

# Self-Reformation in Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre: A Moral Approach

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**Abstract**—The chosen work, *Jane Eyre*, is classified as a bildungsroman novel, which emphasizes the moral growth of the title character. *Jane Eyre*'s journey toward maturity and making her dreams into reality seems challenging, as she has to reform herself to harmonize herself with the patriarchal society that she lives in. Through this journey, Jane has to go through various difficult situations to be able to cope with expected social norms and develop moral reasoning. Therefore, the present paper uses a moral approach to analyze the main character's moral development. This paper illustrates how Jane, during her journey of moral development, has been influenced by some main and major characters in the chosen literary text, from whom she could learn how to act according to Victorian social norms and gain what she wants without being cast out.

**Keywords**—Moral Approach, Nineteenth century, Bildungsroman, Passionate, Mature girl

## I. INTRODUCTION

In a Victorian male-dominated society, culture was believed to be a rule or principle that humans (women in particular) could not live without, and their lifestyle was heavily based on it. During this time, culture played a significant role in shaping moral behaviour and extended even further to societal norms. So, it is clear that morality was a part of Victorian culture. Xiao (2015) states that "Victorians and literature in the Victorian period are much noted for their concern with morality" (p. 1815). Therefore, culture taught girls moral behaviours, like they had to bring a good reputation to their family by being "pure, innocent, gentle, submissive, and obedient" creatures (Abaker, 2019, p.50). The quote sheds light on the morality of girls like they had to be soft, passive, mature, and patient, as well as had feminine behaviours once they faced a problem. That means the expectation of girls' ability to respond correctly, properly, and tamely to the situations of the patriarchal society they lived in was firmly established in British culture. They were taught to follow the specified cultural expectations and not question them. Thus, for a typical girl to be accepted in a patriarchal society, and because acceptance was the primary concern at the time, she had to meet all of the aforementioned moral attributes of the Victorian social conventions. During that time, many prominent female novelists could successfully

present typical female characters throughout their writing pieces. While the protagonists in almost all three Brontë sisters' masterpieces were presented differently, especially Charlotte Brontë in her novel *Jane*.

Charlotte Brontë is an English female novelist who could produce many salient literary writings during her brief lifetime and is best known for her passionate and bildungsroman novel, *Jane Eyre*. The novel was published during the Victorian era, when culture was regarded as a valuable treasure that humans, particularly women, should pursue. This bitter truth can be seen in the author's personal life when she wrote her classic work, *Jane Eyre*. She had to publish it under the masculine pseudonym Currer Bell.

This was because she was trapped by the strict confines of the expectations of women. In other words, at the time, they believed that a woman's position was in the home, cooking for her family, raising children, and managing the house. Abrams (2001) points out, "Numerous publications told women how to be good wives and household managers." Taking Abrams' point further, culture, during the reign of Queen Victoria, heavily encouraged women to be far away from the public sphere, i.e., the outside world. To put it differently, at the beginning of nineteenth-century England, the idea of women in literature seemed unacceptable to the British male-dominated culture. So, this shows the displacement of women from literature, art, and public life.

As was already said, the way Charlotte presents Jane in her best-selling literary work is quite different compared to other female writers. Virginia Woolf's extended essay sheds light on the reason behind such differentiation in *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf, in section four, talks about the contentment of female writers, and she talks about it in a roundabout way when she talks about Charlotte Brontë, in which she says that "she left her story, to which her entire devotion was due, to attend to some personal grievance." She remembered that she had been starved of her proper due of experience... "Her imagination swerved from indignation, and we feel it swerve" (1929, p. 54). Here, Woolf thinks that Charlotte writes with rage and protest in *Jane Eyre* to show that the text bears the scars of Charlotte's personal sufferings and miseries. This might be a reference to the author's awareness of the real world and knowledge of the outside world, on the one hand.

On the other hand, Woolf might mean by "indignation" that a woman must have peace with her circumstances so that no anger or discontent bleeds into her writing. That is to say, female writers, need to be content with their lots in life, and that

contentment will keep any anger or resentment they may feel from not being happy from bleeding into their works. Perhaps one can say that this is because Charlotte wanted to have the same kind of freedom as the male gender at the time, and her novel did not suit her situation of being degraded and suppressed by men. Moreover, Charlotte was very aware of her misfortune and failed to accept it in her novel; especially at the beginning of the story; this shows the reason behind Charlotte's representation of Jane differently as a passionate, heedless, and atypical young lady.

