

Fantasy as Psychological Protection and a Coping Mechanism in *Jane Eyre*

by

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## Abstract

In Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, Jane uses her imagination to create fantasies that enable her to overcome difficult environmental stimuli, including an abusive homelife, physical neglect at school, restlessness due to social constraints, and separation from love. She derives her daydreams from activities including reading, painting, drawing, and pacing, using them to ignite her mind. Her fantasizing helps her to process her experiences and regulate her emotions, preventing her from losing self-control and succumbing to socially unacceptable behaviour. Through her imagination, Jane directs her attention away from circumstantial negativity toward thoughts that nurture her, enabling her to obtain the psychological benefits that her external environment denies her. As a result of her fantasy engagement, Jane develops resilience and accesses a degree of agency to act as an autonomous individual instead of as a submissive victim, displaying strength despite childhood trauma and adulthood adversity.

## Chapter I. Introduction

The imagination is a tool that an individual can use to transcend reality and cope with traumatic experiences. This use of mental creation occurs with respect to the titular protagonist in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Throughout the novel, Jane uses her mind to frequently enter into fantasies that enable her to overcome the adversity she faces, by redirecting her attention, which prevents her from being psychologically impaired by traumatic experiences, such as abuse from her family and boarding school leadership. By constructing daydreams, Jane shields herself from negative external stimuli, directing her attention beyond her present circumstances. Her reveries are not rooted in unhealthy escapism, wherein she completely loses touch with reality and subsequently loses her autonomy, but these thoughts instead serve a deeper purpose. Although there exists within the text, "a tension between the engrossing pleasures of reverie and the necessary protections against its alleged liability to disruptive excess" (Gettleman 558), Jane's fantasizing is ultimately beneficial toward her emotional welfare. I argue that Jane's behaviour fosters resilience, allowing her to develop into a relatively stable adult who continues to use fantasy to cope with the challenges with which life confronts her. Her imagination thus serves as a tool for maintaining a healthy state of mind, so that she can gain a sense of stability despite the uncertainty in her life. She utilizes multiple mechanisms as she activates her imagination, including book reading, artwork creation, and bodily movement as she paces while mentally reflecting. Jane's fantasy creation bears similarity to Brontë's imaginative tendencies toward fantasy, which are detailed in Elizabeth Gaskell's biography, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. The cultural significance of Jane's daydreaming relates to the Victorian need for mental control, as described by Sally

Shuttleworth. Jane's reading and pacing activity can also be analyzed with respect to Miciah Hussey's observations on fantasy and the self, and her artistic activity pertains to Kathleen A. Miller's work on art and the psyche. Her imaginative thought can furthermore be examined using modern psychological findings, including research on art therapy and creativity and Mihalyi Csikszentmihali's concept of "flow" experiences. Jane's imagination supports her by giving her control as she regulates her attention in a positive direction. Collectively, her fantasy processes enable her to develop as an individual, helping her strengthen interpersonal relationships, instead of remaining socially isolated, and to develop from a girl into a woman.

## Chapter II. Fantasy Through Reading

Growing up as an orphan, Jane experiences a traumatic childhood under the guardianship of her aunt, Mrs. Reed, who rejects Jane by differentiating the young girl from her biological children, treating her with contempt as if Jane were a parasite. She yells at Jane, reminding her of her social inferiority within the household, making her out to be an improper, wicked child who needs extensive reformation. Jane also suffers the abuse of her cousin John, who frequently displays vile behaviour without being punished by Mrs. Reed, unlike Jane, who is unfairly subject to her aunt's chastisement when she is arguably not at fault. John partakes in multiple forms of aggressive conduct against Jane, using his words and body to treat her like an object and assert authority over her. For example, during one violent encounter he calls her a rat and reminds her of her status as an orphan, telling her that she does not deserve to share in the privileges in which he partakes. John's physical brutality manifests when he hits Jane fiercely and throws his book at her after catching her reading it. She states, "the volume was flung, it hit me, and I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it. The cut bled, the pain was sharp: my terror had passed its climax" (Brontë 11). The detail that John's hostility has the potential to draw blood is significant, because blood traditionally represents life. By causing Jane to lose blood, John steals life from her, taking away her youth and innocence. Jane's reaction is to explicitly compare him to figures of persecution: "You are like a murderer—you are like a slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!" (11). The extremity of her analogy illustrates the seriousness of her trauma. By attacking her, John does not literally murder Jane's body, but he kills part of her by causing life to drain from her body. Likewise, traumatic experiences can interfere with the lives of the

victims, preventing them from overcoming the emotional pain of the incident. Jane's analysis applies at a figurative level, as John's aggression is an attack on her psychological wellbeing, scarring her and disrupting her emotional stability. He murders her peace of mind, causing her to need a strategy to revive and restore it, so that she can function without being continually tormented by the ghost of his abuse. Jane's comparison of John to a slave driver highlights the power imbalance between them, indicating that she feels trapped in a position where she cannot escape the conditions that give John his power in the first place, preventing her from living to her potential as an individual agent. These similes that Jane utters connote the degree to which she personally perceives that she is violated, indicating that she feels he has trampled upon whatever few rights she has as a human being in her situation. John treats her like a war victim through his hostility, and this perturbs Jane as he dismisses her identity, steals her vitality, and topples her emotional equilibrium, leaving destruction in his wake.

This type of cruelty is not an isolated incident, and Jane has come to expect his callousness. As Patrick Morris asserts in his analysis of Jane's traumatic upbringing, "Jane's life at Gateshead exemplifies the characteristics of severe child abuse. She is constantly tormented and brutalized and is wracked with fear" (158). Narrating the novel from a future moment in time, Jane reveals to the reader her conditioned response to John's presence, explaining, "every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near" (Brontë 10). This reveals the intensity of her interpersonal struggle with John and indicates that the conflict does not wash over her without upsetting her internal wellbeing. Instead, her frightened response to her oppressor is physiological; Jane's mind psychosomatically communicates her distress to

her body, which consequently physically demonstrates the magnitude of her emotional terror. Furthermore, the physical depth to which Jane's body becomes alert shows that John's abuse penetrates deeply within Jane, causing a visceral reaction as it reaches the inner aspect of her being. The physicality of her response corresponds in intensity with the profound emotional effects caused by John's violence, through the symbolism of her body's movement. By asserting that her flesh "shrank," Jane illustrates that John's attacks have negatively affected her self-confidence. The act of shrinking indicates that John has socialized her to view him as her superior and to perceive herself as weaker and less capable of self-assertion and self-expression. John's violence debases Jane, designating her as socially insignificant and worthless. By minimizing her physical body, like an animal curling up to guard itself from a predator, Jane demonstrates her need for security. She is his prey, an object for him to act upon to satisfy his sadistic urges. Jane reveals that during one incident, "he spent some three minutes in thrusting out his tongue at me as far as he could without damaging the roots: I knew he would soon strike" (10). He taunts her like a predator about to kill and eat a creature lower on the food chain, knowing that that creature is powerless to defend itself. This adds another layer of meaning to his labeling her a "rat," making it more than an insult against her character by deeming her immoral. By directly comparing her to a small rodent, John suggests that she is also weak and defenseless. Jane's act of physical self-minimization therefore indicates Jane's need for emotional protection, so that she does not succumb to the force of John's violence.

