Many literary critics claim that part of what makes Brontë's *Jane Eyre* such a popular novel is its description and use of nature. As suggested by Mark Schorer in his introduction to one version of the novel, “natural phenomena are the external representatives of psychological conditions” (Schorer, 2000, 34), and it is the constant mimicry of Jane's emotions by her environment that makes the descriptions so rich and vivid. Schorer also notes that this technique is, perhaps, unconscious on the part of the author, but he never develops the idea. However, he misses the point that since *Jane Eyre* is written in first-person, it has to be unconscious. We describe not what we see through our eyes, but what we perceive through the filter of our existing emotional and psychological state. Because Brontë writes in first person, she sees the world from Jane's point of view and describes it as such. Like a Rorschach test (Hill, 80), the world around us is impersonal; what we see is what we want to see, and what we want to see is invariably what matches our mood. This leads to the aforementioned resemblance between the environment, as described by Brontë, and Jane's emotions. These parallels are evident throughout the book, specifically in descriptions of Thornfield Hall before and after the arrival of Mr. Rochester. They are also apparent in descriptions of Marsh End and Ferndean, both locations associated with powerful emotions.

Thornfield Hall is the place with the strongest emotional association in the entire novel. It is the location of Jane's first meeting with Mr. Rochester, as well as the place of their failed wedding. When Jane first arrives, believing the house to be owned by Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper, she finds it “good but dull” (Gordon, 2000, 45). It is tranquil and stately, but does not fulfil the longing for action and excitement that Jane has. “[She] desired more of practical experience than [she] possessed; more of intercourse with [her] kind, of acquaintance with variety of character, than was here within [her] reach” (Brontë, 1966, 141). These feelings can easily be observed in the way she describes the hall: “The steps and banisters were of oak; the staircase window was high and latticed; both it and the long gallery into which the bedroom doors opened looked as if they belonged to a church rather than a house” (Brontë, 1966, 129). Her descriptions lack colour and movement; they seem almost stolid. She compares it to a

church, which both then and now has the connotations of peaceful prayer, of calm and studied reflection. It is clearly not a place designed to appeal to a young woman full of vigour and curiosity.

After Rochester arrives however, Jane's life is turned upside-down, and her universe becomes vivid and interesting once more. Her emotional state is changed drastically, and this also changes how she sees and describes Thornfield. To Jane, it is “little more than a peaceful backwater until transformed by the arrival of Mr. Rochester” (Gordon, 2000, 47). Afterwards, though it becomes a centre of happiness and excitement and all of the things that the old Thornfield was not. Her descriptions of it become animate and colourful and cheerful. She talks of “a brilliant June morning” and “through the open glass door, the breathing of a fresh and fragrant breeze” (Brontë, 1966, 286). The change in imagery is obvious, but there is never any actual physical change to the landscape or weather. The difference is entirely in the way Jane perceives what she has seen all along.

Another location where the descriptions are based significantly on Jane's emotional state and not on her actual surroundings is on the road to Marsh End. Her marriage to Rochester has just been broken off, and she is in self-imposed exile from his presence. She is heartbroken and depressed, at the lowest emotional point in the entire novel. “[Her heart] plained of its gaping wounds, its inward bleeding, its riven chords” (Brontë, 1966, 350). Is it merely coincidence, then, that the landscape around her is described as dead, dying or barren? “All the surface of the waste looked level. It showed no variation but of tint: green, where rush and moss overgrew the marshes; black, where the dry soil bore only death. Dark as it was getting, [she] could still see these changes, though but as mere alternations of light and shade; for colour had faded with the daylight” (Brontë, 1966, 356). Her descriptions lack colour and verve, and complement her depression extremely well. When she says that “A pang of exquisite suffering – a throe of true despair – rent and heaved my heart” (Brontë, 1966, 361), is it any wonder that she looks around and sees nothing but barren wastes?

Almost the opposite of barren wastes, Ferndean is a deep, ancient forest to which Rochester retreats after Thornfield burns down. When Jane first enters it, she has not seen Rochester since their

fateful wedding day, and is clueless as to what his feelings towards her might be. She is afraid and in the dark, so to speak. Her descriptions of Ferndean match these emotions well: “Even when within a very short distance of the manor-house, you could see nothing of it, so thick and dark grew the timber of the gloomy wood about it” (Brontë, 1966, 455). When Jane is reunited with him and they profess their love, her descriptions do an abrupt about-face and Ferndean becomes cheerful and bright: “[She] led him out of the wet and wild wood into some cheerful fields: [she] described to him how brilliantly green they were; how the flowers and hedges looked refreshed; how sparklingly blue was the sky” (Brontë, 464). She is happy and confident and very much in love once more, leading her to see a beautiful world around her. “Ferndean attains an edenic status” (Gordon, 2000, 51) and equally vivid descriptions, solely by dint of having such a strong happy emotional association.

At Thornfield Hall, Jane starts out quiescent and ends up in a state of temporary emotional bliss. This bliss is shattered, and on the road to Marsh End, Jane is heartbroken and depressed. At Ferndean, Jane starts out worried and unsure, and ends up in wholeheartedly in love once more. Through every step of Jane's journey in *Jane Eyre*, her environment remains in lockstep with her emotions. When she is happy and in love, the world around her is bright, active, and colourful. When she is sad or depressed, the world around her is dull, dreary, and black. But this is no author's trick of imagery, this is what any of us would see in the same situation. Our perceptions are altered by our emotions, and Jane Eyre the character is no different.