“TO GROW UP CLEAN”: JANE EYRE AND EDUCATION

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While narratives of the Victorian governess emphasize her ambiguous social class position, this thesis argues that the advertised reason for the private governess’s employment within the home – her instruction of the family’s children – deserves ample critical attention. To investigate the Victorian governess’s educational project, I use Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847) as my focal text and incorporate additional governess novels from the period, such as Julia Buckley’s Emily, The Governess (1836) and Marguerite Gardiner’s The Governess (1839). I argue that the narrative’s omission of the governess’s work, the governess’s extracurricular education, and the destruction caused by the educational containment of foreign women ultimately destabilize and problematize the education the governess is hired to teach. This destabilization positions the governess’s work at the helm of an alternative model of education that does not advocate for “Englishness” but instead a comingling of knowledge that extends beyond England and is often learned in private communal settings.

I divide my thesis into three sections representative of three pillars of education: the schoolroom, the curriculum, and the teacher. In the first section, I consider the activities of the differing schoolroom spaces Jane Eyre encounters as a pupil and teacher. With state-sponsored education not a fixture of Britain until the early twentieth century, nineteenth-century education followed social class rather than state-mandated guidelines, a finding consistent with Jane Eyre’s representation of Lowood, a charity school for educating middle-class girls; Thornfield, a private home for educating an upper-class pupil; and Morton, a village school for working-class girls. I argue that while Jane’s narrative overlooks the educational specifics of each classroom space, the
upper-class private home overall lacks the qualified possibility of progress available in the educational spaces outside the home.

In the next section, I interrogate a recurring verbal formula identified in my survey of nineteenth-century governess advertisements: variations of the phrases “the branches of an English education” and “a sound English education.” I assess nineteenth-century textbooks to show that these phrases signify not only academic content knowledge but also moral principles and behavioral expectations rife with tensions. Applied to Jane Eyre, I argue that Jane’s extracurricular education acquired in unstructured female communities pushes against the “Englishness” of the prescribed “sound English education.” Rather than replicate literary criticism that pairs Mr. Rochester’s West Indian wife Bertha against Jane, I pair Bertha and Adèle to show that Mr. Rochester’s desire that Adèle “grow up clean” in England represents a project of cultural containment leading to narrative erasure.

My final section examines Jane’s function as teacher to the reader. I suggest that while Jane presents her knowledge as unquestionable facts in a textbook, her brief qualifiers and logical errors undercut her ultimate authority. I then draw on the botanical context of “ferns” to suggest that the novel’s conclusion at Ferndean complicates Jane’s linear progress narrative. My botanical intervention into current conversations about Ferndean suggests that rather than a garden of transplanted French flowerets, an education guided by the model of “ferns” – such as the education enjoyed by Jane in her extracurricular, female spaces – advances a vision of a hearty comingling of social classes and cultures.
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Introduction

As a cultural icon, the Victorian governess evokes images of respectability, propriety, and the upper-class English home. She teaches the family’s children, guides the children’s moral upbringing, and serves as a symbol of her employer’s wealth. Behind this image, however, lurk contradictions and complications.

In 1970, M. Jeanne Peterson applied sociology’s term “status incongruence” – a term denoting a conflict in assessing a person’s social characteristics – to the Victorian governess’s social position within society and her employer’s family (7). Peterson suggested that the Victorian governess, a gentlewoman hired to live in an upper- or middle-class home and educate the family’s children, contradicted the “very values she was hired to fulfill”: the governess was not a mother but by teaching children fulfilled the traditional duties of a mother, a “lady” but now an employee, a symbol of middle-class gentility but now a sign of her middle-class family’s failure to provide for her economically (9). Twenty years later, Kathryn Hughes and Mary Poovey took up similar projects to explain how the contradictions of the governess’s social position mapped onto the political and economic situation of the 1840s. Poovey suggests that the governess’s social incongruity in which she occupied a liminal, middle position between servant and employer attracted a profusion of attention from her contemporaries “at least partly because the economic and political turmoil of the ‘hungry forties’ drove members of the middle class to demand some barrier against the erosion of middle-class assumptions and values. Because of the place they occupied in the middle-class ideology, women, and governesses in particular, were invoked as bulwarks against this erosion” (231). Although they were invoked as “bulwarks,” some contemporaries worried that the governess was instead a “conduit through which working-class habits would infiltrate the middle-class home” (232). As these details suggest, the
governess occupied a contradictory, vexed position, making her on the one hand necessary but on the other hand unwelcome.

Richard Redgrave’s 1844 oil painting “The Governess” helps to dramatize Peterson, Hughes, and Poovey’s explorations of the governess’s status within her employer’s home. The painting, originally exhibited with the quotation, “She sees no kind domestic visage here,” features a governess in the foreground (Redgrave). She sits at her desk in a black dress with eyes looking downward and hand clutching a letter in her lap. The desk in front of her, the piano to her right, and the charcoal color of the tapestry behind her box the governess into a dark, bleak, defined space. Within this space, she is surrounded by her “work” – books lie on the desk, a music book rests on the piano’s ledge, and a basket of sewing awaits her below. In contrast to the governess, Redgrave depicts three adolescent girls, all with light blonde hair and dressed in pastel clothing. Like the governess, one girl sits with an object of reading in her lap, a book, but unlike the governess, this girl’s eyes look out the open doorway, not down at the floor. The other girls gaze at each other, with one girl’s hands on her, presumably, sister’s shoulders and the sister’s hands on the first girl’s waist. The imagery makes clear that while the governess’s pupils are outside in the light, the governess is not only excluded from the girls’ company but also secluded in a confined space of drudgery.

While Redgrave dramatizes the division separating the governess from her pupils, his painting also includes an additional significant aspect of the governess’s life: the materials of her work. Indeed, the advertised purpose of the governess within the private home is to educate children, much like the schoolmistress of a boarding, village, or charity school. However, with few exceptions, critics of the governess – both in the nineteenth century and today – have commonly brushed this instructional purpose of the governess aside. In the nineteenth century,
discussion of the governess’s educational purpose either satirized the lengthy list of female accomplishments she was supposed to teach or contextualized the arduousness of the governess’s work in relation to her status within the household.¹ For example, in Elizabeth Rigby Eastlake’s 1848 review of Jane Eyre, she does not dwell on Jane’s role as a teacher or her effect on her pupils; instead, she focuses on Jane’s morals and the inconsistency of her character. Criticism of the governess in the twentieth and twenty-first century furthers the work of Peterson, Hughes, and Poovey by continuing to contextualize the governess in relation to her ambiguous social class position. In addition, recent work on the governess attempts to direct attention away from fictional governesses to instead provide details of historical governesses’ lives.²

Peterson, Hughes, and Poovey all cite the same statistic to make the same point: in the 1851 census, 25,000 women, two per cent of all unmarried women between twenty and forty, described themselves as governesses. For Poovey, Peterson, and Hughes, this small percentage does not correspond to the significant attention governesses received from Victorians, which makes them primarily ideologically rather than socially significant (Peterson 8; Hughes xvi;

¹ For example, an 1848 article in Punch, titled “A Model Governess,” mocks the lengthy and unnecessary set of skills the governess must know: “She is an Encyclopedia in bombazeen, which must be ready to be referred to at a moment’s notice by every one in the house upon every possible and impossible science . . . She plays the harp, piano, and accordion; teaches calisthenics and hair curling; dances the newest fashionable dances from Bohemia or Abyssinia; understands glove-cleaning and dress-making; is clever at Berlin wood-work; in short, must have every female accomplishment at her fingers’ ends” (51). Other articles, such as an 1859 article titled “The Governess Question” in the English Woman’s Journal, place the governess’s work in context of her unwelcome position within the home: “‘My governess sits in the school-room when lessons are over,’ is the almost universal epilogue, while concluding an engagement . . . The servants have their hall and social pleasures; the governess is condemned to solitude, and must listen with aching heart to the merry laugh she may hear below” (163).

² For example, Ruth Brandon’s Governess: The Lives and Times of the Real Jane Eyres (2008) describes six governess’ lives to show how fiction in fact amplified the social anxieties faced by governesses. In 2012, Irene Goldman-Price published an edited collection of letters between Edith Wharton and her governess, thus continuing the critical desire to recover the authentic governess voice.
Poovey 232). More recently, in 2008, Ruth Brandon reframes this statistic: “since no middle-Class woman worked unless circumstances compelled her to do so, that 2 per cent must mean that almost every respectable lady who was forced to earn her own living became a governess” (1). Brandon does not view the governess as solely an ideological anomaly but rather a social saturation that necessitates attention to the particularities of her work. Whereas Poovey, Hughes, and Peterson draw on Victorians’ perceptions of governesses and information circulating outside the home in print written about governesses, Brandon refreshes the conversation by moving inside the home to examine material written by governesses and their pupils.

Brandon is not the first critic to gather information about governesses from the “inside.” In their 1997 primary source anthology, Trev Broughton and Ruth Symes write: “We wished to show something of what went on within the schoolroom: a subject hitherto rather marginal to histories of the governess. Our first priority has been to discover the governess at work: devising her curriculum, designing and giving lessons, managing – or mismanaging – her pupils, and balancing the many extraneous duties that fell to her lot” (13). For Broughton and Symes, focus on the mechanics and curriculum of the schoolroom reveals how Victorian governesses helped to “forge, perpetuate, and even challenge conventional understandings of what middle-class women could profitably learn, know, and teach” (13). Although “forge, perpetuate, and even challenge” appear to be contradictory rather than complementary terms, Broughton and Symes do not discuss their claim in great detail. Rather, since their collection is an anthology, they allow their primary sources to speak for themselves. Historians such as Christina De Bellaigue and Ellen Jordan have bolstered Broughton and Symes’ project by showing how nineteenth-century curriculum informed yet challenged ideologies of womanhood, nationhood, and motherhood.
In these social histories, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, the most well-known Victorian governess novel, flickers in the background. Troughton and Symes supply passages from *Jane Eyre* but do not analyze them; Peterson opens her essay by mentioning *Jane Eyre* but does not return to it; Hughes begins her first chapter by identifying Jane’s problems as peculiar to a middle-class woman but does not relate her subsequent claims about the governess to the novel. While the inclusion of *Jane Eyre* shows critics’ interest in how literature mediates the social facts of history, this analysis has been only cursory. Poovey is an exception, for she weds psychoanalytic and feminist analysis of *Jane Eyre* with history. She, however, does not take an “inside” approach like Broughton and Symes recommend, for she quickly brushes aside Jane’s employment, calling it “idealized,” to discuss her developing relationship with Rochester (241). Poovey’s lack of treatment of the specifics of Jane’s employment, i.e., the how, what, and why she teaches, coincides with the general trend of analysis of education and schooling in *Jane Eyre*. In 2009, Kirstin Hanley noted this critical omission, commenting that the “scenes of women teaching and learning” in the novel “are generally overlooked in the interests of emphasizing Jane’s escape from this servitude” (1). Hanley reacts against critics like Esther Godfrey or Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar who focus on Jane’s work as a governess primarily to read *Jane Eyre* as a *Bildungsroman*. Peculiarly, Hanley’s educational intervention of situating Jane and her role models within the “woman as pedagogue” tradition similarly glosses over the particulars of Jane’s work; for example, she limits Jane’s “unpleasant responsibilities” as a governess to “restraining the flippant behavior of her charge” (1, 5). By bypassing the particularities of the

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3 Following Hanley’s article, recent focus on *Jane Eyre* has investigated a diverse range of topics, including: evolutionary theory (Mishou), disability (Bolt et al. (eds.)), the imperial archive (Hope), the national identity of the English country house in relation to Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Henderson), slave narratives and racial strategies (McKee, Lee), Brontë’s relationship to foreign authors and governesses (Parsons, Müller-Adams), and Jane as governess
work occurring in the schoolroom, critics neglect the space where Jane, as well as other fictional and non-fictional governesses, would spend the majority of the day.

One exception to this tendency is Susan Zlotnick, who in 2014 interrogated the “work” of the Brontë sisters’ heroines. By briefly analyzing each of the Brontë sisters’ total of six novels, Zlotnick argues that the Brontës “use service, and the figure of the servant, to draw attention to the soul-destroying narrowness of Victorian women’s lives and to voice their own desire for greater opportunity, independence, and self-determination” (37). Although Jane is a “governess,” not a “servant,” Zlotnick suggests that Jane’s “escape route” is through “service, which she ennobles by recasting it as the missionary work that was central to Britain’s imperial enterprise” (42). Zlotnick discusses Jane’s work in terms of liberty, escape, and imperialism, yet I zoom in on the educational specifics – the schoolroom, the curriculum, and the teacher – to show how Jane Eyre’s as well as other governess novels’ representations of education problematize and reveal the limitations of educational goals for upper-class and rising middle-class daughters.

Central to interrogating the governess’s relationship to education is recognizing that she teaches a non-standardized curriculum. The British government did not begin to allot public funds for education until 1833, and even then, this support for public education, as Richard Altick explains, was “severely limited, the result partly of bickering among the religious factions and partly of opposition to governmental encroachment in a realm traditionally sacred to private, or at least clerical enterprise” (145). As Marianne Thormählen elaborates, while proponents of national education invoked the example of other countries, such as France and Germany, (Talairach-Vielmas, Gilbert). For these latter two analyses on Jane as governess, Talairach-Vielmas investigates how the ideal of femininity operates to move Jane from governess to wife, and Gilbert discusses the governess’s own writing in the schoolroom as a parallel to the self-empowerment of nineteenth-century women writers. Gilbert concentrates on the schoolroom as a site of writing, yet she overlooks the specifics of this space’s other central activity: teaching.
opponents decried compulsory education as an offense to British liberty (12). Lauren Goodlad elaborates on the stakes of this “British liberty”: “Victorian Britons imagined themselves as citizens of a self-governing nation and heirs to constitutional liberties. By custom, by nature, by established tradition – even by divine will – Britons were, it was believed, a vanguard people, able to contrast their freedoms to the noxious state interference endured by Continental and Oriental peoples” (3). As these analyses suggest, despite a move toward state-funded education in the 1830s, this move was met with considerable resistance due to a wariness to accept state-imposed encroachment on British freedom.

Jane Eyre and her contemporary female governesses, both fictional and historical, thus teach in an environment that lacks a state-standardized model. Louis Althusser describes “education” as an “ideological state apparatus” in which students learn “know-how” in “forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology of the mastery of its ‘practice’” (235, 236; emphasis in original). Whereas Althusser proposes that state-sponsored education indoctrinates students into learning and adopting prevailing ideologies, Victorian British education, as Altick, Thormählen, and Goodlad remind us, did not follow the model of the “state.” Rather than an “ideological state apparatus,” the education the Victorian governess teaches belongs to an ideological social class apparatus, for although particular values and assumptions overall underlie educational materials such as textbooks, the goals and curriculum of education were organized according to social class boundaries. *Jane Eyre* dramatizes these social class divisions, for Jane’s advertisement to become a governess lists her ability to teach the full range of female accomplishments, yet she instructs her village pupils in only the most basic academic subjects because of the village pupils’ lower class status.
Most interestingly, although Jane spends the bulk of her time within her narrative teaching, the text does not elaborate on these moments of instruction. I suggest that these absent moments of instruction merit critical attention, for these absences reveal a tension in the text that challenges the education Jane is supposed to teach – a “sound English education.” Scenes of schooling are not absent only in *Jane Eyre*; instead, a sampling of mid-nineteenth-century governess fiction shows a similar pattern of silences. I thus read these texts symptomatically, an interpretive method Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus summarize as: “Symptomatic readings often locate outright absences, gaps, and ellipses in texts, and then ask what those absences mean, what forces create them, and how they signify the questions that motivate the text, but that the text itself cannot articulate” (3). In this way, I build on theorists, such as Althusser and Fredric Jameson, who examine the lacunae of texts for their ideological significance. As Best and Marcus summarize, “for Jameson, interpretation is ‘unmasking’; meaning is the allegorical difference between surface and depth; and the critic restores to the surface the history that the text represses” (5). In my reading of *Jane Eyre*, I aim to “restor[e] to the surface” the governess’s challenge to the ideological project of education.

Chris Vanden Bossche examines the critical tendency to read *Jane Eyre* as either a support or subversion of ideology, cautioning that this method “follows from a conception of ideology as a self-contained discursive field that exists outside of, and prior to, particular speech acts or written texts” (48). To remedy this problem, Vanden Bossche recommends, “if, instead of trying to discover which normative ‘ideology’ the novel supports or critiques, we look for the ways in which it produces social identities” (51). To respond to this call, while my thesis shows how *Jane Eyre*’s representation of education for specifically Adèle opposes the dynamic cultural project “a sound English education,” I also situate the novel’s critique of this education with
respect to Jane’s social identity as a governess and suggest how the elisions and tensions in *Jane Eyre* ultimately model an alternative form of education.

My attention to education in *Jane Eyre* restores focus to not only the governess’s work but also the governess’s pupil. Indeed, in addition to criticism skimming past Jane’s primary identity as a teacher, criticism has forgotten her primary pupil: Adèle. Although the presumed goal of education is the student’s progress, critics concern themselves with the progress of Jane, the teacher, not Adèle, the student. For many critics, Adèle is a minor plot point leading to Jane’s ultimate marriage with Mr. Rochester. Mara Reisman situates Adèle’s French birth within the novel’s national project, arguing that the novel’s depiction of “England as a healthy, wholesome space in contrast to unhealthy, immoral France” results in Jane becoming the “quintessential English woman in contrast to the West Indian Bertha or the French Céline [Adèle’s mother]” (133). While *Jane Eyre* indeed invites national divisions, my thesis suggests that the novel’s depiction of education conflicts with the “wholesome soil” Mr. Rochester identifies as particular to England (150). In fact, Jane’s own education, her teaching, and the literal or narrative dissolution of both Bertha and Adèle contrast the negative containment underlying “a sound English education” to the positive assemblage of both English and non-English knowledge acquired in extracurricular spaces. Indeed, this assemblage of knowledge acquired by Jane closely reflects the collaborative exchange of knowledge Charlotte Brontë shared with her siblings Emily, Anne, and Branwell at their parsonage home at Haworth. As Christine Alexander

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4 For example, although Violeta Craina discusses how *Jane Eyre* explores the “proper” education of women, Adèle is mentioned only once, as an item in a list of plot summary: “After leaving her job, Jane marries, tends to a blinded and maimed Rochester, adopts Adèle, gives birth, and rears her son to the age of ten, then decides to write” (42-43). Similarly, in an article titled, “Spectral Strangers: Charlotte Brontë’s Teachers,” Nesta Devine contrasts two teachers, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, but references Adèle, the teacher’s pupil, only in the context of Jane’s growing affection for her.
notes about the Brontë siblings’ collaboration, “Close in age, intelligent and active, they naturally formed what their father called ‘a little society amongst themselves’” (xv). Although the Brontës’ own education provides a useful interpretive frame to analyze *Jane Eyre*, this thesis departs from a biographical reading in favor of a cultural reading that situates *Jane Eyre* in relation to contemporaneous governess fiction, advertisements, and instructional materials. To make this argument, I divide my thesis into three chapters: the schoolroom, the curriculum, and the teacher.

