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Title

***A RE-EVALUATION OF KEY FIGURES' STRUCTURE AND CONCEPTS IN
FEMALE WRITING: CHARLOTTE BRONTE'S JANE EYRE (1847)***

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for a
Degree of Magister**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgment is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved
Father, brother Said and my little sister Lamia*

Abstract

The present Magister dissertation studies the key figures' structure and concepts in a female novel: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* written in 1847. Actually, different disciplines are used when scrutinizing *Jane Eyre* such as history, politics, economy and philosophy; hence, making of it an interdisciplinary study. This research work is based on both Darko Suvin's agential theory that is meant to examine the structural arrangement of the narrative and on the Feminist theory whose main goal is to bring an eventual change for women who are subject to alienation, oppression, domination and hegemony. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that when studying the structure of the narrative, the socio-historical context is revealed automatically.

When assessing Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* from a twenty first century outlook, the use of the theoretical underpinning is cardinal in order to obtain a scientific study that can be measured and proved. Accordingly, literary theory is a body of ideas and methods that critics use in the practical reading of literature. In retrospect, literary works have been analysed only in terms of studying literary devices as entities separating one from another such as space and time, characterization, themes and structure neglecting the context in which the literary work has been written. This analysis remains valid, but thanks to the emergence of new theoretical trends, nowadays, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* can be approached from different angles so as to avoid a reductionist analysis.

The aim of this project is to demonstrate the specificity of female writing. In this respect, at the structural level, Charlotte Brontë has created a new female narrative category who is no longer a flat character based on bad connotations, but an over determined round character composed of two opposed flat characters that have re-defined the existing woman; hence, creating a new one. At the socio-historical level, through this new female category, Brontë deconstructs the hegemonic discourse of the nineteenth century and creates a counter-discourse using feminist tools such as education and work that generate a new paradigm for the oppressed women.

Key words: Agential theory, Feminism, Hegemonic discourse, Ideology, Alienation and False consciousness.

Table of Contents

Board of Examiners.....	I
Declaration.....	II
Acknowledgment.....	III
Abstract.....	IV
Contents.....	V
Introduction.....	1
 Chapter I: A Socio-Historical and Cultural Context	
I. 1. The History and Culture of Victorian England	11
I. 2. Women and Art, The Novel	19
I. 3. Women’s Status and Roles During Victorian England	28
 Chapter II: Theoretical and Methodological Underpinning	
II. 1. The Role of Modern Literary Criticism Nowadays	40
II. 2. The Agential Theory: A Socio-Historical Approach.....	55
II. 3. The Hegemonic Discourse VS Counter Discourse (Feminism).....	59
 Chapter III: Re-Evaluation of Key Figures’ Structure and Concepts in	
Charlotte Brontë’s <i>Jane Eyre</i>	
III. 1. “Historical and Dialectical Materialism” in <i>Jan Eyre</i>	76
III. 2. The Building of a New Female Category.....	86
Conclusion.....	102
 Appendix	
Diagram I.....	58
Diagram II.....	72
Bibliography.....	111
Abstract in Arabic.....	119

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This dissertation re-evaluates the key figures' structure and concepts in female writing, that is in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). In the first place, the emphasis is put on the narrative arrangement of the key figures because it is through characterization that one can link the social reality and the writer's vision of life. Besides, the use of the theoretical concepts are momentous as they can back up a scientific analysis that can be measured and proved. Nonetheless, this study is taken from the comparative literary perspective that draws upon multiple theoretical tools and philosophical assumptions. However, it is worthwhile stressing that, in retrospect, the task of comparative literature was related to comparing literary texts and writers. Then it shifted towards a new meaning whose function is to build a theoretical background using tools from various disciplines like history, economy, sociology and philosophy so as to analyse literary texts. Indeed, the comparative approach does not hold rigidly to a single paradigm or set of assumptions, instead, it is about using a cluster of theories and philosophical assumptions. Therefore, comparative literature can be regarded as "literature without borders". Understandably, historically, comparative literature has moved from narrow selective studies comparing pieces of writing to multidisciplinary field.

Considering the theoretical underpinnings opted for this research work, it is paramount to highlight that the re-evaluation of key figures' structure and concepts in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* can be developed through the interrelation between Darko Suvin's agential theory and the Feminist theory. For instance, as the novel is a narrative that is built by characters, the latter are mainly considered as narrative agents who are symptomatic of a given ideological praxis that will help in the understanding

of literary works in general and Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in particular. Moreover, it is worth stressing that the agential theory rejects the impressionistic approach of characters that focuses only on the study of the hero; on the other hand, it proposes a socio-historical approach. Therefore, the effect of dealing with Darko Suvin's agential theory is mainly concerned with the socio-historical categories of flat and round characters that are meant to facilitate the deciphering of the social and cultural discourse of a given period because any discourse can be regarded as an intrinsic and inseparable part of reality. Besides, the main purpose of using the Feminist theory is to negate the hegemonic discourse by using education and work as tools that are likely to generate a new paradigm for the new women.

In order to understand the wider implication of the agential theory of the post-structuralist Darko Suvin that deals with both narrative and socio-historical space and time, one has to stress chiefly the merit of this view which has come as a response to former scholars, both formalists and structuralists, who have neglected the importance of socio-historical space and time when analysing works of art. Admittedly, the post-structuralists and the Marxists have proclaimed that it is difficult to explain a literary work independently from the socio-historical context in which it has been written. Thus, the agential theory is concerned with whatever characters are built by the writer whose significance is expressed through "chronotope", a term coined by the Russian scholar Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin in 1937. In fact, Bakhtin's "chronotope" provides the internal link between the narrative and the socio-historical context. This term denotes a configuration of spatial and temporal indication in a fictional setting where and when certain activities and stories take place (Simon

During, 1993). In this sense, the use of Bakhtin's concept is a necessary step when dealing with a literary study as characters can be studied according to the vision of the author. Accordingly, at the narrative level, the agential theory studies the structure of characters as being flat "type" or "round". It is all about doing an empirical study by picking up traits from the text because it is through the study of traits and their interrelation that the socio-historical paradigm can be revealed.

The flat or "type" category is concerned with characters' traits that have to be picked up from the narrative in order to show that these traits are not opposed during their performance. In addition, at the socio-historical level, flat characters stand as representatives of people who do not question hegemonic discourse. Dealing with the latter category, round characters create movement at both narrative and socio-historical space and time. At the narrative level, what must be established is that round characters have generally opposed traits; but Darko Suvin has extended this definition to round characters with at least two opposed flat characters. At the socio-historical level, this category of characters is known for its resistance to the dominant ideology. In short, it is through the study of characters that Brontë's ideological position and vision of history are revealed.

This research work relies on the Feminist theory that falls under the advocacy and participatory paradigm whose main purpose is to bring an eventual change for women who are subject to alienation, oppression, domination and hegemony. It has been argued by the existentialist philosopher Simone De Beauvoir that, throughout history, women have always experienced otherness. This otherness sapped their creativity and denied them as a legitimate voice in western cultures (De

Beauvoir, 1949). Consequently, De Beauvoir's main concern is to make women conscious about their life as to be able to react to the injustice they are subjected to. Furthermore, the analysis of *Jane Eyre* emphasizes the use of some theoretical concepts such as "historical and dialectical materialism", "social alienation" and "false consciousness" and the social hegemonic discourse that is mainly concerned with a complex interconnection between ideology and power and its counter discourse using Feminist tools such as education and work.

There is no doubt that since 1847, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* has been analyzed by many researchers; nevertheless, according to the previous works that have been carried out on this particular novel, mainly from the last decade, one may mention that their analyses have often focused on the content by applying cluster of theories. Thus, using Feminism with Psychoanalysis, Feminism with Marxism or Feminism with Post-colonialism neglected the form of the narrative. As an illustration, one can cite Pat Macpherson who points out in his book *Reflecting on Jane Eyre* the *Reflection on Feminism in Jane Eyre*: "Jane Eyre is marked by a strong romantic elements and the role of nature is especially important." (1983, p.297-302). The work is infused with romantic spirit. The emphasis on the sensitiveness of the mind and the intense sensibility to changing nature. Another critic Wong Guofo, author of *Literary Theory of Feminism* says: "Jane Eyre embodies a new conception of women as heroines of vital strength and passionate feelings (1987, p. 225-229). In this analysis, like in the majority ones; the concern is only on the context neglecting the structure of the novel.

Shifting from this kind of study, the actual analysis deals with both form and content. In fact, the present research work encompasses the post-structuralists' outlook that accords importance to both form and socio-historical background in a literary work. In addition, the particularity of this research is to give importance to the philosophical field when evaluating *Jane Eyre*. For example, Leo Tolstoy, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Simone De Beauvoir, John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant's philosophies have been put to contribution in this research work. In brief, unlike the previous analyses done on *Jane Eyre*, this study draws insight from different disciplines, notably history, economy, politics and philosophy, making of it an interdisciplinary analysis.

As a researcher, in the outset, what has pushed to choose a female writing and more precisely Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is that after reading some Victorian novels for pleasure such as Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1813) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), I have noticed that Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is completely different as she dares to stand against the Victorian norms. Admittedly, unlike Charlotte Brontë, other writers have always used a fixed female fictional character. For instance, in *Oliver Twist*, the female narrative agent Lucy is a flat character who is described as a prostitute, a mistress and a thief. In *Wuthering Heights*, the beautiful female character Catherin is considered as "the angel in the house" as she possesses the required feminine traits. All in all, female characters have always been reduced to the category of valueless figures; however, Brontë has created a new female category of character completely different from them.

In addition, what has pushed me to choose a female writing and more precisely Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is that after reading some Victorian novels for pleasure such as Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), I have noticed that Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is completely different as she dares to stand against the Victorian norms. Admittedly, unlike, Charlotte Brontë, other writers have always used a fixed female fictional character. For instance, in *Oliver Twist*, the female narrative agent Lucy is a flat character who is described as a prostitute, a mistress and a thief. In *Wuthering Heights*, the beautiful female character Catherin is considered as "the angel in the house" as she possesses the required feminine traits. All in all, female characters have always been reduced to the category of valueless figures; however, Brontë has created a new female category of character completely different from them.

The analysis of this literary work falls under the rubric of humanities that seek to understand human conditions. The field of humanities provide an imagery of what is on the other side of the glass pane. Thus, humanities are about interpretive methodologies that are distinguished from the positivist and empirical ones. Indeed, unlike the social sciences that deal with an empirical, objective and deductive approach in order to generate knowledge, humanities involve a more critical and analytical approach based on interpretation. Moreover, it is interesting to note that this dissertation is based on a qualitative design using Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* as a case study. The crucial aim of this design is to uncover the hidden meanings, non-obvious features, multiple interpretations and unheard voices in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

Following this methodology, the main concern of this dissertation is to show how Charlotte Brontë's novel is different in form and content. Nonetheless, there are some other questions that have to be highlighted. What are the Feminist tools that Charlotte Brontë uses in order to build a new female category? How do women writers struggle against male hegemonic writing? What is the function of male characters? Is Charlotte Brontë consistent in her ideology? Or does her novel have inner conflicts? In an attempt to find out satisfactory answers to all these questions, the body of this study will be divided into three main chapters.

Chapter one that is concerned with the socio-historical background gives an overview of the social and cultural life of the Victorians as far as social class and gender issues are concerned. The socio-historical background of the Victorians is relevant because Charlotte Brontë has fictionalized the nineteenth century. This chapter is divided into three sub-titles. The first one examines the history and culture of Victorian England through the use of the Marxist Georg Lukacs' theory of reflection that deals with "historical and dialectical materialism". Then the concern moves to situate women and art, especially the novel, in relation to the canon. This chapter ends with tackling women's role and status in the patriarchal society where male discourse is the dominant one.

The theoretical and conceptual framework on which this actual dissertation is dealt with is found in the second chapter which is divided into three sub-titles. It begins with illuminating the role of modern literary criticism in nowadays literary studies. In fact, the use of theories and concepts have become a compulsory step in order to end up with a scientific analysis that can be proved and measured. The second

sub-title will show the necessity of using Darko Suvin's agential theory. The agential study of characters reveals their particular structure which in its turn reveals the socio-historical paradigm. Concerning the third sub-title, it puts emphasis on the social hegemonic discourse that is faced by a counter discourse concerned with resistance using the Feminist theory so as to raise women's awareness.

Last but not least, chapter three is related with the analysis of key figures' structure and concepts. It attempts to give a close reading of the text. This chapter is divided into two sub-titles. The first sub-title is concerned with making the concept of "historical and dialectical materialism" operational, resulting in unveiling other concepts such as "social alienation" and "false consciousness". Understandably, by putting the concepts mentioned earlier into practice, the characters' structure is revealed, which in turn reveals the socio-historical paradigm. At this stage, it is important to bear in mind that when dealing with one literary device that is concerned with the structure of characters, the other literary devices like space/time and themes are going to be unveiled automatically. However, chapter three ends with demonstrating how Charlotte Brontë manages to build a new female category of character that is composed of two opposed flat characters using the feminist tools like education and work in order, to some extent, to empower women. To sum up, it is through the analysis of key figures' structure and concepts that Charlotte Brontë's philosophy of life is uncovered.

CHAPTER I

Socio-Historical and Cultural Context

The force of a work of art is directly proportional to its historicity, that there is indeed no contradiction between our present day appreciation of a work and its concrete historical content¹.

Before reaching the required terminal station that is concerned with the analysis of Charlotte Brontë's literary work *Jane Eyre* written in 1847, it is necessary to stop at the first station concerned with the socio-historical background in which her novel has been written. Indeed, the first chapter is devoted to the context of Britain during the nineteenth century and the emphasis is more on the social side as far as women are concerned. In order to build a new female category of character, Brontë needs to go through a search for the meaning of the English roots. To end up, to assimilate how Brontë's ideas of social class and gender inequalities are developed in fiction, the study of the Marxist literary critic Georg Lukacs' theory of reflection that is concerned with historical and dialectical materialism concept is cardinal.

1. 1. The History and Culture of the Victorian England

In order to scrutinize and fathom Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, it is crucial to probe into on the history and culture of the Victorian England because most of the time works of art are the product of the deepest tendencies of a given period. Indeed, one may not swatch nineteenth century English novels such as, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfel Hall* (1848), Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Jane Eyre* specifically without understanding the Victorian era.

¹ Fredric, Jameson. "Criticism in History", 1979, 49.

Eventually, each era represents a given society, a group of people with individual characteristics, a given ideology, philosophies and culture. Each era has its own way of experiencing reality that is distinctive to it as it is the case with a dress fashion. The latter is a style that is popular only at a particular time and one may not be familiar with it if she or he does not live that time or at least does not have an overview about it.

Among the scholars who have upheld the involvement of the social and historical elements in literary works are the Marxists. For instance, the Hungarian Georg Lukacs, a Marxist literary critic, has pointed out that it is not enough to analyze words on page when the focus is only on intrinsic elements like themes, characters, plot, and space/time. Therefore, extrinsic elements such as context are rather crucial. In this respect, in order to have a background of any literary work, Georg Lukacs inserts a theory of reflection in his book *Critic and Writer* (1974). Lukacs' theory is constructed through the interrelation of two concepts that are historical materialism and dialectical materialism. Nonetheless, it is worth stressing that Lukacs' theory has its roots in the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* (1849). In fact, Marx and Engels early speculated about these concepts. Regarding historical materialism, they have stated that history is no more defined a succession of events, but rather, as a class struggle that consists of five phases which are slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and communism.

In the very first place, humanity witnessed slavery that was based on the exploitation of slaves by their masters. But, in the course of time, humanity experienced feudalism though less hurtful than slavery, was yet, an exploitation of the

landowners over their peasants. However, from the eighteenth century onward, capitalism and socialism have emerged approximately at the same time, but holding contradictory beliefs.

On the one side, according to the Cambridge dictionary 1995, capitalism is an economic, political, and social system based on private ownership of property, business, and industry, and directed towards making the greatest possible profits for successful organizations and people. On the other side, socialism is a set of beliefs which states that all people are equal and should share equally in the wealth of the country. Nevertheless, the last phase humanity has witnessed is communism whose objective is to end up with a classless society. Admittedly, this belief is based on society in which the methods of production are owned and controlled by all members where everyone works as he can and receives what he needs. Nonetheless, this system has never worked so far as it is too idealistic and utopian. Indeed, this system could not and cannot be applied because some philosophers like Thomas Hobbes claim that people are greedy and selfish by nature and they are never content as they always want more.

According to Hobbes, men are evil, selfish and pitiless, in constant war with one another because of their self-interests. Moreover, even in the Soviet Union, communism has not succeeded because they did not apply Marx's plans properly. For instance, instead of following the five steps, they moved from feudalism to communism directly skipping both phases of capitalism and socialism whose outcome can be only a failure. To sum up, according to the Marxists, history is all about class

struggle as it has been emphasized by the American literary critic and Marxist political theorist Fredric Jameson:

History of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle: freeman and slaves, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journey man in a lord, oppressor and oppressed-stood in constant opposition to one another, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes².

Although Fredric Jameson has used different labels concerning the relationship between the dominant and dominated, the latter is all about the same struggle which is class. Overall, history is not the result of progressive events, but a result of class struggle in which economy is the determining factor.

Lukacs' dialectical materialism is a combination of two structures: infrastructure or the base and superstructure. Dealing with infrastructure or the base, it concerns people's economic status and material conditions while superstructure is concerned with people's consciousness and ideologies such as religion, culture, philosophy and political system. Nonetheless, it is important to point that superstructure is determined by infrastructure as Marx indicates: "the mode of production determines the character of social, political, and intellectual life generally"³. This suggests that it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being; on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness. In addition, it is worth recalling that from Marx and Engels' concepts, Lukacs formulates his concepts of historical and dialectical materialism that are bound by an interplay

² Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious*, 2000, 59.

³ Tabak Mehmet. *Dialectic of Human Nature in Marx's Philosophy*, 2012, 59.

relationship that leads ultimately as much as possible to the objective reflection of reality within a literary work.

All in all, the Marxists state that it is impossible to explain and analyze a work of art without its immanent context which exists in the objective reality, but merely as aspects of historical ground interacting with economic factors. The Marxist's philosophy is to seek deeper in the social reality vis-à-vis the organic relation of the historical and dialectical materialism. Nonetheless, one has to bear in mind that the main purpose of the use of these theoretical concepts in the empirical research is to render them operational. Therefore, following Lukacs' concept, one may wonder how Charlotte Brontë represents Victorian England in *Jane Eyre* regarding historical and dialectical materialism.

