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# Finding Freedom for Jane: A Reading of Subjugation, Shame, and Sympathy in Charlotte's Brontë Jane Eyre

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FINDING FREEDOM FOR JANE: A READING OF  
SUBJUGATION, SHAME, AND SYMPATHY  
IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S *JANE EYRE*

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
English

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by  
Rebecca Shaver  
May 2016

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Accepted by:  
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## ABSTRACT

In an investigation of Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*, Jane clearly desires liberty in the form of social belonging or freedom, and makes the active choice to pursue it, but finds that liberty is ultimately best won not by an antagonistic battle, but instead through subjugation by those of a higher class than herself. As a social inferior, the mere association with a higher-class family name (whether that is through employment, marriage, etc.) is enough to set Jane's eye on the ultimate goal of total autonomous freedom through social climbing. Jane actively participates in subjugation as a means to elevate her state in society, evident through choices of language. This language ranges from inhuman equations to magical creatures to derogatory social labels, but functions in the same way throughout the novel. I assert that Jane is fully active in her pursuit of a place in society. It is paradoxically through assimilating to the language and culture of the higher classes and referring to herself as an inferior that Jane takes back her power. By acknowledging her inferiority through her language, either to herself or by participating in conversations with (or active silence toward) social superiors, Jane actively wrests conversation to her advantage.

## DEDICATION

I would like to formally thank my friends and family for their support during my time as a graduate student. To my mother, father, and grandparents, who are always generous with their time and love, which fueled me through graduate school. To my brothers, who drive me to be the role model and older sister they deserve. To Robbie Clark, who sat by my side for two years of writing and reading and supported me unconditionally.

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## INTRODUCTION: JANE'S DESIRE FOR FREEDOM AND THE RHETORIC OF SUBJUGATION

Repeatedly, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is given opportunities to follow what she states are her desires—to be free and happy with her position in life—but seems instead to decline the pursuit. Jane remarks, “I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer” (Brontë 85). In her feminist critique, Carla Kaplan notes that “Jane longs for...precisely what cannot be fulfilled,” which presumably refers to her “desires for intimacy and recognition” (6). She says that Jane is aware that to be “shut out of human dialogue, to be silenced, isolated, and spoken for by others” equates to a denial of “identity and being,” from both society and Jane herself (6). Indeed, not only does Jane acknowledge the loss of identity through subjugation, but, I argue, she embraces and uses subjugation for this very purpose. Jane clearly desires liberty in the form of social belonging or freedom, and makes the active choice to pursue it, but finds that liberty is ultimately best won not by an antagonistic battle, but instead through subjugation by those of a higher class than herself. For example, instead of staying at Lowood or even searching for a space or community of solidarity with others in a similar social position, Jane purposefully opts for “a new servitude” as a governess, only acceptable to her because “it does not sound too sweet; it is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment: delightful sounds truly; but...so hollow and fleeting that it is mere waste of time to listen to them” (Brontë 86). Jane refers to this new position as if it was some type of punishment and “Liberty, Excitement, [and] Enjoyment” are more pleasurable, but unattainable, pursuits (86). Jane would like the latter, but finds throughout the novel that

those pursuits are best attained, covertly and quietly, through “servitude” and subjugation. As a social inferior, the mere association with a higher-class family name (whether that is through employment, marriage, etc.) is enough to set Jane’s eye on the ultimate goal of total autonomous freedom through social climbing. Jane actively participates in subjugation as a means to elevate her state in society, evident through choices of language. This language ranges from inhuman equations to magical creatures to derogatory social labels, but functions in the same way throughout the novel. I assert that Jane is fully active in her pursuit of a place in society. It is paradoxically through assimilating to the language and culture of the higher classes and referring to herself as an inferior that Jane takes back her power. By acknowledging her inferiority through her language, either to herself or by participating in conversations with (or active silence toward) social superiors, Jane actively wrests conversation to her advantage.

Jane discovers very early on in the novel that language is more powerful than action and through the rhetoric learned from observation of social insiders, like the Reeds, Jane can position herself in society in a far more favorable light than the situation she was born into—the middle-class (at this point, unrecognized and a non-class) orphan of an improper marriage. She begins as a spectator in the Reed home, where she not only first discovers her status is unacceptable to English society, but also that physically active resistance will not win her freedom. So, when Jane is removed to Lowood, she spends her time observing and learning the correct way to interact with social superiors, which she then enacts fully and manipulatively during her time as a governess at Thornfield in order to climb social strata throughout the rest of the novel. Moving up and down by

association with Rochester as his governess, plaything, and fiancé, Jane also uses this time to cement her place above the class of servants and the poor. The necessity for an active participation in conversation is born from the sympathy of servants and social superiors toward Jane. As a space of sympathy is created around Jane, others display pity toward the young girl; this pity elicits shame from Jane. Throughout a majority of the novel, Jane requires intimacy through subjugation in order to achieve association with a social class through marriage, employment, or other means of shame-less inferiority. As Joseph Adamson and Hilary Clark put it, “A society without shame...would be a society without intimacy” (16). Otherwise, Jane is unattached and inferior, placing her outside of social order, but without freedom. Adamson and Clark note, “If one...crosses another’s inner limits, one violates his privacy, and he feels shame” (Wurmser, qtd, 17). Jane uses rhetoric to avoid and combat these violations from outsiders in order to stave the shame that comes from this intimate evaluation of her parentage and lack of respectable associations or wealth. Ultimately, Jane is lucky enough to inherit a large fortune and finds respectable familial connections, freeing her from the pursuit of association by subjugation and, I argue, from the necessity of associating with the social order at all.

Brontë’s earlier critics<sup>1</sup> often attribute the strained relationships between Jane and society/self to Rochester, the domineering male influence of the novel, and while they note the use of language, they fail to fully recognize the unusual patterns in Jane’s language<sup>2</sup>. For instance, scholars such as Steven Earnshaw, John G. Peters, and Chih-

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<sup>1</sup> Gayatri Spivak, Sara Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Janet Gezari

<sup>2</sup> Until the early 2000’s, much of the criticism on *Jane Eyre* seems to focus on feminist readings. As newer critical theory emerges, it appears that more scholars find that affect theory lends to a discussion of discursive studies of the novel.

