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Cancel Jane?
Jane Eyre, Romance, and the Lure of White Feminism

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<1>Victorian studies, as part of the wider ecosystem of literary criticism, finds itself in an ever-deepening identity crisis. #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, the most recent U.S. presidential election and its bloody aftermath, and, of course, this interminable pandemic, have sent shockwaves across the field and accelerated long overdue shifts in what (and how) Victorianists study and teach. (1) The mode of my inquiry is thoroughly presentist, although, as Eleanor Courtmanche argues in a prescient 2019 essay, all forms of historicism are imbued with a kind of "shadow presentism." Literary critics cannot help being presentists since their objects of study always emerge as refracted by events at the macro-scale, events which Courtemanche calls "hinge points" (463). As such, the past seven years have blurred into a single, dystopian hinge point that occasions this essay. The present moment feels unmoored from our remembered social and political past, although we are constantly reminded that our crises rarely take new forms.

<2>Victorian studies' crisis manifests particularly in the realm of pedagogy. Shrinking enrollments, demographic changes, and accelerated cultural shifts bring previously submerged concerns about canonicity and the field's *raison d'être* to the fore. (2) As the ongoing political backlash against inclusive curricula in U.S. higher education illustrates, though, pedagogy remains a powerful site of scholarly activism and should be protected as a site of vigorous political contention. I would like to turn to one of the most regularly taught Victorian texts, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*(1847), to gauge how past and present clash in the classroom. In what follows, I suggest that *Jane Eyre*'s erotic imaginary is limned by the threat of sexual violence, that this threat is part of a logic of white Western heterofemininity (for which I will use the shorthand "white feminism"), and that this logic has seduced readers into

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identification with the novel's narrator for almost two centuries. *Jane Eyre* mobilizes a specious liberationist fantasy that relies on racialized erotic pleasure to compensate for the period's systematic denial of basic rights to the majority of people, including its protagonist. Further, the novel's enduring affective power over its readers, its ability to generate identification with Jane, rests on the existence of disposable persons, exemplified by Bertha Mason, and this essay's goal is to make the ethical costs of *Jane Eyre*'s liberalism visible. I will conclude that these insights should govern the way the novel is read and taught—if it is to be read and taught at all. In fact, I wish to begin with a provocation: Would it be for the best if *Jane Eyre* lost its vaunted spot in the Victorian canon? (3)

<3>I teach *Jane Eyre* every year, usually in early February, when the year seems bleakest. Teaching this text during the pandemic didn't fix anything, but it felt soothing in its familiarity. Vanessa Zoltan, the host of the *Hot and Bothered* podcast, made the same argument about the solace she derived from *Jane Eyre* and devoted the second half of 2021 to chapter-by-chapter discussions, beginning the podcast with the acknowledgement that Brontë's novel, owing to its white supremacist and sexually oppressive logics, might be too thorny to be handed down to the next generation. In fact, Zoltan reported that the novel had been taken off certain high school syllabi already. Zoltan's misgivings about whether *Jane Eyre* should be included in future curricula resonate with the memorable conclusion of Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong's introduction to the "Undisciplining Victorian Studies" issue where they invoke the words of Arundhati Roy who imagines our shaken-up present as a "portal" into a newly emergent future, a gateway that invites consideration if we should "drag[] the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred … our … dead ideas" across its threshold (383). Is *Jane Eyre* such a carcass? What's the point of spending valuable class time on this long novel when we could devote it to democratic erosion, climate catastrophe, imperialist wars, and the long-standing legacies of racialized extraction capitalism from the point of view of those who found (and find) themselves on the losing end (Spampinato, "Love under these Conditions")?

<4>The issue is, *Jane Eyre* teaches really well. In early February 2023, I asked my students in an online quiz on *Jane Eyre*, Volume I, what they thought of the protagonist, and, reader, twenty out of twenty students in my Spring general education British survey enthusiastically identified with Jane's anti-authoritarian spirit, among them five African American men, one man from Uganda, and one man from Japan. I'm quoting one of my students with his permission: "So far I like Jane. She deals with what comes her way, and she faces it head on, kind of like me. She is standing up for herself and the mistreatment she receives."

