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## The Oedipal Dynamic in Jane Eyre

Aurélie Dell'Olio

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| Aurélie Dell'Olio. The Oedipal Dynamic in Jane Eyre. Literature. 2010. dumas-00518020

**HAL Id: dumas-00518020**

**<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-00518020>**

Submitted on 16 Sep 2010

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USTV

Faculté des Lettres et sciences humaines

Master Recherche

Année 2009/2010

# The Oedipal Dynamic in *Jane Eyre*

**“I suppose I should now entertain none but fatherly feelings  
for you: do you think so? Come – tell me”**

**JANE EYRE**

présenté par Aurélie DELL'OLIO

sous la direction de M. John ENGLE



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**I would like to thank Dairine O'Kelly for the support and the advice she gave me during my research and, of course, John Engle who has been very helpful in the elaboration of this *memoire*, offering suggestions and extremely pertinent food for thought.**

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## Introduction

*Jane Eyre* is a cornerstone of literature; it tells the story of little Jane who struggles into life to reach a sense of her own identity. It is a novel of rebellion, of self and society, and of changing gender expectations. But it also contributes to troubling investigations of the psyche and interpretations of dreams.

According to Freud, anxieties and inhibited desires are inherent feelings to human beings. Such wishes are intensely repressed in everyday life, but they are acted out in dreams. The childhood aspiration to force out the parent of one's own sex and take his or her place in the affections of the parent of the opposite sex is part of the most commonly repressed unconscious desires. Freud so called "Oedipal complex" refers to this behaviour, naming it as an allusion to Oedipus, the Greek tragic hero known for having killed his father and married his mother.

In *Jane Eyre*, the father figure is embodied by Mr. Rochester, a substitute for the missing father in Jane's family structure who will, in a certain way, re-enact with her the basic pattern of Oedipal dynamics. Rochester's patriarchal power is extensively expressed throughout the novel, contributing to the Oedipal dynamic in *Jane Eyre*.

This aspect of the novel is not particularly evident as we first read it. But, as we look into it in more details, as we concentrate on the narrator's character and her quest for identity, some elements and particularities, characteristic to the Oedipal complex, come to light. Charlotte Brontë's life also seems to be of paramount importance in the understanding and corroboration of Oedipal dynamics in the novel.

*Jane Eyre* shares many similarities with the *Oedipus* myth; and if we turn to psychoanalytic descriptions and representations of the Oedipal complex and its accomplishment, it is striking how Jane's behaviour recalls Oedipal manifestations.

In such a reading of the novel, one of the most important questions concerns Jane's quest: the eventful moment being the red-room episode, why does she need to go on a quest from then? What is she yearning for?

This *memoire* will concentrate on the similarities that *Jane Eyre* shares with the *Oedipus* myth, but the latter will only be studied in relation to the novel, as what is relevant for our analysis is mainly their different common points. Besides, we will draw on psychoanalytic studies to try to better understand Jane's behaviour; however, we will not go into further complex psychoanalytic details, as it is not the point of this essay.

The major aim of this work is to analyze Jane's quest for identity and try to understand her motivations and actions. Examining that quest through the lands of Oedipal dynamics will help bring the central themes of the novel in the focus. Her encounter with Rochester, the patriarchal power, will be considered as a capital event in the consideration of Oedipal dynamics.

Does Jane's final union with Rochester represent the fulfillment of an Oedipal desire? Why does the happy couple choose to live remote from society if Jane and Rochester's marriage fits in with the conventional social order? And finally, has Jane reached a sense of her own identity and mental health at the end of the novel?

We will try to answer these questions by considering the Oedipal dynamic in *Jane Eyre*, detailing the narrator/protagonist's progression towards autonomy and maturation: from her initial condition of exclusion and loneliness, when she experienced the formative stage of the red-room, to the subsequent necessary quest towards a sense of her own identity.

In *Jane Eyre*, as in the *Oedipus* myth, the protagonist is singled out as the cause of all the troubles and calamities, thus becoming the scapegoat<sup>1</sup>. Jane is held responsible for a multitude of problems throughout the novel. But it is through and thanks to these obstacles that Jane moves on from childhood to adulthood. Her transformative experience is best exemplified through the episode of the red-room, in which Jane experiences a symbolic "mirror stage", which is quickly succeeded by the Oedipal stage.

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<sup>1</sup> On this point, see René GIRARD, *Le Bouc émissaire*, 1962.



Indeed, Jacques Lacan explains that in the pre-Oedipal stage, the child experiences the *mirror stage*<sup>2</sup>. Thanks to the mirror experience, the child is able to consider itself, his mother and later others as independent selves. The child begins to fear the hostility of another, to desire what is unmistakably beyond the self, and to want to fight with another for the same, craved object. Only after that mirror stage, what Lacan calls the *imaginary stage*, can the Oedipal stage prevail. Now considering himself as self and the parents as separate selves, the self can distinguish genders.

The relationship that Jane entertains with her environment, her position of scapegoat, are of paramount importance in the understanding of her behaviour, her actions and her subsequent quest for identity. In the light of her progression towards integration, we will study the development of the Oedipal complex. Finally we will ask if, at the end of the novel, the Oedipal dream is fully achieved.

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<sup>2</sup> On this point, see *Les Complexes familiaux* (in Encyclopédie française, available on the Internet), and also *Le Stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du je, telle qu'elle nous est révélée, dans l'expérience psychanalytique* (a report given at the 16<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Psychoanalysis at Zurich, on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1949). The mirror stage is also addressed in the seminar *Les Ecrits techniques de Freud*. H. Krutzen identified all the occurrences of the concept in Lacan's seminars, in *Jacques Lacan, séminaire, 1952-1980 : index référentiel*, Paris, Anthropos : Diffusion, Economica, 2000, 862 p.

# I. Relationship between the individual and the group: Jane Eyre as scapegoat

Scapegoats are to be found in every society and it is strangers who are most often doomed to this slighting status. In Christian theology, in Leviticus<sup>3</sup>, the scapegoat is symbolically embodied by the person of Jesus, who self-sacrificed himself for the good of humanity, after having been constrained to wander the “wilderness”.

In *Le Bouc émissaire*, anthropologist René Girard discusses the theory of the scapegoat, by which a society unites to single out a person and hold him as the origin of its adversities and misfortunes, so that the scapegoat is cast out or killed by the community. Communal harmony can only return when people are convinced that the cause of their troubles has been contained and is now unable to harm. Once that process has come to an end, another scapegoat is designated and the cycle resumes its course.

Oedipus is a stranger who comes into power and is then deemed responsible for the crisis of a whole society. Indeed, the king is attached to the land (an identification proclaimed by the oracle and the king himself); which means that should adversity or baseness take hold of the king, it will result in famine throughout his entire realm. Thebes, its people, their life and afflictions fall under the king’s responsibility. In *Jane Eyre*, the term is better understood as a metaphor, since Jane is symbolically responsible for all the calamities. Indeed, she is held responsible for a multitude of problems.

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<sup>3</sup> “And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’s lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness” (King James Version : *Leviticus* 16 : 6-10).

## 1. Jane's family

The shaky basis of Jane's social position is loss, insecurity and conflict. She has been denied a "proper" family since her early days of childhood. At Gateshead, Jane is rejected by the Reed family and considered a castaway. She is isolated from the rest of the family- there is "I" (Jane) and "the Reeds", "them" and "me". In the opening of the novel, we find Eliza, John and Georgiana "clustered round their mama in the drawing room" (5)<sup>4</sup>. This "tableau" is that of a happy family and Jane cannot be part of it: "Me, she had dispensed from joining the group", the personal pronoun "Me" reinforcing the sense of isolation. Significantly, in the structure of the sentence, this pronoun is placed in syntactic and punctuational isolation at the beginning of a sentence, emphasizing Jane's isolation from the family group. Jane is a lonely figure, as socially isolated as she is physically inferior : "small", "weak", "not pretty" (Chapter 1).

At a time when Jane deeply needs to experience touches of love and affection in order to grow up healthily, she, unfortunately, can only endure physical and emotional solitude, depression and oppression. Furthermore, Jane inherently suffers from the absence of a mother; the nostalgia of the now lost first relation with the mother increases her sensation of solitude, of being deprived of something unreplaceable and experiencing an irreparable loss.

This feeling of solitude leads to major troubles of integration. Jane progressively convinces herself that she will never be a part of a group or family, that she will never be accepted as such. Integration and independence are essential to childhood. However, Jane cannot take advantage of these two constructive forces, and therefore, she is unable to progress. On the contrary, such inherently positive forces are unhealthily contained inside herself and, as a consequence, tend to destroy her.

Psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott believes that children, in order to progress healthily in life, need to undertake three major psychological tasks:

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<sup>4</sup> The edition used throughout this *memoire* is Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, [1847], London, Norton Critical Edition (Third Edition), 2000.

Tout d'abord, ils se construisent une conception d'eux-mêmes, une conception d'un « self » relié à une réalité qu'ils commencent à percevoir. Deuxièmement, ils développent une aptitude à établir une relation avec une personne, la mère. [...] [Et l'enfant] se développera avec succès d'une troisième manière, c'est-à-dire lorsqu'il deviendra capable d'établir des relations impliquant plusieurs personnes.<sup>5</sup>

What is important to underline is that, significantly, Jane is far from fitting into this category of mentally fulfilled children, as she is deprived of each of the three psychological steps, and thus cannot aspire to reach a sense of her own identity.

Jane's entourage is oppressive. Not considered a member of the family, she is seen as socially inferior, less than a servant. A poor orphan, financially contingent upon the Reed family; Jane is considered by them a deceitful and devious insignificant figure, who must always behave as her masters insist. She finally rebels against the situation. In a similar manner, Oedipus is an orphan, an ingenuous child, a victim and a combatant all in the course of the play.

Up to then, Jane has been resentful of the harsh treatment she had been subjected to, yet she has always been quite submissive. Surprisingly retaliating against John Reed, she turns into a new, rebellious child. The primal and most important aspiration in life is to live and to live pleasantly. In order to do so, Jane must first get rid of her internal destructive forces by releasing them; only then can she feel a sense of security and contentment. Aggressive and pitiless drives are closely attached to feelings of pleasure and satisfaction, and when acted out, they lead to a sensation of excitement and complacency.

The comparisons Jane chooses in her description of John Reed are telling if we analyze them in that light: "You are like a murderer – you are like a slave-driver – you are like the Roman emperors" (8). While such substantives put forward John Reed's position of domination over Jane, as well as the difficulty of rebelling against such

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<sup>5</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *L'Enfant et le monde extérieur, Le Développement des relations*, Translated to French by Annette Stronck-Robert, Paris, Payot, 1972 (English ed., 1957), p. 33-4.

cruelty, they also reveal Jane's release, gratification and jubilation as she pronounces those words.

But a completely paradoxal feeling is tacked on to the jubilation, which is remorse. Indeed, after having letting go of the aggressive emotions, Jane is sent into a fit of compunction:

I was left there alone – winner of the field. It was the hardest battle I had fought, and the first victory I had gained: I stood awhile on the rug, where Mr. Brocklehurst had stood, and I enjoyed my conqueror's solitude. First, I smiled to myself and felt elate; but this fierce pleasure subsided in me as fast as did the accelerated throb of my pulses. A child cannot quarrel with its elders, as I had done; cannot give its furious feelings uncontrolled play, as I had given mine, without experiencing afterwards the pang of remorse and the chill of reaction. A ridge of lighted heath, alive, glancing, devouring, would have been a meet emblem of my mind when I accused and menaced Mrs. Reed: the same ridge, black and blasted after the flames are dead, would have represented as meetly my subsequent condition, when half an hour's silence and reflection had shown me the madness of my conduct, and the dreariness of my hated and hating position.

Something of vengeance I had tasted for the first time; as aromatic wine it seemed, on swallowing, warm and racy: its after-flavour, metallic and corroding, gave me a sensation as if I had been poisoned. Willingly would I now have gone and asked Mrs. Reed's pardon; but I knew, partly from experience and partly from instinct, that was the way to make her repulse me with double scorn, thereby re-exciting every turbulent impulse of my nature (31).

Such a culpability inevitably leads to hatred: Jane comes to despise herself. She does not fit into the restrictive mould that society has established for her, that is one of conventionality and acquiescence. In a world of Mrs. Reeds and Mr. Brocklehursts, the pressure to conform puts great strain on the individual who resists it. Jane consequently feels bad to express herself and to object. Following her emotional outburst, she feels guilty, possibly as she imagines society will shame her for her violent impulses and

need to express her feelings. This repugnance of the self facilitates the development of the aggressiveness which results in painful inner conflicts directed against the ego. The super-ego is the place where the aggressiveness is contained.

Jane is constantly fighting between love and hatred, hostility and culpability. Such a conflict between these opposed forces originates from the first relation with the mother and later with both parents, and it seems that it can only be moderated as the child finds his place among the family circle and begins to have a sense of his own identity. Unfortunately, as we all know, Jane enjoys neither parental love nor the privilege of growing as part of a unified family.

Human violence is a central notion in the thought of René Girard<sup>6</sup>, who explains that in a primitive society, conflicts break out, tensions mount and the society channels all the aggressiveness onto one person, who is symbolically or physically sacrificed. The community is then reconciled and new life can begin. For Girard, violence is a power that can shatter everything; if not channeled onto a scapegoat, it can lead to the destruction of a whole society.

How can Jane have a feeling of her own identity knowing that she has to deal with eternal rejection from the part of the others, and a never-ending cycle of aggressive emotions and remorse on her part? One possible answer seems to lie in what Melanie Klein refers to as “projection”:

La projection est notre première mesure de sécurité, notre garantie la plus fondamentale (dont tant d'autres découlent) contre la douleur, la peur d'être attaqué ou l'impuissance. Par ce mécanisme, toutes les sensations, tous les sentiments, que notre esprit ressent comme douloureux ou déplaisants, sont immédiatement relégués à l'extérieur de nous-mêmes; nous nous en déchargeons sur quelqu'un d'autre. [...] Le premier pas pour nous rassurer contre les dangers dont le soi est menacé de l'extérieur nous est ainsi rendu possible par la projection. Ayant réussi dans notre esprit à localiser le danger à l'extérieur de nous et à le concentrer, nous procédons alors à une deuxième

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<sup>6</sup> On this point, see René Girard, *La Route antique des hommes pervers*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, « Le Livre de poche », 1985, p. 38 and *La Violence et le sacré*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, « Pluriel », 1972, p. 323.

manœuvre projective, qui consiste à décharger les pulsions agressives en nous sous forme d'une attaque contre ce danger extérieur : l'agressivité première qui constitue un danger est expulsée et localisée ailleurs en tant que chose mauvaise ; ensuite, l'objectif investi de danger devient le but vers lequel décharger l'agressivité qui se forme ultérieurement.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, a possible reason for Jane to hang on to life might lie in the fact that she is able to project her fear, pain and powerlessness into someone else (here the Reed family). The aggressiveness is therefore relieved into the outer danger and Jane can be reassured and unburdened.

Interestingly enough, when Jane leaves Gateshead, the Reed family gradually begins to fall apart and is finally completely torn apart, as Jane is no longer present to channel their aggressiveness and to be held responsible for all the misfortunes. For Girard, Oedipus is one of many scapegoats. The foreign liberator of Thebes experiences a reversion of affection on the part of his peoples when the plague breaks over the city. And every time we call back this myth, we become the witnesses and the accomplices of a collective lynching. Jane similarly focuses on the notion of justice as she is definitely a victim of oppression. She is broken both physically because of John Reed and mentally because the family does not accept her. Accepting their reasoning, she describes herself as a “heterogeneous thing” and an “alien”.

John Reed calls Jane a rat, which not only underlines his feeling of superiority but also her symbolic danger to the rest of the family as rats carry diseases and plague. She is also compared to a mad cat and a toad, similar symbols of calamities and thus rejection. Referring to the bestiary, John Reed symbolically deprives Jane of humanity. Reduced to a status of animality, she sees her own identity as a human being called into question. Here we can make a parallel with *King Lear*, in which Shakespeare recurrently uses the theme of the bestiary. In the storm scene, the King himself is almost reduced to bestiality as he symbolically tries to strip away his clothes and finds

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<sup>7</sup> Melanie Klein, Joan Rivière, *L'Amour et la haine*, Translated to French by Annette Stronck-Robert, Paris, Payot, 2001 (English ed., 1937), p. 26.

out that “Man’s life is cheap as beast’s” (Act II, scene 2)<sup>8</sup>. The state of animality excludes, by nature, all behaviours proper to a human being and thus precludes the very ability of thinking.

As he reduces Jane to animality, John Reed not only puts into question her ability to form a part of human beings, but also shows violent feelings of hostility. The people who, without tangible reason, constantly make a person the source of their adversities, are inherently unhappy and unsatisfied with their lives. This state of being and those unsatisfied desires bring about feelings of frustration and pain which inevitably lead to aggressiveness: an assault onto a defenseless person, a scapegoat.

In *La Machine infernale*, Jean Cocteau presents tragedy as a genre in which the hero is grounded and dominated. He is not the mythological hero that one would expect. Indeed, Cocteau turns Oedipus into a fragile hero, one who is physically and morally mastered. On page 84, Oedipus begs the Sphinx : « Laissez-moi ! Grâce... » and also cries for help: « Mérope !... Maman ! »<sup>9</sup>. In *Jane Eyre*, the protagonist’s experience of the family situation as the outsider, the excluded one and the scapegoat contributes to the development of her fragmented self. Jane is then miserably sent to Lowood, as a final rejection on the part of the Reed family. There, she is going to experience not only the rejection of one family but the stare of others.

## 2. The stare of others

Jane is continually made to endure the stares of others, which strike her as nearly physical assaults. Owner of the Lowood school, reverend Brocklehurst embodies an inherently negative side of Christianity, as he is totally deprived of feelings of charity or amiability. Charlotte Brontë cleverly relies on the significance of names throughout the novel. “Brocklehurst” is a harsh name, associated both with the substantive “rock”, which hints at the stiffness of the Calvinist religion he

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<sup>8</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, London, Reginald Foakes, The Arden Shakespeare, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Cocteau, *La Machine infernale*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, « Le Livre de Poche », 1934, p. 84.



represents and the institution he runs, but also with the past participle “hurt”, which foreshadows threat and pain for Jane. “Lowood” similarly suggests both darkness and physical punishment. It is also the beginning of her Dantean journey (a low point in her route), as she still has difficult woods to pass through, before the eventual apotheosis offered by the narration.

When Jane arrives in Lowood, Brocklehurst openly denigrates her, as she is said to be “a castaway”, “an interloper and an alien” emphasizing her otherness. Mr. Brocklehurst ordains: “you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinise her actions.” (56). The orders are given in an intensely strained and passionate manner with a style befitting the indictment of a heinous crime. Jane is to be considered dangerous, as Brocklehurst places her in a position of scapegoat: “You must be on your guard against her; ... avoid her company” (56). Calling her “a liar” and compelling Jane to stand on a stool, Brocklehurst forces the helpless girl to adopt a shameful position of public exposure to the accusing stares of others.

When Jane approves Mrs Reed’s decision to send her to Lowood, the narrator is looking for what her fake household cannot offer her, that is love, affection, attention and care. It is truly a real home and a stable emotional situation which Jane is seeking. She wants to be, at last, a full member of a group. Winnicott cleverly clarifies a similar situation:

Au début, un enfant, s’il doit se sentir libre et devenir capable de jouer, a besoin d’être conscient d’un cadre, il a besoin d’être un enfant insouciant.