Ping Chen focus on types of labeling of inferiority or deprecating language in reference to Jane in the novel—romantic, social, and supernatural, to name a few—and how these subsections of rhetoric lend to Jane’s agency or lack thereof. Jane’s acts of language as a whole are a means of social mobilization and limiting the study of her language to these subsections leaves room for investigation and close-reading. Sara Ahmed’s study of freedom and accomplishment as it relates to will speaks to Jane’s use of language in Brontë’s novel, *Jane Eyre*, in a way that many scholars are failing to recognize in current critical conversations (Ahmed 1). Ahmed explains that having will does not necessitate having confidence or power, per se. By untangling will from power, but maintaining that having will is an active state, we can see that it is possible for Jane to be both powerless and active at the same time. While Jane may have will, Ahmed notes that agency, or will, may not always be from a viewpoint of confidence:

Willing might be how we encounter an obstacle as that which is to be overcome: we might perceive the will as a resource insofar as it is bound up with a scene of overcoming. We do not have to give power to the will to suggest that how we experience willing is involved in how we experience power (understood here as capacity or competence). (37)

It is *how* Jane encounters the obstacle of her birth and tarnished family name that creates and sustains her willfulness.

By openly accepting her ambiguous social status and purposely making herself a pitiable figure through self-abjecting language, Jane cultivates a sense of sympathy from social superiors that leaves an opening for Jane to climb their social ladders without

drawing much notice. Instead of identifying Jane as a social climber, readers and society alike then tend to see Jane's travel in the social sphere as the triumph of a poor, unattached, and un-classed young woman. Moreover, Ahmed also suggests that "We tend to the will as a way of attending to what is not yet reached, as a way of reaching what is not yet" (38). That is, will is often the means to an achievement or accomplishment—in Jane's case, her ideal social standing. These accomplishments of will create a horizon of sorts, constantly revealing something new ahead of us, at some never-arriving endpoint, as we move forward—in time, in goals or achievements, in attempts at successful or unsuccessful exercises of will. Ahmed refers to this constantly moving horizon as a "will sphere" (38-40). Jane desires an accomplishment—liberty, of some kind—and works toward it. She may not always move forward, or in the case of my argument, up the social ladder, but she is always using language to exercise active, willful movement toward this goal.

Jane's ability to traverse social boundaries without resistance or notice stems directly from the language she uses toward herself, as well as the language used toward Jane by others. From the opening pages of the novel, Jane is labeled by others time and time again. Her entire objective, outer identity is defined by such labels as a "fairy," an "imp," an "animal," and a "changeling," to recollect only a few (Brontë). John G. Peters explains the power of these labels, observing:

Throughout the novel, Jane appears as a threat to the other characters. Either because she is an intruder from outside the community, because she is an enigma, or because her ideas are threatening, the other characters marginalize

Jane in order to dismiss her or her ideas and thereby transform her into something non-threatening. (57)

In the Reed's home, she is labeled as an interloper in the Reed family by both Mrs. Reed and the children. At Lowood, the religious school run by the fervent Brocklehurst, she is labeled as naughty and outspoken for questioning religious teachings: "this girl...is a little castaway:...this girl is—a liar!" (Brontë 66) Indeed, Peters explains, "[e]ven at Thornfield... she does not easily fit into the established roles of either gentry or servants. As a governess, she is a dependent; yet she is better born and better bred than" most of the staff; but even her social equal, Mrs. Fairfax, is reluctant to accept Jane as one of her own (59). What I mean to point out is not the objective fact that Jane is labeled at the margins of society, something that is already widely recognized in scholarship on the novel<sup>3</sup>. What I argue instead is that Jane purposefully and continually seeks out her break with society and herself by imposing the negative, socially marginalizing language as a self-referent. By doing so, Jane creates situations where pity arises from social superiors. This pity creates sympathy (and vice versa, often) so that those superiors feel comfortable inviting Jane into their lives or divulging the "secrets" of their social status that Jane may not otherwise learn, such as appropriate behaviors among men of high status. For instance, Jane is allowed to sit quietly on the outskirts of the party where Blanche Ingram is first introduced; whereas other servants would come and go, only seeing glimpses of the interactions of the elite, Jane is allowed special permission to spectate and learn from the entire gathering—an opportunity not offered to her prior to this point.

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<sup>3</sup> By such scholars as Sarah Gilead, Lori Pollock, and John G. Peters

Led by example of her superiors and readings of exotic cultures in such texts as Bewick's *History of British Birds*, Goldsmith's *History of Rome*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Jane learns the rhetoric of the inferior or inhuman, internalizes it, then, repeats the action back to the world. Learning to use and manipulate this language is the earliest instance where we can see Jane's willfulness established. Jane purposefully chooses terms of subjugation amidst her active struggle to be noticed, loved, or accepted by the Reed family. The earliest and most notorious example of this is, of course, when Jane is "gathering up [her] feet...cross-legged, like a Turk" shut off in an alcove away from the family while she reads (Brontë 7-8). By differentiating herself in a cultural sense, Jane creates a minority identity from the start of the novel. This metaphorical distancing from British culture enables Jane to separate from that realm altogether. So, now she may actively, physically remove her body from the British realm (the rest of the home), into the alcove (a marginalized position). Shortly after, Jane has an altercation with John (the imperial British male), and changes her minority persona again to suit this situation. Jane describes her struggle against punishment for striking John, calling herself a "rebel slave" with the resolution "in [her] desperation, to go all lengths" (12). While terming herself a "slave" inherently subjugates Jane to a master (in this case, John), she wisely chooses to refer to herself as a "rebel" as well (12). And yet again, Jane refers to herself pages later as a "thing": "[The Reeds] were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathize with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing...; a useless thing...; a noxious thing" (15-16). These disparate identities of passive objects with active functions may, in any other case, be incompatible; in the space of Jane's un-classed body, they

become an affirmation of Jane's use of language through her will. We can only see the full breadth of the application of will as a movement forward, if we consider the image of Ahmed's horizon. The "will sphere" reveals the possibility of future accomplishments and obstacles, in terms of Jane's climb to social superiority and freedom, by presenting her with options for subjugation.