In the first chapter, I examine the three locations of schooling in *Jane Eyre*: the charity school Lowood, the private home Thornfield, and the village school at Morton. I find that in each schoolroom, Jane’s narrative does not thoroughly describe the specifics of her instructional methods or materials. I argue that despite this similar occlusion of education, the charity and village schools, which function outside the private home and aim to educate middle- and working-class female students, respectively, provide a framework for linear progress achieved by both Jane as a pupil at Lowood and the village students at Morton. This tangible realization of progress, however limited or qualified, is not present within the upper-class private home. I show how the parentheses within Jane’s advertisement when compared with her schoolroom and pupil reveal an underlying instability present in other fictional representations of the governess. Despite the lack of narrative description regarding the governess’s instruction, governesses are hired for an explicit instructional purpose. To begin to identify this purpose, I conclude the chapter by assessing a sampling of historical governess advertisements and identify a recurrence of variations of the verbal formulas: “a sound English education,” “a solid English education,” and the “branches of an English education.”
Next, in “The Curriculum,” I interrogate the keywords of these verbal formulas to identify the content, values, and pedagogical methods of the governess’s curriculum. I ground my argument in analysis of three nineteenth-century textbooks and the list of approved books published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. I find that the knowledge prescribed by this curriculum includes not only an Anglo-centric presentation of facts but also mandates particular expectations of behavior and principles. As I compare this model of education to Jane’s own education, I build on existing scholarship that identifies the significance of Jane’s female role models by showing how the subject content and instructional methods she receives in private female communities complicate the “knowledge” she should not only know but also teach. I then apply this understanding of education to Jane’s teaching of Adèle. Ultimately, Adèle achieves the “sound English education” desired to curb the threat of her French morals at school rather than with Jane, suggesting that the private home space becomes a subversive challenge to the education it in fact sets out to provide. I conclude the chapter by pairing Adèle with Bertha. While the majority of criticism doubles Bertha with Jane, I parallel Adèle with Bertha to show how each woman’s containment leads to literal or figurative death. This loss as a result of the women’s containment challenges the stripping of foreign excess needed to fulfill Mr. Rochester’s desired goal that Adèle “grow up clean” in England (145).

Finally, the third chapter interrogates Jane as teacher. In the role of teacher, Jane is responsible for the transmission of knowledge, and I assess how Jane as narrator controls the reader’s knowledge. I argue that Jane’s narrative mirrors the text’s representation of education, for while the narrative – the form of “education” for the reader – seems to claim ultimate, unrivalled authority, the narrative contains underlying instabilities that question this authority. This interplay between claims to unchallenged knowledge and subtle instabilities that challenge
it coalesce most explicitly in the novel’s final social vision at Ferndean. While criticism has remained divided as to whether Ferndean is utopic or foreboding, I show how Jane’s linear progress narrative of marriage with Mr. Rochester as well as the botanical context of “ferns” undercut the suggestion of idyllic English happiness.

Overall, analysis of the educational specifics of the governess’s work locates her subversiveness within the upper-class English home in the advertised reason for her employment: her work. In a historical moment without a standardized, state-sponsored curriculum, the insufficiencies of the curriculum contained in textbooks and the negative depiction of educational containment advocate against standardization and ultimately position the governess at the helm of an alternative model of education that privileges extracurricular knowledge that extends beyond England and is learned in communal, private spaces.
Chapter 1: The Schoolroom

In this chapter, I contribute to the critical omission regarding Jane’s identity as a teacher by contrasting the novel’s three locations of teaching and learning: the charity school Lowood, the village school at Morton, and the private home Thornfield. As with Jane’s work as a governess, critics have tended to not focus on the curricular specifics of these additional educational spaces, instead favoring analyses that read the charity school in terms of Mr. Brocklehurst’s disciplined suppression of the pupils’ sexual identities and the village school in terms of English patriotism or Jane’s maturation. I argue that the novel does not thoroughly describe the instructional specifics of any schoolroom space, yet educational differences among these spaces emerge. While the charity school for dependent, middle-class girls has the most regimented structure, the village school’s more basic curriculum for working-class girls dramatizes the social separation between Jane and her students. Although these schoolrooms’ pupils belong to different social classes, both schoolrooms occur outside the private home and provide tangible steps for students to progress from a lower to a higher academic level of competence. In contrast, I read Jane’s governess advertisement against a sampling of historical

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5 Recent criticism on Lowood has connected the school to a critique of evangelism, a forcing of the girls to accept their class positions, and an institution that aims to produce wage laborers for the market economy (Glen, Godfry, Leggatt and Parkes). Joan Peters and Suzanne Shumway offer two examples of analysis of the narrative strategies of Lowood, with Peters suggesting that the school acts out “a parodic rebellion against established forms of discourse in the conventional, essentially ‘male’ novel form,” and Shumway adding that Lowood offers Jane “surprisingly enough, some degree of linguistic diversity and independence” (Peters 219; Shumway 161). In contrast to Lowood, the village school has received significantly less critical attention, a tendency that Marianne Thormählen notes in The Brontës and Education (11). For examples of readings that view the village school as a plot point to propel Jane to Mr. Rochester, see, for example, James Phillips or Margaret Lenta. Thormählen positions the “patriotic overtones” of the village school in relation to mid-nineteenth-century debates about education, and Cheryl Wilson suggests that Jane’s work as village schoolmistress helps her realize “her ability to encourage other women to realize their potential” (Thormählen 11; Wilson 136). Although both critics discuss education in the village school, neither critic evaluates the curricular specifics of Jane’s instruction.
governess advertisements to reveal a disjunction: while advertisements present a transparent checklist of skills the governess must teach, *Jane Eyre* as well as other fictional governess texts do not elaborate on the particulars of the governess’s schoolroom work. Ultimately, these governess advertisements, Adèle’s prior accomplishments, and Mr. Rochester’s arrival introduce an underlying instability that positions the private English home as a site of educational stagnation and ambiguity rather than progress. To begin to explain the significance of fictional texts’ omission of the governess’s instruction, I conclude the chapter by identifying a recurring ambiguous verbal formula present in historical governess advertisements: variations of the phrases “usual branches of an English education,” “solid English education,” and “sound English education.”

**Lowood: Regimented Learning**

At the age of 10, Jane becomes a pupil at Lowood Institution, a charity school for middle-class girls. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar appropriately summarize this event: “Mr. Brocklehurst has come with news of hell to remove Jane to the aptly named school of life where orphan girls are starved and frozen into proper Christian submission” (344). Lowood accomplishes this “submission” through rigid discipline and surveillance. Recently, Heather Glen has connected Lowood’s privations and punishments to a “hostile but realistic portrayal of the ethos of evangelism,” and Esther Godfrey has argued that Mr. Brocklehurst’s insistence on cutting the girls’ hair aims to teach them to “endure and accept their class positions” (Glen 78; Godfrey 857). While Lowood’s regimented structure enacts the religious and social class critiques Glen and Godfrey advance, an educational perspective yields an additional conclusion. Lowood’s organized schoolroom may equate the school to a regimented factory, yet the school’s
visible curriculum at the same time provides a structured, although limited, method for scholastic elevation based on academic achievement.

The schoolroom’s ordered physical space prescribes a precise structure for the arrangement of the students. On her first night at Lowood, Jane describes the schoolroom as a “wide, long room, with great deal tables, two at each end, on each of which burnt a pair of candles, and seated all round on benches, a congregation of girls of every age” (54). The room’s large space, quantity of pupils, and uniform arrangement of two tables with exactly two candles denote rigidity rather than nurture or camaraderie. The orderly arrangement of the schoolroom mirrors the students’ precision assembling for lessons the next morning. After Miss Miller calls, “Form Classes!” and repeats, “Silence!” and “Order!” several times, Jane observes the pupils “drawn up in four semicircles, before four chairs, placed at the four tables; all held books in their hands” (55). Miss Miller’s commands and the schoolroom’s mathematical division into equal groups of four mirror the previous evening’s mathematical division of the physical space into groups of two. Overall, this regimentation positions the students as trained participants in a well-organized system.

This structured school environment includes subjects taught through students’ memorization, showing that the dominant form of learning consists of repeating rather than generating knowledge. As Jane approaches the schoolroom, she hears a “hum of many voices,” which she learns are the result of the girls’ “whispered repetitions” of their “tomorrow’s tasks” (54). Miss Scatcherd’s interactions with her students illustrate this educational practice, for after students twice read a chapter in English history about the reign of Charles I, she asks the students “sundry questions about tonnage and poundage and ship-money” (63). These mundane, fact-based questions recall popular nineteenth-century history textbooks, such as Richmal Mangnall’s
Historical and Miscellaneous Questions, a book Brontë owned, which features lists of questions and answers as well as brief, fact-driven abstracts of historical events (Chapple 198). For example, the 1840 edition of Mangnall’s textbook describes Charles I’s reign: “Charles the First, 1625, received from his father the same unconstitutional ideas of royal prerogative; his people began to feel their own weight in the scale of empire, and refused to pay the taxes he imposed; a civil war ensued” (Mangnall 179). While this summary may contain subjective or ambiguous information, such as “his people began to feel their own weight,” the abstract’s list-like structure in which semi-colons separate key information suggest that students are expected to return information, not interpret it. Read against Jane’s detail that the day’s lessons are “measured by the clock,” students’ regurgitation of information depicts them as passive, unquestioning learners in a well-ordered, factory-like system (58). This description of Lowood matches the assessment Lucy Snowe, Charlotte Brontë’s heroine in Villette, provides of the literature teacher M. Paul: “this school and yonder college are your workshops, where you fabricate the ware called pupils” (403). Likewise, at Lowood, the disciplined structure renders the schoolroom as a “workshop” that manufactures “wares called pupils.”

Within this educational space, every student and teacher has a designated place and role. When Jane arrives at Lowood, Miss Miller places her at the “bottom” of the “inferior class,” showing that each student occupies a particular position in the educational hierarchy (55). Just as Jane has a specified place, the teachers perform assigned roles based on subject area. Helen Burns describes that Miss Smith instructs sewing, Miss Scatcherd teaches history and grammar, Miss Temple gives music lessons to the elder pupils, and Madame Pierrot, who “comes from Lisle, in France,” teaches French (61). This list denotes the teachers’ subject areas, and Jane further describes the instruction occurring within the schoolroom: Miss Scatcherd asks her pupils
his history questions, the superintendent leads a geography lesson, and teachers instruct pupils in “repetitions of history, grammar, etc.” with “writing, arithmetic” and “music lessons” following (58). Within this ordered system, Jane omits the teachers’ precise methods of instruction, with Miss Scatcherd’s history questions and the word “repetitions” forming the only concrete clue to the school’s pedagogical methods.

Rather than pedagogical transparency, however, Jane’s trajectory as a student suggests that Lowood’s curriculum gives pupils a precise method to progress from a lower to a higher academic level. On the one hand, Lowood’s regimented structure seems to produce identical copies of students trained to become middle-class housewives or governesses. On the other hand, Jane’s personal experiences as a student reveal the potential for positive individual mobility. Although Jane begins as the last student in the lowest class, she soon elevates herself academically. As she describes, “I toiled hard, and my success was proportionate to my effort . . . in a few weeks I was promoted to a higher class; in less than two months I was allowed to commence French and drawing” (83). Jane’s “toil” results in tangible progress, for her promotion to a “higher class” gives her access to new skills, knowledge, and hope. From learning two tenses of the basic French verb “to be” and creating an ill-drawn cottage, Jane thinks of her future academic achievement: “I feasted instead on the spectacle of ideal drawings . . . I examined, too, in thought, the possibility of my ever being able to translate currently a little French story-book which Madame Pierrot had that day shown me” (83). Jane’s hope provides a ladder for progress, in which competence at one task unlocks a new skillset. Due to her efforts, Jane becomes “first girl of the first class,” then earns “the office of teacher” (92). Jane does not describe her specific instructional methods within the classroom, yet Lowood’s precise division of labor suggests she would likely use similar methods to teach her assigned subject as her
former teachers. Lowood’s schoolroom prescribes regimented learning, yet the school’s curriculum, which consists of basic subjects in addition to particular accomplishments such as drawing and French, provides an ordered though limited method for students to progress from a lower to high level of knowledge.

**Morton: Teaching Progress**

Although Jane does not teach at the village school in Morton until she leaves her position as a governess, both the charity and village schools, though serving different demographics of female pupils, share similarities. Like Lowood, the village school operates outside the private home, has a male clergyman supervisor, and shows the potential for students’ progress. St. John Rivers tells Jane that when he arrived to Morton, the village “had no school: the children of the poor were excluded from every hope of progress” (348). As St. John Rivers aligns the opening of a school with children having the “hope of progress,” Jane’s educational purpose as schoolmistress is to give her working-class female pupils access to this desired “progress.”

Jane unhesitatingly agrees to serve as the village school’s teacher, yet her initial observations of her students emphasize her dismay at their academic deficiencies. Previously, St. John Rivers cautioned her, “It is a village-school: your scholars will be only poor girls – cottagers’ children – at the best, farmers’ daughters. Knitting, sewing, reading, writing, cyphering, will be all you will have to teach” (348). Unlike Lowood’s inclusion of French and music in its curriculum taught by specialized teachers, the village school’s curriculum for working-class girls features just one teacher teaching all of the most basic subjects. Similar to this simplified curriculum, Jane feels “degraded” after her first day teaching and is “weakly dismayed at the ignorance, the poverty, the coarseness of all I heard and saw round me” (352).
This onslaught of negative verbs and nouns – “degraded,” “dismayed,” “ignorance,” “poverty,” “coarseness” – parallels the academic abilities of her pupils. Of Jane’s twenty students, “but three of the number can read: none write or cypher. Several knit, and a few sew a little” (351). Jane’s initial reaction combined with her students’ poor academic abilities initially question her students’ capacity to improve.

Despite this fear, Jane’s instruction results in tangible progress for her students. After time, Jane finds “some of these heavy-looking, gaping rustics w[o]ke up into sharp-witted girls,” and the “rapidity of their progress, in some instances, was even surprising” (358). Of course, Jane’s repeated use of the limited “some” rather than the comprehensive “all” shows that Jane does not include all of her pupils within this narrative of “progress.” While this limited “some” betrays prejudice, Jane reveals she taught to “several farmers’ daughters . . . the elements of grammar, geography, history, and the finer kinds of needlework” (358). Notably, like at Lowood, Jane does not narrate scenes from her schoolroom, which obscures the precise instructional methods she uses to educate her students. However, Jane’s teaching of these more advanced subjects to now “several” daughters implies that Jane’s teaching, at least for some students, not only accomplishes the “progress” St. John Rivers intends but also exceeds his curricular expectations of “knitting, sewing, reading, writing, cyphering” (348). Marianne Thormählen reads Jane’s developing regard for the village school girls through the lens of national debates about education, suggesting that Jane’s valuing of the girls’ “intrinsic worth” reflects strong “patriotic feeling” (11, 16). To add to Thormählen’s suggestion, Jane’s instructional scaffold in which the highest-performing students gain access to additional subjects proves that these working-class English girls are not only competent but also capable of academic success. Jane’s work with the village pupils fits into a national conversation about the need for education for the
working classes. As Altick explains, by the 1830s, people agreed on the necessity of popular education, for educating the working-class would “safeguard men’s minds against thoughts of rebellion,” “improve their morals and manners,” and “make [them] better workers” (142). While Jane’s teaching of girls rather than boys minimizes the necessity of quelling rebellion or producing “better workers,” Jane’s work does have the potential to improve her female pupils’ manners and make them more knowledgeable future wives and mothers. In this way, the village girls’ progress connects to a national narrative that values the education of the working-class as one method to enhance the future material and cultural progress of England.

   Overall, Jane’s growing satisfaction with her village pupils despite initial reservations mirrors the simultaneously intimate yet separated space of the schoolroom. Jane finds “estimable characters amongst them [her students],” “passed many a pleasant hour in their homes,” and “began personally to like some of the best girls; and they liked me” (358). Jane’s visiting of her pupils and their families within their homes and emerging friendships with her students reveal a familial, personal relationship between teacher and student distinct from the regimented, impersonal environment suggested by Lowood. Jane’s satisfaction, however, is qualified, for she references the families’ “simple kindness” and says it is like “sitting in sunshine” to “live amidst general regard, though it be but the regard of working-people” (359). “Simple” and “though it be but” imply that Jane views neither her pupils nor their families as her social equals, resulting in a sense of separation. This disjunction parallels the school’s physical space. On the one hand, the school has just twenty, rather than Lowood’s eighty, students, and the building that houses the schoolroom also contains Jane’s living quarters. This reduced number of pupils and shared physical space between home and school suggest the possibility for increased individual instruction and simultaneously connect education to a home rather than institutional
environment. On the other hand, Jane’s home space and school space remain distinct, and the presence of multiple students divides Jane’s attention, perhaps explaining her preference for the limited “some” rather than the comprehensive “all.” As a result of Jane’s inclusion in the community and teaching of the students, Cheryl Wilson suggests that the village school helps Jane realize “her own ability to encourage women to recognize their potential” (136). Analyzing the school’s space, however, helps to qualify Wilson’s conclusion, for while Jane “encourage[s]” these working-class village girls, she still remains separated from them in terms of space and status.

**Thornfield: Private Home Silences**

Unlike Jane’s educational experiences at the charity and village schools, Jane’s work as a governess to Mr. Rochester’s ward Adèle situates Jane within the private English home and places her in contact with not multiple but one student. Although Jane’s advertisement to become a governess presents a transparent checklist of skills, similar to the list of subjects taught at the charity and village schools, Jane’s narrative does not elaborate on the specifics of her instruction of her pupil. This finding of omitted instructional details despite advertised curricular transparency is consistent with other nineteenth-century advertisements and governess novels, which ultimately positions the private home as a silenced site of education that fails to reflect the progress of learning observed in the educational settings operating outside the home for the lower social orders.

After two years of teaching at Lowood, Jane pens a newspaper advertisement that draws on the conventions of historical governess advertisements. She writes:
‘A young lady accustomed to tuition’ (had I not been a teacher two years?) ‘is desirous of meeting with a situation in a private family where the children are under fourteen’ (I thought that as I was barely eighteen, it would not do to undertake the guidance of pupils nearer my own age). ‘She is qualified to teach the usual branches of a good English education, together with French, Drawing, and Music’ (in those days, reader, this now narrow catalogue of accomplishments would have been held tolerably comprehensive).

