Tribhuvan University

Critiquing the Victorian Orthodoxy in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, in

Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Masters of Arts in English

By

Mukti Nath Adhikari

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

July 2011

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Mukti Nath Adhikari has completed his thesis entitled "Critiquing the Victorian Orthodoxy in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from August 2010 to July 17, 2011. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

_____

Mr. Raj Kumar Baral

Lecturer

Central Department of English

Date:

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Critiquing the Victorian Orthodoxy in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*" by Mr. Mukti Nath Adhikari, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University has been accepted by the undersigned members of the thesis committee.

Members of Research Committee

_____ _____

Internal Examiner

_____ _____

External Examiner

_____ _____

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank my supervisor Mr. Raj Kumar Baral, Lecturer, Central Department of English (CDE), for his encouragement and scholarly guidance to mould the present research into the present shape.

I also would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Head, CDE for his scholarly guidance and support. Besides, I take this opportunity to thank all my teachers of the CDE for their academic and moral guidance.

I owe the highest level of thankfulness to my parents, who always prompted me towards positivity of life and were ever present by me in all ups and downs of life.

I also take this moment to remember my wife and children for their cooperation and moral boost up during the course of my studies.

July 2011 Mukti Nath Adhikari

Abstract

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is a nineteenth century English novels, which successfully critiques the contemporary English society bringing the hidden aspects into the fore. It is the time marred with ideological differences between the people's aspiration for freedom and liberty, followed by suppression of the dogmatic class – representative class of the bourgeoisie. It presents the story of Jane, an orphan girl, who despite all the odds heralded in her way never loses hope for better tomorrow. Despite all the inhumane treatment to her by the society and individuals, she is optimistic and positive even to her arch enemies. Her greatest weapons to fight the unjust are compassion and forgiveness. Her struggle is symbolic to the desire of the then people, who have been hopefully waiting for a better tomorrow – a perspective to analyze history from other than established notion of hierarchical notion.

Contents

I. Contextualizing *Jane Eyre* and Notion of Historicism

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* published in October 1847 that depicts the orthodox mentality of the people of nineteenth century, England. The novel depicts social and economic development of the time through the development of its central character, Jane Eyre who goes on to defies the Victorian mentality and trends of her days. The plot of the novel is loosely based on biography of Bronte's hardship she faced to establish herself in the then patriarch society. Jane in the novel represents the dismantling of the class hierarchy and mentality associated with it. It thereby established the rise of middle class peoples' dignity and value in the then society. Taking this concept as the guideline, the present research takes on of coming of the middle class people and their values through the application of 'New Historicism.'

New Historicism is a critical movement that has existed in some form from Ancient Greece to modern times. From ancient times, philosophers have been eager to separate history from fiction. Like many others, this disciplinary boundary proved fragile from the start. New Historicism distinguished itself from its antecedents largely because of the way in which the concept of history it assumed. A critique makes explicit use of textuality, the way in which history is only available as a collection of discourses. French scholar Michael Foucault is renowned name in the field. Foucault influenced this critical approach, and his histories of everything from madness to sexuality are histories of the discourses that have constructed the past.

The concept of Historicism focuses on hermeneutical process. The past is to be understood on the model of interpreting a text; and texts, literary or otherwise, only have meaning within an economy of other texts, which both limits their possibilities and facilitates the distinctiveness of their utterances. A poetic statement, for example, amounts to one thing in Plato's philosophy, but it might possess an altogether

different status in Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romantic or postmodern treatises. In each case, its value is relative to that accorded to adjacent discourses of science, politics, history, and so on. Hermeneutics was originally the science of interpreting Scripture.

Hermeneutics retains the idea of relating the individual work to a larger purpose into whose pattern it meaningfully fits. Understood hermeneutically, a text's meaning is limited by the value accorded its discourse within the culture of its first audience. Nevertheless, between that past reception and our present attempts to understand it, the text will in all likelihood have generated many more interpretations. The historicist usually claims to be more aware of the conventions governing the first set of expectations than the original readers, for whom they may well have been internalized, unconscious assumptions, and for whom reading the text consisted in straightforward exegesis. Historicists also claim to have gained more knowledge of the text's meaning because of their acquaintance with the new meanings it had for subsequent historical periods.

A notion of ideology – here a society's unconscious tailoring of criteria of objectivity to fit its own interests – comes into play, because historicists, especially nowadays, frequently define themselves as critics who refuse to take the past on its own terms, regarding the economy with which it regulated the possible meanings of different genres as the ideological constraint to be broken.

Paul Hamilton recognizes this concept of role of ideology in historicism as:

> The deregulation of original economies of meaning which historicists claim to achieve characterizes the transition from modernity to postmodernity. Modernity's typical insistence on the 'new' is

> overridden by postmodernity’s refusal to accept the fixed sense of the past against which modernity asserted its novelty. (123)

Althusser abandons the orthodox interpretation of ideology as false consciousness. His theory places ideology within the material institutions. He conceives ideology as a body of discursive practice which sustains individuals in their places as subjects. Foucault also emphasized that discourses are always rooted in social institutions. He shows that social and political power work through discourse. He says that power relations in any given era in a society constitute the concepts, oppositions and hierarchy of its discourses. As such, truth and knowledge are determined by the society in any given era. There are o 'absolute' truths, not even permanently 'authentic' truth and knowledge in the world. Truth and meaning depends upon politico-historical contexts. Borrowing the basic idea of power from Nietzsche, he explains that our language activities themselves depend on our 'will to power'. We cannot possess truly 'objective knowledge of history because even historical writing is entangled in cultural 'tropes' or symbols. Besides, they are being biased due to the subjectivity of those who write it and the limitations of its creation.

Discourses are produced within the real world of power and struggle and they are means to gain, maintain or subvert the existing power systems. Truth depends on who creates and maintains history, or who has the power to create and perpetuate what is taken as truth. For instance, both the colonizer and the colonized create their own kinds of truth, but they create the opposite truths. So, there are no absolutely true or absolutely false discourses of any kind; there are only more powerful and less powerful ones.

Powerful discourses determine and dominate the mode of thought and other discourses. Discourses change with the changes in the power structures of the society;

the socio-political, religio-cultural, and academic institutions are also bodies maintaining the prerogatives of the strong in the society. The possibilities and criteria of truth change along with the change in the power structure in the society. Even the concepts like that of madness, which we take for granted as permanent, are also dependent upon the existing bases of thought as determined those in power. Of course, the so-called sane people decide what is madness, and not vice-versa.

But this concept changed during the 17th century, in the age of reason. In this age, madness was considered to be evil, both in cause and effect; in the 18th century, it was deemed as a kind of disease and crime; but in the Romantic era madness was in some sense considered to be one of the sources of creativity, more than it was in the Renaissance. The twentieth century holds mixed viewpoints about it, but the age-old negative attitude has permeated throughout the centuries. Power functioning as the backbone of all conceptualization in the society permeates all the discourses and operates imperceptibly through the academic legal and even judiciary institutions at all times; it tunes everything so as to perpetuate the existing order in favor of the powerful. The set of such invisible tools (or rules) are so powerful that they form our very consciousness, and so we cannot recognize the biases easily. We have been trained to think in such ways by the state, education, religion, culture, and so on, so that we are 'loyal' to the powerful, more or less directly and explicitly. The whole era's 'archive' or consciousness is permeated by the structure of the concepts in favor of the powerful. The very tool with which people think is made up of these brainwashers.

There are two meanings of the word 'history': (a) the events of the past and (b) telling a story about the events of the past. The New Historicists believe that history is always narrated. The Past is never available to us in 'pure' form, but is only available in the form of representations. Historical periods are not unified entities. There is no

single 'history', only discontinuous and contradictory 'histories'. For instance, there was no single Elizabethan world-view, and the idea of a harmonious and uniform Elizabethan culture is a myth imposed on history. Such impositions of unifying ideas upon the diversities of realities are usually propagated by the ruling classes in their own interests.

Historians can no longer claim that their study of the past is detached and objective. We cannot transcend our own historical situations and concepts that make up our very consciousness. The past is not something which confronts us as if it were a physical object, but is something we construct from already written texts of all kinds that we construe in line with our particular historical concerns.