## PART II: SHAPING JANE'S GOALS WITH SHAME AND SYMPATHY

In order for Jane to manipulate and master the functions of society, her language must express her shame in order to elicit sympathy from those within the English social order. Jane's obstacles— other people of established status, the participatory rhetoric of conversation, and the societal expectations of Victorian England— are often additional sources of Jane's shame and therefore, help explain the manifestation of her self-abjecting language. In her analysis of sympathy in the novel, Lorri G. Nandrea refers to "Audrey Jaffe's...study of sympathy in Victorian fiction [which] explores the manner in which sympathy, while appearing to erase differences and cross class divides, actually aids in the construction and maintenance of middle-class identity" (118). As an entirely mimetic experience: "to feel sympathy, it was necessary to 'represent in our imagination copies of the sentiments that we ourselves feel as we imagine ourselves in someone else's place and person'" (Marshall 5, qtd in Nandrea). It is important to note that in this novel, sympathy manifests in the eyes of those already *in* defined classes that Jane does not belong to; Jane's amorphous state, now identified as middle-class, made her the pitiable outcast to anyone not of Jane's situation—essentially, everyone Jane comes into contact

with. For instance, from the servant class, Jane is chastised by the Reed servants for her inability to meet the expectation of the silent outcast orphan. Later, Miss Fairfax serves as a similar reminder. From the upper classes, Jane is similarly expected to be the silent governess, whose only function is the care of Adèle. Jane describes the party where she spectates the Ingrams and other guests and comments on Blanche's "haughty lip" and "mocking air" toward Adèle and, by extension, Jane (Brontë 172-3). These characters feel sympathetic toward Jane only insofar as her situation differs from their own: "Society becomes a field of visual cues and its members alternative selves: imaginary possibilities in a field of circulating social images, confounded and interdependent projections of identity" (Jaffe 3). So, instead of drawing Jane into their circles to assimilate her, they further alienate her by defining, affirming, and manifesting that difference between their class and Jane's middle-class standing through their actions and language toward her. To add insult to injury, Jane sees that sympathetic division and feels shame, sadness, and anger for the necessity of this sentiment in her situation. During the discussion with Brocklehurst about Jane's removal to Lowood, they speak about Jane as if she is not there. Mrs. Reed affirms Jane's suspicion that she is not of their class after all, saying "I should wish her to be brought up in a manner suiting her prospects...to be kept humble" (Brontë 34). Jane responds internally: "I had felt every word as acutely, as I had heard it plainly; and a passion of resentment fermented now within me" (36). In short, Jane can only internalize their condescending sympathy as an array of shamed emotions, further eliciting anger and resentment as a reaction.

It is notable that the narrative recollections themselves add to the air of shame, pity, and sympathy by doubling Jane: Jane as a character and Jane as an older, wiser, and distant narrator. This creates a problematic attention to Jane as a character. The two Janes call back to Jaffe's explanation of sympathy in the novel, but this time, in reference to the distance between Jane as a narrator and Jane as a character. She says: "when sympathetic spectator and sufferer occupy different places in the social hierarchy," as narrating-Jane and character-Jane do, as well as character-Jane and other characters of the narrative, "what circulates in the spectator's mind are positive and negative cultural fantasies: images of social degradation, and simultaneously, of what Silverman<sup>4</sup> calls 'ideality'" (Jaffe 4). Jane as a narrator looks back on a younger Jane and can experience the sympathy that others during that moment were experiencing toward younger Jane. While it's difficult to assert whether or not Jane as a narrator is feeling shame that manifests in her writing or whether she is faithfully maintaining a truthful depiction of younger Jane's shame, this does bring to mind creations of distance within the narrative itself and an example of Jane's self-abnegating, shamed language. For instance, when Rochester takes an interest in Blanche Ingram, adult Jane sketches two pictures: one of beautiful, radiant Blanche and one of plain, unassuming Jane. Jane refers to Blanche as "an accomplished lady of rank" and Jane, an "indigent and insignificant plebian" (Brontë 161). This is language we may have expected from Rochester, but it is Jane who draws this harsh contrast when painting the pictures of herself and Blanche. The pictures are material manifestations of the self into an objective, tangible item for Jane to hold and study. This

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<sup>4</sup> Referencing Kaja Silverman

is perhaps the most literal example of Jane's shame at work in her language, as well as an effective moment to elucidate what I mean by self-referential, -abnegating, or -abjecting shame. She is "'disconnected, poor, and plain'" and chastises herself ("Poor stupid dupe!") for falling in love with Rochester (161). "Keep to your caste<sup>5</sup>," Jane reminds herself, insinuating that at this point in the novel, she is at least below the class of the likes of Rochester and Blanche (162). Examples like this demonstrate throughout the narrative that Jane's inferiority is most clearly exemplified in the language directed at or constructed by Jane. Jane seeks to rely on and prolong her inferiority in order to cover or compensate for the shame she feels from being always slightly less-than—less than a lady, less than a human, and less than a wife, to name only a few instances—and to quietly, covertly rise through society's ranks unnoticed by social superiors too busy sympathizing with Jane. Through these harsh assessments of her self, it is evident that she actually learns this skill much earlier than critics like Kaplan or Peters would have us expect. It is not her time at Thornfield that teaches Jane this type of language. Instead, we can look to the beginning of the novel to affirm that Jane is amidst learning or has already learned how to manipulate this willful choice of language.

Cognizant of her control of language, we can now readily identify the source of this rhetoric, which has been learned by outsider-Jane from those inside the social order of England, toward the start of the novel. The rhetorically-active Jane we see later in the novel is the product of an upbringing in the Reed household that debased Jane's ideas of her own societal rank in a deep, fundamental way. The evidence of Jane's social

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<sup>5</sup> This also calls to mind Indian class system, dominated by Britain but at once, not British—much like Jane.

inferiority comes early, only a few pages into the novel: "...tell mama she is run out into the rain—bad *animal!*" (emphasis mine, 9). Jane's understanding of her place in British society develops and sustains from this point in a two-fold manner. She is not only reminded by her social superiors that she is not to be tolerated by those of a higher class, but she inwardly affirms this notion by entertaining her lesser status, whether by self-inflicted penance for what Mrs. Reed has deemed Jane's sin (her inferior parentage) or by assenting to strict British class structure and gender roles. In fact, from a young age, Jane was instilled with the idea that her parentage was the original source of her shame and the ultimate source of sympathy from others. In reference to Jane's parentage, the following is revealed by narrating-Jane after hearing a conversation between servants from the Reed home, noting that:

my father had been a poor clergyman; that my mother had married him against the wishes of her friends, who considered the match beneath her; that my grandfather Reed was so irritated at her disobedience, he cut her off without a shilling; that after my mother and father had been married a year, the latter caught the typhus fever while visiting among the poor of a large manufacturing town where his curacy was situated, and where that disease was then prevalent: that my mother took the infection from him, and both died within a month of each other. (26)

Jane's recollection of her parents is hardly compassionate. Her distant, stoic tone is quick and short. The inferiority of the marriage is highlighted by shame-tinged words such as "irritated" and "disobedience," highlighting that obedience was valued above love (26).

