

To House a Moor and End a Marsh: Jane and Imperialism through Liminal and Structural Processes in *Jane Eyre*

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Abstract

Liminality, as defined by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, is a valuable and yet highly underused concept for analyzing Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, especially for the novel's eponymous heroine. For much of the novel, Jane Eyre exhibits potential for liminality, both in her character and in her narrative space. To be liminal is to be removed, to some degree, from the social structures and institutions of one's time and place in history. For Victorian era Great Britain, the British colonial empire must be considered a forefront social institution. Therefore, examining whether a figure existing in Victorian Great Britain is liminal or not reveals whether that figure is subversive or supportive to Britain's imperialist project. Thus, analyzing the liminality of Jane holds significant and urgent implications for postcolonial criticism, especially since past postcolonial criticism of this novel has largely been concerned with whether the novel reads against or with nineteenth century imperialism. Yet, no critic thus far has attempted to examine the postcolonial concern through elements of liminality. This research therefore takes up this approach and analyzes how Jane entering or leaving liminality affects her participation in or resistance against the imperialism of Victorian era Great Britain. Gayatri Spivak's "Three Women's Text and a Critique of Imperialism" serves as a theoretical basis for further postcolonial analysis, as do van Gennep and Turner's writings on liminality. This essay applies Spivak's arguments to show how Jane is complicit in the imperialist tendency through her departure from liminality. This essay also argues against Spivak to show how Jane nonetheless successfully inhabits liminal space and thus is capable of resistance. Borrowing from Louis Althusser's ideas of ideological state apparatuses and interpellation, however, this paper concludes that Jane is ultimately more complicit in the imperialist agenda than she is resistant to it. This conclusion has the implication of reminding critics, like Spivak, who view Jane entirely as an imperialist subject that Jane is more resistant than she is made out to be and that resistance to an institution as socially entrenched as imperialism is possible. It also reminds critics who prefer to see *Jane Eyre* as a subversive text and Brontë as a subversive author that individual autonomy is often illusory.

Keywords: Jane Eyre, Imperialism, Liminality

1. Introduction

In *Jane Eyre*'s oft-examined red room scene, Jane catches her reflection in a looking-glass and sees a figure "like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp" from "Bessie's evening stories" that "[come] out of lone, ferny dells in moors" (Brontë 18). Even this early on in the novel, Jane has already caught a glimpse of her future self—the adult Jane that, too, emerges from the "lone, ferny dells" of Moor House and Marsh End. Jane, as "[phantom]," "fairy," "imp," and orphan, inhabits, within the very nature of her character and birth, a space of liminality, which is defined as a transitional period or phase during which a subject is not a part of social structures/institutions and therefore lacks social status. Liminal as they are, Jane's traits are not easily concealed, erased, or structuralized. Not

that Jane tries. In fact, she seems to embrace and take advantage of these aspects of herself, and even feels herself violated whenever there is any attempt to suppress these features.

As demonstrated by the numerous instances in which Jane is described or associated with fairylike and otherworldly imagery, Jane possesses attributes similar to that of beings that do not take up fixed social positions and that are positioned at the edge of society, or not in human society at all (e.g. phantom, fairy, imp, orphan, etc.) and that are, hence, liminal. Thus, Jane can be said to be “internally” liminal, in the sense that Jane exhibits liminality within her very character and her characteristics. If Jane is liminal within her very character, then she is made doubly liminal by the external narrative processes and movements that she undergoes throughout the novel, such as her inhabitation at “lone, ferny dells in moors.” In other words, Jane can also be “externally” liminal in the sense that the narrative places Jane within liminality by bringing her to settings and spaces that are liminal, as opposed to liminality that is already a part of Jane. Unlike her internally derived liminality, however, Jane actively seeks to eliminate most or all traces of her external liminality. Indeed, in one of the only major instances where Jane intentionally seeks external liminality, she does so only because the alternative meant the loss of her internal liminality. That is, when Jane makes the conscious choice of leaving Thornfield Hall, she does so only because marrying Rochester would have deprived her of all the autonomy that her liminal characteristics provided her with. Thus, for much of the novel, there is continuously a discrepancy and tension between the internal and external characterization of Jane. For this reason, the time from Jane’s escape from Thornfield Hall to her three-day wandering to her entry into Moor House serves special importance as an instance where Jane’s liminality is fully manifested.

