



The Role of Bronte's Jane Eyre in Reforming Women's Oppression

Musa Hassan Tajeldin Hamad

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to shed light on the role of Charlotte Bronte's novel Jane Eyre in reforming women's oppression during Victorian Era. The paper investigates the main themes, which related to oppression, most characters reflect the social relationships of the Victorian society. Through her Jane Eyre, Charlotte Bronte struggles continually to achieve equality and to overcome oppression. She had known that is important to fight against patriarchal domination, against those who believe women to be inferior to men, and many characters in her novel symbolized real figures during the Victorian era. Perhaps, her novel conveys moral lessons toward Victorian Society, and reforms the abuse of women. A woman is seen in man's perspective, producing stereotypes in society. One of stereotypes labeled on Jane is that she was considered as a dependent woman. It is shown by her dependence to others for support. Besides being stereotyped as dependent, Jane also becomes an object of men. This oppression can be seen in the way three men treat Jane. Then, the female character's responses to the oppression which happened during Victorian era by being an independent woman, breaking the social value that women are only placed in domestic life, refusing to be an object of men, and struggling to survive by showing her resistance. These issues are relevant to all times worldwide, including our present modern time. In addition, Bronte represents early form of feminism during Victorian era; she was one of the founders of feminism in the Victorian Age. She was the revolutionary icon of the age. Jane Eyre changed people's perceptions of women. Jane Eyre's story tells us about a man-dominated society, and urges society to change bad treatment of woman; they should struggle and strive for their decency and dignity. Bronte puts an extra emphasis on the expanding gap between the ideologies of the social classes present during Victorian era; Jane herself spoke out against class oppression certain moments in the book, all pursuit was for early reform.

Key Terms: *Social Classes, Autonomy, Patriarchy, stereotype.*

Introduction

The subject of literature is portrayed human life, human experience. Every poem, play or story deals with some aspects of human life and experience. It has sometimes been said that literature is like a mirror that reflect life for us. In the ancient times literature used to depict morals and life as it is. Literature is important major; it is studied as a mean that helps people to provide the ability to connect human relationships, and defines what is right and what is wrong.

Literature, like all other human activities, necessarily reflects current social and economic conditions.

The Greek and Roman philosophers believed that the purpose of literature should be didactic, and its purpose is to teach morals and good behavior, to prevent bad behavior. Aristotle presented the first fully developed theory that shows, how literary art can and should function within society, with the ability to see the world with a pair of fresh eyes, it triggers the readers to reflect upon their own lives. Reading a material that is relatable to the readers may teach them morals and encourage them to practice good judgment. This can be proved through public school systems, where the books that are used tend to have a moral-teaching purpose.

Victorian literature refers to the body of literary work that was written during the reign of Queen Victoria over the United Kingdom, from 1837 until her death in 1901. Most literary historians consider 1830 the beginning of the Victorian era.

Victorian literature addressed many themes, and urged the society to reform woman's oppression. However, defining characteristic of Victorian literature is a story Focus on morality.

Charlotte Bronte was considered one of the female Victorian writers. As reformer, she was born on April 21, 1816 in Thornton, Yorkshire to Maria Branwell and Patrick Bronte. Her mother was died when she was five, Charlotte and her sisters were raised by her aunt. According to Cody (*Charlotte Brontë: A Brief Biography*, 1987), in 1824 Charlotte and three of her sisters Maria, Elizabeth, and Emily were sent to Cowan Bridge, a school for clergymen's daughters. When an outbreak of tuberculosis killed Maria and Elizabeth, Charlotte and Emily were brought home. In 1831 Charlotte became a pupil at the school at Roe Head, but she left school the following year to teach her sisters at home. She returned to Roe Head School in 1835 as a governess and then in 1838 Charlotte left Roe Head School for a position as governess in a family. As adults, Charlotte and her sisters collaborate in a book of poems. They published under male pseudonyms: Currer Ellis and Acton Bell. She then made her first own work entitled *The Professor* published without success. She began to write her second novel, *Jane Eyre*. In October 1847 *Jane Eyre* was published and quickly became a bestseller. In October 1849 *Shirley* was published, and in January 1853 *Villette* is published. *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *Villette* were published with the similar theme, which are the struggles of strong independent women and their need for love. Cody (1987) stated that *Jane Eyre* is an autobiographical novel depicting Charlotte's life. Jane's experience at Lowood School, where her dearest friend dies of tuberculosis, recalls the death of Charlotte's sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, at Cowan Bridge. The hypocritical religious fervor of the headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, is based in part on that of the Reverend Carus Wilson, the Evangelical minister who ran Cowan Bridge. Additionally, John Reed's decline into alcoholism and dissolution is most likely modeled upon the life of Charlotte Brontë's brother Branwell. Finally, like Charlotte, Jane becomes a governess a neutral vantage point from which to observe and describe the oppressive social ideas and practices of nineteenth-century Victorian society.