Jane creates distance between herself and their memory, referring to her father as “the latter” when describing his disease. There is no sympathy as Jane ends the story, stating plainly “both died within a month of each other” (26). The entire novel centers around Jane’s constantly changing and evolving emotions, but this portion of the narrative shows no emotional connection. It could be that perhaps Jane, as a narrator and as Mrs. Rochester, finds that her family name no longer serves any function to the story. Later in the narrative, Jane rarely references her parents or family. Even at their mention, Jane is a disinterested spectator; she stands outside of the situation, looking on with the same sympathy that Jaffe describes. Jane’s parents are only useful to the narrative insofar as they are a reflection of Jane’s own feelings of shame derived from her parent’s legacy.

Jane’s distant bitterness stems directly from her frustration of the social situation her parents have left her in—the then unidentified and wholly unattached middle-class. In order for Jane’s mother to remain in proper society, she was expected to marry within or above her social rank. Marrying a clergyman degraded not only Jane’s mother, but also the family name; hence, her father’s the harsh actions of Jane’s grandfather were not unheard of in situations where socially unequal individuals married. The couple would have been shunned by good society and marked inappropriate to communicate or socialize with. While the later Reed patriarch (Jane’s uncle) took pity on Jane after once denying the parentless infant, her mother and father were never forgiven before their deaths by Jane’s grandfather; Jane is therefore still the product of a disowned daughter and a common clergyman, and remains so, even with the good graces of Jane’s uncle. Even her adoption and social association with the Reeds could have been more successful

had Jane not bore the name Eyre. Instead, she is entirely outside the family, save a partial blood relation. Lastly, Jane's father was working amongst the sickly masses of a manufacturing town. This situates the Eyres in an emerging middle-class of industry, attaching that still-ambiguous class to Jane as well. The middle class was still growing, building an empire based on the common man's industry rather than landed gentry, and were not entirely respected or accepted wholly among traditional society, based on a dying feudal system.

At the start of the novel, the Reed family shuns Jane for this very reason, but the young girl is unable to understand the difference between herself and the family and therefore, makes assumptions about her place in society that she soon learns are incorrect. Jane feels the issue is a matter of obedience, remarking "however carefully I obeyed, however strenuously I strove to please [Mrs. Reed], my efforts were still repulsed" (33). In reality, Jane quickly learns that obedience will not reconcile her social ambiguity and the shame at being associated with her. She could have realistically assumed her social rank was, at least, associated with the Reeds. However, Miss Abbot confirms that, in the social order of England, not only is she not associated with the Reed's class, but she is also below the class of the servants. Miss Abbot, the lady's maid, chastises Jane, telling her "you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep" (12). Jane has had no opportunity to enter higher class social ranks up to this point, as she is never given the opportunity to interact with the Reeds in a meaningful, functional way. All this time, Jane has been expected to earn her room and board in the home, but having never been given this information or the opportunity to learn social order, she has presumably misread the

situation. She realizes now that she has been marked as inferior, not for her poor adherence to Mrs. Reed's vague requests, but because she is marked with an inherited social blemish. Bessie later responds to Miss Abbott, in reference to Jane's birth, "Poor Miss Jane is to be pitied, too, Abbot" (26). This spurs and explains Jane's later feelings of shameful gratitude for those who assist her without expectation of compensation, like when she begs for shelter with St. John and his sisters after leaving Thornfield.

As further evidence that Jane is finely attuned to her movements through class, Jane persistently affirms that she remains above the level of poverty. For instance, when Jane is questioned by Mr. Lloyd in the Reed home, he asks Jane about her family. Jane replies that she knows only of low relations with the name of Eyre and though they may be well-meaning and kind people, she "should not like to belong to poor people" (24). She remarks on the degradation of person that would be required in order to become a low-class citizen and decides, as a child, that she "was not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste" (24). In the face of Mr. Lloyd and the threat of relocation, Jane boldly responds to a stranger that, though she is unhappy in her current position, she knows well enough that belonging to kinder, poorer family is a downward movement on the social ladder of England. Jane feigns a sympathetic move in her narration. She sees herself in the position of the Eyres and feels shame for the prospect. Even Jane is not exempt from the pangs of sympathy in relation to class struggle. However, these revelations of Jane's un-classed status serve to lay the groundwork for Jane's increasing willpower. Jane does not belong above or below stairs; she belongs outside of these

structures entirely and therefore, is empowered to observe and manipulate the social order.

These feelings of shame and willful motivations continue manifesting more clearly after Jane leaves the Reeds for Lowood. After Helen is made to wear the badge of 'slatern' by Miss Scatcherd's hand, Jane becomes infuriated. "The fury of which [Helen] was incapable had been burning in my soul all day, and tears, hot and large, had continually been scalding my cheek; for the spectacle of her sad resignation gave me an intolerable pain at the heart" (74). Ashley Bennett notes that this act transcends sympathy on Jane's part; it is a shared sense of shame that binds the girls. Already, they have struck a "'chord of sympathy' that can be touched through reading" and can "accommodate differences in understanding and affective engagement" (Bennett 308). Their interests "can diverge...without breaking the bond" created by their shared love of reading (309). This too goes for the sense of shame. Jane, though not being punished at that moment, can recollect the emotion, as Bennett notes quoting Adam Smith's metaphor of a crowd watching a man misbehave publicly:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. (305)

Jane feels Helen's shame, as well as shame for what Helen is *not* expressing that Jane feels she *should* be. Where Jane would have cried and blushed, Helen is stoic, "bringing

Helen and Jane into a shameful scenario whose form nonetheless accommodates other feelings and affectively binds Jane to Helen despite her sense of their divergent emotions and thoughts” (310). Jane places herself in the position of Helen as the sympathetic spectator; their personas assimilate in this realm of understanding and Jane sees what the prospect of Helen’s position in society could offer. Not long after, Mr. Brocklehurst publicly shames Jane for her upbringing and the situation is reversed. Rather than react with tears and anger, as Jane did, Helen turns to religion:

“Hush, Jane! you think too much of the love of human beings; you are too impulsive, too vehement; the sovereign hand that created your frame, and put life into it, has provided you with other resources than your feeble self, or than creatures feeble as you. Besides this earth... there is an invisible world and a kingdom of spirits...and those spirits watch us, for they are commissioned to guard us; and if we were dying in pain and shame, if scorn smote us on all sides, and hatred crushed us, angels see our tortures, [and] recognise our innocence....” (Brontë 69)

Kaplan reads Helen’s chastisement as “hardly sympathetic,” denying Jane “a democratized mirror of the public sphere,” that is, a secular and democratically-source opinion, to instead teach Jane how to use religion to navigate her disparate identities of female and low-class stature (12).