The concept of liminality was first developed by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in his book, *The Rites of Passage*. In his book, van Gennep described liminality as a threefold process. First, there are the “rites of separation,” or “preliminal rites” (11), in which a subject separates from themselves the practices, rules, behaviors, codes, etc. of their previous identity. Then, the subject enters “transition rites,” or “liminal rites” (11), where the subject has not yet been reinscribed into formal rituals, but has the means of reentry. Van Gennep lastly describes “rites of incorporation,” or “postliminal rites” (11), in which the subject is reincorporated into social structures and takes on a new identity or role. Here, van Gennep is applying these terms specifically to ethnographic studies of small-scale societies and cultures, but his ideas work just as well when extended to general sociological phenomena. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “liminality” as a “transitional or indeterminate state between culturally defined stages of a person’s life.” To be in liminality, then, is to be in between stages that provide a person with a determined position or status within their sociocultural context. To gain any such determined position or status within a sociocultural context means removing a person from liminality and placing them into an element of structure. For that reason, liminality and anti-liminality (the process of leaving liminality) might also be considered antistructure and structure, respectively.

To say, then, that Jane is in liminality is to say that she is, in some sense, removed from her sociocultural context, namely Victorian era Great Britain. Conversely, to say that she leaves liminality is to say that she is a participant within that same sociocultural context. One of the most prominent, if not latent, aspects of that culture and society was its colonial empire. Given this reality, the question of whether *Jane Eyre* and Charlotte Brontë (insofar as *Jane Eyre* can be representative of Brontë’s identity) affirm or subvert British imperialism has been a matter of urgent consideration for postcolonial literary critics. Yet, no critic thus far has attempted to examine the matter directly through elements of liminality in the novel, despite the clear implications and significance that liminality has for determining imperialist involvement. After all, if liminality denotes a certain amount of separation from structures and rituals of culture and society, and those same structures/rituals are complicit in the imperialist agenda, then to say that someone is liminal is to suggest a certain degree of removal from that imperialist tendency. If someone is fully immersed into structures, on the other hand, then that suggests full participation, or complicity at the very least, in the imperialist tendency. Thus, examining Jane’s liminality will shed light on the question of whether or not *Jane Eyre* is complicit in the imperialist project. As previously discussed, Jane moves in and out of liminality. Even if she is out of liminality externally, she is most likely still in liminality internally. Therefore, I do not argue that *Jane Eyre* either fully affirms or subverts imperialism. However, I do argue that while Jane displays potential for removing herself to some degree from imperialist tendencies through her liminal characteristics and actions, she is ultimately unaware of both the anti-imperialist implications of liminality and the imperialist implications of structure, and through that lack of awareness becomes complicit in imperialist tendencies.

2. Critical and Theoretical Background

Perhaps the most notable work that takes up the argument that *Jane Eyre* and Brontë affirm imperialism unquestioningly is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Three Women's Text and a Critique of Imperialism." In her essay, Spivak explains that her project is to "examine the operation of the 'worlding' of what is today 'the Third World' by what has become a cult text of feminism: *Jane Eyre*" (244). By "worlding," Spivak "means that it is not enough to see Third World writing as a separate thing out on the margins of metropolitan culture" (Parker 286). Rather, "given the hybridity or interconnectedness of cultures, the Third World is part of the metropolitan world, just as the metropolitan world is part of the Third World" (Parker 286). She most specifically targets the individualistic feminism that had been the popular mode of feminist criticism of *Jane Eyre* at the time, which she believes not only remains oblivious to the imperialism that makes the rise of the "feminist individualist heroine" (Spivak 251) possible, but also "reproduces the axioms of imperialism" (Spivak 243). Spivak further argues that in the making and individuation of human beings, the constitution of the individuated subject produces and reproduces—through Louis Althusser's interpellation—preexisting and unchallenging attitudes towards imperialism. For example, one scene Spivak features in her article is when Jane is "shrined in double retirement" (Brontë 10) at her window seat. Here the novel individualizes Jane by marking off a space of her own and provides her with a "self-marginalized uniqueness" (Spivak 246). In setting this space for Jane and Jane only, the novel must inevitably disinherit and destroy Bertha, who occupies a similar space. Spivak's reading therefore goes against readings that see Bertha merely in psychological terms as Jane's uncanny double. For Spivak then, the entirety of *Jane Eyre* presents imperialism as an unquestioned ideology. Hence, the novel gives St. John Rivers and an account of his mission the last word.