Pourquoi doit-il en être ainsi ? Le fait est que les premiers stades du développement affectif sont pleins d’un conflit potentiel et de risques de rupture. La relation à la réalité extérieure n’est pas encore établie fermement. La personnalité n’est pas encore bien intégrée. [...] [L’enfant] peut arriver à maîtriser ces éléments d’autant mieux que son environnement sera stable et personnel. Au début, il a absolument besoin de vivre dans un cercle d’amour et de fermeté (et d’indulgence conséquente) afin de ne pas trop craindre ses propres pensées et son imagination, ce qui entraverait son développement affectif.

Maintenant, que se passe-t-il si le foyer fait défaut à l'enfant avant qu'il n'ait l'idée d'un cadre faisant partie de sa propre nature ? [...] S'il découvre que le cadre de sa vie est brisé, il ne se sent plus libre. Il devient angoissé et, s'il espère, il se met à rechercher un autre cadre que celui du foyer. L'enfant dont le foyer ne réussit pas à lui procurer un sentiment de sécurité recherche quatre murs en dehors de son foyer. Il espère encore et se tourne vers les grands-parents, les oncles et les tantes, les amis de la famille, l'école. Il recherche une stabilité extérieure sans laquelle il se peut qu'il devienne fou.<sup>10</sup>

And it is through the frame of the school that Jane hoped to find an exterior stability.

However, as she enters Lowood, it is only a repeated condition of rejection which she experiences at first. As a consequence, the whole concept of the household begins to fall apart as Jane is, once again, faced with another social and emotional failure; a situation which encourages her to build her personality on the basis of an antisocial behavior.

Mr. Brocklehurst strips Jane of her humanity, first by raising her up as an "object" of humiliation: "I was now exposed to general view on a pedestal of infamy" and secondly by relegating her on the Christian scale to a most inferior position, lower than that of a "heathen", lower than a little "black Hindu".

This uneasiness when faced with a new, unknown, not reassuring place and most of all the stares of the others is so well described in details and gives such a feeling of intensity that when we first read it, we even have the impression that the author actually lived the situation and felt the sufferings she describes. And that first impression turns out to be justified; Charlotte's first appearance at Roe Head school, on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1831:

She was very shy and nervous, and spoke with a strong Irish accent. When a book was given her, she dropped her head over it till her nose nearly touched it,

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<sup>10</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *L'Enfant et le monde extérieur, Le Développement des relations*, p. 168.

and when she was told to hold her head up, up went the book after it, still close to her nose, so that it was not possible to help laughing.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the time, the first impression that girls of her own age had of Charlotte was one of shyness, introversion and solitude; that of a girl mounting into the window-seat, sitting cross legged, a book in her hands, looking now and again pensively through the window, and crying. A situation that is not without reminding us of that of an unsure, shut-in, lonely little girl in Lowood.

Jane's pensive gazing through the Gateshead window-seat suggests her looking in the distance but also inside herself, projecting in the outside her inner good parts and needs for affection and love, as it is the only way for her to disclose kindness, since the Reed family is unresponsive. Her fervent contemplation could also be interpreted as a manifestation of her wish to recover the good object (the parental love) which has been lost or is absent at the moment; she is staring at the distance to catch a glimpse of it.

What is also interesting to note is that Jane never plays. Play is the principal way for a child to resolve his or her emotional disorders and be able to grow up healthily. It is a way to make ties, find friends and express oneself. Winnicott believes:

J'envisagerai la quête du soi. Je reformulerai l'idée que certaines conditions sont nécessaires pour que cette quête aboutisse. Ces conditions sont associées à ce qu'on a coutume d'appeler la créativité. C'est en jouant, et seulement en jouant, que l'individu, enfant ou adulte, est capable d'être créatif et d'utiliser sa personnalité toute entière. C'est seulement en étant créatif que l'individu découvre le soi.

De là, on peut conclure que c'est seulement en jouant que la communication est possible, exception faite de la communication directe, qui relève de la psychopathologie ou d'une extrême immaturité.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, London, Penguin Books, 1997, p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *Jeu et réalité, L'Espace potentiel*, Translated to French by Claude Monod and J.-B. Pontalis, Paris, Gallimard, 1975 (English ed., 1971), p. 76.

According to Winnicott's argument, Jane will not be able to fully discover herself and her identity as long as she refuses to play or show signs of communication.

But he also explains that the "deprived child" is inherently agitated and incapable of playing; showing an impoverishment regarding the ability to make experiences and to communicate with others. An unbearable loss (such as Jane's privation of her parental circle), could most likely lead to an impossibility to play and manifest creativity.

Winnicott goes further, trying to give reasons for a child's urgent need to play. He explains that it is firstly, by pleasure and secondly to express the child's aggressiveness, in order to get rid of the hatred and the belligerence. He then underlines that children often play to control the anxiety, but also to increase their experience (by developing their personality, their creativity and by adapting to the external environment). He goes on putting forward their desire to establish social contacts, to communicate with others and finally to reach an integration of their personality.<sup>13</sup> Jane, by adopting an antisocial position goes without these positive qualities.

Winnicott offers an interesting and relevant opinion which could explain Jane's antisocial temperament:

La tendance antisociale naît toujours d'une privation affective et représente la revendication de l'enfant qui cherche à revenir à un état de choses antérieur au temps où il n'était pas privé et que tout allait bien.<sup>14</sup>

Because she lacks affection and attention, Jane becomes aggressive and unmanageable, as she relentlessly seeks a former state of plenitude. Her antisocial behaviour can be interpreted as a warning signal, a desire to be understood by a loving, caring and trustworthy environment. In addition to the loss of her parents, the Reed family contributes to Jane's personality disorders as it fails to provide her with the necessary good cares she needed during her early days of personal development. She has been

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<sup>13</sup> See appendix p. I-IV : « 4. Pourquoi les enfants jouent-ils ? », in Donald W. Winnicott, *L'Enfant et le monde extérieur, Le Développement des relations*, p. 123-128.

<sup>14</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *Processus de maturation chez l'enfant, Développement affectif et environnement*, Translated to French by Jeannine Kalmanovitch, Paris, Payot, 1970 (English ed., 1965), p. 183.

deprived of a fundamental affectionate contact and, as a result, her emotional development is going to be disturbed.

Winnicott goes further in describing the concept of personality disorders and the different points which he develops match and represent perfectly Jane's condition:

En réalité, dans le trouble du caractère, il y a un autre élément : à un moment de la première enfance, *l'individu* a perçu, à juste titre, qu'au début tout allait bien ou assez bien et qu'ensuite tout n'était pas bien. En d'autres termes, il y a eu, à un certain moment ou pendant une phase du développement, une faillite réelle du soutien du moi qui a entravé le développement affectif de l'individu ; une réaction à ce traumatisme a pris alors la place de la simple croissance. Une faillite de l'environnement favorable fait ainsi obstruction aux processus de maturation. [...] L'individu qui appartient à cette catégorie poursuit sa vie avec deux fardeaux distincts. Naturellement, l'un de ceux-ci est constitué par l'accroissement de charge que représente un processus de maturation perturbé et à certains égards arrêté ou retardé. L'autre, c'est l'espoir, un espoir qui n'est jamais tout à fait éteint, que l'environnement reconnaîtra et réparera la faillite spécifique qui a causé le mal. Dans la grande majorité des cas, les parents, la famille ou les tuteurs de l'enfant admettent le fait (si souvent inévitable) « qu'on l'a laissé tomber » et, au moyen d'une période de traitement particulier, de gâteries ou ce qu'on pourrait appeler des soins mentaux (*mental nursing*), ils aident l'enfant à se remettre du traumatisme.<sup>15</sup>

We will later see that Helen, Miss Temple and afterwards the Rivers family will play this role of providing Jane with the “mental nursing” she needs to grow up and reach a mental equilibrium. But for the moment, Jane experiences feelings of persecution, depression and violent inner conflicts, which reflect her sensation of solitude, her worried temperament, her self-hatred and her longing for intercourse and liberty.

On her journey from Thornfield to Marsh End, Jane is completely destitute, as she has no connection, no money, no luggage. Once more, her surname gave a hint at what was going to happen from the beginning since it is also linked with the etymology of ‘to err’, which means both to wander or to make a mistake, a sin. Jane is again the

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186-7.

outsider in term of social organisation since the social system is represented by money and property. However, we should note that, this time, she willingly stands apart from society.

Throughout *Œdipe ou le crépuscule des dieux*, Henri Ghéon seems to suggest that it is the exemplary nature of those who suffer which make them exceptional human beings. In this vision, Oedipus experiences pain before reaching the divine gratitude. Ghéon draws his inspiration from a rereading of the Greek myth concerning the role of suffering. In the century of two world wars and the Holocaust, Oedipus offers a modes of human suffering. Following this logic, we can see Jane's suffering as necessary. We can imagine that she must suffer in order for her to become accepted by others and finally be free. Through her suffering, Jane is going to form her own personality and grow up. John Reed is the trigger of her evolution. Indeed, she is blamed for the quarrel that happened between them. As a punishment, she is banished to the red-room and what she experiences there contributes to her development and represents above all the terminus a quo of her Oedipal complex.

### **3. The red room: the beginning of Oedipal dynamics**

Jane's initial situation at Gateshead is one of deprivation, and her rebellion against her unjust treatment by John Reed leads to her punishment – she is dragged to the red-room. She looks around her at that gigantic jail-like room which surrounds her, known to be the most prominent place of the house, but which is seldom lived in for Uncle Reed died there. Jane's perception of the enclosed space of the red-room – a microcosmic mirror of the house as she experiences it – breeds superstitious fears and feelings of guilt that turn into a fit on the brink of insanity.

The hatred and the aggressiveness Jane feels for the Reed family are at the origin of painful sensations which she experiences to the extreme as she is locked into the red-room, such as suffocation and asphyxiation. Such conditions are highly destructive for the self as they increase sadness, fear and insecurity. According to Melanie Klein, the

fear of being shattered by inner destructive forces is the deepest and the most harmful one.<sup>16</sup>

A possible remedy lies in the comfort a mother can give to her child. However, as Jane is deprived of motherly love, those feelings of tension and disquietude cannot be soothed. She has no other choice but to go along with the worry of insecurity, the perpetual dissatisfaction, and the consciousness of not being loved.

The dark red of the room endows it with an initiatic and funerary significance. Its prevailing, hypnotic red colour – “red damask”, “red carpet”, “crimson cloth” (10-11)– is opposed to blinding, spectral and immaculate white. This colour scheme appears repeatedly in Charlotte Brontë’s work, a scheme of violent contrast between the cold purity of white and the hot crimsons and scarlets of passion and retribution. In this scene, the colour white seems to represent a limit: it is the colour of passage, of death and rebirth. This opposition between red and white is also symbolically significant of Jane’s personality, mental nature, as she constantly struggles between feelings and reason, passion and restraint. Besides, her progress is in some ways paralleled or indicated by the oscillation between the extremes with which fire and ice are associated in the novel.

In *Bleu. Histoire d'une Couleur*, Michel Pastoureau puts forward the important meaning of a colour but also its complex and controversial approach:

La couleur n'est pas tant un phénomène naturel qu'une construction culturelle complexe, rebelle à toute généralisation, sinon à toute analyse. Elle met en jeu des problèmes nombreux et difficiles.<sup>17</sup>

Cocteau in *La Machine infernale*, uses red to give the impression of a slaughter. Indeed, with her red scarf, Jocaste hangs herself. Besides, during the honeymoon (Act III, part I), the room is considered to be “une cage, une prison”, symbolic of Oedipus’ new functions and of his destiny.

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<sup>16</sup> See Melanie Klein, *Envie et gratitude et autres essais*, Translated to French by Victor Smirnoff, Paris, Gallimard, 1968 (English ed., 1957), p. 145.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Bleu. Histoire d'une couleur*, Paris, Seuil, 2002, p. 5.

In this scene, the red and white aggressive colours create an omnipresent feeling of oppression: “La petite boucherie” is reminiscent of the slaughterhouse, a sort of metaphor of destiny; the red colour is associated with the death menacing the two characters, this death being associated with incest. Moreover, the red scarf is an object which gives rise to Jocaste’s fear and anguish; indeed she fears it: “je la crains”.

Jane is equally frightened by the red room. At one point, she decides to cross the room: “I had to cross before the looking-glass” (11). This action is a kind of test: she is trying to avoid the reflection of herself in the mirror. She is unsure of herself, of what she will see. She wants to avoid looking because she does not yet know herself, what she is going to find in the mirror. She finally looks at herself in the mirror, only to find out that she is completely alien from herself: “strange little figure there glazing at me” (11). She experiences a schizophrenic dissociation: “Am I a monster?” – in this alienated state, the self is seen as a terrifying other.

Oedipus experiences the same kind of dissociation. His deformity and later his self-inflicted blinding contributes to his state of alienation, as he has to face the “monster” he has turned into. His own parents, by physically injuring him when he was yet only a child, mete out a hurtful scar which Oedipus will have to endure until his death. This wound is a reminder and a symbol of his ill-fated life; one in which he has always been singled out. It is also a parallel to the way his moves have been quelled and restricted from the day he was born and for the rest of his life.

Interestingly enough, it turns out that the author also experienced some part of the very first crisis of her story: the red-room. It was discovered thanks to a letter from Mary:

“Three years after” – (the period when they were at school together) – “I heard that she had gone as teacher to Miss Wooler’s. I went to see her, and asked how she could give so much for so little money, when she could live without it. She owned that, after clothing herself and Anne, there was nothing left, though she had hoped to be able to save something. She confessed it was not brilliant, but what could she do? I had nothing to answer. She seemed to have no interest or pleasure beyond the feeling of duty, and, when she could get, used to sit alone, and “make out”. She



told me afterwards, that one evening she had sat in the dressing-room until it was quite dark, and then observing it all at once, had taken sudden fright".<sup>18</sup>

Such an experience had a great impact on her, in such a way that the red-room episode is filled with the scars of such a traumatising experience:

I sat looking at the white bed and overshadowed walls – occasionally turning a fascinated eye towards the gleaming mirror – I began to recall what I had heard of dead men troubled in their graves... I endeavoured to be firm; shaking my hair from my eyes, I lifted my head and tried to look boldly through the dark room; at this moment, a ray from the moon penetrated some aperture in the blind. No! moonlight was still, and this stirred... prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears which I deemed the rustling of wings; something seemed near me (106).

Through the metaphor of the mirror, Lacan tackles the notion of the fragmented self<sup>19</sup>. He calls this moment of transition the Mirror Stage: a notion of illusion, as though the person in the mirror does not correspond to the person facing it. He continues his theory by explaining that before the mirror stage, the child identifies himself directly with the mother and that the mirror corresponds to the status of autonomy. Indeed, the child progressively comes to recognize the image of the mirror as himself. But for Lacan, the child cannot be totally autonomous as he lacks the initial complete plenitude of the first relation with the mother. There will always be something missing, so that one can never be a complete self.

In *Jane Eyre*, this notion of the problem of developing one's identity is constantly present. Indeed, Jane does not know who she is; she does not recognize herself in the mirror. She sees huge dark "broken reflections" and a "visionary hollow", emphasizing the notion of the self being fragmented. Jane's fainting at the end of the

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>19</sup> See p.7 of the dossier, note 2.

scene enables her to escape an unbearable reality while also suggesting she has undergone a transformative experience.

Elizabeth Imlay describes Jane's story as an initiation process, connecting her occasional lapses of consciousness with "rites of passage"<sup>20</sup>. Aristotle explains that every man, if he is man, experiences suffering: « Par la souffrance j'ai découvert que j'étais un homme ». Besides, in her preface of *The Professor*, Charlotte Brontë already explained:

I said to myself that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs – that he should never get a shilling he had not earned [...] that before he could find so much as an arbour to sit down in – he should master at least half the ascent of the hill of Difficulty<sup>21</sup>.

It thus displays the author's intention to prove that life is a struggle and that the hero must show resistance and will to move forward in life. "Strive" and "endure" are two words Charlotte Brontë often uses<sup>22</sup>, it is not innocent that Jane should use the same exact words in a conversation she has with Rochester: "we were born to strive and endure." (270).

Jane, by overcoming the many obstacles that cross her way, and by always following her own path, moves towards autonomy and gradually acquires a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction when looking back at the difficulties she has surmounted: "Anybody may blame me who likes" (92), "I am no bird, and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will" (216). But this pleasure is closely associated with aggressive emotions, which explains why these emotions are so domineering and difficult to master: "something spoke out of me over which I had no control" (22), "you shall yourself, pluck out your right eye" (254).

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<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Imlay, *Charlotte Brontë and the Mysteries of Love*, [1989], Kent, Imlay Publications, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> On this point, see "Preface" 1., in Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, 1857.

<sup>22</sup> Those two words appear, for instance, in another letter written by Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey: "I have never yet quitted a place without gaining a friend – Adversity is a good school – the Poor are born to labour and the Dependent to endure" ((June 30<sup>th</sup> 1839) to Ellen Nussey; Smith I, 193-194).

Jane's symbolical mirror stage is a painful experience, as she is faced with complete nothingness, "hollow[ness]": her image reflected in the mirror. However, it is also a transformative and constructive experience as it is through suffering that Jane becomes a woman.

## II. The development of the Oedipal complex

### 1. Progressing towards integration

According to Lacan, the virtue of the mirror stage is to lead the child to a certain degree of autonomy, though he will never be a complete autonomous being. In the course of this experience, the child progressively masters his body image through its reflection. As he identifies himself through his reflecting image, he contributes to the structuring of the “I” and to the progressive destruction of the aspect of a fragmented body which he had. The mirror stage is thus of paramount importance, as it contributes to the child’s considering of his body as a unified totality.

Lacan explains:

Le stade du miroir est un drame dont la poussée interne se précipite de l'insuffisance à l'anticipation – et qui pour le sujet, pris au leurre de l'identification spatiale, machine les fantasmes qui se succèdent d'une image morcelée du corps à une forme que nous appellerons orthopédique de sa totalité, – et à l'armure enfin assumée d'une identité aliénante, qui va marquer de sa structure rigide tout son développement mental.<sup>23</sup>

It is thanks to this body image that the child will come to know himself, to identify himself and form his identity. However, young Jane’s experience of the mirror stage is far from being a stage of progressive mastery of her body image and destruction of the aspect of a fragmented body which she has. She cannot consider her body as a unified totality.

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<sup>23</sup> Jacques Lacan, « Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je telle qu'elle nous est révélée dans l'expérience psychanalytique » : Communication faite au XVI<sup>e</sup> Congrès international de psychanalyse, à Zürich, le 17 juillet 1949.

Winnicott approaches Lacan's notion of the mirror stage differently. Where Lacan attaches a same "mirror experience" for every child, that is undergoing a crisis of identity being faced with an alienating self that will "mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development"<sup>24</sup>, Winnicott presumes that another consideration has to be taken into account. According to him, the factor of the "facilitating environment", or the "holding environment" which is represented by the caretakers in charge of the infant's well being, detains a major role, if not the predominant role in an infant's development and his feeling of "discord". To be fulfilled, the psychological maturation requires a favourable environment and is subordinate to its quality.

