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Pilgrim of love: soul's search for fulfillment in Jane Eyre

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Pilgrim of love: Soul’s search for fulfillment in *Jane Eyre*

by

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This is to certify that the Master’s thesis of

Kimberly Anne Downes

has met the thesis requirement of Iowa State University

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Major Professor

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For the Major Program

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For the Graduate College
DEDICATIONS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, who introduced me at the age of nine to *Jane Eyre*. I would also like to thank my father for encouraging me, Kathy Hickok for all her help, and especially my fiancé, Max, for being a wonderful person whom I love with all my heart. Thank you all—I couldn't have done it without you!
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CHAPTER 1

JANE EYRE, AN ALLEGORY?

Jane Eyre has baffled critics ever since its publication in 1847. While some argue that the plot is weak and that Brontë relies too much on coincidence and melodrama, others claim that the novel was written that way intentionally. It is simultaneously a great work of romantic fiction and a feminist manifesto.

Twentieth-century critics consider it a fairly moralistic work, but it was seen as scandalous and irreligious to many in the nineteenth century. No matter what viewpoint the critic may take, few would argue the novel's popularity; Jane and Rochester are so widely known that they could almost be considered mythical figures. There is something in the story that is universal, something that brings readers back to the book throughout their lives. That something is simple: we have all been on Jane's quest.

Much of the confusion may be due to conflicting views on the genre in which to classify Jane Eyre. Is it merely a Gothic romance, full of melodrama and improbable plot twists, or is it great literature? Is it a fairy tale? Is it written for children, as the Gateshead and Lowood scenes would suggest, or for adults as the rest of the book would lead us to believe? Is it also possible to read the novel as a “Christian allegory of temptation, suffering, and redemption” (Roy, 722) or as a parody of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress? The latter interpretation has been brought up in the works of critics such as Harold Bloom, Maggie Berg, Peter Dale, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Such readings contribute to the view that
Brontë's novel is somehow immoral. However, Brontë was not writing a religious work; she was writing a love story. As I will point out, references to Bunyan are constantly found in the novel, but Jane's pilgrimage was never meant to take her to the *Celestial City*. Her goal was an earthly one: to reach an understanding of herself and the nature of love.

While there may be some truth to the interpretation of *Jane Eyre* as a Christian allegory, there are problems with this interpretation. For instance, Jane vocally rejects Helen Burns' view of Christian martyrdom. Even at the end of the novel, she is clearly more interested in living a happy earthly life than wishing for the rewards of heaven as her friend had done. If she had been wishing for death, she would have married St. John and followed him to India. If this were a Christian allegory, Rochester would be seen as a personification of temptation, and it would have been counterproductive for Jane to return to him, no matter how much he had professed to change.

I would also argue that *Jane Eyre* is not a parody of Bunyan. *Pilgrim's Progress* was, at one time, like a second Bible to many Protestants. It has been well documented that Brontë was familiar with and admired Bunyan, and, as I will discuss later, there are elements in *Jane Eyre* which could certainly be read as an imitation of Bunyan. However, there is no place in *Jane Eyre* where Brontë makes Bunyan look ridiculous. Jane does, after all, honestly admire St. John -- who is very like Bunyan's character, Greatheart. She even lets St. John have the last word in the novel, much to the chagrin of many readers, including this one. The interpretation I propose possibly explains why such an ending is necessary.
The idea that there are allegorical elements to be found in *Jane Eyre* is hardly new. However, I have yet to see a critic follow the allegorical thread all the way through the novel. Doing so allows the reader to see “a kernel of vital meaning concealed beneath a shell of fictitious and often improbable narrative” (MacQueen, 47). If the novel is read literally there are certainly times when Brontë appears to ask her readers to suspend their disbelief a little too much. If read allegorically, those places that once seemed improbable, such as Jane’s flight from Thornfield, the way she “discovered” her family, that telepathic cry which reunites the lovers, and even the excruciating ending all begin to make sense.

Many readers may assume that allegory was an art form that died out with the morality plays of the Middle Ages and the works of Chaucer, Milton, Spenser and Bunyan. They may also assume that every allegory is a religious allegory. However, allegory, from the Greek word *allegoria*, simply means “speaking otherwise.” Allegories can be found in verse or in prose, and they are merely stories which have a deeper meaning underneath the surface meaning. In other words these stories can be interpreted or understood on at least two levels (Cuddon, 22). Edwin Honig explains that, “Literally, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* depicts the soul’s pilgrimage from the doom of life without grace to salvation” (Honig, 100). Christian, the lead character, goes on a journey from the City of Destruction hoping to reach a the Celestial City, where he has read he will find eternal life. On his journey he must pass several tests of his physical and psychological strength. Christian must pass through places like the Slough of Dispond, the Valley of the

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1 Elizabeth Imlay is the only critic who came close to following the allegory through the entire novel, however, she focused equally as much, if not more, on the mythical elements in the novel. I am focusing entirely on the allegory.
Shadow of Death, and Vanity Fair. He must listen to the Interpreter's warnings and learn from the mistakes of people like the Man in the Iron Cage. He must fight the beast Apollyon to the death. Literally this can all be read as one man's quest, and one man's goal. Allegorically, however, Pilgrim's Progress "portrays an Everyman hero following the Christian pattern of suffering and rebirth as an initiation into heavenly life; morally or psychologically, it provides a therapy for burdened consciences" (Honig, 100).

Common literary elements used to construct an allegory include personification, particularly of virtues and vices; deliberate naming of characters and places, such as Christian, Greatheart, or the Valley of the Shadow of Death; repeated symbolism, such as numbers, gates, rivers, or storms; trials by ordeal, such as fighting monsters to the death or undergoing severe psychological trauma; and a goal, such as the Celestial City, other forms of salvation, sexual possession, identity, or love. Many times the plot involves some sort of journey or quest. In explaining the importance of the quest, Gay Clifford asserts:

To express change and process allegorical action often takes the form of a journey, a quest, or a pursuit: this becomes the metaphor by which the process of learning for both protagonists and readers is expressed. In the course of their adventures the heroes of allegory discover which ideals are worth pursuing and what things are obstacles to that pursuit (Clifford, 11).
Jane's quest, like Christian's in Pilgrim's Progress, is divided into sections according to geography and the types of tests she must endure in each. Her life is divided into five sections by the houses where she resides over the span of twenty years. The novel begins at Gateshead, where Jane lives with an aunt who despises her and a cousin who bullies her. From there she is sent to Lowood School where she spends the latter part of her childhood. As a young woman she travels to Thornfield Hall, where she works as a governess and finally encounters the love she has been looking for all of her life, but her conscience forces her to flee her lover after she finds out that he is already married. After wandering the moors and nearly starving she is taken in by a young clergyman and his sisters (who conveniently turn out to be her cousins). At Moor House/ Marsh End she is exposed to an alternate form of "love" and very nearly agrees to a passionless marriage, but at the last minute she hears her lover calling for her. His wife has died in a fire, leaving the couple free to marry. She finds him at Ferndean, injured but still very much alive, and they reconcile.

There is no way to ascertain whether Charlotte Brontë was deliberately trying to write an allegory, but Elizabeth Gaskell, Winifred Gerin and Christine Alexander all suggest that "Charlotte Brontë's earliest attempts at writing were imitations of the literary forms she knew best. They demonstrate that as an apprentice Brontë deliberately copied her favorite authors" (Workman, 177). For example, Brontë was an avid reader of Byron; one of the recurring characters in her juvenilia was Zamorna, whose appearance and reputation were clearly Byronic in nature. If it is known that she imitated her favorite authors as a young girl, then it is not all that surprising to see that she continued to do so in her later
writing. It has been well documented that Pilgrim's Progress was one of
Charlotte's favorites and that her "belief in the burden of sin and the individual
responsibility for redemption is illustrated by her references to Bunyan's [book] in
her novels and letters" (Linder, 61). In this essay, I will attempt to show that
Brontë may have been using Pilgrim's Progress as a guide for her allegory, but
that Jane, unlike Christian, was perfectly content to live an earthly life in Beulah
with Mr. Rochester.

On the surface the plot of Jane Eyre may not look like anything more than
a work of romantic fiction, but it is necessary to look much closer to see its genius.
The kernel of truth (another allegorical element) is cleverly veiled, and it takes a
careful reader to see through it. The first thing to make clear is that Jane Eyre is
not only a novel, it is a tale, and as Adrienne Rich points out, "The concern of the
tale is not with social mores, though social mores may occur among the risks and
challenges encountered by the protagonist... the world of the tale is above all a
vale of soul-making" (Rich, 90). "If Jane is observed not only as a penniless
governess who falls in love, but also as the human soul in search of fulfillment,
new light is cast upon her. If Rochester is seen not just as a romantic hero, but as
Eros, love itself, the same illumination is shed upon him" (Imlay, 17, emphasis
mine). Jane is the soul of Everywoman, and her "destiny is radically different from
Christian / Christiana's: her final arrival is at the destinations of mature
independence and integrity" (Dale, 114), not to mention love. Through the episodic
structure of Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë has opened up a series of windows to a
soul and allowed us to see into Jane's heart and mind. In the first window we see
Gateshead.
CHAPTER 2

GATESHEAD: THE HOUSE OF DEATH

When we first meet Jane Eyre, she is a ten-year-old orphan living with a rich aunt and three cousins at Gateshead, a country estate in the northern part of England. The name Jane is simple, small, and plain, just like the girl herself. Her first name does not leave much to talk about. However her last name, Eyre, is much more interesting. The words "err," "air," and "heir" are all homonyms for "Eyre" and they all hold some significance to Jane. The first word, "err," means to make a mistake. Err is what Jane does at Gateshead when she fights back after John Reed has struck her, and when she lets her temper get the better of her with Mrs. Reed after the decision has been made to send Jane away to school. The second word, "air," relates to her diminutive size, the otherworldly quality which Rochester often notices, and also to Jane's fascination and identification with birds. The third word, "heir," refers to a person who inherits money, which is exactly what Jane becomes near the end of the novel. It is through that inheritance that Jane discovers her true family and has the means to return to Rochester as more of a financial equal.

The name of the house, Gateshead, is also symbolic. It "suggests a barbaric and primitive fortress with enemies' heads stuck on poles ... It also ironically echoes Psalm 24, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates.... Who shall ascend into the hill of the lord?... [H]e that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (Williams, 21). The first possible reading suggests that this is a house of death and revenge. The second
suggests that the residents of the house see themselves as good Christians with pure hearts. It is Jane, the outsider, whom they see as wicked. The image of the gate has a special significance because, like Christian, Jane must pass through a gate, leaving everything she is familiar with behind her, in order for her pilgrimage to start. Until she passes through the gate for the final time she is stuck in her own City of Destruction.