Spivak has identified narrative strategies that are useful for a continued critique of elements of imperialism in the novel, such as how spatial themes achieve imperialist effects. However, while I am inclined to agree that *Jane Eyre* and Brontë affirm imperialism more so than they subvert or challenge it, I tend more to disagree with Spivak's notion that the novel largely leaves the ideology of imperialism unquestioned. Spivak's reading is provocative, so many critics have responded to her arguments with objections similar to mine. One such response is Susan Meyer's "'Indian Ink': Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of *Jane Eyre*" from her book, *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction*. Meyer believes that Spivak is wrong in arguing that *Jane Eyre* maintains purely an unquestioned ideology of imperialism. Rather, Meyer sees that *Jane Eyre* is characterized "by an ideology of imperialism that is questioned—and then reaffirmed—in interesting and illuminating ways" (66). For Meyer, *Jane Eyre* uses Bertha Mason to represent the fear the British had at this time of slave uprisings in Jamaica. This presentation of British colonialism opens the possibility that Brontë was making a "critique of British slavery and British imperialism in the West Indies" (Meyer 71), a possibility supported by the fact that Rochester is punished for imprisoning Bertha and Jane. However, any such presentation of British colonialism is weakened by the fact that race is used mostly for figurative purposes rather than treated as a subject in and of itself. According to Meyer, race is employed as a metaphor for class and gender inequalities, though the way race is used does not seem to apply to race itself, or at least not to the same extent. Lastly, Meyer argues that although St. John does get the last word in the novel, his history is still quarantined in its distance from the main narrative. Thus, *Jane Eyre* simultaneously tries to challenge imperialism while still complicit in it.

Meyer's arguments reflect my own reading of the treatment of imperialism in *Jane Eyre*, but the matter of how liminality works to that effect remains. In her article, "Liminality and Antiliminality in Charlotte Brontë's Novels: Shirley Reads *Jane Eyre*," Sarah Gilead engages in the project of charting the various ways in which *Jane Eyre* demonstrates both elements of liminality and antiliminality, a term she uses to refer to structures "hailing" in its subjects. Gilead sets up her interpretive problem by claiming that "*Jane Eyre* is perhaps the paradigmatic liminal novel of the Victorian period," (303) which she justifies first by citing the novel's "overt multiplicity of...textual sources" (303). She moves on to describe how Jane, as "the orphan, the child, the powerless female, and at times the madwoman, the criminal, and the Christian pilgrim," acts as a "potent liminal configuration" (304). Gilead then goes through the number of "transformative crises" (304) Jane undergoes, analyzing the ways in which Jane participates in either structure or anti-structure in the major stages of the narrative and in the moments between those stages. Of primary concern for me, then, is Gilead's analysis of Jane's escape from Thornfield Hall, her journey after the escape, and her entering the Moor House/Marsh End stage. Not surprisingly, Gilead interprets this stage as a site where, "antistructural episodes regenerate structure" and where Jane reaches the "terminus of the liminal experience," initiating "her rebirth as a socialized adult" (309). Yet at the same time, however, the environment represented by Moor House and Marsh End is still a "borderline place" (309).

Another useful method of analyzing Jane's liminality and her corresponding relationship to imperialism is Louis Althusser's essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" from his book, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other*

Essays, in which Althusser introduces the term and concept of “interpellation.” Althusser starts his essay by stating that “every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced would not last a year,” (127) which he attributes to Marx. One of the crucial points Althusser bases his essay out of, then, is the idea that “the ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production” (127). Echoing Antonio Gramsci’s idea of cultural hegemony, Althusser argues that this reproduction of the system (that which allows production) is enabled by the process of interpellation, in which “ideology hails...concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (173). Defined otherwise, interpellation is “the process of being passively, unconsciously drawn into dominant social assumptions” (Parker 224), such so that it reproduces the conditions that enable the social institution to reproduce itself. By ideology, Althusser means not a conscious system of beliefs or ideas (e.g. liberalism, democracy, pro-choice), but rather refers “to an unconscious set of beliefs and assumptions, our imaginary relation to real conditions that may not match what we imagine” (Parker 224). The ways in which we are interpellated into ideologies Althusser calls “ideological state apparatuses,” which include institutions like schools, media, churches, entertainment culture, families, unions, etc.

