What 'Jane Eyre' Means : Love's Progress

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I

Lord David Cecil says in *Early Victorian Novelists* that Charlotte Brontë's books are incoherent. But Q. D. Leavis asserts that Cecil's reaction shows "an inability to read" and that *Jane Eyre* is coherent and schematic. Any reader of *Jane Eyre* might agree with her. Most critics disagree with Cecil and propose their own views. Nevertheless it seems to me that they have missed some important essentials that give unity to *Jane Eyre*: functions of the name 'Jane Eyre.'

In many works of literature, the names of the characters are significant. The characters in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* may be taken as a good example. In this allegorical work we find characters who have distinctively meaningful names: Christian, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Faithful, Hopeful, Giant Despair, etc. Let us adduce another example from American literature: John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. The main characters are the Joads. 'Joad' bears a significant meaning of 'a migratory worker.' Thus the name symbolizes the life of the heroes.

The title of a work is also important. Let us take Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. It should be noted that the 'arms' has a double meaning. One meaning is, of course, 'weapons.' And the other is 'the sweet arms' of Catherine who dies after Caesarian operation. If we miss the second meaning, as we are quite likely to do, our understanding of the work will be incomplete. If we take *Wuthering Heights* as another example, we are requested to suppose that the title symbolizes the desolate and wild story.

In this way, names of characters in a literary work and its title are important to the understanding of the work. What then do we expect from 'Jane Eyre'? According to Q. D. Leavis, the title was taken from the Eyre family to whom "the historic house with the madwoman's room" (p. 27) belonged. But apart from this, she supposes that Charlotte used 'Eyre' to express "free as air" and "an Ariel-like spirit living." This may be partially true, because there is a passage where Jane's foot is compared to that of a sylph, a spirit of the air (p. 288). But this explanation alone does not seem to be enough for the understanding of *Jane Eyre*. First we must be aware that 'Jane' hints at baptism, because it is the feminine form of 'John,' and 'John' can be related to John the Baptist. Second, our attention must be directed to the etymology of 'Eyre.' Its etymology is Latin 'iteräre.'
comes from 'iter,' and the etymology of 'iter' is 'i' which means 'to go'⁶; 'iterāre' itself means 'to travel, journey, wander.' Therefore it seems that the sense of 'to travel, wander' is inherent in 'Eyre.' These interpretations of 'Jane Eyre' are not improbable for Miss Brontë who was felicitous and careful in the choice of words,⁷ who knew Latin⁸ and who paid much attention to the name of the heroine in Villette.⁹ Actually the two senses are recognized throughout Jane Eyre, and they give a coherent thematic form to the novel. They act in it just as our brain does in our body. Thus, in the present paper, I would like to study Jane Eyre from the view that the title of 'Jane Eyre' has a unifying power and helps to describe vividly Jane Eyre's journey through hardship and trial to the victory of her love.

II

We find in Jane Eyre many passages where a journey or wandering is either directly or indirectly alluded to. And whenever Jane leaves one place to go to another, the words connected with 'Eyre', like 'journey' and 'wander', never fail to be found. Significantly enough, Jane Eyre begins with a wandering scene. The very first sentences of the first chapter run as follows: "There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrub-bery an hour in the morning" (p. 39). On the other hand, in chapter 36 where she and Rochester finally reunite, Jane says, "My journey is closed" (p. 448). This is impressive, because it foretells not only the end of Jane's journey in chapter 37, but also the end of Jane Eyre itself, while the last chapter, 38, shows only the happy ending of the couple and an account of St John Rivers. Therefore we may roughly say that Jane Eyre closes with the end of Jane's journey. On this account, it may be understood that Jane Eyre begins with a journey and ends with it. Then, what view does Jane have on a journey?

