

NINETEENTH-CENTURY

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**“The eagerness of a listener quickens
Storytelling and Autobiogra**

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<1> In many ways, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is authority to tell stories. The issue of storytelling in narrative for, in the first scene, Jane has been barred because of something that Bessie, the nurse, says from Mrs. Reed and, more importantly, the order of what Bessie has said about her. Thus, Jane would not be permitted to be neither storyteller, by explaining by hearing what others have said. Yet, on the following page, she is indeed a storyteller. Looking through the *History* of an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comings through children’s brains, but strangely impressive and mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding: profoundly interesting: as interesting as the tales of the evenings” (8). The difference, then, between this Jane evidently has the imagination to tell stories that impress and interest a listener; however, unlike Bessie’s authority to do so, the freedom to tell stories and the silences Jane when possible or privileges someone else. Jane learns from this early episode as storytelling increasingly relies upon.

<2> Several critics (such as Penny Boumelha, Karolyne Williams, and Nancy Workman) have explained *Jane Eyre*, usually arguing that they reveal the psychological development or the limited “plots” available for her. It has been seen as similarly limited, and, unfortunately, often been disregarded in such biographical applications. It claims that her use of the gothic within a life narrative



request of publishers who wanted something more than a straightforward interpretation that ignores the fantasy kingdoms that comprise Brontë's voluminous juvenilia. Consequently, Brontë's unusual technique of blending the real with the imaginary is examined. Of primary interest is why Jane would choose the autobiographical form, but then deliberately call it a "fiction" by using non-realist elements. What is this mode of autobiography with the supernatural world? It is understood as a response to the constraints imposed by the Victorian period, a kind of feminist "doubleness" that negotiates the boundaries of romance, figuring binaries not as opposed but as complementary (858). In this article, I will argue that an appreciation of the imaginative possibilities is instilled in Jane as a child by the female characters like Bessie who influence her. This is not reinforcing Jane's disadvantaged position in the household, but rather, as I see "power as ability, a resource more available to women than to men. As an adult, Jane uses storytelling to implicitly challenge the authoritative position of storyteller, a position that is held by St. John Rivers, Edward Rochester, and, of course

<3> Recent studies of nineteenth-century women's autobiographies show that women's use of the genre was not as straightforward as it seems. Despite being a very old form, the genre was not used in the eighteenth century by English working-class women. At the time Robert Southey used it in the *Quarterly Review* (Smith and Watson 2). Interestingly, in 1836, Broome, a poet laureate, enclosing some of her writing for his perusal. In his lengthy response, he lectured her that "literature is not a woman's life: & it ought not to be" (qtd. in Miller 100). As Miller argues, life cannot be the business of literature either. As a result, women had clear ideas as to who was an appropriate subject for an autobiography, and women, perceived "as being in no way outside that category:

They took no part in politics or business, they did not go to school, or to exhibit anything important at the Royal Academy, or to public debate. Those who did write just did so in the domestic arena on the grounds that they were passing on their experiences to children, or teaching the public something about the art of household management. (2)

Written in just such a vein is the first biography of Jane Eyre by her friend Elizabeth Gaskell, published in 1857. In her "metabiography" (x), Lucasta Miller observes that Gaskell took in selecting the anecdotes and incidents that define the Victorian femininity" (2), thereby developing a first

commonality and the exceptionality of Brontë's life and of the biography itself.

