



**CHALLENGING OF FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS  
TO PATRIARCHY IN *JANE EYRE* BY  
CHARLOTTE BRONTE**

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**MASTER THESIS**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

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## THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion the thesis submitted by Rasha ALSHAMMAA titled “CHALLENGING OF FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS TO PATRIARCHY IN *JANE EYRE* BY CHARLOTTE BRONTE” is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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This thesis is accepted by the examining committee with a unanimous vote in the Department of English Language and Literature as a Master of Arts thesis. August 13, 2021

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The degree of Master of Arts by the thesis submitted is approved by the Administrative Board of the Institute of Graduate Programs, Karabuk University.

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Director of the Institute of Graduate Programs

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and all information included has been obtained and expounded in accordance with the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials, not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

Without being bound by a particular time, I accept all moral and legal consequences of any detection contrary to the aforementioned statement.

**Name Surname: Rasha ALSHAMMAA**

**Signature:**

## **FOREWORD**

All praises are to Allah, who honored me with his grace, and prayers and peace be upon the teacher of teachers, Prophet Muhammad SAW. First of all, I would like to dedicate every humble effort, this thesis, to my dear parent whose prayers have left a permanent imprint in my heart and life. Also, I would like to thank my beloved husband, the life-long companion, and my lovely children who accompanied me during the study journey and supported me with their endless love. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to my loyal sister, brothers, and best friends who encouraged me and helped me in this journey.

All my respect and gratitude are to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Abdul Serdar ÖZTÜRK, who supported me with his knowledge, kindness, and humility. I will never forget all his invaluable efforts since I enrolled in the master's program at Karabuk University. Lastly, I am grateful for the opportunity that Karabuk University has given me to continue my studies and achieve this precious goal of my life. I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who supported me in this experience; may Allah reward you all!

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the challenge of female consciousness to patriarchy in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* in the frame of feminist criticism. It studies the period when *Jane Eyre* was written, the aim of the author and the effects of this literary work on readers. It also concentrates on the life of Jane Eyre from childhood to adulthood by highlighting her awareness and independence despite the domination of the patriarchal society along with the Christian doctrines. Thus, it presents the difficulties that women went through, and how few of them were brave enough to get their independence away from the control of the patriarchal society like Jane Eyre. As Charlotte Bronte has lived during the Victorian age and witnessed the oppression of females, her novel gives a clear picture of the whole situation through the life of the eponymous heroine. Bronte's novel presents a new image of the conscious woman, this unfamiliar image is considered as an inspiration for the females of her generation and the later ones. So, this thesis studies the protagonist's awareness in each stage of her life; it highlights Jane's uniqueness as a child at Gateshead, a student at Lowood Charity School, a governess at Thornfield, and a mature woman who can choose her own destiny at Moor family house. It takes the readers on an expedition to explore the oppressed life of the females in the Victorian era including all the hardships they faced in their domestic, educational, and emotional lives by the society that neglected them since the beginning of their lives.

**Keywords:** Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, Patriarchal Society, Female Consciousness.

## ÖZ

Bu tez, Charlotte Bronte'nin *Jane Eyre* romanında kadın bilincinin ataerkilliğe meydan okumasını feminist eleştiri çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Bu kapsamda, bu çalışma Jane Eyre'in yazıldığı dönemi, yazarın amacını ve bu edebi eserin okuyucular üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. Aynı zamanda, bu tez, Hıristiyan öğretileri ile birlikte ataerkil toplumun egemenliğinde yetiştirilmesine rağmen romanın ana karakteri Jane Eyre'nin öz-farkındalığını ve bağımsızlığını vurgulayarak çocukluktan yetişkinliğe kadar olan yaşamına odaklanmaktadır. Böylece, kadınların yaşadığı zorlukları ve Jane Eyre gibi ataerkil toplumun kontrolünden uzaklaşabilecek kadınların o dönemin toplumunda ne kadar az olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Charlotte Bronte, Viktorya döneminde yaşadığı ve kadınların ezilmesine tanık olduğu için, romanı, aynı adı taşıyan kadın kahramanın hayatı okuyucuya o dönem toplumunun betimlemesini net bir şekilde yapmaktadır. Bronte'nin romanı bilinçli kadının yeni bir görüntüsünü sunmakla kalmaz, bu alışılmadık görüntü aynı zamanda kendi kuşağının kadınları ve sonrakiler için bir ilham kaynağı olarak da görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu tez, kahramanın hayatının her aşamasındaki farkındalığını inceler; Gateshead'de bir çocuk, Lowood Charity School'da bir öğrenci, Thornfield'da bir mürebbiye ve Moor aile evinde kendi kaderini seçebilen olgun bir kadın olarak Jane'in benzersizliğini vurgular. Okurları, Viktorya döneminde kadınları ev, eğitim ve duygusal yaşamlarında yaşadıkları tüm zorluklarla birlikte, ihmalkâr bir toplum tarafından ezilen yaşamlarını keşfetmek için bir yolculuğa çıkarmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, Ataerkil Toplum, Kadın Bilinci.



## ARCHIVE RECORD INFORMATION

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## ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ

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## **SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH**

This thesis studies the period when *Jane Eyre* was written, it focuses on the aim of the author and the effects of this literary work on readers. It also focuses on the life of Jane Eyre from childhood to adulthood concentrating on Jane's awareness and independence despite the domination of the patriarchal society.

## **PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

This thesis aims to study the Patriarchal society in England and in *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, it focuses on the difficulties that women went through at that time, and how few of them were brave enough to get their independence.

## **METHOD OF THE RESEARCH**

In this thesis, literary methods such as feminism and especially the patriarchal dominance will be taken into consideration and it will be written in the APA (American Psychological Association) as a principle of writing.

## **HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH/RESEARCH PROBLEM**

It shows the hardships that females have suffered from, and how few of them were brave and strong enough, like Jane Eyre, to get their independence away from the control of the patriarchal society.

## **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

Observing the status of the female during the Victorian era is not easy as long as life has changed during the past years and the female's life has also changed. What is considered a normal right for any woman during the present days, was taboo in the past. For that reason, intense research has been done for the purpose of understanding females' suffering to be reflected and expressed through this thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer.

Charlotte Bronte

(p. 109, chap. 12)

*Jane Eyre* is known as one of Charlotte Bronte's masterpieces that presents the life of a female character in the nineteenth century through the eyes of a feminist English writer. It is regarded as an autobiography as Bronte mentions it in her first volume: *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*. The last edition of *Jane Eyre* includes thirty-eight chapters portraying the story of a heroine who faces the hardship of being a female in the Victorian era. It is worth noting that Charlotte Bronte herself lived in the Victorian era and witnessed the oppression of females at that time. According to Margaret Smith in her book *Charlotte Bronte: Selected Letters* (2007), Charlotte Bronte was born on April 19, 1816, in Thornton near Bradford, Yorks. She was the third child of Revd Patrick and Maria Bronte and died on March 31, 1855, after an extreme pregnancy complication, and she was buried on April 4 in Haworth church.

Although she did not live very long, Charlotte Bronte achieved a lot during her lifetime. In her childhood, Bronte was sent to study at Clergymen's Daughter's boarding school, where she worked as a teacher later. After that, she worked as a governess, and then she went to Pensionnat Heger to study languages and work as a teacher later. According to Smith (2007), "in 1846 there appeared *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton*

*Bell, the pseudonyms of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne"* (p. 2). Consequently, Bronte's sisters started to write hiding their real identities to be accepted in the patriarchal society that did not allow women to get out of their common stereotype of the angel at the house.

On 12 March 1837, about ten years before writing *Jane Eyre*, Bronte's passion for literary writing motivated her to send some of her poems to the famous British poet Robert Southey requesting his feedback. However, he sent her a letter back saying: "*Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it even as an accomplishment and a recreation*" (Southey, 1987). Southey's reply reflected the hardship that women have experienced at that time as they were considered full-time workers for the benefit of their families, thereby implying that talented females did not have a chance to prove themselves at that time.

Regarding Bronte's early beginnings, Margaret Smith asserts that Bronte has written: "*about 180 poems, 120 stories and other prose pieces*" (p. 39). Bronte's first novel was *The Professor* that was first rejected and later published in 1857 after Bronte's death. Then, she wrote *Jane Eyre* when she was taking care of her sick father who had several eye operations. Zoe Brennan states in his book *Bronte's Jane Eyre* (2010) that Bronte's *Jane Eyre* was published on 19 October 1847 to get a "*largely critical approval*" (p. 4). After the public success of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, she had written *Shirley* that was published in 1849. At that time, Bronte found the courage to reveal her real name. In 1853, Bronte wrote *Villette*, which is also known as one of her masterpieces in literature.

During her life, Bronte wrote many letters to her friends and colleagues; some of these letters were kept as they are and were printed in the way she wrote them. However, some other letters were burned based on the request of Bronte's husband, Arthur Bell Nicholls. In one of her letters to Ellen Nussey on October 20, 1854, Bronte comments on Nicholls's request (as cited in Smith, 2007): "*Men don't seem to understand making letters a vehicle of communication— they always seem to think us incautious*" (p. 26). Bronte's letter refers to her understanding of the difference between females' and males' ways of thinking. Undoubtedly, Bronte's awareness is one of the main reasons behind her success as she proved that through her writings which reflect the reality of the Victorian society.

*Jane Eyre* is one of Bronte's most famous novels that represents part of Bronte's life and suffering as a female in the Victorian era. Brennan (2010) asserts "*Although Brontë never establishes an exact date for events in Jane Eyre it is generally thought to be set in the early 1800s*" (p. 14). The title of the novel refers to the main character Jane Eyre whose personality represents an exceptional case of a female in the nineteenth century. The novel is a Bildungsroman, reflecting the development of the main character by focusing on her growth and the experiences she gets in each phase of her life. Throughout the novel, the reader realizes that Jane's awareness always leads her to an exceptional fate.

Mainly, *Jane Eyre* represents the oppressive life of females from early childhood to the rest of their lives; it highlights the social, religious, and cultural strains which were imposed on the females to keep them under the common patriarchal stereotype of the

angle at home. Debra Teachman (1955) talks about *Jane Eyre* in her book *Understanding Jane Eyre A Student Case Book to Issue*, and she says:

Jane Eyre is the story of a woman who is unwilling to submit to anything she perceives as wrong or unfair. She believes that she should have the right to determine her future for herself, that she should have the right to make her own choices, and that she should be considered the equal of any man as a human being (p. 14).

*Jane Eyre* was the first novel published by Charlotte Bronte. No one can deny the fact that being published under the male name of Currer Bell is one of the main reasons behind its acceptance by the Victorian society. *Jane Eyre* presented to the society a very critical subject and highlighted females' suffering at a time when they were inferior and marginalized. That is, she presented the paralyzed life that females were living to arouse their awareness and help them change their bitter life.

It is worth mentioning that Jane's suffering as an orphan intertwines with Bronte's. Bronte's mother died early because of disease; therefore, she was sent to the Clergy's Daughter's school that imitates Lowood Charity school in the novel. Zoe Brennan (2010) asserts that Bronte suffered in her school because of "*its draconian rules, lack of heating and barely edible food*" (p. 10). These circumstances are what she has portrayed through Jane's suffering at Lowood. In addition, the spread of the epidemic that killed Bronte's sister is the same as the one mentioned in the novel through Helen's death. So, the reader of *Jane Eyre* realizes Bronte's self-suffering, and this is what makes it a semi-autobiographical one.

*Jane Eyre* presents the life of a female in the nineteenth century whose suffering starts at the age of ten with the death of her parents. Consequently, she becomes obligated to live in the house of her dead uncle, where she suffers from the severe

treatment of her uncle's wife and his spoiled son. After that, Jane moves to Lowood charity school to face another kind of oppression in the name of religion. When she finishes her school days as a student and a teacher, she moves to Thornfield to work as a governess and meet her love, Mr. Rochester. During the early conversations between Jane and Rochester, she realizes that he also adopted the patriarchal concepts. Rochester tends to be the master of Thornfield who must be followed, and that is what a man of the upper class used to be in the nineteenth century. However, what differentiates Rochester from the other males at that time is his appreciation of Jane's mind and heart. So, after long conversations between Jane and Rochester, they realize that their love grows up, and then they decide to get married. However, Bertha appears in the novel as the previous wife of Rochester who lost her rationality in an accident; therefore, the wedding ceremony of Jane and Rochester at that time was canceled.

After that, Jane leaves Thornfield to meet her cousins by chance and gets a good portion of the inheritance from a dead uncle. At that time, she meets St. John, the cold religious man, who asks her to marry and travel to India with him. However, Jane refuses St. John's proposal and goes back to Rochester when an inner voice tells her that he needs her. When she meets Rochester again, Jane knows that Bertha's fire killed her and burned Thornfield. Finally, Jane comes back to her love as a strong independent woman who is financially independent. They get married and live happily as two compatible lovers.

While reading *Jane Eyre*, it can be realized that the protagonist's suffering at any stage of her life is mainly because of the males' discrimination and females' oppression. Accordingly, this study aims to explore Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* from a feminist



standpoint. Initially, it highlights the emergence of the feminist movements, the reasons behind their existence, and the pioneering feminist figures who called for women's rights. Then, it concentrates on the females' status in the nineteenth century under the domination of the patriarchal society. What distinguishes this study from other studies is that it focuses on the protagonist's awareness in overtaking the difficulties which were imposed on women by the patriarchal society that was supported by the church during the nineteenth century. This study also highlights the period of writing *Jane Eyre*; it shows women's oppression in many fields, like education, work, love, and marriage during the Victorian era.

In this study, chapter one presents women's issues through time from a feminist point of view. It also highlights the early beginnings of the feminist movement, the reasons behind its emergence, and the most common feminist figures who worked hard to achieve women's independence at that time. Also, it explains first-wave feminism, second-wave feminism, and third-wave feminism, including all the different branches of the movement which raised a variety of issues regarding women's rights. In addition, it tells about the feminist writers whose works have urged people, especially females, to revolve against the miserable situation of the females at that time.

From a feminist perspective, chapter two highlights the psychological and physical oppression that females have experienced during the nineteenth century from the early years of their lives as presented by Charlotte Bronte through the protagonist, Jane Eyre. Chapter two also reflects the young girl's suffering at Gateshead where Jane realizes that females are ignored, controlled by the patriarchal society, and are deprived of inheritance. On the other hand, she recognizes that superiority is attached to the male

whose gender allows him to control all the inhabitants especially the little orphan, Jane Eyre. Then, this chapter highlights girls' oppression in charity schools through Mr. Brocklehurst in a religious framework. However, Bronte's presentation of Jane's exceptional personality leads to her abnormal happy ending as a woman who refuses the prevalent oppressing practices at that time. Thus, chapter two shows how feminist writers like Charlotte Bronte reflect this situation through the events of *Jane Eyre* in an attempt to stimulate people's awareness to change the bitter reality.

