontë 1996: 290). This paper has presented the journey of *Jane Eyre's* eponymous heroine throughout life, accompanied by angelic or avian birds in flight, seeing her as a child or a fairy offering escape to another world, which motifs express Jane's personality and elevate her above oppressions. The very fairy, avian elements Brontë incorporates in this novel remain part of Jane's tangled journey through its pages, offering her a partial release from the traps of life which hold her down. She journeys under the light of the moon which accompanies her as her divine mother, reaching out from the sky to help her on her way with maternal, heavenly aid. This novel thus works through its dark expressions to achieving a certain measure of passionate fulfilment, Jane's *bildung* leading to her greatly desired but only partial consummation by the novel's end. As Arnold says, the eternal note of sadness persists within the romantic longing of the protagonists for each other, raising them above pain and despair, while such elements remain a part of their life and death, keeping their feet firmly planted on this earth.

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