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Becoming Jane: The Role of Nature and the Weather in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

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Resumen:

Este ensayo analiza la importancia que tienen la naturaleza y el tiempo en el proceso de maduración de la heroína en *Jane Eyre* (1847) y cómo la naturaleza y el tiempo, mediante el uso de la falacia patética, se hacen eco del estado de ánimo y de los sentimientos de los personajes principales. Charlotte Brontë recurre a paisajes, elementos de la naturaleza y condiciones atmosféricas para marcar momentos importantes en el desarrollo psicológico de Jane. Ésta novela pertenece al género del Bildungsroman, el cual relata el desarrollo tanto físico como psicológico del personaje principal. Veremos cómo Jane pasa por diferentes fases en su desarrollo personal hasta completar el círculo del viaje de la heroína, inspirado en las teorías de Campbell. Por otra parte, la naturaleza y el entorno como reflejo de la vida interior de los personajes son centrales en el género gótico del que también participa la novela de Brontë. Teniendo como referencia los cinco lugares en los que Jane Eyre vive a lo largo de la novela —Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor House y Ferndean— analizaré los momentos en los que la naturaleza y el tiempo cobran importancia, bien porque señalan los sentimientos de la heroína o porque marcan un momento importante en su proceso de maduración.

Abstract:

This essay analyses the importance of nature and the weather in the heroine's process of maturation in *Jane Eyre* (1874) and how, through the use of the pathetic fallacy, nature and the weather evoke the state and feelings of the main characters. Charlotte Brontë uses the environment, elements of nature and the weather in order to mark the important events of the psychological development of Jane. This novel also belongs to the Bildungsroman genre, which relates the physical and psychological development of the main character. We will see Jane evolving throughout different steps until she completes the circle of the heroine's journey, inspired by Campbell. Nature and the environment used as a mirror of the inner life of the characters are central to the gothic genre to which *Jane Eyre* belongs. Taking into account the five different places that appear throughout the novel —Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor House and Ferndean— I am going to analyse the moments in which nature and the weather are foregrounded, either because they point out the situation or the heroine's feelings, or because they mark an important moment in the development of the main character.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is one of the most outstanding novels of the Victorian literary canon. The novel was received by the public on the one hand with a lot of excitement, and on the other hand with shock. Women at that time were supposed to be subordinated to men. They were "quite different from men; destined by God and by nature not for an active life in the world, but for the domestic sphere" (Glen 109). What appealed to large numbers of female readers was, and as Glen points out, the fact that Jane "gains an education, she earns her own living, she struggles, she survives: above all, she refuses to compromise herself" (109). Other readers and critics, however, were not very fond of this rebel woman that was Jane and they described the book as unfeminine because it acted against the typical roles of a woman at that time. Right at the beginning of the novel, the readers are faced with the fact that Jane lost her parents. She is now an orphan who will have to endure some difficulties in order to mature. Since the very beginning of *Jane Eyre*, the reader is aware of the presence of nature and of various kinds of weather, crucial in understanding the protagonist's feelings and in highlighting the steps of Jane's maturation process. In this dissertation I am going to study the importance of nature and the weather in *Jane Eyre*, both as symbolic elements that reflect the main character's feelings and as signalling the different stages in the heroine's journey towards the consolidation of her personality. Drawing on John Ruskin's pathetic fallacy, central to the gothic genre, I will explore key moments in Jane's life throughout the five places in which her development unfolds. In parallel, I will read the novel against the theory of the heroine's quest inspired by Joseph Campbell.

Jane Eyre is a Bildungsroman, a term first used by Karl Morgensen "in his history lectures of 1819/20, but … not fully described until Wilhelm Dilthey's *Das*

Leben Schleiermachers (1870) which contains his lengthy, critical consideration of Johann von Goëthe's novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96)" (Maier, 317-18). Guo Lei and Xuhan Zhu define the Bildungsroman as, "a genre of literature that focuses on the intellectual, psychological and moral development of a principal protagonist from youth to adulthood" (566). *Jane Eyre* perfectly fits the pattern. Jane has a sorrowful childhood, both in Gateshead Hall and in Lowood, and has to come to terms with her past in order to mature and find her place in the world. The reader can appreciate how Jane matures from the beginning to the end, from the child she is first to the mature and happy woman that she becomes. By the end of the novel Jane has overcome some obstacles and achieved wholeness in her life, both physically and psychologically.