Finally, another useful complement to Spivak’s essay is Edward Said’s chapter on narrative and social space, “Consolidated Vision” in *Culture and Imperialism*. One of Said’s main goals in this chapter is to argue for the importance of “contrapuntal reading,” the point of which he says is to “take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it” (66). Although Said mentions the possibility of resistance to imperialism, he is nonetheless highly critical of nineteenth and early twentieth century novels. He suggests that neither the author nor the text that they produce can be free from the moment or circumstances in which they are writing. Specifically, Said argues that packed into a novel are “both a highly regulated plot mechanism and an entire system of social reference that depends on the existing institutions of bourgeois society, their authority and power” (71). Novels do not cause imperialism, but the two are “unthinkable without each other” (71). In order to get at anti-imperialist resistance, then, it is key that “one must open [a text] out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded” (67).

What Spivak has identified for the purposes of this essay is the way in which physical spaces have the capacity to influence Jane’s involvement or relationship with imperialism. For Spivak, such discursive and narrative tendencies increase Jane’s supportive involvement and relationship with imperialism. Meyer provides a more nuanced, contrasting view that recognizes some of the possibilities for the novel’s resistance. One such possibility that has been left unaddressed is the element of liminality. Gilead has outlined the ways in which the novel and Jane take up and display liminality, which, given liminality’s antistructural tendencies, indicates that *Jane Eyre* and Jane do demonstrate resistance. Yet, Gilead also discusses the moments when Jane leaves liminality and reenters social institutions and structures. Althusser, then, provides the framework by which we can understand such a process by establishing and defining the ideas of interpellation and ideological state apparatuses. Finally, Said helps us understand what the process that Jane undergoes reveals about the larger picture of the relationship between individuals and their society and institutions.

3. Jane, Liminality, and Imperialism

In her essay, Spivak at one point suggests that “the manipulation of the domestic inscription of space within the upwardly mobilizing currents of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bourgeoisie in England and France is well known” (246). I would suggest, as I think Spivak would as well, that “upwardly mobilizing currents” of the bourgeoisie is not restricted to “domestic...space,” but applies also to space beyond the domestic. Such is the case with Jane’s inscription of the space of Moor House and Marsh End. The *Oxford English Dictionary*’s second definition of “moor” is that it is “a piece of unenclosed waste ground; uncultivated ground covered with heather.” The third definition states, “An area of unenclosed, uncultivated land held by a proprietor or as common land by a town, village, etc.” In both cases, the definition describes a moor as “uncultivated.” A moor, then, is empty, natural, liminal space, which means Moor House must be a private space carved out or “inscribed” from the vastly emptier space of the moor. In the beginning of the novel, Jane sets off a space of her own to read at the window seat, an act which Spivak believes individualizes Jane and provides her with “self-marginalized uniqueness” (246), especially since it takes place in an “already triply off-center place” (246). If the window seat is a “triply off-center place,” then so must be Marsh End. Like a moor, a marsh is usually lacking in structures or signs of civilization. Even if there are structures or signs of civilization, establishing those requires draining the marsh, a human activity denotative and connotative of cultivation.

What else is viewed by Europeans as “uncultivated” and uncivilized? It was frequently the narrative told by the colonizers that the imperialist project was a mission to cultivate the uncultivated and civilize the uncivilized, though

