

A STUDY OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S USE OF BIRD  
IMAGERY IN JANE EYRE

By

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## PREFACE

I discovered through a study of Charlotte Brontë in the Victorian novel course that Jane Eyre was more than a love story. A class discussion of the novel revealed to me that a pattern of motifs exists in Jane Eyre, the interpretation of which is valuable in understanding the novel. An investigation of the critical material on Jane Eyre disclosed that, though there were some incisive articles on other motifs and iterative words and images, nothing had been written on the functions of bird images in Jane Eyre. Studying such images, I learned that birds almost always appear in landscape descriptions, that characterization is intensified in bird images, and that birds are used as a symbol of happiness-love-hope.

Several acknowledgments are in order. First, I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Mary Rohrberger, my thesis adviser, for her patient criticism and constructive suggestions. Second, I want to express appreciation to Dr. D. Judson Milburn, my second reader, who gave so generously of his time. Third, I want to thank Mr. John K. Saunders, my Victorian novel course instructor, who suggested expanding the idea of the bird motif into this thesis. Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my husband Al and four children without whose encouragement and sacrifice this thesis would have been impossible.

Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë's novel published in 1847, is a first person, retrospective narration of small and plain Jane Eyre, a governess. Allusions to birds appear in profusion in the novel beginning with a reference to Thomas Bewick's two volume History of British Birds, and concluding with the description of Rochester as a "royal eagle" and Jane as a "sparrow." Miss Brontë incorporates more than one hundred ornithological references in the novel, which represent a variation of British birds.

Although this thesis is limited to an investigation of Jane Eyre, a similar but less intensive study was made of Shirley and Villette in an effort to determine whether Miss Brontë used bird images in a pattern in her novels. Shirley and Villette contain their quota of bird references, the one having over sixty-five ornithological allusions, and the other over fifty-five bird images. Birds almost always appear in landscape descriptions, and bird imagery is used to intensify characterization in all three novels. Jane Eyre is the only novel of the three, however, which uses the bird as a symbol in portraying the relationship between a man and woman. This use of bird imagery is less consistently developed in Shirley and in Villette. One has to conclude, however, that Miss Brontë's iterative use of bird imagery insofar as it relates to landscape descriptions and character delineation constitutes a significant pattern throughout her novels, Jane Eyre, Shirley, and Villette.

A review of the scholarly material on Charlotte Brontë indicates an increase in critical assessment within the past twenty year period.

Although critics have written many incisive articles on Jane Eyre, which are worthy of notice and which have provided valuable background material in the writing of this thesis,<sup>1</sup> unlimited possibilities for further critical studies still exist.

Kathleen Mary Tillotson in her book, Novels of the Eighteen Forties, provides excellent background material on the novels of this decade, particularly her essay on Jane Eyre.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Tillotson discusses the recurrent symbols and figures in the novel, but she fails to note the recurrent allusions to birds. She, also, discusses the device of the retrospective first person narrator, and the importance of the autobiographical form to the structure of the novel itself.

In the analysis of Fannie Elizabeth Ratchford, The Brontës' Web of Childhood, there is no indication of a bird symbolism which might have been carried over from childhood.<sup>3</sup> One could conclude that birds become a device of writing in Miss Brontë's adult life. Miss Ratchford draws interesting parallels between Angrian plot material and several incidents in Jane Eyre, as well as discussing the Angrian prototypes of the Reed family, Jane, Adèle, Rochester, and Bertha.

Robert Martin in his book, Accents of Persuasion: Charlotte Brontë's Novels, minimizes the biographical, and provides a significant study on the structure and design of Miss Brontë's novels.<sup>4</sup> In the chapter on Jane Eyre, Mr. Martin analyzes the symbolic identification between Thornfield Hall and Rochester, but he makes no comment upon bird symbolism. He, also, traces the development of Jane from childhood to maturity, and the development of Rochester from sin to repentance, which is helpful to this study.