Address J. E. Post-office, Lowton, ---shire.’ (95)

Jane’s credentials include her previous teaching experience and her list of subjects: the “usual branches of a good English education, together with French, Drawing, and Music.” Although Jane does not mention the word “governess” until Mrs. Fairfax responds to this advertisement and “fix[ed]” the day for her to “assum[e] the post of governess in her house,” Jane’s advertisement reproduces the language of mid-nineteenth-century governess advertisements (97).

For example, an advertisement published in *The Watchman* on January 11, 1843 reads:

A Young Lady, who has been accustomed to Tuition, wishes to obtain a Situation as Governess in a gentleman’s family. She can instruct her pupils in Music, French, and Drawing, with the general routine of an English education. Unexceptionable references can be given. Address by letter, post-paid, to D.W., Post-Office, Cambridge. (“Multiple Classified Advertisements” 11 Jan. 1843)

Slight differences emerge between these advertisements, for Jane specifies the maximum age of her desired pupils and writes “good English education” rather than this advertiser’s “the general routine of an English education.” Analysis of other advertisements reveals additional variations: for example, among other possibilities, an advertiser may describe the “English education” with other adjectives, such as “sound” or “solid,” add further accomplishments, such as “Italian” or
“dancing,” specify she would accept employment in either a “School or Family,” say she has “no objection to go abroad” or could teach “either in town or country” (“Multiple Classified Advertisements” 30 Apr. 1846; 9 Aug. 1843; “Governess – A young lady”; “As a Governess”; “Multiple Classified Advertisements” 11 Jan. 1843; “Private Governess”; “Governess- A Young Lady”). Although these differences highlight variations among applicants, a few consistent genre conventions emerge: a woman advertises her desire for employment by using the third-person descriptor “a lady” or “a young lady” and listing the subjects she can teach. This list nearly always includes accomplishments, such as “French” and “drawing,” as well as an “English” education. A similar pattern guides advertisements written by families seeking to hire a governess because these advertisements, although they begin with the word “Wanted,” are also written anonymously and include a list of desired subjects the prospective governess will teach. Overall, for both governesses seeking work and families desiring to hire a governess, newspaper advertisements present a checklist of qualifications, which, on the surface, suggests that the governess’s instruction once she is in the schoolroom within the private home will be guided by a standard curriculum.

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6 I examined governess advertisements from approximately 1790 – 1850 using a keyword search of “governess” and limiter of “Advertising” in The Times Digital Archive and Nineteenth-Century Collections Online database. The newspapers these databases returned included The Watchman, The British Friend, and The Times. Although a small subset, the variations and consistent similarities among these advertisements suggest that they reflect a representative sample size of governess advertisement conventions.

7 As an exception to the mention of an “English” education, a “young lady” from 1834 describes herself as one “who excels in music, drawing, dancing, and who speaks and writes French correctly” (“As a Governess”). The lack of reference to “English” is atypical, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

8 For example, omitting the employer’s address details, an advertisement published in The Watchman on March 22, 1854 reads: “Wanted, immediately, in a Wesleyan Family, a Young Lady capable of imparting a good English education, with French, Music, and Drawing. Dancing would also be desirable” (“Multiple Classified Advertisements” 22 Mar. 1854).
However, despite this overt curricular transparency, Jane’s parentheses within her advertisement hint at an underlying instability. Sharon Marcus reads the juxtaposition between the publishable text of Jane’s advertisement and the parenthetical asides as a means to highlight the advertisement’s “nonreferential status” (211). While this advertisement, as Marcus suggests, positions Jane as a third-person commodity to be purchased by a prospective buyer, Jane’s first-person parentheticals also work to question the governess’s qualifications and advertised skillset. Jane’s first parenthesis, “had I not been a teacher two years?”, pressures the ambiguous but often-used phrase “accustomed to tuition” (95). The question mark introduces uncertainty as to what length of time qualifies as “accustomed to,” and the time “two years” reveals it does not necessarily equate to lengthy teaching experience (95). Reinforcing this potential lack of experience, Jane’s mention of her age as “barely eighteen” in the second parenthesis emphasizes Jane’s youth, vulnerability, and also inexperience (95). Further, her third parenthetical that her list of accomplishments is “now narrow” but would have previously been “tolerably comprehensive” sarcastically prods not only the governess’s curriculum but also the time period’s infatuation with the excessive learning and performing of accomplishments (95). Although the performance of these accomplishments helped upper- and middle-class daughters secure husbands, critics of nineteenth-century curriculum, as Christiana De Bellaigue notes, often targeted the curriculum for “devot[ing] too much time to frivolous ‘accomplishments,’ such as dancing, music, and drawing” (172). By questioning the governess’s teaching credentials, youth, and curriculum, Jane’s parentheses expose a tension between the surface of the advertisement and its underlying market anxieties.

Other fictional texts accomplish this same critique by mocking the advertisement’s excessive and formulaic list of requirements. For example, an 1840 poem in *The Odd Fellow,*
titled “Wanted a Governess,” writes that among other requirements “too tedious to mention,” the governess must “be at small-talk remarkably clever,” know modern languages “completely,” “epigrams make, both brilliant and terse,” “in music (of course) . . . be a proficient,” and “ne’er have a cold, when called on to sing,” (21, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14). The poem’s title shows its dialogue with the governess advertisement genre, for it directly replicates advertisements’ opening language. While the poem includes accomplishments typically present in advertisements, such as “music” and “modern languages,” the inclusion of “epigrams,” “small-talk,” and “ne’er have a cold” questions advertisements’ transparency by suggesting that the requirements for governesses exceed the advertised list of necessary skills. Rather than just subject matter, the governess becomes responsible for knowing and by extension teaching the genteel graces expected of middle-class wives. Similarly, an 1851 fictional piece in Eliza Cook’s Journal, “The Advertisement,” questions the formulaic and market nature of governess advertisements. The mother dictates an advertisement to her daughter with the publishable content of the advertisement in italics and the mother’s and daughter’s commentary in normal font. The mother begins, “Wanted a Governess; that is the usual heading of such things, I believe. Let me see – comma after Governess – then go on; to instruct three young ladies in French, (comma) Music” (282). When the daughter interrupts, saying, “We must have Italian too,” the mother continues, “Well, put down Italian before Music, with a comma between, then go on – Singing, and the ordinary branches of a sound English education (full point)” (282). The mother’s precision following the “usual heading of such things” and care to dictate punctuation where appropriate expose the advertisement as formulaic rather than sincere, and the daughter’s desire, “we must have Italian too,” positions accomplishments as commodities that are not necessarily needed but can be blithely added to a list. These contextual sources help to show how Jane’s parentheses
participate in an ongoing debate about the governess advertisement that fringe it with ambiguity and critique rather than transparency.

Amidst this tension, Jane’s overtly outfitted classroom provides her with the equipment necessary to impart advertisements’ requirements. These materials, however, simultaneously destabilize this overtness as they exceed her stated qualifications. In the library, Jane’s temporary schoolroom, the bookcase contains “everything that could be needed in the way of elementary works” (110). Although the unspecified “elementary works” obscure the books’ precise titles, their presence in the library for Jane’s use suggests that her pupil Adèle will most likely study history, geography, and grammar, the common academic subjects learned by elementary-aged upper-class females in the nineteenth century (De Bellaigue 176). In addition to these books, the room also contains “a cabinet piano,” “an easel for painting,” and “a pair of globes” (111). In her advertisement, Jane wrote she knew “French, Drawing, and Music” (95). While the “cabinet piano” might be used for “music” instruction, Jane’s advertised skill of “drawing” employs different materials and methods than “painting,” and Jane did not mention “globes.”9 These materials’ presence in the schoolroom not only shows that Mr. Rochester expects Jane to teach Adèle a range of accomplishments but also tinge the governess’s role in ambiguity by suggesting her role within the private upper-class home may extend beyond her advertised list of skills.

Although Jane’s classroom materials are overtly described, the schoolroom’s temporariness also unsettles the initial perceived stability of the curricular expectations. Mr. 

9 While Jane does not mention “globes,” “painting,” or a “piano” in her advertisement, some historical women seeking work as governesses did. For example, in a March 23, 1843 advertisement published in The Times, a lady seeking employment in a “gentleman’s family” desires to “instruct her pupils in the English and French languages, with the rudiments of Italian, music, drawing, geography with the use of the globes, writing, arithmetic, and the usual requisites of polite education” (“Governess Wanted”). Other advertisements reference accomplishments such as “flower painting” and “pianoforte” (see, for example, “Governess Wanted, for a Young Lady Of” and “Governess, - A lady”).
Rochester “directed” that the library should be used for the schoolroom, yet upon his return to Thornfield, he reclaims the library and forces Jane and Adèle to relocate, thus rendering them, even within the private home, as temporary female intruders in his masculine space (110). As a result, the private home schoolroom is less stable than either of the school spaces for middle- and working-class pupils, for both the charity and village schools have permanent rather than temporary classrooms. To reinforce Jane and Adèle’s status as outsiders in this masculine space, in the library, “most” of the books are “locked up behind glass doors” (110). This “loc[k]” creates a physical, impenetrable barrier between the books, teacher, and pupil that prevents Jane from accessing the knowledge reserved for Mr. Rochester.

As a further complication, Adèle displays her “accomplishments” during breakfast by speaking in her native French, singing, reciting poetry, and offering to dance for Jane (109). Mara Reisman concludes that what is “not quite right” about Adèle’s performance is her “Frenchness” and that she has “too much knowledge of the world and sexuality, even if it is only mimicry rather than empirical knowledge” (132). Reisman’s conclusions are valid, for Jane comments on Adèle’s French-learned skills, saying her choice of song “seemed strangely chosen for an infant singer” and her recitation style was “very unusual indeed at her age” (110). However, situating Adèle’s performance within the morning’s timeline also expands Reisman’s analysis. Since Adèle performs these skills prior to her first lesson with Jane in the schoolroom, Adèle shows that she has previously learned the content of the “accomplishments” that Jane has been hired to teach (109). In this way, Adèle’s performance pressures the governess’s advertised curriculum, for her display of accomplishments outside of the schoolroom creates an unmentioned yet adhered to distinction between proper and improper ways to perform and, by extension, teach skills such as “French,” “singing,” and “dancing.”
As Jane begins to teach Adèle, the uncertainties regarding Jane’s teaching increase, for Jane’s narrative does not specifically describe her instruction of Adèle within the schoolroom. On Jane’s first morning as a governess, she recalls, “when I had talked to her [Adèle] a great deal, and got her to learn a little, and when the morning had advanced to noon, I allowed her to return to her nurse” (111). Although Jane and her pupil have been in the schoolroom for perhaps three hours, Jane does not specify the “little” that she taught Adèle or explain the content of their “tal[k].” Despite this absence, teacher and student spend lengthy amounts of time together in the schoolroom; for example, Jane describes how “October, November, December passed away,” and “one afternoon in January, Mrs. Fairfax had begged a holiday for Adèle” (117). Jane’s mention of this holiday implies that other than Adèle’s early dismissal at noon on the first day, Adèle has not received any reprieve from her studies. Infrequently, Jane supplies brief excerpts of Adèle’s conversation within the schoolroom, yet this dialogue, most frequently spoken by Adèle in French, directs attention away from the learning occurring within the physical space of the classroom. For example, in Adèle’s excitement over the prospect of a box of gifts, she tells Jane, “Et cela doit signifier . . . qu’il ya aura un cadeau pour moi, et peut-être pour vous aussi, mademoiselle,” and when she later spies Mr. Rochester’s guests, she says, “Elles changent de toilettes” (125, 170). Adèle’s French comments deflect attention to commodities, gifts, and woman’s clothing outside of the educational space, making education a peripheral rather than central concern. As noted, Jane also does not thoroughly elaborate on her or other teachers’ specific instructional methods at Lowood or the village school. However, the description of Thornfield’s instruction differs. At the village and charity schools, Jane does not narrate a scene

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10 As Beth Newman, editor of *Jane Eyre* (New York: Bedford Books, 1996) notes, these phrases translate to: “And that must mean, there is a gift for me, and maybe also for you, Miss,” and “They are changing their clothes” (125n, 170).
from her classroom as a teacher yet the instruction is framed within a narrative of progress. In contrast, at Thornfield, Jane repeatedly hints at her and Adèle’s physical presence within the schoolroom, but the specifics of the instruction, since Adèle already knows the accomplishments, remain elusively at the margins. Jane perhaps summarizes the periphery nature of the schoolroom best when she answers Mr. Rochester’s question about how she has occupied her time during his absence with, “Nothing in particular; teaching Adèle” (183). By combining “nothing in particular” with “teaching Adèle,” Jane presents her teaching as a commonplace, insignificant occurrence that her narrative glosses.

Within this opaque learning environment, both Jane and Mr. Rochester comment on Adèle’s “improvement,” yet the lack of instructional transparency makes Adèle’s progress indiscernible. After Jane’s first morning with Adèle, she next mentions Adèle by commenting that her “sometimes wayward” pupil “soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable” since “no injudicious interference from any quarter ever thwarted my plans for her improvement” (115). Jane does not specify Adèle’s academic progress in any particular subject; rather, she equates “improvement” with Adèle being “obedient and teachable” (115). Once Mr. Rochester arrives to Thornfield, he similarly references Adèle’s “improvement,” telling Jane, “I have examined Adèle, and find you have taken great pains with her: she is not bright, she has no talents; yet in a short time she has made much improvement” (128). While “examined” suggests that Mr. Rochester perhaps quizzed Adèle in specific academic subjects, this “improvement” remains ambiguous as he does not elaborate in which areas she “improved,” rendering it uncertain whether he indeed tested her academic knowledge or “examined” her behavior and disposition. In response to Mr. Rochester, Jane replies, “I am obliged to you: it is the meed teachers most covet; praise of their pupils’ progress” (128). Mr. Rochester’s compliment of
Adèle’s “improvement” and Jane’s mention of “progress” anticipates St. John Rivers’ stated educational goal for the village school. However, whereas “progress” in the village school was linked to students’ learning of a set of identifiable subjects, the uncertainties regarding Jane’s instruction of Adèle in the schoolroom make Adèle’s progress intangible.

Further, although Mr. Rochester praises Adèle’s improvement upon his initial arrival to Thornfield, his presence stagnates Adèle’s learning. His return forces Jane to relocate her schoolroom to an unidentified “apartment upstairs” and increases Adèle’s school holidays (124). For example, Jane “exonerate[s]” Adèle from school duties to prepare for Mr. Rochester’s arrival, and, on another occasion, Mr. Rochester sends Adèle from the schoolroom “away to the nursery” (167, 256). In addition, his frequent threats to send Adèle to “school” position the workings of the private home schoolroom in opposition to the learning accomplished in structured school environments occurring outside the home (225). Mr. Rochester’s behavior shows that he, as the overseer of Adèle’s education, neither prescribes to Mr. Brocklehurst’s system of regimented learning for Lowood or St. John Rivers’s goal of academic progress for the village school. Rather, Adèle’s education becomes a secondary rather than primary concern for not only Mr. Rochester but also Jane, for Jane’s lack of narration regarding Adèle’s learning in the schoolroom opposes Jane’s elaborately detailed conversations with Mr. Rochester. Critics have read *Jane Eyre* as Jane’s individual progress narrative; for example, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar title their chapter on *Jane Eyre*, “Plain Jane’s Progress,” and, more recently, Esther Godfrey tracks Jane’s development “from governess to girl bride” by assessing how Jane must perform femininity to progress from working-class to middle-class to Mr. Rochester’s wife (Gilber 336; Godfrey 853). In these readings, Mr. Rochester’s arrival to Thornfield serves as a catalyst for Jane’s own narrative of progress. Crucially, however, while *Jane Eyre* culminates in
Jane’s marriage, Jane’s development from orphan to wife comes at the expense of Adèle’s academic progress.

*Jane Eyre* does not uniquely silence the instruction within the governess’s schoolroom; rather, a pattern of silence emerges in which mid-nineteenth-century governess novels similarly occlude the particulars of schoolroom instruction. For example, while Anne Brontë, like her sister Charlotte, worked as a governess, her *Agnes Grey* (1847-8) features similar governess schoolroom silences. By examining Agnes’s relationships with her pupils’ mothers, Dara Rossman Regaignon argues that Agnes disrupts the governess’s perceived function as a “transparent transmitter of maternal pedagogy” (94). The presence of the mother in *Agnes Grey* indeed introduces the tensions Regaignon explores, yet Agnes’s opaque schoolroom instruction adds a further complication to this claim of “transparency.” The novel only vaguely describes Agnes’s work: she “managed to get something done in the course of the morning”; her and her pupils “applied to lessons again”; her pupils have an “indecorous manner of doing their lessons” (22, 25, 69). This “something” and these “lessons” receive no description, and the plot, as in *Jane Eyre*, soon shifts to the protagonist’s burgeoning courtship with the clergyman Mr. Weston.

Other, less critically examined, governess novels additionally obscure the specifics of the governess’s schoolroom work, ultimately creating a pattern of schoolroom silence among mid-nineteenth-century governess novels. These novels, such as Julia Buckley’s *Emily, The Governess* (1836) and Marguerite Gardiner’s *The Governess* (1839), repeat similar plots that tend to reproduce the social histories of the governess summarized by critics such as M. Jeanne Peterson, Kathryn Hughes, and Mary Poovey: circumstances, often economic, drive a young woman to seek work as a governess, and while employed, she experiences tensions within the family and servants due to her ambiguous class position. In these novels, the governess’s
instruction is referred to as simply “lessons.” For example, in Gardiner’s *The Governess*, although the governess Caroline provides vivid descriptive details of the schoolroom by noting its “large maps,” “slates, drawing-paper, pencils, and colours,” Caroline only mentions her instruction as “lessons,” a finding replicated in Buckley’s *Emily, The Governess* (Gardiner 21, 52; Buckley 205). These additional governess novels do not describe multiple instructional spaces like *Jane Eyre*, yet the overall comparison between these novels reveals a constellation of schoolroom absence. This pattern stands in opposition to non-fictional advice books directed to governesses, such as Mary Maurice’s *Governess Life* (1849), in which pedagogical tactics on how to manage pupils and teach specific subjects, such as reading and arithmetic, comprise over one-third of the work. Ultimately, although non-fictional advice books as well as advertisements foreground the educational purpose of the governess’s employment, the methods of the schoolroom remain at the obscured margins of governess fiction.