As far as historical materialism is concerned, *Jane Eyre* was written in the nineteenth century and more precisely in 1847 when Britain embraced the capitalist system that rendered it the most powerful and unchallengeable country in the world. The best proof is the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851. Britain exhibited its "highly sophisticated" products in a crystal palace in front of millions of visitors from all over the world who were dazzled by those extraordinary products. Additionally, during this period, Britain was characterized by ethical values such as respectability, social deference and religious conformity, to such an extent that it has been argued by some historians that this era is considered as an interruption in British history. This period is situated between two troublesome eras: the Napoleonic Wars of the nineteenth century and the First and Second World Wars of the twentieth century. Moreover, it is important to mention that the Victorian era goes hand in hand with the Industrial

Revolution that made of Britain a powerful nation mainly through an empire that has provided it with cheap raw material and labour forces.

Truly, England is the first country to have undergone the process of industrialization. The phrase “the Industrial Revolution” seems to have been coined to account for a variety of technological innovation took place in England in the first half of the nineteenth century. This century has been hijacked by the critics of the twentieth century to be a “Golden Age”. It has been described as one of prosperity, progress, scientific discoveries, industrialization and many reforms that have been witnessed in different fields. Nonetheless, this period is paradoxical and complex because though the Industrial Revolution has created wealth, it has created a class-based society.

The British society is divided into three classes, the upper class, the middle class and the proletariat. The upper classes’ composition changed from hereditary aristocracy to a combination of nobility and a wealthy commercial class the bourgeoisie or the middle class along with the proletariat. While it had been a sunrise for the minority, it had been a sunset for the masses. Machineries have produced wealth only for the minority and misery for the majority. Indeed, the material prosperity stemming from uncontrolled industrial and urban development had come at a high environmental and social cost causing urban squalor, social evils, delinquency, crimes, and suicide. The social evils were generated from the dismissal of workers replaced by machines. When evicted from work, people became desperate. For example, in order to survive, they were obliged to steal. Some others committed suicide, used violence, prostitution and theft. Furthermore, the houses where the poor lived did not have drainage or running water; thus, becoming centers of squalor and

diseases. All in all, it is the working class who paid the price of making the Industrial Revolution successful, living in unpleasant conditions. So, as odd as it may seem, the Industrial Revolution had not only created progress, but a new hierarchy leading to a division of people into distinctive classes as well.

Manifestly, even the British politician and writer Benjamin Disraeli has acknowledged in his work of art *Sybil or The Two Nations* (1845) the phenomenon of class division in Britain. He pinpoints the gap between the rich and the poor people despite the growing wealth generated by the increase production and trade as he argues in the following:

Two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and sympathy; who are ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets, who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by different food, are ordered by different manners are not governed by the same law (p. 36).

In addition, he explicitly mentions this gap through his fictional character Eagermout: "THE RICH AND THE POOR" purposefully written in capital letters. Through this quotation, one can describe the Victorian society as a beehive society that stresses hierarchy.

This hypercritical situation is well demonstrated in Brontë's novel. For example, she depicts the Reed family and Mr. Rochester as the haves and the charitable school of Lowood in which the orphan girls live as the have-nots. As regards dialectical materialism, it is evinced through the female key figure Jane Eyre who accents the cracks of the capitalist system through the interaction of male characters like her cousin John Reed and Mr. Edward Rochester who becomes Jane's husband by the end of the novel. In her youth, being an orphan, Jane Eyre is described as a miserable girl living with her relatives the Reeds, the haves, who have not

welcomed her because she is penniless telling her “you are a dependent, you ought to beg, and not to live here with a gentleman” (*Jane Eyre*: 13). In this regard, John Reed stresses the material conditions as Jane’s family is poor; therefore, she has no right to associate on equal footing with her wealthy cousins. Jane’s lack of money makes her dependent upon the Reeds for substance. In addition, according to the quotation mentioned above, John Reed stresses also the issue of patriarchy when telling her “and not to live with a gentleman”, a fact which insinuates the superiority of men over women.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile noting that even women at that time have adopted and adapted this ideology of male superiority in their sub-conscious. For instance, even the domestic agent Miss Abbott admonishes Jane for her strike with John by warning her about their relationship, a relationship between a master and a servant. Eventually, the claim of Miss Abbott shows women’s internalization of men’s superiority. Besides, surprisingly, in the course of time, being a governess at Mr. Rochester’s Thornfield house, as ironic as it might seem, Jane herself confirms her secondary status by calling all the time Mr. Rochester “master” because he belongs to the aristocracy believing that his wealth, caste, custom separate her from him. This confirms Lukacs’ theory about the base determining man’s consciousness having Jane feeling her inferiority face to the wealthy man Rochester.

To end up, it is noticeable that via the character Jane and her interaction with other characters especially with the male like John Reed and Mr. Rochester, the reader is aware of the beehive of nineteenth century Victorian England. Thus, it is

worth pondering out that no literary work can be objective unless the portrayal of certain economic and social class is unveiled within the class' historical dimension.

1. 2. Women and Art: The Novel

Throughout history, women have struggled to gain respect and the same rights as men. They have been considered as a second-class people hardly to be called citizens since they have not been able to vote. It has been difficult because of patriarchy that postulates men superior to women. This ideology has constructed the social structures of societies of all over the world. However, in the course of time, women have contributed to the major social changes that have occurred in the worldwide thanks to their political awareness. Their footprints can be found in different realms and the best testimony of their emancipation is shown through the different laws that were passed in the English parliament by many politicians from different political parties. For instance, the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835 gave women the right to vote only in local elections whereas with the Municipal Franchise Act of 1869, it gave more rights: “words importing the masculine gender...shall be held to include females for all purposes connected with the right to vote for country councilors”⁴. Furthermore, in a matter of divorce, the Custody Infant Act of 1839 allowed the mother to have access to her children. Women; therefore, struggled against their repressive society to find their true selves. Indeed, women and more precisely the Victorian ones have been determined to improve their captious situation by making their voices audible through different means such as art in general like painting, music, theatre and literature in particular.

⁴ [www. History of women. org. Suffrage local. html.](http://www.historyofwomen.org/SuffrageLocal.html)

Art is considered as a vehicle used to illustrate and illuminate the history of any given country like the history of the United Kingdom. Like television, literature is a means of communication between the writer and the reader. In this sense, the Russian philosopher Leo Tolstoy believes in the notion of transmission of feelings through literature. He views literature as an activity through which people express particular ideas that serve society. In this formulation, there is a debate whether literature represents society or society affects literature. Therefore, on the one hand, there are some scholars such as Georg Lukacs advocates that literature affects society whose theory of reflection was discussed earlier. On the other hand, others like the Marxist literary critic Louis Althusser argues that literature affects society and sometimes leads to revolution.

Though Althusser belongs to the Marxists' ideology, he holds another point of view about art and notably about literature. Unlike Lukacs, Althusser asserts that literature can affect society and sometimes lead to revolution. His ideology, labeled production theory, states that art in general and literature specifically can change society. He claims that, for example, the working class is manipulated through art to accept the ideology of the dominant one, a process that is called "interpellation". According to him, art is in the hands of the capitalists who use it to reinforce their ideology on the working and the middle classes. Nonetheless, Althusser states that there is another possibility; the working class can also develop their own culture through art which can lead to a revolution and to the establishment of a new hegemony or a power base.

Additionally, art can be considered as a microscope through which the writer fixes on the secrets of her or his soul, then display them to the reader in order to become universal. According to Tolstoy's expressive qualities, the artist should teach society by keeping a close relationship with the reader as it is quoted "art is a human activity consisting in this by, mean of certain external signs I and on the others feelings he has lived through and others are injected by these feelings and also experience"⁵. Tolstoy argues that there should be a close relation between the artist, a work of art and the reader. Thus, a piece of writing has to be felt by the writer first, then transmitted to the reader; the more the reader is affected by the work of art, the best the writer's piece of writing would be. The female writer George Eliot has declared that the greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies⁶. As an illustration, among the Victorian literary works that have marked not only the Victorian readers, but universal ones as well, one may specify the three volume novel *Jane Eyre* written by a female writer Charlotte Brontë under a nickname "Currer Bell".

Following Tolstoy's philosophy, the evidence has shown that Charlotte Brontë has built up a strong relationship with her readers, the fact that she addresses them directly without a mediator. For example, "reader, though I am not very comfortable accommodated, I am not very tranquil in my mind" (Vol. I. p. 117), "you have not quite forgotten Adèle, have you reader" (Vol. II. p. 286) and "reader, I married him" (Vol. II. p. 285). The first person point of view tends to give authority and credibility to the narrative as the person narrating the story is involved in all

⁵ Leo Tolstoy, "what is Art?" In *Art and Philosophy*, 1976, 10.

⁶ James, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*, 2006, 69.

incidents. Brontë is assumed to be the most dominant and ambitious writer not only among her sisters, Emily and Anne. So, it is awkward not to be impressed at Charlotte Brontë's words on page as it has opened a new perspective when dealing with women's preoccupations within literature.

Actually, Brontë is engaged to remodel a positive image for her female key figure Jane Eyre by challenging the stereotypical perception of women and dismantling the patriarchal structure that previously relegated women to subordinate roles. It has been strongly pointed out that male writers of the nineteenth century are sexist in their writings, giving male characters the dominating space whereas female ones, most of the time, are relegated to a secondary position and misrepresentation. For instance, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1890) considers women like the female fictional character Sybil a means of pleasure as it is quoted by his male character Dorian: "I don't want to be at mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them and dominate them" (p. 112). Besides, another male character Lord Henry claims: "no women are a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly" (p. 47). Hence, Brontë's *Jane Eyre* has revolutionized the former status of women by giving them the main voice.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that *Jane Eyre* is a bildungsroman novel. As a genre, the novel has attained its peak during the Victorian time; nevertheless, it has appeared first in Spain in the seventeenth century. Among the famous novelists that Spain witnesses is Miguel de Cervantes through his novel *Don Quixote* (1605). Later on, the French writers have started to write novels and it begins with Madame de la Fayette's *La Princess de Cleves* (1687) that reaches its excellence there. Dealing with

the English novel, it is presumed have emerged first with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), bearing in mind that even Defoe was not been aware that he has written a novel. Yet, the first attempt that would gather features of the English novel has rather been with the female writer Aphra Behn's short novel *Ornooko* or *The Royal Slave* (1688). This latter is about the complex relationship between race and gender.

It has been assumed that Aphra Behn is the first English woman who could break the cultural barriers through her writings and serve as a literary model for the later generations. For instance, she is famously remembered in the English modernist work of Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One's Own* (1929): "all women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn which is most scandalously but rather appropriately in Westminster. Abbey, for it was she earned them the right to speak their minds" (p. 71). Accordingly, Woolf asserts that Aphra Behn is the first middle class woman was brave enough to speak her mind in order to make her voice heard. As a specific genre, the novel reached its zenith during the nineteenth century thanks to the Industrial Revolution that has led to the emergence of the middle class. The middle class writers have contributed a lot to the advancement of the novel, which suggests that novels are mostly written by the middle class and destined to the middle class readers who have grown conscious of their social position as it is depicted in the British poet and author Marjorie Boulton's *The Anatomy of the Novel* (1975):

It is a form of solitary readings, so requires widespread literacy and leisure: It must have been helped by improved techniques of artificial lighting: it may have answered the needs of a large middle class of a society rowing more specialized and complicated: it reflects an increasing Consciousness interest (p. 10).

Moreover, one may notice that the middle class are considered as great consumers of novels “the Victorian public consumes novels as men eat pastry after dinner”⁷. In fact, the middle class in general and women mainly prefer writing and reading prose in general and novel in particular. In the first place, novel provides an escape from their dull life into an imaginative world. Undeniably, as the novel is a form that represents the dynamics of the social mobility, its function is to heal people from their hostile life. Being excluded from political, economic and social activities, writing is the only way out left for women to assert individuality and autonomy. Additionally, the reader may wonder why novels dominate poetry in the nineteenth century, and why female writers prefer writing prose?

As far as the first question is concerned, novels dominated poetry in the nineteenth century because when writing prose, the writer is free to use the length required by his preoccupations. He is free to express himself through the narrative and in doing so he feels some kind of release. In fact, the writer is free to mention, for example, about the negative effects of Industrial Revolution on the individuals and society. Undeniably, the Industrial Revolution causes miserable working and living conditions. For instance, they work for long hours; the factories where they work are unhealthy because of lack of ventilation, heat, noise and damp add to it danger from unprotected machines. Furthermore, the working class lives in the towns where there is no street lightening, no proper sanitation and no social organization. Nothing was offered, but the dreariest and drab surroundings.

⁷ Brantlinger, William, and Thesing, B *Thacheray. A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, 2005, 30.

Regarding the second question that is concerned with why female writers write prose more readily than poetry, plainly, as the middle class family in the Victorian time possesses only a single sitting room that is shared by all the members of the Victorian family. So, if a woman writes poems, it is difficult for her to concentrate as she is always interrupted. Therefore; writing poems seems impossible in those conditions as poetry requires more concentration than prose. Victorian women are not poetry oriented because they do not have the required means such as money and a room of their own to do so, as an illustration, Virginia Woolf, in her long essay *A Room of One's Own*, argues that in order to write a poem, women need five hundred pounds a year and a room of her own locked. Thus, money stands for power to contemplate whereas the lock on the door means the power to think for oneself⁸. Admittedly, writing poems requires private income and private room. As a result, Woolf asserts that only few women have written successful poetry because there is a deep connection between the material conditions and creativity. So, women have to earn their own money because financial and intellectual freedom goes hand in hand. To end up, it is interesting to look at some characteristics of the novel.

The novel, indeed, has some salient features. First of all, it is conceived with the purpose of “mimesis”, a mere copy of nature or a real life and a key literature door and verisimilitude. Verisimilitude or vraisemblance is the excellence of the novel that is judged on its closeness to the actual experience of the author, hence notion of reality: “we find here a close imitation of men and manner, we see the very web and texture of society as it really exists”⁹. In this respect, the novel has the power to

⁸ Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, 103.

⁹ Hazlitt. *Theology and The Victorian Novel*, 2009, 3.

picture the real life. Besides, handling time is also an important component of the novel as it allows the writer to suggest the chronology of causation. In fact, the novel has a chronological plotting in order to provide unity and linearity mainly the bildungsroman that focuses on the individual's development. Moreover, with the evaluation of science, space also has become an important element to the understanding of the universe. Consequently, time and space have shaped the novel.

Being a bildungsroman novel, *Jane Eyre* concentrates on the psychological and moral growth of a female key figure Jane Eyre from youth to adulthood. Equally, for Mikhail Bakhtin, the novel is generally about a special moment in relation between the individual and society when there is sufficient disagreement in society. As a result, for him, the *bildungsroman* is an epitome of change and conflict. Its hero emerges along with the world that reflects the historical emergence of the work itself. He is no longer with an epoch, but on the border between two epochs at the transition point from one to the other. This transition is accomplished in him and through him¹⁰. Brontë presents her main narrative agent Jane who lives on the border of two epochs that are her youth and adulthood. In fact, through the narrative, she is kept recalling her past childhood memories “I have recorded in details the events of my significant existence: to the first ten years of my life, I have given almost as many chapters, but this is not to be a regular autobiography: I am only bound to evoke memory” (Vol. I. p. 104). Understandably, memory has a great power on people's consciousness whether being traumatic or pleasurable. Memories create a link between childhood and adulthood contributing to the building of the personal identity.

¹⁰ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Speech Genres and Other late Essays*, 1986,23-24. This book presents six works from Bakhtin's aesthetic of creative discourse published in Moscow in 1979. This is the last of Bakhtin's extant manuscripts published in the Soviet Union.

It is interesting to note that this mold of novel is widespread in some Victorian novels such as Marry Ann Evans' *The Mill on the Floss* written under a male pen name Georg Eliot (1860). *The Mill on the Floss* is about the psychological and moral growth of a female character Maggie Tulliver who lives her youth and adulthood in a hostile milieu where she cannot fit in any group, be it with her family nor even with the gipsies. She has been confronted to her passion, imagination and intellectual ambition. However, unlike Jane Eyre, Maggie Tulliver is crashed by the Victorian standards, finally not being able to change the Victorian norms of her time. Therefore, her death is inevitable. To be more explicit, *The Mill on the Floss* is about the Victorian patriarchal society that discriminates between men and women. Maggie craves for freedom, education and desires to break the shackles of the Victorian bound on her, yet her incapability to escape the reality makes her accept the social regulations. Admittedly, she attempted to run away from home with her beloved, but failed to do so. Therefore, Maggie can find relief just in death and this makes her a self-sacrifice woman. She has sacrificed herself to help her brother and they die together. In this sense, it is also important to bear in mind that self-sacrifice is a paramount Victorian value. In brief, through Maggie Tulliver, one can notice that George Eliot does not radically challenge the dominant patriarchal culture.

To end up, it is worth mentioning that the nineteenth century novel is also known by the use of children that has a specific significance. The use of children is important because they are considered as blank sheet, innocent, not corrupted yet by the evils of society. They are pure from the contamination of society and industrialization. By using them, writers try to find some white in society as they

behave freely than adults who are easily contaminated and obliged to fit in their society. As an illustration, in Dickens' literary works, the emphasis is generally upon the separation of the child from the world of adult experience. For example, in *David Copperfield*, which was published as a serial first in 1849-1850 and a book in 1850, the story follows the life of David Copperfield from childhood to maturity. In another Dickens' work of art, *Hard Times* that was published first in 1854, children are also present like Louisa and Tom. However, these children are forbidden to be creative and imaginative or to have feelings. Their father, Mr. Grandgrind is basically trying to make his kids into robots, with predictably bad results. Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, published in 1837-1839, is also an Orphan child born in workhouse and sold into apprenticeship with an undertaker. Indeed, most writers use orphan and poor children in their novels in order to fill the gap in society.

1. 3. Women's Status and Roles during the Victorian England

The nineteenth century public witnessed an intense debate about the position of women in the conservative Victorian society. During this century, women kept struggling for a decent professional job alongside men in the world of letters. However, being a woman and a female writer during the Victorian England was not been an easy assignment bearing in mind that the monarch is not only a woman, but a strong supporter of patriarchal society. Men use power for their own advantage mashing any women's attempt at progress. Living in such a society, women and female writers have been kept suffering from society's restrictions. Women have been expected to have neither interest in literature nor to be innovative as it is quoted by Virginia Woolf: "in the nineteenth century, a woman was not encouraged to be an

artist. In other words, nothing could be expected of women intellectually”¹¹. So, intellectual exercise is generally considered as a masculine occupation “unfeminine” which is alien to women.