This paper is about exploring the role of the reform of the Victorian literature which represented in *Jane Eyre*; many themes, styles, genres, and modes of Victorian literature are reflected in the works of the Bronte Sisters', especially that of *Jane Eyre*. Common themes of

Victorian literature are shared with Jane Eyre; such as religious, education, morals and ethics, social classes, and gender relations will be presented, but the paper will focus on women's oppression. It is meant to be reflective of human nature; including both the good and bad. Consequently, this can promote better judgment of situations, so that the readers do not find themselves in the same circumstances as perhaps those in the fictional world. Hence, literature is proven to not only be reflective of life, but it can also be used as a guide for the reader to follow and practice good judgment from.

However, the real significance of Charlotte Bronte's Novel (Jane Eyre) goes beyond the eloquent Phrasing (the ability to express ideas or feeling in public), plot devices, characterizations and the sensitive handling of emotional human condition. The characters were contingents of England and were immersing in a perfectly observed and created world, which is full of conflicts and contradictions, inspiration and intrigue, love and loss, spitefulness and self-loathing and justice and truth. Charlotte Bronte's Novel (Jane Eyre) has become public property. It has been endlessly retold, adapted and imitated. Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre is often seen as the quintessential Victorian and her novel has almost become synonymous with Victorian England, The connection between her fictional world and the actual world of Victorian England has fascinated her readers.

Like many writers, Charlotte Bronte drew on her own life experiences to produce her stories. These stories were mainly focused on social inequality, and through them, she critically describes women position and specified labour that allowed to women, and the injustice of Victorian society toward women. These Conditions in England aroused writers to be directly concerned with contemporary social issues that focus on class, gender, and labour relation, all of which were the cause of societal turbulence and growing animosity between the rich and the poor of England. Charlotte Bronte's novel such as Jane Eyre is used as platforms for criticisms that called for awareness and social reform. Charlotte Bronte was social reform writer as will be shown in this research.

The selected novel, Jane Eyre, is illustrative of Bronte's emotional response to these conditions. Her novel considered as a warning against the conditions of her time. She wanted people to be aware of what was happening to them and put things right. Charlotte Bronte made people aware of the terrible conditions of woman which a considerable number of the English woman lived under during the Victorian era, for she herself happened to experience those conditions. Her own childhood was very much like that of many of her characters in Jane Eyre. The main focus in her novel is women's oppression and whose lives are reflection of her own misery and frustration during her childhood.

Close examination of Bronte's novel Jane Eyre will provide a deeper understanding of the social condition of her time and her attitude towards the prevailing situation in England. This study will further confirm Charlotte Bronte's warnings against inequality of society and its inhumane nature. It attempts to substantial assertion that she was a social moralist writer who was intent on exposing the harsh reality of the living condition .perhaps, she belongs to the

middle class, and she expressed great sympathy with the plight of the poor. She sought to make her readers aware of the terrible conditions under which people lived.

