

Ghosts, Fairies, and Old Wives' Tales

The Function of Folklore and Superstition in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights



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Samandrag

Denne masteroppgåva tar føre seg *Jane Eyre* av Charlotte Brontë og *Wuthering Heights* av Emily Brontë. Oppgåva undersøker kva ein kan lære om det viktorianske samfunnet i England, ved å sjå på aspekt som klasse, kjønn, og samfunnsendingar relatert til urbaniseringa i denne perioden. Desse aspekta blir undersøkt gjennom å sjå på nokre av dei mange folkloristiske elementa ein kan finne i dei to bøkene. Folklore er folkeminna og folketrua som har overlevd gjennom ein tidsalder på folkemunne, og som difor har ukjend forfattar. Både *Jane Eyre* og *Wuthering Heights* viser til folklore gjennom referansar til alvar, spøkelse, gamle balladar og sanger, eventyr, og “kjerringsnakk.” Oppgåva ser først på korleis folklore er brukt i *Jane Eyre*, ved å sjå på korleis hovudkarakteren blir assosiert med overnaturlige vesen i samanheng med at ho i auga til andre karakterar blir framandgjort som eit resultat av at rolla hennar i samfunnet er vanskeleg å definere. Vidare ser oppgåva på spøkelse, og deira innverknad på *Wuthering Heights*, relatert til den same typen framandgjering som i *Jane Eyre*. Til slutt ser oppgåva på korleis tradisjonen for historieforteljing på folkemunne skilde seg frå bokpublisering, som var den nyare og meir aksepterte forma i dei viktorianske mellomklassene. Ved å studere *Jane Eyre* og *Wuthering Heights* i samanheng med folklore og konteksten av det viktorianske samfunnet, prøver denne oppgåva å leggje vekt på kvifor studiar innanfor folklore og litteratur kan vere verdifullt for å finne innsikt i samfunnsrelaterte tema som skjuler seg bak folklore i fiksjon.

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Introduction

“I have now heard all my neighbour’s history, at different sittings, as the housekeeper could spare time from more important occupations. I’ll continue it in her own words, only a little condensed. She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator and I don’t think I could improve her style”

-Brontë 2019, 121

In both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, there are themes and mentions of changelings, ghosts, goblins, and other creatures that are known through folklore. For instance, the titular character and narrator of *Jane Eyre* refers to “one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp” when she describes her reflection in the mirror as a child, and uses language related to folklore throughout the narrative when describing other characters and situations that appear strange and unfamiliar to her (Brontë 2016, 16). Likewise, characters continually refer to ghosts and other supernatural beings in *Wuthering Heights*. These types of folklore reference happen for instance in situations that are unexplainable, such as when Lockwood meets Heathcliff after his dream: “I suppose that she wanted to get another proof that the place was haunted, at my expense. Well it is—swarming with ghosts and goblins!” (Brontë 2019, 22). Additionally, both novels refer to narratives that are traditionally passed through oral tradition, such as fairy tales, ballads, and old folk songs. For instance, Jane states that her nursemaid Bessie “fed our eager attention with passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and older ballads” (Brontë 2016, 11). Likewise, Nelly narrates that she tries comforting Hareton as a child: “I went into the kitchen to lull my little lamb to sleep” (Brontë 2019, 60). Not only does she use what the young Catherine refers to as her “nursery lore” to soothe a child, but she takes that child to the heart, a place associated with home, comfort,

and stories. These observations lead to a number of questions that this thesis will explore, such as: What kind of role do these references to folklore and the fairy world have in the novels? What kind of role do they have in literature in general in this period? How can we learn about the history and culture of this period through these folklore references?

The references to folklore, fairies, and ghosts in the two novels play the role of highlighting the strange and unfamiliar in the narratives, which subsequently provides insight into how Victorian middle classes viewed the people that either did not fit into any societal boundary, or who had been placed on the other side of such a boundary. Such people could for instance be the racial, gendered or class-related Other, meaning the people that were generally not a white, middle-class gentleman. Folklore in Victorian literature often has the role of highlighting contemporary fears, using elements relating to superstition to create a sense of uneasiness surrounding the characters that do not fit neatly into contemporary societal structures. Consequently, by looking at folklore in Victorian literature, one might get a deeper understanding of the societal contexts and processes at the time, through how characters and narrators of the novels use or attempt to distance themselves from folklore and superstition. As such, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are just two examples of a vast amount of literary works from the Victorian era that utilizes folklore within its narrative, and that can provide insight into the contemporary views of Victorian society relating to topics such as class and gender.

Folklore Studies: A Critical Approach

Before writing was invented, humanity shared and stored information orally, through spoken language, listening to what was being said, and remembering for later. Some of this information came in the form of different kinds of stories, meaning that storytelling was a

craft long before the invention of writing. This way of communicating created an oral culture that was “vastly different from the print and digital culture of today” (Chancellor and Lee 2016, 40). One such difference is in that information stored by human memory, unlike when “immortalized” in writing and digital codes, is subject to change. As Chancellor and Lee further explain, scholars have suggested that storytellers most likely remembered and retold key elements of the story rather than memorizing and retelling the story verbatim (Chancellor and Lee 2016, 41). This ancient method of telling and retelling, which is an interactive and collaborative form of communication and information sharing, constantly moulded and remoulded what the people knew. Through millennia of changing cultures, inventions and societies, the information changed and updated, creating a knowledge of and by the people that shared and took part in evolving that knowledge. This kind of knowledge that is for, by and of the people, in short, is what folklorists study today.

The field of folklore studies was established in the 1800s, and originated in England. The term “folk-lore,” coined by the writer William Thoms in the 1840s, was meant to describe “a passing world of curious forms to be replaced by superior ones, but which deserved nonetheless its modest place in the genealogies of nation and humanity” (Ó Giolláin 2014, 71). In other words, folklore studies was meant to describe the information that could give a context to current society, by examining what people knew from oral tradition and history, such as the stories a mother might know from being told by her mother and grandmother, and which they in turn learned and adapted from being told by their ancestors. This information could then possibly give insight into how society had once been, and how it had evolved, through the exploration of knowledge that in the current day could be considered obsolete or irrelevant. This is the same information as was briefly described in the previous paragraph, where oral transmission of information developed into a “people’s knowledge” which scholars looking at folklore thus seek to explore and analyse.

The first half of the term, *folk*, is associated with the people carrying, remembering and conveying this knowledge. At first, the scholars mainly focused on what they called “primitive people,” but the focus of their study shifted to become “associated with ‘peasant culture,’ the ‘labouring classes’ and other groups which did not have the advantages of education and/or social class characteristic of those studying them” (Widdowson 2010, 126). From the very beginning, then, the focus of the field was placed on the people who were less educated than the scholars doing the research. The focus subsequently shifted from terms connected with the barbaric and naive (such as “primitive” and “savage”) to terms connected with the common yet uneducated people (such as “peasants” and “labourers”). Thus, though the terms associated with the people carrying the knowledge became less crude, the people that the folklorists studied were still regarded as beneath them intellectually.

The second half of the term, *lore*, points to the knowledge, learning and traditional beliefs studied by these folklorists. They explore “the full spectrum of tradition: language; childlore; custom and belief; narrative; music, dance, and drama; and material culture” (Widdowson 2010, 127). In other words, folklorists study the vast ways different forms of knowledge has been preserved through oral tradition in a group of people, and what this knowledge entails. Of course, due to the change that inevitably comes when one person is retelling a story or piece of information, the folklorists cannot explore how the stories and knowledge developed, but only what is known by the people of today. In other words, much information has been lost to time and memory, and folklorists can only study the knowledge that has survived and developed for several generations.

Folklore studies share similarities with several fields of study, such as oral history, literature studies and anthropology. However, folklore studies is particularly close to anthropology, as they developed in parallel with each other, and they both “were profoundly marked by Romanticism in their origins” (Widdowson 2010, 127; Ó Giolláin 2014, 80).

Anthropology became the better established field, however, and folklore studies comparatively “never developed as a unified ‘universal’ discipline” (Ó Giolláin 2014, 80). Today, folklorists also have to contend with a negative attitude toward their field, for instance stemming from other scholars’ attitude that it is not enough of a scholarly field, seeing as it is already generally well-known by the general public (Widdowson 2010, 128). In that way, the field of folklore studies is regarded as “too accessible.” The question, then, seems to be: “why study something people already know?” One possible answer could be that we study what people already know in order to seek the deeper truths underlying the narratives and knowledge that have survived until the present day.

Folklorists gather their material through interviews and other kinds of recordings of common people that carry this knowledge. For instance, a scholar could ask a person to sing a traditional song that has been passed down to the person. The scholar could then analyse the recording, for instance in conjunction with other recordings and data from a certain geographical area. Here is another challenge that folklorists have to face: the commercialisation of the data they seek to study, and the development of copyright legislation. Though protecting the intellectual property of the source is valid and important, it also poses a challenge in making the material harder to access. As Widdowson states: “much of [the data] now remains inaccessible to the detriment not only of our knowledge of English tradition but also with regard to the development of teaching and research programmes in the discipline” (Widdowson 2010, 128). This inaccessibility is in spite of the speaker giving the information willingly, either explicitly or tacitly.

The academics currently studying folklore also have to deal with misconceptions about the field, as well as resistance from colleagues who think the field cannot be academic if the subject is based on common knowledge that is already known by the general public (Widdowson 2010, 128). It might not be that surprising, then, that there is a marked absence

of relevant academic programs that focus on the study of tradition in England. This absence is a result of lack of funding, and functions as a symptom of the lack of academical knowledge of English tradition; Although it is known by the general public, there is potential to keep it a discipline that might create deeper insight into *why it matters* for the general public, and the country and society's history.

With regards to literature, folklorists might analyse a literary work in order to find information about folklore in said literature. However, with the definition of folklore stating that it stems from oral tradition, the elements of folklore one might find in literature is not genuine oral popular tradition, but something that might be inspired by it, and might use elements of that inspiration. Davidson, in his article "Folklore and Literature," states that "we find (...) an increasing interest in analysing certain works of literature from the medieval period to modern times, to observe how folktale motifs and folk beliefs may be woven, instinctively or deliberately, into the very texture of the work itself, enlarging its scope and giving it significance and power" (Davidson 1975, 74). Further, the study of folkloric elements in literature might lead to an increased understanding of the significance of folklore and oral folk tradition in society as a whole. For instance, when poetry moved "back to the country during the Romantic Revival," it "caused beliefs and practises of the countryside to gain new significance" (Davidson 1975, 75). Thus, in moving literature to the rural societies, new importance was put upon the traditions and customs of these societies, influencing the popularity of the knowledge—the folklore—that these societies possessed.

An example of this is the Norwegian *Draumkvedet* ("The Dream Poem"). It is a visionary poem and song that has survived in rural areas of Norway through oral tradition, and it is perhaps the poem that has gotten the most attention out of the old Nordic folk songs (Steinsland 2012, 194-197). The lyrics were transcribed in the 1800s in many variants, but there are presumably numerous verses that have been lost to time and memory. In looking at a

temporal context, it is assumed that the lyrics stem from the Middle Ages due to its depiction of medieval Christian faith, while others believe that it is pre-Christian due to the lyrics containing elements of Norse mythology (Steinsland 2012, 195). What *Draumkvedet* provides in being an example of folklore, is that its author and time of origin is unknown, which means that there is no possibility of using the folkloric poem in an attempt to learn about its time of origin, or its author. What the poem provides, however, is an opportunity to ask questions about how it might have been influenced by changing times, and how society has evolved. For instance, does the poem contain elements of Norse mythology because the poem itself originated at that time, or because elements of Norse mythology survived in the culture? Though there is no way of getting a definite answer, this kind of folklore is the living remnant of times that have long since passed, and which has survived through oral communication. As such, *Draumkvedet* and other songs and narratives from folklore of all societies provide opportunities for cross-disciplinary research, for instance regarding similarities and differences in similar poems and songs from culture to culture.

Folklore studies could contribute to a deeper understanding for a country or society's origins and development, in seeing what was before, what survived (for instance through oral tradition), and how it is regarded by the public today. One of the main reasons for why it could be wise to establish new academic programs within folklore studies, is to educate future teachers and researchers, not only to continue the field and teach future students, but also to further educate those with an interest in the subject: the history of a people or a country's culture and cultural tradition. Another reason would be to educate those who intend to teach at the primary and secondary level or education (Widdowson 2010, 129). In essence, the field of folklore studies provides an opportunity of gaining insight into a people or society's history, by looking at aspects of knowledge that has originated in times that have since passed, and that has survived through oral tradition.

Storytelling thus becomes one of the main avenues of passing on this old knowledge. Working women such as nurses and maids and their “old wives’ tales” have provided the passing of this knowledge through stories, songs, and other types of narratives that have often been associated with home and hearth, as entertainment for children and other women (Wakefield 2006; Krebs 1998; Farrer 1975; Vieco 2020). This type of storytelling exemplified in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* through the characters of Bessie and Nelly, who both are maids that tell stories to the younger generation while they work. As Kroeber states: “stories improve with retelling, are endlessly retold, and are *told in order to be retold*” (Kroeber 1992, 1; emphasis original). Thus, through the passing of stories from one generation to the next, the old knowledge transforms and survives in order to be told to generations yet to come.

Folklore studies state that Victorian literature uses elements of folklore and superstition in order to create a sense of unease around characters and situations that break with Victorian societal norms. For instance, in relation to her research on women’s fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Wakefield states that “we see folklore directed at females as a means of dealing with contemporary fears” in Victorian society, meaning that women in this literature are “Othered” as opposed to “English, white, gentrified males” through the uneasiness related to folklore and superstition (Wakefield 2006, 9). Thus, one of the uses of folklore in Victorian literature is that of creating a sense of unease surrounding women, as related to contemporary fears. Additionally, folklore studies look at the tension between folklore and the novel. Victorians generally held more respect for written narratives compared to oral narratives and the folklore that accompanied oral tradition, seeing oral tradition and folklore as more archaic forms of knowledge and sharing this knowledge. Compared and contrasted with the societal advances at the time, folklore was viewed as primitive and something to be outgrown.

This opportunity for learning about society through literature and its use of folklore, is what scholars have recognized in previous scholarship. The scholarship on *Jane Eyre* in relation to folklore studies has looked at how Jane—an outcast from contemporary society—functions as a fairy in the narrative, and I will be building upon previous research through analyses of her use of fairy-related language as a narrator, her role as an outcast changeling at Gateshead, and her role as a fairy at Thornfield. Likewise, scholars have previously looked at *Wuthering Heights* in relation to ghosts and the supernatural in relation to class and societal norms in the Victorian era, and I will build upon this existing scholarship in researching Lockwood, Catherine, and Heathcliff’s relationship with ghosts and belief in the supernatural. Finally, I will use pre-existing scholarship on folklore and storytelling in highlighting the role of the storyteller in Victorian society, as exemplified by both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*.

Chapter Overview

The objective of this thesis is to explore in what ways Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and her sister Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* utilize folklore, and how these folkloric elements function in the two novels. Exploration of folklore in the two novels provides insight into how folklore was regarded in Victorian society, and how this relates to class, gender, and geographical placement within the British Isles. In order to achieve this analysis, the thesis explores fairies, ghosts, and storytelling in the two novels. Thus, this thesis provides a comparative analysis that not only looks at how folkloric and superstitious aspects affect the respective narratives, but also how these elements provide insight into the role of storytelling and the passing on of folkloric knowledge. In essence, the stories of previous generations

influence the newer generations, despite technological and societal advances, because people have always told stories and will continue to do so.

