

VALTER HENRIQUE DE CASTRO FRITSCH

**“STRETCHING THEIR SHADOWS FAR AWAY”: WEAVING
CHEKHOV AND THE BRONTËS ON THE STAGE THROUGH BLAKE
MORRISON’S *WE ARE THREE SISTERS***

PORTO ALEGRE

2016

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
PROGRAMA E PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS
ÁREA: ESTUDOS DE LITERATURA
LITERATURAS ESTRANGEIRAS MODERNAS
LINHA DE PESQUISA: SOCIEDADE (INTER) TEXTOS LITERÁRIOS E TRADUÇÃO
NAS LITERATURAS ESTRANGEIRAS MODERNAS

**“STRETCHING THEIR SHADOWS FAR AWAY”:
WEAVING CHEKHOV AND THE BRONTËS ON THE STAGE
THROUGH BLAKE MORRISON’S *WE ARE THREE SISTERS***



AUTOR: Valter Henrique de Castro Fritsch

ORIENTADORA: Sandra Sirangelo Maggio

Tese de Doutorado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa submetida ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Doutor em Letras.

PORTO ALEGRE

2016

FICHA CATALOGRÁFICA

FRITSCH, Valter Henrique de Castro
“Stretching their shadows far away”: Weaving Chekhov and the Brontës on the stage through Blake Morrison’s *We Are Three Sisters*.

Valter Henrique de Castro Fritsch

Porto Alegre: UFRGS, Instituto de Letras, 2016. 121p

Tese (Doutorado - Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras)
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

1. Teatro Britânico Contemporâneo. 2. Estudos do Imaginário. 3. Blake Morrison.
4. Irmãs Brontë. 5. Anton. Chekhov.

Dedico este trabalho à memória de minha mãe, Wilmara, e de minha avó, Célia, por todo o amor, generosidade e gostosuras que espalharam enquanto estiveram entre nós. Ter uma mãe dedicada já seria fantástico. Eu tive a sorte de ter duas. Que elas possam saber que mesmo não estando aqui, seu amor é presente e que cada palavra aqui escrita possa ser também uma forma de homenageá-las, pois sou eu, seu filho e neto, escrevendo e prosseguindo a nossa caminhada nessa linda jornada que é a vida.

AGRADECIMENTOS

Agradecer é uma forma de reconhecer que não caminhamos sozinhos. Muitas foram as luzes que auxiliaram a iluminar o caminho que me trouxe até aqui, hoje. Espero não esquecer ninguém. Agradeço em primeiro lugar a energia divina que me põe de pé todos os dias, chame-a de Deus, Deusa, Luz ou Presença Divina, e as lindas luzes que foram depositadas em meu caminho – amigos e irmãos. Agradeço ao Israel pelos 11 anos de caminhada juntos, sempre com uma palavra de incentivo quando as forças esmorecem. Ao Grupo Teatro do Lírio, em especial à Luka e à Maria, pela dedicação, amizade e amor incondicional à arte teatral. À Karina, simplesmente, por existir e estar ali me ajudando sempre a bordar o tecido da vida. Às grandes mestras Paulina Nólivos, Daniela Carmona, Maria Lúcia Raymundo (*in memoriam*) e Tânia Farias, por me ensinarem sobre a beleza, a verdade, a crueldade e a angústia da arte da representação. À minha irmã Vanessa pela fé incondicional que deposita em mim. Ao Grupo Suave Luz, pelo nosso (re)encontro tão mágico e leve. Às irmãs de caminhada Jaqueline e Luciane, pelos nossos chazinhos vitorianos regados de carinho e conversas literárias. Aos amigos Davi, Zaeca, Cláudio, Lu Fraga, Kemi e Marquinhos, por encherem minha vida de emoções literárias e factuais. Ao Instituto de Letras e Artes da FURG, por possibilitar o tempo necessário para que eu pudesse realizar este trabalho. Aos amigos da FURG, em especial à Ana e à Karina, por me acolherem com tanto carinho na nova universidade e na vida da cidade de São Lourenço do Sul. Agradeço à Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, por ter sido a minha casa nestes últimos 13 anos. Ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Literários da UFRGS e à CAPES, pela bolsa de pesquisa concedida, sem a qual o presente trabalho não seria possível. Agradeço ao Blake Morrison, pela troca de e-mails e pela generosa entrevista concedida em seu e gabinete na *University of London*. Aos professores Cláudio Vescia Zanini, Jaqueline Bohn Donada e Márcia Ivana de Lima e Silva, pela disponibilidade e carinho com que aceitaram participar desta banca. À professora Márcia Ivana, agradeço a ideia da metáfora do tecido/tecer que permeia todo este trabalho. Por fim, agradeço à minha querida orientadora, professora Sandra Sirangelo Maggio, por ser uma amiga tão doce e um ser humano generoso, que sempre esteve por perto, extrapolando o papel de orientadora para além dos limites acadêmicos. Obrigado a todos vocês, minhas pequenas luzes, possa eu oferecer em dobro o tanto que todos fizeram por mim. O coração de um homem é feliz quando habitado por amigos.

“We sleep, but the loom of life never stops, and the pattern which was weaving when the sun went down is weaving when it comes up in the morning.” - Henry Ward Beecher, *Seven Lectures to Young Men*

RESUMO

A presente tese analisa a peça *We Are Three Sisters* - escrita em 2011 pelo poeta e dramaturgo britânico Philip Blake Morrison - com o objetivo de discutir as ligações entre as instâncias do ficcional, do real, do imagético e do biográfico. Morrison utiliza como pano de fundo para a elaboração de *We Are Three Sisters* o texto *As Três Irmãs* (1902) do dramaturgo russo Anton Chekhov. Morrison preenche sua peça com dados sobre a vida das irmãs Brontë, como retratados pela historiadora e biógrafa Juliet Barker em *The Brontës: Wild Genius on the Moors* (2010). Barker, que foi curadora da biblioteca da *Brontë Society* durante anos, confiou a Morrison os dados de sua pesquisa e o auxiliou a transportá-los para a peça que ele estava escrevendo. Considero importante examinar como se dá esse processo de esgarçamento das fronteiras entre o real e o ficcional através do conteúdo simbólico e imagético, porque ele reflete um tipo de prática cada vez mais utilizada por autores contemporâneos. O diálogo entre a Rússia de Chekhov da virada do século XIX/XX e o cenário (interiorano) do norte (industrial) da Inglaterra no período vitoriano, quando equacionados por Morrison no contexto dos dias de hoje, convidam-nos a traçar considerações que muito têm a nos dizer sobre os parâmetros da dramaturgia contemporânea. Além de serem três grandes autoras do cânone vitoriano, as irmãs Brontë surgem também como ícones culturais britânicos, tantas vezes já representadas como personagens em biografias ficcionais, romances, filmes, balés e peças de teatro. Para escrever sua apropriação da vida das Brontë, Morrison ampara-se na biografia de Juliet Barker, ao mesmo tempo em que utiliza a peça de Chekhov como um texto-sombra, uma matriz que serve como base para sua criação, um andaime em torno do qual constrói seu enredo. O movimento de entrelaçamento de realidade e ficção realizado por Morrison e a produção do conteúdo simbólico através da análise de imagens arquetípicas são o principal foco de interesse desta tese. Escolhi como metodologia de trabalho a aproximação entre os três textos, o de Morrison, o de Barker e o de Chekhov, através de ferramentas dos Estudos do Imaginário, representados pela análise de conteúdos imagéticos nos termos propostos por Gaston Bachelard, Gilbert Durand, Carl Gustav Jung e Castor Bartolomé Ruiz, uma vez que a tese aponta para possibilidades dialógicas entre imagem e palavra dentro dos paradigmas da cena teatral contemporânea.

Palavras-chave: 1. Teatro Britânico Contemporâneo. 2. Estudos do Imaginário 3. Blake Morrison. 4. Irmãs Brontë. 5. Anton Chekhov.

ABSTRACT

This PhD dissertation analyzes the play *We Are Three Sisters*, written in 2011 by the poet and British playwright Philip Blake Morrison, in order to discuss the links between the instances of the fictional, the real, imagery and biography. Morrison uses as a backdrop for the elaboration of *We Are Three Sisters* the text *Three Sisters* (1900), by the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov. Morrison fills his play with data on the life of the Brontë sisters, as depicted by the historian and biographer Juliet Barker in *The Brontës: Wild Genius on the Moors* (2010). Barker, who was for years curator of the library of the Brontë Society, entrusted Morrison data from her research and helped Morrison to transport them to the play he was writing. I consider it important to examine how this process of fraying of the borders between the real and the fictional, through symbolic imagery and content, takes place, because it reflects a kind of practice increasingly used by contemporary authors. The dialogue between the turn of Chekhov's Russia of the nineteenth/twentieth century and the (countryside) scenario (industrial) north of England in the Victorian period, when equated by Morrison in the context of today, invites us to make some considerations that have much to tell us about the parameters of contemporary dramaturgy. Besides, being three great authors of the Victorian canon, the Brontë sisters also come as British cultural icons, so often represented as characters in fictional biographies, novels, movies, ballets and plays. To write his appropriation of the Brontë's life, Morrison is supported by Juliet Barker's biography, while using Chekhov's play as a shadow text, a matrix which serves as the basis for its creation, a scaffold around which he builds its plot. The intertwining movement of reality and fiction conceived by Morrison and the production of symbolic content through the analysis of archetypal images are the main focus of this PhD dissertation. I chose as a working methodology the approach of the three texts, Morrison's, Barker's and Chekhov's, through the tools of the Studies of the Imaginary, represented by the analysis of imagery content as proposed by Gaston Bachelard, Gilbert Durand, Carl Gustav Jung and Castor Bartolomé Ruiz, since the work points to dialogic possibilities between image and word within the paradigms of the contemporary theater scene.

Key-Words: 1. Contemporary British Theatre. 2. Studies of the Imaginary 3. Blake Morrison. 4. Irmãs Brontë. 5. Anton. Chekhov.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CURTAINS UP	10
1 READING CONTEMPORARY BRITISH DRAMA	21
1.1 READING THEATRE.....	23
1.2 BLAKE MORRISON IN THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRICAL SCENE.....	30
1.3 CONTEMPORARY THEATRE.....	34
2 MORRISON AND CHEKHOV: ADAPTATION AND TRANSPOSITION	42
2.1 ON CHEKHOV'S <i>THREE SISTERS</i>	46
2.2 ON MORRISON'S <i>WE ARE THREE SISTERS</i>	53
3 MORRISON AND THE BRONTËS: PARADOXES OF THE IMAGINARY	63
3.1 ACT ONE – THE ARCANA OF THE ARCHETYPAL THREE SISTERS.....	68
3.2 ACT TWO – MRS ROBINSON AND THE OBLOMOV.....	75
3.3 ACT THREE – RUNNING WATERS AND THE BOG-BURST.....	80
3.4 ACTS FOUR AND FIVE – GLOOMY SILENCE REIGNS.....	85
CURTAINS DOWN	90
REFERENCES	99
APPENDICES/ANNEXES	106

TABLE OF IMAGES

Image 1	<i>We Are Three Sisters</i> – picture of the Northern Broadsides performance. Available at http://www.northern-broadsides.co.uk/ . Accessed on February 26, 2016.	p. 2
Image 2	<i>We Are Three Sisters</i> – picture of the Northern Broadsides performance. Available at http://www.northern-broadsides.co.uk/ . Accessed on February 26, 2016.	p. 22
Image 3	Text vs. Performance – Microsoft Office Word graphic	p.25
Image 4	Blake Morrison’s picture. Taken by Valter Henrique de Castro Fritsch on February, 2015.	p.30
Image 5	Goldsmiths University of London. Available at http://www.gold.ac.uk/ . Accessed on February 26, 2016.	p.31
Image 6	<i>We Are Three Sisters</i> – pictures of the Northern Broadsides performance. Available at http://www.northern-broadsides.co.uk/ . Accessed on February 26, 2016.	p. 115

CURTAINS UP

Nature uses only the longest threads to weave her patterns, so that each small piece of her fabric reveals the organization of the entire tapestry.

Richard P. Feynman, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*

The present dissertation is meant as a weaving work. My first memory of somebody weaving goes back to my grandmother. I close my eyes and I find her sitting in the old armchair with her knitting needles and multiple and colorful balls of wool. She would weave through the whole afternoon while watching soap operas, talking to her guests, or simply staring at my brother and me, who would be playing around her. The memory of one's grandmother weaving is that kind of memory that warms somebody's heart, and these memories are particularly significant to me due to the work I am engaged in writing now.

Feynman, in the epigraph that opens this section, attests that Nature weaves her own patterns. My grandmother knew that, and somehow she is not alone. The image of weavers has been present around the globe ever since the beginning of our history on the surface of the Earth. The culture of weaving is registered in pre-historic caves, in the oral and mythic narratives, in the sculptures and painting of artists from different times, and in the books that form that which we have conveyed to call Literature.

In Ancient Egypt, Neith was the goddess of weaving and wisdom; she was the one the other gods would come to ask advice to. Isis, the goddess queen, used her magical powers to sew the parts of the body of her husband – Osiris – thus bringing him back to life. In the Greek mythology we have the Fates (the *Moirai*), responsible for weaving the destiny of mankind. They would tessellate the thread of life of each single person, cutting the thread when their time to die had come. In *The Odyssey*, Penelope, Odysseus' devoted wife, vowed to choose a suitor as soon as she finished weaving her

husband's burial shroud. However, every night she would undo the part of the weaving she had contrived during the day, as a strategy to delay that dreaded moment. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we find the story of Philomela, who was raped and had her tongue cut so as not to reveal the violation she had suffered. Without access to the spoken word, Philomela communicated through weaving a tapestry, so that her story could be known. Weaving means speaking through images. The concept of weaving relates to mythology so deeply that the English word *text* comes from the Latin word *texare*, which means *weaving*. This explains how, in Literature, authors work by weaving a story.

The very history of Literature is metaphorically connected to the act of weaving. Every text is a kind of fabric, tessellated and embroidered by the hands of its writer/weaver. Every text is a mosaic, composed by different colors of sewing threads and different kinds of materials, waiting for attentive eyes to read it, stare at it, observe it, and even interfere with it, giving the text new colors, new texture, a new *tessitura*, a new voice. This is the point I chose to write my doctoral dissertation from. I want to work as a weaver, collecting different threads and singular fabrics to tessellate my own tapestry. The title of this dissertation makes reference to that – I want my text to be a patchwork. And I intentionally want to put things together by examining the ways through which another weaver, Blake Morrison, weaves his own text, the play *We Are Three Sisters*. He mixes colors, provokes textures, and sews fabrics that may be considered poles apart. And I will do the same as I examine the process through which he does his weaving.

As the curtains open, my eyes strive to encompass everything they reach in this tangle of wires displayed on the stage. I mean to move as an actor. The word must follow the speed of my eyes and my body impulses. The theatre is inscribed in my eyes and throbbing in my body. At the beginning of the task of unraveling the scenes contained in the ball of wool, I am taken by multiple impulses, energies of a past that, though not lived, I feel like mine. How can one talk about something so powerful? How to deal with the word that is written in the soul? The French playwright Valère Novarina has a suggestion about that,

Qu'est-ce que les mots nous disent à l'intérieur où ils résonnent ? Qu'ils ne sont ni des instruments qui se troquent, ni des outils qu'on prend et qui se jettent, mais qu'ils ont leur mot à dire. Ils en savent sur le langage beaucoup plus que nous. Ils savent qu'ils sont échangés entre les hommes

non comme des formules et des slogans mais comme des offrandes et des danses mystérieuses. Ils en savent plus que nous; ils ont résonné bien avant nous; ils s'appelaient les uns les autres bien avant que nous ne soyons là. Les mots préexistent à ta naissance. Ils ont résonné bien avant toi. Ni instruments ni outils, les mots sont la vraie chair humaine et comme le corps de la pensée : la parole nous est plus intérieure que tous nos organes de dedans. Les mots que tu dis sont plus à l'intérieur de toi que toi. Notre chair physique c'est la terre, mais notre chair spirituelle c'est la parole ; elle est l'étoffe, la texture, la tessiture, le tissu, la matière de notre esprit. Parler n'est pas communiquer. Parler n'est pas s'échanger et troquer – des idées, des objets –, parler n'est pas s'exprimer, désigner, tendre une tête bavarde vers les choses, doubler le monde d'un écho, d'une ombre parlée ; parler c'est d'abord ouvrir la bouche et attaquer le monde avec, savoir mordre.¹(NOVARINA, 2010, p.16.)

Savoir mordre. Knowing how to bite. Is this the only way to deal with the spoken word of the texts? Is this the only way to deal with impulse, play, joy, performance, reading and writing? By biting the images that lie before me, as I write this text? So be it, chewing each piece, so that – once taken by their strength – my text may reach the potent discourse of art, even when the drawing of wires vanishes in front of me, every time I try to grasp it with my hands. Nietzsche (1999) told us that the word steals life from the soul, and that every single word we profess is already dead. The images get closer, and then turn far away. It is not possible to grab them, so we have to bite. Knowing how to bite. With every bite, a new piece. As Isis did, I put the pieces together and sew them again. I sew words and images, weaving the body of this work.

With my needle and thread I approach the archetypal goddess, I meet Isis, Penelope, Neith, Philomela, the Fates and my own ancestors. We are all constituted by these archetypes. We can bite and weave like any mythological entity. Our needles weave the threads, and the threads of story and history come together, in order to create

¹ In English: What do words tell us inside, where do they resonate? They are neither barter instruments nor utensils to be picked up and thrown away, they want to speak. They know a lot more about the language than we do. They know they are not exchanged between men like formulae and slogans, but as offerings and mysterious dances. They know this much better than we do, they resonate long before us; they called one another long before we were there. Words are older than you; they were ringing long before your birth. Neither instruments nor are utensils, words the real human flesh and a sort of body of thought: speech is in the innermost of all our internal organs. The words you say are more in you than yourself. Our physical flesh is the land, but our spiritual flesh is speech. It is the cloth, the texture, the fabric, the *tessitura*, the matter of our spirit. Talking is not communicating, talking is not trading or doing barter – of ideas, objects – talking is not expressing oneself, designating, stretching a talkative head in the direction of things, dubbing the world with an echo, a spoken shadow; talking is opening one's mouth and attacking the world with it. Knowing how to bite. (Translation mine.)

art, in a tapestry made out of fabric scraps. I want to sew pieces – my own pieces. I recall memories, classes, readings, movies, exhibitions, concerts, books, music and theatre. These are my pieces – from the actor I thought I was in my youngster days, passing through my experiences with arts, texts and discourses, reaching the point I am at now, as an actor, a director, a teacher and a researcher. These roles encroach my body in order to weave this text.

Therefore, as stated in the first line, this dissertation is a weaving work, a tapestry about Literature and Theatre – my most precious fabric scraps. When I think about my life, it is difficult to dissociate these two words. They reach back to my grandmother. The first time I heard the word *theatre* I was with her and we were watching one of those soap operas. I was not a school boy yet. There was a scene taking place in a theatre, with some actors in Speedos performing a kind of dance while speaking together, like the chorus in a Greek tragedy. I asked my grandmother what that was, and she answered that that was theatre, and that all theatre people were crazy. So, my first memory about theatre is bound to insanity. “All those people were crazy”, she said. I doubt she could foresee I was going to belong to this group of insane people, and that it would give significance to my life – or at least, to the way I face my life.

The thread used to sew together the above mentioned three different times and places is the thread of my perception: my reading, my voice and my views about Literature and Theatre. According to Roberto Alvin, everything related with the theatre is about magic:

É tudo sobre magia e sobre amor, e sobre poesia (não na tradição do eu lírico memorialista, mas na transfiguração de toda estabilidade). Aí/aqui o invisível se torna perceptível – obliquamente, transfigura toda a nossa percepção estabelecida acerca do que seja o real; é preciso apenas uma mudança no ponto de apoio em que trabalhamos (...) o susto, o espanto diante da experiência transumana é o mesmo.² (ALVIN, 2012, p.23.)

²In English: It is all about magic and about love, and about poetry (not the tradition of the remembering lyrical subject, but in the transfiguration of all stability. There/here the invisible becomes noticeable – oblique – transfiguring all our established perception about what is real; just one single change is necessary in the support point in which we work: (...) the scare, the amazement towards the trans-human experience is the same. (Translation mine.)

As it is *all about magic*, we have to weave a body from the immateriality of such magic. The road may be not an easy one, but is filled with pleasure. As in the fictional woods metaphorically presented by Umberto Eco (1994), we only have the experience stocked in our backpacks to help us in our incursion into the literary text. It takes a dialogical posture to weave ideas, to contrast them, and reach to one, or none conclusion.

From my academic experience at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, and from the things I learned with different theatre groups at different times, I bring the threads to weave this textual tapestry. The title of my work informs its purposes. My needle and thread sew three different spheres of artistic production from different times and places. One of them relates to the three famous sisters of Haworth – Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë – who range among the most important writers from the Victorian Period. Their lives have been portrayed in many biographies, and referred to in numberless articles and essays about the artistic work they conceived. They have also been represented as fictional characters in literary biographies, novels and even in plays, such as *We Are Three Sisters*, a theatrical work written by Blake Morrison, who chose to use Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as a shadow text, or a template. Blake Morrison has mirrored much of the dialogues, translating them to fit the specific details of life at Brontë Parsonage. He has kept the structure of *Three Sisters* as a scaffold around which he builds the story of the Brontës. The movement of entwining facts and fiction performed by Morrison, the borrowing of Chekhov's play to build up his own fictional version of the life of these three Victorian writers and the imagery produced by these processes is the main focus of this doctoral dissertation.

Morrison blurs the limits that separate reality and fiction when he writes his biographical play based on Chekhov's fictional play. Conversely, the connections established between Chekhov, Morrison and the Brontës reveal other layers of reality that escape from our ordinary expectations. This reminds me of the medieval holistic approach to knowledge. Hermes Trismegistus' *Emerald Tablet* (2002) presents reality as composed of three layers: one physical, one mental and one emotional. This ancient notion preaches – as modern Physics does now, – that the micro and the macro are connected and work upon the dictates of the same set of forces. During the second millennium of the Christian Era, Western civilization experienced an increasing

propensity to approach knowledge through an analytic process, dividing the objects to be studied into parts, so that each part could be fully and deeply investigated. Canonic academic knowledge became more specific, to the point that the notions of real and imaginary became disconnected, and addressed as opposites rather than being understood as two extremes of the same thing. The physical, mental and emotional aspects of reality may also become disconnected from one another. Fortunately, we have other ways to face the same thing – in the field of Art, for instance, we can always find a way to retrieve human experience by transcending the dimensions of the logical and of the rational.

In order to accomplish the task I put forward to myself, I propose a Hermetic approach to the chosen corpus. Not only to break the dichotomies that have progressively weakened rational knowledge, blurring the link between real and imaginary; but also because the word “Hermetic”, as in Hermes Trismegistus, refers to the Greek god Hermes, syncretic to Toth in Egypt. Hermes is the master of the magic powers of the word. He is also the messenger of the gods, the one able to enter all places, to establish links and connections, like a diplomat and a translator. From Hermes comes the word *Hermeneutics*, pertinent to the art of interpreting texts – that is what we, academic people, do when we write our theses and dissertations.

Nevertheless, I also admit that the rigidity of Hermeneutics is not exactly what I aim for in this work. What really interests me is what has been defined, in the last three decades, as a Hermeneutics of the Imaginary, or simply Studies of the Imaginary.

The field of the Studies of the Imaginary³ has found in Rio Grande do Sul a prolific amount of research and academic production. Four of the biggest universities in this state – UFRGS, FURG, PUCRS and UNISINOS – have developed research and

³ This work is connected to a line of thought named Studies of the Imaginary, that analyses the group of images conceived by humanity that reverberates in all the ages. Such studies are bound to the theory of symbols and archetypes of Carl Gustav Jung. These studies have risen especially in France, presenting responses in philosophy through Gaston Bachelard’s Hermeneutics of the imaginary, anthropology through the studies of the anthropological aspects of the imaginary of Gilbert Durand and the Comparative Mythology represented here by names such as Mircea Eliade and the American scholar Joseph Campbell. It is also important to highlight the studies developed by Northrop Frye who has gotten close to these questions approximating them to Anglo-American Literature. In Brazil, such studies are represented by scholars such as Ana Maria Lisboa de Melo, Castor Bartolomé Ruiz and Maria Zaira Turchi. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that more than a review of these studies, the present research aims to confront different conceptions to clarify the present tension between the symbolic and the rational.

publication in the area and have fomented events, seminars and congresses in regional, national and international levels to discuss and to promote such studies in the fields of cinema, literature and arts. Such scenery puts a researcher of the Imaginary in a comfortable position, since we have been receiving journals, magazines and lecturers from and afforded to contact a respectful number of groups of research. Here we are in a comfortable position to blend and provoke a dialogue between a British corpus and a French theory. I believe it is easier for us to promote such conversation because we are not subjected to the political and cultural circumstances that British and French scholars have to deal with. As a Brazilian researcher, I find myself free to move through these two territories, dealing with the Studies of the Imaginary – a French theoretical school – in English, with a corpus on British and Russian Literature.

It is not very easy to find French theory on the Imaginary available in English. With few exceptions, such as the Australian translation of Gilbert Durand's *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary* works, both English and French schools traditionally tend to resist a prompt translation of each other's theoretical academic works for as long as it is reasonably suitable. Based on this panorama, I think we Brazilian researchers are in a privileged position, as we are able to use French and Spanish Studies of the Imaginary on a corpus written in English, giving to these theoretical and artistic works a new fresh air through a foreign eye.

Blake Morrison's choice of approaching the life of the Brontës from his reading of Juliet Barker's biography means that some aspects of their lives come into focus more than others. Morrison uses his prerogative to be the master of his fictional world as he condenses some events and interferes with the temporal sequence of events. This way, he manages to fit three lives into the limits of a five-act play, so as to explore, dramatically, the possibilities about what their lives could have been. I am particularly interested in observing the treatment given to the clash between what is real and what is imaginary in Morrison's textual fabric, in order to understand the path the playwright treads to compose his play. There is also some room in this work to investigate in which ways the novels written by the Brontës and Juliet Barker's seminal biography are present in Morrison's writing, and the meticulousness in his choice for dramaturgy among all literary genres.