Jane also specifies that his behaviour against her occurs repeatedly, instead of only occasionally, claiming, "[h]e bullied and punished me: not two or three times in the

week... but continually” (10). John’s aggression does not consist of rare incidents that she can easily ignore, as to move on without emotional damage, but rather is comprised of a buildup of attacks that collectively inflict Jane, demanding that she deal with the pain. The frequency of John’s antisocial behaviour against Jane increases its danger, because she needs the psychological strength necessary to withstand the accumulative effects of these afflictions. John’s abuse targeting Jane compounds with that from Mrs. Reed, meaning that Jane needs to devise a means to remain mentally and emotionally safeguarded from the trauma of oppression, so that the tension does not cause her to crumble from its weight. As a result of this aggression, Jane is framed as an entity without personhood, and she is trapped in a space where she is perpetually vulnerable and at risk of being attacked and belittled. She is ultimately a defenseless orphan who does not have the social power necessary to confront this situation. Therefore, she needs a solution to help her withstand the trauma of her social environment, so that she can find tranquility and inner peace. She requires an alternative to direct confrontation with her family, as to mitigate against the stress of injustice, so that she can gain confidence and assert herself as an individual. Jane’s strategy is to activate her imagination, allowing herself to slip away from reality and fortify herself within the shelter of her mental constructions.

Reading books is one mechanism that activates Jane’s mind, allowing her to cope with her circumstances, as is demonstrated in a scene at the beginning of the novel. Prior to the described scene of John’s attack, Mrs. Reed displays her apprehension against Jane by shunning her from being in the presence of her cousins, isolating her from her peers. The reasoning behind this punishment is that Jane does not have a proper “sociable and

child-like disposition” (7), meaning that she does not conform to Mrs. Reed’s expectations for how a young girl should comport herself. This effectively shows that Jane undergoes ostracization in addition to experiencing overt violence directed against her. Jane’s response to this exclusion is to select a book about birds to read and enclose herself behind the curtain of the window seat. As the narrator, she tells the reader, “having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement” (8). By preparing herself to read, Jane relocates herself away from her oppressors, geographically positioning herself in a bubble of safety. The curtain is a physical barrier that isolates her from her family, and this isolation is self-chosen, as opposed to the way that her aunt shuns her. Jane reclaims power by separating herself from the source of trauma, and the window seat becomes the equivalent of a womb or a cocoon, where she is nurtured and protected from violence. Reading therefore creates the opportunity for her to physically escape affliction, so that she can mentally surpass it.

Jane informs the reader that the window is composed of “clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day” (8). Even though the weather outside is unpleasant, the glass window represents freedom into which she can escape, because it signifies the external realm beyond her social sphere. The glass is thus a portal that allows her to mentally surpass the boundaries of her life as an abused orphan. Jane further reveals, “[a]t intervals, while turning over the leaves of my book, I studied the aspect of that winter afternoon” (8). By periodically looking out the window, she oscillates between the external world away from her relatives and the world of her book that also takes her beyond her domestic tribulations. She creates a fantasy that combines the real world with that of literature: the two dimensions merge in the creation

of a daydream in which Jane can clear her mind and be free from authoritarianism. Jane's use of her imagination relates to Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë, where she writes, "children leading a secluded life are often thoughtful and dreamy: the impressions made upon them by the world without—the unusual sights of earth and sky—... are sometimes magnified by them into things so deeply significant as to be almost supernatural. This peculiarity I perceive very strongly in Charlotte's writings [from her childhood]" (77). Just as the outside world influenced Brontë's imagination, Jane's fantasies flourish due to her observations of the world past the window. As she reads, Jane immerses herself in *Bewick's History of British Birds*, taking in both the written text and the accompanying pictorial vignettes. She educates herself about frozen landscapes of various regions, such as Greenland and Iceland, and relays a vivid description from the pages to the reader of the novel. These cold terrains parallel the winter landscape outside the window, and both universes integrate as she absorbs the text in front of her. She also moves beyond the words in front of her, forming her own mental conceptions, as indicated by the line, "[o]f these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own; shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains, but strangely impressive" (Brontë 8). This signifies that as she creates her mental reverie, Jane, despite her limited cognitive capacities due to her youth, makes interpretations about the text. These interpretations are building materials that her imagination takes advantage of to fabricate a respite from her social conditions. As Jane's mental resources are occupied with learning about birds and landscapes, she assimilates the various facts she encounters, composing a fantasy in which she is liberated.

The fact that the book is about birds is also significant, as birds have wings enabling them to fly where they desire, free from the bondage of physical confines. By engaging with the text, Jane lives through the birds vicariously, transcending the limits pertaining to her inferior social status. Although Jane is treated unjustly by her relatives, by reading, she can escape this trauma by mentally entering the world suggested by the text's content. Brontë's bird usage foreshadows future bird imagery within the novel, when the symbolism is reversed, representing captivity instead of liberty, during a moment she argues with her master and love interest, Rochester. She tells him, "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will" (253). Jane's emphasis on her will ties into the Victorian questioning of human mental autonomy (Matus 20-60), and she positions herself as one in control of her being instead of as one without self-governance. Although her fantasy based on a bird book is a means of freedom during her youth, during adulthood, Jane loses this identification, because the meaning of the symbol has shifted. Therefore, the semantics behind her imaginative thoughts are context-specific, and Jane uses what is currently available to her to find the psychological support she needs, not allowing her thoughts to hinder her from taking a different perspective in the future. Her bird fantasy is a tool, and she does not let it overpower her thinking processes, setting her mind in a rigid pattern, but she instead allows herself to alter her perspective when necessary.

The visuality of the content she reads further indicates the importance of her reading experience for her fantasy construction. As the narrator, Jane relays the vivid pictures she observes within the pages, which suggests that the pictorial nature of the vignettes gives momentum to her imagination, allowing her to mentally reconstruct these

images, as to interpretatively interact with them to explore what they have to offer her. Additionally, Jane bypasses imagery in the book that scares her: “The fiend pinning down the thief’s pack behind him, I passed over quickly: it was an object of terror” (Brontë 9). She avoids content that provokes fear, because it counteracts the mental and emotional benefits of the daydream obtained from reading. The word “terror” reveals the magnitude of the effect literature has on Jane’s emotional condition, and it suggests that she does not want that effect to impair her by igniting feelings of dread. She is protective of her mental fantasy, not wanting to corrupt it with imagery that would trigger an unhealthy psychological response. Furthermore, the image involves physical violence, reminding her of how John acts aggressively against her. If Jane were to linger on the page, she would absorb the violence. This would reinforce the trauma, instead of helping her to cope with it, because her social conflicts would brutishly present themselves in her mind, not allowing herself to find relief from the abuse. By avoiding terrifying content in the book, Jane’s fantasy remains untainted, enabling her to push aside thoughts related to the reality of her victimhood.

She reveals her pleasure as she reads the book, claiming that “I was then happy: happy at least in my way. I feared nothing but interruption” (9). Reading therefore allows Jane to obtain a degree of contentment that she would not otherwise be able to obtain. The book transports Jane to another state of existence where the threat of John’s violence does not immediately exist. Her happiness depends on her ability to consume the book, because it is the spark that propels her creative abilities. If she were to be interrupted, the reverie would break, and she would be forced to reengage with actuality, facing the pain of oppression once more. The absence of fear contrasts with her normal

psychological condition concerning John, in which she perpetually dreads him, scared of how he might mistreat her. Thus, the fantasy derived from the reading experience protects Jane, transporting her to a dimension where she obtains immunity from the ghost of her traumatic experiences. Miciah Hussey notes that “absorbed subjectivity emphasizes the function of psychic fantasy as a kind of fictional valence integral to the understanding of selfhood” (31). By daydreaming, Jane counters the damage inflicted upon her identity and re-establishes her personhood. In her mental world, she is no longer merely an orphan without the resources to assert her worth, but is instead an individual operating in a domain where social hierarchies are irrelevant. She can bypass social norms and re-establish herself as someone uninhibited, immune from words that cut her down. The words and images that she perceives on the pages reframe her identity in terms of freedom and potential.