In chapter 3 Jane is lying in bed because of the shock received the previous night. She begs Bessie, a maid-servant, to fetch Gulliver's Travels. This episode must be taken into consideration, Q.D. Leavis says about it that Gulliver's Travels "seemed to show her that there are other kinds of life in the world that she could perhaps escape to" (p. 14). This interpretation favorable to a journey is justified by the fact that Gulliver's Travels was handed to Jane when she lay in bed and could not move. The same aspiration in Jane to escape and change her present situation is seen in other places. In chapter 10, immediately after Miss Temple's departure from Lowood, there is the following passage: "I traced the white road winding round the base of one mountain, and vanishing in a gorge between two. How I longed to follow it farther! ... I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty
I uttered a prayer... For change, stimulus” (p. 117). Jane is a woman of deeds. She advertises for a governess, and leaves Lowood. And then, in chapter 12, Jane states her restless nature: “the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes. Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story, backwards and forwards...” (p. 141). She continues to say, rejecting tranquility, that “It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action.” She seems to assume a favorable attitude toward a change and a journey.

It is, however, equally true that Jane assumes a contrary attitude. In order to see it, let us return to the scene in which Gulliver's Travels is mentioned. Here, she says, “all was eerie and dreary; the giants were gaunt goblins, the pigmies malevolent and fearful imps, Gulliver a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions. I closed the book, which I dared no longer peruse...” (p. 53). If Gulliver's Travels means an escape for Jane, why did she dare no longer peruse it? We must return to the very first chapter to answer the question. There, Jane had been wandering in the morning. But on account of the cold wind and rain, the idea of any further walking was given up. And Jane said “I was glad of it; I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons” (p. 39). This speech may have to be limited to that situation only. But with the quotation about Gulliver's Travels in mind, is it really impossible to assume that what Jane said expresses her own feeling about a journey or wandering? It may not be beside the point to suppose that in fact Jane does not like the idea of journey. There is another example to substantiate this assumption. Immediately after the passage alluding to Gulliver's Travels follows Bessie's song which begins with “In the days when we went gipsying... / A long time ago” (p. 54). Jane says that she had heard it, with “lively delight,” but now she finds “in its melody an indescribable sadness.” She can no longer innocently enjoy hearing the sad song of gipsying as once. To her, the song sounds like “a funeral hymn.” It is understandable from her reaction to the song that she does not think ‘gipsying’ a delightful thing. The quotations cited above tell us that Jane is eager to find stability.

She seems to assume an ambivalent attitude toward a journey or wandering. Her ambivalence possibly comes from the fact that she seeks after stability in spite of her restless nature. We have said “in spite of her restless nature”; but, on the contrary, we may have to say “because of her restless nature,” for restlessness is not, properly speaking, incongruous with a wish for stability. The former is identical with the latter. If we think in this way, it may be said that Jane wanders in order to gain stability. Bearing this attitude of hers in mind, we will deal with her journey in the next section.
III

Jane's journey starts from Gateshead and ends at Ferndean. Her journey can be compared to a Christian's pilgrimage to salvation. The temporary residences in her journey are Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield (A), Moor House, Thornfield (B) and Ferndean. In the beginning, Jane passes through Gateshead, whose name may be interpreted as 'Gate's head,' reminding us of the 'strait gate' which leads to eternal life. As a Christian endures hardship in order to get eternal life, Jane Eyre goes through various kinds of hardships at Gateshead. She is maltreated by Mrs Reed and her cruel son, John, who attacks and injures Jane. But it is she who is blamed by Mrs Reed. Moreover, Jane is confined in the Red Room, where she gets sick.

Jane's hardships can be guessed from the name 'Reed.' It comes, as a matter of fact, from the ordinary word 'reed' meaning "firm-stemmed water or marsh plant." It reminds us of the phrase 'broken, bruised reed.' According to Brewer, 'broken reed' means "something not to be trusted for support: a weak adherent." This meaning explains satisfactorily the deeds of the Reeds. Mrs Reed is entrusted by her late husband with the care and education of Jane Eyre. But she neglects her duty. Furthermore, she tries to give a bad impression of Jane to Mr Brocklehurst, founder of Lowood Asylum.