<5>This student's experience of slow seduction by Jane has been famously theorized in Carla Kaplan's 1996 article "Girl Talk" where Kaplan draws attention to *Jane Eyre*'s "erotics of talk" as well as to Jane's "supremely seductive voice" (6, 16). Jane confesses thoughts and ideas to the reader she withholds from the object of her life's grand journey, Rochester, discursively sharing far more intimacies with us than with her other confidantes, including her cousins, Diana and Mary. This embroils the reader in what Kaplan identifies as the novel's "romantic quest for an ideal lover" and turns us, the ideal reader, into Jane's actual love interest (7). Jane wins our hearts by submitting to our exhortation that she should keep on talking; we, the reader, leave this novel even more empowered than Jane because *we* have subdued *her* into confessing everything. This is how my students become attached to Jane's voice, a voice that is, in Kaplan's words, "rebellious … passionate, affirming, exhilarating, and erotic" (26). It is also, of course, white supremacist.

<6>This essay is part of a decades-long legacy of responses to *Jane Eyre* that strive to challenge its prominent position in the feminist canon while reifying its paradigmatic status (5n1). Perhaps no other novel has been more emblematic of Victorianists' not-quite-coming-to-terms with the period's imperialist and racist legacies when we consider that one of the founding texts of postcolonial theory, Gayatri Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" has *Jane Eyre* at its center. If Spivak sardonically calls *Jane Eyre* "a cult text of feminism" in 1985, today, almost forty years later, not much has changed about the novel's stature in the field (244). We know that it "instrumentalizes racial discourses in [the] pursuit of liberal selfhood and gendered emancipation," as Kellie Holzer writes (99); that, with Olivia Loksing Moy, we confront through it "the consequences of systemized canonization, racial othering, and marginalization established in the nineteenth century" (410); that, as Andrea Kaston Tange observes, the novel features "colonized bodies who are perceived to be disposable, silenceable, subhuman," baiting readers to tolerate its "willful silences" (45). So, why should Victorianists keep engaging it?

<7>In my survey course, I, like many others, tend to wedge *Jane Eyre* between *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), working to cross-contextualize these texts and showcasing the complicities of Brontë's white proto-feminism. An essay by Julia Sun-Joo Lee has been particularly helpful for my class preparation as Lee convincingly shows the generic parallels between *Jane Eyre* and the Anglophone slave narrative with their shared "emphas[e]s on literacy, [their] teleological journey from slavery to freedom, [their] biblical allusions . . . , and [their] ethics of resistance over submission" (318). Even more striking, "the young Jane Eyre *sounds like* a slave narrator," argues Lee, to which I would add that

she often sounds like Mary Prince's composite narrator, a similarity that students note, and that might further explain Jane's appeal to the students at the majority Black college where I teach (318). In class, we tease apart Jane's countless comparisons of her own situation to that of enslaved people, concluding that Brontë rerouted, or rather, appropriated, the British abolitionist fervor of the 1820s and '30s in the service of white middle-class women's social liberation.

<8>Such liberationist fantasy, I suggest, both relies on and yields a specific kind of identificatory pleasure. Scholarship has shown that *Jane Eyre* produces whiteness as that which continually escapes oppressive enclosures, with a dehumanized, ambiguously racialized, and ultimately dead Bertha Mason serving as the main foil to Jane's whiteness. For example, Patricia McKee traces how the novel assigns non-white markers not only to bodies, but to cultural practices. The novel accords whiteness to Jane's Christian work ethic, her reason, dignity, education, taste, self-command, and especially to her ability to defer sexual fulfilment indefinitely. As McKee argues, "racialism . . . is embedded in Jane's claims of freedom and of discipline" (67). Once Jane is at Thornfield, the novel departs from the teleology of the slave plot because Jane, according to Lee, "is lulled into willing subjugation" by Rochester's overwhelming erotic magnetism (324). Because she is susceptible to—even invites—his seduction, Jane switches the generic mode of her narration from slave narrative to gothic romance in Volume II and the first chapter of Volume III. Whereas Mary Prince experiences catastrophic sexual exploitation (4) at the hands of her enslavers, Jane's erotic victimization is rendered as piquant, pleasurable indeed, while her spatial and formal proximity to Bertha upstairs remind readers that ideas of slavery and race permeate the erotic scene. This proximity, arguably, heightens Jane's pleasure.