<4> However, despite what was said publicly about being inappropriate for women, women themselves, as demonstrated by both Gaskell's work and Sanderson's nineteenth-century women's autobiographical fragments, Women's lives were detailed in letters such as those such as those of Fanny Burney, and in journals such as these. These works are often embraced by postmodernists as "democratic narrative," a democratic term that acknowledges the practices and writers of the time rather than the previously privileged male practices which implies a "definitive achievement" or "unique achievement" (Watson 3-4). A Victorian woman might paradoxically use her domestic and social environments in autobiographical writing. For example, in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* (35). Estella Jelinek discusses in *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography* and notes the differences between men's and women's approaches to writing that "[e]ven before Victorianism took hold, the inner life was not silent. Women continued to treat personal matters as public. In their vulnerable private lives, they wrote objectively about themselves" (41). This certainly seems to accord with Brontë's diaries. Her siblings, Brontë wrote in a miniscule script that was often illegible and so "the children enjoyed the delicious thrill of reading their little books were a secret shared only among themselves. When an adult, Brontë kept a tenacious grip on her privacy and so, themselves, the Brontë family "were perhaps over-protective of the privacy of others" (40). Moreover, Brontë held on to her privacy as long as possible to escape the public's prying into her life. She was that ostrich hiding its head in the sand," and said that she had never seen the Haworth moors; but 'the concealment [was] but a

<5> Yet, as Lyndall Gordon's biography shows, Brontë's life was full of contradictions, and a desire for privacy does not mean that she wrote a fictional life narrative. Brontë was an avid correspondent, she reviewed and commented on the literary world in letters to her family and a large number of acquaintances. Thus, at times she wrote in literary expression. She also had ample practice writing in her juvenilia is an eclectic mix of poetry, journalism, travelogue, adventure and historical narrative, and mock-political pamphlets, much of it written in male voices, and all of which "testify to powerlessness," according to Christine Miller's *Austen to Woolf* (154). Moreover, Miller's *The Brontës* perception of Brontë as dutifully self-effacing and

early age to be publicly acknowledged for her writing much about narrative voice from the different forms from her publishers and the circulating library at an ongoing interest of hers. In a letter to her friend advises, “[f]or biography, read Johnson’s lives of Southey’s life of Nelson, Lockhart’s life of Burns, [and] of Byron, [and] Wolfe’s remains” (*The Letters* 130). She enthusiastically tells her friend to “beg, borrow, or religious biographies she had just read (*The Letters* for and cleverness in literary genre suggests that her elements like imaginative storytelling within the novel can be seen as a narrative strategy inherent to *Jane Eyre*. Watson and Watson point out that autobiographical writing is a *situated* practice of self-representation,” in which she lived experience through *personal storytelling*” (New Lanser reminds us that the act of writing and publishing discursive authority: a quest to be heard, respected (7). In this way, then, Brontë’s use of a pseudonym and use of fiction to cloak its autobiographical sections similar to those outlined by Judith Lowder Newton; however, they may also be considered offensive since they circumvent the restrictions of Victorian society.

<6> Jelinek’s definition of autobiography as “an act of thinking and feeling, and one’s talent as a formalized storytelling might function as part of this process in *Jane Eyre*. In fact, a lack of imagination was precisely what Jane Austen’s novels. ““Can there be a great artist without G. H. Lewes; ““What I call – what I will bend to, without destitute of the divine gift... Miss Austen being, without *poetry*, maybe *is* sensible, real (more *real*” (qtd. in Gaskell 262). Thus, storytelling, a metafictional act, testify to a writer’s talent, validate a woman’s use of fiction, contribute to the mid-nineteenth-century discussion of domestic ideology, and even literary aesthetics. If women’s autobiographical writing was about the self, such as spiritual crises, intellectual development, and relationships, some of their accounts also entered the public sphere, as indicated in *Traditions of Victorian Women’s Autobiography*. Critics have contested Virginia Woolf’s two famous definitions of *Jane Eyre* and its author: the first counts Brontë among “limited writers” who do not “attempt to solve the problems of *Eyre*” 129), and the second regrets that there is a “character in the novel that “resent[s] the treatment of their rights” (“Women and Fiction” 47). Sally Shuttleworth, who counters Woolf’s claims; in the introduction

she argues that the book highlights some of the period. “At its centre,” she notes, “is a restless, quickly outwards from childhood anger to colonialism of the female lot to working-class discontent” (Sh

