

VANESSA GOMES ALVES DE OLIVEIRA

**OF ANGELS AND DEMONS:
FEMALE ROLES AND SEXUALITY IN *JANE EYRE* AND
*WIDE SARGASSO SEA***

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*WIDE SARGASSO SEA***

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RESUMO

De demônios a anjos, mulheres têm feito parte da literatura tanto como personagens quanto como autoras. O objetivo desta dissertação é analisar como três personagens mulheres são apresentadas em dois romances, o inglês *Jane Eyre* (1847) e o caribenho *Vasto Mar de Sargaços* (1966), focando na oposição entre anjos e demônios, nos papéis femininos das sociedades em que elas se encontram, e em sua sexualidade. *Jane Eyre* foi o primeiro romance publicado de Charlotte Brontë. Nele, a autora dá vida a uma garota pobre e órfã que precisa superar dificuldades na vida para se construir como pessoa e alcançar a sua tão desejada liberdade; esta heroína é muito aclamada na literatura como uma mulher independente que não tem medo de dizer o que pensa. Jane afirma que não é um anjo, e nem tem desejo de ser. No mesmo romance, escondida de todos os olhos, existe também certa demônia com uma risada feroz e um comportamento selvagem. Bertha Mason, a mulher silenciada e louca também não é nenhum anjo. Inspirada nessa personagem, um século depois, a autora caribenha Jean Rhys decide que a demônia Bertha tem uma história própria a contar e cria o romance derivado *Vasto Mar de Sargaços* (1966). A protagonista desta obra é Antoinette Cosway, uma menina das Índias Ocidentais demasiadamente sensível e com medo de tudo. Antoinette está presa no jardim do Éden, flutuando entre se tornar o anjo que se espera que ela seja ou enfrentar o seu demônio reprimido. Assim, o objetivo desta dissertação é comentar essas três representações da condição feminina – Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason e Antoinette Cosway – à luz da dicotomia criada em torno dos papéis sociais esperados das mulheres. O trabalho vem estruturado em três capítulos. O primeiro considera a condição feminina a partir de uma bifurcação de papéis aqui representada através dos termos “anjo” e “demônio”. O segundo verifica como essa problemática se apresenta no romance vitoriano escrito por Brontë. O terceiro aborda a questão pelo recorte pós-colonial de Rhys, feito em um novo tempo e lugar. Ao término do trabalho, apontarei o que muda e o que permanece igual, a partir da análise dessas três personagens que se equilibram entre o puro e o depravado, o moral e o corrupto, tentando se encaixar, ser aceitas e abrir seus caminhos rumo à realização pessoal.

Palavras-chave: 1. Literaturas de língua inglesa; 2. Mulheres na literatura; 3. Charlotte Brontë; 4. Jean Rhys; 5. *Angel in the house*.

ABSTRACT

From angels to demons, women have been part of Literature both as characters and as creators. It is the objective of this work to analyze how three female characters are portrayed in two novels, the English *Jane Eyre* (1847) and the Caribbean *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), with focus on the opposition between angels and demons, on the female roles expected from the society in which they live, and on their sexuality. *Jane Eyre* was Charlotte Brontë's first published novel. In it, the author gives life to a poor, orphan girl who needs to overcome the difficulties in her life to construct herself as a person and attain her desired freedom. This heroine is acclaimed in Literature as an independent woman who is not afraid of expressing herself. As a woman of her time, Jane affirms she is no angel, and she does not desire to be one. In the same novel, hidden from all eyes, there is a certain demon with a cruel laughter and wild behavior. Bertha Mason, the silenced mad woman is no angel either. Inspired in this character, a century later, the Caribbean author Jean Rhys decides the demon Bertha has a story of her own to tell, and creates the derivative novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). The protagonist of this novel is Antoinette Cosway, a girl from the West Indies overly sensible and afraid of everything. Antoinette is caged in the garden of Eden, floating between becoming the angel she is expected to be, or facing her repressed demon. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to comment on those three representations of the female condition - Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason and Antoinette Cosway - in the light of the dichotomy created about the social roles expected of women. The thesis is structured in three chapters. The first considers the female condition, from a bifurcation of roles here represented through the terms "angel" and "demon". The second verifies how this problematic is presented in the Victorian novel written by Brontë. The third approaches the question through Rhys' Postcolonial view, created in another time and place. At the end of the work, I hope to be able to identify what changes and what continues the same, through the analysis of those three characters, balanced between pure and deviant, moral and corrupt, trying to fit in, being accepted and opening their ways toward personal realization.

Keywords: 1. Literatures in English; 2. Women in literature; 3. Charlotte Brontë; 4. Jean Rhys; 5. *Angel in the house*.

*Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could
deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And, subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright net she can
weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.
The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so
went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight
neck bent,
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.*

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, **Body's Beauty**

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INTRODUCTION

*I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.*

P. B. Shelley, The Cloud

The Victorian period is marked by several changes for the British Empire. Amongst those changes we have the rise of the Woman Question, a debate about women's position in society and their rights to do more than just be mothers, daughters and wives. It was also in the Victorian period that questions about the nature of the sexes were put into discussion. Writers such as John Stuart Mill proposed that the "nature of women" was something artificial, and that it was nurture that shaped the character. (MILL, 2009, p. 39) On the other hand, still the idea predominated that men and women were naturally different, and that each sex had a certain objective in society – women should take care of the house and family, whilst men should take care of the finances and provide for the family.

The difference between the sexes remains unanswered, though there are, indeed, many theories discussing nature vs nurture, and whether the position of each sex is biological or socially constructed. Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* in 1949, and there she wonders that "It is hard to know any longer if women still exist, if they will always exist, if there should be women at all, what place they hold in this world, what place they should hold". (BEAUVOIR, 2011, p. 23) Years later, philosopher Judith Butler continued the discussion about sex, asking "how are we to understand the 'matter' of sex, and of bodies more generally, as the repeated and violent circumscription of cultural intelligibility? Which bodies come to matter — and why?" (BUTLER, 1993, p. 11)

It is the objective of this work to analyze the construction of sex and female sexuality in Victorian England and in the English Caribbean – which was known as West Indies back then -, of the nineteenth century, using the novels *Jane Eyre* (1847) written by Charlotte

Brontë, and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) by Jean Rhys, and its main characters – Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason and Antoinette Cosway as objects of study. In the first chapter, an analysis of how the lives of Victorian women were, and what was expected of them will be made, using mainly *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (2001) by Kathryn Gleadle and Nina Auerbach's *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (1982) to understand the female roles they played in society, focusing on the dichotomy of angels and demons, and the famous characters Eve and Lilith, both known as being the first women that ever existed in Christian and Jewish traditions. Women's working conditions, their relation with the family and the home, and how those are connected to the female roles they were supposed to follow will also be analyzed. In addition, because one of the aims of this work is to analyze the sexuality of the characters in *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), there will be an examination on the history of female sexuality in the nineteenth century and how it is portrayed in both novels. Finally, since the characters Bertha Mason and Antoinette Cosway are both Creole women, - women with European ancestry born in the West Indies-, an analysis of Creole women in the nineteenth century will be made, considering their roles, their expectations and position in society. For this part, *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean* (2003) by Liden Lewis, *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in the Historical Perspective* (1995), and *Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939* (2004) by Evelyn O'Callaghan will be used in order to understand the construction of the women in the West Indies of the nineteenth century.

In the second and third chapters the discussion of the novels, their authors, and the characters will be made. In 1966, Jean Rhys wrote in *Wide Sargasso Sea*: "There is always the other side, always", (RHYS, 1999, p. 77) a sentence full of meaning if one has read *Jane Eyre* (1847) previously and did not have the chance to hear the other side of the Creole mad wife, Bertha Mason, a very relevant character in Jane Eyre's pilgrimage. It was that sentence that made me realize Rhys' intention to respond to Charlotte Brontë's great work. Before I go any further, I feel that it is important to explain the reason why I chose to work with those two distinct ladies and works. I came across *Jane Eyre* for the first time during my undergraduate course. The novel pleasantly surprised me, mainly because of the protagonist, Jane Eyre, and the way she was portrayed as an independent woman with no family, no fortune, but a great resolve to live the best life she could reach, despite her situation – a female orphan in England in the nineteenth century. The novel is narrated through her point of view, in first-person, as an autobiography, and it follows her life from childhood up to when she becomes

an adult. Therefore, it is a *Bildungsroman*, a novel that “describes the processes by which maturity is achieved through the various ups and downs of life”. (CUDDON; PRESTON, 1999, p. 82)

As a girl who had read novels from Victorian authors – mostly men – and had seen several different representations of women that were “angels in the house”, as the poet Coventry Patmore once wrote, I took *Jane Eyre* as a breath of fresh air. Jane is rejected by the only family she knows of as a child, and called a “bad animal” (BRONTË, 2016, p. 11) because she refuses to behave in the way people expect her to. Jane is “an emblem of a passionate, barely disguised rebelliousness”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 337) She is fierce, angry, and desires freedom. This fierceness, anger was what “horrified the Victorians”, (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 338) though the repressed sexuality hidden in red-rooms and attics was not so disturbing. Jane is passionate, and refuses to fit the space destined for her because of her sex.

On the other hand, whilst Charlotte Brontë was well known for me, Jean Rhys was not; I found *Wide Sargasso Sea* by accident when I was doing a research about *Jane Eyre*, and I was very happy I did. If *Jane Eyre* surprised and awed me with a strong female heroine, *Wide Sargasso Sea* made me question everything that I had read that far. The reason is plain: the novel is structured as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, showing the story of a version of an important, though minor, character in *Jane Eyre* – Bertha Mason Rochester. Bertha is the mystery of *Jane Eyre*, and she is considered the counterpart of the heroine, Jane’s “truest and darkest double”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 360) For a better understanding, Jane Eyre, in her wanderings as an adult, ends up becoming a governess in a mansion called Thornfield Hall; the place, as any other gothic location, is full of mysteries, very dark, and with a hidden floor where almost no one enters. It is on that floor, as Jane finds out later in the novel, that the dark secret of its owner, Mr. Edward Fairfax Rochester, is kept. Rochester’s wife, Bertha, or, as she is known, the mad-woman in the attic, is the opposite of what the perfect Victorian lady should be; she is a Creole coming from the West Indies, married to Mr. Rochester because of her fortune and his English blood. She is brought to England only to be locked in a room for the rest of her life because she is considered mad. She is still married to Mr. Rochester, though, and that makes it impossible for Jane and him to move on with their relationship. Bertha is, therefore, the stone in the middle of Jane’s path to happiness.

It is easy to ignore Bertha when we read *Jane Eyre*; after all, she is described so horribly by Mr. Rochester that, as Jane does, the reader also takes his views of the facts. In addition, Jane deserved to be finally happy with the man she loves. For that to happen, Bertha must disappear. Basically, the character is simply another adversity that must be removed from Jane's way. And this is what happens; when the moment comes for Jane to reach maturity, Bertha dies. And her death makes it possible for Jane to go on with her life – a life full of happiness and love in which she and her husband are “a perfect concord”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 327) That is the happy ending expected in a love story. Bertha, then, becomes a vague memory in both the protagonist's and in the reader's minds, after she is burned in a fire triggered by herself, and turns into ashes, forever silenced.

Some literary critics, as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000), state that Jane and Bertha are not that different, that Bertha is, in fact, a representation of Jane's hidden self, the one that makes her be called a wild animal as a child, a force that Jane learned to repress in Lowood by the teaching of her beloved Miss Temple, and her friend Helen Burns. Bertha represents this wild force, the one that cannot help but being leashed in Thornfield Hall when Jane is sexually enticed by Mr. Rochester. This hidden self is dark, dangerous, demoniac, animalistic, and sexual. Bertha is, then, the Other, the seductress, the witch.

Her depiction as a mere impediment for Jane, and the way she was treated by her husband, made Jean Rhys, also a Creole woman,

vexed at her portrait of the ‘paper tiger’ lunatic, the all wrong creole scenes, and above all by the real cruelty of Mr. Rochester. After all, he was a very wealthy man and there were many kinder ways of disposing of (or hiding) an unwanted wife – I heard the true story of one – and the man behaved very differently. (RHYS, 1999, p. 139)

Therefore, Rhys gives the silenced character a voice. As Linda Hutcheon puts it, “art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories”. (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 2) Jean Rhys relied on a famous Victorian classic to create her own version of some facts, producing, in the end, a novel in its own rights, though still connected with *Jane Eyre*. Rhys' novel became “acknowledged as an exemplary attack on a master narrative, which found many successors and fired the postcolonial debate”. (RUBIK; SCHATMANN, 2007, p. 64). As Antoinette Cosway says in her novel, there is always the other side to things, and that is what *Wide Sargasso Sea* is, the other side of the story of Bertha Mason, the one that is not relevant

in Charlotte Brontë's novel. Now it is, in the view of a Caribbean woman of the twentieth-century.

Jean Rhys finished writing and published the novel in 1966, 119 years after Charlotte Brontë published *Jane Eyre*. This was Rhys' last novel before she passed away, and also the novel that brought the author back to the spotlight after years of a literary hiatus. Rhys was, then, in her late 70s, living in England by herself in poor health and with scarce money. *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) was her comeback, a response to a classic British novel of the nineteenth century, and it was, as her predecessor's, a success. It won literary prizes such as the W. H. Smith Literary Award and the Royal Society of Literature award (ATHILL, 2016, p. 40), and made Rhys known worldwide, consolidating her career as a writer even after many works previously. After *Wide Sargasso Sea* she went on writing short stories, but no other novels. In addition, Jean Rhys became a CBE, an honorific title granted by the British Government to people who contributed to the quality of arts and science in the United Kingdom.

Wide Sargasso Sea has many similarities with *Jane Eyre*. Both novels are written in first-person and have several parallel scenes. One example is the confrontation involving Jane, John Reed and the book in the opening of *Jane Eyre*, contrasted with the scene involving Antoinette, Tia and the stone, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Each passes through five different places in the course of their narratives. Jane moves from Gateshead to Lowood, to Thornfield, Moor House and Ferndean. Whereas Antoinette lives in Coulibri, in the Catholic boarding school, Spanish Town, Granbois, and in England. In all respects the circumstances involving the two protagonists have points in common. We meet them as children, follow their growth through a sequence of different places and witness the outcome of their brave endeavors. But, as a literary construct, *Wide Sargasso Sea* also "distances itself from the world created by Charlotte Brontë in 1847, while complementing the story for both future and past readers of *Jane Eyre*". (GARCIA; OLIVEIRA, 2016, p. 1)

Rhys's novel begins with Antoinette Cosway – that is Bertha's birth name – in her childhood, living with her mother, Annette Cosway, a widow, her younger brother Pierre, and the servants of the house. Her house was as decadent as her family. The story's context is a place where slavery has just been abolished. Antoinette's family had been previously owner of slaves; therefore, they were not welcome in the neighborhood anymore.

There are similarities between Jane and Antoinette. They are rejected by their families – Jane by her aunt, Mrs. Reed, and Antoinette by her mother. Both go to religious boarding schools and remain there until they become young women. After the school period, their paths diverge considerably. One can say that each goes into a different kind of servitude. Jane, because she is poor, goes to work as a governess – that is, a private teacher – at a distant place, in a manor house called Thornfield Hall, so as to earn thirty pounds a year. And Antoinette becomes an heiress after her mother marries a wealthy Englishman called Mr. Mason. An arranged marriage is settled between Mr. Mason and an affluent English family, who send their second son all the way from Europe to marry Antoinette. Along with her, a dowry of thirty thousand pounds is endorsed in the bargain. It is emblematic that Jane, the poor one, is to work for £ 30 to earn her freedom, whereas Antoinette, the rich one, is sold by her family at the price of £ 30.000.

In spite of her poverty, Jane thinks of herself as a free woman. In a way, the fact that she is alone counts to her advantage, granting her independence to decide about things related to her life. Had she been a member of a well-structured family, other people's interests would have to be taken into consideration. Conversely, that is how Antoinette finds herself trapped into a loveless marriage. There are hidden layers in the two protagonists. Both have secrets they that they seek to reveal, but are afraid of. Jane's are hidden in the attic; Antoinette's, in the unsaid - what she does not say and what the novel does not mention. In the end of the two novels, the protagonists reach opposite endings, as if they were counterparts. Jane becomes herself an heiress, shapes her personality and marries the man she chooses, whom she sees as her soul mate. Antoinette is progressively deprived of her identity and becomes – first Bertha, and then the madwoman in the attic.

This thesis is structured in three chapters. The first explores the dichotomies and doubles so frequently exposed in all forms of 19th century art, here represented in the conflict involving feminine social roles, sexuality and the images of the angel in the house versus the demonic female. Chapter Two analyses the novel *Jane Eyre*, and Chapter Three *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Although *Wide Sargasso Sea* may be seen as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, in this thesis the novels are discussed according to their order of their publication. However, as the plots intertwine, sometimes it is difficult to treat them as separate works, because of the many parallel plotlines. As readers, we tend to fill in the gaps in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, for instance, with the knowledge we have about some facts that follows our reading of *Jane Eyre*. For instance, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* there is no mention to the name of the Englishman who marries

Antoinette (who is also the first-person narrator in the middle part of the novel). But a *Jane Eyre* reader cannot help but seeing him as a nineteen-year-old Edward Rochester. As a consequence, Antoinette Cosway/Mason/ becomes Antoinette Cosway/Mason/ Rochester. And the characters Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre* and Antoinette Cosway, from *Wide Sargasso Sea*, also merge together at a certain point.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze three female characters. Besides the protagonists in Brontë's and Rhys' novels, there is also Bertha Mason, the third character, always present in the shadows of the two novels. In *Jane Eyre* Bertha stands as a wild, stereotyped, bestial creature, the personification of madness. We only hear from her or glimpse at her presence. As representative of powerful hidden impulses, Bertha Mason is responsible for much of the Gothic mysteries the story comprises. This Vampire-like character haunts the place and scares the protagonist, posing a challenge that Jane is not ready to meet during her stay at Thornfield. Knowing the inquisitive and brave nature of our protagonist, the fact that she never goes in search of a reason for those inexplicable noises, or for Mr. Rochester's strangest behavior, is the interesting point to be investigated. In the structure of *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason exists so that we can explore the symbolic elements the protagonist, Jane Eyre, has to deal with in her process of psychological growth.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Bertha represents all that is silenced in the story. Here, as Bertha is the first-person narrator in the last part of the novel, things are seen from the inside. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is written in a different time, when the current notions about mental illness indicate that a person cannot be diagnosed simply as being "mad". The question raised here, then, is political: What social, economic or personal elements might have caused so many women – such as Antoinette Cosway and her mother Annette – to lose their minds, in the Colonies, during the 19th Century? The fact that part of the book is narrated by a confined person can enlighten the readers in many respects.

In either case, for the aims of this thesis, Bertha Mason signifies the fire, or the red, in the two protagonists, Jane and Antoinette – the repressed Eros, vital force, or sexuality: an element of nature, like Fire which, if kept under control, can help one's progress; but which, if not restrained, can lead to destruction as well. In the course of the analysis of the character's hidden selves and journeys, I will present my reading of the two novels, with the theoretical and critical support provided by authors as Michel Foucault, Elaine Showalter, Elaine Savory, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Heather Glen, Joyce Carol Oates,

Patricia Beer, and Patsy Stoneman. The first biography of Charlotte Brontë, written by Elizabeth Gaskell, and her letters by Clement Shorter, and the autobiography *Smile Please*, by Jean Rhys, also serve as references to contextualize the authors and their historical backgrounds.

1. ANGELS AND DEMONS: FEMALE ROLES

*Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities*

Coventry Patmore, **Sahara**

1.1 THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE: VICTORIAN WOMEN

In Judeo-Christian tradition Eve is the first woman, created from Adam's rib and molded to be his companion. As all other dual things in the Creation myth – darkness and light, heaven and earth –, man and woman are also presented as opposed. Adam and Eve live happily in the Garden of Eden until Eve commits the terrible sin of eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Life and Knowledge of Good and Evil. She also offered the fruit to Adam, who also ate from it. As a result of this disobedience, they were expelled from Eden, their own paradise on earth, and their lives became filled with hardships. For the man, because he listened to his wife, the earth would be cursed on his account. For the woman, she would have pain in childbirth; her desire would be for her husband, who would be her master.

The fate of humanity was sealed from there, because of the mistake committed by Adam, but mainly from Eve's curiosity. She was the one to be seduced by the snake, thus provoking their disgrace. Eve was the first woman to be mastered by her husband, the one to seal the fate of other women. The example of the Creation myth was incorporated into the Church and became an intense subject of discussion and examination in the Victorian period of British society in all Christian denominations. Therefore, its influence in society is an important topic related to the codes of Victorian morality and behavior.

Angels and demons play a strong role in the Christian tradition. Whilst angels are pure, supernatural creatures that live in heaven, and have as their function to connect humans to god, demons are the ones to seduce humans to sin, to get them away from god's presence, and lead them to hell. Here we have the dichotomy of good and evil, just as the one of men and women.

Victorian society was one that cherished rules and customs. In 1832, Thomas Babington Macauley argued in favor of political reform to “protect the rule of law from the exercise of arbitrary power”. (MORGAN, 2010, p. 473) The laws were, then, a measure to defer people to the state system, and keep them away from the “revolutionary” consequences of industrial changes, and the frequent attempts to create from them a new politics. (MORGAN, 2010, p. 473) It was through the evolution of law that other political and social changes happened. As mentioned by Morgan,

Among all classes, the old morality – bribery and unbelief, drinking, wrenching, and gambling – gradually became regarded as archaic if not antisocial. As well as ‘vital religion’, rationalist enlightenment, retailed from Scotland and France, and cheaper consumer goods indicated that life could be longer and more refined. (MORGAN, 2010, p. 473)

Through religion and the rule of laws, gender roles were well established. Women (the descendants of Eve) were to follow the punishment set by God at the beginning of time – they should be subordinated to men, their masters. Women should look up for the image of Virgin Mary and reinforce the characteristics in their behavior that were angelical. Women are mothers. And mothers, like angels, protect, guard, and care for all humans. In the Victorian Period, it was very common to define the role of a woman as that of an angel. Women are subordinated to men as angels are subordinated to God. Women are the protectors of their homes and family. The author Coventry Patmore writes a well-known poem, “The Angel in the House”, first published in 1854, which generalizes this image of women as selfless, loving creatures whose only purpose in life is to please and protect. Beautiful as it may be, this role can be suffocating, because it does not account for individual aspirations or needs. The poem well exemplifies what is expected from women in the Victorian period, when the female roles are well established, according to rules that are to be followed in order to maintain a society with very strict gender functions.

Patmore was a poet and literary critic. “The Angel in the House” is his masterpiece, the work that made him a famous writer. The poem sets a description of a happy marriage according to the Victorian ideal of a domestic life, presenting and the gender roles men and women are to play. But this is not the first work to call women angels. I quote Nina Auerbach when she states that “angels proliferate most freely in novels of the 1840s and 1850s”, (AUERBACH, 1982, p. 82) i.e. two decades previous to Patmore’s publication. Important authors such as

Dickens and Thackeray, even the Pre-Raphaelites, have used the image of women as angels in the house in their books, poems, or paintings.

As Nel Noddings asserts, this role extols woman as “infantile, weak, and mindless – a creature in constant need of male supervision and protection”. (NODDINGS, 1989, p. 59) First a woman obeys her father and brothers, then her husband. This is the role she is expected to embody. As a consequence of her holiness and willingness to help, her husband would strive and prosper. So, the female functions of that time consisted of caring for the home and for the household, for the family, for the husband. Queen Victoria herself, while being the ruler of a great empire, still kept the image of a caring wife and a mother for the nation.

With women’s place being in the domestic life, and their focus on the family and husbands, there was no room for them in the spaces outside their house. Life was not easy for women who did not marry, or who were born poor. Therefore, the debate about women’s place in society called “Woman Question”, (which started around the seventeenth century) became a recurrent topic of discussion well into the nineteenth century. Because, while many writers (like Coventry Patmore) were reinforcing the domestic place of women, other artists, like Barbara Leigh Smith, were complaining about that and questioning why women’s functions should be so restricted. Besides writing *A Brief Summary, in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws of England Concerning Women: Together with a Few Observations Thereon* (1869), Smith also co-created the *English Woman's Journal*, a periodical that published texts produced by women and supported women’s educational and political rights. For the author, women should have the rights to inherit property, they should be able to have jobs in areas such as Law and Medicine, which were “closed in fact” (GLEADE, 2001, p. 2) for women. Women had predetermined jobs they could follow. In addition, they did not have the same education possibilities as men, which made it even more difficult for them to get jobs that were not related to the domestic life. As said by Le Faye,

Most girls were educated at home, either by their parents or by a governess with the assistance of visiting tutors, but the sum total was the same: needlework, both for necessity and for pleasure; simple arithmetic; fine hand writing, which was considered a very elegant accomplishment; enough music to be able to sing and play some country dances on the forte-piano or harpsichord for family entertainment; a little drawing; some French fables to recite; reading the Bible, Shakespeare, other poetry and some respectable novels such as Sir Charles

Grandison; and some very scrappy ideas of history and geography. (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 88)

The education for Middle-Class and Upper-Class girls was very limited, and enough to keep them from going too far. Whilst men would work and provide for the family, women would care for the home and the domestic life. In most cases, women could not inherit property when their father passed away; instead, the inheritance would go to the oldest male relative, be it a brother or a distant cousin. Furthermore, the occupations were restricted. Thus, “women were portrayed as financially, intellectually and emotionally dependent on their kin”, (GLEADE, 2001, p. 51) first on their fathers, then on their husbands. If they wanted to have a good way of living, they should marry a respectable man who could provide for them. Convenient marriages, where fortune and family names mattered, played an important role in the period. In return to the husband’s name and the benefits that came from it, a woman should be compliant, protect her family, and take good care of the children.

That type of marriage was for families that had something to offer. If a woman was poor, plain and with no name, things were even more difficult. There were few options for jobs if a woman desired, or needed, to work; for women from respectable families and with an excellent educational background, there were salaried positions as ladies-in-waiting, women of the bedchamber or mistress of the robes. For those of lower social scales there were jobs as paid companions, governesses, teachers, or domestic posts such as housekeepers or maids. (GLEADE, 2001, p. 53) For the lower classes, the options were even scantier.

The nineteenth century was a time characterized for industry and development. According to David McDowall, “after the Industrial Revolution, nineteenth-century Britain was the ‘workshop’ of the world”. (MCDOWALL, 1989, p. 131) Therefore, with so many industries producing more than any country in the world, the need for labor also increased. In the countryside, women worked in the field; and in some regions, such as East Anglia, “large groups of women and children tramped long distances to work excessive hours in appalling conditions”. (GLEADE, 2001, p. 11) In addition, women continued doing domestic work, and “40 per cent of all working women were recorded as domestic servants in the 1851 census”. (GLEADE, 2001, p. 11)

Working class women had a range of occupations to follow, though they were rather limited to certain fields. Besides working in the countryside, they could also work in towns and industrial cities. They were underpaid, and even though some tried to negotiate for better pay,

those initiatives were fruitless. But even for women working in the fields, industries, or as maids and servants, living life as an angel was still an ideal to be pursued.

This notion about the angel – or demon, in certain cases – was popular in the Victorian period, and “functioned above all as a shaping principle, not only of fictions, but of lives as well”. (AUERBACH, 1982, p. 3) It was spread through the arts, and can be quite noticeable in literature, as mentioned before. But paradoxically, at the same time this myth of the angelic woman was spreading, some voices were heard rejecting this ideal, and declaring that women should do something different with their lives. For it was also in the Victorian period that, in literature, women writers “dominated the vast novel market in Victorian England”, (THOMPSON, 1999, p. 14) and a number of them became famous after going through the trial of publishing their works.