In addition to its association with 'broken reed,' however, 'Reed' makes us think of water. And significantly enough, description of nature at this place responds to this water image. The beginning of Jane's journey is presented to us with "a rain so penetrating." And when Jane departs from Gateshead we have the following description which is connected with water: "Bessie carried a lantern, whose light glanced on wet steps and gravel road sodden by a recent thaw" (p. 73). This relation to water is important, because it sets us to thinking that Jane's journey takes the form of baptism. In addition to this 'Reed,' we have the other name which might be connected with water; John Reed. 'John' is very suggestive of John the Baptist.

Thus, we may be able to suppose from the two uses of the name 'Reed' that Jane undergoes hardship and that at the same time she is being administered mental baptism. A good effect, though slight, of her baptism can be detected in the last word in the last quotation; "thaw." Though it is used to suggest a natural phenomenon, we may take it that it also symbolizes the abatement of her hardship. But since her mental baptism has started only just now, and as Jane figuratively says right after that, "Raw and chill was the winter morning," the baptism does not bring yet any other immediate result more remarkable than this. As for John Reed, for example, who should be a John the Baptist because of his name, he is quite unlike John the Baptist; all he did was maltreat Jane. It will be some years before baptism has a noticeable effect.
Inhospitability at the Reeds finally makes Jane decide to leave Gateshead and begin a new journey to go to school at Lowood, because, she thought, “school would be a complete change; it implied a long journey, an entire separation from Gateshead, an entrance into a new life” (p. 57). And here she enters on the second journey. School gives her a change, indeed, as she expected. But hardships do not leave her. They are waiting for her under other forms. One of them is presented in the form of bad food. Children at the school eat insufficient and nauseating food. Another is in the form of the unhealthy and cold place. Children shiver with cold, and many of them die of typhus. Besides, discipline is too severe. The children must, for example, walk ten miles in a cold winter as far as Brocklebridge. Julia’s naturally curled hair must be cut off entirely because it is not arranged closely, modestly, plainly.” (p. 96). As concerns herself, Jane was scolded by Mr Brocklehurst for having broken a slate. He accused her and, to her chagrin, he announced publically that she was a liar. He made her stand on a stool for more than half an hour. As seen from these, Lowood is the second place of trial for her.

Water images are seen in this Lowood, too. ‘Lowood’ evokes the image of shady, unhealthy and misty low land full of trees. In fact, it is said concerning Lowood that “Assuredly, pleasant enough, but whether healthy or not is another question. That forest dell, where Lowood lay, was the cradle of the fog and fogbred pestilence” (p. 108). Thus Lowood is connected with water. And we can understand that Jane is baptized here, while she undergoes several hardships. In accordance with her baptism, the surroundings around her ameliorate. The school is improved, and Jane is invested with the office of teacher. But at last the time comes for Jane to depart. Miss Temple, one of the teachers at the school, now leaves Lowood to marry. Her name, needless to say, connotes a place of Christian public worship. She is literally a temple to Jane: being with her, Jane feels self-content and feels no necessity to move. But once Miss Temple has gone, the prop and stay of Jane’s mind is removed. She comes to think that “it was not the power to be tranquil which had failed me, but the reason for tranquillity was no more” (p. 116). Now she intends to escape from Lowood. The next quotation is quite indicative of her longing for freedom from bondage. Jane opens her window and looks out: “My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks. It was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits” (p. 117). She advertises for employment as a governess in the Herald. And next we come across the effective use of the water image which is suggestive of baptism. We must pause at the scene in which Jane drops a letter: “I visited a shop or two, slipped the letter into the post office, and came back through heavy rain, with streaming garments, but
with a relieved heart” (p. 119). Jane has finally made up her mind to leave. At this crucial stage, we find the second water image. The rain seems to mean the last sprinkle of baptism at Lowood. And she revives with the rain. Therefore, she comes back “with a relieved heart.” Towards the close of a pleasant autumn day, she receives a letter from Mrs Fairfax at Thornfield. “Pleasant,” not ‘rainy’ or such like, is of deep significance, because it suggests that Jane’s baptism at Lowood has finished. Thus the effect of baptism manifests itself more vividly at Lowood than at Gateshead. Jane’s baptism keeps continuing, bringing a gradual result.