Before the reader is introduced to Jane, we get the sense that Gateshead is a lifeless and unhealthy place. The shrubbery is “leafless,” the clouds are “somber,” and the rain is “penetrating.” When the novel opens, Jane is sitting in the window seat, shielded from the cold of the outside by a window and the cold of the inside by a “red moreen curtain” (Brontë, 9). In her own little womblike room reading Bewick’s History of British Birds, she is fascinated by pictures of places like Lapland, Siberia, Iceland, and other “deathlike white realms.” Even before Jane receives the “interruption” she fears, the reader knows that the house is clearly not the place for a soul to grow and develop; rather it is a place where the soul will die.

With the introduction of the other inhabitants of the house, the reader sees why Jane is drawn to images of cold places and death. Coldness and death are all she has ever known. Three people who loved her have already died before the book even begins. Her father, a clergyman, and her mother, sister to the late Mr. Reed, had both died of typhus shortly after Jane was born. The other death was that of Jane’s kind uncle, Mr. Reed, the Master of Gateshead, who had loved Jane and promised to take care of her out of affection for his sister. The house is now run by
Mrs. Reed, arguably "the most unambiguously evil figure in the novel" (Williams, 21).

Mrs. Reed is, in many ways, the personification of Envy; every action she takes in the novel is an act of it. While she keeps her promise to her late husband to let Jane live at Gateshead, she hardly treats her as her own child (as she had also promised). She hates Jane for the kindness Mr. Reed had bestowed on her and is cruel to the child at every turn. Mrs. Reed "not only [uses] her husband's ghost to terrorize Jane in the red-room, while seeming herself to hold him in superstitious dread...but she also thwarts her husband's wish that Jane should be treated kindly, just as she later tries to prevent Jane's other uncle, John Eyre, from doing her any good" (Williams, 21). Mrs. Reed herself tells Jane of this envy and hatred as she is dying. Her confession to Jane is honest, but hardly in good faith. She confesses that she had told Mr. Eyre that Jane had died only when she is on her death bed. She wanted to rid herself of her "burden" of guilt, much as Christian wanted to do in Pilgrim's Progress. When she tells Jane of the letter from her uncle, Mrs. Reed may have righted the wrong that was done to Jane, but her explanation for why she hadn't been honest in the first place shows just how ingrained her envy is. "I disliked you too fixedly and thoroughly ever to lend a hand in lifting you to prosperity," she tells Jane. "I took my revenge: for you to be adopted by your uncle, and placed in a state of ease and comfort was what I could not endure. I wrote to him: I said ... Jane Eyre was dead. You were born, I think, to be my torment" (Brontë, 241).

It is fitting that in a house run by Envy (Mrs. Reed), Wrath (John Reed) would also play an important role. John is a fourteen-year-old school boy who is
"large" and "stout" with "dingy and unwholesome skin," a "spacious visage," and "heavy limbs and large extremities." We are told that he gorges himself at dinner and that "he had not much affection for his mother and sisters" (Brontë, 12). He is prone to violence, and readers are likely to remember him when they read about Bertha Mason later on in the novel. Her large, athletic frame and "discolored" face, as well as her violent forms of expression are reminiscent of John Reed. Judith Williams also points out that, like Bertha, he possibly possesses "misused or perverted sexuality" rather than simple maleness (Williams, 21). The last, and perhaps most striking, similarity between the two characters is that they both end their own lives after threatening the lives of their caretakers. Bertha tries to kill Rochester, first by burning him in his bed and then by burning the house down. She succeeds indirectly in causing him to lose a hand and his sight. Mrs. Reed, while delusional, says that John "threatens [her]--he continually threatens [her] with his own death, or [hers]" (Brontë, 234). While he did not directly attempt to take his mother's life, it is made clear that John's death was a major factor in Mrs. Reed's illness, and in her subsequent death.

Even at such a young age, John Reed is a tyrant. Jane describes his physical tyranny in chapter one:

He bullied me and punished me ... continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near.... all at once, without speaking, he struck suddenly and strongly.... [A]ccustomed to [his] abuse, I never had an idea of replying to it; my care was how to endure the blow that would certainly follow the insult" (Brontë, 12).
He is not only violent, but calculatingly so. Before he strikes her with the book in the first chapter of the novel, he tells her that he will “teach [her] to rummage through [his] bookshelves: for they are [his]” (Bronte, 13). It is clear that she is to receive a punishment of some sort and that he has the authority to administer it. He then tells her to “go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows” (Bronte, 13). He wants to be certain to hurt just Jane and not anything of value in his house. Jane’s reaction, after he hit her hard enough to make her bleed, is to fight back both physically and verbally, something any good Victorian female was never supposed to do. Her “passion” is what gets her sent to the red-room. When she calls John Reed a “wicked and cruel boy,” a “murderer,” and a “slave driver” (Bronte, 13), Jane has seen and recognized evil (Williams, 23). Her mistake was to fight Wrath with wrath, which leads to the first main crisis of the novel.

An aura of death hangs over Gateshead. When Jane lives there as a child, it is the death of Jane’s uncle; when she returns to it later, Wrath (John) has turned against himself and ended his own life. Envy (Mrs. Reed) is unsuccessfully trying to repent on her deathbed. Jane’s other two cousins, Eliza and Georgiana, are also living through their own kinds of death.

Eliza is the personification of Judgment. She has a schedule that she follows every waking moment of her day and “no weather ever prevented the punctual discharge of what she considered to be her devotional duties; fair or foul, she went to church thrice every Sunday, and as often on weekdays as there were prayers” (Bronte, 239). Though Jane “never saw a busier person than [Eliza]
seemed to be," it was as though Eliza were just doing all these things to have something to do, and that she thought everyone else should live life in the same manner. After the death of her mother, Eliza chooses a live burial in a French convent (Williams, 22). For someone who chooses to live life in devotion to God, her hatred for her sister is astonishing. "You had no right to be born," Eliza tells Georgiana, "for you make no use of your life" (Brontë, 238). She calls her sister a "fat, weak, puffy, useless thing" and assures her that "after [her] mother's death, [she] washes her hands of[Georgiana]: from the day [Mrs. Reed's] coffin is carried to the vault in Gateshead Church, [they] will be as separate as if [they] had never known each other" (Brontë, 238).

Georgiana Reed is really no better than her sister, and is the personification of Emotion. She "chatters nonsense to her canary bird by the hour" (Brontë, 235), falls asleep during the day over novels, and talks endlessly. Georgiana's conversations always run on the same themes: "herself, her loves, and woes.... [S]he never once adverted either to her mother's illness, or her brother's death, or the present gloomy state of the family prospects" (Brontë, 236). She has become nothing but a shell of a person, not really caring about anything of importance, and she hates Eliza as much as Eliza hates her. "Everyone knows you are the most selfish, heartless creature in existence," Georgiana tells Eliza after Eliza's outburst. "I had a specimen of [your hatred for me] before in the trick you played me about Lord Edwin Vere: you could not bear me to be raised above you, to have a title, to be received into circles where you dare not show your face" (Brontë, 238). While we later learn that Georgiana made "an advantageous match with a
wealthy worn-out man of fashion" (Brontë, 244), we are well aware that she will never be a happy woman.

Jane learns a great deal while she is trapped in the House of Death a second time with her two cousins. She watches Judgment and Emotion play out a scene which resembles a psychomachia. "True, generous feeling is made small account of by some; but here were two natures rendered, the one intolerably acrid, the other despicably savourless for the want of it," says Jane. "Feeling without judgment is a washy drought indeed; but judgment untempered by feeling is too bitter and husky a morsel for human deglutition" (Brontë, 239). It is no wonder that Jane, after living around death for a month, appears different to Rochester when she returns to Thornfield. "Good angels be my guard!" Rochester exclaims. "She comes from the other world -- from the abode of people who are dead; and tells me so when she meets me alone here in the gloaming" (Brontë, 247). Death very clearly lives at Gateshead, and never is this made more clear than in the red-room scene.

The red-room was the chamber in which Jane's uncle died. It had been kept locked up since his death, with all of his belongings exactly where he had left them. It is both a shrine to him and a tomb. In this tomb Jane is forced to undergo her first trial by ordeal. Esther Harding explains that "this trial by ordeal is a regular feature of the quest, for only the hero is destined to reach the goal, and the heroic quality is only engendered in the common man [sic] through the overcoming of difficulties" (Harding, 98). Williams claims that this ordeal in the red-room involves a symbolic death, and that Jane has "awakened in a place that appears to be hell: the first thing she sees is a 'terrible red glare, crossed with thick black bars'"
(Williams, 24). The room is dark, and the redness is described in detail: “pillars of mahogany,” were “hung with curtains of deep red damask.” The bed resembled a “tabernacle” in the center of the room, a house of worship for the dead. The carpet was red, a “crimson cloth” covered a table, the walls were pink, and all the furniture was mahogany (Brontë, 15).

Before Jane is left alone in this private hell, one of the servants, Miss Abbott, gives an indication of the kind of Christian upbringing Mrs. Reed is giving Jane. She says to Bessie, “God will punish her. He might strike her dead in the midst of her tantrums, and then where would she go?... Say your prayers Miss Eyre, when you are by yourself; for if you don’t repent, something bad may be permitted to come down the chimney and fetch you away” (Brontë, 15). Susan Gallagher explains that “from this emphasis on sin and punishment, we are not surprised that, as a child, Jane is afraid of the spiritual world and unable to recognize God’s loving care for her” (Gallagher, 64). Jane is right to yell out “Unjust, unjust!” when Envy and Wrath cruelly punish her in God’s name. In this dark, hellish womb “the germ of the person we are finally to know as Jane Eyre is born: a person determined to live, and to choose her life with dignity, integrity and pride” (Rich, 93). After this experience she is ready to begin her pilgrimage.

