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From The Bottom To The Top: Class And Gender Struggle In Brontë's *Jane Eyre*[*]

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ABSTRACT

The Victorian era, which refers to the nineteenth century in the British history, was the period of industrial revolution, which gave birth to many changes in the British politics, economy and culture. It was in this period of time that class and gender were mostly on the foreground. And it was the women who suffered more than men from these class and gender-based cultural norms.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* revolves around the title character's struggle against class and gender oppressions as an orphan from her childhood till her adulthood. The protagonist is born into the Victorian society with double disadvantages as a female orphan. However, she does not fit into the Victorian concept of "the Angel in the House". While creating this kind of character, Brontë draws contrast between her protagonist and the other female characters throughout the novel. Jane's cousins Eliza and Georgiana and her aunt Mrs. Reed at Gateshead; Miss Temple and Helen at Lowood; Adele and Blanche Ingram at Thornfield; her cousins Mary and Diana at Marsh End represent the Victorian concept of "woman". Also, at each of her stations, let it be from either middle class or upper class, Jane encounters a man, who represents patriarchy. Her cousin John Reed at Gateshead, Mr. Brocklehurst at Lowood, Mr. Rochester at Thornfield, and Mr. Rivers at Marsh End all represent patriarchy. In her journey from Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Marsh End to Ferndean, Jane goes against the grains of her period. She discerns that there is a false association between classes and virtues. She achieves getting over the class and gender boundaries in the end at Ferndean by climbing the ladder from bottom to the top.

Thus, the aim of the study is to examine Jane Eyre's progress in contrast to the Victorian models in the novel by taking into consideration the period's concepts of class and gender.

Keywords: the Victorian period, Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, class, gender.

Dipten Zirveye: Brontë'nin *Jane Eyre* Romanında Sınıf Ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet Mücadelesi

ÖZ

Britanya tarihinde on dokuzuncu yüzyıl olan Viktorya Çağı, Britanya siyaseti, ekonomisi ve kültüründe birçok değişime yol açan endüstri devrimi dönemidir. Sınıf ve toplumsal cinsiyet bu dönemde çoğunlukla ön plandadır. Bu sınıf ve toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı kültürel normlardan erkeklere nazaran kadınlar daha çok çekmiştir.

Charlotte Brontë'nin *Jane Eyre* romanı, çocukluğundan yetişkinliğine kadar sınıf ve toplumsal cinsiyet baskılarına karşı mücadele eden başlık karakteri etrafında döner. Başkahraman dişi bir yetim olarak çifte dezavantajla Viktorya toplumunda dünyaya gelmiştir. Fakat, kendisi, Viktorya döneminin "Evdeki Melek" kavramına uymaz. Bu türde bir karakter yaratırken, Brontë, roman boyunca baş kahramanı ve diğer dişi karakterler arasında zıtlık kurar. Jane'nin Gateshead'deki kuzenleri Eliza ve Georgiana ve halası Bayan Reed; Lowood'daki Bayan Temple ve Helen; Thornfield'daki Adele ve Blanche Ingram; Marsh End'deki kuzenleri Mary ve Diana, Viktorya döneminin 'kadın' kavramını temsil etmektedir. Ayrıca, Jane, gittiği yerlerin her birinde, ister orta sınıf olsun isterse üst sınıf, ataerkilliği temsil eden bir erkekle karşılaşır. Gateshead'deki kuzeni John Reed, Lowood'daki Bay Brocklehurst, Thornfield'daki Bay Rochester ve Marsh End'deki Bay Rivers, hepsi, ataerkilliği temsil etmektedir. Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Marsh End'den Ferndean'a olan yolculuğunda, Jane, döneminin tabiatına karşı çıkar. Sınıflar ve erdemler arasında yanlış bir ilişkilendirme olduğunu fark eder. En sonunda, dipten zirveye tırmanıp, Ferndean'da sınıf ve toplumsal cinsiyet sınırlarını aşmayı başarmış olur.