Charlotte Bronte paid special attention to woman whose lives were a constant reminder to her; and of her miserable childhood and her deep sense of the injustice and oppression that she suffered as a girl until she became adult. A victim herself, Bronte vehemently attacks bad treatment of woman, preventing them from good education and patriarchal oppression society, which did not allow woman, to work freely.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this paper will be attempted to investigate The Role of Charlotte Bronte's Novel (Jane Eyre), how she reformed Women's Oppression during the Victorian era. Charlotte Bronte might played curial role in nineteenth century through portraying the truth, and telling people what is wrong what is right. These issues are relevant to all times, worldwide, including our present modern time. This will be presented through discussing and analyzing Jane Eyre. The novel is considered one of the most important tools that help people to raise awareness, and redresses the social turbulence; also, it helps society to realize the good and bad. Jane Eyre gave new truthfulness to the Victorian novel with its realistic portrayal of the inner life of a woman, noting her struggles with her natural desires and social condition.

The objectives of the research are as follows:-

To investigate how Charlotte Bronte played great role in reforming Women's Oppression during the Victoria era.

To investigate to what extent she was the founder of feminism and the revolutionary icon of age.

To illustrate how Charlotte Bronte changed people's perceptions of women as reformer.

To explain how Charlotte Bronte criticized the Victorian privileged class through her novel Jane Eyre.

Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

How did Charlotte Bronte play great role in reforming Women's Oppression during the Victorian era?

Did she represent early form of feminism during Victorian era?

How did Charlotte Bronte change people's perceptions of women as reformer?

How did Charlotte Bronte criticize the Victorian privileged class through her novel Jane Eyre?

Research Hypotheses

Perhaps, Charlotte Bronte played crucial role in rising awareness and redressed society from social turbulence particularly woman's oppression.

Her novel *Jane Eyre* was good example; it reflected many characters' relationship that resembled complicated Victorian society.

Charlotte Bronte succeeded to portray the problem of women's oppression during the Victorian era.

It seemed that, Charlotte Bronte represents early form of feminism during the Victorian era.

Significance of the Study

England in the nineteenth century was known with inequality, hunger, and poverty. The significance of this research lies in the fact that Charlotte Bronte's wrote her *Jane Eyre* as message that recovers Victorian society from inequality, bad treatment of women, and criminal behavior.

The paper also explores the role played by Charlotte Bronte to raise the awareness, reform women's oppression, and it deals with important issues, including poverty in general, and the injustice done to the poor. These issues are relevant to all times, worldwide, including our present modern time.

Research Methodology

Since this paper is related with analyzing particular forms of written text, it does not need to apply a method of data collection. This research uses a content analysis and descriptive-qualitative method to analyze the data because the data of this research are nonnumeric. The study, therefore, takes extracts from selected Novel *Jane Eyre*, and interprets Charlotte Bronte's views and ideas; this can be analyzed through selecting specific characters. The analyses are sub-divided with headlines according to the detailing concepts and the relevant issues of Victorian society will be discussed in this paper.

Woman's Oppression in *Jane Eyre*

Oppression is a type of injustice. It is the inequitable use of authority, law, or physical force to prevent others from being free or equal. Oppression, whether based on gender, race, or class effects is disadvantageous to the oppressed people physically and psychologically. It takes place through everyday practices, attitudes, assumption, behaviors and institutional rules (Lott in Barone, 1998 : 7).

It is believed by the socialist feminist theory that women's position and women's participation in the public world and beyond the family and household are seen as unequal comparing to men's. It is important to see how Bronte's *Jane Eyre* reflects the condition of women in the society in the nineteenth century of England in which patriarchy and capitalism exist.

Walby (1990 : 20) has explained the patriarchal concept as follows: I shall defined patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women...the use of the term social structures is important here, since it clearly implies rejection both of biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one. According to her, patriarchy is a root of subordination toward women. Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices which is considered unjust for women since it puts women as the objects of subordination. It is not

only Walby who states that patriarchy is the root of women's oppression. Mitchell and Jaggar, socialist feminists state the roots of women's oppression are patriarchy and capitalism.