After Jane’s experience in the red-room she no longer enjoys the same things she used to. She can’t eat the tarts that Bessie gives her and can no longer be content with what little kindness Bessie shows her. Earlier in the story we learned that Jane read Gulliver’s Travels with pleasure, but now “when [she] turned over its leaves, and sought in its marvelous pictures the charm [she] had, till now, never failed to find — all was eerie and dreary; the giants were gaunt
goblins, the pygmies malevolent and fearful imps, Gulliver a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions” (Brontë, 23). Perhaps she is aware unconsciously that she has a long journey ahead of her and that she, too, will become a “most desolate wanderer.” Cynthia Linder appears to agree with this view: “At this point [Jane’s] feelings about her own situation are governing her attitude towards what she is reading, and the similarity between herself and Gulliver is too great to make the experience of reading pleasurable” (Linder, 37)

As a Soul, Jane requires love in order to be healthy. It is this unmet need that becomes to her a call much like Christian’s Bible is a call for him to start his pilgrimage. The correlation becomes clear when in chapter three Jane tells us, “I stood there, a wretched child enough, whispering to myself over and over again ‘what shall I do, what shall I do?’” (Brontë, 40). Her words echo those of Christian: the Dreamer sees Christian “open the Book, and Read therein; and as [Christian] read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, ‘what shall I do?’” (Bunyan, 8). As stated before, Jane’s pilgrimage was never meant to lead her to the Celestial City or even to a religious awakening, but rather to fulfillment. At Gateshead she would find nothing but death, and she would continue to be ruled over by Envy and Wrath. Jane wanted to live, so she took the only way out that was offered to her—school.

Jane’s Lowood experience really starts before she passes through the gates of Gateshead. It is fitting that she meets Mr. Brocklehurst in the opulent settings of Gateshead and not the dreariness of Lowood School. He is, after all, a wealthy man, and a man who considers fear to be the most important element of a Christian education. Robert Keefe further explains that “like all of Jane’s male
enemies, Brocklehurst, a combination of the devil and Red Riding Hood’s wolf, is a devourer. He would swallow his enemy whole if he could” (Keefe, 108). From Jane’s description of Brocklehurst we see that “the grossness of [his] soul is reflected in the repulsiveness of his face” (Martin, 67). She says that he is a “black pillar.” He is a “straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug: the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital” (Brontë, 33). He towers above Jane, and he scrutinizes her as if searching for the evil he expects to see in her soul. What he may have found on his own is of no importance because Mrs. Reed has already troubled herself to give Jane a character. She says to Mr. Brocklehurst, in Jane’s presence, “I should be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, and above all, to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit” (Brontë, 34).

Brocklehurst’s Calvinist attitude and, to the modern reader especially, his cruelty are apparent immediately. He does not question Jane about this accusation of deceit, but instead says, “Little girl, here is a book entitled The Child’s Guide. Read it with prayer, especially ‘an account of the awfully sudden death of ... a naughty child addicted to deceit’” (Brontë, 37). J. Jeffrey Franklin cites the following as evidence of Brocklehurst’s Calvinism: “his reliance on the doctrines of innate human corruption (or original sin) and of strict body/soul duality, particularly, it seems, in the case of young women” (Franklin, 463). His cruelty is immediately apparent; his extreme hypocrisy appears later, and is best covered while discussing Lowood itself.

By the time Brocklehurst has left Gateshead Jane has found an inner strength she didn’t know she possessed. Despite her fear of Brocklehurst, she
realizes that school is where she must go. Jane cannot leave, however, without first making it clear to her “benefactress” how unfairly she has been treated during her stay at Gateshead. Jane “dimly perceived that [Mrs. Reed] was already obliterating hope from the new phase of existence which she destined [Jane] to enter” (Brontë, 36). It is fitting that Jane react with wrath at this point: Wrath is such a potent force at Gateshead, and Jane has yet to pass through the gate and leave it behind her. “I am glad you are no relation of mine,” Jane tells Mrs. Reed. “The very thought of you makes me sick.... [Y]ou think I have no feelings and can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity.” As she says these things her “soul began to expand, to exalt, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, [she] ever felt.” Jane recognizes that deceit is not her fault at all, but that of her aunt. Once she has told her aunt of this recognition she has the strength to say “send me to school soon, Mrs. Reed” (Brontë, 39). She is ready to pass through the gate and begin the pilgrimage.
CHAPTER 3

LOWOOD: JANE'S VALLEY OF HUMILIATION

"Where else would a beast take a child but into a wood?" asks Sandra Gilbert, referring of course to Mr. Brocklehurst. "[He] came with news of hell to remove Jane to Lowood, the aptly named school of life where orphan girls are starved and frozen into proper Christian submission" (Gilbert, 344). The name Lowood suggests many things. A low wood could easily be interpreted as a swampy area -- a breeding ground for the lice, fleas, and mosquitoes which likely caused the typhus epidemic that killed forty-five out of the eighty pupils at the school. It can also mean a low place, a valley. There are two valleys in Pilgrim’s Progress, the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death; Brontë uses features of both in the Lowood chapters of Jane Eyre.

It is fitting that when Jane arrives in this low wood, "rain, wind, and darkness fill the air" (Brontë, 44). It is a sign of things to come that even the fire in the parlor let off an "uncertain light." As with Gateshead, it is quickly apparent that the school is not a healthy place to live. The girls all share a common mug at dinner, a sure way to pass around germs, and the dormitory is so cold that the basins of water the pupils use for washing freeze overnight. The first meal Jane shares with the other pupils of Lowood is a breakfast of burnt porridge. Jane attempts to eat it: "ravenous, and now very faint, I devoured a spoonful or two of my portion without thinking of its taste, but the first edge of hunger blunted, I perceived I had got in hand a nauseous mess: burnt porridge is almost as bad as
rotten potatoes" (Brontë, 48). Instead of being served something else instead, the girls all had to give thanks "for what [they] had not got" and begin their school day.

The school itself, dreary as it is, does offer Jane some opportunity for growth. She quickly learns that the aptly named Miss Temple, the superintendent of Lowood, is kind. In many ways Miss Temple becomes Jane's surrogate mother; she showers Jane with the love and encouragement which Mrs. Reed was supposed to give her. She is also the "catalyst to Helen's spiritual fire -- perhaps its setting or temple" (Williams, 26). Her role in the story is not just as temple or as mother, however. Her main role is that of Justice, and this means fighting the hypocrisy of the Brocklehursts of the world. Miss Temple personifies Justice in the scene where Jane is signaled out for humiliation by Brocklehurst. When he accuses Jane of deceit and makes her stand on a stool in the center of the room, it is Miss Temple who later tells Jane that "when a criminal is accused, he always has the right to speak in his own defense" (Brontë, 73). She listens to Jane's side of the story, as Brocklehurst never did, and she writes to Mr. Lloyd to find out if what Jane had said was true. Hearing the story confirmed, she publicly clears Jane of all charges. Miss Temple also tries to be just by fighting with Brocklehurst and the school board over the poor clothing and lack of food the children were given. It took a typhus epidemic to convince them, but she did try, and she gave the children food of her own whenever she could.

The second bright part of Jane's life at Lowood is her friendship with Helen Burns. Helen teaches Jane that negative passions need to be restrained, and that the soul can not really be free if past grudges are held onto. At ten, Jane can not follow this example, but Helen practices what she preaches. When Miss
Scatchard flogs Helen, “not a tear rose to [her] eye ... not a feature of her pensive face altered its ordinary expression” (Brontë, 56). Jane later tells Helen that “if [Miss Scatchard] had struck [her] with that rod, [she] should get it from her hand: [She] should break it under her nose” (Brontë, 58). Helen calmly tells Jane that it had been her duty to submit, that “it is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you; and, besides, the Bible bids us return good for evil.” Helen’s words echo those of the Interpreter when he explains the importance of suffering to Christiana: “Behold the Sheep was quiet, and took her death patiently.... [Y]ou must learn of this Sheep, to suffer: And to put up [with] wrongs without murmurings and complaints” (Bunyan, 166). It is no wonder that Jane felt Helen “considered things by a light invisible to [Jane’s] eyes” (Brontë, 58).

Helen’s maturity and other-worldly quality may be partially explained by her name. The name “Helen” translates to “light” or “bright.” She is a light in that she lives like a true Christian, not like the other “Christians” we have seen thus far in the book. Both “light” and “bright” are also associated with the intellect, and Helen is certainly an intelligent and insightful girl (Imlay, 131). The surname Burns evokes many images, most obviously the association with fire, an element often referred to in the book as a symbol of passion. Helen is passionate, but what she desires is not earthly in any way. Imlay and Williams both see Helen as a burning sacrifice, much in the same way Faithful was a burning sacrifice at Vanity Fair. After all, Helen is “consumptive, soon to die, burning with other-
worldly intensity” (Rich, 94). Sandra Gilbert views Helen in a completely different way:

Helen ... does no more than bear her fate.... Burning with spiritual passion, she also burns with anger, leaving her things ‘in shameful disorder,’ and dreams of freedom in eternity.... [W]hen typhus decimates Lowood, Helen is carried off by her own fever for liberty, as if her body, like Jane’s mind, were a ‘ridge of lighted heath ... devouring’ the dank valley in which she has been caged (Gilbert, 346).

Critics argue whether Jane’s friendship with Helen Burns was healthy. Those who read the book literally are likely to see Helen as having a positive influence on Jane. Those who read allegorically, like myself, see Helen, like Faithful from Pilgrim’s Progress, as having major flaws in her character which prevent her from having a complete soul. Robert Keefe explains:

Most critics have accepted Charlotte’s idealized portrait of her sister [Maria] at face value, seeing Helen’s influence as beneficial to Jane’s development. The issue is more complicated than that, however; certainly the little girl is a saint, but that very sainthood is an insidious threat to Jane. For Helen Burns is a creature in love with death (Keefe, 98).

Helen is not equipped with what she needs to make it through an earthly life; in this way she is also like Faithful. She will accompany Soul through the Valley of
Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but she will not make it much further. In Pilgrim's Progress, Faithful "went so fast that he missed the Interpreter's House and the Palace Beautiful and did not stop to learn the lessons they could teach" (Harding, 201). In his rush to death he never learned how to live, and this is much the same case with Helen Burns. It is clear that Helen understands this much when she says to Jane shortly before she dies, "By dying young I shall escape great sufferings. I had not qualities or talents to make my way very well in the world; I should have been continually at fault" (Brontë, 84). Helen lets herself be the martyr, willingly submitting to everything the Valley of Humiliation chooses to subject her to, and for this she is rewarded with the early death she seeks.