Drama has always been a complex kind of text because it contains many intricate particularities inside a structure that may apparently seem simple. The first difficulty relates to defining the ways in which drama belongs in Literature. Not only because of its structure, but also because of the elements that belong in a play that depend on a different kind of materiality than that allowed by the written text. These elements are vital parts of a play, and for that reason the effect that a play provokes is different from the effect of a novel, or a poem. As to the elements upon which a play depends, film theorist Gerald Mast says that

One can easily define what a novel concretely, physically is: it is that piece of matter one holds in one's hands, its letters printed on paper and bounded by the covers in which those pieces of paper have been gathered. But a play has no similar concrete, physical existence. The object that one can hold in one's hand is not a play but the script of a play. Nor is a performance of that text the play but a performance or production of the play. A play, then, is not a physical thing at all but an imaginary ideal: either the imaginary combination of all possible performances and productions of that script or the idealized "best" performance that can be imagined (by whom? at what time?) from that script. As teachers of literature we frequently pretend that the text of the play is the play, as if it were a novel written in speeches. (MAST, 1982, p. 287.)

The fact is that a play can be faced as a conglomerate of languages put together to be heard and to be watched by someone. It depends on as many elements as the text, the actors, the director, the producer, the technicians, light, scenography, music, costumes, make-up, and space. Actually from these aspects I take three to explore here now: the text, the actor and the audience, with a mind to reinforce some aspects that will be relevant to my dissertation. When we analyse a play we must consider that it is both a piece of literature and a space for performance that cannot be repeated twice in the same way. In a sense, the interaction between the actors and the audience makes them share the ownership of the play, because they are responsible for creating a believable fictional life. They cannot crystallise their art, though, because it lasts one single moment. Actors can use many techniques, but they cannot repeat the same text in the same way twice, because neither the actor nor his audience is the same. As Stanislavsky puts it (2003), the actor is a human being invested of a second nature, lending his body to the text, using his body in a different way from what non-actors would use. Still, they

are as vulnerable to the same daily changes as other humans are. So, the greatest challenge of the actor is to make this daily quest for the truth of his character believable.

There is the presence of the writer, dead or alive, who is also an owner of the play, whose words are repeated through the years in multiple performances. Then, we have the director, one of the central figures in contemporary theatre art. Directors are also the owners and the intellectuals responsible for giving a play its form, and also for proposing a new and fresh interpretation to it. If we have as many Hamlets as we have different actors playing Hamlet, so we will have as many different interpretations to the same text as we have different directors. In this sense, drama, literature and cinema are very close to one another. Mast reminds us of these similarities talking about the role of interpretation in cinema and literature. According to him,

(...) more to the point for literary scholars, does one condemn Shakespeare or Chaucer for their alterations of their source materials, for their hammering the original Boccaccio story or Holinshed chronicle into the form they needed for their own particular concerns in that particular narrative? Although the filming of a literary work has been called “adaptation” by some and “translation” by others, both terms imply (indeed demand) a respect for the original text as the fixed foot of a compass around which the film version must resolve. If one terms the film work an “interpretation” of the original text (as Verdi’s *Otello* is an operatic interpretation of Shakespeare’s play or as Shakespeare’s *Henry V* is a dramatic interpretation of Holinshed’s history), the burden for artists becomes wholeness and integrity of their artistic interpretations, not their loyalty to the original. Further, critics who claim that a film violates the integrity of the original material can only mean that the film violates either their own interpretations of the original or the general consensus regarding the interpretation of the original work. Seen in this manner, the critical problem is not of two competing works of art (film versus literary text) but of two competing interpretations (the critic’s and the filmmaker’s) of the same work of art. While the critical interpretation owes its loyalty to the original work, the artistic interpretation becomes an original work in its own right. (MAST, 1982, p.281.)

As one can notice, the amount of threads and textures is huge and demands patience and care to weave the parts in a way that can produce a proficient patchwork. So far, I have proposed to present my reading of Blake Morrison’s movements as he establishes connections between Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* and Barker’s *The Brontës* through a Hermeneutics of the Imaginary. I focus the analysis on the fabric of images

tessellated by this British author, highlighting the images that help me face Morrison's *We Are Three Sisters* and Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as fictional universes that are complementary, with characters that seem to fulfill similar journeys in an intricate building of identity.

I choose to work with the theories of the Imaginary, as proposed in the French line, because I have been addressing Literature this way for at least one decade by now. I rely on its capacity to provide a bridge connecting Imagination and Reality, Materiality and the Symbolic. The French line developed here derives from the studies of Gaston Bachelard and Gilbert Durand, and meets the theories on symbol, archetypes and collective unconscious originated in Carl Gustav Jung. According to this line, Imagination precedes logical thinking and conscious rationality. Imagination is a fabric tessellated by the little pieces of images produced by all human beings. It is through the significance attributed to these images that we sew our own identities. In a creative way, man finds forms to exteriorize his subjectivity and project his interiority. In this sense, the things that are imagined must be described through their effects, because they cannot be explained by conclusive definitions. This is what happens in *We are Three Sisters*, as we have a contemporary playwright filling in the blanks of the Brontës' biography with his own imagination. Castor Bartolomé Ruiz (2003) metaphorically defines the concept of imaginary as a creative river whose waters fill the world, the humanized world, in the role of a creative creator. According to him,

Temos de mergulhar no sem-fundo humano para nos auto compreender. Somos cientes de que toda auto compreensão é parcial, e qualquer definição é aberta, isto é, relativa. Por isso não pretendemos explicar-nos racionalmente, mas implicar-nos vitalmente, simbolicamente naquilo que somos. Ao levantar o véu da divindade humana, o que encontramos? Surpresa, nosso próprio rosto! Mas não é só o rosto da finitude conhecida, do humano determinado ou do logos explicado que vemos. É também um rosto inescrutável, um rosto que não pode ser exaurido por nenhum tipo de determinação ou explicação; ele nos lança para um horizonte de infinito e nos submerge no abismo do sem-fundo humano. A esse sem-fundo humano, tragicamente humano, denominamos de imaginário.⁴(RUIZ, 2003, p.23)

⁴ In English: We must dive into the human abysmal dimension to reach self-understanding. We are aware that every sort of self-understanding is partial, that any definition is open, relative. So, we do not intend to explain things rationally, but to plunge into what we are symbolically. When the veil of human divinity is lifted, what do we find? Surprise: our own face! But what we find is not merely the face of known finitude, the determined human or the explained logos. There is also an inscrutable face, the face that

If someone asked me the way I preferred to deliver my text to the addressee, I would say I wanted to write a text as vigorous as texts written by Deleuze or Artaud, when they put their crafts to paper. But, because that does not belong in the structure of a dissertation, or even because I lack the talent to do that, I propose a theatrical tapestry instead, divided into three acts. In the first act, or chapter, called *Reading Contemporary British Drama*, I offer a comment on the present British theatrical scene, examining how it interchanges, or not, with the contemporary theatre around the world. It is in this chapter (act), that I also talk about the particularities of studying the dramatic genre, and the implications of doing that. In doing so, my intention is to understand what Blake Morrison is doing when he merges Chekhov's and the Brontës' contexts so as to highlight aspects of his own (and our) time.

The second Act is devoted to Blake Morrison and Chekhov and to the extent of similarities and differences between the plays by both playwrights, giving special attention to the interchanges between Chekhov's fiction and Brontës' life through Morrison's play. I consider important to examine how this process of stretching of the boundaries between the real and the fictional works because it reflects a type of practice increasingly used by contemporary authors. The dialogue between Chekhov's Russia and the countryside scenario of the industrial north of England in the Victorian period, when equated by Morrison in the context of today, invites us to make some considerations that have much to tell us about the parameters of contemporary drama.

The final act, *Morrison and the Brontës*, inspects the appropriations made by Morrison of the Brontës' bibliography – through Juliet Barker's book. To examine Morrison's choices I will work with the concept of the paradox of the imaginary coined by Castor Bartolomé Ruiz, throwing lights in some relevant symbolical content that can suggest different levels of interpretation of *We Are Three Sisters*.

Dropping the Curtains is the part destined to conclude this tapestry, weaving the final considerations and knitting the last threads.

cannot be exhausted by any kind of determination or explanation; that throws us towards an infinite horizon and sinks into a never-ending abyss of humankind. To this never-ending abyss of humankind, tragically human, we call imaginary. (Translation mine.)

1 READING CONTEMPORARY BRITISH DRAMA

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all I need for an act of theatre to be engaged.

Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*

Weaving and embroidering – the metaphors I chose to pursue in this work – could be simple and ordinary tasks. However, thinking about drama, especially the contemporary theatre panorama, as a weaving craft is not so simple. Contemporary theatre is an intricate tapestry because it is woven from different threads and materials. In order to understand what theatre was and what it has become, it is necessary to accept that the rules of this game have changed so many times that what was considered a piece of art in other times could be dismantled and discredited by the contemporary playwrights and theoreticians. And vice-versa. Cultural clashes are also important to observe, as it seems impossible to define a European panorama of contemporary theatre taking into account the amount of dissimilarities in the offered productions.

One of the major characteristics of the British is their eccentricity. There is a marked resistance of British theatre to incorporate post dramatic theatre and other artistic tendencies that are present in French and German contemporary theatre. To the English playwright Howard Brenton (2009), a play is as tight a form as the eighteenth-century sonata. Brenton defines a theatrical text as an event that generally lasts two or three hours, is performed in chunks, and consists in a group of people presenting an enacted story to another group of people sitting in front or around them. He also declares that the rigidity of such form has taught the audience what expectations to bring and what conventions to adapt to in the playhouse. To Brenton this is a fact that happens whether theatre-makers like it or not. This can be called the most traditional approach to theatre, and it represents the rigidity of form that the author-centered theatre culture of Britain is best adapted to. Of course, one can always highlight names such as Sarah Kane, John Osborne, Tom Stoppard, Joe Orton, Harold Pinter and Mark Ravenhill to illustrate how innovative English dramaturgy can be. However, it is

important not to forget that artists such as Samuel Beckett and Peter Brook only achieved success after crossing the channel and moving to France.

In the epigraph that opens this section, Peter Brook claims that the only things crucial to a theatrical event are an empty space, a man crossing this space and someone else watching him. That is a change of paradigm if we consider the historical background of European and American productions. Before thoughts like those proposed by Brook, the common idea was that the art of performance demanded an Italian stage with scenarios, accessories, costumes, light spots and other materials that would support the performance of a play on the stage. Peter Brook translates the spirit of our age by separating what is vital from what is complementary, showing that the traditional sophisticated American and European have accessories that, ultimately, could be suppressed. Heavy machinery and scenarios, refined costumes and multiple light spots are not as important as they used to be. The empty space reveals what is essential for theatre to happen – the actor, the space and someone watching, in the art that has been described as the art of encounter.

As this art of encounter, theatre is the place (physical or imaginary) where people from different cultures and with different backgrounds can meet and share the same artistic event (although, precisely for having different backgrounds, none shares the same artistic experience). Nevertheless, it is very difficult to define what this art precisely is, because it is an amalgam of what is being performed on the stage and what is conceived on the paper, by the playwright or by the person, or group of persons, who decide what the play is. In other words, one of the most difficult tasks for those who adventure in the field of theatre studies is to define what a play is. Is it the text written on the page to be performed by actors, or is it the performance itself? Does it belong in literary studies or in performance theory and research? One of the most challenging problems in theatre theory is to define, in a satisfactory way, the nature of drama, because it seems to belong in both areas. I problematize such question in this chapter, in order to find an adequate way to approach *We Are Three Sisters*, the play that is at the heart of the corpus of this dissertation.



1.1 READING THEATRE

I propose that this text be seen as a patchwork because I am engaged in combining in it both my background as a researcher of literature and my experience as an actor and director. The patchwork is an organized craft composed of different colors and fabrics that create a piece that is unique. The art of drama does the same by collecting pieces of life to create a character, to conceive a plot or to present an image. The processes involved in the craft of reading a play, however, demand more than just putting pieces together. In a certain way, the dramatic genre is a challenge that defies the reader to understand a text in which the key is out of it. It demands that one understands that it is a text written to be performed on the stage, so its final destination is not the reader, but the audience.

Anne Ubersfeld, in her widely acclaimed book *Reading Theatre*, presents an important theoretical contribution to the study of the dramatic genre, be it on the page or on the stage. As a theatre director and the person in charge of the *Institut d'Études Théâtrales* at the University of Paris-Sorbonne for several years, she has the experience and the authority to present a whole theory centered on the role of the theatrical sign in the field of semiotics. Ubersfeld acknowledges that the task of approaching a play is not an easy one.

Everyone knows – or accepts as truth – that you cannot read theatre. Professors are not unaware of this. Almost inevitably they know the anguish of explaining or trying to explain a textual document to which the key lies outside itself. Actors and directors embrace this truth more than anyone else and they view all the academic explanations, which they see as unwieldy and useless, with scorn. Ordinary readers accept this wisdom as well. Whenever they take a stab at it, they realize the difficulty of reading a text that most decidedly does not appear to be intended for reading the way one reads a book. Not everyone is technically versed in mounting a play, nor does everyone have the unique imagination needed to conceive a work of fictive performance. This, however, is what each of us does, and this private act cannot be justified either theoretically or practically. (UBERSFELD, 1999, p.2)

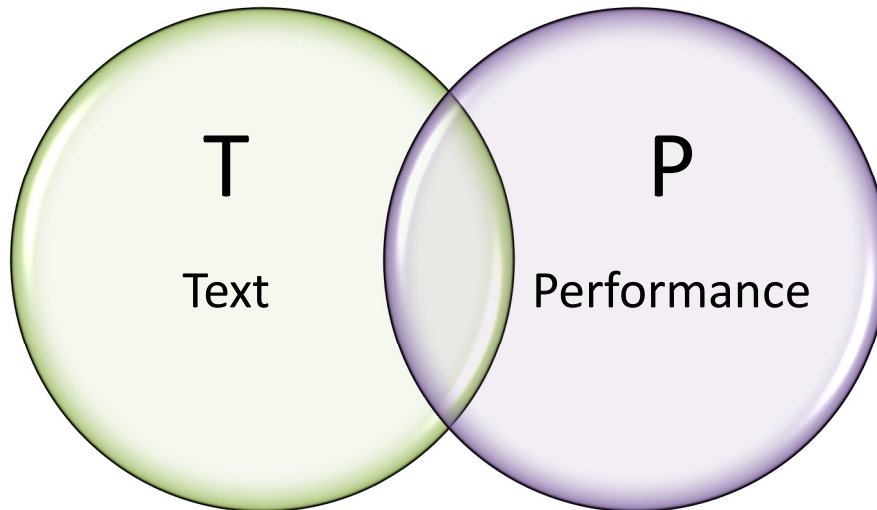
From the premise that theatre is not meant primarily to be read, Anne Ubersfeld defends the idea that, against all odds, such a reading is necessary and vital to those engaged in the theory and practice of the dramatic genre. It is not difficult to understand

her thought if we consider that theatre is the art of the encounter, so it is necessary to meet, to be together, so that it can be put to use. No matter how many productions of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* we may have watched, we will always return to the text as a touchstone. The performance is perishable, it vanishes as soon as the curtains drop; whereas the text lasts and can be kept to be explored and studied. Although, nowadays, it is a common practice to record performances on Medias in order to save the performance, it is a consensus that it does not reach the same artistic value as the live performance. Ubersfeld establishes a reading approach that decodes the specificity of the dramatic genre and connects the links of this textual practice to the specificities of the performance.

The specificity of the text written to be performed on the stage is the first question we have to face. The difficulty lies in the conflict of what is to be privileged – the written text or the performance. Ubersfeld refers to the inadequacy of the traditional methods in academic studies, once we are dealing with a genre that extrapolates the measure of poetry and is not as linear as the narrative of a novel – because a play is not a novel written in lines. Drama is a problematic genre, especially in the present time, when contemporary playwrights have suppressed many of the features that we used to attribute to theatre. Eugenio Barba (2010), who is an Italian director and theoretician of Theatre Anthropology refuses to talk about dramaturgy, he insists on the term dramaturgies. Barba defends that each aspect of a theatrical performance has its own dramaturgy. It is the meeting of all these dramaturgies that creates a theatrical event. So, in Barba's view we have a dramaturgy of the playwright, a dramaturgy of the costumes, the scenario, the light, the music, the director, and the dramaturgy of the actor, which is the one Barba has dedicated most of his research and writings to investigate.

In the opposition of the text and the performance we find the intersection between the literary production and the concrete performance. As Ubersfeld reminds us, theatre is an art that is both permanent, because it can be registered on the paper, and an art of the instant, because it can never be reproduced identically. It is at the same time the art of one single person – the playwright – and the art of a group of people who will put the words together on the stage through a creative process. Although theatre demands highly refined textual creation and is bound to a canonical literary tradition based on philosophical and theoretical texts, it is an intellectual and difficult art that

depends on the creative processes of a group of people and whose fulfillment is reached only when it is presented to an audience. It is in the intersection that we read theatre.



To Ubersfeld, this intersection is a semiotic space. Not in the sense of offering the truth about the textual sign, but of opening the possibilities of reading through multiple views on the textual sign system. Adopting this view, Ubersfeld explores the theatrical sign in order to understand the dramatic genre and to create the proper tools for "directors and actors to construct a signifying system in which spectators can find their place"(UBERSFELD, 1999, p.8). It is, first, a matter of facing the reading of theatre as an integrated signifying event in order to trespass the barriers imposed by the text-performance opposition. Secondly, it is important not to see things in the traditional way that privileges the text and understands performance as a kind of expression or translation of that text.

This equivalence is very likely an illusion. The totality of the visual, auditory, and musical signs created by the director, set designer, musicians, and actors constitutes a meaning (or a multiplicity of meanings) that goes beyond the text in its totality. In turn, many of the infinite number of virtual and real structures of the (poetic) message of the literary text disappear or cannot be perceived, because they have been erased or lost by the actual system of performance. Indeed, even if by some miracle performance could speak or tell the whole text, spectators would not hear the whole text. A good part of its information is erased or lost. The art of the director and the actors resides largely in their

choices as to what should not be heard. We cannot speak of semantic equivalence: if T (text) equals the set of the entire set of textual signs, and P (performance) equals the set of performed signs, the intersection of these two sets will shift for each performance. (UBERSFELD, 1999, p 14)

In this sense, ranking the text above performance can provoke the illusion that there is a right way to align the signs written on the paper to those performed on the stage. As Ubersfeld attests,

The main danger of this approach lies, of course, in the temptation to freeze or fix the text, to sacralize it to the point of making the system of performance impossible and thwarting the imagination of the interpreters (directors and actors). Further danger lies in the (unconscious) temptation to fill in any silences or spaces in the text, and to read the text as if it were a compact book or unit that could only be reproduced using tools external to it; in this way any production of an artistic object is prohibited. The greatest danger lies granting privileged status not to the text, but to one particular historical or codified reading of the text, a reading which, as a result of textual fetishism, will be granted eternal legitimacy. Given the relations (unconscious but powerful) that are established between a theatrical text and the historical conditions of its performance, the privileged status to codified ways of performing that text. In other words, the result might be the prohibition of any advances in the art of staging plays. Thus traditional actors and directors thought that they are defending the integrity and purity of a Molière or Racine text, when in fact they were defending a codified reading of the text, or perhaps even given a predetermined way of performing it. We can see not only the extent to which granting privileged status to the text can make theatre sterile, but also why, in theatre, it is so necessary to distinguish clearly between what is essentially of the text and what is essentially of the performance. Without these distinctions, it is impossible to analyze the relation between the two phenomena and identify their common task. Paradoxically, the failure to distinguish clearly between text and performance leads those who defend the primacy of the text to indeed cause the effect of performance to revert upon the text. (UBERSFELD, 1999, p.16)

Aristotle seems to solve that matter in his *Poetics*, when he affirms that although the text is meant to be performed, it has to be as capable to read as any kind of poem - being it tragedy, comedy, epic or poetry (ARISTOTLE, 2000, p.62). Ronald Peacock (2011) suggests that a proper analysis of the opposition text/performance should focus

on the images that are generated by the text and on the symbolical matter that can enrich the creative processes of performance. The reading of theatre that one performs is a product of one's own constructs and concepts, so it is not difficult to understand that all definitions are likely to fail if they propose to account for a reading of totality. In order to provide a reading of the images (in a symbolical way) contained in the double text/performance, symbolical constructs must be observed. It is important to consider the image in the context in which it appears, avoiding the risk of simplifying the analysis by opening dictionaries of symbols that provide possibilities of definitions for the image we investigate. We should rather consider where the image is inserted, feel the literary text that contains it, decide if what we see is a symbolical pattern, or just an ordinary image, and select one possibility of meaning in the context we contemplate.

The main point to be considered in my reading of Morrison's *We Are Three Sisters* is the study of the symbolical patterns revealed by images in the play. So, I believe it is important to clarify what I mean when I refer to an analysis of the symbolical patterns, because it is different from the approach Ubersfeld proposes from the perspective of semiotics. According to Lévi-Strauss, the mythical image has the same origin of music, both are born inside language, (LÉVI-STRAUSS, 1997, p. 23). Nevertheless, they refer differently towards the world – music centers on the dimension of sonority, and myth on the dimension of meaning. Lévi-Strauss remarks that both sound and meaning find themselves profoundly bound to the structure of language. Akin to the contents of a song, that can be divided into minor parts, as are the musical notes, the mythical narratives can also be divided into segment parts that Lévi-Strauss calls mythemes. The mytheme is the essential part of the myth, the one that is bound to creation through the arrangement with other different mythemes, as we can do when composing different songs with the same notes arranged in a different disposition. Mythemes can awaken in man some feelings that are not rationally known by him, archetypal contents that reveal something apparently unknown. In the kind of analysis we are performing, it is important to examine which feelings are these, if these mythemes can be considered as sentences, or if it is possible to divide them in minor parts.

Gilbert Durand (1999) also poses such questions in order to understand the minor parts of mythemes, or the minor parts of a symbolical or fictitious narrative. His

studies rely on signs, symbols, icons, archetypes, figures, images and idols. Durand explores such modalities in the book *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, where he devises some schemes that organize the images generated by man in any culture. The studies on the symbolical images have improved a lot after Durand. To him, the study of images depends on the cultural and symbolical patterns of a determinate society rather than on its language. Still, Durand also highlights the importance of Jungian studies about the unconscious, which have helped him devise his structural division of the archetypical images produced by symbolical constructs:

The study of the meaning of images entails, however, a second consequence. By adopting this approach one inverts the prevailing habits of classical psychology which were either to model the imagination on the descriptive development of thought, or to study the imagination from the perspective of “rectified” logical thought. Now in the case of the imaginary, the rejection of the first Saussurean principle of the arbitrariness of the sign entails the rejection of the second principle which is that of the “linearity of the signifier”. The symbol, not being of a linguistic nature, does not develop uni-dimensionally. Therefore the motivations which organize do not form long chains of reasons – in fact they do not form any “chain” at all. Linear explanation such as that given by logical deduction or introspective narration is not adequate for the study of symbolic motivations. (DURAND, 1999, p. 33)

Durand devises a scheme of archetypical images, arranged inside what he calls the order of the imaginary. To him, there are images widespread around the globe that provoke similar narratives, or even that are organized inside similar schemes that reveal their archetypical roots. Among those archetypes we have the images of the warrior maiden, of the lovers who are not allowed to be together, of enemy brothers. Those images are widespread in the world through the different legends, myths, performances and literature of different cultures. Such archetypes were previously studied and explored by Carl Gustav Jung, whose theories inspired Durand.

To Jung, the term archetype “applies only indirectly to the collective representations, since it designates only those psychic contents which have not yet been submitted to conscious elaboration and are therefore an immediate datum of psychic experience” (JUNG, 1990, p.5). To Jung, the archetype is more than just an archaic

image shared among diverse cultures. It is a bridge that links the two sides of human conscience. It is at this point that Durand's theory meets the Jungian view of images. Both consider the twofold aspect in consciousness. One side relates to the direct access we have to the contents of the world, in which we feel as if we understand the processes of the world; it is presented to us as a perception or a feeling. The other instance is the indirect one, in which for some reason the content of the world cannot present itself to our conscious mind, so it is changed into images elaborated inside archetypical structures. It is easier to provide an exemplification to this than to explain it: if you ask someone to imagine a tree, a dog, or a house, taking into account the differences in individual experience, the persons will imagine a tree, a dog or a house (probably different trees, dogs and houses). However, if you ask people to imagine love, or death, the object is an abstraction, so the person has to provide an image through his/her indirect consciousness. Being the object absent, it is represented by an image, and this is what Jung and Durand call a symbolical pattern.

So, symbolical imagination belongs in the world of indirect consciousness and is inhabited by archetypical and symbolical patterns. The symbol is, in this sense, a way to represent abstract things or things that are difficult to perceive, as hatred, passion, or the soul. Durand points that the symbol is arbitrary, as it is not directed by the rules of the sign. Although the signifier is always presented in the concrete level, the signified is open to as many interpretations as one is able to provide. The element fire, for example, has a signifier that is easy to apprehend, but it may symbolize different things, in different circumstances. Therefore, the way I choose to heal the fracture provoked by the text-performance opposition is to embrace the studies of the symbolical images in order to understand and to stimulate the potentialities of the dramatic text. I choose to perform a reading of theatre in the intersection proposed by Ubersfeld, but with my focus on the symbolical patterns that can be understood both in the text on the page or in the possibilities of performance on the stage.

1.2 BLAKE MORRISON IN THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRICAL SCENE

At times of crisis or distress, it's poems that people turn to. (Poetry) still has a power to speak to people's feelings, maybe in a way that fiction, because it works in a longer way, can't. There's a little bit of your brain that mourns and grieves that you're not writing poetry, but actually as long as I'm writing something, I'm happy.

Blake Morrison, *Single Street*

Blake Morrison is an English poet, anthologist, critic and playwright. He was born in Skipton, Yorkshire, in 1950, and was educated at Nottingham University before pursuing postgraduate studies in Canada and at University College in London. According to the *Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, he worked for the *Times Literary Supplement* between 1978 and 1981, when he was editor for both *The Observer* and *the Independent* on Sunday. Morrison is now Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, Chairman to the Poetry Book Society and council member of the Poetry Society, a member of the Literature Panel of the Arts Council of England and Vice-Chairman of English PEN⁵. Since 2003 he has been Professor of Creative and Life Writing at Goldsmiths College in the University of London.