In her extensive study, Jane Eyre (Charlotte Brontë), Barbara Hardy

provides a useful discussion of the imagery and symbolism inherent in the novel.<sup>5</sup> Although she makes no direct references to Miss Brontë's use of bird images, she discusses images of another world, Jane's dreams, and the splintered chestnut tree. Her discussion of symbols and their contribution to movement, transition, and coherence is valuable to this investigation.

It appears from Jane W. Stedman, "Charlotte Brontë and Bewick's 'British Birds' " that Bewick was a favorite book in the Brontë household.<sup>6</sup> Miss Stedman discusses the impression Bewick's History of British Birds made upon Charlotte, which probably accounts for her frequent use of bird images in Jane Eyre. Her comments, also, on Miss Brontë's use of bird images in the characterization of Jane and Rochester is of value to this thesis.

Inga-Stina Ewbank, Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early Victorian Female Novelists conducts a thorough study of the Brontë techniques. Her analysis of the functionalism of Charlotte Brontë's iterative use of bird imagery is excellent in its relevancy to this study.<sup>7</sup> She notes that Miss Brontë achieves a "fullness and consistency" in the Jane-Rochester relationship by the use of iterative bird imagery.

It is the purpose of this thesis to present an analysis of Charlotte Brontë's use of bird imagery in Jane Eyre. Miss Brontë uses birds in several ways: first, birds almost always appear in landscape descriptions; second, characterization is intensified in bird images; and third, birds are used as a symbol of happiness-love-hope in portraying the Jane-Rochester relationship.

The bird motif is introduced in the first pages of the narrative

with Jane making her initial reference to the illustrations found in Bewick's History of British Birds. "With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my own way",<sup>8</sup> she relates. Not only does Jane experience a measure of happiness in looking at pictures of birds in books, but she experiences a sense of admiration in gazing at a painting of a "bird of paradise" (p. 20) on a china plate. It is notable that a plate decorated with a "bird of paradise" and an ornithological book are among the few things Jane associates with a degree of happiness during her childhood at Gateshead.

Foremost among Jane's unpleasant associations with Gateshead is her tyrannical and abusive cousin John, whom she describes as a person ". . . no one thwarted, much less punished; though he twisted the necks of the pigeons, [and] killed the pea-chicks . . ." (p. 15). John continually abuses Jane, both physically and verbally, even denying her access to Bewick's book on birds. He is mentioned only indirectly as an adult, but he apparently alters for the worst. True to character, just as John made life unhappy for Jane as a boy, he made his mother equally so as a young man. Just as he "twisted the necks of the pigeons," he destroys himself by committing suicide.

In another passage, Georgiana, the blue-eyed blonde darling of the Reed household is associated with birds. Jane pictures her as ". . . interweaving her curls with artificial flowers and faded feathers . . ." (p. 29). Georgiana as a member of the upper class uses faded feathers as part of a decorative coiffure. For Jane, who obviously loves birds, this is a heinous act which she associates with vanity and superficiality, two characteristics in which her self-centered cousin Georgiana abounds.

In contrast to her beautiful cousin, Jane is plain and small, a fact that is constantly pointed out. Her lonely ten year existence as a ward of Mrs. Reed is to be concluded with the appearance of Mr. Brocklehurst from Lowood Institution. Jane is watching a carriage with indifference when her ". . . vacant attention soon found livelier attraction in the spectacle of a hungry little robin . . ." (p. 30). This simultaneous appearance of a carriage bearing Mr. Brocklehurst and a "hungry little robin" foretells the beginning of a new life for Jane. She is to be placed in Lowood, but, more important, she is to be released from the environment of her loveless and unhappy childhood; she now has hope for the future.

There are relatively few allusions to birds in the chapters devoted to Jane's stay at Lowood. One could conclude though that her eight years at Lowood are not much happier than her ten years at Gateshead. Jane realizes that human beings cannot live without love, and that without love, life is hopeless. Feeling her unhappiness acutely, she concludes that hope awaits only those who dare to live life to the fullest, and she makes the decision to leave the academic atmosphere of Lowood, and ". . . to seek real knowledge of life . . ." (p. 82).