One can appreciate some similarities between the evolution of the protagonist in a Bildungsroman and Joseph Campbell's theory of the monomyth developed in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). In his classic study of comparative mythology, Campbell observed a common pattern in the development of the protagonist of classical myths and traditional fairy tales. The monomyth, or hero's quest, symbolizes the psychic path that will lead towards the integration of the protagonist's personality and his maturation as an individual. Campbell's heroes are primarily masculine, so some feminist critics studied the heroine's journey because they believed it to have its own particularities. As Maureen Murdock states: "Women do have a quest at this time in our culture. It is the quest to fully embrace their feminine nature, learning how to value themselves as women and to heal the deep wound of the feminine" (3). *Jane Eyre*, clearly depicts this feminine quest towards maturation, since Jane must learn how to value herself as a woman and how to act independently at a time when this was not expected from a young lady. Jane's process of maturation is marked by some important

events that have great effect on her identity and personality, most of them associated with nature and natural elements.

Jane Eyre has also been approached as a gothic novel. The rise of the English novel in the early 18th century took place in the context of the Enlightenment, concerned with reason and rationality. The gothic subgenre developed later, in the 1760s, with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) —a novel set in Italy during the Middle Ages— in order to represent the period's "cultural anxieties" (Botting 1). "Tortuous", "fragmented narratives" which describe "mysterious incidents", "horrible images and life-threatening pursuits" predominate in the late eighteenth century (Botting 1-2). When *Jane Eyre* was published, the interest in the gothic had diminished but mainstream writers still used gothic images to express the character's anxieties. As Navarrina states:

> When the Modern Gothic comes to the picture in the turning of the 19th century, the Gothic setting remains as one of the most characteristics of the Gothic motif, however it is substituted by the new mansions, since the genre had already suffered the shift, meaning, it had returned to the land of its origins, which was the British islands. The scenario evolved, but the function remained the same, illustrating the complex plots and contradictions described in those narratives. (87)

Jane Eyre has numerous gothic touches. Jane is trapped within the walls of Gateshead and Lowood at the beginning of her life and then, when she travels to earn her own living, she finds a job as a governess in Thornfield Hall, depicted as a gothic mansion. In Brontë's novel there is a sense of suspense, mystery and darkness; there might be ghost apparitions, as in Gateshead, for instance, Jane believes the ghost of her uncle John Reed has appeared to her. In Thornfield, Jane starts hearing some laughs and strange sounds:

> I started wide awake on hearing a vague murmur, peculiar and lugubrious, which sounded, I though, just above me. I wished I had kept my candle burning: the night was drearily dark; my spirits were depressed. I rose and sat up in bed, listening. The sound was hushed. I tried again to sleep; but my heart beat anxiously: my inward tranquillity was broken. The clock, far down in the hall, struck two. Just then my chamber-door was touched; as if fingers had swept the panels in groping a way along the dark gallery outside. I said, 'Who is there?' Nothing answered. I was chilled with fear. (175)

What seems to be a ghost is later explained away and the reader gets to know Bertha Rochester, Mr Rochester's first wife. Bertha is trapped in the attic and she tries to trouble Jane and Mr Rochester. Therefore, the gothic here is expressing some of Jane's fears: she loves Mr Rochester, but she is afraid of his past life. She does not completely trust him and this episode in which her "tranquillity was broken" (175) is a mirror of her anxiety. Dreams are also important in the gothic as well as in *Jane Eyre*. As Allan Gordon asserts: "dreams in *Jane Eyre* can also serve as 'presentiments', or warnings of future events". The perfect example would be when Jane dreams of a woman who looks like a ghost. Pages after this happens, Jane discovers the truth about Mrs Rochester, and her path changes completely. These gothic elements in *Jane Eyre* are mainly used to express repressed feelings, fears and anxieties of the character.