Jane’s engagement with fantasy therefore has a significant role within the novel as a device for managing her response to the trauma with which she struggles. She turns to reading to ignite her mind and find consolation in the adventure literature offers her, turning her attention away from the afflictions she has endured in the material world, to a nonmaterial dimension where she can overcome her victimhood and forget the injustice perpetrated against her. The act of reading challenges the dynamics of her perceived position as a slave, expanding her boundaries past her present conflicts, to a posture of liberation where she can find a sense of reassurance. The abuse she faces is beyond her control due to her low social status, but her daydreaming is an active measure she takes to regain power and defend herself. Her imagination helps her heal from the compounded hostility she endures, preparing her for the additional difficulties she will face as she

grows up. Immersing herself in fantasy is Jane's coping mechanism that fortifies her within an insulated chrysalis where she can nurture her emotional condition and restore the damaged areas, allowing them to grow and develop to reach a healthier state. This retreat from reality supplements Jane's mind by giving her relief, temporarily blocking out the actuality of her trauma, so that she can withstand it through resilience.

Jane's strength despite her turbulent childhood relates to modern psychological studies on such children. William C. Compton and Edward Hoffman observe that "some children thrive despite a variety of difficult backgrounds that include... parental neglect... [and] abuse" (190). They further write, "[s]uch findings should not be accepted as evidence that early family environment is unimportant, rather, that some children learn how to adjust to difficult environments and are less negatively affected than others" (190). In context of the novel, Mrs. Reed assumes the role of a neglectful parental figure contributing to the abuse of Jane, and Jane is a child who manages to thrive nevertheless. Of the "protective factors" that "resilient children" (191) tend to possess, one that Compton and Hoffman list is "[s]elf-regulation skills for self-control of attention" (191). As she constructs her mental fantasies, Jane takes charge of where she allocates her attention, channeling it toward visions that protect her from the horrors of her domestic life. These visions counterbalance the damage caused by the violence she endures, reducing the salience of abuse as she daydreams. Her control of attention is a vital instrument for her survival, and it is her fantasizing that brings her focus under her control. Through her imaginative thoughts, she manipulates what she thinks about, concentrating on what she finds appealing, attending to the wonders she creates. By practicing these skills, Jane thus promotes resilience within herself.

Although reading books is one mechanism Jane uses to ignite her mind to cope with her afflictions, she eventually reaches a point where reading is insufficient for meeting her psychological needs. During the incident in which John throws a book at her, Jane physically retaliates, attacking her cousin in self-defence, and her aunt punishes her by shutting her up in the red-room, which leads to Jane creating an unhealthy fantasy that torments her. The red-room has a dark aura to it, as it is where her uncle died, and it is typically uninhabited, making it seem sterile and unwelcoming instead of cozy and familiar. John Hagan postulates that this location “is symbolic of the prison-like atmosphere of Gateshead as a whole” (354). As Jane faces the new stimulus of a frightening environment, she retains the psychological weight of her daily life: “All John Reed’s violent tyrannies, all his sisters’ proud indifference, all his mother’s aversion, all the servants’ partiality, turned up in my disturbed mind like a dark deposit in a turbid well” (Brontë 14-15). This accumulation of suffering renders her vulnerable to the effects of being forcibly sequestered in an eerie location. The imagery of the well indicates that Jane is engaged in a process of rumination, where she repeatedly thinks upon concepts that disturb her, unable to rid her thoughts of negative content. The contents of the well perpetuate the tension she feels, fixing her attentional resources on injustice and hopelessness, preventing her from escaping the emotional hold associated with these thoughts. A well is typically filled with water, which nourishes an individual’s bodily state to sustain life and help rid it of waste. In this context, however, the well’s contents are toxic, and they are dangerous because they are already within her, capable of exerting their power over her psychological state. Jane notes, “[h]ow all my brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection! Yet in what darkness, what dense ignorance,

was the mental battle fought!” (15). She is internally unstable and does not comprehend how to process and manage her thoughts so that her environment will not further influence her mental condition. The ignorance that characterizes Jane’s mind indicates that she is not in a position where she can decide how to reduce the stress she feels, because her experience is novel and she is not accustomed to interacting within the particular space in which she is confined. Patrick Morris remarks, “As solitary confinement is known to produce severe depression in adults, this form of punishment for a child of Jane’s age is unusually cruel” (158). Jane is disoriented, and she does not know the most efficient way of behaving to minimize the consequences of her current affliction. She lacks the resources necessary to create a fantasy that would help her transcend the terrors of her environment. Jane does not presently have a book that would help her guide her thoughts away from her distress, and her mind therefore travels toward unpleasant territory.

While in confinement, Jane reflects upon her uncle’s death, considering the possibility that his spirit could manifest as a result of her being mistreated by his wife. She sees a light that passes through a window and hears a sound that resembles wing movement, thinks that a ghost is imminent, and screams from the terror thus incited within her. Jane’s mind perceives stimuli in her external environment and expands upon these, manipulating them into symbols of supernatural danger that could potentially harm her. Fear overpowers her thoughts, causing Jane to create a dark fantasy that further inflicts her mind, instead of relieving and soothing it. Although her imagination has previously demonstrated protective qualities, the mental stress from the attack by John and her solitary confinement is too much for her to bear, and Jane’s perturbation escalates

to the point that she passes out. Her loss of consciousness signifies that Jane is psychologically unable to endure the mental and emotional distress resulting from the traumatic quality of the experience. Once her punishment is concluded, however, Jane attempts to take steps to overcome these traumatic effects, but because her time in the red-room has transformed her by imposing severely upon her mind, she now needs more ways to activate her imagination than simply reading.

Jane continues to lack self-control after being locked away, to the point that she bluntly releases her anger upon her aunt, speaking fiercely at her on several occasions. Uninhibited by self-restraint, Jane verbalizes her fury due to the heat of her emotions, releasing her inner state into the outer world. During one instance, she describes her outpouring as “scarcely voluntary” (Brontë 27), explaining that “it seemed as if my tongue pronounced words without my will consenting to their utterance: something spoke out of me over which I had no control” (27). By losing control of her mental state, Jane loses control over her bodily state and its reactions to external stimuli. Her tongue is an organ that seems to operate independently from the rest of her physical being, acting imprudently and recklessly. This is dangerous because she could potentially say something that could lead to grave consequences that could further ostracize and stigmatize her; she needs to learn to master her tongue by adulthood if she is to protect her reputation. Her words become a weapon that she does not know how to manage, and she could thereby injure herself. During another incident with her aunt, Jane once more speaks rashly, then describes the effects of her verbal utterance: “Ere I had finished this reply, my soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, I ever felt. It seemed as if an invisible bond had burst, and that I had struggled out into