Among the best known female authors we have Anne Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Brontë, Fanny Burney, and George Eliot. Those authors took the pen – a phallic object meant for male hands – and managed to be forever immortalized as great writers. However, success did not come easily. Writers had to fulfill some expectations regarding their works. As mentioned by Elaine Showalter (1977), “The Victorians expected women’s novels to reflect the feminine values they exalted, although obviously the woman novelist herself had outgrown the constraining feminine role”. (SHOWALTER, 1977, p. 7) In addition, their careers were marked by the prejudice of being a woman. In 1837, the laureate poet Robert Southey wrote in his letter to Charlotte that “Literature cannot be the business of a woman’s life, and it ought not to be”. (SHORTER, 1908, p. 128) In the *Subjection of Women*, John Stuart Mill says,

But they have not yet produced any of those great and luminous new ideas which form an era in thought, nor those fundamentally new conceptions in art, which open a vista of possible effects not before thought of, and found a new school. Their compositions are mostly grounded on the existing fund of thought, and their creations do not deviate widely from existing types. (MILL, 2009, p. 122)

Therefore, female artists not only had to face the difficulties of publishing a work because of their gender, they also had high expectations to come up to. That was part of the burden that came with their gender. For Virginia Woolf, the ghost of the Angel in the House loomed over Victorian writers. As she states in her speech “Professions for Women”,

It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her. You who come of a younger and happier generation may not have heard of her—you may not know what I mean by *The Angel in the House*. . . . She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all...she was pure. (WOOLF, 1974, p. 174)

There were many discussions concerning women, their biology and the space they should occupy in society. However, there never seemed to have a consensus about where women should be. Moreover, that led to a division between those who thought of women as angels, and those who thought women should have more rights granted than they did. Furthermore, if women were not angels, what would they be? As mentioned before, in a system that worked through dichotomies, we have good and evil, light and dark, and the counterpart for angels should be demons. Thus, if on one hand women were the angels in the house, on the other they could turn into terrible demons. As with Eve in the Creation myth, good and evil were two sides of the same coin.

After all, it was not Eve's initial intention to eat of the forbidden fruit; much like Adam, she was seduced by the idea of knowledge, something that was not within her reach. In the Victorian period, angels could become demons as fast as Eve became a sinful, condemned woman. As Tennyson writes in *Idylls of the King* (1859), "For men at most differ as Heaven and earth / But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell". It did not take much for a woman to become a demon. According to Mary Daly,

The myth [of Eve and the Fall] takes on cosmic proportions since the male's viewpoint is metamorphosed into God's viewpoint. It amounts to a cosmic false naming. It misnames the mystery of evil, casting it into the distorted mold of the myth of feminine evil. In this way images and conceptualizations about evil are thrown out of focus and its deepest dimensions are not really confronted. (DALY, 1973, p. 20)

If women carry evil within themselves, they must be contained in order not to unleash the evil they possessed. Therefore, women's life is controlled by men, their bodies belong to their husbands and their children, and their minds should not be granted much knowledge or power. Women who went against those principles were fallen women – or demons.

In fact, the dichotomist approach to the world precedes the myth of Adam and Eve. It can be traced back to the times of Zoroastrianism, in the 2nd millennium BC. According to the Jewish *Babylonian Talmud*, a compilation made around 500 BC, there is a mention to the myth of Lilith – Adam’s first wife, before Eve was created from his ribs. However, differently from Eve, who lived peacefully with Adam before they were expelled from Eden, Lilith reacted when Adam tried to dominate her, and went away. In Christianity, her myth is either erased, or she is turned into a demon, presented as a seductress and a rebel. As mentioned by Judith Plaskow, “Lilith is not a demon; rather she is a woman named a demon by a tradition that does not know what to do with strong women”. (PLASKOW, 2005, p. 84)

If we transcend the dichotomies, Lilith and Eve can be said to be the two sides of the same coin. Their myths end in similar ways, with both responsible for the evil that ensues, as sinners whose evil doings mankind has to bear the consequences. In Victorian times, women should strive to be angels and to control their tendency to be demonic.

1.2 THE WHITE WITCH: CREOLE WOMEN IN THE 19TH CENTURY

On the other side of the ocean, in the Caribbean islands, the female roles were also well established. During the 19th century most of the islands in Central America were English or French colonies. The English called them the West Indies; the French called them *Les Antilles*. In the English perspective, they formed an important part of the British Empire. Most of the landed families we find in important Victorian novels possessed also plantations and slaves in the colonies, who granted the economic status they displayed in Europe.

The Caribbean is a place known for its cultural variety; it became known as the West Indies after Christopher Columbus landed there on behalf of Spain. The place was then disputed, conquered and colonized by Europeans throughout centuries until the islands finally had their independence. There are many islands in the Caribbean territory, and their history binds them together. The similarities go from imposed European “monopoly, slavery, the era of piracy, stirrings of a national identity” to “slave rebellions, abolition, wars of independence, economic dependence on outside sources, local political fragmentation, strong rulers, and dependence on tourism”. (ARGOTE- FREYRE; FIGUEREDO, 2008, p. 8)

As the cultural and historical background from those islands is broad and complex, they are only referred to instrumentally in this thesis, whose focus concentrates on Jamaica and

Dominica, the two islands where the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* takes place. In the novel *Jane Eyre*, a substantial portion of Mr. Rochester's present fortune comes from the money he gets as he marries a Jamaican heiress. Jamaica was at first under Spanish rule, when the indigenous people were explored. In the 17th century England conquered the island and named it Jamaica, establishing plantations and transporting African people as slaves to work forcibly in them. According to Figueredo and Argote-Freyre, "By the mid 1700s Jamaica had become England's most important Caribbean colony" and "England's main sugar provider, enriching planters there". (ARGOTE- FREYRE; FIGUEREDO, 2008, p. 71)

Many British people – especially the second male sons in respectable families (the ones who would not inherit property) – went to the island to administer the plantations and control the trade business, some becoming very rich. Those who established themselves there with their families soon became a large part of the white population. This control from the British Empire over Jamaica went on until the revolution that took place in the nineteenth century, which led to the abolition of slavery. Jamaica, as Thomas C. Holt asserts, besides being the "jewel" of the British colonial crown, "had the largest slave population and the most demographically and politically complex society". (HOLT, 1992, p. 8) The mixture of the cultures from the Europeans, the Indigenous and the Black people, followed by later waves of immigration from China and India, produced a peculiar cultural configuration with strong similarities amongst the islands. Jamaica and Dominica were not an exception.

Dominica was under the French rule before it was conceded to Britain in the eighteenth century. It was the third "largest British Commonwealth Territory in the Caribbean", (BAKER, 1994, p. 13) and people usually described it according to its natural beauties. Jean Rhys, who was born there, says, "It is strange, growing up in a very beautiful place and seeing that it is beautiful...Behind the bright colors the softness, the hills like clouds and the clouds like fantastic hills. There was something austere, sad, lost, in all these things. (RHYS, 2016, n. p.) Dominica's history is quite related to the other islands; the exploration and colonization from the European, the slavery of Africans and the natives, the diaspora of many peoples make the Caribbean a special place. As theorist Stuart Hall claims "The distinction of our culture is the result of the largest interlacement and fusion, in the furnace of a colonial society, of different African, Asian, and European cultural elements". (HALL, 2003, p. 31.

Translation mine)¹ Therefore, to explain female roles in the Caribbean, it is necessary to discuss the matter of cultural identity and of Creoleness in a society where cultures are deeply mixed. The concept of identity, for Hall, “is the product of taking a position, of staking a place in a certain discourse or practice. In other words, of saying, “This is, for the moment where I am, who I am and where I stand”. (HALL, 2019, p. 315) Furthermore, identity, for the theorist, is not something closed, it is always in process. Cultural identity, in that sense, is not only one shared culture that people have in common. It is

[...] a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. (HALL, 2019, p. 394)

Therefore, the cultural identity of the Caribbean has been in constant move, never fixed to a specific culture or another. Its culture has become creolized, it has “derived from plantations; insular civilizations...social pyramids with an African or East Indian base and a European peak”. (GLISSANT, 1999, p. 221) Creoleness is a cultural process which has taken place throughout the Caribbean, though in different ways in each island.

The term comes from the word Creole, and it means “the interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history”. (BERNABÉ et al., 1990, p. 891) As mentioned before, the Caribbean was mainly colonized by the Spanish, the French, and the British, who moved into the islands to profit from the vast territories that were unexplored. After they established families there, their descendants would be considered Creoles, i.e., people of European ascent who were born in the colonies. They showed the influence of European culture in the way they dressed, the religion they practiced, and the language they spoke; however, they were also influenced by the culture of the place where they lived.

For White Creole women, which are the object of our concern in the analyzed novels, life was domestic. They looked after the house and the children, with the help of enslaved women. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, women were legally and economically as dependent on men as they were in Britain. Since most of the records about women’s lives at

¹ In the translation of La Guardia et al.: “A distinção de nossa cultura é manifestamente o resultado do maior entrelaçamento e fusão, na fornalha da sociedade colonial, de diferentes elementos culturais africanos, asiáticos e europeus”.

that period in the West Indies were written by men, the details of their lives usually were considered of no concern. According to Eve O'Callaghan, "women had no official place in the drama of imperial conquest; their roles as mothers of heirs and paragons of reassuringly cozy domesticity, were strictly supportive". (O'CALLAGHAN, 2004, p. 17)

The roles differed for Black, White and Brown women. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese says that,

Within the household, the everyday lives of slaveholding women, and in some measure those of slaves, conformed closely to prevailing notions of the appropriate division of labour by gender, following earlier British, European, and, to some extent, African conceptions of male and female spheres. (FOX-GENOVESE, 1988, p. 192)

The reason why we are talking about the conditions of female life in the West Indies is that Bertha Mason, in *Jane Eyre*, and Antoinette Cosway, in *White Sargasso Sea*, are White Creole women. It was common for the White women to embody characteristics of Black or Brown women. Their modes of speaking, of dressing and their manners were adopted from their Black and Brown counterparts. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* this is clearly seen when Antoinette's behavior does not match what is expected from her English husband, being similar to the Black women surrounding them.

In terms of work, White women had few options, as their lives were limited to domesticity and the house. If they were not the plantation mistresses, or wives of important men, they would work as servants. According to Fox-Genovese, "Convention declared that the household responsibilities of slaveholding women were natural extensions of their personal relations as wives, mothers, and daughters, all of whom answered to a master who was husband or father". (FOX-GENOVESE, 1988, p. 192) Despite the fact that they were plantation mistresses – thus, before the Emancipation, held enslaved people –, this female role had similarities with the British angel in the house. This role, the "figure of the lady, especially the plantation mistress, dominated southern ideals of womanhood", (FOX-GENOVESE, 1988, p. 47) and white women should follow the ideal.

Still, this angel function was subordinate to men. Patricia Morton (1996) explains that "elite males in the plantation hierarchy had to maintain absolute control over all reproductive females and, most crucially, over those who bore their legal heirs". (MORTON, 1996, p. 91) Therefore, even though they were in a privileged status in comparison to the other women in

the colonial period, White Creole women had no right to property, to income, or to custody of their children; their bodies and minds belonged to their fathers or husbands.

In the eighteenth century, woman was defined according to a stereotype. As Beckles observes

She was now considered unfit for manual labour on account of her endemic fragility; unsuited to physical exertion in the tropic [sic] as a consequence of her possession of a faint heart and a delicate skin; terrified of black male sexuality on account of her chaste, virginal, and jet-white purity; and devoid of lust, gaiety, and passion, having embraced in its fullness the importance of ordered moral discipline and self-denial. (BECKLES, 1995, p. 132)

It was this stereotype that was considered the proper female conduct, which excluded Black women for, in this case, “Norms of appropriate gender conventions could be violated”. (FOX-GENOVESE, 1988, p. 193) Black women had to work in conditions that would never be entrusted to White women – hard labor and physical exertion; their bodies belonged to their masters, thus they would do what they desired with them. They might be subjected to sexual violation even if they had a partner, and their children could be taken away if the master wished to do so. They could never “count on the ‘protection’—however constraining and sometimes hypocritical—that surrounded white women”. (FOX-GENOVESE, 1988, p. 194)

Besides the plantation mistress (the equivalent of the British angel in the house), there were women who did not conform to the rule of the perfect housewife; consequently, they would be considered deviants in the eyes of society. Whilst in Britain the angel had its demon, in the West Indies the plantation mistress had the White witch and the enslaved Black woman. If on one hand the White Creole woman had to be motherly and act like a lady, the Black woman was hard and strong, thus unfeminine. This idea created a dichotomy between the White Creole and the Black African, where the first was superior to the latter.

At the same time, there was the White witch. Herbert G. de Lisser wrote *The White Witch of Rosehall* (1929) portraying Annie Palmer, the ghost that haunted her former home, Rose Hall. Besides being in a position of power that was uncommon for women, she was a very sensuous woman, differently from the pure and obedient plantation mistress as was expected. As the Angel in the House came from Patmore’s poem, the White Witch came from Lisser’s novel, as another stereotype related to female roles. This stereotyped figure was used in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and later in Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea*, to depict the White Creole Bertha Mason or Antoinette Cosway/Mason/Rochester.

This demonized woman, connected with the idea of a witch – considered “associated with the Devil” (SIGNS, 2008, p. 192) – was the complete reverse of the good plantation mistress. She was deviant from the rules, which dictated that “Women had no business to bear arms and no place in politics. They were not fit to meet men on equal terms in the combat of public life and, should they attempt to, they would open themselves to being bested by superior physical strength”. (FOX-GENOVESE, p. 195)

The Creole woman did not have the same status as a woman born and raised in Europe. It is ironic that they had to follow the ideal of the European woman – pious, generous, altruistic, and pure – yet European women were above them in terms of womanhood. Therefore, the White Creole woman becomes the Other for the White European woman. After all, the West Indies were a place for “tropical sensuality” and its exotic, hot landscapes translate the way its inhabitants are. Voicu asserts that this exoticism describes a particular mode of aesthetic perception, one which “renders people objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery”. (VOICU, 2014, p. 65)

This Other, as described by O’Callaghan, “rarely acts as an individual, but demonstrates instances of pre-given traits”, (O’CALLAGHAN, 2004, p. 60) and receives adjectives such as primitive, wild, and, for women, sensuous and enchanting. Hence, the Creole, a figure that is exotic for its identity and fluidity, fits this space of the Other, and with the figure comes the place. The Caribbean is also a Creole space, with a “homogeneous territory, peopled by ‘others’ of distinctly separate race and culture, easily fitted into colonial hierarchies and within rigid categories”. (O’CALLAGHAN, 2004, p. 60)

In this Eurocentric line of thought, the Creole woman would be less than the European one, and even if they shared the ascendancy, the language, and the moral values, still they lived in another place, with a different culture, and a different history. They were not the same. Thus, even though they are similar, the British Angel in the House is not the same as the plantation mistress; in fact, taking for example Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, the White Creole woman of Mr. Rochester was compared to a demon more than once in the Victorian novel, especially because of her excesses.

There are more examples of this representation of Creole women and the West Indies in British literature in the nineteenth century. Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1847) brings the rich Creole woman Miss Swartz who ends up marrying a Scotsman. She is called a “dark object of

conspiracy” who responded to their affection with “quite a tropical ardour”. (THACKEREY, 2006, p. 183) As for the space, in Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda* (1801), Jamaica is depicted as a “dishonest space, one that ruins Victor, Belinda’s suitor before he leaves the island”. (HULTQUIST, 2014, p. 43)

In West Indian English literature women writers are not as numerous as they are in Britain. Since education was already restricted at that time, even basic literacy was limited. Furthermore, as indicated by O’Callaghan, “even if the few educated non-white women harbored literary aspirations, all outlets were controlled by the British authorities and catered to the ‘English’ tastes cultivated by the plantocracy”. (O’ CALLAGHAN, 2004, p. 2) Nonetheless, Carole Boyce and Elaine Savory affirm that there were many unknown women writing in the Caribbean, “but unfortunately not much is said about those”. (BOYCE; SAVORY, 1990, p. 2) Some renowned writers at the time were Henrietta Jenkin, Mary Prince, and Pamela Smith.

In terms of female characters, according to the poet E. Kamau Brathwaite there are three familiar models to represent the White Creole woman from the West Indies. First, there is Miranda, “Shakespeare’s beautiful, virginal symbol of desirable English/European womanhood”, followed by Miss Ann, “whose respectful title evokes the plantation mistress, the pious but firm lady of the Great House”. Finally there is Antoinette, “the disturbed white Creole [...] who, associated as she is with black culture, occupies a more indeterminate space in colonial mythology”. (O’CALLAGHAN, 2004, p. 1) By those archetypes it is possible to see that the ideal of women required by society was, in literature as well, the same as its counterpart, the witch, demonic woman.

1.3 THE MOCKING DEMON: FEMALE SEXUALITY IN THE 19TH CENTURY

From angels in the house and plantation mistresses to demons and witches it is possible to notice what was expected from women in the nineteenth century both in Britain and in the West Indies. The angels and plantation mistresses were expected to be pure, lenient, and caring; the demons, witches and fallen women were symbols of corruption, destruction, the opposite of what the angels and ladies should be.

As Eve and Lilith in the Judeo-Christian tradition, those women were put on opposite sides, as opposite forces, although in many aspects they shared the same position. One was the symbol of domesticated woman, the other was a seductress who did the contrary of what was expected from her. On the one hand there is purity, on the other impropriety; virtue, and lack thereof. Virtue, purity and impropriety are connected with female sexuality, and female sexuality, in 19th Century literature, is deeply connected with madness. Ultimately, their purity or sensuality defined the roles they played – the angel or the demon. However, to talk about sexuality it is necessary to understand what was expected from women's sexuality in the nineteenth century in England and in the West Indies.

As mentioned before, nineteenth century England had rules for everything, and sexuality was no exception. In his *History of Sexuality*, Michael Foucault writes that in the Victorian period, “silence became the rule”; (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 3) sexuality was confined, hidden in the home, where husbands and wives would copulate only as a way to reproduce. In the open air, “proper demeanour avoided contact with other bodies, and verbal decency sanitized one's speech”. (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 3) If this unspoken rule was broken, the offenders should pay. An example worth mentioning is the case of the author Oscar Wilde, who was called a sodomite by the 9th Marquess of Queensberry because of his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. The accusation led to a series of events that culminated in Wilde's arrest in solitary confinement with hard labour, and eventually led to his breaking down and premature death.

Of course the accusation was about Wilde's relationship with other men, but the rule of non-spoken sexuality still applies. After all, not only was sexuality reserved for the quietness of one's home, it was also reserved for men and women, in heterosexual relationships for, as mentioned by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* “normative sexuality fortifies normative gender”. (BUTLER, 1990, p. 12) The female roles were solidified by sexuality, thus the role of angel or demon depended on how women behaved. As angels, women were expected to reserve their body to their husband and for reproduction, to become mothers. The nineteenth century was a time to discuss nature vs nurture. For some theorists, such as Charles Darwin, there is a reason why the sexes are so different. Cynthia Russett explains that “In the evolutionary development of the race women had lagged behind men, much as ‘primitive people’ lagged behind Europeans”. (RUSSETT, 1989, p. 11) And “The reason for woman's arrested development was the need to preserve her energies for reproduction”. (RUSSETT, 1989, p. 11) Therefore, women's natural role was to

be mothers and reproduce the species, a secondary role for them since men were the primary – they produced and women reproduced.

Thus women became fragilely attractive, while men grew muscular and courageous, each sex loving in the other what it did not find in itself. It followed, therefore, that women could never expect to match the intellectual and artistic achievements of men, nor could they expect an equal share of power and authority. (RUSSETT, 1989 p. 12)

Both in Britain and in the West Indies this was true of White women. They did not need to have anything else; they did not need to strive to have more than what was already proposed to them. Consequently, sex becomes a norm, part of “a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce—demarcate, circulate, differentiate—the bodies it controls”. (BUTLER, 2004, p. 12) The sexual regulation certainly served as a way to maintain morality within society, in a way that for those who did not follow the regulations set upon it, would be punished, as was the case with Oscar Wilde. Sexual deviance included excessive desire and passion, fascination and “its suggestions of almost irresistible attraction to evil”, (O’MALLEY, 2006, p. 5) and perversion. At the same time, according to Butler, sexuality cannot always be regulated, for

The fact that desire is not fully determined corresponds with the psychoanalytic understanding that sexuality is never fully captured by any regulation. Rather, it is characterized by displacement, it can exceed regulation, take on new forms in response to regulation, even turn around and make it sexy. In this sense, sexuality is never fully reducible to the “effect” of this or that operation of regulatory power. This is not the same as saying that sexuality is, by nature, free and wild. On the contrary, it emerges precisely as an improvisational possibility within a field of constraints. (BUTLER, 2004, p. 15)

Therefore, although sexuality in the nineteenth century was guarded and contained, reserved for the home and shared by husband and wife, still it was not limited; it is not possible to reduce sexuality completely, after all it is a necessity for human beings in order to reproduce. However, there needs to be a certain limit in how to express one’s sexuality. For Butler, sexuality does not follow the gender, thus the gender does not determine sexuality. In the nineteenth century, though, certain things were expected from males and females, and heterosexuality was expected from both. For women, as they were supposed to try and reach the status of angel, creatures that do not have gender, who are not in any form sexual, their

sexuality was not to be displayed openly. They were meant to be wives, daughters, and mothers; they were supposed to be Eves, submissive to their men and bearers of children, still punished for the original sin; not Liliths, the one who ran away from her responsibilities and became known as a seductress and a demon.

Pleasure and desire were to be ignored. Desire was seen as evil, and pleasure was not necessary for reproduction. In the West Indies, the rules were not that different when applied to White Creole women. “The conventions that defined the lady included a strong emphasis on purity and chastity in the unmarried and decorum in the married”. (FOX-GENOVESE, 1988, p. 235) However, while still controlling female sexuality, “it did not deny its existence” and “Ladies recoiled in horror from inappropriate manifestations of sexuality and severely criticized even women of their own class who allowed their private lives to become a topic of public discussion. But within their own circles, they acknowledged the existence of passion, deploring only its ravages”. (FOX- GENOVESE, 1988, p. 235)

They also had an archetype to follow, that of the plantation mistress, and they should stay away from the archetype of the witch, the woman who refused to follow the rules. O’Callaghan asserts that “White women were supposedly completely fulfilled in nurturing domesticity and motherhood, and so refined that sexuality was repulsive”. (O’CALLAGHAN, 2004, p. 28) At the same time, Black women were considered “fallen temptresses and therefore subject to institutionalized rape” (O’CALLAGHAN, 2004, p. 28) as they were the objects of their masters. While White women were pure, Black women, and White women who did not follow the codes were considered a threat to the mistresses.

The sexual and moral codes were both similar in Britain and in the West Indies in the 19th Century, as can be seen. Sexual repression and control can be seen in the Arts, much as the female roles are depicted and reproduced. Teresa De Lauretis asserts that

woman, the other-from man (nature and Mother, site of sexuality and masculine desire, sign and object of men's social exchange) is the term that designates at once the vanishing point of our culture's fictions of itself and the condition of the discourses in which the fictions are represented. For there would be no myth without a princess to be wedded or a sorceress to be vanquished [...], no desire without an object, no kinship without incest, no science without nature, no society without sexual difference. (DE LAURETIS, 1984, p. 5)

Literature, and other forms of Arts, has been one of the ways to reproduce and maintain certain myths (i.e. the angel and the demon), the “collective fantasies that give substance and structure to a society's political, social, economic and cultural existence, and also help

structure the individual's existence". (HORROCKS, 1995, p. 17) Sexuality, madness, deviance, and immorality are some of the sensible subjects portrayed in literature, and those will be seen in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, though in different proportions. Other violations such as "Adultery, celibacy, mannishness, cross-dressing, coarse frankness of gaze, the incongruity of the masculine and potentially phallic spade, the 'self-immolation' of the convent, the sexless marriage" (O'MALLEY, 2006, p. 2) can be seen in some literary works. *Wuthering Heights* (1847), for instance, the only novel published by Emily Brontë, depicts a couple involved in deviances such as passion, adultery, mannishness, and perversion.

In *Jane Eyre*, sexuality is raging in the characters of Jane, Mr. Rochester, the mistresses he has in France, Italy, and Germany, and, mostly, in Bertha Mason, the mad wife locked in the attic for her excesses – which include drinking and adultery. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette Cosway is the daughter of a father who had many children out of marriage, something that her mother, Annette, did not seem to mind (except for the fact that she ended up depressed and confined); her mother, Annette, is a true beauty, a seductress who manages to marry a rich English man even when she is decadent, without any fortune to her name, and after the disgrace that fell upon her late husband. Finally, Antoinette not only has a relationship with a cousin of hers, she also takes pleasure in having sexual intercourse with her husband. The expected result of all of those immoral practices is, of course, punishment. In *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the punishment for sexuality is severe. Jane goes through starvation, coldness, and a near death experience after she almost marries an already married man – even though she was unaware of those circumstances. Mr. Rochester suffers the Biblical punishment for adultery losing his sight and one of his hands, becoming a shadow of his former self, in need of help from a woman in order to live on. Bertha is locked away for almost two decades not only for her deviations, but because she is not a true European – she is a Creole woman. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette's father dies and leaves his family in disgrace; Annette (the mother) grows mad and dies alone, forgotten even by her own family. Finally, Antoinette (the daughter) goes through a gradual process of loss of identity, taken away by her master, her husband, who changes her name to an English one – Bertha. Then, she is locked away and slowly becomes the wild mad woman in *Jane Eyre*.

2. "I AM NO ANGEL"

*There is no sorrow in his smile,
No kindness in his tone;
The triumph of a selfish heart
Speaks coldly there alone;
He says: "She loved me more than life;
And truly it was sweet
To see so fair a woman kneel,
In bondage, at my feet.*

*There was a sort of quiet bliss
To be so deeply loved,
To gaze on trembling eagerness
And sit myself unmoved.
And when it pleased my pride to grant
At last some rare caress,
To feel the fever of that hand
My fingers deigned to press*

Currer Bell, Gilbert

2.1 CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S JOURNEY

Charlotte Brontë was born at a time in which female novelists were rising. In the nineteenth century authors as Jane Austen, the Brontës and George Eliot answered the question about whether women could produce literature, and they are studied and reviewed up to the present day in a worldwide scale. At the same time, John Stuart Mill mentioned that it would be difficult for women to have a "literature of their own" (MILL, 2009, p. 126) independent of the male tradition, and it was expected from their works to be innovative and original.

After her first published novel, *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë received a variety of criticism regarding her work, and some she answered back. One of those was about her position as a female writer, when critic G. H. Lewes judged Currer Bell not as an author, but as a female author. Her answer was: "I dare say you meant no harm, and perhaps you will not now be able to understand why I was so grieved at what you will probably deem such a trifle; but grieved I was, and indignant too". (SHORTER, 1908, p. 106) The author also mentions that she preferred the readers to think of Currer Bell as a man, for then they would be fairer.

(SHORTER, 1908, p. 79) She continues saying that “You will, I know, keep measuring me by some standard of what you deem becoming of my sex; where I am not what you consider grateful you will condemn me”, (SHORTER, 1908, p. 80) and that

I cannot, when I write, think always of myself and of what is elegant and charming in femininity; it is not on those terms, or with such ideas, I ever took pen in hand: and if it is only on such terms my writing will be tolerated, I shall pass away from the public and trouble it no more. (SHORTER, 1908, p. 80)

Brontë shows an awareness of her position in society years before Coventry Patmore wrote “The Angel in the House”; she knows what was expected from her as a woman, and a woman who dares to write and publish her works. It is no wonder she managed to be successful. However, her path to become a recognized writer was not simple. There are many biographies of Charlotte and her famed family. According to Juliet Barker, in the biography *The Brontës: Wild Genius on the Moors: The Story of a Literary Family*,

What is surprising is that, despite so much activity, the basic ideas about the Brontës’ lives have remained unchanged. Charlotte is portrayed as the long-suffering victim of duty, subordinating her career as a writer to the demands of her selfish and autocratic father; Emily is the wild child of genius, deeply misanthropic yet full of compassion for her errant brother; Anne is the quiet, conventional one who, lacking her sisters’ rebellious spirit, conforms to the demands of society and religion. The men in their lives have suffered an even worse fate, blamed first of all by Mrs Gaskell, and since then by feminists, for holding the Brontë sisters back from achieving literary success and even, at times, for simply existing. Patrick is universally depicted as cold, austere and remote, yet given to uncontrollable rages, alternately neglecting and tyrannizing his children. Branwell is a selfish braggart, subordinating his sisters’ lives to his own by right of his masculinity, and negating the value of this sacrifice by squandering his talent and the family’s money on drink and drugs. Arthur Bell Nicholls, who cannot be portrayed as either mad or bad, is simply dull. (BARKER, 2013, p. 18)

There have been several discussions on the Brontë family. In this section, though, the objective is to briefly show Charlotte’s story as a writer and the criticism she received after publishing her novels. The author was born in 1816, in Thornton, Yorkshire, from an Anglo-Irish reverend called Patrick Brontë, who published a book of poems and several sermons, essays and articles; and from Maria Branwell Brontë, who wrote a diary. Out of the six children the couple had, two died in childhood and the others grew up to write. Branwell strove to have his talent recognized, but his lack of diplomacy and short temper hindered his

way.² When it comes to gender role, it must be observed that too much pressure was put on Branwell's shoulders. As the children grew up and lived at the Haworth Parsonage, if their father retired, or died, the family would have to leave the place. Branwell was the only male among the four remaining siblings – and therefore the one who got the best education. So, it was expected that he would grow and provide for the safety of his sisters in the future. The load was too heavy; he took to drinking and went into drugs, becoming a disappointment to the family. As an author, the production he left consists of a body of short fiction, poems and translations from classical texts. Its quality is yet to be determined, because what Branwell writes is some degrees wilder than what we find in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, on the brink between aesthetics and chaos.