In fact, women are not considered as serious artists and have great difficulty in obtaining public showings. The public opinion of the nineteenth century holds that women can never produce great art, they are more fundamentally for the applied arts of design and craft than fine art like writing poems, novel, film, painting and sculpture. In their context, the Australian Feminist scholar Dale Spender has argued:

“men of letters” have excluded women and women’s writings from both participation and consideration within literary circle, and they have compounded their errors of judgment with their failure to mention that there are different rules for the women, whom they have not included¹².

Unfortunately, the majority of women have internalized this inferiority feeling unable to be writers; nevertheless, a few have liberated themselves from this stereotype. For instance, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot and the Brontë sisters have been cognizant enough to understand that a woman has the capacity of being on the same intellectual ground as men; however, one has to mention that their novels cannot be signed under their names, instead, they have been obliged to use a male nicknames for fear that their novels are rejected. For example, Mary Ann Evans wrote her novel *the Mill on the Floss* under a male pen “George Eliot”, Emily Brontë wrote *Wuthering heights* under the pseudonym of “Ellis Bell” and Ann Brontë wrote *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* under the pseudonym of “Acton Bell”. During this century, much beneficial social

¹¹ Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929, 58.

¹² Kharbe, Ambreen. *English Language and Literary Criticism*, 2009, 250.

changes have taken place due to the willingness of these women writers and others to assert their opinions and act on their beliefs.

Charlotte Brontë is one of those women who were acutely aware of the problems of her sex. Due to her political awareness, she decides to write obliquely through fiction in order to speak about women's preoccupations as far as freedom, education and financial independence are concerned. She signed her novel under a male nickname "Currer Bell" because at that time authoresses were looked on with prejudice. Brontë asserts that she and her sisters felt sorrow not to be able to reveal their names to the public, but at the same time, she was conscious about the society's negative response to any female literary work. Indeed, men used to reject women's work of art for fear of rivalry between them, on the one hand, and in order to keep them submissive, on the other hand; writing has always been considered as a vehicle of arousing women's awareness of their rights. For example, Brontë states: "the purpose of *Jane Eyre* not only the novel, but also the character herself as a cultural heroine is to transform a primeval society which devalues women and their contributions into a nobler order of civilization"¹³. Indeed, Brontë's main object of writing *Jane Eyre* is to denigrate society's attempt to restrict women's activities through her fictional character Jane Eyre.

To end up, women writers have encountered a lot of difficulties so as to have their novels reach the public. Moreover, there is evidence that novels are affiliated with women and identified as a female activity. So, by hitching women with novels, the latter has been given a reluctant status. Actually, the novel has a difficult existence;

¹³ www.essay.uk.com/coursework/jane-eyre-the-feminist-tract.

but this does not prevent women to have a voice and forum that leads often to social and political involvement.

As it has been said earlier, being a woman is not an easy task. When men hear the word “woman”, the immediate image that comes to their mind is beauty, sexual desire, marriage, housewife, and motherhood. This image is considered as an archetype of the Victorian woman which is well explained in Coventry Patmore’s work of art *The Angel in the House*. It is a poem written in 1854 from a husband’s point of view. He summarizes the word “woman” in few words: meek, charming, pious, sympathetic and above all, pure. As a result, from infancy, a woman is taught that beauty is her specter in order to get married. To back up a husband and ensure harmony in society, she has to possess feminine traits which are sensitivity, self-denial, self-sacrifice, chaste, moral purity, compassion and desire and above all beauty. Accordingly, good girls and good women are associated with beauty.

It has been recognized that female children were brought up with this ideology. For example, when reading fairy tales like the *Beauty and the Beast*, the female heroine is usually a very beautiful, submissive and weak creature who marries by the end a handsome prince. In fact, woman’s beauty is presented in a way that links goodness with beauty. Beautiful heroines are usually very quiet and passive and they do not speak much. If they do, they are usually answering questions. Truly, they never question things, they believe in the absolute truth believing in all what is presented to them. They rarely take action or make decisions. They spend a lot of time indoors cooking and cleaning for the males and while they are doing this, the males are having a very exciting time outdoors. Nonetheless, women who are not wives and mothers are

depicted as imaginary creatures such as witches or fairy godmothers. By contrast, men are always portrayed in a large range of roles as fighters, policeman, judges and kings. Therefore, these kinds of stories urge the Victorians women to believe in the importance of beauty rather than education.

It has been held that women have always been considered inferior even before the nineteenth century. Admittedly, the Enlightenments of the eighteenth century like the philosopher Jean Jacque Rousseau confirms the limited capacity of women. He advocates that “cunning is only what enables a woman to achieve some kind of power possible for them: by exploiting tears, displaying their tender sensibility, offering or withholding sexual favours. So, women can obtain influence over man”¹⁴. Actually, Rousseau confesses in his work *Emile* written in five books (1762) that men depend on women only in one case, which is when they desire them. By contrast, according to him, women always need and desire men. Furthermore, he devotes four books about Emile’s education. Indeed, the four books are devoted only to Emile’s education about some manual skills appropriate to his gender and how to be a strong man.

As far as the fourth book is concerned, Rousseau presents his male character as physically a strong teenager who is ready to receive an education that deals with emotions and desires as he quotes: “we have made an active and thinking being. It remains for us, in order to complete the man, only to make a loving and feeling being-that is to say, to perfect reason by sentiment”¹⁵. Besides, it is worth noting that Rousseau devotes only one book, the fifth one, in order to speak about the

¹⁴ Pain, Gill and Sellers, Susan. *The Feminist Literary Criticism*, 2007,53.

¹⁵ Dent, Nicholas. *Rousseau*, 2005, 95.

importance of a female character Sophie to be an obedient future wife for Emile. In fact, in the course of time, Rousseau realizes that his character Emile would soon need a wife. As a result, he outlines a special education for the girl Sophie that is suitable for her submission. He prepares her to be a “doll” and “the Angel of the house” by asserting that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent. She should be governed by fear to exercise her mental cunning, and make a coquettish slave in order to render her more alluring object of desire, a sweeter companion to man whenever he chooses her to relax himself ¹⁶.

Overall, women were brought up to be pure, innocent, tender, sexually undemanding, submissive and obedient to fit the glorified “Angel in the House”, the Madonna image of the time. Truly, women were taught that beauty is their capital. They had to be very beautiful to get married in order to assure a stable life; otherwise, they will stay at home without a husband; hence, without any financial position. In this sense, the English writer and philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft has stated that all writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners, from Jean Jacques Rousseau to Dr. Gregory, have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and consequently, more useless members of society¹⁷. To end up, for the Victorians, the feminine traits discussed earlier are crucial elements to prepare women for marriage.

As far as marriage is concerned, the representation of the ideal wives are abundant in the Victorian culture because the ugly women cannot be married; thus, she cannot hold a status in society. Marriage is considered as an important pillar for the

¹⁶ Black, Josef, Conolly, Leonard and Flint, Kint. *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*, 2010.

¹⁷ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of women*, 1975, 13.

Victorians mainly for three reasons. In the first place, it has a religious connotation as it avoids adultery that was not accepted in the British conservative society. In the second place, it is meant for social mobility because through it, women can either maintain their status or climb the social ladder. In the third place, it is also important for inheritance because before marriage, women do not have the right to be heir. Thus, through marriage, they can have access to money and inherit it. However, though marriage is considered as an opportunity to have a financial status, it is viewed by some people as a kind of slavery because women have to rely on their husbands in everything. In fact, for the slave, the master is only a means to be fed and clothed. In this respect, another philosopher John Stuart Mill, one of the most influential English speaking philosopher of the nineteenth century about “paternalism” having women generally subject to the whims of their husbands. The social norms stress that women are physically and mentally less able than men; therefore, they need to be taken care of. Undeniably, paternalism is firmly entrenched in the British culture as it stresses the infringement on the personal freedom and autonomy of the individual. It is usually associated with the power of man over women.

To end up, the domestic ideology of the nineteenth century positioned woman in the private domain of home where she should carry out her prescribed role of wife and a mother. Men, on the contrary, would rule the public domain through work, politics and economics. Women were ordained to be wives, mothers and household managers that made them naturally unfit for economy, politics and civil participation in society. Understandably, men had willingly decided this ideology:

She was intensely sympathetic, immensely charming, utterly unselfish, she excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She scarified herself daily....in short she was, so constituted that she never had a mind, but preferred to sympathize with the minds and wishes of others. Above all, she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty¹⁸.

This excerpt signifies that women have been expected to be sympathetic, beautiful, self-sacrificed, pure; therefore, she does not need to think because thinking is viewed as men's sphere.

As far as women's education is concerned, furthering education was viewed as a key to additional free demand, a way to fight for their rights. But, by preventing them from having access to education, this made it difficult for them to achieve independence, economic status and intellectual freedom. Like the religious people who wanted to dominate people by limiting access to religious education, men also want to keep women ignorant so that they could dominate them easily. Therefore, they put everything into practice to enslave women's minds by using education as an indirect weapon of subjugation. In fact, unlike the masters of slaves who use violence to submit them, the masters of women do not need to use violence. Instead, they limit their education. Hence, they obtain their obedience through their consent as John Stuart Mill has stated:

The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. All women are brought up from the earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission¹⁹.

¹⁸ Blair, Emily. *Virginia Woolf and The Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel*, 2007, 53.

¹⁹ Shea, Victor and Whitla William. *The Victorian Literature: An Anthology*, 2015, 283.

Actually, Victorian man gets an education that supports his rationality whereas a woman gets an education that supports her femininity. Women did not have the opportunity to learn serious subjects like mathematics and science. Since they were prepared for matrimony, their education took the form of what is called “accomplishments”. They had a special curriculum which is concerned with teaching them geography, history, grammar, foreign languages like French and Italian adding to it music, drawing, sewing, embroidering, and playing pianos. For instance, at Lowood school, Jane Eyre and all the poor girls learnt only these skills “there were lessons on geography; the lower classes were called by the teachers: repetitions in history, grammar, writing and music lessons were given to elder girls” (*Jane Eyre*: Vol. I. p. 58). In fact, these skills were called “accomplishments” that were designed to verify and enlighten home once they are safely encored in.

It is important to emphasize that women’s discernment in education was not only determined by gender, but by social class as well as it is well demonstrated in *Jane Eyre*. For instance, considering gender issue; unlike Georgiana and Eliza Reed, John Reed is a schoolboy. Regarding social class discrimination, it is portrayed through the character Adèle, Rochester’s pretended daughter, who is taught at home by a governess whereas the poor orphan girls like Jane and her mates are taught in the charity institutions like Lowood school. Most of the charitable schools have been run by church authorities that put a stress on the religious education. To end up, as women’s education is limited, automatically job opportunities were limited too. Women who needed to support themselves had only to take the option of either a teacher or a governess.

There are no means for women to live in England, but by teaching, sewing or washing. The last is the best. The best paid, the best unhealthy or must free, but it is not well paid enough to live by. Moreover, it is impossible for anyone not born to this position to take it up. I don't know but it is²⁰.

These jobs opportunities were available for women in order to earn their living without sacrificing their social position preventing them going to prostitution. As an example, in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, there was a portrayal of a female character named Nancy, is an orphan, a working class and uneducated girl whose available option is to be a thief, a mistress and a prostitute in order to live in a hostile milieu of the Victorian England. Nevertheless, though prostitution was accepted, the reader sympathizes with Nancy by the end because she sacrifices herself in order to save the innocent child Oliver Twist from the gang bearing in mind that the Victorian women are known by self-sacrifice. In fact, Nancy is rather considered as a victim of the Industrial Revolution. In brief, Nancy is considered as an ambiguous character as she is regarded, on the one side, as "a fallen woman" and "a victim", on the other side. It is worth stressing that women who could work had either strayed from the family circle or had dead parents.

Women's censorious position in the Victorian England was accentuated by the mixture of religious conviction, biological determination and philosophical assumptions. Admittedly, the religious conviction states that Eve, who represents women of the world, was the main source of the fall of Adam and man in general whereas the biological determination emphasizes that woman is biologically weak. Philosophical assumptions, for their part underline on the irrationality of women

²⁰ Tayfor, Marry to Nussey, Ellen. *Lettre*, ii, 179.

because the interference of their sentiments that lead them to take wrong decisions. To end up, all these moralities accentuate that women are easily tempted, weak biologically, and irrational. Nonetheless, Charlotte Brontë stands against these beliefs showing their fallacy and revolutionizing the accepted standards concerning women by trying to reverse them in her novel *Jane Eyre*. She gives her female key figure Jane Eyre the main voice.

Ultimately, the most apparent issues that had been prominent during the nineteenth century were social class and gender inequalities which had rendered this epoch as a complex and contradictory one. Being the most unchallengeable country in the world, Britain appeared as a weak nation, at home, inasmuch as it witnessed many clashes and conflicts. Eventually, concerning class issue, though being an industrialist country, the British citizens did not have the same opportunities resulting into a class-based society. Only a minority of the British people enjoyed life whereas the majority was miserable, being replaced by machineries, living in bad conditions and suffering from famine. In fact, while it has been sunrise for some, it was sunset for a great number of the British. Regarding gender snag, the Victorian England has been known as a patriarchal society having the power held by men who had always considered women as an inferior individual relying on the religious conviction, biological determinism and philosophical assumptions that have accentuated women as a weak, irrational and an easily tempted individual. Therefore, men have put everything into practice to make woman believe in their inferiority devoting her life to satisfy her father, brother and husband needs. Above all, women were not allowed to have a place in the world of letters. To end up, in order to face the third chapter that is related to the

analysis of Brontë's novel, chapter two has to be heavily armed with theoretical tools because they are fundamental.

CHAPTER II

Theoretical and Methodological Underpinning

Modern literary criticism is the application of literary theory. Thus, literary theory is the systematic study of nature of literature and the methods of analysing literature²¹.

Nowadays, the word “theory” has become an umbrella term for a variety of scholarly approaches so as to read literary texts. From the twentieth century onwards, literary theory has become compulsory in order to have a scientific analysis. This chapter emphasises the role of the twentieth century theoretical schools and movements when examining works of art. In addition, chapter two also handles Dako Suvin’s agential theory that is related to the Socio-historical approach. Last, chapter two highlights the social hegemonic discourse and its counter discourse is concerned with Feminism.

2.1. The Role of Modern Literary Criticism Nowadays

The historical roots of criticism lie on the Ancient Greece philosophers Plato and Aristotle. In fact, literary criticism has started with the great philosophers Plato and Aristotle who have influenced the current literary studies. In the outset, despite the fact that Plato and Aristotle have different outlooks about the role of art in society, they share only on one point which is that literature represents life. Both of them, indeed, consider literature as a mere copy of nature “mimesis”²² which is a whole process and an important key to literature door.

Nonetheless, dealing with differences, as far as Plato neglected poetry in his *Republic* written in 308 BCE claiming that it is just superficial, historically untrue and over stimulates human emotions because it deals with the heart and not with the mind. So, according to him, poetry is irrational that generally makes people do things on an

²¹ Gordon Michael, Kreiswirth Martin and Szemanimre. *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2015.

²² Saijalsomaa, Sari Kivistö, Pirjo Lyytikäinen. *Rethinking Mimesis: Concepts and Practices of Literary Representation*, 2012, 3.

impulse; hence, they tend to take wrong decisions. This partly explains that Plato has been influenced by his teacher Socrates who holds that art is valuable only if it treats moralities and ethics. He considers poetry as the imitation of nature and a beautiful lie because it undermines the stability of humankind. Therefore, wisdom is the absolute knowledge of truth or life as a whole. What comes from the mind is the world of truth. For instance, when talking about the word “beauty”, the pure image of it is just in people’s mind; but when they make it concrete and real in a particular item, it becomes an illusion, a lie and a fake, according to Plato.

Admittedly, Plato states that art cannot provide us with true knowledge since it is the imitation of life. Besides, he asserts that art should be banned since it can evoke emotions that allow the irrational part of the soul to gain control. In effect, art has a detrimental impact on our soul and it infects it against its will. Eventually, he considers that poetry is imitative and corrupting whose purpose is simply to give pleasure to the audience without educating them. As a result, it is viewed as a “bad” art that should be censured especially for the young people who are going to be the guardians of the ideal city in the future. For example, God must not be depicted in poetry in a negative way showing his vices because these young people are going to be influenced; therefore, they will imitate what they have learned. In short, Plato is against imitation and for intelligible facts of real knowledge. For him, drama destroys the soul; therefore, the city.

Among other differences between Aristotle and Plato is the issue of democracy as far as art is concerned. It is arguable that Plato does not believe in democracy especially among the mob whom he considers as often dangerous.

Manifestly, giving them freedom can lead to disorder. That is why for Plato, censorship is required on works of art, and this leads people to think that an artist is generally not free. However, more importantly, Plato is not really against freedom unless it leads to disorder. It appears; therefore, that it is better to have censorship with stability than disorder with freedom.

It has been proven, through history, that countries that have followed this scheme have avoided rebellions, riots, and even civil wars. Censorship for Plato is necessary in order to avoid instability as he claims that “censorship is a necessary evil that must exist to help the city as a whole”²³. That is why Plato is called the “Father of censorship”²⁴. He is for teaching virtues rather than vices especially for his ideal city that seeks to build a stable city by banishing poets and rejecting democracy. In brief, Plato reduces the function of art to be “mimetic”. He is considered as basically a moral philosopher as he focuses on the pedagogical didactic aspect of art i.e. people read art only for morality and religious purposes and not for its beauty and its pleasure and this is labeled “the Platonic Approach”. Nonetheless, Aristotle has another view as far as art is concerned.

Though being the most distinguished disciple of Plato, Aristotle refuses Plato’s views. Being the founder of criticism, Aristotle’s conception deals with beauty, aesthetics and pleasure as it is well demonstrated in his *Poetics*²⁵ that was written in 335 BCE. While Plato believes that truth is found within the mind, Aristotle looks for the truth outside the mind. According to Aristotle, poetry is a beautiful art. He defines

²³ Pappas, Nicholas. *The Routledge Guidebook to Plato’s Republic*, 2013, 231.

²⁴ Plato’s view of literature is heavily conditioned by the political concerns that have generated Athens at that time. He lives in Athens that has been full of social and political problems. So, he writes Republic in order to find solutions to build an ideal city.