Jane leaves Lowood to take a position as governess in the household of Edward Fairfax Rochester of Thornfield. From this point on, one can catalog the scenes in which birds appear. The "cawing tenants" (p. 96) of the rookery atop Thornfield Hall, who ". . . flew over the lawn and grounds to alight in a great meadow" (p. 96) foreshadows Jane's flight from Thornfield and eventual reunion with her master at Ferndean. Jane ". . . enjoying the calm prospect and pleasant fresh air, yet listening with delight to the cawing of the rooks . . ." (p. 96) surveys the picturesque manorhouse of Mr. Rochester.



Jane further alludes to birds in her description of the beds on the third floor "shrine of memory" (p. 102), some of which she says are shut in ". . . with wrought old English hangings crusted with thick work, portraying effigies of strange flowers, and stranger birds, and strangest human beings . . ." (p. 102). There is a strangeness, an air of gloom and mystery about the third floor of Thornfield. Jane senses this and hurries to the leads, which are ". . . on a level with the crow colony . . ." (p. 102) to view the Rochester estate.

Not only do birds appear more frequently in landscape descriptions in the Thornfield period of the novel, but characters are described in bird images. Jane describes her pupil's singing as ". . . strangely chosen for an infant singer; but . . . the point of exhibition lay in hearing the notes of love and jealousy warbled with the lisp of childhood; and in very bad taste . . ." (p. 99). Although there is evidence of Adèle's childishness, Jane believes it is indicative of future immaturity, jealousy, and poor discretionary judgment.

Jane has a brief opportunity to become acquainted with her pupil before the master of Thornfield Hall returns. Mr. Rochester is intrigued by the "Lowood constraint" (p. 133) of the governess, who seldom laughs or exhibits any emotions. After careful observation of her, he tells her he sees ". . . at intervals the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-set bars of a cage . . ." (p. 133). Aware of her unnatural reserve, he sees her as a "curious sort of bird" because of her repression of emotions that ordinarily come natural to human beings. In this first description of Jane in bird imagery, Rochester, also, tells Jane that he believes with time she will learn to express her emotions and to overcome her apparent fear of men.

As if in response to Mr. Rochester's prediction, Jane begins to experience emotions of love for her master. She refuses to acknowledge this feeling primarily because of their vast social differences, which is made more apparent by the arrival of Mr. Rochester's houseguests.

In other passages utilizing bird images, Jane describes the house-party at Thornfield. The ladies arrive amid "fluttering veils and waving plumes . . ." (p. 158) reminding Jane ". . . of a flock of white plummy birds" (p. 163), who become as "lively as larks" (p. 167) in the presence of male companionship. Fashionable ladies wear plumes as hair ornaments, and although the Brocklehurst ladies are described as wearing ostrich plumes, Jane never specifies what type Mr. Rochester's houseguests wear. Regardless of the kind of plumes, the connotation involved in the wearing of plumes remains the same for all ladies, whom Jane collectively censures. According to Greek anthology, the ostrich has been ascribed as possessing ". . . certainly the most brainless expression of any on earth."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in Jane's eyes, the ladies are all completely void of any intelligence, as well as being egotistic, superficial, and vain.

Among all these seemingly unintelligent women, Blanche Ingram is the epitome of the true aristocrat. Beautiful Blanche with her ". . . fine head of hair; raven-black, and so becomingly arranged . . ." (pp. 151-152) is the same person Jane refers to in two different passages as the one with "raven ringlets" (p. 153, p. 158). She is sketched in bird imagery only in connection with her hair, specifically in terms of circles; therefore, her egocentricism and sense of vanity overshadows everything else. In addition to being the most egocentric, Blanche is the most superficial, arrogant, and materialistic of Rochester's guests.

The arrival of Mr. Mason, provides Jane with the first opportunity to describe Mr. Rochester in bird imagery. He is the "fierce falcon" (p. 181) with whom she contrasts Mr. Mason, the "sleek gander" (p. 181). After Mr. Mason's accident and furtive departure, Mr. Rochester takes Jane into his confidence in the garden while ". . . the birds fetch their young one's breakfast out of the Thornfield . . ." (p. 206). At a loss for appropriate comments, Jane listens to the "birds" that ". . . sang in the tree-tops . . ." (p. 207). Mr. Rochester continues to confide to her that he believes he has found the instrument for renewed faith in humanity and hope for the future. Again, ". . . the birds went on carolling . . ." (p. 208), and Jane remains silent. She is puzzled by Mr. Rochester's conversation, but she thinks that he is referring to Blanche Ingram.