Nature and the environment are important elements in Gothic novels, often employed to create an atmosphere and to highlight the character's moods, inner feelings and preoccupations. This is precisely what happens in *Jane Eyre*, as this dissertation intends to show. There is a literary device that responds to this convention, the 'pathetic fallacy'. The pathetic fallacy is a personification in which there is a " presentation of inanimate natural objects that ascribes to them human capabilities, sensations, and emotions" (Abrams and Harpham 269). As Bernard Dick asserts, the expression

"entered our critical vocabulary in 1856" (27). John Ruskin coined the expression and he did so as a way of criticising the "subjective poets who were unable to see reality as it was and instead projected their own feelings into it" (Dick, 27). J.A Cuddon argues that for Ruskin pathetically fallacious writers were those ascribing "human feelings to the inanimate" (692). In *Modern Painters* Ruskin provides certain examples of ancient poems to illustrate his idea, giving to the term a pejorative meaning. However, Hamilton asserts that "although Ruskin considered the pathetic fallacy a derogatory term …, it no longer has that negative connotation and is now merely descriptive" (43). In this dissertation, I will use the pathetic fallacy in this simply descriptive sense, analysing some crucial scenes in the book when nature takes control mirroring Jane's evolution. To do so, I will focus on the main locations of the novel, starting at Gateshead in November, then moving to Lowood and Thornfield, and finally, already in the spring and summer seasons, Moor House and Ferndean in the concluding chapter of the novel.

2. Gateshead: Alone in the Winter Cold

Already in the first chapter of the novel there is an association between Jane's feelings and the natural elements. The narrator transports the reader to a dark and wintery landscape in Gateshead, where Jane lives with her aunt and cousins: there is a "cold winter wind", there is "rain so penetrating" and there are "sombre clouds" (1). With these clues the narrator creates a gloomy atmosphere typical of the Gothic tradition. This beginning can be a prolepsis of what will happen later in the chapter, as the reader gets to know the situation of Jane at Gateshead. We learn that Jane's parents are dead and after their death she went to live with her uncle Mr Reed. In this chapter it is explained that Mr Reed is dead and now Jane lives with her aunt who she hates and her cousins who are tedious too. Jane's feelings at this time of her life are dark, with a sense of loneliness, she also feels hatred towards her aunt and cousins. These feelings go together with the very first description of the weather.

According to Ferber "a cloud can be anything that prevents vision" (44), he also adds that "in Greek terms life is seeing the light as well as being seen in the light" (44). Ferber suggests that as life is light, clouds signify death. Extrapolating this view to the novel, we should notice that the death of Jane's parents has brought the "sombre clouds" to her inner self. She is a sorrowful child who seems to be trapped in a house where she does not belong. Mrs Reed is constantly against her and she does not have any pity for her. Moreover, her cousins bully her.

The "rain so penetrating" is alluded to at the beginning of the first chapter. Ferber states that "rain often stands as a synecdoche for all bad weather and thus a symbol of life's unhappy moments" (165). Shakespeare's "Lear on the heath finds wind and rain responding to his inner fury and pain", he adds (Ferber, 165). Rain, thus, highlights Jane's anguish for both having lost her parents and for being raised in a family that does

not value her. She also talks about the "winter wind". Interestingly, Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" can provide an idea of what the wind might represent. J. Kapstein asserts that "the first stanza of the poem describes the leaves flying before the wind, which is represented as both destroyer of the leaves and preserver of the seeds from which new life will arise" (1070). Relating this to *Jane Eyre*, the wind as a preserver of seeds can be considered a representation of Jane's future development both physically and psychologically. Throughout the novel the readers will see this journey of maturation and her achievements in life, next to her future husband, Mr Rochester. In *The Heroine's Journey*, Murdock explains that the heroine's quest and her journey of maturation start with the "Separation from the Mother". As she states: "The separation from the mother is a particularly intense process for the daughter because she has to separate from the one who is the same as herself. She experiences a fear characterized by anxiety about being alone" (17). These are the seeds from which Jane has to evolve and create a life of her own, freely. The "winter wind" will provide this strength to Jane, who will succeed after overcoming some obstacles.