According to Wilfred Bion and Winnicott's works, the caretakers hold a considerable function in what Bion first called "containment". As psychoanalyst Margot Waddell clarifies,

Containment is Bion's term for the state of mind in which it is possible for the mother unconsciously to be in touch with the baby's evacuation or communications of pain, and of his expressions of pleasure, to receive, then to be able to engage with and savour them if calm and loving, or to modulate them if distressed and threatening, and to hand them back to him in a recognisable and now tolerable form. Bion thought of this capacity as being essential to the baby's ability to get to know, to centre and to understand the different parts of himself and his relationships with others.<sup>25</sup>

Jane lacks the presence of a container. The Reeds are unable to absorb her anxiety and hand it back in a more compliant form, on the contrary, they exacerbate the narrator's anguishes. Jane is left in a confused and alienating state; the different experiences she will have to go through will not be assimilated and incorporated as long as she will be deprived of this "holding environment", thus preventing her to grow and

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<sup>24</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, Translated to English by Alan Sheridan, New York, Norton, 1977 (French ed., 1966), p.3.

<sup>25</sup> Margot Waddell, *Inside Lives: Psychoanalysis and the Growth of the Personality*, London, Duckworth, 1998, p. 32.

reach a state of maturation and identity. Glòria Mateu i Vives, counsellor and child and adolescent psychotherapist, clearly summarizes Bion's work:

Bion's theory of containment (1970) provides a conceptual tool for looking at the mechanisms of protection and containment of anxiety. Bion formulated a condensed statement about the transformations of beta particles into alpha activity. The gist of his theory is that if an emotional experience is not worked through, it cannot be metabolised and digested and the result will be that it will remain unassimilated. Beta elements, undigested particles, can become Alpha elements only if they are contained and thought about rather than expelled. The process of digestion and transformation contains the primitive emotional experience and makes it palatable and manageable.

There must be a container in order to stymie the child's apprehension and respond to his desires. Only then, when the traumatising experience has been introjected in a more tamed and docile occurrence, can the infant gain self-assurance. As Jane's fears cannot be contained, she is left to her own devices, plagued with an amplified dread.

Bion describes this process of containment which he observed during one of his consultations with a patient:

When the patient strove to rid himself of fears of death which were felt to be too powerful for his personality to contain he split off his fears and put them into me, the idea apparently being that if they were allowed to repose there long enough they would undergo modification by my psyche and could then be safely reintrojected [...] An understanding mother is able to experience the feeling of dread, that this baby was striving to deal with by projective identification, and yet retain a balanced outlook.<sup>26</sup>

Hanna Segal comments by explaining that a successful containment is the only way for the infant to reach a "mental stability":

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<sup>26</sup> Wilferd R. Bion, "Attacks on linking", *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol.40, 1959, p. 103-4.

When an infant has an intolerable anxiety, he deals with it by projecting it into the mother. The mother's response is to acknowledge the anxiety and do whatever is necessary to relieve the infant's distress. The infant's perception is that he has projected something intolerable into his object, but the object was capable of containing it and dealing with it. He can then reintroject not only his original anxiety but an object modified by having been contained. He also introjects an object capable of containing and dealing with anxiety. The containment of the anxiety by an internal object capable of understanding is a beginning of mental stability.<sup>27</sup>

In fact, Bion uses the term "containment" to refer to and develop Melanie Klein's notion of projective identification. She introduces this concept in the 1940's to define a phenomenon which encompasses identification and projection; that is respectively when the child finally comes to recognize himself, to gradually acquire a sense of his own identity (through the mirror stage for example), and when he is able to project a bad object into another person. Klein explains that, as the projection is realized, the bad object leaves the child's body and mind to become embodied in that other person. Projective identification is also a way to expel conflicting forces of the self in order to later internalize them in a more manageable form. Or on the contrary, it can also be a mean of protecting the child's good forces by projecting them into that other person; to keep them safe while internal conflicts arise.

If we try to understand Jane's mental being and development in the light of what we now know about this process of containment, we can only imagine how this absence of container must have been terrible in terms of mental stability, self-assurance and development of identity. Not only her vulnerability, but also her continual sufferings and anxieties when confronted with the Reed family, can be explained even better than before if we turn to Bion's notion of containment, or Klein's "projective identification".

Indeed, being deprived of any container or caretaker, all of Jane's fears and shocking experiences cannot be incorporated and reintrojected in a more manageable

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<sup>27</sup> On this point, see "A psycho-analytic approach to the treatment of psychosis" (1975), In: Hanna Segal, *The Work of Hanna Segal*, New York, Aronson, 1981, p. 134-5.

form; so that she is doomed to keep those anxieties for herself, thus enabling them to extend and maintain her in a traumatized state.

The only positive transition from this primal shock of the red-room towards a hope for Jane to find self-assurance and most importantly a sense of her own identity and a vanishing of her alienating devils, seems to be a search for a nurturing female figure, capable of accomplishing the role of a container, the role of the “transitional object” (as termed by Winnicott in “Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena”, 1951).

And indeed, following the dreadful red-room episode, Jane is on a desperate search for this first state of well-being and fullness of the primitive relation with the mother. Indeed, she can now fully make the difference between this first position of bliss and those painful and dangerous feelings she is now experiencing. Regaining the initial state of beatitude now becomes the urgent need.

Such a desire is unconscious; it represents the mental manifestation of her urges, the most important being the union with the mother. In psychoanalysis, impulses are known as “quêteuses d’objets” (H. Segal, 1964): Jane’s impulses drive her on a quest to find a mother figure. This fantasy of parental affection will be permanently following Jane as she moves forward in life, since a fantasy cannot be forgotten as long as it is not achieved.

The young, growing up narrator needs to find a parental circle with which she could identify herself, in order to healthily respond to the personal process of the development of her personality. The household detains a major function in a child’s mental development, as it is the only entity capable of dispelling the hatred and fear which the child feels. Jane cannot endure the animosity she experiences and her inner conflicting forces as she lacks this fundamental family tie. Her mental pain has reached such an extreme point (as it cannot be discharged), has become so unbearable that it results in a physical injury: Jane’s fainting in the red-room.

Only a loving and caring environment can provide the child with a positive and constructive atmosphere, necessary for his needs, mental health and development. That is the reason why Jane is on a quest for love. Klein enumerates the constituents of an



integrated personality, which is essential to mental health, but we can note that Jane, as she gets back from the red-room ordeal, does not possess such qualities:

Une personnalité bien intégrée est le fondement de la santé mentale. Je commencerai en énumérant quelques-uns des éléments d'une personnalité intégrée : maturité émotionnelle, force de caractère, capacité à traiter des émotions conflictuelles, un équilibre entre vie interne et adaptation à la réalité, ainsi qu'un assemblage réussi en un tout des différentes parties de la personnalité.<sup>28</sup>

That is because she does not possess these vital elements, and that she knows that staying with the Reed family means she will never be able to have if only a touch of them, that Jane urgently convinces herself to go on a quest to have a chance to acquire them. Besides, the insecurity she endlessly felt while living with the Reeds is also an evidence of her lack of self-confidence, and the only way for her to escape from such a weakness seems to be to turn to the outside world.

Jane lacks not only the initial complete plenitude of the first relation with the mother but the mother herself. In order to find the true nature of her own identity and consider herself as a unified body, Jane must seek parental love, being biological or substitutive. Making this connection would enable her to finally rely on someone and as a consequence, find the courage to consider her body as a unified one. This cognitive operation is essential to Jane's mental and relational well being. The parental image represents the first mark in a child's life and when missing, the consequences for the child welfare are considerable: problems of identity, lack of genealogical markers, numerous psychological wounds, frail relation to the world that surrounds the child...

Klein puts forward the destructive and disturbed behaviour of a child when deprived of parental love:

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<sup>28</sup> Melanie Klein, *Le Transfert et autres écrits*, Translated to French by Claude Vincent, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1995 (English ed., 1975), p. 71.

Attente et désir ne sont pas satisfaits ; [...] [l'enfant] découvre qu'il ne peut pas satisfaire tous ses propres désirs [...] il devient agressif. Il éclate automatiquement, pour ainsi dire, de haine et d'un désir irrésistible d'agression. S'il ressent le vide et la solitude, une réaction automatique s'installe, qui bientôt peut s'emparer de lui et l'accabler, une colère agressive se fait jour, qui est source de douleur et de sensations corporelles d'explosion, de brûlure, de suffocation et d'étouffement. Celles-ci, à leur tour, déterminent ultérieurement des sensations de pénurie, de douleur et d'appréhension.<sup>29</sup>

Such an absence or weighty loss result in severe psychological consequences and will unconsciously have an impact on the child for ever.

One can imagine that this absence of parental presence and love must have been a trial for young Jane since her early days of childhood. Seeing herself as a fragmented body in the mirror of the red-room (instead of experiencing a stage of unification), we can make the assumption that Jane finally felt the vital need to find the maternal and paternal loves she has always yearned for. The mother is logically the first parental figure Jane will try to turn to, trying to find back the initial state of plenitude and union with the mother's womb. The father always comes after the mother as the latter is the first figure of sexual investment for the child.

## 2. Seeking a substitute mother

Jane deeply feels the need to create ties with other human beings, in order to gather and concentrate large parcels of love, support and security which will always be present in case of necessity. Besides, being able to find friends and be loved is the only way for Jane to realize that she is actually a good person and that her aggressive emotions have been mastered or decimated. Klein observes:

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<sup>29</sup> Melanie Klein, Joan RIVIERE, op. cit., p. 23.

La voracité, ou le désir de posséder des choses bonnes, peut concerner n'importe quel objet imaginable qui évoque l'idée de bon, ou bien elle peut les concerner tous : possessions matérielles, dons physiques ou intellectuels, avantages et privilèges. A côté cependant de la satisfaction réelle que ces bons objets peuvent apporter, ils signifient, en fin de compte, une seule chose dans la profondeur de notre conscience. Ce sont des preuves, si nous les obtenons, que nous sommes bons nous-mêmes, pleins de choses bonnes, et que nous sommes aussi, en retour, dignes d'amour, de respect et d'honneur. En même temps que des preuves, ce sont aussi des garanties contre nos craintes d'un vide intérieur, contre nos tendances malignes qui nous font éprouver le sentiment d'être mauvais et pleins de choses mauvaises pour nous et pour les autres. Les bons objets nous servent également de défense contre notre crainte des représailles, des punitions ou des châtements dont les autres pourraient faire preuve à notre égard, soit physiquement ou moralement, soit dans nos affections et nos relations amoureuses. Une raison importante pour laquelle une *privation* quelconque peut être si douloureusement ressentie est que cette privation représente inconsciemment l'idée inverse de ne pas être *dignes* de choses bonnes et de voir se réaliser ainsi nos craintes les plus profondes.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that Jane is able to tie bonds with friends makes her realize that she is capable of loving and be loved by other human beings and not only bring out aggressiveness and animosity. In a way, she tastes love for the first time and discovers that happiness and kindness are existent qualities. This positive experience seems to heal all the evil that used to rule as she was living among the Reed family. Indeed, at that time, she sometimes thought she was responsible for all the family's troubles. Thanks to these new friendships, Jane can, unconsciously, begin to solve her inner emotional conflicts. And, as a consequence, we can note that she less and less expresses feelings of culpability and more and more displays self-assurance.

As she accumulates new positive and fulfilling experiences, shifting from a position of loss and absence to one of satisfaction, Jane gradually progresses and enriches thanks to the people who enable her to turn the bad experiences she used to

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47-8.

engrave in her memory, into constructive experiences which now enable her to acknowledge her newly-found chance, to better make the most of it. Her self-confidence increases as she feels herself capable of keeping the good objects.

Along her quest for motherly love, Jane, in Lowood, meets characters who help her in her progress by playing the role of idealistic models. The first figure to take on such a role is Helen Burns, who can be considered as Jane's foil. Helen, just as Jane, has a passionate burning temper but their temperament differ in many ways. As young Jane finds solace in fairy tales, gothic stories ladden with vivid images which feed her imagination, Helen, on the contrary, prefers intellectual works (such as Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*) based on the philosophy of acceptance of the limits of one's understanding. Jane finds an appeasing and calming down energy in the person of Helen, who will largely contribute to Jane's development.

While being calm and dedramatizing, Helen accepts her fate as she advocates to "love your enemies, bliss them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you" (49), when Jane is extreme in her reactions, dominated by her emotions, "too impulsive, too vehement" (59). Helen finds all she needs in herself and in her religious belief: "If all the world hated you ... while your own conscience approved you ... you would not be without friends" (58), while Jane desperately seeks recognition in others.

The calming effect which Helen operates on Jane, sets herself up as a mentor, a model. She is the first adviser Jane will have to rely on and to counteract her lack of parental presence and love. She teaches Jane to think more of her own self rather than on other human beings and her precepts will greatly influence Jane in the course of her life ("Sir a ... sinner's reformation should never depend on a fellow-creature" (186)). Helen offers Jane some principles she will always apply to in her making of decisions (refusing to follow Rochester as his mistress to France or John as his wife to India).

Helen proves to Jane that positive emotions do exist. She reassures her by showing her that good people and sides of life are not only a myth. Helen is a sincere person, who has the courage of her convictions and who shows Jane respect and gives her love; two feelings that are shared by the narrator and given back in return.

Thanks to her newly-found friendship with Helen, Jane is finally able to encounter the beneficial effect of the essential emotional ability of giving and receiving in return. She is, at last, re-experiencing the positive sensations of the first relation with the mother, which are protection, union, help, communication, guidance... Such a support is essential as Jane is growing up and needs to face painful situations. The love and accompaniment which Helen offers Jane can be seen as substitutes for the affections that a mother would provide for her child. Besides, as Jane gradually identifies with Helen, all the former jealousy and envy seem to subside.

In the same way, at Roe Head, Charlotte Brontë found the attention and affection of E., who succeeded in winning her confidence, just like Helen Burns does with Jane.

E. was younger than she, and her tender heart was touched by the apparently desolate condition in which she found the oddly-dressed, odd-looking little girl that winter morning, as "sick for home she stood in tears", in a new strange place, among new strange people. Any over-demonstrative kindness would have scared the wild little maiden from Haworth; but E. managed to win confidence, and was allowed to give sympathy.<sup>31</sup>

However, Helen's influence is limited since it is truly a motherly presence and touch which Jane relentlessly seeks. Besides, Helen's teachings cannot provide Jane with all the answers since the model she presents is actually an impossible one on Earth. Both being homeless souls, Helen, unlike Jane, doesn't seek a home and a parental love on Earth; her own home is waiting for her in Heaven and her only hope is to find a father in the person of God. Helen is not made for a physical world and she dies of consumption in Jane's arms, reinforcing the theme of the gothic doubling: sleeping with the dead double.

If we turn to Hanna Segal's *Introduction à l'oeuvre de Melanie Klein*, we can interpret this action (sleeping with Helen), as a sort of projective identification: Jane by literally surrounding Helen with love and care, is trying to project her good parts into her dying double, in order to avoid the parting:

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<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

L'identification projective est utilisée dans des buts multiples : elle peut être dirigée vers l'objet idéal afin d'éviter la séparation [...] les parties bonnes peuvent être projetées pour éviter la séparation. (p.33).

Helen was not only a model but also Jane's first experience of a good outer object in her life, with all the symbolism of a comparable recovery of the first primitive good object (the mother) which it may imply. Therefore, Helen's death means more than a painful loss of a friend for Jane, it also reanimates the extreme anguish of losing the primal good object, the mother.

Besides, Helen's death revives Jane's old evils: depression and culpability. Indeed, Winnicott argues:

Lorsqu'on perd quelqu'un de cher, on se considère personnellement responsable de cette mort, en raison même des pulsions de destruction qui accompagnent l'amour, et le processus de deuil découle de ce sentiment qui s'élabore aussi chez l'individu.<sup>32</sup>

Deprived of the first gifts of family-like affection which Jane found in the arms of Helen, the protagonist's quest for motherly attachment comes back to its starting point. But Jane is soon to experience the position of a child relying on motherly attentions and cares; a condition which has always motivated her quest. Often associated with the moon, symbolical of the mother, Miss Temple makes great impressions on Jane from their very first meeting. Her name Temple hints at her protective nature and function, as well as her capacity for spiritual guidance. Besides, she will be the one enabling Jane to get over the loss of her model, Helen, by filling the void the latter has left in Jane:

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<sup>32</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *Processus de maturation chez l'enfant, Développement affectif et environnement*, p. 204.

Nous avons la personne qui a le sentiment d'être vide, qui a peur de se sentir vide et qui a peur de la qualité supplémentaire d'agressivité que ce vide introduit dans son appétit. Il se peut que cette personne se sente vide pour une raison connue : un ami très cher est mort ou une possession valable a été perdue. [...] Cette personne a besoin de trouver un nouvel objet dont se remplir, une personne nouvelle qui pourra remplacer celle qui est perdue, de nouvelles idées ou une philosophie nouvelle pour remplacer des idéaux perdus. On comprend que cette personne soit particulièrement susceptible d'être influencée. A moins qu'elle ne puisse supporter la dépression, la tristesse ou le désespoir et attendre une guérison spontanée, elle recherchera une influence nouvelle ou elle tombera sous le joug de n'importe quelle influence puissante qui se présentera.<sup>33</sup>

Fortunately, it is a new positive influence that Jane finds in the person of Miss Temple, a model who is going to help her constructively progress in her life. Jane, by accepting Miss Temple as a substitute mother but also as a substitute for Helen's loss, shows emotional maturity.

Adrienne Rich puts forward how Jane progressively learns to resist hatred and traditional female temptations in a patriarchal world, relying on female and maternal support:

Jane Eyre, motherless and economically powerless, undergoes certain traditional female temptations, and finds that each temptation presents itself along with an alternative – the image of a nurturing or principled or spirited woman on whom she can model herself, or to whom she can look for support.<sup>34</sup>

Rich depicts Miss Temple as being “maternal in a special sense: not simply sheltering and protective, but encouraging of intellectual growth.”<sup>35</sup> Both Helen and Miss Temple

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<sup>33</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *L'Enfant et le monde extérieur, Le Développement des relations*, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> Adrienne Rich, “Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman”, In Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 470.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 473.

are representatives of motherly love, which is needed by Jane to overcome her arduous trials.

As a sanctuary of protection and religious peace, Miss Temple will play the role of a substitute mother for Jane at Lowood. Miss Temple clearly plays all the parts attached to the role of a mother, by providing Jane with, on the one side, motherly affection and tenderness and on the other side an education and principles to follow.

The way Miss Temple resists the threat of the school – of becoming as cold, hard and heartless as Mr. Brocklehurst – is held as an example to young Jane who rejoices: “I can remember Miss Temple walking ... encouraging us, by precept and example...” (51). The substitute mother is also the first person to deliver some kind of justice to Jane, first by listening to her and then by publically denying Mr. Brocklehurst’s wrong accusation, thus assuming the role of a mother by being the first adult person to side with Jane and help her regain some confidence.

Miss Temple provides Jane with an essential part of the needs a child requires to blossom; that is an adult person on which the young narrator can truly rely and confide, but also a solid and sincere emotional environment. The latter greatly contributes to Jane’s growing sense of her identity, her progressive maturation and her many favorable psychological changes, for example her increasing socialisation within the Lowood institution.

The key to Jane’s gradually healing of her personality disorders lies in the role which her environment plays. Helen and Miss Temple, by playing the role of a substitute family for Jane, enables her to naturally recover from her old destructive forces. They supported young Jane, providing her with a sense of being a part of a family circle and therefore enabling her to grow up through constructive and positive paths. Therefore, for the mental development of a person to be successful, the cares of the environment must be good enough. Besides, it seems that, through the idealization of her models, Jane reaches a condition of reinsurance, thus leaving behind her old persecutive anxieties.

Miss Temple’s role as a model is so essential that her departure from Lowood results in a new crisis of identity for Jane: “Miss Temple, ... to her instruction I owed



the best part of my acquirements ... she had stood me in the stead of a mother” ( 71). Jane had clearly found a mother in the person of Miss Temple; the relationship they entertained was intense. They seemed to form a whole – a bond that can be found in a mother-daughter relation when the father is absent.