Here, Kaplan contrasts Helen and Miss Temple, clearly marking the latter as the superior, sympathetic being, but ignores Jane’s agency in this moment and her opportunity to learn from Helen how to mask, if not eliminate, her shameful

signification<sup>6</sup>. Jane has been introduced to religion through the eyes of Helen, who provides her with an alternative to her internalized shame. This affiliation with God is unlike the organized, corrupted religion Jane has seen before; Helen has a direct and personal relationship with God and Christianity and, unlike Brocklehurst, Helen paints the picture of a benevolent Christian community that Jane could belong to, transforming from social pariah to Christian (taking the place of class altogether). Jane could then transfer her shame into sin, which can be atoned through prayer and confession; this presents an easy solution for adolescent Jane, who has not yet had the opportunity to explore her options for liberation in the way adult Jane will be able to.

As a contrast to Helen, Miss Temple gives Jane a secular example of a woman passionate about her beliefs who is able to interact with authority without escalating the situation; she manages the well-being of the girls in her care by bending rules set forth by Mr. Brocklehurst, but the situation does not escalate to public punishment (like Brocklehurst's punishment of the young girls), which Jane has been unable to accomplish as of yet. A clear instance occurs when Miss Temple substitutes a palatable breakfast of bread and cheese for rancid, burnt porridge. Brocklehurst publicly and accusatorily questions Miss Temple, asking "Who introduced this innovation? and by what authority?" (Brontë 62). She responds: "I must be responsible for the circumstance, sir" (62). Brocklehurst rails against the rational Miss Temple, openly chastising her choice to feed the girls:

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<sup>6</sup> Reference to Bennett

“You are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying.... Oh, madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children’s mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls!” (63)

To this point, Miss Temple stands quietly during Brocklehurst’s rant, speaking only when spoken to, and only in defense of the girls. To temper the verbal and physical reaction young Jane will likely have, Miss Temple stops her and whispers, “Don’t be afraid, Jane, I saw it was an accident; you shall not be punished” (64). Miss Temple does not argue with her superior, but instead defuses the situation privately to Jane. Her subjugation to Brocklehurst meets his expectations of a woman in his service, and therefore, gives her the opportunities to do as she pleases or as she sees fit when he is not present; better to ask forgiveness than permission. This example not only teaches Jane to speak at the appropriate time, but to the correct person and with the correct response.

In the face of Brocklehurst’s condemnation of Jane, Miss Temple suggests an alternative to Helen’s Christian redemption, reminding Jane “that when a criminal is accused, he is always allowed to speak in his own defence. You have been charged with falsehood: defend yourself to me as well as you can” (71). The reference to law and governing forces is another perspective for Jane to consider and another place where Jane could become something more than ‘other,’ becoming instead part of a secular

community. Helen's way sets Jane up to be the Angel of the House<sup>7</sup>, a perfect Victorian woman fit for marrying; Miss Temple's way offers Jane the opportunity to liberate herself from the systematic oppression of the patriarchal society, but at the cost of being cast off from the public sphere. Jane appears to favor Miss Temple's approach, as she "craves recognition and hence embraces contestation" (Kaplan 12). The recognition at this point is simply the affirmation from a superior that Jane is somehow good enough to pursue her goal.

In either case, the education Jane receives from Helen and Miss Temple on how to overcome this obstacle at the hands of the patriarchal forces becomes invaluable in her transformative efforts later in the novel. In an effort to take up "a new servitude," Jane becomes the governess at Thornfield (Brontë 86). Feeling lost without the guidance of the deceased Helen and married Miss Temple, Jane is again experiencing the sentiments imbued by the Reeds. She is without connection to a family, to a social circle, and to society and seeing that Miss Temple's secular efforts for liberty have ended in marriage, Jane knows that her only opportunity for advancement socially at this point is to seek a place of servitude—or, put more simply, subjugation—since Jane has no romantic prospects at this point. Miss Temple shows Jane a successful upward movement in society by moving from boarding school teacher to the wife of a fairly wealthy male. Explaining the eight years she spends at Lowood, she remarks almost exclusively on Miss Temple's marriage. Jane says she "owed the best part of [her]

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<sup>7</sup> Termed by Coventry Patmore, the Angel was expected to control the domestic sphere while her husband was privy to the public sphere. As 1800 progressed, "the ideal developed into an increasingly insistent division of 'separate spheres' rationalized primarily in terms of the burdens faced by men" in the public sphere but expected to be somehow lifted by the angelic wife from her domestic sphere (Adams 8).

acquirements;...[Miss Temple] had stood [her] in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion. At this period [Miss Temple] married, removed with her husband (a clergyman, an excellent man, almost worthy of such a wife) ... and consequently was lost to [Jane]" (84 ). The only requirement for a degree of social freedom, Jane learns, is to be willingly subjugated by a social superior.

### PART III: ENACTING THE RHETORIC OF SUBJUGATION AT THORNFIELD

Lowood provides Jane the security of position, relative independence, and the ability to secure a place in society (given the title of teacher). This is, however, not enough for Jane. She desires a place in society that is more secure and in Jane's eyes, this place is as the subjugate of a family name—either her own or that of a husband. As Jane grows and becomes an adult teacher at Lowood, we begin to see her ability to set those goals along the horizon of her will sphere. With each move forward (on the horizon) or upward (on the social ladder), Jane can recognize and set her own long-term goals—assimilating with Rochester, removing Blanche Ingram from the picture, marrying Rochester, etc.. It also appears that as Jane ages, her self-abnegating language decreases; however, her willful participation in conversations that call attention to her social inferiority increase tenfold. Jane's shame waxes and wanes depending on her social situation, but in a controlled way. The first clear instance of this change is when an active adult Jane chooses to leave Lowood for her position as governess at Thornfield. This is a notable career change due the unusual focus in Victorian culture on characters cast out much like Jane and in need of a place in society. Governesses were often "the subject of

charitable endeavor,” according to M. Jeanne Peterson (8). Female servants outnumbered governesses by the thousands and “Moreover, the governess had no social position worthy of attention. She was at best unenvied and at worst the object of mild scorn, and all she sought was survival in genteel obscurity” (Peterson 8). Whether or not this describes the motivation of Jane’s move from teacher to governess, it is still notable to consider how Jane’s choice sets her up for another failure of liberation. Jane is consciously removing herself from Lowood in search of a position. Much like her oddly detached self-abjecting language, Jane attributes this idea not to herself, but to a non-human entity divided entirely from her consciousness. She thanks “A kind fairy” that “had surely dropped the required suggestion on [her] pillow...it came quietly and naturally to my mind.—‘Those who want situations advertise’” (Brontë 86). Jane pursues the “new servitude” to escape her position at Lowood, as she cannot continue her social climb in this position. Becoming a governess creates a new and more open space for Jane to experience society. We see here that while Jane accepts the position as governess, it is already a failure to meet the standards that Jane *states* she wishes to fulfill. The governess, according to Peterson, is a liminal position in society without association to a particular genteel class; she is invisible. The question remains: does Jane see this?