Jane Eyre is regarded as a novel of development, i.e., of the protagonist's journey from childhood to adulthood, and considering the Victorian Era conventions, the masterpiece portrays ethical and moral issues from the point of view of Victorian morality. Jane is presented as a young lady with an innate sense of right and wrong, yet she is hungry for life. That is to say, to Jane, morality has a significant role and importance; but at the same time, she is a person who tries so hard to be educated, independent, and have a sense of belonging and love, which makes her a passionate girl. This is because her behaviours and actions are controlled by her passionate feelings. It is apparent that at the time when Jane was living, a young passionate female who was hungry for life was totally rejected and was considered impractical and unsuitable by British culture and morality. Because Jane has a sense of morality and wants her quest to be fulfilled, she must follow the time's moral values and control her passionate feelings. During the story, Jane's tendency to reform herself by controlling her passionate feelings causes her to be mature. This paper aims to illustrate how Charlotte presents Jane as a person with moral principles for her to be able to reform herself in the story, by which she will be able to develop her moral reasoning and gain whatever she dreams about without being cast out by the Victorian patriarchal society.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jane Eyre was published two months after the author sent in the manuscript. It was an instant hit, and readers liked it a lot. Since that time, many readers and researchers have favoured the character of Jane Eyre very much, despite her being so unattractive, small, and plain. Jane Eyre has strong feelings, but she is seen as the most critical and successful female character because she grows up and gets what she wants. This was what Victorian society expected of people. Since its publication, many books and articles have been written about the chosen text.

In "Moral Value in Charlotte Brontë's Novel Jane Eyre" Elya Susana examines the author's concentration on the moral values in her masterpiece, Jane Eyre. The paper explains how the title character has been changed into a mature person by practising the three types of moral values, such as responsibility, patience, and sincerity, which women were expected to have in the Victorian period. It is apparent that the Victorian period was characterized by gender inequality in all facets of life, in particular in social conventions. During this time, Victorian social norms and values tended to see women as passive, needy,

submissive, and emotional, to name just a few traits. Even though the social norms and values were strict for both genders, it was even worse for women, as they had to accept and follow some rules that were not of their nature. To put it differently, for example, women are not passive and dependent by nature, but they have to pretend they are just to be accepted by society. This paper intends to show Charlotte's representation of the moral values of the title character, which reflects a clear sample of English society at that time.

It also profoundly explains a good relationship between women and their cultural and social conventions. Readers can find information on the social conventions of the time and how Jane attempted to follow them so that she would be accepted by the patriarchal society. Hence, the paper aims to answer the issues of the human relationship between themselves and their society in correlation with practising and following the moral values expected by British culture and society.

Ali Sabri and Mohd Nazri in "Jane Eyre's Morality": A Kohlbergian Reading, explore how the researchers interpret the chosen literary text in the light of Lawrence Kohlberg's moral theory. The researchers state that the novelist deals with the moral development of the title character from the beginning to finish of the story. In this novel, Jane is portrayed as an unconventional female who struggles greatly for her independence and identity, forcing her to make difficult moral decisions and choices to gain correct and healthy moral reasoning. The paper employs three sequential stages of Lawrence Kohlberg's moral theory to help Jane develop morally. So, the research shows that the passionate female character gradually grows up and can tell right from wrong and make good decisions based on that knowledge.

Muhammed Amrin argues in his paper, "The Analysis of Jane Eyre's Personality," Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, that the textbook reflects Jane Eyre's inner life and personality. In the Victorian era, the character of women was very much paid attention to by society and culture. It is apparent that Charlotte presents Jane differently from any other woman then. That is to say, Jane is shown to be a passionate, strong-willed, and outspoken young girl, which causes her to have both outside and inside conflicts as she tries to become independent. In an age of male-centred society, Jane wants to achieve gender equality, which she struggles with. The researcher provides readers with clear and insightful information on the fundamental drive of a person's personality. He also examines how Jane faces and passes through many hardships just to get her basic needs and rights. The paper points out that Jane's personality can be changed, and she can control her behaviour to achieve her purpose in life as a female. According to the previous theses, it is possible to conclude that there are significant similarities between the subject matter and goal of the current paper and the previous theses. The only difference between them is that the researcher in the present paper will focus on the ethics and the moral values of Victorian England and the nature of Jane's morality as well as what she should do and why in order for her to be able to fulfil her quest for education, independence, family and love without being cast out from the patriarchal society that she lives in.