### 3. Absence of a father figure

The father figure being absent, the child retreats into an exclusive relation with the mother; a fusion that is detrimental for his well being. Regarded as one of the two founding figures of a child’s character, the father (not necessarily the child’s progenitor) stands as an emotional landmark, which is essential to the child’s mental development and particularly his construction of an identity in the processus of sociability. The father represents the necessary dividing force which disunites the child from his mother.

Besides, the father’s role is very important as regards to the child’s emotional and sentimental life, as it will greatly influence his or her later love affairs as well as all of his or her human relations.

Jane does not enjoy the presence of the second parental figure; the one which helps bring about the growing of her independence and autonomy. The principal consequences of such an absence for a child correspond to an emotional stress and in some cases a psychosis. According to Michael W. Yogman<sup>36</sup>, the father embodies two principal psychological roles: protect and stimulate. He facilitates the child’s ability to deal with affliction and is always present as a protective force against any adverse or aggressive environment. His absence provokes perturbations in a child’s development.

Antonia Fonyi argues:

Quand le père (symbolique) est absent se libèrent les forces du désordre...

L'absence absolue du père est psychose. Le chaos de la fusion avec la mère qui

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<sup>36</sup> On this point, see Dr Michael W. Yogman’s « La présence du père », (1985). In: Geneviève D. Parseval, *Objectif bébé*, Paris, Seuil, 1987, p. 207-222.

règne au commencement de l'évolution psychique, époque où le père n'est pas encore, menacera toujours d'engloutir une personnalité dont les structures n'auront pas été consolidées par une présence paternelle; autrement dit, si l'absence originelle du père se prolonge en absence éternelle, les désordres archaïques ne prendront fin qu'avec le néant asilaire.<sup>37</sup>

If we follow such a statement, Jane must have inevitably felt the lack or loss of this father figure and consequently yearned to find him and establish link with him in order to achieve mental equilibrium.

Miss Temple being gone, the fusion between Jane and the object of motherly love is broken: “with her was gone every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in some degree a home to me” (71). Levy-Shiff’s work “The effects of father absence on young children in mother-headed families, Child development” helps us understand how a fatherless child can be so anxious and disturbed when it comes to separations (1982). Jane is so affected by Miss Temple’s leaving that she experiences a new crisis of identity. Levy-Shiff studies the multiple consequences related with the absence of the father on the child’s emotional equilibrium. He notes that fatherless girls are more independent than those who have one.

This theory is relevant when applied to Jane’s character, as she endlessly goes from one place to another, on a quest most of the time deprived of any emotional links or human company. Her desire for independence can be perceived in her persistent will to fly away and find intercourse: “I longed to go where there was life and movement” (75) to experience “all incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence” (93). She alone takes the decision of advertising in the Herald to find a situation:

You must inclose the advertisement and the money to pay for it under a cover directed to the Editor of the Herald; you must put it, the first opportunity you have, into the post at Lowton; answers must be addressed to J.E. at the post-

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<sup>37</sup> Antonia Fonyi, *Quand le père est absent*, In: *Le Père, métaphore paternelle et fonction du père: l'interdit, la filiation, la transmission*, Paris, Denoël, « L'espace analytique », 1989, p. 369.

office there: you can go and inquire in about a week after you send your letter, if any are come, and act accordingly (73).

The author herself needed that intercourse, passion, intensity and fire in life; she longed for action and escaping. She confesses in a letter dated August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1841:

...I hardly know what swelled to my throat as I read her letter: such a vehement impatience of restraint and steady work; such a strong wish for wings – wings such as wealth can furnish; such an urgent thirst to see, to know, to learn; something internal seemed to expand bodily for a minute. I was tantalised by the consciousness of faculties unexercised, - then all collapsed, and I despaired. My dear, I would hardly make that confession to any one but yourself; and to you, rather in a letter than *vivâ voce*. These rebellious and absurd emotions were only momentary; I quelled them in five minutes. I hope they will not revive, for they were acutely painful. [...] What dismays and haunts me sometimes, is a conviction that I have no natural knack for my vocation. If teaching only were requisite, it would be smooth and easy; but it is the living in other people's houses – the estrangement from one's real character – the adoption of a cold, rigid, apathetic exterior, that is painful...<sup>38</sup>

Jane now needs to begin her quest to find the love of a substitute father – the second part of herself which is missing.

#### 4. Jane's quest

*Jane Eyre* is a first person narrative and thus describes Jane's own progression. She needs to give a structure to her own life. Mikhail Bakhtin explains that everyone must be the the author of his or her own life<sup>39</sup>. Jane is going to make choices that will be decisive with regard to her life. In the novel, one can find recurrent references to

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<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, op. cit., p. 154-5.

<sup>39</sup> Ken Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.239.

boundaries (the most telling one being the reference to gates), underlining that she has to cross many thresholds to move through one situation to another.

Her situation has some similarities with that of Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: a Christian in search of salvation. It tells the story of Christian (representative of all Christians), who realises that he is a sinner and seeks to escape punishment (represented by the City of Destruction) by going on a moral pilgrimage (represented by his actual journey) towards full religious understanding and salvation in the Celestial City (representative of heaven). On his spiritual journey, Christian passes through a number of places which represent various trials on his way to reaching true religious piety.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegorical journey. In some way its structure corresponds to that of the picaresque novel, in which the hero takes a journey whose course leads him to meet all types of men and experience a variety of trials. Jane as well as Oedipus will meet people on their journey who are going to influence them in some way. Their pilgrimages are rather personal, individual. It helps us understand how Charlotte Brontë uses the pilgrimage as a structure for the novel.

In *Jane Eyre* and *Oedipus* there is both a real journey and a mental journey, as the structure starts with a position of punishment, a threatening atmosphere. Oedipus undertakes an intellectual journey throughout the play; struggling to find the truth. Like Jane through her quest to find the true nature of her own identity, Oedipus has to go through different stages in order to reach this truth, namely Information, Knowledge and Wisdom.

Oedipus gains what can be regarded as affection and compassion from the readers (perhaps mostly at the moment when he has fallen from power) as it is his sense of responsibility for his city that drives his search for the truth. Nonetheless, we can note that Oedipus and Jocasta sometimes seem to be deliberately blind to the truth. Such an attitude goes counter to Oedipus' main goal when undertaking such a perilous journey: seeking the truth. Both talk about the same prophecy but neither remarks the extreme congruency in the related facts. Similarly, Jocasta tells Oedipus how she bound her son's ankles (780-781) but Oedipus does not link this with his own swollen feet.

While obviously underlining the tragic irony, this also puts to the fore how despairingly Oedipus and Jocasta do not want to speak the self-evident truth.

Such an attitude can be associated with denial, a condition which is greatly described by Klein:

Leur refus de croire ce qu'en même temps ils savent vrai reflète la tendance universelle au déni. Le déni constitue une défense très efficace contre l'angoisse persécutive et la culpabilité qui apparaissent lorsque les pulsions destructives n'ont pas pu être entièrement maîtrisées. Le déni, qui est toujours lié à l'angoisse persécutive, peut étouffer l'amour et la culpabilité, saper à la base la sympathie et le respect à l'égard des objets internes et externes, perturber les facultés de jugement et le sentiment de réalité.<sup>40</sup>

*Jane Eyre* is a novel of education, a bildungsroman dealing with Jane's development from childhood to adulthood. M.H Abrams describes the word as

the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences – and often through a spiritual crisis – into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world.<sup>41</sup>

In the Heavenly Footman<sup>42</sup>, Bunyan points at the essential aspect of the journey, saying that,

Because the way is long (I speak metaphorically), and there is many a dirty step, many a high hill, much work to do, a wicked heart, world, and devil, to overcome; I say, there are many steps to be taken by those that intend to be saved, by running or walking, in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.

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<sup>40</sup> Melanie Klein, *Envie et gratitude et autres essais*, p. 211-2.

<sup>41</sup> Meyer H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, [1993], Fort Worth, Harcourt Brace College Publishers (Seventh Edition), 1999, p.193.

<sup>42</sup> Acacia John Bunyan Online Library (consulted on 10/08/2010), *The Heavenly Footman*, [1968], <http://acacia.pair.com/Acacia.John.Bunyan/Sermons.Allegories/Heavenly.Footman/III.html>

Out of Egypt thou must go through the Red Sea; thou must run a long tedious journey, through the vast howling wilderness, before thou come to the land of promise<sup>43</sup>.

In a similar way, Jane will have to experience some pain and undertake many trials. At the end of the novel we can ask ourselves what Jane has learnt.

We can also point out that 'eyre' is an archaic word which means a journey in a circuit<sup>44</sup>, so that Jane's very name foreshadows her perilous journey. Charlotte Brontë's narrative strategy also parallels the structures of the Oedipus myth in that in *Jane Eyre*, the journey is at the beginning much more linked to an idea of a way out than to a progression towards a destination. When Jane leaves Gateshead or Lowood, she has no precise goal apart from that of escaping as we can underline with the repetition of the term "liberty", emphasized by the structure in chiasmus: "I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer" (72). Similarly, Oedipus' only aim when he leaves Corinth is to avoid the prophecy at all costs and find a way out.

## 5. Identity Crisis

The notion of crisis of identity in *Jane Eyre* is important since at each stage in the novel, there is a crisis but there is also a progression. The reference to the individual and this quest for identity throughout the novel means that the protagonist will have to make crucial decisions and judgements.

Not all Jane's decisions are conscious; some are simply instinctive. The contrasts between reason and instinct, judgement and feeling are important themes in *Jane Eyre*. Sometimes like Oedipus, she experiences conflicts between her reason and her instinct. For instance, when she decides to leave Lowood, Jane has lengthily

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<sup>43</sup> On this point, see Chapter I. Heaven must be run for. So run, that ye may obtain. – 1 corinthians IX. 24, in John Bunyan, *The Heavenly Footman*, 1698.

<sup>44</sup> *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*. Retrieved November 29, 2008, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Eyre>

thought about it – it is a rational decision. Oedipus who, after being warned by the Oracle of his foreshadowed murdering of his father and later marriage with his mother, rationally takes the decision to go away in order to avoid the prophecy, so that it cannot be fulfilled. Unlike this, Jane's response to John Reed is an instinctive rebellion against cruelty, with as a consequence the open up of the gates to Lowood. As for Oedipus, he instinctively killed Laius in the dispute over right of way.

Jane's psychological crises and troubles are caused by problems with her own identity. There is a conflict between Jane who wants to grow up and reach her own identity and the different obstacles she encounters. In Lowood, she reaches a point of despair: "I wished to die" (58). In this regression, there is a crisis of identity; indeed, she is without any support "left to myself, I abandoned myself" (57).

The use of the double extends this psychological question. Indeed, the use of doubling as a literary motif dramatizes the notion of a fragmentation of identity – a desire to be reunited with a lost centre of personality, identity. Helen and Bertha are considered to be Jane's doubles as they represent parts of Jane's own personality. Jane has to fight against many social conflicts (concrete reality) but at the same time she is also in danger of not having a sense of her own identity. When Jane and Helen sleep with the arms round each other, it depicts a strong and appalling image of Jane sleeping with the double, with the dying part of herself.

The theme of the one and the many (doubles) is also important in Sophocles' Oedipus the King. Indeed, a contradiction prevails throughout the play, as both the herdsman and Jocasta assume that it was not only one person who killed Laius at the crossroad, whereas it finally turns out that Oedipus alone killed his father. So, if we trust both interpretations, Laius has been killed by only one person but also several people at the very same time... One possible understanding is that Oedipus is searching for the person responsible for Laius' murder, so that he is in a way the investigator hunting for the murderer. However, the two roles eventually amalgamate into one person, namely Oedipus. Interestingly enough, Oedipus is now alike both father and brother.

*Oedipus the King* teems with doubles and twos – that is, “two herdsmen, two brothers (Oedipus and Creon), two daughters and two sons, two opposed pairs of king and queen (Laius and Jocasta, and Polybus and Merope), and two cities (Thebes and Corinth).”<sup>45</sup> Oedipus is bewilderingly some combination of two things, so that being the hero of the play, the discrepancy between the one and the many is fundamental to the play. Thus, Jocasta’s query: “What is this news of double meaning?”<sup>46</sup> is clearly an appropriate question.

In *Jane Eyre*, crises of identity are often manifested through the evocation of the afterlife. In Cocteau’s work, the afterlife is expressed by the plague. In the red-room, when Jane sees a light gleaming on the wall, she imagines it is Uncle Reed coming back from the afterlife. Besides, the images of storm, which include those of wind, rain and snow, are to be found throughout the novel. They are metaphors for passions and anger; they echo the upheaval going on in the characters’ life; sometimes they forecast that upheaval, are an omen that all will not be well and that the Gods are angry.

After Rochester’s proposal, a violent thunder-storm follows, in which the chestnut-tree is struck by lightning. This scene augurs that all will not be well with the engaged couple and the fulfillment of the Oedipal dream. So does the ‘blast’ in her dream of the ruin of Thornfield Hall. The chestnut-tree is a very powerful symbol in the novel: it is the place where Rochester proposes to her and, just before he does so, “A waft of wind came sweeping down the laurel-walk, and trembled through the boughs of the chestnut: it wandered away - away – to an indefinite distance – it died.” (217).

Jane is thus exposed to the elements, reflecting the upheaval in her life and in her emotions. Finally, when St. John tells Jane that she has inherited a fortune and that he has discovered her true identity, he enters the room in a “whirling storm”, appearing out of “the howling darkness” (321). The news he brings is, of course, of enormous emotional importance to Jane, and the storm reflects this. While fulfilling a metaphorical function, the storm images also contribute in a literal way to establishing

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<sup>45</sup> Oedipus Rex or Oedipus the King Study Guide. In GradeSaver [on line]. Gradesaver LLC, 2010. [Consulted on July 10<sup>th</sup> 2009], <http://www.gradesaver.com/oedipus-rex-or-oedipus-the-king/study-guide/section2/>

<sup>46</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, 939.



setting and atmosphere: they create tension, dramatic intensity and a sense of mystery and expectation.

In *King Lear*, in the same way, lightning represents moments of madness. Lear's folly has a repercussion on Nature; by contradicting natural order, Lear has hindered the "Divine power" so that nature is also upset. This literary process is called *prosopopeia*: the king bestows his fury and affliction to the storm, and as a consequence the forces of Nature are attributed human characteristics; they become animate, alive<sup>47</sup>.

When Jane arrives at Lowood, she hears "a wild wind rushing amongst trees" (35). When she approaches Moor House, "the night wind swept over the hill [...] the rain fell fast" (282). Those signs are of major importance in Charlotte Brontë's narrative strategy, since they prepare the reader for the worst; they introduce a threatening atmosphere, an impending disaster.

When Mrs Temple leaves Lowood, Jane finds no more reason to stay, as she is still an orphan without any family. She is once again emotionally homeless and begins to feel her old emotion. This also corresponds to her beginning to feel imprisoned again. She wants to escape from that prison to find a new place "Grant me at least a new servitude!" (72). Jane left because she felt homeless. Helen Burns and Miss Temple were the substitutes of a mother for her but also confidants, companions...

The connotation of the proper names prefigures what Jane is about to experience and how she is going to suffer. "Thornfield", the place she is heading to, is clearly a tricky place, a field of thorns difficult to negotiate. It foreshadows Jane's future personal and moral trials, as Thornfield is the place where she will meet Rochester, the father figure which has been missing for so long in her life. Thornfield nonetheless seems to be a more inviting place but it is still in some way cut off from the outside.

Jane, as a governess, does not have companions of equal social status since she has not the same importance than her employers and she is above the servants. In Thornfield the others are sometimes rejecting and insulting her for being a governess. One cannot but remember the moving part when Jane compels herself to draw her

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<sup>47</sup> On this point, see Jean-Marie Maguin, *Imagination and Image Types in King Lear*. In William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, p.15.

portrait and compare it with Blanche Ingram's; the latter being so much more praiseworthy.

We can note that Jane, most of the time, relates to art (precisely drawing and painting) to analyze and understand what is hidden in her mind. At Gateshead, she would draw the sceneries she discovers in her dreams and the places she dreams she could come across and contemplate; and at Thornfield she cannot help drawing a portrait of her master as if she could lay bare of his personality and his deep character.

The Brontë family was fond of drawing, and more generally anything that was related to art. Mr. Brontë made it his business to give his children a good education, instruction. The girls would look into any drawing or painting all day long; giving their impression, their feeling, and trying to bare the work of art and the artist behind it. The power of imagination was, for Charlotte and her sisters, an essential, even vital attribute; so indispensable that Charlotte even thought at one point of earning her living as an artist. Thus it is not surprising that the author chose to endow Jane with imagination, a passion for art and the gift of painting and drawing.

It is in Thornfield that Jane first tries to share her fervour for art through Adèle's teaching. And it is also there that Jane meets Rochester, the character who represents the patriarchal power and Jane's Oedipal dream.

## **6. Finding the father figure, the patriarchal power**

Rochester does not correspond to the traditional heroic-looking young gentleman. He can be associated with a Byronic hero – a stereotyped character which comes from Lord Byron who had a rather scandalous life and who was rebellious. He created often heroes who were usually outcast from society, burdened with an obscure curse, having committed some terrible fault in their mysterious life.

The name "Rochester" echoes that of the Earl of Rochester (1647-1680), who was a member of the Court of Charles II. He had a divided personality, as he was a

very cultivated man with a family life but at the same time, he had a second life in London with mistresses. He was famous as a seducer and had a very active life.

But what is more striking and worth underlining in his controversial personality is that the Earl of Rochester surprisingly adopted a woman only to marry her later on! Consequently the fact that Charlotte Brontë chose to associate her male lead with the Earl of Rochester cannot be innocent. She must have studied the details of the life of the Earl and willingly associated him with her character. This will to amalgamate the two personalities cannot but suggest that her character Rochester can possibly have a tendency towards an Oedipal personality.

Other similarities are to be found between the two characters, as Rochester has two personalities whether he is with Jane or with people of his own station (influenced by the negative aspect of society). He also has a double life as he hides from Jane the existence of Bertha.

The fact that Rochester is not conventional with her gives Jane relief:

The ease of his manner freed me from painful restraint [...] I ceased to pine after kindred. My thin crescent destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of my existence were filled up; my bodily health improved. (125)

Besides, her desire for family has surprisingly stopped as though Rochester has provided her with a sense of family. The things which are missing seem to be compensated by his influence and her bodily health is improved.

Mr. Rochester clearly embodies the male force in society – a hint that he will be some kind of a threatening obstacle is to be found in his description and his association with a large form blocking the way to horizon: “the solid mass of a crag [...] effac[ing] the aërial distance of azure hill, sunny horizon” (95). His patriarchal power is suggested by his temper, potential cruelty, ostentatious way of speaking and flowery language: ““What the deuce is to do now?””, “I think he was swearing [...] he was pronouncing some formula which prevented him from replying to me directly” (96).

Rochester constantly orders Jane to come or to sit and answer his questions, in the style of a father: “‘Come to the fire’, said the master [...] We obeyed, as in duty bound” (103), “ ‘It would please me to draw you out [...] – therefore speak.’ [...] ‘Speak’, he urged” (113). Rochester’s mastery is also found in his different disguises and lies; his trickery is a source of power. He is also animated by a kind of desire for dominance as he won’t reveal his feelings as long as Jane does not reveal her’s. Suggesting the desire for control, Rochester personifies the faculty of the mind as a Chariteer driving a chariot holding tightly the rein, in firm control of feelings, themselves personified as horses trying to escape.