Healthy friendship or not, through her conversations with Helen, Jane begins to understand what it is that she is seeking on her pilgrimage. Thinking everyone would believe him, Jane is devastated after Brocklehurst accuses her of deceit in front of the entire school. Helen attempts to console her by speaking to her in a voice of spiritual wisdom: "If all the world hated you, and believed you wicked, while your own conscience approved you, and absolved you from guilt, you would not be without friends" (Brontë, 72). If Jane's quest was to lead her to the Celestial City, then these words may have been a bigger comfort, but even at this young age Jane understands that her pilgrimage will not lead her on the same path as her friend. "If others don't love me, I would rather die than live," Jane says; "to gain some real affection ... I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest ..." (Brontë, 72). Helen calms Jane with words of
death. “Life is soon over,” Helen assures her, “and death is so certain an entrance to happiness” (Brontë, 72).

Lowood did not have to be a Valley of Humiliation. It was not a pleasant place, but it did not have to be a miserable one either. What made it miserable was the fact that Hypocrisy was in charge, in the person of Mr. Brocklehurst. Both Jane and Christian have a major foe to fight in their respective Valleys of the Shadow of Death. Brocklehurst is the Apollyon figure in Jane Eyre. “He is a devil quoting scripture,” Robert Keefe explains, “a beast who cloaks his action in the role of Christian ministry” (Keefe, 109). Like Christian, Jane meets her Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation. Apollyon, like Brocklehurst, never failed to remind pilgrims about their part in original sin and how they had already failed their Lord with their vanity and lusts of the flesh. In Brocklehurst’s mind wanting an edible meal and warm clothes was lust of the flesh, as was possessing naturally curling hair. “We are not to conform to nature!” is the excuse he gives for tormenting the girls in his care.

Adrienne Rich speaks of Brocklehurst’s hypocrisy in this way: “He is the embodiment of class and sexual double standards and of the hypocrisy of the powerful, using religion, charity, and morality to keep the poor in their place and to repress and humiliate the young women over whom he was set in charge” (Rich, 94). Repress and humiliate them he certainly did, and all in the name of God. Whenever Justice (Miss Temple) would protest his treatment of the girls he would say, “Madam, I have a Master to serve whose kingdom is not of this world: my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly
apparel” (Brontë, 67). With this argument, he ordered haircuts for those girls with topknots or curly hair; these were luxuries he felt would lead to lusts of the flesh. In order to make it clear that Brocklehurst was the personification of hypocrisy, Brontë chooses at this point to introduce members of Brocklehurst’s own family. Jane describes the family in the following way: “They ought to have come a little sooner to have heard his lecture on dress for they were splendidly attired in velvet, silk and furs ... and from under their [the daughter’s hats] fell a protrusion of light tresses, elaborately curled” (Brontë, 67). Even at ten Jane could see his sin very clearly, and it is in this way that “the little pilgrim defeats him” (Keefe, 109).

Jane survived her Lowood experience despite being made literally to walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death during the typhus epidemic. The epidemic turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Jane and the other pupils who were not infected because “inquiry was made into the origin of the scourge, and by degrees various facts came out which excited public indignation to a high degree.... [T]he discovery produced a result mortifying to Mr. Brocklehurst, but beneficial to the institution” (Brontë, 86). A better building was built, the food was improved, new clothing was made, and the funds for the school were handled by a committee. Jane took advantage of the changes and received the best education the institution could give her. The education gave her the means for autonomy that many young women of the time would not have had offered to them.

Jane missed the purity and companionship which Helen had brought to her life, but learned to control her negative passions as Helen had, developing her own spirituality along the way. It was not until Miss Temple, or Justice, married and
was consequently “lost” to Jane, that she felt stifled at Lowood. Her restlessness is sudden and acute:

I imagined myself only to be regretting my loss, and thinking how to repair it; but when my reflections were concluded ... I had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple—or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been breathing in her vicinity—and now I was left in my natural element, and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions. It did not seem as if a prop were withdrawn, but rather as if a motive were gone: it was not the power to be tranquil which failed me, but the reason for tranquillity was no more (Brontë, 87).

Esther Harding explains this transformation and the reason why Jane must take action to leave Lowood at this point: “After a certain degree of understanding has been reached it is not possible to go back to the old way of living. One must accept the responsibility for one’s life at the new level of consciousness” (Harding, 88). Jane has reached that degree of understanding; she has learned all she can learn at Lowood, she has gained teaching experience, and it is now time for her to continue her journey toward self-fulfillment. Instead of asking what to do, as she had as a child, she now asks what she wants. What she wants is to be found at Thornfield Hall, and so that is where she must go next.
CHAPTER 4
THORNFIELD: HOUSE OF TWIN PASSIONS

The Thornfield episodes of the novel are truly the heart of the story. In fact, there have been several rewrites of *Jane Eyre* which cut out the rest of Brontë's tale. Doing so reduces the work to pure romantic fiction; it is still a good love story on its own, but it is missing much of what makes the love plot so rich.

Certainly without the rest of the novel an allegorical reading would be much more difficult, if not impossible. Brontë structured *Jane Eyre* in such a way that Thornfield rests at the center (or heart) of Jane's journey. It is here that she finds her heart, and her love, but she has many more tests to endure before she can fully possess either.

It is night-time when Jane first arrives at Thornfield. She feels she has found a safe haven in the house with the kind-hearted Mrs. Fairfax, whom she mistakes as the mistress of the estate. It is the first of many occasions when things will not be as they appear at Thornfield. Jane is not immediately comfortable in the house, though she minimizes the effect of the "eerie impression made by that wide hall, the dark and spacious staircase, and that long, cold gallery" (Brontë, 101). Instead she focuses on her own bedchamber, which she finds to be more than comfortable. She admires the papered walls and carpeted

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floor and assures the reader that her "couch held no thorns in it that night;[her] solitary room no fears" (Brontë, 101, emphasis mine). Sandra Gilbert says that Jane's reaction to her new environment was one she would have expected from *Christian* when he entered the *Palace Beautiful* (Gilbert, 348). While Jane believes that "a fairer era of life was beginning" for her, the fact that she says that the couch held no thorns on *that particular night* leads one to believe that Jane already sensed that this was going to be a place where thorns would grow and would prick her.

There are thorns at Thornfield, just as the name implies, yet there are also flowers. Literally, there are the "blossoms and thorns of the magic may-trees standing in front of the house" (Imlay, 138). Symbolically, the name is also fitting because, in a Biblical sense, it is here that Jane "is to be crowned with thorns, she is to be cast out into a desolate field, and most important she is to confront the demon of rage who has haunted her since her afternoon in the red-room" (Gilbert, 347). The most significant thorn in the house comes in the form of Bertha, the madwoman in the attic. This thorn is not apparent to Jane at first, perhaps because she is ignorant of what it is that Bertha represents. While Lowood was a miserable place under Hypocrisy (Mr. Brocklehurst), Thornfield must also be a miserable place under Lust (Bertha).

There are two passions at war in the house, one good and one evil: one is Mr. Rochester, seen in the physical red-room (the drawing room) and one is Bertha, hidden, locked into the psychological red-room on the third floor. The passions are connected as husband and wife should be, until the death of one of them. As Williams explains, "Rochester has power ... because he appeals to a far deeper
level of imagination in Jane than the mere fantasy of the Byronic hero, just as Bertha’s power is more powerful than any of the metaphorical power in Jane’s daydreams. [T]hese two powers literally converge on Jane from both directions—without and within” (Williams, 32). Rochester may be master of the house, but Lust (Bertha) rules from her third floor throne. She punishes her husband first, and as he gets closer to Jane, she begins to punish Jane as well. The more Jane allows herself to have lustful feelings for Rochester, the more power Bertha has over her and the more danger Jane is in.

The first two inhabitants of Thornfield we are introduced to are Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper, and Adéle Varens, Jane’s new pupil. Jane thought that Mrs. Fairfax was the “neatest imaginable little elderly lady, in widow’s cap, black silk gown and snowy muslin apron.” Our first glimpse of her is sitting in a chair knitting with a cat at her feet. “Nothing, in short, could be wanting to complete the beau-ideal of domestic comfort,” thought Jane, and we learn that she mistook the grandmotherly figure in the widow’s cap to be her employer (Brontë, 98). In Jane’s naiveté this mistake is easy to understand, although it is significant in showing us how much Jane still needs to learn about the world. She is young, poor, and vulnerable—ideal prey for the twin passions.

The next inhabitant we meet is Adéle Varens, and again there is some confusion. At first Jane thinks that Adéle is “Miss Fairfax” since it would make sense for her pupil to be the daughter of the mistress of the house. When she learns that the child is named Varens, Jane’s confusion grows, though she thinks that it would be impolite to ask what the connection was between the Fairfax and Varens families. Adéle’s identity is never fully revealed to the reader. Her mother
was a French opera dancer, and there is a possibility that Rochester was her biological father; however, the father could also be another of Céline's lovers, as it is evident, at least from Mr. Rochester's point of view, that she had more than one. Regardless of her parentage, she is kept at Thornfield and raised in physical comfort and emotional deprivation. Perhaps it is simply this loneliness which makes her behave so foolishly. She knows that her mother got attention when she performed, and so Adéle performs. Her only comforts are pretty dresses and gifts from Mr. Rochester. As Sandra Gilbert points out, part of what makes Jane uncomfortable with Adéle, and indeed with all of high society, is that they are in the realm of *Vanity Fair* which reminds her of her days at Gateshead (Gilbert, 350).

Adéle is Jane's first encounter with *Vanity Fair* at Thornfield, and she is uncomfortable with Adéle's perception that life is a performance. Adéle is “perhaps seven or eight years old, slightly built, with a pale small-featured face, and a redundancy of hair falling in curls to her waist” (Brontë, 103). Jane notices and is bothered by this since the only other girls she has seen with a “redundancy” of hair were the Reed sisters and the daughters of Mr. Brocklehurst. Adéle introduces herself by singing a song from an opera. Jane describes the song:

It was the strain of a forsaken lady, who, after bewailing the perfidy of her lover, calls pride to her aid; desires her attendants to deck her in the brightest jewels and richest robes, and resolves to meet the false one that night at a ball and prove to him, by the gaiety of her demeanor, how little his desertion had affected her (Brontë, 105).
When we do learn of Rochester's broken affair with Céline Varens, we see that Jane was correct when she said that the choice of song (for Adéle in particular) was in very bad taste "for an infant singer."