²⁵ Graham, Gordon. *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*, 2005.

it as a “medium of imitation” that represents or duplicates life through characters, emotions and actions. Besides, considering Plato’s view about art which he sees as dominating peoples’ emotions, Aristotle comes against this view arguing that art can provide educational and moral insights; it thus, fosters growth. He states that on the contrary, literature clears our mind through emotions as it is its primary objective for its existence “raison d’être”. It leaves us rather more rational in the end. Moreover, Aristotle claims too that good literature is the one that generates catharsis that is concerned with pity and fear that can be transformed as a purge for our former emotions. A good tragedy, Aristotle states, is the one that produces catharsis and purgation of negative feelings. Catharsis is regarded like a therapy after which people feels better. So, the strength of feeling forms a basis for aesthetic.

Accordingly, for Aristotle, in the beginning of the tragedy, characters are prosperous and good then this state of goodness is going to change because ignorance will generate pity and fear for the reader and the audience at the end. A good tragedy is known for its protagonist who will mistakenly lead to his downfall, but he must be realistic otherwise people will not learn from these mistakes. However, it is important to stress that the protagonist is not conscious when committing mistakes because of his moral weakness; therefore, experiencing a reversal fortune. Consequently, by the end of the tragedy, people feel pity, fear and may be they cry resulting in the production of catharsis. Admittedly, the audience or the reader is going to feel happiness and relief after crying getting rid of the negative feelings by purifying them, purging them from evil, cure passions and generate sympathy. In contrast to Plato, Aristotle considers art or poetry as a beautiful aspect that is concerned with aesthetics. In brief, Aristotle

considers art in general and poetry specifically as informative, instructive and curative. To end up, from the time of Aristotle onwards, criticism is regarded as a science.

In short, it should be remembered that criticism started a long time ago with the most influential philosophers of history Plato and Aristotle. Plato argues that man can live without art as it can stimulate her or his emotions leading to irrationality; and thus, taking wrong decisions whereas Aristotle believes that art is necessary in the life of people as it is beautiful and enjoyable. Unlike Plato who considers art just as an imitation, Aristotle views it as complementary to nature. For Aristotle, art is not the exact copy of reality; it is rather a recreation, a representation that adds something to the real one. Admittedly, when imitating, people feel pleasure and acquire knowledge. Aristotle regards poetry and drama as more valuable than history because according to him, art conveys truths more than history does. Unlike the historians who relate what has happened, poets relate what may happen. So, reality is not shown as it is, but as it should be and this makes the difference between a historian and a poet. To end up, Aristotle's criticism about Plato's view about art can be considered as the most important contribution in the modern literary criticism of the twentieth century.

In retrospect, the study of works of art involves the study of plot, themes, setting and characters independently putting emphasis on the analysis of the hero; nevertheless, the current criticism is influenced by the evolution of linguistics and the possibilities of using theories offered by the formalists, new criticism and practical criticism, phenomenologists, structuralists and post-structuralists. It has been held that in the twentieth century, to make a literary study scientific, many schools and movements have come into being in order to stress the necessity of discarding doubt

that is considered as the most deviating feature. However, it is very interesting to note that literature is ambiguous by definition. Accordingly, a literary work can have different meanings at the same time for four reasons.

First of all, a work of art can have several possible interpretations at different periods. Second, words on page can have different meanings for the same reader at different levels of her or his life. For instance, when I, first, have read Brontë's *Jane Eyre* I was a second year licence student considering it only as a love story by focusing on events and relationship between characters; but, after six years, when as a magister student, my analysis has changed and the merit of this argument lies on the opportunity of studying modern literary schools and movements that have led to a scientific study that can be proved. Third, a work of art can have different interpretations to different readers because of the unconscious influence of their personal background that plays an important factor when scrutinizing any literary work. For example, when reading *Jane Eyre* from a western point of view, it has been viewed as tackling the issue of patriarchy as emphasizing male supremacy. Nonetheless, when reading it from a non-European, oriental point of view, the interpretation is totally different. From an orient perspective, it has been interpreted as a racist work because in spite of the fact that Brontë's pretended aim is to defend women by giving them voice in a patriarchal society, when coming to the fictional character Bertha Mason, a Creole, Brontë has excluded her from the empowerment of the white women. In fact, Bertha Mason is considered the "Other" being silenced, alienated, marginalized and considered as a mad woman not only by men, but by white women as well. Ultimately, as the author's intention cannot generally be known

mainly, when it comes to key scenes, events, characters, the critic finds literature complex and ambiguous. However, ambiguity is considered as a fundamental concept that offers many ways of conceiving literature and such skill is called “criticism”. Truly, there is every reason to believe that literary criticism is often influenced by literary theories and philosophical discussions.

In order to understand words on page, literary theory offers a variety of approaches to the reading texts. The aim of modern literary schools and movements of the twentieth century is to move from an impressionistic analysis to a scientific study. In fact, the former way of analysis expects the reader to seek only for the interpretation of a particular piece of writing studying elements as entities separated one from another whereas the latter way urges the critic to use theories and concepts that have to be operational in order to be valuable and measurable when interpreting literary works. As a result, commitment to theory is used according to the needs and goals of the critic. Literary criticism has come to existence in order to provide some guidelines to help the reader to analyze, deconstruct, interpret and evaluate any piece of writing. It is stated that when interpreting a literary text, critics are doing literary criticism; and when they examine the criteria upon which their interpretation rests, they are doing critical theory. In other words, literary criticism is the application of critical theories.

Understandably, with the emergence of modern literary criticism, the analysis of *Jane Eyre*, for example, has moved from a reductionist analysis to different angles. In retrospect, the focus has been on the thematic or impressionistic analysis by emphasizing theme, setting, tone, narrator, point of view and plot. However, the merit of this argument depends on the way one may study *Jane Eyre* otherwise. For

example, it can be analyzed from a formalist point of view, new critic, practical critic, phenomenologist, structuralist or from a post-structuralist's perspective.

As far as the Russian formalists' perspective is concerned, it has emerged in order to put an end to the subjectivist theories of literature such as Romanticism. Unlike the romantics, the formalists are not interested in the feelings of the poets, in the individual responses of readers or in the representations of reality; instead, they tend to study the artistic features of the literary work like structure and form. Indeed, the main interest of formalist critics, like Roman Jakobson and Boris Eikhenbaum, is to ask what the author means about a particular piece of writing. They regard literature as a unique form of human knowledge that needs to be examined on its own terms. This can be exemplified by René Wellék and Austin Warren's book *Theory of Literature* (1949). René Wellék and Austin Warren advocate that a work of art is not primarily a social, historical or biographical document, but it is a literary work that can be understood only as a reference to its intrinsic literary feature which is concerned with the form and structure.

Accordingly, the Russian formalists are concerned with having a close reading of a literary work and dismissing the other elements that deal with biography of the author, the reader's reception or with the social and historical context of the text. For example, Roman Jakobson emphasizes in his book *Modern Literary Poetry* (1921) that the object of literary studies is not literature, but its literariness, inasmuch as literature is regarded as a verbal art. To make it more salient, literariness is one of the crucial ways in which literary language distinguishes itself from the ordinary communicative language. Hence, the formalists have argued that what matters is the

“literariness” of the text. For example, among the characteristics of literariness is defamiliarization that is esteemed by presenting the world in a strange way that allows the reader to see reality differently. Thus, the formalists are pondered with two factors. First, the verbal technique that makes a literary work as such. Second, the foregrounding of language itself is concerned with how language functions on the surface. As a result, the formalists deal with form and manner and not with matter.

All in all, for the formalists, analyzing a piece of writing, the defining features of a literary work do not reside in the extraordinary conditions such as history or socio-cultural phenomena under which a literary text might have been created, but in the form of language that has been used. However, one should bear in mind that the formalists perspective is necessary, but not sufficient; therefore, it has been followed by New Criticism.

New Criticism in America and Practical Criticism in the United Kingdom have appeared at the same time, in the 1930's and 1940's. Despite the fact they did not emerge in the same geographical area, they share the same analogy. Similarly to the formalists, New Criticism and Practical Criticism emphasize form and not subject i.e. manner and not matter. They are considered as milestone terms shifting interests from content to the artistic form and structure. In this sense, it should be emphasized that they are interested in the artistic style and not in the meaning. For example, in order to make their application efficient, the British practical critic I.A. Richardson pushes his students to concentrate on anonymous poems by instructing them to focus on words on

the page rather than relying on perceived or received beliefs about a given text²⁶. In this way, Richardson believes that this method of analysis is intended to have a psychological benefit for the students so as to make them active, think; thus, having the skill of analysis.

The New Critic does not focus on the author's intention, on the reader's response, or on the socio-historical context because, for them, literature is a piece of writing where the identity of both the author and the reader is lost. Hence, the focus should be on the literary devices of language like metaphor, simile and ambiguity in addition to the plot, characterization and space/time so as end up with one universal interpretation. Whereas New Criticism is too restrictive as it excludes the author and the critic from any analysis; but is sacred because it starts from the text. Nonetheless, phenomenology has appeared as a response to new criticism.

Considering Phenomenology, it founded by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. The phenomenologists in general are interested with only what is apparent. Their focus is on the reality of objects as they appear to the human consciousness. They have not been much interested in describing the author's world of consciousness as it is manifested in her or his work as a whole, but on the reader's response. This hints that according to the phenomenologists, the work of art does not exist independently from the reader's interaction; instead, it is her or his experience. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that there are two versions of phenomenology as criticism which are the individual consciousness and the aesthetic reception.

²⁶ "Introduction to Practical Criticism". The Faculty of English-University of Cambridge.

As far as the former version is concerned, it can take the shape, the form of a description of a reader's experience. It is about how the reader produces meaning by making connections and fill in the gaps. As a result, it is the reader's task to produce the work and anticipate what will happen later in the narrative through conjecturing, guessing and then having her or his expectations appointed or conformed. Actually, according to the phenomenologists, the text has no concrete existence without the reader's response because of these activities that the critic does in order to produce meaning of a literary text. Besides, dealing with the latter version that is concerned with the aesthetic reception, a work of art is considered as an answer to questions posed by a horizon of expectations which are clear, but difficult to determine at the same time as we do not have only one reader's response, but many. As a result, interpretations of a literary work must not focus on one experience of one reader, but on the history of work of art receptions. To sum up, the phenomenologists deal with what is apparent in a language and how meaning is formed in the reader's mind. Nonetheless, the reliance on what is only apparent has not been approved by the structuralists who come as a reaction to them.

Regarding Structuralism, it is considered as an intellectual movement and approach. According to the literary theorist, philosopher, linguist and critic Roland Barthes, structuralism is considered as neither a school nor a movement, but an activity. Structuralism has been developed first in anthropology with the work of Claude Levis Strauss then in literary and cultural studies with the work of Roman Jakobson, in psychology with Jacques Lacan, in the intellectual history with Michel Foucault and in Marxism with Louis Althusser. Although these thinkers have never

formed a school as such, their contributions fall under the umbrella of structuralism. One has to bear in mind that their works are well read in England, United States and elsewhere in the world during the fifties, sixties and seventies.

In addition, in contrast to the phenomenological approach that deals with the description of the reader's consciousness, structuralism seeks to analyze structures that operate, act and happen unconsciously in the reader's mind. Undeniably, there is an ample evidence to point out that the structuralists' task is to look for the hidden reality of the text. This hidden reality is constituted by a set of frame works signs that relate to one another which help the reader to interpret and give meaning to the text. Moreover, it is important at this stage to bear in mind that structuralism is widely regarded to have its origins in the work of the French linguistic theorist Ferdinand De Saussure; but it was soon been used as a tool to be applied in many other fields including philosophy, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and sociology. In fact, in the early twentieth century, Saussure has developed a science of signs based on linguistics. He has stated that any language is just a complex system of signs that expresses ideas with rules that govern their usage. The underlying abstract structure of language has been labeled as "langue" and the concrete manifestations as "parole".

It is well stressed that unlike the Romantics or the Humanists who hold that the author is the progenitor of a text; structuralists argue that any piece of writing has no origin. As an illustration, in his article "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative"²⁷ (1966), Roland Barthes divides literary work into three hierarchical levels, which are functions, actions and narrative. It starts with functions of the

²⁷ Roland Barthes; Lionel Duisit. "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative", 2006, 237-272.

elementary piece of a work that enables the reader to identify the character. Then that character would do an action and consequently be one of the elements that would make up the narrative. Understandably, it is interesting to note that Barthes is able to use these distinctions to evaluate how certain key functions work in the forming of characters. This might be highlighted by the example of a set of words like “handsome”, “proud” and “fair” that, when put together, will formulate a specific kind of characters or actions. As a result, the ambition of structuralists is to understand to be concerned with the original meaning and to try to give explanation and new interpretation to a literary work.

However, though Structuralism and New Criticism share the same purpose is to end up with a close reading of the text, they differentiate in some other aspects. Unlike new criticism, structuralism rejects universality, the author and the narrator, but gives importance to readers. As a result, a literary work does not have only one interpretation, but many. To be more explicit, in his article *The Death of the Author*²⁸ (1967), Barthes argues that language speaks itself by itself; but when the author is known, the reader tends to be diverted as far as meaning is concerned. In other words, meaning must be discovered at the cost of the death of the author, making of the reader an active participant without relying on the author. Structuralism is a continuation of formalism and phenomenology as all of them are not concerned with the content of a work of art, but with form and structure being valued as a key element in the understanding of a text. However, like previous schools and movements, post-structuralism has come into existence as a continuation in order to complete what has

²⁸ Gallix, Andrew. “In theory: The Death of the Author”, 2010.

been missed in structuralism. It is noticeable that each movement or school moves a step further.

Post-structuralism, undeniably, it departed from structuralism. This new school is difficult to define because the boundaries between structuralism and post-structuralism are not clear. For instance, some critics have connected the works of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan with structuralism while others have associated them with post-structuralism. Nonetheless, the majority of the critics have argued that Roland Barthes, Lacan and Foucault are identified as post-structuralists because they have gone beyond structuralism as a movement or a school. Considering the post-structuralists outlook, they advocate that structures of signification do not exist independently as far as the subject is concerned, but these structures are entangled with the external forces that produce them.

It is assumed that contrary to structuralism, post structuralism has focused on knowledge, totality and subject i.e. man and consciousness. As a consequence, the reader has to consider the outside knowledge of a given literary work and make a critique. The emphasis on the form, seemingly at the expense of the thematic content has not been well received by the content-based critics such as Darko Suvin, Frederic Jameson, and Antonio Gramsci. In fact, these theorists do not dismiss wholly the formalist's approach; they insist that their methods of analysis are necessary, but not sufficient because they have neglected the social world in which human beings who write and read literature are bound to. Thus, in order to avoid extremity and deficiency, one has to find a middle way by giving importance to both structure and the socio-historical context in which a piece of writing has been written.

To sum up, critics can notice that modern literary schools and movements are regarded as a whole process starting by the formalists, new criticism and practical criticism, phenomenology, structuralism and ending up with post-structuralism. Actually, *Jane Eyre* is analyzed from a post-structuralist angle by giving importance to both structure and socio-historical factors that have pushed Charlotte Brontë to reveal reality. Additionally, such schools and movements have allowed the emergence of Darko Suvin's agential theory and the Feminist theory that are considered as theoretical tools among others used so as to construe *Jane Eyre*.

2. 2. The Agential Theory of Darko Suvin: A Socio-historical Approach

Dealing with the Agential theory, it echoes the point that it has been used by different scholars like the comparatist Darko Suvin²⁹ who has advocated the importance of a socio-historical approach when analyzing literary texts. He typically views the social and cultural phenomenon as inseparable from the interpretation of works of art. So, structures of signification do not exist independently of the subject, but they are structures that are entangled with external forces that have produced literary texts³⁰. Suvin's agential theory that deals with the structure of the narrative is cardinal.

Actually, Darko Suvin's theory, which is not only applied to drama, but to novels as well, was first published in the Italian article "Per Una Teoria Dell Analisi Agenzial" (1981). Then it was published in another article "On Dramaturgic Agents and Krleza's Agential Structure". Through a materialistic view of history, Suvin deepens the study of fictional characters and develops a new form of narrative agents

²⁹ Suvin, Darko is a professor of comparative literature best known for several major works of criticism and literary history devoted to science fiction.

³⁰ Dalila, Zeghar. New Categories of Female Characters in Alice Walker's Novels Through a Comparative Study of Western, African and Feminist Theoretical Propositions, 2012. Phd thesis.

or for the analysis of fiction. Accordingly, he proposes two categories of characters: “flat” character or “type” and the “round” character that are significant at both structural and socio-historical level. However, it is worth noting that flat characters are often found in any narrative texts whereas the round ones, may or may not be found in a given text depending on its epistemic period or genre³¹. Additionally, flat and round characters are viewed as entities in movements and their transformations are parallel to the dominant aspects of socio-historical relations. Understandably, the building of the narrative agents is symptomatic of a given ideological praxis, as far as people’s culture, politics, education, religion and philosophy are concerned.

On the one hand, considering the flat character or the type, according to Darko Suvin, at the structural level, it is determined by non-contradictory traits that have to be picked up from the text. The critic needs at least six traits to decide whether the character is a flat or not. It may be identified through articles “the”, “a” or “an”. Such a character is generally static as it does not lead to a movement in the narrative. At the socio-historical level, the flat character does not question the dominant ideology; instead, it conforms to the specific hegemonic discourse. On the other hand, as far as the round character is concerned, it is determined by contradictory traits. Nonetheless, for Suvin, it can be composed at least of two opposed flat characters that are found at the surface of the text. In contrast to the flat character, at the narrative space and time, round character creates a movement because of its opposed traits whereas, at the socio-historical space and time, this kind of character questions the hegemonic discourse and resists it.

³¹ Ibid, 2012.