The third chapter demonstrates the difficulties that females have faced in the field of education in the nineteenth century as presented by Charlotte Bronte through the protagonist's life at Lowood Charity School. It highlights women's suppression at schools due to the domination of the patriarchal norms which rely on religious doctrines. Besides, it portrays the poor health conditions at schools as a result of the spread of the epidemic during the Victorian era. However, it presents Jane's uniqueness and excellence as she overcomes all the hardships and takes Lowood as a bridge to enrich her knowledge and reach her self-independence.

Chapter four presents females' emotional life in the nineteenth century. It shows how the society used to deal with girls' emotions from childhood to the rest of their lives. Then, it includes Bronte's presentation of Jane Eyre as an abnormal girl in the Victorian society who refuses all kinds of paralysis and longs for love, passion, and independence. Likewise, it concentrates on Jane's adulthood in which the writer focuses on Jane's awareness in choosing her husband based on logical and emotional senses. It also presents how Jane's and Rochester's marriage is regarded as an exceptional case in the nineteenth century, especially with the existence of St. John, who is presented as a

sample of the ideal and religious husband at that time. Moreover, it talks about Jane's refusal of St. John's proposal that he offers under the umbrella of religion to obligate Jane to accept this marriage and travel with him. Consequently, the reader realizes that Jane tends to be loved rather than be religious; she is quite sure that religion is a tool used by the patriarchal society to oppress the females at her time.

## CHAPTER ONE

### FEMINIST THEORY

Feminism is one of the most common terms that has been discussed throughout history; its importance lies behind the significant issues that have been raised by feminists to support the oppressed part of the society. Undeniably, women have suffered from several forms of persecution in different cultures, and the main reason behind that is their gender. From the first moment of their lives, females suffer from being neglected by the society that considers femininity as a kind of blemish. In his book, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (2011), Charles E. Bressler outlines Plato's famous declaration: "*thanks god for two blessings: that he had not been born a slave and that he had not been born a woman*". Bressler (2011) also mentions Thomas Aquinas's depiction that women are "*imperfect men . . . an incidental being . . . a batched male*" (p. 145). Thomas Aquinas, who is a famous philosopher and a religious man in Europe in the thirteenth century, argues that women are incomplete and less important than men. In addition, Peter Barry (2002) depicts in his book, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to literary and cultural theory*, Freud's assumption that women suffer from "*penis envy*" (p. 73). Therefore, many influential figures have been prejudiced against women; their statements reflect the society's point of view over time, thereby urging feminists to revolutionize against all the repressive stereotypes of women as inferior, irrational, or passive. This chapter represents the earliest seeds of feminism, studying the variety of feminist movements and branches. It also sheds light on the most discussed subjects that have caught the public attention through time, and the most famous

feminists who asked for women's rights, including the famous feminist, Charlotte Bronte.

Throughout history, females bear the burden of their gender and suffer from the domination of the patriarchal society. Women are considered as inferior who must be controlled by men, and this concept was adopted by Aristotle (as cited in Bressler, 2011): "*the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled*" (p. 145). In other words, men are physically, intellectually, and artistically superior, thus implying that they have stronger minds as well as bodies compared to women. The patriarchal and prejudiced societies always assume that women are weak, emotional, and empty-minded in different cultures; therefore, they restrain them in the stereotype of maids and tools for childbearing which are the major parts of women's role. Kate Millet (1970) argues in her book *Theory of Sexual Politics* that the common image of women is characterized by men to fit their needs which are derived from the "*fear of otherness of woman*" (P. 46). In that sense, the patriarchal ideology is essentially rooted in the Western culture, and this is what urges some women to rebel against the old practices and call for their rights. Simone de Beauvoir is one of the most famous feminist critics; she highlights women's suppression and fights for obtaining their rights. Simone de Beauvoir asserts (as cited in Bressler, 2011) that woman in the patriarchal society "*becomes the Other, an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominated male*" (p. 149). In the light of Beauvoir's standpoint, it is clear that the woman is considered as other and an object, and she must be controlled by the man who is the leader and the decision-maker.

As a matter of fact, women's subordination is one of the previously prevalent beliefs in patriarchal societies; it refers to the superiority of the man over the woman and the inferiority and submission of the latter one. According to Sylvia Walby (1990) in her book *Theorizing Patriarchy*, patriarchy is "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (p. 20). In other words, women's subordination points out that women are weak, powerless, and are unable to be dependent; thus, they always need to be directed by men. These ideas result in women's less self-esteem and lack of self-confidence as they are imposed to be under the control of their fathers, brother, or husbands. In *The Second Sex* (1949/2010), Simone de Beauvoir argues the concept of subordination in the marriage institution. She affirms that the woman usually subordinates to her husband and tolerates all the difficulties, while the husband is the one who is in charge of guiding and protecting her. Thus, the woman has to flourish on the margins, whereas the husband embodies the moral, wise, and instructor part of the relation (p. 523) All in all, women are considered inferior to men as the social standards claim that they are psychologically and physically less efficient.

As a result of the consecutive oppression that women have experienced, many people especially scholars, artists, and writers have focused on the status of women in the patriarchal societies and called for their rights in the educational, political, scientific, and economic fields. Therefore, the fourteenth century witnessed the appearance of the women's movement with the efforts of early feminist people like Christian de Pizan who is known as one of the early writers who supports women's issues. According to Pizan in her book *Le Livre de la Cite des Dame* (as cited in Bressler, 2011), women and men are equal creatures of God (p. 147). Pizan refused any kind of discrimination against

women; her attitude might have ignited the fuel of feminism even though her voice was not really heard in the male-dominated society.

Accordingly, Feminism can be considered as any endeavor to achieve women's emancipation throughout history. Its main concern is to pave the way for women to obtain their rights in all fields of life, such as education, politics, inheritance, business, and any other domains. Besides, feminism aims at revealing the sexual, emotional, and psychological oppression against women in patriarchal societies. Lois Tyson (2006), in his book *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, depicts that the patriarchal ideology marginalizes and objects the female by considering her as a man's object without any concerns about her needs, feelings, or any of her rights as a human being (p. 91). Thus, women's suffering from oppression and inequality provokes some of them to rebel against the old practices of the patriarchal society and call for their rights. In the eighteenth century, that matter was considered a social movement demanding equality between men and women. According to John Scott and Gordon Marshall in their book, *A dictionary of Sociology* (2009), feminism as a social movement started in England in the eighteenth century to call for women's rights. Scott and Marshall define feminism as follows:

A social movement, combining theory with political practice, which seeks to achieve equality between men and women. Its origins in 18th -century England are associated with Mary Wollstonecraft's plea for the rights of women. At the turn to the 20th century, the term referred to suffragettes and other campaigners for votes for women and women's access to education and professions (p. 250).

Subsequently, feminism started to take its place in literature in the 18th century although the term 'feminism' itself was not pretty known at that time. Mary

Wollstonecraft is one of the earliest British feminist writers who called for the liberation of women through her writings which remonstrate the patriarchal stereotyping of women as inferior. In her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft urges on a corrective revolution for verifying female's rights in the world, and she also asserts the importance of educating and respecting women to occupy an essential part of the society (p. 54). More specifically, Wollstonecraft strongly believes in the necessity of supporting women to get equal rights like men, thus giving them a chance to define their identity. In this regard, Peter Barry (2002) states in his book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*:

The 'women's movement' of the 1960s was not, of course, the start of feminism. Rather, it was a renewal of an old tradition of thought and action already possessing its classic books which had diagnosed the problem of women's inequality in society (p. 84).

Thus, Wollstonecraft's efforts are considered as the continuation of the previously discussed women's issues.

Evidentially, it is worth mentioning that Feminism emerges for the sake of finding solutions to women's problems in the world, and aims to abolish the prevailing view of women as dependent and non-significant others. Feminists believe that women can doubtlessly be equal to men; thus, they focused on women's potential strength and mental intellectuality. Since literature is one of the most effective ways to change the public opinions, the feminist literary criticism emerged in the 1960s as an application of feminist strategies on literary texts. Thus, some feminists like Simon de Beauvoir and Virginia Wolf supported feminism in their writings and tried to prove that women have never been non-significant others as it was claimed before. Lois Tyson (2006) defines feminist criticism in his book, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, as a



literary method that reflects women's economic, political, social, and psychological oppression through literary texts (p. 83). Besides, Lisa M. Hogeland defines literary criticism (as cited in Gamble, 2006) as "*a kind of literacy, a way of reading both texts and everyday life from a particular stance*" (p. 219). So, literary criticism is a way of reflecting on the reality of life through written texts, and that is why the variety of the presented ideas leads to the overall knowledge about the issue.

Later on, feminism became more familiar in the 19th century after the establishment of the Seneca Falls Convention in New York. According to Sarah Gamble (2006) in her book *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Post feminism*, "*In 1848, two Quaker anti-slavery activists, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Candy Stanton organized the first Women's Rights convention in the US*" (p. 293). This specific date is very crucial as feminists started to call for their rights officially. Accordingly, Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker indicate in their book *A Readers Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (2005) "*The Women's Suffrage and Women's Rights movements' were the crucial determinants in shaping this phase, with their emphasis on social, political and economic reform*" (p. 117). So, first-wave feminism was established to support women's right to vote and get important positions in political, educational, economic, and social institutions.

It is worth mentioning that many famous feminist writers and activists called for women's rights in the first-wave, like Elizabeth Robins, Dorothy Richardson, Rebecca West, as well as Vera Brittain, Winifred Holtby, Oliver Schreiner, Katherine Mansfield, and Ray Strachey. All those feminists were much known for their contributions to supporting women's rights at that specific time. Further, Selden, Widdowson, and

Brooker (2005) also reveal that the beginnings of the feminist criticism could be considered as a reflection of the first-wave (p. 118). Consequently, writers of the first-wave reflect the reality through their writings as long as feminist literary criticism evolves along with the development of the movement. Thus, they contribute to delivering the message to the society and enlighten the dark paths for women to revolve against the old practices.

In the light of the previous idea, the first-wave feminism witnessed some outstanding feminist writers who contributed to delivering the concepts of the movement and achieving its goals. Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf are very significant figures in feminism. Woolf's publication of *Orlando* (1928), *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and *Three Guineas* (1938), as well as Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* (1949) are considered masterpieces in the world of feminist criticism. It is crystal clear that Virginia Woolf is one of the earliest feminist writers who struggled for revealing the old common image of the woman in the patriarchal society as an 'angle in the house', and the concept of gender in the nineteenth century. In her biographical novel *Orlando* (1928), she criticizes the suppression and inferiority that deprive women of their rights. Hence, the main reason behind the significant place that Virginia Woolf achieves in literature is her creativity along with the importance of the issues she presents. Thus, her novels are studied and argued from different perspectives by those who are interested in literature.

Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker (2005) depict in their book *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* that Virginia Woolf's writings are studied by many feminist critics from multiple concepts (p.118). They add that in her *A*

*Room of One's Own* (1929) Woolf denies any kind of comparison between men and women, and asserts that women are strong because they are so, and there is no need to compare them with men (p. 180). Moreover, Woolf affirms that the woman must be economically independent and get her special area for the sake of writing (p. 7). Woolf condemns all the patriarchal claims of women's duties in the house and emphasizes the importance of supporting women with money and education to be intellectually and economically dependent. In addition, Woolf (1929) adds in her book *A Room of One's Own*: "*Literature is open to everybody*" (p. 83). So, literature is available for everyone, and it is not only related to only men; rather, it can be a tool to reflect women's strength.

Similarly, in her most influential book, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (1949/2010) states "*one not born, but rather becomes, a woman*" (p.199). Obviously, Beauvoir's attitude confirms the feminist believes that femininity is not inherited; it is a construct that has been learned to keep women dependents and inferiors. Thus, femininity means the set of behaviors, appearances, roles, attitudes, etc. which are imposed on the female to be sexually attractive to the male. Most notably, Beauvoir has many works and attitudes which support feminism as a movement and feminist criticism as well. Her name is very famous in the first and second-wave feminism because of the importance of the issues she discusses. Beauvoir believes that women are given fewer opportunities in life; therefore, she focuses on women's rights to learn and work, along with the paradox in the materialistic and physiological treatment between the two genders. In her book, *The Second Sex* (1949/2010), Beauvoir argues that the main reason behind men's aggressive attitudes toward women's freedom is their anxiety about losing their authorities which are related to their potency. She also depicts: "*no one is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or more disdainful, than the man anxious*

about his own virility” (p. 32). According to the important issues that Simone de Beauvoir argues in her book, it is considered a turning point in feminism. In this regard, Maggie Humm asserts that *The Second Sex* (1949) witnessed the end of the first-wave feminism.

In a related context, the 1960s witnessed the beginning of the second-wave feminism with the efforts of Betty Friedan who adopted Beauvoir's argument that the main reason behind women's oppression is the cultural consideration of women as others. Accordingly, Sarah Gamble (2006) argues in her book *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* that feminism's second wave also calls for a full reconfiguration of the concept of femininity for the sake of achieving women's identity and independence (p. 30). Thus, Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) reshapes feminism as it asks for new demands that support women's rights. One of Friedan's most important chapters in her book refers to the stages that feminism went through. In this regard, Friedan (1963) depicts that feminism ended in America in the 1920s with women's right of voting. Then, in the 1930s and 1940s, feminists were calling for human rights and the freedom of all the neglected and oppressed people including women since women's affairs were not really taken into consideration at that time (p. 123). For that reason, Friedan founded NOW (National Organization for Women) in 1966 to continue from the point the first wave had ended. This important step revived feminism by calling for women's liberation and ending gender differences that characterized the second movement. According to Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker (2005) in their book *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*: “‘Second-wave’ feminism and feminist criticism are very much a product of—

*are shaped by and themselves help to shape – the liberationist movements of the mid-to-late 1960s"* (p. 120).

It is worth mentioning that male-dominated language is part of women's discrimination. Dale Spender (1990) argues in her *Man Made Language* that there is a special set of language and thought imposed on women, which are already determined by males as controllers in the patriarchal societies (p. 143). Thus, the man is the controller, and then he is the one who says what is true, wrong, or not important in the discourse. For that reason, some female writers used to hide their identities and write in the names of men. Ann B. Dobie (2011) asserts in her book *The Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* that some female writers like Charlotte Bronte and Mary Ann Evans were compelled to write under men's names to hide their gender identity. For example, Charlotte Bronte wrote in the name of Currer Bell and Evans wrote in the name of George Eliot, and used the accepted forms and styles of male writers in their novels (p. 105).

