

Socio-economic Independence and Female Emancipation: A Marxist Feminist Analysis of *Jane Eyre*

Rimsha Rauf, Dr Qurra-tul-Aen

Abstract

Marxist Feminism, an intersecting branch of Marxism and Feminism, observes the ways in which females are oppressed or marginalized due to capitalism. This research mainly aims at finding out how Charlotte Bronte criticizes gender discrimination against females based on their socio-economic status in her novel, *Jane Eyre* (1847). Earlier studies on *Jane Eyre* have mainly focused on its feminist themes but this project analyzes the Marxist Feminist ideology depicted in *Jane Eyre*. By applying the lens of Marxist-Feminism, based on the insights of Elisabeth Armstrong's *Marxist and Socialist Feminism* (2020) and Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong's *Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex: Towards Feminist Marxism* (1983), it is contended that Bronte strongly condemns socio-economic discrimination against females. This research highlights the typical abusive relationship of a capitalist with his worker with special emphasis on the unrestrained exploitation of female workers. This research discusses the major and minor female characters of the novel who undergo oppression due to their socio-economic statuses. Bronte also seems to use Jane's character as a mouthpiece to promote the cause of socio-economic independence for females. Jane's educational and economic resistance against patriarchal ideals calls for socio-economic equality for all genders. This study also highlights the significance of female comradeship against patriarchal and capitalist subjugation.

Key words: Capitalism, Discrimination, Exploitation, Female Socio-Economic emancipation, Marxist Feminism

Introduction

This research establishes a connection between Marxism, Feminism, and Marxist Feminism. The novel, *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Bronte is a feminist text which trails the journey of its heroine Jane Eyre from her childhood to adulthood and finally to her marriage. The novel highlights many significant themes such as the hardships of the orphans, religion, gender roles, social rules, the quest for true love, independence, freedom and equality, the essence of Feminism along with supernatural touch and gothic elements. However, one of the many themes of this novel is the social stratification and marginalization of females due to their socio-economic conditions. With the help of a detailed textual analysis of the primary text, *Jane Eyre*, and using the lens of Marxist Feminism presented by Elisabeth Armstrong in *Marxist and Socialist Feminism (2020)* and by Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong in *Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex: Towards Feminist Marxism (1983)*, this research contends that Bronte criticized capitalism with special reference to gender discrimination while emphasizing the need for the economic independence of women for their sustainable emancipation.

History proves that females have been in a constant struggle for centuries to acquire social, political, and economic equality between the sexes. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) is believed to have laid the foundation of Feminism through her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in 1792 stressing the need for educational facilities for females. In literal terms, Feminism is the “belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests” (Merriam-Webster n.p). The prime motto of this theory is to acknowledge females as

worthy and constructive beings for a better society. Today, Feminism has been much more evolved than the ancient times. It has grown into several different branches, but the main objective is yet to empower females in every field of life so that they can work with men side by side. Besides political movements, literature has always been an effective strategy for voicing one's opinions and criticism against social norms. The writers of the 18th and 19th centuries are usually believed to be the progenitors of Feminist literature. The writings of Fanny Fern (1811-1872), Jane Austen (1775-1817) and the Bronte sisters are prized for their accurate portrayal of conservative seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth-century beliefs and their direct or indirect association with the movement of Feminism.

The novel, *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Bronte shook the entire Europe with its realistic depiction of the harsh patriarchal society of the Victorian era. It served as a platform to voice the opinions and criticism of the suppressed gender (female) against the cruel male dominant society (Lamonaca 245). Intrigued by the details, this novel has been chosen as the primary text and through textual analysis this research contends that Charlotte Bronte strongly criticizes the classism against females during the Victorian era in Great Britain. Using the lens of Marxist Feminism, the main objective of this research is to find out how Jane and other female characters undergo oppression due to their social and economic status. This research might help others to develop a better understanding of the oppression against females from underprivileged backgrounds.