Jane's departure from Gateshead is worth commenting on. In the following passage in Chapter five, Jane is leaving Gateshead for Lowood, a boarding school, because her aunt Mrs Reed does not want to take care of her anymore:

> 'Good-bye to Gateshead!' cried I, as we passed through the hall and went out at the front door. The moon was set, and it was very dark; Bessie carried a lantern, whose light glanced on wet steps and gravel road sodden by a recent thaw. Raw and chill was the winter morning: … I went to the door and watched its lamps approach rapidly through the gloom. (43)

In this passage the reader can feel the atmosphere of coldness and sadness in a sharp winter morning, which can be extrapolated to Jane's inner state; there is fear, sadness but, as I am going to explain next, there is also hope and change. As Ferber describes:

> The moon's continually changing phases led to its association with mutability, metamorphosis, inconstancy, or fickleness. The 'sublunary' realm, everything beneath the sphere of the moon is governed mainly by change, chance or fortune, as opposed to the divinely ordered spheres above it. (129)

This moment is crucial for the development of the character and the novel. The moon symbolises the starting "metamorphosis" of Jane, as it brings light to the darkness of the night. To start her metamorphosis Jane should depart from darkness, which symbolises the isolation, the loneliness, the sadness and the anger of her days in Gateshead. Moreover, besides the presence of the moon, there is a reference to "the gravel road sodden by a recent thaw" (43). The word "thaw" also implies change, since ice melts into water. This transformation might represent again Jane's path and journey to maturation and change. In Murdock's view, when the daughter "experience[s] her mother as either absent or too busy to mother her, she may set out in search of a positive female role model, perhaps an older woman with whom she can bond" (26). This is precisely what Jane does and she will find in Miss Temple, her teacher at Lowood, an example to follow in her process of maturation.

3. Lowood: the Garden as a Symbol of Change

After a long drive Jane arrives at Lowood. Just after the first night there, we learn the terrible conditions in which the students live: there is not enough food, it is very cold, they wear few clothes to protect them from the cold, etc. Lowood is described as a prison by Jane. The following passage is a good example of it: "During January,

February, and part of March, the deep snows, and, after their melting, the almost impassable roads, prevented our stirring beyond the garden walls, except to go to church; but within these limits we had to pass an hour every day in the open air" (66). In this passage it is the snow first that keeps the girls isolated from the rest of the world. Later, the roads were "impassable" due to the melting of the snow. Nature does not even allow them to look outside the walls of Lowood. Therefore, nature does not grant Jane the freedom that she is looking for. Nature and the weather act against Jane and the students in Lowood, creating the feeling of being trapped in a prison they cannot escape from. In her process of maturation, Jane has to overcome some obstacles in order to continue her journey. One of them can be Lowood and its natural surroundings that do not let Jane develop.

The garden in Lowood is presented at first not as a pleasant place. The students must go there for an hour to play and refresh. In the winter months, it is described as cold, unpleasant, gloomy and sad:

> The garden was a wide inclosure, surrounded with walls so high as to exclude every glimpse of prospect; a covered verandah ran down one side, and broad walks bordered a middle space divided into scores of little beds: these beds were assigned as gardens for the pupils to cultivate, and each bed had an owner. When full of flowers they would doubtless look pretty; but now, at the latter end of January, all was wintry blight and brown decay. … it was an inclement day for outdoor exercise; not positively rainy, but darkened by a drizzling yellow fog; all under foot was still soaking wet with the floods of yesterday. (51-52)

Here the garden is presented as almost dead. It is also a reflection of rectitude and reason which is related to the way of teaching at Lowood. It is well structured in beds for students to learn to cultivate. Nature is not allowed to go wild, just as the girls in the

institution are taught to be obedient and restrained. There is also a connection between the weather and Jane's emotional state. A few lines later, Jane says: "As yet I had spoken to no one, nor did anybody seem to take notice of me; I stood lonely enough" (52). Again, the weather is a mirror of her feelings, with the rain evoking her feeling of loneliness and adding a sense of sadness and melancholy, reinforced by Jane's words: "I hardly yet knew where I was; Gateshead and my past life seemed floated away to an immeasurable distance; the present was vague and strange, and of the future I could form no conjecture" (52).