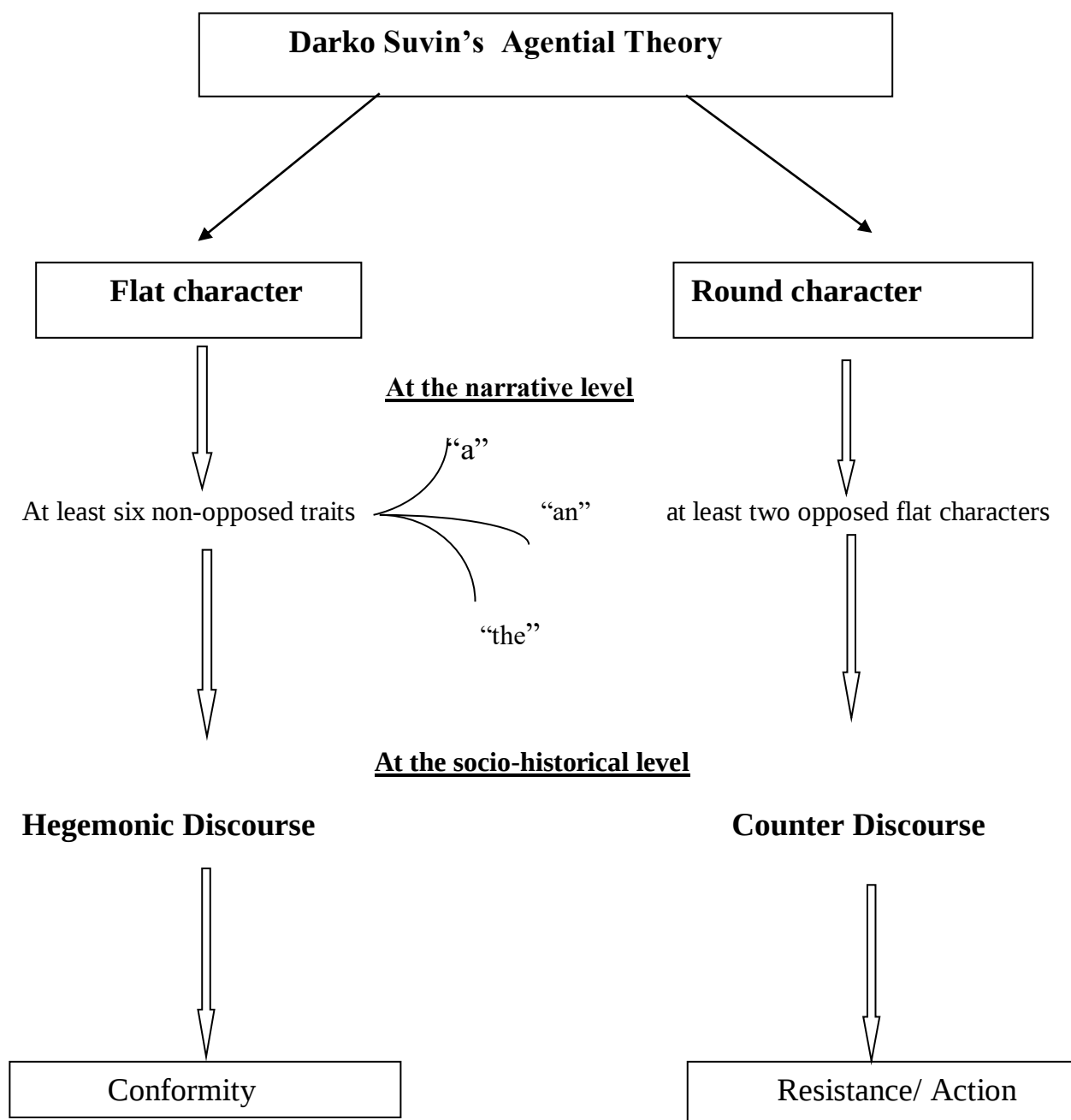
Besides, through the agential theory, Suvin insists on the notion that characters can be understood in space and time in which they evolve “space does not exist apart from what constitutes it: its qualities are determined by the specific field of relationships established by its constituting entities”³². Consequently, it is noticeable that there is a deep integration of time and space into a unified “time-space” as time experience is embedded in space experience and vice versa. In fact, much importance has been given to time being esteemed as real hours and space being regarded as standard hours.

Moreover, the Russian philosopher, literary critic and semiotician Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin is another scholar who has given importance to the role of the socio-historical space and time. He demonstrates that the significance of characters is expressed through what he calls “chronotope” that has been coined in 1937. Bakhtin’s chronotope is regarded as a concept that has been used in his theory of meaning emphasizing in the necessity of the interrelation between the narrative and the socio-historical space and time stating: “moments of adventurist time occur when the moral...sequence of life’s events is interrupted. These points provide an opening for the intrusion on nonhuman forces”³³. This alludes that time is not only considered as a clock time, but it is a corporal experience. He adds: “chronotope is a unit of analysis for studying language according to the ratio and characteristic of the temporal and spatial categories represented in that language”³⁴. To sum up, Bakhtin’s chronotope is useful in the study of the relationship between the writer and social reality.

³² Suvin, Darko. “Approach to Topoanalysis and the Paradigmatic of Dramaturgic Space”, 1987, 315.

³³ Bakhtin, Mikhail. “Form and Time and Chronotope in the Novel’s Dialogic Imagination: Four essays”, 1981, 95.

³⁴ [http://cultural.studies.web.unc.edu/resources-2: what-is-cultural-studies](http://cultural.studies.web.unc.edu/resources-2:what-is-cultural-studies).

Diagram I:

2.3. The Social Hegemonic Discourse Vs Counter Discourse (resistance): Socialist Feminism

Working at a broad theoretical level, this research work addresses hegemony as a social discourse. Admittedly, in order to complete the theoretical scaffolding of this project, the concept of social discourse that is concerned with hegemony, ideology and power has to be taken into consideration to situate Brontë's novel. Manifestly, in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë has dealt with the perverted male hegemonic discourse and how it has been deconstructed building a counter discourse that is related to resistance. This implicates that Brontë has integrated consciously politics in her representation of the social reality. Most of the time, people think that a literary scholar is trained only in literature, but reality suggests that, most of the time, writer cannot be detached from the political issues. In fact, writers cannot be detached from the circumstances of life, from the fact of their involvement with a set of beliefs, a social position, and from the mere activity of being members of a society. For instance, as far as *Jane Eyre* is concerned, when dealing with the hegemonic discourse, the attempt is to demonstrate how hegemony is produced and reproduced within the Victorian society. However, the main concern is to search on whether hegemony is the logical outcome of consensus or coercion.

It is requisite to clarify that social discourse is well acknowledged nowadays for remaining steady for many decades as a dominant notion in the hand of the minorities whereas the majority "others" are struggling and sometimes negotiating a place within the mainstream ideology. Social discourse has different definitions; for instance, according to Darko Suvin, it is a close dialectical interrelation with people in

social reality and in the building of fictional characters as their traits are taken from beliefs, values and myths that are circulating in a given society³⁵. Furthermore, from the outlook of the Belgian- Canadian social theorist and literary critic Marc Angenot, social discourse represents all that is said and written in a given society that is related by convictions and taken into ideological configurations³⁶.

In order to explain the existing power as the outcome of power relations and power struggle, the emphasis has to be put upon “common sense assumptions” that are labeled as “ideologies” or “weltanschauung” being implicit in a given piece of writing. Just like discourse, ideology is another nebulous concept that has received much contestation. The term “ideology” or “science of ideas” has been first introduced by the French Enlightenment aristocrat and philosopher Destutt De Trary during the secularization of the French society in the late of the eighteenth century³⁷. Undeniably, it is important at this point to stress that ideologies are implicit or exist in the social convention according to which people interact linguistically and of which people are generally not consciously aware³⁸. Therefore, the nature of the social conventions depend on the power relations which underlie ideologies. However, it is not difficult to grasp that ideologies are closely linked to language because in order to communicate, people use language that is considered as the commonest form of social behaviour where we rely most on “common sense assumptions”.

Additionally, ideology is considered as a basic component in Marxism, it is a key term. For instance, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’ *The German Ideology*

³⁵ Dalila, Zeghar. *New Categories of Female Characters in Alice Walker’s Novels Through a Comparative Study of Western, African and Feminist Theoretical Propositions*, 2012. Phd thesis.

³⁶ Reboul, Jacqueline. *Glossaire Critique de la Critique Contemporaine* in 1979, 223.

³⁷ Olrich, Ricken. *On the Etymology and Original Uses of the Term Ideology*, 1994.

³⁸ Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*, 2001, 20.

written (1845), they have stated that ideology is about the ideas of the ruling class that exists in every epoch “the class which has the means of material production at its disposal; has the control at the same time over the means of mental production so that their ideas are presented as universal truths that serve the interest of the general public interest”³⁹. In fact, people internalize what is socially produced. In this respect, it has been proven that unlike the ancient times when domination of people was achieved through coercion, using physical violence, in the course of time, power and domination have started to take another form which tends to be indirect and unconscious i.e. through the consent of individuals. Truly, the notions of coercion and consent have been empirically tested through the examples of poor and rich, women and men, and through the issue of racism. The outcome is that the increasing gap of power between these binary oppositions discussed above is the outcome of consensus resulted by people’s “false consciousness”.

Considering the concept of “false consciousness”, it is about people’s acceptance of an unfavorable social class system without protesting or questioning, taking it as the logical way for things to be. But, when people are aware or conscious about their situation, they generally long towards the desire of emancipation. Admittedly, Karl Marx has rejected “false consciousness” which is a system of ideas that affects people’s political behavior by instilling false beliefs about causal properties of the social world. While operating under the grip of ideology whose objective is to legitimate the power of the ruler, people tend to behave according to mistaken assumptions face to their real interests. These people are manipulated in such

³⁹ C. J. Arthur. *The German Ideology: Part One with selections from parts two and three, together with Marx’s “Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy”*, 2004,64.

a way that they accept other views that run counter their own interests, serving the ones of their dominator. In this sense, the main objective of Karl Marx is to have the working class shift from “false consciousness” to “class-consciousness”.

Nevertheless, later, it has been recognized that the Marxists do not necessarily refer to the working class, but refer to the oppressed people in general. Accordingly, “class-consciousness” has been replaced by “political awareness” whose main objective is to have the alienated people uncover the hidden forces behind their critical situation so that they can be able to reverse them. In fact, Marx wants the dominated people to rediscover themselves by getting rid of their “rigid chains”.

Moreover, “false consciousness” has been also later defined by Louis Althusser in his book *Ideology and State Apparatuses* (1971) as the system of beliefs and unconscious-assumptions, unexamined, invisible that represent the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence⁴⁰. Within this frame, it is believed that the bourgeoisie bloc whose ideology is the dominant one uses misleading categories to manipulate the labour force by controlling the societal beliefs and ideas that best serve their own interests. Furthermore, according to another Marxist scholar Raymond Williams’ perspective, ideology is relatively formal and an articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as a “worldview” or “class outlook”⁴¹. From this perspective, ideology is seen as a system that generates interrelated meanings and ideas which ultimately construct a specific worldview shared amongst a specific social grouping. This view goes hand in hand with that of social constructivist theory that refers to the notion that the individual is

⁴⁰ Shari, Benstock, Suzanne Ferris and Susanne Woods. *A Handbook of Literary Feminisms*, 2002, 238.

⁴¹ Pamela J. Shoemake and Stephen D. Reese. *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*, 70.

socially constructed and mediated by history. For example, whether you are born a boy or a girl, society shapes the behavior of its citizens. In brief, after having a look at different interpretations of the concept of ideology, it is pointed out as a new and effectual mainstream that expresses mechanisms of power.

As far as power is concerned, when mentioning it, one cannot avoid not highlighting hegemony, a concept that has been coined by the Italian Marxist theorist and politician Antonio Gramsci who has claimed that hegemony can be operational not just by using force, but it can also be achieved by consent through the shaping of the mind of the oppressed taking into consideration that consent is regarded as being more efficient and less costly. It is well known fact that Gramsci's concept is a useful tool for any understanding of cultural life in the west. He describes it as society's "brain washing". Indeed, in the narrow scope, it is a very mundane term that advocates that power can be primarily operated through consent in a given social context and the ability to use physical force comes in the second position.

Besides, what matters; however, is that unlike Gramsci's Marxist predecessors who have reduced hegemony only to the class struggle, Gramsci has developed this concept into a much complex theory that dialectically scrutinized various issues related to the correlation between state and civil society. In fact, as a theorist, Gramsci did not reduce "politics" to a mere reflection of economic forces, but has given attention to the phenomenon of political leadership and organization⁴². So, there is a symbiotic correlation between power and hegemony. Accordingly, for Gramsci, power is constituted by a dual or dyadic opposition that he has put under the

⁴² McNally Mark and Schwarzmantel John. "Gramsci and Global Politics", 2009, 10.

framework of force and consent, violence and persuasion⁴³. Gramsci has come out with the notion that hegemony cannot be avoided intellectually and historically.

As arguable as it might be, according to Gramsci, the exercise of power is based on two pillars which are the state and society. Concerning the first pillar which is concerned with the state, it is viewed as political coercion that is considered as the organ of one particular group that acts to make sure its interests and conditions of survival are secured⁴⁴. Dealing with the second pillar, which is concerned with the consent of the masses or “civil society”, it is achieved through a complex and protracted process that continuously formulates and shapes the public mind widely known as hegemony. Hence, hegemony can be viewed as a “manufacturing consent”.

“Manufacturing consent” is Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman’s concept that has been initiated in 1988 in order to analyze the effect of mass media on people. Chomsky and Herman have argued that mass media serve as a system of communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, inform and to inculcate individuals with values, beliefs and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interests, in order to sit at the top of the table, the systematic propaganda is required⁴⁵. Understandably, it is all about winning the consent of the dominated class through ideological domination by persuading them to view the world in a manner favorable to the dominant class. In this

⁴³ Howson Richard and Smith Kylie. Hegemony: *Studies in Consensus and Coercion*, 2008, 85.

⁴⁴ David Forgacs. *A Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings*, 2000, 205.

⁴⁵ Chomsky, Noam and Herman, Edward. Manufacturing Consent, *The Political Economy of Mass Media*, 1989, 47.

sense, it comes to be taken into consideration that consent is more effective than coercion.

To be more explicit, in order to sustain the norms, values, attitudes and customs that serve continuously the dominant ideology, those who govern rely heavily on the various social institutions to instill what Gramsci calls “articulatory practices” in the conscious of the masses or public. Power is, therefore, a means of hegemony which is contained in essence within the hands of an intellectual leadership that works to maintain the discourse of the ruling class group as the dominant discourse. To sum up, people should increase their consciousness about how language contributes to the domination of some people by others because that consciousness in particular is a significant element of the “first step” towards emancipation. Thus, struggle and raising consciousness empower people to provide a counter discourse.

As a post fact analysis, Feminism can be regarded as a suitable counter discourse to the male hegemonic discourse. Feminist literary criticism recognizes that since literature both reflects and shapes people’s culture, literary studies can either perpetuate the oppression of women or help to eliminate it. Unlike other schools of critical theory, Feminist literary criticism does not trace its roots to a single theorist who establishes a unified theory, but it is more appropriate to speak of Feminist practices than of one practice. For instance, there are liberal Feminism, Marxist Feminism, socialist Feminism, cultural Feminism and so forth. Indeed, Feminist literary criticism has a number of Feminist approaches and each of it embraces its own critical school or combination of methodologies. Nonetheless, there is a basic principle that unites Feminist critics under one roof despite their plurality of methods.

Admittedly, despite the variety of Feminist approaches to literary study, practitioners of Feminist literary criticism do share common beliefs. They agree upon the basic tenet that is concerned with women's oppression that must be eliminated so as to redress their marginalization in literary history as far as female creativity is concerned and thereby to serve their main goal that is concerned with the subversion of patriarchy.

Besides, one has to note that the Feminist strength lies on having freedom to borrow ideas and concepts from other theories and adapt them to its own theory. In effect, there is ample evidence that shows that Feminism is an interdisciplinary theory borrowing heavily from a broad range of disciplines. For example, it has borrowed some concepts from Marxism such as "alienation", "false consciousness" among others. From George Luckacs's perspective, alienation is caused by the material and social process that affect human beings. As it has been explained earlier, the economic organization of any given society determines the kinds of legal, political, religious and general cultural life of the world. Truly, superstructure is determined by infrastructure or the base i.e. the material structure of people determines how they think and perceive the world.

It is crucial to pinpoint that there are different kinds of alienation. Nonetheless, the main type of alienation that is well spotlighted in Brontë's work is "social alienation". "Social alienation" is a concept that has been used by sociologists to describe the experience of individuals or groups who are disconnected from the values, norms, practices and social relations of their society. It is about the social relationships that are reflected by a low degree of integration in common values and a

high degree of distance or isolation from society⁴⁶. In other words, social alienation is when one finds himself deprived of the ability to determine life and destiny, from the right to think or from the right of valuing goods and services produced by his own labour. Eventually, it is interesting to notice that the influence of the Marxist literary theory has led to the emergence of other theories like Feminism in general and the Socialist Feminist theory in particular whose main purpose is to deal with the notion of power and powerlessness.

Nonetheless, unlike Marxism, the Socialist Feminism analogues women's oppression as a result of both capitalism and patriarchy. It has been accepted that the Socialist Feminism has gained popularity during the last century notably during the sixties and seventies, a time frame also known as the second wave of Feminism. The latter has started in the United States and eventually has spread throughout the western world and beyond it. Among the second wave activists, one can mention the French existentialist philosopher Simone De Beauvoir. This thinker, De Beauvoir, can be viewed as a prominent beacon of the second wave of Feminism.

De Beauvoir has emphasized that women's oppression is related to both patriarchy and economic conditions. She presses for change on the basis that women and men are equal to one another; thus, women should be equal to men in the workplace and in the family. As a socialist critic and an existentialist philosopher, De Beauvoir is well known by her long essay *Le Deuxième Sexe* divided into two volumes. Volume one is entitled *Les Faits et les Mythes* whereas volume two is entitled *L'Expérience Vécue*. De Beauvoir's long essay is considered as a revolutionary work

⁴⁶ Ankony, Robert. *Community Alienation and its impact on Police*, 1999, 128. Phd thesis.

because she is the first Feminist writer who has justified her position with both historical and philosophical theses. It is a pioneering work and “très avant- gardiste pour l’époque” because it was written almost twenty years before the birth of the “mouvement de Liberation des Femmes” in France, and ten years before Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*.

As far as *The Second Sex* is concerned, it has been thought to be about the situation of women after the Second World War. But it is much more than that, it is a philosophical work rich with its literature, historical, psychological, and biological references. For example, she refers to the psychoanalyst figure Alfred Adler, the French poet André Breton, the Marxist figure Friederich Engels and Karl Marx, the psychoanalyst theorist Sigmund Freud, the English novelist D.H. Lawrence, the French existentialist Jean Paul Sartre and the French writer Stendhal and so forth. The main aim of De Beauvoir’s essay is to claim for an absolute equality, sexual freedom, freedom to work, and birth control so as to show that “no woman has a destin tout tracé”. The latter claims that women are free to be mothers when they want to be so, and they are free from all social obstacles. This is why she was interested in the inferiority of women as a fact rather than in the causes which she qualifies as being not enough. According to her, nothing condemns a woman to remain “l’éternel feminine”.