<7> Books are as important to Jane Eyre as they were counted thirty-seven allusions to the Bible in *Jane Eyre* and a plethora of references to more than twenty other authors like Walter Scott (165). In a more recent article, Cheryl Clarke notes that occurs within the span of the novel and perspectives of female readers that “challenge the traditional pleasure, creativity, and intellect of Victorian women’s reading as a child, her bonding with Helen Burns at Lowood, and her reading circle with Diana and Mary. The “constructive and nurturing power of female reading and bonding over stories occurs in Brontë’s real life, not only at home, but also when she is a student at the Roekeby. Her preference for solitude, Gaskell tells how she was “frightening them [the other students] almost on one occasion the effect was such that she was led to the Wooler, coming up-stairs, found that one of the ladies had palpitations, in consequence of the excitement p

<8> In *Jane Eyre*, the institutional principles of Lowood, Reed, Rochester, and St. John Rivers, with differing degrees of intrusion of the patriarchal world that attempts to prevent the challenge to social institutions that women face. Interestingly, Wilson points out that “while at Thornfield, the meaningful experiences with books. Books line the shelves and provide convenient screens for Jane to hide behind in the community to share her reading” (137), partly because the communities are different. Indeed, soon after Jane’s arrival at that most of the books in the library, which Rochester keeps in his schoolroom, are locked behind glass doors; she says

there was one bookcase left open, containing a few volumes needed in the way of elementary works, and a few of the best literature, poetry, biography, travels, a few romances. [Rochester] had considered that these were the best for her private perusal; and, indeed, they were the only ones present. (103)

Jane responds in an indifferent manner because reading is uncommon. On the contrary, Beth Newman highlights how Patrick Brontë to allow his children to have the use of the library, to let them avidly read whatever appealed

they were being granted a freedom rarely bestowed

<9> However, *Jane Eyre* reveals that books are used for pleasure; they also have a monetary significance. In her biography *The Brontës*, [the author] observes that many of the characters are avid readers because they were expensive at the time and the possession of such extravagances (146). In *Jane Eyre*, John Reed uses books as weapons clear when he warns Jane, “You have no business to be independent... Now, I’ll teach you to rummage my book at her like a weapon. Notably, John, the editor, is used primarily as signifiers of status and as weapons, and not for their content. Most importantly perhaps, the text of *Jane Eyre*, an individual of reduced circumstances, is a trappings of the upper middle-class, the social hierarchy, and the position of individuals such as John Reed endangers her. In an influential work *The Woman Reader*, [the author] concurs; she discusses woman reading and asks “what moral, sexual, religious, or political a woman’s being absorbed by so preoccupying a reading and inquiry may be taken a step further for Jane’s character is fully understood unless her storytelling, essential to her identity from books and tales, is explored.

<10> Jane’s interest in storytelling develops not only from the characters who influence her with their tales of fiction with a lesson in power. At Gateshead, Bessie Lee is charmed to be in good humour,” and Jane recalls her attention with passages of love and adventure tales, ballads; or (as at a later period I discovered) from the Earl of Moreland” (9). Here, Jane departs from the main narrative to intimate that she continues as a reader, recognizing some of the tales that she had attributed to her. The profound effect that the books and the tales have on her points out that she even draws parallels between the characters in the books and the tales. For example, she draws parallels that she occasionally declares aloud, such as “you are like a murderer – you are like a slave-driver – you are like a tyrant” (11), because she has read Goldsmith’s *History of England*. At Gateshead as an adult, she notices the bookcases containing *Gulliver’s Travels*, and the *Arabian Nights* before she leaves (228).

<11> Bessie is not the only character to influence Jane. A crucial lesson in narrative restraint at the Lowood school is publicly humiliates Jane by calling her a liar, and she must explain herself and her family circumstances before she can leave. Before Jane begins, Miss Temple advises her, “do not be deceived. Say whatever your memory suggests as true;

nothing” (71). To an imagination as vivid as Jane’s, it might not be as easy as it sounds. However, she says, she says,

I resolved in the depth of my heart that I would be correct; and, having reflected a few minutes on what I had to say, I told her all the story of my life by emotion, my language was more subdued and developed that sad theme; and mindful of her indulgence of resentment, I infused into the narrative wormwood than ordinary. Thus restrained, my story more credible: I felt as I went on that Miss Temple