At this point, Jane is unexpectedly called to Gateshead, and upon her return to Thornfield, she identifies herself as one of the "stray and stranger birds" (p. 232) to which Mr. Rochester scatters crumbs of happiness. His houseguests have departed, and Midsummer arrives in England ". . . like a flock of glorious passenger birds . . ." (p. 235). It is on this night when fairies control the actions of men that Mr. Rochester provokes Jane into an outburst, during which she declares herself Mr. Rochester's equal. He acknowledges their equality, and admonishes: "'Jane, be still; don't struggle so, like a wild, frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation'" (p. 241). Jane replies "'I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will . . .'" (p. 241).

Employing the imagery of a "wild, frantic bird," Rochester entreats Jane to be calm and not to struggle against her newly discovered emotions.

For once, Jane expresses her emotions and loses her "Lowood constraint," which she endeavors to regain by asserting her independence of emotions and the superiority of her will. Prior to this Jane hears ". . . a nightingale warbling in a wood half a mile off . . ." (p. 236).

Rochester, too, asks "'Jane, do you hear that nightingale singing in the wood? Listen!'" (p. 239). Jane and Rochester subsequently declare their love for one another. Rochester, perhaps influenced by Midsummer and perhaps under the control of another fairy like Puck, proposes his bigamous marriage, which Jane unknowingly accepts.

In still another passage, Jane commenting on her first morning as Rochester's fiancée says: "The rooks cawed, and blither birds sang; but nothing was so merry or musical as my own rejoicing heart" (p. 244). The period marking the engagement is but "a fairy-tale--a daydream" (p. 245) to Jane. She, however, refuses Rochester's desire to shower her with gifts of jewels, to dress her in satins and laces, and to extend to her all the privileges due a lady of Thornfield. Jane, who possesses only a pearl brooch and who wears only the simplest Lowood frocks, uses a bird image in her argument against Rochester's wishes. She argues that she would not be "' . . . Jane Eyre any longer, but an ape in a harlequin's jacket--a jay in borrowed plumes . . .'" (p. 246).

Jane encounters no unduly difficult problems in her new role, except that of keeping Rochester at a distance. Jane with what she labels her "turtledove sensibility" (p. 260), decides that the daily routine must continue as usual with Rochester summoning her in the evening if he desires to see her. Accordingly, that same evening, Rochester summons Jane and sings her his love song. Commenting on this love scene Jane writes: He [Rochester] rose and came towards me, and I saw his face all kindled,

and his full falcon-eye flashing, and tenderness and passion in every lineament" (p. 259). Jane attaches much importance to the eye, particularly Rochester's; she is aware of its power and penetration, which reflects his every emotion, including passionate love.

In yet another passage, Jane addresses the lightning struck chestnut tree under which Mr. Rochester proposed his bigamous marriage:

" ' . . . you will never have green leaves more--never more see birds making nests and singing idylls in your boughs . . . ' " (p. 262). Birds are again alluded to in Jane's statement to the charred and scorched chestnut tree. The fact that the tree will no longer serve as a retreat for birds is a foreshadowing of burned Thornfield Hall, which will no longer shelter Jane and Rochester, whose love flourishes there.

The wedding day arrives, but the marriage is halted at the altar after presentation of evidence that Rochester's wife, Bertha Mason Rochester, is alive. This disclosure solves the mystery of Thornfield Hall. The characterization of this mad woman, who has been hidden in a third floor room of Thornfield for ten years, is intensified by the use of bird imagery. It is Rochester's lunatic wife Bertha, whose cries ". . . not the widest-winged condor on the Andes could, twice in succession send out . . . from the cloud shrouding his eyrie" (p. 195). It is, also, she, who ". . . uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey" (p. 200). It is this same creature, who reminds Jane "of the foul German spectre--the Vampyre" (p. 269) that rends Jane's bridal veil.