As per New Historicists, the relations between literature and history must be rethought. In context, Hamilton has following opinion:

> There is no stable and fixed 'history' which can be treated as the 'background' against which literature can be fore-grounded. All history (histories) is foreground. History is a matter of telling a story about the past. All kinds of texts, including historical texts and the texts written by lawyers, popular writers, theologians and scientists must be treated as belonging to the same order of textuality. (122)

As such, historicism is about telling stories in a different manner, other than traditionally accepted. In the context, *Jane Eyre* is an attempt to re-tell the story from a different angle that looks at the pathetic aspects of the Victorian era.

The protagonist is in an attempt to dismantle the trend that there should be a beautiful heroine, a handsome hero and they should, at the end of the story end a happy ending, usually in marriage of a blessed life. However, this is not the reality, today and in the past. As such, the New Historicists tend to unearth the aspects that

were overlooked due the hegemony created by power. As such, it is a trend of acknowledging the role of historical characters that were shadowed in the course of making an orthodox history.

Historicism studies the processes by which knowledge is obtained and transmitted to dismantle or reconstruct the existing one. Broadly speaking, historiography examines the writing of history and the use of historical methods, drawing upon such elements such as authorship, sourcing, interpretation, style, bias, and audience. The word historiography can also refer to a body of historical work. As the tools of historical investigation have changed over time and space, the term itself bears multiple meanings and is not readily associated with a single all-encompassing definition.

There are different perspectives of interpretation of historicism. Some critics take it in the form ‘historicism of Catholicism’ or ‘historicism of China’ and so on. These are trends to depict the change engulfing in the certain cult and nation. There are many approaches or genres of history, such as oral history and social history. Beginning in the 19th century, with the rise of academic historians, a corpus of literature related to historicism came into existence, and the present concept of historicism is to look at the perspective of ‘Victorian historicism.’

The development of Jane Eyre’s character is central to the novel in depicting the features of the then English society. Nineteenth century England was going through radical changes with people full of aspirations of the coming time. As depicted from the beginning in the novel, Jane possesses a sense of her self-worth and dignity, a commitment to justice and principle, a trust in God, and a passionate disposition. Her integrity is continually tested over the course of the novel, and Jane

must learn to balance the frequently conflicting aspects of self so as to find contentment in life.

An orphan since early childhood, Jane feels exiled and ostracized at the beginning of the novel, and the cruel treatment she receives from her aunt Reed and her cousins only exacerbates her feeling of alienation. Afraid that she will never find a true sense of home or community, Jane feels the need to belong somewhere, to find kin or at least kindred spirits. This desire tempers her equally intense need for autonomy and freedom.

In her search for freedom, Jane also struggles with the question of what type of freedom she wants. While Rochester initially offers Jane a chance to liberate her passions, Jane comes to realize that such freedom could also mean enslavement—by living as Rochester's mistress, she would be sacrificing her dignity and integrity for the sake of her feelings. St. John Rivers offers Jane another kind of freedom: the freedom to act unreservedly on her principles. He opens to Jane the possibility of exercising her talents fully by working and living with him in India. Jane eventually realizes, though, that this freedom would also constitute a form of imprisonment, because she would be forced to keep her true feelings and her true passions always in check.

Brontë, by choosing the profession of governess for Jane, allowed her audience to see life from both the servant's point of view and the aristocracy's point of view by means of a critical, cultured, and articulate character. The uncertain social status of governesses made the role a difficult one as the following historical description by Sally Shuttleworth has following remarks:

> The governess in the nineteenth century personified a life of intense misery. She was also that most unfortunate individual; the single,

> middle-class woman who had to earn her own living. Although being a governess might be degradation, employing one was a sign of culture and means. . . . The psychological situation of the governess made her position unenviable.

Her presence created practical difficulties within the Victorian home because she was neither a servant nor a member of the family. She was from the social level of the family, but the fact that she was paid a salary put her at the economic level of the servants.

Only the salary of the governess and her usually low family position keeps her from being considered part of the culturally elite. The same holds true for the tradesman from Gaskell's North and South. They do not lack potential or intellect anymore than the aristocracy does. Brontë successfully break down the barriers and prove what people from the lower classes can possibly achieve. The same technique shows how the difference between classes falls away. They pay specific attention to changes in names and labels and demonstrate that only labels truly differentiate the worker from aristocracy. Gaskell talks about how Mr. Hale calls Higgins rather than anything else and she goes on to prove the invalidity of using the label of "drunken infidel weaver" to describe him. Further on in the novel, as Thorton comes to accept his worker as equal human beings, his label for them switches from "hands" to "men" (276). The identical thing happens in Jane Eyre. As Jane gains equal footing with Rochester, he demands that she calls him "Edward" rather than "sir" (261). The manipulation of names reveals the shallow basis for social structure, thus confirming Brontë and Gaskell's ideas on the negativity of class prejudice.

Bronte's analysis of the shifts and turns in Jane's life is full of emotions; however, backed by Jane's superficial energies. The figure 'Jane' exists not only as a

controlling agent but rather as the site of violent, contradictory charges of material energy. Following the verbal assault by Mrs. Reed, her aunt, the harsh governess of Lowood, Jane depicts her sensation of expansion and exultation as, "It seemed as if an invisible bond had burst, and that I had struggled out into unhoped-for liberty" (39). This notion of an emergence into selfhood occurring with an unleashing of psychological powers is reiterated later by St. John Rivers, a suitor of Jane in describing the impact of his decision to become a missionary as, "My cramped existence all at once spread out to a plain without bounds . . . the fetters dissolved and dropped from faculty" (462). In case, responsibility for social rebellion is displaced onto a material sphere; it is not the individual, but rather physiological faculties which act to overthrow the fetters of social constraint.

The theory of innate, unrealized capacity lies behind this dual image of justified revolt and of the psychological exhilaration to be obtained from faculty exertion. Each faculty has a legitimate sphere of action, and when properly gratified, is a fountain of pleasure. But, behind this fountain of pleasure, lay the year's long struggle Jane had to undergo while as an orphan child and a destitute fellow at the Lowood, the school, where she completed her schooling from. From suffering the cruelty at 'Lowood' and from the hands of her uncle and aunt, she still does not have any complain to whatever tragedy had befallen on her. Instead she passes, philosophic comments as, "A ridge of lighted heath, alive, glancing, devouring, would have been a meet emblem of my mind when I accused and menaced Mrs. Reed: the same ridge black and blasted after the flames are dead, would have represented as meetly my subsequent condition" (140).

Jane after her scanty education applies for the post of governess at the Thornfield Hall, to look after the child of Mr. Rochester, an arrogant middle aged

ruffian. She soon becomes the teacher and friend to the girls, but is struck by the dark, almost a haunting feeling of her new home. It is largely due to Mr. Rochester, her employer, who according to Sally Shuttleworth is "a cynical, embittered man who spends little time at Thornfield to avoid his guilty fears" (15). However, amid the adversity, they are slowly drawn together into a powerful love, despite their different social status. Rochester's apparent attention remains to be of a shallow, snotty aristocrat who wants his wealth and status more than Jane and her unconditional love.

Jane is on the verge of womanhood, as she is eighteen at the arrival in Thornfield. However, she is seeking the release of the imprisoned real self into the social world. From the beginning of Jane's experience at Thornfield, where she takes up her new role of governess, the doubleness of Jane's character is emphasized. As she herself advises us when she has arrived at her destination, "Reader, though I look comfortably accommodated, I am not very tranquil in my mind" (125). Such is her dilemma, which comes to her, and she does not hesitate to reveal, both in behaviour and action.

Thornfield is a place of the imagination, an old Gothic mansion, whose name derives from its "mighty old thorn trees, strong, knotty, and broad" (131). This image is a wonderfully connotative fusion of masculine sexual energy and imaginative power, and in the other hand, the social hierarchy that existed between the bourgeoisies and the working class people. In words of Susan Ostrov Weisser, the Thornfield is "a representation of cynicism" (83).

Charlotte Brontë may have created the character of Jane Eyre as a means of coming to terms with elements of her own life. Much evidence suggests that Brontë, too, struggled to find a balance between love and freedom and to find others who

understood her. At many points in the book, Jane voices the author's then-radical opinions on religion, social class, and gender.