However, women's oppression on the level of language did not last for a long time because of the efforts of the feminists who fought any types of discrimination over women including language. Michel Foucault (1978) points out in his book *The History of Sexuality* that to survive and get their freedom, women must fight all the old discriminations of men over them (p. 95). Therefore, no one can deny the importance of language in changing the old cultural images of people and affecting their ways of thinking; therefore, using vocal and verbal language appropriately has a very significant role. The contributions of the feminist writers have drawn the reader's attention to important issues through their novels, novellas, poems, and prose. Female writers use

the language to support their cause. For example, Charlotte Bronte has many great works that reflect women's struggle in patriarchal societies and urge them to revolve against all kinds of oppression.

Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker (2005) in their book *A Readers Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* point out the main themes that characterize the second-wave feminism which are domination of the patriarchal ideology and women's less presence in the political field (p. 122). Therefore, Feminist activities and writers' arguments of these issues present feminism in a different shape. Undeniably, Kate Millet is one of the most significant feminist writers in the second-wave feminism; her publication of *Sexual Politics* (1970) supports the second-wave feminism and enhances Betty Friedan's belief. Patricia Ticineto Clough (1994) describes Millett's book in her article *The Hybrid Criticism of Patriarchy: Rereading Kate Millett's Sexual Politics* as "*a theoretical foundation to the newly organized women's liberation movements*" (p. 473). So, Millett's book *Sexual Politics* is a cornerstone in the foundation of the second wave. Besides, Jane Gallop mentions Millett's *Sexual Politics* in her book *Around 1981, Academic Feminist Literary Theory* (1992) stating that *Sexual Politics* is: "*the first book of academic feminist criticism*" (p. 77).

During her life as a feminist, Millet fights against the old beliefs and norms of the patriarchal societies that have been planted in the minds of people through discourse, media, and even literature. She believes that women should impose their special female identity in all the important fields of life against any kind of subordination. In her *Sexual Politics*, Millett (1970) defines the relationship between patriarchy and politics, and considers patriarchy as "*a political institution*" and describes politics as "*a power-*

*structured relationships, arrangements"* (pp. 19, 23). So, she argues that patriarchy is related to politics in a way to control every aspect of life. Commenting on the second-wave feminism, Millett says in her book that the second-wave feminism mostly succeeded in achieving its goals and freeing women from the previously imposed subordination (p. 363).

Geographically, feminism is divided into three parts in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s based on the different countries which contain multiple feminist movements, and then, the demands differed according to the variety of cultures. Charles E. Bressler (2011) reports Showalter's interpretations in his book *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* as the following: "*American feminism . . . was essentially textual . . . British feminism was essentially Marxist . . . and French feminism was essentially psychoanalytic*". For American feminism, Bressler presents Kolodny's declaration of women's right of participation in the literary canon, which is monopolized by men (p.154). Besides, the American feminists aim to free women from all repression, mistreatment, and marginalization in the patriarchal societies. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (as cited in Bressler, 2011), are influential American feminists who highlight the old stereotype of women as either "*the angel in the house*" or "*the madwoman in the attic*" by male writers (p. 154). In addition, Gilbert and Gubar declare that the old stereotypes of females created by men must be discussed, revealed, and overrun to get their own "*literary autonomy*" (p. 155).

On the other hand, the British feminism focused on women's oppression proceeding from the Marxist theory. Thus, feminists wanted to change the social and economic positions of females in societies. The Socialist/ Marxist feminism appeared in

the late 1960s -1970s in Britain to add some significant concepts to the second-wave feminism. As it is obvious from its name, the Marxist feminism reflects the common thoughts of the Marxist theory which indicates the difference between classes on the economic status of women. It proves that patriarchy is not the only reason behind women's suppression and discrimination. Likewise, capitalism plays a big role in that dilemma which Michele Barrett mentions in her book *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (1986), as she says that the Marxist feminism focuses on the role of capitalism in the discrimination of women (p. 9). In addition, Christine Delphy is one of the feminists who criticized the patriarchal system from a Marxist perspective. Delphy analyses the family structure (as cited in Tyson, 2006), as an "*economic unit*" which is divided into lower and upper classes, whereby women present the oppressed lower class who have to work for the benefit of the upper class. Tyson adds Delphy's definition of marriage as "*a labor contract*" that obligates women to work without being paid in the frame of "*housework*" (pp. 97-98).

Similarly, Colette Guillaumin (as cited in Tyson, 2006), argues that the marriage contract obligates all women to work overtime without any vacation and the husband is the only possessor and leader of the whole house (p. 99). Hence, whether she is a wife, a sister, or a daughter, the patriarchal society impels the female to work in the family house twenty-four hours a week without any payment. Judith Lorber (1997) argues in her book *The Variety of Feminisms and Their Contributions to Gender Equality* that if a woman works for her family at home, she has to be supported, and so she is economically dependent on the "*man of the house,*" as her children. If she works outside the home, she is still expected to fulfill her domestic duties, and so she ends up working twice as hard as a man, and she usually has to do a lot with less payment (p. 11). For



that reason, one of the basic demands of all feminists in second-wave feminism is to be financially independent which makes them stronger and more independent.

In a related context, Elaine Showalter is one of the hardworking feminists whose efforts are undeniable in the feminist movement as she fought for women's independence. In his book, *Literary Criticism An Introduction to Theory and Practices*, Bressler (2011) depicts Showalter's standpoint that women writers were eliminated from the "*literary canon*" by those who found it (p. 153). Showalter (1977) highlights the history of female writers in her book *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*, and she mentions the names and works of some neglected female writers, Besides, she defines the term 'gynocritics' and 'gynocriticism'. Peter Barry (2002) describes 'Gynocritics' in his book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* as: "*the study of gynotexts [women's texts]*", while he defines 'gynocriticism' as a wide concept that includes women's writings in terms of history, styles, themes, genres, and many other critical issues (p. 86). All in all, Showalter's has prominent contributions that enhanced women's existence in the field of literature.

Most notably, Virginia Woolf and Simon de Beauvoir are considered as the forerunners of gynocriticism at that time. Elaine Showalter (1977) believes in women's creativity in writing; she argues in her book *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* that the feminist criticism flourished in the 19th century which she calls "*the age of the female novelists*" (P.3). In addition, Showalter presents her gratefulness for the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s as it paves the way for female writers to prove their efficiency in literature (p. 8). According to Guerin,

Labor, Morgan, Reesman, and Willingham (2005) in their book *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, Showalter divided the literary development of feminist criticism into three phases: the feminine phase (1840-1880) when female writers started to emulate the prevailing males' writings; the feminist phase (1880-1920) when women stood up for their rights; and the female phase (1920-present) as women's independence turned into the revealing of the women's texts (p. 225). To sum up, no one can deny the fact that female writers were influenced by male writers before the twentieth century, as the later ones were more allowed to be educated and had their freedom to indulge in the society and learn. However, many female writers proved to the world that they were much more creative than many male writers especially when they got the opportunities to do so.

The French feminism involves feminist and psychoanalytic theory through the application of psychoanalytic methods to the literary texts of female writers. Sarah Gamble (2006) asserts in her book *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* that what distinguishes the French feminism from the American feminism is its reliance on the psychoanalytic theory (p. 34). The Psychoanalytic Feminism is an important approach that appeared initially in France as a result of the French feminists' concern about the psychoanalytic theory. Judith Lorber (1997), in her book *The Variety of Feminisms and Their Contributions to Gender Equality*, states that the Psychoanalytic Feminism is one of the most important approaches of feminism in the 1970s and 1980s (p. 19). In addition, Mitchell emphasizes (as cited in Walby, 1990) the importance of analyzing women's unconsciousness through the psychoanalytic theory to realize their crises (p. 95). Starting from where Freud ended, the French philosopher Jacques Lacan's contributions change the feminists' attitude toward the psychoanalytic theory. Bressler

affirms, in his book *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (2011), that feminists describe Freud as the enemy of women due to his negative beliefs towards women as "*incomplete male*", whereas Lacan is believed to be the one who rescues the psychoanalytic theory from Freud's "misogynistic theory" (p. 155). So, most feminists adopt Lacan's contributions and reject Freud's concepts which they consider as the cornerstones of the patriarchal attitudes against women.

It is worth mentioning that Lacan divides the human psyche into three parts: the imaginary order, the symbolic order, and the real order. Bressler (2011) presents Lacan's declaration of the imaginary order that babies are born genderless. After a few months, they recognize their independent identities away from their mothers. Then, they start the second process of their psychological life '*Symbolic Order*' which is related to language acquisition (p. 134). Sarah Gamble (2006) reports Lacan's point of view in her book *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*, and argues that the Symbolic Order is related to patriarchy as it leads the child to internalize its ideologies through a set of "*binary oppositions*" (P. 34). So, this stage plants the seeds of patriarchy in the human mind through the opposites like male and female which tells males that they are the controllers over the females. Further, it is also related to the father and masculinity, so it is opposite to the imaginary stage in which the child attaches to his mother. Hence, the symbolic order involves the child to ignore the mother as she symbolizes the desires, and attaches to the father who symbolizes the rules. In addition, this stage is related to the use of language that subordinates the female to be obedient to her father's laws unconsciously. The last stage in Lacan's model (as cited in Bressler, 2011), is the real order which consists of "*the physical world, including the material universe everything in it*" (p. 136).

Consequently, the use of the psychoanalytic theory is very familiar in feminist criticism. Ann B. Dobie (2011), in her book, *Theory into practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*, highlights Showalter's description of the French feminists as "primarily psychoanalytic" who basically depend on Lacan's methodologies (p. 106). More specifically, the psychoanalytic feminist criticism depends on the theoretical and practical application of the psychoanalytic theory on the literary texts. Maggie Humm (1994) depicts in her book *Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism* that psychoanalysis and feminist criticism have some conjoint themes and methods like using texts for "representing the 'unsaid' in everyday life" (p. 23). That is, the use of the psychoanalytic theory helps many feminists describe their cause differently. Accordingly, Sarah Gamble (2006) affirms that some theorists like Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva applied Lacan's psychological theories on women's issues to present how language and culture were used to differentiate between man and women (p. 34).

Derrida and Foucault are important French feminist writers who discuss Freud's concepts from a different perspective along with their interpretations of Lacan's discussions regarding language. According to Sylvia Walby (1990) in her book *Theorizing Patriarchy*, each of these two feminist writers has her own analytical method; Derrida focuses on differences, whereas Foucault focuses on discourse (P. 98). Thus, the main difference between them is that Derrida does not give more efforts to power, whereas Foucault has a concern about politics and power. Generally speaking, the concept of men's superiority and women's subordination has been planted in the minds of people in the patriarchal societies just like how mines are usually planted during wars; therefore, this issue requires great efforts to be corrected. Doubtlessly, the use of

psychoanalytic feminist criticism is one of the best solutions as it plays a significant role in understanding and highlighting women's problems. Therefore, feminists' use of the psychoanalytic theory in the feminist criticism displays females' suffering throughout history and achieves great evolution on the feminists' side. Generally speaking, some differences characterized feminism according to what feminists called for in each area, but the most common demand among all feminists is to give both genders equal opportunities and to abolish the old consideration of the woman as inferior, subordinate and other.

The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the appearance of the third-wave feminism in the United States of America. During this time, feminism is shaped in a developed way to demand an overall fulfillment of women's rights away from any kind of oppression or degradation. Sarah Gamble (2006) presents in her book *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* that the third-wave feminism is an actual approach that can change all kinds of inequality that affect women's life. In addition, she says that Rebecca Walker, the daughter of the novelist Alice Walker, is one of the founders of the third-wave feminism (p. 44). It is quite sure that the best way to understand the principles of the third wave is to highlight the previous ones. As it has been mentioned before, the first and second waves called for equality between genders; thus, feminists work on achieving women's liberation and justice in all fields of life. Susan Archer Mann and Douglas J. Huffman (2005) argue in their study that the third wave feminism might be considered as a recent approach that was launched from the second wave to argue about gender relations (p. 56). Consequently, one of the main points that distinguishes the third-wave feminism is its concentration on women's freedom through the acceptance of different races and different sexual orientations.

In a challenging position, many branches grow up from the feminist movement like Queer Theory whose main concern is to promote bisexuality and reject heterosexuality. Ann B. Dobie (2011) in her book *Theory into practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* asserts: "*The term queer theory reflects an evolving alliance between gay men and lesbians, as opposed to the usual male studies and female studies that characterized the earlier gay and lesbian movements*" (p. 109). The Queer Theory has many aspirations like the other movements, but the most important of all is to stop what Dobie names "*homophobia*" and "*heterosexual privilege*". Accordingly, Catherine Mackinnon argues in her essay *Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory* (as cited in Gamble, 2006), that one of the essential elements that refer to men's domination and female's submission is the concept of heterosexuality (p. 220). From that perspective, some feminists believe in women's freedom of choosing their preferred sexual orientation although these ideas are excluded by some other feminists.

With the development of feminism, some new movements have appeared to cover mostly all aspects of life: multi-ethnic feminism, black feminism, and men's feminism. For instance, Judith Lorber (1997) presents in her book *The Variety of Feminisms and Their Contributions to Gender Equality: "multi-ethnic feminism has shown that gender, ethnicity, religion, and, social class are structurally intertwined relationships"* (p. 26). In that sense, equality is demanded in all fields of life, and it is no longer accepted for the upper-class to aggrieve the lower-class for their less religious or social status, or any other reasons. On the other hand, Men's feminism is the application of the feminist theories on men's oppression by other men or even women. It presents that men also suffered from vilification because of their social, political, economic status, or their sexual orientation. Lorber (1997) argues that both men and women might

be oppressed in some societies just like how black people are oppressed in the United States (p. 26). Economically, that happens when men or women from the upper class mistreat male workers from the lower class.

Similarly, black feminism appears as a result of the world's ignorance of black people. Sarah Gamble (2006) draws the attention to the most famous black feminists Mary Church Terrell, Amanda Berry Smith, and Anna Cooper who present the concept of '*double slavery*' (p. 149). Those famous feminists have a great influence on black feminism as they support important issues related to females in patriarchal societies. They discuss how both black and white women are oppressed working slaves, but the black female slaves are much more extorted by their masters; consequently, they are not allowed to defend their bodies or even reject the act of selling their children as slaves. More specifically, black women, especially the American African ones have been suffering for a long time, thereby urging feminists to highlight this dilemma. Most commonly, Gloria Jean Watkins, who is also known as Bell Hooks, is one of the most active feminists through her attitudes against oppression toward black women in patriarchal societies. Her work *Aint I a woman* is very known as it changed the world's perspectives of black women. Hooks (1983) discusses slavery, race, and sex in her book *Aint I a woman* as she says that most American people strongly deny black man's rape of a white woman while they do not draw much attention to the same act when it happens by a white man against a black woman (p. 53). That is, Hooks rejects people's silence toward black women's suffering, and she argues that those women suffer from being always in the second or third class after white men, white women, or even black men.

