

Framed images in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Abstract.....	1
1. Introduction.....	2
2. Framed Images: Mirrors, Windows, and Pictures.....	3
3. Framed Images and Mr. Rochester.....	12
4. Conclusion.....	20
5. Bibliography.....	22

0. Abstract

This project aims to study Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* by using the model of analysis that my mentor, Tomás Monterrey, proposes in his article "Framed Images as Counterpoints in James Joyce's 'The Dead'" as part of his on-going research on the relationship between literature and the visual arts. Monterrey argues that in realistic fiction novelists describe images within frames (such as paintings, mirrors, windows, etc.) to convey or hint invisible elements powerfully influencing the fictional world, either as supernatural forces (destiny, etc.) or as character's desires or flaws—or even as signals revealing the technical structure of the novel—without breaking apart the illusion of reality. Brontë's *Jane Eyre* contains a great variety of images within frames that may disclose hidden aspects of Jane both as a fictional character and a female personality. Although it displays some elements of the romance and Gothic fiction, it is largely considered a realistic novel and even an autobiographical bildungsroman. Brontë examines the repression of the female main characters (Jane and Bertha Mason) by using the metaphors of houses and rooms in order to symbolize female seclusion and repression both at the social and personal levels. As far as Jane is concerned, the novel not only shows her in the repressive sites of childhood and youth, but also her negotiation with patriarchy as an adult and independent Victorian woman. Thus, the main purpose of this project is to study the literary value of these images as a tool for exploring the psychological dimension of the protagonist and for the structural cohesiveness of the novel. Taking into account this idea, in the first place, I shall explain not only that all the framed images present in the novel allow the reader to know about the mental and psychological progression of the protagonist, but also in which manner they help Jane to liberate herself from all the patriarchal spaces that she has to deal with during her entire life. The functions of the framed images within the structure of the novel will be shown. In the second part of my project, I shall consider some framed images related with Mr. Rochester that will reveal the complexity of Jane's mind and how intricate their relationship is.

Keywords:

Charlotte Brontë, Framed images, Jane Eyre, Patriarchal system.

1. Introduction

Monterrey states that “The creation of a verbal painting [...] allows novelist to examine in their realistic stories the activity of certain extraordinary factors, which operate beyond human sensorial perceptions, and consequently are very difficult to be expressed in ordinary language” (“Chaos” 145). He also suggests that “readers do understand the literary meaning shown by the image, but they may decide to read it symbolically by establishing analogies in order to extract another significance of much deeper insight” (“Framed” 62). The function of the Gothic novel, as it can be the case of *Jane Eyre*, is to open up horizons beyond rationality, social patterns and socially approved decisions. Charlotte Brontë uses the technique of introducing images within frames for telling things that she cannot put into words because they are unspeakable, they exist beyond sensorial perceptions and language. Due to this fact, through the use of framed images, she allows the reader to know hidden aspects of the main character mostly in connection with the situation of women within the patriarchal system. The Victorian period saw the recognition of the liberty principles, both individually and at the conscience level. Nevertheless, these principles only benefited men, and among them, only those who belonged to the upper and middle classes. On the contrary, women were still being repressed, mostly in relation with the right to education, the right to own a property or the right to vote. Nonetheless, these were not the only privations of liberty that women suffered, being the worst of them the privation of their own identity. During the Victorian period, women were expected to get married and to spend their entire lives looking after their husbands and children, always under the pressure of the patriarchal system.

Jane Eyre is a journey that our protagonist carries out from the impossibility of incorporating herself into the patriarchal system, until the final incorporation. She has to go through all these stages, from repression to punishment and from prison to liberty. The level of repression that the protagonist has to face up in all the houses she has to live reinforce the pressure that the patriarchal system exerts over Jane. For that reason, she tries to express her real feelings and thoughts through the use of paintings, and furthermore Charlotte Brontë employs mirrors and windows for that purpose which will be examined in chapter two. All these tools will help her to transmit things that otherwise she will not be able to say and help the reader to disclose Jane, as a fictional character and as a Victorian women. Chapter three will concentrate on the framed images related with Mr. Rochester –in other words, Jane’s negotiation with patriarchy.

2. Framed Images: Mirrors, Windows, and Pictures

The novel starts in Gateshead, the house where Jane spent her childhood. The entire house is like a cage for Jane. In this repressive environment in which her liberty is limited, together with her wild nature, make that Jane reacts through madness. She does not behave as her cousins do and her reactions always end up with periods of punishment. For that reason, when Jane is confined in the Red room where she was haunted by the spectre of her uncle Mr. Reed, she enters in a state of madness and rebelliousness. Although the spectre is not real, it frightened Jane and, as a matter of fact, the feeling that this ghost will come creates anxiety in her. In this concrete case, the pressure of the patriarchy is present in the Red room since it was there where Mr. Reed died. He was the head of the family and a father for Jane. Hence, when she experiments this situation of terror and she looks at the mirror, she even does not recognize herself. Although, initially she finds in the Red room a pleasant place where she can be safe “no jail was ever more secure” (21),¹ the mirror discloses something unexpected to Jane:

My fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. [...] All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp... (21)