Blake Morrison has also written non-fiction books, such as his memoir *And When Did You Last See Your Father?* (1993), a moving narrative about his father's life and death which won the J. R. Ackerley Prize and the Esquire/Volvo/Waterstone's Non-Fiction Book Award. This biography was made into a film in 2007, starring Colin Firth. A second memoir called *Things My Mother Never Told Me* was published in 2002. He is also the editor of the *Penguin Reader of Contemporary British Poetry* (1982). When the matter is theatre, Blake Morrison's works are predominantly what we convey to call

⁵English PEN is the founding centre of a worldwide writers' association with 145 centres in more than 100 countries. It facilitates and promotes translation into English of published work in foreign languages they consider to be of outstanding literary merit.

adaptations. He adapts from classic plays such as in *The Cracked Pot* (1996), an adaptation of Heinrich von Kleist's *Der Zerbrochene Krug*. Both *The Cracked Pot* and his version of Sophocles's *Oedipus* (2001) were produced and performed by Barrie Rutter's theatre company Northern Broadsides. The same theatre company went on to perform his version of *Antigone* in 2003 and published *Antigone* and *Oedipus* (2003) in a double volume the same year. Morrison's plays also include *The Man with Two Gaffers*, a version of Carlo Goldoni's *Il Servitore di due Padroni*, and *Lisa's Sex Strike*, his adaptation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, which transforms the classic text into a comedy set in a northern mill town. *Lisa's Sex Strike* toured with Northern Broadsides in 2007. His latest play is *We Are Three Sisters*, written in 2011, the corpus of my dissertation, which is based on Chekhov's *Three Sisters*.

On February, 4th 2015 I visited Prof. Morrison in his office at Goldsmith College, when he granted me a very generous interview.⁶ He was so kind as to answer my many questions concerning *We Are Three Sisters*. In a very cold day – at least for me – I got to his office very early so as not to lose my schedule. The first thing you see when you enter the University campus is a very beautiful garden of daffodils, which are kind of welcoming people who get there. Daffodils are the flowers associated with the poet Oliver Goldsmith, who lends his name to the college.



The flower holds a very strong signification in the Studies of the Imaginary – the system I have dedicated most of my academic life to study. Daffodils are precisely the flowers Charlotte Brontë, as a character in Morrison's play, talks about in her opening lines.

Charlotte: We'd barely arrived when she fell ill. We came in a dog cart with two wagons full of furniture trailing behind. There were daffodils in the garden and white clouds over the moor. We were all excited. We'd no idea what was coming. (MORRISON, 2011, p.5)

I was thrilled when I arrived at Goldsmiths and saw so many daffodils, whose symbolic meaning can be associated with new beginnings and rebirths. It meant a new beginning for the Brontë family, as we will discuss in the third chapter of this

⁶ The complete interview can be read in the Appendix A of this dissertation.

dissertation, and it was definitely a new beginning for me. After three years studying Blake Morrison's play, I was going to meet him and have a chat with him.

Among the many things we discussed that day, he told me how he came to the idea of writing *We Are Three Sisters*. The critic Susannah Clapp, who was familiar with his other adaptations for the theatre company Northern BroadSides, advised him to go for Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. She thought that approximating that work to the life of the Brontës would make another good adaptation. Morrison remarked that Susannah Clapp was approaching the subject as a Chekhovian, not a Brontëite. She was thinking simply of the fact that Chekhov's play has three sisters and a wayward brother, and imagined that something could be made out of that.

My first contact with Chekhov's *Three Sisters* took place when I was studying at TEPA⁷ in 2010, taking a course about different styles of acting with two very important names from Porto Alegre theatrical scene – Daniela Carmona and Luís Paulo Vasconcelos. After studying Greek Tragedy, *Commedia dell'Arte*, and Shakespeare, we came to Realism⁸ and Chekhov's plays. As I read *Three Sisters*, I immediately thought of the Brontës, and wondered whether that was a coincidence or Chekhov knew about Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell's lives. I commented on this issue with my adviser – Professor Sandra Maggio – and she suggested that I developed the idea and wrote an essay about that. I never wrote the essay, and ended up forgetting about the idea, until I found Morrison's play. These coincidences involving the movements in the process of research remind me of Jung's reference to synchronicity, when he says that

The conceptual relationship of minds, defined by the relationship between ideas, is intricately structured in its own logical way and gives rise to relationships which have nothing to do with causal relationships in which a cause precedes an effect. Instead, causal relationships are understood as simultaneous — that is, the cause and effect occur at the same time.” (JUNG, 2012, p.18)

⁷*Teatro Escola de Porto Alegre* is a Drama School located in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil.

⁸ To the aims of this dissertation, Realism is meant as Theatrical Realism. Theatrical Realism was a general movement that began in the 19th-century theatre, around the 1870s, and remained present through much of the 20th century. It developed a set of dramatic and theatrical conventions with the aim of bringing a greater fidelity of real life to texts and performances. It was founded by Constantin Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theatre.

Synchronicity or not, when I looked at the daffodils in the park I felt I was bound to this dissertation in a symbolic way. During the interview, Prof. Morrison told me he had begun the research about the Brontës and Chekhov ten years before, studying Chekhov's plays and style and the Brontës' poems, novels and writings along with Juliet Barker's biography. He said that he felt encouraged when he saw there was more to it than Susannah Clapp had initially pointed.

I was encouraged to see how many of the ideas or themes that preoccupied the Brontës also feature in Chekhov's play: work, love, education, marriage, the role of women, the dangers of addiction to drugs or alcohol, the rival claims of country and city, a background of social change and political unrest. And there is evidence that the parallels are not mere coincidence. According to his biographer, Donald Rayfield, one of the books Chekhov ordered for the library of his hometown, Tagarong, and which he kept for nearly a month before sending it on, was an account of the Brontës by Olga Peterson. I know nothing about Peterson's biography, perhaps it is just a translation or a rip-off of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte*. But, in any case, Chekhov would not have had to read a biography to be aware of the Brontës; by the end of the 19th century they were internationally famous. It is enough to say that a rough outline of their story might have lodged at the back of his mind. (BROWN & MORRISON, 2014, p. 32)

So, I learned from Morrison that Chekhov indeed had some contact with the life of the Brontës. The movements involving Chekhov's and Morrison's plays are the subject of the second chapter of this dissertation. The important thing to highlight is that the process of creation Morrison is engaged to, and his plays, are conceived in a traditional way of writing theater, very close to the Realism Chekhov was engaged in. That is the focus of discussion in this section. My questions are: Is there a place for realism in contemporary theatre – even in British contemporary theatre? Is a play contemporary because it has been written nowadays, or because it fulfills a certain amount of features that we recognize as contemporary in the arts of performance? What is the role of Morrison's play in the contemporary theatrical scene?

1.3 Contemporary Theatre

We're not beginning to... to... mean something?

Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*

One cannot think about contemporary dramaturgy without thinking about the vanguard movements from the twenties. And there is no better way to look back at those movements than trying to answer Hamm's question to Clov, in *Endgame*, written by Samuel Beckett and quoted in the epigraph of this section. Were they bound to mean something? Were theatre and art movements such as Surrealism, Expressionism, and Futurism intending to signify something? What did these movements provoke in the way we face drama?

I believe that, among the literary genres, theatre was the most affected by the conceptual changes about what an artistic text is. Contemporary dramaturgy is made of very different kinds of texts – and some of them very difficult to recognize as theatre at all. Hamm's question reveals the joy and the horror of being exposed. Beckett plays with such lines by showing that characters have to take the risk of being read and interpreted by others. Beckett breaks the possibilities of interpretation or, at least, multiplies them, in a new kind of theatre that denies representation the right to be anything but itself. From such concept, theatre is not an imitation of life anymore, but a (re)presentation of life and there are no boundaries to new presentations of life. So, contemporary theatre is not bound to rules or fixed structures that could help readers and audience to recognize it as theatre.

Theatre relies on the game of what is being shown and what is being hidden. The dramatic text does not imitate life: it proposes a double of life, building to life a verbal replica that is performed on the stage. Contemporary theatre seems to maintain such features, which demand from the readers/audience an active role, so as to be understood or decoded. Contemporary dramaturgy deviates from what we recognized as theatre before, presenting as a play, texts written in prose or verse, in a linear or non-linear narrative, with fragmented voices that echo not just the society we live in but the artistic movements of the past, in a constant movement of killing and resurrecting the vanguard movements from the fifties.

In the present scene, we have at least two models that represent each a different artistic attitude. The first is the classical model, a closed model, made out of informative writing, facilitating the understanding of readers and audience by structuring the play in a traditional way with a linear narrative, lines, characters, scenes and acts. The second is bound to erase everything that facilitates interpretation. It is a model bound to erasure and void. The empty space and the feeling of void come as an expression of powerful images that compose a new way of writing that communicates rather through absence than through words. This kind of dramaturgy deviates from what we recognized as theatre before, presenting as a play texts written in prose or verse, in a linear or non-linear narrative, with fragmented voices that echo not just the society we live in but the artistic movements of the past, in a constant movement of killing and resurrecting the *avant-garde* movements from the fifties. We see exponents of this kind of theatre in names such as Sarah Kane, Heiner Müller and Valère Novarrina, authors whose dramatic narratives are open not only to different interpretation but also to different ways of reading and organization. When critics and artists talk about Contemporary Theatre, they are generally talking about this second model.

Although Contemporary Theatre attempts to break the structures of the Aristotelian model, it is still a way of representing the world, in which the matrix is also being used – a group of human beings performing something in front of another group of human beings. Jean-Pierre Ryngaert sees Contemporary Theatre as an answer to the classical model of drama that relies on clarity of information, which must be complete, coherent and compact from the opening lines of a play. According to Ryngaert, Contemporary Drama proposes a different relationship with the reader/audience.

Insufficient information in writing is hardly accepted as a game with the reader, as an informative puzzle, whose pieces come only gradually. Or even worse, a puzzle whose pieces will never come or will lack, or misfit. The role of the reader is to fill these empty spaces and empty writings with his own ideas and imagination. (RYNGAERT, 2013, p.8)

Adding to the role theatre directors have engaged themselves to since the eighties, the contemporary theatrical scene is an amalgam of fragmented voices that are

put together in order to make sense and to defy the limits of interpretation. Names such as Bob Wilson, Pina Bausch and Tadeusz Kantor contributed to undermine many of the certainties about the status of mimesis and representation, especially those concerning the written text. In spite of the efforts to amplify the presence of artistic directors, we still have the presence of the writer, whose words are repeated through the years in multiple performances. We have also been witnessing a new phenomenon in contemporary drama – the multiple artist, who takes several functions at the same time. Of course there is nothing new to that – Shakespeare was responsible for writing, directing and acting in his group. Nevertheless, nowadays, these characteristics come to scene again, and we have the presence of artists who are also responsible for the translation, or re-mediation, of their works into different languages – as cinema, for instance.

This kind of artist was foreseen by Antonin Artaud, who in his book *The Theatre and its Double*, professed that the postmodern world would give birth to a new kind of artist, cruel and capable of translating himself into different artistic languages with the same proficiency (ARTAUD, 1998, p.156). Artaud looked forward to this theatre of cruelty, whose void would provoke a feeling of nausea for being alive in modern times. The evincing of this feeling of void and lack of guidance meant by Artaud are powerful aspects in contemporary drama and contemporary theatre performances.

In this scenario, there are no closed boundaries delimiting what a play is anymore. Those boundaries have been suffering constant breakings and rearrangements; they are very supple in the present days. Nonetheless, there is still a difference when we talk about a play on the page, on the stage and on the screen: the eye that looks at it. When reading a play, the reader is responsible for imagining the scenes and characters without any exterior help. The play performed on the stage imposes all these elements on the watcher, but without giving a direction to the watcher's eye. When someone watches a play it is possible to listen to the text and see the sequence of images at the same time, but it is the watcher who decides where to focus his/her attention. In this case, the watcher is responsible for what he will see. When the play is adapted into a movie, we have the eye of the director determining what the camera will hit, according to his understanding of the play he has read. The movie audience does not have the possibility the theatre audience has of choosing where to focus. In this sense, watching a film is like reading a piece of criticism. In both cases we read on the second degree, we

read *apud*. Furthermore, there are many possibilities of reading and approach involving the reader of drama, the audience in the theatre and the watcher in a movie. There are different kinds of language involved. That is why we can conceive a play as a holistic construct that takes place in the tension produced by the clash between materiality and imagination.

Deviation and Fragment seem to be the two most significant features of this second model. Deviation is mostly understood as deviating from realism, but then we must apprehend realism in a broader sense, as Sarrazac reminds us,

No teatro, como na literatura romanesca, o desvio constitui a estratégia do escritor realista moderno. Esclarecemos, todavia, que não se trata aqui de um realismo fundado na imitação do vivo, esse realismo estritamente figurativo, na tradição de Balzac e Tolstói, que Lukács coroa com o título de “grande realismo” a fim de depreciar toda a literatura dramática da modernidade, dos naturalistas a Brecht, passando pelos simbolistas e expressionistas. Não, o realismo do desvio assemelha-se antes a um realismo menor no sentido deleuziano do vocábulo. Não deixa de ter a ver com o realismo ampliado de que fala Brecht ou com o que Günther Anders, a propósito de Kafka e Brecht – dois mestres da parábola, a arte do desvio por excelência – definiu como um realismo experimental: A ciência moderna da Natureza coloca o seu objeto, para sondar os segredos da realidade, numa situação artificial, a situação experimental. Ela fabrica uma estrutura, em cujo cerne instala o objeto, deformando-o justamente em virtude disso; mas daí resulta uma constatação da forma. (SARRAZAC, 2012, p. 64)⁹

In other words, Deviation is the strategy adopted by contemporary playwrights to flee from the routine of ordinary life that is many times used in plays as an attempt to reach a sincere realism. On the other hand, the notion of Fragment derives from a way of writing that is confrontational and denies the structures of the traditional and absolute drama. The traditional and absolute drama is built from the perspective of one

⁹ In English: In theater, as in Romantic literature, deviation is the modern realist writer’s strategy. However, that is not a kind of Realism founded on living imitation, strictly figurative, in the tradition of Balzac and Tolstoy, which Lukacs defines as “Great Realism”, so as to depreciate the whole dramatic literature of modernity – from the Naturalism of Brecht to the Symbolist and Expressionists. Differently from that, this Realism of Deviation rather resembles Realism in the Deleuzian sense of the word. It has things in common with the enhanced realism related with Brecht, or with what Günther Anders says about the purpose of Kafka and Brecht – two masters of the parable, the art of diversion par excellence. Anders defines that as Experimental realism. Modern Natural Science poses an experimental, artificial situation: it manufactures a structure and installs the object, deforming it, but nonetheless stressing the realization of that construct as a form. (SARRAZAC, 2012, p. 64). (Translation mine.)

organizing principle, in a logical sequence that restrains empty spaces, ruptures and successive beginnings. Fragment stimulates the plurality of forms, stimulates ruptures and multiplies perspectives by adding several points of view. As Sarrazac says,

Tradicionalmente, o fragmento designa o caráter incompleto ou inacabado de uma obra; nesse caso, e a crer nas definições vigentes, o essencial não parece encontrar-se no que resta dela ou no que foi composto, mas sim no que não chegou até nós, no que falta. Paradoxalmente, nossa época transformou o que era a confissão de um fracasso, uma perda ou uma insuficiência na afirmação de uma escolha estética. (SARRAZAC, 2012, p.89)¹⁰

However, all these features contemplated by this second model of the contemporary theatrical panorama seem not to be the focus of Blake Morrison when he writes *We Are Three Sisters*. Contemporary British Theatre presents a certain resistance concerning foreign influences, although it is also a fomenter of a myriad of provocative artistic movements, such as the *In-Yer-Face Theatre* and the *London Pop* movements, for instance. So, although we do have innovation on British Contemporary theatre, it is important to recognize that these changes are not always welcome, and that the influence of French and German theatre in Britain is not necessarily regarded as a positive influence. British audience and critics seem to maintain their preference for the traditional approach of theatre as we detailed in the first model we present before. I recall a situation that could exemplify the preference of British people to the traditional theatre form. Once, I was in a conference of ABRAPUI¹¹, and after my presentation about contemporary theatre I had a chat with Professor Peter James Harris, a British man, living now in Brazil, author of the book *From Stage to Page – Critical Reception of Irish Plays in London Theatre*. My presentation was about the possibilities of a dramaturgy of actors based on the principles defended by Eugenio Barba and his Theatre Anthropology. Professor Harris discouraged me of such studies by claiming they were just a trend from the sixties, and that if one is engaged in a serious study on

¹⁰Traditionally, the fragment refers to the incomplete or unfinished character of a work; in this case, according to the current settings, the key does not lie on what remains, or on what was done, but on what is missing. Paradoxically, our time transformed what once meant the acknowledgment of a failure, a loss or insufficiency, into the affirmation of an aesthetic choice. (SARRAZAC, 2012, p.89) (Translation mine.)

¹¹ Associação Brasileira de Professores Universitários de Inglês.

Drama, one should rely on classics. Another good example is the reception of Katie Mitchell's radical staging of contemporary plays on British stage, as Lane tells us,

Mitchell is still an anomaly. Critics and audience are still coming to terms with her European-influenced style of directing and adventurous audio-visual theatrical experiments: following her production of Martin Crimp's new translation of *The Seagull* she received hate mail from spectators. Despite artistic entrepreneurs such as Mitchell, British theatre remains a place where the assumed mode of communication is that of realism, and where work that break these conventions is misinterpreted as an irritating interruption to a standardised form of dramatic theatre, compared to it in a reductive manner. (LANE, 2010, p. 16)

Nonetheless, the apparent fondness for Realism that British theatre seem to have is not only a matter of preference but also a cultural construction that is bound to the way the British experience drama. Ryngaert (2013) says that each subject, each story and each culture have their own ways to experience theatricality. It seems that the choice for Realism to portray the everyday life of the Brontës, presenting a type of microhistory, or microbiography, describing the ways of the Brontë family in the small village of Haworth is appropriate, especially when Morrison explains his motivations concerning Realism.

I wasn't interested in transposing scenes from the fiction. I wanted this was the story of the Brontës lives. It wasn't an adaptation of a novel. I wasn't trying to conflate Charlotte and Jane, Emily and Cathy. No. I was telling the story of the sister's real lives. I wanted it to seem a plausible realistic version of their lives, and that is a tradition Chekhov is also working – Realism. So, it is not surreal, it is not fabulist and it is not an allegory; it is a realist drama. (FRITSCH & MORRISON, 2015)

There is also another aspect that we have to take in consideration, namely, what directors and playwrights expect from an actor's performance of a theatrical character. Blake Morrison has a very interesting contribution to such discussion. Talking about his aesthetical choices and his preference for Realism, he highlights a very important fact, which cannot be ignored when we talk about the tradition of theatre in Britain - the role of the spoken word and proper delivery of speech. It comes from British tradition the importance of an adequate pronunciation, enunciation and intonation of words and sentences in order to be understood by the audience, especially those ones bound to

canonical literary texts. We must have in mind that the expression in English to watch a play by Shakespeare is not to watch Shakespeare, but to hear Shakespeare, for instance. So, as Morrison explains, there are more cultural layers that cannot be simplified just by naming Contemporary British Theatre conservative. Talking about his own play, *We Are Three Sisters*, he says,

Well, I think it might be seen as an old fashion play, especially because the subject that matters is the early 19th century, the setting and so on. On the other hand, you could say it is also metafictional or postmodernist to the extent that I am working from original texts transposing and reinventing them. Reinventing and reinterpreting an original text. One of the first plays to make an impression on me was Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*. The idea of them stepping outside Shakespeare's play and talking about things, a minor character being brought to the center of the stage, for me it was great. It is a kind of game, working with an original text, and trying to do something with that original text, you know, from a different context. So, I don't know how my plays fit really to contemporary British drama. As I said, I don't even consider myself a playwright but a poet and novelist. So, I never really thought about my relationship to contemporary British theatre. One thing that I should add is – because I work with this particular theatre company and director, Barrie Rutter, who is currently rehearsing *King Lear*, and he has demands and prejudices about what theatre must be. First of all, authentic colloquial speech; it was important the Brontë sisters to sound like people living in the early 19th century Yorkshire; they have those accents; they use the idioms of that time. Secondly, simple realist setting; no videos, no fancy lighting effects, and also a high importance to English proper pronunciation. The way educated people would speak at those times; delivering the text and the language properly. Rutter believes a lot of drama schools are not preparing the actors to deliver the text properly; people don't deliver lines like they should. So, he focus on that; he focus on clarity. If you go to a Northern Broadsides production, you hear every word. And this is wonderful for the writer, because the audience is going to hear every word. So, I think working with him and his company was also an influence on my writing of plays; knowing exactly what he was expecting and what he wanted to do probably influenced the play. (FRITSCH & MORRISON, 2015)

Therefore, to the goals of this dissertation, we will consider as contemporary all the plays that are written in the present days, and not only those ones associated with innovative featuring. Especially because the focus is a British author and, as I suggested, British theatre can be faced in multiple ways concerning the matter of innovation of form and structure clashing ideals and aesthetics of a more traditional approach to theatre. And, although Blake Morrison is working on adaptations of classic plays – a movement very recurrent in European innovative theatre – he does his

adaptations without breaking the boundaries of form and structure, which seems to be the way British audiences are more comfortable with. In the next chapter, we discuss the strategies Morrison uses to adapt/transpose from Chekhov and we analyse both playwrights comparing their plays concerning structure and characters.

2 MORRISON AND CHEKHOV: ADAPTATION AND TRANSPOSITION

“Do you see that tree? It is dead but it still sways in the wind with the others. I think it would be like that with me. That if I died I would still be part of life in one way or another.”
Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters*

I still have a strong and vivid image of me reflected on the mirror of TEPA's dressing room wearing costumes of a Russian man from the beginning of the 20th century. My hair was greased and combed in a way that made it difficult for me to recognize myself in the image I faced on the mirror. There was a stream, a kind of electric impulse running through all my body, as if something was telling me that I was not myself at that moment. I was a Prozorov. I was Andrey Prozorov.

We had been studying Chekhov for two months and that was the precise moment when we actors had to show our teachers the result of our physical and psychological research of one of Chekhov's characters. I chose Andrey in a very passionate way. I felt sorry for him. Compassion was the feeling which led me to him. He was a very intelligent man who was also a very smart boy, educated to be a professor, destined to be a great man - one man to make proud the entire country. However, after his father's death, he saw himself handcuffed to his three sisters, being pushed to accept the role of provider of that family - the one who would take care of all three sisters and take them back to Moscow. It was too much for him. I do not know how to precise what I felt, but at that moment, looking at me/him on the mirror, I knew it was too much for him. It was a merge of sadness, anguish and anger that made me feel so immobilized.

After the proper preparations on costumes and make-up, we were conducted to the stage where our teacher Luiz Paulo Vasconcelos was waiting for us. He asked so many questions and we were supposed to answer as if we were the characters we were impersonating. I remember I had no wish to answer the questions. There was an urge to be silent, not to talk to anyone, because I knew no one would understand all those things that were happening inside me. Then, suddenly, as soon as the teacher noticed my silence, he approached me and asked me "are you happy?", and I answered "no, I can't be", so he asked me "why?", and I said "It is too much pain. It is too much hope. I don't

want happiness, I am resigned. I just want to be left alone." At that moment, my teacher got a little bit closer and whispered to me "now, you've got Chekhov, don't you ever lose it".

"Don't you ever lose it", my teacher said. I don't think I could, even if I wanted to. I was impregnated of Chekhov, and it was a kind of catharsis for me, as if I could understand every single word of *Three Sisters*, through the perspective of the brother. Andrey is excluded even from the title of the play, and I felt I had no place in that family. Some years after this experience, precisely when I decided to conduct my PhD dissertation on Morrison's play, I promoted a workshop with my own theatre company – *Grupo Teatro do Lírio* - to study and research Chekhovian characters. That was another instigating experience, and everybody was engaged in taking a deep plunge in the characters from *Three Sisters*. That was the space I needed to have another breathtaking experience that taught me a lot about Chekhov. We were improvising a scene with the sisters and Andrey, and in a certain moment I recall saying something like "I adore you" to Olga. Luciana, the actress who was impersonating Olga, looked at me with her teary and melancholic eyes, and did not say one single word. She just grabbed my hand and stared at me for several minutes. I could understand the depth of her deception on me and how much suffering I was causing to her, and yet I could notice how much she loved me. It was a vivid and unique experience. There was no necessity for words. The silence was so powerful and told me so many things, that I realized that it was not possible to communicate, to express your feelings in that play. Chekhov does not allow that because his characters live under the sign of resignation and silence that are muffled by the everyday dialogues, empty of vibrant life. I quote the scene I performed on the stage of TEPA to illustrate that.

Andrey: Good morning, grandfather. What have you to say?

Ferapont: The Chairman sends a book and some documents or other. Here. . . . [Hands him a book and a packet.]

Andrey: Thank you. It's all right. Why couldn't you come earlier? It's past eight now.

Ferapont: How's that?

Andrey: [Louder]. I say you've come late, it's past eight.

Ferapont: Yes, yes. I came when it was still light, but they wouldn't let me in. They said you were busy. Well, what was I to do. If you're busy, you're busy, and I'm in no hurry. [He thinks that Andrey is asking him something] What?

Andrey: Nothing. [Looks through the book] Tomorrow is Friday. I'm not supposed to go to work, but I'll come — all the same . . . and do some work. It's dull at home. [Pause] Oh, my dear old man, how strangely life changes, and how it deceives! Today, out of sheer boredom, I took up this book — old university lectures, and I couldn't help laughing. My God, I'm secretary of the local district council, the council which has Protopopov for its chairman, yes, I'm the secretary, and the summit of my ambitions is — to become a member of the council! I to be a member of the local district council, I, who dream every night that I'm a professor of Moscow University, a famous scholar of whom all Russia is proud!

Ferapont: I can't tell . . . I'm hard of hearing. . . .

Andrey: If you weren't, I don't suppose I should talk to you. I've got to talk to somebody, and my wife doesn't understand me, and I'm a bit afraid of my sisters — I don't know why unless it is that they may make fun of me and make me feel ashamed. I don't drink, I don't like public-houses, but how I should like to be sitting just now in Tyestov's place in Moscow, or at the Great Moscow, old fellow!

Ferapont: Moscow? That's where a contractor was once telling that some merchants or other were eating pancakes; one ate forty pancakes and he went and died, he was saying. Either forty or fifty, I forget which.

Andrey: In Moscow you can sit in an enormous restaurant where you don't know anybody and where nobody knows you, and you don't feel all the same that you're a stranger. And here you know everybody and everybody knows you, and you're a stranger . . . and a lonely stranger.

Ferapont: What? And the same contractor was telling — perhaps he was lying — that there was a cable stretching right across Moscow.

Andrey: What for?

Ferapont: I can't tell. The contractor said so.

Andrey: Rubbish. [He reads] Were you ever in Moscow?

Ferapont: [After a pause] No. God did not lead me there. [Pause] Shall I go?