In Victorian England, women were not thought of as full human beings, instead they were treated as lesser with no real rights or privileges. A book that demonstrates an opposing view of this stereotype is *Jane Eyre*, written by Charlotte Bronte in 1847. This book challenges the societal norms towards women during the Victorian era by taking the reader through the life of Jane Eyre, an orphaned girl who is left with her aunt and eventually sent to boarding school where she ultimately becomes a governess and independent woman. Throughout the novel, she refuses to fall into the stereotypical gender roles for women at the time and represents an early form of feminism.

Jane Eyre, even from childhood, refused to conform to the expectations of a passive young girl. Never listening to her aunt, Mrs. Reed, and failing to be submissive towards her male cousin John Reed. Both her cousin and aunt were abusive towards her throughout her childhood, mistreating her in both emotional and physical ways. John always had a superiority complex which originated from him always being treated as the most important. This led him to believe he was the boss of everyone and therefore able to treat people in the way he wanted.

In *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, gender stereotypes and roles are often brought up as cages people must live in to be successful in life. However, schools like Lowood are almost one large gender stereotype, teaching girls to be ladies: to sew, to sit up straight, to endure, to be calm, collected, and tranquil. Gender oppressions are defied by Jane's early childhood behaviors, but through her time at Lowood become upheld. Bronte makes this point because it shows how people are shaped by their upbringing, as seen in Jane's behavior as an adult. Jane's childhood behavior defies gender stereotypes because at this time, children were supposed to be quiet and obedient, especially female children, yet Jane is impassioned, loud, and relatively disobedient.

The discrepancy in her behavior is the dilemma of all modern feminists. Jane may wish to act in a feminist way and defy the stereotypes she is trapped in, yet it is the fact that she is trapped in them that is holding her back. One could argue that by this alone, Jane defies gender stereotypes, yet her behavior as an adult woman is largely refined, reposed, unemotional, and ultimately in favor of gender stereotypes. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte brings up several feminist ideas. However, by forcing Jane into the role of teacher, she serves to uphold the gender stereotypes she at first allows Jane to defy. Gender stereotypes in *Jane Eyre* are at first defied in Jane's early childhood, and then upheld in her later years. In a society where women were expected to be calm and tranquil, even in the face of suffering, Jane's behavior is conflicting, looking for independence.

Jane Eyre, which are being considered as a dependent woman, being an object of men, and receiving bad treatments. Furthermore, the next paper elaborates the female character's responses to the oppressions that happen in that era by being an independent woman, breaking the social value that women are only placed in domestic life, refusing to be an object of men, and struggling to survive by showing her resistance.

Jane's Responses to the Oppression

Feminist study is a discipline that can be used in analyzing literature. It is commonly used to analyze women's problems living in society dominated by men. In this paper, feminist study is used to analyze oppressions toward Jane, the main female character of Bronte's *Jane Eyre* since Jane faces oppressions from the society. Specifically feminist theory is used to criticize the main female character's oppressions and her responses to them. Women's problem which happens in the novel is the oppression toward women as an effect of living in Victorian society. Patriarchal oppression and class oppression. All oppressions are strongly related to stereotypes, because, they seemed as slicked images to the society. Patriarchal oppression causes the images of the main female character considered as dependent and be an object of men, while class oppression gives bad treatments to the main female character as the effect of being a member of lower class. Having such kind of oppressions, the main female character took some responses to them by making herself independent, breaking the social value that women are only placed in domestic life, refusing to be an object of men, and struggling for life by showing her resistance.

Protagonist

The protagonist and narrator of the novel, Jane is an intelligent, honest, plain-featured young girl forced to contend with oppression, inequality, and hardship. Although she meets with a series of individuals who threaten her autonomy, Jane repeatedly succeeds at asserting herself and maintains her principles of justice, human dignity, and morality. She also values intellectual and emotional fulfillment. Her strong belief in gender and social equality challenges the Victorian oppressions against women and the poor.