Therefore, what she sees in the mirror is a deformed and blurred image. Not because of the lack of self-recognition, but because she has to enter in the Patriarchal system and she does not. She has to accept the new role of authority that John Reed has acquired since the death of his father. Jane is described as the “personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit” (Gilbert & Gubar 337). For that reason, her behaviour towards John Reed is always wild and unacceptable for a little child. In the Gothic, the novel tends to analyze the psychological introspection, in particular in those moments where the sublime is explored. In such manner that in hard and frightened situations, the protagonist tries to escape and rebel. For that reason, all the things that Jane expresses are through madness or through the use of framed images (the mirror). On the one hand, the mirror helps the reader to understand the impossibility of Jane for escaping from the patriarchal authority and, on the other hand, it makes Jane to escape through madness and rebelliousness from her enclosure in the Red room, showing up her wild nature. The Red room is a vision of the society she is

¹ All page references to *Jane Eyre* are taken from the 2006 Penguin edition.

trapped in and it represents all the values that do not fit in the Victorian society: anger, passion, madness, etc. It is obvious that Jane does not behave as girls are supposed to do and, besides, she breaks with all the norms established by society, trying to always find a means by which she can express all her feelings and thoughts without scandalizing society that surrounds her.

In these terms, it is obvious that in this restrictive and authoritarian environment, where freedom is negated to women, the only solution for Jane is trying to find a place where she can feel secure and isolated. For that reason, she spends most of the time reading under the protection that the window offers to her. Windows, in the novel, have a great variety of functions. Firstly, windows act as liberating elements that help Jane to get rid of the things that make her feel repressed and unhappy. The enclosure she feels in every house she lives not only inhibits her unacceptable behaviour in Victorian times, but also suppresses her natural state. Secondly, windows also serve to explore the psychological dimension of the protagonist. It is at windows where, through the nature that she describes, Jane reveals the reader the hidden aspects of her personality, thoughts and feelings. Thirdly, the descriptions of what Jane sees through the window reinforce the cohesive structure of the novel. Therefore, windows are also significant in *Lodwood* as Jane tends to “frame” Miss Temple, the superintendent of the school.² She always appears near windows. She is like a mother for her and the only one who takes care of Jane during the time she spent there.

The very first sentence in the novel “There was no possibility of taking a walk that day” (11) summarizes perfectly well the level of repression that our protagonist has to face up in her childhood and that is going to prevail in her entire life. Every single place, in which Jane has to live, becomes a cage for her. She feels always subdued by social rules and the patriarchal system. *Jane Eyre* is “A story of enclosure and escape, [...] in which the problems encountered by the protagonist [...] are symptomatic of difficulties [...] oppression (at Gateshead), starvation (at *Lodwood*), madness (at *Thornfield*), and coldness (at *Marsh End*)” (Gilbert & Gubar, 339).

Gateshead, the place where Jane spent her childhood, is the most traumatic and repulsive place for her. It was there where she witnessed one of the worst experiences in her

² An institution designed to educate orphan girls whose social status is inferior due to their family situation and whose sanitary and alimentary conditions are limited.

life: the Red room. This house is for Jane a claustrophobic space in which the feeling that she does not belong to this family is perceived by her. In other words, she is a vulnerable child who does not have a place within the family life at Gateshead. The domestic oppression and humiliation that Jane, as a child, has to suffer is, to a large extent, because of her social and economic situation. Due to the fact that she is orphaned and that she does not received any inheritance from her parents, Jane is forced to live in a hostile atmosphere. Therefore, she does not feel a real home protection, and she reacts wildly when unfairly attacked by her cousins and especially by her step-aunt. This situation could explain the reason why her behaviour is always revealed through anger. In fact, Jane seems not to fit in the Victorian stereotype. Moreover, it is her natural and rebellious behaviour what, little by little, separates her from the rest of her family. Nevertheless, the anger she feels is not in the sense that she is angry with her family, but in the sense that her nature has to be negated and repressed by discipline, punishment and social strictures.

The fact that her cousins do not offer Jane anything else but indifference incites Jane to look for a place where she can feel secure and isolated from this hostile environment: the window. Is in that moment of exclusion where she finds shelter in the window-seat. This framed object is immediately transformed in a refuge; a kind of escape route, a place where she can give free rein to her creative imagination and also where she can immerse into a world of fantasy:

A breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room, I slipped in there. It contained a bookcase: I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement. (13)

When she talks about this “double retirement” she is making reference firstly to the book, and secondly to the window. Thanks to these two elements, she could find a tool for being in peace and introducing herself into an infantile world and to recuperate her own thoughts and feelings. In other words, she wants to recover her self and her identity that was stolen by the patriarchal authority. The descriptions of the book acquire a lot of importance in relation with the framed images as the author gives a lot of significance to them. She describes in great detail all the pictures and images that appear in those books (These works are referred to further on in the text) as all of them will contribute with the creation of the three paintings that our protagonist paints once she is at Lodwood. The book *History of*

*British Birds*³ written by Thomas Bewick contains pictures of Polar Regions that somehow represent the feeling of loneliness and coldness that Jane is experiencing at this moment due to the rejection of her family. The fact that Jane enjoys reading not only shows that it is part of the education in Victorian times, but also that the author employs books to help Jane to escape from the inhospitable place that is Gateshead. This is such a repressed environment that even in her release, Mr Reed appears and in his patriarchal role shows to Jane that he is the one who rules in the house and reminds her lowest status, not only in the house and within the family, but in society, as she is a poor orphaned child.