Having travelled over “the blue peaks” and now being at Thornfield, Jane seems to have gained stability. This third journey looks like the last one. In fact, she gains the favor of those at this place. And Jane and Rochester fall in love. They get engaged. Her future seems full of hope. But her journey at Thornfield ends in a miserable tragedy. She must undergo another kind of hardship quite different from the previous ones. Her hard journey still continues.

It is noteworthy that the development of the love of Jane and Rochester, the discovery of Rochester’s bigamy and the end of their love are all closely related to journey imagery. Here we cannot help but sense the overflowing influence of the name ‘Eyre.’ At his first encounter with Jane Eyre in chapter 12, Rochester is described as a traveller. And it is while he is on a journey to Mr Eston’s that Jane realizes her affection for him and forces her feelings to submit to the discipline of reason. In chapter 18 Rochester comes to Thornfield disguised as an old female gipsy vagabond, and confesses his love to Jane in this indirect way.

Journey imagery continues. But as the catastrophe of the love approaches, journey imagery is used in a different way: to denote the bad luck of separation. In chapter 22 Jane travels back from the funeral of Mrs Reed. On her way back to Thornfield she anticipates her sad fortune, because there is a rumor that Rochester may marry Miss Ingram. Jane asks herself how long she is to stay at Thornfield. She is afraid lest it be short. She says to herself, “Where was I to go?” (p. 271). In the next chapter, 23, Rochester (telling an out-and-out lie) recommends Jane to go to Ireland because he is going to marry Miss Ingram. The lie is told in order to make Jane love him much more by provoking her jealousy. And she is taken in and unconsciously reveals her love.

‘No matter--a girl of your sense will not object to the voyage or the distance.’
‘Not the voyage but the distance: and then the sea is a barrier--’
‘From what, Jane?’
‘From England and from Thornfield: and--’
‘Well?’
‘From you, sir.’ (p. 279) [italics mine except the last one].
As in the scene of a gipsy vagabond, love is thus declared in connection with a journey image. But what is more important than this is the fact that behind their flirtation lurks the omen of separation. Though he succeeds in confirming Jane's love, Rochester unconsciously introduces the concept of separation. Readers who see such words as “parting,” “weary travels,” “necessity of departure” and “necessity of death” cannot help sensing in them an ominous future for the couple.

Ironically, fear of separation greatly increases the nearer the wedding draws. The night before the wedding, it is told that Jane dreamt two dreams the previous night. In her dreams prediction of separation from Rochester was made in journey images. It was vivid and direct. In one dream she “was following the windings of an unknown road” (p. 309), and she “was burdened with the charge of a little child.” And Rochester was “on the road a long way before” her. She made every effort to catch up with him. But her effort ended in total failure. Rochester “withdrew farther and farther every moment.” In the other dream she was wandering, too. To quote from the text, “here I stumbled over a marble hearth, and there over a fallen fragment of cornice” (p. 310). In this remarkably Gothic scene, she was carrying a little child, as in the first dream. We should probably identify the child with Jane. By the way, while she was wandering with the child, Jane saw that Rochester was “departing for many years, and for a distant country.” She climbed a wall. But “the stones rolled” from under her feet. And the ivy she grasped gave way. Ivy is, of course, the symbol of “imperishable affections of love and friendship.” Therefore, the fact that the ivy gave way symbolizes the breaking of the couple’s love. And then she “sat down on the narrow ledge,” and “bent forward to take a last look.” But at that moment the wall “crumbled.” The child “rolled from” her knee. She “lost” her balance, “fell” and woke. The verbs “crumbled,” “rolled,” “lost” and “fell” signify nothing but heart-breaking destruction of the love. And the event of the child’s rolling from Jane’s knee may certainly predict Jane’s desertion from Rochester. Kathleen Tillotson says that there is a device of retrospection in Jane Eyre and that this novel, like Wuthering Heights, “must have been planned backwards.” Her opinion is convincing, for the device is seen in the scene we are discussing. That is, Jane’s sad dreams were already anticipated by us in her conversation with Rochester a little before she began telling the dreams. But what is more important for our study, the unhappy ending is intimated indirectly in a journey image used by Rochester in this conversation, too. They are at supper. Rochester recommends Jane to eat. Jane answers that she cannot eat. Then he says to her, “Is it because you have the prospect of a journey before you, Jane? Is it the thoughts of going to London that takes away your appetite?” (p. 306) [italics mine]. To that question she answers that she cannot see her prospects and that she hardly knows what thoughts she has in her head.
Everything in life seems “unreal” to her. Uncertainty and worry are in her words, and they are expressed in relation to a journey image. Though Jane does not know what they are, it is sure that they foreshadow an unhappy ending to her love.