### III. MORAL APPROACH

To achieve the aim of the present paper, the researcher uses a moral approach to analyze *Jane Eyre*. Neog (2007) states, "Moral theories are put forward to present a clear and comprehensive reflective account of our moral life. The main practical aim of a moral theory is to discover a decision procedure that can guide correct moral reasoning about matters of concern." (p.7). Taking Neog's point further, it can be said that moral theory addresses and focuses on one's moral life within the society that he lives in. Not only this but it can be used as a guide to show the right and the wrong sides of a particular decision that one has to take regarding a specific matter or issue that he faces in his life and society and apply moral rules correctly. Thus, the mentioned approach is the study of the rightness and wrongness of an action in society by individuals, and it explores the nature of one's morality and examines how one should live life in relation to others. In this approach, when it comes to analysing a particular piece of literary work, a writer's duty is to educate the readers by presenting the characters in their story in a way that serves society. Due to the time when the masterwork was produced, morality and culture played a significant role in people's lives, Charlotte had to present Jane's morality to fit the moral values and culture of the Victorian conventions. As it has been mentioned earlier, this paper aims to focus on Jane's morality to fulfil her long quest to be educated, independent, and have a sense of belonging and love; therefore, it is appropriate for the research to be conducted through a moral approach.

### IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

It is obvious that Charlotte based her masterwork on the customs and mores of Victorian society to teach her readers about Victorian England's ethics and moral values and attempt to convey her views about Victorian mores. Throughout the story, Charlotte gives her title character an innate sense of right and wrong. Additionally, Jane develops a moral sense as a result of her inability to reject societal expectations. Brontë's *Jane Eyre* tells the story of a young orphan girl who lives in different places from childhood to womanhood, including Gateshead Hall, Lowood School, Thornfield Hall, Marsh End, and Ferndean. The events in each of these places in Jane's life and the people she meets will shape her morals and help her define what is considered ethically acceptable and correct in Victorian social mores.

Charlotte Brontë presents Jane, the heroine of her classic novel, as an intolerant, lacking self-control, and rebellious girl at the beginning of the story, as Mitchell and Osland (2005) view Jane's presentation as "radically rebellious" (p. 175). To put it differently, when we first meet Jane at Gateshead Hall, she is a person who is more concerned with being herself and defining who she is, as well as an outspoken girl. She sees and feels almost all the social pressures put on women, but she

doesn't give in. At Gateshead, Jane lives with a hardhearted and different social class family who considers her an unsought outsider and rejects her as a family member. Reed's bad treatment, as Jaekel (2007) states, is "[b]ecause Jane is poor, has no relatives other than the Reeds and has no property, Victorian culture dictates that Jane has no voice" (p.2). Jane is supposed to be a submissive, tolerant, gentle, and compliant young lady, given the Victorian culture and mores and the circumstances of her life. While readers can notice the opposite, i.e., they can notice Jane's rebellious character at the very beginning of the story, which apparently leads to her immoral behaviour toward the Reed family.