Thus, Jane refines the rhetorical acts of “assertion and conviction” that intersect with the imaginative act (Watson 6). The tailoring of the tale to suit the needs of Miss Temple immediately by Miss Temple’s belief, and it is a useful practice with others throughout her life narrative that Brontë herself employed. In her justification of the sisters’ novels, Brontë appealed to the moral quality of “writing in all innocence about the barbarous society” providing “simply an accurate representation of the world.” Barker notes that Brontë resorted to this technique and admitted to Gaskell that her account of Lowood School were drawn from her own experiences at the Clergmont. Brontë recognized that while the account was “true at the time, it is not impartial (qtd. in Barker 120).

<12> Jane’s life narrative is a frame that encloses her life, but also several fantastic stories which she relates. As Jane explains, “this is not to be a regular autobiography where I know her responses will possess a certain truth. Ostensibly, then, Jane deviates from the strictures of the *Villette*, by jumping over certain periods of time in order to interest or entertain her reader, whom she addresses (110). Some of the stories seem to complement Jane’s life that Jane herself acknowledges: Bessie’s doleful biography is similar to Jane’s own situation; fairy tales are not a development, and the tale of Bluebeard’s castle, is similar to Jane’s situation at Thornfield; and, as Nancy Workman says, is similar to the *Arabian Nights* ruler, Sultan Shabristan, or of Scheherazade. Alexander, in *The Early Writing of Jane Eyre*, notes that such works, especially the *Arabian Nights*, influenced the young girl (18). However, some critics have taken the allusions and Jane’s life even further. Karen Rowe, on the subject, points out that the plot of *Jane Eyre* more

tale than the traditional *bildungsroman*. But in *Eyre* with classic fairy tales, Rowe makes some statements about Jane's situation. For example, she claims that Bertha is the fairy godmother and, ignoring Jane's reiterated warnings, she "outwardly resembles classic fairy-tale heroine" (71). Rowe turns Bertha into "a respectable governess, if not a great one" (71). Perhaps is Rowe's assertion that Jane renounces her childhood fantasies" (71) late in the novel "because it subverts the ideal of human equality" (70). Certainly Jane's storytelling during her formative years, but its relevance to her adulthood is not clear in the narrative itself – composed retrospectively when Jane is supposedly outgrown her penchant for stories – is perhaps underestimated. This is demonstrated in the receding of the novel, when Jane's retrospective narration describes the ghost that she may encounter a ghost and the subsequent events that occur across the room. Warhol observes that,

[t]hroughout the passage the narration is full of Gothic elements that is "fearful," "wracked with violent grief," "trying to look boldly," "prepared for horror," "heart beating thick," "head growing hot," "rushing" – the perspective of a Gothic heroine... the voice of Jane's older self. (861)

While Jane the narrator's imaginative storytelling is often confused with Jane the character's preference for Gothic art, her appreciation for the art that she maintains and develops is a key element of her character.

<13> Other critics have argued in a fashion similar to Rowe's that Jane finds that the gothic romance "brings with it close to the ideal of female freedom. It supports Rochester's view of her life and life story; it threatens the autobiographical narrative she seemed to have achieved" (89). These analyses ignore the fact that Jane's reading of the events at Thornfield is, in fact, valid and is thereby discounted, bestowing more, not less, value on her. This suggests as well that imaginative constructs, such as Gothic modes, are employed not merely as escapism or as a means of self-justification, but they significantly function as an aid to Jane's self-justification and appreciation for stories cannot be easily dismissed as a product of romantic youth.

<14> Perhaps the primary mistake that Rowe's analysis makes is that they do not look at Jane's active agency in her emotional development. For instance, Rowe insists that if Jane's

only two options:

Acquiescent in her servitudes, she can nurture her talents and virtues, while dreamily awaiting the reward for her promised labor; or, according to masculine logic, she can pursue her promised reward; or, according to masculine logic, she can pursue a larger-than-life authority and journey into a rugged independence, but sacrificing her health.