Even if novels do not elaborate on the particulars of governesses’ instruction, instruction does occur, and the space of the schoolroom within the private home is not accidental. As Mrs. Fairfax tells Adèle when she first meets Jane, “Come and speak to the lady who is to teach you, and to make you a clever woman some day” (108). In Mrs. Fairfax’s opinion, Thornfield requires Jane’s presence so that Adèle can become “clever.” For *Agnes Grey*, critics, such as Mary Summers, have granted the novel significant educational implications. Summers describes *Agnes Grey* as a “conduct book” meant to promote a “new cycle of education” in which governesses’ pupils are “transformed by their education and consequently play a part in the transformation of their own education” (86). If the fictional governess’s presence in the home is necessary and has the potential for long-lasting educational consequences, yet the specifics of her instruction
remain elusively at the text’s margins, then a pressing question becomes: what is the “education” that the governess’s pupils learn?

To begin this conversation, I will return to where this section regarding education at Thornfield began: governess advertisements. Although neither all women who desired to become governesses nor all families who wanted to employ a governess advertised in newspapers, advertisements’ formulaic construction provides insight into standard rhetoric and cultural articulations of how potential governesses and their employers describe this work. As previously noted, this rhetoric details a list of subjects the governess can or is required to teach. In addition to specific skills, such as French or drawing, the majority of advertisements from the period of 1840-1859 include variations of the phrases, “branches of an English education,” “sound English education,” or “solid English education.” Novels and other fictional works reproduce this verbal formula. Jane writes she can teach, “the usual branches of a good English education,” and the mother in “The Advertisement” asks her daughter to include, “the ordinary branches of a sound English education” (95, 282). In contrast, governess advertisements from 1790-1840 less often include this verbal formula, instead using phrasing such as, “She undertakes to teach the English and French languages, grammatically” (“As Governess”). Thus, in advertisements for private governesses, the transition from the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century appears to witness the standardization of the verbal formula consisting of a descriptor, whether “usual branches,” “sound,” “solid,” or “good,” added to “English education.”

I sampled advertisements from 1790-1850 in Nineteenth Century Collections Online and The Times Digital Archive. I limited my tally to advertisements for resident or private governesses, either written by the prospective governess or employer. I reviewed but excluded from my tally advertisements for a “daily governess” or “school governess,” as these types of governesses did not live within the private family. This limit yielded 150 advertisements. Of this 150, 103 contained the phrase “English education.” Of these 103, 80 were published between 1840-1859. In contrast, 25 of the 47 advertisements that did not reference “English education” were published between 1790-1839. See the Appendix for a tabular representation of the findings.
Significantly, this phrase does not appear in advertisements for all spaces of female education. While it also occurs in advertisements for governesses working at private boarding schools, the private boarding school and private home similarly aim to teach upper- or rising middle-class daughters. Thus, with social class as a constant, both spaces abide to similar educational goals. In contrast, as this chapter has shown, schoolroom spaces in Jane Eyre differ according to social class and also prescribe varying educational goals with different degrees of progress visible for the students. Consistent with this spatial division, variations of the phrases “usual branches of a good English education” and “sound English education” are conspicuously absent in advertisements for schools for clergyman’s daughters, which are comparable to Lowood in terms of social class, or village schools. For example, an advertisement for a clergyman’s school offers “Instruction in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar and Composition, History, Geography, Astronomy, the Use of the Globes, Geometry, Botany, and Needlework” (“Multiple Classified Advertisements.” British Friend). This advertisement suggests curricular transparency by listing the academic subjects offered, yet absent from this list is “English education.” In contrast, an advertisement seeking a schoolmistress for a village school states she will be responsible for the “general instruction of the School, as well as to teach Needlework” (“Multiple Classified Advertisements.” The National Society). “General” presents its own ambiguities, yet “general instruction” also does not make a national claim to “English education.” Thus, “English education,” whether “solid,” “sound,” “good,” or another variant, emerges as unique to governess instruction of the wealthier social orders. The next chapter aims to dissect these keywords to identify the content and values of this otherwise ambiguous educational goal.
Chapter 2: The Curriculum

Marianne Thormählen states that by the early nineteenth century, the phrase “a sound English education” “summed up the essence of the knowledge-oriented part of the female curriculum” (79). This knowledge-oriented part included English grammar and literature, geography, history, and arithmetic, with the other skills-oriented part of the female curriculum including the French-influenced accomplishments, such as dancing and singing (Thormählen 81). Jane Eyre’s advertisement supports the division Thormählen makes between academics and skills, for Jane lists “French, Drawing, and Music” separate from the “usual branches of a good English education” (95). Despite this separation, Christina De Bellaigue shows that private girls’ schools equally taught both parts of the curriculum – “English education” and accomplishments. De Bellaigue examined the curriculum of 29 private girls’ schools in England from 1800-1880 and found the most frequently offered subjects included French (86% of schools), arithmetic (80%), history (78%), music (72%), drawing (69%), geography (69%), and grammar (60%) (174). Notably, three of the top five most frequently taught subjects are accomplishments, with French topping the list. Despite De Bellaigue’s limited sample size, the frequency of accomplishments alongside the “English subjects” show that the totality of female curriculum placed comparable emphasis on both sources of knowledge. Although De Bellaigue’s findings draw from private boarding schools rather than private homes, both spaces catered to rising middle-class and upper-class families, making the curriculum most likely consistent.

If the totality of “education” for upper-class female students consisted of both “knowledge” and “accomplishments,” then the decision to designate only one-half of this education as a “sound English education” demands further scrutiny. In this chapter, I will first situate each term of this verbal formula in relation to its historical and definitional context to
suggest that the phrase as a whole signifies an incontestable, sturdy English foundation. I next analyze nineteenth-century textbooks to show how this education prescribes both academic content knowledge and codes for behavior and cultural superiority. Despite the claim to sturdiness, these textbooks and the phrase’s context within the educational climate of the nineteenth century mar it with uncertainty. I suggest that Jane’s education, the purpose of Adèle’s English education, and the similarities between Adèle and Bertha ultimately problematize the cultural containment and exclusion inherent in the phrase. I conclude the chapter by suggesting how Jane Eyre and the figure of the governess crystallize the cultural and educational tensions latent in other governess novels.

The Sound, Solid Branches of an English Education

Recalling Appendix 1, of the 103 governess advertisements that mentioned an “English education,” 80 included either the descriptor “branches” (46), “solid” (21), or “sound” (13). Overall, these three descriptors position “English education” as strong, rational, and substantial. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “branch” as “a portion or limb of a tree or other plant growing out of the stem or trunk, or out of one of the boughs” (“branch, n.” 1). Applied to the advertisements, these “branches” – the multiple academic subjects – orient toward a common “trunk” of “English education.” This desired trunk is neither flimsy nor unstable; rather, it is, as various definitions of “sound” and “solid” suggest, “free from damage, decay, or special defect,” “entirely of the same substance or material,” and “well founded or established; of real value or importance; substantial” (“sound,” adj. 3a; “solid,” adj. 10a, 13a). These definitions situate “sound” and “solid” as claims to an unblemished, firm, and healthy correctness. Further, the definition of “entirely of the same substance or material” renders “English education” as
homogenous, which forecloses the possibility for combination of different materials and instead classifies each “branch” as uniformly English. Ultimately, “solid,” “sound,” and “branches” collectively suggest that “English education” consists of several sturdy, rational, and strong subjects that combine to create a well-supported and unified whole.

However, the cultural context of “sound English education” and the language of governess advertisements in which variations of this phrase appear problematize these claims to stability. De Bellaigue credits part of the widespread criticism female curriculum received in the early nineteenth-century to “a function of the dominance of a narrow conception of what constituted ‘solid’ education” (172). This “narrow conception” aligned “solid” education with the classical male curriculum, which privileged the study of classical languages while disparaging the female accomplishments (173). The appropriation of “solid” in governess advertisements thus suggests an attempt to render governess’s curriculum as authentic as the classical male curriculum. The simultaneous application of the same word “solid” to designate two different forms of education – one for boys taught a classic curriculum at school and the other for girls taught a governess-led curriculum in the private home – destabilizes the supposed solidity the phrase seeks to claim. The governess advertisements’ non-standardized descriptors further complicate the claim to stability. Although “branches,” “solid,” and “sound” form the majority of descriptors, numerous other descriptors emerge, some of which include “good,” “various,” “routine,” “essential,” “polite,” “liberal,” and “superior.” While these adjectives similarly describe “English education” positively, slight variations exist among them; certainly, a “polite” education has a subtly different connotation than a “solid” education. This inconsistency suggests that advertisements’ claim to teach a variation of an “English education” may have become a cultural placeholder that in fact lacks standardized significance.
If the “sound,” “solid” “branches of an English education” signify the knowledge-oriented subjects, then one method to understand the knowledge and values advocated by this “English education” is to examine a common source of nineteenth-century instruction: textbooks. As Michael W. Apple, educational theorist, writes, “Education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture. The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone’s selection, some group’s vision of legitimate knowledge” (22; emphasis in original). Apple’s conclusion resonates with Althusser’s conception of the educational ideological state apparatus that aims to teach “know-how” legitimized by the prevailing dominant ideology (236). While England lacked a standardized curriculum, textbooks present knowledge in a standardized format. Although not all students from all social classes used the same textbooks, analysis of select textbooks in subjects studied by the majority of school-aged children – grammar, spelling, and history – shows that the “English education” refers to factual subject knowledge predicated on Anglo- and Euro-centric assumptions of superiority as well as particular prescribed gender roles and expectations of behavior.

In Jane Eyre, Jane does not name the specific textbooks she uses to learn or teach, yet Jane and other characters undoubtedly use these resources, for books constantly flicker in the background. When Jane arrives at Lowood, although she does not supply the books’ titles, she mentions the “lesson books” the girls use, the “chapter” the students read before Miss Scatcherd questions them, and the “certain little French story-book” Madame Pierrot shows her (58, 63, 83). At Thornfield, Jane states the library bookcase contains all of the “elementary works” needed to instruct her pupil, later carries these “books” upstairs, and on one occasion allows Adèle to put away “books and work” (110, 124, 125). Even Blanche Ingram, in her disparaging
remarks about governesses, confesses that as pupils under their governess’s charge, she and her brother “tossed our books up to the ceiling” (180). Although the absence of specific book titles obscures a precise determination of these books’ content, the books’ presence, even if obscured, points to a dependence on books as a means of instruction.

To begin to describe textbooks’ pedagogical content and underlying values and assumptions, I will primarily assess: Rev. J. Russell’s *English Grammar* (1833), William Mavor’s *The English Spelling-Book* (1837), and Rev. George R. Gleig’s *The Family History of England* (1836). All three of these textbooks appear in Mary Maurice’s *Mothers and Governesses* (1847) in an appendix titled “Approved Books on the Supplementary Catalogues of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.” Maurice, an ardent supporter of education and governesses, opened an Anglican school, subscribed to the Governesses’ Benevolent Institution to support its efforts to improve the lives of governesses, and wrote both *Mothers and Governesses* (1847) and *Governess Life* (1849) to give governesses instructional advice and defend their work (Kaye). As Maurice’s *Mothers and Governesses* has as its main audience both mothers and governesses, it can be inferred that the list of “Approved Books” would guide mothers’ and governess’ selection of textbooks. Founded in 1698, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) became the largest producer of Christian literature by the eighteenth century (Harris 136). As Jocelyn Harris notes, the SPCK advocated for “equal education in literacy, numeracy, and Biblical knowledge for girls as well as boys” (137). Since the Anglican Church was the guiding faith of Brontë, Maurice, SPCK, and England, examining textbooks on the SPCK’s approved list of books serves to represent the knowledge, pedagogical methods, and cultural values contained within English schoolchildren’s instructional materials.
Before assessing the educational specifics of individual textbooks, an analysis of the list of “Approved Books,” which was published the same year as *Jane Eyre*, begins to illustrate the landscape of nineteenth-century curriculum. Significantly, SPCK published books for both boys and girls; while the full list exceeds the curriculum female pupils such as *Jane Eyre*’s fictional Adèle could expect to learn, the list as a whole provides insight into underlying instructional methods and topics. Shortened versions of this list appear in other textbooks, such as *The Family History of England*. In *The Family History of England*, this shortened list is divided into three categories: “English,” “Latin,” and “French.” The latter two sections feature grammar books to learn the language as well as a few selections of classic Latin and French texts, such as *Select Epistles of Cicero and Pliny* and *The French School Classics* (479). The texts listed under “English” are more expansive in their content and include subjects such as grammar, composition, literature, arithmetic, geography, history, and astronomy. The majority of these books’ titles contain the keywords “A Practical Introduction to,” “The Principles and Practice of,” “Outlines of,” or “The Elements of,” which shows that these schoolbooks are written to provide the foundations of knowledge for a beginning rather than advanced student (478).

The complete list in *Mothers and Governesses* expands these findings. This list contains 124 textbooks alphabetized by subject, beginning with “Algebra. A First Book of Algebra, specially adapted for Beginners” and ending with “Wild Animals; their Nature Habits and Instincts” (1, 8). As with the shortened list, some textbooks on the complete list use the language of “introduction,” “elements,” “outlines,” and “principles,” reinforcing that these textbooks are

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12 This list is not divided by sex, but, as a general rule, only boys would study Latin. As De Bellaigue summarizes, “The classical curriculum was the centre-point of a notion of liberal education whose ideal was that of the independent gentleman. To study Latin and Greek was to step outside a curriculum rationalized in accordance with a domestic conception of femininity and, ultimately, to challenge the prevailing ideal of womanhood” (177).
intended for primarily a beginning student, such as the fictional Adèle. Of the 124 textbooks, at least 25 books spanning a range of topics have a religious focus. The inclusion of religious-focused texts on a list of books approved by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge may be unsurprising, yet this list’s placement in a book aimed at mothers and governesses helps to emphasize the importance of religion to education. While many of the textbooks focus on England, whether her church or her history, a significant number of textbooks describe foreign lands or people, with reference to “manners” and “customs” recurring often. Two examples of book titles include: The Civil History of the Jews, from Joshua to Hadrian; with Notices of Manners and Customs, Geography and Antiquities, Extracts from Travellers, illustrative of Manners and Customs mentioned in various passages of Holy Scripture, and Persian Stories; illustrative of Eastern Manners and Customs. While the inclusion of textbooks that reference many locations and peoples existing outside of England presents the curriculum as culturally aware, this repeated focus on “manners and customs” also suggests that these texts use “history” or “stories” to make generalizable cultural claims, thus making the textbooks liable to cultural stereotyping.

Rev. J. Russell’s English Grammar helps to coalesce the religious, cultural, and pedagogical emphases of the overall textbook list. The textbook’s grammar “exercises” feature a dialogue between a fictional student labeled the genderless “W.” and an instructor who asks questions and provides the rules of grammar in a numbered list. Although this format is conversational, the instructor maintains ultimate authority as he provides the grammar rules W. needs to know. The first rule of the first exercise, “1. GOD has given to man the power of SPEAKING,” reflects the text’s overall religious emphasis (9). In addition to multiple references to Bible passages and verses throughout the lessons, the instructor also makes distinctions
between Englishmen and foreigners that work to affirm rather than erase differences. In the instructor’s discussion of syllables, for example, he tells his pupil that English words with multiple syllables come from words “that have ONE syllable, or from OTHER languages” (12). He then immediately asks his pupil a question: “Do you remember the Frenchman and the Turk, whom you met in the steam-boat last summer?” (12). The immediate reference to the “Frenchman and the Turk” after mentioning “OTHER languages” categorizes these different people as undoubtedly “other.” After the pupil replies, “Yes,” the conversation turns to questioning why the pupil could not understand the Frenchman and Turk’s languages despite the shared features of “tongue,” “lips,” “throat,” and “palate” (12). The pupil confides that he “saw no difference, except that the Turk had not shaved his chin,” so he “do[es] not know, why they did not speak, as Englishmen speak” (12). The instructor prompts an explanation from the pupil by referring to the account of Babel in the Bible, which the student recalls as when “God confounded the language of all the earth, and made men not to understand one another’s speech” (12). For the instructor, foreign languages thus exist as a reminder of the “truth of the Bible,” yet this religious rationalization does not lessen the cultural divides between England and the foreign “other” the instructor draws (13). The next lesson again references the Frenchman, for the instructor tells the pupil, “Your French acquaintance would have spoken another word, and would have been understood by his countrymen, though he was not understood by you” (16). This comment does not disparage the French, yet an English grammar textbook’s inclusion of this reference shows the text demonstrating a cultural consciousness that defines and defends a specifically “English” grammar against, or at least in relation to, a foreign other.

While *English Grammar* comments on the English language in relation to other languages and presents the instructor as the ultimate possessor of knowledge, William Mavor’s
The English Spelling-Book contains moral lessons to define proper behavior for good boys and girls and also reveals underlying stereotypes about England and Europe’s place in the world. The text is arranged in a series of lists and lessons; after, for example, a list of one-syllable words, the text supplies multiple “lessons” that combine these one-syllable words into sentences. The content of these lessons primarily addresses children’s behavior. For example, Lesson 16 describes Tom who falls in a pond and “was long ill and weak” (24). Tom “had been told not to go,” so “it was his own fault, and he was a bad boy” (24). Unlike Tom, in the next lesson Jack Hall is a “good boy” who dutifully goes to school, is kind to all, and does not fight with others. The text has clear opinions about these boys’ behavior: “Mind and do not the same [as Tom],” and “Be like Jack Hall, and you too will gain the love of all who know you” (24). The next lesson continues this pattern by offering examples of “good” and “bad” girls. A “nice girl” who “was not good” “fibbs” and refuses to share her cake (27). In contrast, Miss Jane Bond dutifully sews to make clothes for her doll, and Miss Rose, a “good child,” who “did at all times what she was bid,” is rewarded with a trip to see “the Doll’s house” (28). These lessons separate girls and boys, for the boys adventure outdoors and go to school while the girls sew, play with dolls, and are asked to share with others. In addition to these gender roles, the book’s focus on describing the behavior of both “good” and “bad” children shows that the text teaches not just spelling but also behavior.

This spelling textbook also contains several appendices, such as “Outlines of Geography” and “Epochs in History,” that elevate England and Europe while denigrating Africa in particular. “Outlines of Geography” describes the continents, and the preference for Europe begins with the first superlative – “Europe is the most important division of the globe” – and continues with a list of Europe’s positive qualities – “the temperature of the climate,” the “progress of the arts and
sciences,” and “the establishment of a mild and pure religion” (227). This beginning praise ends with Europe being described as “eminently superior to the others [continents]” (127). After declaring Europe’s superiority, the description next includes a list of the “powerful kingdoms and states,” the first of which is “Great Britain” (127). In contrast to this exalted description of Europe, the text characterizes Africa as: “Except the countries occupied by the Egyptians, those venerable fathers of learning, and the Carthaginians, who were once the rivals of the powerful empire of Rome, this extensive tract has always been sunk in gross barbarism and degrading superstition” (128). As the phrases “gross barbarism” and “degrading superstition” attest, the opposing descriptions of Africa and Europe overall present a Eurocentric worldview, one that lays claim to Europe’s as well as Great Britain’s superiority at the same time that it disparages others.