unhoped-for liberty” (37). In this context, Jane’s method for attaining freedom is through charged discourse, which contrasts with her earlier fantasy derived from literature, in which she does not project her thoughts outward, but retains them inward, as to soak herself in her daydream. Her angry outspoken method of liberation is more interpersonal than using her imagination, and her words are potent, causing disruption within the household. When she daydreams, by contrast, Jane has more agency over her conduct, keeping her emotions from escaping her being. Her fantasy provides her with freedom while simultaneously establishing healthy barriers for her feelings, enabling Jane to release the pressure pent up inside her and to protect herself psychologically from further damage. By converting her raw emotions into language and expelling them into the oral realm, however, Jane contributes negativity into her environment. Her angry words consequently cause her usually stern aunt to become distressed, with a “frightened” (37) expression, which indicates that Jane has committed an error that thenceforth alters the nature of her relationship with Mrs. Reed. Jane’s chosen mode of self-expression is disadvantageous, because she oversteps her boundaries by violating social protocol by disrespecting her guardian who comes from a higher class. She needs to instead process her visceral feelings in a manner that does not involve deviating from socially derived regulations for dignified conduct, or she will struggle to become a functioning individual within society. Jane’s reckless verbal outpouring is a sign that she is still immature in her ability to control herself and that she needs to further develop the skills necessary to combat her rage. Her charged reaction demonstrates her need for self-mastery, to prevent future displays of emotional recklessness. As she grows as an individual, Jane draws

from more resources for affective regulation via fantasy, to the effect that she learns how to maintain composure and remain steadfast mentally, to avoid breaking down.

Sally Shuttleworth's description of how there was a prominent apprehension against madness during the Victorian era assists in contextualizing the cultural significance of Jane's sudden lack of composure. Shuttleworth notes that "[t]he ever-present threat of insanity constituted the sub-text of the culture of self-control" (43), and she further informs that "[t]he test of sanity for women rests almost entirely in the realm of emotional restraint" (50); this indicates the importance of Jane's need to resolve her emotional conflicts to avoid being categorized as mad. Jane's fantasizing prevents herself from reaching this tipping point, preserving her mind by monitoring her affective conditions. Additionally, Shuttleworth indicates how Jane's breakdown categorizes her as a "passionate child," and this places her "within the borderland of insanity" (153). Jane's passion has the potential to be detrimental, leading her into dangerous mental territory in which she loses her identity. As scholars Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar observe, Jane's vulnerability to insanity is realized in the figure of Bertha (359-360), Rochester's secret wife, who suffers from madness and lacks the capacities to interact within society in a nonviolent, intellectual manner.<sup>1</sup> Gilbert and Gubar explain that Bertha acts without restraint, serving as the manifestation of Jane's inner dark aspect that she desires to "repress" (360), and Bertha has the tendency to parallel Jane's behaviour in a manner that evokes madness, such as in the way they both take to pacing (361-362).

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars offer a different perspective on Bertha; Patsy Stoneman, for example, details the critical response of "an increase of sympathy" (178) that perceives Bertha as someone subject to colonial forces (178-197). Similarly, Alexandra Nygren suggests that Bertha is more than Jane's "foil" (117) and is a target of colonialism that oppresses her (117-119).

The issue presented in Jane's narrative is that "[i]n both the social and psychological domains, wasteful, polluting excess is set against productive, healthy regulation" (Shuttleworth 153). Jane's outburst demonstrates that she has resources within her mind that can be harmful, which is why she must be careful when she fantasizes: "Jane depicts her history as a battle on two fronts: the internal struggle to regulate her own flow of energy, and the external, social fight to wrest control of the power of social definition" (153). In her personal life, Charlotte Brontë created and immersed herself in a fictional world called Angria, both as a child and an adult (Gordon 29, 85). Lyndall Gordon describes Brontë's fantasy as having had the semblance of being "caught in a dream" (29), and Brontë's imaginary universe empowered her by allowing her access to a "freedom of expression" (31). She became deeply attached to Angria, however, struggling profoundly to detach herself from it, yet realizing that doing so was important for her self-growth (84-85). Likewise, Jane's mind has the potential to give her liberty, but it can also ensnare her if she is not careful. Furthermore, Shuttleworth notes that in Brontë's writings, "mastery of the inner promptings of the psyche is represented as leading directly to opportunities of social control, as each outcast or orphan acquires an impervious external demeanor and moves gradually into a position of social respectability and power" (36). If Jane is able to manage her mental resources to overcome traumatic catalysts that instigate an eruption, she can empower herself to navigate within the social realm and make decisions that sustain her by offering her social resources previously unavailable to her. By utilizing her fantasies, Jane operates upon her psyche, taming it, so that she can become the young woman that she needs to be to support herself.

After she is released from captivity, Jane attempts to read *Gulliver's Travels* to relieve her mind from the stress of the preceding events. This book was previously significant to Jane, because she “considered it a narrative of facts” (Brontë 21), believing that the mythical figures she read about were real and that she could eventually encounter them. This suggests that in the past, the fantasies invoked by the novel were strong enough to impose themselves onto her perception of reality. Her imagination enabled her to enjoy the prospect of witnessing interesting creatures, and this gave her mind a refuge from the abuse she suffered. Currently, however, Jane is unable to derive the therapeutic benefit from the book that she once obtained from literature. She narrates, “when this cherished volume was now placed in my hand— when I turned over its leaves, and sought in its marvelous pictures the charm I had, till now, never failed to find—all was eerie and dreary” (21), and she notes that “the giants were gaunt goblins, the pigmies malevolent and fearful imps” (21). Jane’s mind, in a state of fright, transforms the pleasant images into terrifying symbols that accentuate the distress she feels. She decides to shun these images by rejecting the novel: “I closed the book, which I dared no longer peruse, and put it in the table” (21). Although reading previously solaced Jane by providing a refuge from the continual abuse she endured, the book now no longer sparks her mind by invoking wonder. Jane therefore needs to find more techniques to use her imaginative capacities productively instead of in a manner that worsens her mental state. One such technique is through the creation of visual art in her mind in relation to her engagement with painting and drawing, which also benefits her by prompting her to overcome other childhood afflictions she undergoes, including those that occur during her introduction to school.

### Chapter III. Fantasy Through Art

As a result of the episode in the red-room, Jane is sent to the Lowood boarding school for girls, where she continues to face unjust treatment that she must mentally overcome if she is to be strong and resilient. The school's treasurer, Mr. Brocklehurst, deepens Jane's pain by defaming her character in front of the class, painting her as a sinister liar despite her innocence. She is deemed spiritually immoral, which effectively humiliates her by tainting her image within the school's population. His condescending speech mortifies Jane because she cares about her reputation and feels that she has been debased in the eyes of her cohorts. As a result, Jane's discomfort within the institution increases in conjunction with the other aversive features of her environment. Not only does Jane need to cope with the pain from the abuse from the Reeds and injustice of Mr. Brocklehurst, she also needs to cope with neglectful living conditions, such as exposure to cold weather, limited clothing, and insufficient food portions. For example, the students are given rations of bread so meagre that some older girls out of desperation force Jane to relinquish part of her share, which contributes to her being unable to satiate her hunger. This conflict has physical ramifications, creating hunger pains that attack her body from the inside, drawing her attention to the reality and unpleasantness of her daily life. Jane lacks the physical means to obliterate the arousal caused by hunger and therefore directly reduce its effects on her wellbeing, so that it loses a degree of its salience upon her attentional resources, allowing her mind to be free from the strain caused by want. She thus requires an indirect means of managing the negative effects of food deficiency, by reducing its emotional impact instead of its physical impact. One method Jane uses to cope with the lack of nourishment is to mentally visualize a meal