‘What do you want?’ I asked, with awkward diffidence. ‘Say, ‘What do you want, Master Reed?’’ was the answer. ‘I want you to come here’ and seating himself in an arm-chair, he intimated by a gesture that I was to approach and stand before him. [...] ‘What were you doing behind the curtain?’ he asked. ‘I was reading’. (14)

Again, in her loneliness, and because of the mistreatment she receives, Jane continues to find shelter in the window. Windows, in *Jane Eyre*, are used not only to protect Jane, but also to increase the feeling of enclosure she is suffering as she only talks about outside from a domestic side; in other words, the impossibility of being totally free is reinforced by the fact that she is always trapped in rooms and houses. Moreover, windows also help the reader to know about the landscapes that surround Jane. It is interesting how the natural elements that Jane describes seem to feel the same that Jane. This fact increases her attachment with the natural world rather than with the norms and rules established by society:

I fell to breathing on the frost-flowers with which the window was fretted, and thus clearing a space in the glass through which I might look out on the grounds, where all was still and petrified under the influence of a hard frost. From this window were visible the porter’s lodge and the carriage- road, [...] my vacant attention soon found livelier attraction in the spectacle of a little hungry robin, which came and chirruped on the twigs of the leafless cherry-tree nailed against the wall near the casement. [...] I was tugging at the sash to put out the crumbs on the window- sill, when Bessie came running upstairs into the nursery. [...] what are you doing there? Have you washed your hands and face this morning?’ I gave another tug before I answered, for I wanted the bird to be secure of its bread: the sash yielded; I scattered the crumbs, some on the stone sill, some on the cherry-tree bough, then, closing the window, I replied - ‘No, Bessie; I have only just finished dusting.’ (42-43)

³ *The History of British Birds* is the best-known work of Thomas Bewick, an 18th-century wood engraver famed for his finely-detailed, imaginative illustrations [...] examine each major British bird species, with detailed written observations and precise engravings; But the book also contains unusual ‘tail-pieces’ – small images [...] These images depict a wide range of subjects, from innocent scenes of rural life to bizarre and disturbing fantasies featuring drunks, fools and devils.

This excerpt reflects the views from the window that Jane sees from the inside of the house, which is very interesting, as the landscape is described from the point of view of the imprisonment ‘where all was still and petrified.’ The narration portrays the outside world totally frozen. Nothing goes in and out of the external world to her and the only comfort for her is to feed the little robin. Bearing this in mind, it is reasonable to think that what the author wants to show the reader is not the landscape itself, but the fact that through this framed image she is able to explain the feeling of loneliness that she is experiencing. On top of that, the use of the metaphor of the robin and the frost reinforce not only the idea of solitude, but also Jane’s attachment with a natural and undomesticated environment. Nevertheless, the fact that the cherry tree — a tree usually related with sensuality— is leafless, and the little bird is starving, displays a painful and heartbreaking nature. Another point is that the words that Bessie pronounces “‘Troublesome, careless child! - And what are you doing now? You look quite red, as if you had been about some mischief; what were you opening the window for?’” (43). It gives the reader a vision of Jane’s real personality. The words ‘Troublesome’ and ‘careless’ suggest that she is an individual closer to the natural and savage world rather than the social one.

After the different episodes of anger for which Jane has been responsible, her aunt Mrs. Reed, gets tired of her behaviour and takes the decision of sending her to Lodwood. In this new scenery, the solitude that Jane feels, and her repressed nature do not change. Living under the miserable conditions that the institution offers and the strict norms that the girls have to obey, Jane learns to suppress her wild nature. For that reason, she tries to find a place where she can give complete freedom to her real nature, especially during the vacation periods, when all her mates return to their houses and she is completely alone in the institution. “I wandered as usual among the forms and tables and laughing groups without a companion, yet not feeling lonely” (73). Nevertheless, despite of it she does not feel lonely and —like in Gateshead —she finds refuge at windows. The use of this framed image helps her to show all the emotions that since her arrival have been repressed. Additionally, this image within a frame helps the reader to explore the psychological dimension of the protagonist:

When I passed the windows, I now and then lifted a blind, and looked out; it snowed fast, a drift was already forming against the lower panes; putting my ear close to the window, I could distinguish from the gleeful tumult within, the disconsolate moan of the wind outside. Probably, if I had lately left a good home and kind parents, this would have been the hour when I should most keenly have regretted the separation; that wind would then have saddened my heart; this obscure chaos would have disturbed my peace! As it was, I derived from both a strange excitement, and reckless and feverish, I wished the wind to howl more wildly, the gloom to deepen to darkness, and the confusion to rise to clamour. (73-74)

The vision that the author gives to the reader through the window is not only a descriptive image but also an auditory image. The sound of the wind that becomes wild reflects that Jane Eyre feels attached to this natural element of wilderness. For that reason and because of the lack of affection and care of a family, she identifies herself with nature. It is interesting how Charlotte Brontë creates a parallelism between the word “air” and the name of our protagonist. She emphasizes with this romantic perception that she is like the air itself: a wild spirit. Jane’s statement “I wished the wind to howl more wildly” is her desire to be free, not only from a physical point of view, but also from a moral point. Moreover, her desire to display her real feelings, thoughts and her wish to get rid of the pressure established by society incites her to show her wild nature through the use framed image of the window. She is a human being more attached to the natural world than to the social world.