this was mostly an excuse to effect a noble image of the economically-driven endeavor. For Jane, then, to reside and take up the space of Moor House mirrors quite well the imperialist project of the British. However, Jane is not the one who built the house, and nor is she, at first, doing anything more than living in the house. Thus, she is initially simply complicit in the imperialist agenda rather than being an active contributor, since she is not actively engaging in any activity suggestive of cultivation or civilizing. Moor House, though, is, as Gilead points out, the site where “antistructural episodes regenerate structure” and where Jane reaches the “terminus of the liminal experience,” initiating “her rebirth as a socialized adult” (309). Soon after Jane recovers from her three-day wandering, St. John Rivers gives her a teaching position. True to the space and role in which she resides, Jane immediately starts treating her pupils with condescension not unlike the manner in which Europeans treated their colonized subjects. Jane describes some of the students as “unmannered, rough, intractable, as well as ignorant” (Brontë 413) and reminds herself that “these coarsely-clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy” (Brontë 413). According to Jane, these students possess “the germs of native excellence, refinement, intelligence, kind feeling” that would sprout and bear fruit if only Jane does her “*duty*...to develop these germs” (Brontë 413). Jane sees it as a duty to cultivate the “germs” of these children, just as Europeans saw it as their duty to “civilize” colonized subjects. With the weary language Jane uses to describe her task and surroundings, one also gets the sense Jane very much sees her office as a burden, just as the colonial project was portrayed by the narrative spun by Europeans colonizers. And by developing these “germs,” Jane demonstrates and participates in the use of education as an institutional tool and ideological state apparatus to produce subjects that reproduce the institution. Naturally, the rest of the residents at Moor House fulfill similar roles and engage in similar projects. St. John, as a clergyman, Christianizes both the townspeople and, later, colonized Indians. Diana and Mary work as governesses. Since their pupils would likely already belong to rich, upper class families, Diana and Mary do not “civilize” subjects as much as Jane or St. John, but they nonetheless act as institutionalizing influences upon the children.

Jane’s extrinsic liminality ends irrevocably when she receives her uncle’s inheritance, but she does not receive it through her own volition, and thus the development is not the most effective demonstration of her participation in imperialist tendencies. This comes, I believe, when Jane has received her inheritance and takes on the project of decorating and furnishing Moor House in anticipation of the return of her newly discovered cousins. If Jane had previously taken on a role tantamount to the Christian missionary who traveled abroad to civilize colonial subjects, then Jane now has assumed the role of the European who sought to settle permanently into a colony. After all, to decorate and furnish any space is to imply the resident’s wish to stay in that space permanently, or at least for an extended duration. Jane brushes, dusts, cleans, and cooks and afterward remarks how “delightful” it was “by degrees to invoke order from the chaos” (Brontë 452). Jane then furnishes the house. The whole process is described in highly ritualistic language, where tasks are completed in a step-by-step fashion and where the necessity of the tasks is never questioned. Afterwards, the house takes on a new identity, just as anyone participating in rituals like marriage or the proselytization of indigenous populations, emerges with a new, socially-assigned identity. This scene is also important in the way in which Jane replicates the red room. In her description of her decorative project, Jane recounts that she arranged “dark handsome new carpets” and furnished the bedroom with “old mahogany and crimson upholstery” (Brontë 452). Back when Jane was immured in the red room, the room is described as having “a bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask;” a red carpet; a “table...covered with a crimson cloth;” and a wardrobe, a table, and chairs “of darkly polished old mahogany” (Brontë 17). Given that the red room episode was an instance where Jane was kept to herself, isolated from any sense of community, her act of furnishing and decorating a portion of the communal space that is Moor House after the red room serves to reappropriate that memory and experience so that it actually works towards undoing the isolating effect. In this sense then, acting in the cultivating, civilizing, and imperialist role serves to provide Jane with a community. This makes sense, since to be taken out of liminality means reentering society, a community at its most foundational level. This, then, reads against Spivak’s argument, since she suggests that inscribing space and individualization reinforce imperialism. As this example shows, however, communal space can be just as imperialist as individual space.

If Jane starts assuming an imperialist inclined role at the Moor House space, then it follows that Jane’s three-day wandering bears striking resemblance to the ocean voyage that precedes colonization. This three-day episode is where Jane is at her most liminal. She has entered a place with “great moors behind and on each hand of [her]” (Brontë 371), but there is no Moor “House” to structure her, nor is the terminus, Marsh “End,” anywhere near. Here, Jane has no space sectioned off for herself; any space she occupies she must leave by the next day. Here, she is also exposed to the elements. In all but three days, she experiences a variance of three climates: temperate, warm, and cold. On her first night, Jane remarks that “the dew fell, but with propitious softness” and that “no breeze whispered” (372). On that night, “nature seemed...benign and good” (372). The next morning, Jane comments on “what a still, hot, perfect day” it is in the “golden desert” of the “spreading moor” (373-374). At the end of her wandering, as she

nears Moor House, Jane notes that the “rain fell fast, wetting me afresh to the skin” and that her “living flesh shuddered at its chilling influence” (380). She adds that “it might have pelted on” had she “stiffened to the still frost” and fell to “the friendly numbness of death” (380). Contrast these scenes with Jane “shrined in double retirement” with “clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating [her] from the drear November day” (10). In this liminal space, it hardly matters if Jane represents the heat or if the cold represents the counterposing forces. Such representations matter only when there can be structural dichotomies capable of delineating categorical and distinct signifiers and signifieds. In this liminal space, there is only Jane and nature. To be liminal, then, is to have no hierarchical categories. Without any hierarchical categories, there can be no positions of superiority/inferiority, dominance/subordination, colonizer/colonized, etc. To be liminal, therefore, is not simply to be removed from imperialism, but from every power dynamic possible.