Böylece, bu çalışmanın amacı dönemin sınıf ve toplumsal cinsiyet kavramlarını göz önüne alarak Jane Eyre'in romandaki Viktoryan modellere zıt olarak ilerleyişini incelemektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Viktorya Dönemi, Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, sınıf, toplumsal cinsiyet

During the Victorian era, Britain underwent significant changes that impacted the society deeply afterwards. It was the period of industrial revolution, which resulted in various developments in trade and, accordingly, automatically social upheaval in Britain. The changes made the reign of Queen Victoria the most progressive one in the British history (Fletcher, 2002). However, behind Britain's shining face, there

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was trouble and anxiety, as well. One of its reasons was the growing imbalance among upper, middle and working classes, as a result of prospering middle class in contrast to the sinking working class. The differences among these social classes were evident in their life conditions. The upper class composed by the British aristocracy and gentry was wealthy and they played a significant role upon British politics. Holding political power referred to involving much in the economics for them, too. They became influential in building railways, canals and mining around the country by means of the economic contribution of the growing middle class. On the other hand, the conditions of working class people became worse and worse. They occupied the low rank of the classes and hence benefitted the least among the classes. Many of them worked in mining, fishing, transportation, industry and other manual trade. In addition, their single purpose in their lives became just making money to be able to stay alive and fighting the poverty and illness (Pollard, 1993; 99-105).

In fact, the situation was much worse for women and children. For instance, boys were employed in dangerous works for their young age. They were put to work even in coalmines, crawling all day through tunnels (McDowall, 1989: 108). Many women living in the rural areas moved to the cities to be able to work in heavy conditions in factories. They also worked in farms by digging and picking cottons or in mines just like little children. The more lucky ones became maids for upper class families. If the woman was single, she could be employed for them as a servant or a governess (Mitchell, 2009; 21-22). Therefore, it can be concluded that the status, rights and duties of women cannot be generalized since they varied according to the social class they came from. It indicates that social class determines the traditional ways of women's lives, because the Victorians believed that each class has its own standards and people were expected to conform to the roles of their classes. Therefore, women had distinct conditions related to the class that they came from (Mitchell, 2009; 27). However, regardless of their classes, it can be claimed that women enjoyed a few legal and social rights. And there was one thing that remained unchanged: they were expected to remain subservient to their fathers or husbands. Until the acts of 1882 and 1892, women could not vote, become property owners, and hold professional jobs apart from governess, a domestic servant, factory workers or agricultural labors (MacDowall, 1989; 120). They were 'angels in the house', as they were considered to be physically weak, fragile, and incapable to cope with the life outside. Therefore, their life was confined to the domestic sphere. As claimed by Hughes, "[n]ot only was it their job to counterbalance the moral taint of the public sphere in which their husbands laboured all day, they were also preparing the next generation to carry on this way of life", they were expected to be obedient and loyal to their husbands and a good mother for their children (http://www.bl.uk).

Throughout her novel *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) sheds light upon the period's class and gender issues by evoking the question about the Victorian women's positions and roles in the society. Thus, with the novel, Brontë puts up mirror to the English society of that time. Until that time women writers had had traditional Victorian woman characters in their works so as not to be criticized. The characters were beautiful, naïve, submissive and did not even dare to get over their class and gender boundaries, in this context, confirmed their position as the "angel[s] in the house". Therefore, upon her sisters claiming that it was impossible for the contemporary authors to create a heroine, who is out of the society's class and gender boundaries, Brontë's answer was: "I will prove to you that you are wrong; I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours" (qtd. in Gaskell, 1997; 235). Therefore, she creates Jane Eyre as a strong woman character shifting the class barriers, in this context, the social and economic restrictions upon her. In this respect, this study aims to show the character's struggle and achievement despite the strict Victorian norms. Her class and gender struggle is observed in her spatial shift: from Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Marsh End and throughout Ferndean: from an orphan, lower class girl, then a middle class governess to an upper class woman.

Jane's first struggle starts when she loses her parents and goes to live with the upper class family- the Reeds at Gateshead. When, her mother's brother, Mr. Reed is on the death bed, Mrs. Reed promises him that she will take care of Jane just like her three other children (Brontë, 2003; 11). Contrarily, she discards Jane and holds her children, especially John superior over Jane. She has three children: Eliza, Georgiana and John among whom Jane hates John most. The Reed family represents the upper class. Mrs. Reed and her children belittle and reprimand Jane as she is an orphan without any property. Jane understands that