Accordingly, *The Second Sex* is a style of thought based upon the ontological and epistemological distinction between men and women “self and other”. In this book, De Beauvoir emphasizes how women’s representation has moved from

myth that is based on the biological determination, history, religion conviction and philosophical assumptions to discourse. Indeed, in the beginning, the representation of women has been only a myth or a stereotype, but in the course of time, this myth has become systematic knowledge. De Beauvoir refers to some historical figures who have contributed in displaying women as an inferior being. For example, she refers to a religious man St. Thomas who states that a woman is “the imperfect man” and “an incidental being”⁴⁷. She refers to Pythagore who says: “ya un principe bon qui a crée l’ordre, la lumière et l’homme. Il ya un principe mauvais qui a crée le chaos, les ténèbres et la femme”. This quotation shows that men have associated women with evil, chaos and darkness. They are reduced to “nothing” in front of the “divine man”. Truly, women are regarded as “inessential” in front of the “essential”.

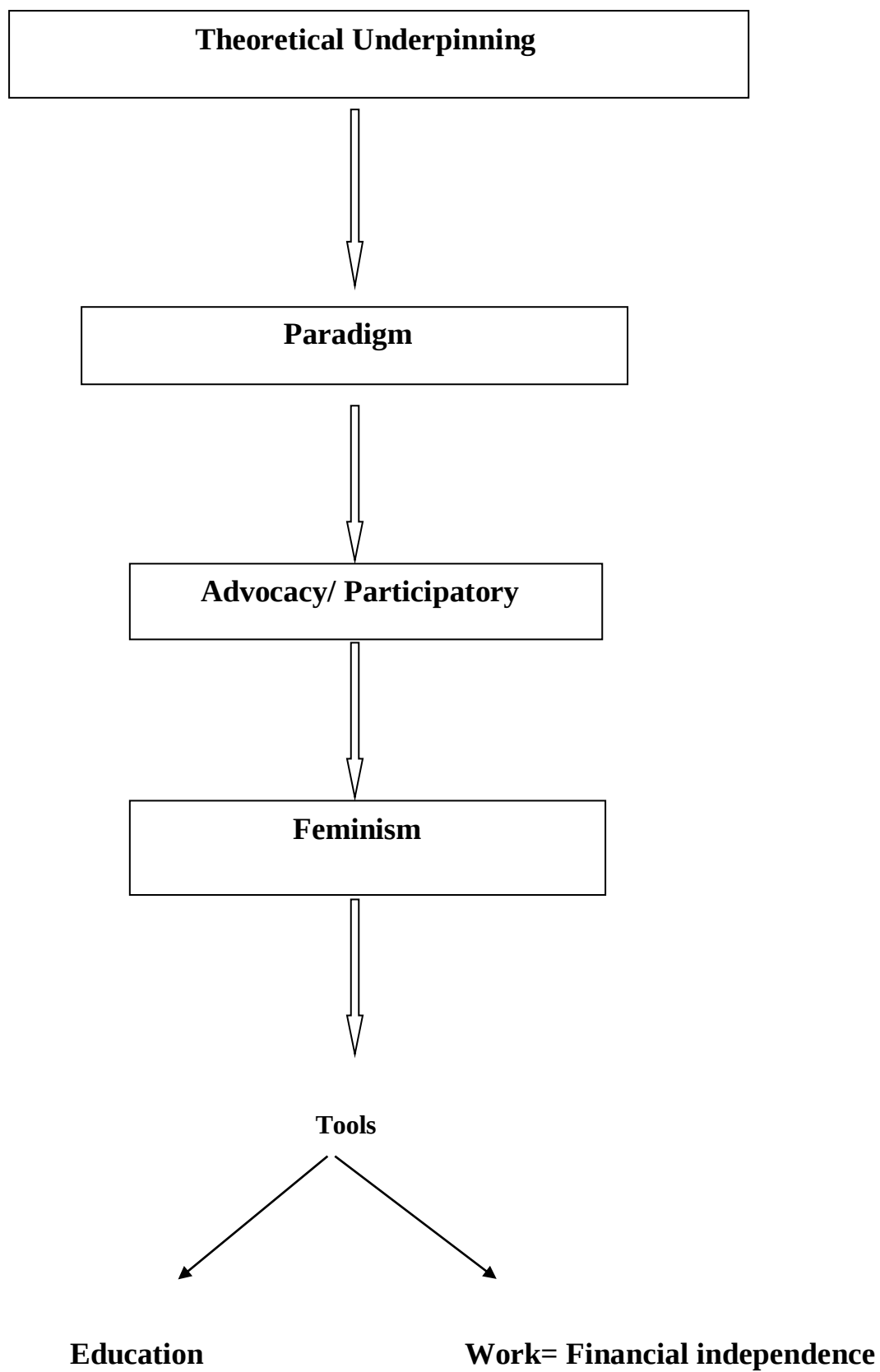
In addition, De Beauvoir goes also through Hegel’s claim about reality being made up of interplay opposing forces. According to him, when man asserts himself as subject and a free being, the idea of the other has to be raised. Understandably, for men, there must be an object “women” for the subject “men”. This signifies that because of these figures, this masquerade becomes a fact. Therefore, the relationship between men and women is a relationship of power domination of varying degree of a complex hegemony.

Nevertheless, after a long investigation, De Beauvoir draws conclusion that woman’s inferiority is only the result of social constructivism that it is all about the differences in the upbringing of man and woman. Indeed, male domination is not inherent or fated, but conditioned at every stage of development. She argues that man

⁴⁷ Nicholson, Linda. *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, 1997, 13.

“learns his power” whereas woman has been conditioned to believe that by denying her true self, it is the only way to achieve happiness and to gain acceptance and such reasoning goes with the Marxist concept of “false consciousness”. Despite the religious and philosophical claims, Beauvoir calls for women’s education and participation of women in the world of work as it is important for her to be integrated into society and to become a true partner to man. All in all, the socialist Feminist such as De Beauvoir has argued that women’s liberation can only be achieved by working to end up both economic and cultural sources of their oppression and using education and work as tools.

Overall, it should be kept in mind that Aristotle’s criticism has paved the way to the modern literary criticism of the twentieth century. For instance, Darko Suvin’s flat and round can be applied to study the structure of the narrative agents that facilitate the deciphering of literary works in general and *Jane Eyre* particularly. Besides, the use of the Feminist notions such as education and work can also help the critic to deconstruct the male ideology as it raises awareness of the oppressed women so that the latter can be empowered. To end up, Darko Suvin’s agential theory and the Feminist theory are going to be applied when analysing *Jane Eyre* in the following chapter.

Diagram II:

CHAPTER III

**Re -evaluation of Key Figures' structure and Concepts in
Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre***

I will show you [Brontë's sisters] a heroine as plain as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as yours⁴⁸.

Dealing with the third chapter, it is concerned with the analysis of the narrative *Jane Eyre* based on the re-evaluation of key figures' structure and concepts. Actually, this analysis has been conducted through the interrelation of Darko Suvin's agential theory and the use of the theoretical concepts already mentioned in chapter two such as "historical and dialectical materialism", "social alienation" and "false consciousness" adding to them the use of the Feminist notions of education and work that contribute to the study of social class and gender issues. By using this theoretical paradigm, Brontë's cultural perception of the nineteenth century is revealed. Indeed, in order to scrutinize the building process of characters that evolve in space and time, the use of Darko Suvin's categories of flat and round are paramount. Actually, the significance of characters is expressed through what Bakhtin calls "chronotope". The latter is concerned with the interrelation of the narrative and the socio-historical space and time.

Additionally, it is worth recalling that it is through the analysis of Brontë's novel that satisfactory answers to questions that have been cited in the introduction can be found out. For example, how is Brontë's novel different in form and content? How are fictional characters composed in space and time? What are the Feminist tools that Charlotte Brontë uses in order to build a new female category? How do women writers struggle against male hegemonic writing? Is Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* consistent in her ideology? Or does her novel have inner conflicts?

⁴⁸ Gaskell, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 2006, 2006.

3.1. “Historical and Dialectical Materialism”, “Social Alienation” and “False Consciousness” in *Jane Eyre*

The use of theoretical concepts like “historical and dialectical materialism”, “social alienation” and “false consciousness” helps to analyze, deconstruct, evaluate and interpret *Jane Eyre*. Actually, the novel is composed of thirty-eight chapters through which the twenty-six characters play a great role in revealing the ideology of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the main interest in this narrative is to study the female key figures Jane Eyre, Mrs. Reed, Mrs. Fairfax and Helen Burns without neglecting the importance of male characters like John Reed, Mr. Brockelhurst and Edward Rochester. The novel is composed of five narrative spaces, but there are three main typological landscapes that have prominent value into shaping the narrative like Gateshead, Lowood School and Thornfield Hall. More importantly, the novel is engaged in social class and gender issues.

Jane Eyre captures the complexities and contradictions that have marked the first half of the nineteenth century and all these complexities are shown through the female character Jane Eyre. In fact, she depicts the strict and hierarchal system that maintains the circumscribed class position. Throughout the novel, there is a strong emphasis on the concept of “historical and dialectical materialism” that has resulted in Jane Eyre’s social alienation. The latter is concerned with estrangement, isolation and marginalization. Jane’s social alienation is visible in the three narrative spaces which are Gateshead, Lowood and Thornfield hall.

Admittedly, the world where Jane has grown up is one that is related to patriarchy and women's economic status. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Jane's social alienation is mainly shown through a typical male hegemonic discourse. Indeed, semantics as part of language matters a lot.

As far as the first narrative space is concerned, at Gateshead, Jane's social alienation is revealed by both male and female characters like John Reed and Mrs. Reed. As far as John Reed is concerned, the structure of this character is significant at both the narrative and the socio-historical levels. On the one hand, at the narrative level, John Reed is a flat character or a "type" because such a character, according to Suvin is equipped with a number of traits that are culturally compatible. Accordingly, John Reed is described with non-contradictory traits. For example, he is "a roman emperor", "a murderer", "a slave driver" and "a tyrant" (Vol. I. p. 14). In essence, the evidence of associating John with Roman Imperial figures is significant. In fact, Brontë describes John like Nero, Caligula and Messalina because of their wickedness. Undeniably, these figures are arrogant, greedy, cruel, extravagant and inhuman; hence, there is consistency between John's behavior and these Roman Emperors. By comparing John to "a murderer", "a slave driver" and "a roman emperor", Jane seems to be aware OF the corruption of the ruling class. In effect, Jane will not be shocked BY his death later because such a death is compared to the destiny of the Roman Emperors.

If one is to draw a single conclusion, it will be safer to admit that John's death suggests that the Victorian novels are known for the fate of their characters who are either rewarded or punished depending on their deeds. Truly, as John has ruined

his health, his estate, and has got into considerable troubles, he is doomed to die because self-indulgent people are punished whereas those who do good deeds like Jane are rewarded.

At the socio-historical level, John's traits represent the myths and beliefs that have perpetuated the male hegemonic discourse of the Victorian time. Indeed, men have succeeded, through their discourse, in manipulating women making them a subordinate class. John accentuates the existing power between women and men as he behaves like an absolute and an essential figure. For him, being a woman and poor, Jane does not have the right to be associated on equal footing with her wealthy cousins like Georgiana, Eliza and John. Eventually, Jane's lack of money leaves her dependent upon the Reeds family for substance as he states:

you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg and not to live with gentleman's children like us and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama's exposed now, I ll teach you to rummage my bookshelves: for they are mine; all the house belong to me or will do in a few years (Vol. I. p. 13).

To end up, following Georg Lukacs' concept of "dialectical materialism", the superstructure of the Reeds determines their consciousness. In fact, being a rich family, the Reeds tend to behave as the dominant class because of their power that is mainly connected to the material conditions.

As odd as it might seem, Jane's social alienation not only results from the male character John, but from the female narrative agent Mrs. Reed as well. Actually, "the deceitful" and "hard-hearted" Jane wife's Uncle, Mrs. Reed, has marginalized

Jane by obliging her to take her meal alone and to spend all her time in the nursery, while her cousins, Georgiana, Eliza and John, are constantly in the drawing room. On this view, Jane has been totally excluded from her relatives “Mrs. Reed has ordered her children not to interact with her saying: “I don’t choose that either you or your sisters should associate with her” (Vol. I. p. 34). Even though Jane has done everything in order to please them, being poor, she has been alienated all the time “I dares commit no fault, is trove to fulfill every duty and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking from morning to noon and from noon to night” (Vol. I. p. 19). Additionally, Jane is culturally alienated being described as a “Turk”: “I mounted into the windows seat: gathered up my feet, I sat across. Legged, like a “Turk” (Vol. I. p. 10). So, by identifying her with the word “Turk”, oriental people, Jane is viewed as an outsider who does not belong to the Reeds.

In short, money and position are all that matters for the Victorians. Understandably, feeling social alienation with her relatives, Jane wants to escape from their persecution and quest for freedom, education and money “this approach of my independence had become a vague sing song in my ear” (Vol. I. p. 16) hoping to find a more peaceful place. Thus, she views Lowood School as an entrance into a new life.

Jane has resolved to leave Gateshead choosing Lowood as a “calm” narrative space. It has been five o’clock in the morning of the nineteenth of January that Jane has left Gateshead to Lowood. Ironically, Jane’s social alienation at Lowood is caused by “the black marble” clergyman named Mr. Brockelhurst who directs Lowood. Clergymen in general and Mr. Brockelhurst in particular are viewed as fair people; in fact, it is proved through the novel that they are hypocritical practitioners

contributing tremendously to making other women the “other”. Truly, Mr. Brockelhurst considers Jane “an interloper” and “an alien” girl claiming: “it becomes my duty to warn you, that this girl, who might be one of God’s own lambs, is a little castaway: not a member of the true flock, but evidently, an interloper and an alien” (Vol. I. p. 82). Being mean, Brockelhurst uses his power as a clergyman in order to oppress the poor girls and teachers of Lowood.

Moreover, Jane and other girls social alienation is also manifested through meals, bearing in mind that food is significant in the nineteenth century literature because there is a difference between dining and eating. Dining is a sign of civilization which is connected with the middle class whereas as eating is connected with the poor class. In fact, people like the Reeds dine and drink tea for pleasure whereas the poor people like Jane and other girls drink tea for substitution and compensation of food. For instance, the poor girls are given bad quality of food as Jane claims “I had got in hand a nauseous mess; burnt porridge is almost as bad as rotten potatoes; famine itself soon sickness it” (Vol. I. p. 56). She adds “soon after 5.00 p. m, we had another meal consisting of a small mug of coffee and half a slice of brown bread. I devoured my bread and drank my coffee with relish, but I should have been glad of as much more. I was still hungry” (Vol. I. p. 64). Understandably, Lowood shows the harsh realities of the nineteenth century charitable schools.

Surprisingly, even the director of Lowood Mr. Brockelhurst has admitted that the girls live in harsh conditions “Lowood is plainfare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits such is the order of the day in the house of its inhabitants” (Vol. I. p. 43). Actually, even at Thornfield, another

narrative space, people are given cheese cake, French pastry and custard “Mrs. Fairfax pressed me into her service, and I was all day in the store-room, helping (or hindering) her and the cook, learning to make custards, cheese cakes and French pastry, to truss game and garnish dessert-like dishes” (Vol. I. p. 203). To end up, for Jane, Lowood is not as different from Gateshead as she has experienced social alienation in both narrative spaces.

Concerning the third narrative space in which Jane’s social alienation is also visible. It has been an October day when Jane has left Lowood towards a new destination. It is at Rochester’s house, Thornfield Hall, where Jane is accepted as a governess for the little girl Adéla, Rochester’s pretended daughter. Nonetheless, at Thornfield, Jane faces a new relationship with Mr. Rochester that, unfortunately, also emphasizes social class and gender issues. Indeed, Rochester stresses that being male and rich, it is difficult to give up his superiority “leaving my superiority is out of question, then, you must still agree to receive my orders now and then, without being piqued or hurt by the tone of command” (Vol. I. p. 167). Rochester’s sense of mastery is matched only by his assumption that his control of others is entirely appropriate to people like him.

Besides, Jane is not only frustrated by the attitude of the rich people, but by servants as well. Among these servants, Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper of Thornfield, has internalized that poor girls like Jane do not have even the right to dream about an eventual union with their master. This servant has made it clear that any association between a master and a governess is impossible. Accordingly, Mrs. Fairfax has never

be able to mention the name of her master because of the gap between the rich and the poor:

you have nothing to do with the master of Thornfield, further than to receive the salary he gives. You 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 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 (Vol. I. p. 201).

She adds: "Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses". (Vol. II. p. 59). It has been accepted among the Victorians that the relationship between a master and his governess should not be allowed because it can introduce moral distortion to the household.

Nonetheless, as strange as it might seem, even Jane herself, acknowledges her subordination when she discovers that Mrs. Fairfax is not the proprietor of Thornfield, "no great dame, but a dependent like myself" (Vol. I. p. 126). Truly, Jane affirms her secondary position when calling Mr. Rochester "master" many times, bearing in mind that there is a love relationship between them, believing that wealth, cast and customs separate each other. To sum up, once again, the social status proves to have a tremendous impact on the life of the Victorians.

As far as Mr. Rochester's structure is concerned, he is a round character having a multiplicity of opposing traits. For example, he is described as "peculiar" (Vol. I. p. 131), "clever" (Vol. I. p. 131), "unimpeachable" (Vol. I. p. 131), "just" (Vol. I. p. 131), "abrupt" (Vol. I. p. 159) "proud" (Vol. I. p. 183), "sardonic"(Vol. I. p.

183), “harsh” (Vol. I. 183), “moody” (Vol. I. p. 183) and “wild best” (Vol. II. p. 263). On the one hand, Rochester is rude, harsh and abrupt; but on the other hand, he is attentive and caring. For example, he chooses to raise Adèle Varens who is a mistress’ daughter though she is not his child “a French dancer’s bastard-not my own child” (Vol. I. p. 104) and yet, he takes care of her and makes sure that she receives education. So, in spite of being moody, cynical and defiant, he is capable of deep and strong affection.