Marxist Feminism is an intersecting branch of Marxism and Feminism which analyzes "different methods via which women are marginalized and exploited through capitalism" (Desai 119). Olivia Guy Evans presents the three major assumptions of Marxist Feminists, quoting that they are of the view that females are the primary source of producing labour and

channelling them into the social hierarchy of society. However, their role is not acknowledged and paid. Marxist Feminists believe that the working class females are double oppressed, by their capitalist masters as well as their working husbands. They believe that females absorb the anger and frustration of their exploited working husbands. Lastly, they believe that this sort of oppression against females, such as confining them to homes for unpaid domestic and reproductive labour supports capitalism. They also focus on highlighting the sad reality of considering females as a cheap source of labour who can be appointed on meagre wages and can be fired at any moment (Guy-Evans n.p).

Elisabeth Armstrong's theory of Marxist Feminism introduces some of the major ideas of Marxist Feminism such as unpaid domestic labour, the nonrecognition of housewives as domestic workers and the need for domestic wages. She claimed that in a capitalist society, the capitalist receives the profit, the worker receives the wages whereas the ones who reproduce the daily and generational life receive no wages or social value. Armstrong also discussed how female work such as spinning, weaving, and agricultural labour gave way when feudalism enclosed many lands. Thus, females were forced to work in privatized households as the head servants under the male master of the home (Armstrong 1-15). In addition to unpaid domestic labour, Marxist Feminism also accentuated the issue of less-paid female workers in public workplaces. Quoting Engels and Zetkin, Armstrong also presents this idea of viewing "marriage as a religious and state institution that has enforced women's subordination to men and capital" (Armstrong 5).

Similarly, Pat and Hugh Armstrong argue that the social and economic conditions of the 18th and 19th centuries forced people to sell their labouring power as they owned nothing else. Thus, the system confined females to homes and pronounced them best for reproductive

labour. Whereas capitalism compelled the men labourers to sell their ability to work in factories. “That is how capitalism clearly defined boundaries for men and women. Females were in fact freely compelled to marry and to have children and thus to do the domestic work” (Pat and Hugh Armstrong 6). Thus, it conveys that men and women were bound into unbreakable chains of traditional gender roles which were reinforced by the practices of capitalism. They also believe that capitalism has also introduced class differences among females. The concerns and issues of the upper-class females are far more different from those of the working-class or the middle- class females. They further elaborate that the working-class woman is not only oppressed by the capitalist society but also by her male partner who is also being oppressed by the capitalist society (Pat and Hugh Armstrong 7-43). Thus, it relates to how Charlotte Bronte picks up on the issue of oppression against females due to their socio-economic statuses. Bronte elaborates in her novel that females are not only oppressed in the social realms but also in their own houses by a patriarch such as John Reed and Mr. Rochester in the case of Jane. She also highlights that females belonging to different socio-economic classes have to face different forms of violence. But females, on the whole, are being marginalized by the capitalist society.

John G. Peters claims in his article, “Inside and Outside: ‘Jane Eyre’ and Marginalization Through Labeling” (1996), that Jane’s character and her ideas were enigmatic for the people because they were unexpected in those times. He argues that Jane was marginalized by most of the characters in the novel to become a representative of every woman, who strived for her rights and tried to voice her opinions, outside the social and moral order of society (Peters 57). He further claims that Bronte produced the unusual daring character of Jane and made her rebel against the nauseated treatment of females to call for

equality between the genders. He further builds a connection between Charlotte Bronte and her heroine, Jane Eyre, by describing them both as a threat to society's negative reviewers. He also explains how every character in the novel tries his/her best to suppress Jane and transform her into something conventional. They disliked her boldness and the authenticity of her ideas. She was isolated and oppressed in one way or the other (57-60). Similarly, Joyce Zonana also confirms the feminist features of the novel by constructing a sultan-slave relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester. Her article includes a debate on Rochester's character, whether he was a liberal or a typical Victorian man. She criticizes his character and highlights that Bronte portrayed that even the most educated men of the time held conformist moral values and could not help themselves ordering and dominating females (Zonana 592-617).