In contrast to this previous view of the garden and nature, there is a change in the tone later on in the chapter. The garden becomes a symbol of change: dead at the beginning but later full of life, paralleling Jane's state of mind, feelings and evolution. In the following fragment, Lowood is suffering from a pestilence. A lot of girls have died, and many are seriously ill:

> Its garden, too, glowed with flowers: hollyhocks had sprung up tall as trees, lilies had opened, tulips and roses were in bloom; the borders of the little beds were gay with pink thrift and crimson double daisies; the sweetbriars gave out, morning and evening, their scent of spice and apples; and these fragrant treasures were all useless for most of the inmates of Lowood, except to furnish now and then a handful of herbs and blossoms to put in a coffin (88)

One measure to prevent healthy girls from being infected is to spend time outside in nature. For those who are not infected the garden signifies freedom from the pestilence in Lowood. Nature releases girls from the illness that lives inside the school. This can be related to Jane's search for freedom since the very beginning of the book. Therefore, we can say that nature here is a symbol of life and freedom. There is a detailed description of the variety of flowers that the girls can find in Lowood's garden. There

are, in fact, some parallels between the flowers' meanings and Jane's character and future actions. First, the hollyhocks stand for fecundity. Robert Tyas asserts: "It seems to have been most aptly chosen as an emblem of fruitfulness" (111). Inferring, fecundity stands for Jane's starting process of maturation in Lowood. Little by little she is becoming a mature woman. Tyas also explains that daisies represent innocence. Besides, Ferber quoting Chaucer, identifies daisies with "the most faithful of wives" (50), something Jane will become in the last chapter of the novel after she marries Rochester. Finally, roses and lilies are also present in the garden. According to Ferber, they "symbolize two usually complementary virtues, love and purity" (176), two typically Victorian virtues that play an important role in Jane's development at Thornfield Hall.

In Lowood, nature and the weather have two different faces. Nature appears healing when the pestilence arrives at Lowood, but also acts as a prison. Relatedly, there are in Lowood two different kinds of figures. The cruel Mr Brocklehurst and the protective Miss Temple. Mr Brocklehurst is mean to the girls and does not care about the conditions they are living in. This character connects with the nature that does not allow the girls to be free. Miss Temple is the only character that can protect Jane and the girls from the difficult situation they live in Lowood. Therefore, she echoes the healing and protective side of nature. This good side of nature that is represented by Miss Temple is connected to Jane's search of a role model. She does not have a mother and she finds a positive mother figure in Miss Temple. In Murdock's book, this step in the process of maturation is called "Healing the mother/daughter split". Jane is looking for "affiliation and community, for the positive, strong nurturing qualities of the feminine that have been missing" (Murdock 131).

4. Thornfield: the Awakening of Passion

The best example of the pathetic fallacy in *Jane Eyre* comes after Mr Rochester's love proposal to Jane. There is a clear evolution in Jane and Mr Rochester's relationship. The first encounters are tense and distant, but, slowly, the relationship starts to be more intimate. Jane is very restrained, but she finally gets the courage to talk about her feelings. Both finally confess their feelings. Rochester tells Jane: "I offer you my hand, my heart, and a share of my possessions" (303); "Jane, I summon you as my wife: it is you only I intend to marry" (304). Jane replies: "Then, sir, I will marry you" (305). Instantly, nature responds:

> I could scarcely see my master's face, near as I was. And what ailed the chestnut tree? it writhed and groaned; while wind roared in the laurel walk, and came sweeping over us.
>
> 'We must go in,' said Mr. Rochester: 'the weather changes. I could have sat with thee till morning, Jane.'
>
> 'And so,' thought I, 'could I with you.' I should have said so, perhaps, but a livid, vivid spark leapt out of a cloud at which I was looking, and there was a crack, a crash, and a close rattling peal; and I thought only of hiding my dazzled eyes against Mr. Rochester's shoulder. (306)

Right after both have declared their feelings, nature responds furiously. The wind here might represent the disturbed mind of Jane after accepting to marry Mr Rochester. The wind, as explained, represents change, in this case a change in their relationship. It could also represent Jane's feelings of fear and uncertainty. Besides, there is also a bolt of lightning. In the morning Adèle, Rochester's ward, comes to tell Jane that "the great horse-chestnut at the bottom of the orchard had been struck by lightning in the night, and half of it split away" (307). As Edwards points out: "The meaning is clear, and as simple as in Shakespeare: a wrong in the human world is mirrored by disturbance of the

natural world" (288). Nature is reacting to the fact that Rochester already has a wife. By proposing to Jane, Rochester is acting wrong and nature reflects this. Edwards suggests that "we may see the chestnut tree as a parallel for the relationship between Rochester and Jane, or as a symbol of conflicts within either Rochester or Jane" (288). Therefore, this episode of the chestnut tree can be a prolepsis of what is going to happen next in their relationship. Jane will depart because she discovers the truth about Rochester, and their relationship will split up like the chestnut tree. Jane also has inner conflicts which are reflected in the broken chestnut tree too.