Another characteristic that Charlotte gives to the eponymous heroine is ambition. To put it another way, Jane is portrayed as a young girl who wants to advance socially to meet conventional expectations. Mitchell and Osland (2005) remark, "Jane Eyre is perhaps the hungriest of all fictional heroines; she wants everything" (p. 177). Mitchell and Osland add that "when the novel was first published, it was Jane's discontent that drew the most virulent objections" (Ibid.). Unlike the Victorian stories, *Jane Eyre* is the story of a quest for everything, which means Jane's ambition and hunger for life distinguish her from typical young Victorian women, who were unambitious. To put it differently, Jane has been presented from the very outset as an unsatisfied girl with her life and what she has, which creates problems for publishing the textbook. This is because, at that time, it was not expected or even allowed for women to be dissatisfied with their living conditions. One of the things that Jane strives for and wants to have during her growth journey is education. Charlotte clarifies this when Jane is reading the book that belongs to John (her only male cousin at Gateshead) this way: "What were you doing behind the curtain? He (John) asked." "I (Jane) was reading." (JE, p.16). The quote indicates Jane's willingness and striving to get knowledge in order to be educated, but because she does not belong to the Reed family, i.e., because she is classless, she does not have the right to use the properties of the house at all. To do so, she has to hide behind the curtain. Jane's behaviour and ambition, as Peters (1996) states, "subverts established cultural norms" that is why "[f]rom the very outset, the characters exclude Jane; even as a child she is isolated from the social group" (p.57). This might well be clarified that Jane's ambitious character is not accepted by the Victorian mores and her behaviour is regarded as immoral by the society she lives in, which leads her to hide. Thus, it can be said that Charlotte isolated Jane from the Reed family to tell readers about her moral failure as a threat to her social image.

On the other hand, it is an undeniable fact that women in Victorian England were not always able to get an education or were thought to be unfit for it. This was because of Victorian customs. As Davis (2009) states, "[t]he idea of education in nineteenth-century revolves around social class and social mores" (p.1). Thuresson (2011) also asserts, "[d]uring this century social position was of great importance, and the conventions of society were to be strictly followed" (p.2). Taking Davis's and Thuresson's points further, readers can learn that social class and societal norms had a massive role in

one's being educated at that time, and they were both intertwined. For example, a person like Jane, who is a woman and does not have a specific social class to belong to, was not allowed to receive an education in the Victorian conventions. Charlotte explains how Jane is verbally abused by John in her novel from the tongue of John Reed this way: "You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent" (JE, p.25). In this piece, the author tells us what she thinks about Victorian ideas about social class and women getting an education.

Charlotte wants to convey that, according to Victorian norms, a person like Jane, who is classless and female, does not have access to education. Although Jane is aware that her behaviour will be regarded against the social mores of the time, she tries to as Davis mentions, "self-educate herself" (p.2) because, according to Jane's morality, being educated is correct. While to the Reed family, who represents Victorian mores and culture, is not. Therefore, as Cashman and Cushman (2020) declare, "if a person performs an action they sincerely believe to be right but notices that everybody else considers it wrong, their subjective experience may be a moral failure" (p.2). Considering this, we can see that Jane's ambitious behaviour and attitude make her a moral failure as a threat to her social image, which leads her to feel rejected by the society she lives in. Jane's self-educating will lead her to be hit by her male cousin in this way: "But when I saw him lift the book to throw it at me, ... The book hit me and I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it. The cut bled" (JE, p. 26). Jane's being physically abused by John can be regarded as a cultural punishment for Jane because she does not bend to social traditions. In other words, Jane's rejection of social norms and expectations results in her being punished by the people she lives with in an effort to stifle her ambition and instil in her the need to behave like a typical young girl.

As was already said, the description makes it clear that the Reed family treats Jane at Gateshead like a servant and puts her through a lot of physical pain. The suffering that Jane endures causes her to reveal her passionate character. Jane describes her feelings this way in the following sentence: "the pain was sharp: my terror had passed its climax; other feelings succeeded" (JE, p. 27). This may show the strength of her temper, which leads her to say, "Wicked and cruel boy! You are like a slave-driver" to John Reed (Ibid.). Not only this, but she tries to hit him back this way, "I don't very well know what I did with my hands, but he called me "Rat! Rat!" and bellowed out aloud" (Ibid.).

Here, we can see that Jane does not only speak passionately; instead, she tries to hit John back because she is trying to defend herself. Jane wants to tell readers about her first experience, which made her show her passionate nature. This behaviour was regarded as the immodest thing to do for Victorian women, and it can be clearly seen here that Jane does not represent Victorian norms. Bossche (2005) comments on Jane's passionate behaviour this way: "Jane is slowly perceived as a rebellion against the Reeds because of the fact that she speaks her mind and shows an awareness concerning her self-worth" (p.47). Jane's behaviour here is seen as inappropriate because she shows her true character as an outspoken person and is more concerned with being herself and defining who she is.

