

## **No Woman's Land: Deterritorialization in *Jane Eyre*** by Ann Marie Martinez

*I*n their many writings, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have put forth the concept of deterritorialization, and it seems that the best way to grasp its meaning is to fall back on one of their own sentences – one both simple and complex at the same time: “A stick is, in turn, a deterritorialized branch.”<sup>1</sup> It is something out of its original element. Just like that stick, *Jane Eyre* is out of her element; but unlike the stick, whose deterritorialization is absolute, Jane is constantly endeavoring to regain her territory. From the moment we first encounter her, she is a voice coming to us from an unknown setting – she is about to tell us of all the places she has been to, but we do not know from where she is speaking. Her voice is in a temporal deterritorialization. As we embark on the journey through her life, we realize that her story is one of advancing toward a completion, both in the self and in the setting.

*Jane Eyre* does not belong anywhere or to anyone. Her parents and her home, by misfortune, were taken from her, and she has been left without anything to call her own – without a territory. According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of territory, in the ethological sense [it] is understood as the environment of a group [...] that cannot itself be objectively located, but is constituted by the patterns of interaction through which the group or pack secures a certain stability and location. Just in the same way the environment of a single person [...] can be seen

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia UP, 1994) 67.

as a “territory,” in the psychological sense, from which the person acts or returns to.<sup>2</sup>

Jane may be in the care of Mrs. Reed, she may be in the company of her young cousins, she may sleep near the servants' quarters, and she may live at Gateshead Hall, but she is shunned by Mrs. Reed, mistreated by her cousins, looked down upon by the servants, and constantly in search of a corner in the great house to call her own. Mrs. Reed considers Jane to lack a “sociable and child-like disposition”<sup>3</sup>—she does not even see her as a child; the Reed children call her a “bad animal” and John Reed says to Jane, “you ought to beg, and not live here with gentlemen's children like us”<sup>4</sup>; the servants see Jane as “someone less than a servant, for [she] does nothing for [her] keep.”<sup>5</sup> Many times she is left by herself because she has not integrated into any of the household's groups. And, as “Jane looks wistfully toward the light and warmth of the servant community [ at one point, she] has no more place there than she does among the Reeds,”<sup>6</sup> and so must continue by herself. Possibly, if Jane saw the environment around her as a home-environment, she would respond to it warmly, but, most importantly, since Jane sees herself as an outsider everything and everyone is as foreign to her as she is to them. She says,

I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there: I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage. If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them. [I was] a thing that could not sympathize with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; [...] a noxious thing [...].<sup>7</sup>

Jane, however, is free precisely because she is deterritorialized. In fact, “[d]eterritorialisation [sic] frees a possibility or event from its actual origins”<sup>8</sup> because without an attachment to something specific mobility is increased. Hence, her transfer to Lowood is not emotionally disturbing because she has no attachment to Gateshead. She is free to explore and roam. Indeed she does, for “everyone, at every age, in the smallest things as in the greatest challenges, seeks a territory, tol-

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<sup>2</sup> Stephan Günzel, “Immanence and Deterritorialization: The Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari” (Jena: Friedrich-Schiller-Universitaet).

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (1847; New York: Oxford UP, 2000) 8.

<sup>4</sup> Bronte 11.

<sup>5</sup> Bronte 12.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Fraiman, *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993) 98.

<sup>7</sup> Bronte 16.

<sup>8</sup> Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 58.