Patrick Brontë worked as a perpetual curate in Haworth. After the death of his wife, Rev. Brontë raised his children with the help of his sister-in-law Elizabeth Branwell. Branwell would stay home, studying with private tutors, whereas the four girls – Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Emily – were sent to the Clergy's daughters school at Cowan Bridge, where "the fees were subsidized for the daughters of evangelical clergymen to a mere £14 per year". (INGHAM, 2006, p. 4) The school's records said that Charlotte was clever for her age, though with no remarkable talent. (GASKELL, 1998, p. 105) Maria and Elizabeth contracted tuberculosis and died. Thus, Rev. Brontë decided to take care of his daughters' education himself.

In 1831, when Charlotte was fifteen, she enrolled at Miss Wooler's School, in Roe Head, a place that was "a cheerful, roomy country house, standing a little apart in a field, on the right of the road from Leeds to Huddersfield." (GASKELL, 1998, p. 122) She was described by a friend, Mary Taylor, as "a little, old woman, so short-sighted that she always appeared to be seeking something, and moving her head from side to side to catch a sight of it. She was very shy and nervous, and spoke with a strong Irish accent". (GASKELL, 1998 p. 125)

Roe Head was a respectable school with wealthy girls, completely different from Cowan Bridge. Charlotte stayed there for a year, rose to be the top of her class, and in 1832 she returned home to tutor her sisters. In 1835, she returned to Roe Head as a teacher, and remained there for three years. In 1842, sponsored by their aunt, Charlotte and Emily went to the Pensionnat Héger, a school for fine ladies in Brussels. Their aim was to classify as

² The factual information about the Brontës displayed in this section (except when otherwise documented) comes from BARKER, 2013.

teachers, so that one day they might open their own school. As mentioned by Juliet Barker, “Charlotte and Emily did not fit easily into their new life at the Pensionnat Héger”, (BARKER, 2013, p. 505) since the culture in Belgium was different for theirs, and all lessons were taught in French. The sisters were also older than the other students. In a letter to her friend Ellen Nussey, Charlotte says,

It felt very strange at first to be under, submit to authority instead of exercising it – to obey orders instead of giving them – but I like that state of things – I returned to it with the same avidity that a cow that has long been kept on dry hay returns to fresh grass – don’t laugh at my simile – it is natural to me to submit and very unnatural to command. (SHORTER, 1908, p. 237)

In the Pensionnat they met Monsieur Héger, a very important figure in Charlotte’s and Emily’s personal lives. He recognized the girls’ talent, taught them rhetoric and French literature, and also revised their production while they were studying under him. For centuries there was a Victorian veil of silence about Charlotte’s and Emily’s experience at the Pensionnat, which was only made open a few decades ago. For the sake of this work, it suffices to say that the impact of meeting Monsieur Héger was so intense that he provided in them the inspiration to create three outstanding literary characters: Heathcliff in Emily’s *Wuthering Heights*; Mr Rochester in Charlotte’s *Jane Eyre* and Monsieur Paul in Charlotte’s *Villette*.

Charlotte and her siblings were always very close to one another. As children, they shared an imaginative life (BLOOM, 2008, p. 1), writing verses and stories together, creating the imaginary worlds of Angria (adventure fiction) and of Gondal (poetry). This early material is now known as their *Juvenilia*. It is there that Brontë’s life as a writer starts, at home with her siblings writing fantastic stories in a dining room surrounded by shelves (that were open to them) containing the *Bible*, the *Arabian Nights* and works by John Milton and Lord Byron. In 1846 the sisters spent all the money they had to publish a volume of sixty-one poems titled *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*, their famous androgynous pseudonyms. The idea of publishing the poems came from Charlotte, and the requirement that their identities remained anonymous was from Anne and Emily. The decision about the pseudonyms was an important one. According to Charlotte, it was

dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because – without at

that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine' – we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice. (HARMAN, 2015, p. 229)

As expected for three unknown poets, the collection did not sell well. In fact, only two copies were sold, and only a couple of critics commented on it, but on a praising note. For the sisters, though, the production of *Poems* taught that poetry did not sell “and it was not economic to pay for the publication of one’s own work: if they seriously intended to earn a living from writing, they would have to be more hard-headed about the whole business”. (BARKER, 2013, p. 656) Therefore, they decided to “press on immediately with trying to get their fiction before the public too”. (HARMAN, 2015, p. 232) In that same year Charlotte tried to find a publisher for her first novel, *The Professor*, together with the works of her sisters, Emily’s *Wuthering Heights* and Anne’s *Agnes Gray*, though unsuccessfully at first. Eventually, they found a publishing house, Smith, Elder & Co.³, which accepted *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Gray*, but rejected *The Professor*, on the grounds that it was too close to daily life, and readers looked for something “more imaginative and poetical – something more consonant with a highly wrought fancy, with a native taste for pathos – with sentiments more tender – elevated – unworldly”. (HARMAN, 2015, p. 246) What possibly happened was that – in the attempt to get distanced from the wild adventures of Angria, Charlotte exaggerated in the prosaic events in *The Professor*. Her intention was to create a (male) protagonist who

should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs – that he should never get a shilling he had not earned – that no sudden turns should lift him in a moment to wealth and high station – that whatever small competency he might gain should be won by the sweat of his brow ... that he should not even marry a beautiful nor a rich wife, nor a lady of rank – As Adam’s Son he should share Adam’s doom – Labour throughout life and a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment (BRONTË in BARKER, 2013, p. 657).

After the rejection of *The Professor*, Charlotte wrote *Jane Eyre* in four months in order to submit a novel that might be published along with her sisters, so that Emily and Anne would not feel uncomfortable because of her failure.

Smith, Elder & Co. was a respected publishing company, working with authors as important as John Ruskin and Charles Darwin. William Smith Williams, the editor who rejected *The*

³ This company still exists, now by the name W. H. Smith. It was founded in London in 1792, and is now 227 years old.

Professor, said in a letter to Brontë that it had “great literary power but did not believe it would sell”. (BARKER, 2013, p. 689) In addition, he expressed the desire of seeing her next novel. He was overwhelmed when he read *Jane Eyre*, with its poor and plain protagonist struggling against difficulties and opening her way in a story with a dark Byronic hero, and a mad woman hidden in the attic. All publishers in Smith, Elder & Co. were amazed by the work. Curren Bell was offered £100 for it, a small amount considering that at the time “the actual payments were in the region of five hundred pounds per novel”. (BARKER, 2013, p. 691) Even Mrs. Gaskell would receive £800 for her biography of Charlotte Brontë. Curren Bell, then, wrote a letter to them saying that

One hundred pounds is a small sum for a year’s intellectual labour, nor would circumstances justify me in devoting my time and attention to literary pursuits with so narrow a prospect of advantage did I not feel convinced that in case the ultimate result of my efforts should prove more successful than you now anticipate, you would make some proportionate addition to the remuneration you at present offer. On this ground of confidence in your generosity and honour, I accept your conditions. (BARKER, 2013, p. 691)

In October 19th 1847, Charlotte finally received the first copies of her novel. Differently from the poems she co-wrote with her sisters, *Jane Eyre* was huge a success. William Makepeace Thackeray, one of Charlotte’s favorite authors, gave his review saying that

I wish you had not sent me *Jane Eyre*. It interested me so much that I have lost (or won if you like) a whole day in reading it at the busiest period, with the printers I know waiting for copy. Who the author can be I can’t guess – if a woman she knows her language better than most ladies do, or has had a ‘classical’ education. It is a fine book though – the man & woman capital – the style very generous and upright so to speak. (BARKER, 2013, p. 702)

Many other critics praised her work; the *Critic* describes *Jane Eyre* as “a story of surpassing interest”, and *The Examiner* mentions that “There can be no question but that *Jane Eyre* is a very clever book. Indeed, it is a book of decided power”. (BARKER, 2013, p. 702) There were also some harsh criticism, of course, as Elizabeth Rigby’s in *The Quarterly Review* “Jane Eyre is throughout the personification of unregenerate and undisciplined spirit” and her “autobiography is preeminently an anti-Christian composition”. (GILBERT, GUBAR, 2000, p. 385) The fact stands, though, that Curren Bell’s first novel sold the first edition in within three months, and people everywhere were reading it.

Unfortunately, the happiness of having her first novel published would not last long. In the next year both Branwell and Emily died, and in 1849 Anne also passed. Branwell and Charlotte's relationship – arguably because as children it had been so close – was strained through Branwell's excesses. As she wrote to her friend Ellen, it was “an impediment to all happiness”. (SHORTER, 1908, p. 331) However, his passing took a toll on Charlotte and her family; Charlotte “took to bed, incapable of even speaking, waking from fitful sleep into a renewed awareness of what had taken place, a nightmarish state with ‘impressions experienced...such as we do not put into language’”. (HARMAN, 2015, p. 280)

Branwell died of the same disease that had taken Maria and Elizabeth Brontë – consumption. A couple of months later, Emily suffered the same fate, and in the next year, Anne as well. After Anne's death Charlotte “gave herself over to grief”. (HARMAN, 2015, p. 290) In a letter to Williams, a person who had become her friend over time, she wrote,

There must be Heaven or we must despair, for life seems bitter, brief – blank. To me – these two [Emily and Anne] have left in their memories a noble legacy. Were I quite solitary in the world – bereft even of Papa – there is something in the past I can love intensely and honour deeply – and it is something which cannot change – which cannot decay – which immortality guarantees from corruption...A year ago – had a prophet warned me how I should stand in June 1849 – how stripped and bereaved – had he foretold the autumn – the winter, the spring of sickness and suffering to be gone through – I should have thought – this can never be endured. It is over. Branwell – Emily – Anne are gone like dreams – gone as Maria and Elizabeth went twenty years ago. One by one I have watched them fall asleep on my arm – and closed their glazed eyes – I have seen them buried one by one – and – thus far – God has upheld me from my heart I thank Him. (HARMAN, 2015, p. 292)

Charlotte was the only sibling left. Her next novel, *Shirley*, reflects all the ups and downs its author had been through. She had started writing it when everything seemed fine. Then all things happened. As she started the novel again, “her mood had changed irrevocably”. (BARKER, 2015, p. 784) However, the status of Currer Bell as author of *Jane Eyre* remained, and the new novel had to meet great expectations. Still, while *Jane Eyre* has anger, fury and rebellion, *Shirley* seems to be trying for “objectivity, balance, restraint”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 373) In addition, “the whole story was an exploration of the ‘Woman Question’ which so exercised educated minds”. (BARKER, 2012, p. 788)

After *Shirley*, the discussion about her identity arose again. People were still curious about who Currer Bell was, if indeed it was a woman writing behind that name. Charlotte still

persisted in walking invisible. Even if her real name was displayed to the public, it would be impossible for her to socialize with other writers and critics. The thought that she would be judged as a woman rather than a writer remained. Still, there are some traits in *Jane Eyre* that evoke similar events in Brontë's life. The death of Helen Burns echoes the deaths of her sisters, Maria and Elizabeth. The same with the horrid portrait of Lowood. As declared by Barker, "It was inevitable that readers of the novel would recognize not only the setting of the novel in that area but also themselves and their neighbors". (BARKER, 2015, p. 794). With *Shirley*, the parallels were even stronger. First there were rumors, then her real name started to be whispered about. Some critics commented on how the men in the novel were wrongly written or fake; the *Atlas* declared that "There is a woman stamped on every page", (BARKER, 2015, p. 797) and the *Critic* said that "The female heart is here anatomized with a minuteness of knowledge of its most delicate fibres, which could only be obtained by one who had her own heart under inspection". (BARKER, 2015, p. 797) In the end, the critical consensus was that "*Shirley* was better written than *Jane Eyre*, but lacked the earlier novel's fire and originality: a worthy successor but not one that would further Currer Bell's reputation". (BARKER, 2015, p. 799)

The search for Currer Bell's identity continued. George Henry Lewes, who knew the author's identity and the fact that she was a woman, wrote a rather harsh review on *Shirley* pointing out that the author was indeed a woman, and a childless one. If "under your heart had ever stirred a child, if to your bosom a babe had ever been pressed ... never could you have imagined such a falsehood as that!" (BARKER, 2015, p. 801) Lewes is probably referring to the fact that Caroline Helstone, the protagonist in *Shirley*, has working aspirations, and gets sick when she is confined to the domestic environment. Brontë was particularly affected by this review. She wrote to Williams saying that "it is very brutal and savage. I am not angry with Lewes – but I wish in future he would let me alone – and not write again what makes me feel so cold and sick as I am feeling just now". (SHORTER, 1908, p. 106) Currer Bell answered the critic, telling him that she just wished the critics would judge her as an author, not as a woman.

It was at that time that Mrs. Gaskell also took an interest in Currer Bell's identity. She wrote a letter to Brontë to express her sympathy, and though she asked not to be answered, Charlotte said "but I cannot help doing so. Her note brought the tears to my eyes: she is a good – she is a great woman – proud am I that I can touch a chord of sympathy in souls so noble". (SHORTER, 1908, p. 86) The process of losing her invisibility went on. Finally, in

1850, it was disclosed by the *Bradford Observer*, but by that time a lot of people already knew who Currer Bell was.

In the years to follow the presentation of Charlotte Brontë as the author of her two famous novels, she was introduced to literary society, spent some time with George Smith's family in London, wrote the prefaces of her sisters' novels that were republished by Smith, Elder & Co., and edited some of their poems. Her next novel, *Villette*, was published three years after *Shirley*, in 1853. Charlotte had been suffering from a liver illness, and when she wrote to Laetitia Wheelwright she said that

It cannot be denied that the solitude of my position fearfully aggravated its other evils. Some long, stormy days and nights there were when I felt such a craving for support and companionship as I cannot express. Sleepless – I lay awake night after night – weak and unable to occupy myself – I sat in my chair day after day – the saddest memories my only company. It was a time I shall never forget – but God sent it and it must have been for the best. (SHORTER, 1908, p. 262)

It was during this period that Brontë wrote *Villette*. According to Barker, “The manuscript bears striking evidence of her state of mind during its composition”. (BARKER, 2015, p. 903) Charlotte even required that her work would be published anonymously, writing to George Smith that

I should be most thankful for the sheltering shadow of an incognito. I seem to dread the advertisements – the large lettered ‘Currer Bell's New Novel’ or ‘New Work by the Author of “Jane Eyre.”’ These, however, I feel well enough are the transcendentalisms of a retired wretch – and must not be intruded in the way of solid considerations; so you must speak frankly. (SHORTER, 1908, p. 282)

Villette would be the first work under her real name, after a lot about her life had been revealed. As had happened with *Shirley*, people would look for the similarities between the fiction and real life. This would be “a major embarrassment to her, for it was not difficult to recognize Charlotte herself in the lonely, watchful and caustic Lucy Snowe or, more importantly, George Smith in the handsome Dr John Graham Bretton”. (BARKER, 2015, p. 914) Still, the novel was published bearing her name. Lucy Snowe came to life as “silent, invisible, at best inoffensive shadow” with no “patrimony and no expectations, great or little”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 400) She is submissive and quiet, defeated. Different from the previous novels, Lucy Snowe does not have a happy ending, in fact the end is not even a closed one.

The reviews were mostly favorable; the *Examiner* declared that *Villette* “amply sustains the fame of the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*”. The *Literary Gazette* praised it saying that

This book would have made her famous, had she not been so already. It retrieves all the ground she lost in *Shirley*, and it will engage a wider circle of admirers than *Jane Eyre*, for it has all the best qualities of that remarkable book, untarnished, or but slightly so, by its defects. (BARKER, 2015, p. 932)

Others, less favorably, complained basically about the main character. The *Spectator* said that “this book, far more than *Jane Eyre*, sounds like a bitter complaint against the destiny of those women whom circumstances reduce to a necessity of working for their living by teaching”. (BARKER, 2015, p. 933) The *Guardian* argued that it was of “somewhat cynical and bitter spirit”. (BARKER, 2015, p. 933) The one that probably stung Charlotte the most was that by Harriet Martineau,

The book is almost intolerably painful ... An atmosphere of pain hangs about the whole, forbidding that repose which we hold to be essential to the true presentment of any large portion of life and experience. In this pervading pain, the book reminds us of Balzac, and so it does in the prevalence of one tendency, or one idea, throughout the whole conception and action. All the female characters, in all their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing, or are regarded by the reader in the light of that one thought – love. It begins with the child of six years old, at the opening – a charming picture – and it closes with it at the last page; and, so dominant is this idea – so incessant is the writer’s tendency to describe the need of being loved, that the heroine, who tells her own story, leaves the reader at last under the uncomfortable impression of her having either entertained a double love, or allowed one to supersede another without notification of the transition. It is not thus in real life. There are substantial, heartfelt interests for women of all ages, and under ordinary circumstances, quite apart from love. (BARKER, 2015, p. 934)

This review created a rift between Brontë and Martineau, since Charlotte felt personally betrayed. In her letter to George Smith about the other writer, she says: “The fact is I have never written to her since a letter I received from her” and “I do not know when I can bring myself to write again”. (BARKER, 2015, p. 935) In the end, as with her other novels, *Villette* was also a huge success, despite the eventual negative criticism it received.

Two years before her own death, Brontë married Rev. Arthur Bell Nichols, started and abandoned *Willie Ellin*, and severed her tidings with Smith, Elder & Co., seemingly after George Smith was engaged. She died on March 31st 1855. The last novel published with her name was, finally, *The Professor*, in 1857. Charlotte Brontë became a myth of literature and a

well-known female writer. Charlotte Brontë was no angel; after all, the role of the angel was to take care of the home, the husband, and the children. Although Brontë and her sisters did indeed take care of the household as was their duty, she spent most of her life unmarried, and died childless. Nowadays, she is known as an author, as she had desired to be, well recognized for her works.

2.2 PLAIN, ORPHAN, POOR

The opening scene of *Jane Eyre* sets the tone of the novel. Young, orphaned Jane Eyre observes while sitting on the window-seat hidden behind a red mooren curtain, “shrined in double retirement”, (BRONTË, 2016, p. 9) that it was not possible to take a walk that day due to the cold and the pouring rain; this first line could be considered a foreshadowing of all the walks that would not be possible for her to take because of her circumstances, the cold, hunger, and loneliness she would face as she grew up. It is in the first chapter of the novel that it is established Jane’s character. She is alone in the small breakfast room, cast away by her aunt, who was with her children about her looking “perfectly happy”. (BRONTË, 2016, p. 9) The reasoning behind her isolation is that because Jane’s behavior is not considered childlike or sociable, she should be by herself until she learns how to behave properly like a child.

It is only the beginning, so it is not possible to know if the reasoning behind Aunt Reed’s punishment of a child is just or not. Jane is by herself in her hidden spot, where “folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were the clear planes of glass, protecting but not separating me from the dear November day”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 10) The red curtain enveloping her, protecting her against what was inside the home – her cousins and her aunt, more specifically – is first time the color red, a crucial symbolism throughout the novel, appears. On her lap she has a book called *History of British Birds*, and though the book is not necessarily interesting to her, she mentions some passages that did not pass “quite as blank”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 10) They were “those which treat of the haunts of sea-fowl; of ‘the solitary rocks and promontories’ by them only inhabited; of the coast of Norway, studded with isles from its southern extremity, the Lindeness, or Naze, to the North Cape”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 10) It may seem as a childish memory only; however, this passage contains another important detail - the image of birds, and what they represent to Jane. When she reads about the birds, it is not the knowledge about them that interests her, but the places.

She mentions “the bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with 'the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 10) and not once the name of the birds she has certainly come across, after all it is a book about birds, not places.

She is interested in the pictures and descriptions of the places she had never been before, places where if she were a bird, she might be able to reach. The pictures reminded her of the tales Bessie – one of the servants at Gateshead Hall – narrated with “passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and older ballads; or from the pages of *Pamela*, and ‘Henry, Earl of Moreland’”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 11) *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, the story of a servant girl who ends up marrying her employer, and *Henry, Earl of Moreland* or *The Fool of Quality*, a young man who is taken away from his family and taught how to be altruistic; both are stories which reflect on Jane’s fate in the future.

While covered and hidden away, Jane feels “happy at least in my way”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 11) The girl is alone, hiding behind a curtain whilst her cousins receive love from their mother, and she is punished, not only psychologically, but also physically for on the next part, her cousin, John Reed, appears to disturb her peace. John calls her “Madame Mope”, Joan, and bad animal. He “bullied and punished” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 12) Jane continually and she feared him. In relation to John, she is completely submissive, for she had “no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 12) her aunt was “blind and deaf” even though he abused Jane in front of her. In addition, Jane’s position in Gateshead Hall as an orphan girl who was living there only in favor of her aunt, after a promise she had made to her dying husband – Jane’s uncle Reed -, made her “less than a servant”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 14) and there were no advantages in keeping her there. It was quite a fragile situation, for Mrs. Reed had all the power upon Jane, and as her guardian could do whatever she wanted with the girl. Consequently, this power over Jane passed on to her cousin, the “young master” of the house.

John, thus, is in power over Jane, and she is “habitually obedient” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 12) to him. In this first chapter, John strikes Jane “suddenly and strongly”, calling her a “rat”. The breaking point for Jane, though, is when he throws the book she had been reading and strikes her head, cutting it. For the first time, then, Jane defies John, calling him “wicked and cruel boy” before she attacks him in “such a picture of passion”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 13) Despite

the fact she was defending herself against John, she is punished by being locked away in the red-room.

This first chapter is a mixture of foreshadowing, from the books about birds and Jane's fascination about places she did not know, to how she is called an animal, a rat, locked away in a room as punishment. It is in this first chapter that one thing is clear; Jane Eyre is no ordinary heroine, as much plain and insignificant as she seems. After all, in her situation – a girl poor, parentless, alone – one would think that she needed to make the best of her circumstances. If she were to be abused, she should not resist the evil person; if she were to be stricken, she should turn the other cheek. If her young master decided to punish her, she should accept her punishment as it was her duty to do so. Because even though she was just a child, Jane was still a girl and certain things were expected from this gender even at an early age.

One of the reasons why she is constantly punished by her aunt is exactly that she does not act accordingly. Jane resists, though. She resists “all the way” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 13) to her punishment, as she was a “trifle beside myself” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 13) conscious of her penalties and “like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 13) It is at this moment that Jane is called mad for the first time, by a servant, before being thrown in the red room.

This room is a defining moment for Jane's journey. While being carried there, Jane refuses to bend; Bessie even tells her that she would be restrained if she did not behave, and that “took a little of the excitement” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 14) out of her. The two servants look “darkly and doubtfully” on her face, incredulous of her sanity. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 14) After this, one of them says “She's an underhand little thing: I never saw a girl of her age with so much cover” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 14) and Bessie reminds her again of her position in Gateshead Hall. The reminder of her dependence upon her aunt was “painful and crushing, but only half intelligible” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 14) for Jane. Finally, Miss Abbot, completely distrustful of the girl, says that

God will punish her: He might strike her dead in the midst of her tantrums, and then where would she go? Come, Bessie, we will leave her: I wouldn't have her heart for anything. Say your prayers, Miss Eyre, when you are by yourself; for if you don't repent, something bad might be permitted to come down the chimney, and fetch you away. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 14)

As mentioned before, Jane cannot not be considered an angel because of her defiant behavior; throughout the first and second chapters, she is compared to an animal, called mad, until, finally, evil. Thus, for her evil and possible insanity even as a small child, Jane is punished over and over again. In the red-room she faces part of this punishment; the place is seldom slept in, even if it was one of the “largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 15) It had

A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the centre” and “two large windows, with their blinds always drawn down, were half shrouded in festoons and falls of similar drapery; the carpet was red; the table at the foot of the bed was covered with a crimson cloth; the walls were a soft fawn colour, with a blush of pink in it; the wardrobe, the toilet-table, the chairs were of darkly-polished old mahogany. Out of these deep surrounding shades rose high, and glared White, the piled-up mattresses and pillows of the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane. Scarcely less prominent was an ample, cushioned easy-chair near the head of the bed, also White, with a footstool before it; and looking, as I thought, like a pale throne. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 15)

It was a cold room, for there was rarely a fire; it was silent and separated from the rest of the house; solemn, and, to give it even more of a gothic setting, it was there that her uncle Reed had perished. The color red and the fact that Jane was locked in this room are very important for the rest of the plot. Red, according to Michael Ferber in *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* “is the color of fire, gold, and roses; it is the color of faces when they show embarrassment, anger, or the flush of health or passion. It is also “the color of blood”. (FERBER, 2007, p. 178) In Renaissance poetry, red and White are “often paired as the colors of beauty or love” and it can also be the color of devil. (FERBER, 2007, p. 178) In *Jane Eyre*, red, fire, and hot, cold, rain, and gray are often used to express certain emotions or moments in the characters’ lives.

For instance, the red curtain enveloping Jane while outside is gray and cold from the rain; the red blood that falls on her face after John Reed strikes her, the warmth from her moment of rage, the red of the room she is locked in and the coldness from the lack of fire. Jane is sat on an ottoman near the chimney; the windows are muffled, and there is a great looking-glass between them, repeating “the vacant majesty of the bed and room”. When Jane passed in front of it,

All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a White face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16)

She sees herself as a spirit, a phantom, a creature out of fairy tales instead of a girl; mirrors, in Literature, can have a handful of meanings, and one of them is “what one sees in them – oneself, the truth, the ideal, illusion”. (FERBER, 2007, p. 134) Although Jane’s blood was “still warm” and the “mood of the revolted slave was still bracing me with its bitter vigour” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16) it is not this image she sees in the looking glass. Instead of the heat she feels inside herself, all she sees is dark, cold, and fear. It is exactly like this that Jane saw her situation. She was an orphan child, dependent on a family that only had coldness and punishments to offer her, her future was dark, and she was suffering. As she sits in the red-room thinking about her situation, she wonders “Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win any one's favour?” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16)

Jane wallows in self-pity, not understanding why she was treated so poorly by everyone when “I dared commit no fault; I strove to fulfill every duty; and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking, from morning to noon, and from noon to night”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16) It is interesting to see the view people have on Jane and the view she has of herself; they are complete opposites, as much as cold and hot, fire and ice, and the reflection in the mirror and the reality.