In a related context, social construction feminism argues that gender is the main reason behind inequality through the differentiation between men and women in the society. Accordingly, Judith Lorber (1997) states, in her book *The Variety of Feminisms and Their Contributions to Gender Equality*, as a result of the common set of gender rules that are imposed in societies, people used to focus on the differences between genders and neglect the similarities (p. 30). Hence, social construction feminists fight for a full replacement of the old practices regarding male's and female's life in the houses and at work to achieve gender equality. Besides, postmodern feminism is a wide approach that also focuses on gender equality in all aspects of life; yet, it highlights binary oppositions that are imposed by the patriarchal societies for the benefits of males. According to Brooks (as cited in Gamble, 2006), post-feminism calls for a variety rather than duality. He also mentions that Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Laura Mulvey, and Judith Butler have a great influence on feminist criticism as they focus on important issues, like "*deconstruction*", "*difference*" and "*identity*" (p. 42).

In conclusion, the importance of women's issues has resulted in a variety of feminist movements. Bressler (2011) affirms in his book *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* that the appearance of different subcategories of feminism is the result of its different ideologies which are also connected to different aspects of literary criticism (p. 157). Hence, although different approaches branch out of feminism, the most common purpose of all feminists is to defend the aggrieved part of the society. The interaction between feminism and literary criticism has been undoubtedly one of the most influential ways of changing the public opinion. Feminist writers strive for achieving women's independence in all fields of life and work on raising people's awareness and changing the old belief related to gender differences.



They fight for delivering a message to all women that the future will always be better when they revolt against all kinds of persecution. Accordingly, Charlotte Bronte is one of the significant writers who sheds light on women's oppression and draws attention to women's abilities through her semi-autobiographical novel *Jane Eyre*. Nowadays, women have attained great achievements in many fields, like art, science, politics, literature, and sport even though no one can deny the fact that some of the patriarchal ideologies against women are still prevailing in many societies. It is worth mentioning that Shirley Chisholm is the first woman who has a political position as a major party for President of USA. She reveals in her book *Unbought and Unbossed* (2010): "*Of my two 'handicaps,' being female put many more obstacles in my path than being black*" (P. 20). However, in some patriarchal societies, people are still attempting to hide the sun in one finger to ignore women's achievements and insist on the common negative belief, claiming that women are weak, talkative, irrational, and are out of the game of politics.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

At the beginning of the 19th century, women suffered from being neglected and trapped in wretched conditions due to the prevailing culture of oppression; they had few opportunities compared to men because of the limited educational and work chances. No one can deny the fact that the patriarchal societies along with the Catholic Church alienated women and forced them to be submitted to men's authority through strict teachings and social norms. Even though women's oppression was not a new matter, it may have accompanied females' lives since the inception of the whole universe. In his famous play *Othello*, William Shakespeare presents his fascination of women's issues through the female characters who present women's status during his time. In one of his most noted scenes in *Othello* (as cited in Bevington & Kastan 2011), William Shakespeare writes: "*Use Desdemona well*" (p. 343). The word "use" has an important connotation; it refers to the fact that women were stereotyped as passive, weak, and inferior tools who must be directed by men. Hence, they were subjected to men's willingness for the sake of being safe. According to Virginia Woolf (as cited in Bressler, 2011), in patriarchal societies: "*men have treated women as inferior*" (p. 148). Woolf's declaration emphasizes women's state in some societies that glorify males and put down females. However, women's issues started to take a great share in literature in the mid-nineteenth century through a few writers who highlighted their oppressed life in an attempt to change the old practices of the society and enhance women's roles. Accordingly, Charlotte Bronte is one of the earliest writers who mentioned women's issues in her writings; Bronte's famous novel, *Jane Eyre*, is considered a turning point

that awakened female's consciousness through the protagonist's courage to confront the society, urging all females of her generation to rebel against all kinds of women's oppression during the Victorian age. In this regard, Zheng Kelu asserts (as cited in Gao, 2013): "*the Victorian Age was men-centered and men-controlled times. Women were discriminated against by men at that time. However, the ahead-of-age female consciousness of Jane Eyre, the main character challenges men's authority*" (p. 927). This chapter aims to explore females' conditions from a feminist standpoint as presented in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* in the nineteenth century. It focuses on the oppressive control of the patriarchal ideologies in the society that employs religion for the male's benefit, and it reflects the protagonist's survival which presents Jane as an idealized image of the free independent woman.

After losing her parents because of typhus, Jane finds herself obligated to live in her uncle's house in which she faces many troubles as she feels that she is not likable by Mrs. Reeds and her children. In Reed's house, Jane lives in a suppressive atmosphere that leads her to isolate herself to be protected. Sally Shuttleworth states in her book *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (1996): "*Jane's strategy of response to oppression is concealment, a retreat to a physiologically suggestive interiority*" (p. 154). Consequently, rather than getting along with the Reed's repressing family, the little Jane prefers to sit by herself reading a preferred book as Charlotte Bronte presents in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

A small breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room, I slipped in there. It contained a bookcase: I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement (p. 9).

In this sense, Lucy Sharon describes Jane's sitting position in her essay *Travel and Space in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre* (2002) as "*a womb-like enclosure*" (p. 110). Thus, Jane's longing for her mother as an orphan and the need to be secured is presented in the way she sits covered by the curtain of the breakfast room.

Furthermore, what distinguishes Jane from any other girls of her generation is her longing to be educated, independent and free. This is what Charlotte Bronte shows in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*I returned to my book—Bewick's History of British Birds*" (p. 10). Jane's choice of reading a book about birds might be a sign that refers to her longing to be free of Reed's house and that society as well which resembles the bird's cage. James Buzard argues in his *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels* (2005): "*Jane flies off in reverie from human society in its entirety*" (p. 209). In this regard, choosing a book that has pictures refers to Jane's rejection of any kind of obedience, as they give free space for her to think free and use her vivid imagination.

It is worth noting that male domination is one of the essential elements in the patriarchal ideologies which assume that women are non-significant others who must be inferior to their male masters. Simone de Beauvoir argues (as cited in Bressler, 2011) that a woman in the patriarchal society "*becomes the Other, an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominant male*" (p. 149). In this respect, Charlotte Bronte highlights male discrimination in her novel through the character of Jane's cousin, John. The fourteen years old boy believes that he has superiority over Jane and all the other female characters at Gateshead house as he is the sole male inheritor to Mr.

Reed. So, John tries to obligate little Jane to call him "*Master Reed*" as mentioned in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (2011, p. 11). John's statement asserts the masculine mentality that he inherited from the patriarchal society in which he and his ancestors have lived.

Gender differences are presented in multiple situations in *Jane Eyre*, whereby the writer shows how females were supposed to be inferior to males. Accordingly, Simone de Beauvoir affirms (as cited in Bressler, 2011): "*Being subordinate to the male, the female discovers that she is secondary or nonexistent player in the major social institutions of her culture*" (p. 149). During the Victorian time, females used to be in an inferior position behind males, and this is what interprets John's marginalization of his sisters calling himself the master of the house. In addition, in patriarchal societies, females do not have the right to be compared with males, and this is what Eliza and Georgiana Reed know as a fixed rule at their home. Females do not even have the right to inherit and this is clear in John's declaration in the presence of his two sisters as Charlotte Bronte portrays it in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years*" (p. 12). Accordingly, John's superiority is caused by his gender on one hand and his financial status on the other hand. Richard J. Dunn comments on Jane's status in his book *Jane Eyre: A Norton Critical Edition* (2001): "*as an economically helpless person she is vulnerable in a highly class-conscious society*" (p. 471). Thus, at Gateshead, Jane realizes gender differences in the Victorian society, and reveals how upper-middle-class people have more privileges than the lower-class. John's superiority over his sisters who share the same social class refers to the priority of gender differences in that society.

It is worth noting that the young boy finds Jane as a good opportunity to prove his masculine power through verbal and physical abuse in addition to body gestures. Sara Lodge argues in her book *Charlotte Brontë Jane Eyre: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (2009) that John represents Jane's first "confrontation with male despotism" (p. 114). This is what Charlotte Brontë affirms through Jane's narration in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continuously. . . Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence (p. 12).

Along these lines, John's aggressive attitude is a reflection of the patriarchal system against Jane who represents the female side, Besides, Mrs. Reed epitomizes the ideology of silence in the society that ignores women's mistreatment by men.

However, the little orphan initially tries to fulfill John's orders as she feels that she is a stranger at Gateshead who should follow the rules of the house. In one of the fiercest confrontations between Jane and her cousin, she tries to be obedient as Charlotte Brontë portrays it in *Jane Eyre* (2011) through Jane's narration: "*Habitually obedient to John, I came up to his chair. He spent some three minutes in thrusting out his tongue at me...*" (p. 12). These words are clear evidence of the young boy's observation of patriarchal ideologies. Moreover, John's oppressive attitudes and physical persecution exacerbate as Charlotte Brontë presents it in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

When I saw him lift and poise the book and stand in act to hurl it, I instinctively started aside with a cry of alarm: not soon enough, however; the volume was flung, it hit me, and I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it. The cut bled, the pain was sharp (p. 12).

This critical moment is considered a turning point in Jane's life as she realizes that she will no longer be submissive to any male for any reason. Targeting her head may be a clue that the boy, who represents the patriarchal society, does not want any thinking mind. On the contrary, he just wants obedient bodies. However, Jane's reaction comes against the boy's expectations as she rebels and insults him as mentioned in Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (2011): “‘Wicked and cruel boy!’ I said. ‘you are like a murderer – you are like a slave-driver – you are like the Roman emperors!’” (p. 13).

In the light of the previous statements, Jane's triple condemnation of her cousin is very significant. The girl's personality does not match with the females of her generation; she doesn't feel inferior even though she initially tries to be silent and obedient as an orphan who does not have any shelter other than Gateshead house. At the time of John's strong attack, Jane could not bear that burden anymore and she burst in front of him to express all her independent feelings and refuse what makes her feel like an inferior slave. In this regard, Mary Wollstonecraft states in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792):

A slavish bondage to parents cramps every faculty of the mind. . . . This strict hand may in some degree account for the weakness of women . . . and thus taught slavishly to submit to their parents, they are prepared for the slavery of marriage (p. 165).

Wollstonecraft refers to one of the dilemmas in the patriarchal ideologies; she argues how these societies teach females to be obedient slaves of their males who are believed to be their masters. In Bronte's novel, Jane's social rank is considered lower than servants at Gateshead. To be accepted as an orphan female in the Victorian era, she is not allowed to think as an independent individual. On the contrary, she is supposed to be a slave of Mr. Reed as a child, and later on, she has to be obedient to her husband as an adult wife.

As a result of Jane's self-defense against her cousin's bully, Mrs. Reed punishes her by locking her in the red room where she incurs the most difficult and oppressive situation as a child at Gateshead. Once Jane knows that her uncle died in this room, she becomes very scared and that makes her suffer from severe trauma as Charlotte Bronte portrays it in *Jane Eyre* (2011) in the following: "*I thought Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might quit its abode—whether in the church vault or in the unknown world of the departed—and rise before me in this chamber*" (p. 18). Along these lines, Jane thinks that her uncle's ghost is still there in the red room and will appear to punish her. Consequently, she shouts hysterically asking for help, but the reality is that nobody cares, neither Mrs. Reed and her children nor the maids who are allowed to contact her. Accordingly, Richard J. Dunn asserts in his book *Jane Eyre: A Norton Critical Edition* (2001) that Jane's illness in the red room represents females' illness as a result of their weakness and emotional needs (p. 472). Thus, Charlotte Bronte's representation of Jane's case is a way to support females through the difficulties that the protagonist faces in the novel.

During the night in the red room, Jane thinks about her suffering at Gateshead house as Charlotte Bronte reflects it in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win any one's favour?*" (p. 16). Like any other child, Jane wants to be accepted, yet for the whole society she is a female, and for Reed's family, she is a stranger who is not allowed to be equal to any of them. Dunn (2001) argues: "*In the Red Room, Jane experiences the bitter isolation of the outsider, the powerlessness of the scapegoat to please, the abjectness of the victim*" (p. 471). That is, Jane's life at Gateshead is interspersed with attempts to paralyze her and to put her in the frame of the



ordinary oppressed female of the nineteenth century. Likewise, Elsie B. Michie asserts in her book *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre: A Case Book* (2006) that Brontë's representation of Jane's harsh childhood is a reflection of the social, economic, and cultural situation in England at the beginnings of the nineteenth century that she herself experienced (p. 131).

After her parents' death, Jane's life turns into a combination of oppression, neglect, and violence. Nobody cares about her in Reed's house except for the housemaid, Bessie who sometimes feels pity for her and helps her as much as she could. As she has been working for a long time in Reed's house, Bessie knows what kind of people they are; therefore, she tells Jane, as presented in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*If you become passionate and rude, Missis will send you away, I am sure*" (p. 15). Bessie's recognition of the situation reflects women's submission during that period. Hence, in patriarchal societies, females have to be obedient; otherwise, nobody feels any pity toward them as in Jane's case.

It is worth mentioning that after sending Jane to the red room, Mrs. Reed prevents the servants to have pity on her for any reason. As long as Bessie and Abbot used to obey their masters at Gateshead house, nobody approaches the red room in order not to lose their job. However, when Jane tells that she sees a ghost, Bessie feels sympathy toward her and decides to break the rules. Richard J. Dunn describes Bessie's attitude in his book *Jane Eyre: A Norton Critical Edition* (2001) as "*the first woman to show Jane affection*" which gives her a ray of hope to remain alive and stops her from going into an absolute depression (p. 472).

For Mrs. Reed, Jane does not fit to be one of her family members and not even a servant as she does not obey her masters; therefore, she finally decides to send her to Lowood charity school. During her conversation with Mr. Brocklehurst, the headmaster at Lowood, Mrs. Reed emphasizes the importance of training Jane to be an obedient female who follows the rules. Consequently, Mr. Brocklehurst pleases Mrs. Reed by giving Jane a book that tells about the death of the girl who tells lies. Then after Mr. Brocklehurst departure, Jane expresses her negative feelings towards Mrs. Reed, as Charlotte Bronte presents it in *Jane Eyre* (2011), telling her:

I am glad you are no relation of mine. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty (p. 38).

Henceforth, Jane is no longer afraid of expressing her feelings at Gateshead; Reed's hatred strengthens her to be able to defend herself especially as she knows that she will no longer live there.

Most notably, Jane's personality does not match the expectations of the Victorian society and that puts her in difficult situations; this female has inner self-independence that refuses the patriarchal practices of people around her. Even though Jane is still a child, she is mature enough to know that she deserves to be respected, accepted, independent, and equal to the males of her generation. Undeniably, this is what aggravates Reed's members who actually represent the status of the patriarchal society in the nineteenth century. According to David G Myers in his book *Psychology* (1995), “*The individual is sensitive for social norms so he does what society expects from him to do otherwise the individual will suffer severely*” (p. 622). From that perspective, Jane's suffering is related to her incompatibility with the society around her. At

Gateshead, she finds herself confronting the patriarchal system that subjects females and deprives them of their rights.