Chapter one explores how folklore is used in *Jane Eyre*, with particular focus on language related to fairies. Jane as the narrator uses fairy-related terminology to describe situations and characters that are new and unknown to her, such as when she says that: “I thought I caught a glimpse of a fairy place, so bright to my novice eyes appeared the view beyond” (Brontë 2016, 96). Jane is also described in fairy terms, both by herself and Rochester. This fulfils two different purposes. Firstly, when Jane describes her own reflection in a mirror using references to fairies, she shows the reader that she views *herself* as strange, suggesting that she does not fit within the mould of society at Gateshead. Secondly, in being deemed a fairy by Rochester, the reader gets a glimpse of the imbalance of power between the two, in that she (the governess employee) has less power in society than Rochester (the gentleman employer). Rochester shows that he also views Jane as strange by calling her fairy, mermaid, and other terms related to supernatural creatures that stem from folklore. That way, while Jane’s own perception is coloured by other people’s opinions and treatment of her throughout her childhood, Rochester places a fairy-related identity upon her that she does not hold the power to dismiss until they reunite at the end of the narrative, and she states that “you talk of my being a fairy; but I am sure you are more like a brownie” (Brontë 2016, 390). Prior to this quote, Jane has been given the means of surviving comfortably through her uncle’s inheritance, and Rochester has been lowered as a result of the fire that burned Thornfield to ashes and resulted in Rochester’s injuries. They thus reunite as equals, which is shown through Jane finally—and only once—associating Rochester with a fairy creature.

Chapter two explores folklore and superstition in *Wuthering Heights*, with a focus on ghosts and hauntings in relation to societal norms and class boundaries. First, through an analysis of the event known among scholars as Lockwood’s dream, the chapter builds on

existing scholarship to explore how an urban gentleman is forced to associate with rural culture. When he struggles to make sense of the ghostly apparition that appeared in what he refers to as a nightmare, Lockwood has to turn from books and the written word, towards the spoken tales that are provided by Nelly, a maid and working-class woman. In essence, when books fail to provide Lockwood with information to make sense of a supernatural event, he has to turn to the oral tradition that in the Victorian era was commonly associated with rural cultures and the lower classes in society. The chapter then looks at the role played by Catherine, a living woman that becomes a ghost. She longs for her childhood, being “half-savage” with the freedom to roam the moors (Brontë 2019, 98). In being a domineering and violent woman who longs for her childhood self, she provides an example of Victorian society’s fear of regression into a savage past. Additionally, by not conforming to norms relating to gender, Catherine also provides an example of the gendered Other in Victorian society, who was seen as threatening to the peaceful home. Finally, in an analysis of Heathcliff as an outcast from society and societal structures, the chapter makes a connection between the supernatural Other and ghost-belief. Heathcliff plays a similar role in *Wuthering Heights* to how Jane functions as an outcast changeling in *Jane Eyre*. He exemplifies the Other of Victorian society through his status as an orphan, his unknown origins, his tendency for violence, and his lust for vengeance. Therefore, the folklore in *Wuthering Heights* largely plays the role of creating a sense of unease around characters and situations that to Victorian society would be seen as threats to societal norms.

Chapter three differs from the previous two chapters, in that instead of analysing elements of folklore, its primary focus is on how folklore is conveyed and passed on from person to person. Therefore, chapter three looks at the role of the storyteller, and how stories are told. Through implementing techniques associated with oral narrative into the narration of *Jane Eyre*, such as addressing the reader and creating a sense of familiarity between the

reader and narrator, Charlotte Brontë combines old storytelling techniques and the newer written form of the mass-printed novel. Brontë thus brings a form of storytelling associated with lower classes into a medium that in the Victorian era was associated with the increasingly literate middle classes. Folklore, oral tradition, and storytelling was chiefly associated with working women such as nurses and maids, who among other things used these stories as entertainment for children. When Rochester tells a fairy tale to Adèle in *Jane Eyre*, he subverts the norms of storytelling related to class and gender in that he uses a form of storytelling not commonly associated with the Victorian gentleman, in addition to performing the role of Mother Goose, telling a story in order to entertain a child. Conversely, Lockwood exemplifies the middle-class gentleman that transcribes an oral narrative when he listens to Nelly's tale of the Heights and the Grange, fulfilling a role akin to the folklorist of the nineteenth century that travelled the country and learned of the history and customs of rural societies. Finally, the chapter looks at the working woman and her role in learning and passing on folklore through oral tradition. Bessie in *Jane Eyre* and Nelly in *Wuthering Heights* both provide examples of the maid that used to tell stories to the children of the house, often while performing tasks such as sewing and mending in front of the hearth. In essence, then, this chapter explores the role of folklore and storytelling as related to class and the societal norms of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 1: Folklore and Fairies in *Jane Eyre*

“I thought I caught a glimpse of a fairy place, so bright
to my novice eyes appeared the view beyond”

-Brontë 2016, 96

Jane Eyre, who functions as both the narrator and main character of her “autobiography,” continually refers to fairies and folklore throughout the narrative. This language often appears in situations that are new or otherwise strange to her, showing that one of the functions of folklore-related language in *Jane Eyre* is to heighten the sense of unfamiliarity in characters she meets and situations she experiences. Additionally, Jane herself is associated with fairies, implying that she does not fit within the perceived boundaries of her contemporary society, making her a liminal character whose role in society is difficult to define. This is for instance shown when she describes her own mirrored reflection in fairy terms, showing that she sees herself as strange in relation to the communities around her. She is, however, not the only one to refer to herself in fairy terms: throughout their relationship, Rochester uses fairy terms to describe Jane, deeming her a fairy or fairy-like creature. In addition to providing more examples that Jane is seen as strange and different to define in a societal context, it also shows a power imbalance between the governess and the gentleman who employs her. This imbalance is balanced at the end of the novel, when Jane refers to Rochester as a folklore creature, showing that she has returned as Rochester’s equal. References to folklore and fairies in *Jane Eyre* thus serves as a way of othering Jane, deeming her an outsider from contemporary society.

1.1 Fairy Belief and Critical Approaches

The interest in learning about fairies and whether or not they existed blossomed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in England. Many believed that they did exist, and that unfortunately “the fairies were leaving England” (Silver 1986, 142). Charlotte Brontë shared this belief with other authors and scholars. The general consensus was that the nation was growing too industrial and urban for the fairies, and that “it was important to locate the fairies and chronicle their acts before they departed for good” (Silver 1986, 142). It was with this motivation—of documenting their existence and influence before they were gone—that the study of the origins and types of fairies began in the 1790s.

Fairy belief, though its origins are from a time before Christianity came to the British Isles, is connected to a Christian religious view. For instance, there was a belief that certain kinds of fairies were created from the souls of infants who had died unbaptized (Silver 1986, 144). During the conversion to Christianity in England, there would be a show of rejection of the pagan beliefs, but these beliefs would often still be held privately, and were in certain circumstances “ultimately incorporated into the everyday culture of Christian life” (Dennehy 2016, 21). One example of this fusion is the belief that certain Christian actions would banish fairies, for instance through showing fairies the sign a cross if they came too close.

Though the interest in researching and studying fairies began in the Romantic era, the Victorians had both the means and passion for investigating them. The Victorians had newer technology and advanced science and research methods that they used to attempt to find proof of fairies’ existence. Interestingly, “all who asserted that fairies did exist did so with a sense that their reality was a protest against sterile rationality, evidence that the material and utilitarian were not sole rulers of the world” (Silver 1986, 148). While this statement falls in accordance with the belief that industrialization was making England inhospitable for the fairies, it also shows a subjective protest against all the newfound technology and

information, and subsequently the rationality that Victorian society overall seemed to covet. The people who believed in the existence of fairies apparently held firm to the belief that theirs was the reality to trust in, and that the rational and educated reality was not the only one to consider.

In essence, Victorian society held the mentality of an “us versus them,” in the opposition between rationality and the desire to seek nature and superstition. Fairies and fairy language in *Jane Eyre* thus function as a way of defamiliarizing the characters and situations associated with them. Several scholars that have studied *Jane Eyre* in relation to folklore agree with this view. They exemplify Jane as an outcast—an Other—in her contemporary society, as she is continually described in fairy terms, and she herself uses fairy terms to understand the world around her.

Abigail Heiniger argues that *Jane Eyre* challenges the constraints of Victorian society through Jane’s relation to folklore and fairies. Jane shows the possibility for women to be “active and intelligent” in a society where the ideal woman was passive and domestic (Heiniger 2006, 28). Jane’s looks, movement, assertiveness and need for independence all point towards her being a fairy. Specifically, Heiniger argues that Jane is a changeling, “the elf in the house” (Heiniger 2006, 24). Consequently, by being akin to a fairy and rejecting the notion of “The Angel in the House,” Jane challenges the ideal of the Victorian woman.

Francisco José Cortés Vieco analyses *Jane Eyre* as though the heroine were a fairy, building upon Heiniger’s argument that Jane functions as a changeling. Vieco argues that “for Mrs. Reed, Jane is neither her kin nor a human girl, but a feral creature and a fiend — a changeling” (Vieco 2020, 23). Jane is thus the outcast that disrupts the peace of Gateshead and the Reed family, functioning as the changeling who intrudes upon the home. Additionally, Vieco argues that Rochester “always sees her as his own fairy, not as an autonomous fairy” (Vieco 2020, 27). Rochester thus views her as a fairy to be held in his

power, and not as what she desires to be: an autonomous woman. Furthermore, Vieco argues that the language between Jane and Rochester becomes the means of reflecting “their affinity and kindred spirits despite class and gender dissimilarities” (Vieco 2020, 27). This shared language allows them to converse freely despite the disparity between the two with regards to class and social standing.

These two scholars show only a glimpse of the scholarship on *Jane Eyre* in relation to fairies and folklore. Scholars largely agree that fairy and folklore elements in the novel show how Jane does not fit neatly within societal boundaries of the Victorian era, for instance sitting on the boundaries between different classes. Thus, Jane represents a person whom the Victorian middle classes treated as an Other, in a time where urban society attempted to redefine the boundaries that comprised Victorian society (Armstrong 1992, 245). This view of Jane as being Other due to her desire to be an independent and educated woman, in addition to her being difficult to place within a set social structure due to her status as an orphan, is what this chapter seeks to build upon in the forthcoming analyses.

1.2 The Language of Fairies

Jane is both the titular and main character of *Jane Eyre*, and she functions as the narrator as well. Throughout the narrative she uses folklore-related language, pertaining in large part to fairy belief, in her descriptions of several situations to show how things or events are foreign, new, or otherwise strange to her. Seeing as the novel is a bildungsroman, where Jane narrates her life from the age of ten until she gets married, the reader sees how her use of folkloric reference has been affected by other characters, and how she deals with the references she uses. Jane’s narration thus serves as one of the ways that the reader might get a glimpse of the societal anxieties that Brontë comments upon through the use of folklore in her novel, namely

that terms relating to folklore could be used in an attempt to explain what could be perceived as being unexplainable.

Jane believes in fairies as a child, going as far as to search for them, which suggests that for Jane, fairy belief is associated with childhood and childish imagination. For instance, when she reads 'Gulliver's Travels,' Jane states that:

I considered it a narrative of facts and discovered in it a vein of interest deeper than what I found in fairy tales: for as to the elves, having sought them in vain among foxglove leaves and bells, under mushrooms and beneath the ground-ivy mantling old wall-nooks, I had at length made up my mind to the sad truth, that they were all gone out of England to some savage country where the woods were wilder and thicker, and the population more scant. (Brontë 2016, 21)

This passage, from the early pages of the novel, provides a foundation for the use of folkloric language throughout the novel in showing the reader Jane's fairy belief in an explicit manner. Significantly, she provides this explanation as she reads a literary fairy tale, combining the two into something that suggests that as a child, alone at Gateshead, she sought solace in books and folklore. As Vieco states: "Jane's only two fairy wings to escape from brutality and infamy are her fantasies of a better future life and her literary imagination, buoyed by the books she voraciously reads from Gateshead's library" (Vieco 2020, 24). That way, Jane's fairy belief as a child was functional, in that it provided her with a sense of hope when all of her family tried denying it. Jane's belief in fairies existed when she was a child, and follows her as she grows up, providing her with a vocabulary to explain the unexplainable, as well as providing her with a way to approach life as she lives it.

In addition to correlating folklore with childhood, Jane also associates folklore reference and superstition with servants and other people of the working classes, which is shown through numerous references to Bessie. For instance, when Jane sees her reflection in the Red Room, she uses folklore terms such as “half fairy, half imp” to describe her reflection. She then goes on to comment that she learned them from “Bessie’s evening stories,” suggesting that she associates the terms with Bessie and her stories more than Jane’s own mind (Brontë 2016, 16). When Jane goes on to say that “superstition was with me at that moment,” this seems to confirm that Jane tries to distance herself from the folklore terms (Brontë 2016, 16). As Wakefield observes: “the heroine learns nursery tales, ballads, romances, and Pamela from the servant Bessie, and she hears them at a point in her life when others consistently term her low-class” (Wakefield 2006, 67). By distancing herself from Bessie’s folklore terms, then, Jane also distances herself from the notion of being of the lower classes.

Jane attempts to maintain the air of a lady that separates herself from the lower classes, and thus also the classes that she associates with folklore, which also becomes evident when she reunites with Bessie prior to her employment at Thornfield. Bessie tells Jane that “you look like a lady,” and later declares “you are quite a lady, Miss Jane!” in response to learning about Jane’s talents relating to playing the piano, drawing, sewing, and both reading and speaking French (Brontë 2016, 85). Jane is pleased to hear that she looks like a lady, and is “not quite indifferent to its import,” suggesting that she wishes to maintain the air of a lady, and is happy that Bessie has commented on what Jane perceives as a correct observation. Conversely, Jane’s description of Bessie as “a woman attired like a well-dressed servant” creates a gap between the two in appearance and station. Though Jane is on her way to her new place of employment and is thus by definition part of a working class she has, as Wakefield asserts, moved “away from her youthful servant identity, and the heroine takes

pride in this fact” (Wakefield 2006, 67). This desire for being a lady also subsequently forms part of the explanation why Jane wishes to distance herself from the folklore language: it is not just that she associates it with people of the working classes, but it is also her desire to not be one of them.

Jane exhibits a consciousness surrounding her place in the social hierarchy in relation to her employer and uses folkloric language to explain these dangers. For instance, right after learning about the existence of her perceived rival Blanche Ingram, she says:

It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it; and, if discovered and responded to, must lead, *ignis-fatuus*-like into misty wilds, whence there is no extraction. (Brontë 2016, 146)

Rochester is Jane’s superior, and she is under his employ as a governess. Her status as a governess is part of what affects her precarious status in relation to the social hierarchy as a woman. As a child at Gateshead she was an orphan with no clear place in the social hierarchy, whilst her role as governess makes her “not quite a gentlewoman, yet not quite a servant,” which suggests that her precarious position at Gateshead did not disappear, but it evolved as she stepped into her new role at Thornfield (Wakefield 2006, 68). Additionally, as Campbell states: “Jane recognizes that she lives in a society in which rank typically trumps love when it comes to matrimony” (Campbell 2016, 243). Jane senses the dangers of falling in love with a man that vastly outranks her, in that she must keep her love a secret, which creates new dangers in and of itself.