Recalling Bertha's midnight visit to Jane's room, and visualizing what harm could have occurred, Rochester passionately cries: "When I think of the thing which flew at my throat this morning, hanging its

black and scarlet visage over the nest of my dove, my blood curdles---' " (p. 294). Jane is again described in a bird image, specifically as the dove, and its use in this image retains the universal symbolism of purity.

It is because Jane is the personification of purity that she adamantly refuses to yield to Rochester's passionate pleadings for her to become his mistress. As much as she abhors the thoughts of being a mistress herself, she nonetheless exhibits a curiosity about his mistresses. Comparing her inquisitiveness to that of an "eager bird" (p. 295), Rochester relates the tale of his dissipated life and his eventual return to England, as a man thoroughly disillusioned with mankind.

In yet another passage Rochester reminisces on his return to Thornfield and his first impression of Jane. She is the "' . . . linnet [who] had hopped to my foot and proposed to bear me on its tiny wing' " (p. 296). He tells her that far from rendering only physical assistance, which then appeared as insignificant as that a linnet could offer, she has since become the means of his regaining his faith in mankind.

Commenting upon Jane's indomitable will (pp. 301-302), Rochester does not directly refer to her as a bird, but he alludes to her as a "savage, beautiful creature" in its "cage," and he uses such terms as "soft flight," and "nestle" to carry out the bird imagery. Struggling with her emotions against Rochester's pleas for her to become his mistress, Jane because of her moral principles refuses to yield to his proposal. Jane's departing word of advice to her master is to "' . . . trust in God and yourself. Believe in heaven. Hope to meet again there! " (p. 300). Mr. Rochester agonizingly cries out, to no avail, "'Oh, Jane! my hope--my love--my life!' " (p. 302)

In two passages relating to Jane's "flight and homeless wandering" (p. 304), birds are again alluded to. Beset with emotional turmoil and a desire to return to Mr. Rochester, Jane heartbreakingly continues her flight, leaving behind the one she wholly loves. She becomes conscious of "birds . . . singing in brake and copse . . ." (p. 305), and she thinks: "Birds were faithful to their mates: birds were emblems of love. What was I?" (p. 305) Jane feels completely alienated from society, and she disassociates herself from birds because to her they are symbols of love.

Jane's refusal to identify with birds lasts for less than a day, for by night, she says her "sad heart" is as ". . . impotent as a bird with both wings broken . . ." (p. 307). She desires to return to Mr. Rochester, but she is unable to because of conflicting emotions; she is as impotent as a bird with both wings broken. Distrustful of man, separated from the one she loves, and suffering mental anguish, Jane desires a release in death. Her death wish, however, is immediately negated by her faith in God, which, also, serves to reconcile her with society.

Again employing bird imagery, Jane refers to her hunger as a "vulture," who ". . . sank beak and talons in my side" (p. 311). Not only is she starving physically, but she is emotionally starving for love. Her hunger is the palpable result of circumstance, but her emotional deprivation is self-imposed. Jane finally collapses on the doorstep of the Rivers family, and Diana and Mary nurse her ". . . as they would . . . a half-frozen bird, some wintry wind might have driven through their casement" (p. 331). The comparison of Jane to a "half-frozen bird" is appropriate for when she discovers that Mr. Rochester is married,

she writes: "I looked at my love: that feeling which was my master's-- which he had created; it shivered in my heart, like a suffering child in a cold cradle . . ." (p. 281).

The person most instrumental in restoring Jane's health, as well as her faith in humanity, is Diana, who is, also, described in bird imagery. Jane admires her beauty, intelligence, and leadership qualities, and of all the females in the narrative, she is the only one characterized positively. Jane writes that "Diana had a voice toned, to my ear, like the peaceful dove" (p. 326). Diana is literally a dove in her gentleness and purity for she has to constantly be the peacemaker and mediator between Jane and St. John.