she belongs to a lower class. John says to her: "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 to rummage my book-shelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years" (Brontë, 2003; 7-8). In his expression, such words as "dependent," "no money," "none," and "beg," refer to Jane's attributed lower class position. John behaves her as if she were a misbehaving pet. He calls her "bad animal" (Brontë, 2003; 8). This shows the way in which the wealthy Reeds treat Jane with cruelty, because she is an orphan; thus, she does not have a parent who will provide her an equal class. Becoming an orphan refers to becoming penniless and poor even in her cousin's eyes. Whenever the children have a quarrel among themselves, Jane is always guilty, beaten and locked in the room where her uncle has died. They behave her more like a servant than a family member. The servant says: "What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactresses' son! Your young master!" Jane replies: "Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?" The servant says: "No; you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep..." (Brontë, 2003; 7). With this conversation, Jane realizes that she is subordinated to both the family and the servants. In fact, John's patriarchal power among the female family members despite his young age derives from his being the sole male heir of the Reed Family. This also gives him a gender power to harass his sisters, servants, and dependent female cousin. Being aware of it, Jane claims that Mrs. Reed, Eliza, and Georgiana take side of John, and says: "the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him" (Brontë, 2003; 7). Jane becomes conscious of the fact that being male gives cruel John all rights in all terms in spite of his young age. Despite being the siblings at the same household, John seems more advantageous in comparison to his sisters Eliza and Georgina.

Although she does not lead a pleased life with the Reeds, Jane considers a life of poverty to be even worse as many other people think: "Poverty looks grim to grown people, still, more so to children: they have not much idea of industrious, working, respectable poverty; they think of the word only connected with ragged clothes, scanty food, fireless grates, rude manners and debasing vices; poverty for me was synonymous with degradation" (Brontë, 2003; 31). It is obvious that Jane has been brought up with some prejudices against lower class in her aristocratic household until her father's death. Her assumptions concerning poverty indicate that she associates it with such qualities as idleness and unkindness that she abhors. However, Jane is signaled by the conversation between her and the servant who implies that Jane is in a lower position than the servants in the Reeds' house, so she accepts going to Lowood School, a boarding school for orphan low-class children, instead of accepting her role in the household of Gateshead. As Andrienne Rich states: "By choosing not to be a part of the social charade and by not doing what is expected of a young girl in her position, Jane takes a stand against the social conventions" (2001; 472). Her last words to her aunt are shocking, considering that she is only a child: "I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I 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 (Brontë, 2003; 36). Hereby, according to Terry Eagleton, she is "stripped from the outset of significant ties of kin" (2005; 24) by refusing her closest relative in her life.

In fact, Gateshead and Lowood are "similar to each other from the perspective of submissive and repressive treatment" (Rich, 2001; 472). The Lowood School where Jane's aunt sends her both to stay and study is not very different from the red room Jane has been locked in at Gateshead. Lowood is a boarding school for orphan girls where they are under a strict sensual and alimentary discipline. It is like a penitentiary for Jane, as the girls suffer and are behaved cruelly by the headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst and their teacher Miss Scatcherd. John is replaced by Mr. Brocklehurst at Lowood as male authority over her. She claims: "I disliked Mr. Brocklehurst; and I was not alone in the feeling. He is a harsh man; at once pompous and meddling he cut off our hair; and for economy's sake bought us bad needles and thread, with which we could hardly sew" (Brontë, 2003; 125). In fact, this is the second time she meets him. In their first encounter at the Reeds, he tells: "Humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood. I therefore, direct that especial care shall be bestowed on its cultivation among them" (Brontë, 2003; 43). On the other hand, his manners at Lowood indicate how religious hypocrisy reinforces prejudice against the lower class. He is not representative of a good Christian in terms of the

duties of his class towards humility. He is a corrupted religious figure. He claims: "My mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety—not with braided hair or costly apparel" (Brontë, 2003; 77). Mr. Brocklehurst tells the girls that disobedient children are doomed to go to hell. On the other hand, Jane observes that his girls and wife are "splendidly attired in velvet, silk and furs" (Brontë, 2003; 78). He is a religion abuser and prejudicious against lower class while living in luxury and misbehaving the girls at Lowood to make them grown up with awareness of their class and gender boundaries in the Victorian England.