Declaring *Jane Eyre* as a feminist text, Esther Godfrey in her article "Jane Eyre", from *Governess to Girl Bride* (2005), argues "that gendered identities in *Jane Eyre* are inseparable from Jane's working-class affiliations and from her role as a young wife to an older husband" (Godfrey 835-71). She further claims that class and age complicate readings of "masculinity and femininity in the text. Jane evokes nineteenth-century notions of androgyny and female masculinity, effectively using what are often interpreted as her subservient positions to her advantage" (835-71). The article also stresses the financial crises of Victorian society and the ideology of "separate spheres". Godfrey explains how different classes merged and the differences between these classes became inevitable. However, the line of gender discrimination blurred to some extent in the lower working classes. She also claims that Charlotte Bronte bridges the gap between the lower working class and the middle class by making Jane a governess. Continuing her claims, she mentions that to emphasize the flexibility and grandeur of a woman's nature and character, Jane is made to go through several

transitional phases from a rebellious child to a cultured lady and finally the wife of Mr. Rochester.

The article further extends into the grave issue of age gaps and marital oppression against females based on their socio-economic statuses. Godfrey describes how young females in their twenties were wedded to older men merely for the sake of financial stability or for the sake of heirs. In the case of governesses, it was even more complicated for them to find a husband because of their strange position in the social hierarchy. By making Jane the wife of Mr. Rochester, Bronte broke another stereotype of conservative Victorian society.

Jiang Qian conducts a comparative study of *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) in her article, "A Comparative Study of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* from a Feminist Perspective" (2008). She claims that the character of Bertha Mason was introduced more like a gothic element in *Jane Eyre*, however, a Marxist study of the text could reveal how her character underwent the oppression of a loveless marital relationship constituted merely due to her socio-economic status. She argues that Jean Rhys in her prequel of *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, draws out the character of Bertha Mason from a mad woman in the attic to an oppressed unloved wife. Both the novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, pinpoint how Mr. Rochester married Bertha only for the sake of money (Qian 420-423).

These articles pronounce that *Jane Eyre* was not well-received by the audience of Victorian society. However, it is largely viewed as the first feminist novel of the 19th century (Gao 926). Above-discussed articles argue on the nature of the novel, whether it is a Feminist text or not, or provide evidence of the Feminist as well as the Marxist aspects of the novel. However, none of these articles include a detailed textual analysis of the novel, through the

lens of Marxist Feminism. Almost all the above-mentioned articles lack an account of any Marxist elements associated with the minor female characters such as the female students at Lowood school. Thus, this research aims to fill the gap of a deficient textual analysis and criticism of *Jane Eyre* under the Marxist Feminist lens. It will also attempt to answer questions such as how the main character, Jane, and the other female characters undergo oppression due to their socio-economic statuses. How does Charlotte Bronte criticize the socio-economic prejudices against females during the Victorian era in Great Britain? Does Charlotte Bronte promote the economic independence of females in her novel *Jane Eyre*? If yes, then how does she depict it? How do the male and the female characters of the novel are treated differently because of their economic stability? And how do the economically powerful males and females treat Jane Eyre?

Economically Dependent Women and the Denial of Basic Human Rights

The lens of Marxist Feminism confirms that many types of injustices are inflicted upon the economically dependent women in *Jane Eyre*. For instance, they are denied their basic rights to education and security, and they are bullied and harassed in domestic and academic spaces.