We have so far examined the development of Jane’s love and its end at Thornfield in connection with journey imagery. And her miserable ending is naturally to be expected from the name of this place. After she fled from the unhealthy Lowood, Jane Eyre came back to the hill, not to the low wood. Her escape to the higher place seemed to promise a bright future. But the field was full of thorns. Here we must remember that they symbolize “temptation of the flesh” and “inchastity.” In fact, as if to verify this symbolic interpretation, she was attracted by Rochester’s physical appearance, and experienced the first sweet love. But it was legally forbidden, because Rochester had a wife. He was hiding the fact and leading her into temptation. And she was also a frail woman, because, even after the disclosure of the abhorrent fact, it was after much vacillation that she finally decided to leave Thornfield. Thus ‘Thornfield’ proves to be an apt word to describe Jane’s hardship.

The hardship at Thornfield does not seem to have any relation to water imagery. But it does. We must direct our attention to the last part of chapter 26. There Jane is described as lying in the dried-up bed of a great river. And then she “heard a flood loosened in remote mountains, and I felt the torrent come” (p. 324). And the chapter ends with the quotation from Psalms 69. 1–2; “the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire: I felt no standing; I came into deep waters; the floods overflowed me.” Does not this scene remind us of Noah’s flood that purged sins from the earth, or of baptism on a large scale? In this way, there appears the water image, and it serves to purify this polluted place of “temptation of the flesh.” Thus we might say that the water image is used here more symbolically and effectively than before.

Leaving Thornfield means the fourth journey for Jane. She wanders through a heathen field “like a lost and starving dog” (p. 354). She meets with harsh and cold usage. But after severe trial, she is rescued by St John Rivers. Different from her treatment at the Reeds, Jane lives comfortably at Moor House. In addition, her life as a teacher at Morton village school goes well. And she is lucky enough to have five thousand pounds bequeathed her by her uncle. But in spite of all these favorable situations, there occurs to her one quite troublesome problem: St John’s proposal of marriage. He wants to marry Jane, not because he loves her, but because he needs her for his missions in India. Of course, she does not like his proposal without love. And since she has no love for him, she would not like to marry him, though she willingly proposes her help as a friend. But he does not relinquish his plan, and continually tries to persuade her, forcing her at the
same time to learn Hindustani against her will. Finally, she is, as if overcome by his persistence, almost inclined to give her consent to the marriage, feeling as if she were charmed by his magical power which issues from his pious religious spirit.