Jane no longer persistently refers to herself as an inferior or inhumanely; Rochester degrades her in his own language to a non-human entity. It is after his careful consideration of Jane and what appears to be light, teasing language that Rochester accuses Jane of bewitching his horse with a ring laid “for the men in green,” or small sprites doing Jane’s will (122). Jane counters back, in equal fashion, that her “men in

green all forsook England a hundred years ago” (122). This exchange appears harmless at this stage. Jane meets Rochester’s slights against her progress blow by blow for some time; however, their first conversations are littered with problematic master-servant directives and recognition of Jane’s inferiority, but it’s Rochester that mirrors much of the language Jane learned in her youth from the Reeds and used in reference to herself—an “inmate,” fairy, “seraph,” and “seducer” (124-136). This calls back to Jane’s earlier mentions of terms like “rebel slave,” “heterogeneous thing,” and the evaluation of her reflection in the red room (12, 16). Then again, when Jane runs to Rochester and puts out the fire about to engulf him, she is met with more degrading terms. “What have you done with me,” he demands, “witch, sorceress?” (148). Though Jane has just saved his life by tossing water onto the fire, Rochester continues to shame her, telling her to “wait two minutes till I get into some dry garments, if any dry there be” (149). Jane asks if she should fetch the overseer of the home, Miss Fairfax—a natural inclination. He responds condescendingly, asking “what the deuce would you call her for?” (149) He means for these responses to make Jane feel badly for not only how widely she spread the water, but how much she used, as well as making her feel as if she is unrightfully rushing him. There is also an implication of sexual impropriety as Rochester dresses shamelessly in front of his governess, and the shame that follows—or rather, should follow—as Jane is present for this transgression of social norms.

Rochester also constantly leads Jane by putting her in irreconcilable and inappropriate positions in order to assert his power. During their early conversations, for instance, he demands they eschew formalities. Though Jane is in his employ, he tells her,

“I don’t wish to treat you like an inferior: that is’ (correcting himself), ‘I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years’ difference in age and a century’s advance in experience’” (133). Jane finds herself in the position to speak freely and while she takes the liberty in her rhetoric, she does not take the liberty of applying this informality with others in the social order just yet. She knows well enough, after watching Miss Temple, that there are appropriate times to speak and opportune, rhetorically manipulative responses. We see this acquired skill at work, and Jane adds another skill to her repertoire of social manipulations. In addition, I have made the distinction between Jane’s self-abjecting language and the language of others. I would assert, however, that the conversations between Rochester and Jane present a special case in the novel. Jane does not often directly refer to herself in conversation or narration with derogatory language at this point; instead, she participates in conversations with Rochester where he refers to her in much the same terminology, in much the same situation of shame and sympathy that spurs Jane to use the language toward herself in other situations.

Her active *participation* in their banter is an active *agreement* that these terms are acceptable to her. This plan is made evident when Jane decides she will not reply to Rochester: “If he expects me to talk for the mere sake of talking and showing off, he will find he has addressed himself to the wrong person” (133). While Jane does not hold to this promise, it is the narrative choice to include this inward thought that makes it clear that Jane makes this choice—not Rochester. As his employee, she puts up no fight, disagrees with no label he presents; instead, she counters the essential points Rochester is making within these comments. The examples of domineering language from Rochester

are plentiful throughout their time together upon Jane's employment until her choice to leave. For instance, early in their relationship, Rochester displays a common ploy that recurs often in their banter. He gives Jane directives, as a master may: "' keep to yourself, and don't venture on generalities of which you are intensely ignorant'" (134). In Jane's past, directives like this come from the mouths of the likes of Mrs. Reed or Brocklehurst after Jane has done or said something that does not meet societal standards for propriety; but this directive follows an act of impropriety, instead, by Rochester. He asks Jane if they may dispense with the formalities that follow a conversation and relationship of a master and subordinate. Jane replies, "'I am sure, sir, I should never mistake informality for insolence: one I rather like, the other nothing free-born would submit to, even for a salary'" (134). This reply hardly demands a chastisement from Rochester, after the improper request he makes. In fact, Jane should rightly feel shame, if she were adhering to common social practices. Yet, Jane participates in these conversations willingly and responds to improper demands as if they were perfectly reasonable. For Jane, this is an opportunity to master and dominate conversation with a social superior, much like Miss Temple has taught her.

She ignores impropriety and does not argue with Rochester's unkind evaluations of her, which puts Jane in her desired place of subjugation. Instead, she counters with a dissenting opinion on their topic of conversation (though always framed as a subordinate by her constant use of "sir,"<sup>8</sup> or refuses to respond at all. This positions Jane as both a subordinate to Rochester, but somewhat dominant in their conversations; however,

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<sup>8</sup> Reference chapter XIV, where the word "sir" appears twenty-six times in their conversation.

Rochester appears to fail to recognize the way Jane moves the conversations to her advantage. As an example, Rochester asks her if he is handsome and while this is an inappropriate question to ask an employee directly, Jane considers her answer: “I should, if I had deliberated, have replied to this question by something conventionally vague and polite; but the answer somehow slipped...:-- ‘No, sir’” (131). Rochester counters Jane’s answer, stating “‘you are not pretty any more than I am handsome’” (132). This harsh evaluation of Jane’s appearance is unsuitable for their relationship, but rather than call attention to that fact or defend herself, Jane, “instead of speaking, ...smiled: and not a very complacent or submissive smile either” (133). The conversation on their informality pursues and while Jane continues to thoughtfully choose moments to speak, she begins to reveal dissenting opinions with Rochester. Rochester becomes somewhat antagonistic, saying he doesn’t “mean to flatter [Jane]” by allowing her responses, but Jane reserves her response for internal dialogue, then changes the subject to Rochester’s adolescence (134) By participating in this type of conversation and responding as she does, Jane uses the subjugation of her position as governess to her advantage to learn from higher-class Rochester and develop her own language.