Andrey: You may go. Good-bye. [Ferapont goes] Good-bye. [Reads] You can come to-morrow and fetch these documents. . . . Go along. . . . [Pause] He's gone. [A ring] Yes, yes. . . . [Stretches himself and slowly goes into his own room.](CHEKHOV, 2005, p.267)

Chekhov uses a dialogue with a half dead man to show the impossibility of communication in the micro world he conceived to his *Three Sisters*. Although both characters are talking, they are not listening to each other, because they are both submerged in their own thoughts and memories. Even though Ferapont tries to talk about the same subject, the scene illustrates the impossibility of a mutual understanding because they are not participating of a dialogue, but delivering a soliloquy instead. In this context, the characters deny the possibility of mutual communication, suppressing the necessity of mutual understanding once both can talk freely about their reminiscences. That was the feeling I got when performing this scene - the strong sensation that even though I was talking, I was not being heard, and that I did not mind, because I was talking to Ferapont in order to talk to myself to evoke good memories from a happier time.

I consider relevant to talk about my own experience with Chekhov, because, although I am engaged in writing a PhD dissertation from the perspective of a researcher of literature, I am also an actor and I have already experienced Chekhov's dramaturgy in my body. I have already spoken those words from the play, and they are, in a sense, my words too. When I chose Morrison's play, I was motivated by the fact that I would be able to approach writers that I really care about through research and art. The muffled silence present in *Three Sisters* is the same I found out in the Victorian Hawthorne of the Brontë Sisters. So, here we are with threads and fabrics, putting these pieces together in order to make sense of the experiences lived from and through those artists. In this chapter, we will explore Chekhov's and Morrison's play and the processes of transposition and adaptation that are involved in the writing of *We Are Three Sisters*. Taking part in a work like this relates to the epigraph of this act/chapter. I see the tree. I understand the metaphor. If I died I would still be part of life in one way or another. This work is part of it - it is part of the scraps of fabric that I sew together to make sense of life and art.

2.1 On Chekhov's Three Sisters

Yes. They will forget. That is our fate; you can't do anything about it. The things which to us seem serious, significant, very important, - the time will come - they will be forgotten or they will seem of no consequence.” - Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters*

Three Sisters, the last of Chekhov's play, was written in 1900 and it was performed on stage for the first time in 1901 by Moscow Arts Theatre directed by Konstantin Stanislavsky. The play explores the decay of the aristocratic class in Russia, following the steps of the Prozorov family (Andrey, Olga, Masha and Irina) over the course of years. The three sisters and their brother grew up in Moscow and because of their father's transference they have to move to a provincial town in the countryside. There is a constant feeling of displacement in the family, and a continual talking about their dreams and plans to return to the life they once had in Moscow. The play begins on Irina's name-day¹², which also is the one-year anniversary of their father's death. The three sisters live a quiet life without the great excitements they were used to in Moscow. Olga is a teacher who is frustrated with her students and the amount of tasks such a job demands from her. Masha is an artist, she is a pianist and she is the only sister who is married, although she ends up having an affair with Vershinin, a married man. Irina is single and chooses to ignore the courting of her suitors until she bends to the social pressure to marry the Baron. The whole dominant theme of the play is introduced in the first act, when Olga and Irina are talking in the living room.

Olga: (...) As a matter of fact, the four years I've been working at high school, I've felt as if every day my strength and youth were draining from me drop by drop. While the same old dream keeps growing bigger and stronger...

Irina: To go to Moscow. To sell the house, wind up everything here and – go to Moscow...

Olga: Yes! Quick as you can go to Moscow. (CHEKHOV, 2005, p.250)

The echoed voices of Irina and Olga introduce Moscow as the major symbolic theme of *Three Sisters*, the one which dominates the play working as a symbol of hope

¹² For Orthodox Christians the name-day is the day of the Saint of whom they have been named after. This date is as important as their birthday.

and of all the things the Prozorov family are not able to achieve. There is a constant presence of Moscow in the dialogues of *Three Sisters*, showing that these characters deposit their entire possibility of felicity in their moving from the countryside to a cosmopolitan capital city. However, as the plot follows, it becomes clear that the Prozorovs are not going back to Moscow and that they are stuck in a life that, although not chosen by them, they are not able to get rid of. Moscow is also a vivid hope the sisters keep with them in order to stand the tedious and unattractive life the small town is able to offer them. The continuous waiting for this return to the glorious past they remember having in Moscow fulfils the lives of these sisters, giving to the play a melancholic tone bound to the deep dissatisfaction the protagonists have with the present and the persistent insistence of looking to the past in search of their future.

The play is divided into four acts that help us to see the passage of time through the changes in the lives of its protagonists. The first act takes place during spring, and despite the melancholic tone, it is possible to notice that there is a lot of hope from the sisters, especially Irina and Olga, to change their lives. They expect that by moving to Moscow they will guarantee their bliss and they will be able to solve all their problems. However, Chekhov presents, since the very first lines, some clues that tell us the sisters will not accomplish their dream. Jurij Striedter (2005) comments on that by pointing that even if there is a harmony of hoping voices pointing to Moscow, there is also a certain irony from the secondary characters when we think about the scene as a whole.

The harmony is repeatedly interrupted by the remarks of the three officers conversing in the next room. Olga's yearning for the old home is followed by Chebutykin's "To hell with both of you!" and Tusenbach's "You're right, it's ridiculous." The sister's triple "To Moscow" is followed by the stage direction "Chebutykin and Tusenbach laugh". And Olga's later statements on how she would like to quit her job and get married are cut short by Tusenbach's remark "You talk such rubbish, a person gets sick and tired just listening to you". Of course none of the three comments responds to the sisters' speeches; rather, they are fragments of a conversation among the men. And precisely because the context of the officers' talk remains unclear, because there is no direct link between their comments and the sisters' conversation, it provokes expectation in the reader/spectator that the dramatic dialogue is bound to convey a meaningful context. (STRIEDTER, 2005, p. 561).

The spring-like tone that permeates the first act of the play masquerades what the following scenes and the clues Chekhov deposits here and there show us – that the sisters are destined to live in the place that is so hideous for them, and that Moscow is to be kept as a reminiscence of a past that, although happily lived, is not going to come back. In fact, I do believe Olga and Masha are aware of such fact since the beginning, although they behave in different ways. In the first scene, when Irina and Olga are chatting about Moscow, Masha whistles while reading a book. There is certain indifference in Masha's behaviour that denounces what she really thinks about her sisters' hopes. Masha was the first one to give up such dream when she decided to marry a local teacher. She knows that if her sisters could accomplish her dream to go back to Moscow, she would not be part of it, because she was already trapped in that provincial town by matrimony. So, in this context, Masha whistles and such attitude drives Olga angry, which makes one wonder what her reasons are. Why does Olga get angry with the indifferent attitude of Masha towards their chat about Moscow? I believe it can be explained if we take into account the role Olga sustains in the Prozorov family.

After their father's death, Olga assumed the motherly figure to Prozorov family, especially to her youngest sister, Irina. All the responsibilities with the house, the administration of the few employees they keep with them and even the maintenance of the hope of her siblings are tasks that Olga performs in order to keep everything working well. Olga demands a lot from herself and she does not allow her sisters and brother to give up their dreams. Although she expresses in the first act that she would be content if she could marry and stay all day long inside her house, she is the one who works as a teacher to provide for the family what their earnings with their father's allowance is not able to sustain. There is a social discomfort that becomes clear as long as we follow the plot with Olga having to assume a role that is expected to be taken by Andrey. Having this in mind, Masha's whistle seem to be provocative to Olga, because she is making a lot of efforts to allow her sister Irina to keep on believing and dreaming about a better future, and Masha seems not to care about that. So, Olga gets annoyed and she demands from Masha to stop whistling: "Don't whistle! How can you?" (CHEKHOV, 2005, p.250). Her demanding is followed by a silent pause. There is a discomfort in this silence, as if Olga and Masha drop the mask for some seconds and the truth about her beliefs could be seen. But the silence is rapidly followed by the

enthusiastic chat about Moscow Olga and Irina have in order to soften the mood of the scene.

Pauses and silences are very important in Chekhov's plays. As Stella Adler reminds us, silence is as important to Chekhov as the notes are for music (ADLER, 2000, p.215). In the pauses and silences, much is revealed about the feelings of the characters and the way they deal with the conflicts that are presented to them. Chekhov innovates in the dramatic genre because he allows people to be in silence and he lets them talk about frivolities while they are in pain and despair inside. Adler also says that Chekhov reaches that part of soul that touches art in a deeper way, so he introduces silence and the absence of actions to the stage, communicating with no need of words or in the reading of what is underneath words.

Another important remark to consider in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* is the characters' impossibility to understand one another and the endless denial of facing the world that is presented around them. Olga masquerades the ruin of her family with plans of going back to Moscow, Masha refuses to be stuck in an unhappy marriage and has an affair with a married man who is not able to leave her wife to stay with her, Irina divagates on the importance of work and how she would be happy if she could work instead of staying at home all day long, but as soon as she faces the reality of working in a telegraph company, she turns back to their plans of returning to Moscow. The three sisters dream about their brother becoming a professor in the University of Moscow, although it is clear in Andrey's behaviour that he is not shaped for such a task, or that the social pressures on him suffocated his ability to put plans in action. There is a permanent utopian orientation that isolates the characters from one another and from real life. All the characters are discussing and philosophising about their own lives losing themselves in reminiscences of the past, and making it impossible for them to construct a future based on reality. Each member of the Prozorov family and their acquaintances are stuck in their own problems and their denial of facing them provoking a melancholic delusion that permeates the four acts of the play.

Peter Szondi (2001) claims that all Chekhov characters live under the signs of renounce and resignation. They renounce even the bliss of real encounters, as they are stuck inside themselves they renounce the present moment and the possibility of

communication. There is a perpetual nostalgia that permeates the play that prevents the characters from living a life with plenitude. According to him,

Coloca-se então a questão de como esse desdito temático da vida presente em favor da recordação e da nostalgia, essa análise do próprio destino que se pereniza, ainda permite configurar aquela forma dramática na qual outrora se cristalizara a profissão de fé renascentista no aqui e no agora e na relação entre os homens. Ao que parece, a dupla renúncia que caracteriza os seres de Chekhov deve ter como correlato a negação da ação e do diálogo – as duas categorias formais mais importantes do drama - portanto, a negação da própria forma dramática. No entanto, é apenas em princípio que esta se verifica. Como os heróis dos dramas de Chekhov continuam a viver em sociedade, a despeito de sua ausência psicológica, e, sem levar às últimas consequências a sua solidão e nostalgia, permanecem suspensos numa zona intermediária entre eu e o mundo, agora e antes, sua forma tampouco renuncia inteiramente às categorias de que necessita como forma dramática. Ele as conserva numa casualidade inacentuada que deixa a verdadeira temática tomar forma pelo negativo, como desvio em relação a esta.¹³ (SZONDI, 2001, p.42)

Nevertheless, even though Chekhov's play is not centred on ideas and actions but on reminiscences, dispositions and philosophy, he is able to draw the social background and rules that permeated the society he lived in. In characters such as Anfissa and Ferapont, he is able to show the discrepancy of treatment they can obtain from characters such as Olga and Andrey, or Natasha and Solyoni. Chekhov lived in a period of transition from 1863, the time when servants were seen as property, to a time when although unchained from the Landlords, these servants were abandoned having to pay for their land without any money to do that. However, Chekhov presents such situations without great actions; on the contrary he merges the historical and social context in the everyday life of the characters. STRIEDTER (2005) believes Chekhov's dramaturgy is more bound to mood than action.

¹³Then raises the question of how this recanted life's theme present in favour of reminiscence and nostalgia, this analysis of destiny that perpetuates itself also allows you to set that dramatic way in which once had crystallized the profession of Renaissance faith in the here and in the now and the relationship among men. Apparently, the double resignation featuring Chekhov creatures must be to correlate the negation of action and dialogue - both most important formal categories of drama - so the denial of the very dramatic genre. However, it is just assumed that this occurs. As the heroes of Chekhov's dramas continue to live in society, despite their psychological absence, and without taking to the last consequences their loneliness and nostalgia, they remain suspended in an intermediate zone between they and the world, now and before, his way either waive entirely the categories you need as dramatically. He retains a non-stressed fluke that leaves the real theme taking shape by the negative, as deviation in relation to that. (Translation mine)

Labelling Chekhov's plays as dramas of mood came as a response to the realization that they did not seem to be dramas of action. This should not, however, be understood as Chekhov's total disregard for the element of action, because even on that level expectations are evoked and reflected. In this respect, a contrast can be drawn between long-term expectations, concerning the totality of the action or the bulk of its progress, and short-term expectations, which concern immediately subsequent actions. (STRIEDTER, 2005, p. 564).

Having this in mind, we can think about the constant repetition of the mantra "To Moscow" that is evoked by the sisters as a line of long-term expectation. The hopes for Andrey to have an academic career in Moscow are put in this same category. As STRIEDTER claims, in *Three Sisters* the long-term hopes are seen as a future expectation, a possibility of happiness which is constantly postponed, reflected upon, until they are faced as an illusion and are finally renounced (IDEN). On the other hand, the short-term expectations are generally to the way characters are introduced even before they have the chance to speak for themselves. It happens with Vershinin and with Natasha, as we receive a lot of information about them in advance, provoking a short-term expectation that is solved as soon as the characters join the scene.

Culture and education are also major themes in *Three Sisters*. We learn from the dialogues that the characters believe in a world where all people should work and be educated, and that this is the real condition for happiness. When Andrey and Masha talk about how they seem displaced in a provincial town with all their erudition, we have a very strong position of Vershinin.

Vershinin: So you read English?

Andrey: Yes. Father, rest in peace, overstocked us with education. It sounds silly and absurd, but still I must admit, after his death I started putting on some weight and, well, I put on some weight in one year, it's as if my body were freeing itself of its constraints. Thanks to Father, my sisters and I know French, German and English, and Irina knows a little Italian. But what good is it?

Masha: In this town knowing three languages is a superfluous luxury. Not even a luxury, but a kind of superfluous appendage, a bit like a sixth finger. We know a lot of useless stuff.

Vershinin: I don't think there is or can be a town so boring and dismal that an intelligent, educated person isn't of use. Let's assume that among the one hundred thousand inhabitants of this town, which is, I grant you, backward and crude, there are only three such as you. Naturally, it's not up to you to enlighten the

benighted masses that surrounded you. In the course of your lifetime, you must gradually surrender and be swallowed up in the crowd of a hundred thousand, you'll be smothered by life, but even so you won't disappear, won't sink without a trace. In your wake, others like you will appear, maybe six, then twelve and so on, until at last the likes of you will be the majority. In two hundred, three hundred years life on earth will be unimaginably beautiful, stupendous. Man needs a life like that, and if it isn't here and now, then we must look forward to it, wait, dream, prepare himself for it, and that's the reason he must see and know more than his father and grandfather saw and knew. (Laughs) And you complain you know a lot of useless stuff. (CHEKHOV, 2005, p.259)

However, as the plot follows through the four acts, it becomes clear that despite all the good intentions and philosophical beliefs of the protagonists and their acquaintances, there is a gap between what they believe life is and what is presented to them by the circumstances. The last act shows the military officers preparing themselves to leave the town. They were Prozorovs' last saving point, the only ones they could trust and talk to in the same intellectual level. The departure of the officers coincides with the duel of Solyony and the Baron Tusenbach, leading to the murdering of this last one, leaving Irina without her fiancée. Vershinin departs with the army leaving Masha behind, Andrey seems to accept that his wife Natasha betrays him with Protopopov and Olga prepares to move from the house she used to administrate, practically kicked out by Natasha, the woman she always despised. The entire family seems to vanish in pain and hopelessness, as the last dialogue demonstrates.

Masha: Oh, how the music plays! They're leaving us, one of them has gone forever and ever, we're left alone to begin our life anew. One has to go on living... One has to go on living...

Irina: (Lays her head on Olga's bosom). A time will come when everyone will realize why all this is, what these sufferings are for, there won't be any mysteries, but in the meantime a person has to live... has to work, nothing but work! Tomorrow I'll go away by myself, I'll teach school and I'll devote my whole life to anyone who may possibly need it. It's autumn now, winter will be here soon, the snow will cover everything up, but I shall work, I shall work...

Olga: (Embrace both sisters.) The music is playing so gaily, cheerfully, and I feel like living! Oh, dear Lord! Time will pass, and we'll be gone forever, people will forget us, they'll forget our faces, voices and how many of us there were, but our suffering will turn to joy for those who live after us, happiness and peace will come into being on this earth, and those who live now will be remembered with a kind word and a blessing. Oh, dear sisters, this life of ours is not over yet. Let's go on living! The music plays so

gaily, so cheerfully, and it looks like just a little longer and we shall learn why we're alive, why we suffer... If only we knew, if only we knew! (CHEKHOV, 2005, p.305)

Though, despite the gloomy ending of the play, with the sisters being left alone with their vanishing dreams, there is a lyric tone that permeates the entire play and is highlighted in the sisters' final lines. They are not optimistic about their future, there is no place for dreams anymore and the reality of facts drops as a thunder in their lives. But, still, there is poetry. There is a beautiful crafted way in which the sisters address their suffering and their fear to be forgotten. Irina's last speech demonstrates that the last sister to have high hopes about future has finally given up. She gives up in a poetic way, accepting the reality of the world and professing her wish to be useful in the time she has to live. They still look for meanings – for the situations they had to face, for the losses and for life itself. They do not believe in dreams anymore. Their old aspirations were genuine, but they vanish in the battle field. Representing the social collapses by showing the disintegration of individuals, Chekhov reaches the tone of lyricism and poetry, especially with the anguish of Olga's final statement, when she stares and aspires for consolation – the consolation of knowledge and wisdom that they were not able to grasp in time to save their lives. The disintegration of Prozorov family and the low hopes for their future merges with the lyrical images Chekhov draws, provoking a final long-term expectation: What is going to happen with them? Will they have a future? Will they find love or consolation? In Olga's last line, if only we knew.

2. 2 On Morrison's *We Are Three Sisters*

“Human beings never enjoy complete happiness in this world. I was not born for a different destiny to the rest of my species: to imagine such a lot befalling me is a fairy tale - a daydream. Which I can and will realise. I shall begin today.” — Charlotte Brontë,
Jane Eyre

Separating and choosing threads to this delicate embroidery is not an easy task, especially when one is emotionally attached to the pieces of fabric that are being used to compose the craft. If Chekhov is a very important part of my life as an actor, the works

of the Brontë sisters have a very special place in my heart and in my academic life. *Jane Eyre* was the first novel I read in English and its multiple and deep images carried me away in a sense I could forget even the language barriers that made it difficult for me to understand word by word. Many years have passed and I had the opportunity to visit and revisit the works of these writers many times. I read them, I wrote about them, I got to know adaptations of their works on the page, on the stage and on the screen, but I can say that I am never tired of them. So, I confess that I will have to take care to choose the proper threads, to select what is really important from now on, because for me everything these sisters have written or taught matters.

In the epigraph that opens this section, Charlotte talks about the impossibility of reaching a full state of felicity. The same feeling permeates Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as we have just seen. It is part of our jobs as human beings to love and to hate, to suffer and to be relieved, winning and losing things and people we love. The Brontës' novels and poems talk about those feelings and how we humans deal with them in the battlefield of thoughts, actions and sensations. The life of Charlotte, Emily and Anne was so explored by biographers, novelists, playwrights, poets and artists in general that we could say that their lives are as important as the literary works they presented us.

Presenting Chekhov and the Brontës in such a passionate way is a way to show my feelings towards these writers and to justify why Blake Morrison became one of my favourite persons in the world – this English writer from northern England was able to combine many things that I am fond of – he merges the Brontës and Chekhov, theatre and novel, biography and fiction in such an intricate craft, putting very different pieces and fabric scraps together to create a text play that extrapolates the boundaries of theatre, because it deals with so many layers that present a piece of literature that is also a puzzle to be solved.

Morrison saw the obvious connections between the life of the Brontë sisters and Chekhov's play -for instance the three sisters who support each other, a troubled brother with drinking problems, dead parents, the feeling of remoteness from the centre, an old servant who is also considered part of the family and all these themes such as culture, literature, work, women's rights, love and marriage that are discussed by Chekhov and the Brontë sisters. The more I study about the life of the Brontës and their literary works and I think about these connections with Chekhov's play, the more I am convinced that

Morrison was able to grasp from the literary universe something that was there all the time, but we did not realize. I learned from Morrison that Chekhov's biography by Donald Rayfield mentions that the Russian writer may have read a biography of the Brontës he ordered from St Petersburg and that biography could be the link that establishes the connections between his literary work and the real life of the Brontë sisters.

But this is just a literary speculation. What matters for my dissertation is to provide my particular reading of Morrison's craft and to perform my roles as a reader, an academic researcher and a person of theatre in order to make sense of the multiple possibilities a play such as *We Are Three Sisters* can provide. In this section we deal with the movements of adaptation and transposition that Morrison performs in order to create his literary work. To do so, we have to sum up to join the conversation a theoretician who has a lot to say about adaptation and transposition – Linda Hutcheon.

Blake Morrison chooses Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as a shadow text, a kind of scaffold from which he builds up his story about the Brontë sisters adapting characters and situations and transposing time and social background. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that we are not talking here about a derivative work, but a literary creation that is unique and stands for itself without the necessity of any exterior help. Morrison's *We Are Three Sisters* stands for itself without the necessity of knowing Chekhov or his plays. Morrison's play is a literary work with many layers to be grasped, because the play shadows the structure of another playwright from another historical and social background to portray the life of three writers who are not only characters in a play, but people who lived on the surface of the Earth. The more you know about those facts and literary works the more you can deepen your reading of Morrison's play. As Linda Hutcheon teaches us

If we know that prior text, we always feel its presence shadowing the one we are experiencing directly. When we call a work an adaptation, we openly announce its overt relationship to another work or works. It is what Gérard Genette would call a text in the second degree, created and then received in relation to a prior text. This is why adaptation studies are so often comparative studies. This is not to say that adaptations are not also autonomous works that can be interpreted and valued as such; as many theorists have insisted, they obviously are. This is one reason why and adaptation has its own aura, its own presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. I take such a position as axiomatic, but not as my theoretical focus. To interpret an

adaptation as an adaptation is, in a sense, to treat it as what Roland Barthes called, not a “work”, but a “text”, a plural “stereophony of echoes, citations, and references”. Although adaptations are also aesthetic objects in their own right, it is only as inherently double or multilaminated works that can be theorized as adaptations. (HUTCHEON, 2006, p.8)

So, taking Hutcheon’s words into consideration, it is not our jobs as literary critics to perform judgements related to the fidelity or proximity of the text. This is not the criterion of judgement neither should it be the focus of analysis. My reading of *We Are Three Sisters* is not an attempt of showing how it gets close or how loyal it is to Chekhov’s structure or the Brontës biographical materials, because I do not believe Morrison’s play aims to reproduce such things but to adapt them in a creative way. And also, Morrison works with the transposition from the real to the fictional, from a historical and social background to a fictionalized play, and these movements can be studied through different lenses and perspectives.

Hutcheon defends that adaptation must be seen in at least three different perspectives – as a formal entity or product, as a process of creation and as a process of reception. As a formal entity we know that *We Are Three Sisters* is an adaptation to the stage of some periods of the Brontë Sisters’ lives and also that it uses Chekhov’s structure of a previous play to build up the universe of the Brontë parsonage that is the background of Morrison’s text. The process of creation adopted by Morrison involves a lot of study and research not only about the Brontë sisters’ literary works and life, but also the entire process of recreation from a structure of another play written by a playwright that is transposed from a different historical and social background. And the process of reception relies on the reader/watcher of the play and it is engaged with the previous experiences one has had with the Brontës, Chekhov and Morrison’s works – the process of reception depends on our memories and capacity to read intertextualities.

One more thing we have to keep in mind when reading *We Are Three Sisters* is that it is a theatrical play, and as a theatrical play we have at least two different modes of engagement with it. In her book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Hutcheon presents three different modes of engagement with a work of art – the telling mode, the showing mode and the interacting mode. According to her,

In the telling mode – in narrative literature, for example – our engagement begins in the realm of imagination, which is simultaneously controlled by the selected, directing words of the visual or aural. We can stop reading at any point; we can re-read or skip ahead; we hold the book in our hands and feel, as well as see, how much of the story remains to be read. But with the move to the mode of showing, as in film and stage adaptations, we are caught in an unrelenting, forward-driving story. And we have to move from imagination to the realm of perception – with its mix of both detail and broad focus. The performance mode teaches us that language is not the only way to express meaning or to relate stories. Visual and gestural representations are rich in complex associations; music offers aural equivalents for characters' emotions and, in turn, provokes affective responses in the audience; sound, in general, can enhance, reinforce, or even contradict the visual and verbal aspects. On the other hand, however, a shown dramatization cannot approximate the complicated verbal play of told poetry or the interlinking of description, narration, and explanation that is so easy for prose narrative to accomplish. Telling a story in words, either orally or on paper, is never the same as showing it visually and aurally in any of the many performance media available. (HUTCHEON, 2006, p.23)

So, we are dealing with two diverse possibilities when performing a reading of a play. In the telling mode we deal with the text of the play - the play on the page - and such task demands efforts of imagination to set the scenes while reading. This is the main reason for me to choose to focus my reading on the telling mode, because I did not have the opportunity to watch *We Are Three Sisters* on the stage, and because I chose to focus on the literary aspects of the play, since this is a dissertation based on a literature postgraduate program. The showing mode is bound to the sensorial aspects of reception and it works for the multiple possibilities of the play on the stage, and the transposition of one language into another could be also considered a kind of adaptation. According to Hutcheon,

When we work in the other direction – that is, from the telling to the showing mode, especially from print to performance – a definitional problem potentially arises. In a very real sense, every live staging of a printed play could theoretically be considered an adaptation in its performance. The text of a play does not necessarily tell an actor about such matters as gestures, expressions, and tones of voice to use in converting words on a page into a convincing performance; it is up to the director and actors to actualize the text and to interpret and then recreate it, thereby in a sense adapting it for the stage. (HUTCHEON, 2006, p.39)

In this sense, we have as many possibilities of different performances of *We Are Three Sisters* on the stage, as we have different actors and directors performing it. That is one more reason for me to focus on the intersection that Ubersfeld suggests, giving attention to the play on the page, because I can provide a reading that is based on the text conceived by Morrison and not on the performance of any specific group or artist.

We Are Three Sisters is a five act play set in Haworth Parsonage, home of our three protagonists Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë. It covers a brief period of the life of these writers, from 1845 to 1848 – a time when the Brontës were not well known yet. Blake Morrison did not choose this specific period of their lives by chance, as he attests.