Thornfield is the third place that Jane visits during her journey towards maturation. Thornfield is also the place where she will first fall in love. In Thornfield she is somehow free, she is not trapped there like in Gateshead or Lowood. In spite of some negative moments, Thornfield is a happy and a safe place for Jane. Thornfield means home for Jane. That is why when she comes back to Thornfield after visiting her aunt Mrs Reed, she is in a very good mood knowing that she is coming back home. There is a reflection of this happiness in the weather and in the nature in this coming back episode:

> It was not a bright or splendid summer evening, though fair and soft: the haymakers were at work all along the road; and the sky, though far from cloudless, was such as promised well for the future: its blue—where blue was visible—was mild and settled, and its cloud strata high and thin. The west, too, was warm: no watery gleam chilled it—it seemed as if there was a fire lit, an altar burning behind its screen of marbled vapour, and out of apertures shone a golden redness. (291)

The sky is blue with high and thin clouds, emphasising Jane's idea of happiness. The clouds are high so there is no fear that something bad is going to occur. This reinforces the idea that Thornfield is a safe place for Jane. In this passage the sun appears. In *Jane*

Eyre there are not many scenes where the sun appears. Before Thornfield Hall, Jane's life has been sad and full of darkness. Now in Thornfield she is cheerful. These feelings are mirrored in nature with the figure of the sun that shines: "How full the hedges are of roses! … I passed a tall briar, shooting leafy and flowery branches across the path; I see the narrow stile with stone steps; and I see—Mr. Rochester sitting there, a book and a pencil in his hand; he is writing" (292). Interestingly, the briar, a wild bush with thorns, can be related to the figure of Bertha Mason, Mr Rochester's first wife, a tall woman presented as a wild creature, a savage who comes from the Caribbean. This briar appears contrasted to the roses that are mentioned first in the scene. I would argue that the roses, more delicate and sophisticated, are an image of Jane. The two kinds of flowers represent the duality that Jane and Bertha evoke.

5. Moor House: from Winter into Spring

Jane leaves Thornfield after she learns that Mr Rochester is married. Mr Rochester explains everything to Jane and he also takes her to see Bertha Mason, locked in the attic. He suggests that, as they cannot marry, they can live abroad as lovers. Jane fears for her moral integrity and leaves Thornfield. She wanders for days, hoping that nature would provide all she needs. The following passage illustrates her uncertain circumstances:

> And I sank down where I stood, and hid my face against the ground. I lay still a while: the night-wind swept over the hill and over me, and died moaning in the distance; the rain fell fast, wetting me afresh to the skin. Could I but have stiffened to the still frost— the friendly numbness of death—it might have pelted on; I should not have felt it; but my yet living flesh shuddered at its chilling influence. I rose ere long. (398)

In this scene the rain and the wind appear again. As explained in the first section, the rain represents the unhappy moments of life. This is one of the most difficult decisions that Jane makes. She leaves Thornfield where she is happy and where she found love for the first time, and now she is alone wandering in nature with nowhere to go. In addition, the wind represents Jane's inner fury and pain after leaving Thornfield and Mr Rochester. The presence of the wind also responds to her inner fury towards Mr Rochester, who has not been honest with her. The frost and the coldness of the scene reinforce Jane's sadness and desperation. Besides, there is a direct relation between 'frost' and 'death'. In the heroine's journey this sense of death and betrayal connects with the step of "Spiritual Aridity": "she now feels utterly alone, deprived of comfort. To her the bottom has fallen out" (Murdock 74-75).