He seems to like to torment Jane in the way he plays on with her, with her fear of her social inferiority. Tension is palpable before the wedding, as Rochester, now being confident of having gained Jane’s love, subsequently starts to consider her as an amusement, a subordinate person. He boasts, playfully and nonetheless threateningly:

it is your time now, little tyrant, but it will be mine presently: and when once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I'll just – figuratively speaking – attach you to a chain like this (231).

Dianne F. Sadoff associates the attachment between Rochester and Jane with the “somasochistic relationship between fathers and daughters in nineteenth-century patriarchal society”<sup>48</sup>. She explains that many of Freud’s patients (being analyzed in the framework of understanding the complicated relationship between a father and his daughter), could recollect, under analysis, “childhood fantasies of being beaten by their fathers”. Freud analyzed these fantasies as an expression of erotic love for the father, finding their origin in the conflicting aspects of the Oedipus complex – a guilty admiration manifested in visions of a child being beaten.

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<sup>48</sup> Dianne F. Sadoff, *The Father, Castration, and Female Fantasy in Jane Eyre*, In: *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism*, Bedford: St Martin’s, Beth Newman, 1996, p. 518-27.

There are attempts at avoiding the marriage with the father figure when for instance, in chapter XV, Bertha puts fire to Rochester's bed while he is sleeping. She is characterized as Jane's darkest double, putting into action what Jane intimately feels. Then as the wedding day approaches, Jane's anxiety and increasing sense of losing her own identity reflect the malaise felt at the imminence of marriage with the father, so that on the night before the wedding, Jane's anxieties become real as Bertha, as a symbol of Jane's Oedipal fear comes to her room, tearing up the wedding veil.

Here again, Bertha has appeared as an expression of Jane's personality: an alter ego; the concrete reason why Jane should not marry Rochester. Bertha's existence further suggests the unconventional and unethical union between the young narrator and the already married patriarchal male lead. Besides, the night before the wedding, Jane dreams that she is carrying a child which she presented as a burden and Rochester goes away, shameful of the disgraced child which might represent the result of the Oedipal union.

Such a dream reflects Jane's profound anxieties and a clear evocation of dread. The ruin of Thornfield Hall points to the fragility of her union with Rochester. The image of the horse galloping away, leaving Jane behind, unable to hold the person back (obviously a representation of Rochester), pictures Jane's manifest fear of abandonment. Being an orphan child, Jane has always lived with the fear of being left behind, desolate; and as the wedding approaches, it appears that this apprehension is fiercely rekindling.

In her dream, she is struggling to keep her balance on the shifting rocks with the child clinging in terror to her neck, as Rochester is riding away to a "distant country" (241) for many years. "The unknown little child" (241) that Jane carries may represent Adèle – a child, Jane fears in her dream, that Rochester would abandon to her before going away, but also a reminiscence of Rochester's troubling past. More probably, it could also suggest Jane's past weakness and pain, as well as the oppressive weight of her relatively lower social class and limiting prospects.

The "shell-like" wall suggests the state of insecurity which Jane endures, as well as implying her vulnerability as regards her precarious love for Rochester and the

upcoming matrimonial ceremony. It can also be considered as a parallel to the birth of that little child Jane is carrying, or as symbolic of Jane herself: both being fragile little birds. The “scared infant” (241) also suggests the relative class inferiority into which Jane is born. Her social position may perhaps be a barrier to her approaching union with the man she loves. The dream ends with Jane and the child falling from the collapsing wall, an action possibly signaling a corresponding drop in social class, status, and prospects, a fall which in fact will occur.

The second dream is, actually, a tale which occurs in reality. Bertha emerges from the closet to visit Jane on the night before the ceremony, clearly indicating the two women’s emblematic pairing. As Bertha places the veil on her own head, she furiously tears it in two, paralleling the split chesnut and foreshadowing the negative sequence of events during the marriage. This second dream obviously emphasizes the theme of the double as regards the relationship between the two female leads.

The many similarities found in their behaviour hold Bertha as Jane’s darkest double. Indeed, Bertha turns to the mirror to look at herself, paralleling Jane’s own action in the red-room as she crosses before the looking-glass but cannot recognize herself – the “dark oblong glass” (242) recalling the “visionary hollow” (11) of the red-room chapter. Then, Bertha “dr[aws] aside the window-curtain and look[s] out” – an action which parallels Jane looking out from the window-seat at Gateshead and from the third floor at Thornfield; longing for liberty. Finally, Jane refers to Bertha’s “fiery eyes” – a feature which is usually attributed to Jane in the novel. If the behavioral echoes of the two scenes (i.e. what Jane thinks to be her second dream and the red-room episode) was not sufficient, we can also note that Jane loses consciousness at the end of the passage, thus experiencing once again the inner turmoil she was confronted with in the red-room.

If we believe Klein’s thinking, this second fainting, almost equivalent to the first one she experienced as a very young child in the red-room, was predictable: « Je crois

que la pression exercée par les situations d'angoisse les plus précoces est un des facteurs qui provoque la compulsion de répétition. »<sup>49</sup>

Bertha is also felt as a persecutor for Jane, a threat which is both exterior and interior. As Bertha visits Jane at night before her marriage, she is clearly embodying an outer menace but also an even more violent inner one, as Jane's persecutor is also her double, leading to an extremely dangerous inner conflict which ends with Jane's fainting, as the pain is too difficult to handle.

This threatening dream is clearly a reflection of Jane's deepest fears and appears as an omen that all will not be well with the engaged couple. Jane creates a gothic atmosphere where impressions, fiction and reality are confusingly intertwined. This passage is of paramount importance as it represents the climax of Jane's fears and uncertainties at the eve of the wedding. The whole world of the novel seems then to be dangling, waiting for the foreshadowed disaster and deception to come. The fact that Jane faints is a clear indication to the fact that she has not reached the end of her journey. She experiences again her childhood anxieties and faints just like in the red-room, as an escape to reality.

Rochester dominates the wedding preparation. Jane is passive and Rochester takes everything in hands and makes all the decisions: the luggage "would be far on their road to London: and so should I" (234). Rochester's controlling role is also perceived in the facts that he is the one who names the new Jane on the luggage: "Mr. Rochester had himself written the direction, 'Mrs. Rochester [...]'" (234).

His "falcon-eye flashing" (233) suggests a powerful image of strength, Jane being his bird of prey. Rochester also refers to Jane as a small, helpless caged bird. Besides, he is much more experienced than she is, she is not ready yet to be married; she fears she might lose her identity in the process by yielding to the father figure. She is burning with a sense of degradation she feels. She compares herself with a "slave" and he a "sultan". She feels threatened about her own identity, about what will imply to marry him.

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<sup>49</sup> Melanie Klein, *Le Transfert et autres écrits*, p. 17.

This suggests the unfitting character of their situation. Indeed, the fact that Jane is so uneasy implies that she has doubts about the morality of having Rochester as a husband. Besides, Mrs Fairfax warns Jane to keep her distance with him. Jane explains:

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, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for his creature: of whom I had made an idol (234).

Jane is becoming too dependent on him, he takes the place of God in her mind. Rochester symbolically stands for Jane's God and he can be equated to a father figure ("God the Father").

Rochester substitutes for the missing father in Jane's family structure re-enact the basic pattern by linking her fate to his good-will. The fact that Rochester is eclipsing every thought of religion is understandable and evident since Jane is going beyond the politically and religiously acceptable by wanting to marry the father figure embodied by Rochester. In order to marry him, she has to set aside morality and religious thoughts. We can also underline that the way Jane looks at Rochester is comparable to the way a girl look at his father: an image of almighty figure of protection and power.

The marriage is interrupted (thus preventing the Oedipal accomplishment) because Jane finds out that Rochester has a wife – Bertha. The symbolic prevention of marriage has thus become actual as the discovery of Bertha's existence puts an end to the wedding. Then Rochester, in a statement similar to that of a father asserting undivided love for his daughter, claims that it is "this young girl" whom he really likes and not this "monster" (Bertha), yet the existence of Bertha prohibits his acting it out. He asks Jane to become his mistress and acts quite violently; the most negative aspect of his personality is released:



His fury was wrought to the highest [...] he [...] seized my arm, and grasped my waist. He seemed to devour me with his flaming glance: physically I felt, at the moment, *powerless...* (my italics). (271)

Not surprisingly, a similar news item occurred when Charlotte was teaching at Roe Head. In Leeds, a young governess married a man and they had a baby. But all this was made without knowing that the man in question was actually married to another woman:

Report now says, that his first wife was deranged, and that he had made this an excuse to himself for his subsequent marriage. But, at any rate, the condition of the wife who was no wife – of the innocent mother of the illegitimate child – excited the deepest commiseration; and the case was spoken of far and wide, and at Roe Head among other places.<sup>50</sup>

This news item must have utterly shocked her so that she decided to use it in her novel as one of the major climaxes of the plot.

In chapter XXVII, page 253, Jane introduces a Biblical reference to illustrate the psychological torment she thinks she should be condemned to: “you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye” (drawn out from St Matthew chapters: 5:29 and 18:9). This is a moment of great climax as Jane’s decision will dramatically influence the rest of the novel and its end. In *Oedipus the King*, the climax of the play happens when Oedipus finally realizes that he has murdered his father and married his mother. From this knowledge will ensue the outcome of the rest of the play. This revelation brings about tremendous consequences for the main character, leaving him in a state of shock, unable to decide what to do, now that he knows the truth.

As Thornfield burns down, Rochester is surrounded and imprisoned by the flames, mutilating him and ironically punishing him in the way Jane had figuratively wished to injure herself. God’s punishment for adulterers is, as we know, blindness. Such a chastisement seems to have been imposed on Rochester by a divine power

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<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, op. cit., p. 105.

through Bertha. As a consequence, our male lead is now blind and carries a severely injured arm. “Now that she knows he is married, she is bound to either leave him or become guilty of adultery. Thus the reference to the sacrifice of hand and eye is relevant, for by this figurative sacrifice she avoids sin”<sup>51</sup>.

Mr. Rochester however, does not enjoy a similar fate. Because he knew the whole time that he had a wife, Rochester is not spared from his punishment: “Rochester’s losses in the fire are striking realizations of the stern justice of Matthew 5: ‘One eye was knocked out and one hand so crushed that Mr. Carter, the surgeon had to amputate it directly’”<sup>52</sup>. The allusions to the Sermon on the Mount presents to the reader what readers in the nineteenth-century may have been using as a moral guide in their own lives.

Blindness and sight are major motifs in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*. Though Teiresias is physically blind, he knows the truth from the beginning, whereas Oedipus on the contrary is blind to his fate in spite of his physical eyesight. Sophocles’ conservative views on prophecy are clearly displayed, as he proposes a double irony: it is Teiresias, the blind person, who foreshadows the future, whereas Oedipus, who possesses all of his seeing faculties, is incapable of speaking the self-evident truth.

The fact that Oedipus becomes literally blind at the end of the play, intensifies the dramatic irony. Indeed, at the end, Oedipus chooses to put out his eyes to punish himself, as this is the only way for him to avoid sin. But this deliberate and conscious act (a methodical, rhythmic action) also seems to be a way for him to take control of the pain that torments him. Besides, he explains: “What good were eyes to me? Nothing I could see could bring me joy”<sup>53</sup>. Only by taking this radical measure can he reach a certain freedom and relief; now that he has made himself a blind man, he is finally unable to see. Oedipus is doomed to walk forever in physical darkness, though the truth is now visible to him. At the same time, Jocasta’s immediate response as she

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<sup>51</sup> Marianne Thormählen, *The Brontës and Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.11.

<sup>52</sup> Catherine B. Tkacz, “The Bible in *Jane Eyre*”, *Christianity and Literature*, 44.1, 1994, p. 3-27.

<sup>53</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, 1473-74.

is faced with the dreadful understanding of the truth, is to charge herself by committing suicide.

These allusions not only foreshadow plot and certain themes, but also teach the reader a valuable lesson about life and the choices one makes. Jane wants to abandon herself to the temptation but her conscience regains the upper hand. She personifies conscience as a tyrant who is holding passion by the throat, preventing her from yielding to the Oedipal desire.

The fact that she chooses reason over feelings proves that she is striving to control her inner destructive urges which threaten to endanger the self. Besides, the sexual impulses she feels towards Rochester provoke in her an unrestrained feeling of guilt, as they are perceived as selfish and potentially harmful for the circle. Therefore, reason takes over and accomplishes what is productive, giving back to Jane an impression of self-control and altruism.

Jane cannot stay with Rochester since she has a memory of basic Christian principles and thus a sense that she needs to escape a sort of danger. She dreams she is in the red-room and sees the moon coming to her, admonishing her to “flee temptation!” (272). Here, the moon appears as a symbolic maternal apparition; Jane turns to the symbolic womanhood of the Mother as she is in danger of losing her integrity by not resisting the patriarchal power:

I watched her come – watched with the strangest anticipation; as though some word of doom were to be written on her disk. She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud; a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit; immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart –  
“My daughter, flee temptation!”  
“Mother, I will.”

It is once again a motherly figure which warns and protects Jane from external and internal dangers.

This event represents another very important moment of crisis which is going to affect Jane. It reminds her the feeling of being oppressed and imprisoned and her reaction to that memory is to flee. Indeed, she has to escape from an Oedipal imprisonment with Rochester and her flight is necessary for her own self-preservation.

After fleeing Thornfield, Jane wanders – starving, freezing, stumbling. In a similar way, Oedipus' journey is essentially that of a wanderer, as he adopts a wanderer's role when he relentlessly seeks information from the other characters to find the truth and when at the end of the play his daughter Antigone helps him as he vagabonds impotently and blindly, having been chased off the city, and subsequently dying at Colonus. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophocles also depicts Oedipus as a nomad, wandering as Creon and his men are pursuing him.

The motif of the crossroad is essential both in *Jane Eyre* and in *Oedipus the King*. After running away from Thornfield, Jane on her journey, comes to a crossroad: “a stone pillar set up where four roads meet” (275). Jane has already started choosing a direction without Rochester but now, it is the first time that she actually has the choice, strictly speaking, between different directions. She does not know where to go but still has to choose the right path. In *Oedipus the King*, Laius has been killed in the middle of a three-roads intersection. This crossroad definitely symbolizes the crucial moment as it corresponds to the point when Oedipus begins to fulfill the prophecy and as it will lead to the twists and turns of the whole plot. And this path where three roads meet is continually referred to throughout the play.

The symbol of a crossroad is significant as it is a place where essential choices have to be made. And the decisions that will follow will have considerable consequences. The difference between Jane and Oedipus is that Jane is fully aware that the choice she is about to make will have consequences on the rest of her journey and on the rest of her life. But Oedipus, on the contrary, was not aware at the time that he was taking a fateful decision, so that in the drama, the crossroad does not stand for decision making, but rather for hazard and predictions. Which crucial decision is Jane going to make now: yielding to the Oedipal dream or resisting it?

### **III. Fulfilment of the Oedipal dream?**

#### **1. Loving the father figure**

According to Freud, any human being is subject to all kind of fears and most importantly repressed wishes. And, those feelings are prone to emerge in dreams, disguised. Jane's timeless love for Rochester is a consequence of the lack of fatherly love in her life. Jane has never experienced any kind of parental affection since the only memory she has of a "mother" figure is that of her cruel aunt Reed.

Throughout the novel, Jane is struggling to find the loving touch she has desired more than anything else since the early years of her childhood. Her efforts to find the love she relentlessly yearns for finally pay off as she meets Rochester. He is twenty years older than she is and provides her with the affection and love she has always wanted.

From the beginning of their relationship Rochester insists that Jane is a "little sunny-faced girl with the dimpled cheeks and rosy lips" (220), "this one little English girl" (229), thus emphasizing the image of a father endeavouring to flatter his daughter and give her attentions. Jane sometimes presents a protest against the patriarchal authority embodied by Rochester, thus going against the attraction of the Oedipal love fantasy. But this protest is also a sign of a daughter's feelings for her father: the displeasure which is attached to the failure of not getting what she wants from him. Whenever Jane affirms the right to her own identity, patriarchy ineluctably puts her in her place.

Jane's first encounter with Rochester does not reveal any kind of attraction or sentimentality on her part. The portrait she makes of him is far from being a romantic depiction. As she arrives at Thornfield, he is the first man to cross her way and she

pictures him as an older man. She never describes any kind of physical attraction towards him and she first depicts him as “dark, strong, and stern” (99).

However, as time passes, Jane begins to be attracted by Rochester, by this powerful, authoritative, distant man who is twice her age. The intensity with which Charlotte Brontë depicts the passionate love between Jane and Rochester is clearly the reason why *Jane Eyre* appealed and still appeals to the reader. Jane’s desire for fusion with Rochester finally comes to an end as she becomes one with Rochester: “absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” (384).

The love which Jane and Rochester entertain for each other sometimes reveals flashes of aggressiveness. Rochester points to her burning temperament: “no contact strikes the fire from you that is in you” (168) and warns her about his: “To live, for me, Jane, is to stand on a crater-crust which may crack and spue fire any day.” (184). The bond which links them is, on the one hand, highly fragile since it relies on a fiery relationship in which one character can, at any time, burst out and endanger the union; but on the other hand, this link is extremely strong, since, as we noticed, Jane and Rochester cannot possibly live away from one another, their fate are bound and whatever happens in the novel, they will always find a way to be together, as Jane insists: “I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine [...] absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” (384). Indeed, deep love is always ardent as it is intimately linked to human desires which are inherently unstable, leading to aggressiveness and even sometimes destructive manifestations.

Intense love also means jealousy; which is an important emotion that is present all along *Jane Eyre* and which manifests itself with more strength as Jane doubts Rochester’s feelings for her. Impulses of jealousy can be interpreted (among other things) as resulting from the love of a daughter for the patriarchal figure (in this case the hatred would be directed towards the mother or any female figure in intimate contact with the father), or from the love of a human being for another, in the framework of a love affair (here the animosity would be headed towards a third person considered as a potential danger that can hinder the well-being of the couple or the might-be couple).

Both interpretations are viable if we turn to Jane's situation and, in both cases, Blanche Ingram is the person towards who the resentment is driven.

When Jane shyly and enviously observes Rochester playing and dancing with Blanche Ingram from the corner of the room, her position of jealous and powerless spectator weirdly resembles that of a daughter lusting after the relationship between her father and the female figure that accompanies him without being able to separate them or to make the jealousy stop by monopolizing the father's whole attention. What logically follows is Jane's ensuant humiliation as a consequence of the injury caused to her:

I pronounced judgement to this effect: – That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life: that a more fantastic idiot had never surfeited herself on sweet lies, and swallowed poison as if it were nectar.

'*You*', I said, 'a favourite with Mr. Rochester? *You* gifted with the power of pleasing him? *You* of importance to him in any way? Go! your folly sickens me. And you have derived pleasure from occasional tokens of preference – equivocal tokens, shown by a gentleman of family, and a man of the world, to a dependant and a novice. How dared you? Poor stupid dupe! – Could not even self-interest make you wiser? You repeated to yourself this morning the brief scene last night? – Cover yourself and be ashamed! He said something in praise of your eyes, did he? Blind puppy! Open their bleared lids and look on your own accursed senselessness! It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it. (136-7)

The consequent feelings are inferiority, depression, the impression of being despised and most of all guilty. That is the reason why Jane feels the need to draw a portrait of herself, "disconnected, poor, and plain.", and compare it with Blanche's, "an accomplished lady of rank." (137). Self-deprecating is the only way for Jane to protect herself from further and deeper pain. She is incapable of admitting her qualities and putting them forward; competing with Blanche Ingram is unthinkable for her. She

therefore chooses to deny her desires by putting herself down, punishing herself for having felt such an attraction. As she represses her love feelings, Jane believes she is protecting herself, but another emotion is now governing: hatred, directed towards the rival.