Despite differences between St. John and Jane, it is St. John, who fulfills Jane's ultimate hope of one day having her own school. Musing over her first day as a village-schoolmistress, Jane, again, refers to birds. Listening to the birds "singing their last strains" (p. 341), she realizes that on this day when she should be happiest, something is missing from her life.

That missing element in Jane's life is Rochester, and upon hearing his voice mysteriously calling her from beyond the hills, she returns to him. Comparing herself to a bird, Jane writes: "Once more on the road to Thornfield, I felt like the messenger-pigeon flying home" (p. 401). Alighting from the carriage two miles from the Rochester estate, Jane walks to Thornfield and sees the "rookery" (p. 402) and hears "the loud cawing" (p. 402) of the rooks. The birds still inhabit Thornfield, but the house is as she once dreamed: ". . . a dreary ruin, the retreat of bats and owls" (p. 268).

After Jane recovers from the initial shock of finding Thornfield a



deserted burned out shell, she hurriedly returns to the inn where the host obligingly answers her questions and relates the tale of Thornfield. Learning that Mr. Rochester resides at Ferndean, she hires the post boy to take her to her now blind and crippled master.

Allusions to birds, which are vitually non-existent in the Moor House section of the narrative, begin to reappear when Jane returns to Thornfield and compares herself to a "messenger-pigeon flying home" (p. 401). It is at this point, also, that the bird as a symbol of a combination of happiness-love-hope appears.

The passage containing Jane's careful observation of her master after a separation of one year is, perhaps, the best example of the function of bird imagery as symbol. As mentioned previously, Rochester is referred to as a "fierce falcon" with a "full falcon-eye"; it should be noted that with these two exceptions, Rochester has not been described in bird images. However, in this single passage, Jane employs three different bird images to describe his appearance to the reader.

According to Jane, Rochester's physique is still athletic, and his hair is still "raven-black" (p. 409); neither can she detect any visible evidence of suffering. However, she notices a change indicative of desperation and brooding, which reminds her ". . . of some wronged or fettered wild beast or bird, dangerous to approach in his sullen woe" (p. 409). She compares his blindness to that of a "sightless Samson" (p. 409) and a ". . . caged eagle whose gold-ringed eyes cruelty has extinguished . . ." (p. 409).

The first of these three images describes Rochester's hair as still "raven-black" (p. 409). An interpretation of this image must of necessity coincide with that of the other members of his social class, such

as Georgiana Reed, the Brocklehurst ladies, the ladies comprising his houseparty, and more particularly, Blanche Ingram. Birds are associated with these ladies only in connection with decorative hair ornaments, which usage as discussed earlier connotes superficiality and vanity. Blanche and Rochester both have raven-black hair, and it is undeniable that these two possess tremendous pride with a tendency toward egocentrism. However, Rochester, unlike the others, has undergone extreme mental and physical torture, and he has subsequently matured as an individual. Because of his past year's suffering, he is entitled to true happiness-love-hope.

The second image Jane uses in describing Rochester is that of a wild bird. She observes that Rochester has not altered perceptibly even though he is now blind and has suffered the loss of his left hand. In Jane's eyes, however, Rochester's countenance does reflect change, which is desperate and brooding like a captive bird made sullen and dangerous by sorrow. Rochester is a captive in the sense that he is handicapped by blindness and the loss of a hand. He is sullen and disillusioned with life and mankind because he has suffered immensely in being deprived of happiness-love-hope.

The third image is that of a blind and caged eagle. The bird from the second image is now specifically an eagle, connotative of royalty or nobility. His "gold-ringed eyes," however, have been extinguished; he is blind. In an earlier discussion of Rochester's "falcon-eye," it was noted that he is passionate. The passion has been extinguished and all that remains is true love; happiness has been replaced by sorrow; and there is no hope without Jane. Like sightless Samson, Rochester has met his fate at the hands of a woman. Although it is his lunatic

wife Bertha, who actually causes his blindness, it is Jane, who has caused him more suffering. He has grieved more over losing Jane, whom he considers his only means of happiness, love, and hope. However, it is because of suffering and injury by fire that he has undergone a kind of catharsis. He is physically crippled, but he has been relieved of the burden of his past, and he is at liberty to seek his happiness-love-hope.