For example, Jane refuses to fake gratitude toward Mrs. Reed, and her passionate outbursts cause Mrs. Reed to send Jane to Lowood. Jane leaves Lowood on her own accord when the school ceases to feel like home, signaling that Jane has taken control over her own destiny. Jane's intelligence and goodness inspire Mr. Rochester to hope for love again and propose marriage. Once again, Jane's convictions lead her to uproot herself because she doesn't want to compromise her morals for love. Jane's goodness also attracts St. John's attentions. Jane's refusal to marry St. John demonstrates her self-knowledge and understanding that she cannot live having stifled her passion in a loveless marriage. Finally, Jane's love helps Rochester create a new life. Her insistence on only marrying Rochester according to her own terms allows Jane to finally discover a home for herself.

Antagonist

Instead of struggling against a singular antagonist, Jane struggles against societal forces, embodied by several characters, that threaten her search for happiness and belonging. Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John represent patriarchal values that attempt to control Jane's sense of self. Brocklehurst asserts absolute control over the girls of Lowood, dictating how they

dress, eat, and even wear their hair. By parroting the accusations of Mrs. Reed, he attempts to keep Jane from creating a new start at the school and finding kinship there. Later, Rochester tries to control Jane with manipulative language to keep her from leaving him. His sexual desire threatens Jane's moral convictions, which dictate an important part of her psyche. Finally, St. John blocks Jane from her goal of happiness by trying to force her into a loveless marriage. His desire to mold Jane into his ideal vision of a Christian martyr is a manifestation of patriarchy. Mrs. Reed, while a woman, also weaponizes patriarchal values against Jane by punishing her for not being a docile child, despite never giving Jane reason to be happy. Mrs. Reed's punishment reflects the Victorian belief that women should be passive, and that even justified negative emotions are a sign of indolence, or even madness.

The rigid Victorian class system blocks Jane from forging her path in the world because she must rely on others for shelter. Mrs. Reed resents Jane for being dependent upon her. Brocklehurst's stingy doctrine of privation punishes vulnerable, dependent girls for their poverty. Like Mrs. Reed, Brocklehurst believes that their low social status means that they inherently must abandon all pride in themselves. However, his version of humility means poor nutrition and deadly living conditions, threatening Jane and her classmates' safety. Blanche Ingram, with her beauty and social status, further represents the rigid class system and social order that doesn't favor Jane. Everyone expects Rochester to marry Blanche Ingram because she possesses both wealth and beauty, which emphasizes that Rochester's choice of poor, plain Jane upends social convention. Blanche Ingram doesn't directly antagonize Jane herself, aside from commenting on governesses as an inferior group of women, but her existence highlights the social obstacles and privileges of class.

1-Class oppression

Class privilege is the basis of one person or group claiming to be more important, smarter, better, more deserving, more qualified than another person or group. The lower group is viewed as less intelligent, less talented, inferior, and not worth very much. The importance of class issue is that it focuses exclusively on the poor, which is the members of lower group (Bowles & Edwards in Barone,1998 : 13).

In a society in which class stratification exists, class stratification is also one of the reasons of women oppression. Society treats a person based on which class he or she belongs to. A woman from lower class usually gets double oppression in her life: as a woman and as a member of the lower class.

Middle class:

Middle class women can almost be considered guides to the lower class women. During their free time, they would go and help the pauper class women. They would sponsor mothers and babies homes, kindergartens, and health and hygiene reforms. To sponsor someone means that you a certain amount of money, in this case, to get these woman's daily necessities. Although all of these middle class women had cleaning servants for their homes, they would

lecture the lower class women on how to keep their houses clean. This just shows that just because the upper class women had a bit more money in their pocket, they felt they were superior to these women who actually had to work for their own money. The goal of these middle class women was to marry into a wealthy relationship. This allowed the women to get more respect from the upper class society and get more goods.