This privileged positioning of particularly England occurs not just in geography but also history lessons, as seen in a case study of textbooks’ depiction of Henry VIII’s reign. Henry VIII’s desire to divorce his wife cemented Britain’s Protestant identity by leading to Britain’s separation from the Roman Catholic Church, a divisive moment of history that opposed England to continental Catholicism. In The Family History of England, Gleig presents the reign of Henry VIII in a positive, although contradictory, light. The summary begins, “All his actions prove him [Henry VIII] to have been pre-eminently selfish,” but despite this negative characterization, “He was clearly an instrument in the hands of a wise Providence, for the furtherance of its own ends” (349). Notably, Gleig writes “its” rather than “his” “own end”; “his” seems to be the more appropriate pronoun for a king who was “pre-eminently selfish.” The use of “its” rather than “his” thus creates a discrepancy that suggests a shying away from presenting the king negatively. This discrepancy continues in the text’s characterization of Henry VIII’s break with Rome. Gleig
acknowledges that had Henry remained faithful to Catherine, the break with Rome would have been “unlikely,” yet even though he “swayed a sceptre more absolute by far than has ever yet been wielded by an European monarch, [he] may be said to have laid the foundations of liberty for future generations” (350). The Family History of England’s biases in favor of Henry VIII despite the tensions and negative aspects of his reign become explainable when read in the context of the textbook being published in a Protestant country and endorsed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Similarly, Richmal Mangnall’s Historical and Miscellaneous Questions, though not on SPCK’s list of endorsed textbooks, has evasions that subtly question Henry VIII’s reign at the same time that the text overtly supports it. The text asks: “What title, which is still retained by the English sovereigns, did Henry the Eighth receive from the pope?” (124). The answer, “Defender of the Faith,” was bestowed “On account of a book which he published against the opinions of Luther” (124). Curiously, this exchange references Henry’s opposition to rather than support of the Protestant catalyst Luther. In response to a later question, “Name the most remarkable events in the reign of Henry the Eighth,” the answer does not include the break with the Catholic Church, instead providing a list: “The Reformation was begun; the battle of the spurs fought between the English and the French . . .” (124). The remaining questions continue to be factual: “Who was prime minister to Henry the Eighth?” “Name the discoveries and improvements at this period.” “What great men suffered death in this reign?” (126). While The Family History of England celebrates Henry VIII’s rule, the perplexing inclusion of some details in Historical and Miscellaneous Questions, such as Henry VIII receiving a title from the Pope, yet exclusion of other details, such as his role in the break with the Catholic Church, depict a
selective history of Henry VIII’s reign that favors rather than overtly questions the king’s decisions.

This selective rendering of history, combined with other textbooks’ emphases, also has moral significance. De Bellaigue notes that history was one of the subjects most commonly offered in girls’ schools and was regarded as a “particularly feminine topic” because commentators argued that by studying history, women “would be able to draw moral lessons from it for their children” (176). Using textbooks’ depictions of Henry VIII as an example, these moral lessons would privilege rather than criticize England and her history. Of course, future mothers’ ability to learn and teach morality was not solely confined to history textbooks. As we have seen, morals with respect to behavior govern the organization of the “lessons” in The English Spelling-Book, and other popular books used by mothers and governesses, such as Sara Coleridge’s Pretty Lessons in Verse for Good Children (1834) and Sarah Fielding’s The Governess; or The Little Female Academy (1749), similarly frame the teacher-student relationship in terms of morality.

This moral focus of education supports Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s assessment that middle-class women viewed “moral and religious training as the core of their educational function” (281). Indeed, this “moral and religious function” of education was not limited to middle-class mothers. Rather, providing a strong moral education to children was viewed as primary importance for all mothers and, as an extension, governesses. For example, in Mothers and Governesses, Mary Maurice cautions mothers that in selecting a governess, there is “something far higher, and more important” than hiring an accomplished governess – her “moral tone and character” (10). This preoccupation with morals even prompts Maurice to caution mothers against hiring a particular type of governess: “English mothers! if you wish to spoil the
purity of your daughters’ minds, to sap their morals and destroy their simplicity, place them in the hands of a French governess!” (13). Maurice exposes a cultural anxiety about the effects foreign French governesses will have on the morals of English children, and her string of worries about “purity,” “morals,” and “simplicity” present the educational function of governesses not in terms of subject matter (the rules of grammar and spelling or the facts of history, for example) but in terms of morality.

Whereas Thormählen suggests that “a sound English education” pointed to the “knowledge-oriented part of the female curriculum,” analysis of select nineteenth-century textbooks shows how this “knowledge” included not just facts but also cultural views of England’s and Europe’s superiority, codes for proper behavior, and power dynamics between instructor and student (79). As these textbooks’ pressure points suggest, while the phrase “a sound English education” presents curriculum as a solid and incontestable foundation, the twenty-first century reader finds evasions and tensions within this foundation, perhaps imperceptible to British educators of the nineteenth century, that serve to destabilize this claim to soundness.

Complicating Education

*Jane Eyre* maximizes the subtle underlying tensions of a “sound English education” through its depiction of Jane’s own education, the desired outcome and result of Adèle’s learning, and the parallel between Adèle and Bertha’s similarly negative repression. Ultimately, these factors suggest that the governess’s education, curriculum, and status within the home decenter the sound Englishness she is supposed to teach.
Extracurricular Knowledge

Jane’s education departs from the fact-driven, Anglo-centric knowledge surveyed in textbooks, for she subjectively interprets “history” and supplements her knowledge with extracurricular skills learned in private female communities. In the “history” presented in textbooks, pupils often learn from questions and answers to memorize facts. In contrast, Jane reads both nonfictional and fictional books as “histories” and selectively interprets the information in these books to make her own conclusions. In the opening scene of the novel, Jane views “the pictures” in Thomas Bewick’s *A History of British Birds* (20). Jane mentions that the “words” in the introductory pages “connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes,” yet her lengthy description of these “vignettes” show that her primary objects of analysis are the pictures, not the typical source of knowledge: words (21). Jane’s engagement with the visual rather than the solely textual material not only suggests an atypical approach to knowledge but also shifts the emphasis of the content of this “history.” As the book’s title states, the subjects of Bewick’s “history” are “British Birds,” yet Jane does not concentrate on the facts presented about the individual species of birds. Instead, she focuses on the settings, the “haunts of the sea-fowl,” for example, rather than the sea-fowl themselves (20). Further, the settings that Jane describes are not “British” but rather foreign; for example, she narrates, “Nor could I pass unnoticed the suggestion of the bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland” (21). Jane’s reading of this “history” redefines its content, for rather than remember the facts of British birds, Jane values the pictures of the foreign settings.

After Jane’s cousin John disrupts her reading, Jane’s use of two other books, Goldsmith’s *History of Rome* and Swift’s *Gulliver Travels*, further complicates her study of “history.” As John attacks her, Jane narrates, “I had read Goldsmith’s ‘History of Rome,’ and had formed my
opinion of Nero, Caligula, etc. Also I had drawn parallels in silence, which I never thought thus to have declared aloud” (23). Jane’s method of extracting morals from “history” reflects nineteenth-century practice, yet Jane also departs from this model. Rather than depend on an instructor’s analysis or presentation of the “facts,” Jane forms her own “opinion” and draws her own “parallels.” Like Bewick’s *A History of British Birds*, Goldsmith’s *History of Rome* is non-fictional, yet Jane skews the boundary between fact and fiction in her reading of *Gulliver’s Travels*. Jane asks Bessie to bring her *Gulliver’s Travels*, stating, “I considered it a narrative of facts, and discovered in it a vein of interest deeper than what I found in fairy tales” (32). For the two titled “history” books, Jane either overlooks the book’s main subject or subjectively applies the book’s information to her life. In contrast, with *Gulliver’s Travels*, Jane views the fantastical fiction as a source of “facts.” Further, all three books’ content extends past England; while Jane focuses on the foreign settings in *A History of British Birds*, *History of Rome* describes Rome, and *Gulliver’s Travels* details “travels into several remote nations of the world,” as its full title states (Swift). The inversion between fact and fiction and focus on non-British settings departs from the textbook model of British education and makes Jane’s individual study of history neither “English” nor “solid” nor “sound.”

Jane’s experiences as a student at Lowood continue to distance her from the fact-based learning of subjects as presented in textbooks. Jane next mentions “history” when she observes Miss Scatcherd at Lowood asking students questions about Charles I’s reign. While Jane may read “history” inappropriately, Miss Scatcherd’s mundane history questions about “tonnage and poundage” render the English history taught in structured school environments as less compelling than Jane’s individual gleaning of knowledge (63). To reinforce this divide, Miss Temple’s instruction of Helen and Jane separates the knowledge of structured school spaces...
from the knowledge possible in private, communal settings. Miss Temple invites Helen and Jane to her private room, and Jane observes that Miss Temple and Helen “conversed of things I had never heard of; of nations and times past; of countries far away; of secrets of nature discovered or guessed at: they spoke of books: how many they had read! What stores of knowledge possessed!” (82). These “secrets of nature,” “countries far away,” and “nations and times past” hold exciting potential for Jane that extend beyond the schoolroom rote memorization of the facts of England (82). This shift beyond England immediately continues, for Miss Temple and Helen “seemed so familiar with French names and French authors” (82). Helen’s familiarity with “French names and French authors” speaks to her extensive French reading and cultural knowledge of France, thus placing her outside the bounds of the typically speaking-focused French curriculum. Jane further illustrates the extent of Helen’s knowledge by commenting that her “amazement reached its climax when Miss Temple asked if she [Helen] sometimes snatched a moment to recall the Latin her father had taught her, and taking a book from a shelf, bade her read and construe a page of Virgil” (82). As Latin formed part of the classical male, rather than female, curriculum, Helen’s knowledge, which Miss Temple cultivates in the private space of her room, exceeds the curricular expectations of Lowood’s schoolroom.

In this scene, Jane solely observes and exists outside of the knowledge Helen and Miss Temple access, yet Jane soon becomes a participant in this exclusive, extracurricular educational community. Jane’s rise to the “first girl of the first class” attests to her mastery of the curriculum Lowood teaches; however, immediately after describing this academic success, she mentions Miss Temple, writing, “to her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements” (92). Jane’s crediting of Miss Temple with the “best part of [her] acquirements” positions the individualized instruction provided by Miss Temple as superior to the regimented instruction prescribed by
Lowood. Jane’s narrative thus invites a preference for the knowledge Miss Temple represents, a knowledge that includes Latin, other foreign languages, and many books covering various subjects.

Just as Miss Temple and Helen form an educational community that Jane joins, Jane continues to expand the boundaries of her knowledge during her stay with Mary and Diana. After Jane flees Thornfield, she observes Diana and Mary through a window and describes, “And in a low voice she read something, of which not one word was intelligible to me; for it was in an unknown tongue – neither French nor Latin” (327). Jane’s conclusion that the language she hears is “unknown” since it is “neither French nor Latin” perhaps suggests that she, like Helen, has at least a rudimentary understanding of Latin. As Jane looks through the window, she is again outside an educational community, yet she soon joins Diana and Mary and shares their knowledge. Just as Jane admires the “stores of knowledge” possessed by Miss Temple and Helen, Jane uses similar language to describe her admiration of Diana and Mary: “They were both more accomplished and better read than I was; but with eagerness I followed in the path of knowledge they had trodden before me” (343). As Diana, Mary, and their brother incorporate Jane into their private learning space, Jane accesses new forms of knowledge, particularly German and Hindostanee. Jane’s expanding knowledge further distances her from the “sound, solid branches of a [female] English education,” an observation reinforced by Miss Oliver later finding in Jane’s drawer “first two French books, a volume of Schiller, a German grammar and dictionary, and then [her] drawing-materials and some sketches” (361). The breadth of Jane’s knowledge “transfix[es]” Miss Oliver “with surprise,” and then Miss Oliver exclaims, “Had I done these pictures? Did I know French and German? What a love – what a miracle I was! I drew better than her master in her first school in S--” (361). As Miss Oliver is an upper-middle
class daughter who likely learned at a private boarding school, her questions not only express admiration but also show that Jane’s education exceeds the curricular objectives of even upper-class women.

Mr. Rochester’s questions to Jane about her education perhaps most aptly characterize her amalgamation of both standard and non-standard forms of English education. In Mr. Rochester’s first conversation with Jane at Thornfield, he launches a series of questions about her education, beginning with “Have you read much?” (129). Viewed in the context of Miss Temple’s many years of instruction, Jane’s reply that the books she has read “have not been numerous or very learned” hardly seems to represent the extent of her knowledge accurately, suggesting that she deceptively withholds information from her employer (129). Mr. Rochester’s questions continue, and he concludes Jane is “no doubt well drilled in religious forms (129). Jane again shows reticence by neither confirming nor denying Mr. Rochester’s conclusion, which overall places her in an ambiguous liminal position of knowledge. Mr. Rochester next asks whether she can “play” piano; when Jane replies, “A little,” he says, “Of course: that is the established answer” (130). In this area of knowledge, Jane conforms to the “established” view, for after playing only “a few minutes,” Mr. Rochester says, “You play a little, I see; like any other English school-girl” (130). In contrast, Mr. Rochester’s interrogation of Jane’s drawing abilities thwarts his expectations. He, like Miss Oliver, likens Jane’s drawings to those of a “master,” asking Jane, “probably a master aided you?” (130). Mr. Rochester’s implication ignites Jane’s indignation, causing her to exclaim, “No, indeed!” (130). When he examines her pictures, he asks further questions about her mood and technique: “How could you make them look so clear, and yet not at all brilliant?” “And what meaning is that in their solemn depth?” “And who taught you to paint wind?” (131). Her drawings exceed his expectations and explanation, a
perplexity he expresses when he concludes, “the drawings are, for a school-girl, peculiar” (133). The addition “for a school-girl” shows that Jane’s drawing skills place her outside of the established expectations of knowledge for a governess.

Overall, Jane’s education, which draws from extracurricular sources of knowledge, pressures the “sound English education” that prescribes the study of particular academic subjects with an Anglo-centric perspective. While Jane has a schoolroom charity-school education, she supplements this knowledge with additions gained through her own individual abilities or participation in private educational communities operating outside of a structured school environment: individualized readings of “history,” the acquisition of “extra” foreign languages, and the attainments of additional artistic abilities. Other critics such as Kirstin Hanley and Cheryl Wilson emphasize the importance of these private female learning communities on Jane’s development. For Hanley, Jane’s participation in the “woman as pedagogue” tradition results in female relationships forming the “cornerstone” of Jane’s education (2). Wilson suggests that the female reading communities in Jane Eyre “empower their participants” and reveal the potential for “social change” against patriarchal restrictions (31). While I agree with Hanley and Wilson’s conclusions, attention to the educational specifics within this variety of unstructured school settings amplifies their conclusions. To acquire her assemblage of knowledge, Jane flits through various spaces containing varying social orders of characters who all exist in different relationships to her: she learns from the servant Bessie in her upper-class aunt’s home, constructs her own version of “history” within this same space, discovers new stores of knowledge in the private rooms of a middle-class teacher in a charity school for girls, and learns further information from Diana and Mary in their middle-class private home. Jane’s knowledge, then, relies on a multiplicity of characters and spaces, which blurs the social divisions dividing
education. Jane travels among these various spaces, adding to her knowledge regardless of the social class of her teacher, mentor, or peer. Prominent among Jane’s teachers are fellow middle-class educators: Miss Temple’s work at the school instructs girls who may, like Jane, work as a governess, and Diana and Mary are “governesses in a large, fashionable, south-of-England city” (346). Although Diana and Mary’s employers are both “haughty” and regard them only as “humble dependents,” they have an expansive range of knowledge that exceeds curricular expectations. Thus, *Jane Eyre* depicts a series of middle-class teachers whose work penetrates the upper-class English home and whose knowledge pushes against the rigid borders of an Anglo-centric and fact-driven English education.

*The English Teacher & The French Pupil*

Critics such as Mary Poovey and M. Jeanne Peterson emphasize the “middle” ambiguous position of the governess within the English home (Peterson 458; Poovey 43). Considering that Jane’s education bridges a “middle” position between a standard female curriculum and the acquisition of numerous extracurricular additions, it seems as if working as a governess would be the ideal position for Jane. The private home, like Jane, appears to be also extracurricular since it operates outside of structured school spaces, and Jane expands her own knowledge by participating in private educational communities. Using Jane’s own learning as a model, it seems reasonable that Jane would form an extracurricular, private female learning community with Adèle and similarly expand Adèle’s knowledge. Jane’s tenure as a governess, however, never realizes this potential, specifically because Adèle’s French birth demands that she, in the opinion of Mr. Rochester, learn the behavior and morals unique to a “sound English education.” The pairing of Jane as teacher and Adèle as pupil thus represents a mismatch of abilities and
expectations. At the end of her narration, Jane describes that Adèle thrived at school, and “as she grew up, a sound English education corrected in a great measure her French defects; and when she left school, I found in her a pleasing and obliging companion: docile, good-tempered, and well-principled” (438). Although Jane’s governess advertisement states she can teach “the usual branches of a good English education,” it is the school, not Jane, who supplies the desired outcome. As Mr. Rochester’s desire for Adèle to “grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden” makes clear, the “sound English education” provided by the school denotes a cultural containment that prizes submission, good-temperedness, and English principles (150). Marianne Thormählen summarizes that opponents of national, state-sponsored education decried it as an offense to British liberty; the example of Adèle, however, reveals that this “British liberty” in fact aims to restrain upper-class daughters, particularly foreigners, into proper submission. Together, Jane and Adèle exposure the fissures of the educational project previously described, for the focus of this education becomes cultural containment – a containment that Jane, as a governess with her extracurricular knowledge within the private upper-class home, is ill-equipped to supply.