consisting of food such as “hot roast potatoes, or white bread and new milk” (74), as to “amuse [her] inward cravings” (74). These mental creations become a substitute for material food, and satisfy her mind, despite her inability to gratify the needs of her body. Instead of consuming external provisions by orally ingesting them, Jane forms her own provisions by generating them internally through fantasy. Her fantasizing about dietary sustenance benefits her, because it is her means of claiming agency and acquiring what the institution denies her. She surpasses the power of Mr. Brocklehurst, who is adamant that the children obtain only minimal servings for the sake of their character, to savor food of her selection. She takes control of the quantity she obtains through her thoughts, mentally rejecting portion restrictions to find relative solace, despite the ever-present physical pain her body generates. The limitation of Jane’s fantasy for providing sustenance parallels Mary Taylor’s discussion with Charlotte Brontë about the limitation of Brontë’s own imaginative behaviour: “I told her sometimes they were like growing potatoes in a cellar. She said, sadly, ‘Yes! I know we are!’” (Taylor as qtd in Moglen 26). Although Brontë was inclined toward fantasy, she acknowledged that it was not a perfect mechanism without its shortcomings. As Jane masters her perception by directing it away from her stomach, her imaginative decisions disrupt a degree the power that her somatic being holds over her, even though she cannot completely conquer it. Jane’s mind counteracts injustice, once more allowing her to transcend her victimhood through fantasy, fortifying herself to withstand her daily struggle with hunger.

After she starts studying drawing at Lowood, Jane shifts her fantasy away from food to entirely new entities. She describes her new bedtime thoughts: “I feasted instead on the spectacle of ideal drawings, which I saw in the dark; all the work of my own

hands” (Brontë 74), and she gives examples of the mental images, including, “freely pencilled [sic] houses and trees, picturesque rocks and ruins... [and] sweet paintings of butterflies hovering over unblown roses” (74-75). She internally draws images of nature, and these collectively create a utopia where she is free from any concerns about her body and its sustenance. The butterflies suggest the freedom to explore beyond boundaries, and the “unblown roses” suggest a sense of preservation and protection. These scenes are simple yet pleasant, creating spaces in which Jane can be secure and enjoy the innocence of childhood wonders, instead of worrying about how to feed herself. One advantage of Jane moving her mind beyond food is the possibility for her imagination to help her overcome a broader spectrum of the conflicts she has faced thus far. By shifting her fantasy to a more general context, Jane uses her mind to fulfil a wider range of emotional needs, instead of only addressing her hunger. While targeting the issue of her lack of food by imagining meals is advantageous for her wellbeing, by expanding her thoughts to more general images, Jane allows her mind to find relief for other aspects of Lowood, such as having to walk to church in notably cold weather conditions. This also allows her to avoid ruminating on the abuse she faced at Gateshead, concentrating her mental focus on uplifting imagery. By positioning herself as an artist, Jane increases her creative liberty and creates a future for herself beyond the task of meeting her present needs. Art therefore prompts Jane’s mind, enabling her to expand her thoughts past what is physically satisfying to what is emotionally satisfying. The artistic element of this fantasy is significant because it allows Jane to exercise an increase in autonomy and to discover her potential while coping with the restrictions placed upon her by the school. As Jane operates her imagination, she uses creativity, which, according to contemporary

scientific research, is a trait associated with flexibility: “creative people tend to be highly flexible in their thinking and quite tolerant of ambiguity or even outright disorder. They often delight in seeking the simplicity that lies beneath apparently complex, difficult, and even chaotic problems.... [C]reative people are marked by a higher tolerance for frustration” (Compton and Hoffman 166; emphasis removed). To survive within the sphere she inhabits, Jane must be flexible and tolerant of frustration, because she has limited social resources and problems continually present themselves to her throughout her life, preventing her from inhabiting a life of ease that characterizes the existence of the upper class. Jane’s creative imagining assists her by letting her draw new entities that keep her focused on positive thoughts of which she can take ownership.

At boarding school, Jane befriends a fellow student, Helen Burns, who also uses her thoughts to cope with the abuse of the institution, but with a different approach. Like Jane, Helen is enthralled by the enchantment of reading as a means of isolating herself from her outer environment. While Jane engages with books “of a frivolous and childish kind” (Brontë 49), Helen’s reading behaviour takes a more “studious” (50) tone. Helen finds relief by concentrating on the text in a sobering manner, instead of in the playful manner that Jane does. She has a refined maturity and self-control that Jane currently lacks as she withstands the institution’s cruelty. As Helen faces chastisement from authority, she bears it without complaining or retaliating, maintaining silent composure in a dignified fashion. Jane acts as a spectator, observing Helen’s response to hardship: “She looks as if she were thinking of something beyond her punishment—beyond her situation: of something not round her nor before her” (52). Helen’s mind surpasses her external reality, ignoring the material realm, and this numbs her to the social pain of

being publicly shamed. Jane relays, “[h]er eyes are fixed on the floor, but I am sure they do not see it—her sight seems turned in, gone down into her heart: she is looking at what she can remember, I believe; not at what is really present” (52). The interpretation Jane derives connotes that Helen uses introspection to process her circumstances and to withstand socializing agents from having a significant effect on her. Despite her outward submissiveness, Helen does not lose her internal agency, but gains advantage over her punisher by maintaining a positive attitude regarding the situation. When Jane later discusses Helen’s endurance with her, Helen reveals that her deep spirituality guides her: “We are and must be, one and all, burdened with faults in this world: but the time will soon come when, I trust, we shall put them off in putting off our corruptible bodies; when debasement and sin will fall from us with this cumbrous frame of flesh, and only the spark of the spirit will remain” (58). Helen further claims, “I live in calm, looking to the end” (59), summarizing her attitude toward suffering. Helen therefore copes by disengaging herself from the present and by concentrating on the future; she perseveres through her aspiration toward a heavenly peace that she believes exists in a timeframe beyond the pain of the moment, trusting that she will eventually partake in it. She uses her faith to deny victimhood and emerge as a victor. Helen practices an inwardness based on spiritual convictions that she has encoded within herself and that she can access in her mind to give herself the courage to face punishment in humiliating conditions. Helen acts as a precursor for Jane’s future imaginative thinking, demonstrating the power of inward thought for self-control, but there are differences in the manner in which both girls use their minds for emotional survival. Helen gives Jane the impression of wanting to “converse with her own thoughts” (59), which indicates that she does not necessarily

need external devices to activate her mind the way that Jane uses art. Additionally, the religiously devout nature of Helen's coping is different from Jane's thinking patterns, which utilize creativity instead of spiritual "meditation" (59). While Helen uses her beliefs to engage in logic-based thinking by rationalizing about her future in order to withstand her pain, Jane uses her imagination to compose a fantasy that frees her from her pain.