A detailed textual analysis of the novel highlights that Bronte uses the Reed family as the chief representative of the capitalist class, who owns the private property, against the orphan girl Jane, who owns no wealth or means of production, to pinpoint the subjugation and oppression against poor females (especially orphan girls) belonging from the lower class. Jane was dependent on the Reeds because her parents were dead, they left her no financial legacy and the Reeds were her only relatives that she knew of. Being aware of Jane's powerlessness, the Reed family marginalized and tortured her mentally and physically. The lines, "Eliza,

John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mama in the drawing-room... Me, she had dispensed from joining the group” (Bronte 6), depict that Jane was kicked out of the capitalist social circle from the very beginning. Her relatives did not embrace her. Instead, she was often beaten by her male cousin, verbally abused by her female cousins, and completely ignored by her aunt, Mrs. Reed. The lines by Jane, “John bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually...and Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject” (Bronte 10), provide evidence of the maltreatment and marginalization against a dependent orphan girl. The line, “No, you are less than a servant” (Bronte 14) highlights that Jane was given a status lower than the servants of the Reed house. Even the servants mocked her misery of social inequality in comparison to the Reed family, “You ought not to think yourself on an equality with the Misses Reed and Master Reed...They will have a great deal of money...you will have none” (Bronte 15). These dialogues confirm that money was the only deity. Anyone with no means of earning money was considered a useless person.

Jane was denied the right to get herself educated because she did not have her own money. She was excluded from the “privileges intended only for contented, happy little children” (Bronte 7). Jane was deprived of basic privileges such as education, social bonds or friendships, and familial love during her stay at the Reed’s. The dialogue by her autocratic male cousin John, “You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent. You have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us” (Bronte 11), demonstrates the inhuman treatment towards the lower class by the narcissist capitalists. These dialogues explain the concept of exploitation of the working class, especially females at the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Bronte also exposes the maltreatment of the female pupils and workers at the charity

school as well as the teachers at the hands of their wealthy male master, Mr. Brocklehurst of the Lowood charity school. Bronte uses poverty and hunger to suggest how the capitalists could use their resources to support the needy people but instead, they chose to ignore their necessities. Jane says, “He starved us when he had the sole superintendence of the provision department” (Bronte 188). Bronte highlights the hypocrisy of the capitalist class by depicting that the famine and the terrible conditions in the school contrasted Brocklehurst’s wealthy and well-fed lifestyle. She highlights that the capitalist class pretends to help the lower class but does the exact opposite.

Using Armstrong’s insights into the inevitable connection between capitalism and patriarchy, this paper also pinpoints that Mr. Brocklehurst even marginalizes and punishes Jane at the school by making her stand on a stool and advising everyone to push her out of their social circles. He advises, “You must be on your guard against her...avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse” (Bronte 99). Bronte seems to highlight how everyone tries to suppress a vocal and opinionated person by using punishment and marginalization tactics. Jane’s case illustrates how rebellious and unconventional females of Victorian society were forced to shut up or else they were evacuated from every social group. In addition to this, a more critical approach identifies that the schoolmaster had an unjustified and unreasonable disdain towards all the female students at the school. The lines where Jane says, “he cut off our hair; and for economy's sake bought us bad needles and thread, with which we could hardly sew” (Bronte 188) provide evidence that he used to meddle in their personal lives such as deciding their physical appearances, hair, clothes to their manners which demonstrates patriarchal and capitalist hold on women’s bodies.

As Karl Marx wrote about the unity of the working classes, “Working men of all countries unite!” (Marx 11), Bronte seems to emphasize that women should also have comradeship to get liberated from the tyranny of capitalism. Jane had finally made some friends and adjusted better to Lowood than to Reed's refuge. It was because Lowood was a charity school and every student belonged to the same socio-economic class. The only respite they got was when they joined hands together to fight against the forces of patriarchy and capitalism. Thus, Bronte intended to highlight the sense of impartiality and harmony among the members of the same (lower) class and gender.