In the red-room, Jane goes through two moments of high emotional state; the first is when she thinks about how unjust is her situation, and she has a desire to escape the jail, the “insupportable oppression”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16) She imagines running away, something that she does at some point, or if running away was not effective, letting herself die. The punishment in that case does the opposite of what it is supposed to do – tame Jane and make her think about her actions; instead, Jane delves in a darkness, her brain “in tumult” and her heart “in insurrection”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16) Questioning the reason why she suffers, child Jane does not find an answer, however adult Jane seems to have found it as she says “now, at the distance of—I will not say how many years, I see it clearly”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16)

Her answer is that she is a discord in Gateshead Hall. She does not fit with her family, since she is not related to them but rather her uncle who had already died, and she was a poor,

orphaned girl; she also does not fit with the servants, since she does not work in the house. She is

a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or adding to their pleasure; a noxious thing, cherishing the germs of indignation at their treatment, of contempt of their judgment. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 17)

It is notable here that Jane is not what is expected of her. Interestingly, according to Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, it was not the coarseness and sexuality in *Jane Eyre* which shocked Victorian viewers, but rather its “anti-Christian refusal to accept the forms, the customs, and standards of society”. It was the heroine’s “refusal to submit to her social destiny”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 338) As the air, Jane refuses to bend, and that is the reason why she suffers so much throughout her journey. Jane understands that if she were different, if she were “sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child—though equally dependent and friendless” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 17) her life would have been easier. Mrs. Reed would not punish her so hard, her children would be more cordial towards her, and the servants would have a different approach to her.

Whilst in her wonderings, “Daylight began to forsake the red-room [...], and the beclouded afternoon was tending to drear twilight”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 17) The rain, another much used symbol in the novel, one that can mean “suffering or bad luck and rain as fertilizing force from above”, (FERBER, 2007, p. 165) is still “beating continuously on the staircase window, and the wind howling in the grove behind the hall”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 17) Just like the daylight was going away to be replaced by the darkness of the twilight, Jane’s courage and fiery passion from before also go away, and she is left feeling “cold as stone”, her “habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression, fell damp on the embers of my decaying ire”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 17) Her rebellion diminishes and she wonders if she indeed is wicked as everyone thought she was; again she thinks about death, and how would it be for her to be in the vault under the chancel of Gateshead Church, the same place were her uncle Reed was buried.

This is a dark thought for a ten-year-old child. She also thinks about her uncle Reed, the person that had adopted her after the death of his sister, and before he died made Mrs. Reed promise she would care of the child. Jane, then, understands that if he was alive, he would have treated her kindly. As she thinks about that notion, she looks at the White bed and

overshadowed walls “occasionally also turning a fascinated eye towards the dimly gleaming mirror”, again delving into delusions, divided between the reality of her situation and the illusion of what could have been. Jane thinks about her uncle’s spirit visiting her after being “harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 17)

At this moment, her childish imagination starts to get the best of her and she sees a “light gleamed on the wall”; (BRONTË, 2015, p. 18) adult Jane says that she could conjecture that light was most likely a gleam from a lantern, however, child Jane thinks the gleam of light was “herald of some coming vision from another world”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 18) Once again her emotions ran to the fiery side – her heart beat thick and her head grew hot. She feels “oppressed, suffocated” by something that seemed “near me”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 18) At that moment, she rushes to the door and tries to open it. When Bessie and Mrs. Abbot open the room, she begs to be led to the nursery, telling the servants she saw a light and thought a ghost would appear; then, Mrs. Abbot condemns her in some disgust, saying “what a scream! If she had been in great pain one would have excused it, but she only wanted to bring us all here: I know her naughty tricks”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 18) It is interesting to notice that later on another person would scream in another locked room, mimicking Jane’s experience in the red-room; for Gilbert and Gubar, the red-room experience is echoed through the novel in several moments. As they affirm,

For the little drama enacted on “that day” which opens *Jane Eyre* is in itself a paradigm of the larger drama that occupies the entire book: Jane’s anomalous, orphaned position in society, her enclosure in stultifying roles, and houses, and her attempts to escape through flight, starvation, and [...] madness. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 341)

It is in this red-room, so full of meaning and symbols, that Jane has her most traumatic experience, one that will follow her into the future as an adult. For in this room, where she is locked with no way to escape because of her untamed and enraged behavior, as a punishment for her displacement in her society, is also the fate of another important character in the novel.

As Jane begs to be released, asking to be punished some other way, Mrs. Reed thrust her back and locks her in again, and Jane realizes that for her aunt, “I was a precocious actress in her eyes: she sincerely looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19) It seems that her aunt’s ideas about Jane were

not completely wrong, for the only way for Jane to succeed in her adult life is to fake and be someone else, as an actress would. If she wanted to leave the “jail” she was in, she would have to pretend submission, she would have to lower her head for her aunt, and she would have to follow the rules. She does not do any of those; in fact, she does the opposite as a child, which results in her being sent to Lowood Institute.

After her pleading, and the refusal of her aunt to free her, she “had a species of fit: unconsciousness closed the scene”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19) This closed “scene” is Jane’s ticket to freedom; the usage of the word “scene” commonly used in plays is what may confirm that Jane is, indeed, an actress in her life, for that is the only way for her to succeed – not showing her true self. When she wakes up from this fit, the first thing she sees is “a terrible red glare, crossed with thick Black bars” and she hears “voices, too, speaking with a hollow sound, as if muffled by a rush of wind or water” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19). The red glare, as it turns out, is only the nursery fire; however, as all the symbols in the novel, this one can mean a couple of things. Jane’s own mind and real self being trapped behind bars, locked away in her mind as a necessity for her to be able to be part of the society; Jane’s recollection of the terrible experience she had in the red-room, or “an even more dreadful omen of experiences to come”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 341) The “agitation, uncertainty, and an all-predominating sense of terror confused my faculties” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19) is foreshadowing of what is about to happen for it is from this point onwards that Jane’s life changes.

As she is being taken care of by Mr Lloyd, the apothecary, she feels “an inexpressible relief, a soothing conviction of protection and security, when I knew that there was a stranger in the room”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19) The relief with strangers Jane feels as a child will be echoed as she goes on her journey. In Lowood, she feels good knowing that is an opportunity of knowing people who would not judge her in the way her family did; in Thornfield Hall, being with strangers is a breath of fresh air for her and the sign of her independence. In Marsh End, the strangers who take her in and care for her is what she needed after everything that happened in Thornfield. Interestingly, whenever anything disturbs her peace of mind and awakens that red glare inside of her, she runs away, escaping it as she said she would in the red-room.

When Mr Lloyd leaves, “the room darkened and my heart sank again” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19) for she is once again with people who knew her. In this part of the novel, another

foreshadowing appears as Bessie and Sarah are talking in the nursery; she hears them saying “Something passed her, all dressed in White, and vanished—'A great Black dog behind him'—'Three loud raps on the chamber door'—'A light in the churchyard just over his grave’”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19) A couple chapters later, Bertha Mason passes Jane all dressed in White and vanishes as the mystery she is; Mr Rochester appears with Pilot, his dog, as Jane wonders in the road; the three loud raps were also to happen as Bertha goes to Jane’s room.

As they sleep and “the fire and candle went out”, Jane is left with “such dread as children only can feel”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19) the fear of something that is about to happen. Adult Jane once again interrupts her childish narrative to say that the experience in the red-room “gave my nerves a shock” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 19) that reverberates until her adulthood, but that she ought to forgive her aunt, “for you knew not what you did: while rending my heart-strings, you thought you were only uprooting my bad propensities”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 21) As Jesus does while being crucified, Jane uses the same quotation, a sign of her moral growth in her adulthood.

Here it is possible to see the differences between the adult Jane and the child Jane; it is also here that two important female roles crash in contradiction. Another parallel that can be traced is the one of Jane as a demon and Jane as an angel. As all the symbols used throughout the novel, especially the fire and cold, red and grey represent this parallel well. Child Jane is surrounded by darkness and cold – a sign linked with “evil, death, ignorance, falsehood, oblivion, and despair”. (FERBER, 2007, p. 115) She is not what is expected of her, as she asserts; Jane is a bad animal, a mad cat and a rat, and by those descriptions it is possible to see that there is nothing good in her.

Consequently, punishment is necessary to her. She is Lilith, the one that is against bending to submission and desires freedom. As coldness surrounds her, Jane’s mind is red, angry and vivid. She wants to escape the jail she is locked in, the net that ensnares her. The only way for her to achieve that, though, is acting and pretending. After her turmoil in the red-room, she feels “physically weak and broken down” with “an unutterable wretchedness of mind: a wretchedness which kept drawing from me silent tears”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 21) She was in such a state that “no calm could soothe, and no pleasure excite”, and she could not stop herself from crying. Her state led her to receive delicacies she would never have before, such as the tart served in a china plate, one that she had deemed herself unworthy of the privilege

of eating on; Bessie's words of unwonted kindness and favors, as the book *Guliver's Travels* she fetches for the crying child.

The tart she does not eat, and the book she sets aside, unread. Bessie starts singing a song that again is a symbol for Jane and her journey, for her "feet they are sore, and my limbs they are weary; Long is the way, and the mountains are wild; Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary; Over the path of the poor orphan child". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 22) Indeed, the song foreshadows everything that is going to happen to Jane in her adult life. She will wander until her feet are sore and limbs weary, both physically and mentally. The way for her happiness is long and full of harshness, and the mountains "the sites of revelation both natural and supernatural" (FERBER, 2007, p. 131) are wild. Darkness with no light will surround her, and her future holds misfortunes and struggles. It is only at the end of her journey that "Yet distant and soft the night-breeze is blowing; Clouds there are none, and clear stars beam mild; God, in His mercy, protection is showing; Comfort and hope to the poor orphan child". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 22) As Bessie sings the doom of Jane's life, the child cannot stop crying. Bessie asks her to stop to which she thinks "She might as well have said to the fire, 'don't burn!'". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 22) Again, although her rebellion seemed to have been subsided, Jane's red rage still burns within her. She tells Mr Lloyd she cries because she is miserable, and when he asks her what had happened to cause her such a misery, she explains she was knocked down, the explanation jerked out of her by "another pang of mortified pride". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 22)

Her pride and rage, her lack of forgiveness for her aunt and cousin are clearly shown in the third chapter of the novel; when given the opportunity to speak about the unfairness of her life, Jane does not waste time. She tells Mr Lloyd she is unhappy, and that Gateshead Hall is not her house. However, when the apothecary asks her if she would live with the relatives of her father, even if they were poor, Jane states she "should not like to belong to poor people", (BRONTË, 2015, p. 23) which was exactly what she was, for though her aunt Reed had money, as Jane herself seems to know, she does not belong. Adult Jane justifies by intruding in the narrative and saying that

Poverty looks grim to grown people; still more so to children: they have not much idea of industrious, working, respectable poverty; they think of the word only as connected with ragged clothes, scanty food, fireless grates, rude manners, and debasing vices: poverty for me was synonymous with degradation. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 23)

Ironically, Jane in the future will go through the bottom of what poverty means – jobless, with no family, no friends, no home, no money, no food, not even clothes. At the same time, she says she would not want to be with poor people,

to learn to speak like them, to adopt their manners, to be uneducated, to grow up like one of the poor women I saw sometimes nursing their children or washing their clothes at the cottage doors of the village of Gateshead: no, I was not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 23)

She has no idea that as an adult she will work as a teacher to poor girls just like herself. Her next option, then, was to go to school. It is here that her path of punishment for being an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit, as Elizabeth Rigby (1849) once wrote about the character, starts. It is at this part in which Jane must turn from Lilith, rebellious, wild, the personification of evil in a female shape, to Eve, punished for the rest of her life for her moment of rebellion, with not only pains of childbirth, but also eternal submission to her master. The way to do that is in a Christian institution, Lowood Institution. At first, Jane does not understand very well what a school is; the examples she has are from Bessie, who said schools are a place where “young ladies sat in the stocks, wore backboards, and were expected to be exceedingly genteel and precise”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 25) and John Reed who “hated his school, and abused his master”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 25) The ideas come from a servant who probably has never been to a school and a boy from a rich family. Jane’s conclusion is, thus, that she should go to school, at the same time Mr Lloyd says she “ought to have change of air and scene” for her “nerves are not in a good state”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 25)

Mrs. Reed thinks that is a great idea and is “glad enough to get rid of such a tiresome, ill-conditioned child, who always looked as if she were watching everybody, and scheming plots underhand”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 26) Adult Jane interferes mentioning that Abbot gave her credit for being a “sort of infantine Guy Fawkes”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 26) an allusion to the perpetrator of the unsuccessful Gunpowder Plot to destroy Parliament in 1605. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 26) In addition, she learns of who her parents were and how they got married against her grandfather’s wishes, which led to him cutting her mother off without any money. They caught typhus fever and died, a month apart from each other, leaving a child behind. Again, there are mentions of the fact that they would pity Jane more if she were “a nice, pretty child” instead of a “little toad as that”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 26)

After days and weeks of her encounter with Mr Lloyd and the offer of hope for the future, Jane's health returned to normal, and her relationship with her aunt worsened. Mrs. Reed "surveyed me at times with a severe eye, but seldom addressed me", (BRONTË, 2015, p. 27) and she was kept away from her cousins, sleeping in a closet and making her meals alone. Her relationship with John Reed also changes as when he attempted to chastise her, she turns against him "roused by the same sentiment of deep ire and desperate revolt which had stirred my corruption before", (BRONTË, 2015, p. 27) and he runs away from her. In turn, he tells his mother that she had hurt him, and that leads to another confrontation between Jane and her aunt, which led Jane to say "They are not fit to associate with me" and that "My uncle Reed is in heaven, and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mamma: they know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 27)

This seems to be the breaking point to Mrs. Reed; the months passed by, and Jane was left utterly excluded from the Reed family. Finally, after three months not being called into Mrs. Reed company, she is called to her aunt's presence; there she meets a man with "straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug: the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 31) The "Black pillar" is Mr Brocklehurst, the supervisor of Lowood Institute; for child Jane Mr Brocklehurst was tall, with large features. Their first interaction is quite significant for he asks her if she knows to where the "wicked go after death" (BRONTË, 2015, p. 31) and she answers that they go to hell. The wicked in this scene is Jane, thus if she is not disciplined and tamed, her fate will be a "pit full of fire" to be "burning there forever". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 31)

Lowood, a Christian institution, is the right place to correct a girl wild and proud as Jane. Mr Brocklehurst inquires Jane if she prays and reads the Bible, to which she answers she likes "Revelations, and the book of Daniel, and Genesis and Samuel, and a little bit of Exodus, and some parts of Kings and Chronicles, and Job and Jonah", (BRONTË, 2015, p. 32) though she does not like Psalms. The supervisor then says it is shocking that she does not like Psalms, and compares her to a little boy, younger than Jane, who knows six Psalms by heart, and would rather learn a verse of Psalm than having gingerbread- nut because "angels sing Psalms" and he wishes "to be a little angel here below". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 32) Jane answer is that Psalms are not interesting, and Mr Brocklehurst gives his verdict: she has a wicked heart, and must pray to God to change it: "to give you a new and clean one: to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 32) The path for having a clean heart is not an easy one.

After her encounter with Mr Brocklehurst, it is decided that she is to be sent to Lowood; before she goes there, though, she has an altercation with her Mrs. Reed, telling her what she truly thinks of her before being sent away, “an extraordinarily self-assertive act of which neither a Victorian child nor a Cinderella was ever supposed to be capable”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 343) Jane was in turmoil after hearing her aunt telling Mr Brocklehurst that she had “a tendency to deceit”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 32) which is contradictory to how Jane is honest when she talks to Mrs. Reed next, saying that “I am glad you are no relation of mine: I will never call you aunt again as long as I live” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 35) and that she shall always remember how she was thrust into the red-room roughly and violently. Her anger and vindictful feelings are not those expected from a child, and the relief, the freedom and triumph she feels after again going against a position of authority in her life are signs of the Lilith inside of her. As the demonic figure had done with Adam and god when she goes against what was expected of her as the first woman to be created, Jane also goes against what is expected of her as a poor, orphan child with no way of taking care of herself; still, freedom is more important to her.

The next step of her journey is to step away from the gate and into the woods of the unknown; she is alone as she goes to Lowood, as she is in all of her journey. The charitable institution is where orphan girls are “starved and frozen into proper Christian submission”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 344) It is there that Jane meets two people who are important in her path to becoming a proper lady; the first is Miss Temple, the superintendent of Lowood, a woman Jane admired the most. She looked

tall, fair, and shapely; brown eyes, with a benignant light in their irids, and a fine pencilling of long lashes round, relieved the Whiteness of her large front ; on each of her temples her hair, of a very dark brown, was clustered in round curls, according to the fashion of those times, when neither smooth bands nor long ringlets were in vogue; her dress, also in the mode of the day, was of purple cloth, relieved by a sort of Spanish trimming of Black velvet; a gold watch (watches were not so common then as now) shone at her girdle. Let the reader add, to complete the picture, refined features; a complexion, if pale, clear; and a stately air and carriage, and he will have, at least, as clearly as words can give it, a correct idea of the exterior of Miss Temple—Maria Temple, as I afterwards saw the name written in a prayer-book entrusted to me to carry to church. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 45)

It is Miss Temple, with her “shrine of ladylike virtues” (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 344) who manages to tame Jane in a way that when she leaves after getting married, Jane says that she was “left in her natural element”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 78) As her name suggests, the

superintendent becomes a temple for Jane to go to; a place where Jane felt safe, and a motherly figure to an orphan girl who had never once had love and comprehension. Through Miss Temple, who seems to be “directly imported from conduct books for Victorian girls”, (WEHRMANN, 2007, p. 152) Jane suppresses the “bad animal” angered inside of her, one that was unleashed before the red-room incident. Besides Miss Temple, the other important female figure in Jane’s life is her first friend in Lowood, Helen Burns.

Similarly to Miss Temple, though in a more submissive way, Helen Burns is also the perfect depiction of the angel, of Eve; she is the ideal that seems impossible to Jane, one of “self-renunciation, of all-consuming (and consumptive) spirituality”, (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 346) yet the girls have a similar life story. As Jane, Helen is also an orphan, even though her father is still alive, and she suffers rejection from her only family. In addition, although for Jane she seems good and with no fault, she also “burns with anger, leaves her things in shameful disorder, and dreams of freedom in eternity”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 346) However, different from Jane, Helen is not bothered by the hardships she faces in Lowood and in her life; she longs for Heaven, her “true home” and decided to threat bad with good instead of with vengeance.

Her first encounter with Jane is a meaningful one since Jane gets interested in the book Helen is reading called *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759), a moralistic book written by Samuel Johnson, which concluded that human happiness “was elusive and the best course was resignation to that sad fact”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 47) Helen offers Jane the book, and Jane’s reaction is that “the contents were less taking than the title: *Rasselas* looked dull to my trifling taste”; (BRONTË, 2015, p. 47) the rejection of a moralistic book offered by the pure Helen mimics Jane’s resolution to reject the rules surrounding her, whether in Lowood or in Gateshead. On the other hand, Helen accepts all the punishments and suffering with open arms, as it is her duty as a Christian. Whenever she is publicly punished by Miss Scatcherd, instead of showing signs of “great distress and shame” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 49) as Jane’s expects her to, she neither “wept nor blushed”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 49) She bears the pain, the shame, and never once complains about it, as an angel has to do, as Eve had to do after her own punishment for her sins, and as Jane was supposed to do, as she is very similar to Helen.

Jane could not, though, “comprehend this doctrine of endurance; and still less could I understand or sympathise with the forbearance she expressed for her chastiser”, (BRONTË,

2015, p. 52) for her angered mind “you are good to those who are good to you”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 52) In the end, the fire inside Helen burns her to death – she dies with her arms around Jane, “half covered with its White curtains”, with an “unsnuffed candle burnt dimly”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 75) Helen knew about her death, and she was very happy with her mind at rest. Her dying speech is about how she did not left “no one to regret me much” and that “By dying young, I shall escape great sufferings. I had not qualities or talents to make my way very well in the world; I should have been continually at fault”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 76) The speech foreshadows Jane’s path after Lowood, for it will be full of suffering, again marking how similar to each other they were, despite their outlook in life being different. Helen Burns, though, did not resist the fire inside of her; death is the only possible way to redeem herself for her sins, as it will be for Bertha Mason later on.

After Helen’s death, adult Jane again interrupts the narrative to skip part of her childhood, for “a few lines only are necessary to keep up the links of connection”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 77) Through those eight years she skips, her life “was uniform: but not unhappy, because it was not inactive”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 77) One of the changes, a drastic one for that matter, is the marriage of Miss Temple, which led her to go away from Lowood. At the time, Jane is already eighteen years old, and a teacher at Lowood. As she mentions in her description,

I had the means of an excellent education placed within my reach. A fondness for some of my studies, and a desire to excel in all, together with a great delight in pleasing my teachers, especially such as I loved, urged me on: I availed myself fully of the advantages offered me. In time I rose to be the first girl of the first class; then I was invested with the office of teacher; which I discharged with zeal for two years; but at the end of that time I altered. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 77)

This alteration came after the departure of Miss Temple, who had contributed to Jane’s instruction, and had stood her “in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 77) From the moment she left Lowood, Jane’s hidden self, the one Helen, with the help of Miss Temple so “full of goodness” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 53) tamed, managed to break free again. Whilst staring at the horizon, Jane has the same feeling of longing she has at the beginning as she wonders about the landscapes in *History of British Bird*, the need for freedom, one she did not have in neither Gateshead nor Lowood. Once again the Lilith inside of Jane desires to break free from the confines of her mind as she “walked about the chamber most of the time” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 78) as a caged animal would do. In her reflections, she understands that her mind “had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple—or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been

breathing in her vicinity—and that now I was left in my natural element, and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 78) The old emotions would be the ones from her childhood – desire, anger, passion -, and she remembers that the world is too big for her to be in Lowood for the rest of her days.

She goes to the window, opens it and looks out – from the terrain of Lowood to the hilly horizon. She longs to surmount those physical and mental boundaries, to go beyond the “prison ground, exile limits”; (BRONTË, 2015, p. 79) she watches the White road, the one that she had descended a few years back at twilight, and now she wishes to go further up that road into the unknown. However, being a woman with no money or family to care for her, Jane did not have many prospects, thus she pleads for a new servitude. It is through those wishes and desires that she is led to Thornfield Hall, to the “painful experience that is at the center of her pilgrimage”, and where she is to be “crowned with thorns, she is to be cast out into a desolate field, and most important, she is to confront the demon of rage who has haunted her since her afternoon in the red-room”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 347)

It is in Thornfield that she will come to face with her Lilith, her demon, the one that has come into life in the red-room, suppressed in Lowood, now will be fully unleashed. Jane’s path in Lowood, as mentioned before, was what taught her to act accordingly, one feature she did not have as a child and which caused her most of her problems. As an adult woman, though, Jane’s acting is mastered. She is an exterior of coldness, calm and recollection, things she learned from Helen Burns and Miss Temple; her interior, however, was still the same as when she was a child – the fire had only been diminished, not yet extinguished by the presence of Burns and Miss Temple. On the other hand, with Mr Rochester and Bertha at Thornfield Hall, it will burn red and fierce.

The new chapter of Jane’s life starts with her telling the reader that “A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 86) as she is at an inn on her way to Thornfield. It is interesting to note that once again a mention of Jane being an actress in the whole plot is made; her act is to be the proper governess – polite, recollected and serious – even though inside she is still wishing for freedom and independence. She goes to Thornfield to be the governess of a French child called Adèle Varens, and before she meets Adèle’s protector and owner of Thornfield, she explores the mansion first. She arrives there at night, thus the mansion is all dark with the exception of a few candles lit. Mrs. Fairfaix is the housekeeper and she is the one to welcome Jane in a rather warm way, with a fire and

food when Jane was expecting only “only coldness and stiffness”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 89) It is a reception Jane did not expect, and one that made her offer up “thanks where thanks were due”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 90) and before sleeping she realizes her “couch had no thorns in it that night; my solitary room no fears”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 90)

As she wakes the next day, her chamber looks bright and the sun shone through the curtains; she thinks then that a “fairer era of life was beginning for me, one that was to have its flowers and pleasures, as well as its thorns and toils”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 90) She proceeds to dress up with her plain clothes, the only ones she possessed and as she does so she feels the misfortune of not being tall, finely developed, and beautiful, instead she had all the opposites to those qualities. The interesting point in this part is the fact that Jane wishes for beauty after years of learning in Lowood that she is to be plain, and that vanity is a sin. Therefore, not even a day after being away from Lowood, Jane already lets go of one of the principles she was supposed to have learned there; she wears her plain clothes as she is supposed to, but she cares about her image and acts as though she does not.

As she goes around the house, she admires it for all “was well arranged and handsome”; the one that interests her more is the third story because of the air of antiquity, and the old relics stored there gave to it an aspect “of a home of the past: a shrine of memory”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 97) Considering who is locked in the third story of the house, it is rather convenient that Jane thinks it is a place of memory and history. During the day, she mentions,

I liked the hush, the gloom, the quaintness of these retreats in the day; but I by no means coveted a night's repose on one of those wide and heavy beds: shut in, some of them, with doors of oak; shaded, others, with wrought old-English hangings crusted with thick work, portraying effigies of strange flowers, and stranger birds, and strangest human beings,—all which would have looked strange, indeed, by the pallid gleam of moonlight. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 97)

It is during the night that “ghosts, magic, and moonstruck madness, as well as the pursuit of love or anything else restrained by daylight” (FERBER, 2007, p. 137) come out, and it is exactly during night time that the mysteries in Thornfield – Bertha Mason – appear to haunt the governess. Jane goes closer to the attic towards the battlements, and there she has the vision of the land beyond Thornfield, much similar to the way she had done in Lowood as she decided her future. A few steps behind her lay the dark attic, which seemed “Black as a vault compared with that arch of blue air to which I had been looking up”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 98)

and it is here that the first contact between Jane and Bertha is made. As she walks further the staircase leading to the attic, she notices that the long corridor full of Black closed doors was “like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle”. The reference to the fairy tale by Charles Perrault (1697) in which “the young wife is given keys to many rooms but is denied entrance to the one containing bodies of Bluebeard's former wives” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 98) is a foreshadowing to the secret Mr Rochester keeps there, and which Jane only finds out as she is about to marry him.

Whilst she explored the dark corridor, she hears a laugh “tragic, as preternatural a laugh as any I ever heard”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 99) It is at this point that the haunting from Bertha, the secret wife of Mr Rochester and, in a way, Jane’s “own secret self”, (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 348) starts. The attic is a rather important location for it “becomes a complex focal point where Jane’s own rationality (what she has learned from Miss Temple) and her irrationality (her “hunger, rebellion, and rage”) intersect”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 348) Jane’s demon, hidden away in her mind by the power of two angels – Miss Temple and Helen Burns -, takes a physical quality in the form of Bertha and all the fire that seems to follow her. As happens in Lowood, in Thornfield there are two important figures in Jane’s path, and whilst in Lowood they were angels, in Thornfield they become demons. As already mentioned, Bertha is one of those figures, and the other is Mr Rochester. The Byronic hero, as he is called by some critics, is exactly the lack of tranquility that Jane seems to wish in her life. Jane herself proclaims that human beings “must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 101) It is exactly the opposite of what an angel in the house, an Eve, should procure in her life. Jane does not desire the peacefulness domesticity could provide her, instead she desired for more. In a way, it is the same necessity Mr Rochester looks for through his own journey, and as Jane asserts

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 101)

After this assertion what she really thought about her condition, Jane again mentions the laughs and the eccentric murmurs she attributed to Grace Poole, as if one was the result of the other. Again, three months go by before she meets Mr Rochester, and those three months are nothing but foreshadow of the change about to happen in Jane's life; the same had happened before in Gateshead Hall before she is sent to Lowood, and in the school before Helen died. They meet in the road as Jane goes to the city, under the moon light; the encounter is rather magical for both of them. Jane remembers the stories Bessie used to tell her as a child, in a similar way she does in the red-room, more specifically of the Gytrash, "which, in the form of horse, mule, or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travelers, as this horse was now coming upon me". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 103) As for Mr Rochester, he calls her people the "the men in green" and asks if he broke "through one of your rings" a reference to fairies or witches. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 112)

The first time they see one another, Mr Rochester falls from his horse and Jane tries to help him; her impression of him was that he was not a handsome man, and had he been one she would not have "dared to stand thus questioning him against his will, and offering my services unasked". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 104) At the same time, she recalls she had never seen a handsome man before and though she had reference to beauty, she understood that a handsome man would never desire anything to do with her, and for that reason she would have "shunned them as one would fire, lightning, or anything else that is bright but antipathetic". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 104) For her first impression, Mr Rochester was masculine, and "dark, strong and stern", (BRONTË, 2015, p. 104) however his appearance is seared in her memory as something new that had happened in her life.