Although Jane at the end of her narrative applauds the school’s ability to make Adèle “docile, good-tempered, and well-principled,” Adèle is originally both “docile” and “good-tempered,” making the primary area of desired improvement Adèle’s “principles” (438). During Jane and Adèle’s first schoolroom lesson, Jane reports, “I found my pupil sufficiently docile, though disinclined to apply” (110). The inclusion of this keyword on just the first morning of lessons implies that Adèle’s “docility” does not need improved. Docility implies submissiveness, and other than child-like prattle and exuberant eagerness, Adèle certainly submits to her superiors while under Jane’s tutelage – perhaps even more so than her instructor. For example, as
Adèle prepares to see Mr. Rochester and his visitors, Jane reports, “when she was dressed, she sat demurely down in her little chair, taking care previously to lift up the satin skirt for fear she should crease it, and assured me she would not stir thence till I was ready” (173). Despite her eagerness, Adèle’s willingness to sit “demurely” and remain still illustrates her compliance. Further, her perpetually cheery disposition despite perpetual commands and rebukes from the household certainly present her as “good-tempered” (438).

With a good-tempered and docile disposition, Adèle’s central flaw becomes the potential damage her “principles” may have suffered due to her French birth. Mr. Rochester likens his foreign French ward to a flower that needs cultivated. He tells Jane, “My Spring is gone, however: but it has left me that French floweret on my hands . . . I keep it and rear it rather on the Roman Catholic principle of expiating numerous sins, great or small, by good works” (145). Mr. Rochester’s rearing of his “French floweret” on the “Roman Catholic principles” aligns Mr. Rochester’s reparation of his sins with continental Catholicism rather than English Protestantism. Further, Mr. Rochester’s story of Adèle’s heritage continues the cultural connotations of cultivation, for he tells Jane, “I e’en took the poor thing out of the slime and mud of Paris, and transplanted it here, to grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden” (150). Mr. Rochester’s cultural argument aligning Paris with “slime and mud” and English with “cleanliness” and “wholesome soil” suggests that at stake in Adèle’s education is not mastery of content knowledge but rather adoption of particular “English” behaviors and morals (150). Connected to the ideas of education previously explored, this language of soil and cultivation shares striking similarities with the verbal formula present in governess advertisements: the “branches of an English education.” Just as “branches” implies sturdy roots deriving from a solid English foundation, Mr. Rochester hopes that Adèle’s French stems will not perish but instead
take root and be made “clean,” stripped of all outside pollutants or contaminants, by the “wholesome soil” of England (150). Thus, Jane’s function as governess in Thornfield is to cultivate Adèle within this English garden so that her undesirable French characteristics are contained, weeded, and replaced with English principles.

Some critics, such as Deidre David and Mara Reisman, argue that Jane’s work as a governess successfully reforms Adèle. Reisman suggests that Lowood made Jane “the ideal of English domesticity,” which in turn transforms Jane into a successful civilizing agent who “convert[s] Adèle from a French heathen child to a proper English woman” (139). David similarly contends that Jane “reforms the French manners of Adèle Varen into the genteel behavior of English young ladies, and she refines the ‘heavy-looking, gaping rustics’ at her Morton school” (110). While David cites textual evidence for Jane’s work with her village pupils – the girls becoming “obliging,” “amiable,” and acquiring “quiet and orderly manners” after Jane begins to teach them “grammar, geography, history, and acceptance of their class and gender subordination” – David includes Adèle only as a conjunction with the village school girls but does not supply textual evidence to support Adèle’s similar improvement due to Jane’s teaching (110). Likewise, Reisman evidence is Adèle becoming tractable to Jane’s teaching, for Jane comments that Adèle “soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable” (115). This comment, however, comes prior to Mr. Rochester’s arrival, which, as argued in Chapter 1, halts Adèle’s progress. Jane indeed develops a motherly affection for Adèle and places her in the school that leads to her acquirement of a “sound English education,” yet Jane’s explicit instruction of Adèle in her role as governess does not lead to this result (438).

Both Reisman and David position Jane as a civilizing agent, reading *Jane Eyre* as a novel of Englishness triumphing over the foreign threats latent in Adèle’s French, as well as Bertha’s
West Indian, heritage. Jane’s own education and her tenure at Thornfield, however, complicate this rigidly defined nationalistic reading. As argued in Chapter 1, the rare glimpses of Jane’s teaching of Adèle do not result in the same assurance of visible educational progress as seen in the structured school environments of the charity or village schools. Additionally, when Jane first meets Adèle, Adèle demands Jane’s attention so that she can show Jane her accomplishments; in Jane’s last interaction with Adèle at Thornfield, Adèle is “claim[ing]” Jane’s “outward attention” in the gallery (308). Thus, Adèle begins and ends her time with Jane performing the same action, which works to question to what extent Jane has curbed Adèle’s tendencies.

Instead, equipped with an uncommon English education, Jane is also an uncommon English governess to her French pupil. Although Jane does not travel beyond England’s borders, her amalgam of knowledge expands beyond England. Further, Jane’s relationship with Mr. Rochester pushes against the boundaries of the “English” principles she is supposedly meant to cultivate in Adèle. Jane indeed distances herself from the taint of foreign principles by first telling Mr. Rochester, “I will not be your English Céline Varens” and then refusing to live as his mistress “in the south of France [in] a whitewashed villa on the shores of the Mediterranean” (268, 300). Jane’s cultural references opposing England to France seek to separate her from the foreign threat of impropriety, yet Jane’s eventual outcome as Mr. Rochester’s wife in fact engages English anxieties about governesses and their potential threat to the stability of the family. While Jane claims to distance her own behavior from the French Céline Varens, Jane threatens sound English values of morality by marrying her employer. In 1848, Elizabeth Rigby Eastlake in her anonymous review of Jane Eyre voiced similar concerns. She writes, “But the crowning scene is the offer [of marriage] – governesses are said to be sly on such occasions, but
Jane out-governesses them all” (67). To emphasize Jane’s impropriety as a governess, Eastlake compares Jane to Thackeray’s social-climbing anti-heroine governess, Becky Sharp, who Eastlake says would have “blushed” at Jane’s actions (67). Overall, Eastlake concludes, “It is true Jane does right, and exerts great moral strength, but it is the strength of a mere heathen mind which is a law unto itself” (69). Thus, Jane’s courtship with Mr. Rochester challenges her status as the “ideal of English domesticity” (Reisman 139). Overall, Jane’s behavior while serving as Adèle’s governess and her extracurricular education suggest that she alone cannot provide the curriculum to enact the cultural containment that Mr. Rochester says Adèle needs. Instead, the “clean” and “wholesome soil” Mr. Rochester’s Parisian weed needs to flourish requires Adèle’s transplantation to the structured environment of the school, not the unstructured amalgam of knowledge offered by the middle-class governess in the private home (150).

_The Contained, Foreign Women of Thornfield_

Adèle is not the only foreign woman Mr. Rochester seeks to contain within Thornfield’s walls. With the French Adèle in the schoolroom and Mr. Rochester’s West Indian wife Bertha in the attic, the foreign-born and bred women of Thornfield are literally kept out of sight. Ultimately, Adèle and Bertha’s erasure from Jane’s narrative problematizes the cultural containment implicit in the curriculum Jane is expected to teach.

Just as Adèle flits through Thornfield on the margins of the main narrative, she typically surfaces only briefly in criticism; in contrast, Bertha has become a dominant figure in _Jane Eyre_ criticism, particularly because of the questions her character raises regarding imperialism. Gilbert and Gubar’s conclusion in _The Madwoman in the Attic_ that Bertha is “Jane’s truest and darkest double” has launched a long history of criticism that views Bertha as Jane’s “other”
As a result of this critical strain, Lori Pollock summarizes that Bertha is “condemned forever as ‘the madwoman in the attic,’ and simplified under the rubric of Other in various critical discourses” (269). For Pollock, this “othering” of Bertha leads to an unnecessary state of affairs, for “Brontë’s representation of Bertha Mason generates a multitude of slippages and transgressions in the text which have been largely ignored” (270). Some of these “slippages and transgressions” have been addressed by critical projects that either interrogate Bertha through the lens of post-colonialism or extend the lines of doubling between the characters. For example, Melodie Monahan not only connects Bertha to both Jane and Blanche Ingram but also parallels Adèle with Blanche, Celine, and Jane. John Hagan and Judith Williams depart from these typical gender parings by paralleling Bertha with Mr. Rochester, not Jane. Hagan calls Bertha Mr. Rochester’s “alter ego – a hideous mirror of his own licentiousness,” and Williams argues, “Rochester’s power and Bertha’s power are thus linked” (Hagan 357; Williams 30). Whether Bertha becomes an “other” to Jane, Rochester, or Blanche, critics collectively try to understand Bertha’s position at Thornfield by pairing her with another. Despite these parallels, one character in particular has been overlooked as a possible candidate: Adèle. Bertha and Adèle share an educational link through their status as foreign women whom Mr. Rochester seeks to contain within his English country home.

Like Adèle, Bertha is a participant in an educational project. In “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” Gayatri Spivak analyzes Bertha Mason under the rubric of “soul

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13 For example, Maurianne Adams explains that Bertha’s ungoverned passion and rage are because she is “Jane in the Red Room” (188). James Buzard calls Bertha Jane’s “monstrous, Thornfield-imprisoned doppelgänger” (208), and Aubrey Mishou has recently paired Bertha and Jane in terms of evolution to suggest that Brontë unites Jane and Bertha to “explore an evolutionary struggle and present an analysis of contemporary relationships in light of such scientific thought” (255). For a thorough summary of how critics use Bertha to set up an “othering” with Jane, see Beattie, pgs. 493-8.
making” to argue that the emergence of Jane’s feminist individualism comes at the expense of
Bertha, the native female (244). Spivak draws on Kant’s categorical imperative to situate “soul
making” as the project of positioning Bertha as the object of the following categorical
imperative: “make the heathen into a human so that he can be treated as an end in himself” (248;
emphasis in original). For Spivak, this categorical imperative functions as the formula of
imperialism. I would suggest that underlying this formula is also education, for “mak[ing] the
heathen into a human” – transforming Bertha into a proper Englishwoman – requires an
education in how to behave, think, and act. As argued, “education,” and specifically the rubric of
a “sound English education,” structures the transmission of knowledge according to particular
cultural hierarchies that prescribe precise methods for thinking about one’s relationship to
authority, gender, and culture. “Soul making” becomes a form of education, for “making”
someone into a particular version of themselves requires instruction: it requires teaching.

Of course, Jane Eyre does not provide any scenes of Bertha learning in a classroom,
either in the West Indies or in England. When Mr. Rochester describes to Jane his first meeting
with Bertha, his statement, “She [Bertha] flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure
her charms and accomplishments,” suggests that Bertha has received an education saturated with
learning the necessary “accomplishments” to attract a male suitor (301). Other than this narrative
detail, however, Bertha’s upbringing remains cloaked in mystery. Further, Mr. Rochester
certainly does not exert himself to “educate” Bertha in the same manner he strives to educate
Adèle. Whereas Mr. Rochester explicitly transplants Adèle to England to “grow up clean in the
wholesome soil,” he takes and hides his wife in the third story of Thornfield for his own
liberation (150). He convinces himself, “Place her in safety and comfort: shelter her degradation
with secrecy, and leave her” (305). Educating, reforming, or otherwise engaging in a process of “soul making” certainly does not appear to motivate his agenda.

However, despite the lack of explicit scenes of instruction for Bertha, Jane’s narrative explicitly connects the French pupil to the West Indian madwoman. For example, Mr. Rochester’s description of Bertha “lavishly display[ing]” “her charms and accomplishments” recalls Adèle’s display of her accomplishments on the first morning of Jane’s tenure as governess (301). Although the purposes of Bertha and Adèle’s performances may differ, for both woman and child this display of accomplishments is accompanied by an underlying suggestion of indecorous sexuality. Further, in the same chapter in which Jane meets Adèle for the first time, she first hears “a curious laugh; distinct, formal, mirthless,” a laugh that Jane later learns belongs to Bertha (114). After Mr. Rochester tells Jane about Adèle’s parentage, she again hears Bertha’s laughter and later that evening helps quench a fire in Mr. Rochester’s room, a fire she later learns was caused by Bertha. While Mr. Rochester labels Adèle the “illegitimate off-spring of a French opera-girl,” he also calls Bertha Mason “the true daughter of an infamous mother” (150, 302). Although Adèle may be an “illegitimate” and Bertha a “true” daughter, both daughters have mothers whom Mr. Rochester criticizes. After being transplanted from their foreign homes, both Adèle and Bertha are friendless and motherless, strangers to the English home where they find themselves contained. In both cases, Adèle and Bertha have an English female hired to contain them – Jane and Grace Poole – who exist in ambiguous, marginal positions within the home. Unlike the other household servants, Grace not only earns more wages but is, as Jane calls her, “that living enigma, that mystery of mysteries” (204). Jane, as the governess with the accomplishments but not the social standing of the upper class, inhabits an ambiguous middle position between hired help and family. Further, as a result of their
containment, both Adèle and Bertha stagnate. While Jane’s instruction does not result in Adèle’s visible educational progress, Bertha remains confined within the “secret inner cabinet” of the “third-storey room” for 10 years (305).

Some could argue that Bertha and Adèle’s respective ends thwart this parallel, for Bertha dies while Adèle thrives at school. However, Jane’s narrative in fact erases both Bertha and Adèle, either literally or figuratively. When Bertha jumps to her death after starting the fire that destroys Thornfield, she momentarily overcomes yet ultimately succumbs to the effects of her containment. On top of the roof, Bertha “was standing, waving her arms above the battlements, and shouting out till they could hear her a mile off” (417). Bertha’s waving arms and shouts that can be heard from “a mile off” suggest that she has finally achieved visibility and escaped her containment. This momentary visibility and release from containment, however, does not result in liberty or a successful coexistence between Bertha and England. Instead, when Mr. Rochester approaches her, she “yelled, and gave a spring” off the roof (417). Mr. Rochester’s intention to re-contain Bertha results in her death, reinforcing that the process of “soul making” harms rather than benefits Bertha (Spivak 244).

Although Adèle’s schooling transforms her into a proper English woman, she suffers a figurative, rather than literal, death. The end of Jane’s narrative reduces Adèle from the lively

14 Critics have offered various interpretations of the fire and the subsequent maiming it causes Mr. Rochester. Some critics, such as Susan Meyer and Mary Ellis Gibson, have interpreted the fire from the perspective of suttee, arguing that Bertha’s metaphorical performance of suttee enables Jane to fulfill her sexual desire for Rochester. Others, such as Adrienne Rich, offer a Freudian perspective to read the fire as Mr. Rochester’s symbolic castration, a form of “dues” to compensate for his treatment of Bertha (154). Additional critics analyze the fire through the lens of postcolonialism. Trevor Hope, in his comparison of Jane Eyre and Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea, writes, “both texts involve the conflagration of Thornfield Hall as the key figure of the nation/imperial archive” (67). Similarly, Deidre David concludes that Bertha “is a woman ‘grilled’ by flames sparked by Rochester’s corrupt colonialist practices, and it is through her own and characteristically British form of female suffering that Jane must rescue and reform Bertha’s colonial creator and destroyer” (95-6).
French girl who performs her accomplishments for others to a brief, silenced summary in Jane’s final chapter. Jane first asks, “You have not quite forgotten little Adèle, have you, reader?” (438). Although Jane reassures the reader, “I had not,” her narrative has otherwise forgotten Adèle (438). In fact, the last time Jane inserts Adèle as an active character in her narrative occurs after Jane and Mr. Rochester’s first failed attempt at marriage; when Jane and Mr. Rochester return from the church, Jane relates, “At our entrance, Mrs. Fairfax, Adèle, Sophie, Leah, advanced to meet and greet us” (289). Mr. Rochester’s hurried pulling of Jane with him upstairs thwarts this intended meeting between teacher and pupil. When Jane refers to Adèle after this moment, Adèle is not physically present. For example, Jane mentions, “not even little Adèle had tapped at the door” (294); Mr. Rochester and Jane debate whether Adèle must “go to school” without Adèle being present (296); Mr. Rochester narrates a past occasion when he saw Jane and Adèle playing in the gallery; Jane, as she leaves Thornfield, passes the nursery, saying, “Farewell, my darling Adèle!” but does not enter the nursery (315). From the time Jane flees then returns to Mr. Rochester, she mentions Adèle twice: once when Jane compares Miss Oliver to Adèle, saying, “I like her [Miss Oliver] almost as I liked my pupil Adèle,” and again when the host at the inn tells her, “Miss Adèle, a ward he [Mr. Rochester] had, was put to school” (360-1, 417). From Jane’s first attempt at marriage to Mr. Rochester, then, Adèle fades from sight, becoming more of an apparition than a physical presence. Jane completes this narrative erasure by calling Adèle a “pleasing and obliging companion” who shows “grateful attention” and has “long since well repaid any little kindness” (439). Adèle’s “sound English education” has resulted in deferential submission, thus quenching and diffusing her initially spirited and lively disposition. Whereas Jane’s progress from governess to bride tracks a linear progression of female individualism, Adèle trajectory devolves into narrative silence. Although Bertha dies and
Adèle lives, Adèle’s ending ought not to be interpreted as a sign of the triumph of her education. To the contrary, although Jane invites the reader to view the outcome of Adèle’s containment – her becoming “docile, good-tempered, and well-principled” – as successful, Adèle’s containment, like Bertha’s death, in fact erases her narrative voice (439).

This act of cultural containment most closely aligns itself with the curriculum of a “sound English education,” for the education underlying this phrase privileges a fact-based and Anglo-centric transmission of knowledge. As this chapter has argued, while the various adjectives used in this phrase or its variants claim an incontestable, sturdy foundation, the appropriation of this phrase to describe female education as well as the multiplicity of interchangeable adjectives subtly question this phrase’s stability. Overall, Jane’s education and her teaching of Adèle maximize these tensions. Rather than fact-based, Anglo-centric knowledge learned in structured schoolroom settings, Jane assembles an amalgam of knowledge from private, primarily middle-class female communities. Jane’s assemblage of knowledge does not result in the similar formation of an extracurricular female community with Adèle because the education desired for Adèle is one of homogenous cultural containment, the desire for her to “grow up clean” in the “wholesome soil of an English country garden” (145, 150). As the parallel examples of Adèle and Bertha make clear, this cultural containment of foreign women – the desire to clip and weed out their foreign excesses under the rubric of Englishness – stifles or kills them.

Overall, Jane Eyre’s representation of the effects and limitations of the prescribed governess curriculum maximizes tensions present in other governess novels. Just as Jane’s extracurricular knowledge makes her not quite right as the ideal advertised governess, fictional governesses are often not quite right for their positions. Although Agnes Grey says she and her sister were taught “in the strictest seclusion,” her father also teaches her Latin, a skill she does
not necessarily need to fulfill her employer’s desire she help make her pupils “superficially attractive, and showily accomplished” (4, 60). Like Agnes, Emily in *Emily, The Governess* learns from her mother, and Emily’s “very great taste” exceeds her mother’s expectations and prompts her to hire an additional instructor (31). Similarly, in *The Governess*, young Caroline’s “great natural abilities” even “surpris[e] the professors who instructed her” (3, 4). As these examples suggest, the governess’s intellect often exceeds curricular objectives, leading to the surprise of masters and the study of extra subjects. While most of these other governesses learn from their mother or have additional male instructors, Jane’s status as a neglected orphan replaces both the mother’s and male masters’ instruction with primarily various middle-class female communities that similarly operate outside the structured space of a school.