The progression of Jane’s climb continues until Rochester’s proposal, when the two first come to heads as equals and Jane begins to exhibit marked discontent for her subjugation under Rochester. As she approaches the horizon, the goal of marriage becomes more clear, and Jane is unsure that this particular goal will be in her best interest—social liberty. Jane’s feelings for Rochester develop after she sees that he is too consumed with his own shame to be sympathetic toward Jane. This eliminates the

obstacle of her middle-class association, as he fails to make that differentiation. Instead, he shows Jane his “Pain, shame, ire—impatience, disgust, detestation” and Jane decides, after seeing Rochester operate with others from his social station, that he is ultimately “not of their kind...he is of mine...though rank and wealth sever us widely” (142, 175). It is clear that Jane recognizes their differences and understands that a marriage to Rochester will automatically associate her with his “rank and wealth” (175). So, when Rochester does propose to Jane, the rhetoric hearkens back to their early conversations. He says, “Jane, I summon you as my wife: it is you only I intend to marry” and Jane “was silent: [she] thought he mocked [her]” (254). Jane is again silent, which is a submissive move—and exactly what Rochester, the dominant master, wants from Jane, and exactly the move Jane intends to make in order to ensure the marriage. She is fully aware of the appropriate response at the appropriate time, though her narrative appears to feign confusion.

The subsequent time Jane spends at Thornfield reveals a problem. Jane and Rochester step into traditional roles, which they have eschewed up until this point. Rochester requests that they do not interact as master and servant, but neither are prepared, or really recognize, that the engagement reverts their roles back to gendered roles of power, or lack thereof. Jane quickly realizes that subjugation to a husband may associate her with a social status, but it does not free her; her means of freedom must change to something more independent, so Jane must break the engagement. Rochester asks Jane not to leave, not to “struggle so, like a wild, frantic bird,” an inhuman equation that asserts his strength and superiority (253). Jane’s rebuttal gives the reader hope that

she may yet succeed: “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you” (253). Here, Jane decidedly and succinctly rebuffs the labels Rochester uses for her. Even under the showers of gifts from Rochester, Jane’s assertions of the power over her own life oscillate. This is an unexpected consequence of the work Jane has done to climb socially to this point. The almost pleasurable shame she feels as a dependent is evident after she convinces Rochester to buy her a modest dress, mentioning “the more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation” (268). Not only does this harken back to Jane’s sense of shame for being not quite good enough for higher classes, but it also elicits a sense of shame at being made a “doll” by Rochester, an Angel, and a domestic subservient required to follow the whims of a husband, rather than the directives of a master (268). Recognizing this and realizing that shame has become a pleasurable endeavor rather than a power move, she fights against becoming an objectified “Harem inmate” and “English Celine Varens” (269-70). Like the rhetoric of her earlier self-abjecting terms, these combinations call to mind subjugation, but in different ways. The former term is fully subjugated and contains Jane as not only an inmate, but an inmate within a Harem—a male-controlled sphere. The latter term, working at both power and subjugation, disempowers and denationalizes French Celine, who otherwise, would have earned her living respectably in her own country. Referring to herself in this way is meant to be derogatory toward Celine, hinting implicitly that English women are distinctly different (read: less sexually promiscuous) than French women. But, at the same time, this reference calls to mind the possibility that Jane will be

used as a sexual object, instead of a liberated female. Both women lose value in this equation, but perhaps more so Cèline than Jane.

This battle, both internally for Jane and externally between the lovers, comes too soon in Jane's quest for belonging and costs some of her accomplishment toward social freedom. Instead of a verbal power move where Jane properly utilizes the language of her superiors to show her understanding of the social inequality, she rises, "open[ing] the piano, and entreated him...to give [her] a song" (271). Rochester tests Jane and asks her to sit down, but then "swept her off the stool," refers to her as "'a little bungler,'" and "pushe[s] [Jane] unceremoniously to one side—which was precisely what [she] wished" (271). Jane's wish to be subjugated is fulfilled, but without marriage or a family name to make her place in society concrete, she has still not succeeded. She has no choice but to search for liberation elsewhere after she finds that Rochester's wife, Bertha, is still alive. This lapse in her pursuit of connection is another instance where Jane's goals of liberation must change again and therefore, cannot be reached until she moves closer to her "will sphere" horizon. At this point, Jane has the option to stay with Rochester as an unmarried mistress or to leave. As his mistress, Jane does not secure a place in society or social freedom and in fact, would be worse off than her current un-classed (or middle-class) status. So, Jane leaves without a plan, but not without a goal. She must find her social liberation elsewhere.

#### PART IV: THE FREEDOM OF JANE'S INHERITANCE

Jane wanders the countryside and by a lucky turn of events, finds herself amongst family; this is her opportunity to associate herself, by relation, to a class. Her cousins, at this point merely unnamed acquaintances, take her into their home at Moor House. Jane listens to their conversations on the poor beggar being nursed back to health by their care and notes that “Never once in their dialogues did I hear a syllable of regret at the hospitality they had extended to me; or of suspicion of, or aversion to, myself” (339). Diana, Mary, and St. John, being of similar and problematic status as Jane, do not apply the same distancing sympathy to Jane and therefore, Jane does not feel the shame of her situation. In order for Jane to move forward toward her new goal, this is absolutely necessary. Removing shame from the equation allows Jane to funnel her efforts into a willful pursuit of freedom. Her renewed will and new situation alter her rhetoric, now more forceful and confident and less purposely subjugated. For instance, Jane demands to earn her keep and while speaking with the servant of the home so graciously taking her in, she speaks fairly harshly to Hannah: “You are mistaken, in supposing me a beggar. I am no beggar; any more than yourself of your young ladies” (340). Jane is “indignant,” though she has appeared on their doorstep without any recommendation of propriety (340). She slings directives at Hannah, saying “Give them to me” and “Let me have them,” referencing berries meant for a pie (341). Even as Adèle’s governess, Jane was never so forthright or harsh. As her position changes, so does Jane’s language.