As it has been mentioned earlier in this paper, Jane is presented as an atypical Victorian young woman, her attitude and behaviour, as Rich (2001) says, "are rebelling against the social conventions; ... by not doing what is expected of a young girl in her position, Jane takes a stand against the social conventions" (p. 472). Charlotte intentionally gives Jane this passionate nature and behaviour as she wants through Jane to revolt against Victorian morality and express her dissatisfaction on the social conventions. While Jane is about to defend herself physically, she is described as "such a picture of passion" and "fury" by Bessie (JE, p. 28). Quintero (2012) comments on Jane's reaction and her passionate nature as Jane "[r]ather than be beaten down by her struggle, she fights back, establishing her passionate nature" (p. 11). Weiland (2014) emphasizes, "Jane's verbal explosion in the face of John's cruelty solidifies her passionate nature in reader's minds" (p. 11). Kollé (2011) adds, "Jane's response is against social conventions" (Kollé: 2011, p. 11). These quotes suggest that Jane is not a typical Victorian girl because she is passionate and acts in a way that goes against the social norms of the time. In other words, it was forbidden for a girl like Jane to exhibit her passion or fury, which makes Abu Hassan and Azmi (2019) comment on the consequences of Jane's behaviour and believe that, "Jane's action against John is viewed as a wicked, unfamiliar behaviour which needs to be treated soon" (p. 70). Based on their comment, Jane's passionate behaviour is regarded as an immoral and unfeminine action according to the Victorian societal norms and has to be tamed. That is why she will be punished psychologically and physically by locking her in the red room this way: "Take her away to the red-room, and lock her in there" (JE, p.28). Ewing (2018) argues that "[t]hose women who were passionate were labelled "mad" and frequently sent to languish in asylums or attics, locked away from civilized society." Ewing's opinion may be a bit extreme, but nevertheless has much relevance regarding Jane's struggle to understand her stance regarding Victorian norms and a typical Victorian woman. As a result, Jane's attitude and behaviour challenge the norms and ideals of the Victorian period by being more frivolous with the ideals that society accepts.

The literary genre of the novel is a bildungsroman, which means the main focus will be on the moral development of the main character from youth to adulthood. According to the mentioned clarification on the genre of the chosen text, Cashman and Cushman (2020) argue, "child development appears to involve periods designed in a way that will reliably lead to moral failure "(p.2). It can be said that both Cashman and Cushman give more detailed and accurate results for the process of Jane's development in terms of morality. Jane is in the process of developing herself morally, and yet she is a child, which will lead her to have a moral failure and damage her social image. Before leaving Gateshead, Jane confronts Mrs Reed and shows her real feelings of passion again, which surprises her aunt:

"I am glad you are no relation of mine. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to visit you when I am grown up; and if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how

you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty” (JE, p. 32).

In the Victorian era, women were always expected to hide their feelings and emotions under any circumstances. Still, the author challenges this view by giving passionate characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes to the titular character to show readers how women’s emotions were repressed by the strict moral and social codes. Jane’s emotions and passion are not tolerated by Mrs Reed, who represents Victorian people and mores. So, Jane will have a moral failure that will hurt her social image, so she will move from Gateshead to Lowood Institute.

Charlotte makes clear how Jane in Gateshead transgresses Victorian morality through her unwomanly behaviour. She also explains how her strange quest for education leads her to be "sent to Lowood School as a form of punishment from Mrs Reed, where she gets an education" (p. 10), as Edberg (2021) mentions. Jane’s punishment this time is different from the previous ones as she has to change her residence. It is possible that the author purposefully allowed this to happen to the novel’s title character. This is because she is a person who knows right from wrong, and she likes to be educated, yet she is aware of the fact that Gateshead is not the right place to gain an education. Therefore, once Mr Lloyd (the Reeds’ apothecary) asks Jane, "[w]ould you like to go to school?" and Jane happily says, "I should indeed like to go to school," was the audible conclusion of my musings” (JE, p. 45). Jane’s strategy to avoid such kinds of constant punishment reveals her childish moral reasoning that if she is not to be punished by the Reeds, she must be sent to a school. In other words, it indicates her right decision in the matter of gaining education, on the one hand. On the other hand, since the story is about questing, Jane notices that the people she lives with in Gateshead and how she is trying to be educated make her a moral failure and threaten her social image. In order to avoid having such a negative social image, she has to change her location and move to an official place where she can have access to education.