When she returns to Thornfield after this unusual encounter, Jane does not desire to re-enter the mansion for to pass its threshold was to "return to stagnation; to cross the silent hall, to ascend the darksome staircase, to seek my own lonely little room". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 107) Again Jane's mind is unrested, even if she has quite the good life in Thornfield. She always desires for more, and with Mr Rochester her desire is finally quenched. She lingers at the gates, pacing backwards and forwards, as the caged animal she was; in the end, she "turned from moon and stars" (BRONTË, 2015, p. 107) and went back to her servitude. For her utter surprise, the man that had made quite the impression on her was the master of the house. His presence changes everything within Thornfield Hall; whereas it had been silent and cold, with Mr Rochester it becomes loud and full of life with its master's within its confines – and Jane

enjoys it as it does the same to her. He is what was missing in her life – the piece necessary for her construction as a person.

The master calls for Jane's presence for tea; with the help of Mrs. Fairfax, Jane dresses up better than her usual plain attires, ready to meet her master officially. Following Mrs. Fairfax, she passed the dropped curtain and goes into the next scene of her life. There was a "superb fire" burning, shining full on Mr Rochester's face. He does not look at her, and only orders her to sit. She does so disembarrassed, for it was the sort of behavior that did not put her "under no obligation". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 110) He orders her to "come to the fire", and she obeys as in "duty bound". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 110) This request is mimicked later on the novel, when Mr Rochester suggests Jane becomes his mistress, however, at that moment she does not comply for their relationship had turned from master and servant to that of a man and woman with equal spirits.

It is in Mr Rochester's brooding and masculine figure that Jane finally finds her freedom, for he treats her as an equal and not as an underling as she had been treated most of her life. Their dynamics is not of the prince who saves the princess; in fact, Mr Rochester was the one who kept needing Jane's help through the novel; the equality was exactly what Lilith desired but did not achieve as Adam wanted her to be submissive, as Eve turned out to be.

Therefore, Mr Rochester feeds Jane's demon more than subdues it as Miss Temple and Helen Burns had done before. This spiritual equality echoes through the novel as for instance when he orders Jane to "resume your seat, and answer my questions" (BRONTË, 2015, p. 114) and then looks at her drawings and his response "reveals not only his own Byronic broodings, but his consciousness of hers". (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 352) There is also the moment where he manages to pretend he is a gypsy, and the only one who is not convinced of his act is Jane. He asserts that he does not want to "to treat you like an inferior: that is (correcting himself), I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years' difference in age and a century's advance in experience". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 114)

This raging passion Jane feels for Mr Rochester, one impossible from the beginning due to several reasons – social, economic and marital status -, appears not only in her mind, but in the physical plane as well. Jane had always desired freedom, a way to extinguish her agitated mind, and she moves from place to place in order to find it; in Thornfield she finally finds her forbidden fruit, and she certainly reaches for it. However, it seemed out of her way. He shone more than "the brightest fire", (BRONTË, 2015, p. 134) the "friendly frankness, as correct as

cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him” and she felt as if he was “my relation, rather than my master”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 134) It was through him that she “ceased to pine after kindred” and her “blanks of existence were filled up”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 134) She acknowledges that he had many faults, but she believes “his moodiness, his harshness, and his former faults of morality (I say former, for now he seemed corrected of them) had their source in some cruel cross of fate”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 134) Their equality here is rather pronounced as Jane too had a sort of moodiness as a child, and she was judged by her faults of morality by Mrs. Reed and Mr Brocklehurst.

Still, they could not be together in the way she would like to. It is thinking about how he would eventually go away from Thornfield and how “joyless sunshine and fine days will seem” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 134) that Jane sleeps. She wakes with the sound of a “vague murmur, peculiar and lugubrious, which sounded, I thought, just above me”; (BRONTË, 2015, p. 135) she is in darkness, without any fire to lit, and her spirits are depressed by her previous wonderings. There was a “demoniac laugh—low, suppressed, and deep—uttered, as it seemed, at the very key-hole of my chamber-door” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 135) and she rises only to find that Mr Rochester’s bed is set on fire. Again, she manages to rescue him, and that works well for her for they take another step on their relationship after the incident. In his room, with tongues of flame around his bed, the scene is almost sexual.

Not only that but Jane is the one to command Mr Rochester to get up from the bed and find out who tried to murder him. Then, in a rather intimate scene, one not supposed to happen between master and servant, Mr Rochester puts his cloak around Jane, and when they part ways, they shake hands and he praises her “good genii”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 137)

Jane was rather happy despite what had happened, and “Till morning dawned I was tossed on a buoyant but unquiet sea, where billows of trouble rolled under surges of joy”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 138) At the same time, she could not reach the Promised Land, and just as her previous fears, the next day Mr Rochester is gone. Her sentiments get worse when she hears of whom Mr Rochester was visiting, and the prospect of him meeting with the beautiful and unmarried Miss Blanche Ingram. Alone, locked into her heart, she “examined its thoughts and feelings, and endeavoured to bring back with a strict hand such as had been straying through imagination’s boundless and trackless waste, into the safe fold of common sense”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 145)

At that moment, everything Miss Temple had taught her in Lowood comes back with force, and she tries to lock away the inner side that had been unleashed by the presence of Mr Rochester. Her way to do it is to go back to her relationship of master and servant, of employer and employee. Unbeknownst to her, Mr Rochester also has feelings for her, as she is the only way able to understand and see through his own act. When he comes back to Thornfield with some acquaintances, Miss Ingram in the middle, Jane decides to keep her distance. When Adèle wishes she can be part of the reunion of ladies and gentlemen, Jane

took her on my knee and gave her to understand that she must not on any account think of venturing in sight of the ladies, either now or at any other time, unless expressly sent for; that Mr Rochester would be very angry, &c. 'Some natural tears she shed' on being told this; but as I began to look very grave, she consented at last to wipe them. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 151)

The reference to *Paradise Lost* (1667) by John Milton is of when Adam and Eve depart from Eden, and dropped some natural tears for having to leave their heaven to the unknown; it is interesting to note that although Adèle is the one shedding tears because she could not be with Mr Rochester due to her position, Jane is in a similar place, for she also wanted to be with him, but could not because of who she is. Her paradise is a hand away from her, still she could not reach it; the next couple of days while the visitors are still in Thornfield, Jane, the image of coldness and recollection, hides in the shadows much like she had done in Gateshead as a child, the spectator of a play she was not part of. She watches Mr Rochester and the Dian Miss Ingram as they pretend to get married, with feelings that she tried to suppress yet were revived “green and strong”; (BRONTË, 2015, p. 158) she notices that Mr Rochester is not like the other gentlemen in the room, but he is like her. She feels “akin to him,—I understand the language of his countenance and movements; though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 158) Although she decides to keep her distance, Jane still sees their spiritual equality, and it draws her to him more than the opposite; after all, letting him go is “Blasphemy against nature!” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 158) even if they could not be together in a romantic way.

Instead of pursuing him, though, Jane resorts to a voyeur position, always watching Mr Rochester interact with Miss Ingram, her eyes understanding their relationship better than anyone. She knows he is going to marry her for political reasons, not for love, for “she could not charm him”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 168) For Jane, Miss Ingram had not won, and she

would have “died to them” if Mr Rochester truly loved her; however, Miss Ingram was not “a good and noble woman, endowed with force, fervour, kindness, sense”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 168) instead she is proud, vain, and scornful. Her behavior, then, results in her failure in fascinating Mr Rochester, her “Arrows that continually glanced off from Mr Rochester's breast and fell harmless at his feet”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 168)

Jane felt satisfaction over this, because if she could not have him, neither would Blanche. Things change drastically when an unexpected visitor arrives at Thornfield, bearer of bad news, in a wet afternoon - Richard Mason. For Jane, his physiognomy was “unsettled and inanimate” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 172) and he “repelled me exceedingly”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 172) It was during his stay that Mr Rochester, dressed as a gipsy woman, decides to act to his guests; it is through this act that he discovered Miss Ingram true intentions, by telling her lies about himself that he had not as much fortune as before. In addition, Jane is the only one to see through his act, when the gipsy asks her to kneel next to her, and muttered

The flame flickers in the eye, the eye shines like dew: it looks soft and full of feeling; it smiles at my jargon: it is susceptible; impression follows impression through its clear sphere; where it ceases to smile, it is sad; an unconscious lassitude weighs on the lid: that signifies melancholy resulting from loneliness. It turns from me; it will not suffer farther scrutiny; it seems to deny, by a mocking glance, the truth of the discoveries I have already made,—to disown the charge both of sensibility and chagrin: its pride and reserve only confirm me in my opinion. The eye is favourable. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 181)

Thus, at the same time Jane reads him, he also reads her; their equality is again proved in this passage, as they are able to see through each other's act with precision. He even reads her passions, saying “may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and the desires may imagine all sorts of vain things: but judgment shall still have the last word in every argument, and the casting vote in every decision”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 181) Indeed, Jane's rage is waiting for another chance to be free, and this chance arrives when Richard Mason decides to visit Bertha. In the middle of the night, after the whole act with Mr Rochester and the gipsy, and the confirmation that he would, for a fact, marry Miss Ingram, Jane had forgotten to “draw her curtain”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 185) and the consequence was that the moon – full and bright – “looked in at me through the unveiled panes, her glorious gaze roused me”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 186) She opens her eyes to face the moon, and as she goes to close the curtain, a cry is heard, “a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound that ran from end to end of Thornfield Hall”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 186) Once again Bertha makes her appearance in a

moment of vulnerability to Jane – she was in her room, her curtain opened, and no act in place. The light of the moon, which can be a symbol for “Virginity or chastity” (FERBER, 2007, p. 130) shone brightly upon her face, “beautiful, but too solemn”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 186)

The cry she heard does not return, though Jane notices it had come from the chamber above her ceiling, in the third story; three times she heard a cry for help from the same chamber, and Jane decided to go after the sound. The scene she encounters is of a bleeding Richard, and a rather agitated Mr Rochester, in a room where a door, which had been previously concealed, is opened. Jane could hear the “snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarrelling” and the “globin ha! ha!” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 188) coming from the opened room; she assumes it was from Grace Poole, but it is Bertha, the secret of Mr Rochester. Then, she was “in the third story, fastened into one of its mystic cells; night around me; a pale and bloody spectacle under my eyes and hands” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 189) a scene similar to the one in the red-room; Jane had finally entered the room of her Bluebeard, however its secret was not entirely disclosed. As before, when she tries setting fire on Mr Rochester’s bed, Bertha unknowingly was bringing him and Jane together, for after the second time she helps him, he gives her the key to his room and to part of his secret. As they see Richard going away, Mr Rochester calls her and tells her

The glamour of inexperience is over your eyes, [...] that you see it through a charmed medium: you cannot discern that the gilding is slime and the silk draperies cobwebs; that the marble is sordid slate, and the polished woods mere refuse chips and scaly bark. Now here' (he pointed to the leafy enclosure we had entered) 'all is real, sweet, and pure. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 194)

The analogy between the mansion and himself, the pure nature and Jane is direct in this part. After all, their relationship of equality has only one unequal part, which is the fact that Mr Rochester has much more experience than Jane. As Thornfield Hall is old, full of dark secrets and hidden rooms, so is Mr Rochester, and as the nature around them is pure, untouched, so is Jane. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar assert that “Rochester has specific and ‘guilty’ sexual knowledge which makes him in some sense her ‘superior’” and his

possession of the hidden details of sexuality, however – his knowledge, that is, of the secret of sex, symbolized both by his doll-like daughter Adèle and by the locked doors of the third story behind which mad Bertha crouches lie an animal – qualifies and undermines that equality. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 355)

At the same time, though Jane is untouched physically, she has had some experience with a wild, untamed part of her that is very much locked as Mr Rochester's secret is; this hidden part of her, a secret Mr Rochester may want to unveil, and this becomes more prominent when they are already betrothed and he starts treating her as an inferior, "a plaything, a virginal possession – for she has now become his initiate, his 'mustard-seed', his 'little sunny-taced ... girl-bride'". (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 355) Once again he threatens her as a creature from another dimension when he compares her to his mustard-seed, which, in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596), is the name of one of the fairies in Titania's court. Jane, realizing this, decides to keep him "in reasonable check", and does not accept his gifts and money, knowing that by the time she did, he would treat her like one of the mistresses he had previously.

Not only that, Jane also refuses to be treated as an angel or as a bird, for she is "a free human being with an independent will", (BRONTË, 2015, p. 227) both comparisons of lack of freedom and submission by her. She tells him that after he again manipulates her into thinking he did not want her, and that he would marry Miss Ingram. Her act of coldness and propriety slipped away when "The vehemence of emotion, stirred by grief and love within me, was claiming mastery, and struggling for full sway; and asserting a right to predominate: to overcome, to live, rise, and reign at last; yes,—and to speak". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 227) Her mind overcome with passion addresses his spirit "as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are!" (BRONTË, 2015, p. 227); Mr Rochester then opens his true heart to her, and asks for her to "Come to me—come to me entirely now" speaking in her ear to "Make my happiness—I will make yours". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 227)

Jane accepts Mr Rochester, however, as he tries to tame her into submission, her demon, the constant in her life, refuses to accept it. When he calls her an angel, she laughs at him and says "I am not an angel [...] and I will not be one till I die: I will be myself. Mr Rochester, you must neither expect nor exact anything celestial of me—for you will not get it, any more than I shall get it of you: which I do not at all anticipate" (BRONTË, 2015, p. 233) and that "I had rather be a *thing* than an angel". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 235) In turn, Mr Rochester desires that wild side of Jane, and requests of her to not "turn out a downright Eve on my hands!" (BRONTË, 2015, p. 235) She does not turn into an Eve, or an angel; instead, she refuses to be bent, as the air, as the nature, as Lilith. Therefore, when his secret is disclosed, Jane

decides to go away, even if she “longed to be his”, because if she stayed, she would be, indeed, mastered as Eve. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 286)

Before her departure, though, she reminds of Gateshead, of the red-room; the night was dark, and

The light that long ago had struck me into syncope, recalled in this vision, seemed glidingly to mount the wall, and tremblingly to pause in the centre of the obscured ceiling. I lifted up my head to look: the roof resolved to clouds, high and dim; the gleam was such as the moon imparts to vapours she is about to sever. I watched her come—watched with the strangest anticipation; as though some word of doom were to be written on her disk. She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud: a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a White human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed and gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart—'My daughter, flee temptation!' (BRONTË, 2015, p. 286)

The moon, symbol to chastity, and also “mutability, metamorphosis, inconstancy, or fickleness” (FERBER, 2007, p. 130) tells Jane to fly away, to not turn into what Mr Rochester desired of her. Once again, her demon decides for her; she escapes before the dawn broke, as Lilith does when facing submission, not telling anyone and again she journeys through darkness and misery.

The last part of her journey of hardships will meet its end in Marsh End, though before she ends up there, she must face all the difficulties she had been through before – oppression, starvation, madness, and coldness. It was her time to redeem herself from her sins, for that bad side she kept hidden inside of her and that took care of her actions whenever she was at a hard situation. Her pilgrimage must reach a Christian result, and the demon inside of her must be killed; an angel Jane did not desire to be, but an angel she should try being for the sake of her soul, as Mr Brocklehurst had told her years back. In the end, after almost dying of famish and coldness, a good Christian opens his door to her – John Rivers, a significant name. In Christianity, it was necessary for the Israelites to cross the Jordan to reach the Promised Land; thus, it was necessary for Jane to go through John Rivers in Marsh End for her to reach her final destination.

As all the other places in Jane’s life, Marsh End also has important people who symbolize something to her; Mary and Diana, also with allegorical names, recall “the Great Mother in her dual aspects of Diana the huntress and Mary the virgin mother”, (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 365) and they become the sisters Jane never had, while St. John Rivers seems to

offer her a “life of principle, a path of thorns (with no concealed roses), and a marriage of spirituality”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 365) In Marsh End Jane finally has the love and care she had always wished for in a family – which ends up being her real family – and after going through so many struggles to reach that end, she opens her heart to the Rivers family. As for romantic love, in Marsh End there is no possibility for it, for while St. John offers her marriage and yet a “new servitude” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 79) as the wife of a missionary, he does not offer her love.

In fact, it is interesting to note that St. John Rivers is the exact opposite of Mr Rochester, like ice and fire, heat and coldness, passion and apathy; he offers her a life of servitude as his wife, a life as a true angel, and, of course, Jane rejects it yet again. As they grow closer together, she finds him “a very patient, very forbearing, and yet an exacting master” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 355) and soon she falls under his “freezing spell”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 355) It is, in a way, similar to her relationship with Mr Rochester, who, despite his position, treated her as an equal in spirit. St. John also expects something of Jane, however, instead of igniting the fire inside of her, he blows on it. Consequently, Jane understands that to please him “I must disown half my nature” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 355) and that as his wife she would always be “restrained, and always checked [...] forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital—this would be unendurable”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 363)

In that case, if she were to marry St. John under his conditions, she would go into an even more unequal relationship than that proposed by Mr Rochester; however, instead of trying to make her “the salve of passion, St. John wants to imprison the ‘resolute wild free thing’ that is her soul in the ultimate cell, the ‘iron shroud’ of principle”. (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 366) Once again, the memory of Jane affirming she is no bird, and no net to ensnare her is echoed in this part, as she refuses to accept St. John’s conditions. As Lilith, she would not lose her freedom again; thus, in more favorable conditions, she flies away one more time. After finding out she is the heir to her uncle in Madeira, and that she has a real family, Jane returns to Thornfield; it is under the moonlight, with flesh quivering on her bones that Jane receives the sign she must return to her beloved one in Thornfield.

It is after her return that Jane’s life changes again, though this time is final. Her journey comes to an end when she discovers that the one impediment in her relationship with him – his mad wife, Bertha – had committed suicide and burned Thornfield, one of the symbols of

Mr Rochester's social superiority to Jane, to the ground. Mr Rochester, perhaps in punishment for his sins, specifically the sin of adultery, loses his sights, and a hand, as it is the biblical punishment for those who commit adultery. Lonely, hurt and crippled, Mr Rochester is perfect for Jane, for now they were physical and spiritual equals.

As for Jane, despite being able to reunite with her love, she is finally able to be "freed from the burden of her past, freed both of the raging specter of Bertha (which had already fallen in fact from the ruined wall of Thornfield) and from the self-pitying specter of the orphan child". (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 368) Her pilgrimage reaches its ends after a lot of pain and struggles; her demon is symbolically burnt together with Thornfield, which had almost been her cage. Her story ends with an assertion to the reader, "I married him," (BRONTË, 2015, p. 399) and that "No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am; ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 401) Jane, who had been a Lilith, a demon, for part of her life, finally turns into what Miss Temple, Helen Burns, and St. John Rivers had always taught her to be – Eve, the angel, bound to her husband, in "perfect concord". (BRONTË, 2015, p. 401)

2.3. MAD, LOCKED, WILD

An important element in Jane Eyre's pilgrimage is played by a quite an important character, one that has been called her "raging specter", (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 368) a symbol of the "sexual "hunger" that all women in this novel either repress (in the hope of spiritual reward) or pervert (for financial gain)". (BLOOM, 2007, p. 107) Bertha Mason Rochester, the mad woman in the attic, not only torments Jane and attempts to murder her husband and brother, she is also on the way for Jane's happiness with Mr Rochester.

There are many parallels between the two female characters. Jane has a hidden side to her, a demon hiding in the shadows of her mind, waiting for the opportunity to be freed. Bertha is a demon, also hiding in the shadows and striking when she has the chance. Jane has a wildness and an agitation that were not abated even in the hands of the angelic Miss Temple and the acquiescent Helen Burns; Bertha is also wild, though differently from Jane, she does not control herself and is therefore kept in a cage. Finally, both women are bound to the same man, the Byronic Mr Rochester, and it is through leaving him that they are finally freed from their respective prisons.

It is possible to infer, through these parallels, that Bertha is what Jane would have become if she did not learn how to control her impulses and the burning rage that had followed her since she was a child. However, it is not the objective of this thesis to analyze what could have been, rather what is. Bertha's role in *Jane Eyre* starts long before we acknowledge her existence as a character, as Mr Rochester's mentally deranged wife. Before then, her influence is felt through the strange noises and movements perceived in Thornfield Hall – the patriarchal mansion. Symbolically, it represents the work and slave blood that sustain the farming system this novel derives from. Bertha is the soul of the Gothic force in the novel, the provider of the suspense that makes it impossible for the reader to leave the book. She also represents the repressed elements in the nature of the protagonist. Nothing is known about Bertha until she finally appears in fact. In their first contacts, Jane only hears the sounds she produced. Jane hears her for the first time when she is in the corridor that leads to the attic, the place where Bertha is locked in. Jane compares the place with a corridor in “some Bluebeard's Castle”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 98) As mentioned before, Bluebeard is a tale about a violent man who customarily kills his own wives. According to Maria Tartar, “Over the years [this story] has served as a master-narrative about the perils of marriage” and it has a happy ending “the heroine marries ‘a very worthy man, who banished the memory of the miserable days she had spent with Bluebeard’”. (TARTAR, 2017, p. 218) If we take into consideration the moral of Bluebeard's tale, Bertha can be considered one of his wives, one who could no longer go to and fro on the face of the earth, (PERRAULT, 2016) while Mr Rochester would play the part of Bluebeard himself. It is in this corridor that leads to Bluebeard's place that Jane hears “a curious laugh; distinct, formal, mirthless” that “passed off in a clamorous peal that seemed to wake an echo in every lonely chamber”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 98) When she asks Mrs. Fairfax where that laughter is coming from, the answer is that it comes from one of the servants, Grace Poole – the person responsible for keeping Bertha locked and looking after her. Jane accepts the piece of information and moves on with her life in Thornfield, which is not quite as smooth as she would have expected. Later on, when she feels uneasy because of the dull routine in her life in Thornfield, it is close to the room Bertha is locked in that Jane walks “along the corridor of the third story, backwards and forwards”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 100) mimicking the movement of a caged animal – as Bertha would do. Still, while Jane has the possibility of walking freely and leaving the place, if she wills, “Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 100) Bertha's way of revolting against her situation is making herself noticed. And in the moments Jane is alone in the corridor, she hears “the same

peal, the same low, slow ha! ha!” and the “eccentric murmurs; stranger than her laugh”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 101)

The first time Bertha makes a physical appearance is to create havoc. After Mr Rochester had told Jane about the affair he had with Adèle’s mother, she condoles with him, and starts considering her own feelings towards him. In spite of his irregular life, she thinks of him as “naturally a man of better tendencies, higher principles, and purer tastes”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 134) It is then that – as if to contradict her judgment – Bertha – Rochester’s darkest secret – appears at Jane’s door, touching it “as if fingers had swept the panels in groping a way along the dark gallery outside”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 135) and leaving Jane “chilling with fear”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 135) Next, she hears a “demonic laugh – low, suppressed, and deep” and “unnatural”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 135) When she asks who was there, her only answer is something gurgling and moaning before retreating towards the third story. Jane’s first thought is of Grace Poole, who might be perhaps possessed by the devil. It is here that we have the first comparison of Bertha with a demon. Bertha sets Mr Rochester’s bed on fire, an action that will be repeated at the end of the novel, when she destroys the entire ancestral mansion.

Fire has a variety of symbolic meanings in literature. According to Michael Ferber its meanings “are not only manifold but sometimes ambiguous: what warms can burn, what illuminates can dazzle and blind. Fires are found on earth, in heaven, in hell, and in purgatory; they bring life and death; they can kill by burning up or by burning out”. (FERBER, 2007, p. 73) Fire can kill, but it also brings life and it is indispensable for human beings in order to cover basic needs such as keeping a person warm and cooking food. Bertha has a similar position in the novel. She can kill, as she tries to do with Mr Rochester and her brother Richard. Still, if it weren’t for her presence in Mr Rochester’s life, Jane would be married to a man already married, becoming a prey to bigamy – a sin and a crime. In a way Bertha gives Jane an option, and Jane takes it, flying away from Thornfield. Bertha is a fundamental character in the structure of the plot of *Jane Eyre*. She is the mystery in a Gothic fiction, the secret of the hero, and the impediment and challenge for the heroine.

Fire can also mean “passionate love and jealousy”. (FERBER, 2007, p. 74) As declared before, Bertha is considered by some critics Jane’s “dream-self”, (THOMAS, 2006, p. 60) the physical projection of that dark part of her she keeps hidden – her demon, her Lilith. It all starts in the red-room, a place where Jane has “a species of fit” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 20) and

her “brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16) In another room, in a quite similar way, locked away against her will, “always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, forever condemned” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 16) is Bertha, continuously punished – for her condition, her madness, her heritage, her cheating on Mr Rochester, her lies, for being “intemperate and unchaste”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 274) This treatment begs the question that Jean Rhys herself asks as she wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea*: why is Bertha Mason so severely punished?

As mentioned before, the only story told about this infamous character is through the lips of Mr Rochester, her husband, the British, Byronic hero who marries a Creole for the sake of her fortune. It is his truth that we must accept when reading the novel, the truth that Bertha deserves all the punishments that she suffers, for her behavior as a married woman – and before she married as she seduces Mr Rochester -, is despicable. Not only did she drink in excess, she is also a sexual symbol, which is far from what a lady should be. It is through her beauty that she seduces Mr Rochester, and much as he did with all his mistresses, he falls for her enchants. For that reason, in his Eurocentric masculine mind, Bertha is passive of punishment for her sins, and he shall be the one to condemn her since he is, after all, her husband, thus her master.

In that way, one of Bertha’s punishments is to become the other, the double which is “familiar enough to be disturbing and strange enough to remind us of the otherness that inhabits the self-same”. (WOLFREYS, 2002, p. 15) Bertha can be seen in the novel acting according to Jane’s feelings. As Elaine Showalter asserts, she represents “The ‘animal’ aspects of womanhood” and “the incarnation of the flesh, of female sexuality in its most irredeemably bestial and terrifying form”. (SHOWALTER, 1977, p. 118) Sexuality in the nineteenth century, as discussed before, was not a matter of discussion; in fact, as Foucault asserts in *History of Sexuality* “Christianity associated it with evil, sin, the Fall” and it should be used for “exclusively procreative ends within that conjugal relationship”. (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 14) In addition, men and women were restricted to only have one partner in life, their spouses, thus “each spouse would have to ensure the other's chastity, being careful not to cause him or her to commit the sin of the flesh—either through indecent entreaties or through harsh refusals”. (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 184) Furthermore, sex was not supposed to be pleasurable, and desire should be a temptation to be resisted. Mr Rochester, however, marries Bertha because of his desire for her, the desire to have a woman that “All men in her

circle seemed to admire”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273) and Bertha allures him in the same way the serpent in the Bible allures Eve to eat from the forbidden tree.

The consequence of his lack of temptation, of his sin, is to be forever bound to the same woman he married because of that desire. In turn, Bertha, also in sin when she seduces him and omits the truth about her family, slowly is consumed by the germs of insanity. She is the mad woman, the demon, the Vampyre that appears only in darkness, under the moonlight, representing danger to the heroine, and that part of herself she should not have as a lady in the nineteenth-century.

The way Jane and Bertha interact in the story, and the way they are portrayed, is both interesting and emblematic. If Jane is a demon, just like Bertha is called, she has the freedom of choosing her own fate in the same way Lilith was able to do. Bertha, however, does not have this option, therefore she is punished. This is emblematic because of the way Bertha, a Creole woman, is presented in a Victorian novel, and how she becomes the obstacle for the heroine. Her story, the only one both Jane and the reader are able to hear is told by Mr Rochester, right after their marriage is impeded by Richard Mason, Bertha’s brother. Her background is completely different from Jane’s, from the place she came from to her family and fortune.