This secret and its dangers are what she refers to when she brings in the comparison to an *ignis fatuus*. The *ignis fatuus*, also known as the will-o'-the-wisp, is defined by the OED as “a phosphorescent light seen hovering or floating at night over marshy ground” and “a thing which (or occasionally a person who) deludes or misleads a person by means of erratic but seemingly encouraging appearances.” Thus, what Jane means by using referencing this fairy-like creature, is that: by keeping the subordinate woman’s infatuation a secret, it will devour the life that keeps it hidden, whilst a secret love that is responded to will lead the woman away, presumably to a fate where she loses herself, never to return to life as she knew it. Her folkloric reference makes the phrase more damning to the reader who understands it, in that the will-o'-the-wisp is seen as a misleading force trapping travellers in the wildlands of the moors. The reference to this kind of fairy also provides an example of how, “despite the heroine’s resistance to folktales with their strange creatures and low-class associations, part of her holds on to these stories” (Wakefield 2006, 68). Jane tries keeping her distance from folklore, but it still permeates the language she uses to explain her experiences. Campbell observes that the supernatural in *Jane Eyre* is effective in “characterizing psychological experience,” of which the will-o'-the-wisp provides an excellent example (Campbell 2016, 244). Jane tries to keep her distance from folklore and the supernatural, but ultimately ends up using it to explain what she cannot explain using simple words. Instead, she uses the language of a different reality to explain her own. In other words, despite her attempt to distance herself from folklore and maintain the air of a lady, she nevertheless uses the language she associates with the lower classes to explain her experiences.

Jane, like most educated Victorians, looks towards rationalism and away from folklore. Though Jane attempts to narrate her upbringing with fidelity, including her previous fairy-belief, Jane as a narrator dismisses it as untruth, superstition, something she has outgrown and turned her back to. This becomes evident whenever she references Bessie as

the source of her folkloric terms, in that she distances herself from the terms and superstition associated with it. For instance, in Jane's first meeting with Rochester on Hay Lane, she "remembered certain of Bessie's tales" which she associates with the figure of the Gytrash, the "North-of-England spirit (...) which, in the form of horse, mule, or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers" (Brontë 2016, 103). As a teenager at the time of her experiencing the event, her mind instantly turns to folklore for an explanation of this new situation she has not been in before. As the retrospective narrator, Jane explains the folklore references by referring to Bessie's tales, thus distancing herself from the previously instinctual reference to folklore. Jane, at the time of experiencing the meeting, does not realize that neither the figures approaching her is a Gytrash before she has gone through a small catalogue of creatures she knows from Bessie's stories, mentioning both the Gytrash and goblins before realizing that the figure is in fact Rochester riding a horse, which immediately frees her from the spell of imagination. This serves as another example that though Jane attempts to distance herself from folklore and superstition, she still partly holds on to them (Wakefield 2006, 68). Thus, Jane refers to these stories and the associated superstition when experiencing events that she finds herself unable to explain rationally at first.

Folkloric references follow Jane through her childhood and into adulthood, providing a distinct method of framing the narrative within an "autobiography" that contains elements of the oral tradition that she learned growing up at Gateshead, and which she meets again at Thornfield. Despite attempting to distance herself from folklore, something she associates with childhood and the lower classes, Jane as the narrator uses folklore and superstition to explain situations and her reactions to them. One of the underlying functions of folklore and superstition in *Jane Eyre* is to provide insight into what may be perceived as "unexplainable," or what Jane herself struggles to explain: the underlying psychological processes that affect

how and why she reacts to certain situations. Therefore, folklore as a means of narrating unexplainable events tell us that Jane unconsciously holds on to her upbringing as a child outside of the societal classes she wishes to be a part of, despite trying to outgrow these folkloric references. Finally, the folklore and superstition in *Jane Eyre*, especially pertaining to fairies, provide the reader with insight into how she and other characters view her.

1.3 The Outcast Fairy

Throughout the novel, Jane is being treated like an outcast. She is of low birth compared the Reeds, her family that reluctantly feeds and houses her at Gateshead before being moved to Lowood school. She is seen as a liar and an outcast at Lowood, and after moving to Thornfield to work as a governess, she again ends up in the liminal state of not quite fitting into a strict class hierarchy, being not a merely a servant, yet also not quite being a gentlewoman. With particular focus on her childhood, it is apparent that Jane is regarded as an intrusive presence at Gateshead, which leads to her being mistreated both physically and psychologically. However, more than being regarded as merely obtrusive, she is regarded as mischievous. This is one of the many reasons why Jane in childhood can be regarded as a changeling at Gateshead: she could be seen as having the disruptive powers of the not-quite-human creature that has taken a home in a human family, disrupting the peace as a result.

Jane's descriptions of her aunt and benefactress Mrs. Reed suggest that Jane is viewed as a disruptive presence, where Jane's humanity is questioned. When Jane asks Mrs. Reed what her late husband—Jane's uncle—would think if he saw how Jane is treated, Jane says this about Mrs. Reed's reaction: "her usually cold composed grey eye became troubled with a look like fear; she took her hand from my arm, and gazed at me as if she really did not know whether I were child or fiend" (Brontë 2016, 27). Evidently, Mrs. Reed becomes troubled and

fearful of Jane when confronted with the question. Jane is not like the other residents at Gateshead, of which Mrs. Reed is keenly aware, and which she acts upon in her treatment of Jane (Vieco 2020, 23). Furthermore, by stating the oppositions of child or fiend, Jane as the narrator suggests that Mrs. Reed sees something unnatural—possibly even preternatural—in Jane. Thus, Jane is not only the intruder in her home, the child she never wanted to be responsible for, but she is also something Mrs. Reed cannot seem to define. According to Jane's narration and use of supernatural language specifically, Jane is something Mrs. Reed cannot seem to define in terms of her being human or something far more threatening.

A further argument for Jane's role as a changeling at Gateshead appears through Mrs. Reed's view of Jane as a liar. Jane states that: "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 2016, 19). These descriptions, which could be summed up as Mrs. Reed accusing Jane of having the spirit of a trickster, fit with a general view of fairies. For instance, when Briggs presents the nature of the Brownie, a type of fairy, she says: "The dual nature of the Brownie is apparent in most of the tales. In some he is merely tricky, touchy and easily driven away, in others he turns to active mischief, and can be really dangerous" (Briggs 2002, 47). This explanation can also be used for other types of fairies, in that people viewed them as something to treat with caution, so as not to provoke the fairies to treat humans with trickery and maliciousness. Therefore, when Mrs. Reed later tells Brocklehurst that she is a liar, she confirms Jane's impression that she views Jane as a disturber of the peace at Gateshead.

Mrs. Reed evidently sees Jane as something to be rid of, which also conforms with the belief in changelings and Jane as being something akin to a changeling. Once a child was believed to be a changeling, the people of the house usually turned to acts of cruelty to get their own child back, and to be rid of the changeling (Briggs 2002, 139; Dennehy 2016, 23-

24). Though Jane does not seem to have replaced an existing child in the Reed family, she is nevertheless viewed and treated both as an unwanted presence. She is regarded as “less than a servant, for [she does] nothing for [her] keep” (Brontë 2016, 14). Her cousin, John Reed, throws a book at her in an act of violence that subsequently leads to her confinement in the Red Room (Brontë 2016, 12-13). Mrs. Reed views her in contempt, exemplified by Jane’s confinement in the Red Room and the claim that Jane is a liar. Though the usual—and often deadly—means of being rid of a changeling are not employed at Gateshead, Mrs. Reed ultimately succeeds in getting rid of Jane, by sending her to school at Lowood.

On her deathbed, Mrs. Reed admits to seeing Jane as a burden, describing Jane in ways that one could associate with changelings despite not using strictly folklore-related terms to do so:

I have had more trouble with that child than any one would believe. Such a burden to be left on my hands—and so much annoyance as she caused me, daily and hourly, with her incomprehensible disposition, and her sudden starts of temper, and her continual unnatural watchings of one’s movements! I declare she talked to me once like something mad, or like a fiend—no child ever spoke or looked as she did. (Brontë 2016, 208)

After Mrs Reed claims that Jane has been a burden to her, bringing trouble and annoyance, she then proceeds to describe her “disposition.” The way in which this disposition is described is reminiscent of ways one would describe a mischievous fairy, for instance through the description of Jane as being temperamental. Additionally, when she describes Jane’s tendency to observe and speak differently to how Mrs. Reed would expect from a child of Jane’s age, she connects it to something “mad,” or something preternatural like a fiend. In

that way, Mrs. Reed shows that she is unable to explain Jane's disposition from the time she lived at Gateshead, and that she, like Jane, reaches for the preternatural in attempt to describe it. Furthermore, by claiming that "no child ever spoke or looked as she did," Mrs. Reed places these qualities, reminiscent of mischievous fairies, into the realm of the changeling—the belief in the fairy child that intruded upon human families and created discord through illness or ill manners. Changelings were used to explain unwanted or unusual behaviour in children, such as an infant crying for an excessive amount of time for no apparent reason (which could for instance be a sign of what we now know as colic), or an older child exhibiting behavioural patterns that their parents struggled to explain "such as those classed as 'Autism Spectrum Disorder' (...) when they failed to develop in a similar way to their peers" (Dennehy 2016, 23). Thus, through Mrs. Reed's use of these terms to describe Jane, in conjunction with Jane's frequent use of folkloric language throughout the novel, the reader might get a sense that Mrs. Reed classifies Jane as being an indeterminate and mischievous Other, possibly even something akin to a changeling in her home.

Having internalised how she has been treated by the Reeds family and their servants, Jane views herself as an outcast at Gateshead, which is reflected in her use of fairy-related terms when she views herself in the mirror in the Red Room:

I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers. (Brontë 2016, 16)

She refers to her reflection as a “strange little figure,” suggesting that she does not recognize herself. Vieco agrees with this view, emphasizing that “she does not recognize her human body because her supernatural identity as a fairy changeling manifests itself” (Vieco 2020, 24). What Vieco suggests then, is that she starts identifying with a supernatural identity rather than merely as a human girl. Jane’s further description of her reflection seems to suggest this as well, when she mentions “tiny phantoms,” “fairy,” and “imp” in her descriptions of the figure in the mirror. Furthermore, by referring to her reflection as a figure, combined with the supernatural terms she uses to describe that figure, she shows that she finds herself to be a stranger in the house, something foreign. The mirror image—the figure in the reflection—thus conveys Jane’s perception of her being an outcast, or as Vieco states: “a ghost among the living Reeds” (Vieco 2020, 24). Thus, this also serves as an example of Jane using language related to fairies in order to provide insight into psychological processes that would otherwise be difficult to explain: Jane is scared of her what her reflection shows her, so she distances herself from it by keeping it separate from her own identity through referring to it as the “figure” in the mirror, and describes it using fairy terms that puts the figure in the mirror squarely into a different realm than the one Jane knows.

Jane Eyre is a character who has no clear place at Gateshead, serving as an outcast with folkloric reference that suggests inhuman qualities. She is seen as less than a servant, not quite part of her family, and a mischievous burden to Mrs Reed, the gentlewoman who has been forced to give her food and shelter. She falls between class-lines, being of lower birth while still being part of the Reed family by blood, being an orphan but still living under the same roof as the Reed family through the generosity of Jane’s late uncle. She is viewed as something strange, something that does not exhibit the normal behaviour of a regular human girl. Consequently, she is seen as the undefinable character that has intruded upon the peace

of Gateshead; the character that will keep wandering the boundaries of Victorian classes, as well as the liminal space between human and inhuman, throughout the rest of the narrative.

1.4 Folklore and Power Dynamics

In their first meeting at Thornfield, Rochester immediately associates Jane with fairies, which shows that he sees her as Other in relation to Victorian society as a whole. He first comments on her appearance: “You have rather the look of another world. I marvelled where you had got that sort of face” (Brontë 2016, 112). By commenting on her appearance, he mirrors Jane’s first description of herself as being otherworldly, both in terms of the mirror giving a glimpse into a different reality—that of the reflection—and in terms of Jane associating her reflection with fairies. Additionally, seeing as fairies are associated with “another world,” it could be argued that Rochester is primarily focused on the fairy Other. When Rochester then mentions fairy tales before stating that he “had half a mind to demand whether [she] had bewitched [his] horse,” he both explicitly connects her appearance with fairies and fairy tales, as well as linking her to the fact that fairies were believed to possess supernatural abilities (Vieco 2020, 27). Finally, he states that he is “not sure yet” about her relation to fairies and subsequent potential abilities, which provides the beginning of many supernatural references—most of which are specifically focused on fairy lore—pertaining to Jane.

Rochester’s determination that she is not quite human ultimately leads to repeated instances of what Wakefield calls folklore-naming: situations “in which an individual refers to a creature from folktale, fairy tale, or even mythology” to directly label another character “as a fanciful creature” (Wakefield 2006, 2). Wakefield further states that there are three primary motives to folklore-naming: “to reinforce self-confidence,” “to allay uneasiness regarding the sex and social standing, among other variables, of the other present,” and “to

put a companion in the ‘proper’ place” (Wakefield 2006, 2). In relation to Rochester’s folklore-naming of Jane, the second motive related to uneasiness seems most apparent. For instance, when Rochester and Jane first meet on Hay Lane, Rochester immediately sees that she is not a regular servant but is unable to say anything further. He is uncertain about her position at Thornfield, and readily accepts her statement that she is the governess as truth. Rochester transfers this uncertainty of Jane’s social standing into the realm of fairies, by relating her to fairies and associating her with supernatural qualities.

Besides functioning as a way of showing Rochester’s anxieties surrounding Jane’s status as a governess, the folklore they refer to also serves as a way of showing the connection between the two characters. During their first meeting at Thornfield, after first associating Jane’s appearance with “another world,” Rochester questions Jane about what he refers to as her “people,” prompting confusion from her, and subsequently a clarification that he refers to “the men in green” (Brontë 2016, 112). Jane speaks “as seriously as he had done,” which makes their conversation flow with folkloric reference and talk of fairies that had “forsook England a hundred years ago” (Brontë 2016, 112). “The men in green” refer to the fairies that were believed to inhabit England, and by stating that they left the country years ago, Jane situates herself among the people of the Victorian era who believed that fairies were fleeing the country as a result of industrialization (Silver 1986, 142). However, where Jane refers to the fairies—the “men in green”—as something other than herself, Rochester associates her with them, claiming that she is a fairy as well. Jane never explicitly dismisses his claim that she is a fairy, or that she is associated with fairies, something which happens throughout the narrative. This conversation—where Rochester first associates Jane with fairies—thus exemplifies the connection between the two characters in that they both unite in conversation over mutual understanding for folklore and fairies. Moreover, as Vieco states: “the realm of fairies” allows the two characters to “reflect their affinity and kindred

spirits despite class and gender dissimilarities” (Vieco 2020, 27). The realm of fairies, and the terminology associated with it, becomes an arena for the two to meet despite the discrepancy in social standing. Thus, in order to converse and connect, Jane and Rochester bypass conventional norms and moves their acquaintance into the realm of folklore and fairies.

Mrs. Fairfax functions as a counterweight to Jane and Rochester’s conversation, thus showing that their form of communication was unusual at the time for people that were not servants, particularly considering the difference in class. Both Jane and Mrs. Fairfax are more than servants, which is implied when Mrs. Fairfax presents the servants of Thornfield: “they are only servants, and one can’t converse with them on terms of equality: one must keep them at due distance, for fear of losing one’s authority” (Brontë 2016, 89). Mrs. Fairfax seems to delight in the fact that she can converse on equal terms with Jane, suggesting that Mrs. Fairfax sees Jane as an equal above the servants (Wakefield 2006, 67-68). Seen in parallel with her reactions to Jane and Rochester’s first conversation at Thornfield, we see this notion of “equal” being tested: “Mrs. Fairfax had dropped her knitting, and, with raised eyebrows, seemed wondering what talk this was” (Brontë 2016, 112). Here, Mrs. Fairfax reacts with surprise to the subject that is discussed between Jane and Rochester, namely that of fairies, which to her would seem foreign and strange. In relation to the notion of master and servant being on unequal terms, her reaction could also suggest that she sees her master and colleague’s conversation as too familiar. Though Mrs. Fairfax has stated that she and Jane are situated above the other servants in the social hierarchy of Thornfield, it is very clear that at Rochester sits at the top of this hierarchy. Consequently, this kind of familiar conversation between employer and employee would come as enough of a surprise to Mrs. Fairfax for her to drop her knitting. This reaction being related to terms of equality as related to fairy language seems to be confirmed when the conversation steers into common topics such as family and how Jane came to be employed as a governess, and Jane observes that Mrs.