Later, just before Rochester's proposal, Jane feels a pang at the announcement of Rochester and Blanche's (fake) marriage and bursts out jealously:

' [...] I see the necessity of departure; and it is like looking on the necessity of death.'

'Where do you see the necessity?' He asked, suddenly.

'Where? You, sir, have placed it before me.'

'In what shape?'

'In the shape of Miss Ingram; a noble and beautiful woman, – your bride.'

[...] 'Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? – a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you.'

(216)

Here her jealous reaction is more to be found and experienced in love affairs. Jane is apparently envious and, as a consequence, reveals a feeling of anger against the first female person who is jeopardizing her union with her beloved Rochester; she fears a third person is going to possess something she has always yearned for. Klein puts forward the noteworthy difference between jealousy and envy:

La jalousie se fonde sur l'envie mais, alors que l'envie implique une relation du sujet à une seule personne et remonte à la toute première relation exclusive avec la mère, la jalousie comporte une relation avec deux personnes au moins et concerne principalement l'amour que le sujet sent comme lui étant dû, amour qui lui a été ravi – ou pourrait l'être – par un rival. Selon l'idée commune, la



jalousie est le sentiment qu'éprouve l'homme ou la femme d'être privé de la personne aimée par quelqu'un d'autre.<sup>54</sup>

We can also point to Jane's sometimes pang of jealousy towards Rochester's daughter, Adèle. Being envious of the father's children is most of the time felt by a daughter who wants her father to give her her own infants. So if we take into account the father-daughter relationship that exists between Rochester and Jane, we can interpret such a jealousy in that light. Besides, one cannot omit the fact that, at the end of the novel, Jane leaves Adèle in a school away from home, however taking care that the school follows an indulgent system, but nonetheless standing apart from the family circle...:

You have not quite forgotten little Adèle, have you, reader? I had not; I soon asked and obtained leave of Mr. Rochester, to go and see her at the school where he had placed her. Her frantic joy at beholding me again moved me much. She looked pale and thin: she said she was not happy. I found the rules of the establishment were too strict, its course of study too severe for a child of her age: I took her home with me. I meant to become her governess once more; but I soon found this impracticable; my time and cares were now required by another – my husband needed them all. So I sought out a school conducted on a more indulgent system, and near enough to permit of my visiting her often, and bringing her home sometimes. I took care she should never want for anything that could contribute to her comfort: she soon settled in her new abode, became very happy there, and made fair progress in her studies. As she grew up, a sound English education corrected in a great measure her French defects; and when she left school, I found in her a pleasing and obliging companion: docile, good-tempered, and well-principled. (383)

Jealousy is a primitive, but complex and painful reaction, even more when it is love rivalry that is in question. Indeed, it represents a confusion of hatred, aggressiveness and fear at the idea of losing the subject of all desires. If the individual

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<sup>54</sup> Melanie Klein. *Envie et gratitude et autres essais*, p. 18.

seized by a stream of jealousy believes that he is not loved, he will extend this thought to his or her whole circle, leading to an excessive and unbearable sensation of solitude and impotency. Sometimes, the only remedy to such a pain is to denigrate and to blame the rival; a defensive reaction which Jane applies as Blanche Ingram spends her first days in the mansion, labelling her as being part of “a flock of white plummy birds” (146).

Winnicott puts forward the different destructive emotions ensuing from the feeling of love:

Des idées de haine, la jalousie, un conflit affectif douloureux, des souffrances personnelles font suite aux idées d’amour. Lorsque le conflit est trop important, une diminution de la capacité totale, des inhibitions, un « refoulement », etc., en résultent.<sup>55</sup>

What is now important to underline is the kind of relation Charlotte Brontë and her husband entertained, the kind of affection he offered her (he was full of consideration and very loving); but, most importantly, the way he considered her: Mr. Nicholls “was one who had seen her almost daily for years; seen her as a daughter, a sister, a mistress and a friend.”<sup>56</sup>

The way he proposes to her and the following state of astonishment and even shock he left her in strangely call to mind Jane’s reaction when faced to the same situation:

He entered. He stood before me. What his words were you can imagine; his manner you can hardly realise, nor can I forget it. He made me, for the first time, feel what it costs a man to declare affection when he doubts response... The spectacle of one, ordinarily so statue-like, thus trembling, stirred, and overcome, gave me a strange shock.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *L’Enfant et le monde extérieur, Le Développement des relations*, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, op. cit., p. 396.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 397.

Besides, Mr. Nicholls' behaviour and change of attitude greatly resemble those of Mr. Rochester when he asks Jane to become his wife: "His face was very much agitated and very much flushed, and there were strong workings in the features, and strange gleams in the eyes" (217). Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Nicholls happening long after the writing of *Jane Eyre*, we can imagine that the novel announces for what to come in reality (such a sequence of events being profoundly fixed in the author's subconscious).

When Rochester leaves Thornfield, to go on a business trip, Jane is in the same situation of solitude and loneliness than when one of her substitute mother figures, Miss Temple, left Lowood: "a strange chill and failing at the heart", "a sickening sense of disappointment" (138) and her reaction weirdly resembles Adèle's (Rochester's daughter). Jane's infatuation for the inaccessible, distant and worldly man who leaves home and comes back while the young Jane stays confined in his house is representative of the desire for a patriarchal, travelling, distant father.

When Jane leaves Thornfield to see her aunt dying and then comes back, there are many references to home and to what it is like to come back home. When she comes back she says to Rochester "wherever you are is my home – my only home." (209). Rochester embodies the figure of power and inaccessibility to which Jane desires to be united, a dynamic paralleling, among other things, the desire found in a father-daughter relation.

The relationship between Rochester and Jane characterizes the dynamic found in a traditionally structured nuclear family as Rochester associates the stimulation, the disappointment and the mystery. However these pre-Oedipal energies if acted out would endanger the social order; that is the reason why Jane chooses to go away from him.

Other similarities are to be found between the different characters Charlotte Brontë chose to animate and the real people she met in her own life.

## 2. Some intriguing likenesses

Many parallels can be made between the man (Rochester) Charlotte Brontë chose to bind with her female lead (Jane) and the author's own father. Mr. Brontë was well-known for being an easily-enamoured kind of man, who was not particularly inclined to demonstrate impulses of affection towards his children, whose presence was even sometimes felt as an intrusion, a disturbance and a discomfort for him. He was the kind of solitary man who preferred dining alone and strolling by himself, rather than being confronted with the need to entertain any companion.

He also showed a strong temperament and was very stubborn – upholding his opinions and conception of life no matter what. Deviating from his principles could not possibly be considered an option. These traits and particularly this obstinacy strangely bring to mind Mr. Rochester's temper. Such similarities of characters cannot but emphasize the father-daughter relationship that exists between Rochester and Jane.

Besides, the likeness doesn't draw the line at their temperament; it is also true with regards to their physical conditions, their health – both of them have once lost their eyesight and gradually regain it when there was no hope for it. In 1843, Mr. Brontë's eyesight began to fail and he, as a consequence, found himself in the need of seeking someone for assistance in his daily life. And, unerringly, it is Charlotte Brontë who decided to take care of him and support him; a decision which Jane Eyre took likewise when it came to her beloved husband. In a letter, dated January, 23<sup>rd</sup> 1844, Charlotte Brontë writes:

Every one asks me what I am going to do, now that I am returned home; and every one seems to expect that I should immediately commence a school. In truth it is what I should wish to do. I desire it above all things. I have sufficient money for the undertaking, and I hope now sufficient qualifications to give me a fair chance of success; yet I cannot yet permit myself to enter upon life – to touch the object which seems now within my reach, and which I have been so long straining to attain. You will ask me why? It is on papa's account; he is now, as you know, getting old, and it grieves me to tell you that

he is losing his sight. I have felt for some months that I ought not to be away from him; and I feel now that it would be too selfish to leave him (at least, as long as Branwell and Anne are absent), in order to pursue selfish interests of my own. With the help of God, I will try to deny myself in this matter, and to wait. [...] I have fewer illusions; what I wish for now is active exertion – a stake in life. Haworth seems such a lonely, quiet spot, buried away from the world.<sup>58</sup>

We can also note that the description she gives of Haworth has some striking similarities with the words she uses to describe Ferndean: “The manor-house of Ferndean was [...] deep buried in a wood”, “you could see nothing of it, so thick and dark grew the timber of the gloomy wood about it.” (366); to sum it up “quite a desolate spot” (367).

Besides, Charlotte Brontë used to apply herself to read to her father, just like Jane did for her husband:

*June 13, 1845:* I feel reluctant to leave papa for a single day. His sight diminishes weekly; and can it be wondered at that, as he sees the most precious of his faculties leaving him, his spirits sometimes sink? It is so hard to feel that his few and scanty pleasures must all soon go. He has now the greatest difficulty in either reading or writing; and then he dreads the state of dependence to which blindness will inevitably reduce him. (p. 209)

Thus, Mr. Brontë was very dependent on his daughter, just as Charlotte was on him when it came to having company (later on, Mr. Brontë even showed jealousy as he more than disapproved her marriage with Mr. Nicholls; it was impossible for him to imagine and most of all tolerate such a connection between Mr. Nicholls and his daughter). Then, thanks to a miraculous operation, he finally began to recover his eyesight:

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<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, op. cit., p. 198. The four last quotations of this sub-section will refer to the same book.

Nearly six years have now elapsed since the cataract was extracted (it was not merely depressed); he has never once during that time regretted the step, and a day seldom passes that he does not express gratitude and pleasure at the restoration of that inestimable privilege of vision whose loss he once knew. (p.382)

Not only do we find congruency between Mr. Rochester and Mr. Brontë's personalities, one can also underline analogies between Jane and Mr. Brontë's wife: Miss Branwell. Indeed, the latter, just as Jane, had lost both her father and mother; which we can guess probably left her in need of affection, and more particularly parental affection. Besides, Miss Branwell

was extremely small in person; not pretty, but very elegant, and always dressed with a quiet simplicity of taste, which accorded well with her general character, and of which some of the details call to mind the style of dress preferred by her daughter for her favourite heroines (p.35) (here Jane Eyre).

According to Charlotte, physical beauty was not a primary attribute and she attached a very particular importance to convincing her sisters of that opinion. She could not understand why they would always make their principal characters beautiful and attractive. For Charlotte, a reader may find as much interest and importance in a plain heroine than in an alluring one: "I will prove to you that you are wrong; I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours." (p.235).

Mr. Brontë soon fell in love with Charlotte's mother; it was not a matter of physical attraction, but had more to do with a fusion of personalities. He did not wait long until he asked her in marriage – a suddenness which somehow had afraid her and had raised many questions on her part. Such events cannot but recall Jane Eyre's indecisiveness with regards to the prospect of her own marriage – uncertainties that follow her even in her dreams. She encounters difficulty when it comes to picturing herself as Mrs. Rochester; all the more as she finds out about Bertha's existence.

### 3. An alternative to the Oedipal end

After Jane's discovery of Bertha, Jane leaves home as a daughter leaves the parental home to build her own place in the world, her own house. She thus leaves the patriarchal house controlled by Rochester in order to find work and establish a family of her own.

Now that Jane has fled from Rochester, this feeling of unwholeness due to the absence of paternal love turns to a feeling of loss. According to Dominick LaCapra, "When absence is converted into loss, one increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new totality or fully unified community."<sup>59</sup> This alteration from absence to loss generates a feeling of a fall from a position of absolute warmth, harmony and contentment. As a consequence, Jane will now try to find back this feeling of totality and community which she experienced with the father figure, Rochester.

Experiencing a feeling of desire for the father figure Rochester was positive for Jane's welfare and evolution, as she has put an end to that relation of emotional and physical fusion with the mother, or here the substitute mother Mrs. Temple. However, after having made the tragic discovery of Rochester's wife Bertha, Jane regresses. As this major blow occurs, her first reaction is to go back to a mother figure to find comfort. Mrs. Temple being far away from her and almost absent from her present life, Jane has no choice but to turn to someone else for help.

Jane first follows the advice of "a white human form" (272) which she considers as a momentary substitute mother; a person she chooses to turn to as she experiences a moment of loss:

a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed on me. It spoke, to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart — 'My daughter, flee temptation!' 'Mother, I will' (272).

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<sup>59</sup> Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," *Critical Inquiry* 25, 1999, p. 698.

Having flown away from Thornfield, Jane experiences another crisis of identity; left to herself she wishes to die:

A weakness, beginning inwardly extending to the limbs, seized me, and I fell: I lay on the ground some minutes, pressing my face to the wet turf. I had some fear – or hope – that here I should die. (274)

Forlorn, Jane tries to find refuge and a home in Nature, a benevolent force. She thus turns to the archetypal mother for solace: “the universal mother, Nature”; seeking “her breast and ask[ing] repose” (275). She finds a new substitute mother through Nature and seeks her affection as intensely as she once sought Mrs. Temple’s:

Nature seemed to me benign and good; I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I ... clung to her with filial fondness. Tonight, at least, I would be her guest – as I was her child: my mother would lodge me without money and without price. (276)

Therefore, after her painful parting with Rochester, Jane seemed to feel the need to go back to the security of the first relation with the mother, to a sensation of plenitude and bliss. Behind the wish to encounter new territories and rebuild her life without Rochester, hid the desire to recover the wealth of the primal union with the mother.

This experience in the natural environment makes her feel close to God: “I felt the might and strength of God” (276). At this point, not a tie holds Jane to human society; she is completely free, enjoys the opened space she has always desired and most of all, has found release sheltered in the arms of a mother (Nature) and a father (God). This episode could have signaled the end of her journey, but having reached this extreme point of satisfaction, Jane understands that she cannot survive thus. Finding herself unable to live like a bee or a lizard, she is compelled to seek human society for food; acknowledging the necessity and positive aspect of society. Indeed, such an absolute dependence (on Nature and God) is intrinsically dangerous since it implies the possibility of a privation. The eventuality of being self-sufficient becomes unrealizable.



The solitude which Jane experienced in the natural environment seems to be necessary for her mental development and her autonomy. Indeed, Frances G. Wickes explains that the fundamental experience occurs during moments of solitude.<sup>60</sup> Many psychoanalysts put forward the idea of a “quiet” nucleus of the personality which conveys the notion that maturation happens during isolation. Therefore, Jane’s physical and mental seclusion in the forest, may be considered as an indispensable experience towards independence. This detachment might represent a further step in Jane’s quest for her identity.

Jane, by confronting herself to external dangers, turned away from her violent inner conflicts and troubles of well-being. Internal powerlessness and insecurity in view of her former situation with Rochester, becomes now a consequence of the outer threats. The most difficult struggle for the equanimity of the spirit is relinquished for a more physical struggle. Jane is therefore laboriously trying to part with the potency which Rochester has on her.

Many unconscious psychological factors can be at the origin of Jane’s wish to leave for new discoveries, to accept to suffer from physical privations, to face important outer dangers, and to almost die. The interest that she found in exploring new territories could be interpreted as an aspiration to go back to the mother’s womb or to find back the primitive contact with her body. A new region could represent a new mother, one that could answer the gap left by the loss of the real mother. In Nature, Jane’s aggressiveness is only used to fight against adversity, to fight not to let herself die; in that position, she is certain that she won’t hurt anybody.

But it could also suggest Jane’s inability to face the tremendous and painful emotion resulting from the discovery of Rochester’s first wife, Bertha. The violent confusion of hatred, fear, guilt and love could have led the devastated narrator to a wish to confront external dangers, voluntarily being inclined to destroy herself, nourishing intentions of physical destruction.

Klein describes one of her analyses with a patient who, I think, interestingly shares many similarities with Jane’s situation as she tries to find shelter in Nature:

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<sup>60</sup> Frances G. Wickes, *The Inner World of Man*, New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1938.

Il savait qu'il s'était toujours senti seul étant enfant, et que ce sentiment de solitude ne l'avait jamais complètement quitté. L'amour de la nature tenait une place tout à fait particulière dans les sublimations de ce patient. Dès sa plus jeune enfance, il aimait être dehors et il y trouvait de la satisfaction et du réconfort. Au cours d'une séance, il me parla du plaisir ressenti lors d'un voyage dans un pays vallonné et de sa répugnance à se retrouver en ville. Je lui interprétais, comme je l'avais déjà fait précédemment, que la nature ne représentait pas uniquement pour lui la beauté, mais aussi la bonté, en fait le bon objet qu'il avait intériorisé. Après un silence, il me dit qu'il pensait que c'était vrai, mais que la nature n'était pas toujours bonne, l'agression y étant toujours présente. [...] J'ai déjà évoqué son besoin compulsif d'être dehors, [...] [le] sentiment qu'à l'intérieur de soi-même on se trouve cerné par des objets hostiles et rancuniers. [...] En un sens, son amour de la nature s'était trouvé séparé par le clivage de sa relation à sa mère ; la dé-idéalisation de sa mère l'avait conduit à transférer cette idéalisation sur la nature. [...] La liberté et la joie que lui donnait la nature n'étaient pas uniquement une source de plaisir – lié à son amour du beau et à son intérêt pour les arts –, c'était aussi un moyen de neutraliser la solitude fondamentale, qui n'avait jamais complètement disparu.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, Jane's solitude as a child is indisputable and it is also true that she used to find, in the love of Nature, the affection and attention she could not find in a family circle, or in human beings in general (for example, looking through the window as she sat in the window-seat at Gateshead, or trying to find comfort walking outside Lowood in the winter days as Helen was dying). Jane's similitude with Klein's patient is also found in this feeling that inside oneself lies hostile and conflicting forces, so that the only way to counteract them and to relieve oneself is to focus onto the outside forces: Nature for example. Besides, the patient's de-idealization of the mother is paralleled with Jane's destructive disappointment at the long-awaited encounter with the patriarchal figure. Just as Klein's patient, she transfers that idealization onto Nature, the benevolent force.

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<sup>61</sup> Melanie Klein, *Envie et gratitude et autres essais*, p. 130-2.

This period of regression has not been totally negative for Jane, since it allowed her to know herself better before continuing her journey. Besides, such an experience greatly developed Jane's resistance and her ability to protect herself. By facing anguish and adversity, she extended her defense mechanisms.

When she arrives at Moor House/Marsh End, St. John welcomes her in his house and saves her sense of her own identity. Indeed, Jane cannot survive without connection; she needs to be part of a group to know herself. She cannot survive physically but also in term of her own identity without social connection.

The Rivers feed her body and then her spirit – from physical food to mental food. Jane has never experienced this kind of social exchange before: “a reviving pleasure in this intercourse, of a kind now tasted by me for the first time” (298). She also feels a sense of equality when communicating with the two sisters and this sensation is felt before they know they are cousins.

In *Le Bouc Emissaire*, René Girard imagines a society in which everyone is the equal of the other and everybody lives in harmony and respect. The realm of God, announced by Jesus, puts an end to sacrifice and marks the start of the reign of forgiveness: « Le Royaume de Dieu c'est l'élimination complète et définitive de toute vengeance et de toutes représailles dans les rapports entre les hommes »<sup>62</sup>. René Girard believes in a new society, a new humanity: « Une humanité nouvelle est en gestation, à la fois très semblable et très différente de celle dont nos utopies agonisantes ont rêvé »<sup>63</sup>.