Edward Rochester, despite his stern manner and not particularly handsome appearance, Edward Rochester wins Jane's heart, because she feels they are kindred spirits, and because he is the first person in the novel to offer Jane lasting love and a real home. Although Rochester is Jane's social and economic superior, and although men were widely considered to be naturally superior to women in the Victorian period, Jane is Rochester's intellectual equal. Moreover, after their marriage is interrupted by the disclosure that Rochester is already married to Bertha Mason, Jane is proven to be Rochester's moral superior.

Rochester regrets his former libertinism and lustfulness; nevertheless, he has proven himself to be weaker in many ways than Jane. Jane feels that living with Rochester as his mistress would mean the loss of her dignity. Ultimately, she would become degraded and dependent upon Rochester for love, while unprotected by any true marriage bond. Jane will only enter into marriage with Rochester after she has gained a fortune and a family, and after she has been on the verge of abandoning passion altogether. She waits until she is not unduly influenced by her own poverty, loneliness, psychological vulnerability, or passion. Additionally, because Rochester has been blinded by the fire and has lost his manor house at the end of the novel, he has become weaker while Jane has grown in strength— Jane claims that they are equals, but the marriage dynamic has actually tipped in her favor.

St. John Rivers is a foil to Edward Rochester. Whereas Rochester is passionate, St. John is austere and ambitious. Jane often describes Rochester's eyes as flashing and flaming, whereas she constantly associates St. John with rock, ice, and snow. Marriage with Rochester represents the abandonment of principle for the

consummation of passion, but marriage to St. John would mean sacrificing passion for principle. When he invites her to come to India with him as a missionary, St. John offers Jane he chance to make a more meaningful contribution to society than she would as a housewife. At the same time, life with St. John would mean life without true love, in which Jane's need for spiritual solace would be filled only by retreat into the recesses of her own soul. Independence would be accompanied by loneliness, and joining St. John would require Jane to neglect her own legitimate needs for love and emotional support. Her consideration of St. John's proposal leads Jane to understand that, paradoxically, a large part of one's personal freedom is found in a relationship of mutual emotional dependence.

Similarly, Helen Burns, Jane's friend at Lowood School, serves as a foil to Mr. Brocklehurst as well as to Jane. While Mr. Brocklehurst embodies an evangelical form of religion that seeks to strip others of their excessive pride or of their ability to take pleasure in worldly things, Helen represents a mode of Christianity that stresses tolerance and acceptance. Brocklehurst uses religion to gain power and to control others; Helen ascetically trusts her own faith and turns the other cheek to Lowood's harsh policies.

Like Jane, Helen is another character in the Lowood School. However, unlike Jane she depicts the pessimist opinion towards the social happenings and the society around her. Helen is an orphan who longs for a home, but believes that she will find this home in Heaven rather than Northern England. And while Helen is not oblivious to the injustices the girls suffer at Lowood, she believes that justice will be found in God's ultimate judgment—God will reward the good and punish the evil. Jane is more headstrong character. She is unable to have blind faith on God for respect and dignity

and hence, attempts on her own to get it – break away from the existing trend in the then society.

As such, taking all this issues in consideration, the present research takes on the issue of 'Historicism' to dismantle the existing perspective of viewing history. For the same the first chapter is 'Contextualizing Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Notion of Historicism. It will make an elaborate study on the use of Historicism to look history from a different perspective. Similarly, the second chapter makes an attempt on viewing the orthodox mannerism prevalent during the Victorian era under 'Victorian Era Orthodoxy in *Jane Eyre*.' Finally, the last chapter – Conclusion shows how the orthodoxy of Victorian era has been dismantled in the novel.

II. Critiquing Victorian Orthodoxy in *Jane Eyre*

Jane Eyre, one of the strongest novels of the nineteenth century extends the ways in which ideological pressures of class, gender and economics are played in the domain of the then existing futile sense towards life and living. The novel depicts sadistic approach present in the nineteenth century society through the psyche of the then people and their mentality – a trend towards the coming of Historicism. It portrays a vivid picture of sensitive issues, along with implicit argument against the social depression rampant in the period.

The novel depicts the beginning of ways of reviewing culture and tradition of the time. It is a text that restructures the concept of viewing ideas and values of the day. The depiction of a swarthy little heroine and an arrogant hero was not thought to be the subject matter of novels of the day. Similarly, the rise of an orphan lady in achieving societal status is amazing story that focuses on a new concept of history to be read and seen.

New Historians, in the wake of Foucault see the historical as textual, and one effect is to create a new relationship between the historical and the literary text. Because both are representations, a term very important to the New Historians neither one is closer to the truth of history. History is not some unmediated reality out there, some stable background that the literary text reflects or refers to; it is not a context. Paul Hamilton in *Historicism*: *The New Critical Idiom* writes on historicism, as:

> It is like the literary text itself - of a different genre, granted, but no less a discourse. Such a view might seem to undo the privilege of the literary text or of history - depending on whether someone valorizes an aesthetic distinction or an ontological one - but it does make it possible to study relations between texts both literary and historical and

> discover how they trace certain patterns and negotiate various kinds of cultural meaning. (86)

While human beings have generally tried to understand themselves historically, they have not always done so as historicists. Historicism emerges in reaction to the practice of deducing from first principles truths about how people are obliged to organize themselves socially and politically.

It can be witnessed, as the beginning of the novel presents a sense of uncertainty and hopelessness. The central character is an orphan and relegated child living in the mercy of her foster uncle's family. She is badly abused by Mr. and Mrs. Reed. However, Jane overcomes this scenario and presents hope in the contemporary society. The happy ending of the novel, though in a unique way is its symbol of presence of hope, spread all over Europe during the era. Jane has a vivid imagination and romantic side which makes her passionate and emotional than most of her fellow classmates, at Lowood. She is emotionally and verbally advanced than other children of her age. She is also extremely perceptive, analytical and self aware, she says:

> Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting: as interesting as the tales Bessie sometimes narrated on winter evenings, when she chanced to be in good humour [. . .] fed our eager attention with passages of love and adventure taken from fairy tales and older ballads. (7)

Jane is above other girls and children of her age. She is aware of the happenings around her and her sharp insight helps her to fight the cynicism of her age.

Jane's struggle starts as soon as she turns ten. Her father dies and leaves Jane in care of her aunt and cousin, with a promise that Jane will be given a descent

rearing. But, soon Jane is surrounded in hostile situations with minimum of care and love to her. G. M. Trevelyan writes about Jane and her tough family as:

> Jane's aunt Reed was imperious and her cousins John – a spoiled, sadistic boy, Georgiana – a plump and primped and Eliza – a shallow, but sour and sharp-tongued girl, all, in early teens. Both her aunt and her cousins revile her as an ingrate, but years later, on her deathbed, Mrs. Reed reveals to Jane that her husband – Jane's uncle had forced Mrs. Reed to promise that Jane would be raised as a member of the family, but she never gets any familial treatment. It is only Bessie Lee, a maidservant at Gateshead, who treats Jane with some degree of kindness and respect. (25)

Jane actually belonged to a higher class. During the early days of her school life, she was treated relatively well; however, as days passed, her aunt started to become increasingly strict to her. She was forced a harsh treatment by aunt and her cousins. However, the harsh treatment received by Jane was no different to most of the orphaned girls of her time, as it was the part of the society in those days.

The then social structure was such that orphans were no humans. They were mere burden to the society and the mankind. And, the orphan girls were an easy victim for the inhuman behaviour in the society, in those days. Jane had lost her father and was living in favour of her aunt, who had promised her brother (Jane's father), a fair treatment to Jane, which she had forgotten, as soon as her brother died.

However, Jane stands up against all the difficulties with boldness. At the school, too, she is given unjust treatment, so far that her two best friends are barred from speaking and entertaining with her. She recalls the incident, as:

> I resisted all the way: a new thing for me, and a circumstance which

> greatly strengthened the bad opinion. Bessie and Miss Abbot were disposed to entertain of me. The fact is, I was a trifle beside myself; or rather out of myself, as the French would say: I was conscious that a moment's mutiny had already rendered me liable to strange penalties, and like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved in my desperation, to go all lengths. (12)

She compared herself with those slaves, who were barred from coming near to the whites and, got new encouragement to fight for more. She was a white, but the conduct shown to her was worse than the slaves. As, a slave who was forced for inhumane behaviour would think himself a slave and adjust accordingly, but Jane was not, and she was finding hard to face the reality.