It is fitting that, soon after we meet Adéle, we get our first hint of Bertha. After all, if Rochester is indeed Adéle's father, as he very well may be, then Bertha is the betrayed wife. Adéle was the product of lust, and Jane had been exposed to her all morning, so her awareness of the presence of Lust is heightened. Ironically, Bertha's and Helen's names carry the same meaning. However, Bertha's form of "brightness" is best interpreted as flame which she uses to set her husband's bed, and later the house, on fire. Her last name, Mason, suggests "heaviness, stoniness, the house of the soul, i.e., the body" (Imlay, 46). Laurence Lerner argues that Bertha is not really a character at all in the book, but rather a figure. She only appears "for a dozen pages out of four hundred and fifty, is hinted at for about twice as many, and ... does not speak a single word" (Lerner 280). Imlay agrees that Bertha is not intended to be read as a person. Instead, Bertha personifies "passion beyond the reach of reason [Lust], or insanity; and Rochester attempts in fear and loathing, in which self-hatred is unavoidably bound up, to confine and subdue her" (Imlay, 47).

As her surname suggests, Bertha is a large woman, and as we see when Rochester wrestles with her after the aborted wedding, she is nearly as strong as her husband. There is something almost androgynous about her unusual size and strength. Jane tells her readers that Bertha looks like a vampire, which is fitting considering the way she attacked her brother, saying she would "drain his heart"
(Brontë, 214). John Maynard agrees and adds that “her peculiarly sexual form of violence follows the general definition of Bertha as sexual extreme” (Maynard, 107). Her lustful violence takes on other forms as well. She tries to burn her husband to death in his own bed, which certainly lends itself to a sexual interpretation. She also tears Jane’s wedding veil the night before the event is to take place because “as the real Mrs. Rochester, she prohibits the marriage, even as she identifies the veil with both her and Jane.... [T]he veil retains its traditional significance as a hymenal symbol of the bride’s giving herself to the groom” (Maynard, 108). Her ripping of the veil could be seen as a warning of the dangers of sexual intercourse (especially in the Victorian era when women were not supposed to enjoy sex) or as a symbolic rape. It would be fitting for Lust not to pay attention to gender differences in her victims.

We do not actually see Bertha at this point in the novel. Instead we see Grace Poole, the woman who was hired to keep Bertha subdued. Directly before we hear Bertha’s laugh, Jane is climbing down from the attic and she remarks that she “lingered in the long passage...separating the front and back rooms of the third story: narrow, low, and dim, with only one little window at the far end, and looking with two rows of small black doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard’s castle” (Brontë, 110). A careful reader going back to the book for a second time will immediately get the connection between Rochester and Bluebeard. While Rochester did not kill Bertha, as Bluebeard had done to his wives, he does keep her a secret, locked up in what we imagine is sometimes a bloody chamber, while trying to secure another wife for himself. It is after Jane makes this observation that Brontë allows the reader to hear Bertha’s “curious laugh.” After the laugh,
Jane is led into a third case of mistaken identity, though this time it is Mrs. Fairfax's fault. Jane believes that the keeper (Grace Poole) is the patient. Grace Poole is Lust's keeper, and it is because she is not always a careful keeper that Bertha can have such power in the house. Part of what makes this case of mistaken identity so ironic is that the keeper's name is Grace. God's "grace" would temper madness, it would not be the madness itself. God's "grace" would also allow people their own free will; as Grace does with Bertha when she gets drunk on porter. Jane is told by Mrs. Fairfax that Grace Poole was the one who had the strange laugh and so "when strange events begin to occur -- the midnight fire in Rochester's bed, the attack on Mason -- she believes that Grace Poole is again responsible. This unknowing conflation of madwoman and madwoman's keeper makes Grace Poole, in Jane Eyre's eyes, "that living enigma" (Lawson, 46). It is also interesting to note that the only time Grace speaks at any length in the novel is to "lecture Jane on the ways of Providence" (Lawson, 46). When Grace tells Jane that "a deal of people ... are for trusting all to Providence; but I say Providence will not dispense with the means, though he often blesses them when they are used discreetly" (Brontë, 157), Jane takes this warning as a threat. In reality, Grace is giving some very good advice -- bolt the door against Lust, whether that lust be personified in Bertha, Rochester, or within Jane herself.

The passions which Rochester and Bertha represent are like two sides of the same coin. In her madness, Bertha (Lust) can not survive without the help of Rochester (Love). He could easily have let her die at Ferndean or have left her to fend for herself in Jamaica, but he did not. His actions imply that he was simply
too kind to abandon her, or allegorically, that Rochester was not yet free of the lustful side of his own nature and so he was not ready to let her die. This would appear to be the case, because even when he is in Europe and she in England he is still ruled by her. He has a pattern of looking for love through lust and can never be satisfied by it. He looked for women who would flatter him into believing himself physically attractive, and was disappointed every time because all they wanted was his money. Adéle was likely created by his lust, and perhaps it is this reminder of Bertha, and not of Céline, which made him dislike being in her presence. It would also explain why Rochester has the child live at Thornfield rather than at school or at one of his other homes.

Rochester is such a complicated character that many critics either downplay his importance or portray him as a domineering, cruel, patriarchal tyrant. An allegorical reading does not allow for these interpretations. The most important thing to remember when trying to understand Rochester is that he is not supposed to represent a psychologically rounded character; he is merely a concept, much in the way that Bertha is a concept. If one views him as the personification of love then all his actions make sense. He does not refer to Jane as a bird, or an elf, or his little mustard seed to belittle her, rather he does it because it is only natural for him to speak metaphorically. Poetry is the language of love, and so he speaks poetically (even Shakespearean-like at times) in regular conversations. The psychological games he plays with Jane can certainly be interpreted as cruel, but it is easy to forgive him when we realize that Love didn't know how else to make his soul-mate return his affection. Rochester himself says
that it is impossible to feel jealousy without ever feeling love, so he tries to create jealousy in her.

It is interesting that Brontë chose to make Love physically unattractive, or at least conventionally unattractive, for nineteenth-century British standards. (We tend to find the dark, brooding characters devastatingly attractive now). This was done to emphasize it was Rochester’s inner self that attracted Jane. Soul would not be content to love just a handsome shell, as is later proved at Moor House. We grow to find Love as attractive as Jane does. He is stern and unsmiling when we meet him, and over time we come to see into “his great, dark ... very fine eyes” (Brontë, 134). With Jane we see “Mr. Rochester smile -- his stern features [soften]; his eye [grow] both brilliant and gentle, its ray both scorching and sweet” (Brontë, 177). As Love works his magic on the reader through Jane, it becomes impossible to see him as anything but attractive. How can Love be anything else?

Brontë added yet another interesting characteristic to Love. It is easy to see Rochester as simply a Byronic hero -- as many critics and readers have done since the novel’s publication. He is dark, brooding, sexually liberated, and lame (in the end). Most importantly he has an “error” in his past which, he feels, dooms him to an eternity of loneliness and hell on Earth. Taking all this into account, some readers see Rochester as Byronic and nothing else. It is likely that Brontë was still influenced by Byron when she was writing Jane Eyre, as it is well known she was in her earlier writing. However, she was also an admirer of Bunyan, and Rochester is very much like a minor, yet important, figure in Pilgrim’s Progress as well: the man in the cage at the Interpreter’s House.
In *Pilgrim’s Progress* Christian comes to a place called the *Interpreters House*, where he sees a man locked into an iron cage. Allegorically, the cage doesn’t really exist—despair is his real cage and “the essence of ‘the unpardonable sin’ is despair, for despair prevents the sinner from asking for forgiveness. The voluntary rejection of grace, with the inevitable consequence of damnation, was a conventional interpretation of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” (Butler, 36).

The reader can begin to see the resemblance between Rochester and the *Man in the Iron Cage* as early as the second conversation Jane and Rochester have in the drawing room:

“You would say, I should have been superior to my circumstances ... but you see I was not. When fate wronged me, I had not the wisdom to remain cool: I turned desperate; then I degenerated. Now, when any vicious simpleton excites my disgust with by his paltry ribaldry, I can not flatter myself that I am any better than he: I am forced to confess that he and I are on a level. I wish I had stood firm — God knows I do! Dread remorse when you are tempted to err, Miss Eyre: remorse is the poison of life.”

“Repentance is said to be its cure, sir.”

“It is not its cure. Reformation may be its cure; and I could reform — I have strength yet for that — if — but where is the use of thinking of it, hampered, burdened, cursed as I am? Besides, since happiness is irrevocably denied me, I have a right to get pleasure out of life: and I will get it, cost what it may” (Brontë, 139).
We see from this passage that Rochester thinks he is cursed and that it is no use to repent because he is simply doomed. Here is a similar passage in *Pilgrim's Progress* when Christian is having a discussion with the Man in the Iron Cage:

*Christian:* For what did you bring yourself into this condition?  
*Man:* For the Lusts, Pleasures, and Profits of this World; in the enjoyment of which, I did then promise myself much delight: but now even every one of those things also bite me, and gnaw me like a burning worm.  
*Christian:* But canst thou not now repent and turn?  
*Man:* God hath deprived me repentance; his Word gives me no encouragement to believe; yea, himself hath shut me up in this Iron Cage: nor can all the men in the World let me out. O Eternity! Eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet in Eternity? (Bunyan, 29).

Reading these two passages, it's easy to see how similar they are. Rochester is in the *Iron Cage* himself because of Lust (Bertha and her control over him), Pleasure (the only pleasure he can get is in adultery), and Profit (not completely his fault -- it was his father and brother who had arranged the wedding for profit, but he is confined by his station in that he is expected to act in a certain way). He can not repent because he thinks that it is no use to do so. Life does not have to be so grim for either man since "in theory, [they] should be able to find the key of Promise, and have [their] 'unpardonable sin' pardoned. Bunyan firmly believed that all sins could be forgiven" (Butler, 37). Rochester's largest obstacle
to repentance is that he is married to Bertha. He had taken his vows with Lust and was unable to divorce her because she was insane. Elizabeth Imlay explains, "In the matter of morality, where Rochester ends Bertha begins. Good and Evil passions are incompatible, yet inextricably entangled. Sometimes her nature seems about to break out in him; he hovers on the brink of violence but never quite tips over" (Imlay, 27).

The natures of Love and Lust may collide at Thornfield, but Rochester never gives in completely. There are numerous references comparing him to a volcano on the verge of eruption, but Jane tempers his passions. He makes the mistake, however, of seeing her, rather than God, as his savior at this point; the salvation of his soul depends on her. When he says during their second long conversation, "I have received the pilgrim -- a disguised deity, as I verily believe. Already it has done me some good: my heart was a sort of charnel; it will now be a shrine" (Brontë, 140), she doesn't realize he is talking about her. Who else but Soul could he be talking about? His sentiments are made more clear when he calls her "my cherished preserver" (Brontë, 154) after she has put out the fire Bertha had set in her bedchamber.