At Lowood, Jane does not have any changes in her class and her position in the society she suffers. However, she questions the opinion that social class determines the manners and virtues of people. This questioning begins with the cruelty of Mrs. Reed, as an upper-class woman. She says to her aunt: "People think you a good woman, but you are bad, hard-hearted. You are deceitful!" (Brontë, 2003; 36). The question in her mind finds its answer in time. In contrast to Mr. Brocklehurst's cruel manners, she meets Helen, who is a good-hearted, naïve and for her, more religious than Mr. Brocklehurst. She is the first person Jane meets, who adapts herself to the qualities she preaches. She represents what true Christian love is. Whence, she realizes that poverty does not signify bad character and class does not determine a person's morality, because she observes it as vice versa. She learns that labeling people as good or bad according to their class is wrong. In one of her later lectures at Marsh End, she refers to Helen by saying to her cousin: "Some of the best people that ever lived have been as destitute as I am; and if you are a Christian, you ought not to consider poverty crime" (Brontë, 2003; 397), on the other hand, she also criticizes Helen's excessive submission, because Jane observes that Helen accepts the conditions at Lowood, keeps her silence when she is punished. Her submissiveness bothers Jane, and she thinks that Helen should defend herself by breaking her silence against her unfair punishments. She thinks: "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" (Brontë, 2003; 65) because in her words, loving one's enemy means that "I should love Mrs. Reed, which I cannot do; I should bless her son John, which is impossible" (Brontë, 2003; 66). It is evident that Jane has a rebellious nature against injustices in life. She witnesses the death of little Helen following her punishment. Accordingly, as Susan Fraiman notes, "Helen's brief life serves arguably to steer Jane away from the shoals of submission..." (1993; 103). She vows not to obey the injustices imposed upon herself because of her lower class in the society.

When she becomes a teacher at Lowood many years later, Jane is an educated woman now (Brontë, 2003; 72). She thinks she has made a class progress. She tells: "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" (Brontë, 2003; 87). Thereby, she begins to enjoy becoming a middle class educated girl who can be employed as a governess, so she prefers her new position at Lowood to the one at Gateshead.

Her moving to Thornfield is her class shift: from the lower class as a poor orphan and then a teacher at Lowood to the middle class as a governess at the age of eighteen. Leaving Lowood for a new life at Thornfield is like passing to another passage while reading. She thinks; "a new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play..." (Brontë, 2003; 80). She says firmly: "I'm the governess" (Brontë, 2003; 116), as being well conscious of moving from poverty to a better way of life as a respectable person at Thornfield. Now, she has a job and a warm place to live at the same time at Mr. Rochester's household, Thorfield. However, she comes across many thorns at Thornfield where she suffers much from afterwards.

She is welcomed with the strict distinction between middle class and upper class that is implied in Rochester's words when they speak alone for the first time. He says to her: "Miss Eyre, draw your chair still a little farther forward: you are yet too far back; I cannot see you without disturbing my position in the comfortable chair, which I have no mind to do" (Brontë, 2003; 114). The relationship between master and servant is shown between them. Mr. Rochester is the patriarch and master at the Thornfield household, and as an upper-class man, he is at the top of the social hierarchy. Therefore, as a governess

and a lady, Jane is supposed to show respect the high aristocracy and patriarchal power. She is treated as a servant by Mr. Rochester. On the other hand, she compares herself to Mrs. Fairfax, who is the housekeeper at Thornfield: "The equality between her and me was real...my position was all the freer" (Brontë, 2003; 87). In this sense, her guest for independence and equality is flourished, as she thinks that although some people in the house are above her in terms of class, she is not at the bottom due to the existence of servants at the household of Thornfield. Therefore, as claimed by Heather Glen, Jane seeks to become a woman that "strikes out courageously and independently and forges her own career..." (2002; 157). It is obvious that class and gender boundaries bother her. The reason is that no matter how she has struggled to leave Lowood with the hope of starting a new life at Thornfield, she still finds herself entrapped by the class and especially gender boundaries. She feels herself a bird trapped in a golden cage owned by an upper-class patriarch. Her desire for independence and equality is sensed from her thoughts:

> 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; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (Brontë, 2003; 101)

Her expressions confirm that Victorian "[w]omen were living in misogynist world and under male dominance" (Muda, 2011; 78). Thereby, there is a huge gap between men and women in the Vctorian society. However, for her, two genders should benefit from the same conditions equally. Concerning Mr. Rochester's daughter for whom she is employed, she thinks that the daughter is also imprisoned by the walls of Mr. Rochester's house that stands for patriarchy. Not allowed to explore the life outside, the little girl is observed to be confined to the house learning sewing, drawing and French. Mr. Rochester educates his daughter, but prepares her properly for her gender roles in the society she lives in. Noticing all these, but subverting the Victorian women's attributed role as "angel in the house", Jane claims: "I am not an angel...and I will not be one till I die: I will be myself" (Brontë, 2003; 247). She refuses to be the domestic angel that Mr. Rochester, who represents the patriarchal society and its conventions want her to be.