Many periods in the Brontës' lives were dramatic but this was a particularly dramatic period. I was interested in the whole idea of the three sisters, unlike Chekhov's three sisters, doing something, becoming published and so on, but their breakthrough also coinciding with Branwell's decline. This is the period of his disappointment with Mrs Robinson, for whom he had worked as a tutor and with whom he was in love and then his decline and indeed death. There is a question mark as to whether Branwell might've known that his sisters had found a London publisher. Certainly Charlotte was worried that someone had seen one of the letters that came from her publisher. Anyway, it seemed to me this is a very dynamic and interesting period of their lives to explore and that there were connections and parallels to be made with Chekhov's play. (BROWN & MORRISON, 2014, p.32)

The practice of adaptation and transposition as performed by Morrison brings to the readers and audience a double-coded work of art, because we have to interpret the meaning of the play in its own and also the relationship to its original sources and texts – in this case Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and the Brontës' biography. Morrison approximates not only the structure, dialogues and sequences of actions performed by the characters from *Three Sisters*, but he also uses feelings and silences – and we have already discussed how important silence was to Chekhov – in a strategy that sometimes approximates Chekhov's characters to the Brontës, and sometimes get them far away from one another. He deals with the transposition of the vast emptiness of the Russian landscape to the wild desolation of the moors of Yorkshire, a place he knows very well, as he was born there.

We Are Three Sisters starts in a mood very similar to the first scene of Chekhov's play. The three sisters – Charlotte, Emily and Anne – are together in their

working tables while talking about their memories of the past, remembering their mother's death. It is in this first scene that we are already able to establish the connections with Chekhov's characters. Charlotte is Olga, the one who claims for her the role of mother figure, the one who tries to cheer up the youngest in order to elevate her moral, constantly protecting her sisters, brother and father while administering the life of the house. Emily is Masha, detached from the scene; distant, distinctly sad, whistling while sometimes talking through poetry – her own poems, in this case. Anne is Irina, she is the baby of the family, the one whose innocence and capacity of keeping on dreaming must be preserved, and she is also subject to the amorous attentions of the doctor and the new curate.

However, although the sisters perform similar roles as characters of a play, Morrison is aware that their destinies are quite different, and the way Chekhov's sisters and the Brontës deal with the aspects of life goes to unlike directions. However, it is important to highlight that we are not talking about the Brontë sisters as the real persons who lived in the 19th century, but the fictional characters from Morrison's play. The choice of using Chekhov's structure and model of characters baffles the reader with the amount of similarities, but also provokes us to think about the differences from two very distant settings in time and space. In the conversation we had, Morrison talked about these parallels and dissimilarities.

But, of course, it's a wonderful play and the structure of the play is a fantastic template to use anyway. And, although it is set in Russia, there are sufficient parallels to work with. So, to take one example the line everybody remembers from *Three Sisters* is "Moscow, Moscow, Moscow". So, that made me think what the Brontës relationship to London was. Well, ambivalent, I think. There's a letter that Charlotte wrote where she tells her friends who are visiting London about the wonderful and majestic things in the capital that you can see. And, of course, there is that famous trip they made to London to declare their identities to the publishers, this was Anne and Charlotte, Emily stayed behind. And they had, like anybody growing up in rural Yorkshire, like I did, we are always a little suspicious of the capital city – London. So, the attraction to the city and this slightly resistance I found interesting to explore in the relation to the Chekhov work. And, also, there are obvious connections: three sisters, a troubled artistic brother, dead parents, the feeling of remoteness from the centre, an old servant, and a lot of discussion about work, about marriage and about love. One thing I think that is in common in Chekhov's work and the Brontës is the position of women in society. In Chekhov, we see a class of women who are frustrated with the life they have, although it is a privileged life. The Brontës were also, I think, frustrated with the position of women in society, but, of course, the

great difference was that they worked. They worked so hard. They worked so hard in order to accomplish their duties and their writing work. So, although there are similarities in the position of women in society, the way they address the matter is not the same. (FRITSCH & MORRISON, 2015)

Among these parallels, there is also the very important participation of Branwell in the plot of the play. As Andrey, Branwell was the centre of various scandals concerning alcohol and gambling, and also like Andrey, he is the one on whom the family deposits high hopes of a brilliant future. It is interesting to notice that Branwell was the one the family expected to be published, as Andrey is the one the family expected to be a famous professor in the University of Moscow. However, the reactions these two brothers receive from their sisters are poles apart. While Olga, Masha and Irina refuse to face the reality of facts that are being presented in their lives, Charlotte, Emily and Anne do not expect for their brother to do the work and become writers themselves.

The processes of adapting and transposing that we see in *We Are Three Sisters* are a complex conversation between past and present and the world of the story. Actually, the story that is being told in *We Are Three Sisters* happened before the time when Chekhov's *Three Sisters* takes place. The mediation of what is going to be shown and what is going to be discarded is done in the present time by Morrison, who orchestrates his choices sometimes transposing dialogues and changing the setting, sometimes adapting characters, aggregating more than one character in another one – as the character of the Doctor, for instance – and sometimes recontextualizing entire scenes to let both Chekhov's structure and the Brontës characters appear.

As I have already discussed in the second section of this chapter, “To Moscow” seems to be the mantra that motivates and works as an engine that moves the life of the Prozorovs ahead. The Brontës had a very different relationship with London, as Morrison already mentioned, they were sort of suspicious about the habits of people from the capital. Another important thing that Morrison had to take into account to write his adaptation is that the Brontës, differently from the Prozorovs, never lived in the capital. He addressed this topic in the interview we had.

(...) in the Chekhov, they were in Moscow at first, and that is very different from the Brontës who had no earlier attachment to

London. But, anybody in Yorkshire, and it would be the same today; the city has still a sort of glamour about it. Although the Brontës being kind of puritanical and their resistance to the superficiality associated with London society, another part of them was called by the capital. More important, perhaps, they were dependent of London if they wanted their works to get published. London was, you know, where books were published, and they had ambitions to be writers. So, they had to have a relationship to London in order to become published writers. And, later in life, after Anne and Emily died, Charlotte spent some time in London. Of course she was not a member of London society, but she got to know a little bit of it. But the key point was the trip, when Charlotte and Anne decided to go and be honest with their publishers: “We are not men called Bell, we are women called Brontë”. This is beautifully described in Elizabeth Gaskell’s biography, and it is very detailed in Juliet Barker, talking about the trains they got, the places where they stayed, the publishers who were shocked, how they introduce themselves, and when they got back, how Emily was disgusted because she wanted to remain anonymous, and now the publishers knew they were women. Well, that scene had to be added, there’s nothing like that in Chekhov, and thinking about the title of the play, this is where *We Are Three Sisters* come from. I felt I had to include that scene, because it was such a good dramatic scene. The other thing, and sorry it is not part of your question, but think about the problems of transposing Chekhov: Masha, as the Emily figure, is married; the Branwell figure is also married, so I had to change that obviously. Branwell is interesting, because he had this affair with this woman, Mrs Robinson, and she became the equivalent of Natasha. The three sisters resist to Natasha as the Brontës resist to Mrs Robinson. The problem I had was because of the staging of my play, it all takes place in the Parsonage, so the trip to London publishers is related, recounted, and a similar thing happens to Branwell, because I couldn’t have Branwell in Mrs Robinson’s house. I had to get Mrs Robinson in the Parsonage, what actually never happened, in reality she never came. Of course, it was highly implausible in reality, but that is fiction.(FRITSCH & MORRISON, 2015)

The destiny of Charlotte, Emily and Anne, although very similar to the final act of Chekhov’s play, is far away of the tones of despair and void that Olga, Masha and Irina present. But, once again, it depends entirely on the reception of the reader/audience to put the pieces together. It is clear that both groups of sisters have different endings because they have different journeys. The lines are transposed almost equally, but the interpretation goes poles apart. We end Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* without knowing what is going to happen to Prozorov’s sisters. We know they fear to be forgotten and we know that it is a possibility in the fictional world they live in. However, they will never be forgotten, as Romeo and Juliet, Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary and so many other fictional beings that will keep on living in Literature and imagination. On the other hand, although the discourse of Charlotte, Emily and Anne is

practically the same, we know the Brontë sisters will not be forgotten, because we are aware of literary history, and we know the place they occupy in the literary canon. It is again a clash of adaptation of different spheres and the clash the transposition from biographical to fictional provokes.

Morrison jokes with multiple possibilities vanishing the barriers of what is fictional and what is biographical and what is adaptation, leaving to the reader/audience the task to decipher what is hidden inside his play. As David Lane teaches us, “adaptations will always carry a metatheatrical echo as one text is seen and heard through another” (LANE, 2010:182). Morrison allows this resonances and reverberations of Chekhov’s play provoking the reader/audience to dig deeper in the text to understand those movements he is creating. *We Are Three Sisters* messes with Chekhov’s structure by adding a fifth act and by the transposition of the protagonists from the Prozorovs’ perspective to the Brontës’. All the experience on adaptation in Morrison’s play relies in the ability of the reader/audience to read intertextualities – it is Umberto Eco’s backpack all over again. We need memory and knowledge in order to experience differences and similarities. In the next chapter we explore such intertextualities from the perspective of the studies of the imaginary, presenting a reading of *We Are Three Sisters* from the mosaic of symbolical images the play offers.

3 MORRISON AND THE BRONTËS: PARADOXES OF THE IMAGINARY

“Without this playing with fantasy no creative work has ever yet come to birth. The debt we owe to the play of the imagination is incalculable.” – Carl Gustav Jung – *Man and his Symbols*

Jung’s assertion in the quote that opens this third act puts fantasy and imagination in a very important position in the processes that constitutes any creative work. As long as we deal with symbolic constructs and Art we are also dealing with imagination and its products. Before any kind of rationalization on any matter, we first imagine on that. So, it is possible to say that imagination is the first seed of our comprehension of the world around us. We do not think rationally when we are babies, but we imagine things and we try to decode the world through all our senses. Even when adults, imagination still performs a very important role in the way we interact with the world. In this sense, we can say that rationality does not constitute the predominant trait in human identity. Our identity is a combination of what we think rationally and what we apprehend from the images of the world through a kind of symbolical thought.

In this third chapter/act we analyze the play *We Are Three Sisters* through the perspectives of the Studies of the Imaginary in order to understand the images that compose the play’s fabric and the overlaps between biography and fiction that are used by Blake Morrison. It is important to highlight that we will not deplete all the possibilities of imagery reading, but we focus on some images in order to present a personal reading of the chosen pieces. One more important concept to explore in the proposed reading is the one Castor Barolomé Ruiz (2003) has created in order to explain some of the processes of human mind and behavior – the paradoxes of the imaginary.

Ruiz believes there is a permanent hermeneutical movement provoked by the tension between Reason and Imagination and he declares our contemporary society is a product of such tension. According to his ideas, the imaginary cannot be enclosed by

rationality, because rationality does not suffice to reduce the capacity of creation to logical categories or structures of thought. Imagination and rationality depend on each other. The former offers the creative force, and the latter shapes it into material existence. Rationality reproduces and combines things that pre-exist; imagination provides the access to the region of endless creation. So, in the historical moments in which one of these instances predominated over the other we have met with confusion and conflict. To Ruiz,

O imaginário é pura potencialidade de renovar o sentido já existente. Porém essa criação de sentido só pode se expressar por meio do logos. Só a lógica permite especificar as potencialidades criadoras do imaginário. Assim, a razão não pode existir sem a fecundação do imaginário, este não pode concretizar-se se não por meio das determinações lógicas que a racionalidade impõe. A força criadora do imaginário só pode existir sob a forma de determinações concretas.¹⁴ (RUIZ, 2003, p.51)

Ruiz has an expression to refer to this lack of evenness between imagination and rationality: he refers to that as the “human fracture”. As I have already presented in the first chapter, we live in a world that demands a hermeneutical posture of us as decoders of the things that happen around us. The human fracture is precisely our incapacity of full apprehension of the world. We inhabit a world full of images, colors, forms and words, and we interpret and reinterpret such things every single day. From our birth we are cast in a wood of symbols, and we have to decode them in order to keep going. We are not merely rational animals; we are mainly hermeneutic creatures, who give meaning to everything around us. Not only do we adapt to the existent reality, we also modify it through our actions that are motivated by the impulses of imagination. Here lies the human fracture, this eternal search for meaning. This fracture can only be fixed by the production of meaning. Every construction of meaning is a symbolical bond to a hermeneutic behavior by man upon the world.

¹⁴The imaginary represents the potentiality to renew the existing order. But this creation of meaning can only be expressed through logos. Only logical thought allows one to specify the potential of the creative imagination. So reason cannot exist without the triggering of imagination, which cannot be done without the logical determinations that rationality imposes. The creative power of imagination can only exist in the form of precise determination. (Translation mine)

Such concepts are important to approach the movements performed by Blake Morrison to compose *We Are Three Sisters*. In the play we have many layers that can only be interpreted if the reader/audience carries the proper tools. Although the plot is simple and linear as the traditional approach to drama is commonly presented, it depends on the knowledge of literature and world one carries to fully apprehend the lines and textures Morrison is using to tessellate his textual fabric. Here the fracture is more evident, because there are many things to be known in order to fully understand the imbrications of such literary and symbolical embroidery – the social and historical context that gave birth to Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*, the movements performed by Morrison in order to use Chekhov’s text as a scaffold or a shadow text, the implications in using biographical happenings from the Brontës’ lives and fictionalizing them, the overlapping of fictional characters and persons who do not belong to the realm of fiction and the presence of symbolical images that permeate the textual/visual final product.

By using Chekhov’s structure and characters as a matrix and taking inspiration in the facts narrated by Juliet Barker in her book *The Brontës – Wild Genius on the Moors, the Story of a Literary Family*, Blake Morrison imbricates fiction and biography overlapping layers of history, creative writing and creative imagination in order to give birth to his literary work. And, although imagination and creativity are the drives to his artistic work, there were a lot of space to academic and literary research before Morrison decided to put pen on paper. More than using Barker’s seminal biography, Morrison got in touch with Barker in order to perfect his views about the Brontë family, as he told me in the interview we had.

Well, I’m not a Brontë scholar, or even really I was, when I began, any kind of expert. I had, of course, read *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and some of the other novels, but when I began my research, I particularly used Juliet Barker’s book, that is just sitting behind you on the shelves, because it is the most detailed, and I particularly like one thing she emphasizes, I think, in her biography, actually two – one is that the Brontës were not cut off from the world, as Elizabeth Gaskell presents in her biography, but they do have an intellectual life around Haworth; and secondly, theirs was not a story only about tragedy, gloom and despair, but there was some lightness in that too. So, I found her book very helpful, and indeed I sent her a draft of the play, which she didn’t like very much, because it was too far from the truth of the Brontë story. After that, I sent other drafts and I took some advice from her, and then she began to enjoy it, to like it. She also lives near Haworth and the theatre company, so she became a supporter of

the play and the project. And, I also read wildly Brontë biographies, I read a lot of books, I read all the novels, I read more about Anne, because I hadn't read much her, I started, I suppose, to use some insights from the biographies, but also reading the letters and reading the novels – to take lines, sentences from those, which I thought could be representative of what Charlotte, Emily and Anne believed, thought and felt and I used in the play some of these lines. So, the short answer is, I grew up in that part of the world, near the Brontës, I lived like they lived in the top of a village, so I also used these parallels. I was not an expert. I was just interested, like anybody could be, in them. Well, I did the research, but not like a scholar would, but as a creative writer, looking for things that I could use. (FRITSCH & MORRISON, 2015)

By approaching the necessary research not as a scholar but as a creative writer, Morrison encompasses his play with at least three different layers of reading – the layer of biography, that belongs to the realm of history and narrative, the layer of fiction, that belongs to the realm of creativity and the layer of symbolical images, that belong to the realm of the imaginary. The first layer concerns to his researches and appropriations from the contents of Barker's biography. Even so, it is instigating to think that Barker's work is also a narrative and thereby as susceptible as any other work of fiction when we think about the tension of Reality and Imagination that Ruiz has proposed. Both Barker and Morrison depend on the production of meaning and the approaching of the lives of persons who had lived and constituted a biography and work in real life. More than that, these persons were also creative writers who have been portrayed in many different media. In this sense, Reality and Imagination are two sides of the same coin, and a hermeneutic behavior which provides meanings, may be seen as an essential condition in the reading of the world or the reading/writing of a text. Ruiz says that,

O sentido é sempre uma forma de significar o mundo, um modo de simbolizar a realidade. Ele é criado sempre a partir do desejo. Os sentidos simbólicos que a pessoa cria para as coisas, para as experiências de vida, assim como para o mundo em geral, entrelaçam-se formando redes de significados. Essas teias significativas constituem visões de mundo ou cosmovisões. Todos nós, seres humanos, formamos nossa subjetividade na medida em que nos inserimos na trama de uma determinada cosmovisão. Ao

sermos tramados por uma rede simbólica específica, passamos a ser sujeitos socializados.¹⁵(RUIZ, 2003, p.60)

So, both Barker and Morrison tessellate their texts from their impressions, feelings, sensations and capacity to apprehend society, history and imagery. Both writers are working upon the same set of forces, although they are motivated by different tasks and writing from different perspectives and textual genres. Barker and Morrison are responsible for presenting their particular vision of the life of the Brontës by using the crafts of biography and drama respectively. They are engaged in presenting their particular view of the world of the three sisters from Haworth, their way to understand the historical, social and artistic movements from that period. Eventually, they are engaged in their own cosmovisions, as Ruiz has suggested.

The second layer is associated to the creative processes pertinent to Morrison's composition. They are related to the procedures of adaptation and transposition of Chekhov's play, the multiple possibilities explored and selected in order to compose his fictional composition and also the way he represents his plot and characters. By approaching the processes of adaptation and transposition as a creative writer and not a scholar, Morrison assumes that his impressions and feelings have an influence on his final product. Ruiz defends that every representation is tied to an amalgam of sensations and feelings, in a course of transforming the immaterial sensation in a meaningful image or collection of images that compose the particular imagery of an artist. It is a practice of giving materiality to the evanescent impressions through the power of words and literature.

The second layer opens the door of the possibilities of symbolical thought and imagery that are contemplated in the third layer I mentioned before – the realm of the imaginary. Imagination is a fabric tessellated by the little pieces of images produced by

¹⁵The attributed meaning is always a way to signify the world, a way to symbolize reality. Meaning is always created from desire. The symbolic meaning that people create for things, and for the experiences of life, as well as for the world at large, intertwine to form networks of meanings. These webs become significant worldviews or cosmovisions. All of us, human beings, form our subjectivity to the extent that we are part of the fabric of a particular worldview. By being hatched by a specific symbolic network, we become socialized subjects. (Translation mine)

all human beings. The threads of imagination are evanescent and supple because they precede logical thinking and conscious rationality. It is through the significance attributed to the products of imagination that we sew our own identities. In a creative way man finds forms of exteriorizing his subjectivity and projecting his interiority. In this sense, the things that are imagined must be described through their effects, because they cannot be explained by conclusive definitions. The only materiality that we can reach to observe and analyse is the symbolical product offered by arts and dreams. Analysing the symbolical contents of a literary text is to promote a tentative reading of the drives, impulses, feelings and sensation, conscious or unconscious, used by the author in order to create Art.

In the following sections we will explore the intersections between biographical content and Morrison's creative writing, highlighting the production of symbolical imagery in *We Are Three Sisters* that is pertinent to the proposed reading. We will explore Morrison's play by electing some aspects of imagery, throwing lights to the most relevant symbolical content and stablishing possible connections to Barker's biography and Chekhov's play.

3.1 ACT ONE – THE ARCANA OF THE ARCHETYPAL THREE SISTERS

“My first memory is gravestones. What's yours, Emily?” –
Anne/Act One – Blake Morrison, *We Are Three Sisters*.

Carl Gustav Jung (1990) believed that the unconscious and the foundation of any individual personality rely on several discrete perspectives or archetypes that come into play more or less forcefully, depending on the particular circumstances that are available for each individual. The archetype is, in a certain way, a tendency to form mythological patterns or motifs, and they can be represented by typical images common to psychic activity in every culture through history. Jung suggests that these motifs can be presented in dreams, myths, fairy tales, and in the Arts and that they must be understood as manifestations of the unconscious and its forces that operate in individual and collective levels, building the experience of each human being in a journey he called process of individuation. To Jung,

The term archetype thus apply indirectly to the “*représentations collectives*”, since it designates only those psychic contents which have not yet been submitted to conscious elaboration and are therefore an immediate datum of psychic experience. Primitive tribal lore is concerned with archetypes that have been modified in a special way. They are no longer contents of the unconscious, but have already been changed into conscious formulae taught according to tradition. The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear. (JUNG, 1990, p.5)

The archetypes are abundant in Arts and in Literature, and we have plenty of essays and studies about its presence in the Brontës’ novels and poems. These symbolical patterns happen to appear also in Morrison’s play. In the epigraph that opens this section, Anne Brontë, the character in Morrison’s play, attests that her first memory of the Haworth moors was the gravestones. It is the first scene in Act One and the sisters are talking about their mother’s death and the memories they are able to recollect from the time they had to move to Haworth. It is morning and the three sisters have a small writing desk in front of them, suggesting that they are writing or that they are getting prepared to write something.

We know by the overlaps of fiction and reality that these three sisters are not merely characters in a play, but they are also references to three persons who have really inhabited that small town in the North of England. We also know that these same three sisters became very famous writing books about female characters that reflect the way they were able to express the tension of the paradoxes of the imaginary that seem to guide each living artist - the tension between reality and imagination with which any artist struggles in order to compose any artistic work. We are also acquainted with the metaphor presented in this dissertation that every text is a fabric and that every writer is a kind of weaver. The threads are getting colourful and the textures are mixing in order to provide vivid images. Thinking about these sisters as weavers is quite an instigating metaphor to the archetypal image of the Fates, the Greek goddesses of man’s destiny.

Weaving my text, I chose the threads and materials and I follow the steps of these old mythological women – Neith, The Fates (*Moirai*), Philomela and Penelope. Walking and weaving I am able to reach other three sisters whose words are powerful threads that composed texts with a force that I am not able to reproduce, although I can

observe and analyse them, in order to understand how they handle the spindle spinning and how they build lives – even so, they are fictional lives. The Brontë sisters, both as characters of Morrison’s play or as the portrayed figures in Barker’s biography are related to the *Moirai*, not only because of the interpretative effort that I am suggesting, but by the etymology of their own family name, as Barker attests.

Patrick had first to be proficient in Latin and Greek. As these were not on the syllabus of the ordinary village school in Ireland, it seems likely that Patrick was instructed in the Classics by Thomas Tighe, perhaps in part payment for his services as a tutor to the family. Interestingly, the story was current as early as 1855 that Patrick adopted the “Brontë” spelling of his surname in response to pressure from Thomas Tighe, who disliked the plebeian “Brunty” and thought the Greek word for thunder a more appropriate and resonant version of the name. (BARKER, 2012, p.6)

The Fates were among the eldest goddesses in ancient Greek mythology and they were both daughters of Zeus, the lord of the gods and thunder, and Themis, the goddess of justice. The Brontës were daughters of Patrick Brontë, the one who decided to associate his family name with thunder – in a sense they are thunder’s daughters. The Fates were the spinners of the thread of life, determining the span of human life of every mortal from birth to death. No other god had the right or the means to alter their decisions. So, even Zeus, the lord of thunder, had to accept the decisions of the goddesses of destiny. And, although Patrick advises the sisters in the play advising them that they should leave writing behind, he is not able to stop their drive towards literature. There was something powerful and horrifying about the Fates’ presence and, although they detained such powers, they were cut off of the world, living in isolation and silence. This image is reinforced by one of Charlotte’s lines in Act One when she affirms that “nothing ever happens – we’re buried away from the world.” (MORRISON, 2011, p.13).

To the archetypal spinners is given the power to initiate and terminate lives, a power that Charlotte, Emily and Anne were acquainted with as the own goddesses of their private literary worlds. It is Charlotte who is the one responsible for sewing the threads of the life of Jane Eyre and Lucy Snow, as Emily tessellated the destiny of Catherine and Heathcliff, and Anne embroiders the fate of Agnes Grey and Gilbert

Markham. In this sense, weavers and writers share the power upon life and death. Talking about the powers of female spinners, Pierre Brunel poses some questions.

Em que consiste esse poder das fiandeiras? Até onde ele se estende? A natureza sagrada de seu número – o três – parece remontar as estações do inverno, da primavera e do verão, que eram as únicas distinguidas pelos povos antigos. Os utensílios das fiandeiras têm uma dimensão simbólica; o que liga as fiandeiras ao tempo, o que as torna dependentes entre si e faz delas a representação do feminino cotidiano, guardiãs da divina fertilidade terrestre, dos cuidados preciosos de vigília nos períodos do dia e da vida, do vigor inflexível das leis que regem a relação com a morte, seja de todas as pequenas mortes individuais, seja do desaparecimento em geral. Serão também mulheres com capacidade de desejo? As fiandeiras e o desejo: será isso que faz a tradição gloriosa, presente em todos os povos, de pôr as mulheres para fiar, depois para tecer e costurar? (BRUNEL, 2005, p.371)¹⁶

I take the risk to fill in Pierre Brunel's digressions by suggesting that the next step in the archetype of the female spinners is to take from them the needles and spinning wheels to substitute them for pens, pencils and notebooks. Putting their pens on paper is also a way of weaving, tessellating words where they used to use threads and wool. What differentiates the Brontës from the Fates is the fact that their webs are not composed by an amalgam of sewing materials, but by a myriad of images embroidered with words written on paper. And they are not alone. The archetype of the three sisters – the three female spinners – is widespread in our culture, from the most canonical texts as the Greek tragedies and epics, passing through the fairy tales, medieval romances and Shakespearian plays, such as *Macbeth* and *King Lear* to the contemporary dramaturgy, as in Chekhov, or even in the popular culture of movies as in *Hocus Pocus*, fantasy literary fiction as Neil Gaiman's novel *Stardust* and cartoons, such as the *Powerpuff Girls*. It is also transposed to different media as in the videogames such as *World of Warcraft*, *Final Fantasy*, *God of War* and *The Legend of*

¹⁶ What is this power of the spinners? How far does it extend? The sacred nature of their number - the three - appears to date back the seasons of winter, spring and summer, which were the only distinguished by ancient people. The tools of spinners have a symbolic dimension; which connects the spinners to time, which makes them dependent on each other and makes them the female daily representation, guardians of the divine fertility, precious care wakefulness during periods of the day and life, unyielding force of the laws governing the relationship with death, or of all the little individual deaths, is the disappearance in general. Would they also be women with capacity to desire? The spinners and desire: Would it be what makes the glorious tradition, present in all people, to put women to spin, then to weave and sew. (Translation mine)

Zelda, and even in songs of Heavy Metal by bands such as *Nightwish*, *Angra* and *The Rasmus*.