Once again, Jane’s wild nature is exposed through a framed image that she is only able to express when she is alone. The fact that she is attached to nature and the company of the natural elements makes her to feel like at home and to fill her family’s absence. Additionally, it is normal that Jane’s affection for Miss Temple is stronger than with any other person in the institution. As her own name indicates, she is a “temple” where Jane takes refuge from the hostile environment in Lodwood. She is more than a friend and a confidant for Jane. She helps Jane to behave, as she must do it in order not to have troubles in the institution and besides; Jane becomes a governess thanks to Miss Temple.⁴ For that reason, it is very interesting how, every time she appears in the novel, Jane describes her through the image of a window or near this framed image. This fact reinforces the idea that windows offer her protection: “Some heavy clouds, swept from the sky by a rising wind, had left the moon bare; and her light, streaming in through a window near, shone full both on us and on the approaching figure, which we at once recognised as Miss Temple” (93).

⁴ In Victorian times, being a governess was about the only job available for a middle-class woman whose only schooling was the general education (García-Doncel 123)

Miss Temple is now a character that Charlotte Brontë tends to describe within frames. She protects Jane and it was because of her that Jane stays for so long in Lodwood. Nevertheless, when Miss Temple abandons Lodwood to have married, Jane does not find any reason to stay. Miss Temple taught her how she had to behave in order not to be punished by Mr. Brocklehurst. The influence that Miss Temple exerted in Jane is visible in the following words: “I had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple—or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been breathing in her vicinity—and that now I was left in my natural element, and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions” (113). The abandonment of Miss Temple exposes the real nature of Jane that was hidden during the eight years she spent at Lodwood. Miss Temple is, as Gilbert and Gubar point out: “A shrine of ladylike virtues: magnanimity, cultivation, courtesy and repression” (393). For that reason, and because Jane sees in her a model to follow, she accepts to repress her wild nature. It is reasonable to think that the absence of Miss Temple makes her going immediately to her window in order to connect herself with wildness:

I went to my window, opened it, and looked out [...]. My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks; it was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits. [...] And now I felt that it was not enough; I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication; for change, stimulus: that petition, too, seemed swept off into vague space [...]. (113-114)

As it has been explained, all the places where Jane has to stay are like a prison for her and on account of the fact that Miss Temple abandons her, her desire for liberty increase. For that reason she says: “I was left in my natural element, and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions” (113). Apart from the framed images that have been already mentioned in the novel, there are some images present within frames done by Jane that are really important for the development of the plot: pictures and portraits.⁵

The first picture that the reader has a reference to in the text is when Jane arrives at Lodwood for the first time. It is used for the cohesive structure of the work but it also shows Jane’s fondness for painting and, in a sense, the author is trying to anticipate for what the reader is going to find in relation with these framed images. When Jane arrives at Lodwood, she enters in what is going to be her new house for a long period and she pays attention to a

⁵ The Knowledge of painting, together with music and French, was part of the education that the Victorian women must acquire. This knowledge would give them a higher status in society.

picture in the wall. She is trying to guess the meaning of that painting, but suddenly the door opens and she sees another image. There is a chief of attention from one place to another. The author once again is saying the reader to guess it:

I was puzzling to make out the subject of a picture on the wall, when the door opened, and an individual carrying a light entered; another followed close behind. The first was a tall lady with dark hair, dark eyes, and a pale and large forehead; her figure was partly enveloped in a shawl, her countenance was grave, her bearing erect. (59)

Jane is now a well-educated girl with a great amount of knowledge in art. One instance could be Bessie's words, when in her encounter with Jane years after she left Gateshead, she finds out all the things that Jane—now as an adult—is able to do: “No, Miss Jane, not exactly. You are genteel enough; you look like a lady, and it is as much as I ever expected of you” (122). This fact would explain why Jane does not paint spontaneously. Her natural capacity for painting, illustrates why she chooses these resources to explain certain psychological necessities. In such a manner that, through the pictures and portraits, she is able to depict things that otherwise she would not be able to explain, not because she does not want to, but because the Victorian society would consider it inappropriate.