And, despite all these, she grew up to become the teacher at the Lowood School and remains at Lowood as a teacher. However, following the urge of a disembodied voice, she soon advertises for a governess position and is solicited by Mrs. Fairfax of Thornfield. At Thornfield Manor, a gothic three-story mansion, Jane serves as governess to Adele Varens at a ward of Edward Rochester, owner of the estate.

At Lowood School, more than six dozen girls ranging in age from nine to twenty years are constantly reminded that they are behold to the charitable donors who pay partial costs for their schooling. They are hardly made to forget that their living in mercy of some unknown donator/s. They are compelled to live in mental and physical domination, and the situation of the building is equally pathetic. The building is bleak, sparely furnished, and under heated, stern and fragile condition. It severely tests Jane's and fellow resident's endurance power. However, the worst is, Jane and her mates are deprived an easy access to education as well. She narrates hurdles

imposed on education and inhumane treatment received by one of her cousins, in following manner:

> You have no business to take our books: you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama's expense. Now I'll teach you rummage my book-shelves: for they are mine; the entire house belongs to me, or will do in a few years. Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and windows. (11)

In this pathetic situation, Jane's mental and physical endurance powers are tested. She survives all these hardships imposed on her, only because of her strong determination and stamina.

These terrible situations engulfed her with all sorts of negative feelings, even death wish, as well. She narrates, "I lay again crushed and trodden on: and could I ever raise more? I wished to die, while sobbing out this wish in broken accents [. . .]" (71). Situation in the Lowood School made the poor students feel very dejected and it was common for the innocents to wish death. They were the representation of wide spread negative feelings in the society. The innocent minds were constantly made to bear the heat of injustice and social domination. They were so dejected that they hardly feel like eating a loaf of bread. In one such situation, Jane narrates her distaste for food, as:

> I put both away from me, feeling as if a drop of crumb would have choked me in my present condition. Helen regarded me, probably with surprise: I could not now abate my agitation, though I tried hard; I continued to weep aloud. She sat down on the ground near me,

> embraced her knees with her arms, and rested her head upon them; in that attitude she remained silent as an Indian. (71)

The girls and boys in at the Lowood found solace in each others' companion, followed by tears, a painful reality of the students of the age.

As a governess, Jane, at Thornfield acquires maturity, and full-fledged power to take decision, as the darker side of Thornfield gives her power to strife the odds of life with a regenerated power. At Thornfield, the novel takes a gloomy vast house, popularly known as the Thornfield mansion with mysterious secrets, and a brooding haunted man, Edward Rochester with a dark past to depict the nineteenth century setting of gloomy societal condition. Furthermore, there are old-house-wives, who are selfish and strict and, there are male with the feelings of superior complexity with an inborn attitude to dominate. The novel is a depiction of abuse and apathy by the then society towards the underprivileged class of people of the day. Jane is one such, as she is also neglected by her relatives in a boarding run by her uncle and aunt. But Jane, guides her conscience and resistance power, inherits from her cultural background, refuse to let anyone shove her down. Her struggle against all the odds is to establish and to find herself a place in the then society.

It is the natural laws that govern human behavior at all times. These laws and concepts are formulated, and evaluated by the degree to which they approximate to this ideal pattern. Historicists oppose this tradition, which, primarily associated with the Enlightenment, stretches, in different versions, from the 17th-century natural-law theorists to the sophistications of Kant and Hegel. They argue instead that human nature is too various for such legislation to be universally applicable.

They, therefore, have to evolve a model for apprehending social and cultural diversity different from the scientific, law-governed paradigm of the Enlightenment.

Romantic aesthetics that sense of a human richness unmeasured by scientific calculation and best equated with a natural grandeur similarly exceeding computation, immediately offers itself for this purpose. The hermeneutic tradition has struggled to recast this aesthetic heritage in order to show that history, properly understood, demonstrates that we can have a kind of knowledge complementing the natural sciences, and that all experience not falling under scientific jurisdiction need not be consigned to a non-cognitive aesthetic which lays no claim to being true.

Simply put, such anti-Enlightenment historicism develops a characteristically double focus. Firstly, it is concerned to situate any statement – philosophical, historical, aesthetic or whatever – in its historical context. Secondly, it typically doubles back on itself to explore the extent to which any historical enterprise inevitably reflects the interests and bias of the period in which it was written. On the one hand, therefore, historicism is suspicious of the stories the past tells about itself; on the other hand, it is equally suspicious of its own partisanship. It offers up both its past and its present for ideological scrutiny.

Bronte wrote in the usual stately prose of the time, but it has a sensual, lush quality, even in the dark early chapters at Lowood. At Thornfield, the book acquires an overhanging atmosphere of foreboding, until the clouds clear near the end. And she wove some tough questions into Jane's perspective -- that of a woman's independence and strength in a man's world, of extreme religion, and of the clash between morals and passion. The novel is a critique on the relations between men and women during the beginning of the Victorian period. Through the characters of Edward Rochester and St. John Edwards, Brontë shows the expected positions of women at the time. She rejects both positions and instead argues a third position, that that of equality between the two sexes.

Jane arrives at Thornfield Manor to become the governess of Adéle Varens, daughter to Richard Rochester, a middle aged arrogant man. During Jane's time there she helps, Rochester, a fallen man to dignity and self-respect. This act of kindness, allows for the two to start getting close. Rochester is enthralled with her, summoning her randomly and having Jane accompany him. Jane falls in love with him, but knows she cannot be with him because of their different social standings. Rochester invites her to a party he is hosting, that a woman, name who also wants Rochester's hand in marriage, is attending. Even though this hurts Jane greatly she attends. Rochester dresses as a gypsy, driving off name, but also by giving Jane hope for a relationship between herself and Rochester, in following manner:

> I never met your likeness, Jane: you please me, and you master me – you seem to submit, and I like the sense of pliancy you impart; and while I am twining the soft, silken skein round my finger, it stands a thrill up my arm to my heart. I am influenced – conquered; and the influence is sweeter than I can express; and the conquest I undergo has a witchery beyond any triumph I can win. (273)

Thereby lightens tender feelings in their hearts for each other. This was a rare case in the era, as it helped to dismantle the hierarchy existing in the period. Rochester coming from a high class and Jane a low profile governess makes an unusual combination. However, it can be seen as the beginning of recognition for the underprivileged class of people.

After this time, Jane has to return to Gateshead to attend to her dying aunt. Jane is gone for a month and realizes that she is desperately in love with Rochester. Upon her return to Thornfield, proclaims her love to Rochester. "It is as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar

string situated in the corresponding quarter of your (Rochester) little frame" (214). Rochester, ignoring the social distinctions between the two, and giving into his passions, in return proposes to Jane. All seems well, until Jane starts to doubt herself. She is not of the same social class as Rochester and would be indebted to him.

Jane Eyre was written during the historic period known as the Victorian Era. In this paper I will be explaining social status and events happening during that time period, how people were treated, and how people lived back then. The economy was affected by political reforms and many men, women and children went into factories and agricultural workplaces for work. Before this happened, women were pretty much what you would call house slaves, girls wasn't highly respected, they weren't allowed to go out and get a job in a work place. However, if one was wealthy or from a royal family, s/he would not work. In this book, Bronte tells how Jane got a job that would fit her social status. She had Jane going off to go work in a school to tutor a little girl called Adele. She also describes the lives of women that worked for someone, by telling about the servants that worked and lived for Rochester and the ones who worked and lived with Mrs. Reed as well.

Mr. Rochester and Mrs. Reed are examples of how people of wealthy families and royalty lived. They had servants and people who ran the houses. Rochester traveled a lot and paid Mrs. Fairfax to watch over and run things. Mrs. Reed was mean and had her servants cleaning, cooking and sometimes watching over the children. Diseases spread rapidly through England at this time. A lot of this had to do with the working conditions the industrial reform brought about, having workers work long hours and in horrible conditions. Men, women and children all were in these conditions. But these weren't the only places that had horrible conditions, the schools weren't kept up very well, and in the book, Bronte showed us this by describing the

virus running through school and killing people, including Jane's best friend. This may have been a way of showing what people went through, losing a, loved one to a disease that they couldn't cure. Disease was also spreading through the poor and the story tells about how Jane's parents died while helping the poor, probably of a disease.