This image of an ideal peaceful society is to be found in the relation between Jane and the Rivers sisters. The fact that it turns out that they are real cousins shows that *Jane Eyre* is not a completely realistic novel. The inherently bad family (the Reeds) is finally replaced by a good family (the Rivers). But above all, it gives Jane a real family (actual blood relations), which enables her to dissociate Rochester with her

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<sup>62</sup> René Girard, *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, « Biblio essais », 1978, p. 289.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 609

own family. He cannot be her father as she has found her real family and so the burden of a concrete Oedipal love is dispersed.

Jane needs to find sympathy and tenderness within a family circle in order for her to blossom. It is through this evolution that she acquires an integration of her self. The desire to find a sense of her own identity motivated her quest for affection and more importantly for lost ideal objects. As Jane progressively finds a sense of her own identity thanks to her newly-found blood related circle, she symbolically succeeds in recovering the love found in the union with the mother. Her self-hatred used to be a major trait, but with her increased ability to love and to show signs of indulgence towards others (towards the Rivers family for instance), Jane gradually comes to a state of self-esteem and self-confidence; conditions which were impossible to think about as she was experiencing her early days of childhood. She has reached a balance between her feelings of destruction and love, an equilibrium between two antagonistic impulses which is essential to integration and security. As Winnicott asserts:

L'intégration est étroitement liée à la fonction de maintien ("holding"), exercée par l'environnement. Une intégration réussie est l'unité. [...] « Quelqu'un d'autre voit ou comprend que j'existe », et aussi : « J'ai, ce qui est nécessaire, la preuve en retour (tel un visage vu dans un miroir) que j'ai été reconnu comme un être vivant.<sup>64</sup>

The narrator builds a family circle based on sisterly solidarity with Diana and Mary Rivers, thus bringing an alternative to patriarchal powers. Jane, by inheriting a fortune, becomes the mistress of Moor House. This inheritance has always been predicted in a way, since her surname can be directly linked with the substantive "heir".

Her new blood relationship family is presented as an actual gift for Jane who finds an emotional support in it as well as an intellectual challenge: "what they enjoyed, delighted me; what they approved, I revered. [...] Thought fitted thought; opinion

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<sup>64</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *Processus de maturation chez l'enfant, Développement affectif et environnement*, p. 16.

met opinion: we coincided, in short, perfectly” (298). By sharing her fortune with her family, Jane reaches emotional freedom and the feeling of equality she has always sought, thus underlining the possible reuniting of society and self and disappearance of the notion of scapegoat.

Jane’s life is built on the repetition of experiences of loss and reunion: finding hope, affection and substitutes for the presence of the mother for the first time in the arms of Helen Burns and Miss Temple, only to lose them subsequently; then encountering at the same time the patriarchal force she incessantly yearned for as well as physical, mental and sexual fascination for a male figure, in the person of Rochester, only to discover that their union is impossible and that the only solution is to part from that one and only attraction to a male character; and finally this attachment to the Rivers, this union with her true blood family and her successful hope to be a part of a group at last.

Jane, in a way, succeeded in mourning the primal good object, the mother, thanks to the Rivers, which led to a gradual improvement of the self. These new emotional changes are at the origin of Jane’s development of her aptitudes, her self-confidence and her autonomy. At present, it is not Jane’s destructive forces which prevail but her repairing impulses. Indeed, she is constantly exerting herself for her newly-found blood relations; through contenting them, she convinces herself that she is a good person, worth being loved and that she will never lose her family circle again:

My first aim will be to *clean down* (do you comprehend the full force of the expression?), to *clean down* Moor House from chamber to cellar; my next to rub it up with bees-wax, oil, and an indefinite number of cloths, till it glitters again; my third to arrange every chair, table, bed, carpet, with mathematical precision; afterward I shall go near to ruin you in coals and peat to keep up good fires in every room; and lastly, the two days preceding that on which your sisters are expected, will be devoted by Hannah and me to such a beating of eggs, sorting of currants, grating of spices, compounding of Christmas cakes, chopping up of materials for mince pies, and solemnizing of other culinary rites, as words can convey but an inadequate notion of to the uninitiated like you. My purpose, in short, is to have all things in an absolutely perfect state of readiness for Diana

and Mary before next Thursday; and my ambition is to give them a beau-ideal of a welcome when they come. [...] Happy at Moor House I was, and hard I worked; and so did Hannah: she was charmed to see how jovial I could be amidst the bustle of a house turned topsy-turvy—how I could brush, and dust, and clean and cook. And really after a day or two of confusion worse confounded, it was delightful, by degrees, to invoke order from the chaos ourselves had made. I had previously taken a journey to S—, to purchase some new furniture: my cousins having given me *carte blanche* to effect what alterations I pleased, and a sum having been set aside for that purpose. The ordinary sitting-room and bed-rooms I left much as they were: for I knew Diana and Mary would derive more pleasure from seeing again the old homely tables, and chairs, and beds, than from the spectacle of the smartest innovations. Still, some novelty was necessary to give to their return the piquancy with which I wished it to be invested. Dark, handsome new carpets and curtains, an arrangement of some carefully selected antique ornaments in porcelain and bronze, new coverings, and mirrors, and dressing-cases for the toilet tables, answered the end; they looked fresh, without being glaring. A spare parlor and bedroom I refurnished entirely with old mahogany and crimson upholstery: I laid canvas on the passage, and carpets on the stairs. When all was finished, I thought Moor House as complete a model of bright modest snugness within, as it was, at this season, a specimen of wintry waste and desert dreariness without. (332-4).

This desire to share generosity can also be interpreted as a need to face and destroy Jane's old evils of culpability and jealousy. Through constructive activities, she is able to be a help to her cousins and therefore please them. Of course, this is a sign of love but it also points to a vivid urgency to repair the harm she could have done.

By being generous to the extreme, Jane lets a real feeling of gratefulness show, a sensation which is greatly described by Klein:

Le sentiment de gratitude est un dérivé important de la capacité d'aimer; il est essentiel à l'édification de la relation au bon objet et nécessaire à la reconnaissance de ce qu'il y a de « bon » chez les autres et chez soi-même. La gratitude naît des émotions et des attitudes de la première enfance, lorsque la

mère représente encore le seul et unique objet. J'ai mentionné ce lien précoce qui constitue la base de toute relation ultérieure avec un être aimé. Cette relation exclusive à la mère existe jusqu'à un certain point chez tous les sujets, même si elle subit des variations individuelles dans sa durée et dans son intensité. Elle peut se trouver perturbée du fait des circonstances extérieures. Mais les facteurs internes qui la fondent – au premier plan, la capacité d'amour – semblent être innés.<sup>65</sup>

This feeling of gratefulness (primarily felt towards Helen and Miss Temple and now towards the Rivers family), counterbalance the old predominance of envy and jealousy, so that Jane gradually leaves her unhealthy urges behind. The repetition of this experience leads to a progressive improvement and betterment of the self, as a more friendly environment can be assimilated. Jane enjoys a sensation of serenity from the pleasure of what the present moment offers; she is delighted with the Rivers' happiness, does not show signs of envy or jealousy and does not seem to feel persecuted anymore. She appears to live peacefully, healthily and happily, to have reached a better mental equilibrium.

This improvement is intimately linked to Jane's increasing integration and sense of her own identity. It enables her to take initiatives for the first time, feel free and autonomous and acknowledge her good parts and her capacities. Her ability to enjoy pleasure improves and her hope in life rekindles. Jane is relieved as she can now be the only master of her life and consider herself a human being as a whole.

By enabling Jane to be happy, the Rivers are responsible for her newly-recovered felicity. That is the reason why Jane wants to give back the love she has kindly received:

La joie est liée à la gratitude; si celle-ci est vraiment profonde elle fait naître le désir de rendre à son tour la bonté reçue : c'est la base même de toute générosité. Il y a toujours un rapport étroit entre la capacité de recevoir et celle de donner : toutes deux dépendent de la relation au bon sujet et neutralisent la solitude. C'est aussi sur le sentiment de générosité que repose la créativité, qu'il s'agisse des

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<sup>65</sup> Melanie Klein, *Envie et gratitude et autres essais*, p. 27.

activités constructives les plus primitives de l'enfant ou de la créativité de l'adulte.<sup>66</sup>

Jane, by contenting the Rivers and devoting all her time to constructive and appreciated activities (cleaning, furnishing and re-organizing their house), answers to her cousins' kindness.

Indeed, she gradually gets rid of her old destructive impulses to adopt an attitude of integration, which encourages love in favour of hatred. This lack of integration which was felt as a physical as well as a mental assault is now pushed into the background. However, absolute integration can never be reached as it is not inherent to the nature of human beings. As a result, Jane will never be able to fully understand and accept the true nature of her emotions, her impulses and anxieties.

While we develop the notion of generosity, we can also make a reference to the passage when Jane accepts to visit her dying aunt Reed. Jane's unreturned marks of compassion and benevolence indisputably point to her capacity to give and love, even though it is only a one way investment. Such a behavior confirms her positive mental development:

I had left this woman in bitterness and hate, and I came back to her now with no other emotion than a sort of ruth for her great sufferings, and a strong yearning to forget and forgive all injuries – to be reconciled and clasp hands in amity. [...] 'Yes, aunt Reed. How are you, dear aunt?'

I had once vowed that I would never call her aunt again: I thought it no sin to forget and break that vow now. My fingers had fastened on her hand which lay outside the sheet: had she pressed mine kindly, I should at that moment have experienced true pleasure. But unimpressionable natures are not so soon softened, nor are natural antipathies so readily eradicated: Mrs. Reed took her hand away [...] Again she regarded me, so icily, I felt at once that her opinion of me—her feeling toward me—was unchanged and unchangeable. I knew by her stony eye—opaque to tenderness, indissoluble to tears—that she

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.



was resolved to consider me bad to the last; because to believe me good would give her no generous pleasure: only a sense of mortification. (196-7)

However, one cannot rule out the hypothesis of culpability: Jane could show generosity towards the Reed family as a way to free herself of guilt, from her childhood memory. In that case, the mental evolution would not be as valuable.

Jane is now almost in total harmony with herself, as she finally comes to accept herself by finding out she can show affection, love and tolerance for others. Such a good and harmonious relationship with herself is due to her new friendly and loving ties and her fresh possibility to be a member of a blood family which has become an integral part of her life and personality. By accepting and affirming herself, she is finally very close to finding a sense of her identity.

Blood relations are extremely important in the development of one's identity. It is true that, along her journey, Jane has met characters who have helped her in her progress; but a father, a mother or even cousins could never be replaced by substitutes, not related by blood.

It appears that if one wants to fully understand Jane's personality as an adult and her sometimes curious behavior and complicated thoughts, he or she will have to explore her past in depth, for Jane's childhood is a complex intertwining of consequential experiences.

Jane stays with Saint John: the image of a saint which enables her to see a possible marriage with Rochester as a clear infamous and immoral act: "Reason, and not Feeling, is my guide" (320). But her journey is not complete as she finds out that she will never again be able to find the fulfillment of love. Indeed she is haunted by dreams of Rochester:

dreams where, amidst unusual scenes charged with adventure [...] I still again and again met Mr. Rochester, 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 life time at his side, would be renewed, with all its first force and fire. (312)

So that Jane's new domestic life is not sufficient to overcome the bliss of the old romantic dream.

St. John Rivers represents the alternative path which he proposes: by asking her to accompany him to India as a missionary. There is a strong association between his name and his character: a violent river potentially sweeping Jane into oblivion. Here, we can make a parallel with Rochester, when he asks Jane to stay with him even though she has discovered Bertha, the narrator explains that "The crisis was perilous; but not without its charm: such as the Indian, perhaps, feels when he slips over the rapid in his canoe." (258).

It seems that the author drew on her personal experiences to give life to the character of St. John. As a consequence, it appears that the twists and turns and major characters of the novel do not find their origin in fancy but rather in the past and memories of the author. Such events and people might have touched her in such a way that she found the need to introduce them (or rather some traits of their personality) in her novel and put them to the forefront as indispensable to the sequence of events of the plot. Thus, in a letter dated March 12, 1839, she refers to a member of the holy orders:

I had a kindly leaning towards him, because he is an amiable and well-disposed man. Yet I had not, and could not have, that intense attachment which would make me willing to die for him; and if ever I marry, it must be in that light of adoration that I will regard my husband. Ten to one I shall never have the chance again; but *n'importe*. Moreover, I was aware that he knew so little of me he could hardly be conscious to whom he was writing. Why! it would startle him to see me in my natural home character; he would think I was wild, romantic enthusiast indeed. I could not sit all day long making a grave face before my husband. I would laugh, and satirize, and say whatever came into my head first. And if he were a clever man, and loved me, the whole world, weighed in the balance against his smallest wish, should be light as air'.<sup>67</sup>

Charlotte consequently declined the proposal of marriage.

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<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *op. cit.*, p. 126-7

St. John River keeps evoking the idea that it is God's will that Jane must follow him. By facing Jane to the will of God, he could not have found a better argument as Jane is and has always been haunted by the fear of sinning. Since her early days of childhood, in particular, she has acquired religious instructions through her readings; indeed as Anne Hiebert Alton points out: Jane

reads works which are intended to educate her in religious, spiritual, and moral matters. She is familiar with the Bible, and she refers specifically to parts of Revelations (sic), Daniel, Genesis, Samuel, "a little bit of Exodus", Kings, Chronicles, Job and Jonah. [...] In addition she knows the story of Pamela because Bessie reads it to her.<sup>68</sup>

Besides, St. John is directly associated with the image of a saint and thus promises Jane a pure life, one of devotion to God (in a way the path Helen had chosen).

Charlotte Brontë was herself exceedingly preoccupied by the afterlife and what God may reserve her. She could not help thinking that she was a miserable devotee and that she would never find God's salvation. In one of her letter, she confesses her fears:

I hope, I trust, I might one day become better, far better than my evil, wandering thoughts, my corrupt heart, cold to the spirit and warm to the flesh, will now permit me to be. I often plan the pleasant life which we might lead together, strengthening each other in that power of self-denial, that hallowed and glowing devotion, which the first saints of God often attained to. My eyes fill with tears when I contrast the bliss of such a state, brightened by hopes of the future, with the melancholy state I now live in, uncertain that I ever felt true contrition, wandering in thought and deed, longing for holiness, which I shall *never, never* obtain, smitten at times to the heart with the conviction that ghastly Calvinistic doctrines are true – darkened, in short, by the very shadows of spiritual death. If Christian perfection be necessary to salvation, I shall never be saved; my heart is a very hot-bed for sinful thoughts, and when I decide on an action I scarcely remember to look to my Redeemer for direction. I know not how to pray; I

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<sup>68</sup> Anne Hiebert Alton, "Books in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë.", Brontë Society Transactions 21:7, 1996, p.267.

cannot bend my life to the grand end of doing good; I go on constantly seeking my own pleasure, pursuing the gratification of my own desires. I forget God, and will not God forget me? And, meantime, I know the greatness of Jehovah; I acknowledge the perfection of His word; I adore the purity of the Christian faith; my theory is right, my practice horribly wrong.<sup>69</sup>

Jane is not sure that it is really God's will that she should marry St. John: "I could decide if I were but certain [...] were I but convinced that it is God's will I should marry you..." (357). Besides, leaving it to religion and ignoring her true feelings would have had serious consequences. Indeed, she would have separated all that is aggressiveness and envy from love. By becoming altruistic to the extreme and trying to reach an ideal, she would have lied to herself, hence denying her entire identity, personality and finally her very existence. Her aggressive and sexual impulses must not be condemned or despised if Jane really wants to find a sense of her own identity; even if it means that she has to face what she mostly fears in herself.

We could make a parallel with the psychological concept of the "false self". Jane, by ignoring her true nature and following St. John would in a way lie to herself, abandoning her true self over the insincere precepts of the "false self". The latter would be a socially adapted aspect of Jane's personality, one which is built on the basis of coming up to her environment's expectations and contenting it (the environment being embodied in the person of St. John).

Her ability to love and to dedicate herself to others threatens to turn into an unhealthy need to follow a right cause which is far from being appropriate for Jane if she wants to find a sense of her own identity.

Aggressiveness and sexuality are an integral part of human nature. If Jane had chosen to turn to the path that St. John offered and consequently deny these primitive emotions, they would have made way for hatred and destructive forces, probably generating hypocrisy, persecution and torment for the self as much as towards the others. On that account, Jane must not yield to St. John's desires as she would give up

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<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

emotions that are essential in life and be deceitful towards herself , thence concealing the truth to better accept lying.

The only fact that she is unsure of what to do: yielding to a “false self” or be honest with her true self, shows that, actually, Jane has not reached a complete and deep sense of her personality, as she is incapable of allowing herself to enjoy from a fantastical life and to feel emotions freely.

She thus chooses to ask God to show her the direction, the right path to follow: “Show me, show me the path!” (357). As Jane hears Rochester calling her, she immediately gets back to him, without thinking twice about, leaving all she has behind just to get back to the father figure.

Charlotte Brontë seems to have had an experience similar to that episode, when she hears Rochester’s voice begging her to come back to her; Elizabeth Gaskell reveals:

The hours of retiring for the night had always been early in the Parsonage; now family prayers were at eight o’clock; directly after which Mr. Brontë and old Tabby went to bed, and Martha was not long in following. But Charlotte could not have slept if she had gone, - could not have rested on her desolate couch. She stopped up, - it was very tempting, - late and later; striving to beguile the lonely night with some employment, till her weak eyes failed to read or to sew, and could only weep in solitude over the dead that were not. No one on earth can even imagine what those hours were to her. All the grim superstitions of the North had been implanted in her during her childhood by the servants, who believed in them. They recurred to her now, - with no shrinking from the spirits of the Dead, but with such an intense longing once more to stand face to face with the souls of her sisters, as no one but she could have felt. It seemed as if the very strength of her yearning should have compelled them to appear. On windy nights, cries, and sobs, and wailings seemed to go round the house, as of the dearly-beloved striving to force their way to her. Some one conversing with her once objected, in my presence, to that part of ‘Jane Eyre’ in which she hears Rochester’s voice crying out to her in a great crisis of her life, he being many, many miles distant at the time. I do not know what incident was in Miss Brontë’s recollection when she replied, in a low voice, drawing in her breath,

‘But it is a true thing; it really happened.’ The reader, who has even faintly pictured to himself her life at this time, – the solitary days, – the waking, watching nights, – may imagine to what a sensitive pitch her nerves were strung, and how such a state was sure to affect her health.<sup>70</sup>

However, we cannot rule out the fact that, Jane has never forgotten her beloved Rochester, he has always been present in her mind. And now that she finds herself in a dilemma, she suddenly hears his voice... We can put forward the hypothesis that, finding herself in a difficult position, she wishes so much to find an answer to her Cornelian choice that she believes to be guided by Rochester, the one person she has always loved; but such a belief could easily be groundless.

Charlotte Brontë, by relating the voice to God’s will, chooses to present an absence of issue of morality. Besides, the fact that she chooses to give her narrator a blood-related family enables Jane to go away from it and get back to Rochester, who can now be considered as an exogamous lover. The author’s narrative manipulation of blood links, provides Jane with a conventionally-accepted reason to marry Rochester. However, it still represents an indirect way to unite with the father figure and thus fulfill the undivided and everlasting Oedipal dream.