This interpretation does not consider how Jane uses these narrative elements, using them to open new avenues of social mobility. As Brontë explains, “[a] feminist cannot simply refuse to read the world everywhere, and they condition her participation in the world enterprise” (624). Indeed, instead of fitting her life into the genre (or several) to fit her life. As Warhol points out, “the Brontës are not so much unconsciously ‘writing’ their lives; they are actively engaged in rewriting them” (858). In other words, these formulas – including the style and form of autobiography – change when retold from a woman’s perspective. Jane’s rehandling of these stories, the manipulation of women’s writings, as in Daniel Defoe’s *The Turn of the Screw*. Such changes are that she was not born for a fairy-tale existence and its happy endings. When Rochester masquerades as a gypsy to tell her that she has not much choice of plot for her life – courtship; and promise to end in the same way. When Rochester asks her how she likes that “monstrous” theme “[p]ositively, I don’t care about it: it is nothing to me,” she, however, approves of this theme, and Jane wryly replies, “very much like ‘a volume of a novel of fashionable

<15> Despite Jane’s own marriage at the end of the novel, the stories and literary forms demonstrate an attempt to transcend conventional Victorian women, like Georgiana, who value elements of magic and by extension Brontë, value elements of magic because of the multiple possibilities that they represent. Jane initially thinks are outside of the sterility of her existence. “that was never ended,” the tale her imagination tells her with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, *that I desired* (my emphasis, 109). Helene Moglen confirms that “to write of what was, but of what could be” (484), and the joy of the imaginary kingdoms [in Brontë’s writings] “no matter how incompatible or incongruous in real life, form the backdrop for the stories” (161). Thus, although a romantic one, it is she herself who desires to live in a world of construction. This is suggested in Jane’s judgment of the world which Helen is reading when they meet each other.

interested in the book because the name strikes [her] as attractive,” but a brief examination convinces her of her trifling taste; I saw nothing about fairies, nothing seemed spread over the closely printed pages” (49). In her opinion to the fact that she was young and “not serious or substantial” (49), but her preference for romance as Garrett Stewart puts it (248), does not alter over the years. As a child, Brontë read romantic tales in a letter to Hartley Coleridge, she explains that she is “superior to any trash of Modern Literature”” from her childhood “and childhood has a very strong faculty of Criticism” (qtd. in Barker 146). The Brontë child is collaborative, writing is a mix both of fact and fiction. Her siblings’ absorption in these worlds endured into adulthood that Brontë continued to write about her imagination in the twenties when she took her first post as a governess.

<16> Romance seems to be a “relief” for Jane’s restlessness before her oft-quoted rant on the lack of opportunity for borrowing from “the contemporary political rhetoric” (xiv), Jane says,

[I] walk along the corridor of the third story, in the silence and solitude of the spot and amid whatever bright visions rose before it – and, glowing; to let my heart be heaved by the excitement it swelled it in trouble, expanded it with life inward ear to a tale that was never ended – and narrated continuously. (109)

Jane’s preference for romance is indicated again in a union between Rochester and Blanche Ingram as a fantasy: “Reason having come forward and told, in an unvarnished tale, showing how I had rejected the ideal... That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never more fantastic idiot had never surfeited herself on it if it were nectar” (160). Significantly, reason turns out to be a charade within it, or indeed a parody of the fashionable house party, or so he later says, merely to make Jane love him, and he never has any intention of marrying her.