When meeting Blanche Ingram, a beautiful woman from upper class, Jane asserts "the Victorians saw woman's true function as an 'influence' rather than 'an independent agent' " (Ewbank, 1966; 39). Miss Ingram tries to show the class difference between her and Jane. Therefore, she makes effort to humiliate Jane by telling loudly about her dreadful governesses in her childhood. This reveals the difference between them (Brontë, 2003; 212). Jane thinks: "She was not good; she was not original: she used to repeat sounding phrases from books: she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own" (Brontë, 2003; 162). At Thornfield during three weeks, Ingram and her companions spend all their time on such trivial amusements as singing, playing, going on excursions, attending a gallery, or playing in the billiard room. They do not seem to read or make intellectual conversations. It is obvious that they are valuable only with their bodies their adornments, not with the morals or virtues. Observing these, Jane thinks that in fact, her intellectual and moral attributes make her superior to Blanche Ingram, who comes to Thornfield to influence Mr. Rochester and get married to him, when compared to Jane who comes there to make money by maintaining her virtue and self-respect.

While Miss Ingram's interest is Mr. Rochester's money and forthcoming advantages of upper class, Jane's only ambition is "to save money enough out of my earnings to set up a school some day in a little house rented by myself" (Brontë, 2003; 173). Marriage in the Victorian period was based on financial senses: "A young man needed to be able to show that he earned enough money to support a wife and any future children before the girl's father would give his permission" (Hughes). Therefore, upon hearing a rumor that Mr. Rochester's fortune "was not a third of what was supposed", Miss Ingram and her mother leave Thornfield (Brontë, 2003; 257). On the other hand, Jane utters Mr. Rochester: "...wherever you are is my home – my only home" (Brontë, 2003; 216).

Jane proves her own virtue as a woman and sincerely loves Mr. Rochester. It is a fact that if she were not virtuous, she would try to attract Mr. Rochester sexually to get over the class boundaries between

them; however, she achieves attracting him with her little beauty and no upper class status, but more virtue and purity. She states: "I need not to sell my soul to buy bliss. I have an inward treasure born with me, which can keep me alive all extraneous delights should be withheld, or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give" (Brontë, 2003; 203). She respects herself and likes standing upon her feet and tries to supply equality to people from higher classes with her stance, expressions and manners by conserving her self-respect.

Grown up in a class-based society, Jane is also so class conscious that she tries to suppress her feelings towards Mr. Rochester and persuade herself about that her relationship with him cannot go further, as she is just a governess in that household. Class difference becomes an obstacle for any possibilities of love between Jane and Mr. Rochester because a relationship between a simple governess and a wealthy gentleman would be despised by the class-based society. It is shown in Jane's expressions obviously:

> ..I had any cause to take a vital interest. Not that I humbled myself by a slavish notion of inferiority: on the contrary, I just said —You have nothing to do with the master of Thornfield, further than to receive the salary he gives you for teaching his protégée, and to be grateful for such respectful and kind treatment as, if you do your duty, you have a right to expect at his hands. Be sure that is the only tie he seriously acknowledges between you and him; so don't make him the object of your fine feelings, your raptures, agonies, and so forth. He is not of your order: keep to your caste, and be too self-respecting to lavish the love of the whole heart, soul, and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised. (Brontë, 2003; 164)

Furthermore, when Mr. Rochester seeks to make Jane jealous by announcing that he will marry Miss Ingram and Jane will work for them as their servant, Jane reveals her class prejudice in her response to Rochester, when she rejects becoming nothing but a servant for Mr. Rochester and his new wife: "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!....and we stood at God's feet, equal, - as we are" (Brontë, 2003; 256). Jane expresses her independent identity as a woman who can speak for herself and she wishes to live the equality which she so long has been fighting for.