It is important to notice the perpetration of female victimization is not always carried out by male characters, but economically superior women also victimize economically weak females. Armstrong rightly argues, “woman is a class divided group within capitalism” (Armstrong 5). Many women mistreat Jane because of her socio-economic class at different points of time in her life. For instance, Mrs. Reed's unreasonable and unjustified vengeful behaviour towards Jane is the most glaring example of the tyranny of economically strong women on socio-economically weak women. Jane was more prone and easier to bully because she was not economically strong. Jane's vivid and fearless outburst against Mrs. Reed's oppression is the first blow in the face of capitalist society. Bronte intended to highlight that if the capitalist class kept on treating the lower classes inhumanely, there would be a violent counter-reaction by the suppressed genders or classes. However, Mrs. Reed's mean suggestions to the principal, Mr. Brocklehurst, of the charity school to treat Jane even worse, depict that every reaction also bears consequences. While sending Jane to a charity school, Mrs. Reed writes a character-assassinating letter to the principal of the school regarding Jane. She claims that Jane is not of good character, deeds, and behaviour. She further advises the

headmaster to carry out extremely strict behaviour with Jane to tame her (Bronte 47). This explains that females were more susceptible to such illogical accusations and unreasonable maltreatment in the Victorian era. Even later on Mrs. Reed's deathbed, Jane says of Mrs. Reed, "Poor, suffering woman! It was too late for her to make now the effort to change her habitual frame of mind: living, she had ever hated me-dying, she must hate me still" (Bronte 365). She expresses the everlasting hatred between the capitalist and the middle or lower classes of society. In other words, Gateshead becomes representative of Jane's position outside the socio-economic order as a whole. Using Jane's ill-treatment at Reed's house as a microcosm, Bronte portrays the miserable conditions of the poor or working-class females during the nineteenth century.

Similarly, the capitalist character of Blanche Ingram demonstrates bullying and insulting behaviour towards the governesses as she describes them to be "detestable" (Bronte 268), "ridiculous" (268), and "incubi" (Bronte 268). As Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong write "the variation (social hierarchy) created by existing material conditions has divided women" (Pat and Hugh Armstrong 32), Bronte highlights that capitalism did give birth to oppression carried out by the capitalist females against the working-class females. First Mrs. Reed's oppression against Jane and then Miss Blanche Ingram's contempt for governesses, especially Jane, explain how females were also marginalized by the same gender on the basis of their socio-economic statuses.

In short, Jane had to go through all kinds of marginalization, maltreatment and injustice in the domestic space of the Reed family, at the charity school and at Mr. Rochester's mansion just because she was not economically strong, and her every act of rebellion was punished severely because of her socio-economic status.

Socio-Economic Discrimination and Female Sexuality

Bronte highlights that the partition between the upper-class families and the governesses was forcibly constructed and maintained in the Victorian culture, effectively forbidding relationships between the two groups. This is why when Mr. Rochester and Jane make out for the first time, “He kissed me repeatedly. When I looked up, on leaving his arms, there stood the widow, pale, grave, and amazed” (Bronte 391), Mrs. Fairfax critically gazes Jane as if reminding her of the limits between a governess and a family member. She says, “Try and keep Mr. Rochester at a distance: distrust yourself as well as him. Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses” (Bronte 404). Economically weak women even do not have the right to express their sexuality whereas rich males are at liberty to do so.

Moreover, it was very cruel of him to emotionally distress Jane merely to get a love confession out of her. Jane’s outburst, “Do you think, because I’m poor, obscure, plain and little, I am soulless... You are wrong!... If God had gifted me... with much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me...” (Bronte 386) represents the emotional torture carried out by the rich men on the lower-class females and the importance of money in romantic associations. In other interpretations, one might see the exploitation of females in a love or marital relationship by men on the basis of powerlessness, financial instability, and no authority of females.

Master-Slave Dialectics

Jane Eyre’s Marxist Feminist implications can also be analyzed with reference to Friedrich Hegel’s (1770-1831) master-slave dialectics explaining that one can determine one’s true sense of dignity and establish one’s place in the world only by seeing oneself in relation to

other humans in society. The master-slave dialectic is also reflected in Marx's ideas about alienation. Hegel makes clear that the slave is not free because the product of his labour is not his, but rather belongs to the master. For Marx, this continues to be the case under capitalism, in which the working class produces the society that it lives in and yet does not own that product. Because of this, Hegel's slave cannot properly achieve recognition, just as the alienation of the workers from the commodities that they produce means that they too cannot escape alienation. Thus, they're bound in a master-slave relationship forever. But Karl Marx emphasizes breaking this toxic relationship to liberate the oppressed.