The triple aspect of these women seems to be connected to a reference of time and the weaver, because even the technique that is used in the spinning wheel demands three different gestures. There is a work of choosing the raw material and macerating it, then the preparations with the material and the spinning wheel until the precise time when the weavers are able to weave, observing with patience and caution every single thread in order to make a good weaving work. This is the same kind of task, the Brontë sisters had to deal with, although their material was in the realm of words. And, as the capacity of weaving the proper threads was the safety and liberty for the Fates, the Brontë girls would free themselves through the power of the words they were able to put on paper. In Charlotte Brontë's own words,

How few would believe that from sources purely imaginary such happiness could be derived – Pen cannot portray the deep interest of the scenes, of the continued trains of events. I have witnessed in that little room with the low narrow bed & bare (white washed) walls – twenty miles away – What a treasure is thought! What a privilege is reverie – I am thankful that I have the power of solacing myself with the dream of creations whose reality I shall never behold – May I never lose that power may I never feel it growing weaker – If I should how little pleasure will life afford me – its lapses of shades are so wide so gloomy its gleams of sunshine so limited & dim. (BRONTË, 2007, p.181)

It seems that the liberty that is so vital in the origin of the archetype of the tree weaver sisters and the empowerment that they provide for themselves through their intertwining craft is reached by the Brontë sisters through their liberty of mind and imagination. In Morrison's play, the sisters are engaged in a vibrant dialogue about the things they intend to do and the places they want to go to. They talk about London, the Opera House and the National Gallery. Anne and Charlotte are also talking about possibilities of marriage in their future – an answer to Brunel's questions about the existence of desire in the archetype of the female spinners.

Another interesting fact that connected these characters with the archetypal sisters is the images that they reveal when describing their first impressions of the moors. Charlotte says that the first thing she remembers seeing is daffodils in a garden, while Anne's first image is that one with the gravestones. Symbolizing rebirth and new

beginnings, the daffodil is virtually synonymous with spring. According to Chevalier's *Dictionary of Symbols* (1996) there is a widespread lore connecting the daffodil not only to winter's end but to a lucky emblem of future prosperity found throughout the world. In Wales, it is said that if you spot the first daffodil of the season, your next twelve months will be filled with health and wealth, and there is a Chinese legend that says that if a daffodil bulb is forced to bloom during the New Year, it will bring good luck to your home. On the other hand, the image described by Anne is the one we associate with death – it is the end of man's line, when one of the Fates must cut the thread of life. The antagonistic images may be seen as a representation of the human's life span that correspond to different life cycles, beginning full of life as a bunch of daffodils and ending in the morbidity of a gravestone.

One more image related to death is portrayed in the attitude of Emily. She does not talk to her sisters in the beginning of the play but whistles while listening to Anne and Charlotte's chat. Lachesis, one of the Fates, measured the thread length to determine the length of life before cutting it and in some narratives such as Hesiod's *Theogony*, she whistles while doing it. According to Chevalier (1996) the whistle is also associated with death thanks to the mine workers who used to whistle to tell his workmates that something bad was happening.

There is also a moment in Act One of *We Are Three Sisters* when the Doctor calls Anne "my little seagull." (MORRISON, 2011, p. 8). The seagull is not only a bird with a very rich symbolism, but it is also the title of another Chekhov's play. This play is about Nina, an actress, and Konstantin who struggles against diverse difficulties that lead him to commit suicide in the end of the play. The image of the seagull changes its meaning over the course of the play. First, in Act One, Nina uses a seagull to describe the way she is drawn to the lake of her childhood home and her neighbours on Sorin's estate. In this case, the seagull represents freedom and security. Later, Trigorin, another character in the play, uses the seagull as a symbol for Nina and the way he will destroy her, as Treplev destroyed the seagull. So, the same symbol may represent liberty and fragility in life. It could also be an indicative of the Doctor's ethos in Morrison's play and which kind of relationship he intended to have with Anne. He could be seen as a parallel to Trigorin in Chekhov's play by the subtle image Morrison weaves in his textual fabric. Pierre Darmon (1983) also presents and analyses a German folk tale entitled *The Three Weavers* that tells the story of a young man who happens to meet the

Fates. In his narration, the sisters live near the ocean and they have a lot of seagulls walking around them and resting on their shoulders. Here we have one more bond between the mythological sisters and the fictionalized Brontë characters created by Morrison.

One more characteristic that is presented in Hesiod is the image of the three sisters speaking in a way that one speech completes the previous one - a characteristic that Shakespeare adopted in *Macbeth* as well. Morrison puts a scene like this in Act One, when the three sisters and the Curate are talking about Jane Austen.

CHARLOTTE: Jane Austen! Oh, I know the whole world esteems her. But there's no open country in her work.

ANNE: No fresh air.

EMILY: No running beck.

CHARLOTTE: It's all neat borders and dainty flowerbeds. It's so narrow.

CURATE: Name me a living writer who's as good.

CHARLOTTE: I'm sure there are some.

ANNE: Even if they're not yet published.

EMILY: Or they choose to stay anonymous.

CHARLOTTE: Writers whose work will last forever.
(MORRISON, 2011, p. 14)

It is interesting to observe not only the way they speak, but also how they are almost prophets foreseeing the future and determining what is supposed to happen. They know there will be female writers as good as Jane Austen and that their works will last forever. The Curate is the perfect representation of the man who looks for the oracle and, although they tell him the truth clearly, he is not able to grasp such knowledge. The readers and the audience, if acquainted with the story of these Victorian writers, may be seen as witnesses from the future, who can guarantee that their prophecy was accurate. Hence, sewing the lines through myth, biography and literature we are able to establish strong connections between the Brontë sisters and the *Moirai*. These three powerful women, who recurs in dreams, myths, legends and literature linking the notions of time and fate, or fateful choices whose consequences cannot be unanticipated are here

represented by the three sisters of Haworth, whose words worked as life threads guiding and governing the fictional lives they created through their novels and poems.

3.2 ACT TWO – MRS ROBINSON AND THE OBLOMOV

“I walk around without knowing anyone or anyone knowing me, and yet I feel at home.” – Branwell/Act Two – Blake Morrison, *We Are Three Sisters*

Act Two initiates with a chat between Lydia, the aristocratic woman whose children were tutored first by Anne and then by Branwell, and Branwell Brontë. They are talking of being discreet about what seems to be a love affair.

BRANWELL: We spent all day together.

LYDIA: Even so.

BRANWELL: My sisters will get suspicious.

LYDIA: Why? You’re my children’s tutor.

BRANWELL: If your gardener goes blabbing to your husband then I won’t be much longer. (MORRISON, 2011, p.23)

By reading Barker’s biography we know that Lydia Robinson was a real person and that Branwell almost certainly had an affair with her. However, she certainly never visited the Brontë parsonage in Haworth. Even Morrison’s fictional creation seems odd to the moral patterns that guided Victorian society, especially in the countryside. What we have in this scene is an imaginative effort to establish a parallel with the character of Natasha in Chekhov’s play. Natasha is Andrey’s crush, who ended up as his wife. Intimidated by the Prozorov girls, she is introverted at first, especially when they start mocking her fashion sense. But after getting married, she wastes no time taking over the house like some type of disease: first Irina’s room, then Olga’s and finally Andrey’s. By the end, Andrey can hardly stand living there. Natasha is probably the biggest change in status in the play—from totally powerless, subjected to the ridicule of the better educated and wealthier Prozorov sisters, to exerting a revolting power over them. At the end of the play, she is the one in complete control, inviting her lover to sit inside the house while her husband wanders around outside.

In many features Natasha and Lydia are poles apart. Natasha has some money, but she needs to engage in a good marriage in order to ascend socially. On the other hand, Lydia is the one who detains both financial and social powers over Branwell. In this context, we are talking about two different imagery patterns. Natasha is the lady vamp, the archetype of the seductive spider. As soon as she conquers Andrey's heart she brings horror and agony upon him and the persons he cares about. Lydia, on the other hand, is the mature woman who seduces a young scholar man and initiates him in the sexual mysteries. Even her name evokes a symbolical pattern to us – Mrs. Robinson – a contemporary archetype. After the huge success of the movie *The Graduate* (1967) directed by Michael Nichols as an adaptation of Charles Webb's novel, with the unforgettable song *Mrs Robinson* composed by the American duo Simon & Garfunkel from their fourth studio album, *Bookends* (1968), Mrs Robinson became the archetype of the mature woman who engages in an affair with a young man in search of pleasure and sexual satisfaction. In this sense, Lydia works as an archetype, a symbolical character who will seduce and, once satisfied, abandon her lover.

A symbolical pattern is as an expression of the indirect access of our minds, or at least a product of the unconscious, or an image that bridges a concept that is abstract in the world. It does not mean that the reading of Lydia as the Mrs Robinson archetype is the only possible reading, although it is a legitimate one. Even though the symbol is as old as human perception, in a philosophical and aesthetic sense it is only a relatively recent product of cultural development. It is also interesting to notice that from the start the word symbol is connected to the idea of linking things that have been set apart. The word symbol traces its roots in the Greek word *Symbolom*, which in Ancient Greece means to reunite two pieces that were separated.

So, even in its origin, the term symbol refers to the task of connecting things. In the field of literary analysis the symbol also links things that are apart from one another. When we analyze a literary work, there is always a profusion of images that are connected to the author's ideas, to the culture of the place where the work has been created, and to the age in which the author is inserted. The images in a literary work may or may not be a symbol, depending on the interpretation one makes of them. There is one important thing to take into account when we investigate symbolical patterns in a poem, a novel or a play – that is the relevance of a determinate image to the comprehension of a passage, or even to the understanding of the construct as a whole. If

the nature of the symbol is connecting meanings, the function of the scholar who deals with symbolical patterns is to connect the image highlighted in the literary object with possible meanings. The researcher of symbolical patterns will provide a link that connects the fractured artistic entity with the amount of possible meanings, investigating inside the artistic construct to reunite a possible meaning to a symbolic image. When the researcher attributes a meaning to an image, he performs a kind of symbolical junction. This is what differentiates the uses of the symbol in literary analysis when in contrast with the uses in logics. The symbol must be open to interpretation, because it is connected to the indirect access of our minds – the place where we attribute meanings to things that cannot find their place in the concrete material world. To Jung,

A word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider unconscious aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason. The wheel may lead our thoughts toward the concept of a divine sun, but at this point reason must admit its incompetence; man is unable to define a divine being. When, with all our intellectual limitations, we call something divine, we have merely given it a name, which may be based on a creed, but never on factual evidence. Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend. (Jung, 1978, p. 4)

In simple words, Jung defines the nature of symbols by connecting their nature to all the images that can provide more meanings than their obvious implication. In *We Are Three Sisters* we have some symbolical patterns and archetypical characters. As Lydia may be seen as Mrs Robinson, Branwell Brontë evokes the archetype of the Oblomov. *Oblomov* is the second novel by the Russian writer Ivan Goncharov, first published in 1859. Ilya Ilyich Oblomov is a member of Russia's dying aristocracy - a man so lazy that he has given up his job in the Civil Service, neglected his books, insulted his friends, and found himself in debt. As a child he was pampered by his parents, even to the point where a valet put on and took off his shoes and stockings for him. The archetype of Oblomov was very common in Chekhov's Russia, and it appears here and there in his fictional characters, such as Andrey Prozorov and the Baron

Tuzembach. It is the archetype of the man who received all opportunities and wasted them in liquor, debts and gambling.

Stella Adler (2000) defines the Oblomov's archetype as the typical man without vital energy, who is always giving up things. She affirms that the Oblomov type generally takes himself into great account, but he is not able to see the gap between what he perceives and what he really is. This portrayal fits perfectly to both Andrey Prozorov and Branwell Brontë. Juliet Barker feeds with more information the building of such archetype.

Branwell travelled to London, we are told, where he was so crushed by the realization of his own lack of talent when faced with the brilliant portraits on display in the metropolis that he abandoned the Royal Academy altogether and drowned his sorrows in drink and dissipation. Once he had spent all the money his father had given him he was forced to return home in disgrace, offering only the transparent lie that he had been robbed by a fellow traveller as an excuse for his penniless state. (BARKER, 2012, p. 264)

There is, of course, some folklore about Branwell's behaviour that is elucidated by Barker in her biography. The portrayal of Branwell as an irresponsible drunk is part of the Brontës' mythology. However, what is certain is the fact that he received a better education and more chances to build up a career as an artist. While the girls were studying in insalubrious countryside schools as charity children, Branwell was sent to educational trips to London and Cambridge in order to improve his skills as a painter and a writer. On that topic, Barker writes,

On 20 January 1836, Charlotte and Anne returned to school, leaving Emily and Branwell at home with Patrick and Aunt Branwell. At nineteen, Charlotte's future stretched out before her in a seemingly and uninviting prospect; she had no alternative but to teach. For Branwell, however, there was an embarrassment of riches. The Royal Academy plan may have been shelved but even more exciting schemes were being put forward. It was now suggested that he should make a study tour of the Continent. In preparation for this plan, Branwell joined the Freemason, hoping to benefit from their network of contacts while he was abroad. (IDEN, 2012, p. 284)

As in the Oblomov figure, Branwell was pampered by Patrick, his aunt and his sisters who had high hopes in his talent and capacity to become a great man. To

Branwell was offered a myriad of intellectual experiences and diverse social events in order to improve his skills and to broaden his network of contacts and job opportunities. Nevertheless, as in Chekhov's play, the Oblomov character always disappoints those who deposit their faith on him, as Morrison illustrates in the following scene.

EMILY: Good... Albert Ferrier was here for Branwell. I don't know why.

ANNE: It's all over the town. Branwell lost at cards. They say he owes fifty pounds.

EMILY: Fifty pounds! That's half what he earns in a year. You'd think with Mrs Robinson here, he'd behave himself.

ANNE: He's worse with her around.

EMILY: She doesn't seem to mind. Whatever he does, she still dotes on him.

ANNE: That's how it was at Thorp Green.

EMILY: I don't understand. What's a woman like Mrs Robinson want from a younger man? (MORRISON, 2011, p.29)

Once more, both archetypes are reinforced by the lines of Emily and Anne. The sisters cannot understand Mrs Robinson's behaviour and they do not grasp what the mature woman wants from their brother, besides the obvious sexual intercourse. On the other hand, as Andrey Prozorov, Branwell fails to understand life's purposes and he cannot engage himself in the tasks in which he is supposed to. He never understands his place with the Brontës and Mrs Robinson, so he found tedious and unimportant any activity, for he could not understand them. He is so indifferent and so slothful because he has always lived with all his wants provided by Patrick and his sponsors - at least if in comparison to the extent of help his sisters received. Both Andrey and Branwell seem to live under the Ivan Goncharov' fictional character opinion that life was divided into two halves: one consisted of work and boredom - those words are synonymous for them - and the other of rest and quiet enjoyment.

ACT THREE – RUNNING WATERS AND THE BOG-BURST

“You think I don’t have feelings, that I’m an automaton. But I did love a man once, in Brussels.” Charlotte/Act Three – Blake Morrison, *We Are Three Sisters*.

The epigraph that opens this section relates to a chat Emily, Anne and Charlotte have in Act Three. In this scene they are talking about love, their feelings towards the male visitors and their hopes and dreams for the future. Charlotte makes use of a very sophisticated metaphor – the automaton – to express to her sisters that she does not wish to be seen as a robot, as a plastic doll with no feelings. Here again, Pierre Brunel’s concerns about the possibility of the female weavers falling in love and desire are answered. Morrison borrows the metaphor from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, and the sentence is the same Jane says in an argument she has with Mr Rochester. Morrison comments on that.

I approached the novels using some ideas and some words were actually used. I mean, just to give you one more example, in *Jane Eyre* there is a point when Jane says to Rochester “do you think I am an automaton, without feelings?”, and I thought this could be used in the play. And, when we had a rehearsal, back there in the parsonage, it was full of Brontë fans and admirers and scholars, and during the cocktail reception, one of them came to me and said “well, I enjoyed it, but the language seems wrong, for instance that word automaton, no one would say automaton in the 19th century.” And then I said: “But it is in *Jane Eyre*”. (FRITSCH & MORRISON, 2015)

In Act Three, Morrison brings the bog-burst episode, a very sad calamity that happened in Haworth killing some inhabitants and leaving a lot of people without a roof above their heads. Such tragedy really happened in Haworth while the sisters were living there. It just did not happen in the chronological period of the play. The sad episode was perfect for Morrison to establish a parallel with the scene of the great fire that happens in the third act of Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*. According to Morrison,

Juliet Barker emphasizes how active they were in going to libraries and how active they actually were. These are the sort of details I was able to use. She also tells the story about a huge storm, a catastrophe that happened when the Brontës were young; houses were destroyed and so on. I realize that would be an opportunity to account for a problem I had in act three that in Chekhov’s play there is a fire. Locally, it is a disaster and people are helping, the sisters are helping, and I was worried how to deal with this,

because there was no equivalent fire in Haworth. But the storm, as collect by Juliet Barker, helped me to find an equivalent for the fire, the destruction in a local community, the sisters helping to solve the problem. So, I found Juliet Barker the most useful book that I did look at, and it was from Elizabeth Gaskell that I really got the image, that is very important in the production of the play, perhaps not so much in the text, that is the three sisters walking around the table, talking at night after their father had gone to bed, that really came from Gaskell. (IDEN, 2015, p.?)

Once Morrison solved the problem of the local catastrophe he was able to mirror some of the dialogues present in Chekhov's play, especially those concerning Olga, Natasha and Anfissa and Charlotte, Lydia and Tabby. Nonetheless, what really called my attention in this act was the choice of the elements. In Chekhov, we have a great fire and in Morrison's play we have a huge storm. Although both elements are natural elements capable of beauty and destruction, in terms of the imaginary studies they are completely different. While fire is connected to the male principle and to the generator powers of light, warmth, body and impulse the water is associated with the images of the Great Mother, the female capacity of healing and the feelings that run in the stream of human's emotions.

So, in this context, the choice of one element in detriment of the other cannot be understood as if they were the same. The symbolical meaning changes entirely. It is instigating to think that Morrison did such changing movement only because of the data he found in Barker's book and not because he could associate the symbolical meanings of water with his story about the three sisters from Haworth. That is what Bachelard (2002) calls poetic imagination. Gaston Bachelard practices his Phenomenology of the Imaginary allowing the researcher to overlook the barriers separating authorship and reception, through a poetic reverie. (BACHELARD, 1981, p.69) He performs his symbolical analysis by destroying the biographical commitment, gathering the symbol in its poetic integrity. Bachelard explores the images of the four natural elements – water, fire, earth and air – and all their poetic derivations in his poetics of the natural elements. He inserts the studies of symbolism inside the field of the poetic and creative thought – linking perception with sensation more than to Aristotelian reason. The basic precept to Bachelard's studies on symbols is to perceive the symbolic contents as dynamic creators, amplifying the possibilities of all concrete images when elevating them to the poetic status. In this sense, the symbol engages in a special semantics, in

which it owns not only the artificial and concrete meaning, but also a wider possibility of meaning generated by resonances of these same images in different poetic processes.

As an artist, Blake Morrison operates on this different level, which Gaston Bachelard calls poetic imagination. This level of consciousness breaks the rational way of facing the facts, favouring the impulses of imagination that reverberate in the mind underlying the schemes of the unconscious. It is also Bachelard who says that “we have only to speak of an object to think that we are being objective. But, because we chose it in the first place, the object reveals more about us than we about it.” (BACHELARD, 1981, p.2). This seems to be the case of Blake Morrison, Juliet Barker and even mine, as a reader and scholar as well.

So, the choice of water instead of fire, being arbitrary or not, allows a reading of act three and the play as a whole from the perspective of the poetic element as it was proposed by Bachelard. The water brings the urges of emotion and there are a lot of different meaningful attributions to this element, as we can see in Cirlot’s *Dictionary of Symbols*.

Water, one of the four western classical elements (the others being earth, air and fire), symbolizes passivity, adaptability, purity, fertility, healing and cleansing. It is associated with the emotional-intuitive or feminine aspect (just as fire is the masculine). The expressions ‘risen from the waves’ and ‘saved from the waters’ symbolize fertility, and are metaphorical images of childbirth. On the other hand, water is, of all the elements, the most clearly transitional, between fire and air (the ethereal elements) and earth (the solid element). By analogy, water stands as a mediator between life and death, with a two-way positive and negative flow of creation and destruction. The Charon and Ophelia myths symbolize the last voyage. Death was the first mariner. ‘Transparent depth’, apart from other meanings, stands in particular for the communicating link between the surface and the abyss. It can therefore be said that water conjoins these two images. Whether we take water as a symbol of the collective or of the personal unconscious, or else as an element of mediation and dissolution, it is obvious that this symbolism is an expression of the vital potential of the psyche, of the struggles of the psychic depths to find a way of formulating a clear message comprehensible to the consciousness. On the other hand, secondary symbolisms are derived from associated objects such as water-containers, and also from the ways in which water is used: ablutions, baths, holy water, etc. There is also a very important spatial symbolism connected with the ‘level’ of the waters, denoting a correlation between actual physical level and absolute moral level. (CIRLOT, 2001, p. 366)

Among the many possibilities of interpretation of the water element in the play, it is the one of the running waters and the restrained waters that I am interested in. The bog-burst is a geographical accident, an outbreak or flow of peaty materials which are saturated with water, so that barriers no longer restrain them. When we think about the Brontë sisters and the limitations imposed to their literary careers, we are tempted to associate them with the enclosed waters that penetrate the ground in order to find a way to reach a large amount of water. That is exactly what happens in the play – the waters cannot be restrained anymore and they have to run, even if they are hurting people in their path. This is the part of the play in which the three sisters found out they are going to be published and they are summoned by their editors to go to London. Actually, the editors want to meet Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell – the correspondent pseudonyms of the Brontë sisters. Emily refuses to go, but Charlotte and Anne are not able to restrain themselves anymore. They are like the bog-burst, breaking the dams in their way to fulfil their journeys as the real artists they are.

And, as the strong storm and the bog-burst destroyed the safety of many houses, the moment in which the sisters receive the envelope that contains the summoning letter is a moment of breaking as well. Branwell is the one who sees the envelope first, and he does not understand what it means. The fact is that from this episode, the sisters will increase their importance to the literary world and he, the one whose family hopes were so high, will fall in oblivion. Of course that this is just an interpretative effort to the dramatic image offered by the play. In real life, Branwell dies before his sisters reach success in their published books. Nonetheless, the storm is as good a representation of the running waters that will conduct their literary success, as it is of the breaking of emotions that are exposed in the sisters' chat about her feelings.

ANNE: How do you know? What do you know about love?

CHARLOTTE: You think I don't have feelings, that I'm an automaton. But I did love a man once, in Brussels.

ANNE: I know. It's sad.

CHARLOTTE: I hoped he would write to me, anything, crumbs would have done. I still keep hoping. But he never does.

ANNE: He's a married man. He has his wife to think of.

Emily whistles.

CHARLOTTE: Of course. Brussels was a selfish folly and I've been punished for it. But I'll not pine away. I'm my own woman now, free to do good and help others.

EMILY: Doing good and helping others! That's what people expect of single women. But where's the happiness in denying ourselves? Where's the passion? If that's all life holds, then make an end of me now, I don't want to walk about for ten years like a dead woman.

CHARLOTTE: All I'm saying is that marriage isn't for me. But it might be for Anne.

EMILY: Not unless she's passionate about someone.

CHARLOTTE: Passion rarely lasts beyond the honeymoon. It is better to marry to love than to marry for love. Respect someone and love will follow. (MORRISON, 2011, p. 52)

As the representative element of emotions, water is also connected to the Moon and the drives it inflicts in human behaviours as the moon's gravitational pull affects tidal flow. In the scene above, Charlotte, Emily and Anne explore their beliefs about love and reveal the feelings they have kept to them. As the bog-burst, it is not possible to dam their emotions anymore. Their sentiments are so intense and have been kept in secret for so long that they have to break down all the barriers in order to flow. There is an English proverb - still waters run deep - which is of Latin origin and is frequently in use to mean that a docile exterior hides a passionate or delicate nature. That is precisely what this scene demonstrates, that despite the placid appearances of mild-mannered girls, there are still waters running and they are able to break down many barriers in order to express themselves and to fulfil their journeys. As Cirlot suggests, water is "an expression of the vital potential of the psyche, of the struggles of the psychic depths to find a way of formulating a clear message comprehensible to the consciousness". (CIRLOT, 2001, p. 366) It is clear that more than a local calamity, the bog-burst can be seen as a symbolical representation of the sister's feelings and desires that were restrained for so long and whose psyche cannot dam anymore.

3.4 ACTS FOUR AND FIVE - GLOOMY SILENCE REIGNS

"Why should such gloomy silence reign;
And why is all the house so drear,
When neither danger, sickness, pain,
Nor death nor wants have entered here?
We are as many as we were
That other night, when all were gay,
And full of hope, and free from care;
Yet is there something gone away..." Anne/Act IV, Blake
Morrison, *We Are Tree Sisters*

In the two final acts, Morrison's play is taken by an atmosphere of melancholy and gloom. I particularly think Morrison was very talented in the process of keeping the melancholic atmosphere of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* even when the scenes were meant to show a happy event, such as the books' publication. Both plays carry a gloomy tone that permeates even the moments when the sisters are in high spirits. It is something difficult to define, but very easy to perceive. Coincidence or not, this is the same kind of ambience we find in the Brontë's novels, particularly in Charlotte's and Emily's. However, despite the fact that this melancholic mist that seems to permeate these literary works, Morrison provokes our reading in a different direction, when he says, in the introduction of the printed edition of *We Are Three Sisters*, that the Brontë story is usually shrouded in darkness and misery, and that his play tries to disperse the gloom and to highlight resilience instead. I interrogated him on the matter that Chekhov's *Three Sisters* is as gloom as what we are used to think about Brontë's lives. So, why did he choose a play like this to work as a shadow text if his intention was to let in a little lightness, as he also said before? According to him,

Yeah! You could say there's a gloom surrounding the *Three Sisters*, the end is tragic. But even Chekhov thought of it as a tragicomedy and he called it a tragicomedy, and there is humor there, there is lot of humor. It perhaps comes more from the men in the play than the three sisters (Olga, Irina and Masha). It wasn't such a stretch to use that play, because there is lightness in Chekhov, and I wanted the Brontës to have this same lightness to. So, I think it was perfectly okay to use Chekhov as comedy and tragedy, as both took part in the life of the Brontës. (FRITSCH & MORRISON, 2015)

I totally agree with Morrison's concerns in portraying the Brontës far from the well know stereotypes and caricatures that literary history and tradition may have inflicted upon their images. It is also impossible to deny that both Chekhov's and

Morrison's play are tessellated with a myriad of textures and delicate threads that allow these literary texts to show melancholy and felicity, gloom and hope, shadow and light. Nevertheless, I want to focus on the gloomy aspects revealed by Anne's poem that opens the last section of this chapter. She observes that a gloomy silence reigns in the house and that there is no particular motivation for that. There is no particular threat putting family members in danger, there is no social or natural calamity upon them and they are not sick or in physical pain. However, there is a kind of gloomy mist that travels through the house, a melancholic haze that seems to permeate the place and the family, as a kind of oracle, telling them that sickness and death are getting closer, again, to the Brontë family.