This brings us to the question of whether Jane uses the painting as a tool for simple entertainment or if she uses for other purposes. The portrait she makes of Rosamond Oliver can exemplify this idea. During the period she spends at Morton, where she works as a teacher, she paints because she has a lot free time. Nevertheless, in one of the episodes of the novel, the framed image is used as an attempt to put together St. John and Rosamont Oliver. Jane, who notices the affection between the two characters, tries to provoke some kind of reaction in St. John in relation with the love he feels for Miss Oliver:

[...] St. John stooped to examine my drawing. [...] I knew his thoughts well, and could read his heart plainly; [...] Is this portrait like?’ I asked bluntly. ‘Like! Like whom? I did not observe it closely.’ ‘You did, Mr. Rivers.’ [...] ‘A well-executed picture,’ he said; [...] ‘Of course. And now, sir, to reward you for the accurate guess, I will promise to paint you a careful and faithful duplicate of this very picture, provided you admit that the gift would be acceptable to you. [...] He continued to gaze at the picture: the longer he looked, the firmer he held it, the more he seemed to covet it. (486-487)

After her passing through Thornfield and her arrival to Morton, Jane is suggested by St. John to marry him, what Jane immediately denies. Her failed marriage with Mr. Rochester makes Jane to reject the patriarchal power that St. John wants to exert over her. For that reason, the creation of Rosamond Oliver's portrait and her persistence in showing it

to St John evoke the idea that Jane is trying to say to him, indirectly, that she will never belong to him, because she is a free spirit who rejects the patriarchal authority.

3. Framed images and Mr. Rochester

When Jane abandons Lodwood, she finds a job as a governess in Thornfield. In this new setting she meets Mr. Rochester, the master of the house and the man who will become her future husband. Charlotte Brontë uses —as in the other sceneries of the novel—framed images to describe and analyse Jane’s peculiar personality and her thoughts. Nevertheless, in this chapter, all the images present within frames will be analysed in relation with Mr. Rochester. Besides, those framed images are the ones that the author describes better than any other in the novel. Charlotte Brontë describes paintings and portraits in great detail, but the mysteries that they implied are not going to be resolved. It is the reader who has to guess their meaning. By the use of pictures, mirrors and windows, the author helps the reader to understand, in a better way, the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester. Furthermore, they will help the reader to know more things about Jane’s interior. Firstly, the framed images that will be analysed are the three pictures that our protagonist discloses to Mr. Rochester and that she paints while she was living in Lodwood. What is interesting about these paintings is that they reveal things that few Victorian readers—if any— would give special attention. It is not an external reality, but an inner landscape. In other words, it is something that can be considered spiritual, repressed and visionary. The fact that the paintings are not shown to everybody but are disclosed to Rochester displays something else than three simple pictures. In these pictures all the emotions and experiences that Jane has lived are reflected. She wants Mr. Rochester to know her in every sense.

When talking about the paintings, we have to take into account some moments and experiences of Jane’s childhood and adolescence when she was living in Gateshead and Lodwood. As it is well known, the only moments of release and happiness that Jane had, were the ones she spent in the window-seat while reading the books. This brings us to the questions of whether the books influence in the elaboration of the paintings, because it was in those moments, when she evaded from real world. The fact that the books contain images let us think that the drawings also influence in our protagonist: “Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting” (13). It is curious the fact that when she painted the pictures, she did in a moment of absolutely solitude. Nevertheless, those moments were for Jane the happiest ones. Paintings not only act as a tool for entertainment but also as an escape route that is able to catch all the feelings of loneliness and sadness that Jane feels. Besides, all the landscapes that she saw through the windows and all the emotions she felt, not only in his childhood but

also in her adolescence, are now embodied on canvas. All her innermost secrets are disclosed to the reader and to Mr. Rochester. Jane, due to the fact that she is in love with Rochester, shows the most hidden aspects of her own personality and feelings. That is the reason why he is the only person that knows about the existence of the paintings as they express what Jane cannot put into words, because they are unspeakable. If the descriptions that Jane made of the books she read and the paintings are compared, there is no any difference between them. It is obvious that she paints them using her imagination when she was reading those books. She immersed herself into a world of fantasy and she evaded from the hostile environment that was Gateshead finding shelter in the window-seat. The first piece of art represents:

Clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea [...] One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam; its beak held a gold bracelet set with gems [...] Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn. (166)

The first picture is closely related with the influences that the book Bewick's *History of British birds* exerts over Jane, otherwise, she would not be able to reproduce, with such accuracy, the image of the cormorant as she has never seen one. Furthermore, the fact that in the paintings a wrecked ship appears reminds the reader of Bewick's books when she described: "To the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking" (13). The fact that she includes in the paintings a wrecked ship represents her mood while she was living in Gateshead. She drifted along without any purpose among the Reed family as she was never accepted by them. Nevertheless, the water is green—a colour that represents hope—which reinforces the idea that Jane has expectations of being free. She was submerged like the corpse. Nonetheless, like the bracelet, she was expecting to be able to shine in the darkness without the pressure of the patriarchal authority. The second piece of art described:

The dim peak of a hill, with grass and some leaves slanting as if by a breeze. Beyond and above spread an expanse of sky, dark blue as at twilight: rising into the sky was a woman's shape to the bust, portrayed in tints as dusk and soft as I could combine. The dim forehead was crowned with a star; the lineaments below were seen as through the suffusion of vapour; the eyes shone dark and wild the hair streamed shadowy, like a beamless cloud torn by storm or by electric travail. On the neck lay a pale reflection like moonlight. (166)