Charlotte Bronte maintains the portrayal of a master-slave relationship throughout the novel. The repetition of the word 'master', one hundred and thirteen times in the novel depicts an oppressive male gender (John Reed, Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester) and an oppressed female gender (primarily Jane) on the basis of social status and economic position in society. Bronte highlights that Jane was oppressed in her childhood and teenage years by the Reeds and Mr. Brocklehurst, mainly because she was poor and moneyless. Even though Mr. Rochester was not presented as a typical Victorian man; he was somewhat liberal, unconventional, and irreligious and did not seem to be bothered about gender, class, and race; yet he could not unchain himself from the social hierarchy of that time. In his very first encounter with Jane, he seems to be judging her by her dress, language, and profession. Another dialogue of Jane's, "I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, bestow on a slave" (Bronte 409), provides evidence of the autocratic nature of Rochester and the despotism that is central to his character. Bronte highlights that even the most modern and groomed men of those times could not help themselves practicing their capitalistic or patriarchal card, intentionally or unintentionally, in one way or the other. Thus, throughout the novel, Jane is shown in a

master-slave relationship with the upholders of patriarchal and capitalist power over her.

Marriage as an Institution of Exploitation of Socio-Economically Strong Females

The lens of Marxist Feminism also provides valuable insight into the economic exploitation of the character of Bertha Mason (Mrs. Rochester) and illustrates the oppression of females on the basis of socio-economic status. *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar uses her character as a strategy primarily to discuss the trapped position of female authors within the patriarchal literary constructs. A detailed textual analysis of the novel underlines that Mr. Rochester was forced into a marital relationship with Bertha by his father merely to take hold of her financial assets. Rochester's father knew that Bertha had some mental disorder, but he completely neglected it for the sake of money. Thus, Mr. Rochester explains, "When I left college, I was sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me. My father said nothing about her money, but he told me Miss Mason was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty: and this was no lie" (Bronte 465). Similarly, keeping Bertha locked in the attic of the house is another signifier of such oppression. First, she was viewed as nothing but a strong property holder. She was not loved by Rochester. It was nothing but a compromise or a social contract for him to label himself as her husband in exchange for her monetary possessions. Later on, she was not admitted to any hospital and was left at the mercy of the house servants. Thus, Bronte highlights that Victorian society discriminated even against financially strong women. These females were seen as commodities or shortcuts to achieve financial stability and success by men. Laurence Lerner also interprets Bertha's character as Jane's double character. In other words, Bertha's character is a contrast to Jane's calm and poised personality. Bertha's madness and attacks throughout the novel could be Jane's inner subconscious rebellion or Bronte's critique against the widely

practised submission to violence and patriarchy by Victorian women (Lerner 273-275).

As Elisabeth Armstrong quotes Engels and Zetkin to ascribe “marriage as an institution that has enforced women's subordination to men and to capital” (Armstrong 5), Bronte uses marriage in the novel to portray the struggle for power between the sexes. Even though Bertha Mason is insane, she is a provocative symbol of how married females can be repressed and controlled. Jane sends off marriage proposals that would squash her identity and strives for equality in her relationships. Besides, the tearing of the wedding veil by Bertha Mason is a strong symbol of feigned expectations of marriage. Bronte intends to underline the fallacy of a perfect marital relationship by Bertha Mason’s condition.