Jane arrives at Lowood Institute as a passionate young girl. This, of course, might affect her quest for education. The first appearance of Jane at Lowood School could be better as Mrs. Reed gives Mr Brocklehurst a lousy impression of Jane. This makes Mr Brocklehurst humiliate Jane in front of the whole school this way, “this girl, this child, the native of a Christian land—this girl is—a liar!” (JE, p. 72). One might say that Jane will be treated the same way she was at Gateshead; in a word, she will be discriminated against by the head principal of the school. It might be said that Mr Brocklehurst’s abuse is more painful and worse for Jane than Mrs. Reed’s because the headmaster of Lowood School tries to isolate Jane from her peers in the same social position. On the other hand, he tries to impose his own image of the perfect woman upon Jane and shape her to his idealized standards when he says, “my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying” (JE, p. 75). Sending Jane to Lowood has a purpose for Mrs Reed, as Abu Hassan & Azmi refer to this fact as follows, “Mrs Reed hopes that Lowood School will teach Jane how to submit to discipline and rules” (P.71). Mrs. Reed in this quote

represents Victorian norms and society by punishing Jane by sending her to a worse place to transform Jane into a conventional Victorian young lady. Even though Jane becomes very much hurt by her headmaster’s inhuman treatment in front of her peers; she does not fight back against him as she did with Mrs Reed and her son, John. She tries to control her temper and passion because of her close friend, Helen Burns, and her kind teacher, Miss Temple, instead.

Not to mention, Charlotte presents Jane as a young girl who struggles a lot because of her intolerance and passionate nature. Therefore, Jane must have been introduced by someone who could teach her how to control her negative features and shape her morals, as well as help her define what is believed to be ethically acceptable and correct in Victorian social mores in terms of religion. Jane meets Helen Burns when she goes to Lowood Institute. Helen is mature, smart, respectful, and very religious. Helen is one of these great characters who significantly influence Jane’s personality and life. Helen’s intellect and mature personality help Jane shape her future actions. After the headmaster of Lowood says that Jane is a "liar," Helen tries to make Jane deal with his harsh words. Jane describes Helen in this way in the following sentence: “a girl passed me and lifted her eyes. What a strange light inspired them! [...] I mastered a rising hysteria, lifted up my head, and took a firm stand on the stool [...] she smiled at me. What a smile! It was the effluence of fine intellect, of true courage” (JE, p. 76). Jane’s description leads the reader to believe that Helen’s smile makes Jane strong enough to tolerate Mr. Brocklehurst’s persecution. Kollé comments on Helen’s role in Jane’s life and passionate character as follows: “Helen teaches this orphan (Jane) to control her temper and endure sufferings instead of resisting” (p. 13). Abu Hassan and Azmi add, “[t]his endurance of punishment indicates Jane’s strong desire to be viewed as a good and obedient girl!” (p.73). Helen notices Jane’s passionate nature and behaviour and thinks that Jane’s miseries and sufferings would be solved if she could control her passion or lessen it. As Lee (2010) points out, “previously Jane had attempted physical (and verbal) mastery over her opponents; here she demonstrates a mastery over her own self” (p. 37). Taking Lee’s point into account, Jane, at the beginning of the novel, tries to attack others and fight them back in order to be able to be educated and live like them. But after meeting her best friend, she realizes that if she wants to be free and educated, she has to control her temper; in a word, she has to reform herself. Thus, Helen has influenced Jane to be self-controlled to adapt to the social expectations of the time and fit in.

Jane encounters another figure at Lowood who positively affects her, like Helen, Miss Temple is the only intelligent, mature, and kind teacher at Lowood School with whom Jane could find comfort and be a more mature person. This is because, as Gilbert and Gubar (2000) suggest, Miss Temple “has repressed her madness and rage” (p. 345). Taking Gilbert and Gubar’s point further, one can say that Miss Temple is very much like Jane, which means she is as passionate as Jane. She suppresses her passionate nature to fit into the patriarchal society’s expectations of women’s behaviour.