#### **4. The final fusion with Rochester**

Jane has completely changed when she returns to Rochester, as she is now rich and independent. They are now legally free to found a family (Jane gives birth to their child) and build a new household since Bertha has burned down Thornfield and committed suicide. At first they seem emotionally free too. Yet, in chapter XXXVII, Rochester suggests that they could be father and daughter to each other, or nurse and patient:

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

‘[...]You, perhaps, could make up your mind to be about my hand and chair – to wait on me as a kind nurse (for you have an affectionate heart and a generous spirit, which prompt you to make sacrifices for those you pity), and that ought to suffice for me no doubt. I suppose I should now entertain none but fatherly feelings for you: do you think so? Come – tell me.’ (371)

Oedipus, similarly, has the face blood-drenched and he puts out his eyes. This tragic climax, the disgrace and downfall of Oedipus had clearly been foreshadowed since the beginning of the play, for instance with the chorus’ anxiety about the price of deliverance (expressing the dramatic irony): “Death / so many deaths, numberless deaths on deaths”<sup>71</sup>.

It is through this exemplary lesson that the hero accepts the weight of his sin. Rochester has chosen redemption through self-sacrifice and suffering. The end of the novel pictures all that is not explained by reason. But even if Rochester is blind and has to rely on Jane, there is always the image that makes Rochester, a strong man that a girl can lean on, thus fulfilling the old fantasy of attachment to a strong, father-like dominant man.

Throughout *Oedipe*, André Gide, in a similar way, praises man in his weaknesses and his greatness (because of predestination, man cannot act freely. Therefore, how could he possibly be responsible for his actions?). In *Oedipus the King*, the chorus laments Oedipus’ fall from greatness to weakness and mere nothingness with the warning:

People of Thebes, my countrymen, look on Oedipus. He solved the famous riddle with his brilliance, he rose to power, a man beyond all power. Who could behold his greatness without envy? Now what a black sea of terror has overwhelmed him. Now as we keep our watch and wait the final day, count no man happy till he dies, free of pain at last.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Sophocles, op. cit., 203-204.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 1678–1684.

The Chorus insinuates that it is only because Oedipus has risen too high that he, as a consequence, must fall at one point; thus implying that rise and fall are indissociable. It is known that greatness, wealth and joy experienced by one person bring envy to the rest of the population witnessing such a positive and lucky fate. The Chorus suggests that it might be the reason why Oedipus comes to be so hated as time goes by, having solved the enigma, being wealthy and having a fulfilling family life. We can note that in the early sections of the play, he is referred many times as Oedipus the 'great'.

Rochester has been through the trial of losing the woman he truly loved. For him to lose Jane was to sacrifice not only her but also his sense of his own identity and values, thus endangering his security. All these sentiments and guarantees of power, wealth, confidence, self-assurance and sexual potency which he had once experienced at the idea of having a wife to live with, were substituted by the reviving of his inner destructive forces. But now that they have finally found each other again and decided to enjoy their marriage, Rochester regains confidence and spiritual peace as Jane, by accepting to live with him and be his wife, asserts the predominance of his good side over his bad side, enabling him to consider himself as a worthwhile person.

Now that Rochester has acquired a better respect for himself, he can add that newly-found self-satisfaction to the love he feels for Jane and consequently reach a state of hitherto untasted well-being and bliss, while leaving behind all the former pain, loss, destructiveness and guilt.

Jane and Rochester choose an abandoned house which is cut off from the social world: "Can there be life here?" (367) Jane wonders, as if they could not leave with society. Jane cannot find a balance within conventional society, so their only solution is to withdraw. The house itself, set deep in a dark forest, is old. The setting is asocial, so that the fact that the lovers chose a remote place to live their life and enjoy their marriage cannot but point to the fact that such a union is actually impossible in society. The married couple is achieving the Romantic ideal of a return to Eden, seeking a true religion: one of long time lost human perfection, so much different from the religion proposed by St. John, the missionary.



By moving away from society, by choosing to stand apart, Jane reveals a form of dislike for society, a discord with social connection. By deciding to keep love only for her husband and to unburden herself of her aggressiveness and destructive forces through her animosity against society, Jane seems to try to protect her marriage by radically separating love from hatred and directing them through opposite directions; so that hatred can never imperil her relation with Rochester.

Accordingly, not only is she remote from social order, but she also seems to be convinced that by doing so she will never lose love again. This delightful knowledge leads to an agreeable sensation of security and the belief that she will never hurt anybody anymore and will never be the cause and the person towards who all the hostility converges. Therefore, it appears that Jane, by hating a distant community, protects the love she entertains for Rochester; as it is less dangerous to detest those afar off people.

However, Rochester's now total dependence on Jane could greatly endanger the stability and the durability of their marriage; one can put into question the perfection of their union since our male lead is now doomed to rely on his wife for his every move and daily needs. Besides, being dependent on someone loved can also lead to humiliation as it denotes impotency.

An aspect of mental equilibrium is also an adaptation and an integration into the social world. Jane, by trying to avoid the conflict, jeopardizes her chances to reach a complete mental health.

Charlotte Brontë does not seem to find in her marriage the same passion Jane experiences for Rochester. The author seems to leave behind her dream for true flame and frenzy and rather choose what is more appropriate; that is a conventional marriage:

The destiny which Providence in His goodness and wisdom seems to offer me will not, I am aware, be generally regarded as brilliant, but I trust I see in it some germs of real happiness. I trust the demands of both feeling and duty will be in some measure reconciled by the step in contemplation. It is Mr. Nicholls' wish

that the marriage should take place this summer; he urges the month of July, but that seems very soon.<sup>73</sup>

We can assume that the novel was an indirect means to live a non-conventional marriage; one based on a crossing of rules and limits – one that she could not resolve to assume in real life.

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<sup>73</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

## **Conclusion:**

Charlotte Brontë's narrative strategy parallels in many ways the structures present in the myth of Oedipus. Jane, in her passage from childhood to adulthood, is often singled out as the cause of all the emerging problems, thus becoming the scapegoat. As she lives with the Reed family, Jane cannot develop healthily and reach a sense of her own identity, since she only experiences hatred, oppression and rejection. In the red-room, she experiences schizophrenic dissociation and compares herself to a monster, an alien. This episode triggers her quest for parental love, or at least, for a "facilitating environment", capable of turning her destructive forces into more manageable ones.

Helen is the first female figure to offer Jane love and affection, and is held as a model to Jane. Her subsequent death leads to another crisis of identity for the young narrator. Fortunately, Miss Temple represents the only way for Jane to recover mental health, as she symbolically satisfies Jane's urgency to find back a motherly tie. As her substitute mother leaves to found a household of her own, Jane is once again left to herself. This event marks the starting point of the symbolic Oedipal complex as it triggers Jane's encounter with the father figure: Rochester.

Jane's discovery of her blood-related family enables her to dissociate Rochester with her own family. The weight of an actual Oedipal union disappears; Jane can morally go back to her patriarchal love. The end of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* has been interpreted in many ways. Sandra M. Gilbert gives us one possible interpretation, a rather positive one, stating that Jane is finally totally free at the end thanks to her new equality with Rochester<sup>74</sup>. However, the fact that they choose to live apart from society reveals a refusal to adapt to and integrate fully into the social world. Such a remote condition extremely jeopardizes their ability to reach a mental equilibrium, as living secluded from social company and communication, is inherently detrimental. Besides

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<sup>74</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress", In Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 483-91.

their absolute inter-dependence is highly unhealthy. Therefore, their seemingly perfect and fulfilling union, in an Edenic natural setting, essentially an Earthly Paradise, seems to be reappraised.

In a clever parody of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Paradise* on the last page of the novel, this warm and sensual terrestrial paradise Jane and Rochester affirm to live in is contrasted with the conventional Celestial City of St. John and of others who live in accordance with Christ's prescription for sinners. As Peter Allan Dale points out, "What has happened is that the expected closure of conversion has been displaced. Instead of Jane's final confession of faith we have a conspicuous silence on her part while another character [St. John] affirms the Christian ending"<sup>75</sup>.

The question remains: to Jane, to Charlotte Brontë, is the union with Rochester ethically correct? Doesn't the fact that the author "hides" the lovers suggest a certain discomfort with aspects of this relationship? Even if their union is technically not a Oedipal fulfillment, is Jane not symbolically acting out her Oedipal complex by marrying Rochester, her inherently father-like companion, and by giving birth to his child? The interpretation must be left to the reader's interpretations....

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Allan Dale, "Charlotte Brontë's 'tale half-told': The Disruption of Narrative Structure" in *Jane Eyre*. *Modern Language Quarterly* 47, 1986, p.115.

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## Appendix:

« 4. Pourquoi les enfants jouent-ils ? », in Donald W. WINNICOTT, *L'Enfant et le monde extérieur, Le Développement des relations*, p. 123-8.

### **4** POURQUOI LES ENFANTS JOUENT-ILS ? \*

Pourquoi les enfants jouent-ils? Certaines raisons sont évidentes, mais peut-être vaut-il la peine de les passer en revue.

*Par plaisir.*

La plupart des gens diraient que les enfants jouent parce qu'ils aiment cela et c'est indéniable. Les enfants tirent du plaisir de toutes les expériences physiques et affectives du jeu. En fournissant du matériel et des idées, nous pouvons élargir ces deux types d'expérience, mais il paraît préférable de fournir ces facilités plutôt chichement que trop largement, car les enfants sont capables de trouver des objets et d'inventer très facilement des jeux et ils ont plaisir à faire cela.

*Pour exprimer l'agressivité.*

On dit généralement que, dans le jeu, les enfants « se libèrent de la haine et de l'agressivité » comme si l'agressivité était une substance mauvaise dont on pouvait se débarrasser. C'est partiellement vrai parce qu'un ressentiment refoulé et les conséquences d'une expérience de la colère peuvent être ressentis par l'enfant comme de mauvais éléments se trouvant à l'intérieur de lui. Mais il est plus important de défiar la même chose en disant que l'enfant apprécie de découvrir

\* Publie dans *New Era in Home and School*, vol. 23, n° 1, p. 12, 1942.

que les pulsions agressives ou de haine peuvent s'exprimer dans un environnement connu, sans qu'il y ait un retour de haine et de violence de la part de l'environnement. Un enfant a le sentiment qu'un bon environnement devrait être capable de supporter les sentiments agressifs exprimés sous une forme plus ou moins acceptable. Il faut accepter le fait que l'agressivité est présente dans la structure de l'enfant et que l'enfant se sent malhonnête si ce qui est présent est caché et nié.

L'agressivité peut être source de plaisir, mais elle porte inévitablement en elle un dommage, réel ou imaginaire, infligé à quelqu'un, si bien que l'enfant ne peut pas faire autrement que d'affronter cette complication. Ce problème est résolu à la source dans une certaine mesure lorsque l'enfant accepte d'exprimer le sentiment agressif sous forme de jeu et pas seulement dans les moments de colère. Une autre manière d'exprimer l'agressivité, c'est de l'utiliser dans une activité possédant en fin de compte un but constructif. Mais cela n'intervient que progressivement. C'est à nous de voir que nous n'ignorons pas la contribution sociale de l'enfant qui exprime ses sentiments agressifs dans le jeu au lieu de le faire dans les moments de rage. Il se peut que nous n'aimions pas être détestés ou blessés, mais nous ne devons pas ignorer ce qui sous-tend le contrôle de soi en matière de pulsions colériques.

#### *Pour maîtriser l'angoisse.*

S'il est facile de voir que les enfants jouent par plaisir, il est beaucoup plus difficile de s'apercevoir que les enfants jouent pour maîtriser leur angoisse ou pour maîtriser des idées et des pulsions qui conduisent à l'angoisse si elles ne sont pas contrôlées.

Dans le jeu d'un enfant, l'angoisse est toujours un facteur. La menace d'un excès d'angoisse conduit à un jeu compulsif ou répétitif ou à une recherche exagérée des plaisirs du jeu. Si l'angoisse est trop importante, le jeu s'interrompt pour devenir une exploitation pure de la satisfaction sensorielle.

Il ne m'est pas possible, ici, de prouver la thèse que l'angoisse est sous-jacente dans le jeu des enfants. Le résultat

pratique, cependant, est important. En effet, dans la mesure où les enfants ne jouent que par plaisir, on peut leur demander de cesser de jouer, mais dans la mesure où le jeu fait disparaître l'angoisse, nous ne pouvons pas en éloigner les enfants sans provoquer une détresse, une angoisse réelle ou de nouvelles défenses contre l'angoisse (comme la masturbation ou la rêverie éveillée).

#### *Pour accroître leur expérience.*

Une grande partie de la vie de l'enfant est remplie par le jeu. Pour l'adulte, des expériences extérieures ou intérieures peuvent s'avérer pleines de richesse, mais pour l'enfant ce qui est riche se trouve surtout dans le jeu et le fantasme. De même que l'expérience de la vie développe la personnalité des adultes, le jeu développe la personnalité des enfants lorsqu'ils jouent seuls ou lorsque d'autres enfants ou bien des adultes apportent des inventions dans le jeu. En s'enrichissant, les enfants élargissent progressivement leur capacité de voir la richesse du monde réel extérieur. Le jeu, c'est la preuve continue de la créativité, qui signifie la vie.

Les grandes personnes apportent ici leur contribution en reconnaissant la place importante du jeu et en enseignant les jeux traditionnels, sans pourtant arrêter ou corrompre les inventions personnelles des enfants.

(Aujourd'hui, j'ajouterais ici une note sur l'expérience de vivre dans un domaine d'expérience transitionnel — transitionnel, c'est-à-dire par rapport à la réalité intérieure et extérieure. Voir : « Objets transitionnels et phénomènes transitionnels » dans *De la pédiatrie à la psychanalyse*, Éd. Payot, 1969, 2<sup>e</sup> éd. 1972, p. 109 et aussi *L'enfant et sa famille*, Payot, P. B. P. n° 182, p. 189.)

#### *Pour établir des contacts sociaux.*

Les enfants jouent d'abord seuls ou avec la mère. Ils ne réclament pas immédiatement que d'autres enfants leur tiennent lieu de compagnons de jeu. C'est en grande partie par le

jeu, dans lequel les autres enfants assument des rôles pré-conçus, qu'un enfant commence à permettre à ces autres enfants une existence indépendante. Tout comme certains adultes se font facilement des amis et des ennemis dans le travail, alors que d'autres peuvent rester assis dans un hôtel pendant des années, ne faisant rien de plus que se demander pourquoi personne ne paraît désirer faire leur connaissance, de même les enfants se font des amis et des ennemis dans le jeu alors qu'ils ne s'en font pas facilement en dehors. Le jeu fournit un cadre pour le début des relations affectives et permet donc aux contacts sociaux de se développer.

#### *Intégration de la personnalité.*

Le jeu, l'utilisation des expressions artistiques et la pratique de la religion mènent, de manières différentes, mais tous ensemble, vers une unification et une intégration générale de la personnalité. Par exemple, on peut facilement voir que le jeu lie la relation de l'individu à la réalité personnelle intérieure et sa relation à la réalité extérieure ou partagée.

Considérant ce sujet très complexe sous un autre aspect, je dirai que c'est dans le jeu que l'enfant établit un rapport avec la fonction corporelle. Il serait intéressant, à cet égard, d'étudier la masturbation, ou d'autres exploitations des sens, et le fantasme conscient et inconscient qui les accompagne, et de comparer cela au jeu véritable dans lequel règnent les idées conscientes et inconscientes, les activités corporelles qui leur sont liées se trouvant ou bien en attente ou bien accompagnant le contenu du jeu.

C'est lorsqu'on tombe sur le cas d'un enfant dont la masturbation compulsive ne s'accompagne *apparemment* pas de fantasme ou, d'un autre côté, sur le cas d'un enfant dont la révéric compulsive éveillée est *apparemment* sans lien avec une excitation corporelle localisée ou générale, que nous reconnaissons le plus clairement la tendance saine qui existe dans le jeu. Le jeu relie ces deux aspects de la vie l'un à l'autre : le fonctionnement corporel et la vie des idées. Le jeu, dans l'effort de l'enfant pour se sentir entier, est l'alternative de la sensualité,

On sait bien que la sensualité devient compulsive et le jeu impossible lorsque l'angoisse est relativement importante.

De même, c'est lorsqu'on rencontre un enfant chez lequel la relation à la réalité intérieure n'est pas liée à la relation à la réalité extérieure — en d'autres termes, un enfant dont la personnalité est gravement clivée à cet égard — que nous voyons le plus clairement combien le jeu normal (comme aussi le souvenir et le récit des rêves) est l'un des éléments qui tendent vers une intégration de la personnalité. L'enfant ayant un clivage aussi grave de la personnalité ne peut pas jouer ou, s'il le peut, il ne jouera pas d'une manière que les autres reconnaîtront comme liée au monde.

#### *Communication avec les autres.*

Dans le jeu, un enfant peut au moins essayer d'exprimer à des personnes choisies de l'environnement un peu de ce qu'il ressent à l'intérieur ou à l'égard de l'extérieur. Le jeu peut être « une sincérité vis-à-vis de soi-même », tout comme peuvent l'être les vêtements pour un adulte. Cela peut se transformer très tôt en son contraire, car on peut dire du jeu, comme de la parole, qu'ils nous ont été donnés pour cacher nos pensées, si c'est aux pensées plus profondes que nous pensons. L'inconscient refoulé doit être gardé caché, mais le reste de l'inconscient est une chose que tout individu désire connaître et le jeu, comme les rêves, est au service de la révélation de soi et de la communication à un niveau profond.

Dans la psychanalyse de petits enfants, ce désir de communiquer par le jeu est utilisé à la place du langage employé par les adultes. L'enfant de trois ans croit souvent que notre capacité de le comprendre est si grande que le psychanalyste trouve très difficile de vivre à la hauteur de ses attentes. Une grande amertume peut découler de la déception de l'enfant à cet égard et rien ne peut stimuler davantage l'analyste dans sa recherche d'une compréhension plus profonde que la détresse d'un enfant devant notre échec à comprendre ce qu'il ou elle (confidentiellement au début) communique à travers le jeu.

Les enfants plus âgés ont, à cet égard, relativement perdu

leurs illusions et ce n'est pas un grand choc pour eux que de n'être pas compris ou même de découvrir qu'ils sont capables de tromper et que l'éducation est surtout un apprentissage de la désillusion et du compromis. Pourtant, tous les enfants (et même certains adultes) restent à un degré plus ou moins grand capables de retrouver cette aptitude à croire qu'on peut les comprendre et, dans leurs jeux, nous pouvons toujours trouver l'accès à l'inconscient — et à la sincérité native qui est si curieusement épanouie chez le bébé et qui revient ensuite à l'état de bourgeon.



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# ***The Oedipal Dynamic in***

## ***Jane Eyre***

Aurélie DELL'OLIO

*Jane Eyre* is a mainstay of literature; it has been studied, analyzed and reviewed since its publishing. Charlotte Brontë's young narrator begins her life from a position of exclusion and frustration among the Reed family. Her traumatizing experience of the red-room is going to change her life dramatically. One major aim of this *memoire* will be to try to bring about a different approach to Jane's quest, the reason why our young narrator decides to go on a quest from the red-room episode. What exactly is she looking for? Some part of the answer can be found as we turn to some preeminent psychoanalysts, such as Bion, Winnicott and Klein...

Another consequential, and yet not evident, element of the novel, is the narrator's ambiguous relationship with Rochester, the patriarchal figure; a substitute for the missing father in Jane's family structure who will, in a certain way, re-enact with her the basic pattern of Oedipal dynamics. We will see that *Jane Eyre* shares many similarities with the *Oedipus* myth. Charlotte Brontë's life will also be studied as a means to reinforce this understanding of the novel.

### **Key words.**

Aggressiveness, containment, daughter, father, identification, identity, impulses, integration, model, mother, Oedipal, Oedipus, painful, parental, patriarchal, quest, scapegoat, union, solitude, society.