Jane Eyre: Bronte’s Mouthpiece for Promoting Females’ Socio-Economic Independence

Bronte strongly promotes the socio-economic independence of females by showing the difficulty of surviving in the capitalist and patriarchal society as a woman without any money and by portraying Jane’s efforts to gain economic independence by working as a governess. This research also claims that besides portraying classism and oppression against females, Bronte foregrounds the need for socio-economic equality through Jane’s staunch opposition towards the dehumanizing treatment of herself and her acquisition of wealth towards the end of the novel. During her childhood, she refuses to tolerate John Reed’s beating her and attacks him back. She also resists succumbing and accepting him as her master, “Master! How is he my master (Bronte 14)”. Her outburst against Mrs. Reed is another extraordinarily strong speech, quoting “I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty” (52). Moreover, her refusal to marry Mr. Rochester and struggle for her survival demonstrates the capabilities of females to work and provide for themselves. Her rejection of St. John Rivers’ proposal also stands out for the right of women to choose their

spouses. Furthermore, Jane's education, a career as a governess and later as a teacher even after acquiring wealth, call out the need for as many social and economic opportunities as available for men. Bronte intended to promote social, cultural, and liberal rights of females so that they can acquire education, pursue careers and much more to become independent responsible citizens of the nation.

Marxist Feminism also invokes thinking otherwise; had the situation been the same if Jane had been independent and wealthy since her childhood? Critics like Louise Simons argue that Jane was marginalized and maltreated throughout her childhood because she was poor and dependent on the Reeds and then on the charity school for her survival. Later, she was judged and bullied at Thornfield for being a governess. Only towards the end of the novel, she appears to become a gigantic powerful character, who besides her intellect and boldness attains a monetary fortune from her uncle (Simons 45-48). We see that even after acquiring wealth, Jane keeps serving as a teacher. Bronte accentuates the significance of career and status in the social hierarchy of the society for every woman despite whichever class she belongs to.

Bronte also depicts that economic development can pave paths to social, cultural, and sexual independence. We can observe that after opting for teaching as a career, Jane becomes more independent. She earns on her own and is not bound to ask the Reed family for her expenses. Similarly, working as a governess in Mr. Rochester's mansion enables her to have her financial stability rather than depending on anyone. Even when Mr. Rochester tries to pay her extra money, she refuses to take any more than her due salary. We can see that it is her economic independence that gives her confidence to leave the Lowood school and then Mr. Rochester's mansion providing that she could survive on her own. The economic

independence also enables her to break the cultural and sexual norms of conventional females. Jane's rejection of St. John Rivers' proposal and working as a teacher even after acquiring great wealth signifies the independent choices made by an economically strong woman. Though she still faces marginalization at the hands of St. John Rivers, overall, her character attains the highest progressive state. Moreover, Bronte seems to pinpoint that even though financially strong females like Bertha Mason have to face oppression in one way or the other, the poor or dependent females have to go through much worse than that.

Conclusion

It would not be wrong to say that *Jane Eyre* is a representative novel of Marxist Feminism. Charlotte Bronte portrays various male characters, such as John Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, and Mr. Rochester, claiming that each one of them discriminated against and eliminated Jane in one way or the other from their social circles. Bronte calls for socio-economic equality for females through Jane's bold counter-reactions against the oppression, her struggle to acquire an education, and then pursuing a career far away from her hometown and her passion to serve as a teacher even after being gifted a huge monetary fortune by her uncle. She also introduces other female characters that either belong to the same class as Jane or are higher than her to develop a comparison between the conditions of the lower and the upper classes. Besides, through Helen's and Miss Temple's characters, Bronte pinpointed the need and significance of female friendships and support systems for backing up the concept of unity among the same class or gender and of feminism, eradicating cruelties against abused females, either by men or women. This research also included an account of other female characters in the novel. With special reference to Bertha Mason, Bronte highlights how gender-based violence even overrides the problem of social status. Females are abused for

being female, no matter from which class they belong to. However, lower-class (working-class) females are more vulnerable to subjugation and marginalization as they have no other financial means to support themselves or to find an escape. However, it is evident that Bronte exquisitely reconstructs the gender roles and breaks stereotypes by making Jane undergo transitional progressive phases from a rebellious child to a sophisticated economically independent governess who gets to choose her spouse.