erates or carries out deterritorializations, and is reterritorialized on almost anything,”<sup>9</sup> so Jane seeks the territory she lacks; nevertheless, her deterritorialization continues at Lowood Institution. Here, too, she sees herself as alien to her surroundings – even though her stay extends for eight years in which she is first a student and then a teacher. Her emotional attachments are limited to two individuals: Miss Temple and Helen Burns. The first agreeable moment Jane enjoys at Lowood is in their company. There is the warmth of the fire in Miss Temple’s room, tea and seed-cake to appease hunger, but, yet again, Jane is the outsider – she is the visitor in someone else’s territory. Jane stands aside and observes Helen and Miss Temple: “*They* conversed of things I had never heard of [...] *they* spoke of books: how many *they* had read! What stores of knowledge *they* possessed! Then *they* seemed so familiar with French names and French authors”<sup>10</sup>; and as the girls leave the room, Jane notices that “Helen she held a little longer than me: she let her go more reluctantly; it was Helen her eye followed to the door; it was for her she a second time breathed a sigh; for her she wiped a tear from her cheek.”<sup>11</sup> Highlighting the connection between them of which Jane is not a part. During Helen’s sickness, she (Helen) is kept in Miss Temple’s room, and when Jane hears about Helen’s imminent death, she literally crawls into Helen’s territory, into the crib, and stays with her until the end later that same night. The following chapter resumes the story eight years later, with Jane assuming the role of teacher as well as Helen’s former position as Miss Temple’s favorite. And while at first Jane describes Lowood, its surroundings, and its modus operandi in relative detail, she abridges this period with a simple sentence, by saying, “During these eight years my life was uniform: but not unhappy, because it was not inactive.”<sup>12</sup> Jane has not found something to call her own at Lowood per se, but she has, though, in Miss Temple. Jane says of her, “to her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements; her friendship and society had been my continual solace; she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and latterly, companion.”<sup>13</sup> But upon Miss Temple’s marriage and departure from Lowood, Jane finds herself once more facing acute deterritorialized, because the one thing, the one person, she can claim for herself leaves, never to return; as Jane explains, “[f]rom the day she left I was no longer the same: with her was gone every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in some

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<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari 67-8.

<sup>10</sup> Bronte 73 (emphasis mine).

<sup>11</sup> Bronte 73.

<sup>12</sup> Bronte 83.

<sup>13</sup> Bronte 84.

degree a home to me.”<sup>14</sup> Admitting to herself that she does not belong propels her to continue her search.

Jane casts herself out into the world in order to attain what she lacks, and falls into the role of a governess. However, in nineteenth century England, the one occupation that placed a person at a middle ground, alien to those immediately around her, was that of a governess. Any young woman stepping into this profession at the time “must live daily amidst the trials of a home without its blessings; [...] without any consent of her will, she is made the *confidante* of many family secrets; [...] she must appear not to hear sharp sayings and *mal-a-propos* speeches; she must be ever on her guard.”<sup>15</sup> A governess is to be a member of the household, but the schism that separates her from those sharing the roof with her runs deep. Because of her higher education and social class, to the “servants she was as unapproachable as any other middle-class lady.”<sup>16</sup> And since there was no real difference between the governesses and the families that employed them, a “fictitious barrier” had to be created, for, as was advised in magazines at the time, “[w]e must ever keep them in a sort of isolation, for it is the only means for maintaining that distance which the reserve of English manners and the decorum of English families exact.”<sup>17</sup> The governess is the buffer that has access to both groups yet belongs to neither.

At Thornfield, Jane both places herself and is placed by others in this middle bubble of the governess. Although conscious of being an employee, she sets herself apart from the other servants in the house, as she says, “[t]he other members of the household, viz. John and his wife, Leah, the housemaid, and Sophie the French nurse, were decent people; but in no respect remarkable,”<sup>18</sup> and they, as well, avoid socializing with her beyond the everyday common greetings. Upon first arriving and meeting Mrs. Fairfax, Jane feels welcomed and content to work for such a person. “My heart really warmed to the *worthy lady* as I heard her talk”<sup>19</sup>; but, upon learning the very next day that Mrs. Fairfax is not the owner of the house, Jane responds in the following manner:

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<sup>14</sup> Bronte 84.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Poovey, “The Anathematized Race: The Governess and *Jane Eyre*,” *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988) 130.

<sup>16</sup> Poovey 128.

<sup>17</sup> Poovey 153.

<sup>18</sup> Bronte 110.

<sup>19</sup> Bronte 97 (emphasis mine).

The enigma was then explained: this affable and kind *little widow* was no great dame, but a dependent like myself. I did not like her the worse for that; on the contrary, I felt better pleased than ever. The equality between her and me was real; not the mere result of condescension on her part: so much the better – my position was all the freer.<sup>20</sup>

While Jane may consider herself on an equal level with Mrs. Fairfax, and thus not alone, she has clearly brought her down from being a “worthy lady” to a “little widow,” right into Jane’s own middle bubble. Indeed, seemingly there is no “lady of the house,” so Jane may take certain freedoms that would otherwise be unavailable. And yet, it is with the arrival of Rochester’s guests that Jane experiences the pangs of the social class divide once again. When these guests enter the drawing-room and find Jane sitting by the window, with Adele, responding to Jane’s curtsy, “one or two bent their heads in return; the others only stared.”<sup>21</sup> For them, Jane is someone they cannot socialize with, and subsequently, a potted plant – they discuss any matter before her as if she were not there, even talking of the faults of the governess in her presence. Indeed, “[a]t Gateshead and Thornfield both, she is neither family nor servant, but floating uncomfortably between.”<sup>22</sup>