While not all pupils’ daughters are French, other governess novels similarly expose cultural tensions alongside questions of containment and education. *The Governess* sprinkles French phrases and words throughout the text, yet this continental knowledge is held in opposition to cultural tensions about the French maid. Lady Thompson tells Mrs. Williamson that her friend “has been obliged to insist on her maid wearing a cap, which she, being a French woman, strongly objected to; but really it was quite tiresome to see the profusion of black shining curls she sported, and to hear the comments the men made on them” (53). The French maid’s hair must be contained under a “cap” not only because her curls are visible but also because these curls prompt sexual attention from the men. As with Adèle, the desire to contain the woman’s foreignness derives from cultural anxieties about display and attraction. These cultural anxieties have educational implications as well. In *Caroline Mordaunt; or, the Governess*, the mother cautions the governess, saying, “I cannot but say that Anne [the governess’s pupil] is getting on in French, and so are the other girls; but, after all, too much
attention to a foreign language is an error” (178). Here, the excess of studying French needs curbed, which results in the mother’s recommendation: “We are English women, and are, I trust, to live in England . . . permit me to propose that the French books should be laid aside for a while, and the English grammar be attended to” (178). While the mother couches her comments under the rubric of curriculum, grammatical rules are not necessarily her primary concern; instead, she, like Mr. Rochester or Lady Thompson’s friend, makes cultural distinctions that reveal an anxiety to contain the foreign. As the examples of the foreign-born Adèle and Bertha suggest, this project of containment leads to a destructive erasure. Overall, through curriculum, the governess novel genre draws a subtle parallel between governesses and foreigners by suggesting that both groups are excesses. While governesses have knowledge that exceeds the prescribed curriculum, foreigners have perceived deviant morals or sexuality that others desire to contain. Considering the intended containment of foreigners’ sexuality, the next chapter turns to Jane’s marriage to Mr. Rochester to suggest how marriage becomes another form of containment that threatens to hinder Jane’s extracurricular female educational communities and knowledge.
Chapter 3: The Teacher

The purpose of education is, of course, a project of the selective transmission of knowledge from one group to another. As Chapter 1 and 2 have shown, Jane functions as a teacher in various educational spaces, making her the controller and distributor of knowledge. Thus far, however, this project has omitted consideration of one significant teacher-student relationship: Jane as teacher and the reader as student. Indeed, as Jane tells her autobiography from her sole perspective, her narrative becomes a sculpted form of education for the reader.

In this chapter, I first argue that just as the textbooks surveyed claim an unchallenged, factual authority saturated with cultural assumptions, Jane’s surface narrative considers subjective opinions as objective facts and also betrays cultural prejudices. At the same time, her narrative’s several examples of her own errors in logic and misidentifications undercut this authority, showing that the teacher’s knowledge is not absolute. Next, to solidify the challenges to Jane’s surface narrative, I conclude the chapter by considering the novel’s final social vision at Ferndean. While the ending of *Jane Eyre* seems to be the successful culmination of Jane’s *Bildungsroman*, the botanical context of “ferns,” the physical descriptions of Ferndean, and the recurring metaphor of growth and cultivation displace this final social vision. Ultimately, this analysis of Ferndean unites the teacher, curriculum, and schoolroom. Despite Jane’s (the teacher’s) claims of happiness, a careful reader (the student) sees that the environment (the schoolroom) stifles Jane and thus undercuts this educational project (the curriculum). Rather than a triumph of English individualism or the heterosexual marriage plot, the environmental context of Ferndean advocates instead for the healthiness of female companionship and the dispersal of roots to many varied rather than one “English” location.
The Narrator, The Teacher

In a novel about female education, Jane’s privileged position as narrator showcases her status as the female educator. Vicky Simpson argues that *Jane Eyre* is “about who has the power and authority to tell stories” (1). By authoring her story, the female Jane claims this power, a conclusion Lisa Sternlieb reinforces by reacting against critics who view Jane as a victim of patriarchal oppression and asking: “How can we hear Jane [. . .] as silenced by men when we are reading [her] words?” (7). St. John Rivers, Mr. Brocklehurst, and Mr. Rochester do not take on teaching responsibilities for the female pupils who populate *Jane Eyre*. Thus, it is fitting that Jane, the female educator, receives the narrative authority to educate her reader, whether male or female.

As a child, Jane’s narrative replicates the education described in textbooks and witnessed in educational settings like Lowood, for Jane presents opinions as unqualified facts. At her aunt Reed’s house at Gateshead, 10-year-old Jane makes several assertions. For example, after being confined in the red room, she says, “They are not fit to associate with me,” and “My uncle Reed is in heaven, and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mama: they know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead” (39). As the verbs of being or knowing (“are,” “is,” “can,” “know”) suggest, Jane presents her opinions as objective truths (39). She continues these unqualified claims to knowledge when she confronts her aunt: “How dare I? Because it is the truth. You think I have no feelings . . . and you have no pity . . . I will tell anybody who asks me questions, this exact tale. People think you a good woman, but you are bad; hard-hearted. You are deceitful!” (47). Jane identifies her statement as “truth,” assesses what Mrs. Reed and the general “people” “think,” and repeatedly defines and generalizes Mrs. Reed’s
character with statements beginning with “you are.” Just as a textbook presents information as a series of lists of facts, Jane claims unqualified authority in her pronouncements.

Although these pronouncements about Mrs. Reed could be attributed to her youth, Jane’s cultural biases as a governess continue to show a textbook-like presentation of knowledge. For example, after Mr. Rochester reveals Adèle’s history, Jane initially replies that Adèle is “not answerable for either her mother’s faults or yours” (150). Once Mr. Rochester leaves, however, Jane relates she allowed Adèle to sit on her knee, “not rebuking even some little freedoms and trivialities . . . which betrayed in her a superficiality of character, inherited probably from her mother, hardly congenial to an English mind” (150). Although Jane says she lacks bias, her immediate impulse to attribute Adèle’s flaws to Adèle’s French mother betrays cultural prejudice. Admittedly, while Jane includes the qualifier “probably,” her extrapolation from a child’s innocent prattle to the character of an “English mind” suggests that Jane generalizes cultural conclusions based on a small oeuvre of evidence. Indeed, as Madame Pierrot is Jane’s only acquaintance from France, her conclusions about the taint of Adèle’s French mother show an Anglo-centric superiority demonstrable in texts such as English Grammar or The English Spelling-Book.

This coupling of idealization of England with underlying prejudices continues in Jane’s characterization of her village school pupils, where Jane shows not only cultural but also social class biases. On Jane’s first day of teaching, she asks herself, “Whether it is better . . . to be a slave in a fool’s paradise at Marseilles – fevered with delusive bliss one hour – suffocating with the bitterest tears of remorse and shame the next – or to be a village schoolmistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England?” (352). Coupled with the opposing characteristics of “bitterest tears,” “remorse and shame” and “free and honest,” the
contrasting images of “fevered” and “breezy,” “suffocating and healthy heart” undeniably position England as the answer to Jane’s rhetorical question. Subtle social class prejudices, however, also underlie her pro-English support. As Jane describes the kindness she receives from her pupils’ parents, she says that she repaid them with a “scrupulous regard for their feelings – to which they were not, perhaps, at all times accustomed, and which both charmed and benefitted them; because while it elevated them in their own eyes, it made them emulous to merit the deferential treatment they received” (359). Although Jane again includes a qualifier, “perhaps,” this qualifier does not negate the social class prejudices underlying her statement in which her condescension to repay the parents’ kindness ultimately elevates them in “their own” rather than “her” eyes. At this point in the novel, Jane is nearly destitute, so her claims to superiority reveal a deep-set class prejudice; although she is poor, Jane, as an educated middle-class woman, values herself as higher than the parents of the working-class students she teaches.

While Jane’s comments about Adèle and Marseilles reveal her prejudices toward France, her reaction to Bertha and to Mr. Rochester’s history of Bertha further expose Jane’s cultural biases. When Jane first meets Bertha, she recalls, “In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal” (289-90). Since Jane writes her autobiography several years after the events at Thornfield, Jane knows the true identity of the source of the mystery in the attic; however, Jane withholds this information, instead choosing to render Bertha an inhuman, animalized other by calling her an “it,” listing “beast” as the first option in the choices of “beast or human being,” and likening Bertha’s “grovel[ing]” “snatch[ing],” and “growl[ing]” to that of “some strange wild animal” (289-90). Immediately after seeing Bertha, Jane goes to her room
alone and acknowledges, “till now I had only heard, seen, moved – followed up and down where I was led or dragged – watched event rush on event, disclosure open beyond disclosure: but now, I thought” (292). These “thoughts,” however, do not stray for a moment to Bertha or Mr. Rochester’s potential wrongdoing toward Bertha; instead, once Mr. Rochester intercepts her as she emerges from her room, she relates, “Reader! – I forgave him at the moment and on the spot” (295). Like a teacher getting her students’ attention, Jane’s direct address of “Reader” commands the reader’s attention, and the information she teaches, her forgiveness of Mr. Rochester, appears to vindicate his sequestering of his West Indian wife in the attic.

Following this forgiveness, Jane briefly rebukes Mr. Rochester, yet her subsequent plot-based questions about Bertha counteract the potential for continued female sympathy. During Mr. Rochester’s tirade against Bertha, Jane briefly stops him, saying, “You are inexorable for that unfortunate lady: you speak of her with hate – with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel – she cannot help being mad” (297). Jane’s defense of Bertha reveals compassion rather than cultural stereotyping, yet curiosity soon replaces this sympathy. When Mr. Rochester describes his history with Bertha, Jane asks numerous plot-based questions that do not challenge his motivations or actions. She asks, “And what, sir . . . did you did when you had settled her here? Where did you go?”, “Well, sir?”, “What next? How did you proceed? What came of such an event?” (303-6). These surface-level questions treat Mr. Rochester’s narrative as factual authority, resulting in Jane transforming her initial sympathy for “that unfortunate lady” to pity for Mr. Rochester: she tells him, “I pity you – I do earnestly pity you” (303). Helene Moglen similarly assesses Jane’s forgiveness of Mr. Rochester, noting that Jane decides to leave Mr. Rochester “not because she finds him guilty or distasteful. In fact, she forgives him rather easily” (129). For Moglen, Jane’s immediate forgiveness of Mr. Rochester suggests she does not object
to Mr. Rochester’s morals; rather, she objects to being a powerless dependent like Bertha (129). While Moglen’s analysis centers on Jane’s relationship to Mr. Rochester, shifting the lens to instead probe Jane’s resulting relationship with Bertha reveals that Mr. Rochester’s history persuades Jane from sympathy for Bertha to sole sympathy for him. When Mr. Rochester tells Bertha’s history, he becomes the “teacher” as he educates Jane through the transmission of the appearance of facts on how she ought to interpret the scenario. Likewise, in her reaction to and presentation of this history, Jane becomes the reader’s teacher, informing the reader that the proper reaction to this history should be pity for Mr. Rochester.

Overall, with Jane as teacher, the controller of knowledge, and the reader, the recipient of knowledge, as student, Jane’s assessments about others recreate rather than counteract the transmission of knowledge in textbooks. Although Jane has a wealth of extracurricular knowledge, this wealth of knowledge alone does not exempt her from prejudices. Instead, just like a textbook, Jane’s narrative presents subjective opinions as objective truths, and her cultural biases and concern with plot points reproduce English principles of superiority and the pedagogical method of fact-based instruction.

However, in addition to Jane’s generalizations and cultural biases, Jane’s narrative also shows her errors in logic or moments of uncertainty, which subtly questions the ultimate authority of a “teacher.” For example, although Jane leaves her aunt Reed’s house firmly convinced her aunt is “bad,” “hard-hearted,” and “deceitful,” Helen challenges Jane’s logic. In response to Jane’s conclusion, “when we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard,” Helen replies, “You will change your mind, I hope, when you grow older: as yet you are but a little untaught girl” (67). Helen’s use of “untaught” not only highlights Jane’s youth but also suggests that Jane’s maxim – a maxim presented like a statement in a textbook –
does not represent sophisticated education. Although Jane counteracts Helen’s assessment with, “But I feel this, Helen,” Jane’s selective inclusion of this moment within her autobiography shows a purposeful desire to provide a counterpoint to her initial perspective (67). Further, as Jane “grow[s] older,” instances of misapplication of facts abound: Jane initially mistakes Mrs. Fairfax as the owner of Thornfield; Jane identifies the laughter she hears as “Grace Poole’s laugh,” rather than Bertha’s laugh (117); Jane initially believes she is a penniless orphan but, through the efforts of St. John Rivers, learns she is heir to a previously unknown uncle’s fortune. These revelations hint that Jane’s knowledge in not absolute; rather, just as Jane’s own education and tenure as Adèle’s governess destabilize the assumptions and values of a “sound English education,” Jane’s misunderstandings qualify her own authority. Further, while the previously mentioned qualifiers “inherited probably” and “not, perhaps, at all times accustomed” do not negate the social and cultural prejudices they expose, their subtle presence calls attention to the cultural assumptions they qualify. With Jane positioned in the crux of educational concerns as she is not only governess but also schoolmistress and charity school teacher, these qualifiers and misjudgments collectively destabilize any claim to an educational ideological state, or even social, apparatus by showing that “know-how” is liable to error (235).

While Jane enacts this collective subversion of unqualified, textbook-like knowledge, attentiveness to the implications of Jane’s work as governess further unpacks the “ideological” implications. Vanden Bossche proposes that instead of evaluating whether *Jane Eyre* upholds or subverts ideology, “we [should] look for the ways in which it produces social identities” (51). While broadly the social identity could be “middle-class teacher,” *Jane Eyre’s* evasions about instruction and exploration of the cultural and social implications of the curricular objective of a
“sound English education” specifically invite consideration of the identity “middle-class private home governess.” In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson writes:

> the literary structure . . . tilts powerfully into the underside or *impensé* or *non-dit*, in short, into the very political unconscious, of the text, such that the latter’s dispersed semes . . . themselves then insistently direct us to the informing power of forces or contradictions which the text seeks in vain wholly to control or master. (49)

The text, like the educational project governing Jane’s purpose as Adèle’s instructor, tries to “control or master” – in other words, to contain. The “informing power of forces or contradictions” – the absences of instruction, erasure of Adèle and Bertha, and subtle challenges to Jane’s narrative authority – counteract this project of containment. Peterson argues that the governess’s social position embodies numerous contradictions, for she was not a mother but fulfilled the traditional educational duties of a mother, a “lady” but also an employee, a symbol of middle-class gentility but simultaneously a sign of her middle-class family’s failure to provide for her economically (9). Careful attention to these “educational duties” reveals that the “social identity” produced by the governess not only exposes questions about class, motherhood, and finances but also positions her as a challenger to the values and assumptions underpinning the dominant cultural educational project she is hired to teach (Peterson 9; Vanden Bossche 47).

Further, *Jane Eyre* also invites consideration that education via Jane’s various teaching roles to some degree unites the multiple social class spaces. At Lowood, Jane learns how to teach the skills necessary to be a governess; she learns how to teach a “sound English education.” At Thornfield and the private boarding school, the objective of Adèle’s education is to learn “a sound English education,” and at Morton, Jane’s pride in her English pupils’ abilities recalls the national English-focused arguments in support of popular “English education.” In this way, the
governess, rather than the state, embodies through her learning and teaching “a sound English education.” But, at the same time, these same factors of the private governess’s education and her teaching subtly problematize and position her as a challenger to this educational project.

Jane’s status as “challenger” may not be conscious; indeed, her surface narrative projects no outward anxiety that her curriculum for Adèle is in error. Rather, the “political unconscious” of Jane’s narrative reveals these anxieties by exposing the contradictions latent in the curricular goals of female education. Considering the similarities among other governess novels and fictional texts, these fictional governesses thus form a network, a network similar to the bonds Jane forms between her female role models, that collectively, if not consciously, questions the unqualified status of a teacher’s knowledge and challenges the educational project governesses not only train to learn but also work to teach.

Ferndean

The novel’s ending social vision at Ferndean ultimately dramatizes this interplay between surface narrative and underlying subtle critique. On the surface, Jane’s marriage to Mr. Rochester at Ferndean completes her linear progress narrative from orphan to bride, making Jane Eyre a typical Bildungsroman. As Chris Vanden Bossche summarizes, “From this perspective, Jane Eyre can be regarded as a self-made woman who shapes her destiny through individual industry, a rise that is set against the backdrop of genteel families whose fortunes are in decline” (56). At the end of her narrative, Jane certainly seems content, although she, an otherwise verbose narrator, does not seem to have the words to express her feelings adequately: “I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hope myself supremely blest – blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine”
Although Jane is “blest beyond what language can express,” her inclusion of the comparison “as fully as” suggests a reciprocal, equal relationship between husband and wife. Not only are Jane and Mr. Rochester “happy” but also they have a child, if not children. Jane narrates, “When his [Mr. Rochester’s] first-born was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were” (440). “First-born” leaves open the possibility they may have second- or third-born children; regardless, Mr. Rochester’s male lineage has been preserved, and the reformed Mr. Rochester and loving Jane seem destined for a prosperous future. The surface narrative, then, is the triumph of heterosexual English individualism: the West Indian wife has died, the French pupil has been refined, the teacher no longer has to teach as she is now a wife, and the once continental-traveling and philandering Mr. Rochester has become a reformed “fixture” of England (418). Sandra M. Gilbert supports this reading, as she concludes, “That his [Mr. Rochester’s] ‘fetters’ pose no impediment to a new marriage, that he and Jane are now, in reality, equals, is the thesis of the Ferndean section” (177).