Lower class:

The lower class women were not treated very fairly. They normally wore fifth hand clothing; they (sometimes servants) ate the left food of the higher class people. It was very likely for unmarried women to be classified as a pauper. After having a father or a husband die, barely any money or land was left in the will to the daughter or wife; it was mostly given to the oldest son or another close male relative. For the servants and wives, housework took a lot of physical energy. Some of the tools that they used were treadle sewing machines, mechanical wringers, and cast-iron stove. During the day wives that were their own house maids made clothes, cared for the sick, and grew and processed food that their family ate. Women did not only do this for their family, they prepared and sold food to others too. Also, they wove and repaired fishing nets. Other jobs for the lower class women were barmaids, chamber maids, waitresses', and working in factories. Working in factories was better than working in the domestic service business. The factory business allowed the women to socialize more and had fewer hours than the domestic service. <http://victorianerawomen.blogspot.com/>

By placing *Jane Eyre* between the lower and middle classes, Charlotte Bronte puts an extra emphasis on the expanding gap between the ideologies of the social classes present during the Industrial Revolution in England. *Jane* herself speaks out against class oppression certain moments in the book. However, it is also important to note that now here in *Jane Eyre* are society's boundaries bent. Ultimately, *Jane* is only able to marry Rochester as his equal because she has almost magically come into her own inheritance from her uncle.

Looking for Autonomy and refusing marriage

Jane Eyre is Refusing marriage that set as oppression to the Victorian woman. It was her fear of losing her autonomy motivates her refusal of Rochester's marriage proposal. *Jane* believes that "marrying" Rochester while he remains legally tied to Bertha would mean rendering herself a mistress and sacrificing her own integrity for the sake of emotional gratification. On the other hand, her life at Moor House tests her in the opposite manner. There, she enjoys economic independence and engages in worthwhile and useful work, teaching the poor; yet she lacks emotional sustenance. Although St. John proposes marriage, offering her a partnership built around a common purpose, *Jane* knows their marriage would remain loveless.

Nonetheless, the events of Jane's stay at Moor House are necessary tests of Jane's autonomy. Only after proving her self-sufficiency to herself can she marry Rochester and not be asymmetrically dependent upon him as her "master." The marriage can be one between equals.

The first marriage proposal

Jane says, I went slowly downstairs. Mr. Brigg the lawyer spoke to me. 'I am sorry for you, Miss Eyre, he said.' 'You did nothing wrong. Your uncle, Jane Eyre, is sorry for you too. He read your letter. And then he met Richard Mason in Madeira. Your uncle is dying, Miss Eyre. He could not come to England. He sent me here. He wanted me to stop this marriage.' I did not answer. I went to my room I locked the door. I took off my wedding dress. I put on plain black dress. I lay down on bed. 'I am Jane Eyre today,' I thought. I will be Jane Eyre tomorrow I will never be Jane Rochester. I must leave Thornfield Hall. I must never see Mr Rochester again. My life here is finished.(simp.Chap.51).

The Second marriage proposal

St. John decides to travel to India as a missionary, and he urges Jane to accompany him as his wife. Jane agrees to go to India but refuses to marry her cousin because she does not love him. St. John pressures her to reconsider, and she nearly gives in. However, she realizes that she cannot abandon forever the man she truly loves him.

2- Patriarchal oppression

Oppression is one of the big problems faced by feminists and women in patriarchal system. Kate Millet (in Tong : 2009), a radical feminist, insisted that the roots of women's oppression are buried deep in patriarchy's sex or gender system. It is said that patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant, or masculine, roles and women always have the subordinate, weak characteristics.

Jane struggles continually to achieve equality and to overcome oppression. In addition to class hierarchy, she must fight against patriarchal domination against those who believe women to be inferior to men and try to treat them such as; Three central male figures threaten her desire for equality and dignity, for example:

A-Mr. Brocklehurst

A few days later, Mr. Brocklehurst came to the Gateshead Hall. He was a very tall man. His eyes were dark and his face was cruel. 'Jane Eyre, he said to me. God does not like bad children. God punishes bad children, Jane Eyre.' 'God will punish John reed,' 'I replied, John hits me and he shouts at me.' That is not true. You are a liar, Jane Eyre,' Mr. Brocklehurst said. 'you must not tell lies. And you must not live here with your cousins. You will come to Lowood