After days of wandering, Jane finally gets to Moor House, where St John Rivers and his sisters live. This place will become a refuge for Jane to be safe from Thornfield and Mr Rochester. She likes the house and feels comfortable, as she says: "The more I knew of the inmates of Moor House, the better I liked them" (422). Here, Jane becomes a teacher and feels free. She also inherits a fortune. The next passage describes the environment of the house:

> its avenue of aged firs—all grown aslant under the stress of mountain winds; its garden, dark with yew and holly—and where no flowers but of the hardiest species would bloom—found a charm both potent and permanent. They clung to the purple moors behind and around their dwelling—to the hollow vale into which the pebbly bridle-path. (422)

The landscape surrounding the house gives the reader some clues about what will happen later at Thornfield. First, we are told that the garden is "dark with yew and

holly". According to Ferber the yew is a "cheerless, social plant … It is presumably because yew berries and leaves are poisonous that the tree acquired its deathly associations, and perhaps also because of its dark foliage" (245). Moreover, Ferber states that the holly's "evergreen character also suits funerals and graves" (97). These two plants are a symbol of death and a clue to something bad happening. There is a contrast between Jane's feeling of happiness and what nature is telling the reader. On the one hand, Jane loves being in Moor House, on the other hand there is this promotion of death. This sadness that the environment and plants evoke is related to the process of "Urgent Yearning to Reconnect with the Feminine". As Murdock states: "When she is in a state of sadness and despair she needs the support of the positive feminine, a mother or sister figure, man or woman, to contain her safely while she expresses it" (121). In Moor House, this is what the two young women, who turn out to be Jane's cousins, represent. They help Jane to overcome her sadness and to rediscover her own feminine nature. This nature, sad and dark, is related to her feeling towards Rochester. Although Jane feels complete there, with her own work and money, she misses Rochester. Murdock explains that "it is important for a woman to know that she can survive without dependence on parents or others so that she can express her heart, mind and soul" (44). Jane has taken another step in her process in maturation, now that she knows that she can live by herself, she goes after Mr Rochester to "express her heart".

Jane travels to Thornfield again after hearing Mr Rochester's voice calling her in her head. When she arrives there, the place is devastated by fire and, as nature advanced before, a catastrophe happened. The symbology of the plants in the section analysed before, connects with this environment. Jane says that "there was the silence of death about it: the solitude of a lonesome wild" (514), which reinforces the message that

nature gave in Moor House. Moreover, there is an actual death. Bertha Mason, the one who provoked the fire, jumped off the roof and died:

> we heard him call 'Bertha!' We saw him approach her; and then, ma'am, she yelled and gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement. '
>
> 'Dead?'
>
> 'Dead! Ay, dead as the stones on which her brains and blood were scattered.'
>
> 'Good God!' (518)

In contrast to this scenery of death, there is some life in the environment: "spring had cherished vegetation: grass and weed grew here and there between the stones and fallen rafters" (514). There is some light in the darkness that the fire left. Here, what nature suggests is that there is some hope in Jane and Mr Rochester's relationship. After Jane's departure everything seems destroyed but there is still some hope in their lives as there is nature alive in the burnt Thornfield Hall. Thus, Jane travels to Ferndean to meet Mr Rochester again.

6. Ferndean: Balance in the Midst of Fertile Nature

The weather when Jane arrives at Ferndean is not good but sad and gloomy: "To this house I came just ere dark on an evening marked by the characteristics of sad sky, cold gale, and continued small penetrating rain" (521). This weather reflects Jane's doubts about her relationship with Rochester. It also mirrors her inner feelings of nervousness and concern with Rochester's state. They reunite again in Ferndean. After a long conversation, it seems like they are reconciled now. The tone of the narration in the following morning is a very different one. It is less tense, and everything seems to be balanced, like their relationship. Nature also responds to this feeling of tranquillity,

balance and happiness. "'It is a bright, sunny morning, sir,' I said. 'The rain is over and gone, and there is a tender shining after it: you shall have a walk soon'" (532). The morning is shiny. Jane says that the rain has disappeared and thus all the bad feelings and tensions between them. They are happy together after everything that they have been through. After Jane's proposition to go outside, she observes that Rochester is delighted: "I had wakened the glow: his features beamed" (532).