Act IV starts with Emily walking around the writing table in semi-darkness. She is anxious and perturbed, waiting for the arrival of her sisters from London. When Anne and Charlotte get in the scene they start to talk about all the things they were able to see in London, and how they were amazed by the English capital, although Anne tells her sisters that she prefers Haworth instead of London. It is in the beginning of this scene that we get to know what happens in London and also that the true identities of the Brontë sisters were revealed to their editors in the capital.

CHARLOTTE: We didn't say anything... not then.

ANNE: But we knew he knew. He took us to a back room, and introduced us to Mr Williams, who's older, about fifty, and we chatted, or they chatted, and Mr Smith said we must stay a few days and meet his two sisters, and if Mr Thackeray was in town maybe we'd like to meet him too, because he'd read our books and admired us and...

EMILY: But what did you say about our names?

ANNE: Well, Charlotte stopped him then, you see, and went all serious, and told him straight.

CHARLOTTE: "We are three sisters", I said. (MORRISON, 2011, p.59)

Besides the revelation of their identities and the line explaining the title of the play, we have here the beginning of the conflicts between Charlotte and Emily. Emily never wanted to have her identity exposed and she is very upset about that matter. According to Barker, Charlotte regretted several times the exposure of Emily, especially after the harsh criticism her sister received on her novel *Wuthering Heights* (BARKER,

2012, p.563). Besides this fact, in Act V Branwell receives the news that Mrs. Robinson is a widow now, but that she is not going to keep her promises of being together with him because there is a clause of her husband's will that prevents her from engaging with Branwell. He gets in a very gloomy mood and starts to drink and gamble more than before. There is also the first evidence of Anne's and Emily's consumptions that will lead them to death, when the sisters talk about Anne's asthma and Emily's constant cough. And, in the end of the play, after a gun accident, the beginning of the desperate days which will conduct Branwell to his death bed.

In this scenario, melancholy and gloom can be understood as two aesthetic emotions that permeate not only the Brontës' artistic works, but they seem to be the thread that conducts the sisters and Branwell through their fictional lives in the play. It is interesting to notice how the reflective nature of melancholy can be dissociated from ordinary sadness, and it may reach the status of aesthetic emotion, a drive for the characters impulses and a way to deal with the situations life imposes to them. Emily Brad (2013) presents melancholy and its nature in order to elevate such emotion to an aesthetic place. According to her,

Melancholy is an emotion often occasioned by people or places; we feel melancholic about a lover or friend, or a meaningful place in our lives, perhaps somewhere we have once lived. The quality of the feeling resembles and overlaps with sadness, but is more refined, involving some degree of pleasure, although not as much as bittersweet pleasure. Melancholy also shares a family resemblance with love, longing, yearning or missing something, as well as feeling nostalgic or the emotion that accompanies reminiscing. Although melancholy clearly belongs to this set of emotions, it is also a distinctive emotion in its own right. As an emotion, melancholy's most distinctive aspect is that it involves reflection. Rather than being an immediate response to some object that is present to perception, melancholy most often involves reflection on or contemplation of a memory of a person, place, event, or state of affairs. This reflective feature is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of melancholy because other emotions, for example, mourning, also involve reflection. Interestingly, contemplation and reflection are states of mind often associated with the aesthetic response more generally; especially in the Kantian tradition, some kind of reflective, contemplative and distanced point of view has been regarded as typical of the aesthetic situation. (BRAD, 2013, p. 36)

The reflective aspect brought by melancholy trespasses the play in a way that the sisters, both in Chekhov and Morrison, seem to be contemplating life and what it offers

with a mix of excitement and low-spiritedness. They have dreams and wishes for their future, but it seems they already know how short this future really is. The last scene of the play provides a good example on this matter.

EMILY: Whatever happens, we have to be brave. We've known suffering before. We're used to it.

CHARLOTTE: It's the waste I grieve for. The wreck of talent. He could have done anything.

EMILY: We mustn't despair. We have to go on.

ANNE: But if he dies... what will his life been worth? What are our lives worth?

CHARLOTTE: You mustn't be frightened of death.

ANNE: I'm not frightened of death. If I knew I was dying, I think I could resign myself to it. Only... I long to do some good in the world before I leave it. I've all these schemes in my head and I'd hate them to come to nothing.

CHARLOTTE: Life's brief and bitter, I know. But there must be a purpose.

EMILY: There is a purpose. Think how we might have lived, just sitting there with our embroidery and the clock ticking. We've read, we've written, we've imagined, we've picked blackberries and wild flowers, we've walked the tops in sunshine and snow.

CHARLOTTE: And we've been happy. Not often, maybe, but once you've been happy, even briefly, it sustains you - whatever trials follow, whatever pains of sickness or shades of death, you can face them. Yes, we've suffered, but so have others. The huge mass of our fellow creatures have lives of hardship and privation. Why should we be favored more than them?

ANNE: We'll work, we'll help father, we'll keep writing poems and novels. And we'll look after each other. And my asthma will get better and Emily's cough will be cured.

CHARLOTTE: Soon the years will have passed and we'll be gone. Our faces will be forgotten, our voices will be forgotten, all that mattered to the three of us will be forgotten. But there'll be our books. And in the end, we will be remembered.

EMILY: Then we'll know what our purpose was.

ANNE: What we were born for.

CHARLOTTE: Yes, then we'll know. In the next life. Then, we'll know. (MORRISON, 2011, p.83)

The reflective nature of melancholy is generally associated to the absence of an object or person, and such absence is experienced through memories. However, in *We*

Are Three Sisters, we experience a different kind of melancholy, because we are witnessing the life of fictional characters who were based in the real lives of three well known writers whose biography is almost as important as their literary works (if it is not as important as their works). Witnessing from the future, knowing what future reserves to them - and here it depends on the instruments we carry in our backpack, as Eco (1994) suggests. The way the sisters address life in the last scene, confronting the gloomy situation of the wounded brother by providing a hopeful discourse to encourage themselves. But we, readers and audience, know that they do not have much time as well. We know that Emily and Anne will not heal from asthma and the bad cough and that they will die soon. We know that Charlotte will carry a life with many responsibilities, marrying a man who she does not seem to love - at least not the kind of love she describes in her novels. So, it might be that the melancholic feeling that permeates the story is not only in the play but also in the reader's/audience's eye. The memories that generally evoke melancholy are vibrantly genuine and real for the one who is contemplating them. In this case, it is a possibility of interpretation to see such melancholy dislocated to the eye of the beholder as the play may evoke our literary memories, being they about the biographical aspects the reader may know about the Brontës' lives, the correspondence with Chekhov's play, or even both at the same time. The play touched me greatly, especially because sewing the threads of my literary memories, I know how generous and large are the fabric scraps that compose the place of the Brontë sisters and Chekhov in my life.

CURTAINS DOWN

*“Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep”.*

Shakespeare – *The Tempest*

Shakespeare reminds us in this passage of *The Tempest* that "we are such stuff as dreams are made on", a strong image that fits very well as a metaphor of the work I proposed to myself in this doctoral dissertation. When I first read *We Are Three Sisters*, I was not sure about its relevance to literary and theatre studies or how I could address the text in order to provide a sensitive reading, although I could sense there was fruitful material in there. But this was not the way I chose the play - or the play chose me, as it came to me through my academic tutor's indication. When I decided to study Morrison's play, I promised myself that I would try to grasp as much as I could the feelings of my first reading of the play - those that are generally too emotional and that we, as scholars, tend to leave behind when writing our papers. My first reading of *We Are Three Sisters* was for sure too emotional; because Morrison manages to combine the intensity of Chekhovian words and characters with the poetic images he creates to Charlotte, Emily and Anne - the three sisters from Hawthorne. The play came to me as if somebody in another part of the world knew the things I enjoy the most and decided to give them the format of a theatrical play.

Then, I had to decide which approach I was going to engage with in order to study the play. I was touched by its poetic images, and I knew for sure that the Studies of the Imaginary, as a literary approach could be fertile. But it would not be enough. The play and the process of adaptation from a different author, from a different context,

called my attention to different directions and I knew that I had to discuss these processes too. There were all these ideas about the way contemporary dramaturgy has been presented nowadays and I had many questions on that matter. What is the purpose of theatre today? Is there a space for it? Why has dramaturgy deviated so much from its regular format? What makes a play contemporary - is it because it is written nowadays or because it attends to a myriad of features that attest what contemporary is and what it is not? Is there some space for Realism and Naturalism in theatre these days? I had so many questions and I did not have the proper answers to them. So, I decided that this would not be a work meant to answer questions, but to provoke them. As Beatriz Sarlo¹⁷ suggests, questions are not always to be answered,

Precisamente, los problemas que enfrentamos no tienen, como nunca tuvieron los problemas sociales, una solución inscripta en su enunciado. Se trata más bien de preguntar para hacer ver y no preguntar para encontrar, de inmediato, un guía para la acción. No son preguntas de qué hacer sino del cómo armar una perspectiva para ver. Hoy, si algo puede definir a la actividad intelectual, sería precisamente la interrogación de aquello que parece inscripto en la naturaleza de las cosas, para mostrar que las cosas no son inevitables.¹⁸ (SARLO, p.15)

So, I needed a way to approach *We Are Three Sisters* that could reunite my concerns and impressions of the play in order to provide a personal and sensitive reading that was valuable to literary and theatre academic studies. That was the precise moment, when I remembered about my graduation day in the Letters course at UFRGS. Our paranymp, Professor Marcia Ivana de Lima e Silva, delivered a touching speech about the work we were proposing ourselves to do concerning words and texts. We would be teachers and translators from that moment and she used a very beautiful metaphor to describe our jobs. She talked about how a text is meant as a fabric and that such fabric could be sewed with different threads in order to compose new lives. That

¹⁷ Beatriz Sarlo is an Argentine literary and cultural critic. She is also founding editor of the cultural journal *Punto de Vista*. Sarlo has also taught at several US universities, held the Simón Bolívar chair at the University of Cambridge, and has been a visiting fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. She also writes regularly for Argentine newspapers such as *La Nación* and *Clarín*.

¹⁸ Indeed, the problems we face do not have, as the social problems have never had, a solution in the registered enunciation. It is rather a matter of asking to understand, and to devise a line of action, rather than asking to find the answer. They are not questions about what to do, but about how to find a way to perceive. If there is something to define intellectual activity, which would be precisely the question of what seems enrolled in the nature of things to show that things are not inevitable. (Translation mine)

speech was responsible for providing the metaphor I chose to work on all the things I wanted to put together in this dissertation - the metaphor of the weaver.

Weaving a text, sewing words, tessellating threads in order to give a patchwork body to my ideas and feelings about theatre and literature through the analysis of a play - that seemed to me a challenge that I would enjoy to be engaged in. As I presented in the first section of this work, we deal with at least three levels of perception - the physical, the mental and the emotional ones. These three levels are engaged in what Castor Bartolomé Ruiz (2003) called our hermeneutic posture in the world. We have to deal with different levels of perception and interpretation in our ordinary lives. We have to decode the circumstances that are presented to us and interpret and reinterpret them constantly. In the fields of literature and theatre, this hermeneutic posture that Ruiz defends seems to be even more prolific, as we are dealing with texts in an aesthetic level.

The tension between what has been imagined by the author and the multiple possibilities of interpretation of the reader/audience stimulates the idea of fracture also defended by Ruiz. By creating senses to a text, we are dealing with a weaving work, sewing fabrics together and impressing our readings in an embroidery of ideas, thoughts, sensations, digressions and impressions. The fracture of the sense may only be healed by this process of creating meaning, providing new readings and new interpretations for the same aesthetic product. In this sense, every building of a literary interpretation is a symbolic construction, as we are dealing with a way to understand a representation of life through words and images.

When I chose the metaphor of the weaver, I engaged myself in this task of putting different spheres of knowledge as literature, philosophy, theatre and psychology together, in order to build up a very particular approach composed by the web of possibilities I had tessellated during my academic and artistic journey. I was dealing with the paradoxes of the imaginary, the tension between what was presented to me and all the possibilities of exploring the aesthetic content of *We Are Three Sisters* from the different perspectives and knowledge areas. To take a plunge in order to understand the role of such a play in the contemporary theatre panorama and how profitable a reading could be intertwining the Brontë sisters biography and Chekhov's *Three Sisters* through Morrison's play.

I dedicated a chapter to discuss the act of reading theatre and the implications of such a task. The creative potential of theatre divided into its two aspects - on the page and on the stage - enables incursions from different perspectives. Ubersfeld (1999) defends the idea of reading theatre in the fracture, in-between, in the intersection of what we read on the paper and all the possibilities of putting the words on the stage. However, as a literary text, drama has to stand for itself. Ultimately, I believe a theatrical text is from a textual genre that allows intellectual and artistic digressions, as it is meant to be performed but may be read as well. Drama, as literature itself, is tessellated by a web of meanings that are always connected to history, society and mythical thought, and its potentiality is associated precisely to its dubious characteristic - drama is meant to belong to page and stage from birth.

By discussing the act of reading theatre I was carried to the features of contemporary drama and the way contemporary playwrights and theatrical directors engage themselves in their artistic works. All the discussion about what is or what is not contemporary trespasses many philosophical issues and social and aesthetic postures. Nowadays, it is possible to describe at least two different models of dramaturgy - one being the traditional model and the other a deconstruction of what people are used to think of theatre. The changing landscape of contemporary theatre and performance, the roles, functions and working conditions for playwrights are being redefined in a process of construction, destruction and reconstruction of paradigms. There seems to be an urge of dramaturgical practitioners to forge new relationships between stage and audience while challenging the binary opposition between reality and fiction. The production of meanings in this present panorama deals with the potentialities of imaginary and the ways to access it through the contemplation of otherness. That is the precise place of drama, this meeting point where audience, actors, director and playwrights get together to contemplate, dialogue and decode life. Ruiz reminds us that,

A potencialidade criadora do imaginário faz com que não habitemos num mundo de objetos naturais, mas vivamos num universo de sentidos culturais. O sentido é sempre social. Ele se organiza em teias e estruturas de significados, a fim de estabelecer suturas simbólicas que dêem coerência à ação humana. Por este motivo, a realidade se manifesta para o ser humano de modo contraditório: como algo sólido e efêmero, paradoxalmente específico e fugaz, tensionalmente presente e futuro. Ele não pode apreender a realidade num só aspecto, sempre deve compreendê-la como abertura a ser construída. Não pode definir analiticamente o

real, pois sempre se implica vitalmente no mundo que analisa.¹⁹
(Ruiz, 2003, p.67)

We exist as humans in our relation to the other. I am what the other is not. Each subject exists as a subject through the contrast with otherness. We constitute our identity and our perception of the world when we perceive that we are not the other (KRISTEVA, 1991, p.170). This is also part of my reading, since I understand *We Are Three Sisters* as a clash between what is real and what is imaginary in order to create fiction. It is the two parts of the *symbolom* that must be put together. This predicament of being apart and together at the same time is recurrent in myths, even in those that we know too well,

19 And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought [them] unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that [was] the name thereof.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, This [is] now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (1769 Oxford King James Bible Authorized Version, Genesis 2.19-25, 2004)

¹⁹ The potential to creative imagination prevents us from dwelling in a world of natural objects. We live in a world of cultural meaning. Meaning is always social. It gets organized in structures and in webs of significance, so as to establish symbolic stitches that give coherence to human action. For this reason, reality manifests itself to humans in contradictory ways, as something solid and ephemeral, paradoxically specific and fleeting, putting in tension present and future. Meaning cannot grasp reality in one single aspect; it must approach it as an opening to be constructed. Meaning cannot define reality analytically; it is always implied in the world it analyses. (Translation mine)

The price Adam pays for the acquisition of this other self is a cleavage in his natural identity. Before Eve, Adam was in charge of naming all things in the world, of investing the world with meaning. He was responsible for giving meanings to things. This illustrates our relationship with things that existed before we got in contact with them. They only signify if we meet and name them. But after Adam is divided in two, he is not the only one to name things anymore. Adam is not entire anymore. Eve is what Adam is not, and Adam is what Eve is not. From this primordial otherness the Biblical myth²⁰ poses a metaphor for the interaction of man with the world and with the other. We are constantly attributing meaning to things, actions and images. And we come to the sense of what we are through the contrast - in the other - with what we are not. The myth of Adam and Eve also stands for the impossibility of man's reaching completeness, and for the role of man as a creative creator in the world he inhabits. Man becomes an agent, who is conscious of the presence of the other, and who is not only a part of the whole thing, he is also different, because he creates and modifies the world through his actions.

Contemporary dramaturgy emphasizes such power of creation by donating to artists the power to reinvent not only plots and characters but by deconstructing the entire idea of what we understood as drama. Structured by heterogeneity and multiplicity, today theatre is engaged more in proposing questions than in providing answers. In this scenario, Blake Morrison brings a quite appealing way to approach drama by adapting and transposing canonical texts to different social, geographical and historical contexts. Adaptation is a remarkable feature of contemporary movements in theatre and it seems to be an endless resource to the creative processes that involved any theatrical production. This is the topic I have discussed in the chapter *Morrison and Chekhov*. Adaptations and transposition are features of theatre today and strategies of dialogue with different spheres of time, space and knowledge.

Sewing those fabric scraps was important for the last part of my task in this dissertation - to the embroidery the images I have selected in order to reveal the possibility of symbolical readings from images brought by Morrison in *We Are Three Sisters*. I am aware that, not only as a reader, but also as a researcher, I am constrained to the limits of my own knowledge. Umberto Eco, in his book *Six Walks in the Fictional*

²⁰ This work does not differentiate between mythology and religion, because their function is the same on the sphere of the imaginary.

Woods (ECO, 1994, p.6), provides an interesting metaphor to the hermeneutic relation between the reader and the analyzed piece of literature, as I have already mentioned in the body of this dissertation. He compares the book to a dense forest, and the reader is the adventurer who will make his journey inside the woods. The success of the journey will depend on the stuff we carry in our backpacks. If we have the necessary tools to go through the woods, we can stay longer, visiting unknown places, climbing trees, lighting a fire camp, finding new directions. If we do not have the appropriate materials we can only follow a limited path. We manage to go through the woods, but straight away, without the possibility of finding new wonders.

Following Eco's metaphor of the wood, the discussion carried out in this work brought out the tools from my backpack. I used them by selecting some symbolical images that I judge important for the understanding of the play – at least my understanding of the play. Or even as a possible imagery approach that could be used both to perform a literary reading or to provide images to be worked in performance on the stage. Other readers, or myself in another phase of my readings, can select other symbols, or the same, and approach them in different ways. That is the wonder of literature, because symbols can open into numberless meanings and possibilities, which vary according to the eyes that are on them. Here, lays, for me, the importance of a theatrical work. The multiple layers of readings made by the author, the director, the actor, make complex things even more complex. This fits well in our time of uncertainties, in our world so full with information. We have access to all kind of news every day, through the newspaper, television, radio or internet. As a consequence, things are taken at face value, nothing is important, and the processes involving knowledge and even taste are changing constantly.

One thing that fascinated me in Morrison's play and in the process of writing this dissertation was the possibility to explore the biography of the Brontës. They have fascinated me for so long, since I read their novels during my under graduation course. I have read many essays and articles about their works, things about their lives, and I have watched movies, series and plays about them. The Brontë sisters are those kind of personalities whose lives are as important as their literary works. Charlotte, Emily and Anne proved women could do much more than needle work, as Patrick Brontë suggests in Morrison's play. They were able to substitute the needles for pens and the fabrics for paper. They accept the task of weavers, but in a way that empowered not just them, but

all women who wrote after them. *Stretching their shadows far away*, the title of this dissertation, was taken from one of the lines of the play. It is an intentional purpose of my text to provoke this stretching, mixing textures and materials in order to provide a mosaic of possibilities, open to different readings.

When one writes a doctoral dissertation there is so much to be said. Nevertheless, in order to keep the track, one has to concentrate on some aspects, and leave others behind. Although I had to cut out so many things to open my way through the woods of this work, I am incredibly happy to count on the equipment I got on my backpack. Now I feel better prepared for future incursions. Having approached the issue through a discussion on contemporary theatre, the processes of adaptation and transposition and the studies of the imaginary allowed me to reach other related areas of the historical, intertextual and social aspects that also contributed to the understanding of such a rich literary text. What can one conclude from all this intricate web of possibilities? Well, I do believe Blake Morrison discloses through his adaptation a door to multiple possibilities of reading by establishing a possible connection with Anton Chekhov and the Brontë sisters. I am sure Morrison conquered his place in contemporary dramaturgy with a text that brings many features of the present aesthetic demands of drama disguised by an apparent traditional approach to theatre. I also believe that Morrison presents a text with a rich imagery, surrounded by subtleties that defy the reader/audience to decipher the delicacy of the small details that compose his artistic creation. He transforms real persons in fictional characters with a powerful capacity of imagination, reaffirming the content of Shakespeare's verse - the sisters being real or fiction are, as anyone of us, made out of the same material as dreams. By transposing the huge emptiness of the Russian landscape to the wild emptiness of the English moors and by bringing the three sisters from Haworth to the centre of the stage, Morrison plays with the tension provoked by the paradoxes of the imaginary, provoking the stretching of what we define as real and make-believe, creating a remarkable set of passages, speeches and images. I am aware of the fact that the task I proposed to myself is an endless one, as theatre is in a constant process of changing and symbolical patterns vary according to different eyes and different points of view. So, to close this work, all I can say is that it has truly been a pleasure to write about Chekhov, The Brontës, Morrison and *We Are Three Sisters* to a Brazilian academic public. I hope the work proves useful for readers who love the English theater and literature, just as I do.

REFERENCES

- ADLER, Stella. *On Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekhov*. New York: First Vintage Books, 2000.
- ALVIN, Roberto. *Dramáticas do Transumano e Outros Escritos*. Rio de Janeiro: Viveiros de Castro Editora, 2012.
- ARISTOTLE. *Poetics*. Translated by James Hutton. New York: Norton Edition, 2000.
- ARTAUD, Antonin. *The Theatre and its Double*. Translated by Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Trafalgar Square, 1998.
- BACHELARD, Gaston. *A Água e os Sonhos – Ensaio sobre a Imaginação da Matéria*. Translated by Antônio de Pádua Danessi. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2002.
- BACHELARD, Gaston. *A Poética do Espaço*. Translated by Paulo Neves. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001a.
- BACHELARD, Gaston. *A Terra e os Devaneios do Repouso – Ensaio sobre as Imagens da Intimidade*. Translated by Paulo Neves. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001b.
- BACHELARD, Gaston. *A Terra e os Devaneios da Vontade – Ensaio sobre a Imaginação das Forças*. Translated by Maria Ermantina Galvão. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001c. (arrumei a ordem alfabética dos títulos e as letras a, b, c mudaram de lugar)
- BACHELARD, Gaston. *O Ar e os Sonhos – Ensaio sobre a Imaginação do Movimento*. Translated by Antônio de Pádua Danessi. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001d.
- BACHELARD, Gaston. *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. Translated by Alan C. M. Ross. Boston: Beacon Press, 1981.
- BARBA, Eugenio. *Queimar a Casa – Origens de um Diretor*. Translated by Patrícia Furtado de Mendonça. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2010.
- BARBA, Eugenio. *Teatro – Solidão, Ofício, Revolta*. Translated by Patrícia Furtado de Mendonça. Brasília: Dulcina Editora, 2010.

- BARKER, Juliet. *The Brontës: Wild Genius on the Moors, The Story of a Literary Family*. New York: Pegasus, 2012.
- BECKETT, Samuel. *Endgame & Act Without Words*. New York: Grove Press, 2003.
- BENTLEY, Phyllis. *The Brontës and their World*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1969.
- BERTHOLD, Margot. *História Mundial do Teatro*. Translated by Maria Paula V. Zurawski, Jaime Ginsburg, Sérgio Coelho e Clóvis Garcia. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2001.
- BOGART, Anne. *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- BEECHER, Henry Ward. *Seven Lectures to Young Men*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- BRENTON, Howard & HAY, Malcon. "Howard Brenton: An Introduction and Interview". In: *Performing Arts Journal*. Vol. 3, No. 3 (Winter, 1979), pp. 132-141. New York: Bonnie Marranca, co-Publisher/Editor, 2009.
- BRAD, Emily. "Melancholy as an Aesthetic Emotion". In: *Contemporary Aesthetics - 2013 - vol 1*. Lancaster: Lancaster University Press
- BRONTË, Anne. *Agnes Grey*. New York: Wordsworth Classics, 1998.
- BRONTË, Anne. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. New York: Wordsworth Classics, 1998.
- BRONTË, Charlotte. "My Compliments to the Weather." In: SMITH, Margareth. *Selected Letters of Charlotte Brontë*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- BRONTË, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre – A Norton Critical Edition*. New York: Norton, 2001.
- BRONTË, Charlotte. *Villette*. London: Penguin Classics, 2004.
- BRONTË, Emily. *Wuthering Heights – A Critical Norton Edition*. New York: Norton, 2003.
- BROOK, Peter. *The Empty Space*. New York: Touchstone, 1996.
- BROOK, Peter. *The Open Door – Thoughts on Acting and Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communication Group, 2001.