<9>In my view, these two configurations—the novel's liberationist quest for white middle-class women and its fantasy of delicious heterosexual rape—belong together. In volume III, chapter 27, when Rochester's marriage to Bertha is revealed, the agitated hero, in a menacing "stoop," brings "his lips to [Jane's] ear" and exclaims, "Jane! Will you hear reason? . . . because, if you won't, I'll try violence" (Brontë 392). Rochester, Jane tells us, will "plunge headlong into wild license," as she euphemistically describes the looming assault. "The present," Jane says, "was all I had in which to control and restrain him . . . But I was not afraid: not in the least. I felt an inward power; a sense of influence, which supported me. The crisis was perilous; *but not without its charm*: such as the Indian, perhaps, feels when he slips over the rapid in his canoe" (393). After thus invoking a colonial image of native American triumph over masculinized natural peril (with genocide lurking in the imaginary, too), Jane, implausibly perhaps, subdues Rochester by crying "heartily"

(393). Several pages later, when Rochester understands that Jane will, in fact, leave him, "His fury [is] wrought to the highest" once more; he "painful[ly] "seize[s]" Jane's arm, "grasp[s]" her waist, shakes her whole body, and, again invokes rape: "Conqueror I might be of the house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place. And it is you, spirit—with will and energy, and virtue and purity—that I want: not alone your brittle frame" (408-9).

<10>It is Jane's whiteness that enables Brontë's fantasy of the triumphantly overcome threat of rape, social ruin, and its cognate in nineteenth-century literature, physical death. Only a free white woman can withstand Rochester, the "frenz[ied]" embodiment of Victorian patriarchy, and take pleasure in that fantasy while Bertha is discarded, in McKee's words, "to suffer the violence to which people excluded from whiteness were repeatedly condemned in Victorian culture" (80). Over the course of the novel, Jane propels herself into progressive modernity on the backs of—or in the canoe of—imagined racialized inferiors, showcasing that, again with McKee, so-called "savage and pagan practices function as a field for the work of the civilizing English spirit" (81). Jane's spirit is irresistible: Jane escapes from every enclosure that Brontë imagines for her, including the possibility of physical annihilation through rape as posed by Rochester, only to find sexual bliss with Rochester at the novel's end once their marriage and her pleasurable erotic submission are sanctioned. This is an arousing fantasy, meant primarily for white women, safely enshrined inside the nascent generic confines of heterosexual romance. As such, romance, as a genre, pays Jane (and her readers) back for the structural lack of economic and political agency she (and they) endures. (5) The payback occurs in the currency of delightfully deferred sexual gratification, as a historically specific form of sexual agency.

<11>Much recent scholarship on Charlotte Brontë's and her sisters' 1847 novels highlights their investment in various non-reproductive, non-marital, and non-genital sexualities, such as s/m play in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, or haptic intercourse in *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, pushing the study of sexuality in the Brontës' oeuvre beyond mere reproduction. (6) Whereas a recent—and necessary—scholarly trend is invested in queering or perverting the Brontës, I would risk another glance at that which seemed settled, particularly *Jane Eyre*'s unsettling white straightness. *Jane Eyre*, along with *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant*, long hailed (7) as prototypes for today's sprawling heterosexual romance industry, actually spends an inordinate amount of time on warning readers *away* from romance and reproductive intimacy; these works articulate, both explicitly and implicitly, that white cis women's legal and economic

disempowerment under imperio-capitalist patriarchy forestalls the possibility of autonomy. As such, Catherine Earnshaw commits what amounts to reproductive suicide, as Livia Woods argues, while the second Catherine, at the end of *Wuthering Heights* , enjoys pre-marital bliss when educating Hareton into a gentleman fit for the Victorian age, a task that Helen Huntingdon, in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* , also takes up in marrying Gilbert Markham. Jane Eyre, of course, assumes the role of Rochester's lifelong nurse and amanuensis, managing his estate in permanent discursive and physical blendedness. In the Brontës, white cis women shape men into fully human patriarchs, ensuring reproductive and moral survival into the future and thereby losing all claims to self-sufficiency—but gaining lifelong erotic completion.