Fairfax “now knew what ground we were upon” (Brontë 2016, 112). In these instances, the folklore language between Jane and Rochester functions as a doorway to equal conversation, which would be uncommon—if not unheard of—in the social hierarchy of Thornfield. Thus, they move their conversation from the mortal realm to the world of fairies, circumnavigating social norms that would view their manner of conversation as improper.

Rochester’s tendency to folklore-name Jane shows his view on the power dynamics between them. For instance, when Jane suggests four weeks of probation after their engagement, Jane says that: “When I appeared before him now, he had no such honeyed terms as ‘love’ and ‘darling’ on his lips: the best words at my service were ‘provoking puppet,’ ‘malicious elf,’ ‘sprite,’ ‘changeling,’ &c.” (Brontë 2016, 246). Here, Jane states that the folklore names Rochester uses about her are negatively charged. This, along with how Rochester behaves towards her during this time, suggests that Rochester is displeased at Jane asserting her need and desire for the four weeks of probation. As Vieco claims: “he always sees her as his own fairy, not as an autonomous fairy” (Vieco 2020, 27). He admires her sense of individuality, even using folklore-names as a means of showing her tendency towards individualism. However, in the end, he is the person that holds the power in their relationship, and as the previously mentioned folklore-naming suggest, he dislikes when this power dynamic shifts. Furthermore, the folklore-names, especially considering the terms “provoking” and “malicious,” associate Jane with trickster fairies. According to Wakefield, Governesses overall became “associated with tricky fairies in the nineteenth century,” which in conjunction with the folklore names could suggest that Rochester shares this view and uses folklore-naming as a way to display this opinion (Wakefield 2006, 27). Consequently, Rochester tries tipping the scale of power in their relationship to be in his favour, using fairy terms to belittle Jane and deem her a trickster.

When Jane and Rochester reunite in Ferndean, the power dynamic has changed, in that the power imbalance of governess/employee and gentleman/employer has approached a semblance of an equilibrium. Though they still use folklore language in their conversation when they unite, there is no longer a need to resort to folklore language in order to meet on equal terms. When Jane begins talking about helping Rochester, she says: “I find you rather alarming when I examine you close at hand: you talk of my being a fairy; but I am sure you are more like a brownie” (Brontë 2016, 390). Here, Jane acknowledges that Rochester has been calling her a fairy throughout their relationship, whilst simultaneously deeming her a fairy creature as well. However, whereas “fairy” is a general term that can be used to refer to several different types of fairies, Jane specifically refers to Rochester as a “brownie,” a type of fairy that would generally be described as “grotesque to look at” (Briggs 2002, 46). In other words, where Rochester has given Jane folklore names that point to several different kinds of fairy, Jane refers to him as a type of fairy that explicitly is associated with looking grotesque, after commenting on his “shaggy black mane” (Brontë 2016, 390). This suggests that not only is Jane now on equal terms with Rochester, but she also now feels empowered enough to be blunt about his appearance when they reunite.

The mention of the brownie is the first—and only—time Jane folklore-names Rochester directly, suggesting that he no longer holds the power over her that he once did. The only other time Jane has associated Rochester with a creature from folklore was upon their first meeting, when she referred to him as a “Gytrash” before realizing that he was a man. Since that point, Jane has maintained a respect for his station as his superior, whilst responding to his folklore-naming when they have communicated as though they were in the other world of fairies. This change in the power dynamic, and thus the main contributor to Jane folklore-naming Rochester, is due to Jane’s inheritance and subsequent increase in social status, and Rochester’s ailments following the fire that destroyed Thornfield. Jane has

become an autonomous woman, and Rochester no longer holds the power over her that he once did. Consequently, in the forest of Ferndean at the end of the tale, Jane the fairy and Rochester the brownie meet as equals.

1.5 Chapter Conclusion

Folklore elements in *Jane Eyre*—particularly those relating to fairies—highlight Jane’s otherness in relation to Victorian society as a whole. Jane as the narrator uses language related to fairies and folklore to describe situations and characters she encounters throughout the narrative, in order to highlight their strangeness. As a result, Jane establishes fairy-related language as a means of highlighting what could be perceived as strange and unfamiliar. Consequently, when she refers to herself in fairy terms, we understand that she is seen as an outcast that does not fit into the social structures of contemporary Victorian society. This sense of being othered leads to her functioning as a changeling in her childhood at Gateshead. The other residents see her as a disturbing presence, which in turn entitles them to treat her horribly as a result. When she later moves to Thornfield and again becomes labelled as a fairy, we are reminded of Jane’s establishment of fairy-related language as signifying strangeness. Thus, Rochester’s tendency to claim that Jane is a fairy moves beyond what we have seen until this point in the narrative: she no longer functions as a fairy in the narrative, but she is so strange to him that she embodies the strangeness that we have grown accustomed to associate with folklore and fairies. Fairy-related language in *Jane Eyre* thus follows Jane from childhood to womanhood, evolving and growing as she does.

Chapter 2: Ghosts and Hauntings in *Wuthering Heights*

“I suppose that she wanted to get another proof that the place was haunted, at my expense. Well it is—swarming with ghosts and goblins!”

-Brontë 2019, 22

Similarly to how Charlotte Brontë uses folklore in *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë fills *Wuthering Heights* with folklore elements that highlight the tension between the Victorian urban and rural societies in England. This tension relates specifically to cultural anxieties of the Victorian middle classes such as the fear of the racial Other, and the fear of the primitive past as opposed to the societal and developmental progress that urban Victorian society pursued. Folklore, the knowledge of the rural people, was seen as a direct opposition to societal progress, and was thereby looked down upon as something to be left in the past. Yet, people of the educated middle classes travelled the British Isles in search of this “authentic” past, if only to use as entertainment or a source for knowledge. Notwithstanding, by travelling the land in an effort to find this knowledge, the cultural elite that attempted to distinguish themselves from the cultures they studied gained knowledge that in turn blurred the boundaries between them. The folklore elements in *Wuthering Heights* demonstrate these blurred boundaries between past and present, rural and urban, and primitive and evolved, as seen through ghostly apparitions that erupt from the past to haunt the present.

Lockwood’s dream functions as a catalyst of ghostly presence in *Wuthering Heights*, signalling the return of old ways that would not stay buried or forgotten. This example of the past as exemplified by the apparition of a dead child erupting in—and disturbing—the present, signifies the rural customs and beliefs that the Victorian middle classes as

represented by Lockwood sought to outgrow. Catherine, through her wilful and mischievous personality and her longing for her childhood self, exemplifies the opposite of the Victorian desire to leave the past in the past, as well as the opposite of the Victorian ideal woman. That way, when her ghost haunts Lockwood in the form of a child, she exemplifies the Victorian fear of regression to the past, as well as the anxieties surrounding women who did not follow Victorian norms. Another character that does not fit neatly within the ideal boundaries of Victorian society is Heathcliff. His undefinable past, unknown origins, and belief in ghosts all serve to Other him, making him function as being the novel's changeling outcast. In *Wuthering Heights*, then, folklore related to negative superstitions such as the belief in ghosts has the function of providing the characters with supernatural qualities or experiences, showing them how they do or do not fit within the ideals of Victorian society.

2.1 Critical Approaches to Folklore in *Wuthering Heights*

Several scholars have looked at folklore elements in *Wuthering Heights*, how these elements function for the novel as a whole, and what they might tell us about Victorian society. In her 1974 article, Jacqueline Simpson analyses *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* in terms of folkloric influence. Simpson claims that both novels associate folklore with their characters' inner lives and use many of the same folklore-related motifs, in addition to using some of the same omens to "heighten the sense of doom" (Simpson 1974, 60-61). In the case of *Wuthering Heights* in particular, Simpson argues that Emily Brontë "normally puts her folklore references to structural or thematic use, clustering them most thickly at the opening and close, and before major climaxes or turning points" (Simpson 1974, 52-53). As we will see later, one example of this thematic use of folklore occurs in Lockwood's dream, where he is confronted with an apparition that he cannot properly explain. In that way, Lockwood's

dream also serves as an example of Simpson's claim that Emily Brontë "makes greater demands than Charlotte on the reader's suspension of disbelief," in that no folkloric or superstitious event in *Wuthering Heights* is properly explained. In other words, Simpson claims that the folklore elements of *Wuthering Heights* force the reader to be open to the possibility that at the Heights—and in Lockwood's dream—ghostly apparitions do exist.

Nancy Armstrong, in her article on Victorian fiction, folklore and photography, reads *Wuthering Heights* in relation to how educated men and women in England understood their place in Victorian society (Armstrong 1992, 245). She uses photography and the explorer that travelled through Britain to find old authenticity as a parallel to the folklorist who sought old knowledge as entertainment as well as to exemplify why and how the educated middle classes had evolved from the archaic and primitive. Armstrong argues that *Wuthering Heights* provides an example of the middle-class Englishman who attempted to make an us-and-them distinction between a cultural periphery and an English urban core, where the periphery was subordinated to this core of English values and identity. Further, she argues that *Wuthering Heights* also demonstrates through Lockwood how these folklorists "evidently began to identify precisely the features that branded other people as peripheral with their own most irrational, primitive, and even perverse selves" (Armstrong 1992, 248). Specifically, Armstrong argues that Lockwood fails to separate himself completely from the culture he visits, and the novel thus destabilizes the classification system derived from the stereotypes Lockwood assumes about the culture he observes.

Paula Krebs analyses *Wuthering Heights* in relation to folklore and old wives' tales, highlighting the tension between oral tradition and the novel, which at this point had become the more generally accepted narrative mode in the middle classes. She argues that Emily Brontë set *Wuthering Heights* in a liminal space between the early Victorian novel and "the newly professionalized discipline of folklore studies" through refusing to be one of the "folk"

she writes about, and simultaneously refusing to condescend to them (Krebs 1998, 43). Additionally, Krebs argues that “[t]o adopt folk techniques in the way Brontë does is not imperial acquisition; it is a refusal of the privilege of the ‘pure’ novel form, and thus tribute to the folk elements that the genre of the novel is helping to displace” (Krebs 1998, 50). Thus, the novel has the effect of being set between both “the folk” and the educated middle classes, as well as between oral tradition/folklore studies and the Victorian novel, which at the time was increasing steadily in popularity among the increasingly educated middle classes.

Furthermore, Krebs argues that the ghosts that have such a strong and continual presence in *Wuthering Heights*, are not like the ghosts of the Gothic, nor from the Victorian ghost stories. Instead, she argues that the ghosts “represent a different kind of haunting altogether—the haunting of the Victorian middle classes by fear of the people they designated as ‘the folk’” (Krebs 1998, 41). The ghosts of *Wuthering Heights* thus embody the urban anxieties surrounding the persisting rural cultures—including folklore and superstition—that the urban elite attempted to evolve from. Thus, folkloric elements used in *Wuthering Heights*, much like in *Jane Eyre*, set the novel apart from genre and class conventions associated with the novel and the Victorian middle classes that read them, placing the novel and its folkloric aspects in a liminal space that defies exact categorization from its temporal and cultural setting in Victorian Britain.

This selection of articles provides examples of the critical debates surrounding the role of folklore in Victorian society, with particular focus on folklore in *Wuthering Heights*. Simpson, Armstrong and Krebs all seem to agree with the view that *Wuthering Heights* uses folklore elements to blur the boundaries between the periphery of the British Isles and the English core, creating a sense of unease for the educated middle classes that believed that they had evolved from the cultures associated with folklore and folk-belief. This view corresponds largely with the body of scholarship that has been procured through research for

this thesis: Victorians society lived through a time of great societal and scientific changes, and many of them turned to the folklore and the supernatural to exemplify the anxieties surrounding these changes. What scholars seem to agree upon, is that Emily Brontë used folklore in a way that was unfamiliar to the masses: she used what they viewed as old and archaic knowledge in a newer invention, namely that of the mass-printed novel, making the knowledge—the folklore—play a large role in the narrative and for the characterisation, rather than merely alluding to it. Furthermore, scholars largely agree that Brontë used these folklore elements—such as for instance the belief in ghosts—to blur the boundaries between the rural culture represented by the people at the Heights and the urban culture represented by Lockwood. This view corresponds with the forthcoming analysis of folklore and superstition in *Wuthering Heights*.

2.2. The Gentleman Haunted by the Rural Past

The ghost haunting Lockwood's dream embodies the threat of primitive culture on the culture of the urban middle classes. In this sense, the apparition of the dead child is bridging the gap between the old culture that would not disappear and stay gone, and the culture of the socially elite that sought societal advancement. This creates a sense of unease in Lockwood, who is a representative of the urban Victorian elite. He struggles to separate himself from the rural culture he is visiting, thus increasing the sense of unease at being associated with a culture that he visits, but which he does not want to partake in. Lockwood's dream symbolizes the rural past haunting the urban present, demonstrating the border between the two, and that this border is more blurred than the urban Victorian masses would have liked.

Mr. Lockwood is part of a demographic that viewed regional culture as less evolved—and thus more primitive—than urban culture. In one of his first meetings with

Heathcliff, Lockwood comments on the rural locality of Wuthering Heights: “it is strange how custom can mould our tastes and ideas; many could not imagine the existence of happiness in a life of such complete exile from the world as you spend, Mr. Heathcliff” (Brontë 2019, 11). Through his use of “complete exile” and his comment on custom moulding “our tastes and ideas,” Lockwood makes it clear that this rurality is unfamiliar to him. Further, when he refers to the “many” who would not imagine living like this, he suggests that he is not alone in this unfamiliarity. Lockwood also gives the reader a glimpse of his view of the people that lived in these rural areas: When Hareton tells Lockwood that “My name is Hareton Earnshaw (...) and I’d counsel you to respect it!” Lockwood says: ‘I’ve shown no disrespect,’ was my reply, laughing internally at the dignity with which he announced himself” (Brontë 2019, 12). Hareton has been taught to respect his own family name, and shows here that he wants others to respect it too. With Lockwood’s reaction being internal laughter, he shows the reader that his reaction to a regional young man’s presented dignity is that of amusement. Lockwood could then be seen as one of the “respectable Englishmen and women” who imagined themselves to be “the elite overseers” of the cultures that were “rendered quaint and primitive,” shown here through his reaction to Hareton (Armstrong 1992, 262). Lockwood is from the southern city, and is thus used to people of great self-importance and great names. Earnshaw might be a respectable name in the north, but judging by Lockwood’s reaction, it might not be a respectable name to him. Though Lockwood reacts and behaves in a genteel manner to the people of the Heights, his internal reactions tell us that he still views himself as separate to—and higher than—them.