Religion was another of the prominent features dominating the Victorian period, a big example being the Evangelical movement. Jane struggled at choosing a religion. in the novel, Bronte uses three people as models of religion, rejects all three models, and comes to her own conclusion. Jane takes the best of both worlds, from Helen and Brocklehurst's opinions, and forms her own decision, which makes her comfortable.

Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, as presented under the pen-name of Currer Bell, is today often celebrated as one of the greatest literary works of the Victorian era. This novel's status as a timeless classic certainly isn't without merit. The novel is writtene as an autobiography in the standard three volumes, as a first-person narrative. The novel primarily explores the early life of its protagonist, the young and orphaned Jane Eyre.

Jane starts out life as an orphaned infant under the care of her cruel aunt, Mrs Reed, though she soon finds herself sent away to Lowood, a strict Victorian boarding school. At Jane's coming of age and with an education behind her she strives to explore new horizons and seeks work as a Governess. She soon accepts a post at Thornfield and comes into contact with the wealthy and Byronic Mr Rochester, with whom she will soon find herself helplessly in love. Jane struggles to accept his love for her, for she is a 'Plain Jane' in the very truest sense of the phrase. The remainder of the novel turns out to be a journey of self discovery for Jane and ends as all good love stories do. Or so it would seem. Rochester's plans for Jane are soon brought to a quick end when his hidden dark past ultimately catches up with him.

Although the novel is presented as a classic romance, for it explores the loves and relationships of its main character, it gives the distinct feeling of a social critique under the guise of an autobiography. This literary work defies any common classification for it plays host to a wide range of themes, especially those regarding gender equality and female independence. However, it is important to note that the novel was wrote considerably before the feminist movement gained momentum.

Although Jane Eyre is often celebrated as a gothic romance to classify it as such would not do it credit. This novel breaks free from the constraints set by other romantic female novelists of the era, such as Jane Austen, by promoting the idea that there is more to life for women than the pursuit of a good marriage and wealth, but Jane Eyre puts forth the idea that women too can be as accomplished as their male counterparts.

One of the chief reasons for the widespread gloominess present in the then existing society was lack of proper educational facilities and awareness. Then, education was limited, and often under harsh conditions, discouraging people willing for education. There were fewer opportunities for their life improvement and to shift their traditional occupation. They lagged behind and their coming generations were also forced to face similar conditions of apathy. So, lives of lower class people were very much pathetic, miserable and full of troubles, ultimately resulting in pessimistic thinking in life. They cursed all these as their fate, as G. M. Trevelyan in *English Social History* explains, as:

> The tendency to social segregation, enhanced by the geographical division of various classes' quarters in the layout of great modern cities was thus further accentuated by education. Moreover, the expenses of a public school, so much higher than those of the grammar school and

> Day school, become terrible self imposed burden on lower middle class and professional families. Indeed, at the end of the century it became a principal cause of the lamentable decrease in the number of children in some of the best section of the community. (129)

Some narrow concepts prevailing among the people of the society also do not let them think widely for their hopeful and dignified life. Michael Mason in *Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre* writes:

> In the rural society of that period, not yet seriously disturbed by rural depression of migration to the town, much weight was attached to the narrowest gradations of class status. There was a sharp and sometimes cruel division between those who worked for themselves and those who worked for others. (325)

Division of class amongst the elite and the worker complicated life in an uneasy and difficult situation. Lower class people's fate was full of misery and difficulty, as they had to depend on others. So they became depressed and lost their hope for happier life.

Reading *Jane Eyre* is extremely important to not view what we read in 21st century terms, as hard as that may be. However the novel provides an extremely valuable insight into everyday life in the Victorian period. It brings to life the full severity of it and highlights the struggles of female-kind and, the good aspect is it has recognized the voice of the under privileged class and people. As such, the present research deals on 'Critiquing the Victorian Orthodoxy in *Jane Eyre.*'

In the meantime, there are strange things happening at Thornfield -- stabbings, fires, and mysterious laughter. However, during all these happenings, Jane and Rochester finally confess their feelings to each other. Jane, who is unknown to the

fact that the horrible things happening in the mansion is courtesy Bertha, the imprisoned psycho wife of Rochester, knows only in the day of her marriage with Rochester. Upon this disclosure, Jane cancels the marriage and quits the job and mansion for an uncertain future. Her apathy is as mentioned below, "Dressed for her wedding morning, Jane is forced to look her own departure from her real self in the face: the mirror reflects only a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that is seemed almost the image of a stranger" (315). Exactly who is this stranger, Jane is confused. In the process of comforting her, she shivers and wails; however, soon gets up to fight the unknown destiny – struggle against the cynicism of her fate and the societal standards of the day, and also from Rochester, her love interest.

Rochester himself is described by the narrator again and again, as though Bronte was struggling to pin down the exact qualities which will do their work as yet unexpressed real self of Jane. The readers are told that Rochester is like, "mass of crag" or "a great oak" (143), "dark, strong and stern" (147). All his features have its energy that is in against the postivity of life. The strength of desire and will which is the primary characteristics of Rochester's masculine sexuality calls to mind the image of the thorn trees surrounding the mansion, in which physical size and might evoke imaginative and sexual power.

Even before Rochester appears on the scene, Jane is told that he is peculiar by the down-to-ground housekeeper, who has only a vague sense that 'you cannot always be sure whether he is in jest or earnest, whether he is pleased of the contrary: you don't thoroughly understand him in short" (136). It is absolutely essential to Rochester's sexual attractiveness that he is moody, hard to read and intensely private and convoluted hero who presents no surface smoothness or conventional blandness on which to depend: he constitutes a secret. Like the thorn trees on his property, he is,

we may say, knotted; in his own characteristics, he is 'hard and tough like an India rubber ball; pervious, though, through a chink or two still (163). However, Rochester is penetrable; there is a private, even a female' entrance to this secret, available to the adventure willing to undertake the risk of enduring the full power of masculine sexuality. And Jane, as we know, is ready for vividness.

But then, a love story develops between the two; "petite and sublime heroine and a middle aged ruffian" (85) in words of Susan Ostrow Weisser. During the period of the growth of her love for Rochester, Jane is also given the opportunity to define herself partly through comparison with other women. According to Weisser, Jane asserts her "female self assertion in the service of self-interest: I must have my will" (86).

Nowhere does she endorse Rochester's statements of disgust. Her own revulsion is reserved, rather, for the idea of a sexual connection between Rochester and the lower-class Grace Poole. As Jane, who is a warrior like figure expose this as, "I hastened to drive from my mind the hateful notion I had been conceiving respecting Grace Poole: it disgusted me. I compared myself with her, and found we were different. Bessie Leaven had said I was quite a lady; and she spoke truth: I was a lady" (196).

Edward Rochester, almost twenty years older than Jane, who is eighteen when she arrives at Thornfield, is first portrayed as a dark, brooding, and arrogant man. His often harsh manner belying his vulnerability, Rochester owes his moodiness to the fact that he keeps his insane wife, Bertha Mason, locked up in the attic. The master of Thornfield, he also has responsibility for his pesky French ward, eight-year-old Adele Varens. Although Adele's mother, a French opera dancer, was his mistress for an extended period of time, Rochester doubts that he is truly Adele's father. Despite his

irresolute past, Rochester is portrayed as a charismatic man who becomes an acceptable mate for Jane only after he has symbolically atoned for his past transgressions.

Aside from Rochester, most of the characters associated with Thornfield Hall seem one-dimensional. Mrs. Fairfax is a kind, efficient, elderly housekeeper. Adele is a flighty non-character; she lilts about chirping French phrases about flowers in her hair and pretty women. Technically she serves as a plot device, providing a reason for Jane's employment at Thornfield. Blanche Ingram, Rochester's apparent love interest, is a similarly shallow character; exceedingly beautiful, she is also haughty and manipulative. Blanche's presence in the plot intensifies Jane's consternation and confusion over her feelings for Rochester.

Edward Rochester retains the arrogance of his social class until his blindness causes him to turn inward and to revitalize his humble sensibilities. The love Jane maintains for Rochester results in a virtuous union between the two, a testament to perseverance and perfectibility in the romanticist view of human nature.