It is highly probable that when Jane painted this picture she was thinking about Miss Temple. As it has been explained, the protagonist tends to describe Miss Temple within frames. She was a character idealized by Jane. If we pay attention to one of the excerpts in

which Jane describes Miss Temple, it can be appreciated that the image she describes influences her when she was about to paint the picture: “Some heavy clouds, swept from the sky by a rising wind, had left the moon bare; and her light, streaming in through a window near, shone full both on us and on the approaching figure, which we at once recognized as Miss Temple” (93). Miss Temple was a model for Jane. Perhaps this is why the woman of the picture appears crowned. Nevertheless, it is within the bounds of possibility that the woman is a representation of Jane herself, as she is compared with nature. “The eyes shone dark and wild the hair streamed shadowy, like a beamless cloud torn by storm or by electric travail.” As it has been explained, Jane is more attached to the natural world than the social world. The same happens with the painting in which the woman is described as a savage and free spirit, more connected with nature than with social norms. Finally, the third picture shows:

The pinnacle of an iceberg piercing a polar winter sky: a muster of northern lights reared their dim lances, close serried, along the horizon. Throwing these into distance, rose, in the foreground, a head,—a colossal head, inclined towards the iceberg, and resting against it. Two thin hands, joined under the forehead, and supporting it, drew up before the lower features a sable veil, a brow quite bloodless, white as bone, and an eye hollow and fixed, blank of meaning but for the glassiness of despair, alone were visible. Above the temples, amidst wreathed turban folds of black drapery, vague in its character and consistency as cloud, gleamed a ring of white flame, gemmed with sparkles of a more lurid tinge. This pale crescent was ‘the likeness of a kingly crown;’ what it diademed was ‘the shape which shape had none.’ (166-167)

If we paid attention to the descriptions that Jane made through the windows while she was living in Lodwood, it can be appreciated that the frozen landscapes she explained in detail coincide with some images of the painting. It is like the representation of her own image in the window, holding her head in those moments when she was alone in Lodwood and with the only companion of the frozen views. Besides, it is a painting that transmits pain and solitude. “Glassiness of despair, alone were visible [...] ‘the shape which shape had none.’” Nevertheless, not only those descriptions seem to fit with the painting, but also the images she saw when reading Bewick’s *History of British Birds* “the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space—that reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields of ice, the accumulation of centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights above heights, surround the pole, and centre the multiplied rigours of extreme cold [...]” (12-13). It can be appreciated that these three paintings describe the emotions that Jane felt in the different stages of her childhood and adolescence. Nevertheless, these pictures, in spite of the fact that they are described in great detail, are not composed in order to be exhibited. This is not the case of the picture that is located “over the chimney-piece”: It was a landscape in water colours, of which I had made a present to the superintendent, in acknowledgment of

her obliging mediation with the committee on my behalf, and which she had framed and glazed” (122). Jane says to Bessie in their encounter, years after Jane left Gateshead. It is interesting that, until this moment, no painting was described with such detail. It is reasonable to think that the author wants the reader to pay attention to them more than with any other image that appears in the novel. Besides, she tries to express the things that she is not able to express with words, because they are unspeakable. But, perhaps, what is more important, in this case, are not the paintings themselves, but the conversation between Jane and Mr. Rochester. It is well known that she painted them in the most boring moment while she was in Lodwood and her only company was the canvas. She was totally “absorbed” and “happy” when painting them and even Mr Rochester says “Your pleasures, by your own account, have been few; but I daresay you did exist in a kind of artist’s dreamland while you blent and arranged these strange tints [...] And you felt self-satisfied with the result of your ardent labours?” (167). To what Jane answers: “Far from it. I was tormented by the contrast between my idea and my handiwork: in each case I imagined something which I was quite powerless to realise” (167). Now, as an adult, Jane realizes that she is different in comparison with other girls and that since she was a child she does things that do not fit in society and she knows that she has to hidden. Her wild and uncommon imagination breaks with all the norms established by society that surrounds her.

With the use of painting, Jane is also able to portray the essence of human beings she loves, in such manner that when she finishes them she is able to clarify her feelings towards this person. For that reason, in the same manner, that Jane tends to put within a frame Miss Temple, she also does the same with Mr. Rochester. It is obvious that, through out the novel, she tries to put within frames all the persons that are important for her. One instance could be the portrait she made of Mr. Rochester when she was visiting her aunt Mrs. Reed due to her illness in Gateshead. As it has been said, she paints without any other purpose than entertainment.

One morning I fell to sketching a face: what sort of a face it was to be, I did not care or know. I took a soft black pencil, gave it a broad point, and worked away [...] My fingers proceeded actively to fill it with features. Strongly-marked horizontal eyebrows must be traced under that brow; then followed, naturally, a well-defined nose, with a straight ridge and full nostrils; then a flexible- looking mouth, by no means narrow; then a firm chin, with a decided cleft down the middle of it[...]Now for the eyes: I had left them to the last, because they required the most careful working. I drew them large; I shaped them well: the eyelashes I traced long and sombre [...] ‘Good! but not quite the thing,’ I thought, as I surveyed the effect: ‘they want more force and spirit;’ and I wrought the shades blacker, that the lights might flash more brilliantly—a happy touch or two secured success. There, I had a friend’s face under my gaze [...] I was absorbed and content (305-306)

Once again, she was “absorbed and “content” while she is painting them, until the moment that her cousin Eliza interrupts her. “‘Is that a portrait of some one you know?’ asked Eliza, who had approached me unnoticed. I responded that it was merely a fancy head, and hurried it beneath the other sheets. Of course, I lied: it was, in fact, a very faithful representation of Mr. Rochester” (306). In the novel, the figure of Mr. Rochester’s character is characterized by being an ““an ugly man”” (306) as Eliza affirms. He is not an attractive man, but neither is his nature. This brings us to the question of whether Jane paints them for simple entertainment or if she paints them with other purposes. Nevertheless, what is clear is that she wants to capture and dominate Mr. Rochester’s nature that is revealed in his interior as moral ugliness.