Due to her deterritorialization, since childhood, Jane lacks a static role model from whom she can build her own self-image. There is no one to tell her who she is. Consequently, Jane creates herself by taking fragments from the women around her – they define what she is, and what she is not. Walter Benjamin discussed the concept of a vessel created by the unification of diverse fragments in order to complete the whole. “Fragments of a vessel,” he says, “which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another.”<sup>23</sup> While Jane is selective, she appropriates fragments from the very diverse women around her, in order to create and complete her own self – the English lady she wishes to become. As a child at Gateshead, Jane lacks role models, let alone positive ones, with the exception of Bessie, who “employs her as ‘a sort of under-nursery maid, to tidy the room, dust the chairs, &c’ [...] apprenticing her in the ways of serving, as a mother would her daughter. This apprenticeship is consistent

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<sup>20</sup> Bronte 100 (emphasis mine).

<sup>21</sup> Bronte 171.

<sup>22</sup> Fraiman 97.

<sup>23</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” trans. Harry Zhon, *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2000) 21.

with Jane's developing self-perception."<sup>24</sup> Bessie is the only person at Gateshead to offer Jane a kind word. And it is Bessie's words that Jane carries with her, for her latter belief in the unexplained and otherworldly steams from Bessie's evening ghost stories, which are strewn throughout the novel giving way to both minor and major events – as is the introduction of Rochester, who “first appears in a supernatural haze, as if he had come galloping out of one of Bessie's nightmarish tales,”<sup>25</sup> and Jane's eventual return to Rochester by heeding the voice she hears in the night wind.

Jane's further socialization is taken from those she admires most at Lowood. Even though at Gateshead Jane was treated as a beggarly dependent, she has always seen herself as belonging to a higher social class. The first person she sees as a lady-like role model is Miss Temple, who impresses Jane by her “voice, look, and air.”<sup>26</sup> It seems that,

Jane's “organ of Veneration” swells at the very well-dressed sight of [Miss Temple]: not the pharisaic finery of the ladies Brocklehurst, but just enough quiet elegance to indicate that here stands a proper specimen of the bourgeois female [...]. As her name suggests, Miss Temple is a living shrine to this type, and Jane quickly comes to worship there.<sup>27</sup>

From her, Jane adapts what she calls her “Lowood notions of the toilette,”<sup>28</sup> always wearing a simple dress, smoothed back hair, and, when the occasion calls for, “a single little pearl ornament which Miss Temple gave [her] as a parting keepsake,”<sup>29</sup> or even the “strict self-repression” Jane has been taught by the “marble-like” Miss Temple.<sup>30</sup>

Of Helen Burns, Jane says, “I suspected she might be right, and I wrong,”<sup>31</sup> and so she is diligent to integrate in herself Helen's disposition toward forgiveness, endurance, and composure. Helen even says to Jane, ““Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you.””<sup>32</sup> While a young Jane voices her disapproval at such a suggestion at the moment, she is able

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<sup>24</sup> Fraiman 100.

<sup>25</sup> Fraiman 118.

<sup>26</sup> Bronte 43.

<sup>27</sup> Fraiman 104.

<sup>28</sup> Bronte 119.

<sup>29</sup> Bronte 119.

<sup>30</sup> Fraiman 105

<sup>31</sup> Bronte 56.

<sup>32</sup> Bronte 58.

to precisely follow the advice in her visit to Gateshead during Mrs. Reed's illness. Later, as she wanders aimlessly through the streets, "[t]he girl who once declared, 'I must resist those who punish me unjustly' [...] now swallows her anger at mistreatment and forgives injustice with Helen's own complacency,"<sup>33</sup> and blames not those who refuse to give her any food or aid, but rather turn her away.

From these three women Jane has taken fragments in order to build her own persona; but of others she has been much more discriminatory, and has opted to be their mirror image, reflecting, inversely, their traits. Of Georgiana Reed she has rejected frivolity; of Eliza Reed it is over-zealousness; of Blanche Ingram it is untruthfulness and charade; of Grace Pole it is vice; of Céline Varéns it is the role of mistress; and of Bertha Mason it is that of subjugation and fury.