Bertha Antoinetta Mason is introduced as the daughter of Jonas Mason, a merchant, and of Antoinetta Mason, his Creole wife, an “infamous mother”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 254) Mr Rochester’s father, “an avaricious grasping man”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273) in order to find a place for his younger son, sought a wealthy marriage which would grant him fortune and a wife. He found one in the daughter of an old acquaintance, Mr Mason, “a West India planter and merchant”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273), who would relinquish as a dowry a fortune of thirty thousand pounds. According to the Historical Conversion of Currency from the University of Wyoming (2019), if we convert the pounds of the 19th century to today’s American dollars, Bertha would be worth U\$ 3,183,728. Rochester, being the second male son, would not inherit his father’s property, unless his father put it on his will. Therefore, after he left college he was “sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273) Although his father did not tell him about all her fortune, he said Bertha was “was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty: and this was no lie”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273) Mr Rochester confirmed that. For him, she was “a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram; tall, dark, and majestic”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273) The comparison with

Blanche, the woman who was interested only in his fortune – and who ended up fooled by his act as the gypsy woman – is a good one, after all, Blanche was one of the options for his next wife, and though she was beautiful,

She was very showy, but she was not genuine: she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments; but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature; nothing bloomed spontaneously on that soil; no unforced natural fruit delighted by its freshness. She was not good; she was not original: she used to repeat sounding phrases from books: she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own. She advocated a high tone of sentiment; but she did not know the sensations of sympathy and pity; tenderness and truth were not in her. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 168)

Ironically, Blanche also tries to do to him the same he did to Bertha – she wants him for his fortune. Furthermore, the contempt he feels for her reflects the contempt he feels for himself and the memory of how he acted in his past with Bertha; Blanche Ingram would never be interested in him if it were not for the fact she is already old to marry, and that her father, Lord Ingram, is broken. She is interested in him out of convenience, just like he was interested in Bertha in the past.

Bertha and Blanche share other similarities; just like Blanche – and completely different from Jane – Bertha’s qualities lie on her circumstances and physical appearance. The marriage was convenient for both parties. For Mr Rochester it was financially rewarding, and for Bertha was socially convenient, for he was “of a good race”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273) while she was a Creole, not truly European or English. As mentioned by Jenny Sharpe, the term Creole in England was “a derogatory name for the West Indian sugar plantocracy”. (SHARPE, 2006, p. 87) At the time *Jane Eyre* was published “slavery was so unpopular that only those who directly benefited from it continued to defend it”. (SHARPE, 2006, p. 87) Therefore, the fact that Bertha’s fortune came from this unpopular practice only added to her sentence and, consequently, to her punishment. She is, after all,

a female version of the “immoral West Indian planter,” a literary stereotype that, following the abolition of the African slave trade, was commonly invoked as “a useful shorthand for depravity.” It is clear from Rochester’s description of his first wife that it is not her madness he finds so intolerable as her debauchery. (SHARPE, 2006, p. 87)

Rochester says he lived with her for four years after marrying her, without knowing her well. According to him, she “flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments. All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me. I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited; and being ignorant, raw, and inexperienced, I thought I loved her”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273) His sins of pride, greed, lust, and, later, wrath are also passible of punishment. His punishment seems to be Bertha’s constant presence in his life – he could not divorce her. Sally Mitchell informs us that, before 1857, “divorce was difficult, expensive, and rare”. (MITCHELL, 2009, p. 106) There were two types of divorce granted by the Church – “a *mensa et thoro* (“from bed and board”) in cases of adultery, extreme cruelty, or desertion”, and a *vinculo*, or annulment, which did permit remarriage”. (MITCHELL, 2009, p. 106) Annulments, though, were possible only when “the marriage was not valid in the first place, usually because one of the partners was found to be underage, mentally incompetent, or already married to someone else”. (MITCHELL, 2009, p. 106)

As for Bertha, much as happened to her mother before her, becomes mad. It is implied that her madness is, thus, genetic as Mr Rochester mentions

My bride's mother I had never seen: I understood she was dead. The honeymoon over, I learned my mistake; she was only mad, and shut up in a lunatic asylum. There was a younger brother, too, a complete dumb idiot. The elder one, whom you have seen (and whom I cannot hate, whilst I abhor all his kindred, because he has some grains of affection in his feeble mind; shown in the continued interest he takes in his wretched sister, and also in a dog-like attachment he once bore me), will probably be in the same state one day. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 274)

This view of her family, a Creole family, is a rather imperialistic, xenophobic and European; it is clear that neither Bertha’s voice, not even her brother Richard, is important in the narrative. Rochester’s views of the facts are taken to be the truth of all that concerns Bertha and her family. Rochester did not know any of those facts before he married her; his father and brother did, but never told him about them. Bertha allured him, and soon the marriage took place. Their differences, though, became a problem between them. Bertha was “wholly alien” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 274) to him, her tastes obnoxious, her cast of mind “common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 274) In addition, as asserted by Jenny Sharpe

The particular form of Bertha’s insanity bears the signs of an idle plantocracy in the state of decline. Since the self-indulgence of the planter class was considered

responsible for feeding its vices, it is not madness that is the cause of Bertha's moral degeneration but rather the other way around—her “excesses” have strained her minuscule mind to the point of unhinging it. (SHARPE, 2006, p. 88)

Therefore, Bertha is not only is punished for her “gross, impure, depraved” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 275) nature, but also for her heritage and culture. The way she is physically described in the novel both by Jane and Mr Rochester confirms their belief in their superiority towards Bertha. When the secret is finally revealed, and Mr Rochester lifts the hangings covering the door to Bertha's room, Jane sees her for the only time in the story:

In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 262)

In this moment, Bertha is like a caged animal – walking backwards and forwards, in a room “without a window there burnt a fire, guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 262) The use of the pronoun “it” instead of “she” makes her less human, and she never pronounces a word, she growls, bellows, looks at them wildly, with a “purple face” and “bloated features”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 263) She attacks Mr Rochester, grappling his throat “viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 263) Bertha is beyond salvation at this point, she has turned into a wild woman – ironically, exactly like Jane as a child when she attacked John Reed.

There is no question whether Bertha is a demon or not. Even in her state of madness, she refuses to be locked away, escaping whenever she has the chance, using fire, with anger and vengeance as her fuel. At the same time, the position she represents, the “plantation woman”, (SHARPE, 2006, p. 88) would be the Caribbean equivalent to the angel in the house. The plantation mistress was the model for womanhood in the colonies, just like the angel was in Britain, and interestingly the rates of female madness in those societies were high (SHOWALTER, 1985, p.3). According to Mr Rochester, although Bertha deceived him, she still did what was required of her at the time. A woman was supposed to marry for a happy

and fulfilled life, to have children and become one with her husband – even if in a political and convenience marriage.

It is here that the biggest difference between Bertha Mason and Jane Eyre emerges. Jane Eyre would not have married for the same reasons Mr Rochester and Bertha did – of course she would not have done it because she is not inserted in the same dynamics as they were, thus no one was there to require of her to marry a wealthy man with a good family name. In addition, she expresses her opinion about the matter when she thinks Mr Rochester will marry Blanche Ingram for convenience, as she says

I had thought him a man unlikely to be influenced by motives so commonplace in his choice of a wife; but the longer I considered the position, education, &c , of the parties, the less I felt justified in judging and blaming either him or Miss Ingram, for acting in conformity to ideas and principles instilled into them, doubtless, from their childhood. All their class held these principles; I supposed, then, they had reasons for holding them such as I could not fathom. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 169)

Jane's pride would not let her bend to the will of fortune or appearance, nor to sexual desire. She was presented with the opportunity to let her inner demon escape for good when Mr Rochester offers her a place as his mistress, instead of his wife, and to not “dwell on the Past when the Present is much surer – the Future so much brighter”. (BRONTË, 2015, p. 282)

However, she resists the temptation, as she did not fit in the role Mr Rochester was expecting of her. Not much is known about Bertha's opinions regarding those matters, after all she does not have the chance to speak, and the fact that remains is that she married an unknown man for his family name and his “good race” (BRONTË, 2015, p. 273). Hence, Bertha, much like Mr Rochester, had to pay for her choices. She was punished for offering Mr Rochester the forbidden fruit – sex – locked in an attic, and in her own mind, until she committed suicide – another terrible sin according to Christian dogma.

Bertha Mason never has the chance to speak and give her side of the story, thus the only recounting possible is the one coming from her husband. Her presence is significant not only for the fact she is considered Jane's hidden self, her hidden anger, sexuality, her inner demon, but also for what she represents in relation to her race. Mr Rochester was ashamed of her and her Creole nature, “her excesses”, (BRONTË, 2015, p. 275), which “causes Bertha's lunacy and, accordingly, her propensity towards sin and crime”. (VOICU, 2014, p. 68) In the end, her willing death represents Jane's freedom to marry Mr Rochester. She helps Jane in more

ways she could count; not only by dying, but also by burning Thornfield, “the symbol of Rochester’s mastery and of her own servitude” (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 360) and by making Mr Rochester blind and helpless, thus passive of help.

In the end, Bertha becomes the symbol of the repressed emotions within the novel’s protagonist; she is the devil that resides within all women, one that is continuously tamed by the societal rules and morals, as women should strive to be angels, not demons. She represents fire, rage, anger, sexuality, and she dies burning herself and the masculine symbol that is Thornfield Hall. With her death, she ultimately helps Jane balance herself between the angel and demon, something that she had been struggling with ever since the beginning of the novel. As for Mr Rochester, she represents his final punishment for he again resorts to sin when he tries to offer Jane a forbidden relationship; it is in the fire caused by Bertha that he loses his sight and a hand, his mansion and everything it represents, and ends up needing Jane’s help to reconstruct his life. In a symbolic way, she burns down the patriarchal power that not only had led her to a convenient marriage and to her fate, thus avenging not only herself, but also Jane and all the abusiveness she had suffered through her life. Finally, she avenges her creator, Charlotte Brontë, who also went through hardships to be acknowledged as a writer during her time.

3 “THERE IS ALWAYS THE OTHER SIDE”

*Yet did I love thee to the last
As fervently as thou,
Who didst not change through all the past,
And canst not alter now.
The love where Death has set his seal,
Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,
Nor falsehood disavow:
And, what were worse, thou canst not see
Or wrong, or change, or fault in me.*

Lord Byron, And Thou art Dead, as Young and Fair

3.1 SMILE, PLEASE: JEAN RHYS

Smile, Please, Jean Rhys’ unfinished autobiography, was published in 1979, the year of her death at the age of 88, three years after her last novel *Sleep It Off Lady* (1976) was released. According to Diana Athill, the idea of writing an autobiography did not attract Rhys, but “because she was sometimes angered and hurt by what other people wrote about her she wanted to get the facts down”. (ATHILL, 2016, n.p.) Thus, *Smile, Please* was written, though not completed, by her in a non-chronological order, with facts she remembered from her life. This autobiography will be used here, with the addition of a few others that support in the understanding of Rhys’ life.

Ella Gwendoline Rees Williams was born in Dominica in the year 1890, the fifth child of William Rees Williams, a Welsh medical officer, and Minna Lockhart, a White Dominican Creole from a wealthy and known family of Scottish ascendancy. Her maternal family “established prominently in Dominica for five generations by the time of Rhys’s birth, since James Potter Lockhart emigrated to Dominica to first manage a sugar plantation, Geneva, and then by the mid-1820s to own it, along with 258 slaves”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 2) Potter Lockhart was an important political figure in Dominica, thus the Lockhart name was important. Her family lived in Roseau, a White Anglican “small town sitting between the dramatic forested escarpments which characterize Dominica’s interior and the huge horizon of the almost always deserted Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea”. (SAVORY, 2009, p. 4) Dominica was, at the time, the only island in the West Indies where “White power was successfully challenged”, (SAVORY, 2009, p. 5) for most of its people in the 1890s were of

African descent. Many were Catholic, when the “Anglican hierarchy attempted to be dominant as a representation of the religious wing of British possession and White hegemony”. (SAVORY, 2009, p. 4) Rhys’ father and maternal family were involved with politics, being nominated to the Assembly for a period. (SAVORY, 2009, p. 6)

Rhys’ memories of her childhood are written “as accurately as possible”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) When she was nine, she mentions she hated herself, for being fair with “a pale skin and huge staring eyes of no particular color” whilst her siblings were dark haired and eyed. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) Nine months before she was born, her mother had lost a baby, Brenda Gwenith, and some years before another daughter called Ella. Thus, Ella Gwendoline was named after these two dead girls. Lilian Pizzichini, in her biography *The Blue Hour: A Portrait of Jean Rhys*, asserts that she “felt as though she were the ghost of her mother’s baby”. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 7)

She did not fit in; (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 8) she was pale, the others were swarthy. She was shy, the others were confident. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 8) Also, she did not fit with the Black girls either, for

They ran, swam and sweated as a matter of course. She was a well-brought up little White girl, the descendant on her mother’s side of a wealthy slave-owner for whom Blacks were possessions. She would never be accepted as one of them. To make matters worse, her mother was fond of remarking that Black babies were prettier than White babies. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 8)

As a girl living in a society with huge ethnical and cultural diversity, Rhys had a certain understanding of where she and her family stood. As mentioned before, Dominica was one of the places where White power was defied after a long history of slavery and White English hegemony. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 2) There was an uneasy feeling amongst the Whites, the Blacks, and the mixed-raced people. In addition, the fact that Rhys’ maternal family had made their fortune with sugar plantations only added to her consciousness about her place in that society. One of her memories in *Smile Please* refers to two dolls she and her sister received as a gift from her Irish grandmother; one was fair, the other was dark. Although both were beautiful, she wanted the dark doll as “I had never wanted anything in my life”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) Her mother, though, made her give the doll to her younger sister. Rhys’ reaction was to go to the garden and smash the fair doll’s face with a rock. As Elaine Savory asserts,

What her story signifies is the sense of self-rejection and outsider status within her own family circle which was fed perhaps both by her own subversive reaction to

restrictive domestic conventions and her internalization of the ways colonial Whites were seen by others. (SAVORY, 2009, p. 31)

Her awareness was so acute that there is a chapter in *Smile Please* dedicated entirely to her family's relationship with the Blacks – it's called *Black/White*. She mentions a riot when she was about twelve, and whilst her mother called her siblings and her to dress up and go downstairs, her father said that was ridiculous. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) As she recalls, she heard a sound similar to animals howling, but she knew it was not animals making the sound. Then, she realized her mother had dressed them up in order to run if necessary, if the Black people outside decided to kill them. Nothing happened, however, a "certain wariness did creep in when I thought about the Black people who surrounded me". (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) At the time, she had a Black nurse called Meta, who was "the terror of my life". Her memories of the nurse were not good. First, Meta "always seemed to be brooding over something terrible, unforgettably wrong". The Nurse told her scary stories about mythic creatures such as "zombies, souciant, and loups-garoux". (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) Rhys then compares Meta with another Black girl she met who was friends with her, Francine, who told stories "full of jokes and laughter". (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) In the end, she called Meta "Black Devil" (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) and Francine disappeared without a word, leaving Rhys hurt. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.)

For Elaine Savory, Rhys was contradictory about race, since "She was romantic about Black culture as a child (she thought it more fun than White), but in old age she could sound resentful at the loss of White power in Dominica". (SAVORY, 2004, p. 3) It was in the convent she studied that "the next thing that shook me happened". (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) The school, as she herself asserts, was a place where White girls were a minority. Still, her father "not a prejudiced man", (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) let her study there. One day, she was sitting beside a girl older than her, tall and pretty, who did not look colored, though she was; she admired the girl so much she tried talking to her, only to be told to go away only with a look. For her "This was hatred – impersonal, implacable hatred. I recognised it at once and if you think that a child cannot recognise hatred and remember it for life you are most damnably mistaken". (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) After that, she did not try to be friends with the colored girls, because "They hate us. We are hated. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.)

She continued having friendships only with White girls, then, though still admiring and envying the culture of the Black people around her. Years later, as a young adult woman, she would again face the matters of race. Her paternal aunt, Clarice, took her to England in 1907 to complete her education. She enrolled at Perse School for Girls in Cambridge. However,

she was still in the ship when the differences between Dominica and England became clear to her. From the British food served in the ship, the rules of decorum for each meal, to the coldness of the weather, the grey sky, the lack of the bright colors from the Caribbean she was used to. There were, according to Lilian Pizzichini, certain things that Rhys could not stand in London: “the impersonality of the city; its pitiless disregard for individuals”. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 52)

Rhys attended Perse School for only one term, for she had a “great wish to be an actress”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) She enrolled on The Academy of Dramatic Art, known then as Tree’s School. There she had lessons “in fencing, dancing, gesture (del sarte) and elocution”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) During this period at the Academy, her father passed away, and her mother told her she must return to Dominica for she did not have the money to keep her in England. For Carole Angier, one of the reasons why she left the school was not necessarily because of the death of her father, rather because of her West Indian accent, which was not proper for serious theater in England at the time. (ANGIER, 1990, p. 49) Her life changed again when she decided to join a chorus of a musical comedy called *Our Miss Gibbs*; it was a steady job, and they made thirty-five shillings a week – plus an extra for every matinée. Her stage name was Ella Gray, and as Elaine Savory comments, “The life she lived was both gloriously fake (makeup, costumes and make-believe during the performances), and brutally real (tawdry boarding houses in which the chorus spent their leisure time)”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 4)

It was during this period as a chorus girl that her literary career started. As she mentions in her autobiography, when her first love affair came to an end, she wrote the poem “I didn’t know/ I didn’t know/ I didn’t know”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) She had already a close relationship with books, saying that even as a baby she imagined God was a book. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) As she learned to read, she “read everything she could get hold of”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) The first recollection of her writing, though, was her diary; after separating from the man with whom she was having an affair, she bought an exercise book and wrote “This is my diary”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) There she wrote everything that had happened to her in the last year and a half in which she had been with the man. She said she would write “until late into the night, till I was so tired that I couldn’t go on, and I fell into bed and slept”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) She filled up three exercise books and another, then she wrote “Oh God, I’m only twenty and I’ll have to go on living and living and living. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) After this period, she decided to leave England after meeting her husband to be, Willem Johan Marie (Jean) Lenglet.

She moved to Paris, living in a not very comfortable situation with Lenglet; for that reason, she decided she needed a job, and the first one she got was speaking English to the children in a family. She became pregnant with her first child, William Owen, who died at age of three. Rhys had another child – Maryvonne - two years later. The family had difficulty with money, especially after her husband lost “other people’s money, and, worse, ‘the Commission’s money’”. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 160) Their only option was to return to Paris, to the same small hotel room they moved into after they married. They left Maryvonne in a clinic when she was two weeks old, and it was only a few months later that she returned to take her daughter. To make things worse, Jean Lenglet ran away, leaving her behind. With no husband, no job or money, Rhys had to rely on the help of others. Germaine Richelot, the aunt of the children Rhys had worked with, helped her by giving her money, buying her clothes, feeding her and keeping her company. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 162)

Another friend who helped was Mrs H. Pearl Adam, a journalist she had met years before. She invited Rhys to live with her and her husband in their flat. H. Pearl Adam would have influence on Rhys’ writing process, for she “encouraged her to develop her diaries into fiction, and even edited them herself into the never-published novel ‘Triple Sec.’” (SAVORY, 2004, p. 7) In addition, Adam introduced Rhys to Ford Madox Ford, a “a literary impresario and indefatigable if uneven writer (he published eighty-one books and over four hundred articles)”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 7) Ford was known for having published the work of famous writers as D.H. Lawrence, Graham Greene, and Wyndham Lewis. Rhys moved in with him and his companion, Stella Bowen. As mentioned by Pizzichini, the whereabouts of Maryvonne are not certain at this point, though Germaine Richelot likely was paying for her upkeep. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 185) Her relationship with Ford “was a very helpful training ground for her future work”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 7) In 1927, her first book, a collection of short stories, was published with his help; it was called *The Left Bank*. One year later, she published *Quartet*, “in which she fictionalized the affair with Ford”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 8) Neither *The Left Bank* (1927) nor *Quartet* (1928) sold well, though “the reviews were encouraging”. (STALEY, 1979, p. 14) For Staley, through *Quartet* (1928) “Rhys introduced a style-to be perfected and further refined in her later novels-which was admirably suited to the preoccupations of the heroine, and the subtle revelation of her nature”. (STALEY, 1979, p. 37) The critic goes on to say that

Hers is a style which not only reinforces the pressing themes of her novels, but also discovers and manifests the themes as it reveals the underlying attitude of the narrative voice toward the heroine, which lies within that surface brittleness of the style itself. As readers, we become increasingly conscious of the nature of her characters, not merely through action, motivation, or exertion of the will on their part, but also through the rendering of their respective consciousnesses in a style always insightful and revealing. Carefully modulated, terse, frequently flat, always understated, the style penetrates surface situations to probe deeply into the underlying relationships and conditions of the characters. (STALEY, 1979, p. 37)

After *Quartet* (1928), Rhys continued writing. In 1931, she published her second novel, and third book, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*. In the novel, similar to *Quartet*, and all her other novels, has a female protagonist, Rhys “approaches the problem of feminine identity in a radically different way”. (MAUREL, 1998, p. 27) With a story not so different from hers, Julia Martin is exiled in every possible way, “she is cut off from her relatives, lives outside her country as a social outcast, and cannot be incorporated into known categories”. (MAUREL, 1998, p. 27) Once again, Rhys was able to amplify and enrich her “vision of the feminine consciousness”, (STALEY, 1979, p. 58) which seems to be connected to her. Elaine Savory mentions that “my view is that Rhys created fiction out of her experience”, (SAVORY, 2009, p. 58) and that there is a concern as to “Rhys’s protagonists are one woman, at different stages of development or separate women”. (SAVORY, 2009, p. 58)

Her next novel would be published in 1934, the same year she married Leslie Tilden Smith, a literary agent she had been living with after her divorce with Lenglet. *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) following her previous novels, also has a female protagonist, Anna Morgan, a Creole girl all alone in England, who tries to make a living as a chorus girl. For Lilian Pizzichini, the novel is “the story of her love affair with Lancey, and the beginning of the end of her innocence and youth”. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 208) Rhys’ agent, Tilden Smith, took it to Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape in order to try and publish it; however, both denied the novel. It was Michael Sadleir of Constable who would be interested in it, but only if she changed the ending “to please prospective readers”. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 208) Her previous ending had been of Anna dying after the abortion.

The reception of the novel was quite good.

Reviewers everywhere found this book more palatable than her last three. In some ways, this is because it was a familiar story of Edwardian gaiety girls and bounders and the loss of innocence. It is what happens after that loss of innocence that so

shocked Jean's readers. But this book was enough of a success for Constable to issue a paperback. (PIZZICHINI, 2010, p. 209)

Her next novel would be published in 1939, years after a trip she took to Dominica with her husband, almost thirty years after she had left. *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) was, according to Elaine Savory, "largely ignored". (SAVORY, 2004, p. 9) The protagonist of the novel is Sasha Jansen, and she bears the cumulative burdens of Rhys's earlier heroines; she is Julia Martin grown older, a bit more out of control, but for the present at least, less financially desperate". (STALEY, 1979, p. 85) The timing for the novel was not a good one for Rhys, for many things were happening with her family. She did not hear from Maryvonne during the war years, as she was living in Holland with Lenglet, and the country was invaded by the Germans. Only in 1945 she heard her daughter had "worked in the Resistance and been arrested, and now was about to be married". (SAVORY, 2004, p. 10) Her husband Leslie died of a heart attack in 1945. After 1939, Rhys disappeared from the public eye, and the literary circles "assumed she was dead". (SAVORY, 2004, p. 10)

Rhys went back to writing only in the 50s, when she decided to complete *Wide Sargasso Sea*, one of her most famous works to this day. It was "enormously successful" especially with the addition of her return to life, since she had been presumed dead. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 11) As mentioned by Thomas F. Staley, "For the first time – after over forty years – her work came to the attention of a substantial number of readers" and as a result "her publisher brought back into print virtually all of her earlier work, and the steady sales encouraged Penguin to publish her work in paperback". (STALEY, 1979, p. 121) Rhys published the 'spin-off' of Charlotte Brontë's famous novel, *Jane Eyre*, in 1966, not without difficulty, as Diana Athill mentions in her preface of *Smile, Please* saying that "Jean Rhys allowed no piece of writing to leave her hands until it was finished except for the very smallest details". (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) Athill goes on to say that even after five years of its publication, Jean was still not satisfied with her work. She asked Athill, her editor, why she had let her publish the book, since she "was not finished". (RHYS, 2016, n.p.)

Two years after *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) Rhys published *Tigers Are Better-Looking* (1968), a collection of short stories – nine from *The Left Bank* (1927) and eight others she had published through her life. After the success of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, "Rhys's work was being read by more critics who were able to understand what she was doing". (SAVORY, 2004, p. 108) Thus, the collection of short stories, as asserted by Elaine Savory, "was a master stroke by the publishers to bring those early stories back into availability just at the moment when

Rhys was gaining many new readers”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 92) In 1976, she published another collection of short stories, called *Sleep It Off Lady*, which “brings together a group of mostly unpublished stories”. (STALEY, 1979, p. 121) In this collection, “The order of the stories roughly follows the settings of Rhys’s own life chronologically (the Caribbean, London, Paris, and London again, during the War)”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 98) It ends with the story of a ghost imagining returning home in the Caribbean after death.

Finally, in 1979, her last piece of work, her autobiography, was published unfinished, after the author passed away in May. The name, *Smile Please*, comes from the first memory she tells in the book – “‘Smile please,’ the man said. ‘Not quite so serious’”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) She was taking a picture with her White dress, one she had received as a gift, with Black shiny shoes. Her mother told her to keep still, but she moved an arm. The photograph was displayed on the sitting-room, and “It pleased me that it was by itself, not lost among the other photographs in the room, of which there were many. Then I forgot it”. (RHYS, 2016, p. n.p.) Three years later, she looked at the photograph again, only to realize with dismay “that I wasn’t like it any longer” and that “was the first time I was aware of time, change and the longing for the past. I was nine years of age”. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.)

The first passage of this autobiography seems to summarize Rhys life as an adult, living in different places, moving on, in constant change. The author lived a long life, and “writing became a release” (SAVORY, 2004, p. 5) and her novels, though not autobiographical in every detail, “as readers sometimes suppose, but autobiographical they were, and their therapeutic function was the purging of unhappiness”. (RHYS, 2016, p. n.p.) Rhys ended up being recognized for her style, and she was even compared to Katherine Mansfield; (SAVORY, 2004, p. 106) as asserted by Elaine Savory, “Her first stories appealed to those who delighted in exploring literary techniques, even though her subject matter was already a problem for some readers” (SAVORY, 2004, p. 106) after all, all the protagonists from her novels were women who were “contradictory people who often said and abet their own exploitation”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 20)

Her characters are always shifting from angels to demons, floating and not knowing where to anchor themselves. Like Rhys herself, who was “both conventional about gender (her lifelong love of makeup and pretty clothes), and unconventional (her scorn of typically feminine domesticity)”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 20) The author was no feminist, at least she did not raise the flag of the movement, even if it was already blooming during her time; still, she is a

woman who took the pen in her hands and wrote down about characters that were very similar to herself, and yet different. She gave voice to many marginalized women, Creole women, women trying to survive in a male dominated world.

3.2 BETTER THAN PEOPLE

When Jean Rhys decided to write *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it took her about twenty years to finish the project. Still, after the publication, she did not think it was finished, and even questioned her editor, Diana Athill, for having allowed her to publish the book. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) The author was a perfectionist, and every single detail of the novel had to be purposeful. As she mentions for Diana Athill, she liked shape very much, and ““a novel has to have a shape, and life doesn’t have any””. (RHYS, 2016, n.p.) *Wide Sargasso Sea*, published in 1966, is one of Rhys most famous novels; her reason to write about a character from another novel, *Jane Eyre*, was given to her friend, Francis Windham. In a letter to him, dating 1958, she writes

For some time I’ve been getting down all I remembered about the West Indies as the West Indies used to be. (Also all I was told, which is more important). I called this “Creole” but it had no shape or plan – it wasn’t a book at all and I didn’t try to force it. Then when I was in London last year it “clicked in my head” that I had material for the story of Mr Rochester’s first wife. The real story – as it might have been. (RHYS, 1999, p. 136)

Later on, she also adds that she did not like the image Charlotte Brontë painted of the Creole woman, and she did not agree with the treatment Mr Rochester gave to his first wife. She felt that “That’s only one side – the English side”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 144) At the same time, she constructed the novel in a way that it can be an “independent creation of great subtlety and skill”. (STALEY, 1979, p. 101) The novel presents a series of dichotomies – Colonizer/Colonized; English/West Indian; Master/Slave; Hatred/Love; Angel/Demon; Dominator/ Subjected. It is divided in three parts. In Part One, Antoinette Cosway is the narrator; in Part Two the narrator is Antoinette’s husband, reporting his struggle for power in the narrative, and winning at the end. Finally, Part Three starts off with a third person narrator, and then shifts back to Antoinette, or what she has become. There are no chapters, only divisions that show a change in time and place.