<12>The disavowal of proto-feminist caution on which these novels end, their insistence on sex as delightful non-sovereignty, in fact explains their enduring appeal to students and general readers alike. The anticipation of ultimate dissolution of the self into patriarchal masculinity in all three works remains central to feminine-coded heterosexual attachment, and to the circulating "truths" that structure many femme-identifying people's arousal responses today. Scholars might wonder, then, if there are relationalities to be salvaged from the impossible utopias of Victorian white heterosexual romance, especially given how important they are for the lasting success of twenty-first-century romance for femme people, the most widely read genre in the United States today (Lois and Gregson 460). Often, critics' answer is a resounding negative, although some romance scholars hesitate to disavow the value of heterosexual submission fantasies because they bring delight and respite to millions of readers, and people's fantasies are theirs to indulge in.(8)It might be more fruitful instead to attempt to estrange the banality of the arousing fantasy of feminine-coded heterosexual dissolution.

<13>I would gesture here to the large corpus of scholarship on Victorian married heterosexuality positing that, under marital couverture, there is no possibility for consensual sex in the period. (9) While women gave lifelong legal consent to sex, that's not the same consent as today's more expansive yardstick of ethical affirmative consent. (10) The twentieth-century birth control revolution made it possible for people with uteruses to have sex and not lose themselves to the future. (11) When scholarly understanding of nineteenth-century mandatory marital heterosexuality shifts more closely to current definitions of institutionalized rape, one sees more clearly, perhaps, how strenuously the novels of that period work to turn that violent obligation delightful through the generic invention of straight white feminist romance. From the presentist perspective, the formations of nineteenth-century heterosexuality, as they emerge in period's literature, begin to

look *perverse* ; they are defective, dangerous fantasies. (12) As Erin Blakemore writes, “In the 1840s, Jane [Eyre]’s love for herself was so subversive it bordered on revolution. [Today,] her love of Rochester is so shocking it borders on treason.” The hegemonic repressions and horrors of Victorian straight sex—its obligatory biological and cultural reproductions—served as both sources and engines of desires, pleasures, and ecstasies. These powerfully survive in the present and remain sorely under-theorized because, academically speaking, the literature of straight women’s pleasures fall under the purview of feminist romance studies, a relatively small field virtually untouched by Victorianists. Such pleasures, including those of women of color, still aren’t very prestigious to explore, while the conscription of women of color into white feminism through sexuality has received virtually no attention (Zakaria 107).

<14>Many cis women, historically, have approached hetero sex with ambivalence because it risks real, lifelong change, including possibilities of childbirth and violence, a circumstance that has shaped their behaviors, preferences, and incentives, and, which, arguably, has shaped gender itself. If heterosex is structured by the threat of rape and social ruin, what does this say about the possibility to love without guilt, fear of humiliation, or violence? As romance scholarship suggests, “the moment of rape threat, in romance, “signal[s] female control”; romance novels are “spaces where femme subjects can access a cathartic pleasure at the spectacle of domination” (Zibrak 65, 144). And it becomes clear why Jane Eyre’s triumphant final salute, “Reader, I married him,” suggests that “Jane self-actualization occurs through her relationship with Rochester” (Sferra 53). What she’s saying is, “Reader, I fucked him.”

<15>The good news is that students get it. Compared to a decade ago, I don’t have to work very hard to convince students that both Rochester and St. John threaten Jane with rape. The diffusion of academic intersectional feminism into its current pop versions in virtual spaces such as Tumblr, TikTok, and Instagram has done quick and remarkably comprehensive work. Now, male students, formerly silent, volunteer terms like “toxic masculinity” and “gaslighting,” and offer comparisons between Rochester, the Beast from “Beauty and the Beast,” *Twilight*’s Edward Cullen, and *Fifty Shades* ’ Christian Grey. Students tend to find Rochester “rapey,” list his various strategies of deception, and applaud Jane for getting away from Thornfield. They ask why it doesn’t ever occur to Jane to get Bertha out of her attic so they can escape from Thornfield together, and, while imagining such solidarity is laudable, I warn students of the dangers of white saviorism. Most of them feel let down when Jane returns to the disabled Rochester at the end of the novel, expressing regret that Jane loses her financial independence upon marriage and that she gladly submits to

nursing Rochester for the remainder of his life. Only a few students, usually women, of color and white alike, abashedly whisper to me after class that they enjoyed the happy ending, because, “I guess I’m just a sucker for romance.”