Slowly, through her encounters with different women, Jane has almost completed her self, the vessel of her being is almost as intact as it can possibly be, but as her wedding day approaches, Jane senses that a large fragment is yet missing. When, the day after their engagement, Rochester calls her by her future name, that of Jane Rochester, her response is not one of appropriation but of rejection toward it. She says, "I could not quite comprehend it: it made me giddy. The feeling, the announcement sent through me, was something stronger than was consistent with joy – something that smote and stunned: it was, I think, almost fear."<sup>34</sup> A few days later, looking at her packed trunks Jane disowns them as well as the person she is to become:

tomorrow, at this time, [the trunks] would be far on their road to London: and so should I [...] or rather, not I, but one Jane Rochester, a person whom as yet I knew not [...]. I could not persuade myself to affix [the address cards on the trunks], or to have them affixed. Mrs. Rochester! She did not exist.<sup>35</sup>

On her wedding day, Sophie, the French nurse, calls Jane back to see her reflection in the mirror, and the image that bounces back is not to Jane's liking. "I saw a robbed and veiled figure" Jane says, "so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger."<sup>36</sup> The woman she sees in the mirror, the one she is about to become, will be more incomplete than she is because Jane will cease being her own person and become someone else's "perfect angel" – someone who is complete only in another's eyes, yet incomplete in her own. She cannot proceed to step into the already-completed life of a woman (with a husband, a house, servants, and

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<sup>33</sup> Fraiman 114.

<sup>34</sup> Bronte 258.

<sup>35</sup> Bronte 275.

<sup>36</sup> Bronte 286.

even a “daughter”) if she has not finished piecing her original self together. That is why, when faced with an uncertain future, Jane decides to leave Thornfield in order to flee from Rochester’s advances and toward her missing fragment.

From infancy, one word has been burned into Jane’s psyche – dependent. Upon her marriage to Rochester her state would not have altered since she would have simply transferred her dependency from being his employee to being his poor, unconnected wife. What Jane precisely lacks is her independence, and the one thing that guarantees her such a state is income. The coincidence that of all the homes in England, Jane arrives at the threshold of St. John, Diana, and Mary Rivers’ may seem somewhat incredible, but it serves a pivotal purpose for it is there, and only there, where Jane can find her missing fragment. At their home, she not only finds the family she belongs to, but the inheritance she is rightfully to attain. However, she does not remain with them at Moor House because it is not her home, her territory – it is theirs. She would once again be “the other,” the addition. Thus, as an heiress, she now has the financial and social independence she once lacked, and can return on an equal sense, in every way, to Thornfield.

Up to this point, Jane has always been moving away from some place, and this is the first time she is coming back to a place with the idea of remaining there indefinitely. Indeed, she is returning, she is reterritorializing herself to Thornfield, the only true home she has known. Had she married Rochester the first time, she would have remained deterritorialized for two reasons. First of all, since “deterritorialization, which relies on an initial territorialisation, is also accompanied by reterritorialisation [sic]”<sup>37</sup> she has to find a territory, leave, and return to it for her to be reterritorialized – remaining there would keep her in a constant state of deterritorialization. When she approaches Thornfield upon her return, she is exuberant at the prospect of returning because now she identifies it as a home, having been away from it for a period of time; she says, “How fast I walked! How I ran sometimes! How I looked forward to catch the first view of the well-known woods! With what feelings I welcomed single trees I knew, and familiar glimpses of meadow and hill between them!”<sup>38</sup> However, when she reaches Thornfield she finds it destroyed. It has burned to the ground at the hands of Bertha Mason. And this, in part, leads to Jane’s true reterritorialization. She could never be “the lady of the house” at Thornfield, for it has always been Bertha’s home – she not only inhabited the attic, but every corner of the house was stamped with her presence. Jane then simply transfers her attachment from Thornfield to Ferndean, thirty miles off, and estab-

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<sup>37</sup> Colebrook 65.

<sup>38</sup> Bronte 423.

lishes her home there with its inhabitants, while still remaining in the shadow of Thornfield.

Even though Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* may be simplistically summarized by some as a Cinderella story, in the end, it seems that in fact "Jane does not want a man, she wants a manor."<sup>39</sup> While this too may seem at first like a harsh judgment due to the monetary connotations evoked, Jane does not want the status of a landed gentry, she wants something to call her own.

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<sup>39</sup> Priti Joshi, *Seminar: The Brontës*, San Diego State University, San Diego, 9 Oct. 2002.