This hardship of hers has a close relationship to water imagery. First, in chapter 28 she reaches Marsh End, or Moor House. 'Marsh' means a "low land flooded in winter and usu. watery at all times,"\(^1\) which reminds us of the Reeds and Lowood. 'Moor House' may be interpreted in the same way. 'Moor' is a "tract of open waste ground, esp. if covered with heather."\(^2\) In fact, we have the following description of Whitcross not so far from Marsh End: "they [roads] are all cut in the moor, and the heather grows deep and wild to their very verge" (p. 349). Meanwhile, the name of 'Morton' means "moor town,"\(^3\) which shows that Morton is also connected with 'moor.' The water imagery does not end here. There is another important name: 'St John Rivers.' Now that 'Rivers' and 'John' are presented to us, what should we imagine other than John the Baptist himself (though 'St John' suggests that St John should be connected with John the Evangelist, too)? We have mentioned earlier that John Reed is quite unlike John the Baptist. And though he is cold and does not have any human love as his second name 'Rivers' suggests, and this coldness of his has brought about the hardship of Jane, there is a positive aspect in his case. As Leavis says, we should be aware that John Rivers "completes her [Jane's] education in spite of himself and sends her back to Mr Rochester" (p. 22). His pious religious behavior helps her to form a new, religious way of life. In other words, by tormenting her with an unworldly proposal, he has succeeded in baptizing and purifying her. When we consider that John Reed did nothing to contribute to Jane's baptism at Gateshead, we cannot help but marvel, now, that her baptism has progressed remarkably since then.

In this way Jane has gone on pilgrimaging from Gateshead, and has already undergone three hardships closely connected with water imagery which is suggestive of baptism. And the fourth is at the present Marsh End and Morton. As 'Marsh End' hints, the baptismal ceremony is coming to an end. But it does not end until Jane comes to Thornfield and says, "My journey is closed" (p. 448). But why not? The weather when she departs from Morton is described thus: "It was the first of June; yet the morning was overcast and chilly: rain beat fast on my casement" (p. 446). Why does this description seem melancholy? Why does it not have such brightness as we have sensed in the last scenes at Gateshead and Lowood? The answer lies in the fact that Jane thinks at this time that she would follow John Rivers. She says, "In a few more hours I shall succeed you in
that track, cousin." This shows that Jane is still under the control of John Rivers and that, on this account, her baptism by him has not finished yet. It takes two or three days more to complete her whole baptism.

The day after hearing Rochester's call in the sky, Jane goes on the fifth journey: to Thornfield again. This is her last journey. It is necessary to note that ‘thorn’ has not only the bad meaning as we have seen, but also a good meaning. When we saw Jane at Thornfield for the first time, ‘thorn’ was said to mean “temptation of the flesh and in chastity.” But now, the future seems bright to her who arrives at Thornfield for the second time. ‘Thorn’ in this situation should be interpreted as “the road to salvation,” or, as Shelley says, as “the road to fame”: “And some yet live, treading the thorny road, / Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode” (Adonais, st. v. 11. 8-9.).

Jane comes to Thornfield again, but cannot find him there. She asks the host of an inn whether he knows where Mr Rochester lives, and she learns that he is living at Ferndean, where she goes to complete her journey. And at last Jane and Rochester reunite. Here Jane shakes off the yoke of John Reed, and her baptism is now completed. Her journey has almost ended, too. But another baptism is still needed so that she could end her journey and live happily. That is Rochester's. This time Jane baptizes Rochester, which is surmisable from the fact that ‘Jane’ is the feminine form of ‘John.’ Like Jane, Rochester is a man of wandering and hardship. Therefore we perceive even in Rochester the strong unifying power of ‘Jane Eyre.’ His marriage with his mad wife was the beginning of his hardship. Feeling desperate at this cruel reality, he wandered in Europe seeking an ideal wife. But his wandering ended in total failure. And he came to Thornfield. One day when he came back to Thornfield from business, he met Jane, and they began to love each other since then. Their love deepened, and they got engaged. But when their wedding was being held in a church, his bigamy was revealed. Jane fled from him. Then there followed great hardship for Rochester. His mad wife set fire to his house. He went out to help her, but she flung herself from the battlements. Meanwhile he was buried under the ruins. Though he was rescued, one eye was knocked out and the other inflamed. He became blind. Still worse, one of his hands was crushed and amputated. In addition to all these, he became crippled.