<16>The romance of white feminism is the sticking point here. In *Jane Eyre* , the heroine manages to neutralize the threat to her physical integrity and sexual self-determination, endowing the scene with a certain “charm” that renders violent submission pleasurable. The term “white feminism” has only recently come into Victorianists’ purview and denotes a kind of feminism that, according to Lana Dalley, “centers the experiences of white, middle-class women whose racial and economic privilege grants them the spotlight” while disavowing that these experiences are themselves racialized. Koa Beck defines white feminism as “an ideology [of] personalized autonomy, individual wealth, perpetual self-optimization, and supremacy” (xvii). While white feminism seeks gender parity, its methods, writes Beck, are “anchored in the accumulation of individual power rather than [its] redistribution” (xvii). In my view, the strategies of such a feminism are seductive, and they center around erotic and material wish fulfillment. Not only do texts like *Jane Eyre* mirror the precepts of present-day neoliberal feminism, inviting students’ identification with them, they produce a lasting emotional charge, an “enthralled identification” that can endure—and has endured—for generations (Tange 36). (13) Put more sharply, I have come to understand Jane’s voice as a seductive machine, a technology of conscription into white liberalism that sharply individuates readers and forestalls solidarities of a more complex nature than those of the nuclear family and heterosexual union across class difference. To borrow a phrase from Nasser Mufti, *Jane Eyre*, an early prototype of white feminist romance, has compelled readers to “mistak[e] the West’s technologies of domination for those of liberty and modernity” (394).

<17>My goal in the classroom is not to talk students out of the romance at the core of *Jane Eyre*’s liberalism, but rather to be aware of Jane’s seductions and interrogate the affective dimensions of white feminism. Students understand the point that *Jane Eyre* produces a romantic attachment to whiteness through, among other means, the deployment of triumphant erotic power fantasies, but they are unable to imagine alternatives to liberalism’s affective ties for the future. My students and I remain stuck in a present marked by the growing sense that liberal universalism cannot be sustained, that nineteenth-century ways of thinking about individuals and families have worn themselves out, that accelerating cultural and technological change leaves students unmoored and with a sense of existential futility. (14) In the absence of visions for the future that escape the emancipatory models invented in the nineteenth

century, the romance of Jane's voice still works, including, as many critics admit, as a recruitment tool for Victorian studies scholars.

<18>The romance proposed by *Jane Eyre* is suffocatingly individualistic and anti-communal because it excludes anyone but the primary couple (and the reader who witnesses their union) from the sphere of Jane's affection. The family established at the end of the novel settles at Ferndean, a location repeatedly described as "unhealthy" because hidden away in a quasi-enchanted forest, and it is so disciplined that it appears like a prison. *Jane Eyre* attaches the reader to the family-as-penal-institution through the novel's final, triumphantly erotic message, mentioned above. At a grander scale, the novel lays the groundwork for the kind of liberal modernity that is still with us in the form of the nuclear family, that family's strictly gendered division of labor necessary for capitalist production and reproduction, and, of course, the romantic ideal of lifelong attachment to a single partner to the exclusion of extended families and local communities (Armstrong 124). From older external and communal support networks, the novel assigns the work of family survival to white, middle-class women, ensconcing them in an impossible, idealized single-family home, erasing everyone else from view. This is the enduring cost of Brontë's white feminist romance which, in Nancy Armstrong's words, "wage[s] perpetual war against other ways of living and reclassifie[s] large sectors of the population as potentially disposable" (133). These insights invite us to consider that the creation of the nuclear family was a violent process, so violent and complete that it is still, in Armstrong's words, "the primary apparatus for distributing resources, services, and information," especially in the U.S. neoliberal imagination (130). The only way forward, according to Armstrong, is to "challenge the very gender difference" on which the nuclear family and white feminism are based (132). To invent an alternative social configuration, an unknown cartography of life that refuses to perpetuate current relations of capitalist production while affording people survival, enjoyment, and meaning, then, we must understand, and resist, the arousing romance of liberal selfhood.

<19>Should *Jane Eyre* be canceled, then? Reader, no. It's too important a text to be discarded, precisely because it allows us to trace its strategies of inscription and reification of whiteness, its recruitment of readers into liberal selfhood, its explorations of psychological depth, its formulation of middle-class righteousness and certainty, all of which structure present social epistemologies. It epitomizes much of the early-Victorian *gestalt*; to many students, it presents the first and only and most comprehensive snapshot of nineteenth-century existence they'll ever glean. Moreover, students (and instructors) still derive real pleasure from it. As has been the case with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* , *Jane Eyre* will likely leave the canon of

frequently taught works once most non-academic readers feel like they must endure rather than enjoy spending time with it. My students, certainly, discern *Jane Eyre*'s many limitations, but they are also pleasantly surprised at how much they recognize themselves in its protagonist.