<17> By infusing these fairy tale and gothic elements to create an amalgamated world, both real and unreal, women writers in the nineteenth century felt as if they were describing themselves as “dreamers, fantasists, st

world which alternately delights and tortures the real world” (11). In an untitled manuscript that Brontë relates this kind of doubled perception of pursue her own thoughts, the “here” fades away. the stretch on which it has been for the last twelve which nobody in this house knows of but myself. wandering, return to the ark which for me floats a desolate and boundless deluge” (410). In *Jane Eyre* proclaims that Jane “comes from the other world “substance or shadow,” an elf, a changeling, or a first meeting if she might have bewitched his hair green” (122). Workman astutely points out that Jane him that these men fled England a century before implication that she herself possesses some sort of

<18> Indeed, Jane does have profound psychic experiences in the red room at Gateshead which leads her to lose consciousness with St. John Rivers at Moor House, and her presentiments. One of these presentiments, in particular the tale of Bessie’s that suggested “that to dream of children either to one’s self or one’s kin” (220). Jane recalls the accompanying incident that verified it, and that she dreams of an infant just before she was informed she was summoned to Mrs. Reed’s bedside. But, at other times she simply relieve her from her loneliness or restlessness into strange dreams at night: dreams many-colored, stirring, the stormy” (366). Particularly interesting is the telepathy-like exchange she shares with Rochester at the end of the book as “not unlike an electric shock, startling,” but she claims it was not superstition, “the work of nature” (420). Thus, Jane continually can “find the supernatural in the natural” (Shuttleworth) that the division between the two modes is itself a metafictional comment on how literature, or the novel rather, is created in and inscribed with a social context that is “an important arena of political struggle,” that is (Schweickart 615-16).

<19> Recognizing Jane’s active agency as narrator and her criticism that privileged her unconscious motivations within the patriarchal system. Lisa Sternlieb, in *The Female* herself, “Am I granting these fictional narrators to their own motivation? I believe that I am countering an essential choice chooses instead to read them as victims or inconspicuously silenced by men when we are reading [her] words “the capacity of a woman narrator to design, construct,

ingratiating with artless candor” (1). “Artless candor” advises Jane to use, but Jane sees it as yet another way to manipulate an audience. In this way, Jane frequently complicates the very notion of truth by repeatedly telling more than one story. For example, in her early confession to Mr. Brocklehurst’s visit to Gateshead, she asserts that Mrs. Reed’s character “[b]ecause it is the *truth*” (3) that her narrative authority rests on more than simply what people would have listened to her complaints long ago. That the truth is essentially a story, a story that may not be what was really felt, but, because of Jane’s lack of narrative authority, her story can only claim authority if it is well-constructed. When Jane has something particularly contentious to say, she confesses seeing the servant Grace Poole “bearing a grudge” when she describes a governess’s cool attachment to her charge, she sardonically remarks that she is

<20> Jane is also perceived as truthful and unthreatening. Some might think she lacks agency and is only an artless scribe. Many nineteenth-century autobiographies often show women deprecating about their lives and accomplishments. Jane’s relationship with her writers and husbands; she suggests this “indicates a broader truth: women – and society – held their own literary efforts in high esteem. This interpretation that Jelinek does not consider. That Jane’s life is to be moulded by the power of a woman’s imagination. Jane’s story is confined by the confines of her writing. Jane does something quite different with Rochester as a main subject of her work, but also with her own stories and rewriting them within her own text. Jane’s relationship with Rochester and these tales depends entirely upon

<21> This positive interpretation may seem problematic for the Jane Eyre narrative because, if it is the story of a woman’s life, it is determined by her relationships to men, but it is set in a patriarchal society. Newton reminds us that “to understand the force of ideologies we must examine the ways in which they insure” (xx), and Ann Gordon, Mari Jo Buhle, and others argue that precisely the *interactions* between women’s spheres of influence enable us to discover women’s contributions to the history of their subjection” (85). Indeed, Workman states that Jane is the central character in the book, she also controls the narrative skill – she alters events and others’ perceptions of them which she provides them with information or with a different perspective. However, Sternlieb puzzlingly suggests that “[i]t is not that women are so restricted, so comparatively dull that women’s lives and their experience of telling must necessarily be measured by the experience of living” (4). If the basic events of Jane

is anything but dull; Boumelha neatly keeps score

In the course of the novel Jane has three jobs of a sort, two proposals of marriage. If her travels nearly go to the South of France, nearly go to India. She learns French, German and Hindi and receives male visitors in her bedroom in the confidences of financial treachery and sexual advances. She proposes marriage and gives away thousands