Jane stays at the school for eight years, eventually becoming an instructor within the institution. She continues to express an interest in art, creating paintings based on imagery that her mind generates. Jane's fascination with artistic thought reflects Brontë, who had a love of visual arts, but who had been stifled by monetary concerns from pursuing her aspirations in that field (Alexander 11). Christine Alexander remarks that Jane's "ability to draw provides not only an occupation, but also consolation, as it did for Charlotte" (28). Later, when Jane works as a governess at Thornfield Hall, her master, Rochester, requests that she show him her artwork. Jane complies and presents three of her pieces to him, starting with an image in which she has painted a scene of a bird grasping a bracelet from the arm of a body submerged underwater. Her paintings have been studied by scholars who offer interpretations regarding the meanings within Jane's works. According to Alexander, these images "reflect her early study of Bewick—the cormorant, the iceberg and the evening star—now merged with other images to produce not exact copies of originals, but fantastic pictures that represent her state of mind" (26). Jane's creative power thus serves as a psychological tool to address her past, building upon it to formulate a potential future. The corpse illustrates the pain she has experienced as a child and how it has figuratively killed part of herself, claiming her as

prey. Despite the negativity of death in the image, the bird offers a positive counterpoint by salvaging a piece of jewelry from the victim, which can be interpreted as redemption despite tragedy. By creating this image in her mind, Jane combines the reality of her trauma with her fantasy for a better future, and through this synthesis, she processes her emotions, prohibiting them from controlling her. Robin St. John Conover draws similarities between Jane's art and Milton's poetic depiction in *Paradise Lost* of Satan as a being bound in a fiery lake, offering the suggestion that the captured piece of jewelry "is emblematic of a severed manacle, possibly signifying the end of Jane's bondage" (177-178). In another painting, Jane has captured the image of a starry woman, who she labels "the Evening Star" (Brontë 125) and this woman is beautiful, with an aspect of divinity, and does not invoke sadness. The painting signifies Jane's desire to transcend her past and live an empowered life free of the oppression of trauma. Just as a star is distant from the ground, Jane distances herself from her conflicts when she daydreams the scene in her mind, elevating herself beyond the affective disturbances of her youth. In the final illustration that she presents to Rochester, Jane has created a scene of a head leaning against an iceberg; the face has an eye that is "blank of meaning but for the glassiness of despair" (126), but its head is covered with a jeweled turban. St. John Conover connects this image to a scene in *Paradise Lost* in which a "land of desolation" (182) is present. This "desolation" could be interpreted as Jane's previous trauma that denied her healthy conditions in which to thrive. Jane's image carries both the heartache of her upbringing, as seen in the despondent face, and the potential for a better future, as seen in the glorious head covering. The beauty of the decorated turban is a token of hope that presents itself amongst the despair of environmental circumstances.

The first and third paintings individually present fantasies where Jane can process her emotions pertaining to her troubled youth, and all three images enable her to surpass those emotions to find beauty that prevails regardless of the past. Jennifer Gribble states that “[i]n Jane's responses to events, in her drawings..., we see a mind actively creating its experience” (281). Jane does not passively experience life, but rather uses her mental capacities to process her predicaments. Kathleen A. Miller contends that “Jane’s art depicts terrifying natural scenes where an overwhelming landscape subsumes the female form. Jane’s anxieties regarding female power and patriarchal oppression manifest themselves in her art” (259) and observes that “[a]s she attempts to negotiate these psychic anxieties, they take form in her visual work” (259). Miller also remarks that in the novel, there exists suggestions “that women’s art may hold a variety of meanings — self-expression, psychic development, rebellion, solace, identification” (251). Through her artistic endeavors, Jane works through the accumulation in her mind and creates imagery that touches upon heartache and optimism, working through her emotional baggage to create an identity that surpasses victimhood.

When Rochester questions Jane regarding whether she felt happiness during the creation of the art pieces, she responds, “I was absorbed, sir: yes, and I was happy. To paint them, in short, was to enjoy one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known” (Brontë 126). The act of painting sparks her thoughts, but although she is troubled by the disappointment that her artwork fails to replicate the intense images formulated by her mind, Jane finds the mental aspect of the process therapeutic: “she emphasizes a mind/body dualism that favors internal vision over external manifestations” (Hussey 37). According to Karin Alice Schouten et al., “[t]he aim of art therapy is to elicit processes of

change, development, and acceptance, using art (like drawing, painting, collage, and sculpting) in a purposeful and methodical way in the treatment of psychosocial problems and mental disorders” (221). Instead of letting the baggage of her rough childhood prevent her from being a functioning adult, Jane uses art to generate a fantasy that demonstrates both struggle and transcendence, letting her mind rise above her pain.

#### Chapter IV. Fantasy Through Bodily Motion

In addition to daydreaming in conjunction with her artistic pursuits, Jane uses fantasy in connection with bodily movement as she paces within Thornfield Hall shortly after her initial arrival as a governess. At this point, she feels confined by the sequestered location of the house, and she craves exploration beyond its borders, desiring “more vivid kinds of goodness” (Brontë 109). Thornfield provides her with shelter and employment, but it also hinders her from connecting with the outer world, thus keeping her in captivity. Jane’s self-described “restlessness” is strong enough to the point that she feels “agitated... to pain” (109), meaning that her struggle with isolation causes internal disturbance that denies her comfort and contentment. To overcome this pain so that it does not interfere with her ability to perform her duties as a functional adult, Jane turns to her imaginative capabilities: “Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story, backwards and forwards, safe in the silence and solitude of the spot, and allow my mind’s eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it” (109). Jane allows herself to remain secluded while entering into contemplation, taking advantage of her privacy to find the freedom to mentally break past her boundaries. As she paces the hallway, Jane partakes in continual movement despite external constraint, taking physical steps as her mind makes progress toward new fictional adventures. The liaison between Jane’s bodily motion and her creative thinking generates a solution in which she synthesizes the freedom she longs for. She details the experience in terms of producing a narrative: “to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended—a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence” (109). Fantasy enriches Jane by altering the

story of her present restriction, replacing it with one she dictates and controls. Her thoughts pour freely, concentrating on the splendor of her wishes and removing her focus from the pain inflicted by the spatial parameters that contain her. Jane uses mental invention as a medicine that soothes her ailment while nourishing her vitality, and she maintains the inner strength to function as a working individual. Her daydreams thus improve her affective state, renewing it and transporting Jane beyond immediacy, for the sake of her psychological survival. Hussey notes, “Jane continually evokes the trope of longing to see, grasp, and know that which is beyond her reach throughout the novel, engendering fantasy as the borderland of representation. She activates its potential to recreate temporal, spatial, and social relations as unbounded spaces of her absorbed intersubjectivity” (32), adding that “[i]n the famous sequence of passages that takes place while Jane paces Thornfield’s roof and upper storey, her creative desires stretch in excess of her social position and manifest as the fantastic germinations of the novel. Her movement through space—both physically pacing and projecting her desires—evokes the process of the fantasmatic evolving into narrative” (34). As Jane paces on her feet, she becomes a creative agent, using her mind to formulate a new reality beyond that which is physically restrictive.

In addition to aiding her in coping with her geographical constraints, Jane’s imaginative thinking helps her to respond to the social regulations that constrict her according to her gender. She expresses discomfort in the ideal that women are relegated to activities such as “playing on the piano and embroidering bags” (Brontë 109). These domestic occupations are ultimately unfulfilling for her, and Jane feels that women “need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they

suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation” (109). Jane expresses a yearning for new stimulation, so that the repetition of limited stimuli does not wear her down. Due to the gendered regulations for what behaviours are permissible for her, the novelty she seeks is beyond her grasp, meaning that she needs to turn inward to satisfy her longings. She perceives that people “must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it” (109). Her contemplative thought is her means of constructing an environment in which she can access the action she desires. Jane combats her restlessness with her mental creations, transcending the social barriers of her gendered role. She rejects what “custom has pronounced necessary based on [her] sex” (109), wielding agency to subvert social expectations through fantasy. With her imagination, Jane can cope with her gendered limitations, without letting them defeat her and extinguish the stamina that sustains her motivation to succeed as a governess.