Furthermore, paintings and portraits are also used to analyze the psychological dimension of the protagonist and they also help Jane to understand her own inner and behaviour towards society. Through them, she tries to clarify why she does not fit with the Victorian stereotype. One instance could be Jane’s self-portrait and Blanche Ingram’s portrait.⁶ It seems that the creation of these two pieces of art help Jane to convince herself that Rochester is unattainable for her.

“Listen, then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence: tomorrow, place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully, without softening one defect; omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity [...] Afterwards, take a piece of smooth ivory—you have one prepared in your drawing-box: take your palette, mix your freshest, finest, clearest tints; choose your most delicate camel-hair pencils; delineate carefully the loveliest face you can imagine; paint it in your softest shades and sweetest hues [...] An hour or two sufficed to sketch my own portrait in crayons; and in less than a fortnight I had completed an ivory miniature of an imaginary Blanche Ingram. It looked a lovely face enough, and when compared with the real head in chalk, the contrast was as great as self-control could desire. I derived benefit from the task: it had kept my head and hands employed, and had given force and fixedness to the new impressions I wished to stamp indelibly on my heart.” (213-214)

In this example, the painting is an allied of the reason and not of the feelings. Besides, what is interesting about these two portraits is that Jane “framed” her image twice: the first one doing the drawing, and the second one when she looks her image in the mirror in order to be as faithful as she can when doing her self-portrait. The mirror not only helps Jane to explore her interior but also it helps her to realize that she is not a beautiful woman and besides, she is not wealthy enough to married Mr. Rochester. On the other hand, the fact that she idealized Miss Ingram, although she has not met her yet, reinforces the idea that she

6 She is a beautiful woman who gets interested in Mr. Rochester because of his fortune and rejects Jane because of her low social status.

underestimates herself. Jane makes Blanche Ingram's portrait using her imagination, since the only reference she has, was the one given by Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper at Thornfield. She explains Jane the possibility of marriage between Miss Ingram and Mr. Rochester. Taking this into account, it is not strange that Jane compares herself with Miss Ingram. She is trying to convince herself that Mr. Rochester will never fall in love with her and he would prefer a more beautiful and richer woman. "“Whenever, in future, you should chance to fancy Mr. Rochester thinks well of you, take out these two pictures and compare them: say, ‘Mr. Rochester might probably win that noble lady’s love, if he chose to strive for it; is it likely he would waste a serious thought on this indigent and insignificant plebeian?’”(213-214). She even uses different materials when elaborating the portraits in order to reinforce the idea of social differences between the women. Nevertheless, Mr. Rochester interests in Jane are not physical because he pays more attention to her skills and her personality. Mr. Rochester is also an uncommon person. His sometimes distant personality and his strange and mysterious behaviour make him to feel more attached to Jane than to any other women.

In Thornfield, mirrors also acquire a lot of importance. As the one in the Red room, it represents the impossibility of incorporating herself into the patriarchal authority. Once all the obstacles that separate her from Mr. Rochester have disappeared. Jane, for the first time in the novel, recognizes her image in the mirror. Besides, what she sees is something different to what she was used to "“While arranging my hair, I looked at my face in the glass, and felt it was no longer plain: there was hope in its aspect and life in its colour; and my eyes seemed as if they had beheld the fount of fruition, and borrowed beams from the lustrous ripple” (338). Only when she feels happy and self-confident, she is able to know who she really is. Now that she is about to marry with Mr. Rochester and she feels that she is her equal, it is the moment when she is disclosed to him. "“I had often been unwilling to look at my master, because I feared he could not be pleased at my look; but I was sure I might lift my face to his now, and not cool his affection by its expression” (338).

Nevertheless, although she is happy to marry Mr. Rochester she is afraid of being overpowered to the patriarchal system. For that reason—as when she glanced to the looking glass in the Red room—she does not recognize her image. "“Sophie came at seven to dress me [...] she was just fastening my veil [...] to my hair with a brooch [...] ‘Look at yourself in the mirror: you have not taken one peep.’ [...] I saw a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger” (376). She knows perfectly well that from

the very moment she accepts to marry Mr. Rochester her nature, as a free woman, will be repressed. She even has to abandon her job as a governess. Her own identity will be suppressed, being the worst of her privations because as a married woman, she has to spend her entire life looking after her husband and children, always under the pressure of the patriarchal system. It is the inadequacy of her own awareness of her self with the image reflected in the mirror. There is something that does not connect and it is the inability of the character to assume the role of the patriarchal system by getting marriage with Mr. Rochester. She has an inner debate. On the one hand she is in love with Mr. Rochester and she wants to marry him. But, on the other hand, she does not accept the patriarchal authority. In this case, there is a replication of her self in the image reflected in the mirror.