The story starts with Antoinette Cosway as a young girl living in Coulibri, a place in Jamaica where Antoinette and her family had lived for some time; the first part of her journey is pertained with a lot of symbolisms and meanings. Starting with her family name, Cosway, which is a variation from the word causeway, meaning a “raised road or path across water or wet ground”. (HORNBY, 2015, p. 231) Her father, called Old Cosway, had supposedly “drank himself to death” (RHYS, 1999, p. 17) leaving his wife, Annette, and two children – Antoinette and Pierre - with a broken estate and poor; his family used to be of slave owners, and that fact was what made his family’s life complicated in the neighborhood. They are completely alienated from society, except from one of their neighbors, Mr Lutrell, and the servants that remain in the house, despite the family’s poverty. In a place where “the road from Spanish Town to Coulibri Estate where we lived was very bad and that road repairing was now a thing from the past (My father, visitors, horses, feeling safe in bed – all belonged to the past)”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 9) Therefore, the road which had come from the Cosways was now destroyed, much like the family.

Coulibri, the Estate they lived in, “derives from a Carib word for the Antillean Crested Hummingbird”; (RAISKIN, 1999, p. 9) the choice of a bird as the name of the Estate is important for all the symbolisms it carries. For Michael Ferber, birds in literature are sometimes metonymical or metaphorical, used to represent humans because

[...] they form a community which is independent of our own but, precisely because of this independence, appears to us like another society, homologous to that in which we live: birds love freedom; they build themselves homes in which they live a family life and nurture their young; they often engage in social relations with other members of their species; and they communicate with them by acoustic means recalling articulated language. Consequently everything objective conspires to make us think of the bird world as a metaphorical human society. [...] Because they can fly, and seem to link the sky with the earth and sea, birds also resemble gods. (FERBER, 2007, p. 26)

The Hummingbird also has a variety of symbolic meanings such as “rebirth and healing” (SIGNS, 2008, p. 60), and it is also one of the only birds that can go backwards and forwards in its flight. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Coulibri is the place Antoinette feels safe: however, it is also where she is caged, for she and her family have no possibility of leaving. The Estate had gone wild, gone to bush, (RHYS, 1999, p. 11) though for Antoinette that did not matter for she “did not remember the place when it was prosperous. (RHYS, 1999, p. 11) The place

where she felt safest was in its garden “large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible – the tree of life grew there”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 11) The garden, like the Estate, had also gone wild. The description of the paradise for Antoinette is an analogy for the family’s condition.

The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell. Underneath the tree ferns, tall as forest tree ferns, the light was green. Orchids flourished out of reach or for some reason not to be touched. One was snaky looking, another like an octopus with long thin brown tentacles bare of leaves hanging from a twisted root. Twice a year the octopus orchid flowered - then not an inch of tentacle showed. It was a bell-shaped mass of White, mauve, deep purples, wonderful to see. The scent was very sweet and strong. I never went near it. (RHYS, 1999, p. 11)

As for the wilderness within the garden, Antoinette’s mother, Annette, and Antoinette herself are women running free with no male figure in their lives. They are the Eves without Adam, and that shifts the way they act. Annette “rode about every morning not caring that the Black people stood about in groups to jeer at her, especially after her riding clothes grew shabby” (RHYS, 1999, p. 10) and after a visit from a doctor to see her brother, Annette “grew thin and silent, and at last she refused to leave the house at all”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 10) Her mother did not act accordingly to her position – or what was left of her position as the plantation mistress, as

Mistresses, even the kindest, commonly resorted to the whip to maintain order among people who were always supposed to be on call; among people who inevitably disappointed expectations; among people whose constant presence not merely as servants but as individuals with wills and passions of their own provided constant irritation along with constant, if indifferent, service. (FOX-GENOVESE, p. 24)

Without a husband, with her household falling to pieces, Annette shuts herself away from the world, thus alienating not only herself, but her daughter as well. The woman, whose fate was to become mad, had the habit of walking “up and down the *glacis* [...]” (RHYS, 1999, p. 11) mimicking the movement of a caged animal with no other option than to desire for freedom “as she had a clear view to the sea”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 11) Antoinette was in a similar situation, though she was not a plantation mistress nor would she be in the future. Her fate is much more connected to the Angel in the house, as she does everything people tell her to, being obedient and submissive. As the Sargasso Sea, “an oval shaped area of the North Atlantic Sea [...] characterized by weak currents, very little wind, and a free-floating mass of

seaweed”, (RASKIN, 1999, p. 2) Antoinette was floating about whilst stranded in one place with no way out.

As the Orchids in her Garden of Eden, which represent “beauty, passion, and fecundity”, (SIGNS, 2008, p. 83) both she and her mother are out of reach – one looking like a snake, the other like an octopus. The snake, according to the Christian tradition and symbolism, is the one who seduced Eve, or the Devil in disguise. The Octopus, on the other hand, represents inconstancy. (SIGNS, 2008, p. 69) The two flowers, with all their beauty and sweetness, were secluded in Antoinette’s paradise in such a way that she never went near them. They are Antoinette’s symbolic trees of life and of knowledge, and she cannot touch them. At this time of her life, Antoinette Cosway is innocent, guiltless – though she is still punished for her family’s sins – and the garden is the representation of this innocence, for, according to *Signs & Symbols*, “the Garden of Eden represents a state of ‘divine innocence’ in which humans, God, and nature coexisted in perfect harmony”. (SIGNS, 2008, p. 244) Her innocence is slowly tinted by her understanding of the world around her and the unstable situation of her family.

As mentioned before, Antoinette’s father, Old Cosway, while supposedly drinking himself to death, (RHYS, 1999, p. 17) also had affairs with many women, and the consequences of that directly influence Antoinette in the middle of the novel. He died and left the family poor and abandoned; Annette, in turn, was a “widow without a penny to her name”, cold and distant towards her daughter, not fulfilling her role as mother and as a former plantation mistress. Both her parents’ behavior deeply affect Antoinette’s surroundings. The fact that her father was a former slave owner in a place where the Emancipation act had just taken place and the apprenticeship was in vigor – in Jamaica, the act happened in 1832 – and the White population living there were only 4% overall (RAISKIN, 1999, p. 11) made Antoinette’s life as a White Creole more complicated. The neighborhood in Coulibri had mostly Black people, and the Cosways are completely alone there since the only other White person, Mr Lutrell, killed himself. The racial tension between the Blacks and the “White cockroaches” (RHYS, 1999, p. 13) as they call Antoinette and her family, is the background of the novel, and it is rather problematic.

As Elaine Savory affirms, “Race is a key element in this story. But it is complexly portrayed and tangled with gender, class and national identities in Antoinette, and designates her as different in complicated ways from those around her”. (SAVORY, 2009, p. 86) At the

beginning of the novel, when Antoinette is only a child, though her family is hated in the neighborhood for who they were and what they had done through the years, she says she “never looked at any strange Negro”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 13) She is then, followed by a girl singing “White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody want you. Go away”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 13) and afraid, she went to the “old wall at the end of the garden” (RHYS, 1999, p. 13) looking for safety. This will not be the first time she will be verbally attacked by a Black person, as the pattern will follow later on in the novel. Furthermore, besides the Black people in the neighborhood, Antoinette lives with three more Black people – Christophine, Godfrey, and Sass. The most important for her, though, is Christophine.

In spite of Annette, Christophine is Antoinette’s mother figure, one that is more involved in her life than her own mother. She was one of the Black servants living in Coulibri, a woman following the stereotype of the Black woman in literature – strong, hardy (O’CALLAGHAN, 2004, p. 27) and “the Black mammy”. (SAVORY, 2004, p. 134) Christophine took care of not only the domestic affairs of the house and the family, but she also took care of their safety. Therefore, Antoinette grows close to Christophine, spending “most of my time in the kitchen” (RHYS, 1999, p. 11) with her, listening to her songs in patois – a Creole language - about “the loving man was lonely, the girl was deserted, the children never came back”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 11) Being from Martinique, an island colonized by the French and the same place Annette comes from-, it is Christophine who teaches Antoinette songs that “were not like Jamaican songs” (RHYS, 1999, p. 12) and assumes the position of protector of the family, a position that usually men occupy, and the position of mother to a White child.

It is through her Obeah, “a system of beliefs and practices, African in origin” (RAISKIN, 1999, p. 17) that Christophine terrified people into staying away from the Cosways. Antoinette’s view on Christophine only changes when her mother remarries an English man; before that happens, though, Christophine is part of the feeling of safety Antoinette feels in Coulibri; in this paradise, in which “death and life, beauty and treachery intermingle”, (FINCHAM, 2010, p. 19) Antoinette runs wild, going to the pool, eating bananas with her fingers, and when she returned from her wanderings, her mother never asked her where she had been or what she had done. (RHYS, 1999, p. 14) At this point, though she was a wild girl with no rules to follow – and with no supervision from her mother, the one supposed to care for her -, Antoinette was still an Eve living in her own private paradise, slowly biting into the fruit of knowledge and realizing her position in the society.

It is after her only friend, a Black girl named Tia, cheats her and steal her dress and pennies, and the arrival of the family of former Mr Luttrell, that Antoinette's paradise starts to crumble. With Tia, Antoinette understands not only the hatred against her family as Tia tells her that

She hear all we poor like beggar. [...] That old house so leaky you run with calabash to catch water when it rain. Plenty White people in Jamaica. Real White people, they got gold money. [...] Old time White people nothing but White nigger now, and Black nigger better than White nigger. (RHYS, 1999, p. 14)

She also understands how insignificant her family – and herself – are in the society they occupy. Before, she did not care about that, after all, that was the only reality she knew. Following the incident with Tia, Antoinette meets with visitors in Coulibri, two young ladies and a gentleman. Her mother calls her to meet them, and she goes unwilling for she had “longed for visitors once, but that was years ago”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 14) As it turns out, the visitors were relatives of former Mr Luttrell, and they were “very beautiful [...] and they wore such beautiful clothes” (RHYS, 1999, p. 14) that Antoinette could not look at them wearing Tia's clothes; when they laughed, she ran into her bedroom, and there she stayed until they left. It is after this visit that Annette starts paying attention to Antoinette again, assuming the role of mother as she wants to appear civil in front of her new acquaintances. However, her change in behavior is a bit late, as Christophine tells her that “she run wild, she grow up worthless. And nobody care”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 15) In addition, as Annette walks over the window after Christophine retort, Antoinette sees her as “Marooned”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 15) a term that comes from the Spanish *cimarones*, which means “wild and untamed”. (RAISKIN, 1999, p. 10)

Christophine's prophecy that “Trouble walk into the house this day” (RHYS, 1999, p. 15) after their arrival is a foreshadowing of what is to happen to the Cosway family. Antoinette has a dream in the same night that “Someone who hated me was with me, out of sight. I could hear heavy footsteps coming closer and though I struggled and screamed I could not move”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 15) The dream represents exactly what Antoinette is; for through all the adversities coming in her direction, she does not move. As she wakes from this dream, she thinks “I am safe. There is the corner of the bedroom door and the friendly furniture. There is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss. The barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains. And the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers”. (RHYS,

1999, p. 16) Feeling the change about to happen in her life, Antoinette gets closer to what makes her feel the safest – Nature.

As mentioned in *Signs & Symbols*, “nature appears ‘untamed’”, (SIGNS, 2008, p. 51) and that is exactly what Antoinette is as she “left it and stayed away till dark” (RHYS, 1999, p. 16) with no one bothering to go looking for her. Through her wanderings around Coulibri, going to places she had never been before, she discovers that everything is “better than people”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 16) and as she watched “the red and yellow flowers in the sun thinking of nothing, it was as if a door opened and I was somewhere else, something else. Not myself any longer”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 16) Once again, this is a foreshadowing for what is to happen to her in the future, and it is the last sentence before her mother marries and Antoinette Cosway becomes Antoinette Mason. As she becomes Antoinette Mason, just like her surname, Antoinette’s life and character start to change. As a child with no fortune and living in a broken family, Antoinette escapes to Nature as a refuge and private paradise; however, as her mother remarries, Antoinette no longer feels protected in Coulibri, and a sequence of events will turn the place into literal ashes both for her and her family.

It is through the Luttrells that Annette - and in consequence Antoinette -, is reinserted in society. Antoinette narrates that she is the bridesmaid when her mother marries to Mr Mason in Spanish Town; Christophine curled her hair and she carried a bouquet, as if she was also getting married, though to her destiny. The marriage between Annette and wealthy Mr Mason is an important scene in the novel for it is the first time that it is possible to see how Antoinette and her family are regarded by other White people. Antoinette describes how their eyes “slid from my hating face” as she “heard what all these smooth smiling people said about her when she was not listening and they did not guess I was”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 17) Whilst she hears her mother’s guests talking about what a fantastic marriage that was and how Mr Mason would “regret it”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 17) Antoinette once more seeks solace in nature, as she is hiding in the garden in Coulibri.

They wonder why a man like Mr Mason would “take his pick” with so many better girls in the West Indies and in England, even if Annette “is such a pretty woman” and “what a dancer”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 17) Her dance abilities and beauty, though, are not enough to convince people of his choice. Christophine, however, was a good excuse as they say

He didn’t come to the West Indies to dance — he came to make money as they all do. Some of the big estates are going cheap, and one unfortunate’s loss is always a

clever man's gain. No, the whole thing is a mystery. It's evidently useful to keep a Martinique obeah woman on the premises.' She meant Christophine. She said it mockingly, not meaning it, but soon other people were saying it — and meaning it. (RHYS, 1999, p. 17-18)

After the marriage, Antoinette and her brother spend some time with her Aunt Cora in Spanish Town, a woman that Mr Mason did not approve of for she was “an ex-slaveowner who had escaped misery, a flier in the face of Providence”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 18) His English ideas are not accepted easily by the former Cosways, because “None of you understand about us”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 18) us being not only her family, but also her culture and history. Through this English gentleman recently married to her mother, Coulibri was “clean and tidy, no grass between the flagstones, no leaks”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 18) its wildness completely trimmed with civility taking its place. The symbol of the house, which at first had been falling apart with its members running wild, is an analogy to how Antoinette's life is changing. As a child, she ran wild into the gardens with no one telling her what she should or should not do; Coulibri was like that too, with its garden similar to the one in the Bible, and the security it provided because though the house and family were falling into pieces, they were ignored by the rest of the society as the “White cockroaches” they were. It is as the Luttrells appear and include Annette in their lives that civilization starts to be thrust into the wilderness of Coulibri, and Antoinette starts to understand the world she lived in is not as safe and peaceful as she had imagined. She figuratively eats from the tree of knowledge, and for that she is punished as Eve – cast away from her paradise, and ruled over by the men in her life.

Living as an English girl with an English lifestyle, Antoinette's view shifts; even towards Christophine, previously the only mother-figure she had, her behavior starts changing. She sees her as the frightening person everyone saw her as, all because of what people started to say about her and obeah, to the point in which she imagines that hiding in Christophine's room, a place she “knew so well”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 18) “there was a dead man's dried hand, White chicken feathers, a cock with its throat cut, dying slowly, slowly. Drop by drop the blood was falling into a red basin and I imagined I could hear it”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 18) The feeling of safety Christophine used to bring no longer exists, just like the wildness in Coulibri also ceased. Antoinette Mason was not a White cockroach anymore; she had a different home, a different name, and a different family – an English family. Therefore, the next step in her life is to behave as an English girl, a proper lady, much like her favorite painting of *The*

Miller's Daughter, inspired by the popular poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson – a girl who “is grown so dear, so dear,” that the narrator of the poem would “be the jewel/ That trembles at her ear: / For hid in ringlets day and night, / I'd touch her neck so warm and White”. (TENNYSON, 2013, p. 337)

A year goes by with this new lifestyle, and during this time, the matrimonial life of Annette and Mr Mason starts to slowly crumble. At this point it is important to note that much of what is about to happen to Annette is going to be replayed by her daughter later on. Starting with the cultural differences between husband and wife. Paula Grace Anderson argues that

By a sense of impending financial disaster, as well as the private misery of her son Pierre's signs of brain damage, Annette decides to market her last remaining asset-her "exotic" Creole sexuality. Her sexuality is the core of the marriage to the Englishman, Mr Mason, whom she sees as the future savior of the family's fortune. (ANDERSON, 1982, p. 61)

In the novel, this exoticism will always be put in terms of English versus Creole, and in relation to women; Annette was a beauty, rather exotic for her Creole ways. Cristina-Georgiana Voicu mentions that the exotic is not

an inherent quality to be found ‘in’ certain people, distinctive objects, or specific places; exoticism describes, rather, a particular mode of aesthetic perception – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery. (VOICU, 2014, p. 65)

When Mr Mason joins the family – a family made by mainly women - as the new patriarchal English figure, he starts to impose not only his own English culture and moral, but he also tries to tame Annette, who before he had arrived did whatever she wanted to do, like riding around on her horse even as people laughed at her; Antoinette, still a child under those circumstances is much easier to bend and accept the English way of life that came with Mr Mason. Annette, though, resists accepting everything he has to offer. This can be seen when they start to argue about her desire to move away from Coulibri because “The people here hate us. They certainly hate me”; (RHYS, 1999, p. 19) However, Mr Mason would only laugh and tell her to “be reasonable” and that “You were the widow of a slave owner, the daughter of a slave-owner, and you had been living here alone, with two children, for nearly

five years when we met. Things were at their worst then. But you were never molested, never harmed". (RHYS, 1999, p. 19) For her, the reason for their hatred would be because they were not poor anymore. Mr Mason disregards her, and she becomes angry.

Antoinette only watches as this goes on in her home, and though she agreed with Mr Mason about not going away, she still remained with the idea that he did not understand them at all, and that she "would never like him very much". (RHYS, 1999, p. 20) She never called him father, though one day she does call him "White pappy", (RHYS, 1999, p. 20) and he laughs not knowing that "Jamaican slaves often referred to their masters as 'father' or 'big Pappy' not so much as a sign of respect as a veiled but mocking form of aggression. This term of address was usually reserved for the most naïve of the masters, who would be flattered by it". (RAISKIN, 1999, p. 20) In addition, although she agrees that he saved them from poverty and misery, before they were not as hated; however, "Now it had started up again and worse than before, my mother knows but she can't make him believe it. I wish I could tell him that out here is not at all like English people think it is. I wish..." (RHYS, 1999, p. 20)

The family situation worsens when Coulibri is set on fire one day, and Annette's fears come to fruition. A group of Black people throw stones on the house and set it on fire, and the Mason family is obliged to leave in a hurry in order to save their lives. Whilst the house burned down, Antoinette, Christophine, her Aunt Cora and brother Pierre – already dead – try to escape, and Mr Mason tries to get Annette to leave because she wanted to go back in the house to get her parrot, Coco – who had his wings clipped by Mr Mason, which led to him being unable to fly from the house to save his life. The scene of Coco on fire, trying to escape only to fall down and dying is an analogy not only to what Antoinette is going to do at the end of the novel, but also the fact that Mr Mason clipped both Annette's and Antoinette's wings, and the freedom they had before, even in poverty and misery, was forever gone after the English man arrived.

The fire has a variety of symbolic meanings, as mentioned previously, and in this particular scene from the novel, the fire was set out of rage, anger, and resentment; former slaves who had suffered for years by the hands of Antoinette's family, and still lived in terrible conditions whilst the "White cockroaches" had managed to get rich again. As they run away from the house, Antoinette could "hardly see any grass or trees" (RHYS, 1999, p. 25) for there were a lot of people reunited around her home, thus the safety she felt with Nature vanishes. It is only after Coco burns, a bad omen to see a parrot die, that people start to go

away and let them pass through “not laughing anymore”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 25) As they went into the carriage, Annette was looking back at the house, and when Mr Mason tried to make her go into the carriage, she screamed. (RHYS, 1999, p. 26) Antoinette, mimicking her mother, also looked towards her home, and as she saw the house burning, “the yellow-red sky was like a sunset and I knew that I would never see Coulibri again”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 27) The sun, its colors and its relation with fire can symbolize “birth, death, and resurrection”. (SIGNS, 2008, p. 16) As Antoinette says “Nothing would be left, the golden ferns and the silver ferns, the orchids, the ginger lilies and the roses [...]”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 27) and much like the garden, which also caught on fire, everything Antoinette knew and found safe died; her purity, peace, and safety – all dead and gone. Everything she thought was “better than people” (RHYS, 1999, p. 16) was burned, and, ironically, all that was left from her previous life were the people. That is why when she sees Tia, one of the reasons why she immerses herself in Nature, she runs in her direction “for she was all that was left of my life as it had been”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 27) They had “eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 27) thus, she believed Tia would accept her as her equal and she would remain in Coulibri, living with her. However, as Eve was not supposed to go back to her paradise, and the Angel in the House is not supposed to live free, Antoinette did not have the option to go back. Her punishment for not resisting her urges is a rock to the face, thrown by Tia; and as the blood ran down on her face, she looked at Tia and “saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers” and it as if she saw herself, like “in a looking-glass”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 27)

From this moment onwards, every character is affected by the consequences of this fire. Figuratively, the fire burns Antoinette’s paradise, and she is expelled from it – as happened with Eve in the Bible; it burns Coulibri, and all the freedom and wilderness it represented – including a very straight foreshadowing scene of Annette’s parrot being burned and falling down whilst on fire. The narrative shifts to sometime after the fire, when the family is already living in Spanish Town, away from all that had happened in Coulibri. Antoinette wakes after being ill for six weeks at her Aunt Cora’s house; she discovers that the Luttrells had been the ones to help them escape the havoc at Coulibri, her brother Pierre was dead, and her mother was in the country “Resting. Getting well again”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 28) Unbeknownst to Aunt Cora, Antoinette had heard her mother screaming “*Qui est là? Qui est là?*”, then ‘Don’t touch me. I’ll kill you if you touch me. Coward. Hypocrite. I’ll kill you’”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 28) Annette, already developing the germs of insanity after losing her child and home, was

confined to a country house in order to heal her illness. When Antoinette goes there to see her with Christophine – the only person from Coulibri that still remained, though not for so long – she remembers “the dull feeling as we drove along for I did not expect to see her”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 28) As Coulibri, what Antoinette felt for her mother had also gone; Annette, recognized for her beauty, was unkempt with one plait shorter than the other, and as Antoinette hugs her, she held her tightly that she could not breathe, in a way that made Antoinette think “It’s not her”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 27) Annette looked at the door, then back to her only daughter, waiting for her beloved Pierre to appear. However, as he would not, she pushed Antoinette away from her, making her fall and hurt herself; Annette was held back, and Antoinette went away.

The next place Antoinette goes to after Coulibri, and the one that also brings a feeling of safety for her, is the convent. As a teenage girl going into womanhood, it is important for Antoinette to learn how to be a proper lady in order to be part of the society of Spanish Town. She was a Mason, wealthy and beautiful, though restrained by the conventions of the society she was part of. It is also there that she is supposed to atone for her previous sins, and turn into a Christian girl. However, on her way to the convent, an important, though side, character appears in Antoinette’s life – her cousin Sandi, son of Alexander Cosway, who is nothing less than Antoinette’s brother. It is him who protects her against a boy and a girl who keep pestering her on her way to the convent, calling her “crazy like your mother”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 29) and Sandi threatens them to help her. Although their interaction seems to be one-sided at first – for Antoinette had learned from Mr Mason to be shy about “her colored relatives” (RHYS, 1999, p. 30) -, Sandi will appear again after Antoinette is already a married woman, accused of having slept with him, in an incestuous relationship. It is interesting to note that they met when Antoinette was on her way to the convent, where she is supposed to learn how to behave properly as a Christian lady, and Sandi is the main reason for her to be accused of adultery later on.

In the convent, similar to Coulibri, Antoinette finds refuge from the outer world. There, once again she connects to the wilder side she had when she was a child as she stitches silk roses on a pale background colored green, blue and purple – green representing naivety (FERBER, 2007, p. 89), blue representing purity, (FERBER, 2007, p. 35) truth and ideal, and purple representing penitence and mourning. (FERBER, 2007, p. 163) The roses, besides being flowers and reminiscent of her relationship with Nature, are also a notorious symbol for “the most beautiful, the most beloved and often for one who is notably young, vulnerable, and

virginal” girl. (FERBER, 2007, p. 173) Underneath the roses, she writes her name in “fire red, Antoinette Mason, née Cosway, Mount Calvary Convent, Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1839”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 31) as a way to claim her identity, something that will be important in her future. The nuns of the convent read stories of Saints, and Antoinette specifically mentions three – St. Rose, St. Barbara, and St. Agnes. According to Judith L. Raiskin,

St Rose of Lima (1586-1617), the first saint of America, named a patron of South America and the Philippine Islands. According to legend, St. Barbara was shut up in a tower by her father so that no man should see her. Her usual emblem is a tower. After condemning her to die as a Christian, Barbara’s father was killed by lightning. St. Barbara is the patron of those in danger of sudden death, particularly by lightning. Also a virgin martyr, Agnes refused marriage at age thirteen because of her dedication to Christ, preferring death to any violation of her consecrated virginity. (RAISKIN, 1999, p. 32)

Female Saints, as mentioned by John Coakley, are “known for a combination of asceticism and interiorized devotion typically accompanied by visions, revelations, and mystical states”. (COAKLEY, 2006, p. 1) The example of those Saints mentioned in the novel affirms that what is expected of female saints, which should also be models for girls such as Antoinette. To devote themselves to God, family, to subservience, all the characteristics the Angel and the Plantation Mistress need to have, which also put them “as the weaker sex, whose bodies were soft, porous, and vulnerable and thus, ominously, more susceptible to demonic influence as well”. (COAKLEY, 2006, p. 11) Therefore, as mentioned before, it did not take a lot for women to be angels or demons, for they were sides of the same coin. Another Saint mentioned by Antoinette, the Saint of the convent, is of a fourteen year old girl named St. Innocenzia, whose story is not known, “she is not in the book”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 32) a very different figure compared to the ones that were “all very beautiful and wealthy. All were loved by rich and handsome young men”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 32) but not St. Innocenzia, after all she is just a child with no story, simply a skeleton “under the altar of the convent chapel”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 32)

Meanwhile, Antoinette learns through the example of those women “Cleanliness, good manners and kindness to God’s poor”; (RHYS, 1999, p. 32) at the same time, she looked up to the other girls in the convent, H el ene, Germaine, and Louise. The former girls were “a little disdainful, aloof”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 33) but Louise was not like that as she sang “Like a bird would sing”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 33) Alone in the convent, for everybody from her family had either gone to England, like her Aunt Cora, or did not stay very long in Spanish Town, as

Mr Mason, Antoinette did not mind for the convent was her refuge, “a place of sunshine and of death”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 33) It was the place where she forgot about happiness, praying the Hail Mary, and thinking about her mother and “wherever her soul is wandering, for it has left her body”; (RHYS, 1999, p. 34) For Antoinette, everything was

brightness, or dark. The walls, the blazing colours of the flowers in the garden, the nuns’ habits were bright, but their veils, the Crucifix hanging from their waists, the shadow of the trees, were Black. That was how it was, light and dark, sun and shadow, Heaven and Hell, for one of the nuns knew all about Hell and who does not? But another one knew about Heaven and the attributes of the blessed, of which the least is transcendent beauty. (RHYS, 1999, p. 34)

It is in the convent that she learns how to behave as a proper lady, and she truly adapts to their habits, not questioning much. There she learns not to desire, not to be vain, she learns she needs to behave like the Saint the nuns tell them about; slowly she accepts her fate as a White Creole girl now stepdaughter to a wealthy man.

She also learns about all the good things there are in the Heaven, and then wishes to be dead so she could see and experience them. Death for her is a way of both having justice for all that had happened to her, and also to have freedom. She will learn about the sensation of going to Heaven as she marries and experiences the *petite mort*, or little death, an expression used by the French to represent the feeling of having an orgasm. Eighteen months in the convent, Mr Mason visits Antoinette, now a seventeen-year-old young woman, to tell her that some English friends of his were going to spend the next winter there. In the way he smiled as he told her that, Antoinette feels “dismay, sadness, loss”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 35) Again, she has a dream, a premonition of what is going to happen with her.