Her dream is to marry Mr. Rochester not to become wealthy by marrying him. It is indicated in her reactions when Mr. Rochester buys her expensive gifts. Rochester says to her: "I will myself put the diamond chain round your neck, and the circlet on your forehead… and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairylike fingers with rings" (Brontë, 2003; 261). She thinks: "...if I had ever so small independency; I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester..." (Brontë, 2003; 236). This quotation indicates, according to Rich, that "Jane refuses to become the object that Mr. Rochester possesses and again it is a form of rebellion" (2003; 479). Instead of pleasing Jane, the gifts make her anxious and she replies: "Oh, sir! Never mind jewels! I don't like to hear them spoken of. Jewels for Jane Eyre sounds unnatural and strange; I would rather not have them" (2001: 303). The possibility of sacrificing her life for Mr. Rochester as a typical Victorian woman terrifies her. Jane declares: "I only want an easy mind, sir; not crushed by crowded obligation. Do you remember what you said of Celine Varens? — of the diamonds, the cashmeres you gave her? I will not be your English Celine Varens" (Brontë, 2003; 272). It is also noteworthy that she keeps calling Mr. Rochester as 'sir'. In fact, Mrs. Fairfax is like a reminder for Jane of the social inequality between her and Mr. Rochester. This fact is endorsed with Mrs. Fairfax's astonishment when she learns that Jane and Mr. Rochester is getting married. She becomes shocked not because she thinks that Rochester cannot love Jane sincerely, but because she is culturally persuaded that "gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses" (Brontë, 2003; 334). Therefore, instead of indulging herself in the wealth of Mr. Rochester, she insists: "I shall continue to act as Adele's governess; by that, I shall earn my board and lodging, and thirty pounds a year besides… and you shall give me nothing, but your regard" (Brontë, 2003; 315). Her expressions show her uneasiness about the class barrier between them, and she expects nothing from Mr. Rochester apart from his love and respect.

Learning on the wedding day that Mr. Rochester is already married to another woman called Bertha Mason, Jane feels an endurable pain in her heart and decides to leave Thornfield despite Mr. Rochester's insistences and her love of him, as she becomes disappointed. Bertha Mason who is mad and imprisoned

at the attic frightens her and she becomes concerned with a similar end waiting for her, following her marriage to Mr. Rochester. While departing, she expresses again her indulgence in independency: "I am no bird, and no net ensnares me. I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you" (Brontë, 2003; 223). While leaving Thornfield, Jane feels that she has saved her independence, dignity and self-respect: "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself" (Brontë, 2003; 280). It is obvious that she cannot stand the thought that she has been deceived by Mr. Rochester, who is already legally married to another woman even if she is mad.

Finding her fainted on the way, John Rivers takes Jane to their home at Marsh End where he lives with his sisters called Diana and Mary, who turn out to be her cousins later on. She does not feel herself independent enough in their house, because she feels that Mr. Rivers behaves her as her master, which of course annoys her: "He acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind: ...I could no longer talk or laugh freely ..." (Brontë, 2003; 352). He proposes her and wants to take her to India where she can teach the colonized children. He says: "You shall be mine: I claim you..." (Brontë, 2003; 356). It is clear in his words and speaking style that Mr. Rivers considers Jane to be his object, which that he can use as he pleases. St. John Rivers reminds her of her cousin, John Reed not only in their behaviours but also in their names. Therefore, she fears and rejects any marriages without love, while Mr. Rochester is in her mind: "If I were to marry you," she says to him, "you would kill me. You are killing me now" (Brontë, 2003; 357).

Her inheritance of a fortune from her uncle changes Jane's life, because, due to it, Jane can experience an ensuing material independence in the Victorian society one more time; however, this time, not as a working woman but an upper class one. In this sense, she becomes the equal of Mr. Rochester in material conditions. This sudden wealth also takes off the master-servant barrier between the couple. For this reason, she decides to go back to Thronfield where she finds that Mr. Rochester's house has been burnt and Bertha is dead. Mr. Rochester and his loyal servant Mrs. Fairfax go on living at Ferndean. Mr. Rochester is now "helpless, indeed – blind and cripple." (Brontë, 2003; 380). Indeed, Mr. Rochester is now the dependent one because he becomes physically dependent on the others' help as a blind man while Jane is not only physically but also financially independent and strong now: "…I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress" (Brontë, 2003; 385). It can be claimed that Jane's expression also indicates a form of revenge against the Vcitorian society norms. She proves that she is not dependent on Rochester financially or physically. Whence, she accepts Rochester's propose, believing that they can live as equal at Ferndean. She says to him: "I can build a house of my own close up your door" (Brontë, 2003; 440) by insisting upon marrying him.

In conclusion, Jane is rebellious against the domestic feminine image drawn by the nineteenth-century writers. She challenges and condemns the conventions of the period, because "[s]he stands up for herself and her ambitions, despite the conventions of society telling women existence" (Brontë, 2003; 317). In *Jane Eyre*, The novel alerts about the lines between controlling and being controlled, and powerful and powerless, because the protagonist starts her life as a lower-class orphan at Gateshead and then at Lowood, then ascends to the middle class as a governess at Thornfield and at last ends up with upper-class woman due to her uncle's inheritance. In this respect, she climbs the Victorian class ladder from the bottom to the top by coming over the borderlines constructed by the society.

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