Yet, achieving such a state is hardly possible. After all, the ocean voyage must end. The ship must eventually land somewhere, lest the passengers die of thirst or starvation. Similarly, Jane must land somewhere during her three-day wandering or else die from thirst or starvation. Indeed, she almost does. The fact that she ends up near death after her experience of extreme liminality suggests that no one can exist in pure liminality and still be able to live. Victor Turner, another anthropologist who built upon the ideas of liminality left by van Gennep, suggested as much when he defined liminality as “an antistructural, fluid state that paradoxically generates social structure” (Gilead 319). Turner elaborates that liminality is “the Nay to all positive structural assertions” but also “in some sense the source of them all” and “a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise” (Turner 97). If liminality is a source of structures, then the existence of liminality always automatically guarantees the existence of structure. Oddly enough then, the existence of the possibility of liminality, a state of no binary oppositions, means the existence of a binary opposition—liminality/structure or liminality/anti-liminality.

All this is to say that it is little wonder that Jane gets “hailed” in, literally and theoretically, after her bout of wandering. Literally, she is hailed in by a candle light in Moor House. Figuratively and theoretically, she is hailed, or interpellated, into and by ideological state apparatuses—in this case, a household or a family. Desperate Jane has no choice but to respond to the candlelight hailing. It may appear Jane is making a conscious choice to go towards the light, but when death is the alternative, consciousness and choice have little to do with Jane’s actions. Jane’s desperation, then, is more representative of the way in which we cannot help but be “passively, unconsciously drawn into dominant social assumptions,” not unlike the way in which Jane is drawn into the structure of imperialist tendencies that is Moor House.

4. Conclusion

This line of thought echoes Said’s argument in “Consolidated Vision,” for if Jane cannot help but be interpellated into structures of imperialist tendencies, then that suggests that people in nineteenth and early twentieth century Great Britain could not help but be complicit in the imperialist agenda, including authors, as Said emphasizes. It is at Ferndean Manor, however, that Jane becomes most engaged with imperialism, and Ferndean Manor, located deep within a forest, is, again, the structuralization of a “triply off-center place.” After Rochester has asked Jane to marry him, Jane asks Rochester to “let [her] look at [his] watch” (Brontë 514). Rochester tells Jane to “fasten it into your girdle...and keep it henceforward” (Brontë 514). Time throughout the novel has been used to connote social status and power. Yet, time, as we have constructed it, is also one of the forces most engaged to imperialism. After all, industrialization cannot happen without the standardization of time. Trains cannot operate without standardized schedules. Machinery cannot operate without timed mechanics. Factories cannot operate without their workers basing their days on the hours of their shift and knowing when to clock in and out. And imperialism is so necessary to Europe because much of Europe has industrialized. The causal relationship can go the other direction too, since industrialization no doubt made imperialism all the more possible, which means there is a positive feedback loop between industrialization and imperialism. Time, then, acts to allow and perpetuate imperialism. To be the person who is most in control of time, then, is to be just as engaged with imperialism as time is. By taking the watch, Jane unknowingly takes on this role.

It is a frustrating reality that Jane assuming power and autonomy for herself necessarily means she simultaneously becomes more engaged with imperialism than before. It is an even more frustrating reality that the means of female empowerment have been hijacked or co-opted, prior to it even being used, by those who got their hands on the means first. Such is the case with time here. Such is also the case with language, the subversion of which is the goal of *écriture féminine*. Spivak has a legitimate point, then, in arguing that producing the independent and individualistic female that feminist criticism is so keen on elevating contributes towards imperialism. If we want to read Jane Eyre as an empowered character or *Jane Eyre* as an empowered text, it would serve well to keep this

implication in mind. And it would serve just as well to do the same if we want to consider Brontë a subversive author.

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