Jane and Rochester spend most of the morning in the open air. Jane describes what they did that morning: "I led him out of the wet and wild wood into some cheerful fields: I described to him how brilliantly green they were; how the flowers and hedges looked refreshed; how sparklingly blue was the sky" (532-533). The flowers are refreshed after the rain. After all the troubles and impediments in their relationship, they have been able to reunite and reconcile. Moreover, blue and green are highlighted. According to Ferber, green stands for hope "because it is the color of young vegetation and springtime" (90). He also states that "because it is the color of the sky (and perhaps because the sea is blue only on sunny days), blue is traditionally the color of heaven, of hope, of constancy, of purity, of truth, of the ideal" (31). These two colours stand for hope, which is the main feeling that both characters have. They are reunited and they can build a future together after all. This hope can also be related to Rochester's blindness after Thornfiled's fire. There might be some hope, as later on the reader discovers that Rochester is recovering his sight: "He informed me then, that for some time he had fancied the obscurity clouding one eye was becoming less dense; and that now he was sure of it" (547).

Rochester has some doubts about their relationship as he is blind and thinks that he is an obstacle in Jane's life. "'I am no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut-tree in Thornfield orchard', he remarked ere long. 'And what right would that ruin have

to bid a budding woodbine cover its decay with freshness?'" (538). In this fragment Rochester compares himself and Jane to natural elements. He is portrayed as the old broken chestnut-tree in Thornfield, while Jane is a fresh young flower. Rochester is alluding, first, to their age difference, as he is the old tree and Jane is the young "budding woodbine". Secondly, he is portrayed as old and broken, a burden for Jane's life and also for their relationship. Jane answers to Rochester's comment:

> You are no ruin, sir—no lightning-struck tree: you are green and vigorous. Plants will grow about your roots, whether you ask them or not, because they take delight in your bountiful shadow; and as they grow they will lean towards you, and wind round you, because your strength offers them so safe a prop. (538)

Jane tries to comfort him. What Jane does is to stimulate his masculinity by reinforcing his freshness and fecundity. She compares Mr Rochester to very strong and fertile plants. "Green and vigorous" reinforces his strength. When Jane tells him that "plants will grow about your roots", she points to his fertility. She is also suggesting that Mr Rochester is a good man who takes care of her as he "offers them so safe a prop".

Finally, Jane and Rochester marry and they have a son. This can be connected with the exuberant nature in Ferndean, as ferns evoke fertility. It is here in Ferndean that the couple finds happiness together and the heroine's quest finishes once Jane has integrated through marriage her feminine and her masculine sides: "The heroine comes to understand the dynamics of the feminine and the masculine nature and accepts them both together" (Murdock 160).

7. Conclusion

This dissertation has analysed the importance of nature and the weather in describing the heroine's journey in *Jane Eyre*. At the same time, nature and the weather have also been analysed as mirroring the feelings and thoughts of the characters, especially Jane's, following the pathetic fallacy, a kind of personification that projects human feelings onto natural objects very popular in the gothic tradition. My analysis has shown that the meaning of nature and the weather varies in each one of the five locations of the novel. The first one, Gateshead, with its bad wintery weather and inexistent nature evokes Jane's feelings of loneliness, sadness and anger. This first location is also connected with the first step in Jane's maturation process which is "Separation from the Mother". The next location is Lowood, apparently very similar to Gateshead. Here, on the one hand, nature and the weather act as prison to Jane and the girls confined within the walls of Lowood. On the other hand, nature and the weather also protect some girls from the pestilence. This good nature is connected to Miss Temple, a teacher who helps and tries to comfort Jane. Here in Lowood Jane will be able to heal the Mother/Daughter split in the heroine's process. In Thornfield, the situation changes at the beginning. Jane finds true love, and nature and the weather mirror her happiness. When Mr Rochester asks Jane to marry him, nature responds splitting the chestnut-tree, symbolising some troubles in their relationship. Jane discovers that Mr Rochester is married, and she leaves Thornfield. She goes to her next location, Moor House, where nature, at first cold and bare but moving on into spring, reflects her more cheerful and independent character. Finally, she travels to Ferndean to reunite with Mr Rochester. Here, at her arrival, nature echoes her doubts and fear to meet Mr Rochester again. However, in the end, the weather changes into a very good one at the same time that Jane and Rochester are reconciled and finally marry. The circle of the heroine's journey is closed with their

marriage, which symbolises the integration of the masculine and the feminine. After analysing the novel's use of nature and the weather, especially in the form of the pathetic fallacy, in parallel to Jane's development, it can be concluded that the heroine's journey in the novel is signposted by the natural elements. Proof of this is the fact that Jane's quest starts in the winter months in the middle of hostile nature and ends in summer surrounded by fertile and welcoming vegetation.

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