Indisputably, being brave and asking for one's rights is not an easy matter for a young girl in the 19th century when the patriarchal ideologies were controlling the society. In Reed's house, Jane lives in a suppressive atmosphere that tries to control her and kill her curiosity. This appears at the beginning of the novel when Mrs. Reed prevents little Jane from asking any question as Charlotte Bronte presents it in *Jane Eyre* (2011): “*Jane, I don't like cavillers or questioners*” (p. 9). Elsie B. Michie suggests in her book *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre: A Case Book* (2006): “*The injunction to silence is the fundamental threat Jane faces throughout the novel*” (p. 53). However, Jane is not the kind of child who accepts to be silent, ignorant, and submissive. Her strong personality appears in many situations in which she stands alone defending herself and asking for her rights.

Undoubtedly, little Jane approves her ability to confront those who persecute her in many situations, especially when she stands in front of Mrs. Reed expressing her feelings when she was pushed to the red room as Charlotte Bronte presents it in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

I shall remember how you push me back-roughly and violently pushed me back into the red room, and locked me up there-to my dying day. Though I was in pain, though I cried out, have mercy! Have mercy, Aunt Reed! (p. 38).

What might have encouraged Jane to speak is her need to be respected, whereby Robert Bernard Martin asserts in his book *The Accents of Persuasion: Charlotte Brontë's Novels*

(1966): “*Jane naturally becomes as passionately self-willed as the Reeds themselves, in an attempt to win at least respect, if not love, from those who bully her*” (p. 52).

In this stage of her life, Jane has two choices: either to live under the control of Mrs. Reed and her spoiled son in a dominant oppressive patriarchal society at Gateshead, or to go to school to have new experience in life. Jane thinks that Lowood School might be a chance to escape from the miserable life at Gateshead, then she prefers the second choice as Charlotte Bronte portrays in *Jane Eyre* (2011) through Jane’s declaration: “*I should indeed like to go to school*” (p. 26). Yet, since Mrs. Reed is the one who chooses this destination for Jane as a penitentiary, she selects one of the schools that imposes strict rules on females to force them to learn the rules of their patriarchal society as Mr. Brocklehurst describes Lowood in *Jane Eyre* (2011) in the following words: “*plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated, accommodations, hardy and active habits; such is the order of the day in the house and its inhabitants*” (p. 36). Thus, Mr. Brocklehurst knows how to please Mrs. Reeds and she thinks that this is the most appropriate place for the disobedient Jane.

No one can deny the fact that Lowood is fertile soil for planting the seeds of patriarchy in the minds of the girls by Mr. Brocklehurst. Kate Millet asserts in her book *Sexual Politics* (1977) “*through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women’s subordination to men*” (p. 35). Brocklehurst, who pretends to be religious, never stops talking about the fire to get the girls scared of punishment and then they will follow his directions. For example, he cuts the girls' hair saying that curly hair is not Christian. In addition, he offers them little

amounts of stale food that hardly meets the starvation level. Jane describes the situation in Lowood in the following words in Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (2011):

The unhealthy nature of the site; the quantity and quality of the children's food; the brackish, fetid water used in its preparation; the pupils' wretched clothing and accommodations—all these things were discovered, and the discovery produced a result mortifying to Mr. Brocklehurst, but beneficial to the institution (p. 84).

However, after spending three months at Lowood, Jane gets used to the less amount of food she eats every day, the cold water in winters, and the forced hours of memorizing the Church Catechism. One day, Jane's slate slips from her hand accidentally in the presence of Mr. Brocklehurst. Then, he directly puts Jane on a stool and proclaims that she is a liar and he prevents anyone to speak to her for the whole day. This punishment is very harsh for a girl of her age, and though Jane looks calm at this time, a volcano erupts inside her. Charlotte Bronte shows this in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*What my sensations were no language can describe; but just as they all rose, stifling my breath and constricting my throat*" (p. 68). Accordingly, Sylvia Walby classifies violence in her book *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990) as a kind of authority that is imposed on women by the patriarchal system, and she considers it as a real matter that negatively affects women by keeping them trapped in fear (p. 140). As such, little Jane suffers from Mr. Brocklehurst's injustice which makes her fearful and disappointed when she remembers his conversation with Mrs. Reed assuring that he will warn the teachers at Lowood of Jane's abominable character.

At Lowood, Jane lives under very difficult conditions; however, the presence of Helen and Miss Temple relieves Jane's suffering. Accordingly, Richard J. Dunn argues in his book *Jane Eyre: A Norton Critical Edition* (2001): "*The discipline of Lowood and*

*the moral and intellectual force of Helen and Miss Temple combine to give the young Jane a sense of her own worth and of ethical choice" (p. 474). Hence, Miss Temple lightens the flame of independence in the minds of the clever ones like Jane who can differentiate between what is right and what is wrong, and this is what helps Jane adopt the suitable decisions in her life later.*

During her childhood, Catholicism is shaped in Jane's mind mostly through two contradictory sources at Lowood. The first one is Mr. Brocklehurst, the rude principal, who employs religion for his benefit to control the girls oppressively. Karin Jacobson arrests in her book *Cliffs Notes: Jane Eyre* (2000): "*Brocklehurst justifies this extreme lifestyle by referring to Christian doctrines. Like the primitive Christians and tormented martyrs, the girls should revel in their suffering and accept Jesus' consolations" (p. 32). Brocklehurst's insincerity appears to everyone at Lowood when his wife and daughters enter the classroom dressing in very expensive clothes as Charlotte Bronte depicts it in Jane Eyre (2011):*

they were splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs. The two younger of the trio (fine girls of sixteen and seventeen) had grey beaver hats, then in fashion, shaded with ostrich plumes, and from under the brim of this graceful head-dress fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled; the elder lady was enveloped in a costly velvet shawl, trimmed with ermine, and she wore a false front of French curls (p. 66).

The hypocritical religion of Mr. Brocklehurst becomes obvious for everyone in this scene, but no one confronts him as he is the representative of the patriarchal authority at Lowood during the nineteenth century when patriarchal ideologies were mostly dominating.

Along these lines, the other character who represents Catholicism for Jane is her best friend, namely Helen Burns, who believes that Christians should be lovely and good towards others as much as Jesus used to be. However, Helen's philosophies are very different from Jane's as the latter one believes in the principle of an eye for an eye, whereas Helen believes in Jesus' quotation which indicates when anyone slaps her on the right cheek, she should turn to the left one. Helen's internalization of these concepts reflects the role of Catholic principles in victimizing the weakest part of the society. Robert Bernard Martin argues in his book *The Accents of Persuasion: Charlotte Brontë's Novels* (1966) that Catholicism is very involved with "man's position in the world" (p. 54). Undeniably, the patriarchal societies do not hesitate to focus on such principles to weaken females.

Helen's spiritual support appears when Mr. Brocklehurst puts Jane on a stool as Charlotte Bronte presents it in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

in passing, she lifted her eyes. What a strange light inspired them! What an extraordinary sensation that ray sent through me! How the new feeling bore me up! It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit (p. 68).

Before she dies, Helen speaks to Jane to tell her that she is happy as she knows that she is going to heaven. Karin Jacobson comments on Helen's death in her book *Cliffs Notes: Jane Eyre* (2000): "While Helen's resignation allows her to die with dignity, Jane's courage leads her to face life with zest" (p. 36). However, Helen's death affects Jane emotionally, as for the second time death comes to take people whom she feels at ease with.

Whenever she falls into a psychological crisis, Jane finds herself stronger than before. After Helen's death, Jane continues her study at Lowood, and six years later, she becomes a teacher there. Then she decides to try a different experience, moving to work as a governess at Thornfield in a big house that belongs to Mr. Rochester. At this time, Jane is not a little child who lives under the control of the oppressive Reeds; rather, she is an adult who takes care of a little girl. Lauren Owsley points out to Jane's position at Thornfield in her essay Charlotte Brontë's Circumvention of Patriarchy: Gender, Labour and Financial Agency in *Jane Eyre* (2013) as she "*is expected to negotiate a balance between maid-servant and lady of the house as she cares for Rochester's young ward, Adèle*" (p. 59). In Rochester's house, Jane goes through emotional experience as she falls in love with Mr. Rochester; however, their wedding does not complete and she decides to leave Thornfield and returns to her emptiness.

Later on, Jane lives in very harsh conditions until she meets the Rivers family who offers her food and shelter, and she discovers accidentally that they are relatives. St. John is represented as the male figure in Rivers family; he is a religious man who has repressed desires and cold personality. In this direction, Gilbert (as cited in Owsley, 2013) summarizes the difficulties that women suffer from in the patriarchal societies through Jane's "*oppression (at Gateshead), starvation (at Lowood), madness (at Thornfield) and coldness (at Marsh End)*" (p. 56). Moreover, at the moment he proposes to marry her, Jane feels that John's language is very offensive as he forces her to go with him to India using religion as a tool to convince and obligates her as Charlotte Brontë presents it in *Jane Eyre* (2011) in St. John's declaration: "*and do not forget that if you reject it, it is not me you deny, but God*" (p. 398). No one can deny the spirit of patriarchy



in John's declaration; his connection between religion and the proposal puts Jane in a difficult situation as she feels that her independence is endangered.

However, the adult Jane Eyre never gives way to others to determine her destiny as she believes that she no longer subordinates to anyone's willing. Charlotte Bronte asserts that through Jane's declaration: "*I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will*" (p. 248). Consequently, Jane follows her sensation and goes back to Mr. Rochester to marry the person she loves rather than the one who traditionally matches the religious and social requirements. Harold Bloom affirms in his book *Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre: Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations* (2007) that Charlotte Bronte chooses to end the novel in a way that is free from oppression (p. 67), and this could be observed through Jane Eyre's happy ending.

In conclusion, women's life is a series of hardship that is imposed by the society in the frame of religion and common patriarchal norms. In each phase of her life, Jane suffers from different kinds of oppression mostly at Gateshead and Lowood, where the little orphan is subjected to mistreatment, isolation, starvation, and deprivation. However, Jane's awareness takes her out of the safe zone that has been established by patriarchal societies and internalized by women in the nineteenth century. Jane Wyatt argues in her essay *A Patriarchal of One's Own: Jane Eyre and Romantic Love* (1985) that readers of Bronte's novel "found there something not provided by family and culture, an alternative female scenario" (p. 201). Bravely, Bronte presents an image of the woman who resists the authority of John Reed at Gateshead, Mr. Brocklehurst at Lowood, and St. John Rivers Marsh End, and supports herself psychologically,

financially, and socially away from the prevailing stereotype of women during the Victorian age.

## CHAPTER THREE

### WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Learning is a common right that every individual deserves to get; since childhood, the educational process starts to take a big part of necessity in human life with the influence of parents, societies, and educational systems. No one can deny the importance of schools in children's lives as they provide them with planned curriculums that correspond with the social norms and religious virtues. In the nineteenth century, the patriarchal system along with the church was the most dominant party and has imposed their influence on schools to plant the seeds of their beliefs in children's lives especially women. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar highlight female education in their book *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979): "*the repressiveness with which the nineteenth century educated all its young ladies*" (p. 275). Undoubtedly, since childhood, the female starts to realize her role in the society through adults around her. She finds her mother occupied for the whole time by housekeeping and fulfilling male's demands, thereby realizing that she has to be a copy of her mother to be acceptable in the society. When she goes to school, she learns how to be obedient and follows the social norms and religious values. This situation was killing women's ambition in the Victorian era, until the day that some writers like Charlotte Bronte, who witnessed women's oppression at that time, was able to reflect her experience through writing her famous novel, *Jane Eyre*. Accordingly, Marianne Thormahlen (2017) asserts in her article *Celebrating Charlotte Brontë: Transforming Life into Literature in Jane Eyre*: "*Charlotte's personal circumstances — in a wide sense — can enrich readers' appreciation of the novel*" (p. 273). Through her novel, Bronte presents the reality of schools through the protagonist's

life at Lowood Charity School. She joins the school at the age of ten and realizes that it is a patriarchal institution that has been established to teach girls how to be controlled through the fake use of religion under the hypocritical management of the schoolmaster, namely Mr. Brocklehurst. However, the protagonist's awareness, as presented by Bronte, leads her to protect herself from the poisoned belief of Mr. Brocklehurst and uses Lowood as a bridge to reach her independence. This chapter aims to present the conditions of the educational system in the nineteenth century as presented by Charlotte Bronte through Jane Eyre within the framework of feminist criticism. It focuses on the domination of the patriarchal norms over schools which concentrate on religious doctrines for women's suppression. It also argues the spread of the epidemic in schools and the protagonist's self-improvement and excellence in overcoming all the difficulties in that deadly environment.

Jane's distinguished personality is controversial in the nineteenth century; when women learn how to obey and serve the dominating gender in the society, Jane seeks to develop herself by taking advantage of any opportunity that enhances her intellectual development. Thus, her uniqueness puts her in troubles with those who do not make any effort towards women's progress. This appears in the first chapter of the novel when little Jane shows her fondness for reading despite John Reed's degradation of her. Jane's concern of reading differentiates her from other children of her age as she finds herself relieved with books through using her vivid imagination to take her out of the rude reality. Charlotte Bronte presents that situation in *Jane Eyre* (2011) as follows: "*A small breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room, I slipped in there. It contained a bookcase: I soon possessed myself of a volume*" (p. 9).

Jane's self-development results from her passion for learning which contrasts with the patriarchal stereotype of women in the Victorian society. The fixed role model of women characterizes them as weak, inferior, and empty-minded. On the contrary, Jane believes in females' skillfulness and their rights to be educated as much as males do. This is obvious in her narration in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do*" (p. 109). Accordingly, Elsie B. Michie asserts in her book *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre: A Case Book* (2006) that *Jane Eyre* displays the protagonist's excellence in harmonizing the contradiction between "*self-determination and socialization*" (p. 84). Jane's self-development appears at each stage of her life, as she presents progress in her maturity through the chain of events in the novel. Consequently, each time she moves from one place to another, and with each person, she meets during her life, Jane closes a chapter of her educational experience and opens a new one.

As a new stage of Jane's life, there are some reasons behind her transmission to Lowood charity school. Based on Jane's perception, going to school is a chance to escape from her miserable life at Gateshead and start a new life that might provide her with knowledge, experience, and dependence. Micael M. Clarke argues in his article *Brontë's Jane Eyre and the Grimms' Cinderella* (2000) that Jane decides to leave Reed's family and look for a better future away from them (p. 704). In addition, Jane feels that she does not belong to any of the family members as Brontë portrays this in her novel *Jane Eyre* (2011) through Jane's narration: "*I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there: I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage*" (p. 17). On the other hand, Mrs. Reed wants to get rid of the disobedient child and refuses to be part of her family and neither a servant at her house. Hence, she

chooses a charity school for Jane as a result of being a poor orphan who does not have money left after her parents' death.