While at Moor House, Jane acquires both a small fortune and association with her family name, finally thrusting her into a social status and marking the beginning of

Jane's freedom from subjugation. After discovering a windfall of twenty-thousand pounds, St. John also reveals his christened name—St. John Eyre Rivers. Jane happily announces her intentions for the newly discovered money:

Those who had saved my life, whom, till this hour, I had loved barrenly, I could now benefit. They were under a yoke,—I could free them: they were scattered,—I could reunite them: the independence, the affluence which was mine, might be theirs too. Were we not four? Twenty thousand pounds shared equally would be five thousand each, justice—enough and to spare: justice would be done,—mutual happiness secured. Now the wealth did not weigh on me: now it was not a mere bequest of coin,—it was a legacy of life, hope, enjoyment. (385)

The importance of this quote lies not within what Jane intends to do for others. It is the implication that, if she believes money will give them “independence,” “a legacy of life, hope, enjoyment,” then the money will also bring Jane these accomplishments (385). Jane's obstacles of social status are no longer relevant, as she is freed by her wealth and family connection.

Jane can now traverse social boundaries and the physical world without the shame of her parentage, fitting squarely into middle-class with her fortune and family name intact by association with her cousins. Jane chooses to leave this situation, but with her newfound freedom, she does not have the constraints that required her attention when she left the Reed home, Lowood, or Thornfield. St. John's failed proposal exemplifies how her new position changes Jane's rhetoric. Whereas Jane's reaction to Rochester's

proposal was silence, she is effusive with excuses for not marrying the missionary. She is “not fit for it” and does “not understand a missionary life” (402-3). She gives St. John a directive, asserting dominance instead of submission: “abandon your scheme of marriage—forget it” (409). And finally, when St. John realizes Jane is perfectly independent without marriage, Jane acknowledges her freedom in her narration, noting his “disappointment of an austere and despotic nature, which has met resistance where it expected submission... in short, as a man, he would have wished to coerce me into obedience” and Jane has denied it—a huge step forward from her relationship from Rochester and her ultimate goal realized (409). Jane is free to choose her liberty and while we may find that her final choice is subjugation on her own terms, it is her *choice* that frees Jane.

#### CONCLUSION: JANE RECONCILING CLASS AND SELF IN A NEW SPACE

With her goal realized, Jane returns to Rochester in an equalized position—Jane is wealthy and independent, whereas Rochester is blind and dependent upon a caretaker—freeing Jane from the necessity of the rhetoric of subjugation. Upon realizing Jane has returned to his side, he repeats her name: “Is it Jane?;” “Jane Eyre! Jane Eyre;” “My living Jane?;” “embrace me, Jane” (433-4). During their first reunited conversation, Rochester does not refer to Jane as an inhuman thing, an object, or by a derogatory name. Instead, they have a respectable conversation in which Jane has every opportunity to assert rhetorical dominance and, for the most part, does. While Jane problematically begins the repetition of “master” and “sir” within their initial conversation, she finds

other ways to assert her new position—namely through a system of metaphors that come close to, but do not reach the same level as, Rochester’s labels for Jane (433). As a governess, Jane manipulated their conversation in more subtle ways. Now that Rochester is in need of Jane’s care, she flips their roles by referring to Rochester in animalistic terms:

“It is time some one undertook to rehumanise you,” said I, parting his thick and long uncut locks; “for I see you are being metamorphosed into a lion, or something of that sort. You have a ‘faux air’ of Nebuchadnezzar in the fields about you, that is certain: your hair reminds me of eagles’ feathers; whether your nails are grown like birds’ claws or not, I have not yet noticed.” (436)

Rochester recognizes the power dynamic has shifted and after Jane evaluates how badly he has been injured, he craftily slips in a derogatory, inhuman label, calling back to their previous dynamic. Jane asks if Rochester can see her and he responds, “No, my *fairy*” (436, emphasis mine). Even in his state, Rochester cannot rhetorically allow Jane her freedom; and worse yet, Jane, as before, does not react to this label, but instead asks, “When do you take supper?” (436) Soon after, Rochester labels her again as a “mocking changeling—fairy-born and human-bred” (438). The reappearance of these labels begs the question of the necessity for Jane to reply. If she does not, she is participating in the conversation and therefore, allowing the label. If she does reply to it, she asserts her dominance. However, Jane is already free. Rhetoric of subjugation is no longer a tool needed to gain or maintain her freedom.

We find that Jane's active rhetoric of subjugation was simply not enough, but necessary in order for Jane to find her family, fortune, and therefore, independence. Though she presses on the limits of social status by desiring subjugation in order to place her, at least, as the subordinate of a classed individual or family, this stress on language is only effective for those within English society; Jane is without, until her fortune places her above the middle-class and therefore, in a respectable status. She does not find her freedom wholly at Gateshead, Lowood, or Thornfield; it is instead, only during her time at Moor House and her settlement in the private sphere of Ferndean that Jane's shame of always being less-than the perfect angelic wife or the industrious employee drops away. Her cousins do not look upon her with the same sympathy that the servants or Blanche Ingram exhibited. Jane no longer needs to feel shame for her middle-class status because no one in the home elicits that shame. When Jane finds her community, or at least the space to recognize, nurture, and evolve her gendered evolution of self and the change of her position as an independent, well-off female, she can return to the previously oppressive space Ferndean with the knowledge she is now empowered to create a sense of self within it, instead of searching endlessly for a subjugated association that cannot provide her with full liberty. While returning to Thornfield would have been a return to a public sphere, with the prying eyes of servants and the curious stares of tourists and gentile families calling on the publicly-open home, Ferndean is a private space in which normative roles safely fall away for some time (at least, until Rochester regains his sight).<sup>9</sup> Since the narration sums up several years very quickly, and with little insight as

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<sup>9</sup> It's also interesting to note that while Rochester and Jane would realistically have the funds to rebuild a

to how Jane truly feels about her situation, we cannot be sure that Ferndean sustains this power dynamic for independent, free Jane. The trope of the self-made and reworked woman, attributed to much of Brontë's fiction, shows that "gradually the protagonist recognizes that complete withdrawal is not only pragmatically unworkable, but self-destructive;" hence, Jane's return to Rochester, but on her own conditions (Mombberger 358). As if their previous relationship was symbolically destroyed after Jane's revelation of self-preservation, Jane and Rochester instead inhabit an altogether new and equalized space instead.

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proper, public home in the spirit of an updated Thornfield, or *Pride and Prejudice*'s Pemberly (as an example), they chose instead to remain in a home condemned by Rochester. It was unfit for Bertha, though his feelings toward her were those of animosity and obligation. In a relationship of supposed affection and care, it could be a power move by Rochester to keep Jane limited to Ferndean, as he knows she is free to make choices she was not able to make prior to this point. \*Attributed to Dr. Kimberly Manganelli

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