The story does slow down after the abortive wedding, when Jane flees Thornfield and briefly considers marrying a repressed clergyman, St. John, who wants to go die preaching in India. It's rather boring to hear the self-consciously saintly St. John prattling about himself, instead of Rochester's barbed wit. But when Jane departs again, the plot speeds up into a nice, mellow little finale. Taking this scenario of bravado, Sally Shuttleworth writes:

> Bronte did a brilliant job of bringing her heroine to life -- as a defiant little girl who is condemned for being "passionate," as an independent young lady, and as a woman torn between love and principle. Jane's strong personality and wits overwhelm the basic fact that she's not

> unusually pretty. And Rochester is a brilliantly sexy Byronic anti-hero with a prickly, mercurial wit. (24)

Rochester and Jane couple to the form romantic side of the novel, perhaps little told in those days. Lack of passionate and sensuous feelings backed by the age gap between the two characters make the novel pretty platonic in nature – a hope against the existing trouble of the time.

Different female characters in the novel in comparison are frail in counter-part to the males. These female characters do faint, cry, and turn pale, but on the other hand, they also strive to overcome their fragility. Jane fights against these traditional weaknesses. Jane exhibits great strength in the midst of sufferings. She narrates her hard times, as:

> Hopeless of the future, I wished but this — that my Maker had that night thought good to require my soul of me while I slept; and that this weary frame, absolved by death from further conflict with fate, had now but to decay quietly, and mingle in peace with the soil of this wilderness. Life, however, was yet in my possession, with all its requirements, and pains, and responsibilities. The burden must be carried; they want provided for; the suffering endured; the responsibility fulfilled. I set out. (208)

However, a true warrior, Jane did not allow her agony to overcome her. Even though the characters of Jane and Margaret -- a fellow sufferer at the Lowood School, seemed frail, they fought that image of themselves within their own mind, as well as in the mind of the other characters.

Margaret cautions Jane not to be strong-minded to which, Jane replies, "Don't be afraid, Edith. I'll faint on your hands at the servant's dinner-time, the very first

opportunity; and then, what with Sholto playing with the fire, and the baby crying, you'll begin to wish for a strong-minded woman, equal to any emergency" (319). In this way, the mentally strong Jane invokes the fire of strength within her fellow friends.

Jane Eyre explores the predicaments of those bound by law, conventions, and social status to live and not of their own choosing. Parallel to the then societal status, Jane resents being controlled by inferiors but uses this resentment to generate energy necessary for her survival and rise to independence. The power of religion to enlighten or to corrupt finds expression in Jane's reliance on heartfelt prayer and in the diametrically opposed vocations of Brocklehurst and St. John Rivers. In each case the social value of religion is depicted as part of the individual's motives.

Most characters in the tale suffer even if they do not have any significant causes for it. Bronte presents the destiny as an inevitable foe, though they do not have any significant causes for it. Sometimes, even they are compelled to give up their happiness for others. Bronte has shown the dominant role of fate, over individual will and aspiration, which has not been given any place in their lives for their fulfilment. She makes this novel tragic from the point of view of fate’s decisive role and shows that it is the inescapable design of fate for their sufferings because of other's insensitive and impulsive behaviour. The inner conflict in character’s mind has further added to the rampant presence of pessimism in the novel. Bronte tries to show that destiny decides what shall happen in human life because it is already decided why they should suffer.

The influence of the English society is also depicted in the story. It has a story of both the rural and urban settings of the nineteenth century England. Men and women in the time were desperate due to the wagering economic and the unwanted

social domination imposed on them. The rural labours were in a very poor condition because of the dwindling economic situation.

The Victorian society was divided in various hierarchies; on the top were the Royals, second to the ranking were the Bourgeoisies consisting of the noble men and the landlords and the peasants and the laymen were at the bottom of the hierarchy. Although the society was adapting to a free democratic norms and culture, the domination was present everywhere, and people were dominated by the so-called upper class people as well as social laws, customs and traditions. They are as helpless and deceived as Bronte created in her literary works.

The era of melancholy was engulfed by agonies and disappointments. David Cecil narrating this pessimist scenario in Bronte's novel writes in *Bronte, the Novelist*:

> Depiction of pain, melancholy and disappointment in her characters were equally attributed in then real day English society. They were equally destined to pass the hard lives. Days of rustic people go in a very pitiable and unjust way; whether fate or destiny both appears to be against them. These troubles, hardships, sufferings, melancholies and discontentment are presented in a very subtle way in Bronte's work. (212)

The disposition of miserable view was confirmed by the fate of Jane, the central character in the novel. She, despite her simplicity and friendly nature, has to suffer all sorts of hardships, for apparently no reasonable reasons.

Besides providing glimpses into the unconscious, dreams in *Jane Eyre* can also serve as "presentiments," or warnings of future events. As Homans notes, Charlotte Bronte often uses the "gothic form of literalizing, or making some aspect of

the dreams come true" (27). A dream in *Jane Eyre* can serve as a general symbol as they depict hope and fear for Jane. Jane believes the superstition of her old governess Bessie, that “to dream of children was a sure sign of trouble, either to one’s self or one’s kin” (76). Indeed, the day after Bessie dreamt of a child, Bessie found out her sister was dead.

Dreams can also serve as complex representations for events in Jane's life. In volume two, chapter six, Jane herself begins having dreams about children. Gilbert and Gubar argue that these dreams correspond to the increasing apprehension Jane feels towards a romance with Rochester. After taking an idyllic walk around Thornfield with Rochester, Jane has an initial series of child dreams:

> During the past week scarcely a night had gone over my couch that had not brought with it a dream of an infant: which I sometimes hushed in my arms, sometimes dandled on my knee, sometimes watched playing with daisies on a lawn; or again, dabbling its hands in running water. It was a wailing child this night and a laughing one the next: now it nestled close to me, and now it ran from me. (182)

In accordance with Bessie's beliefs, Jane's visions bring her trouble. Jane wakes up from one of her dreams to the murderous cry of Bertha Mason, Rochester's mad wife whom he keeps locked in the attic of Thornfield. The day after that, Jane finds out that her cousin John has died and her Aunt Reed lies on her deathbed.

Another feature of the novel is about dream and struggle that were abundantly present in the Victorian era. Jane is a dreamer, as after her engagement with Rochester, she weaves herself in another pair of child dreams. During the first, Jane experiences "a strange, regretful consciousness of some barrier" (268) dividing Rochester and self. She dreams that she carries a bawling child on an unknown road,

and Rochester walks ahead of her. She tries to catch up to him, but her entreaties are muffled and her steps slowed, and Rochester walks farther and farther away.

In the second dream, Jane images the destruction of Thornfield. She wanders around the ruined estate, clutching the child because she “might not lay it down anywhere, however tired were my arms however much its weight impeded my progress” (271). As she struggles to climb a wall to get a better view of Rochester, the child clings to her neck, nearly strangling her. When she reaches the summit of the wall, she glimpses Rochester as a vanishing speck. The wall crumbles and she and the baby fall away as she wakes.

These dreams are associated with prevailing uncertainty in the life of the people of the day. It was common for the people to weave dream, and see them falling. It also reflects a fear that Jane muffles from herself and others, namely that marrying Rochester will alter her identity. The child of the dreams may represent Jane's love for Rochester, or 'Mrs. Rochester,' the new identity Jane will assume after marriage. Alternately, the dreams may represent Jane's orphan childhood, an alter-ego that Jane cannot free herself of, even with marriage to Rochester. In any case, the dreams give marriage-anxious Jane uneasy feelings. Again in accordance with Bessie's prophecy, the dreams of children bring trouble. Jane wakes from the second dream to discover Bertha Mason tearing her wedding dress. Shortly thereafter, Richard Mason will break up Jane and Rochester's attempted marriage with the news that Rochester is still legally married to Bertha.

Jane has another symbolic dream the night she decides to leave Rochester and Thornfield. In this dream, she has returned to the red room of Gateshead. As she looks up at the ceiling, it turns into clouds. A human form reminiscent of the cosmic woman in Jane's imaginative water-colour painting appears. Jane recounts:

> She broke forth as never the moon has yet burst from cloud: a hand first penetrated the stable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed on me. It spoke, to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart — “My daughter, flee temptation!” (62)

Again, Jane's emotions are reflected in her dream. Its decreased foreboding corresponds with Jane's release from marital apprehension as she decides to leave Thornfield. Again, the dream provides foreshadowing. The rising woman prefigures the spirit that later re-unites Jane and Rochester by inexplicably transmitting their messages, “Jane! Jane! Jane!” “I am coming: wait for me! to each other over dozens of miles" (300).