<20>Nevertheless, the choice to teach *Jane Eyre* isn't neutral. Brontë's text was published at the dawn of mass culture, technological acceleration, and social liberationist movements, including feminism, all of which contribute to its enduring sense of cultural familiarity and relevance. (15) Today's instructors are faced with the challenge of adapting their curricula to whatever might lie beyond Roy's post-pandemic "portal": the near certainty of climate cataclysms, the likelihood of recurring pandemics, AI disruptions grand and small, ever-increasing income inequality, particularly along racial lines, and further democratic, institutional, and educational deterioration. What does *Jane Eyre* have to offer a future in which declining long-form literacy and an irrevocable nosedive of historical literature's cultural prestige are likely going to constitute the new normal? (16) Does the fact that *Jane Eyre* might well be the one of the only books some of my students have read from cover to cover—a clear sign of its affective power—countermand its vindication of white colonial liberalism? Ultimately, I don't think it does. And yet I will continue to teach Jane's story, for now at least, since it's partly the story of how we got here. As is the case with each of our critical objects, I recommend we enjoy her carefully.

Notes

(1)This paper's arc would be impossible without publications that appeared after the pandemic's onset, including the "Undisciplining Victorian Studies" special issue. See Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong. For recent "crisis" reflections, see Guillory, Heller, and Kreisel.(^)

(2)See, for example, Betensky.(^)

(3)The use of the term "cancel" in the title is intentionally provocative as well as tongue-in-cheek. Particularly in light of the recent efforts in Florida and other states to restrict content that can be discussed and spoken about in public K-12 and university classrooms to that which is ideologically amenable to current legislatures—along with the intensifying phasing out of tenure and its associated guarantee of academic freedom at public institutions in states ranging from Florida, North Carolina, and Texas—literary critics must strictly oppose censorship of any text, regardless of its political content. Pippa Norris observes that perceptions of

"cancel culture" are indicative of "processes of long-term generational cultural change in many Western societies [which] mean that the proportion of those holding traditionally socially conservative values has gradually reached a tipping point in recent decades" (171). Despite taking an explicitly progressive political stance, my paper does not advocate for cancellations of any kind.(^)

(4)On sexual abuse in *The History of Mary Prince* , see Ferguson, Sharpe, and Feuerstein.(^)

(5)This dynamic is at the heart of the romance genre. See Radway 113.(^)

(6)See Davis, Jarvis, and Manning for erotic play; see Cox for haptic intercourse.(^)

(7)See, for instance, Cohn 133.(^)

(8)See Felski, Larcombe, Linden, and Thierauf.(^)

(9)See Shanley,Hammerton, and Nelson.(^)

(10)See Spampinato's recent "capacious conception of rape" in "Rereading Rape."(^)

(11)Having children does not amount to a loss; I refer here to the degree of lived self-determination femme-identifying people can expect at the societal scale.(^)

(12)Borrowing the queer gaze to further defamiliarize straight femme desire, I'd like to gesture towards Torrey Peters's 2021 novel, *Detransition, Baby*, in which the protagonist Reese, a trans* woman, observes that "Cis women, *she supposed*, rubbed against a frisson of danger every time they had sex. . . . For cis women, *Reese imagined* , sex was a game played at the precipice of a cliff" (emphases mine). Note the conditionals of the passages, the instances of "she supposed" and "Reese imagined," which suggest that this issue, so fundamental to many women's sexual existence, wasn't immediately intuitive to Reese who is, by far, the most perceptive character in Peters' novel.(^)

(13)Spampinato comments on readers' similar "cathexis to Austen's novels" ("Love").(^)

(14)I also suspect that we are witnessing a change in what has long been the most powerful mode of social reproduction, a shift from the educational realm to the

virtual. Am I, in writing this paper, overestimating the possibilities of pedagogy as a form of activism?(^)

(15)For an explanation of how *Jane Eyre* reifies regionalism to decelerate the push of technological innovation and imagine an alternative modernity, see Livesay.(^)

(16)See Kreisel.(^)

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