A specific trait that Lockwood exemplifies as being part of the urban elite, is his focus on rationality, where he attempts to intellectually and spiritually separate himself from the rural locals. However, he is visited by a ghostly apparition in a dream, making his attempt at this intellectual separation from superstition challenging. In his dream, when the child

apparition replies to his request for its name, he narrates: “‘Catherine Linton,’ it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of *Linton*? I had read *Earnshaw* twenty times for Linton)” (Brontë 2019, 21; emphasis original). Seeing as Lockwood functions as the frame narrator of the novel, and that the reader gets access to the narrative through his diary, it is logical that he should comment on the events as he transcribes them. However, in him commenting that he had “read *Earnshaw* twenty times for Linton,” he comments and criticizes his own *lack* of rationality when conjuring the less frequent name. Lockwood therefore criticizes the dreaming mind and its tendency to look away from the most logical solution. When he later tells Heathcliff that “I had the misfortune to scream in my sleep, owing to a frightful nightmare,” he dismisses his experience by claiming that the apparition was merely part of a dream, and not an actual ghost haunting him (Brontë 2019, 22). As Harris writes, “representations of supernatural folklore in Victorian literature often figure as a class-based dichotomy between lower-class ignorance and upper class sophistication, although they had superstitions that transcended class” (Harris 2008, 32-33). Lockwood attempts to rationalize his experience by attempting to distance himself from the superstition he associates with lower classes. Through his attempts at rationalising and reaching for logical explanations, then, Lockwood again tries to separate himself from the rural people—the lower classes—who would believe that Catherine’s ghost was real.

Lockwood’s attempt at putting that intellectual distance between himself and the lower classes’ superstitions is challenging, however, as this ghost-belief and dream superstition could be seen as two of the superstitions that Harris claims transcends class. This could be confirmed by a contemporary observation, written by William Carleton in an article on Ghosts and Fairies in Irish superstitions:

We have met and conversed with every possible representative of the various classes that compose general society, from the sweep to the peer, and we feel ourselves bound

to say that in no instance have we ever met any individual, no matter what his class or rank in life, who was really indifferent to the subject of dreams, fairies, and apparitions. They are topics that interest the imagination in all. (Carleton 1840, 164)

Carleton's observation thus supports what Harris has argued: some superstitions were not bound to a certain class, but affected the middle classes as well as the working classes they primarily associated with these superstitions. Lockwood's attempt at disengaging from the experience and superstition that goes along with it thus proves more difficult than he imagined, particularly considering that he has already established a connection with folklore and folkloric language when referring to the younger Cathy—the daughter of the woman who becomes a ghost—as a fairy when they first meet at the Heights at the beginning of the novel.

When Lockwood blames his violent actions on the fear caused by Catherine's ghost, he distances himself from the supposed reality of his nightmare and the folk-belief associated with it. This is another example of him separating himself from the local "folk" and asserting his place as a middle-class gentleman in the eyes of the reader. He states that "the intense horror of nightmare came over me," and that "terror made me cruel" (Brontë 2019, 22). He admits to becoming afraid as a result of the appearance of Catherine, and blames his cruel actions on this fear, thus blaming his cruelty on the apparition. When the ghost "allows for human cruelty," it identifies "precisely the features that branded other people as peripheral with their own most irrational, primitive, and even perverse selves" (Krebs 1998, 47; Armstrong 1992, 248). Lockwood experiences what Freud would later call the Uncanny: "what seemed familiar and comfortable is threatened by the return of known but hidden fears, ideas and wishes, disclosing how much a sense of self depends on early development as well as a secure anchorage in social structures" (Botting 2014, 8). Upon being confronted by Catherine's ghost and his own reaction of violence, then, Lockwood is confronted with a sense of self that is primitive and violent compared to the idea of education, manners, and

gentility. This further complicates Lockwood's idea that he—as part of an urban elite—is above the rural cultures and its people, when he acts on a violent impulse when confronted with a ghostly past that should have been dead and forgotten.

However, Lockwood's attempts at re-establishing the boundaries between lower-class superstition in relation to his own emphasis on a rational mind fall short. When Heathcliff asks who showed Lockwood to the late Catherine's old room, Lockwood replies that it was the servant Zillah, adding: "I suppose that she wanted to get another proof that the place was haunted, at my expense. Well it is—swarming with ghosts and goblins! (Brontë 2019, 22). Zillah, being a servant, belongs to a group of people with lower social standing than Lockwood. By agreeing with her alleged desire to prove that the place is haunted, he is associating himself with precisely the type of people and beliefs he desires to distinguish himself from: that of the superstitious lower classes. Additionally, by going as far as to mention "goblins," Lockwood uses a folklore term to name a type of fairy—a being from folk belief—that hitherto had not been seen nor mentioned in his dream, and which Lockwood thus mentions on his own accord. Through these folklore elements, Lockwood is "being associated with the rural northerners from whom, despite his professed friendliness, he holds himself apart" (Krebs 1998, 50). Lockwood's exclamatory utterance, where he agrees with a servant that a place is haunted, and where he mentions goblins, underscores an emerging association between Lockwood and the superstitious lower classes—an association which to Lockwood is undesired.

The language Lockwood uses to describe Catherine's apparition regresses into associations with folklore, thus representing the struggle between the rural past and urban present to convey meaning.

'If the little fiend had got in at the window, she probably would have strangled me!' I returned. 'I'm not going to endure the persecutions of your hospitable ancestors again.

Was not the Reverend Jabes Branderham akin to you on the mother's side? And that minx, Catherine Linton, or Earnshaw, or however she was called—she must have been a changeling—wicked little soul! She told me she had been walking the earth these twenty years: a just punishment for her mortal transgressions I've no doubt!' (Brontë 2019, 22)

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “fiend” as an enemy such as an evil spirit or a diabolical being, and “minx” as a sly young woman. As established in chapter one, a changeling is a being from folk belief that was believed to have replaced something or someone else, and the OED confirms this by adding that the changeling is thought to be of inferior worth to the original that it replaced. All of these terms signify creatures that are threatening, as Lockwood undoubtedly deems Catherine, by his account that she was a “wicked little soul” justly punished “for her mortal transgressions.” By moving through these three terms in this specific order however, Lockwood's terminology—which begins with Christian associations—regresses into association with the folklore and folk-belief that Victorian society believed itself to have outgrown. Here, we can see “how contending ways of making meaning once struggled for possession of the same cultural space.” (Armstrong 1992, 252). The old and outdated beliefs of the “folk”—and the terms that came with them—engaged in a struggle with the cultured language of the urban elite to convey meaning. In this particular case, this struggle is shown in the interest of narrating an event that defies rational description.

Ghosts, being representations of the dead haunting the living, symbolise the past haunting the present. Catherine's ghost haunts Lockwood with the spectre of a rural woman of the past; one that should have died and stayed dead. Additionally, by appearing before him as a wailing child, Catherine exemplifies the regression into the past—contemporary society's childhood—and the anxieties of the Victorian middle classes of this regression.

Educated Englishmen argued that “primitive cultures should be regarded as the idyllic childhood of the modern nation,” meaning that the rural cultures that they saw as entertainment were cultures that they had outgrown (Armstrong 1992, 253). In the case of *Wuthering Heights* then, the ghost of Catherine—both as a deceased rural woman returning to haunt the present and as a woman who has regressed into a child—symbolises the rural culture that the Victorian elite considered themselves to have outgrown.

When Catherine then states that she has “been a waif for twenty years,” she also illustrates the persistence of these rural cultures (Brontë 2019, 21). Many rural ways of living—such as living from the sea and the land—were “rendered obsolete by Victorian culture” (Armstrong 1992, 254). However, Brontë exemplifies—through the farmers at the Heights—that “local cultures continued to govern personal life in many parts of England,” meaning that the local cultures didn’t vanish solely because the urban elite desired it; they just stayed at the periphery (Armstrong 1992, 254). As Armstrong states: “No matter where one went in England, he or she was either in the core or at the periphery. What determined whether one felt at home or out of place on either terrain was the kind of person one was” (Armstrong 1992, 259). In Lockwood’s case, he comes from the urban English “core” and spends time at the “periphery” of English culture when he stays at the Heights. He tries to separate himself from the rural culture and folk-beliefs, but when Catherine’s ghost haunts him, she embodies the rural culture that—instead of dying—stayed at the periphery, only to appear and confront the urban middle classes with the cultural childhood they desired to outgrow.

The ghost of Lockwood’s dream thus embodies a liminality between the past and the present, showing the blurred boundaries between rural and urban cultures, and thus highlighting the accompanying Victorian anxieties regarding these boundaries. This refers specifically to the boundaries between the rural past that keeps old traditions alive, and the

urban present that looks towards developmental progress and cultural advancement. Catherine's ghost is not just a "fiend" of "changeling" haunting a gentleman's dream; it is an apparition that momentarily causes him to act in less genteel manners by agreeing with a servant that a place is haunted and using folkloric language to assert his agreement, despite him denying ghostly existence in the name of rationality and education. Through the appearance of Catherine's ghost in Lockwood's dream, then, the rural past that is believed to be dead has returned to haunt the living (and evolving) present of the urban Victorian middle classes.

2.3 The Woman Longing for Her Childhood

When Catherine haunts Lockwood's dream, she confronts him with the fear of the past. However, Catherine embodies this thought relating to the past far earlier than death. As a child, she wishes to stay in a child-like state of complete freedom. As a dying woman, she wishes to return to that free state. Throughout her life, she shows signs of not conforming to the standards and norms of Victorian society, fighting instead for what she wants through mischief and violence. This sense of impulsive recklessness is part of what potentially causes Catherine to haunt her childhood home after her death. Consequently, Catherine represents not only the fear of the societal past haunting the present—as she does when she haunts Lockwood's dream—she also represents the fear of regression into the past that one believed to have outgrown.

Catherine's liminal presence as a ghost is paralleled by how she does not fit into the ideal of the Victorian gentlewoman. When Old Earnshaw leaves for Liverpool at the beginning of Nelly's narrative, he asks his children what they would like to receive upon his return. "Hindley named a fiddle, and then he asked Miss Cathy; she was hardly six years old,

but she could ride any horse in the stable, and she chose a whip" (Brontë 2019, 29). In choosing a whip, Catherine reveals her "dominant character," despite Nelly painting her as a sweet child (Brinton 2019, 41). Furthermore, despite being "hardly six," Nelly reveals that she is capable of riding any horse at the Heights, which also suggests a great deal of talent with regards to controlling other beings and keeping the reins under control. Her character is further revealed to be mischievous and impulsive when Nelly states that Catherine "was too mischievous and wayward" to be her father's favourite of the three children at the Heights, and when Old Earnshaw states that he cannot love her (Brontë 2019, 31; 34). These examples show the temperament of a trickster, rather than that of an angelic and innocent lady. The ideal woman in Victorian society was seen as an "Angel in the House," which was the ideal of "an angel who has been 'killed' into passivity" (Heiniger 2006, 24). Catherine shows no sign of passivity in the examples of her conduct, however, which reinforces the notion that she breaks with the ideal connected with the Victorian woman. Therefore, in her refusal to conform to Victorian gender codes through her own behaviour as a childish trickster rather than an angelic woman, Catherine is left wandering the moors in death, being estranged from the fatherly affections of the Victorian home.

Another trait that Catherine possesses that does not fit the Victorian ideal of gentility and good manners is her inclination for violent behaviour, further establishing a connection between her and the creatures from folklore that the "folk" did not wish to provoke. Nelly states that: "In play, she liked, exceedingly, to act the little mistress; using her hands freely, and commanding her companions: she did so to me, but I would not bear slapping and ordering; and so I let her know" (Brontë 2019, 34). As a child, then, Catherine shows her propensity for enacting her domineering character through violence, through the guise of play. However, when she later pinches and slaps Nelly, violently shakes Hareton and slaps Edgar Linton "in a way that could not be mistaken for jest" (Brontë 2019, 56). In this

instance, it is shown that Catherine's impulses regarding violence have not been outgrown and left behind in childhood; they are very much there, at the periphery of her subconscious, waiting to haunt the present through current action. Brinton claims that "what haunts the text is an incipient quality of violence and a determination to use self-destruction as a tool in order to get one's own way" (Brinton 2010, 82). Catherine uses violence to get her way both in childhood and adulthood. However, what could be regarded as childish playfulness when she was a child, has evolved to become an aspect that haunts Catherine's behaviour in her adult life. Catherine's inclination for violence becomes an issue of her child-like impulses rising to the surface, erupting in a society where such primitive impulses were to be left behind. This, in turn, suggests that time has stopped for Catherine's development, further suggesting a connection with the ghosts that stay suspended in the time of their death. Furthermore, rather than Catherine being killed into passivity, like the Angel in the House would, she stubbornly maintains her fiery temper in death, which is shown when she wails to Lockwood to be let into the Heights.

At two different points of the novel, Catherine expresses a desire for what could be seen by Victorians as the regression into the primitive past, further suggesting that to Catherine, time has stopped in a ghostly halt. In one instance, she and Heathcliff "promised fair to grow up as rude as savages," thus staying primitive and not leaving the "savage" past behind (Brontë 2019, 37). In the second instance, Catherine in her fatal illness raves about wishing to be "a girl again, half-savage, and hardy, and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them!" (Bronte 2019, 98). In both instances, the use of the term "savage" points to a desire to be wild and primitive, especially compared to societal standards at the time. Terry Eagleton states that the dismantling of the class system as exemplified by Catherine and Heathcliff not only signifies that of lower classes, "but also a social vagrant, classless natural lifeform" (Eagleton 1998, 203). Thus, Catherine's desire to be a savage on the moors

exemplifies precisely the anxieties of the Victorian middle-classes regarding the upheaval of class and societal structures, where Catherine in her wilful desire, longs for freedom from society and societal structures as a whole, all while keeping the ghost of the past alive.

Catherine's desire to return to her childhood also includes references to ghosts, further suggesting the repressed past not disappearing entirely. In her ravings and recollections of her childhood, Catherine says: "We've braved its ghosts often together, and dared each other to stand among the graves and ask them to come" (Brontë 2019, 98). "We" in this instance refers to herself and Heathcliff. When Catherine mentions the "we" that must "pass by Gimmerton Kirk, to go that journey!" it appears as though she contemplates taking the journey through death with Heathcliff (Brontë 2019, 98; Brinton 2019, 73). Additionally, through her ravings, she appears to believe that she, through her marriage to Edgar, has been exiled from what had been her world at the Heights, and by extension Heathcliff. This journey through death, then, is a journey she thinks they must take together in order to be together, and in order for her to go home to her world at the Heights. These ideas foreshadow Catherine's fate after death: like a ghost she does not pass to the world of the dead, but she still cannot fully return "home" to the Heights, Heathcliff, or the world of the living. Thus, her desire to return to her childhood home—and to her mischievous childhood self—shows itself in her haunting Lockwood with the appearance of a child wailing to be let in.

Catherine seems to begin her transformation into a ghost even before her death. Right before she dies, she is described as being dressed in white, that her appearance has been altered, and that "there seemed unearthly beauty in the change" when she was calm, which could suggest that her regression towards her past youth has begun even before she dies (Brontë 2019, 121). Additionally, Nelly describes her eyes as appearing "to always gaze beyond, and far beyond—you would have said out of this world," suggesting that she at this point in her illness has already passed the threshold into the liminal space between the living

and the dead (Brontë 2019, 122). Though there are no explicit folklore references in Catherine's death-scene and all of the ominous references "came well in advance," there seems to be a suggestion that Catherine, in her final moments, was not altogether human (Simpson 1974, 58). The association between the recently deceased Catherine and hauntings is further illustrated when Heathcliff, upon hearing Nelly's account of Catherine in his final days, asks her to haunt him. Thus, Catherine's association with ghostly presence is not as clear-cut as relating to either life or death, but on the boundary between the two, as indeed ghosts are.