Other critics have pressured this reading of equality and triumph by probing Ferndean’s stability and the extent of Jane’s equality in this space. Judith Williams observes and asks of the final chapter, “It is odd that we are not told where they live; do they stay at the insalubrious Ferndean?” (51). Although Jane reunites with Mr. Rochester at Ferndean, she supposedly writes her autobiography 10 years after her marriage yet does not explicitly state whether they made Ferndean their permanent residence. Indeed, Jane begins her penultimate chapter, “The manor-house of Ferndean was a building of considerable antiquity”; the past tense “was” introduces the possibility that Ferndean is no longer the Rochesters’ home (419). As with the scenes of education, Jane’s narrative lacks conclusive specificity, imbuing any conclusion with ambiguity rather than sturdy English rootedness. In addition to the uncertainty of Ferndean as the
Rochesters’ final residence, critics have questioned Jane’s final freedom. Esther Godfrey argues that Ferndean highlights the perplexities of gender by “paradoxically dismantling and reifying nineteenth-century notions of masculinity and femininity” (853). Judith Leggatt and Christopher Parkes extend the role of gender to the nation-state and begin their discussion of Ferndean with the question, “But how free is she [Jane] really?” (170). At Ferndean, argue Leggatt and Parkes, Jane “works for and helps maintain the larger space of the English nation,” for *Jane Eyre* “presents a modern view of the nation-state in which all spaces, even domestic ones, are part of a larger network of discipline” (170). Leggatt and Parkes’ logic suggests that Ferndean functions similar to Althusser’s description of the educational ideological state apparatus that indoctrinates particular “know-how” in “forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its ‘practice’” (236). Leggatt and Parkes, however, too quickly erase the differences between the spaces. Although Jane’s status as an English wife suggests her future education of her children may help to maintain values of the English “nation-state,” part of *Jane Eyre*’s educational significance, as has been previously suggested, is the lack of uniform “state” surveillance. Instead, the surveillance occurs in unique spaces and for different purposes depending on social class.

Since Ferndean serves as a replacement for Thornfield, recalibrating Leggatt and Parkes’ argument to solidify the significance of Ferndean as the novel’s concluding social vision requires a reconsideration of the particularities of this space. As has been shown, at Thornfield, Mr. Rochester told Jane he transplanted Adèle to England so that his “French floweret” could “grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden” (145, 150). Mr. Rochester makes a national claim that renders England as a “garden” filled with other flowers all nurtured by “wholesome soil,” and the phrase “grow up clean” suggests not only propriety but also health
and order. Ferndean, however, opposes this image of healthiness and cleanliness. Initially, Mr. Rochester refuses to confine Bertha at Ferndean because of the “unhealthiness of the situation,” and Jane comments that Mr. Rochester could “find no tenant, in consequence of its ineligible and insalubrious site” (419). As a result, Ferndean remained “uninhabited and unfurnished” (419). This series of negations – “unhealthiness,” “ineligible,” “insalubrious,” “no tenant” – categorize Ferndean as lacking life. This lifeless, inhospitable characterization of Ferndean continues: when Jane approaches the house for the first time, “no sign of habitation or grounds was visible,” and rather than the idealized “English country garden,” at Ferndean, “there were no flowers, no garden-beds” (419). Jane even appropriately asks herself, “Can there be life here?” (420). Certainly, Ferndean is not a hospitable “English country garden” where one could “grow up clean” in the “wholesome soil” (150).

In addition to the unhealthiness of the land, the name “Ferndean” pressures the surface narrative of happiness and equality in the English countryside. A “dean” is a “vale,” a “more or less extensive tract of land lying between two ranges of hills, or stretches of high ground, and usually traversed by a river or stream” (“dean,” n. 1a). Just as Jane as governess occupies the middle position at Thornfield between servant and master, a “dean” lies in the middle position between two hills. This middle position has the possibility for negative connotations, for a figurative definition of “vale” is: “the world regarded as a place of trouble, sorrow, misery, or weeping” (“vale,” n. 2b). Of course, the location is “Ferndean,” not “Fernvale.” However, the definition of “dean” as “vale” in addition to the negative connotations of the historical etymologies of “dean” as “déap-denu valley of death” in Old English and “dene of teres” in Middle English support this application of “vale” to describe Ferndean and overall shadow Ferndean in sorrow rather than happiness (“dean,” n.).
Considering Mr. Rochester’s metaphor of flowers and soil, the botanical context of “fern” further complicates the novel’s ending. In 2003, Yoshiaki Shirai connected Ferndean to pteridomania, or “fern craze,” which began in Britain in the 1830s (123). Shirai reports that atmospheric pollution from large cities and towns like London, Manchester, and Liverpool as well as insufficient house lighting made growing vegetation in indoor city spaces “very hard” (124). In contrast, ferns, which favor “damp, shaded woodland conditions,” overcame these insalubrious conditions and thrived (124). For Shirai, pteridomania counteracts a negative reading of Ferndean, for Ferndean “encloses Jane and Rochester,” and by “giving them sufficient moisture and protection from environmental pollution, allows the couple to enjoy an everlasting love self-contentedly and quite free from worldly noise, blessed by the beauty of the natural surroundings” (129). Shirai’s idealism, however, too quickly classifies “environmental pollution” and “worldly noise” as elements from which ferns free Jane and Mr. Rochester. Ferns, as Shirai’s own analysis suggests, thrived in England despite England’s own atmospheric pollution and house lighting; thus, ferns thrive not because of but in spite of England.

Nineteenth-century textbook information about ferns solidifies the nationalist implications of this finding. In Elizabeth Steele Perkins’ *The Elements of Botany* (1837), she writes, “the ferns are very abundantly diffused over the whole earth; they are particularly plentiful in the West Indies and in North America, where they constitute a beautiful covering for the summits of many of the mountains” (230). In addition, ferns “appear to have been among the most ancient vegetable inhabitants of our earth” (231). Although Ferndean becomes the home of the English master and his wife, the ancient heritage, diffusion and abundance of ferns “over the whole earth,” particularly in the West Indies, the place of Bertha’s birth, separate “ferns” from an exclusively English location. Instead, just like Jane has had an uncommon English education due
to her additional knowledge and study of languages, Ferndean cannot be identified as solely “English.” Further, “the roots,” Perkins’ textbook continues, “of many of these vegetables creep and extend themselves in a horizontal direction, and not very far from the surface of the ground” (230). Shallow, horizontal roots oppose the image of a flower taking root in the “wholesome soil of an English country garden” (150). Flowers’ roots extend vertically, suggesting an incompatibility between Ferndean and the English metaphor Mr. Rochester offers.

Applied to education, *Jane Eyre*’s metaphors of cultivation ultimately reinforce the heartiness of diffusive, heterogeneous knowledge structures, not deep-rooted, homogeneous Englishness. Mr. Rochester’s injunction that Adèle must “grow up clean” suggests that his daughter, his flower, must be pruned of her French heritage and take root in a homogenous “English country garden” (150). One would expect an “English country garden” at the wooded estate of Ferndean, yet Ferndean is unhealthy, a place inhospitable to cultivating any “flower,” whether English or French. In contrast, ferns can thrive in inhospitable soil, not just in England but also globally. Rather than release a single shoot vertically, the diffusion of ferns’ horizontal roots suggests a healthy comingling despite insalubrious conditions. Further, ferns’ ability to thrive in spite of atmospheric pollution and insufficient lighting need not be interpreted as the ferns’ undesirability. Instead, Perkins’ botany textbook positively describes the ferns; they are “abundantly diffused,” “particularly plentiful,” and a “beautiful covering” (230). If the novel puts forward a social vision, it is thus one of ferns, not flowers.

At the same time that ferns’ worldly diffusiveness advocates for the hearty comingling of disparate rather than solely English elements, ferns’ asexual reproduction of spores privileges, in the case of *Jane Eyre*, the maintenance of female communities of education. Ferns, as George Yatskievych in an article for the *Encyclopedia of Life Sciences* explains, “do not produce flowers
or seeds” (1). Although the life cycle of a fern includes a “sexual phase,” this sexual phase occurs only once spores have been produced asexually (1). Ferns’ reliance on asexual reproduction resists, or at least complicates, the heterosexual marriage plot, for ferns exist outside of heterosexual marriage by introducing an intermediary stage that necessitates homogenous gender structures. Applied to Jane Eyre, this necessity for homogenous gender structures becomes evident in Jane’s flourishing in female educational communities and her desire to maintain these communities even after her marriage. After marrying Mr. Rochester, Jane had “meant to become [Adèle’s] governess once more,” but she found “my time and cares were now required by another – my husband needed them all” (438). Although she does not offer a direct objection, Mr. Rochester’s domination of “all” of Jane’s “time and cares” inhibits Jane’s desire to return to her role as Adèle’s teacher. Just as Jane’s progress narrative from orphan to bride comes at the expense of Adèle and Bertha, Jane’s own marriage results in a loss for Jane: her profession. Despite this interruption of her profession, Jane shows she continues to value both her former pupil and her former female instructors, Diane and Mary. Jane sought out a school for Adèle “near enough to permit of my visiting her often, and bringing her home sometimes” and describes that Diane and Mary “alternately, once every year, they come to see us, and we go to see them” (438). Whereas Jane leaves Ferndean “often” to visit Adèle, the descriptors “sometimes” and “once a year” show limited movement to Ferndean. Ferndean remains, for the most part, an isolated location that contains the nuclear heterosexual family – Mr. Rochester, Jane, and their child – but limited interactions with “extras.” Significantly, these desired “extras” are all female, showing Jane’s desire to surround herself with female communities. Fittingly, whereas “Ferndean” has “fern” in its name, it is Moor House, not Ferndean, that has “ferns.” As Jane settles into life with Mary and Diana at Moor House, she
describes the land’s terrain: Mary and Diana “found a charm both potent and permanent” in the landscape where “no flowers but of the hardiest species would bloom” but where a “pebbly bridle-path . . . wound between fern-banks first, and then amongst a few of the wildest little pasture-fields” (343). Saturated with ferns, the path at Moor House is not a homogeneous cleanliness but “pebbly.” It is at Moor House where Jane, independent of Mr. Rochester, realizes the hearty diffusiveness, rather than the stringent cleanliness, of the fern.

Although Jane maintains her relationships with Adèle, Diana, and Mary, the isolated setting of Ferndean works to separate the female educational communities from Jane and Mr. Rochester’s heterosexual marriage plot. In contrast, another governess novel, Emily, The Governess, draws on similar metaphors of cultivation to offer a final vision in which governess, pupil, and husband harmoniously coexist. In Emily, the narrator closes the novel addressing the reader about her pupil, Elizabeth, using language similar to Jane: “Do my readers inquire what has become of Elizabeth, and wish to know whether she is forgotten by our heroine in the sunshine of her present prosperity[?]” (204). This language of “sunshine” recalls imagery of cultivation, language that recurs when the narrative reveals that Emily “continued to be to her [Elizabeth] both a parent and instructress” and to “cultivate into rich maturity, those seeds of virtuous impulse, that might raise her hopes above the short-lived pleasures of this world” (204-5). “Cultivate” and “seeds” reinforce the garden metaphor of growth, and Emily and Elizabeth, unlike Jane and Adèle, form an unencumbered reciprocal female community, in which Elizabeth, as a result of Emily’s teaching, helps Emily teach her own children. The novel does not mention “ferns,” yet nonetheless Emily and Elizabeth realize the possibility of sustained educational communities explored in Jane Eyre yet continually thwarted by Jane’s linear movement and marriage. Although Emily, like Jane, marries, the fulfillment of Emily’s Bildungsroman does not
end solely with marriage; rather, Emily’s home circle expands to include her former pupil, a pupil who is not her husband’s daughter. In this way, governess, pupil, and husband form a community that does not advocate solely an “English country garden” but one that is receptive to numerous outside influences.

Overall, while on the surface Jane’s narrative describes her linear progress in becoming Mr. Rochester’s wife, this narrative – the “education” the reader receives from Jane – contains ingredients that challenge it. Jane’s errors in logic and the location of Ferndean open up the possibility for an ideal educational alternative that would qualify the governess’s knowledge as not absolute, surround teacher and pupil with heterogeneous rather than homogenous sources of knowledge, yet value homogenously gendered learner interactions, such as those desired and realized by Jane with Diana and Mary.
Conclusion

In *The Servant’s Hand*, Bruce Robbins analyzes the non-representation of servants in fiction, scrutinizing the historical tendency of “servants fill[ing] the margins of texts devoted to their superiors” (x). For Robbins, the servant’s marginalization “carries awareness of the unnaturalness and arbitrariness of signs into a social hierarchy that would like to present itself as natural, rooted, and fixed” (18). Within this social hierarchy between master and servant, the servant’s labor not only demands recognition because of “the special status accorded to labor within the dominant discourse” but also “lays out common ground where ruptures, recognitions, and renegotiations can take place between them [servant and master]” (21, 22).

The governess novel, as seen through the example of *Jane Eyre*, participates in yet complicates this perspective. While Robbins pinpoints the absence of servants’ physical presences in texts, the governess novel genre makes the governess the central protagonist. At the same time, the governess, like the servant, exerts “the secret pressure of a working hand,” for her work is ultimately occluded (Robbins 1). This tension between ultimate visibility as protagonist and invisibility as laborer dramatizes the governess’s liminal, middle position: she, like the master in the Victorian novel, is visible, yet her work, like the servant’s labor, is marginal. Within this middle position, though, the governess’s work also exerts “ruptures, recognitions, and renegotiations” (22). These disruptions implicate not just the ideology governing the relationship between “masters and servants” but also the dominant educational goals for upper- and rising-middle class females (Robbins 22). In the case of Jane, although Jane “works,” the lack of product from her work in the private home – the lack of identifiable progress in her pupil Adèle – problematizes the soundness of the English education she is hired to teach.
This challenge through absence, however, does not mean that the governess disrupts only if the outcome of her labor is uncertain. Rather, the governess’s own education as well as the consequences of the prescribed education she is expected to teach push against these standards. As the heroines in their own fictional stories, governesses, from Charlotte Brontë’s Jane to Anne Brontë’s Agnes to Julia Buckley’s Emily to Marguerite Gardiner’s Caroline, have extra skills and qualities that separate them from others. This separation due to “extra” knowledge acquired in non-structured spaces challenges the transmission of knowledge as presented in textbooks. The acquisition of extracurricular knowledge in extra spaces evokes an image of growth and flourishing; while the governess may be physically contained within the private home, her knowledge and skills extend unfettered outwards. This image of growth contrasts to the containment underlying “a sound English education.” While Mr. Rochester may use imagery of growth and flourishing to describe Adèle’s transplantation to England, he ultimately prescribes for her an education of containment. The consequences of this containment become most recognizable through the narrative’s parallel between the French pupil Adèle and the West Indian Bertha. While both Adèle and Bertha perish due to their containment, either physically or narratively, Jane appears to thrive. *Jane Eyre* thus presents the startling conclusion: Jane’s *Bildungsroman* from teacher to bride comes at the expense of Bertha as well as her pupils – both Adèle and the village schoolgirls. Jane leaves both Adèle and her village pupils abruptly and even “promise[s]” the school girls “never a week should pass in future that I did not visit them, and give them an hour’s teaching in their school” (380). As far as Jane’s narrative suggests, she never returns.

This conclusion that Jane’s individualism comes at the expense of not only Adèle but also Bertha and the village schoolgirls proves troubling. With the foreign women contained and
figuratively or literally erased, *Jane Eyre* could be read as the victory of the Englishwoman over the foreign “Other.” Jane’s own containment within her marriage to Mr. Rochester, however, complicates this interpretation. At the end of *Jane Eyre*, Jane presents a surface narrative of domestic happiness. As the teacher to her reader, Jane invites us to believe her. Lurking beneath this narrative of happiness, however, lie descriptions of Ferndean that instead suggest that Jane has entered into her own restrictive confinement.

With the private governess teaching in the non-standardized space of the home, her actions implicitly react against standardization – the standardization of a particular set of skills, knowledge, and behavior classified under a recurring verbal formula. The governess novel thus invites a parallel between standardization and confinement and subtly, through omissions and alternatives, reveals pressure points that challenge it. Instead of a garden of perfectly “clean” flowers, *Jane Eyre*’s narrative elisions and complications ultimately propose a model of ferns. The hearty comingling of ferns capable of spreading productively over the globe most closely resembles Jane’s extracurricular knowledge acquired in female groups of similar middle-class learners in private spaces, not a “French floweret” being forcibly transplanted into an “English country garden” where she is stripped of excess to be made a homogeneous “clean” (145, 150).

This language of standardization, containment, and cultivation resonates with educational concerns in not only the nineteenth but also the twenty-first century. In 1840, Friedrich Fröbel, a German educator, coined the term “kindergarten,” literally translated as “child’s garden,” to describe a pedagogical system in which “children should be aroused to activity by having their interest awakened, cultivated, unfolded and ripened” (Cole 18). As Elizabeth Cole explains, the “garden” was an “important environmental component of Froebel’s classroom design,” for in the garden, “children were brought under the influences and impressions of natural learning” (18).
Fröbel does not mention “ferns,” yet his garden differs from the “wholesome soil of an English country garden” in two crucial respects: the emphasis on “awaken[ing], cultivat[ing], unfold[ing], and ripen[ing]” and the characterization of learning as “natural.” Rather than prescribe a weeding of excess to make the “French floweret” more similar to its English counterparts, Fröbel’s garden advocates a natural, uncontained cultivating of talents and interests. In this system, Adèle’s activities or interests in dancing and singing would not be curbed but allowed to develop naturally. While Fröbel proposes this ideal model of education for young children, this model can be seen as an overall caution against rigid standardization and stifling of students’ interests. Although England today continues to use Fröbel’s model of kindergarten to structure early childhood education, England, like many countries, now has a rigidly standardized state-sponsored school system dominated by exams to proceed from one level to the next and enter university education. These exams track student progress in mastering specific academic subjects, yet the example of Jane Eyre suggests that this linear progress inevitably comes at the expense of someone or something – whether the lively Adèle silenced to submission, the West Indian Bertha confined and then condemned to die, or the curiosity of a student stifled by the need to abide to rigid “English” expectations of proper educational performance. The Victorian governess may appear to serve as merely a cultural icon from a bygone era, yet she maintains educational significance. Underneath the governess’s narrative omissions and contradictions rests an alternative educational vision, one that values comingling with various social classes in multiple spaces instead of the need to strip away difference in order “to grow up clean.”
Appendix 1: Governess Advertisement Data

Using *Nineteenth Century Collections Online* and *The Times Digital Archive*, I evaluated 150 governess advertisements written by either a prospective private governess or employer from the period between 1790-1850, with an emphasis on the period 1840-1849. The tables below indicate the findings. The small sample size presents limitations to the conclusions possible from these findings, but the large quantity of advertisements containing the phrase “English education” in the period 1840-1849 compared to the small quantity of advertisements that do not marks a significant divide.

Table 1

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<td>1850-1859</td>
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Of the 103 advertisements that included “English education,” the below table details the frequency of the precise descriptors used.

Table 2

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<tbody>
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<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>“solid English education”</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>“sound English education”</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“routine English education”</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“the branches of an English education”</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“good English education”</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>“essential branches”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“English education in all its branches”</td>
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<td>“course of an English education”</td>
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<td>“useful and polite English education”</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“superior English education”</td>
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Bibliography