Jane's desires are also directly depicting her emotions. In an incident, when Jane hears that Rochester will marry Blanche Ingram, and she closes her eyes to erode her gloom. Jane recalls her dream as, "Closing the gates of Thornfield against me and pointing me out to another road, while Rochester smiles sardonically" (108). This dream reveals Jane's unhappiness at the prospect of Mr. Rochester marrying Blanche. After her separation from Rochester, Jane recounts her sadistic feelings, as:

> Many colored, agitated, full of the ideal, the stirring, the stormy; dreams where, amidst unusual scenes, charged with adventure, with agitating risk and romantic chance, I still again and again met Mr. Rochester always at some exciting crisis; and then the sense of being in his arms, hearing his voice, meeting his eye, touching his hand and cheek, loving him, being loved by him & the hope of passing a lifetime at his side, would be renewed, with all its first force and fire. (235)

These dreams reveal the love Jane maintains for Rochester, and prefigure her return and subsequent marriage to him. However, when the love is separated, it further adds to the realistic presentation of then society.

While Jane has a vibrant feeling towards life, she is usually able to differentiate distinctly between waking life and dreaming, even in ambiguous situations. Her most praise worthy character of never losing hope remains intact with her from the beginning to the end. Like, despite Rochester and his servant Mrs. Fairfax unsuccessfully attempt to convince Jane that her sightings of Bertha Mason are dreams. One night, shortly before Jane discovers Rochester's room is ablaze, she hears a "demonic laugh" (295) emanate from her keyhole. Mrs. Fairfax tells Jane that the laugh she perceived was not real by saying “you must have been dreaming” (294). Jane remains unconvinced and replies heatedly, “I was not dreaming” (294). This belief in selfhood of Jane is the determination to fight against the difficulties imposed by the society and circle of the day.

Another night, Jane wakes to find Bertha tearing her wedding dress. Rochester assures her that her vision was “half dream, half reality,” claiming that the woman Jane saw was Grace Poole and that her state “between sleeping and waking” (277) caused her to envision the Grace in a hideous form Jane outwardly accepts this reasoning, but reflects, "Satisfied I was not" (278). Clearly, Jane can distinguish well between dream and reality, an imposing feature she was endowed with.

Jane Eyre stresses the virtues of self-reliance and perseverance in a world of adversity. Jane's impassionate resilience allows her to overcome the injustices heaped on her by Mrs. Reed, John Reed, Mr. Rochester and Miss Blanche Ingram. Jane, as a sensitive young woman refuses to be calloused by her hard life, pursues an independent, self-governing existence, making her in a sense a prototype of

champions for women's rights.

In a sense, the comfortable classes shut away the offspring of the less fortunate classes as a means of avoiding emotional entanglements; they rationalized their actions with protestations of charitable intentions and moral righteousness. She likes Rochester because he sticks on his ideas firmly. His judgment clouded by excessive pride, Rochester is a literary descendant of the ancient Greek playwright Sophocles' *Oedipus* and embodies the theme of figurative versus actual blindness. While sighted, Rochester fails to comprehend the extent of Jane's commitment to him, choosing instead to hide from her the demon of his private life, his insane wife, Bertha. Only after he is blinded during an attempt to rescue Bertha from the burning Thornfield, Rochester does recognize the true value of Jane.

Struggle and hardships faced by Jane are the harsh realities of the then society. However, the heroics of Jane make her worthy in the society. Jane's determination to fight the odds of the society is analogy to the coming of the generation. The age of dark was being dying to a new beginning. The hostility of the age was slowly being taken over by the goodness of Jane and like her characters present in the society.

Furthermore, use of foreshadowing and symbolic characters - or place-naming to leave hints for the reader about plot development is quite fascinating fact of the nineteenth century era. Like, at Lowood, Miss Scatcherd is as hard and abrasive as her name, and Maria Temple acts as the sanctified refuge for Jane that her surname signifies. Overall, the plot is rich with memorable characters acting within a predictable range of psychological and social motivations. Their actions and dialogue are well documented, and the settings are described adequately enough to provide appropriate context.

Similarly, the cruel treatment Jane undergoes in the novel is a stark example of

the gloom prevalent in the society, in those days. She is only a representative character, out of the thousands, who found no light at the end of the tunnel. In a conversation preceding their betrothal, Rochester treats Jane like a good servant: because she's been a dependent who has done her duty, he, as her employer, wants to offer her assistance in finding a new job. Jane confirms her secondary status by referring to Rochester as master, and believing wealth, caste, custom that separate her from him. She fears he will treat her like an automaton because she is poor, obscure, plain and little, mistakenly believing the lower classes to be heartless and soulless. Claiming the aristocratic privilege of creating his own rules, Rochester redefines Jane's class status, by defining her as his equal and likeness.

As such, the novel critiques the behaviour of the most of the upper-class characters of the day. Blanche Ingram is haughty and superficial, John Reed is debauched, and Eliza Reed is inhumanely cold. Rochester is a primary example of upper-class debauchery, with his series of mistresses and his attempt to make Jane a member of the harem. In her final view of Thornfield, after Bertha has burned it down, Jane emphasizes the stark contrast between her comforting, flowering, breathtaking dream of Thornfield, and the reality of its trodden and wasted grounds. The discrepancy emphasizes that the world's vision of the upper classes doesn't always capture the hidden passions that boil under the veneer of genteel tranquility.

One of Jane's tasks in the novel is to revitalize the upper classes, which have become mired in debauchery and haughtiness. Just as Rochester sought Jane for her freshness and purity, the novel suggests that the upper classes in general need the pure moral values and stringent work ethic of the middle classes. At novel's end, Rochester recognizes the error in his lifestyle, and his excessive passions have been quenched; he is reborn as a proper, mild-mannered husband, happily dependent on his wife's

moral and intellectual guidance – a shift in the attitude of 19th century concepts.

Nineteenth century was a desperate time for the people, not only for the peasants and the laborers but also for bourgeoisies like Rochester. According to Trevelyan, "It was troubled by the clash between the puritans and the clergymen, who were in an attempt to push the women into the age old framework of morality; confining them within the domesticity" (39). On the other hand, some females largely in support of their counterpart males were in an attempt to break loose the age old confinement. In the power struggle between the feminist and its supporters and the leaders of so-called puritan society, the female were the ones, who were suffering the most. *Jane Eyre* is set in this difficult scenario, where Jane tries to break away the orthodox set of beliefs.

In the novel, the central character suffers, though they do not have any significant causes for it, largely similar to the condition of the people of the day, who were forced to suffer for no any apparent reasons. In the midst of all these, Jane a representative figure stands as the fight against the destiny, and her status is the revival of hope of the people of the day. Through the presentation of characters, who are slave to their destiny by birth and remain so, throughout the life, however, desperately they try to overcome fate. On the other hand, there are characters that are born fateful and enjoy the life, similarly, but, few of them fall, unexpectedly, like Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. She has depicted the internal conflict in the character's mind, which is also shown as being destined to do so. Bronte tries to show that destiny decides what shall happen in human life because it is already decided why they should suffer. Destiny of mankind was in the process of taking a leap in the coming of the new generation.

However, the coming of the new age encouraged the lowly people to stand up

and fight for a better tomorrow. As, they had defied death, they were not to worry about anything, anymore. Most people in the era were in a mentality of challenging the despotism of eighteenth century morality, and few were trying to break away from the root. The time in Europe was itself hopeless as being the time of industrial revolution, which resulted in excessive exploitation of individuals. Bronte, who was highly affected from the social and economic changes that was coming with the new era, believed in love and affection as weapons to change the society. It was the time, when the orthodox concept of love was being challenged. Jane, who is in love with Rochester, does not hesitate to express her love, as:

> No; I know I should think well of myself; but that is not enough; if others don't love me, I would rather die than live--I cannot bear to be solitary and hated, Helen. 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. (122)

Jane is a rebel, who faces the antagonism imposed on her by the society but stands against it, in many occasions, including her expression of love to Rochester. Thus the ideas prevalent in the society, during the mid-nineteenth century were crumbling, as people like Jane were seeking freedom in choice of love and marriage.