Like Rochester, Jane has always been a passionate person. Her passion took the form of Wrath as a child (because Wrath was what she had been exposed to), but Lowood had cured her of that. Her attraction to Rochester had to happen—a passionate person would naturally want the passionate kind of love Mr. Rochester represented. Imlay draws many connections between Rochester and Eros, the Greek God of love. She explains Jane and Rochester's relationship by saying, "if there were no moral element in Rochester, he would not appreciate the
Soul as personified by Jane. Similarly, if Jane were not passionate, she would not understand the god of passion” (Imlay, 27). As well as being a passionate person, Jane is also a very moral person, and it is this sense of morality which eventually makes her leave Thornfield. Rochester would be a moral person (or at least more of one) if it weren’t for the fact that Lust was alive. He could hide her, locked up on the third floor, but she still existed, and he knew it. Until Bertha is no longer there, he is forced to deal with the effects of her nature on him, and indirectly, Jane too must fight with her.

Jane admits to the reader that she is in love with Rochester during the portion of the book where Rochester is trying to make Jane jealous by pretending to want to marry the beautiful, but shallow, Blanche Ingram. His cruel methods are understandable when we realize that Love didn’t know what else to do, but they cause feelings in Jane which are not healthy. While his behavior may indeed have made her realize that she loved him, it should also have been a warning to her. Robert Martin explains:

Rochester's treatment of Blanche is one of the least attractive aspects of his character, for he deliberately encourages her when he feels nothing in return. Emotionally he is indefensible, but thematically it may be said that he is treating her exactly as he does Célene, Giacinta, and Clara: he has yet to realize that women can be his equals, and he treats them as inferior beings whose interest in him is financial and who interest him only sensually (Martin, 101).
Jane does recognize this pattern after their engagement, which is one of the reasons she holds him at bay until the aborted marriage. If she recognizes it at this point she isn’t saying, but in any case she begins to despise herself in her own way, much as we suspect Bertha had learned to despise herself (particularly if we have read *Wide Sargasso Sea*). Jane admires the dresses the ladies wear and the high society of *Vanity Fair*, for this is certainly what it is. It is a place where love—if you can call it that—is sold to the highest bidder. Jane is not tempted by the wealth itself, and she has no desire to adorn herself with jewels. If she did, she would no longer be Jane Eyre, as she later tells Rochester. Jane does wish, however, that she had money so Rochester would see her as possible marriage material. She also envies Blanche’s beauty because she thinks, wrongly, that Rochester finds this important. Ironically, several critics have pointed out that there is a physical resemblance between Blanche, the one Rochester appears to intend to marry, and Bertha, the one he is actually married to. The *Vanity Fair* chapters of the novel may show Rochester acting out the story of his first marriage for Jane so he can later show her that he rejects that type of love. While Jane waits for this enlightenment from Rochester, she takes to punishing herself for the feelings she has for him. This self-punishment is most visible when she paints and contrasts a portrait of herself and a portrait of how she imagines Blanche to be:

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3 Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1966. *Wide Sargasso Sea* was a “retelling” of Bertha’s tale of her marriage with Mr. Rochester told from Bertha’s point of view.
Listen, then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence, draw in chalk your own picture ... without softening one defect: omit no harsh line ... write under it 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor and plain'.... [A]fterwards ... delineate carefully the loveliest face you can imagine ... remember the raven ringlets and oriental eye ... call it 'Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank. Whenever ... you should chance to fancy Mr. Rochester thinks well of you, take out these two pictures and compare them: say 'Mr. Rochester might probably win that noble lady's love.... Is it likely he would waste a serious thought on this indigent and insignificant plebeian?' (Brontë, 163).

Despite the interference of the Ingrams and Mr. Mason, or perhaps because of it, Jane's intimacy grows with Mr. Rochester. As it grows Jane finds herself thinking of him as a sort of deity, and this is when she must fight the hardest against her own feelings of Lust. After all, the closer Jane gets to Rochester, the closer she gets to Bertha. Imlay attempts to explain part of Jane's perception of Rochester as deity by discussing his appearance:

When Charlotte Brontë gave Rochester his dark good looks, his rugged features, his 'unusual breadth of chest,' his long strong arms and gloomy brows...she was deliberately endowing Rochester with the multiple characteristics of a primitive and complicated deity...the lameness, the blindness, the rock and fire, muscular figure, and the mingling of maturity, impetuosity, and defiance (Imlay, 23).
She further points out that not only could Rochester represent Eros, but also Vulcan, one of Eros’s possible fathers. The physical resemblance is certainly there: “Vulcan was represented as ...blowing with a nervous arm the fires of his forges. His breast was hairy, and his forehead was blackened with smoke...his wife is represented as laughing at his deformities, and mimicking his lameness to gain the smiles of her lovers” (Imlay, 21). We will remember here that Célene, Rochester’s mistress, “waxed rather brilliant on [his] personal defects – deformities she termed them” (Brontë, 147).

The above associations with primitive deities certainly do appear in Rochester’s character, but the association is more than that. While Helen Burns was fulfilled by thoughts of heaven and the rewards of the afterlife, Jane can not be. She can be fulfilled only by Love, and in this sense she becomes a pilgrim of Love, and not of God. Once she has found love within herself she can’t bear to let it go. “I have known you, Mr. Rochester [Love],” she says to him right before he proposes to her in the garden, “and it strikes me with terror and anguish to feel I absolutely must be torn from you forever. I see the necessity of departure; and it is like looking on the necessity of death” (Brontë, 255). She depends on the continuance of that love in order to survive; it has become her salvation.

Once the lovers were engaged Jane even admits idolatry: “My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion.... I could not, in those days, see God for his creature of whom I had made an idol” (Brontë, 276). Her response to these feelings was to keep him at a distance because she did
not want to think of him as a god. As if sensing her worshipful feelings, Rochester begins to respond to her like a deity. He often refers to her as a lamb in the novel, but it is only when she meets him in a rainstorm the night before their aborted wedding that he refers to himself directly as the shepherd. She has given up keeping him at a distance at this point, and he knows it: “This is you; who have been slippery as an eel this past month, and as thorny as a briar-rose? I could not lay a finger anywhere but I was pricked; and now I seem to have gathered up a stray lamb in my arms: you wandered out of the fold to seek your shepherd, did you?” (Brontë, 280). An allegorical reading makes evident Brontë’s use of blasphemy in these scenes. All through the Thornfield episodes there are warnings of what is to come, and that the love between Jane and Rochester, strong as it is, is not yet meant to be.

In subtle ways Bertha had made her presence known to Jane before Rochester’s arrival, but it is only after he returns home that the warnings begin in earnest. When we first see Rochester, the “brilliant black horse [he] rides is called Mesrour, a name borrowed from [The Arabian Nights].” Mesrour was an executioner who appeared in over fifty of the tales (Workman, 179). Already we have an image of death whom Rochester is riding. When Mesrour sees Jane, he slips on a patch of ice and tosses Rochester from his back. The fall is symbolic in several ways. First, Rochester’s behavior before meeting Jane was full of whirlwind affairs, travel, and high society — hardly the kind of behavior that would secure him a place in heaven. Jane will disrupt this lifestyle and make him want to escape from the sins of the past, so Mesrour (Death) tosses Rochester aside and lets him live a little longer. Rochester’s injury in the fall is also a foreshadowing of
things to come. This is only the first injury Rochester will suffer in his attempt to change, and it is minor compared to what he will experience later. The sprained ankle foreshadows the lameness with which he will later live.

The next foreshadowing images readers see are those of Jane’s paintings, which bring another allegory, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, into the novel. Rochester discusses Jane’s artwork with her at their first meeting in the drawing room. He is drawn to three of the paintings in particular, and all of them have some sort of reference to *Paradise Lost*.

The first watercolor was that of a shipwreck:

One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam; its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems, that I had touched with as brilliant tints as my palette could yield..... [S]inking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse ... a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn” (Brontë, 128).

Alan Bacon notes that the cormorant “finds a relevant parallel in *Paradise Lost* Book IV when Satan in the Garden of Eden sat ‘on the tree of life... sat like a cormorant; yet not true Life thereby regained, but sat devising Death to them who liv’d’” (Bacon, 64). He further notes that the cormorant in Jane’s picture could be seen as a symbol of temptation. Temptation could be in the form of Rochester, who would offer her such a bracelet, or Bertha, who would tear the bracelet from her corpse if she could.
The second painting is a vision of the Evening Star, which can be interpreted as an image of the love Jane will feel for Mr. Rochester. Bacon here notes that “in *Paradise Lost* the evening star also figures, and the love which it introduces is far from being innocent and harmless. In Book XI, the Archangel Michael shows Adam a vision of the future up to the time of the Flood.... [T]he love described there is a sinful love.” The picture then is linked to the first. The first picture depicted temptation in general and this one alludes to a specific temptation—that of Lust (Bacon, 65).

The third and final painting contains a colossal head which suggests both death and mourning:

Two thin hands, joined under the forehead and supporting it, drew up before the lower features a sable veil; a brow quite bloodless, white as bone, and an eye hollow and fixed, blank of meaning but for the glassiness of despair, alone were visible. Above the temples, amidst wreathed turban folds of black drapery, vague in its character and consistency as cloud, gleamed a ring of white flame (Brontë, 129).

Bacon notes that the Kingly Crown which is alluded to at the end of Jane’s description is a symbol of the “shape which shape had none.” Both of these images are from Book II of *Paradise Lost*:

Satan, searching for a way out of Hell, approaches the Gates. These are guarded by Sin on one side and Death, who is the son of Satan and Sin, on the
Other. Death is the subject of the painting because he had no distinguishable shape and he wore the Kingly Crown seen in Jane’s art. Jane’s pictures therefore represent, in order, temptation, sin and death (Bacon, 65).

At this point in the novel she has not encountered any of these, but as she says at the beginning of Chapter 21, “I never laughed at presentiments in my life, because I have had strange ones of my own” (Brontë, 222).