To put it differently, Miss Temple and Jane are both

passionate ladies, but unlike Jane, Miss Temple is mature enough to be able to suppress her passionate nature, which leads her to be regarded as a typical Victorian woman. Xiaojie adds, “she had let the fire of anger burning inside extinguished as Victorian men expected” (p.4). Charlotte makes Jane see and notice how Miss Temple suppresses her anger throughout her reaction to Mr. Brocklehurst’s inhuman behaviour towards her. Jane says the following about Miss Temple’s response to Mr. Brocklehurst’s anger when she gives the students bread and cheese instead of burnt bread:

“Miss Temple had looked down when he first spoke to her; but she now gazed straight before her, and her face, naturally pale as marble, appeared to be assuming also the coldness and fixity of that material; especially her mouth, closed as if it would have required a sculptor’s chisel to open it” (JE, p. 68).

Through this description, Jane notices that Miss Temple is outraged by Mr Brocklehurst’s behaviour. In other words, Miss Temple shows emotionally how she gets angry, but she never shows it verbally or physically, as Jane did while she was at Gateshead. Miss Temple, Jane’s teacher, teaches her how to control her anger and how to respond maturely to those who have hurt her. Thus, it can be said that Miss Temple is the second character who helps Jane shape her morals and define what is believed to be ethically acceptable and correct in Victorian social mores through her behaviours and reactions towards her cruel headmaster.

During the Victorian era, morality and religion were inextricably linked, so moral behaviours were frequently characterized by a foundation in religious beliefs. For a typical Victorian woman to be morally acceptable in her society, she had to give her whole heart to Christianity. At the outset of the novel, Charlotte presents the titular character in the way that she does not put her faith in God as can be noticed through Helen and Jane’s conversation on God and when Jane asks, “[w]here is God?”

What is God? ..... Where is that Region (Heaven)? Does it exist? " (JE, p.74), readers think that Jane is not a devout Christian and does not strive to live according to Biblical principles. Here, Jane can have the second moral failure as a threat to her social image.

As was already mentioned, Jane was a passionate girl when she left Gateshead Hall, but she was a mature and self-controlled girl when she graduated from Lowood School. Jane stated this change in the following sentence: “I appeared a disciplined and a subdued character” (Ibid, p. 76). Moglen (1984) comments on Jane’s change as follows, “from Miss Temple and Helen Burns, Jane learns to value duty and self-control” (p. 117). So, Jane leaves Lowood as a different person, from a young girl with a lot of energy to a mature woman. In her journey of moral development, Jane is halfway between being totally accepted or regarded as a typical Victorian young woman as, on the one hand, she is now a mature and patient girl. On the other hand, she does not behave according to biblical principles, which makes her social image a moral failure.

Jane moves to a new place, Thornfield, where she will practice what she has learned in Lowood; in a word, moral

maturity. To put it differently, she will practice her ability to become flexible in her thinking and attitude towards Victorian culture and mores. As mentioned earlier, Victorian society was heavily based on Christianity. They based everything in their lives on biblical principles, including even marriage.

Another ambition that Jane wants to pursue is marrying the person she likes. Once Jane arrives at Thornfield Mansion, she falls in love with the master of the mansion, Mr. Edward Rochester. Jane is about to marry Rochester when she discovers that Rochester is already married and has another wife. During Victorian times, Bennett (1978) states, “it is religiously and legally wrong for a woman to live with an already married man, under any circumstances.” At this point in her moral growth, Jane has accepted Victorian customs and doesn’t want to be hated and rejected by the rules of the time. Therefore, she tells Rochester that “I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man” (JE, p. 319). Abu Hassan and Azmi Comment on this quote, “Jane makes clear that her moral integrity is more abided by legal, religious, and social laws rather than her own feelings” (p. 73). Two things can be noticed in this quotation. The first thing is using the word “religious”, which refers to Jane’s faith and Christian morals, i.e., Jane finally puts her faith in God and wants to act accordingly. One of the forms of religion that Taylor (2015) refers to in *Jane Eyre* is “religion of heart, which includes a moral approach that is largely concerned with caring for others” (p. 10). So, through the type of religion that Jane gains from Miss Temple and Helen Burns, she understands the needs of the Victorians and learns how to fit herself into the Victorian moral codes.