It is worth mentioning that the financial disparity of the social classes has affected the educational institutions in the nineteenth century. George Orwell asserts in his book *All Art is Propaganda* (2008) that education in England is concerned with social status and "*The most definite dividing-line between the petite-bourgeoisie and the working class is that the former pay for their education*" (p. 73). Accordingly, Mrs. Reed's choice of Lowood charity school, as presented by Bronte, results from her social status as a poor orphan. This is what Jane understands in the first days at Lowood through her conversation with Helen as follows:

“Then why do they call us charity-children?”

“Because fifteen pounds is not enough for board and teaching, and the deficiency is supplied by subscription.”

“Who subscribes?”

“Different benevolent-minded ladies and gentlemen in this neighbourhood and in London” (p. 51).

In a related context, the establishment of charity schools has strongly affected females' lives in the early nineteenth century. The main target of such schools is to tame the young females and enhance the patriarchal stereotype of women as obedient housewives in the society. Accordingly, Meg Gomersall argues in his book *Working-Class Girls in Nineteenth-Century England* (1977) that girls' charity schools aim to teach females the rules and values of Christianity to prepare them to be obedient wives and good mothers (p. 47). Hence, these schools have nothing to do with academic education,

yet they teach females how to be submissive to patriarchal rules and Christian doctrines. In Bronte's novel, patriarchy has been presented as an integral part of Christianity, and they both lead to female oppression. As such, Michie (2006) argues that Jane considers that Christianity tries to victimize the females to keep them saved in the society.

In this respect, schools are considered fertile soil for planting the seeds of patriarchy in females' minds in the nineteenth century. Hence, girls grow up absorbing the social norms that marginalize and obligate them to learn how to fulfill their duties. This is what Jane faces in her life at Lowood charity school through Mr. Brochlehurst's way of addressing the girls in addition to his strict rules. Meg Gomersall presents the purpose of schooling in the nineteenth century in her book *Working-Class Girls in Nineteenth-Century England* (1977) arguing "*the curriculum of girls' charity schools gave a greater priority to the acquisition of domestic skills than to literacy*" (p. 46). As a result, the main object of such institutions is to control the females and put them in the frame of the common concept, namely angels in the house.

Schooling has a great influence on children's upbringing, which might be the main reason behind the patriarchal concentration on educational institutions. In Bronte's novel, Jane's movement to Lowood School is very significant, as her narration of the school's headmaster, teachers, students, and curriculum presents a full image of the overall atmosphere in such institutions. Elaine Showalter describes Lowood in her book *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) as an institution that "*destroy their individuality at the same time that it punishes and starves their sexuality*" (p. 117). Consequently, females are sent to such institutions to face psychological, intellectual, and sexual repression. This is made clear in Jane's

description of her first quarter at Lowood in Jane Eyre (2011) "*My first quarter at Lowood seemed an age; and not the golden age either*" (p. 61).

Bronte's description of the strict rules and harsh living conditions at Lowood is derived from her own experience as she presents it as a prison that lacks the essential elements to be livable. Accordingly, Kathrin Jacobson argues in her book *Cliffs Notes: Jane Eyre* (2000) that Lowood reflects Bronte's Clergy Daughters School (p. 28). Bronte's description of small portions of food, frozen water, cold bedrooms, and multiple tasks is a portrayal of her own life at that school. The bitter reality that all girls know at Lowood is that they are charity children as Bronte displays in the novel through Helen's statement: "*It is partly a charity-school: you and I, and all the rest of us, are charity children*" (p. 51). Consequently, they are obligated to submit to the imposed rules and follow the flock; however, few girls consider Lowood as a step to a better future as Jane does.

In line with Bronte's experience, Jane overcomes the difficult situations, including strict rules, starvation, and epidemic at Lowood charity school. Thus, the spread of the epidemic makes the situation even worse at schools. Jacobson (2000) affirms that Charlotte Bronte herself lived in these deadly conditions at Clergy Daughters School, and she witnessed the death of her two sisters due to the spread of typhus (p. 29). Hence, Bronte's depiction of Helen's death in her novel along with many other girls at Lowood is derived from her own experience. She describes Lowood School in the presence of the epidemic in *Jane Eyre* (2011) as follows:

Disease had thus become an inhabitant of Lowood, and death its frequent visitor; while there was gloom and fear within its walls; while its rooms and passages



steamed with hospital smells, the drug and the pastille striving vainly to overcome the effluvia of mortality (p. 77).

All in all, no one can deny the fact that living in such harsh conditions has badly affected females' life at that time and made the educational process harder than expected. However, few girls could survive in such conditions as Jane whose awareness always leads her to learn from hardship. As a result of Jane's previous experiences that she has witnessed after the death of her parents at Gateshead, she becomes able to overcome the difficulties and take any chance to develop herself.

Undeniably, Jane's artistic sense distinguishes her from any other characters in the novel, and that is what Michie (2006) asserts: "*Her artistry signifies her radical difference not only from those socially beneath her, like Bessie, but also, and especially, from those conventionally placed above her, like Blanche*" (p. 161). This appears in many stages of her life from her early childhood to her adulthood. However, Jane's artistic skills improve during her residence at Lowood thanks to Miss Temple's efforts. As a clever student, Jane never wastes any chance to learn from Miss Temple who is presented as one of the few kind teachers who reinforces Jane's creativity and her sense of independence. In addition, Miss Temple teaches Jane the French language, and she offers her both practical and spiritual support, thereby paving the way for Jane's imagination and helping her endure the harsh conditions at Lowood. This is what Bronte portrays in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

Having invited Helen and me to approach the table, and placed before each of us a cup of tea with one delicious but thin morsel of toast, she got up, unlocked a drawer, and taking from it a parcel wrapped in paper, disclosed presently to our eyes a good-sized seed-cake (p. 73).

In the light of the previous statement, Miss Temple depicts a good image of the sincere and goodhearted teacher who works for the benefit of the girls at Lowood.

However, isolation finds its way to Jane even at school when Mr. Brocklehurst describes her as an alien as presented in Bronte's novel when he says that Jane is "*not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example; if necessary, avoid her company*" (p. 67). So, Mr. Brocklehurst's background about Jane that he has already got from Mrs. Reed leads to his refusal of her personality. However, Jane knows that her life at Lowood is not better than the one at Gateshead, but she also believes that she could get the needed benefit out of that place. Consequently, Jane's awareness leads her to overcome the difficulties at Lowood and concentrate on education and achievement. This is what Bronte presents through Jane's narration:

In a few weeks I was promoted to a higher class; in less than two months I was allowed to commence French and drawing. I learned the first two tenses of the verb *Etre*, and sketched my first cottage. . . I would not now have exchanged Lowood with all its privations, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries (p. 75).

Jane's ignorance of the hardships and deprivations at Lowood opens the doors for her excellence as she knows that education is the gate of independence, and she focuses on achieving her goal. Accordingly, Nancy Pell asserts in her article *Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre* (1977): "*Her comforting fantasies have changed from food to creative cultural achievement*" (p. 403).

Helen Burns is one of the inspirational figures in Jane's life; she influences Jane through her patience and forgiveness in many situations at Lowood. When she first meets Helen, Jane's curiosity pushes her to ask about a book in Helen's hand entitled "

*Resselas*". Hence, the first common point between Jane and Helen is their concern about reading although there are many differences between the principles of the two girls. Then, Helen's answer to some of Jane's wonders about Lowood opens the doors for their friendship. According Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic* (2000), "*Helen is carried off by her own fever for liberty, as if her body, like Jane's mind, were 'a ridge of lighted heath ... devouring' the dank valley in which she has been caged*" (p. 346).

Consequently, Helen's patience at Lowood draws Jane's attraction, and this is what Robert Bernard asserts in his book *The Accent of Persuasion: Charlotte Bronte's Novel* (1966): "*Helen Burns is Jane's teacher in one of the major lessons that the younger girl must learn, that of patience*" (p. 58). After the harsh treatment of the Reeds, Jane's confrontation with Mrs. Reed puts her in anger. Consequently, Jane needs someone to teach her patience and tolerance, which is the role of Helen in the novel. This is made clear in many of her conversations with Jane as Charlotte Bronte presents it in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

I can so clearly distinguish between the criminal and his crime; I can so sincerely forgive the first while I abhor the last: with this creed revenge never worries my heart, degradation never too deeply disgusts me, never injure crushes me too low: I live in calm, looking at the end (p. 59).

Undoubtedly, Jane considers Helen as an idealized picture of patience; however, she has her own ways of understanding the affairs. So, Jane learns patience from Helen, yet she never accepts being mistreated by others. This kind of moderation results from Jane's independent personality as she knows since her childhood that she deserves to be

respected. This is obvious when she tells Helen about what could be considered as one of her fixed rules in life as presented in Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (2011):

If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way: they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse. When we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard; I am sure we should—so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again (p. 58-59)

Having these words declared by a child of ten years old is a reference to intensive awareness and social experience from Jane's side. Since her childhood, Jane has always proved her uniqueness among her generation.

In addition, Helen tries to teach Jane not to judge people by their appearance when she says in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "Then learn from me, not to judge by appearance" (p. 57). As a little child, Jane used to judge people by their appearance, and that appears in many situations in the novel, whereas Jane's little teacher, Helen, advises her to focus on the good side of people. The contradictory personalities of Jane and Helen lead to the different chances they get in their lives. Jacobson (2000) argues: "*While Helen's resignation allows her to die with dignity, Jane's courage leads her to face life with zest*" (p. 36). It is worth noting that the difference between Jane and Helen has also contributed to Jane's self-education as if fate puts Helen in Jane's life for a short time to teach her some important lessons and then it leaves. Michie (2006) asserts "*The second stage of Jane's life ends with Helen dying of consumption, happy in the knowledge that she is going to her Maker*" (p. 84). Consequently, while Helen's surrender leads her to die freely and rests in peace, Jane's rebellion leads her to live with passion and a free mind.

After Helen's death, Jane does not give up, and she continues her voyage to consciousness without a friend, but as an orphan, as she recently used to be. Jane's passion for learning with the existence of Miss Temple leads her to academic excellence at Lowood. Zoe Brennan (2010) insists in her book Bronte's *Jane Eyre: Reader's Guide* that Miss Temple plays a significant role in Jane's early life as she takes the positions of the mother, instructor, and friend (p. 47). So, little Jane finds everything she lost in life with Miss temple who treats her in an unprecedented way. Consequently, Jane's excellence at school allows her to be a teacher for the first time, and she becomes independent and responsible for holding the position of Miss Temple to teach by soul and influences the youngest ones at Lowood as presented by Charlotte Bronte through Jane's narration in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

Fondness for some of my studies, and a desire to excel in all, together with a great delight in pleasing my teachers, especially such as I loved, urged me on: I availed myself fully of the advantages offered me. In time I rose to be the first girl of the first class; then I was invested with the office of teacher; which I discharged with zeal for two years (p. 85).

When Miss Temple marries and leaves Lowood, Jane feels that she can not live there anymore. Thus, Jane's decision to leave Lowood heading to Thornfield has two main dimensions. The first one is the emptiness of her teacher's absence, and the other one is the recurring life at Lowood that obstructs her self-development. What Jane needs during this stage is portrayed in her narration in *Jane Eyre* (2011) "*What do I want? A new place, in a new house, amongst new faces, under new circumstances: I want this because it is of no use wanting anything better*" (p. 87). Then she applies for a job, and she gets the approval to work as a governess at Thornfield. This new transitional period in Jane's life portrays the big difference between Jane, the little girl, and the young

woman, whereby she leaves Lowood as an adult seeking new chances in life. Brennan (2010) asserts "*Her successful plan to advertise as a governess indicates the change between the girl who entered Lowood and the woman who leaves it behind*" (p. 48). Undeniably, working in a different place and facing some other foreign people might offer Jane new experiences in life as Jacobson (2000) argues that Jane's personality tends to emotions, adventures, and learning through experience, so she is not fit with "*the peaceful isolation of Lowood*" (p. 38).

Charlotte Bronte is a well-educated woman who succeeded in presenting her higher levels of consciousness through the main character in her novel, *Jane Eyre*. Bronte's depiction of the educational system that she has witnessed during her time through Jane's experience at Lowood is an attempt to stop females' repression and achieve qualified education for them. Accordingly, Gilbert and Gubar (1979) argue that the unpleasant experience that Bronte's sisters have experienced at the Clergy Daughters School is a reflection of the oppressive educational system during the nineteenth century (p. 275). Through the events of the novel, education has the biggest part of Jane's life. Since her childhood until her adulthood, Jane observes each situation and analyses people's personalities to increase her self-realization. Bronte's assertion on Jane's self-development implies a significant message to the females of her generation to strengthen themselves through education. Brennan (2010) asserts "*Jane's education, in the broadest sense, leads her to realize her place in the world* (p.29). In that sense, Jane's gradual intellectual development after each difficult circumstance she goes through and each person she meets encourages other females to be conscious, dependant, and brave enough to overcome the hard conditions in their lives.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Marriage is a social institution that consists of two partners and grows up through their progeny. This small community needs love to be healthy and stable; however, when any of the two parties loses love and passion, their duties become burdens and the family loses affinity and satisfaction. These main concepts have been known since the beginning of mankind; nevertheless, the different roles of men and women in the society have occupied the public opinion through time. In the nineteenth century, women were marginalized and their daughters have internalized the stereotype of oppression since childhood. Patricia Hollis asserts in her book *Women in Public, 1850-1900 Documents of the Victorian Women's Movement* (1979) the fact that Victorian feminists highlight female's victimization as a daughter and a wife in all aspects of life (p.75). Consequently, feminine revolutions have emerged due to women's suppression in the patriarchal societies that consider females as weak, ignorant, inferior, and others. Females' status of paralysis has urged writers like Charlotte Bronte to adopt women's issues and portray the feminine case through their writings in an attempt to change the old practices in the society and get women's independence. Based on this perspective, Bronte presents the status of women in the Victorian era through her famous novel *Jane Eyre*; she shows how women were oppressed in many fields including love and marriage. Debra Teachman affirms in her book *Understanding Jane Eyre* (1955) the fact that women at Bronte's time were "considered to be subordinate to men according to the laws of both God and Nature." (p. 14). Bronte's portrayal of the protagonist's adulthood reflects the different emotions that Jane expresses through her narration in the

novel. Bronte's detailed presentation of each event allows readers of *Jane Eyre* to live with Jane, express her feelings, revolve as she does, and long for her happiness and independence. Since love takes a big part of Jane's concerns, her awareness and insistence lead her to the happy ending of her special love story which is characterized by the pleasant marriage. Thus, this chapter aims to present women's emotional life in the nineteenth century as depicted by Charlotte Bronte through *Jane Eyre* in the context of the feminist criticism. It presents the emotional oppression that females have experienced. It also concentrates on Jane's adulthood after leaving school and working in the place where she meets her love. Besides, it implies Jane's awareness in choosing her spouse away from the imposed specifications of the ideal husband in the Victorian era.