Dreams and images also play an important part in Jane’s journey during her stay at Thornfield, particularly after she and Rochester are engaged. The most obvious sign that the time for marriage was not right was the splitting of the chestnut tree on the very night Rochester proposes to her. The tree is split in half, as the lovers will be, but it is not separated at the root, for Soul and Love can never be fully divided and continue to live. During their engagement she has the first of a series of dreams that eerily foreshadow the future. The first dream is one where she is “following the windings of an unknown road; total obscurity environed [her]: rain pelted [her]” (Brontë, 283). The reader will remember that Jane will take this journey when she leaves Thornfield. She will wander on unknown roads by Whitcross and into Morton until she finds a house where the people are kind enough to let her in from the rain.

In the second dream Rochester is fleeing Thornfield, which has become a ruin, leaving her and an infant behind. She climbs to the roof to watch him leave and falls over the ledge. Not all of this comes true, at least not as it appears in her dream. In reality it is Jane who flees Thornfield, and Bertha who falls (jumps) from the ledge, but Thornfield does indeed become a ruin. Since the dream tells of
Bertha's future as well as Jane's, it is fitting that Bertha make her first physical appearance here when she rips Jane's bridal veil. The timing of her arrival allows Rochester to explain her away as half-dream-half-reality.

Jane's third dream causes Jane to leave Thornfield in the middle of the night after the wedding has been stopped. She dreams she is back in the red-room at Gateshead. Instead of being frightened by the light that she sees, this time she believes it is the moon telling her to flee temptation -- so she flees. Lust (Bertha) has been exposed -- Jane has seen her with her own eyes. Once her existence is known, Jane can no longer stay at Thornfield. She sees that Love and Lust are indeed married to each other, and that there is no room for her in that relationship. She determines to leave, the words of her conscience echoing those of Christ in St. Matthew: "Conscience turned tyrant, held Passion by the throat...[it told her] you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim, and you, the priest, to transfix it" (Brontë, 300). Conscience may have been telling Jane how she was going to feel without her other half; her heart was indeed "weeping blood" as Rochester put it, but it was Rochester himself who would become blind and crippled.

Rochester tried everything he could to make Jane stay with him. Love knew he could not really live without his Soul. He spoke calmly, explained how he came to keep Lust locked up in his house; he yelled, he cried, he accused her of never having loved him, he tried to talk her into living with him unwed, he even threatened violence emphatically enough that some critics see his actions as an attempted rape. However, Jane is never once frightened by him and knows how far she can push him. Rochester's love for Jane is apparent when he says:
I have for the first time found what I can truly love -- I have found you. You are my sympathy -- my better self -- my good angel -- I am bound to you with a strong attachment.... [A] solemn passion is conceived in my heart; it leans to you, draws you to my center and spring of life, wraps my existence around you--and kindling in pure powerful flame, fuses you and me in one (Brontë, 317).

However, the images he evokes are clearly those of sexual intercourse. The act would not have been a sin for them, even in Victorian times, without the existence of Lust, as they would have been married by the time this scene takes place, but Lust does exist and prevents the marriage. Jane realizes this and refuses to let Bertha have power over her. Jane dreams of the red-room that night because she had recognized the evil of Wrath at Gateshead and had to flee it, just as she has recognized the evil of Lust at Thornfield. Having recognized that evil, the Soul had to flee for self-preservation. Unfortunately, fleeing meant leaving a part of herself behind this time.
CHAPTER 5

MORTON: VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Jane’s trip from Thornfield to Whitcross is filled with imagery of Christian sacrifice. After Conscience has told her to pluck out her eye and cut off her hand in order to avoid sin, she must make the uphill journey to Whitcross, weighed down by a burden of guilt for having left Rochester in the condition he had been in. Her climb is reminiscent of Christ’s journey to Calvary (Imlay, 155). In actuality, Whitcross is not a place of death for Jane, rather one of decision; it is a crossroads from which several towns can be reached, and it is where Jane must decide whether to journey into the town of Morton or to die alone on the moors. If we understand Rochester as Love, then perhaps the choice really isn’t hers to make. If he is Love, Imlay explains:

it seems that he is not only suffering sympathetically with the soul, but perhaps that he is even doing some of the suffering for her. Without love the soul starves but without the soul love has lost its meaning, and consequently he suffers. It is love who suffers the most from human pain, it is he who loves, who suffers, and it is only love who can make the required sacrifice" (Imlay 155).

As Jane makes the trip to Morton, a name which can easily be interpreted as Death Town (Mort-town), she is, in fact, on the verge of starving to death. She
is starving physically, but she is also starving emotionally. Jane has reached the Slough of Dispond.

My night would have been blissful enough [sleeping on the moors], only a sad heart broke it. It plained of its gaping wounds, its inward bleeding, its riven chords. It trembled for Mr. Rochester and his doom: it bemoaned him with ceaseless longing: and, impotent as a bird with both wings broken, it still quivered its shattered pinions in vain attempts to seek him (Brontë, 326).

In *Pilgrim's Progress* Evangelist warns of the dangers of the Slough into which Jane has fallen into.

This ... is such a place as can not be mended: It is the descent whither the scum and filth that attends conviction for sin doth continually run, and it is therefore called the *Slough of Dispond*: for still as the sinner awakened about his lost condition, there ariseth in his soul many fears, and doubts, and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together, and settle in this place: and this is the reason for the badness of this ground (Bunyan, 13).

*Pilgrim's Progress* is not the only allegorical narrative that comes to mind when we read about Jane's trials on the moors and in the town of Morton. Arlene Young draws a parallel between Jane's experiences and those of the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Both of these characters must leave their creator figure (though for different reasons of course); they are initially guided on their
journeys by the light of the moon; they are exposed to the elements, they have no means of survival, and they are shunned at every turn. There is also a clear parallel in the fact that Jane, unseen, watches the inhabitants of Moor House through the window long before gaining admittance to the house, just as the Monster had done (Young, 332).

Imlay asserts that by this point in the novel Brontë “no longer troubles to conceal its allegory to her former degree” (Imlay, 55). We see that Jane is carrying her burden through the *Slough of Dispond*, and that she makes the mistake of falling asleep out on the moors rather than spending that time trying to find a shelter for herself. *Christian* too falls asleep at a time when he shouldn’t have, and this results in his having to trace over old ground in order to find the *Roll* he needed to get into the *Celestial City*. Jane covers new ground, but her exposure to the elements makes her look like a beggar and so she must cover more ground to find a shelter than she might have had to otherwise. Jane’s starvation makes matters worse, as it had for *Christian* in the *Doubting Castle*, and she does not even have *Hopeful* to keep her company. The *Dreamer* describes Christian’s suffering: “Here then they lay, from Wednesday morning to Saturday night, without one bit of bread, or drop of drink, or any light, or any to ask how they did.... In this place *Christian* had double sorrow because ‘twas through [him] that they were brought into this distress” (Bunyan, 93).

By the time Jane is taken into Moor House (or Marsh End as it is also called — meaning the end of the marsh or *Slough* for Jane) she is very ill, not only from lack of food but from a broken heart. She has undergone “a sort of ritual death” much as she had in the red-room at the beginning of the novel and “she is
described by an unidentified family member as a 'mere spectre'” (Williams, 48). However, she has survived the Slough, and so is nursed back to health by the three Rivers siblings. Brontë continues to mix pagan and Christian imagery with the names of the two sisters. Adrienne Rich explains, “Diana and Mary bear the names of the pagan and Christian aspects of the Great Goddess – Diana or Artemis, the Virgin huntress, and Mary the Virgin Mother” (Rich, 103). Diana’s name associates her with the moon/mother figure who told Jane she must flee Thornfield after her dream about the red-room, and Mary bears a physical resemblance to Jane much as a sister would. They are, in fact, cousins. (Williams, 46).

The business of names becomes even more interesting when we look at the deliberate patterns of naming Brontë uses. The three cousins whom Jane lives with at the beginning of the novel are named John, Georgiana and Elizabeth. At Morton she lives with another three cousins (though she doesn’t know it yet) and their names are St. John, Mary and Diana. It is clear that the name St. John is a sanctified version of John, and the two characters are both monsters in their own way. Mary and Elizabeth are Biblical names, and Georgiana and Diana are both worldly names, Georgiana derived from the name of kings and Diana from mythology (Pickrel, 179).

The third sibling, St. John, has the most influence on Jane, because he scorns the kind of love Rochester represents. Susan Gallagher explains: “While Rochester tempts Jane to give up God for love, St. John asks her to give up love and follow God” (Gallagher, 66). St. John, as his name suggests, is saintly in his complete selflessness and his desire to serve God.
with his last name, Rivers, readers can see a Biblical parallel with St. John the
Baptist. St. John desires to be a missionary, to convert the heathens in India, and
to baptize them into the Christian faith. His last name also connects to Pilgrim's
Progress in that true believers must cross the River of Death before they can gain
access to the Celestial City. His outward appearance is beautiful, as would be
expected since the gates of Heaven could be seen from the River. While his
manner and coldness may remind readers of Brocklehurst, St. John is no
hypocrite (Gallagher, 66). He is a living martyr, much like Helen Burns had been,
and he practices what he preaches.

For example, it is clear to Jane that St. John is very much in love with
Rosamund Oliver, but he is determined not to marry her because she would not
make a suitable missionary's wife. Her name, translated as “rose of the world”
clearly shows her lack of qualification. A rose is an earthly beauty, something
which St. John won't let himself be tempted by, and it is also fragile. It would fade
and die quickly in the heat of the Indian sun. St. John's severe repression of his
desire is not healthy. Esther Harding explains:

When a man's feeling and his sexuality are as repressed as they are here, the
woman with whom he indulges his lusts does not exist in his eyes as a human
being in her own right. She is merely the carrier, the embodiment, of his
repressed and projected sexuality, which is not felt as within himself at all
(Harding, 196).
For this reason Rosamund can not truly exist for him. Since he does not love or feel attracted to Jane, she is safe marriage material. St. John's mistake is in automatically thinking that Jane will go along with the martyrdom he proposes to her. Like Mrs. Reed and Brocklehurst, he attempts to do this in the name of God. His initial proposal to her is this: "God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labor, not for love. A missionary's wife you must -- shall be. You shall be mine. I claim you -- not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service" (Brontë, 405).