Again I have left the house at Coulibri. It is still night and I am walking towards the forest. I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is White and beautiful and I don’t wish to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark trees and there is no wind. ‘Here?’ He turns and looks at me, his face Black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry. He smiles slyly. ‘Not here, not yet,’ he says, and I follow him, weeping. Now I do not try to hold up my dress, it trails in the dirt, my beautiful dress. We are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them. There are steps leading upwards. It is too dark to see the wall or the steps, but I know they are there

and I think, 'It will be when I go up these steps. At the top. ' I stumble over my dress and cannot get up. I touch a tree and my arms hold on to it. 'Here, here.' But I think I will not go any further. The tree sways and jerks as if it is trying to throw me off. Still I cling and the seconds pass and each one is a thousand years. 'Here, in here,' a strange voice said, and the tree stopped swaying and jerking. (RHYS, 1999, p. 35-36)

Unbeknownst to her, the man is her future husband, the one she will already be married to on the next part of the novel; once again, the house in Coulibri, her paradise, is mentioned as a place of safety she has to leave in order to follow a man. Her White dress, also a representation of marriage and purity, she does not want soiled. However, as their relationship, it has no salvation anymore so she lets it go. The scenery shifts, and she is no longer in her paradise, but in an unknown place, a place she would never feel completely safe for she did not recognize and had no connections to it. This part of the story closes with Antoinette telling Sister Marie Augustine she dreamed she was in Hell; (RHYS, 1999, p. 36) then, she remembers the death of her own mother, forgotten by her family and never mentioned again; she remembers her mother wild and free riding in Coulibri, before everything changed, and tears come to her eyes as she wonders "Such terrible things happen, [...] Why? Why?" (RHYS, 1999, p. 36) She is not answered, thus, her part in the story is ended, as is her freedom as she becomes a married wife to an English man.

3.3 ANTOINETTE/ "BERTHA"

The part two of the novel shifts the narrative from Antoinette to her unnamed husband – who, for the sake of not confusing, will be called Mr Rochester. He is an English man, coming to meet his future bride, the wealthy Creole girl who "meant nothing" (RHYS, 1999, p. 45) to him, just like everything else. As the second son of a wealthy family, his father decided to give all the fortune to his older brother, and for Mr Rochester the only other option was to make a good marriage; Mr Mason was acquainted to his father, and a quite wealthy man, thus the marriage would be perfect for both sides – he would receive all the thirty thousand pounds and the lands that belonged to Antoinette, and she would receive his respected surname. Therefore, to please his father, he came all the way from his beloved England to marry this strange girl on this strange land. As a colonizer, his objective is "to gain total and systematic control of the mind and reality of the colonized world", (DASH,

1999, p. 21) and Antoinette will be, in a way, his colonized, the exotic, wild woman that needs to be tamed and civilized.

Before the couple married, both had their doubts – and she even voiced it to him when she refused to marry him because she was “afraid of what may happen” (RHYS, 1999, p. 46) because he did not know anything about her, or her about him. They were, indeed, complete strangers. He, in turn, refuses to let her deny him; after all, being rejected by a mere Creole girl, he, an English gentleman from a good family, would make a fool of him. (RHYS, 1999, p. 46) Antoinette, since she was a child, sought safety in places – Coulibri and the Convent – then in people – Christophine and Sandi; for her, the only way to accept her fate and marry Mr Rochester would be with the promise of a safe future, and he realized this as he “kissed her fervently, promising her peace, happiness, safety”; (RHYS, 1999, p. 47) However, he does not have any of those assurances for himself, as he does not feel safe in their honeymoon house, and is not happy neither at peace, even if he has everything – a beautiful wife, possessions, and the peacefulness of Nature surrounding him.

When they finally got married, he remembers very little of the ceremony; he does remember the “Marble memorial tablets on the walls commemorating the virtues of the last generation of planters. All benevolent. All slave-owners. All resting in peace”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 45) and this alone is already reason enough for him to despise his wife and her family, as

the tension between how one actually "made money enough" in the plantation economy of the early nineteenth century and the rising hatred in England for the institution of slavery and the colonial slaveholder complicated still further the task of being a British subject in the West Indies. (CIOLKOWSKI, 1997, p. 341)

With his European, English look, there is a different interpretation of slavery that had not been posed before, as for Antoinette and her family – who had made their fortune and name entirely on plantations holding slaves – it did not matter. For him, though, the fact that his wife comes from a family that did things he does not consider morally right is already enough to make him biased in his opinion of her. Still, as he says, “It was all over, the advance and retreat, the doubts and hesitations. Everything finished, for better or for worse”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 38) Her family past might be despicable; however, it is not with that fortune he is marrying with. They leave Spanish Town, a place Antoinette does not like, “nor did her mother”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 45) to go to their honeymoon house in Massacre, at a small state that belonged to Annette. It is called Granbois, and the road to reach the place was “On one

side the wall of green, on the other a steep drop to the ravine below”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 41) an analogy to the marriage he and Antoinette were part of, for they could either choose to go toward the green, the Nature, or to fall down from a high and never return. The place was “not only wild but menacing”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 41) and for him “Everything is too much [...] too much blue, too much purple, too much green”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 41) Antoinette was also part of this ‘everything’, as she was as strange as all else. She is also too much blue, purple and green, as she had colored the roses before, at the convent, with those same colors in order to reassure her identity.

In Granbois, the third place Antoinette goes in her journey, now as a married lady, she has a reconnection with Nature, one she had lost long ago in Coulibri. The name of the place, Granbois, is named after the Voodoo loa (god) of nature, was another place of refuge to her, one that she was sharing with her husband, and the place she loves “more than anywhere in the world”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 53) For him, though, “the house seemed to shrink from the forest behind it and crane eagerly out to the distant sea. It was more awkward than ugly, a little sad as if it knew it could not last”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 42) The way he sees the house is much like he feels – he wants to leave the wildness and the excess to go back to his own land, over the distant sea. He cannot, though, at least not until he has a good reason to do so.

Their first night together as husband and wife is rather peaceful as they sit together to have dinner, and then, as the flames from the candles reflected on Antoinette, Mr Rochester wonders “why I had never realized how beautiful she was”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 47) Nonetheless, it is when they talk that their differences truly come to surface; as he compliments her dress, she tells him she had it made in St Pierre, Martinique, at the fashion “à la Joséphine”, to which he replies that “You talk of St Pierre as though it were Paris”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 47) They do not seem to agree on anything; Antoinette says “London is like a cold dark dream sometimes” (RHYS, 1999, p. 47) whilst for him “your beautiful lands seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 48) Hence, with nothing in common despite the fact they were married to each other, their relationship soon turns into a sexual one, and it is through that that Mr Rochester exerts his dominance over Antoinette.

As the moonflowers that open every night, and the moth that keeps flying towards the fire light, Antoinette opens herself to Mr Rochester, and under the light of the stars, she tells him a story she had never told anyone, about a dream she had had a long time ago. In this dream, she saw two rats “as big as cats”, on the sill staring at her. She was not frightened by their

appearance or their stare; she stared back at them and they did not move. She could see herself in the looking-glass staring at the rats as they stared at her. Like all her other previous dreams, this one is also meaningful, for the rats are associated with “death, decay and destruction”, (SIGNS, 2008, p. 53) and as she sees herself in the looking-glass, another symbolic object that shows “the truth, the ideal, illusion”, (FERBER, 2007, p. 126) it is as if Antoinette understands that her only fate is to die, to decay, and to be destructed. As an angel – as an Eve -, her only option is to accept it, and as she “felt very frightened” after realizing it, she seeks refuge on the outside, watching the full moon “for a long time”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 49) feeling its light shining over her, not knowing that sleeping in the moonlight when the moon is full “will cause madness”. (RAISKIN, 1999, p. 49) In her stroll with Mr Rochester, she wonders “Do you think that too [...] that I have slept too long in the moonlight?” (RHYS, 1999, p. 49)

The next morning after their first night together, Mr Rochester wakes to Antoinette watching him; his plan is to take her in his arms again, but Christophine interrupts. She is back at Granbois after Antoinette requests her; however, Mr Rochester does not like the imposing woman very much. In that house, she is the only one who is going to question his authority and face him not as a Black woman under an English man, but as a confident woman who knew more than he did – at least in that context. As the days go by, he started to get used to his surroundings, though not completely. For him, “it was a beautiful place – wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness”; (RHYS, 1999, p. 52) Antoinette is much the same, and he keeps thinking that he wants “what it hides”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 52) She is inconstant for him, and though in the bedroom they are in accord, their ideas and morals are completely different. When they had dinner in silence, he would feel a “sidelong look or a sly knowing glance” (RHYS, 1999, p. 53) that disturbed him, but never for too long. He would wake up in the middle of the night and look at her, wondering “why seemed sad asleep”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 54) This is all part of the secret that she is hiding, the one he cannot know.

On the other hand, Antoinette “has forgotten silence and coldness”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 54) the weapons she used before when she tried to escape her fate by not marrying him; she has given all of herself to him - her name, her body, her heritance, even her voice as he is the one to narrate this next step of her life. Kathy Mezei argues that “By her act of narration, she retains her tenuous fragile hold on sanity, on life itself, since to narrate is to live, to order a life, to “make sense” out of it”. (MEZEI, 2015, p. 5) Therefore, as she gives her own life to

her husband – as he masters over her – Antoinette slowly loses her freedom, her autonomy, and her sanity. She does not seem to realize how much she lost not only from her fortune, but also herself when she agreed to marry that English man. Much like what happened to Annette before her, her life was about to change completely because of the person she married.

She remains the girl she used to be – always afraid: of the unknown, of happiness, of dying. He continues to see her as strange, since during the day she would be “like any other girl”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 54) but at night “how different, even her voice was changed”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 54) She would talk about death a lot, and ask him why he made her want to live; her fear is that one day he will stop wishing to make her happy, and take the happiness away from her. During their sexual intercourses, she told him “If I could die. Now, when I am happy. Would you do that? You wouldn’t have to kill me. Say die and I will die”; (RHYS, 1999, p. 55) the death she is talking about is the little death, having an orgasm – pleasure is also something women should not have from sexual intercourse, for it was merely for reproductive reasons. Still, Mr Rochester said “Die then! Die!” (RHYS, 1999, p. 55) as he watched her die many times, in his way, not hers, “In sunlight, in shadow, by moonlight, by candlelight. In the long afternoons when the house was empty. Only the sun was there to keep us company. [...] Very soon she was as eager for what’s called loving as I was – more lost and drowned afterwards”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 55)

Unbeknownst to Antoinette, as he touched her gently, wiping her tears away, deep inside, he knew he “did not love her”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 55) Instead, he was “thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 55) He was a savage with desire when he was with her, she brought that feeling from him, and the fact that he was so affected by her, and she was not as “Nothing that I told her influenced her at all” (RHYS, 1999, p. 56) made his hatred for her start flourishing. Their lovemaking became violent, and he wondered “if she guessed how near she came to dying. In her way, not in mine. It was not a safe game to play – in that place. Desire, Hatred, Life, Death came very close in darkness”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 56) It did not take much for this hatred to completely overwhelm all the other feelings he might have felt for her. Through a letter from a man called Daniel Cosway, he reads about Antoinette’s family, how the Cosways were “Wicked and detestable slave-owners since generations” and that “There is madness in that family”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 57) He tells Mr Rochester that Old Cosway died raving, Mrs. Cosway was “worthless and spoilt, she can’t lift a hand for herself and soon the madness that is in her, and all these White Creoles, come

out”, (RHYS, 1999, p. 57) and Antoinette is probably going to have the same fate as her mother. After reading the letter, Mr Rochester says he “felt no surprise. I was as if I’d expected it, been waiting for it”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 59) As he goes for a stroll, the Nature around him, to which he had already gotten used to, started bothering him. He passed an orchid, and remembered how much like Antoinette they were; he took the flower and trampled it into the mud. The weather was “far too hot”, and that brought him back to his senses. (RHYS, 1999, p. 60) When he reached the house again, Antoinette and Amélie physically fought, and after the fight, Antoinette “pushed me away, sat on the bed and with clenched teeth pulled at the sheet, then made a clicking sound of annoyance”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 60)

From then on, things fall apart for the couple; Christophine, the only one Antoinette actually listens to, goes away, and Mr Rochester grows more distant from her. Not knowing who to trust anymore, he turns to Nature too, going into the hostile forest, and there he lost himself, much as he was feeling at the moment. He was “lost and afraid among these enemy trees” (RHYS, 1999, p. 62) until one of the servants finds him and helps him go back to the house. He did not see Antoinette that day, and her room was bolted and there was no light. (RHYS, 1999, p. 64)

Once again Antoinette is given voice as the narrative goes back to her; this act of narration “becomes an act of affirmation and cohesion, a nod to the world and its conventions, an attempt to prevent herself from dissolving”, (MEZEI, 2010, p. 197) especially now since she feels her marriage is falling apart. Her previous insecurities and fears resurface as she goes to the one person from her past who is still part of her life – Christophine. Antoinette tells Christophine that “he does not love me, I think he hates me. [...] If I get angry he is scornful and silent, sometimes he does not speak to me for hours and I cannot endure it anymore, I cannot”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 65) In turn, Christophine tells her to “pack up and go”; (RHYS, 1999, p. 65) however, Antoinette understands that if she does that, she will be a lost woman because she has no money of her own, and all she had belonged to him according to the English laws. (RHYS, 1999, p. 66) She tells her that his hatred for her is so deep that he even calls her a different name – Bertha. Still, Christophine thinks the only solution is for her to leave, like Lilith would have done, like the demon. However, Antoinette is no Lilith; she is Eve, and it is her duty to stay with her husband and bear all he sends her way. In a last resort for him to at least love her again, then, she asks for magic, or the magic she thinks exist as she asks Christophine to make him love her through obeah.

When she returns home, feeling hopeful that whatever Christophine made for her would work on him, the narrative once more shifts to Mr Rochester as Antoinette tries to talk to him. It was one of the conditions from Christophine in order for her to have the love potion, for Antoinette to try and talk to her husband, tell her side of the story as “there is always the other side, always”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 77) In the end, though, after she tells all the story of her life, she realized that “I have tried to make you understand. But nothing has changed”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 81) He calls her Bertha again, because “it is a name I’m particularly fond of. I think of you as Bertha”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 81) Although she does not like being called a different name, she does not fight him. In fact, Antoinette slowly loses all the fight in her and completely submits to his will, even when he destroys the one place she still holds dear – her third and last paradise – by sleeping with a servant, Amélie, and profaning the peacefulness of the place. At the same time, the germs of her insanity start to flourish as it was prophesized long ago – she starts drinking, and once even attacked Mr Rochester when he tried to take the bottle of rum away from her. There was no salvation for her, or his utter hate for her, anymore. He had decided, finally, that “she’ll not laugh in the sun again. She’ll not dress up and smile at herself in that damnable looking-glass. So pleased, so satisfied. Vain, silly creature. Made for loving? Yes, but she’ll have no lover, for I don’t want her and she’ll see no other”. (RHYS, 1999, p. 99)

As a final punishment, she is again expelled from her paradise, this time to never return. Still, she does not resist; as he takes her to England and locks her away in a dark, cold room, still, she does not resist. She is the Eve, the Angel in the House, and if her master decides that her fate is to be locked away for the rest of her life, than she will accept it. Fulfilling the prophecy of her life, Antoinette turns into whoever her husband wanted, and he wanted Bertha. She follows him into the dark woods, even if deep in her heart she is afraid. She will turn into his lunatic, his mad girl. (RHYS, 1999, p. 99) She will lose herself completely to him.

At the third and last part of the novel, once again the narration shifts to a third person. It is at this moment that *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* connect, for Grace Poole, a character from the British novel appears as Antoinette’s caretaker. At this point, Antoinette and Bertha mingle – the mad woman is Bertha, but a part of the old Antoinette, the wild and fearful child, is still there, lingering in the shadows. Mr Rochester does not appear anymore, and his story is closed. Antoinette, though, still floats about like the Sargasso Sea that names the novel, not belonging anywhere, alone in the cold, dark sea of forgetfulness. She is caged, and

her voice had died completely. It did not matter what she had to say, after all she is just a lunatic, alienated from the society, wild and dangerous. Sometimes she still dreams of what she has to do, of her past. She wanders around the house, remembering her old life – her mother, her Aunt Cora, Christophine, Coulibri, Tia, the fire. They call her back to her home, and then she remembers what she needs to do to be free again. To go back to her paradise. She had always known there was only one way to truly live in the paradise.

The novel ends with an open ending, however, if it is read as a connection to *Jane Eyre*, it is possible to know what happens to Antoinette/ Bertha. Unfortunately, after Antoinette/Bertha's passing, nothing regarding her is mentioned again, and she is truly forgotten, in the way Mr Rochester had always wished for her not to be associated with him anymore. Instead, he would have the "a true English woman" (BRONTË, 2015, p. 88) Jane. Therefore, once again she ends up as a secret, buried underneath Thornfield's ground, a bad memory to be forgotten. She truly becomes the demon Lilith, the second wife, cast aside so a superior wife would take place.

CONCLUSION

Have you any notion of how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe?

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own

I was born into a Christian family, where women were expected to keep to a standard code of behavior, build a home, care for their family and not to expect more than what is necessary. Although feminism has raised several questions about the role of women in society, gender roles are still well established. As a raised Christian, when I read *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as I analyzed the characters, I thought of some similarities between the main characters and two other famous women, Eve and Lilith. According to the Judeo-Christian creation myth, Eve was the first woman, being created from one of Adam's ribs to be his companion. Adam and Eve were innocent creatures, living happily in their reserved paradise with nothing to worry about. One day, though, the Serpent appeared and seduced Eve into doing the only thing that God had forbidden them to do: eating from the forbidden fruit. Not only does Eve eat it, she also takes Adam with her, and both have a bite of what they should not. Because of that act of disobedience, they are expelled from the Garden of Eden. The Serpent, Adam and Eve are punished. Eve's – and all women's – chastisements are the pains of childbirth and submission to men.

The story of Lilith is not in the Bible, but in rabbinic legend. Lilith was Adam's first companion, (PLASKOW, 2005, p. 33) but for some reason she did not want to be with Adam any more, and flew away from the Eden. Through time, her image started to be demonized.

Blending the two stories, we can say that after Lilith left, Eve was created to be submissive to Adam. The fact is that there came a moment when each of them wished to be Adam's equal. They refused to be *under* him, they wanted to be *by his side*. Jane was forced into a position of servitude by her own family, and so was Antoinette. As to Bertha, she represents what

comes out when people are submitted to more pressure than they can cope with. When women strike back, they are accused of committing a sin and a crime. Jane is disrespecting her betters. Antoinette is adulterous, and tries to poison her husband. Bertha is a lascivious seductress and a drunkard. For their sins they were taken from their home and locked away, like animals, so as to be silenced.

The title of this thesis, *Of Angels and Demons*, refers to the ways in which women have generally been represented in literature and art. Through time, and in the Victorian period, women have been depicted as “four central types: the angel, the demon, the old maid, and the fallen woman”. (AUERBACH, 1982, p. 63) Jane and Antoinette are partly angels, partly demons, whereas Bertha – for being an archetype – is demon throughout. They are not old maids because Antoinette and Bertha die young, and Jane’s story stops to be told when she is thirty years old. Jane refuses to become a fallen woman, by living with Rochester without being his wife. Antoinette and Bertha fall into ignominy, whether they deserve it or not.

I close this work with some brief final comments on the three female roles examined, in the light of the angel/demon dichotomy, to conclude that dichotomies only exist as a strategy to analyze and categorize objects, never as things in themselves. No one is completely good or bad, submissive or rebellious. Human beings are more complex than that, and so are our protagonists.

Jane Eyre impresses me for her strong will. Sometimes she agrees with, other times she goes against what is expected of her gender at that period. Jane refuses to play the role of the Angel in the House, adapting unreservedly to social roles, as a proper lady should do. Jane has something of the Angel, and something of the Demon inside her. She is aware of her own rules and limits, and respects them. This helps her to find a balance between docility and anger when she deals with other people. In my opinion, her intuition and her mixture of feeling and reason is what helps her overcome the difficulties she meets on her way.

There is one side of Jane that is similar to Lilith. Her defensive behavior, in the period she is engaged to Mr. Rochester, reveals how uneasy she feels because she is in an unequal position with him. Rochester is rich, she is not; he occupies a respectable place in the community, she does not. He comes from a traditional family; so does she, but that is not taken into consideration, because in the past Jane’s mother also refused to play the role of the Angel, and ended up disinherited.

Jane Eyre is a Romantic construct. In such works, every element in the narrative – the seasons of the year, storms, sun, ambiance, and other characters – everything operates so as to help the protagonist reach her goal. Bertha is one of those elements. For instance, she is the reason lying behind the disastrous outcome of Rochester and Jane’s attempt to marry. That calamity, in fact, is a blessing in disguise. The truth is that our protagonist is not ready to marry, for two reasons. First: the more Rochester covers her with new clothes and jewels, and calls her the future “Mrs. Rochester”, the more Jane wonders who this person – “Mrs. Rochester” – is. For one thing, there is a real Mrs. Rochester hidden in the attic, and her circumstances evoke the medieval female condition of “becoming a wife” so as to seal economic agreements involving two families. Bertha is a good example of the negative outcome of this practice. The second reason respects the structure of this novel. If *Jane Eyre* is a *Bildungsroman*, we are talking about the shaping of one’s identity, the identity that gives name to the novel: Jane Eyre. What if, in the middle of the story, the project of building Jane Eyre is cut short and the protagonist gets a new name, and a new function, that of becoming Mrs. Rochester? How can one person achieve maturity and completion if she is to give up her very name?

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* the situation is even more complicated. The fact that Jane is on her own allows her, at least, to make decisions about her own life. But Antoinette is connected not with one, but with several families. This is reflected in the different sequential surnames she gets, in the process that leads to the loss of her identity. Antoinette Cosway becomes Antoinette Mason, then Antoinette Rochester. After Mr. Rochester finds out about her mother and family, he starts calling her Bertha, and she does become Bertha. Her husband – who does not know her, or the facts related to her life – sees her as Bertha Mason. This is the story of Bertha, the third female role I proposed to investigate in the research.

In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha is more a function than a character. She is the impediment to Rochester and Jane’s relationship. She is the heart and charm of the Gothic mysteries in the novel, the cause of the weird noises and the haunting problems attributed to the servant Grace Poole. Bertha functions both as Jane’s alter-ego and Jane’s nemesis. Bertha’s role in *Jane Eyre* is similar to the role of Heathcliff in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. She represents the sexual, untamed aspect of Jane’s personality. This force is a natural element, such as fire – if kept under control, it gives one strength to open one’s way; if fully released, however, it can lead into destruction.

Ultimately, this is Jane's challenge in her story: she must tame the wild Bertha she has inside, the red in her nature. But if she goes to the other extreme, and becomes too submissive, she may end like her friend Helen Burns, whose philosophy was not going against what was imposed on her. If we were to follow the types of women established in the Victorian Period, Jane would be divided between the Angel – the one everyone expects her to be – and the Demon – because of the rebelliousness she keeps locked inside.

The other novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is structurally divided in three parts, each narrated in the first person by a different character. Part I is told by Antoinette (first Cosway, then Mason); Part II is told by Antoinette's husband (Mr. Rochester, to the *Jane Eyre* readers). Part III is told by a female "I", who is locked somewhere in a distant land (i.e. England). This third narrator is Bertha Mason or the "mad woman", seen from the inside. And, as such, she is still Antoinette, the protagonist of the novel. If, in *Jane Eyre*, the function of Bertha is structural, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* the function is political. Antoinette and her mother Annette are not the only women – either in England or in the West Indies – who end up confined in the 19th Century. In this sense, Bertha represents them all. If we broaden the scope, she can stand as a symbol for all the impediments imposed on women's natural, social, intellectual or cultural development in thousands of years. Although she is the victim, paradoxically she also seen as someone to blame.

Sexuality, as a means of power in women – if seen from the Eurocentric, imperialistic, or religious perspective – is something demonic. Bertha has once been a very beautiful woman – a seductress who trapped Mr. Rochester in an unhappy marriage, as he tells Jane. The reason why she is locked up is that she became lascivious and a drunkard. Bertha is diagnosed as mad, and is silenced. If, like Lilith, she is a fallen woman, then, like Eve, she must suffer her punishment and become submissive. In Jean Rhys' Postcolonial novel, the fact that a Creole woman is locked away for years in the attic of an English mansion becomes emblematic of many questions about gender issues, and power relations.

The stories of these three characters converge in various ways. Bertha represents the fire in the nature of Jane and Antoinette. Jane manages to reach a balance, connecting the Angel and the Demon in the end of her story. Her anger fades away, her desire for liberty is satisfied and she finally becomes an equal with the man she loves, and marries him. Jane is a domesticated Lilith, perhaps the Eve that would have succeeded had she not committed the sin in the first

place. The two extreme images for the angel/demon duality in *Jane Eyre* – Helen Burns and Bertha Mason – die, whereas the heroine survives and succeeds.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* there is a cleavage, instead of the union of the opposite elements. As the sweet compliant child we meet in the first part of the novel – the Angel – disappears, the wild undomesticated Demon takes control. Bertha gets her freedom through fire and death, as it is the way with demons. She becomes literally a fallen woman, throwing herself from the roof to commit suicide (in her derided mind she thinks she is plunging into the pond with her childhood friend Tia). Thus, Bertha frees both herself and her husband. Soon, she will become only a memory, fading away with time.

A *Jane Eyre* reader cannot remain the same after reading *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The confrontation with Rhys' 20th Century Postcolonial presentation of the facts opens one's eyes to a number of elements that were not clearly perceptible before. For instance, the fact that – in spite of Brontë's brilliant achievement in denouncing the social constraints that hinder female movements and growth in Victorian times – ultimately, the narrative point of view in *Jane Eyre* is male, xenophobic, Eurocentric and imperialistic. Not only in respect to Mr. Rochester's Creole wife, but also with his French, German and Italian mistresses, for one thing. The prejudice against Adèle also becomes more visible. The reason why the girl's intelligence is considered limited derives from the fact that she is French. It is good that these things become more visible when the novel is read from a new point of perception. Literary classics, like *Jane Eyre*, need to be revisited and re-interpreted from time to time, otherwise they become dated and vanish.

Through this Postcolonial reading, the dimension of Bertha's final action grows to epic proportions. After all, the fire she provokes devastates Thornfield Hall, a many-century-old manor house that embodies all the patriarchal values. By destroying it, Bertha Mason becomes like Queen Boudica, the Celtic leader who, in the 1st Century C.E., set Colchester and London on fire, while fighting back the Roman domination over Britain.

As readers, we are glad that *Jane Eyre* reaches a satisfactory ending to her story. And we are sorry that Antoinette Cosway does not. There are reasons that explain the opposite outcomes, and the fact that Jane manages to harmonize the Angel and the Demon in her nature, whereas Antoinette does not. It is not that one of them did something right and the other did something wrong. I take it as a matter of narrative structure. Jane is the heroine in a *Bildungsroman*. This genre, which blooms in the 19th Century, carries the didactical purpose

of rising people's morals through the notion that, if one tries hard and does not lose hope, one will eventually succeed. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, on the other hand, is created as a counterpart to that notion. It denounces uneven conditions in relations of power. And the price to pay, that intensifies the plea, is the defeat of the protagonist. In this sense, Jane Eyre becomes a heroine, whereas Antoinette Cosway becomes a martyr.

As a woman myself, when I read these two novels I respond in different ways. Jane's desire for freedom and for a place in the world resonated inside me. Bertha's sad fate as a woman locked for years because of her mental state, with no voice of her own, makes me suffer because there are many women out there that suffer in the same way. Antoinette's fear of an unknown future and of losing herself is one I can identify with. These are three different representations of women, with different personalities and lives; still, the subject of this thesis is the similarities amongst them, because they are "deviations" from what was expected from women at that time, and they have to bear with the consequences of not following the rules.

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