Nonetheless, the fact that Jane discovers the existence of Bertha Mason makes that her incorporation within the patriarchal system fails. She is not only the excuse that Jane has in order not to married with Mr. Rochester, but also the representation of all the things that Jane, in the Victorian society, is not able to show. Bertha is a very powerful character in the novel. The level of repression she suffers when she is locked in the attic is such that her only tool for communication is through madness and rebelliousness. She is a character with no voice and the only things that the reader knows about her are through other characters in the novel (Mr. Rochester and her brother). It is reasonable to think that there is some similarity between the two characters because there is some resemblance with the episode of the Red room. Bearing this in mind, it stands to reason that both female characters react against the pressure of the patriarchal system in the same way. That is through the use of madness. Nonetheless, the only difference between the two characters is that Jane is able to find other tools for expressing her emotions –through the use of the framed images – whereas Bertha, due to her isolation in the attic, is not able to find. The discovery that Mr. Rochester is already married with Bertha makes Jane to abandoned Thornfield as quickly as she can. Nevertheless, when she is living in Morton she hears the spectral voice of Mr. Rochester near a window:

“I saw nothing, but I heard a voice somewhere cry - ‘Jane! Jane! Jane!’—nothing more. ‘O God! what is it?’ I gasped. I might have said, ‘Where is it?’ for it did not seem in the room— nor in the house—nor in the garden; it did not come out of the air nor from under the earth—nor from overhead. I had heard it— where, or whence, for ever impossible to know! And it was the voice of a human being—a known, loved, well-remembered voice—that of Edward Fairfax Rochester; and it spoke in pain and woe, wildly, eerily, urgently. ‘I am coming!’ I cried. ‘Wait for me! Oh, I will come!’” (549-550)

Although she spent her entire life trying not to be under the pressure of the patriarchal system, she ends up incorporating herself into the patriarchy because she accepts to marry with Mr. Rochester. Nevertheless, it is not a total incorporation. “I told you I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress” (569). After receiving the inheritance from her uncle, John Eyre, she is the one who exerts power over him. The reason why at the end of the novel she accepts to marry Mr. Rochester is because he is devoid of all the elements related with the patriarchal system. Firstly, his house was burned by Bertha in one of her episodes of madness. Therefore, the patriarch that commands the domestic environment disappears. Besides, the injuries suffered by Mr. Rochester are not only the ones related with his house, but also his physical damages. The fire that turns into ashes Thornfield makes him to lose his sight and one hand, breaking with the patriarchal figure that he represents. “He stretched his right hand (the left arm, the mutilated one, he kept hidden in his bosom)” (565). Bearing this in mind, it is reasonable to think that only in this moment when he is devoid of all the patriarchal elements, she is able to accept to marry him. Nevertheless, she is not a real wife, because she is like a nurse for him. She has to look after a person that has lost everything he had. But, is in this precise moment, when Jane changes from victim to protector, is the moment when another type of relation appear.

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, it has been shown that the study of all the framed images that appear in the novel helps the reader to understand the complex mind of the main protagonist. *Jane Eyre* is a novel in which Charlotte Brontë explains things that she cannot put into words through the technique of introducing images within frames. The pressure of the patriarchy is such that our protagonist is forced to repress her feelings and thoughts. For that reason, the only medium she found to express her self was through the use of windows, mirrors, paintings and portraits. It has been shown that these elements help the main protagonist to explore her interior and to escape from all the things that make her unhappy. Jane has two escape routes in order to avoid the pressure that the patriarchy exerts over her. The first one, by reacting against the patriarchal authority— through madness and rebelliousness— and the second one is by the use of the framed images. In those repressed environments, in which her liberty is limited, the only solutions for Jane is try to find a place where she can feel secure.

On the one hand, windows, as it had been explained, have different functions within the novel. Firstly, they act as liberating elements. Through the windows, Jane escapes of the seclusion she feels in all the hostile environments, due to the fact that she has to live suppressing her natural state. Secondly, they help to explore the psychological dimension of the protagonist. It is at windows where Jane reveals the most hidden aspects of her personality. Thirdly, the descriptions that Jane makes through the windows reinforce the cohesive structure of the novel. Besides, the use of windows increases the feeling of enclosure as she always talks about outside from a domestic side. On the other hand, mirrors appear in the novel to make the reader understands the impossibility of Jane for escaping from the patriarchal system. Every time she sees her image reflected on it, she does not recognize her self. It is not because of the lack of self-recognition, but because she is not able to accept the patriarchal authority. There are things that do connect between the protagonist and the society in which she is trapped. Considering the paintings and portraits, it must be said that they reflect things that otherwise, Jane would not be able to explain. Like windows, they have a great variety of functions. Firstly, through the use of paintings, Jane is able to disclose things that she cannot put into words because they are unspeakable. Secondly, they help Jane to analyze her interior, as well as to clarify her feelings. They reveal things that nobody is able to understand and that even the reader has to guess their meaning and what the author wants to transmit with them.

It can be concluded that all these framed images tell the reader about Jane's feelings and thoughts, but they are not described directly with words, they are first rendered visually and then the visual object is described. This technique of portraying Jane's inner life increases the complexity of the character and help to better understand the repressed nature of women as the only way of social integration.

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