Even if Jane's perception of these events is called so rich and so inseparable from the rest of her work life as dull. Yet the suggestion that Jane's life connects an autobiographical thread and a fictional thread, is Brontë's own life, as Brontë and her sisters can be read as narratives in much the same way that they did pursue their lives simultaneously... to live virtuously while telling stories

<22> Jane's authority derives from her language and she reveals early in the book when she says, "*Speak I must* and *must* turn: but how? What strength had I to gather my energies and launched them in [a] bundle of sentences, as Jane comes to find out, are not always out that, for nineteenth-century women,

[h]aving influence, in fact, having the ability to be something that was in *their* [women's] own hands, contingent upon the renunciation of such self-control or self-definition. To have influence as a woman was urged to relinquish self-definition

This would suggest that in order for Jane to exert power paradoxically need to appear to relinquish that power by appearing to be deferential and by using narrative to conceal her process of self-definition.

<23> Indeed, in *Room for Maneuver*, Ross Chambers argues that storytelling is often a behaviour of resistance used by the weak against the powerful, necessarily to cause change in the power structure. "Oppositional narrative," he claims, "in exploiting the power, not to change the essential structure of narrative, *other* (the 'narratee' if one will), through the achievement of authority, in ways that are potentially radical" (11) as an oppositional response to her oppressed and dependent woman in the socially ambiguous position

Poovey has examined in her work. “A private govt once complained (qtd. in Gordon, *Charlotte Brontë*) to reclaim one’s existence. This storytelling is, as Cl... “turn the power of the narratee in the interests of... interesting or “seductive” enough to the narratee that oppositional discourse is something that wo... duplicity, helps explain the need for storytelling a... narrative as well as Brontë’s method of writing be... effectively disguise whose life narrative it actually

<24> Jane’s successful storytelling wins her physi... Hannah, the housekeeper at Moor House, seems proudly confirms that she is “book-learned” (341) does not come easily in all her relationships as Ja... struggle with Rochester and St. John. Both Roch... abandon her autonomy to them. Workman obse... suggesting power and privilege emphasizes that l... world and its people as slaves to his whims” (181) is that while most of the others in her life lack the Rochester may be one exception. He, too, seems authority to command an audience, and his chal... her “unceremoniously to one side” of the piano b... “usurp[ing] my place, and proceed[ing] to accom... subordinates Jane to the role of listener, rather th... instinctively find out, as I have done, that it is no... listen while others talk of themselves” (135). Jane... “[h]ow do you know? – how can you guess all this... maintains that he knows best. Indeed, although... influenced – conquered” after he proposes to her... “you seem to submit, and I like the sense of plian... Rochester’s narrative almost succeeds, for his vie... and vulnerable threatens to overpower her own v... and morally certain. He tempts Jane, apparently... principles altogether by living with him as his mi... strengthening her resolve and settling on a cours... listener one last time, saying, “I was not afraid...]... influence, which supported me... I took hold of h... contorted fingers, and said to him, soothingly, – ‘... you like, and hear all you have to say, whether rea

<25> Jane tries to exert narrative authority over S... success. For instance, like Scheherazade, Jane tel... that interests him to such an extent that he wade... in order to hear its conclusion. She also interrup... particularly when he introduces topics that make... marriage proposal. However, St. John has a mani

seems to use her love of stories against her. For example, in the opening of Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion* that sends her into the author and a dismal assessment of the literary opinion that Brontë herself shared, being an ardent Romantic. St. John, like Rochester, eventually tries to "book a moment," to refrain from narrating, and to "I spoke of my impatience to hear the sequel of a story which will be better managed by my assuming the narrative of the listener" (379). The first part of the "tale" is, significantly, written on a piece of paper, a name that St. John and Jane is, as Stewart notes, "the eager auditor, hence the story. Most of it would be properly hers to tell, except for the inheritance, but Rivers instead seizes the reins of the narrative. St. John's relationship is unbalanced to the extent that he has acquired a certain influence over me that took advantage of my attempts to speak and direct her life for her (397). His charm was framing round and gathering over me, and the words spoken which would at once declare and rivet the attention of the times as Jane protests and refuses his proposal, St. John's force and gradually wears her down.