School. You will become a good girl.' I want to come to your school, sir,' I said. 'I want to leave this house.' 'Bad girls are punished at my school,' Jane Eyre Mr Brocklehurst said. The girls work very hard at Lowood.' (simp.chapt11)

B-Edward Rochester

The madwoman saw Mr Rochester. She screamed and ran towards him. 'Be careful, sir!' Grace Pool said. The madwoman was very strong. She screamed and Mr Rochester. But Mr Rochester held her arms. 'This woman is my wife!' Mr Rochester said angrily. 'I wanted to forget about her. I wanted to marry this young girl, Jane Eyre. Was I wrong?' He was silent for a few moments. Then he spoke quietly. 'Yes. I was wrong,' he said 'I love Jane Eyre but I was wrong. Now, go, all of you. I must take care of my mad wife! I went to my room and I locked the door. I took off my wedding dress. I put on a plain black dress. 'I lay down on my bed. I am Jane Eyre today,' I thought. 'I will be Jane Eyre tomorrow. I will never be Jane Rochester. I must leave Thornfield Hall. I must never see Jane Rochester again. My life here is finished.' (simp.chap50).

C-St. John Rivers

St. John decides to travel to India as a missionary, and he said to Jane to accompany him as his wife. Jane agrees to go to India but refuses to marry her cousin because she does not love him. St. John pressures her to reconsider, and she nearly gives in. However, she realizes that she cannot abandon forever the man she truly loves him.

All three are **misogynistic** on some level; they oppressed her. Each tries to keep Jane in a submissive position, where she is unable to express her own thoughts and feelings. In her quest for independence and self-knowledge, Jane must escape Brocklehurst, reject St. John, and come to Rochester only after ensuring that they may marry as equals. This last condition is met once Jane proves herself able to function, through the time she spends at Moor House, in a community and in a family. She will not depend solely on Rochester for love and she can be financially independent. Furthermore, Rochester is blind at the novel's end and thus dependent upon Jane to be his "prop and guide." Jane articulates what was for her time a radically feminist philosophy.

In nineteenth century of England, gender roles strongly influenced people's behavior and identities which made women realize their inferior position. Realizing that gender roles put women into subordination, Jane has struggles to become independent and recognizes her personal qualities. She faces some men who do not respect women as their equals. Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester, and St. John attempt to command or control women. Since men mostly see women from their beauty and not from their characters, women are seen as

entertainers for men and the object of them. Because of this status, women get less respect from men. Men also hold no respect for their wives by having mistresses. Many men keep mistresses and in the end still expect their wives to be faithful even though they are cheating on them the whole time. It is a hypocritical aspect of the Victorian ages.

Conclusion

Through analyses and appreciations of main themes such as Oppression, Patriarchy, and autonomy, researcher explored that, Charlotte Bronte played great role in raising awareness and reforming Women's oppression, many characters in her novel symbolize real figures during the Victorian era, and Jane Eye is very good example for that. Somehow, her novel conveys moral lessons toward Victorian Society, and reforms the abuse of women.

Jane Eyre is a famous work written by Charlotte Bronte on the basis of her own experiences. In this novel, the author shapes a tough and independent woman who pursues true love and equality. She strives for her life and defends her fate in hardships and difficult conditions. In Victorian period, the image of Jane Eyre cast a sharp contrast to the man-dominated society. this paper points out that Jane gradually becomes a feminist in pursuing independence and Jane Eyre's uncompromising pursuit for esteem leaves a deep impression on every reader of *Jane Eyre*. She struggles continually to achieve equality and to overcome oppression; She struggles for equality on economy, and marriage. Her love is based on equality and independence. So many decades earlier, Charlotte Bronte dreamed a dream where the heroine does not have to die or go mad to achieve her victory. Bronte allows Jane to fly in the face of nineteenth-century obstacles of gender bias and expectations, limited education, restrictions in social class and constrictive social mores.