Hence, Bronte did her finest to speak against capitalism, patriarchy, and the socio-economic subjugation of females in society in *Jane Eyre*. The physical and emotional abuse of Jane at the hands of the Reeds and later at the hands of Mr. Brocklehurst in the charity school, her constant struggle to earn and survive, her being marginalized by the capitalist Miss Blanche for being a governess and her solidarity with the same working-class or lower-class females correspond with the assumption of the Marxist Feminist theory. By highlighting the educational discrimination, occupational prejudice, marriage as an institution of exploiting females and

Jane's radical outburst towards every oppressing character of the novel, Bronte advocates female emancipation and socio-economic liberty.

Works Cited

Armstrong, Elisabeth, "Marxist and Socialist Feminism". Study of Women and Gender: Faculty Publications, Smith College, Northampton, MA. 2020 1-24

https://scholarworks.smith.edu/swg_facpubs/15

Armstrong, Pat & Armstrong, Hugh. Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex: Towards Feminist Marxism. *Studies in Political Economy*, vol 10. Research Gate, 1998 7-43.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307814792_Beyond_Sexless_Class_and_Classless_Sex_Towards_Feminist_Marxism

Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Readings, 2016.

Desai, Murlu. "Feminism and Policy Approaches for Gender Aware Development." The Paradigm of International Social Development: Ideologies, Development Systems and Policy Approaches, Routledge, New York, 2014, pp. 119–120.

"Feminism." The Merriam-Webster.Com Dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Feminism. Accessed 01 December. 2022.

Gao, Haiyan. "Reflection on Feminism in Jane Eyre." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 3, no. 6, June 2013, pp. 926–931.,

<https://doi.org/https://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/tpls/vol03/06/08.pdf>.

Godfrey, Esther. "'Jane Eyre', from Governess to Girl Bride." *Studies in English*

Literature, 1500-1900, vol. 45, no. 4, [Rice University, Johns Hopkins University Press], 2005, pp. 853–71, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3844618>.

- Griesinger, Emily. "Charlotte Brontë's Religion: Faith, Feminism, and 'Jane Eyre.'" *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 58, no. 1, Sage Publications, Ltd., 2008, pp. 29–59, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44313877>.
- Guy-Evans, Olivia. "Marxist Feminism Theory." Marxist Feminism: Definition & Theory - Simply Sociology, 19 Aug. 2022, <https://simplysociology.com/marxist-Feminism.html>.
- Lamonaca, Maria. "Jane's Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in 'Jane Eyre.'" *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 34, no. 3, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, pp. 245–63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29533514>.
- Lerner, Laurence. "Bertha and the Critics." *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1989, pp. 273–300. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3045152>. Accessed 5 Jan. 2023.
- "Madwoman in the Attic." *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender: Culture Society History*. Encyclopedia.com. 21 Jun. 2022 <https://www.encyclopedia.com>
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. "Manifesto of the Communist Party." *The Communist Manifesto*, vol. 1, Feb. 1848, pp. 1–68., <https://doi.org/https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>.
- "Module 4." Module 4: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Women, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/IHRIP/circle/modules/module4.htm#_edn1.
- Peters, John G. "Inside and Outside: 'Jane Eyre' and Marginalization through Labeling." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 28, no. 1, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. 57–75, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29533113>.
- Qian, Jiang. "A Comparative Study of Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea from a Feminist Perspective." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, vol. 237, 2018, pp. 420–423., <https://doi.org/https://www.atlantis->

press.com/proceedings/hsmet-18/25899146.

Simons, Louise. "Authority and 'Jane Eyre': A New Generic Approach." *CEA Critic*, vol. 48, no. 1, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, pp. 45–53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44376970>.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. 2017, <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/wollstonecraft1792.pdf>.

Zonana, Joyce. "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of 'Jane Eyre.'" *Signs*, vol. 18, no. 3, University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 592–617, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174859>.