Love is one of the main genres in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Jane's emotional personality appears in the novel through her reactions, attitudes, and verbal conversations. Since her childhood, Jane loses her parents and lives the emptiness of their absence. Then, she finds herself oppressed at her uncle's house through the mistreatment of Mrs. Reed and her son. That is, Jane feels that they do not love or accept her; consequently, she does not love them as much as children love their families. This is what Bronte reflects through Jane's narration in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there: I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage. If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them*" (p. 17). Doubtlessly, the mistreatment of the Reeds urges Jane to rebel in an attempt to support herself. In this sense, Sally Shuttleworth asserts in her article *Jane Eyre and the Rebellious Child* (2014): "*In her anger and passion, Jane is far removed from the conventional model of the Victorian child*". Thus, Bronte presents an



exceptional childish figure though Jane, whose sense of rebellion and passion does not match the traditional Victorian child.

In addition to the mistreatment, Jane is exposed to verbal persecution at Gateshead, thereby making her feel unloved, and this negatively affects her self-confidence in some stages of her life. As a child, Jane hopes to feel that she is likable. Yet, how she would feel so after hearing Abbot describing her as a toad as mentioned in *Jane Eyre* (2011) "*if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that*" (p. 27). After listening to such a conversation between Bessie and Abbot, Jane insists on leaving Gateshead. She assures that she has to look for her emotional, educational and intellectual satisfaction away from the place where she feels that she is not loved. Robert Bernard Martin argues in his book *The Accent of Persuasion* (1966) that Bronte's presentation of Jane's life at Gateshead indicates a magnificent balance between drawing the reader's attention to Jane's loneliness as an orphan and her maturity to take advantage of any chance for herself (p. 55).

Jane's movement to Lowood Charity School is a new start of her life in which she meets new people with whom she hopes to be comfortable and loved. However, when she moves to Lowood Charity School, the severe treatment of Mr. Brocklehurst makes her feel that he is similar to Reed's family and her feelings towards him turn to be the same as Bronte portrays it in *Jane Eyre* (2011) through Jane's declaration: "*I disliked Mr. Brocklehurst; and I was not alone in the feeling*" (p. 123). During her life at Lowood, Jane experiences emotional and sexual oppression through the strict rules of Mr. Brocklehurst which are derived from the patriarchal norms that have controlled the

society in the nineteenth century. When she enters Lowood, Jane finds herself obligated to follow the fixed patriarchal prevailing norms that strip females of their identity. Accordingly, Sylvia Walby asserts in her book *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990): “*In this system women’s labour power, women’s reproduction, women’s sexuality, women’s mobility and property and other economic resources – are under patriarchal control*” (p. 20). Jane observes and understands these concepts at Lowood; however, she internally rebels against them and plans for her future independence.

Catholicism is presented in *Jane Eyre* as another factor for sexual oppression. Bronte shows Brocklehurst as a hypocritically devout man who relies on religion to repress the girls at Lowood. According to Simone De Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (2011), “*The woman is less often asked to accept her inferiority in the name of God than to believe, thanks to, that she is equal to the male lord*” (p. 707). So, in patriarchal societies, religion is used as a tool for females’ oppression and males’ discrimination. Thus, De Beauvoir asserts that religion “*becomes less of an instrument of constraint than of mystification*” (2011, p. 707). This is very clear in Bronte's novel as Jane's life at Lowood and her observations present Lowood Schools and the church as cold places provided for paralyzing and starving the females. That is what Bronte portrays in *Jane Eyre* (2011) as follows:

Sundays were dreary days in that wintry season. We had to walk two miles to Brocklebridge Church, where our patron officiated. We set out cold, we arrived at church colder: during the morning service we became almost paralysed. It was too far to return to dinner, and an allowance of cold meat and bread, in the same penurious proportion observed in our ordinary meals, was served round between the services (p. 61).

Based on the previous perspective, Martin (1966) argues that the coldness of Brocklebrige Church along with the coldness of Brocklehurst is the main reasons behind females' annoyance in *Jane Eyre* (p. 57).

It is worth noting that Helen's asceticism results from the sexual oppression at Lowood. This girl renounces love of people for the sake of the divine love and heaven, as in Helen's attitude toward love in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*I believe God is good; I can resign my immortal part to Him without any misgiving. God is my father; God is my friend: I love Him; I believe He loves me*" (p. 82). In this context, Helen's statement does not have any connotation to human love; on the contrary, Jane believes that love is an essential element in life. In one of her conversations with her close friend Helen, Jane says "if others don't love me, I would rather die than live—I cannot bear to be solitary and hated" (p. 70). Karin Jacobson comments on Jane's declaration in her book *Cliffs Notes: Jane Eyre* (2000) as "*The promise of love and glory in a distant heaven does not appease Jane; she also requires human warmth and affections during her time on earth*" (p. 34). Jane looks for love and tenderness in her life; she tries to fulfill these needs by good people around her. This emotional status might result in Jane's childhood as an orphan whose emotional love stops after the death of her parents and neither Gateshead nor Lowood fills this gap.

Based on the previous idea, Jane believes that she deserves to love and to be loved. In addition, to get other's concerns, she would make great efforts as Bronte presents through Jane's declaration in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

Look here; to gain some real affection from you, or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken,

or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest (p. 70).

On the contrary, Helen's response is always related to spirituality which does not match Jane's contentment to some extent. This contradiction between Jane and Helen portrays the difference between Jane's revolutionary principles and the inferiority of the other girls of her generation. That is what Bronte presents with the intention of changing the old beliefs that have been planted in the minds of females of her generation at that time.

In the nineteenth century, Catholicism was the most prevailing religion in England, and it asserted the patriarchal norms which claim that women have to be totally submissive to males. De Beauvoir (2011) argues that in the Catholic doctrines, the religious woman who seeks God's blessing has to "*devote herself to her children, her husband, her home, her realm, to country, and to church*" (p. 274). This is what Bronte reflects in her novel through the female characters who present inferiority in the presence of male characters. Hence, John Reeds' superiority at Gateshead, Brocklehurst's influence at Lowood School, Rochester's sovereignty at Thornfield, and John River's mastery at Moor house reflect Bronte's portrayal of male discrimination during the Victorian era.

In a related context, the reality of marriage was based on female inferiority and male discrimination in the nineteenth century. Accordingly, Sharon Marcus argues in her book *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (2007) that marriage in the Victorian age was based on husbands' superiority; Marcus asserts that the spouse was considered as one person who is the husband, and he was allowed to take the property of his wife (p. 204). Besides, Marcus (2007) adds that marriage was "predicated on fidelity and thus advertised not only the sexuality of

spouses but also their acceptance of restraints and limits” (P. 204). These were the most prevailing concepts regarding marriage in the Victorian Age, so women were victimized and stripped of their rights.

However, in Bronte’s novel, Jane's main concentration is on her self-improvement and self-satisfaction. This little girl grows up finding herself unable to accept women's inferiority. Thus, she tries to obtain her freedom away from the sickness of the patriarchal society. Bronte presents Jane’s self-awareness in different aspects of life. Hence, Jane gets her educational development through her fondness of reading and learning, whereas she gets her psychological development through the experience and people around her. After spending ten years as a student and a teacher, Jane feels that she needs to fly out of the cage of Lowood to meet different people and to start a new life as Bronte presents in her *Jane Eyre* (2011): “a new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play” (p. 94). Therefore, she leaves Lowood when she feels that she needs to be in “A new place, in a new house, amongst new faces, under new circumstances” (Bronte, 2011, p. 455). Jane seeks new experiences that enhance her self-development. In addition, her work leads to her financial independence as she becomes able to pay for her living. Ronald Thomas emphasizes (as cited in Michie, 2006) that *Jane Eyre* draws a connection between “psychological independence and financial success” (p. 17). At this stage of her life, Jane is no longer a child who needs adults’ help and tender. Rather, she is a young woman who takes the position of a governess and is concerned with her future.

It is worth noting that this part is very essential in Jane's emotional life as Thornfield is the place where she meets her first love, Mr. Rochester, who later becomes

her husband. Both Jane and Rochester have emotional personalities, but they have contradictions in their visions in life. Jane believes in the power of love, and that appears through her strong love of Rochester. On the other hand, she believes in the importance of females' independence as it appears in her early life. That is what Marea Mitchell and Dianne Osland assert in their book *Representing Women and Female Desire from Arcadia to Jane Eyre* (2005): "*A central paradox of Jane Eyre is its enlistment in two antithetical traditions, as progenitor of the modern romance and ringleader of the feminist revolt against its stifling conventions*" (p. 175). Consequently, Jane, who struggles to prove herself amongst the patriarchal norms that give privileges to males, falls in love with a man and experiences one of the greatest love stories despite all the difficulties and the different social classes. This is clear when she tells Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

Do you think I am an automaton? a machine without feelings?... Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong-I have as much soul as you, -and full as much heart...I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; -it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, -as we are (p. 247).

Starting from the first time they meet, Jane's and Rochester's love story seems to be like a fairy tale that starts by an accident that has been prepared by destiny to give a dramatic beginning for an unprecedented love story. When Rochester talks about the first time he sees Jane, he says: "*When you came on me in Hay Lane last night, I thought unaccountably of fairy tales, and had half a mind to demand whether you had bewitched my horse: I am not sure yet*" (Bronte, 2011, p. 121). Undoubtedly, Rochester's wonders match Jane's way of thinking because Jane, since childhood, used to be fond of fairy

tales and imagines herself as a character in such stories. Accordingly, Elsie B. Michie asserts in her book *Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre: A Case Book* (2006): “For Jane Eyre’s fairy-tale shapings, its archetypal themes of search for love and escape from danger” (p. 127). Most commonly, fairy tales end happily with the marriage of the beloved ones, and the elimination of the bad ones; this is what Jane could have thought of and what happens at the end of the novel.

It is worth noting that Charlotte Bronte presents Jane and Rochester as unique characters in the nineteenth century. Jane’s way of thinking reflects her awareness at any stage of her life. Besides, Rochester’s love of Jane reflects his longing for the independent woman, focusing on Jane’s mind, soul and heart at the time when men were concentrating on the visual appearance and social classes. Bronte presents this reality in *Jane Eyre* (2011) through the conversation between Rochester and Jane as he says:

To women who please me only by their faces, I am the very devil when I find out they have neither souls nor hearts—when they open to me a perspective of flatness, triviality, and, perhaps, imbecility, coarseness, and ill-temper; but to the clear eye and eloquent tongue, to the soul made of fire, and the character that bends but does not break...I am every tender and true (p. 255).

Likewise, the existence of Blanche Ingram, the beautiful wealthy lady who matches the Victorians’ expectations as an ideal wife for a rich man like Rochester, asserts on Rochester’s uniqueness in choosing a woman that he loves by heart and mind.

Going back to the nineteenth century, it is quite clear that male’s superiority was most prevalent in the Victorian society as women were considered as dependent followers to their male masters. Teachman (1955) highlights women’s oppression at that specific time; she argues that women were not allowed to be financially dependent or take any independent position in their lives. Besides, they were the properties of their

husbands, who were free to treat them badly (p. 14). Bronte portrays this reality in her novel through the male characters' superiority. Even when she arrives at Thornfield, Jane realizes Rochester's superiority over all the inhabitants. Undoubtedly, Rochester has grown up in a patriarchal society for an upper-class family, and this justifies why he used to give orders and to be followed.

In one of their earlier conversations, Rochester tries to convince Jane to follow his orders claiming that his age and experiences in life allow him to be superior:

Then, in the first place, do you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, abrupt, perhaps exacting, sometimes, on the grounds I stated, namely, that I am old enough to be your father, and that I have battled through a varied experience with many men of many nations, and roamed over half the globe, while you have lived quietly with one set of people in one house? (Bronte, 2011, p. 133).

However, Jane disagrees with Rochester as she believes that being older does not make him superior; she knows that the most important aspect is how much a person learns from the past. Then Rochester replies: "*Leaving superiority out of the question, then, you must still agree to receive my orders now and then, without being piqued or hurt by the tone of command. Will you?*" (Bronte, 2011, p. 133). All in all, Rochester's statement asserts that Victorian men never give up being the ones who give orders, and this is part of the old belief as it has been planted in their minds that women are ignorant and they take orders from their male masters. Then, the reader of Jane Eyre realizes at the beginning that Rochester has also absorbed the patriarchal norms; however, there are many other signs that show that he refuses them at the same time. Charles Petrie argues about the gender case in the nineteenth century depicting that masculinity was thought to be proved by the ignorance and weakness, and inferiority of the female (p. 184).



Despite her strong love of Rochester, Jane never accepts being a weak follower of him. This appears in some of her attitudes like the moment when she refuses Rochester's statement in *Jane Eyre* (2011): "*Soon to be Jane Rochester*" (p. 253). Jane disagrees with Rochester's statement as she believes that she has an independent personality that refuses to be under someone's superiority. That is one of the various situations in which Jane defends her independence as she refuses to be a follower and sacrifices her identity even when she falls in love. Accordingly, Jane Wyatt argues in *her A Patriarchal of One's Own: Jane Eyre and Romance* (1985) that Bronte "*presents a passionate assertion on autonomy and at the same time a passionate commitment to romantic love*" (p. 213). Hence, *Jane Eyre* presents the figure of the woman who has a balanced personality. She believes in the importance of both love and independence, and refuses any kind of coldness or inferiority at the same time.

However, no one can deny that both Jane and Rochester have a great influence on each other in a harmony that leads to their compatibility of souls. In one of her statements, Jane says: "*He liked to open to a mind unacquainted with the world, glimpsed of its scenes and ways*" (Bronte, 2011, p. 145). Undoubtedly, the long conversations between Jane and Rochester are very significant as they develop their relationship; these conversations pave the way for the lovers to know each other, and they seem to be the bridge that links their minds and hearts. Accordingly, Jayashree Kamblé, Eric Murphy Selinger, and Hsu-Ming Teo highlight Jane's and Rochester's relationship in her book *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Romance Fiction* (2021), asserting that their love is "*fostered by their deep understanding of each other, their intellectual compatibility, and their great esteem for each other*" (p. 34).

When their relationship strengthens and Jane accepts Rochester's marriage proposal, their marriage cancels with the emergence of Rochester's previous wife, Bertha. Bertha's existence in the novel has an important role as she presents the effects of patriarchal norms on women. Accordingly, Wyatt (1985) argues that Bertha reflects women's suffering under the control of the patriarchal society whose repression appears in the form of fire that burns her (p. 208). Hence, Bertha is a victim of the traditional marriage that happened due to Rochester's father, who chose her to be his daughter-in-law as she is from an upper-class family. This is Brontë's message to the women in the Victorian society; Brontë shows her female audience the consequences of submission to the traditional marriage without any concerns about love and harmony between the spouses.