Besides, Rochester is described as an honorable and intelligent man, who has made a mistake in the past and is still carrying that burden. Thus, he can be viewed as a Byronic hero. In fact, one has to define the Byronic hero not being conventionally heroic because his dark qualities tend to reject the image of the traditional “hero”

The Byronic hero..... is invariably courteous toward women, often loves music, has a strong sense of honor, and carries about with him like the brand of Cain a deep sense of guilt. He is almost invariably sympathetic in spite of his “crimes”, none of which involve unnecessarily cruelty⁴⁹.

Considering Rochester’s Byronic traits, he is demonstrated as, first of all, a moody individual. For instance, he treats Jane with mood swings sometimes friendliness and coldness. Second, another trait of the Byronic hero, the emphasis is his sense of mastery over female characters “leaving my superiority is out of question, then, you must still agree to receive my orders now and then, without being piqued or hurt by the tone of command” (Vol. I. p. 167). In fact, being a male and a rich man, he cannot give up his superiority. Third, the Byronic hero is also known for his mysterious past. It is

⁴⁹ Thornslev, Peter. *The Byronic Hero Types and Prototypes*, 1965, 8.

of unspecified sin and suffering. For example, Rochester has always hidden his past deed concerning his first wife Bertha Mason.

What makes Rochester further apart from the Romantic heroes of his time is the fact that Brontë depicts him as not classically handsome “with his broad and jetty eyebrows; his square forehead, made squarer by horizontal sweep of his black hair. I recognized his decisive nose, more remarkable for character than beauty” (Vol. I. p. 150). To sum up, all these traits make of him a Byronic hero.

Nevertheless, what seems remarkable about the character Rochester is that Brontë has gone beyond the known Byronic hero portraying him as a man who is burdened with a great sin of his past for which he is going, later, be repented and redeemed. His bad deed is rejecting his wife Bertha Mason because of her “insanity”. He locks her within in his house “far from deceiving to publish the connection, I became anxious to conceal it.....and saw her safely lodged in that third story room of whose secret inner cabinet she has now for ten years made a wild beast’s den” (Vol. I. 263). In fact, Rochester represses Bertha into an innermost room in his manor for ten years in order to hide his sin.

It is worthwhile stressing that as Rochester commits the sin against Bertha, locking her up and ignoring her as his wife, he also commits another sin against Jane by attempting to marry her while he is legally married to Bertha “my bride is here, he said, again drawing me to him, because my equal is here, and my likeness. Jane, will you marry me?” (Vol. II. p. 46). Nonetheless, later, despite the fact that he is male and rich, he shows his will of re-transformation looking for repentance “I flatter myself, I

am hard and tough as an Indian rubber ball; previous, though, through a chick or two still, and with one sentient point in the middle of the lump. Yes: does that leave hope for me? of my final re-transformation from Indian rubber-ball back to flesh? (Vol. I. 165). Indeed, Rochester manages to repent his sins towards Bertha during the fire that she set herself on at Thornfield.

Rochester has risked his own life to save Bertha. It is only at that moment, Rochester considers Bertha as his wife. Therefore, he frees himself from the burden and the restrictions of the typical Byronic hero. However, although he fails in his attempt of saving her, he suffers from injuries:

he was taken out from under the ruins, alive, but sadly hurt: one hand so crushed that Mr. Carter, the surgeon, had to amputate it directly. The other eye enflamed: he lost the sight of that also. He is now helpless; indeed blind and cripple" (Vol. II. p. 261).

Truly, Rochester has passed "through the valley of the shadow of death" having finally paid for his sin. After making peace with God, Rochester has been relived from the burden of the past "Of late, Jane—only—only of late—I began to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom. I began to experience remorse, repentance; the wish for reconciliation to my maker. I began sometimes to pray: very brief prayers they were, but very sincere" (Vol. II. p. 282). It is only when all these conditions have met that Rochester has become a repentant Byronic hero and a suitable docile for Jane. Now, Jane and Rochester are able to reunite at last after being separated because of his sin. All in all, Rochester is viewed as a repentant Byronic hero that evolves and learns from his past mistakes.

After the death of Bertha, Rochester and Jane are now equal in their relationship as Jane says “I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence, when you disdained every part, but that of the giver and protector” (Vol. II. p. 281). In this sense, Jane has always felt inferior to Rochester, but now, she rather feels useful to him after losing his eyes. Rochester becomes happily dependent on Jane’s moral and intellectual guidance “no woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” (Vol. II. p. 287). It is not difficult to grasp that the situation has reversed. In the beginning, Rochester considered himself as the “self”, but after the burning of his house, this event has enabled him to transform his character. It is clear that Rochester has succeeded in his re-transformation from an “Indian rubber ball back” to “a flesh”. Admittedly, Brontë has succeeded in her creation of a repentant Byronic hero.

To end up, through the structure of the character Mr. Rochester, it is noticeable that while making of him a round character, Brontë does not exclude men from her vision of life aiming to create harmony rather than create conflicts between men and women.

3. 2. The Building of a new Female Key figure Category

According to the novel of *Jane Eyre*, one can view Brontë’s writing as “avant gardist” because she has opened a new perspective to women. In fact, Brontë’s newness lies in the building of another female category who is no more “a siren”, “a witch” or “the angel of the house”, but a new woman that is so different from the existing woman of the nineteenth century. As far as Brontë’s new female category is concerned, the structure of *Jane Eyre* follows Darko Suvin’s categories. For instance, such category is

composed of two opposed flat characters having a multiplicity of opposed traits. For instance, in the first flat character, Jane is described as “a servant” having traits such as “a dependent” (Vol. I. p. 13), “a trifle” (Vol. I. p. 15), “a mad cat” (Vol. I. p. 33), “a tiresome” (Vol. I. p. 31) and “a little toad” (Vol. I. p. 32), “an interloper” (Vol. I. p. 82). These traits show how badly Jane, who represents low class women, is treated.

As a second flat character, Jane is described as “a rebel slave” having traits of “a resistant” (Vol. I. p. 15), “the revolted slave” (Vol. I. p. 18) and “a romping child” (Vol. I. p. 19). In contrast to the traits already mentioned earlier, these traits tend to stand for resistance, reaction and change. Being described as a round character is not only viewed as a narrative process; but as an ideological key notion.

Besides, in order to build a new female character, Brontë has equipped Jane with education “knowledge” that is viewed as a feminist tool so that Jane will not fall in ignorance and dependency on others. Actually, the primordial theme of education is regarded as a feminist proposition so as to empower women face to the world of men. According to the English dictionary, education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. It has been assumed by some critics like Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and literary critic, that power and knowledge entail one another.⁵⁰ In fact, many consider knowledge itself as power. Through the narrative, education has proved to be a powerful means that helps Jane to move from a state of ignorance and poverty to a state of intellectuality and richness.

⁵⁰ Michel, Foucault. *Power and Knowledge* : Chapter III pdf.

Jane's alienation and poverty at Gateshead do not lead her to despair; on the contrary, this harsh situation has motivated her to improve her situation. Therefore, Jane does not hesitate to embark herself into developing her self-education. It is interesting to note that Jane has embarked on reading from the beginning of the novel. It is at Gateshead that she turns to books secretly. Nonetheless, She was caught by John Reed reading his books. In effect, because of "daring" to read books, she has been punished and dragged away to the stateliest chamber, the red room, following her fight with John Reed.

At this stage, it is vital to point out that furthering education for women is regarded as a threat for men but an opening key financial freedom, bearing in mind that intellectual exercise is considered only as a masculine occupation. Nevertheless, thanks to her awareness, Jane does not conform to this belief; instead, she views education as an advancement and a means for social mobility. Books, for Jane, stand for knowledge and dignity. For example, *Bewicks' History of the British Birds*⁵¹ is among the books that she reads. In this book, Jane enjoys the freedom of flying away from estrangement caused by the Reeds family. Each picture in Bewick's tale offers her a story that sparks and expends her indefatigable imagination in exuberance. She expects a different life, more valuable than that which she has led in Gateshead so far. Bewick's book represents a significant portrayal of freedom, wafting her to a world of temporary deliverance. Not only does reading bestow a means of expansion and growth upon Jane's imagination and knowledge, it culminates an even more susceptible impact paving a path out of her isolation from the group clustered around

⁵¹ This book is written by Thomas Bewick who is an English engraver and natural author. He is concerned with research and study of organism including plants or animals in their environment leading more towards the experimental methods of study. It compasses scientific research.

the fire. Through reading, the more Jane ponders profoundly in her book, the more she is happy “I was happy at least in my way” (Vol. I. p. 11). In short, books have saved Jane when times have been difficult and tough.

When leaving Gateshead towards Lowood School, an institution devoted for educating orphans, Jane gets the opportunity to be a true learner for six years. In fact, it has offered her the possibility to learn history, grammar, French, drawing and music in addition to religion. Accordingly, religion is very important as each Sunday evening, the girls spend reading, by heart, the church catechism, and the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Mathew and listening to a long sermon (Vol. I. p. 75). Nevertheless, it has been assumed that education of the nineteenth century was mostly aesthetic as characters learn basic artistic skills and foreign languages. It is enough to make women seem cultured making them teachers or governess. After six years, overcoming much difficulties at Lowood, Jane manages to become a teacher “I had to sit with girls during their hour of study; then it was my turn to read prayers, to see them to bed: afterwards I supped with the other teachers” (Vol. I. p. 110). There is every reason to believe that despite the harshness at Lowood, Jane is not ready to go back to Gateshead because she regards knowledge at Lowood more valuable than being in the luxury of Gateshead “I would not now have exchanged Lowood with all its privations for Gateshead and its daily luxuries” (Vol. I. p. 93). Due to Lowood, Jane manages to further her education that has enabled her to find a decent job, a teacher at Lowood then a governess at Thornfield Hall.

When at Thornfield Hall, Rochester accepts Jane as an intellectual woman. Surprisingly, though he is superior in age and in social status, yet, he engages in

conversations with her as though she is his equal without taking rank into consideration which leads her to perceive that Rochester is not treating her as only a paid subordinate. In this regard, Brontë believes that education is a very important factor in women's life and a key door to freedom. However, it appears that Brontë was influenced by some philosophers of her time such as John Stuart Mill. In fact, John Stuart Mill is among the philosophers who emphasized the role of education for not only for men; but for women as well considering it as a "positive" freedom. According to him, the "positive" sense of the word "freedom" consists in the attainment of self-mastery or a release from domination⁵². Mill believes that intellectuality advances people's self-realization, being male or female, and an awakening into a conscious state of rationality that will create greater happiness. In fact, most of the Victorian men wanted to keep women ignorant in order to dominate them easily; "all men, except the most British desire to have in a woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave, but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favorite. They have therefore put everything into practice in order to enslave their minds"⁵³. Through these two key figures, Jane and Rochester, Brontë wants to show that morality and intellectuality transcend division between sexes and social classes inasmuch as both women and men are subject to the same vices and virtues. Thus, women should be given the same opportunity to education as men. To end up, education is regarded as a protected space for Jane.

Moreover, Brontë has not only created an educated female character but a dutiful one as well to show that women no longer the ones who accept things

⁵² <https://www.cambridge.org>. "Liberty and Education: John Stuart Mill's Dilemma", 2009.

⁵³ Black, Joseph. *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature; The Victorian Era*, 2006, 88.

mechanically, but are the ones who have a good faculty of taking and choosing the right action. As an illustration, though Jane has the chance to be asked for marriage by her master, Rochester, she decides to leave him because she discovers that he has lied to her being already married to another woman, Bertha Mason. At this stage, it is requisite to clarify that Jane refuses to marry Rochester out of duty believing in ethics “one drear word compromised my intolerable duty- “Depart”! (Vol. II. p. 121). Despite her passion for him, she is still rationally able to say “mentally, I still possessed my soul, and with it the certainty of ultimate safety” (Vol. II. p. 123). In fact, she advances morality before her own interests making her believe in duty. This behavior corresponds to the philosophy of Emmanuel Kant’s Deontological Ethics that gives importance to duty.

Kant’s duty is concerned with doing the right deeds regardless any self-interest. He says that each individual should have a good will, be rational when taking actions without waiting just for result, be it good or bad. To make it more explicit, Kant believes in “categorical imperative” which is a fundamental principle of morality. For instance, he characterizes it as a crucial and unconditional principle that people have to follow despite any natural desires or inclinations. To exemplify such a philosophy, Jane refuses to commit bigamy despite the fact that she loves Rochester and that she lacks money. She is considered as a moral agent who believes in principles “maxim” and has an intellect and “a good will” to balance between the right and the wrong action. Understandably, Jane uses her reason before her feelings; therefore, she considers bigamy as a wrong deed. Undeniably, bigamy is a wrong action which can never be universalized: “I will keep the law given by God;

sanctioned by man. I will hold the principles received by me when I was sane and not mad”, “I knew what I had to do, and I did it mechanically” (Vol. II. p. 123-127). At this point, Jane insists of leaving Rochester because when staying with him, she will become only a mistress which she refuses entirely. This might be best highlighted by the fact that even in her dreams, she has been warned by her dead Mother who shows her the right path being convinced of leaving Rochester “My daughter flee temptation” (Vol. II. p. 126). All in all, unlike her predecessors, Brontë has equipped her female character by rationality.

Additionally, what makes Brontë’s female narrative agent appears as a new woman because, unlike the Victorian women who are known for their inclination for money and status, Jane is not materialistic. In fact, when Mr. Rochester offers her luxurious dresses and jewels, she feels discontented and degraded because according to her, being offered presents translates her low status and identifies her to shallow women “the more he brought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation” (Vol. II. p. 63). Significantly, Jane abhors artificiality and hollowness.

Brontë’s new female character is also shown when, purposefully, presenting her as a small, plain and not beautiful heroine “humbled by my consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza and Georgiana Reed” (Vol. I. p. 9). Indeed, unlike the Victorians who tend to view beauty as women’s capital, Jane is ugly. For example, Jane’s cousin, Georgiana Reed, is a beautiful female character “her beauty, her pink cheeks and golden curls, seemed to give her delight to all who looked at her and to purchase indemnity for every fault” (Vol. I. p. 18). In fact, Jane is an ugly girl. All in

all, by presenting Jane as an ugly female character, Brontë wants to show how much education can, more than beauty, improve the image of a woman.

Furthermore, Brontë does not only suffice in presenting a new female category character, but she introduces a conventional one as well in order to come out with a comparison between the two. Evidently, unlike Jane Eyre who is active being described as “an actor”, Helen Burns, Jane’s friend, is presented only as “a spectator”. Dealing with Helen Burns, she is viewed as a flat character having non-opposed traits. She is “a hardened girl” who has a “pensive face” and who stands for “the religious doctrine of endurance”. Contrary to Jane, Helen Burns does not want to take part in society. There is an ample evidence that Burns is a female sample of the Victorian women who have accepted the religious beliefs that have been instilled by the religious men who serve only their interests. For example, though she has badly been treated and humiliated by Miss Scatchered, “the teacher”, “that teacher” so “cruel”, she remains rather passive.

Being an obedient girl, Burns rather endures painful situation through tolerance. She considers that human being has to keep his voice inaudible even if he is confronted to the greatest injustice that can exist in the world. She tells Jane “it is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you (Vol. I. p. 68). Accordingly, Burns never dares to question the religious notions “the bible bids us return good for evil” (Vol. I. p. 69), “yet it would be your duty to bear it, if you could not avoid it, it is weak and silly to say you cannot bear what it is your fate to be required to bear” (Vol. I. p. 69). Burns represents the Christian philosophy of

forgiveness and endurance. Undeniably, she is used to tolerate and not to resist any hegemonic rule by never complaining or questioning, but just obeying and executing orders which explains her inevitable death. Brontë makes Burns die because she wants to show that there is a new order that must be established. Through this order, Brontë wants to contrast Burns with Jane, a new female category who has a sense of liberty and tends to resist everyone who has punished her unjustly. Unquestionably, Helen Burns is a victim of “false consciousness” which is a system of ideas that affects people’s political behaviour by instilling false beliefs about causal properties of the social world. In this respect, these are manipulated so as to serve the interests of their male dominator. To end up, Brontë has introduced Burns as a victim on purpose to stress women’s existing paralysis.

Additionally, Brontë has also created another flat female narrative agent Bertha Mason who is not only a victim of patriarchy, but of imperialism as well. Indeed, Bertha Mason is a flat character having non-opposed traits: “a savage” (Vol. II. p. 81), the vampire” (Vol. II. p. 82), a hideous demon (Vol. II. p. 82), “a mad-woman”(Vol. II. p. 92), “wild animal” (Vol. II. p. 93) and “a witch” (Vol. II. p. 259), Being a female and a creole, Bertha has been silenced throughout the novel. On the one hand, considering Bertha’s male oppression. She has been regarded as a mad woman by her husband Rochester. Nonetheless, as ironic as it seems, there is no evidence in the narrative about the causes of her madness. For the reader, her madness is a paradoxical issue because of the sudden shift from a sane woman becoming mad one. On this view, at the beginning of the novel, Bertha is represented as a sane woman and the fact that she has become mad, one is brought to question about the

responsible of her critical becoming. Truly, in the beginning, Rochester states that Bertha is a beautiful woman “I found her a fine woman in the style of Blanche Ingram: tall, dark and majestic” (Vol. II. p. 108). Through this excerpt, Rochester confesses that Bertha is beautiful and, it appears therefore, that she possesses all her faculties. The best proof is that he compares her to another female character Blanche Ingram who is described as a tall, fine, bust, having sloping shoulders, graceful neck: olive complexion, dark and clear; noble features eyes (Vol. I. p. 216). Undeniably, Ingram represents the typical Victorian woman as Jane has argued “if he liked, the majestic, she was the very type of majesty: she was accomplished, sprightly. Most gentlemen would admire her” (Vol. I. p. 214). All in all, Rochester has chosen Bertha being a sane wife having all the features that makes of her an attractive woman, but now it seems that Brontë has purposefully skipped the passage in which it shows the causes of her madness and this can be interpreted as a lack of willingness from her part so as “voluntarily” not to incriminate Rochester for the madness of his wife. Accordingly, it becomes evident that Brontë, though trying to empower women, she is still trapped within the racial prejudices.