Furthermore, upon Rochester’s arrival to the estate, he secretly observes Jane as she daydreams while walking back and forth in the Hall’s gallery, and he later acts as an interpreter of her behaviour, explaining its meaning. He notes, “I think those day-visions were not dark: there was a pleasurable illumination in your eye occasionally” (313), and continues, “your look revealed... the sweet musings of youth, when its spirit follows on willing wings the flight of Hope, up and on to an ideal heaven” (313). Jane’s imaginative activity therefore not only affects her internal disposition, it also manifests itself through her body by lighting up her eyes, symbolizing health and wellness. This indicates that her thoughts are a stabilizing force, strengthening her being to withstand the physical effects that stress has upon the body in addition to the emotional effects. The association of hope with daydreaming indicates its power for sustaining Jane throughout her trials,

giving her a motive for endurance. Hope enables her to persevere despite the discomfort of her circumstances and the uncertainty of her future. The term “ideal heaven” paints Jane’s fantasizing in a spiritual light that suggests that her thoughts have a divine aspect to them that promotes goodness. Rochester informs Jane that she gave the impression of having “a green flowery Eden in [her] brain” (313) but having also a consciousness of “a rough track to travel” (313) ahead of her. Rochester describes Jane’s mind as a spiritual paradise, and this connotes that her inward behaviour is transcendent, distinctly separate from the baseness of the obstacles she faces. The garden symbolism reinforces the notion that her imaginings are life-giving, forming a mental environment that nurtures her. The contrast between Rochester’s illustration of the atmosphere of Jane’s mind and her outer world signifies the importance of her imagination as a priming agent for confronting reality. Her daydreaming during this new phase of life relates to yet differs from how Brontë partook in Angrian thought when she was an instructor herself: “Once, in the schoolroom, the spirit of all Angria crowded out the sight of the girls” (Gordon 58). In this case, Brontë’s fantasizing posed the threat of distraction from her task, but Jane manages to use her fantasy as a means of consolation without deviating from her responsibility as a governess. Jane’s creative thinking supports her emotional wellbeing without disrupting her focus from her duties; daydreaming braces Jane for the future, offering her a means of self-calibration to prepare herself for the unknown.

## Chapter V. Fantasy Through Art and Reading in Social Contexts

In addition to painting images based on her mind's creation while at Lowood, Jane continues to explore art in conjunction with fantasy while living at Thornfield. An instance in the narrative in which she uses art to cope with reality is after hearing a description of Blanche Ingram, a woman who is expected to become Rochester's future wife. Jane feels drawn toward Rochester and would prefer to be the one selected to marry him, but she realizes that she does not have the same social advantages as Blanche to make her a likely candidate for Rochester. To address these feelings, she draws a plain portrait of herself and a glorious one of Blanche stemming from her imaginings of what Blanche could physically resemble based on the description provided to her. By comparing these two images, Jane learns to restrain her desires and consider her relationship with Rochester from a more realistic standpoint: "I derived benefit from the task: it had kept my head and hands employed, and had given force and fixedness to the new impressions I wished to stamp indelibly on my heart" (162). Jane uses her imagination to subdue her thoughts and emotions to lessen the pain of the restrictions preventing her from acting upon her love. She is unable to modify the customs that impede her from being with Rochester, but by creating a fantasy that she transcribes onto a page, she accepts her status: "I was able to meet subsequent occurrences with a decent calm; which, had they found me unprepared, I should probably have been unequal to maintain even externally" (162). Her imagination thus assists Jane in coping with the reality of her circumstances to maintain composure.

Jane continues to use her artistic skills to her mental benefit throughout the novel, such as when she sketches a picture that connects her to Rochester, a person who accepts

her, to overcome social rejection. When her aunt is critically ill, Jane briefly departs Thornfield, her haven, to return to Gateshead, the place where she was constantly a victim exempt from safety and protection from the attacks of her relatives who denied her autonomy. At Thornfield, she belongs within the walls, having formed relationships with the inhabitants, and the resources she has to offer and the labour she provides are appreciated, but at Gateshead she is continually an outsider who is dismissed as one without worth and anything to offer. By entering her aunt's house, Jane retreats to an environment of hostility where she is once again debased and disrespected as a human being. Jane thus makes a return to the site of trauma which is echoed in the behaviour of her relatives, and this has the potential to disrupt her. Although her cousin John is now deceased and she is no longer under the threat of his physical violence, her other cousins, Georgiana and Eliza, continue to act rudely toward her, treating her as an inferior as they did when they were children. The sisters ignore her, treating her with a "cold" (233) demeanor as they focus on their own interests. Jane is not affected by their rudeness as when she was a child, and she explains to the reader that she is immune because, "within the last few months feelings had been stirred in me so much more potent than any they could raise—pains and pleasures so much more acute and exquisite had been excited" (229). The feelings she mentions refer in part to the passion invoked by her relationship with Rochester and the profound affection she has for him. Jane can let these feelings reduce the significance of the memory of her childhood trauma because she has healed from the gravity of its harm. In the past, the treatment of her relatives had a disorienting impact on her during the red-room incident, contributing to her distress, but she is now free from their oppression. Furthermore, Jane explains, "I was determined not to seem at

a loss for occupation or amusement: I had brought my drawing materials with me, and they served me for both” (233). By packing these instruments for her visit, Jane acts proactively, supplying herself with equipment to distance herself from her unpleasant relatives. She notes that she draws, “any scene that happened momentarily to shape itself in the ever-shifting kaleidoscope of imagination” (233). By choosing to design art, Jane sustains the healing of her past wounds and prevents the behaviour of her cousins from disrupting her once more. Among her sketches, Jane formulates “a glimpse of sea between two rocks” and “an elf sitting in a hedge-sparrow’s nest” (233). Such pictures are consistent with her previous images in their incorporation of nature. The fantasies invoked by the pieces that Jane sketches also include a portrait that ends up being the face of Rochester, and she narrates a detailed description of the image to the reader, concluding with the assertion “I had a friend’s face under my gaze” (234). She grasps onto the warmth of their relationship by replicating him in her brain, and this warmth sustains her by giving her an ally in a sphere where she has none. Through recreating the image that her mind develops, Jane provides herself with an individual in whom she places her affection, and this helps her to remain immune to the rudeness of her cousins. She reveals, “I looked at it; I smiled at the speaking likeness: I was absorbed and content” (234). By absorbing herself in the fantasy of Rochester, Jane’s art returns her to Thornfield through her imagination. Jane’s fantasy could be hazardous, as it represents a person she must distance herself from despite her fervor for him, and she must not let her emotional attachment to Rochester run rampant, but she has a more mature control over her fantasizing compared to when she was a child. Her daydream becomes her shield,

guarding her from social attacks by directing her focus on her outpouring of love, which compensates for the love she has been denied.