This Rochester burdened with hardship may be comparable to Samson, because he bears several similarities to Samson. First, his name ‘Rochester’ comes from OE‘Hrofescester,’ the name of a Roman fort. It is also suggestive of ‘rock.’ In consequence, it is surmisable that ‘Rochester’ connotes strength and stoutness. Indeed, Jane describes him in this way: “His form was of the same strong and stalwart contour as ever... not in one year's space, by any sorrow, could his
athletic strength be quelled or his vigorous prime blighted” (p. 456). Needless to say, Samson was a man of strength. Second, when combing Rochester’s hair, Jane said, “If you twist in that way you will make me pull the hair out of your head” (p. 468). This reminds us of the famous Samson’s seven locks shaven off by Delilah through his mental weakness. Third, since his hair was shaven off, Samson’s strength left him. On that account, when the Philistines came to arrest him, he could not resist them. The Bible says, “the Lord was departed from him” (Judges 16:20). Like Samson, Rochester was forsaken for a while by God. He defied God by breathing “guilt on” (p. 471) her purity. Rochester says, reflecting on his own conduct: “the Omnipotent snatched it [Jane] from me. I, in my stiff-necked rebellion, almost cursed the dispensation: instead of bending to the decree I defied it. Divine justice pursued its course” (p. 471). And the result was his punishment by God. Fourth, Samson was now a reprobate. Then he was chained and his eyes were plucked. He became blind. Like Samson, Rochester became almost blind. He was really like “that sightless Samson” (p. 456) as Jane herself said. And his left hand, which symbolizes something sinister, was amputated. Still worse he became crippled. From Jane’s eye, he looked like “some wronged and fettered wild beast or bird dangerous to approach in his sullen woe” (p. 456) [italics mine]. Rochester thus described is quite similar to the blind Samson chained in prison. Fifth, as Samson was crushed under the house, Rochester was buried under his house, though he was taken alive. These similarities between Rochester and Samson seem to suggest that Charlotte Brontë intentionally made use of the story of Samson in order to describe effectively Rochester’s guilt, punishment, and, finally, repentance in accordance with the religious motif of baptism of the novel.

After receiving a severe punishment of fire, Rochester repents of his arrogance. Now he reconciles himself with God, and says, “my heart swells with gratitude to the beneficent God of this earth just now. He sees not as man sees, but far clearer: judges not as man judges, but far more wisely. I did wrong” (p. 471) [italics mine]. But we must be careful and notice that the quotation cited above is said after Jane appeared before Rochester and consented to be his wife. If she had not come back to him, his repentance would have remained imperfect. To perfect it, water imagery is indispensable as we have seen in Jane’s case. Here at Ferndean, too, water imagery is seen. First, the name ‘Ferndean’ is suggestive of water, because it means ‘a valley of fern.’ Moreover, ‘fern’ symbolizes “sincerity,” “endurance,” “humbleness.”22 So, ‘Ferndean’ can be interpreted as ‘a valley of sincerity and humbleness.’ And we should not forget that bracken, one kind of fern, is said to be “a sacred plant.”23 Then, if we take this symbolic meaning into consideration, ‘Ferndean’ may become like ‘a sacred temple.’ And meaningfully,
Rochester “stood quiet and mute in the rain, now falling fast on his uncovered head” (p. 456). The next water image, the third, is most suggestive: the couple’s reunion began by Jane’s bringing a glass of water to Rochester. These water images can be interpreted in connection with baptism. As the first example shows, Ferndean can be construed as a sacred valley where baptism can readily be had. The rain may mean the water sprinkled at baptism. Especially the rain described as “falling fast on his uncovered head” clearly reminds us of the ceremony. Moreover, the fact that Jane brought a glass of water when she met Rochester again and that he drank the water, may mean that she acted like a baptist. And she is the most proper person to perform this ceremony, because she is a ‘feminine John.’ She has been baptized. But now, like Jesus Christ who was baptized by John the Baptist, it is Jane’s turn to baptize. Her journey which started from “Gate’s head” ends here with her baptism of Rochester and his perfect repentance as the result, and their marriage. And now when it becomes known that Jane will marry Rochester, the baptism is no more needed. Neither is water. Therefore, as Jane says, “The sun has dried up all the raindrops” and “The breeze is still: it is quite hot” (p. 470).