St. John's words echo those of a character from the second (and less well known) book of Pilgrim's Progress -- those of Greatheart. Greatheart is the guide who is supposed to lead Christiana and her children to the Celestial City where they will reunite with Christian, who has already gained access to the city. "I am a Servant of the God of Heaven," Greatheart says. "My business is to persuade sinners to Repentance, I am commanded to do my endeavor to turn Men, Women, and Children, from darkness to light, and from the Power of Satan to God" (Bunyan, 208). St. John believes Jane is in need of saving; that if he guides her and teaches her the ways of God, she will realize that she should no longer be thinking of Mr. Rochester. Jane has rejected the form of martyrdom Helen Burns subscribed to, and while she is tempted by St. John, "her passionate nature, which she acknowledges as being the foundation of her personality, can not be ignored" (Linder, 34).

It is easy to be aggravated, even infuriated, with St. John and his relentless pursuit of Jane, his quoting Revelations to drill fear into her, and his insistence
that if she rejects his proposal she is really rejecting God. Many critics see St. John as an essentially evil person, just as they see Rochester as cruel and domineering. Maynard makes this idea clear when he reminds us that St. John tempts Jane with marriage three times, just as Satan tempted Christ three times (Maynard, 133). However, according to Imlay

supposing Rochester is passionate love, and Bertha the negative aspect of passion, then his opposite, St. John Rivers, is not just an intellectual, but a personification of intellect.... Like passion, intellect has its shortcomings, and like Rochester, Rivers is shadowed by his negative ... there gradually rises behind him the spectre of Brocklehurst (Imlay, 55).

If we see St. John not as a man but as a concept, Intellect, then his actions, like Rochester's, become more understandable, as does Jane's attraction to him.

Jane is an intellectual as well as a passionate person, and so it is reasonable that she would be attracted by Intellect. However, as a missionary of the God of Love, she “demands that reason be tempered with feeling and that she herself be considered as more than a specimen” (Franklin, 466). Had she met Intellect before Love, she may very well have married him since before she met Rochester all she wanted to do was save money to open a little school. Luckily for her, her pilgrimage did not lead her on that path. Marrying St. John (Rivers) would have meant being baptized (or drowned) in the River of Death, and she knows it. She knows that if she gave in she would “rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose [her] own” (421).
Once Soul had found Love, they could not survive without each other. Jane continued to think about Rochester, and, more importantly, continued to dream about him. Jane’s dreams continue to foreshadow the future. “I met Mr. Rochester again and again,” Jane says of her dreams, “always at some exciting crisis; and then the sense of being in his arms, hearing his voice, meeting his eye, touching his hand and cheek, loving him, being loved by him -- the hope of passing a lifetime at his side, would be renewed, with all its first force and fire” (Brontë, 369). The dreams she has are certainly passionate, and even sexual, but lacking from them is lust or any sense of him as her God or idol. The dreams he later tells Jane about echo hers: “It is a dream,” he says after he realizes that she has, in fact, returned to him, “such dreams as I have had at night when I have clasped her once more to my heart, as I do now; and kissed her, as thus -- and felt that she loved me, and trusted she would not leave me” (Brontë, 437).

Jane feels the pull toward Rochester from the time she had left him, but there is also some sense of her own identity wrapped up in Moor House and its inhabitants. Readers are not really surprised to learn that the Rivers siblings are her cousins. From the time of the novel’s publication, critics have complained about Brontë’s over-reliance on coincidence at this point. It is true that this would be a major fault in a realistic work, but Jane Eyre is not such a work. If we accept Jane as a Soul on a pilgrimage rather than as a real woman, then we see that she was fated to find her family. After all, it was her letter to her uncle, John Eyre, which alerted Mr. Mason to the marriage and which caused it to be aborted. If that had not happened, then Jane would have been married, yes, but she would never have found this crucial part of her identity. She also would never have gotten the
inheritance which allowed her more equal status with Rochester when she does return to him. In short, her pilgrimage would not have been complete; she would not have been fulfilled. The Soul needs an identity and not just a name, to be complete. Without that identity, the Soul would likely have identified with the identity of another, as she had once done with Rochester at Thornfield. Once her identity is clear, she is ready to return to him. By stressing the importance of Jane's identity and autonomy in the novel, Brontë adds a feminist twist to Bunyan's allegory. As a reader of Pilgrim's Progress would remember, Bunyan's female protagonist, Christiana, clearly would not have made it to the Celestial City without the help of men like Greatheart. Jane, however, rejects St. John's Greatheart in order to find her own way to her own version of heaven.
CHAPTER 6

FERNDEAN: THE FULFILLMENT OF THE SOUL

Just as Brocklehurst appeared in Jane’s life before she departed for Lowood, Rochester reappears in her life before she reaches Ferndean. St. John, or Intellect, has noticed Jane’s shunning of him, which arouses his anger and his determination to claim Jane’s soul for his God. “I know where your heart turns, and to what it clings. The interest you cherish is lawless and unconsecrated,” he warns. “Long since you should have crushed it: now you should blush to allude to it. You think of Mr. Rochester” (Brontë, 417). St. John tries to convince Jane to choose him by a liberal use of reason and fear first: “I cannot give you up to perdition as a vessel of wrath: repent, resolve; while there is yet time.... God give you strength to choose that better part which shall not be taken from you” (Brontë, 421). This tactic does not work with Jane; she prefers his incivility since it is at least a sign of passion for something. However, she grows “pliant as a weed” under his kindness. She is ready to give in and agree to marry him because of his kindness and this is when it is time for Rochester to step back into her life. Gallagher claims that when Jane hears Rochester’s voice at her moment of decision, it is really God who is speaking through him (Gallagher, 67). God prepares to step in when he sees one of his souls about to make a fatal choice. He had sent her on a pilgrimage to gain an identity and to find love. If she chose St. John, she would have no chance at either. Jane would be no more happy following St. John to India than St. John would have been staying in Morton and marrying
Rosamund. God had different paths in mind for St. John and Jane; forcing themselves to be together would have led to ruin for both of them.

Someone, whether it be God or Love, calls out for Jane to alert her to the danger in her moment of temptation. "My heart beat fast and thick," Jane says; "... the feeling was not like an electric shock; but it was quite as sharp, as strange, as startling: it acted on my senses as if their utmost activity hitherto had been but torpor, from which they were now summoned, and forced to wake.... I saw nothing, but I heard a voice somewhere cry -- Jane! Jane! Jane!" (Brontë, 422). It is her signal to leave.

In searching for Rochester, Jane finds that Thornfield is in fact a ruin, and that Rochester has had to live through actually having his eye plucked out and his hand cut off. Many critics see these injuries as punishment for Rochester's sins; in fact, Rochester himself would be inclined to agree with them:

"Jane! You think me, I daresay, an irreligious dog: but my heart swells with gratitude to the beneficent God of this Earth.... I did wrong, I would have sullied my innocent flower -- breathed guilt on its purity: the Omnipotent snatched it from me.... Divine justice pursued its course; disasters came thick on me.... His chastisements are mighty; and one smote me which has humbled me forever.... I began to experience remorse, repentance.... I began sometimes to pray: very brief prayers they were, but very sincere" (Brontë, 450).

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⁴ Gallagher suggests that it was one of Rochester's prayers which made God call to Jane in his voice.
There is another way, however, to look at the reasons for Rochester's blindness and crippling. Viewing it as punishment from God actually gets in the way of an allegorical reading here. Why would God punish Love? It is important to remember that Love was married to Lust and that Lust had been controlling certain aspects of Love's nature. Lust had become, through the marriage, a part of Love's body. Lust had touched Jane through Rochester's burning gaze and through his hands. Since Jane and Rochester had never made love, the eyes and the hands were the only offending organs. Even after Jane had left, Lust remained in control and Love would not let her die. He couldn't give her up. Maynard partially explains this when he says that "Rochester's injuries were in fact received for his courage and kindness in trying to rescue the wife whose death would benefit him" (Maynard, 138). Kindness and courage may have been motivating factors in Rochester's actions on the night of the fire, but it was also self-preservation. Lust was a part of himself, and it would be painful to let her go. When Lust threw herself off the roof and died, the parts of Rochester that had been most under her influence died with her. The loss of his sight and his left hand were the price that Love had to pay to free himself.

Soul and Love are reunited at a place called Femdean, a smaller estate Rochester owns. Gilbert asserts that the name implies a place "without artifice -- 'no flowers, no garden beds' -- but it is green as Jane tells Rochester he will be, green and ferny and fertilized by soft rains" (Gilbert, 370). The reader familiar with Bunyan's work would immediately recognize Femdean as Beulah, the place directly "upon the Borders of Heaven." It is a country where "the sun shineth night and day, wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and
also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle” (Bunyan, 126).

Jane rouses Rochester from his own Slough of Dispond, not with the light from a window of a house on the moors, but with a candle. When she enters the room where he sits for the first time she is carrying a candle and a glass of water, both symbols of life. The nurturing she gives to him nurses him back to health—he is very much strengthened by her presence, and even begins to regain a little of what Lust had taken away from him when she died; he begins to get his sight back in the remaining eye. Jane, too, is healed. Since she is a soul she recognizes that she can not ever be happy without love. She describes their married relationship best: “I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” (Brontë, 454). Her sentiments, while we may tend to think them unhealthy in real life, are perfectly natural in the land of Beulah—it is, after all, “the land where the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom was renewed” (Bunyan, 126). At Ferndean they renew their contract every day.

Jane ends her pilgrimage at Beulah. However, Brontë still lets Bunyan have the last word in her novel through St. John. With his words readers of Jane Eyre are “decisively back within the structure of Pilgrim’s Progress; there the true believer dies [amid] resounding allusions to Revelation, as Bunyan seeks to draw his narrative into the ending of Scripture and thus take us from the end of his earthly story to the story that is presumably without end” (Dale, 121). Brontë will let him have his say, but ultimately the triumph belongs to Jane because the reader knows that St. John will be powerless to drag Jane and Rochester off to
Hell. The lovers have children, and they live every day knowing that they have everything they have been seeking.

It is at Ferndean that the reader sees what the Soul who has been leading us on her journey is made of. Her reward may not be the Celestial City for which St. John searched, but that was never her goal. Jane admired St. John, much as Brontë admired Bunyan, but Brontë added a much needed feminist perspective to the previously male dominated genre of allegory. If Jane Eyre is an allegory, it is an allegory for women as it addresses the Soul of Woman. Woman’s idea of faith need not be all fire and brimstone. It need not be all humility and sacrifice. Woman can follow her own path, make and learn from her own mistakes, and have her own reward. Brontë’s allegory shows us how to find that kernel of truth we were seeking — that the soul was not meant to live without love. It is this underlying truth that makes Brontë’s novel so powerful; it is what brings readers back again and again.
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