On the other hand, the imperialist oppression demonstrated through the female narrative agent Jane. As strange as it appears, though Jane has wanted to be empowered in her patriarchal society having suffered from inferiority vis- a-vis men, when it comes to a Creole woman, she looks down on her. Admittedly, by marginalizing Bertha, Jane manages to shape her identity. In order to be a lawful wife, Bertha is subjected to the kind of egregious animalization bearing in mind that this picture has always been attributed to women of colour. For example, Jane does not

even consider her as a human being, she refers to her by “it”. For example, “the shape standing before me had never crossed my eyes within precincts of Thornfield-hall before, the height, the contour were new to me” (Vol. II. p. 81), “it was a savage. I wish I could forget the roll of the eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineament” (Vol. II. p. 81) and “it removed my veil from its gaunt head”. (Vol. II. p. 82). All in all, the encounter of the narrative agent Jane with Bertha is a microcosmic representation of Victorian imperialism. However, surprisingly, though Brontë’s aim is to empower women to some extent, being a Creole, Bertha Mason has been excluded from this empowerment because plainly she is not British.

Unlike Bertha Mason and Helen Burns, Jane excels the existing norms. In fact, when being at Moor house, Jane, finally, manages to find a belonging and becomes financially independent after much endurance. Truly, while living with St. John’s family, she discovers, accidentally, that they are, in fact, her cousins. So, for the first time, Jane feels integrated in a family having, thus, a sense of belonging to it like any respectable individual “I was an outcast, a beggar, a vagrant, now I have acquaintance a home, a business. I wonder at the goodness of God, the generosity of my friends, the bounty of my lot. I do not repine” (Vol. II. p. 187). In addition to the fact that she has found a family which she belongs to, Jane has also inherited money from her dead uncle “my uncle in Maderia is dead, and left me five thousand pounds” (Vol. II. p. 267). Indeed, Jane has become a moneyed woman “I am an independent woman, Sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress” (Vol. II. p. 268) which makes her feel a well respected woman. However, Rochester has been astonished to see such a woman’s achievement because at that time, women are known for their subordination

and low status “what Janet! Are you independent woman? A rich woman?” (Vol. II. p. 268). To end up, because of contradictory groups of flat characters, Brontë makes Jane shift from alienation to integration.

Admittedly, Jane is able to climb the social ladder shifting from a servant to an independent woman by the end of the novel bearing in mind that such a class move was impossible in the nineteenth century. However, such a change has been achieved through the following narrative spaces as Gateshead, Lowood and Thornfield and Moor house. All in all, Jane has managed to undergo an evolutionary change through which she has succeeded to become a new woman.

To sum up, the dialectical contradiction of having two opposed groups of flat characters create a movement at both narrative and socio-historical levels. At the narrative level, Jane Eyre is a round character composed of two flat characters “a servant” and “a rebel slave”. She has succeeded into deconstructing the male hegemonic discourse and providing a counter discourse. So, Jane’s self-esteem, self-judgment and self-will are said to be the three requisites of independence because she believes in change. It is through the Feminist proposition of limitedly patriarchy and material conditions that a new “de-alienated” category of woman is revealed as “the self”.

At the socio-historical level, by making of Jane an active female narrative agent who is able to express her thoughts and beliefs, the main goal is to bring awareness to the Victorian society contributing, a century later, in the birth of a new movement called “Feminism”. Through this fictional character, Brontë projects a new

vision that bridges the gap between women of the past and women of the future. By making Jane a strong woman, Brontë stresses her writing on what is hidden rather than on what is apparent. She frees herself, to some extent, from the social values that have always existed. She has managed to rub the “angel of the house”. But erasing the angel in the house has not been quite accepted by the Victorians critics. For example, Elizabeth Rigby says:

We do not hesitate to say that the tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered chartism and rebellion at home is the same which has also written *Jane Eyre*⁵⁴.

Being a British female author, historian and critic, Rigby has viewed *Jane Eyre* as a dangerous text because its content is potentially subversive and revolutionary. This revolution is related mainly the historical materialism. It is all about the marriage between the servant and her master.

Nonetheless, this point of view remains a source of considerable division between the critics, but Brontë’s message is not revolutionary because her aim is to create a balanced woman who struggles to promote harmony in a new context where women and men’s positions and roles are to be re-defined. Brontë has preferred having a harmonious couple that is complementary rather than having men and women conflicting each other. She has succeeded to create a balanced women who can find a happy medium between independence and success in her careers on the one hand, and wearing bras and having babies on the other hand. Overall, Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is

⁵⁴ Tredell, Nicoles. *Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre*, 2009,12.

considered as a novel of survival, a quest for belonging, freedom and financial independence.

After analyzing Brontë's novel, according to some critics, *Jane Eyre* can be classified as a third category. It has been argued that the nineteenth century novels written by female writers can be listed into three categories: Jane Austen's, George Sand's and Brontë sisters' categories. Considering the category of the works of Jane Austen, her novel, for instance, *Pride and Prejudice* written (1813) is viewed as traditional because it is believed to conform to the Victorian English values that are concerned mainly with encouraging separate spheres considering marriage, which is regarded as women's first priority, a great importance.

Accordingly, Jane Austen has made the issue of marriage a prominent one. Truly, marriage has always been established as a fundamental social value of the Victorian England. As an illustration, Austen has portrayed her female character Mrs. Bennet as a mother whose main anxiety is to marry her five daughters to wealthy men. It is worth mentioning that the daughters of the nineteenth century have been regarded as a "burden" for their parents. Actually, Mrs. Bennet has been afraid that her daughters will be left without nothing after the death of their father because their cousin, Mr. Collins, will inherit their money; thus; making of these daughters dependent on him. Understandably, Mrs. Bennet devotes all her life to secure wealthy husbands for her daughters as its demonstrated through this quotation "if I can see my daughters happily settled at Netherfield (where the wealthy man Mr. Bingley lives) and all others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for" (Chapter. 3 p. 10). Moreover, Austen has created another female character, Charlotte Lucas, a 27 years

old woman, who is considered as a spinster who praises for marriage even without love:

I am not romantic. I never was. I ask only for comfortable home, and considering Mr. Collins' character, connections and situation in life. I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state (chapter. 22. p. 108).

Thus, this category of writers like Jane Austen tends to follow the male hegemonic discourse which is concerned with having the power of sustaining the norms, values, attitudes and customs that serve continuously men providing them legitimacy to their ideology.

Regarding the second category, unlike Jane Austen's way of writing, George Sand's writing can be regarded somehow revolutionary because it does not conform absolutely to the social conventions. For instance, her novel *Indiana* (1832) is about a heroine who has dared to reject the social conventions of her society by deciding to stop her marriage that has been unhappy so as to quest for a true love. In *Indiana*, there is an impassioned plea for change in the inequitable French marriage laws and for a new view of women. Indeed, it is about a beautiful female agent, Indiana, who marries at the age of sixteen to an older man called colonel Delamar; however, she falls in love with a seductive and handsome neighbor Ratmon de Ramiere. Consequently, she decides to leave her husband and be married out of love. However, such a daring woman has been looked down by her society.

Dealing with the third category, Brontë sisters' works can be situated in the middle. For instance, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* can be classified within this

category because on the one hand, Charlotte's way of writing leans to the emancipation of women in education and work that equals financial independence; hence, neglecting the feminine traits by attributing ugliness to her female character Jane Eyre. On the other hand, her writing alludes somehow to the conformity of social conventions like marriage. Manifestly, making some concessions from a woman will create harmony between a man and a woman. Through *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë demonstrates that men and women do not have an adversarial relationship, but they are complementary. To end up, it is worth emphasizing that Jane Austen's category of works deals with the conformity of the social hegemonic discourse whereas Charlotte Brontë's one is regarded as its counter discourse because it has identified the flaws that have been registered in the Victorian fiction.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

To conclude this modest dissertation, it is worth evoking that the research work that has been carried out so as to re-evaluate the key figures' structure and concepts in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is enfolded with a comparative literary perspective. Accordingly, this research work has followed the socio-historical categories of characters proposed by Darko Suvin in his agential theory and a combination of theoretical tools that are regarded as a necessary step in the analysis of *Jane Eyre*. In fact, in the past, traditional criticism used to approach literature in terms of examining characters, space/time and themes as separate entities. This approach has remained valid, but the current criticism which has been influenced by the evolution of linguistics has suggested the use of theories and concepts so that the results can be visible and measurable.

As far as Darko Suvin's agential theory is concerned, it deals mainly with both narrative and socio-historical space and time. It has proposed two categories of characters which are flat and round. Regarding the flat character, it is known by the non-contradictory traits that are demonstrated at the structural level whereas at the socio-historical level, these traits conform to the existing ideologies. Paradoxically, the round character is concerned with two opposed flat characters that are revealed at the structural level. Nevertheless, at the socio-historical level, these two opposed groups stand as a counter ideological notion that create contradiction and dialectical confrontation of beliefs. One has to bear in mind that when dealing with one literary device like characterization, the other literary devices like space/time, themes and structure are unveiled automatically. In addition, Darko Suvin's socio-historical

approach has also opened possibilities for theoretical combinations using concepts like “historical and dialectical materialism”, “social alienation” and “false consciousness”.

Following the literary work of *Jane Eyre*, Brontë’s new female category is no more a fixed and silenced flat category, but a round character, “a self” and a new individuality. Eventually, her female narrative agent is no longer described as “a witch”, “a siren” or “the angel of the house”, but she is rather a rational and a respectful individual. The essence of this argument is that the new building of a Victorian woman that is a round character leads to a new building of history that manages to bring women to de-alienation. Indeed, the dialectical contradictions of having two groups of opposed flat characters enable Jane to move from a state of alienation being “a servant” to a state of de-alienation becoming “a rebel slave”, an independent and a rich cultured woman. Brontë’s female character is mainly related to learning how to transcend poverty, ignorance, physical appearance and above all to be able to demarcate herself from patriarchy. In fact, it is through Jane that Brontë projects a new vision and proposes new norms to bridge between women of the past and women of the future.

Before moving to the elaboration of the findings, it is worth remembering that chapter one has been devoted to the socio-historical context of the nineteenth century based along the post-structuralist perspective. Accordingly, the post-structuralists like Darko Suvin and Georg Lukacs have claimed that as most works of art mirror life, the socio-historical background should not be neglected as there is an interrelation between the narrative and the social reality. For instance, the important issues that have marked the nineteenth century are class and gender issues.

Considering class, the Victorian England has become a beehive society after its industrialization. For example, some people have been living up the hill while the masses have been living down the hill. Victorian society is also known as a patriarchal one having women considered as second-class citizens. Actually, they are considered only as “the angel in the house” whose main task is to satisfy the whims of their males.

Concerning chapter two, the theoretical and methodological scaffolding that has been adopted for this research work draws upon the application of multiple concepts such as “historical and dialectical materialism”, “social alienation” and “false consciousness” in addition to Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant and Simone De Beauvoir’s philosophical assumptions. The whole project is centered around Darko Suvin’s agential theory and the use of the Feminist tools such as education and work. Manifestly, chapter one and two have prepared the ground for chapter three that is devoted to the investigation of the novel by making the concept of “historical and dialectical materialism” operational. Then chapter three shows how Charlotte Brontë has managed to emancipate her new female category of character.

In very broad terms, the findings of this research have shown that Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is different from contemporary novels in form and content. In fact, at the structural level, unlike the other Victorian writers, Charlotte Brontë has created a new female category at both narrative and socio-historical level. At the narrative level, Jane Eyre is composed of two opposed flat characters “a servant” and “a rebel slave” making of her a round character. However, at the socio-historical level, through this narrative agent, Brontë deconstructs and builds a new vision of life where both women

and men's role are re-defined. Indeed, Brontë has struggled the male writings by deconstructing the male hegemonic discourse and building a new counter discourse by using the feminist tools of education and work so as to empower her new female narrative agent. As an illustration, being embarked in reading from an early age and succeeding in furthering her education at Lowood School, Jane becomes a cultured and an independent woman who manages to get a decent job. Thus, the use of such tools developed by the Feminist theory have shown the specific content of a female writing. All in all, the writer's proposition of a counter discourse gives Jane the opportunity to demarcate from the women of her time showing her courage to challenge the existed norms.

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that though Brontë's goal is to empower women to some extent, this does not mean to exclude male characters from her vision of life. On the contrary, the intrusion of male characters like John Reed, Mr. Brockelhurst and Mr. Rochester have appeared necessary to the building of a new female character Jane Eyre and the novel's structure in general. Indeed, the function of male characters is considered as prominent in the novel. For instance, in the beginning, Brontë has followed the canon through John Reed and Mr. Brockelhurst so as to show the presence of the hegemonic social discourse. Then she has also attempted at building a round male character Mr. Rochester following the model of a repentant Byronic hero. Obviously, to suit the vision of a new female category, Brontë needs to create a new type of a male hero. By building Jane and Rochester as round characters, Brontë's aim is to show that women and men can live in harmony. Overall, *Jane Eyre*

It is important to highlight the conducted investigation that shows Brontë's ideology which is regarded as consistent in its inconsistency; hence, creating controversy and inner conflicts in her novel. Admittedly, Brontë's form of writing has been regarded as a new type. However, this newness has brought confusion and paradoxes in content. The confusion is demonstrated mainly through the female narrative agent Jane Eyre. For instance, though Jane suffers from patriarchy, after being asked for marriage by her master Rochester, she has always kept calling him "master". In fact, she believes that his wealth, caste and custom still separate her from him. Indeed, Jane finds difficulties to liberate herself from the fossilized ideology she has been instilled with. Throughout the whole novel that is composed of thirty-eight chapters, one may notice that Jane has been able to call him by his first name, Edward only four times. For example, the first time that she has called him Edward has been after having accepted his marriage proposal, "Dear Edward!" (Vol. II. p. 47). The second time is when she confesses her love, "Edward, because I love you" (Vol. II. p. 79). The third time is at Moor House when she is discussing with St. John recalling her memory "my husband-whom I had called my dear Edward" (Vol. II. p. 202) whereas the fourth and the last time is when she is married to him after a period of ten years "I know no weariness of my Edward's society" (Vol. II. p. 287). The result of this research shows that though Brontë's aim is to empower women before men, she has not been able enough to liberate herself; through Jane, from male domination.

Moreover, another example of Brontë's inconsistency lies in having her excluding the female character Bertha Mason from empowerment because the latter is not British but a Creole. In effect, Mason has ended up suffering from a double

oppression, a victim of both patriarchy and imperialism. Understandably, Brontë's novel reinforces, to some extent, the patriarchal and imperial ideology. In fact, when dealing with the Victorian nineteenth century novels, it is awkward to ignore the issue of imperialism because most of the time literature deals with politics consciously or unconsciously. Being the supporters of imperialism, writers cannot ignore the vast overseas of British power. To sum up, *Jane Eyre* is viewed as ideologically conflicted.

Nonetheless, this inconsistency can be justified as a reflection of the nineteenth century Victorian England. Accordingly, one has to bear in mind that the Victorian age has been considered by some historians as being a "Golden era". But others consider it as the most controversial period full of paradoxes and contrasts in all fields. For instance, in the first place, the accumulation of wealth created pride among the upper class especially the industrialists while the lack of it created degradation among the lower class. Indeed, in the mid of the nineteenth century, there has been a new class division composed of the bourgeoisie "the haves" and the proletariat "the have nots". Besides, though the Victorians were lucky to live in a transitional period between Napoleon's bloody wars and a peaceful time, the British soldiers did not benefited from this opportunity because they were often in alertness in order to crash rebellions not only at home, but abroad as well.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the British advocated liberty, they have been advocating imperialism at the same time under the pretext of a "civilizing mission". Actually, having emerged as the most powerful trading nation in the world, the Victorians have been happy to restore their dignity and pride to their monarchy, but at the same time they have been the ones who have deprived the natives of their

colonies from their dignity like the Indians and the West Indies people. All in all, Brontë's inconsistency in her narrative can be justified by having her living in the nineteenth century when the British consider class and the English race as the main ideology of the time.

Bringing this dissertation to a close, reading women's writings, in general and Charlotte Brontë's in particular, have inaugurated a new way when dealing with literature. Actually, the nineteenth century English literature is viewed as literature of change and reaction. One has to stress on the fact that action is usually made by men whereas reaction is made by women. To end up, Charlotte Brontë, among other writers like Aphra Ben and Marry Wollstonecraft, has contributed, somehow, to the emergence of Feminism as a movement in the twentieth century. Eventually, Feminism has opened new perspectives so as to liberate women from oppression in different parts of the world.

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الملخص

إعادة تقييم الشخصيات الرئيسية والمفاهيم في الكتابة النسوية: جين أير لي

شارلوت برونتي

تتضمن رسالة الماجستير دراسة تحليل بنية الشخصيات وتطبيق المفاهيم النظرية لرواية "جين أير" للكاتبة "شارلوت برونتي" التي نشرت في سنة 1847. لقد تم استخدام عدة تخصصات في هذه الدراسة مثل التاريخ، السياسة، اقتصاد، والفلسفة مما يجعل هذه الدراسة متعددة الدراسات. تستند مذكرة البحث على نظرية "اجنشل" لصاحبها "داركو سوفين" بغية تحليل الترتيب الهيكلي للسرد وعلى نظرية "الخطاب النسوي" "السيمون دو بوفوار" التي تهدف لدراسة المفاهيم النظرية التي يمكن إيجادها في النص الأدبي مثل "الاعتزال" علما أن دراسة هذه المفاهيم الأخيرة تسمح بالكشف تلقائيا عن السياق الاجتماعي والتاريخي للرواية.

في واقع الأمر، عند دراسة رواية جين أير من المنظور الحالي يعد الرجوع إلى التراكم النظري أساسيا في البحث العلمي. لا يمكن إنكاره أن النظرية الأدبية هي المجموعة من الأفكار والأساليب التي يستخدمها النقاد في الدراسة العلمية للأدب، فهي وصف للمبادئ والأدوات الأساسية التي يحاولون فهمها. في القديم كان يتضمن اهتمام النقاد إلا بتناول العناصر ككيانات منفصلة. في هذا التحول من الدراسة المحدودة التي تتضمن التحليل الانتقائي القائم على الموضوع، التوصيف، الضبط والحبكة إلى التحليل العلمي الذي يستخدم النظريات والمفاهيم المفعلة في رواية جين أير - بغية إجراء تحليل للبيانات الكمية

إن هدف مذكرة البحث هي تبين خصوصية الكتابة النسوية. في هذا السياق استخدمت الكاتبة "شارلوت برونتي" شخصية أنثوية مختلفة تماما عن شخصيات الكتاب الآخرين.

الكلمات الدالة: نظرية اجنشل، نظرية الخطاب النسوي، المادية التاريخية والديالكتيكية، الخطاب المهيمن، الأيديولوجية، الاغتراب، الوعي الكاذب.