*Jane Eyre* is a story about a girl’s growth from childhood to womanhood: in other words about the mental journey of a girl. Love plays an important part in it. But Jane’s journey of love is not a melodramatic one, but one which can be compared to that of a pilgrim who seeks God’s love through hardship. Jane undergoes several hardships in the places where water imagery is pointed out. But each hardship from Gateshead to Moor House helps toward making Jane more perfect than before.24 And significantly enough, at every scene of each temporary residence of her journey, rain or something connected with water appears. It symbolizes the sacred water of baptismal ceremony. In Rochester’s case, too, the same pattern of journey and baptism is repeated. And after both Jane and Rochester are mentally baptized, it becomes evident that Jane leads a happy life. Hence, considering its religious aspect, we may call her journey ‘Love’s Progress’ in imitation of Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

‘Jane Eyre’ gives the novel two main thematic constituents: journey and baptism, and the story revolves around them.25 On this account, *Jane Eyre* is surprisingly coherent. The title ‘Jane Eyre’ means more than a mere title. It has a unifying power. At this point, one question arises to our mind: whether Charlotte Brontë used the same remarkable technique in her other novels like *Professor*, *Shirley* and *Villette*, or not. In order to answer the question, an effort must be made at an early date.
Notes

4 Cf. "Air has a punning association with the heroine," Lodge, p. 121.
5 See OECD, 'Eyre.'
8 Margaret Lane shows us that there was a Latin lesson at The Clergy Daughters' School where Charlotte and her sisters went. See Lane, The Brontë Story (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1953), p. 56. Besides, we have the following passage in Gaskell's Life: "It might be provincial, it might be derived from the Latin; so that it accurately represented her idea, she did not mind whence it came" (p. 307).
9 Gaskell, p. 485.
10 COD, 'reed'.
12 See Ad de Vries, Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1974), 'ivy.'
13 Tillotson, p. 289.
14 We have the following description of Thornfield: "the coach stopped to water the horses at a wayside inn, situated in the midst of scenery whose green hedges and large fields and low pastoral hills (how mild of feature and verdant of hue compared with the stern North-Midland moors of Morton!) met my eye like the lineaments of a once familiar face" (pp. 447-448).
15 Ad de Vries, 'thorn.'
16 COD, 'marsh.'
17 Ibid., 'moor'.
18 See Kenkyusha's New English-Japanese Dictionary (Tokyo, 1960), 'Morton.'
19 Ad de Vries, 'thorn.'
21 Kenkyusha's, 'Rochester.'

22 Ad de Vries, 'fern.'

23 Ibid..

24 Jane is one of the round characters created by Charlotte Brontë. We can see her transformations (1) from a stubborn little girl at Gateshead, to a thoughtful girl who admits resignation at Lowood, and who forgives her dying aunt in chapter 21, (2) from a little poor girl, to a mature, young woman and teacher at Lowood, (3) from a passionate woman who does not seem to think about God, to a woman who remembers God when she leaves Thornfield, and a woman at Morton who would devote her life to religious missions, and (4) from a woman who loves Rochester for his physical appearance, to a devout woman who loves him for all his physical handicaps.

25 'Iterare' has the other meaning of 'to repeat, to do a second time.' It has nothing to do with the word 'iterare' meaning 'to travel,' for the former comes from 'i' which means 'this one, he.' But since they are homographs, they are very confusing. When we consider there are many iterations in words and events in the novel, we are tempted to think 'iterare' meaning 'to repeat' might be connoted in 'Eyre.'