<26> The "fatal word" that eventually does "rivet the attention" Workman points out that when Jane finally breaks her silence "demonstrates Jane's resolve not to listen to St. John's call, reveals her own response to the 'word'; we see her response to the Word of Christianity than by the words of passion and desire. This telepathic moment draws Jane back to Rochester and Rochester finally share a narrative because they have shared the experience, hearing each other's voice calling on for reconciliation. Critics have disputed the power of the narrative in which the complexities of Rochester and Jane's relationship. Workman, for example, sees the ending as ambiguous and complex. In her politics of narrative authority, she finds "an ongoing tension between the sexes" (10). Workman also posits a reading of the text, but, more positively, proposes that this story with its timelessness (183), or her continuation of the "tale" (109). Objections like these seem to subtly blame Jane for her claim to creative freedom might have on others.

<27> There are important details in the closing paragraph of the reading of Jane as not only empowering herself through the act of storytelling, but also preserving her authority in the act of autobiographical writing. Certainly, Jane is drawn to Rochester by her love for him, as Workman suggests. Boumelha se

she says the voice that “wrenches Jane away from another, also quite literally makes the calling of the (26). However, Boumelha’s reading, which maintains associating the plot of romance and marriage with or vocation with St. John, overlooks the fact that the title page makes clear, to write her own story. That is, that Jane hears another’s voice from afar, but that this autobiographical vocation, the articulation of the final scenes of the novel, Jane’s recouped power and voice. When she reports to Rochester how she spent the three months “soften[s] considerably what related to the three months because to have told him all would have been too much” provides a similar justification for not disclosing her feelings to him. She says “[i]f I told anything, my tale would have made a profound impression on the mind of my hearer, who, being sufferings too prone to gloom, needed not the details” (448). Thus, Jane provocatively implies that her relationship with Rochester to handle; he is significantly weakened in this particular, seems to have relaxed for he now says, “I want to express” (447).

<28> Perhaps, then, Jane’s overarching fantasy is of a world where she is who are dominating and authoritative, and the final scenes of the relationship shows that this is not unrealistic. Jane’s relationship with Rochester shows her authority because it contains, controls, and decides the terms of the narratives as well. Blinded and maimed, Rochester is the world for him, and, although his sight partially restored, it assures us that “[h]e cannot see very distinctly: he has Jane has St. John, on the other hand, drawing near to its setting,” and no one “weep[s] for this” since Jane is the center. Of course, Jane may appear to be reliant on Rochester as a storyteller she requires an interested listener. Carolyn Williams explains that “one measure of a work’s success may be the extent to which it is seen and heard. By this standard, a painting that goes unseen or a story that is incomplete; audience response (emotional, moral, and intellectual) (21). Yet Jane’s final subversive act of writing her story while being married, and presumably without her husband’s knowledge, continues to appreciate stories and to foster her own voice. Jane is not reliant on, or content with, Rochester as he is. Carolyn Williams posits that by keeping this final scene as her story, the story of her call to voice and vocation, that Jane writes as “Jane Eyre,” not as Mrs. Edward Rochester. The struggle for authority as a storyteller may be seen in the way that Rochester’s perception at the end of the novel is to tell him, Gaskell reveals that Patrick Brontë never published her first book until she decided to disclose her secret

(1) For a survey of the most influential biographic
Gérin on Brontë's close relationship with her bro
importance of Brontë's father in her life; Robert K
mother and older sisters; and Linda Kauffman on
Constantin Heger. (△)

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Some Chapters of Autobiography, the body potentially.

Closer to the Truth Than Any Fact: Memoir, Memory, and Jim Crow. By Jennifer Jensen Wallach. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008. xii, 176 pp. \$34.95, a false quote is a shrub, not taking into account the opinion of authorities.