Catherine's ghost does not produce a sense of fear and anxiety due simply to being a ghost haunting a gentleman's dream, but because of what she represents as a woman who *becomes* a ghost that haunts the middle-class gentleman. Through her wilful and mischievous personality, her desire to stay "savage," as well as her violent temper, she shows herself to be a woman outside of respectable society. In death, she becomes a ghost, but in life, she exemplifies something akin to a creature from folklore that follows its own whim. Catherine provides examples of contemporary anxieties such as the fear of the past, and the fear of regression into past selves. The fact that she becomes a ghost that haunts an urban gentleman, then, is the consequence of Catherine not fitting in with the societal standards of her time, staying wilful and mischievous until the end, and possibly even further.

2.4 The Man on the outside of Society

Heathcliff functions as a changeling—or otherwise supernatural and folkloric being—disrupting the sanctity of the home. Throughout the novel, he is associated with supernatural and otherwise inhuman creatures, such as: "imp of Satan," "fiend," "incarnate goblin", or otherwise dehumanizing phrases such as: "He's not a human being" (Brontë 2019, 32; 107;

132; 133). Additionally, when Lockwood refers to Catherine as “goblin” and “changeling,” he uses terms that “would suit [Heathcliff] too” (Simpson 1974, 54). This type of description, using imagery from folk-belief, expresses his “otherness” in relation to the other characters, who rarely get the same linguistic treatment (Simpson 1974, 52). In other words, this type of imagery has the function of expressing the fact that he—similarly to Jane Eyre who functions as a changeling in Charlotte Brontë’s novel—is the narrative’s outcast, exemplifying Victorian anxieties relating to societal structures and the maintenance (or upheaval) of these structures.

Immediately upon his arrival, it becomes clear that he is viewed as something “Other.” This becomes especially clear when considering that Nelly continually refers to him as “it” until he has been christened, as seen when she narrates that Mrs. Earnshaw “was ready to fling it out of doors” (Brontë 2019, 30). Nelly later says, narrating her return to the Heights after a few days’ absence: “I found they had christened him ‘Heathcliff’” (Brontë 2019, 30). The immediate change from “it” to “him” becomes linked to the fact that he has been christened while she was gone, which provides her with the knowledge that he was brought from “a state of original sin to a state of grace,” thus being seen as safe in Nelly’s—and by extension Victorian society’s—eyes (Dennehy 2016, 21). In addition, by continuously referring to Heathcliff as “it,” Emily Brontë “hints, through the distorting medium of Nelly’s prejudice, at a basic strangeness in Heathcliff” (Simpson 1974, 52). Through Nelly’s narration, then, Heathcliff is presented as something Other from the very beginning, exemplifying the anxieties pertaining to the racial and social Other in Victorian English society.

One major factor in Heathcliff being regarded as an Other—an outcast—and not fitting neatly into the structures of Victorian society is that his origins are unknown. When Nelly recounts the events surrounding Heathcliff’s death she says: “But where did he come

from, the little dark thing, harboured by a good man to his bane?" (Brontë 2019, 249). Here, she notes the darkness of Heathcliff, which could be related to both his visage and the darkness that characters seem to sense from him when they call him by ominous folklore terms. Smith argues that "the darkness associated with Heathcliff—complexion, eyes, mood, deeds, even clothes—grows to a terrifying intensity until he seems to have supernatural powers of control" (Smith 1992, 512). After Nelly has asked where "the little dark thing" came from, she states that it was her superstition that "muttered" the question (Brontë 2019, 249). In blaming her question on superstition, she creates a sense of unease regarding Heathcliff. Despite her attempts to rationalize the question through blaming superstition and highlighting that she went to sleep soon after (suggesting that her faculties were compromised), her question thus provides one of many examples of a character not only questioning Heathcliff's origins, but also his human nature.

Similarly to how a changeling in folklore is believed to replace a human child, Heathcliff replaces a child of the Earnshaw family. In folklore, it was believed that fairies might take human children from their families. Changelings were fairies that were left behind in the stead of these kidnapped children (Guiley 2010, 76). As Nelly states: Heathcliff "was the name of a son who died in childhood," (Brontë 2019, 30). By christening him Heathcliff after someone who had actually existed—even if the child had already passed—he takes on the identity that had previously been linked to another child. Furthermore, Nelly states that it served him "both for Christian and surname" (Brontë 2019, 30). This means that the name "Heathcliff" serves as his sole signifier for selfhood, seeing as he did not get the Earnshaw name nor any other familial identity. Thus, though Heathcliff did not replace the deceased Earnshaw child through folkloric means, he did replace the child through name and identity. Additionally, him having only one name "hints at an almost inhuman consistency" (Williams 1985, 115-116). This, then, could be linked to the belief in the changeling as an inhuman

entity that transgresses the boundaries of the family. Heathcliff functions as the liminal character that sits on the boundaries between the familiar and the unknown, and between the natural and the supernatural.

Heathcliff gaining ownership of a dead child's name is merely the first in a line of usurpings that disrupts the balance of power in the novel, and which can be connected to Heathcliff's status as a changeling. Heathcliff not only replaces an Earnshaw child in name, he also replaces Hindley with regards to "old Earnshaw's affections" (Vine 1994, 342). Additionally, Heathcliff takes the place of master of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, replacing both Hindley Earnshaw and Edgar Linton respectively. In taking the place of others throughout the novel, he opens up "fixed meanings and identities to otherness" (Vine 1994, 342). Heathcliff replaces what is known with what is unknown, instilling the narrative with the Victorian anxiety of the Other replacing people of gentility. Specifically, the Othered Heathcliff is taking the place of people of gentility—people with money and power—which reflects Victorian anxieties related to colonialism and societal balance with regards to class, social standing, and race.

Heathcliff's "Englishness" is continually questioned by other characters, which serves to Other him and push his liminality further, as he is positioned on the boundaries between what is or is not English in addition to his positioning between being a human or supernatural creature. When Heathcliff is introduced to the Heights as a foundling, Mrs. Earnshaw asks her husband "how he could fashion to bring that gypsy brat into the house" and "whether he were mad?" (Brontë 2019, 30). The fact that Mrs. Earnshaw refers to Heathcliff as a "gypsy" immediately Others him from the rest of the people at the Heights. Likewise, Lockwood's initial description of Heathcliff is that he "forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living" through being "a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect" and "in dress and manners a gentleman" (Brontë 2019, 5). Here, Lockwood points to Heathcliff having the appearance of

a gentleman through the way he dresses, lives and holds himself. However, through the description relating to Heathcliff's "aspect," Lockwood sows doubt relating to whether Heathcliff would be the kind of person to hold his position of power and wealth. *Wuthering Heights* was published in a time where the boundaries of what was (or was not) English were being redefined (Armstrong 1992, 259). This way, in addition to the numerous references and questions regarding his nature, Heathcliff's character as relating to whether or not he was truly English is put into question, like so many other people experienced in Victorian England.

Heathcliff being the only character of the novel to explicitly admit to believing in ghosts serves as another way of stating his otherness. This is especially true when considering his status in other characters' eyes as non-human. When Heathcliff tells Nelly that "I have a strong faith in ghosts; I have a conviction that they can, and do exist, among us," he thus tells her that he believes in a type of entity which haunts the present with a past that should have been buried, and which defies exact categorization by being neither fully dead or living (Brontë 2019, 218). The belief in ghosts and hauntings thus reflects Heathcliff's character, seeing as he is the only character of the novel to stand fully on the side of society, by having no family name, no lineage, no known origin, and no distinct place in the social hierarchy. Therefore, Heathcliff's nature and place in society is undefinable, suggesting his status as a supernatural creature that sits on the borders between human and inhuman.

The imagery from folklore and folk-belief that expresses the otherness of Heathcliff reaches its heights before he dies, when he is described in folkloric terms with an increasing sense of doom. Up until this point of the novel, all folklore references have been taken from the lore of the British Isles, such as changeling, goblin, fairy, *et cetera*. However, when Nelly sees Heathcliff right before he dies, this changes: "Is he a ghoul, or a vampire?" I mused. I had read of such hideous, incarnate demons" (Brontë 2019, 249). This provides the only

example of folkloric creatures that Nelly had to read about in order to know of—and mention—them. Simpson claims that “Nelly’s uncomprehending horror is too strong for English lore, and finds its images in more exotic sources” (Simpson 1974, 53). In other words, Nelly finds that the local lore is not enough for her in this instance, and she turns to other, non-English “incarnate demons” in order to provide imagery that is strong enough to convey her horror. This example provides yet another link between Heathcliff and being othered: when English lore is not adequate to describe him, Nelly turns to something that is both non-English *and* inhuman, thus signifying Heathcliff’s status as an inhuman person who might be (but is not really) English.

From the very beginning, Heathcliff is othered and considered an outcast from his contemporary society due to his appearance, behaviour, and unknown origins. *Wuthering Heights* was published at a time when Victorian society was redefining what it meant to be English, what was truly at the “English core,” and what was at the periphery (Armstrong 1992, 245; 259). With regards to this process, Heathcliff falls outside of society based on each of these traits: he is darker in appearance than what one considered to be truly English; his behaviour suggests primitive impulsiveness driven by a lust for vengeance that did not fit the standards of Victorian gentility; Heathcliff has unknown origins, meaning that he has no lineage to speak of, and no clear English roots. These traits exemplify anxieties relating to the structure of Victorian middle-class society. Thus, folklore in *Wuthering Heights* as it relates to Heathcliff, becomes a way to express these anxieties, through the superstitious Other that pushes the boundaries of respectability and what it means to truly be a part of English society.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

In stark contrast to the ominous folklore associated with Catherine and Heathcliff, the younger generation's Cathy and Hareton having a mutual interest in fairies and other folklore suggests hope. Lockwood refers to Cathy as "the beneficent fairy" when he asks about her husband at the beginning of the novel, Heathcliff's reply to Lockwood's questioning involves "your good fairy," and Nelly describes Cathy as being "gay as a fairy" when describing Cathy's "imaginary adventures" in childhood (Brontë 2019, 11; 147). These quotes all refer to Cathy, and they are the only three instances throughout the novel where a character is referred to as a fairy. Cathy being referred to as a fairy, with the associations to "beneficent," "good," and "gay" provide a stark contrast to the older Catherine's descriptions relating to mischief and omens. Additionally, "For Cathy and Hareton (...), Lockwood's words come true; even the term 'beneficent fairy', so ridiculous in its present context, links with the happy folklore of childhood which provides a leitmotif for their love" (Simpson 1974, 53). The bright fairy language, though it is not distinct in the context where words such as "witch" and "goblin," provides a hope that survives through the narrative, symbolising a weak—yet existing—potential for happiness. That way, the younger generation provides the narrative of *Wuthering Heights* a hope that the societal wrongs made by Catherine and Heathcliff will be set to rights in the end.

The novel ends with the suggestion that cultural anxieties represented by folklore throughout the novel are resolved, or on their way to being resolved. The older generation is buried and believed to be at peace, and the younger generation is working towards a hopeful future that will leave ghostly presence in the past. However, despite Nelly's attempt at affirming her faith that "the dead are at peace," villagers nearby claim that they have seen Heathcliff's ghost, sometimes accompanied by a lady (Brontë 2019, 254). Despite this sense of unease and

ambivalence, the novel seems to end on a sense of finality that the dead are truly at peace when Lockwood visits their grave: “I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath, and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth” (Brontë 2019, 256). He is witnessing “that quiet earth,” but the surroundings he describes are anything but quiet, as Brinton points out in his discussion of this passage: Though it could be argued that Lockwood uses imagery such as the “wind breathing through the grass,” “slumbers,” and “sleeping” as contrasts to the quiet earth, his language suggests a vitality that is uncharacteristic for descriptions relating to death (Brinton 2010, 74). This vitality, coupled with villagers claiming to have seen the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff, gives the impression that the haunting past is never truly gone, but that it may just be resting. Consequently, the open and ambiguous ending of *Wuthering Heights* provides the narrative with both the potential for progression in the case of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange, and the threat of stagnation—or even regression into the primitive past—through the ghostly past haunting the present.

Chapter 3: Folklore and Oral Tradition in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*

“That afternoon lapsed in peace and harmony; and in the evening Bessie told me some of her most enchanting stories, and sang me some of her sweetest songs. Even for me life had its gleams of sunshine”

-Brontë 2016, 38

Chapter one has explored how *Jane Eyre* uses folklore and fairies in relation to characterisation, and how these folkloric elements relate to Jane’s status as an outcast that stays between the boundaries of different social classes in the Victorian era. Likewise, chapter two has explored urban Victorian society’s view of rural societies and the kinds of people who did not fit within contemporary norms through an analysis of *Wuthering Heights* and its utilization of ghosts and ghost-belief. However, this chapter shifts the focus from the folklore and folk beliefs analysed in chapters one and two, to aspects of oral tradition as a means of communicating this information. Folklore has survived by being passed from person to person through oral tradition, and the folklore that permeates *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* is no different. When considering two novels in relation to folklore and oral tradition, scholars largely agree that not only do the two novels sit on the boundaries between different literary genres, they also sit on the boundary between folklore and literature, as exemplified by the analyses of folklore elements in the novels in chapters one and two. However, the novels also sit on the boundary between folklore and literature due to the implementation of elements pertaining to oral communication in the narratives. Therefore, rather than focusing on one superstitious folklore element for each novel like in the preceding two chapters, the analyses of this chapter relate to the aspects within the two novels that exemplify how folklore is conveyed.

How is folklore conveyed, and why does it matter? As previously mentioned, the folklore that is known today has been passed on from person to person through oral tradition for generations, evolving for each retelling. Therefore, the tradition bearer—the storyteller—is vital for the survival of these songs, stories, and beliefs that constitute part of what we now know as folklore. In order to explore the connection between the storyteller and the conveyed folklore in relation to *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, this chapter seeks to answer questions such as: how do folklore genres relate to the printed novel? Why was there tension between oral tradition and the printed novel in the Victorian era? What can folklore in fiction tell us about class and social structures of the Victorian era, as exemplified by how stories are told? What role does the storyteller have for *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* within the narrative?

Jane as the narrator of her “autobiography” uses oral storytelling techniques in her novel, for instance by addressing the reader, despite the novel being a written and thus largely uncollaborative medium. This way, there is a sense of familiarity between Jane—the storyteller—and the reader, showing the reader that Jane is familiar with both oral storytelling and novel writing. Jane as the narrator thus combines the two ways of narrating a tale within the novel, utilizing elements related to oral storytelling in the medium that was more respected by the Victorian middle classes due in part to the Victorian emphasis on rationality. In relation to how class and storytelling interact in the novel, both Rochester of *Jane Eyre* and Lockwood of *Wuthering Heights* provide examples: Rochester tells a fairy tale, which was a genre largely associated with working women, which means that by telling his tale to Adèle, who is a child, he subverts gender roles and takes the role of Mother Goose, the woman storyteller that uses her stories to entertain children. Lockwood transcribes Nelly’s tale of the Heights and the Grange as a folklorist would, by listening to her “old wives’ tale” by the hearth as she works or takes time off from working, commenting upon aspects of it,

and even commenting on the maid's storytelling abilities. These interactions show the difference between the working woman who told stories by the hearthfire when she could, and the middle-class gentleman who writes the story down, being the genteel outsider who through oral storytelling learns the background of rural families, like many others did in the Victorian era. Nelly, as Bessie does in *Jane Eyre*, thus provides an example of the tradition-bearer who told stories by the hearthfire to other women and the children of the household. These working women and "old wives" kept the tradition alive, bringing old knowledge to the newer generations.