Jane Eyre lived in an era in which patriarchy and capitalism were dominant. As a consequence of being a poor orphan girl living in Victorian era, she gets the two kinds of oppressions; they are patriarchal oppression and class oppression. Patriarchy is a male dominated system in which men rule all aspect of life in the Society. One of stereotypes labeled on Jane is that she was considered as a dependent woman. It is shown by her dependence to others for support. Besides being stereotyped as dependent, Jane also becomes an object of men. This oppression can be seen in the way three men treat Jane. Firstly, it can be seen from the bad treatments given by Mr. Brocklehurst to the female orphans at Lowood, where Jane is one of the orphans. He gives poor facilities to the orphans, which produces physical and psychological oppression. Secondly, it is seen in the intention of Mr. Rochester who wants Jane to be his mistress. Asking her to be his mistress is a form of patriarchal oppression since a mistress is not a legal status for a woman in a society. Thirdly, it is seen in the reason why St. John asks Jane to marry him. It is not because he loves her, but it is because he thinks she is smart enough to be a missionary's wife.

Jane suffers from class oppression during her life as well. This oppression happens as an impact of living in capitalist society and being a member of middle class society. She receives bad treatments from the members of upper class society. This kind of oppression happens in

three phases of her life: childhood, teenage, and adulthood. In her childhood, she receives bad treatments from the Reeds, in her teenage she receives bad treatments from Mr. Brocklehurst, and in her adulthood she receives bad treatment from the Ingrams.

Independent woman who ends up marrying the man she loves. Jane is everything Victorian woman is not. Jane is the strong and passionate character, and she is not the poster girl of a Victorian woman. Jane is young, brave, and resourceful in the face of difficulty and even danger, while most Victorian women were pictured as weak

Jane Eyre changed people's perception of women. At first, the novel was considered very radical, since it appeared to encourage rebellion and dissent towards authority. Jane Eyre's story tells us that in a man-dominated society, a woman should strive for the decency and dignity. In face of hardships in life, the courageous woman should be brave enough to battle against it. Self-esteem is the primary element to protect. In addition, the feminism taught how to defend ourselves.

Jane struggles continually to achieve equality and to overcome oppression. In addition to class hierarchy, she must fight against patriarchal domination against those who believe women to be inferior to men and try to treat them.

All oppressions are strongly related to stereotypes, because, they seemed as slicked images to the society. Patriarchal oppression causes the images of the main female character considered as dependent and be an object of men, while class oppression gives bad treatments to the main female character as the effect of being a member of lower class. Having such kind of oppressions, the main female character took some responses to them by making herself independent, breaking the social value that women are only placed in domestic life, refusing to be an object of men, and struggling for life by showing her resistance.

In nineteenth century of England, gender roles strongly influenced people's behavior and identities which made women realize their inferior position. Realizing that gender roles put women into subordination, Jane has struggles to become independent and recognizes her personal qualities. She faces some men who do not respect women as their equals. Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester, and St. John attempt to command or control women. Since men mostly see women from their beauty and not from their characters, women are seen as entertainers for men and the object of them. Because of this status, women get less respect from men. Men also hold no respect for their wives by having mistresses. Many men keep mistresses and in the end still expect their wives to be faithful even though they are cheating on them the whole time. It is a hypocritical aspect of the Victorian ages.

References

- Bronte, Charlotte(1847) Retold by Florence Bell (simplified Macmillan readers).
Tong, R. P. 2009. *Feminist Thought*. Colorado: Westview Press
Barone, Chuck. 1998. *Extending Our Analysis of Class Oppression: Bringing Classism More Fully into the Race & Gender Picture*. A Journal. Carlisle: Department of Economics, Dickinson College, Carlisle.
Walby, Sylvia. *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

Electronic Sources:

Bhargava, Divya. 2009. —Women and Negative Stereotypes: An End before a
Bradley, Keith. 2006. —The Roman Empire: Family Lifell. <http://www.pbs.org/em>
<http://victorianerawomen.blogspot.com/>
<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/janeeyre/>
Cody, David. 1987. —Charlotte Brontë: A Brief Biography. Error! Hyperlink

© GSJ