- BROWN, Richard & MORRISON, Blake. 'The Brontës and Chekhov in Blake Morrison's *We Are Three Sisters*.' In: *Brontë Studies*, Vol. 39 N° 1, Haworth: Brontë Society, January 2014, 30-39.
- BRUNEL, Pierre. *Dicionário de Mitos Literários*. Translated by Carlos Sussekind et al. Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Olympio, 2005.
- BUSE, Peter. *Drama + Theory – Critical Approaches to Modern British Drama*. New York: Manchester University Press, 2001.
- CAMPBELL, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- CARLSON, Marvin. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey from the Greeks to the Present*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- CHEKHOV, Anton. *Selected Plays – A Norton Critical Edition*. Edited and translated by Laurence Senelick. New York: Norton Edition, 2005.
- CHEKHOV, Anton. "The Seagull". In: *Five Major Plays by Anton Chekhov*. Translated by Ronald Hingley. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- CHEKHOV, Anton. "Three Sisters". In: *Five Major Plays by Anton Chekhov*. Translated by Ronald Hingley. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- CHEVALIER, Jean & GHEERBRANT, Alan. *Dictionary of Symbols*. Translated by John Buchanan-Brown. London: Penguin, 1996.
- CIRLOT, Juan Eduardo. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. Translated by Jack Sage. London: Taylor & Francis, 2001.
- COMPAGNON, Antoine. *Os Cinco Paradoxos da Modernidade*. Translated by Cleonice P. Mourão, Consuelo F. Santiago e Eunice D. Galéry. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 1999.
- DARMON, Pierre. *Mythologie de la Femme dans l'Ancienne France*. Paris: Seuil, 1983.
- DELEUZE, Gilles. *Sobre o Teatro*. Translated by Fátima Saadi. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2010.
- DURAND, Gilbert. *A Imaginação Simbólica*. Translated by Jacó Guinsburg. São Paulo: Cultrix, 1988.

- DURAND, Gilbert. *Campos do Imaginário*. Translated by Maria João Batalha Reis. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, 1996.
- DURAND, Gilbert. *Mito e Sociedade: A Mitanálise e a Sociologia das Profundezas*. Translated by Nuno Júdice. Lisboa: A Regra do Jogo, 1983.
- DURAND, Gilbert. *Mito, Símbolo e Mitologia*. Lisboa: Presença, 1982.
- DURAND, Gilbert. *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*. Translated by Margaret Sankey & Judith Hatten. Brisbane: Boombana Publications, 1999.
- ECO, Umberto. *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- ECO, Umberto. *Sobre a Literatura*. Translated by Eliana Aguiar. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2003.
- ECO, Umberto. *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- EDGAR, David. *How Plays Work*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2012.
- FERBER, Michael. *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- FEYNMAN, Richard P. *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.
- FRITSCH, Valter Henrique de Castro & MORRISON, Blake. *Interview with Morrison on We Are Three Sisters*. London/Porto Alegre: 2015.
- FRYE, Northrop. *Fables of Identity – Studies in Poetic Mythology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.
- GAIMAN, Neil. *Stardust*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.
- GASKELL, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997.
- GILBERT, Sandra M. & GUBAR, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic – The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New York: Yale University Press, 2000.
- GLEN, Heather. *Charlotte Brontë: The Imagination in History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

- GONCHAROV, Ivan. *Oblomov*. Translated by David Margashack. London: Penguin Classics, 2005.
- GROTOWSKI, Jerzy. *O Teatro Laboratório*. Translated by Berenice Raulino. São Paulo: Edições SESC, 2001.
- GROTOWSKI, Jerzy. *Para um Teatro Pobre*. Translated by Ivan Chagas. Brasília: Dulcina Editora, 2011.
- GUÉNOUN, Denis. *O Teatro é Necessário?* Translated by Fátima Saadi. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2014.
- HEILMAN, Robert B. "Charlotte Brontë's New Gothic." In: WATT, Ian. (Ed.) *The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- HELIODORA, Barbara. *Caminhos do Teatro Ocidental*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2013.
- HERDERLexicon. *Dicionário de Símbolos*. Translated by José Paschoal. São Paulo: Cultrix, 1990.
- HESIOD. *Theogony*. Translated by Richard Cardwell. New York: Focus Classical Library, 1987.
- HOGLE, Jerrold E. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- HOLY Bible, the: 1769 Oxford King James Bible Authorized Version*. Dallas, Brown Books Publishing, 2004.
- HOMER. *The Odyssey*. Translated by George Herbert Palmer. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003.
- HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- JUNG, Carl Gustav. *Man and his Symbols*. London: Picador, 1978.
- JUNG, Carl Gustav. *Synchronicity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- JUNG, Carl Gustav. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

- JUNG, Carl Gustav. *The Psychology of the Transference*. New York: Princeton/Bollingen Printing, 1992.
- KRISTEVA, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- LANE, David. *Contemporary British Drama*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude. *Anthropologie Structurale*. Paris: Pocket, 1997.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude. *La Pensée Sauvage*. Paris: Plon, 1973.
- MAGGIO, Sandra Sirangelo. *Aspects of Victorianism in the Work of Charlotte Brontë*. Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 1999. PhD Dissertation.
- MALRIEU, Philip. *A Construção do Imaginário*. Translated by Susana Sousa e Silva. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, 2002.
- MAST, Gerald. "Literature and Film". In: BARRICELLI, Jean-Pierre. *Interrelations of Literature*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1982.
- MAYNARD, John. *Charlotte Brontë and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- MELLO, Ana Maria Lisboa de. *Poesia e Imaginário*. Porto Alegre: Edipucrs, 2002.
- MILMAN, Luís. *A Natureza dos Símbolos – Explorações Semântico-Filosóficas*. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 1999.
- MORRISON, Blake. *And When Did You Last See Your Father?* London: Granta Books, 1993.
- MORRISON, Blake. *Selected Poems*. London: Granta Books, 1999.
- MORRISON, Blake. *We Are Three Sisters*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2011.
- MÜLLER, Heiner. *Explosion of a Memory*. New York: PAJ Publications, 2001.
- NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and other Writings*. Translated by Ronald Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- NOVARINA, Valère. *Devant la Parole*. Paris: P.O.L. Éditeur, 2010.

- OVID. *Metamorphoses*. Translated by Rolphe Humphries. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- PAVIS, Patrice. *A Análise dos Espetáculos*. Translated by Sérgio Coelho. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2003.
- PEACOCK, Ronald. *A Arte do Drama*. Translated by Barbara Heliodora. São Paulo: Realizações Editora, 2011.
- RAYFIELD, Donald. *Anton Chekhov: A Life*. London: Faber and Faber, 2000.
- ROSENFELD, Anatol. *O Teatro Moderno*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1977.
- ROUBINE, Jean-Jacques. *Introdução às Grandes Teorias do Teatro*. Translated by André Telles. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2000.
- RUIZ, Castor Bartolomé. *Os Paradoxos do Imaginário*. São Leopoldo: Ed. Unisinos, 2003.
- RYNGAERT, Jean-Pierre. *Ler o Teatro Contemporâneo*. Translated by Andréa Stahel M. da Silva. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2013.
- SARLO, Beatriz. *Escenas de la Vida Posmoderna*. Buenos Aires: Seix Barral, 2004.
- SARLO, Beatriz. *Instantâneas: Medios, Ciudad y Costumbres en el Fin de Siglo*. Ayres: Ariel, 1996.
- SARRAZAC, Jean-Pierre. *Léxico do Drama Moderno e Contemporâneo*. Translated by André Telles. São Paulo: CosacNaify, 2012.
- SENELICK, Laurence. (Ed.) *Anton Chekhov's Selected Plays – A Norton Critical Edition*. Translated by Laurence Senelick. New York: Norton Edition, 2005.
- SHAKESPEARE, William. *King Lear*. New York: Bounty Books, 2007.
- SHAKESPEARE, William. *Macbeth*. New York: Bounty Books, 2007.
- SHAKESPEARE, William. *The Tempest*. New York: Bounty Books, 2007.
- SIERZ, Aleks. *In-Yer-Face Theatre – British Drama Today*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2001.
- STANISLAVSKY, Constantin. *An Actor Prepares*. Translated by Elizabeth Hapgood. New York: Routledge, 2003.

- STRIEDTER, Juri. "Drama as a game of reflected expectations: Chekhov's Three Sisters." In: CHEKHOV, Anton. *Selected Plays – A Norton Critical Edition*. Edited and translated by Laurence Senelick. New York: Norton Edition, 2005.
- SZONDI, Peter. *Teoria do Drama Moderno (1880 – 1950)*. Translated by Raquel Imanishi Rodrigues. São Paulo: CosacNaify, 2001.
- TODOROV, Tzvetan. *Simbolismo e Interpretação*. Translated by Nícia Adan Bonatti. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2014.
- TODOROV, Tzvetan. *Teorias do Símbolo*. Translated by Roberto Leal Ferreira. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2014.
- TRISMEGISTUS, Hermes. *The Emerald Tablet*. New York: Pacific Publishing Studio, 2002.
- UBERSFELD, Anne. *Reading Theater*. Translated by Frank Collins. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- VASCONCELOS, Luiz Paulo. *Dicionário de Teatro*. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 1987.
- WARHOL, Robyn R. "Double Gender, Double Genre in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*". In: *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol 36, N°4. Rice University: Autumn, 1996.
- WILLIAMS, Raymond. *Tragédia Moderna*. Translated by Betina Bischof. São Paulo: CosacNaify, 2011.

APPENDIX A



This is a transcription of an interview Blake Morrison granted me, in his office at Goldsmith College of the University of London, in February 2015:

Valter: My first question is about your genre choice. You are a writer; you wrote poetry, novels and plays, so why did you choose the genre of drama to tell this story?

Blake Morrison: Good question. There is this particular theatre company I work with. I wouldn't call myself a playwright, because I've only ever translated, transposed and adapted plays from German and Ancient Greek and always for the same theatre company based in the Northern of England, not far from Haworth and the Brontë Parsonage, in Halifax. And, a friend of mine, who is the theatre critic for the Observer newspaper, she is called Susannah Clapp, she had seen some of these productions that I had done and she asked me if I had ever thought about adapting *Three Sisters*, because it seems to me, she said, there's so much in there that reminds me the Brontës. Well, I thought, that's an interesting idea. Then, I suggested to the director of Northern Broadsides and he agreed that it was quite interesting. So, I had to go, but I found the obstacles too big to begin with. I thought the differences between the Chekhov play and the lives of Brontës were too great, and so, for a time, I set it aside. Then, I came back to it, because he said, well, you know we should do this. And when I came back to it, I began to see ways in which I could stay truthful, in some ways true to Chekhov, to the

structure of Chekhov's play, but really make it the story of the Brontës. So, for me it was never a choice a play, a poem or a novel...no, no... It was always Chekhov. Can you use Chekhov as the framework to tell the Brontë story?

Valter: How deep was your knowledge about the Brontës biography when you started writing the play? Also, how long did you research in order to prepare yourself?

Blake Morrison: Well, I'm not a Brontë scholar, or even really I was, when I began, any kind of expert. I had, of course, read *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and some of the other novels, but when I began my research, I particularly used Juliet Barker's book, that is just sitting behind you on the shelves, because it is the most detailed, and I particularly like one thing she emphasizes, I think, in her biography, actually two – one is that the Brontës were not cut off from the world, as Elizabeth Gaskell presents in her biography, but they do have an intellectual life around Haworth; and secondly, theirs was not a story only about tragedy, gloom and despair, but there was some lightness in that too. So, I found her book very helpful, and indeed I sent her a draft of the play, which she didn't like very much, because it was too far from the truth of the Brontë story. After that, I sent other drafts and I took some advice from her, and then she began to enjoy it, to like it. She also lives near Haworth and the theatre company, so she became a supporter of the play and the project. And, I also read wildly Brontë biographies, I read a lot of books, I read all the novels, I read more about Anne, because I hadn't read much her, I started, I suppose, to use some insights from the biographies, but also reading the letters and reading the novels – to take lines, sentences from those, which I thought could be representative of what Charlotte, Emily and Anne believed, thought and felt and I used in the play some of these lines. So, the short answer is, I grew up in that part of the world, near the Brontës, I lived like they lived in the top of a village, so I also used these parallels. I was not an expert. I was just interested, like anybody could be, in them. Well, I did the research, but not like a scholar would, but as a creative writer, looking for things that I could use.

Valter: My third question is about Chekhov. I mean, why Chekhov? I know you have already said that *Three Sisters* explores themes that preoccupied the Brontës, but it is a huge challenge especially if you think about the Russian context that supports the play.

Blake Morrison: It did seem to me, when the idea was first suggested to me... This is too wildly, this is too ridiculous, this is too different... But, of course, it's a wonderful play and the structure of the play is a fantastic template to use anyway. And, although it is set in Russia, there are sufficient parallels to work with. So, to take one example the line everybody remembers from *Three Sisters* is "Moscow, Moscow, Moscow". So, that made me think what the Brontës relationship to London was. Well, ambivalent, I think. There's a letter that Charlotte wrote where she tell her friends who are visiting London about the wonderful and majestic things in the capital that you can see. And, of course, there is that famous trip they made to London to declare their identities to the publishers, this was Anne and Charlotte, Emily stayed behind. And they had, like anybody growing up in rural Yorkshire, like I did, we are always a little suspicious of the capital city – London. So, the attraction to the city and this slightly resistance I found interesting to explore in the relation to the Chekhov work. And, also, there are obvious connections: three sisters, a troubled artistic brother, dead parents, the feeling of remoteness from the centre, an old servant, and a lot of discussion about work, about marriage and about love. One thing I think that is in common in Chekhov work and the Brontës is the position of women in society. In Chekhov, we see a class of women who are frustrated with the life they have, although it is a privileged life. The Brontës were also, I think, frustrated with the position of women in society, but, of course, the great difference was that they worked. They worked so hard. They worked so hard in order to accomplish their duties and their writing work. So, although there are similarities in the position of women in society, the way they address the matter is not the same.

Valter: You mentioned Juliet Barker's *The Brontës* in the introduction of the printed copy of the play. And, I ask how important was this book to your writing? You have already talked about this, but is there anything you would like to add?

Blake Morrison: Well, there are specific things that I remember, for instance, on the question of how cut off were the Brontës from the intellectual society and the world, which is what Elizabeth Gaskell suggests. Juliet Barker emphasizes how active they were in going to libraries and how active they actually were. These are the sort of details I was able to use. She also tells the story about a huge storm, a catastrophe that happened when the Brontës were young; houses were destroyed and so on. I realize that would be an opportunity to account for a problem I had in act three that in Chekhov's

play there is a fire. Locally, it is a disaster and people are helping, the sisters are helping, and I worried how to deal with this, because there was no equivalent fire in Haworth. But the storm, as collect by Juliet Barker, helped me to find an equivalent for the fire, the destruction in a local community, the sisters helping to solve the problem. So, I found Juliet Barker the most useful book that I did look at, and it was from Elizabeth Gaskell that I really got the image, that is very important in the production of the play, perhaps not so much in the text, that is the three sisters walking around the table, talking at night after their father had gone to bed , that really came from Gaskell.

Valter: What about the Brontës literary works? You told me you had read all the novels. Did they help you to construct your own text, or in which ways did the novels affect you, actually your writing?

Blake Morrison: They didn't affect the structure, but they affected lines. I was able to grasp, in particular, I think, ideas about love and marriage and romance. There are a lot of lines in the novels on these subjects from all the three writers, really. So, I was able to take sentences from the novels and use them in the play. I also took sentences from the letters, particularly Charlotte's, and put them in the play. I took a very moving thing that Anne must... I think it must have been a letter that Anne wrote when she knows she is in danger of dying, it was in the end of her life, and she says "I'm not afraid of dying, but there are so many things I want to do, so many projects, so many things I want to achieve, this is why I don't want to die." This was in the very end of my play that I wrote some lines to Anne addressing this issue. So, from the novels and from the letters I was able to take some ideas and lines, but there is another play by Polly Teale, and she has done a play about the Brontës, not to do with Chekhov, and she steps out of the story of the Brontës turning Charlotte to Jane Eyre, or Emily turning to Cathy. Suddenly, the real life characters become fictional characters, and this is the fantasy element of Teale's play. I didn't want to do that. I stayed close to Chekhov, the realist play, and I didn't approach the novels in Teale's way. I approached the novels using some ideas and some words actually used. I mean, just to give you one more example, in *Jane Eyre* there is a point when Jane says to Rochester "do you think I am an automaton, without feelings?", and I thought this could be used in the play. And, when we had a rehearsal, back there in the parsonage, it was full of Brontë fans and admirers and scholars, and during the cocktail reception, one of them came to me and said "well,

I enjoyed it, but the language seems wrong, for instance that word automaton, no one would say automaton in the 19th century.” And then I said: “But it is in Jane Eyre”.

Valter: Well, you are actually answering my questions in advance. In Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*, Moscow is a symbol of what Olga, Irina and Masha want and can never get. In *We Are Three Sisters*, you use London instead of Moscow; do you think it works in the same way? Actually, do you think London would be the Brontë’s Moscow?

Blake Morrison: Well, you make a good point, in the Chekhov, they were in Moscow at first, and that is very different from the Brontës who had no earlier attachment to London. But, anybody in Yorkshire, and it would be the same today; the city has still a sort of glamour about it. Although the Brontës being kind of puritanical and their resistance to the superficiality associated with London society, another part of them was called by the capital. More important, perhaps, they were dependent of London if they wanted their works to get published. London was, you know, where books were published, and they had ambitions to be writers. So, they had to have a relationship to London in order to become published writers. And, later in life, after Anne and Emily died, Charlotte spent some time in London. Of course she was not a member of London society, but she got to know a little bit of it. But the key point was the trip, when Charlotte and Anne decided to go and be honest with their publishers: “We are not men called Bell, we are women called Brontë”. This is beautifully described in Elizabeth Gaskell biography, and it is very detailed in Juliet Barker, talking about the trains they got, the places where they stayed, the publishers who were shocked, how they introduce themselves, and when they got back, how Emily was disgusted because she wanted to remain anonymous, and now the publishers knew they were women. Well, that scene had to be added, there’s nothing like that in Chekhov, and thinking about the title of the play, this is where *We Are Three Sisters* come from. I felt I had to include that scene, because it was such a good dramatic scene. The other thing, and sorry it is not part of your question, but think about the problems of transposing Chekhov: Masha, as the Emily figure, is married; the Branwell figure is also married, so I had to change that obviously. Branwell is interesting, because he had this affair with this woman, Mrs Robinson, and she became the equivalent of Natasha. The three sisters resist to Natasha as the Brontës resist to Mrs Robinson. The problem I had was because of the staging of my play, it all takes place in the Parsonage, so the trip to London publishers is related,

recounted, and a similar thing happens to Branwell, because I couldn't have Branwell in Mrs Robinson's house. I had to get Mrs Robinson in the Parsonage, what actually never happened, in reality she never came. Of course, it was highly implausible in reality, but that is fiction.

Valter: When we approach the play, we see that you have used Chekhov as a kind of scaffold to bring this version of *Three Sisters*. For instance, Olga is Charlotte, Masha is Emily and Irina is Anne, so I would like you comment how you did the connections considering their own personalities. Olga and Charlotte are quite similar in so many ways, but what about Emily and Anne? How does it work for you to make these connections and establishing these parallels?

Blake Morrison: I think there are parallels, but for me what was very important in the end was the fact that the Brontës should be like what we understand the three Brontë sisters to be. If they don't correspond exactly to the three sisters in Chekhov, so be it. The more important is that they be recognizably, the older sister as the controlling one, the rational one, the keeper of the reputation of the other two; Emily a bit wild and sort of lonely; Anne, the baby, being sometimes resentful of being the youngest. Well, I don't pretend the portrayal of the three sisters is new, because I had already so much work transposing Chekhov. I didn't want to do any radical interpretation, like taking the Brontës and presenting them in a very different way from what audience expect. There is this book, that I read during my research, which says that Emily must have had problems similar to anorexia, this is Catherine Frank's book. However, I was not interested in any radical new interpretation, I want people to feel like "Oh yeah, that's Charlotte, that's Emily, that's Anne, that's how I always thought them." Undoubtedly there are parallels, but in the end, the key thing was to be like the three Brontë sisters as we know them.

Valter: Chekhov's three sisters were orphan, but the Brontës were not. How important was this fact in the construction of these characters in your play?

Blake Morrison: Well, the beginning of the Chekhov play includes nostalgia, remembering the father who was dead; the Brontë father, Patrick, lived more than all his children, so there's no parallel. But, the mother had died and the two oldest sisters had

died and that seem to me quite possible that the Brontë sisters would have memories and sad memories of their mother and their lost sisters, so in the beginning of my play is not the remembering of the father, it is the remembering of the mother. In Chekhov, this is taking place in a name day, and I had it as a birthday – what is quite different for Russian culture. They were not orphans, but they had lost their mother, so I found correspondence on that.

Valter: You also said in the introduction of the printed edition of *We Are Three Sisters* that the Brontë story is usually shrouded in darkness and misery, and that your play tries to disperse the gloom and to highlight resilience instead. And then, this is just food for thought, but don't you think that Chekhov's *Three Sisters* is as gloom as what we are used to think about Brontë's lives? I mean, why did you choose a play like this to work as a shadow text if your intention was to let in a little lightness, as you also said before?

Blake Morrison: Yeah! You could say there's a gloom surrounding the *Three Sisters*, the end is tragic. But even Chekhov thought of it as a tragicomedy and he called it a tragicomedy, and there is humor there, there is lot of humor. It perhaps comes more from the men in the play than the three sisters (Olga, Irina and Masha). It wasn't such a stretch to use that play, because there is lightness in Chekhov, and I wanted the Brontës to have this same lightness to. So, I think it was perfectly okay to use Chekhov as comedy and tragedy, as both took part in the life of the Brontës.

Valter: This question is particularly important to me. My dissertation analyses some images offered by *We Are Three Sisters*, highlighting their symbolic potential. In some passages you talk about some kinds of flowers and compare some characters to flowers, and I would like to know if this was intentional or just a product of your poetic approach to writing.

Blake Morrison: It's interesting, but I hadn't thought about this very much. Of course, as you can see if you ever go to Haworth and the Parsonage, beyond the moors, you become very conscious of natural world around you and the variety of different flowers and birds there. When you grow up in a place like this, and I did, you become very conscious of nature, birds and flowers and animal life and trees. The Brontës used to walk on the moors; Emily in special had this passionate love for natural life. So, I don't

think I have rationally emphasized birds or flowers; it's just the landscape and part of growing up in a place like that.

Valter: I read in a previous interview you don't consider yourself a playwright. Can I ask you why?

Blake Morrison: Well, because I always work with an existent text. Actually I think this is the nearest I would come to calling myself a playwright, because there's so much involved in crafting and inventing a play. I did have what you called a scaffold. I had the scaffold of the original play. And that was the same when I work with *Antigone*, Lisa's *Sex Strike* and all my other plays. I always use the original to work in transposition. I think *We Are Three Sisters* could be my most radical transposition.

Valter: What about the genre of the play. You've said you are fond to realism and that you wanted to stay close to Chekhov's realism. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Blake Morrison: I wasn't interested in transposing scenes from the fiction. I wanted this story was the story of the Brontës lives. It wasn't an adaptation of a novel. I wasn't trying to conflate Charlotte and Jane, Emily and Cathy. No. I was telling the story of the sisters' real lives. I wanted it to seem a plausible realistic version of their lives, and that is a tradition Chekhov is also working – Realism. So, it's not surreal, it's not fabulist and it's not an allegory; it's a realist drama.

Valter: The contemporary British theatre is a complex web. I mean, it is composed of lot of artistic and aesthetic purposes sharing the same spot. There are names like Beckett, Pinter, Stoppard, John Osborne, and Sarah Kane, who represent a different approach to theatre that is far from away what Chekhov did. What is your opinion about this clash of aesthetic views? Do you think there is still room for realism in the British stage? And how does your work interacts with the contemporary scene?

Blake Morrison: Well, I think it might be seen as an old fashioned play, especially because the subject that matters is the early 19th century, the setting and so on. On the other hand, you could say it is also metafictional or postmodernist to the extent that I am working from original texts transposing and reinventing them. Reinventing and

reinterpreting an original text. One of the first plays to make an impression on me was Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*. The idea of them stepping outside Shakespeare's play and talking about things, a minor character being brought to the center of the stage, for me it was great. It is a kind of game, working with an original text, and trying to do something with that original text, you know, from a different context. So, I don't know how my plays fit really to contemporary British drama. As I said, I don't even consider myself a playwright but a poet and novelist. So, I never really thought about my relationship to contemporary British theatre. One thing that I should add is – because I work with this particular theatre company and director, Barrie Rutter, who is currently rehearsing *King Lear*, and he has demands and prejudices about what theatre must be. First of all, authentic colloquial speech; it was important the Brontë sisters to sound like people living in the early 19th century Yorkshire; they have those accents; they use the idioms of that time. Secondly, simple realist setting; no videos, no fancy lighting effects, and also a high importance to English proper pronunciation. The way educated people would speak at those times; delivering the text and the language properly. Rutter believes a lot of drama schools are not preparing the actors to deliver the text properly; people don't deliver lines like they should. So, he focus on that; he focus on clarity. If you go to a Northern Broadsides production, you hear every word. And this is wonderful for the writer, because the audience is going to hear every word. So, I think working with him and his company was also an influence on my writing of plays; knowing exactly what he was expecting and what he wanted to do probably influenced the play.

ANNEX 1

Blake Morrison's works and awards

Works:

- *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford University Press, 1980)
- *Seamus Heaney* (1982)
- *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (co-editor with Andrew Motion) (1982)
- *Dark Glasses* (Chatto & Windus, 1984)
- *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper (and Other Poems)* (Chatto & Windus, 1987)
- *The Yellow House* (illustrations by Helen Craig) (Walker Books, 1987)
- *And When Did You Last See Your Father?* (1993)
- *Penguin Modern Poets 1* (Morrison, James Fenton, Kit Wright) (1995)
- *Mind Readings: Writers' Journeys Through Mental States* (co-editor with Sara Dunn and Michèle Roberts) (1996)
- *Pendle Witches* (illustrations by Paula Rego) (1996)
- *The Cracked Pot* (1996)
- *As If* (1997)
- *Too True* (1998)
- *Selected Poems* (G1999)
- *The Justification of Johann Gutenberg* (2000)
- *Things My Mother Never Told Me* (2002)

- *Antigone and Oedipus* (2003)
- *South of the River* (2007)
- *The Last Weekend* (2010)
- *We Are Three Sisters* (2011)

Awards:

- 1980 Eric Gregory Award
- 1985 Dylan Thomas Award
- 1985 Somerset Maugham Award for *Dark Glasses*
- 1988 E. M. Forster Award
- 1993 Esquire/Volvo/Waterstone's Non-Fiction Book Award for *And When Did You Last See Your Father?*
- 1994 J.R. Ackerley Prize for Autobiography for *And When Did You Last See Your Father?*

ANNEX II

Pictures of We Are Three Sisters performed on the stage by Northern Broadsides Theatre Company.