3.1 Critical Approaches to Folklore, Storytelling and Literature

People have always told stories. Long before the art of writing was invented, information, stories, songs, customs, etc., were transmitted through oral tradition. This means that before writing, and before the technological advances that have led us to where we are today, people lived in a vastly different culture that was based on orality and transient communication (Chancellor and Lee 2016, 40). Scholars have suggested that storytellers most likely remembered and retold key elements of a song or story, rather than memorizing and retelling the story verbatim (Chancellor and Lee 2016, 41). This ancient method of telling and retelling, which is an interactive and collaborative form of communicating and sharing information, has led to a constant moulding and remoulding of what people know at any given time. Through millenia of changing cultures, inventions, and societies, this oral and transient information has been changed accordingly, creating a knowledge of and by the people who kept and shared it.

There is a vast amount of scholarship that can be used to analyse folklore elements that occur in literature. Many of these scholarly sources include references to storytelling, and

how folklore is conveyed. For instance, Paula M. Krebs has researched the relationship between folklore and the novel. She states that “folklore, associated with women, is directly opposed to man-made products such as ‘Bookes’ and gunpowder” (Krebs 1998, 42). Folklore genres and storytelling is associated with women servants and old wives’ tales, and in this quote, she highlights the juxtaposition between these tales and the books that were a man-made invention. Further, Krebs argues that “while folklore studies was concerned largely with oral narratives, narratives by and about peasants and uneducated populations (albeit captured by and produced for the middle classes), the novel was a narrative by, and largely about the middle classes” (Krebs 1998, 43). In other words, folklore and oral tradition, associated with women, was also associated with peasants and the lower classes, whereas the novel by and for the increasingly literate middle classes. Furthermore, as Krebs also argues: “folklore was considered unmediated—the direct expression of a culture’s superstitions, stories, and emotions—rather than carefully crafted, as the novel was” (Krebs 1998, 43). This, in turn, helps to explain why the novel was seen as respectable in contrast with the discreditable old wives’ tales: the novel was for the learned middle classes, while there was no telling where the traditional oral narratives originated.

In an analysis that is more directed specifically at oral communication, Renate Chancellor and Shari Lee argue that information has been stored and transferred orally through storytelling since the early human societies. Additionally, they argue that “this method of communication created an oral culture and a social organization vastly different from the print and digital culture of today,” that “in addition to being communal, oral communication is transient,” and that “storytelling strategies have evolved significantly in the shift from oral to written cultures” (Chancellor and Lee 2016, 40; 41). As such, Chancellor and Lee highlight some of the differences that exist between oral tradition and print culture, looking at the ways in which print culture and newer innovations alter how we communicate

and store information. Namely, while oral communication is subject to change, print culture has made it easier for humanity to store information and retell it with fidelity.

As such, folklore studies look at more than just the superstitions and knowledge that evolves through oral tradition—they look at how the knowledge is communicated as well. This provides the opportunity of learning more about how social communities exchange and store information, which in turn could help with gaining a deeper understanding of how social structures work in a given community. In relation to Victorian literature, the focus on the role of oral communication provides the opportunity to learn about the roles of certain classes of people in Victorian society, and how these people make or break the norms that accompany these classes.

3.2 How Stories Might be Told

How and why are stories told, and why does it matter in the context of the Victorian reader?

The emergence and persistence of the novel as a new storytelling medium meant that storytelling as a whole—how one told stories and who those stories were about—shifted in the public eye. Though one still told stories, Victorian urban and educated society looked to the written word as more respectable than the oral narratives of the working classes. Krebs states one of the reasons why they did so: “the novel was a narrative by, and largely about the middle classes” (Krebs 1998, 43). In other words, the novel contained stories that pertained to the present, was not a story of unknown origin, and which focused on a way of living that the educated middle classes could understand and possibly relate to. Though both *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* are clearly novels, and thus use the written form of storytelling that was more respectable in the eyes of Victorian society, both novels contain elements related more closely to oral storytelling than to the novel. Jane addresses her reader as one would

address a listener to an oral narrative; Lockwood involves an oral story in his narrative that begins with him depicting his experiences at Wuthering Heights. Both novels thus stretch the boundaries between oral and written storytelling; though a written story cannot be participatory like an oral story could be, both novels have found ways of implementing elements of oral storytelling into their narratives.

Jane Eyre is the narrator of her autobiography, functioning as a storyteller that endeavours to make her storytelling collaborative in directly addressing the reader using techniques commonly associated with oral narration, and thus attempting to make the reader participate in the narrative as much as the written medium will allow. In this way, Jane as the narrator shifts her autobiography slightly in favour of oral tradition, from the standard convention of the novel being an uncollaborative written form. For instance, when St. John reveals to Jane that they are cousins and that she is the sole heir to their late uncle's fortune, she states: "I knew, by instinct, how the matter stood before St. John had said another word: but I cannot expect the reader to have the same intuitive perception, so I must repeat his explanation" (Brontë 2016, 343). Jane connects the meaning behind St. John's words before he has had a chance to explain them, but she shows here that she is conscious of the reader possibly not having the same understanding, so she interrupts her narrative briefly to comment that she will provide the reader with the full context. As Zipes states, summarising Kroeber's view on storytelling: "storytelling is a social transaction between teller and listener, writer and reader, in which participants engage in a quest to understand and modify received wisdom and provisional truths" (Zipes 2019, 248; Kroeber 1992). Jane thus shows that she is aware that whichever information she does or does not provide will affect the reader's perception of the narrative. Therefore, in order to add credibility to her story, Jane needs to effectively communicate with the reader to persuade them of her narration's intended meaning (i.e. the message she is trying to deliver), similarly to how communicators

attempting to persuade a "target" of the validity of their narrative have to be aware that what information is provided, along with how that information is processed, which will ultimately affect how it is interpreted and internalized (Myers and Twenge 2018, 145-155; DeLamater 2018, 324). What matters in this instance, however, is *how* Jane provides this awareness: by interrupting her narrative, providing information to the silent audience member that is separated from the storyteller through temporal and spatial constraints, and addressing this audience member in a way similar to what could be associated with telling a spoken story.

The most prominent examples of the implementation of oral techniques in written narration, however, come when Jane as the narrator asks the reader questions such as: "this is a gentle delineation, is it not, reader?" (Brontë 2016, 308). In an oral storytelling setting one would assume that the reader could dissent or assent to the question, and the storyteller would carry on telling their tale. However, seeing as the medium of *Jane Eyre* is the written word, one would assume that Jane knows the reader can have no influence on the novel. When telling a spoken story, the narrator and narratee are in the same general space at the same time, whereas "written speech" is released from these spatial and temporal constraints found in oral communication, giving it the opportunity to be read and experienced indefinitely (Kroeber 1992, 42). There is a "fourth wall," as it were, in *Jane Eyre*—like there is in all other written narratives—where the narrator and the reader are separated by both materials and time. However, though there can be no literal audience participation, Jane addresses the reader, thereby breaking this barrier, creating a sense of familiarity between her story and her audience. Thus, she includes the audience in a perceived sense of participation, encouraging the reader to think for themselves and create their own opinion on the events of the narrative and not just absorb the information the reader is given.

One of the ways Jane as the narrator persuades (or attempts to persuade) the reader to accept her narrative is through creating a sense of familiarity by addressing the reader's prior

knowledge of the novel's plot and characterization. What these instances of Jane addressing the reader provides is a sense of familiarity between the storyteller and the one to whom the story is told, which traditionally is associated with oral storytelling. Consequently, this sense of familiarity between the narrator and narratee provides another example of features incorporated into the novel that can be linked to oral tradition. Jane highlights this kind of familiarity when stating what the reader "knows" about her story: "now I never had, as the reader knows, either given any formal promise, or entered into any engagement"; "And, reader, do you think I feared him in his blind ferocity?—if you do, you little know me" (Brontë 2016, 369; 384). In relation to information provided by narration, the reader knows what they have been told by Jane, and in these two quotes she shows the reader that she is aware of that fact. Specifically, she comments on what the reader knows about what has happened (or not happened) earlier in the narrative, and about her own character. By again looking to Zipes's statement that storytelling is a social transaction, we see that Jane is aware of how storytelling functions as a transaction of information going from narrator to narratee. Consider also that audiences that are cognitively involved in a given communication will have increased focus on the message at hand, compared to focusing on peripheral details (Myers and Twenge 2018, 153-154). With this in mind we see that Jane, by first asking if the reader thinks she is afraid of Rochester and then stating that she was not, with added emphasis on "you little know me," persuades the reader to focus more on the fact that she was not afraid, as opposed to the "peripheral" detail that Rochester was "in his blind ferocity." She presents the fact with a question, and then counteracting the question with a fact that highlights that at this point in the narrative, the reader has gotten ample opportunity to get to know the character of Jane Eyre.

In these examples, Jane as the narrator illustrates that the social transaction in relation to the understanding of the narrative is participatory on both ends: she provides the

information, and the reader provides their own understanding. Through addressing the reader directly in these instances, highlighting the facts she wishes for the reader to consider—such as knowing that she had not entered an engagement and that she was not afraid—she provides us with reminders that we are familiar with her story and with how she as a character functions, thus persuading us to perceive and interpret the narrative in the way that she wishes.

3.3 The Gentleman's Story

Rochester spins a story about Jane, which means that he not only claims that she is a fairy as discussed in chapter one, but he also places her within a fairy narrative. This is a process that Wakefield calls folklore-narrating, which is when a character “spins a story about the fantastic” (Wakefield 2006, 2). As Wakefield further explains, folklore-narrating (like the folklore-naming referenced in chapter one) functions as a way of handling “insecurities about transgressing sexual, class, racial, national, and gender guidelines,” by way of “boundary construction” (Wakefield 2006, 11). Seeing as folklore and oral tradition is associated with the lower classes both in *Jane Eyre* and Victorian society overall, the fact that Rochester folklore-narrates Jane as a fairy shows his consciousness of Jane's lower-class status. The episode in question happens when Rochester, Jane, and Adèle are on their way to Millcote. Following Adèle and Rochester's discussion of Jane's character, Rochester starts telling a tale that resembles a fantastical version of Jane's return to Thornfield after visiting her dying aunt at Gateshead, concluding with the statement “Mademoiselle is a fairy” in answer to Adèle's question regarding what relevance the tale has to Jane (Brontë 2016, 240). The fact that the tale immediately follows the conversation about Jane, suggests that Rochester has been reminded of her status as a governess, and how different Rochester and Jane are in

relation to age, gender, and class. Consequently, this could then suggest that the tale is spun to shift the perceived boundaries between the two from something concrete to something fantastical, for instance shifting the boundary between governess and gentleman to that of a fairy and human. Furthermore, right before the trio leaves for Millcote, Mrs. Fairfax has told Jane to be careful, and that “gentleman in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses” (Brontë 2016, 238). This statement also seems to confirm that his folklore-narration happens due to a consciousness of their class differences. What this tells us, then, is that Rochester’s storytelling calls attention to his discomfort with Jane’s status as a governess and allows him to create a false narrative where the Victorian boundaries do not exist, but are replaced by the imagined boundaries between fairy and human.

Additionally, when considering that oral storytelling was typically associated with working-class women, Rochester’s tale breaks yet another boundary related to gender. Bessie, a servant, tells the children at Gateshead what Jane refers to as “her nursery tales” in order to entertain them, often whilst working (Brontë 2016, 28). Likewise, Rochester (a gentleman) tells his fairy tale to Adèle (a child) in order to entertain her on their way to Millcote. As Wakefield asserts: “Traditionally women have been identified and constructed as the tellers of folktales; consider the Sybil, Mother Goose, and Scheherazade, to name a few of the more famous” (Wakefield 2006, 9). Other scholars also agree that oral storytelling of folk tales and fairy tales is mainly connected to women (Krebs 1998; Farrer 1975; Vieco 2020). In telling the fairy tale to Adèle in this context, Rochester uses a type of storytelling commonly associated with women, where “he assumes the feminized position of Sybil or Mother Goose” (Wakefield 2006, 75). Rochester performs a role-reversal where he, a man, associates himself with an activity that is typically associated with women of lower classes than the one he is perceived to belong to. Consequently, by folklore-narrating his fairy tale, Rochester transgresses societal boundaries related to both class and gender in order to place

his narrative relating to Jane in a different context, namely that of folklore and oral tradition. In telling his tale, Rochester highlights the Victorian anxieties surrounding gender, class, narrative, genre, and societal norms overall.

Nelly tells Lockwood the story of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange while working on her tasks in front of the hearth, giving the impression of a domestic working-class informant telling a narrative to a folklorist. Throughout the narrative, Nelly is associated with old lore, stories, ballads and songs, which we can see when Heathcliff accuses her of inventing “bugbear stories” (Brontë 2019, 178). When Lockwood tries to make sense of his experiences at the Heights and asks for her knowledge, Nelly becomes the storyteller that bridges the gap between old narrative and new insight, specifically in this case bringing the story of the Heights and Grange into view of the southern gentleman who is, at this point, unaware of local history. In this way, Nelly exemplifies what Chancellor and Lee references in claiming that “oral storytelling satisfies the human need to explain our surroundings, to recall past events, honor religious beliefs and practices, and keep the memories of ancestors alive” (Chancellor and Lee 2016, 41). By narrating her tale to Lockwood, the story—as she tells it and he writes it down in his diary—lives on, bringing new life to events that otherwise would have been forgotten. Consequently, this serves as an example of the history that Victorians regarded as rural and archaic; after all, oral narratives of rural culture were not part of urban and educated culture.

In writing the narrative of *Wuthering Heights* in his diary, one could assume that Lockwood has no intended audience for his tale, which means that the version he hears is not intended to be retold orally, and thus the life of *Wuthering Heights*'s narrative as an oral story ends with Lockwood. Lockwood is the frame narrator that listens and writes Nelly's narrative in his diary. Sometimes he comments on how Nelly narrates, for instance at the beginning of Volume II, where he says of the narrative: “I'll continue it in her own words, only a little

condensed. She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator and I don't think I could improve her style" (Brontë 2019, 121). He compliments Nelly's storytelling, but also highlights that he will condense the tale, possibly due to the constraints related to having to physically write things down. It is in this shift from oral to written that we see several boundary-crossings, one of the more significant being the boundary between working-class and middle-class storytelling. As Krebs claims: "While folklore studies was concerned largely with oral narratives, narratives by and about peasants and uneducated populations (albeit captured by and produced for the middle classes), the novel was a narrative by, and largely about the middle classes" (Krebs 1998, 43). Considering this, it could be argued that *Wuthering Heights* sits on the boundary between classes as well: Nelly—a working woman—narrates a story about people of a higher class than herself, specifically the people she works for, from her own experience. Lockwood, the middle-class frame narrator, retells Nelly's story that is not his own. However, Nelly's narrative is integrated into Lockwood's experience. Therefore, *Wuthering Heights* sits on the boundary between class differences, since it is neither a narrative purely by and about peasants, or a story that is written by and for the middle classes; it is a story where a middle-class man integrates working-class narrative about lower middle-class people into a narrative of his own.

Neither of the two novels fit completely into the constraints that the novel as a storytelling medium imparts. Though they have to keep within those constraints, both novels push the boundaries of what is common in a written story by including elements that would more traditionally be associated with oral narrative, for instance through Jane's addressing the reader and Lockwood listening and writing down the story he hears from Nelly. Through these examples, as well as other references in the novels, the reader also gets a glimpse into what oral storytelling could mean in the narratives themselves, for instance when Rochester tells the story of Jane as a fairy, showing a glimpse into his insecurities surrounding Jane and

the many societal boundaries between them regarding things such as class and gender. What we see in these instances, then, is that storytelling was a significant part of Victorian rural society, and that both of the Brontë sisters took what they knew and learned from oral narratives in their own childhood and implemented it into the newer medium of the novel, bringing the stories as they could be spoken by the hearth-fire out to the masses.