It was an era when the concept of love was also changing its meaning. It was the time, when people were looking for freshness in love and sex. Defying the ancient idea of love, Jane philosophies love, as:

> Most true is it that 'beauty is in the eye of the gazer.' My master's colourless, olive face, square, massive brow, broad and jetty eyebrows,

> deep eyes, strong features, firm, grim mouth,--all energy, decision, will – were not beautiful, according to rule; but they were more than beautiful to me: they were full of an interest, an influence that quite mastered me – that took my feelings from my own power and fettered them in his. I had not intended to love him: the reader knows I had wrought hard to exasperate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong! He made me love him without looking at me. (173)

Jane strongly expresses her newfound knowledge of her love for Rochester, unabashedly or dishonestly. Jane realizes she must look out for herself and live according to the values she has placed as significant in her life, including her love life. Rochester finally becomes human for her – no longer an idol – the only locale of equality.

Jane Eyre expresses the significance of struggle, dreams and day-dreams, which the people of the era were habitual to. Despite Jane's distaste for fantasies and inefficiency, she is a frequent day-dreamer. Rochester recounts observing Jane's pace of walk and activities around the mansion as if a day-dream. When the voice of Mrs. Fairfax, awakens Jane, Rochester imagines her thinking “My fine visions are all very well, but I must not forget they are absolutely unreal” and finding a task to complete to ensure she does not slip back into daydreaming" (22).

In yet another feature of Jane, the novel depicts her as learning to suppress her passions over the course of the novel. It is another important feature depicting the fight against the society. After a turbulent childhood, Jane fulfils a Victorian ideal of womanhood, and grows more graceful and composed as she completes her education.

Despite her placid exterior, Jane still maintains a wild and active dream life According to Maurianne Adams, Jane even pays “inordinate attention to the details of her dream life” (85). Jane’s dreams thus reveal the raw emotions she attempts to mask in order to be an ideal Victorian lady. Jane's capacity to imagine is exposed in her capacity to paint. They reveal her great awareness for dreams. Jane describes the drawings of her visions as, "The subjects had indeed risen vividly on my mind" (242). Rochester declares, "I daresay you did exist in a kind of artist's dreamland while you blend and arrange these paintings" (244). Thus, the act of painting assists her to cope with the harsh reality.

The first painting shows a ship's mast a bare hand, and a bracelet rising out of a turbulent green sea. The second painting is of a wind-rustled hill below a night sky in which a cosmic female form is visible. The third is a monumental bleak human head rising out of the ocean, supported by hands and resting on an iceberg. Adams argues that the pictures represent the scope of Jane's unconscious life. In the first two, the mast, arm, and the hill are Jane's consciousness, while the submerged ship and body and the faint cosmic woman are her consciousness. The third image, "depicts the ice-bound landscape of Jane's despair" (Adams 85). Jane's dream art may thus reveal the extent of her suppressed, passionate feelings, and unconscious.

It is not only Jane's dream, or her hardships, but the bleak mentality of nineteenth century people, who were in an attempt to try to seek a newer and better tomorrow. It is not only about Jane's failure or success, but also symbolic to the change coming to the society. The dream of Jane was similar to almost all the new generation of people.

Jane also emphasizes the distinction between illusion and reality when she and Rochester first become engaged. Rochester becomes giddy at the prospect of

marriage, and he speaks of his love for Jane in exuberant terms. “You are a beauty, in my eyes; and a beauty just after the desire of my heart – delicate and aerial” (221). Jane quickly refutes him on the grounds that his statements belong in the dream world, not the world of reality. She rejects the idealized future he imagines for them, calling his musings a fairy tale of sadness and strife. She brushes off his compliments of her beauty, saying “You are dreaming, Sir; or you are sneering” (221).

As such, Jane as a resisting feminine who wants her voice and the voice of people of her class and standard be heard. She writes:

> I have now been married for 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 near to her mate than I am; ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. (475)

Thus, all the pain and the struggle of the once a submerged Jane established herself in the society of the time. She is blessed with love and dignity, from Rochester and as well as from the society. It is the recognition that she receives on being a part of the society that has always taken the superior and the beautiful under consideration.

III. Exposition of Orthodox Mentality

Nineteenth-century English society becomes hindered by conflict between the aristocrats and the working class people. In such a scenario, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* came as a ray of hope as through the depiction of rise an orphan into the decent status in the then society marks the a shift from historical orthodox mentality to liberalism. The novel presents a swarthy governess, Jane Eyre in strife against the then society. Jane was just a normal looking girl but with sharp understanding to her surroundings. The depiction of not so good looking heroine in fight against the mentality of the system surprised the critics of the day. However, Bronte's brilliant depiction of hope and reconciliation through forgiveness and compassion helped to sooth the conflicting parties – the elite and the worker groups, of her time.

Jane, the central character of *Jane Eyre,* is sensitive and passionate, intelligent and reflective orphan child. As a child, she is keenly aware of her status as an orphan and an outsider. She learns to observe others quietly and takes refuge from her loneliness in books. When pushed beyond the limits of her tolerance for pain and injustice, Jane reacts impetuously. At Lowood School, she rebukes both John Reed and his mother for their cruelty towards her. Later, at Thornfield, provoked by Rochester's emotional manipulation, she hotly declares herself to the status of his soul mate. Though, often described as a small, plain spirit, Jane attempts to curb her self-righteousness with an attitude of stoic acceptance, Jane shows flashes of spirit and temper that make her a compelling character full of passion of compassion and forgivingness, even to rivals and enemies.

The novel comes out from the shadows of class struggle that had left the society of the era with a negative attitude towards life and living. Jane, despite the hardships grows up to be a teacher, and later a governess, who believes in forgiving.

In the time flawed by pessimist ideas and philosophies all over, and when people were simply tired of trying something new, Jane's motivation works as a tonic. Her cheerful nature and friendly attitudes, at least lessens some of the woes widely prevalent in the society. Jane's hope and sympathy to all, including her wrong doers spread message of goodwill and benevolence to the then existing society.

The cause of struggle and unrest in the society is due to the presence of alarming economic dissimilarities. This has helped to make mentality of people like Rochester and Mrs. Reed were advocated in favor of amassing more wealth rather than looking to softer humane sides. Thus, the society flourished towards cynicism, but, Jane's attitude to overcome the problems through forgiveness as the tool served as a way out of the maze of struggle and hatred, invited by it. As such, *Jane Eyre* is an advocacy of reconcile among the socially and economically far apart classes of people of the nineteenth century.

Thus, *Jane Eyre* is a rewriting of the voice of downtrodden and subjugated people of the Victorian era. Furthermore, it is the voice of people who were interpellated due to weak economic statures. The era represented a blend of social and economic hardships put together, which ultimately results in provocation of the working class of people and ultimately ends in their exploitation by their owners. In the context, the struggle faced and overcome by Jane is the rise and acceptance of lower middle class people to the status of dignity and, towards the making of concept of viewing and analyzing history from the inferior's perspective – notion of Historicism.

Works Cited

Arbams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Harcourt, 2000.

Adams, Hazard ed. *Critical Theory since Plato*. 7th Fort Worth: HBJC, 1992.

Adams, Maurianne. *Readings of Bronte*. London: Universal Publications, 1976.

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review, 1971. Blackburn, Simon. *Dictionary of Philosophy*. New Delhi: Oxford, 2004.

Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Michael Mason, Ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.

Cecil, David. "Feminism and Bronte." *Nineteenth-Century Literary Criticism*. Detroit: Gale, 1985. 83-87.

Cox, R. G. *The Critical Heritage*. New Delhi: Vikash Publications, 1970.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 2. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

Gilbert, Sandra M and Susan Gubar. "Charlotte Bronte." *Nineteenth Century Literary Criticism.* Ed. Laurie L. Harris and Emily B. Tennyson. Detroit: Gale, 1985. 87-93.

Hamilton, Paul. *Historicism*: *The New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Shuttleworth, Sally. "*Jane Eyre*: Lurid Hieroglyphics." *Jane Eyre: A Critical Interpretation*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2007. 7-42.

Smith, Bonnie G. "The Domestic Sphere in the Victorian Age." *Changing Lives*. London: Oxford UP, 1979. 67-92.

Trevelyan, G. M. *English Social History*. London: Longman, 1972.

White, Hayden. "Historiography as Narration." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 1.6 (1992): 99-115.