In another passage, Jane facetiously informs Rochester of his need to become rehumanized, for it is apparent that the intervening year has transformed him into a lion or a wild beast of the fields. She then paints a striking portrait of him using two bird images. In the first image, she points out that this wildness is evidenced by his long, dark hair, which reminds her of "eagles' feathers" (p. 414). In the second image, she comments that she has neglected to observe whether Rochester's ". . . nails are grown like birds' claws . . ." (p. 414).

Both images are inextricably interwoven with the "feathers" describing Rochester's hair signifying pride, and the "claws" describing his nails signifying his ability or inability to grasp at what remains of life. Hence, noble Rochester refuses because of pride to grasp at happiness, love, and hope because he considers himself physically handicapped and unworthy of life. Rochester has moments of melancholy, but Jane begins the rehumanization process with a simple plan: first, she reassures Rochester of her love for him; then, she concentrates on making each day one of happiness; and, eventually, she expects hope to be reborn. Rochester, apparently convinced of Jane's powers says: " 'If Saul could have had you for his David, the evil spirit would have been exorcised without the aid of the harp' " (p. 416).

Jane now powerful was once powerless; Rochester once powerful is now powerless; they realize the reversal of their positions. In another passage, Rochester indirectly states his dependence upon Jane when he says: " ' . . . all the sunshine I feel is in her presence' " (p. 417); he then associates Jane with birds, and addresses her as his "skylark" (p. 417), whose voice is more melodious to him than that of the skylark he heard singing in the wood an hour before.

Rochester accords Jane the position of being his skylark. The skylark must be interpreted as his ideal of happiness, love, and hope. Jane is his ideal; because she is, he cannot believe in her reality, and he thinks her presence is but another of his dreams. He fears another separation would be completely disastrous to him as an individual as he is dependent upon Jane for his very life. Happiness has displaced grief since she returned. He is aware that they love one another for he says: "I had a belief that she loved me even when she left me . . ." (p. 421). Not only is she his ideal love, but she is his hope for he tells Jane that her voice " . . . still renews hope, it sounds so truthful" (p. 421). It is because hope is concentrated in her voice that it is to Rochester far superior to the singing of the skylark itself.

In the final passage of the narrative employing bird imagery, Jane reacts with sorrow to Rochester's "avowal of his dependence: just as if a royal eagle, chained to a perch, should be forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor" (p. 417).

The "royal eagle"- "sparrow" imagery is used to describe the Rochester-Jane relationship. Jane, contrary to Rochester's "skylark" imagery, visualizes herself a lowly "sparrow," signifying her acceptance of reality. Rochester, too, finally accepts his human conditions, casts

away his pride, and again asks Jane to become his wife. "To be your wife is, for me, to be as happy as I can be on earth . . ." (p. 423) Jane replies. Jane and Rochester will make their "happiness despite human deficiencies and infirmities. Rochester has chosen Jane, whom he "loves best" to be his wife. Jane reaffirming her love tells him she loves him better than she did in his "state of proud independence" (p. 423). Complete happiness and true love are at Ferndean, and Rochester looks to Jane his "skylark," who ". . . follows on willing wings the flight of Hope, up and on to an ideal heaven" (p. 297).