It is worth noting that Bertha was locked in the attic due to her mental disorder and her irrational behaviors. When Mr. Rochester meets Jane, he sees the opposite side of his previous wife, namely love of the maturity, calmness, and independence of Jane. This appears in *Jane Eyre* through Rochester's declaration:

That is MY WIFE,' said he. 'Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know—such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And THIS is what I wished to have'... 'this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon, I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder—this face with that mask—this form with that bulk; then judge me (Brontë, 2011, p. 561).

Rochester's comparison reveals his suffering from Bertha who is no longer adequate to be a partner. Doubtlessly, Brontë's presentation of Rochester's and Bertha's marriage has a significant connotation as it highlights the consequences of the traditional marriage. Rochester has already gone through such a marriage experience, thereby

urging him to marry Jane with whom he feels love and harmony. When he talks about his previous relationship with Bertha, Rochester mentions in *Jane Eyre* (2011): “I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her” (p. 298). In that sense, Rochester’s statement assures that his marriage to Bertha loses the fundamental elements like love, harmony, and understanding. Accordingly, Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar argue in their book *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979) that Rochester “had married Bertha Mason for status, for sex, for money, for everything but love and equality” (p. 356) the act that he regrets later.

However, Jane leaves Thornfield when she feels that she is cheated by Rochester and decides to mend her feelings away from him. After that, Jane goes through hardship until she finds herself at Moor House enjoying the daily life at the beginning and refusing St. John’s influence at the end. Unlike Rochester, St. John is presented as a religious, cold, and very calm man. When he asks Jane to be his wife, he uses religion and duty as an excuse. This is clear in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

God and nature intended you for a missionary’s wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary’s wife you must—shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign’s service (p. 392).

St. John’s proposal looks like a work contract that obligates Jane to put love out of the question and travel with him to be on a full-time duty under the umbrella of religion. Actually, St. John could be an ideal husband for any woman in the nineteenth century but not for Jane whose independent entity refuses this kind of marriage which is built on duties and inferiority. Consequently, St. John’s promised life does not fit Jane’s expectations as she seeks love and independence.

In the light of the previous idea, Teachman (1955) highlights the difference between Rochester's and St. John's proposal; she asserts that Rochester tries to convince Jane to marry him based on "*the deep passions of the heart*". In contrast, St. John tells her about the "*duty, honor, and gratitude*" of being his wife (p. 14). When he asks Jane for marriage, St. John River does not focus on love and passion, but he uses religion as a way to convince her to marry and travel with him. John's way of presenting his offer is inconvenient for Jane as she feels that he threatens her own independence. Hence, at this specific moment, St. John chooses Mr. Brocklehurst's way of obligating the girls to follow his orders in the name of religion. In addition, John's coldness does not allow Jane to have any emotions towards him. On the contrary, Rochester's enthusiasm for love is what she prefers in marriage.

Consequently, the relationship between Jane and St. John could not end with marriage although he strongly longs for that as he considers Jane as a good wife for him. It is worth noting that there is a big difference between Jane's and John's personalities; she values love and family, whereas he values logic and religion. Charlotte Bronte presents John's image in Jane's imagination in the following sentences in *Jane Eyre* (2011):

As I looked at his lofty forehead, still and pale as a white stone—at his fine lineaments fixed in study—I comprehended all at once that he would hardly make a good husband: that it would be a trying thing to be his wife (p. 383).

Consequently, Jane is quite sure that her revolutionary personality can never fit St. John's coldness, and this is one of the major points that leads her to reject his proposal.

Regarding Jane's financial status, it is worth noting that the amount of money that Jane gets lately from inheritance allows her to be financially independent. However,

it seems that money is not a priority in Jane's life; it is a tool that allows her to be free and more independent. Hence, when Jane loves Rochester, she does not care about his position as a wealthy gentleman from an upper-class family. Instead of accepting Rochester's jewels, she asks him to concentrate on more significant issues as Bronte portrays it in *Jane Eyre* (2011) through the conversation between Jane and Rochester:

I will myself put the diamond chain round your neck, and the circlet on your forehead, —which it will become: for nature, at least, has stamped her patent of nobility on this brow, Jane; and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings (p. 253)

Jane's exceptional consciousness arouses at this tempting offer when she asks him to concentrate on more significant issues stating: "*No, no, sir! think of other subjects, and speak of other things, and in another strain*" (p. 253). After getting her financial dependence, Jane donates a good amount of money and decides to go back to her lover as a strong woman who does not need anything except love.

Consequently, Jane's return to Thornfield is the result of her own will; she comes back to Rochester when she hears an inner voice telling her that he needs her. This is what Bronte portrays in *Jane Eyre* (2011) as follows:

I had heard it—where, or whence, for ever impossible to know! And it was the voice of a human being—a known, loved, well-remembered voice—that of Edward Fairfax Rochester; and it spoke in pain and woe, wildly, eerily, urgently (p. 408).

When she meets her lover again, Jane realizes that he needs support after the fire that burned Thornfield, killed Bertha, and affected Rochester's eye. It is worth noting that Bertha's death has a significant indication as it refers to the death of the patriarchal influence in Jane's life. Accordingly, HUI Jingrui asserts in her essay *Analysis of the*

Function of Bertha in Jane Eyre: “In patriarchal society, under pressure from men, women are spiritually split-off. In order to win equality with men, women have to have their irrationality locked into the attic” (p. 86).

After Bertha’s death, Rochester becomes free of her, and the lovers have the opportunity to start a new life. However, at this time, Jane is not a governess who works for earning her living; she is “*an independent woman now*” (Bronte, 2011, p. 423) who is eager to build her family house hand in hand with her husband. Wyatt (1985) asserts that Rochester’s and Jane’s marriage is: “*As an alternative to the hierarchy of a patriarchal household. . . husband and wife would be equally powerful and autonomous, equally masters of their own houses*” (p. 210). Undoubtedly, this kind of equality between spouses is unfamiliar in the nineteenth century within the society that considers males as householders and females as inferiors. As a result, Bronte breaks the traditional norms and presents a new kind of marriage that gives women their freedom, respect, love, and independence.

The last chapter of *Jane Eyre* starts with the most awaited moments when Jane says: “*Reader! I married him*” (p. 453). Jane’s words imply love to present the happy ending that she has dreamed of. Undoubtedly, Bronte’s choice of such a happy ending is a clear message to the females of her generation; she wants the readers to know the consequences of being conscious, strong, and independent in life. After two years, Rochester becomes able to see in one eye, and the spouses continue their life happily. This appears through Jane’s description of her marriage in *Jane Eyre* (2011) as follows:

I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine. No

woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (p. 454).

As a result, the spouses' happiness after marriage grows with the time passing, their passion increases, and they live in a kind of harmony that appears through Bronte's description in the novel as if Jane and Rochester are the happiest spouses in the whole world.

Bronte's *Jane Eyre* presents a new form of love story that has never been known in the nineteenth century due to the domination of the patriarchal control over the society. In this regard, Louis G. asserts in her article *Comments on Jane Eyre from the Perspective of Feminism* (2015): "The story of Jane and her love story with Rochester open a completely new world for the author and others who fight for women's rights" (p. 37). In this sense, Bronte presents the different feelings and difficulties that Jane experiences before and after meeting Rochester. Jane's conscience leads her to go back to her lover after achieving her full independence, then the reader realizes that the relationship between the spouse is based on love, respect, and equality. Besides, Jane's awareness allows her to reach a happy ending despite all the difficulties that she goes through from the moment she becomes an orphan till the time she meets Rochester again. The reader of *Jane Eyre* realizes that Jane's consciousness and revolutionary personality are the main reasons behind her victory at the end. Thus, Jane's refusal of the negative practices of the patriarchal society against women, which are supported by the church, leads to her special happy life that most of the females have lost during the Victorian Era.

## CONCLUSION

No one can deny that the consequence of the feminist movements, thanks to the feminists' efforts, whereby the societies' point of view toward females has been changed. When Charlotte Bronte wrote *Jane Eyre*, she was experiencing the hardness of being a female in the nineteenth century. In her famous novel *Shirley* (2015), Charlotte Bronte reflects her own beliefs regarding women's rights as she writes: "*I believe single women should have more to do-better chances of interesting and profitable occupation than they possess now*" (Bronte, p. 421). Consequently, Bronte reflects the situation in the best way through her writings in a way that makes her an inspiring person for the girls of her generation.

Nowadays, women in most of the world have got their independence away from the suppressive practices of the patriarchal societies and the old religious teachings. Women become able to study, vote, inherit, work and keep their salaries for themselves. Actually, all the achievements on the level of women's rights would have never been fulfilled without those feminists who were brave enough to fight injustice.

Feminism has started in a moderated way as a result of women's suffering in the oppressing countries. Accordingly, Bressler (2011) highlights the purpose of feminist movements in his book; he says that feminism appeared "*to rescue women from being considered the Other*" (p. 154). After years of hard work and strong demand, feminism has reached the point in which most of the women's rights were achieved, and they became equal to males. However, in some eras in the world, feminism has deviated from the right path as it started to marginalize males' roles in societies. Consequently, males'



movements have also appeared to ask for males' rights. Anyway, feminism, as it was in its beginnings, should preserve women's rights without any prejudice to one of the two genders.

All in all, readers of *Jane Eyre* realize that superiority is the main feature that characterizes all the male characters in the novel which portrays the general situation in the Victorian era. However, Jane's awareness and her success in overcoming all the difficulties is a new different ending for the life of a special rebellious girl who refuses to be one of the victims of the society and religion. More specifically, Jane does not only represent one character; rather, she represents the evolutions sense in many females in the Victorian era who were living the monotonous life of oppression.

What differentiates her from the women of her generation is her awareness and courage in confronting the patriarchal society at a time when women were living a hopeless life under the control of their males. Jane Wyatt argues in her essay *A Patriarchal of One's Own: Jane Eyre and Romantic Love* (1985) that Bronte's novel portrays "an alternative female scenario" (p. 201). As a result, Bronte's presentation of Jane's character is an inspiration to the females of her generation as she wanted to deliver a message for rebelling against oppression to change their fate.

In addition, Bronte's presentation of Jane's suffering since childhood indicates females' suffering at each stage of their lives. More specifically, females were living in a paralytic circle of life in the nineteenth century. It starts since their birth of such a gender and continuous with them until they die. On the contrary, Bronte's presentation of the male characters like John Reed, Mr. Rochester, Mr. Brocklehurst, etc. portrays male discrimination which also starts from the early years of their lives as they absorb

the patriarchal norms which allow them to be superior just because of their gender. In both cases, the patriarchal society is in charge of reinforcing the concepts of superiority and inferiority in the different genders in a way that biases towards males.

From a feminist perspective, chapter three focuses on Bronte's belief in women's right to be educated. Actually, this concept is derived from Bronte's own life as she has grown up in the nineteenth century when females were not able to take equal chances in most fields of life including education. Her portrayal of Jane's insistence on learning is her message to all girls of her time to change the old practices of the Victorian society. Besides, the real difficulties that Jane faces in her educational life portray the real hardship that women have suffered from at that time.

The difference between curriculums in females' and males' schools under the influence of the patriarchal norms and religious doctrines, and the spread of the epidemic have all oppressed the females and obstructed the educational process. Therefore, Bronte's presentation of Jane's revolutionary personality that fights for self-development is a direct message to the female readers especially as Bronte herself has experienced such a situation during her earlier educational life. That is, she wanted to encourage them to break the ice of the patriarchal prevailing oppression and determine their own destiny.

When Jane left Gateshead, she expected to have a better life in her next destination, Lowood Charity School. On the contrary, she realized that Lowood is an extension of the hardship that she faced in Gateshead but in a religious framework. The coldness of the early mornings at Lowood in addition to the coldness at the church put her in an uncomfortable zone that leads to her aversion to the whole atmosphere

including the fake religious doctrines that reinforce the patriarchal norms. Thus, Jane's reaction is expected from a conscious girl who lived in such a situation.

Undoubtedly, Bronte's *Jane Eyre* reflects the role of society and religion in victimizing the females and repressing them in many aspects, including their emotional feelings. Jane's emotional personality, which appears since childhood, is one of the characteristics that distinguishes her from any other girls at that specific time. Females have capitulated to the oppressing environment that limits them in the stereotype of the obedient daughter and housewife. In the Victorian era, there were beauty and ugliness of standards for the competent housewives that Bronte reflects in the novel; these standards evaluate females according to their appearance and ignore their emotions as well as all their needs and rights.

Besides, the reader of *Jane Eyre* realizes the illnesses of the Victorian society on the side of the traditional marriage. Bronte presents Jane and Rochester's marriage as a nontraditional one that is characterized by love and awareness. However, Bertha's existence in the novel has a very important dimension as it refers to the features and endings of traditional marriage which is based on patriarchal principles and interests. Thus, Bertha's madness is the result of the traditional marriage as if Bronte wanted to tell the females of her generation about the consequences of surrendering to the oppressing society. As a result, the two different sides of marriage are Bronte's message to the readers in which she portrays the consequences of each one.

Regarding St. John's character in Bronte's novel, the writer presents him as an ideal husband figure of the Victorian society as he fits with the patriarchal norms that rely on religious doctrines. However, Jane's awareness leads her to reject this traditional

marriage as she believes that emotional and intellectual harmony is a fundamental basis of a successful marriage. Accordingly, Charlotte Bronte presents John's image in Jane's imagination in *Jane Eyre* (1947) as follows:

As I looked at his lofty forehead, still and pale as a white stone—at his fine lineaments fixed in study—I comprehended all at once that he would hardly make a good husband: that it would be a trying thing to be his wife" (p. 383).

Undoubtedly, Jane knows that she would never be happy with John as he presents the opposite characteristics of her ideal husband figure.

In conclusion, in the frame of the feminist approach that has been applied to Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, this study reflects women's situations in the nineteenth century. It explores women's suffering from the oppression that was imposed on them by the patriarchal society, along with the religious doctrines. It also concentrates on women's educational status in the Victorian era highlighting the hardship they have faced in their educational journey. In addition, it presents the emotional life of women in that era under the strict rules which were imposed on them. On the other hand, it presents the protagonist's consciousness that distinguished her from most of the females of her generation as she could overcome the odds and achieve her goals. As a result, Jane's consciousness justifies her happy ending and distinguishes her from most of the females of her generation as she could achieve the goals that she dreamed of in life despite all the hardship that she faced as a woman. Accordingly, Margaret Oliphant asserts in her article in *Blackwood's Magazine* (as cited in Michie, 2006) that *Jane Eyre* is "*a wild declaration of the 'Rights of Woman'*" (p. 15). More specifically, *Jane Eyre* is considered a turning point in the nineteenth century as Jane achieves her inner liberation through her independent identity, qualified education, and love. These are the results of

her consciousness that justify her happy ending that is regarded as Bronte's message to the females of her generation.

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

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