Second, words like ‘legal’ and ‘social laws’ indicate social conventions of the time. According to the quote, Jane’s religious principles and moral development lead her to make the right decision by refusing to be Rochester’s wife. When Jane learns of Rochester’s deceit, she decides to leave him and relocate to Marsh End, a mysterious location.

After Jane flees Thornfield, she still practices her moral maturity at Marsh End, and this can be noticed in St. John’s cold and unromantic proposal to her to be his missionary wife. St. John proposes this way: “God and nature intended you as a missionary’s wife” (JE, p.421). According to St. John, marriage should serve religion and God, and be bare of feelings.

Abu Hassan and Azmi comment on St. John’s opinion on love this way, “St. John is degrading love to a gloomy duty.” (p. 75). While to Jane, marriage should be based on love. Therefore, Jane refuses his proposal by saying: “I believe I must say, Yes — and yet I shudder. Alas! If I join St. John, I abandon half myself: if I go to India, I go to premature death” (JE, p. 422). The first part of the quote, as Alsulami (2015) clarifies, indicates that Jane “wants to live by the laws of God” (p. 3), but the other half of the quote suggests something entirely different. The difference can be seen in Abu Hassan and Azmi comment on Jane’s refusal of St. John’s unromantic and loveless proposal this way, “she feels no responsibility to join him to India as a wife because she believes that God has given her a life to be appreciated and respected” (Ibid). As it has been mentioned earlier in the paper, Jane is a person who knows right from wrong; therefore, she knows her marriage to St. John will be a

wrong decision that will break her moral principles.

Jane is pursuing yet another dream, which is having a family and being a part of a certain social class, as was stated at the beginning of the essay. While Jane was at Gateshead, she was always cast out by the Reed family because they did not consider her one of the family members and made her feel worthless. Jane is a lady who knows what she deserves, and this can be seen quite clearly in her refusal to marry Rochester and to move to Marsh End, where she could find her paternal relatives, which means, as Andersson (2011) mentions, “At Marsh End, some of her wishes come true; she finally belongs to a family” (p.13). Taking Andersson’s point further, upon her arrival at Marsh End, Jane is blessed with a family whom she has dreamed of having since her childhood, as well as an inheritance from her paternal uncle, Mr Eyre of Madeira, which makes her elevate her social class from classless to middle class.

Jane decides to leave Marsh End immediately after elevating her social class, joining a family, and moving to where she finds her true love, Ferdean, to make one of her dreams come true: marrying the man she loves. Upon arriving at Ferdean, she sees Mr Rochester has lost his sight and one of his arms and learns that his legal wife is dead. “He is now helpless, indeed – blind and cripple.” (JE, p.380). Thuresson comments on Mr Rochester’s situation as follows, “Mr. Rochester is now the dependent one, totally depending on the help of others while Jane is independent and strong” (p. 14). Here, Bronte draws readers' attention to Mr Rochester's weakness and Jane's strength, which gives Jane the power to say, “Reader, I married him” (JE, 410). At the end of her journey, Jane weds the man she loves while upholding her traditional society's moral standards and traditions.

#### CONCLUSION

The paper shows how the title character in Brontë’s most famous novel, *Jane Eyre*, tries to reform herself to fit into Victorian social conventions. Jane has been presented as a passionate young lady with dreams, i.e. who wants to have things that were impossible at that time for a young lady like her to have and yet she is pursuing to turn them into reality. She could adhere to Victorian social norms through her quest for a family, belonging to a social class, being educated, marrying the man she likes, and the process of self-reformation. As Jane’s dreams seem to be impossible to come true, she has to learn to suppress her passionate nature in Lowood School and refuse the marriage proposal from Thornfield (which results in her rejection by Victorian society), and St. John’s proposal in Marsh End, by which she will lose her life. At the end of the story, Jane gets what she wants without being rejected, and she becomes more mature in her moral reasoning.

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