3.4 The Role of the Storyteller

Victorians had more respect for the novel as a storytelling medium than oral tradition and folklore overall. They viewed these older forms of knowledge and storytelling as old and archaic, and something that belonged to the rural cultures that had not evolved with urban society. This subsequently meant that the traditional storyteller, though regarded with interest by folklorists as an informant, was largely seen as a relic of the past rather than a keeper of stories that had persisted until the present. In *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, we see examples of the quintessential storyteller in Nelly and Bessie: the woman servant telling stories and singing songs, often while they work, for children, and in close proximity to a hearthfire.

When Nelly tells the story of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange, it is an event that happens over time, when Nelly has the time for it, while she performs tasks such as sewing and mending in front of the hearth-fire. Likewise, in *Jane Eyre*, Jane states that when she was living at Gateshead, Bessie told stories while working:

Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting: as interesting as the tales Bessie sometimes narrated on winter evenings, when she chanced to be in good humour; and when, having brought her ironing-table to the nursery-hearth, she allowed us to sit

about it, and while she got up Mrs. Reed's lace frills, and crimped her night-cap borders, fed our eager attention with passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and older ballads; or (as at a later period I discovered) from the pages of 'Pamela,' and 'Henry, Earl of Moreland.' (Brontë 2016, 11)

Through these general analyses we see a glimpse of the role they play for their respective narratives: they are tradition bearers telling stories and singing songs while they work in front of the hearth, exemplifying a culture that—despite the general opinion and wishes of the Victorian middle classes—was still very much alive in the working classes. For instance, the story Nelly tells Lockwood is at first told over the course of several days while she works on smaller tasks like sewing and mending in front of the hearth at Thrushcross Grange: “She returned presently, bringing a smoking basin, and a basket of work; and, having placed the former on the hob, drew in her seat, evidently pleased to find me so companionable” (Brontë 2019, 28-29). Nelly, who in this instance appears to be the storyteller of old wives' tales, uses her story of the Heights and Grange as entertainment for the injured Lockwood, while working on tasks that can be done in front of the hearthfire. Lockwood again highlights Nelly's storytelling in relation to work, when he says: “I have now heard all my neighbour's history, at different sittings, as the housekeeper could spare time from more important occupations” (Brontë 2019, 121). In other words, Nelly has told her story in the intervals between the tasks that have required her attention elsewhere. When Lockwood returns to the Heights, finding it open and inviting, he is told the continuation of the tale as it has transpired during the time he has been gone after finding Nelly in the kitchen, “sewing and singing a song” (Brontë 2019, 233). This way, both Bessie and Nelly signify the storyteller and tradition-bearer as it was most commonly known in the Victorian era: the working-class woman entertaining the children of the house while working in front of the hearth-fire for warmth and light.

What Bessie and Nelly's storytelling does, in other words, is provide entertainment while they work and perform tasks that are typically associated with women, which specifically makes them examples of the woman storyteller of the nineteenth century. Consider for instance how Nelly narrates the tale of the Heights and the Grange while sewing, and Bessie sings while "making a new bonnet for Georgiana's doll" (Brontë 2016, 22). These activities could be one of the reasons why oral storytelling, fairy tales and folk stories are genres of narration that are primarily associated with women. Farrer states, after surveying previous publications focused on women's behaviour, that "women's creativity and expressive behaviour have been limited to home and hearth activities until rather recently," referring to how women's storytelling was not only mostly associated with the hearth, but that it was also *confined* to the hearth and home. (Farrer 1975, viii). Farrer also claims that "women's hearth activities involve not only other women but also children of both sexes" (Farrer 1975, viii). This statement could also provide an explanation for why folk stories and other genres traditionally associated with women were also seen as childish: they were used to entertain women and children, and thus these genres were not as evolved as the storytelling in novel. As Krebs states: "folklore, associated with women, is directly opposed to man-made products such as 'Bookes' and gunpowder" (Krebs 1998, 42). In this statement, Krebs highlights the opposition between the spoken and written word, and when considered in conjunction with Farrer's statements, it becomes apparent that the written word trumped the spoken folkloric narrative in relevance and reputability in Victorian society.

While Nelly and Bessie both provide examples that folk stories and songs were functional in providing entertainment while performing household-related tasks, they also show that their folklore had other functions, for instance relating directly to how to care for children. In *Wuthering Heights*, for instance, Nelly at one point states that "I went into the kitchen to lull my little lamb to sleep" (Brontë 2019, 60). This provides us with an example

of the very real—and very old—practice of singing lullabies in order to help children calm down and fall asleep, such as Nelly does in this example, when she attempts to calm a young Hareton after being hurt by his father. An additional thing to note is that she went to the kitchen, where there presumably was a fire in the hearth, making this event yet another activity performed by the warmth and light of the hearth. Through Bessie and Jane, we get a glimpse into another function of oral narrative, namely the function relating to education, when Jane says that: “I believed in kidnappers, their exploits having frequently figured in Bessie’s fireside chronicles” (Brontë 2016, 40). Jane, in this instance, is conscious of her surroundings at one of the rest stops on her way to Lowood, and through this statement we get a glimpse into how her mind works, and how it has been affected by Bessie’s stories. Namely, that Bessie’s stories have made Jane aware of the dangers of the world, and that in this instance, she needs to be careful not to get kidnapped. As Briggs states: “In the scanty children’s literature of the eighteenth century the fairy-tale was admitted as a moral instrument” (Briggs 1972, 202). This could also be said to be true about other oral narratives. The glimpses of Bessie and Nelly singing and telling stories while working informs the reader that the culture of oral storytelling was not only alive and well in the working classes, but it was also functional in that it could function as a tool for teaching children morals, and entertaining the children of the household.

Wuthering Heights provides an example of how oral tradition functions in stories being told and retold, moving from person to person, or, in this case, from character to character. While *Jane Eyre* also provides such an example to an extent through Bessie’s storytelling and singing, Jane as the narrator never explicitly indicates that these stories pass on from character to character. As far as the reader knows through Jane’s narration, the oral stories and songs in *Jane Eyre* are told, but not retold. In *Wuthering Heights*, however, it is clear that Nelly’s “nursery lore” passes on through Cathy, to both Linton and Hareton. For

instance, Nelly comments this about Cathy's summer activities: "From dinner to tea she would lie in her breeze-rocked cradle, doing nothing except singing old songs—my nursery lore—to herself, or watching the birds, joint tenants, feed and entice their young ones to fly, or nestling with closed lids, half thinking, half dreaming, happier than words can express" (Brontë 2019, 175). Evidently, Nelly's "nursery lore" has become such a big part of Cathy's life that she uses it to entertain herself when she spends peaceful days alone outside. This could also explain why this lore becomes such a big part of how Cathy bonds with Linton: Nelly's lore is comforting to her, possibly as a result of associating the stories with hearthfire and the storytelling sessions with Nelly. When Cathy states that "he was charmed with two or three pretty songs—*your* songs, Ellen," it could seem like Cathy plays upon her own and Nelly's mutual affection for these songs. Oral storytelling is a discourse that involves a participant that is present while the story is told (Kroeber 1992, 42). Consequently, storytelling sessions bring people together, often in front of the light and warmth of the hearth, and give the participants a mutual focus for the narrative at hand.

Through the roles Nelly and Bessie play in their respective narratives, it becomes evident that they exemplify the woman storyteller and tradition-bearer. This is through their use of oral narratives and songs as entertainment for children, as activities by the hearth while they work, and as tools of education or for soothing children to sleep. The woman storyteller, often associated with the woman servant, kept local history and its customs alive through telling and retelling the stories she knew to the children and possibly also other women of the household. Nelly and Bessie provide examples of this tradition, in that it was not only a tradition that still existed among the Victorian lower classes, but that it also held a practical function where it could help soothe a child, educate others, and provide entertainment. Additionally, oral tradition and storytelling by the hearthfire—often while the storyteller performed domestic activities such as sewing and mending and provided comfort through the

proximity to the fire and marvellous narratives--was evidently a tradition that was held in high regard by both of the Brontë sisters, seeing as they included such strong reference in their novels through the two storytelling maids.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

Why write about oral narration in a chapter analyzing two Victorian novels? As demonstrated, both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* show signs of traits and techniques associated with oral tradition. As demonstrated, Jane addresses the reader and creates a sense of familiarity as a result. In doing this, she slightly blurs the line between spoken and written narrative, by endeavouring to move towards an interactive form of storytelling. The way she does this is by not only addressing the reader, but by asking the reader questions relating to the narrative, and commenting upon the reader's knowledge, making the reader think consciously about the narrative that they are reading. Additionally, Rochester, a man of middle-class gentility, invents and tells a fairy tale, which is a storytelling genre commonly associated with working class women. This way, he topples the norms connecting fairy tale to both gender and class. Lockwood, in his transcription of Nelly's narrative, functions as the folklorist who is entertained by an "old wives' tale" as he heals from his injury and she takes time from bigger tasks to sit by the hearth and tell her story. In this sense Nelly functions as an example of how the traditions connected to storytelling was kept alive. Likewise, Bessie also functions as an example of this female working-class tradition bearer—in the sense that she was a keeper of old knowledge who then passed this knowledge on to her contemporaries—through domestic comfort in front of a hearth fire, while cleaning or tidying, or while working on smaller tasks that could be done while telling a story.

Conclusion

“Thus ended Mrs. Dean’s story”

-Brontë 2019, 225

Folklore has been part of human lives for centuries, even before it was transcribed by the writers and collectors who gathered it from the people who knew it. Both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* prove to be examples of this, not only due to them containing numerous references to folklore and superstition throughout their narratives, but also due to both novels being published in the Victorian era, a time where society as a whole experienced great changes. These changes subsequently led to a perceived need to explore what was and wasn’t English, or in the case of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, what was or wasn’t English, socially acceptable, or even human. The main function of folklore and superstition in the two novels, then, is to provide the narrative with a sense of unease that highlights the boundaries—for instance between different classes—that many middle-class Victorians attempted to define.

I began my research in an analysis of *Jane Eyre* and the novel’s relation to folklore and fairies. Not only does Jane the narrator use fairy language to describe herself, but she also uses it to describe her experiences as she grows up. When researching the available scholarship, it became evident that the fairy language was due to Jane herself being on the outside of Victorian society, rather than it merely being due to strange events happening around her. Thus began the process of researching the dynamics in *Jane Eyre* that separates Jane from the world she grew up in, in an attempt to explore why Jane uses fairy language.

This dynamic between the Victorian novel and language that references folklore becomes particularly interesting when considering that Jane as the narrator attempts to distance herself from the language she has used, in an attempt to distance herself from being associated with the lower classes that were connected with folklore and oral tradition. One answer to the function of fairy-related language in the narration of *Jane Eyre* is thus to highlight the fears that the Victorian middle classes held towards the people on the boundaries of society—the people that did not fit exactly into a social group, and who challenged societal norms, as indeed Jane does as she grows up desiring to be an independent woman.

This need for independence, alongside her status as an orphan, makes her function as a fairy—a changeling—in her childhood home at Gateshead. Her orphan status further puts Jane on the boundary between classes, as she grows up being seen as less than the servants and her own family. When she later arrives at Thornfield, she is explicitly called a fairy throughout her relationship with Rochester. Rochester's tendency to insist upon Jane being a fairy exemplifies the imbalance in power between the two, as well as Rochester's anxieties surrounding Jane's status as a governess. Through folklore elements in *Jane Eyre*, then, Jane is shown to be regarded as a social and gendered Other to Victorian society, as exemplified through Jane being othered from propriety at Gateshead and humanity at Thornfield.

Through my research for chapter two, I discovered that though there are references to fairies, the most prominent examples of folklore and superstition stems from ghost-belief, which permeates most of the narrative, particularly that pertaining to the older generation of characters. As such, ghosts and hauntings in *Wuthering Heights* became this chapter's primary focus. In analysing Lockwood's dream, Catherine's ghost, and Heathcliff's supernatural presence, it became clear that similarly to how folklore functions in *Jane Eyre*, folklore in *Wuthering Heights* serves to create a sense of unease surrounding the characters and events of the novel. This unease in the novel reflects the societal unease that Victorian

middle classes felt with regards to the boundaries between the English and non-English—as well as the tension between rural and urban societies—exemplified by the folkloric tension between the human and non-human.

Finally, after researching chapters one and two, I realised that much of the scholarship I had referenced also discussed oral narrative and how it functions in the two novels. The scholarship largely seemed to agree that *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* sat on the boundaries between different genres, as well as the boundary between folklore and literature. This is shown through Jane's narration containing techniques associated with the collaborative form of oral storytelling, and the implementation of Rochester's fairy tale and Lockwood functioning as something akin to the Victorian folklorist. However, the most prominent influence of oral tradition on the two novels come through the characters of Bessie and Nelly, the two maids who tell old stories and sing old songs while working on domestic tasks by the hearthfire, entertaining the children of the house. These two characters represent the class of people that were largely credited for keeping the oral tradition alive: the working woman, the maid, and the old wife.

Jane Eyre and *Wuthering Heights* provide examples of why it still matters that scholars study folklore elements in literature: the literature mirrors society in ways that can be explored over time, giving new insight for each successive analysis. *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* both tell us about society's view of certain types of characters, filtered through the lens of two woman authors in the mid-1800s that had grown up listening to folklore and reading fairy tales. The folklore elements in the novel provide insight into how and why the narratives differ or conform with Victorian conventions, through the narration and labelling of the Other, such as the Other that seems to be on the other side of the boundary of what is regarded as safe, or the Other that is carefully treading this boundary. It is this latter version, the one that cannot clearly be defined, that the Brontë sisters seem to so

carefully depict through the involvement of folklore. For instance, both Jane and Heathcliff are orphans that do not fit neatly into a clearly defined class, and so they are both examples of what Victorians overall feared: the undefinable Other, the one that was neither English or foreign, depicted through the questions of whether they were truly human, or something on the border of another world entirely.

Though there are many more aspects of folklore in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* that could be explored, these have fallen outside of the scope of this thesis. For instance, though many have already looked at fairy tale elements in the structure and characterization of *Jane Eyre*, one could potentially compare this with structural and character-related choices that affect *Wuthering Heights*, namely that of the medieval ballad. Scholars such as Jessica Campbell, Michael M. Clarke, and Paula Sullivan have analysed *Jane Eyre* in relation to literary fairy tales, and others, such as Sheila Smith and Susan Stewart, have written on the influence of the ballad in *Wuthering Heights*. This comparative analysis could provide an interesting discussion regarding how elements relating to folklore and fairy tale differ in the two novels, and how it might provide more insight into how and why the novels were received differently upon publication.

Although the popularity of the field of folklore studies has diminished since the 1970s, this thesis has shown that folklore studies in relation to literature could still be relevant today. By looking at the themes that are exemplified through folklore in literature, scholars have the opportunity to learn about the bigger questions of class, gender, and social structures. In relation to *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, for instance, this has proven to be an important way of analysing the novels, in that the analyses of the novels' folklore elements provide insight into topics related to the Victorian reimagining of societal structures that followed industrialisation and urbanisation, which in turn largely contributed to the process that led towards how modern society functions in the 21st century. In essence, even though

folklore studies does not enjoy the same support and popularity among scholars as other related fields of study, it is still an important way of exploring questions—pertaining for instance to different dynamics within a given society—that might be more relevant to explore today.

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