Another key instance in which art and reading help Jane to remain psychologically strong is after she has run away from Thornfield and finds lodgings among strangers, as these activities help her foster a safe social network. The reason she has fled is that she and Rochester developed reciprocated romantic desires for each other and were about to be married, only to be interrupted by the revelation that Rochester is already wed to Bertha, a woman suffering from madness. The situation surrounding her flight is heavily emotional, due to the despair of her gaping loss, and it is also physically taxing, due to her body's hunger that bears on her to the point that she breaks down. She becomes desperate, but eventually receives welcome into the home of three siblings, Diana, Mary, and St. John, who save her life by sheltering her. Jane resides with them for an extended period, she begins to create flourishing relationships with the sisters, and she shares her hobbies with them, which helps her temporarily clear her mind from the agony of being separated from her lover. She shares her interest of art with Mary, creating a bond through giving her drawing lessons. By drawing, Jane can transcend the despair caused from the unresolved conflict existing between Rochester and herself, formulating images in her mind that she translates to pages. In addition to drawing, Jane presently derives enjoyment from reading once more, in contrast to the moment after she fainted in the red-room at Gateshead. She borrows books from the sisters, and they share conversations about the content at the end of the day. This illustrates that Jane's mind can once again engage with the material she reads, becoming ignited instead of scarred by fearful imagery. Additionally, the act of reading now helps her create a community

with her peers as she shares her interpretations on the material instead of keeping them concealed. Jane draws the conclusion, “[t]hus occupied, and mutually entertained, days passed like hours, and weeks like days” (351). Her statement indicates the power of deep engagement with creative content in a social setting, as it illuminates her mind, pushing her to compose original thoughts.

During these moments, Jane has experiences pertaining to Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi’s research on “flow” during activity: “Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement... It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part” (Csikszentmihalyi as qtd in Compton & Hoffman 82). Some qualities of the flow experience include time seeming to elapse rapidly, feeling in control, and full concentration (Compton & Hoffman 83-84); engaging in flow has been reported to have a positive correlation with one’s well-being (86-87). As Jane participates in these activities that have previously helped her create fantasies, time loses its meaning and she immerses herself in the tasks in which she partakes. Although she still feels deep pain concerning her affections for Rochester, she can momentarily block it from her mind by tuning to visual art and literature. As Jane socializes with Diana and Mary, their presence prompts the flow experience, letting her enjoy the moment without fear for the future. Flow allows Jane to avoid the threat of madness where her emotions might otherwise overtake her, sabotaging her inner stability that she has currently achieved.

## Chapter VI. Conclusion

As the narrative progresses, Jane's imaginative coping develops in style as she ages and matures. Initially, Jane's fantasy generation is used as a means of isolation as a response to ostracization, but as she matures, she uses her mind to embrace other people and create interpersonal connections. At the beginning of the novel, Jane struggles to make healthy social relationships, because she has been deemed unworthy of contact and familial love. Her mental visions compensate for her lack of healthy relationships, and Jane finds refuge in natural settings where social norms do not exist and she can be free from oppressors, such as when reading the book on birds. Over time, however, Jane's fantasizing incorporates an increasing amount of social influences, such as corporeal imagery. In her paintings from boarding school, she merges imagery of the natural world with images of physical bodies. This suggests that Jane is beginning to open herself more to the possibility of human connection, as reflected in her relationships with Helen and Miss Temple, an instructor. The bodies in her paintings lack identities, suggesting that Jane still struggles to a degree with forming deep meaningful relationships with other people. She then creates the fantasy of Blanche, moving away from anonymous figures to the fabrication of a distinct individual. Although Blanche is her romantic opponent and not her friend, the image Jane creates pertains to her desire for a human connection with Rochester, revealing her burgeoning attachment to him and her openness toward a committed liaison. When she later draws the sketch of Rochester, her imaginative behaviour becomes more personal, because she creates the image of someone she intimately values and with whom she wants a deeper relationship. As she sketches him after having drawn mythical figures, she uses fantasy to feel closer to an individual from

her real life, instead of creatures who are nonexistent in reality and with whom she cannot form an interpersonal bond, such as those from *Gulliver's Travels*. The social element of Jane's fantasy later emerges from her mind and materializes in reality when she spends time reading and drawing with Diana and Mary. At this point, she finds acquaintanceship outside of the imaginative sphere while partaking in activities that tend to catalyze her mental visions. As a whole, Jane's daydreaming becomes increasingly social in character, which shows how she has healed from the pain caused by strained childhood relationships. Her mental constructions help her move past isolation into a sense of community, creating a web of mutual bonds that sustain her social needs.

Another way that her imagining changes over time is through Jane's transition from childlike imagery to mature imagery as she grows from a girl to a woman. As a girl at Gateshead, she imagines elves and other mythical organisms and artefacts based on the literature she reads, and these become to her as though they were real entities that she could potentially empirically perceive: "I doubted not that I might one day... see with my own eyes the little fields, houses, and trees, the diminutive people, the tiny cows, sheep, and birds of the one realm; and the corn-fields forest-high, the mighty mastiffs, the monster cats, the tower-like men and women, of the other" (Brontë 21). Such a fantasy is coded with innocence and wonder, revealing the simplicity of Jane's mind as she enjoys the enchantment that literature offers her. Not only is the content of her daydreaming juvenile, her belief in the existence of these fictional worlds highlights the naïveté with which she views life. At Lowood, she begins to incorporate more mature imagery into her daydreaming, such as nourishing food, which is less whimsical and instead a critical necessity for survival. As she ages, her fantasies begin to take on a more somber tone, as

seen in her paintings, which touch on concepts including death and psychological misery. When she draws Blanche and Rochester, Jane's fantasizing has another layer of maturity, as both images encompass the adult matters of romance and marriage. Right before illustrating Rochester, Jane sketches fictional creatures, but then turns to recreating the image of the person whom she desires. Her gradual transition from imagining mythical beings where she is not an immediate character within the action to creating fantasies that directly relate to her affairs signifies that she is able to use her daydreaming to navigate the world of adult responsibilities. She embraces her womanhood, facing its challenges instead of ignoring them and returning permanently to more juvenile thoughts. The different types of thoughts have different purposes and she uses them at the appropriate times in her life with respect to her age and maturity level. Her type of fantasizing is therefore strategic, whether consciously or unconsciously, as to procure the best results for herself. This reinforces the concept that her imaginings are not mere escapism, but are rather a tool to aid her psychological condition through the protective features and the healing properties of her fantasies. Her daydreams help her to develop and to confront new issues of varying complexity at different stages of her life, prompting her to move from one phase to the next. She does not remain a stunted child, but becomes a woman capable of tending to and educating children. Despite her hardships, Jane proves herself capable of finding employment and forming solutions to her obstacles, displaying problem solving skills and independence. Her imagination helps her assert her selfhood by giving her the resources necessary to fight and persevere as an individual agent who takes ownership of her future. The evolution of Jane's daydreams show how she has

transmuted herself as an individual, changing and adapting her thinking processes, as to stay psychologically stable as she develops into adulthood.

Jane's imagination is her portal to freedom, enabling her to overcome aversive stimuli and thrive as an individual. She derives strength from fantasy, generating visions that aid her in overcoming both traumatic childhood incidents and disquieting adulthood challenges. Daydreaming becomes her coping mechanism that prevents her from crumbling under pressure, allowing perpetual movement forward to propagate herself past conflict. Jennifer Gribble contends that "Brontë is attempting... to balance the claims of an objective, shared world of phenomena of which she must give faithful account, and a belief in the transforming, organic power of the imagination" (282).

Jane's fantasies therefore protect her, guarding her from psychological damage, allowing her to find happiness, agency, and personal development. Through partaking in literature, art, and physical pacing, Jane opens her mind toward the healing benefits of creative thought, as she forms healthy relationships and flourishes into a self-composed young woman.

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