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Phyllis Bentley, The Brontë Sisters (London, New York, Toronto, 1950) presents brief biographical accounts of the Brontës and analysis of their work; she rates Jane Eyre as the most popular of the Bronte novels because "it embodies two age-old human stories, two basic folk-themes: the Cinderella story (poor oppressed girl marries powerful prince) and the success story (new arrival suffers, perseveres, and triumphs). Charles Burkhart, "Another Key Word for Jane Eyre," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XVI (September 1961), 178, states in his brief note: "In addition to Heilman's 'moon,' there is another key word to Jane Eyre: 'Nature.' The word nature occurs at least as frequently and as climactically as 'moon'; and it seems equally handy as a guide to 'the conflict between reason-judgment-common sense and feeling-imagination-intuition' which Heilman discusses." Robert B. Heilman, "Charlotte Brontë, Reason, and the Moon," NCF, XIV (March 1960), 283-302, discusses his interpretation of the moon motif in Jane Eyre; he says that ". . . the moon is an aesthetic staple, at times a scenic element inherently charming to the writer, at times almost a character; at its most interesting it reveals an author groping for a cosmic symbolization of reality, or toward a reality beyond the confines of everyday actuality, toward an interplay of private consciousness and mysterious forces in the universe." R. E. Hughes, "Jane Eyre: The Unbaptized Dionysos," NCF, XVIII (March 1964), 347-364, discusses in detail "the symbolism traditionally associated with the Dionysiac and Apollonian states . . .", which is inherent throughout the novel, and he analyzes the withdrawal motif. Lawrence E. Moser, S. J., "From Portrait to Person: A Note on the Surrealistic in Jane Eyre," NCF, XX (December 1965), 275-281, discusses the internal, external, and the actual levels of the novel from a surrealistic viewpoint noting that the lovelessness of Charlotte Brontë's childhood is a dominant motif, and that ". . . quasi-surrealistic art itself voices Jane's and Charlotte's desperate message of the primacy of love."

<sup>2</sup>Kathleen Mary Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen Forties (London, 1961), pp. 257-313.

<sup>3</sup>Fannie Elizabeth Ratchford, The Brontës' Web of Childhood (New York, 1941).

<sup>4</sup>Robert Bernard Martin, The Accents of Persuasion: Charlotte Brontë's Novels (London, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>Barbara Hardy, Jane Eyre (Charlotte Brontë) (New York, 1964), p. 60. Miss Hardy states: "Symbols may be purely local, occurring once only, but are very frequently repeated, both because of the author's tendency to associate certain ideas and values with certain

traditional or personal forms, and because of the binding power of a symbol, which can contribute to unity, to movement, and to change. Similes and metaphors are symbols because they stand for something other than themselves, and they may also be either local or repeated and elaborated. In this novel [Jane Eyre] symbolic objects and scenes are closely connected with metaphors, seem to give rise to them, and are reinforced by them."

<sup>6</sup>Jane W. Stedman, "Charlotte Brontë and Bewick's 'British Birds,' " Brontë Society Transactions, XV ( ), 40. Miss Stedman discusses in her article the impression made by Bewick's History of British Birds upon Charlotte and the other Brontës as children. She concludes her article with the statement: "It is unlikely that Charlotte Brontë intended the reader to be aware of the continuing subliminal influence that British Birds had on Jane Eyre's mind. Charlotte herself was very possibly unconscious of the connection, although its pervasiveness helps to give the character psychological fullness and individuality. 'Early impressions are ineffaceable,' Charlotte wrote to W. S. Williams. Jane Eyre literally drew upon hers!"

<sup>7</sup>Inga-Stina Ewbank, Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early Victorian Female Novelists (Cambridge, 1966), p. 184. Commenting upon the Jane-Rochester relationship, Miss Ewbank makes the statements: "The fullness and consistency with which she [Charlotte Brontë] has realized the Jane-Rochester relationship is seen in her use of iterative imagery to accompany it. For example, Rochester keeps likening Jane, thinking both of her physical and her mental qualities, to an eager little bird, and in the early stages of their relationship, Jane sees herself as one of the 'stray and stranger birds' to which Rochester throws his crumbs. When she has run away from Rochester, her heart becomes 'impotent as a bird' which, 'with both wings broken . . . still quivered its shattered pinions in vain attempts to seek him'; but when she returns, to find a struck and mutilated Rochester, the bird image is transferred to him: her first impression of him is that of a 'fettered wild beast or bird, dangerous to approach in his sullen woe', and their final relationship, in which he is dependent on her, is that of 'a royal eagle, chained to a perch' which is 'forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor'."

<sup>8</sup>Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, ed. Mark Schorer (Boston, 1959), p. 9; since all subsequent citations will be to this edition (Houghton Mifflin Company), page references will be incorporated parenthetically into the text.

<sup>9</sup>Norma Douglas, Birds and Beasts of Greek Anthology (New York, 1929), p. 99.

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