

# **Liberating The Victorian Woman: Education And Marriage In Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre**

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## **Abstract**

*The Victorian era (1837-1901) is marked by rapid industrialization and moral conservatism, imposed strict expectations on women, confining them to domestic roles and limiting access to formal education and intellectual pursuits. Motivated by the systematic limitations placed on women's intellectual and social development during this era, this study explores Brontë's portrayal of the protagonist, Jane Eyre, as a figure of resistance against restrictive gender norms. In this paper, I have discussed the place of women in Education and Marriage during the Victorian era and the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The paper employs a socio-literary analysis to examine the portrayal of the role of women in education and marriage during the Victorian period through the lens of Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre. In this paper, I have shed more lights on how Brontë challenges the prevailing ideologies of her time, particularly through Jane's pursuit of intellectual and personal autonomy in defiance of societal expectations that limited women to domestic roles. Jane Eyre advocates for progressive reform by portraying education as a vehicle for women's empowerment and by redefining marriage as a partnership based on equality and mutual respect. By redefining marriage as a union of equals, the novel promotes gender equity, demonstrating the importance of legal and social reforms to promote gender equity and inclusion in all sectors of life.*

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Date of Submission: 01-12-2024

Date of Acceptance: 10-12-2024

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## **I. Introduction**

### **The Victorian Era**

The years that Queen Victoria ruled Great Britain and her Empire (1837–1901) roughly correspond with the literary period known as the Victorian era (Landale & Guest, 1986). Britain underwent a major social transformation during this time, moving from a largely rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial one. The steam printing press and other new technologies brought intellectual and physical unity among Britons. The Victorians believed that their world was changing quickly, despite the fact that the era is now primarily remembered as a time of traditional, moral values.

Religious belief was fracturing into views that were more evangelical and even atheist. People of color, women, and members of the working class were fighting for the ability to vote and self-government. Reformers battled for universal education, hygienic workplaces, and sanitary regulations. Victorian writing captures these ideals, discussions, and cultural issues. The main way that Victorian literature is different from that of the eighteenth century and the Romantic period is that it was written for a general audience rather than a niche or elite one. New genres were popular during the Victorian era because of the steam printing press, which significantly reduced the cost of text production and allowed for the rapid and easy distribution of texts via railroads (Secord, 2003).

### **Education During The Victorian Era**

During this time, gender and social class differences in education were quite noticeable. When children in the upper class were very small, governesses raised them. Upon turning ten years old, kids would typically enroll in a public school. Public schools were costly, selective establishments. The best chances for a quality education were available to boys in the upper classes. Boys were essentially trained to be gentlemen in public schools (Broberg et al., 2021; Pedersen, 1979). Academics was not given much of a focus, rather, the curriculum at these schools placed a strong emphasis on leadership, faith, sportsmanship, and even confidence, equipping the boys with all the skills they would need to become respectable members of society's upper classes in the future.

Conversely, girls from higher social classes were not enrolled in public schools. Because staying at home and learning useful skills for marriage was the most common path taken by women in Victorian England, they did just that. Girls had to be capable of sewing, cooking, singing, and playing an instrument (Pedersen,

1979). All of these skills could be put to use in a girl's life, particularly to support or elevate her husband. Women's colleges eventually started to open, and as they grew older, they had more access to higher education. At the beginning of the Victorian era, circa 1830s, the literacy rate amongst Englishmen was hovering just above 60% (Bezirdzhyan, 2024; Pedersen, 1979). The literacy rate amongst women was roughly below half. Decades into the Victorian Era, in the 1860s, the literacy rate amongst women and men finally became equal at approximately 90% in 1870. There was a drastic increase in literacy rates during the 19th century. In 1820, the literacy rate was 53%. In 1870 it jumped to 76%. Women had historically high literacy rate spikes in the 19th century

The Enlightenment played a large role in the increase in literacy rates. Although the Enlightenment began to taper off a few years before the Victorian period began, the lasting residual effects of philosophical thinking and reliance on writings by philosophers like John Locke created a steady increase in literacy rates. Nearing the end of Victoria's reign at the turn of the 20th century, the literacy rate amongst both men and women in Britain was nearly 100%.

In Victorian England, women were believed to only need to be educated in "accomplishments" such as artistic talents (singing and dancing), and the languages, essentially anything that would allow them to earn a husband and become the "Angels of the House" (Leppert, 1992)

However, as time went on and more and more women's colleges opened, more intelligent women attended to be educated in things other than "fashionable" subjects. In this way, knowledge is power and sparked the want for the right to vote and the creation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage in 1897, wish the Queen could not understand .

The Education Act of 1870 in England, which mandated elementary education for both males and females, was not passed until over forty years after the start of the Victorian era (Martin, 2010). Even in upperclass families, secondary education was not considered a priority for females until the 1890s .While female teachers were allowed, their pay was significantly less than that of male teachers, and they had to decide between marrying and starting a career. As a result, all female teachers had to remain single, whereas male teachers were not (Martin, 2010).

Getting to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, formal education became more and more accessible to girls. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the novel, as a young orphan, Jane Eyre receives a formal education and goes on to work as a governess and teacher. Regardless of whether she is the one teaching or being taught, Jane's life never deviates from formal education. Jane gains knowledge from each experience, both inside and outside of the classroom. Jane succeeds in the formal education system, which enables her to grow into a sophisticated and successful woman. Nonetheless, crises teach Jane the most valuable lessons she will ever learn. The most significant educational experiences Jane has been moral and spiritual ones that she learns during hard times, and they enable her to go from being a lonely orphan to a contented married woman.

But in what kind of conditions did Jane attend school during her era? Many young middle-class girls were sent to boarding schools during the nineteenth century, and the conditions, like Jane's, were far below average. Prospective students were frequently discouraged by the meager provisions and subpar facilities. Marianne Thormählen discusses boarding school conditions in her book *The Brontës and Education*: "As the many tales of horror schools in nineteenth century literature remind us, poorly run schools posed dangers to children's physical and mental health, sometimes to their lives." It was difficult for parents to determine how well a school was managed." (Landale & Guest, 1986). Therefore, even though in the 19th century, school had become more accessible especially to girls, the conditions were not favorable enough to attract more girls into school. Nevertheless, despite the poor conditions typical of boarding schools in the late 1800s and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many middle-class girls, like Jane, were educated in these institutions. Many lower class females were unable to attend school and were educated at home by their mothers in order to become competent housewives.

The poor state of the boarding houses was not the only problem that discouraged girls from enrolling in formal education. Many people, including parents, opposed the idea of schooling. Many parents disliked the idea of formal education because a woman's job was to create a haven of a household that provided shelter from the turbulence of the immoral outside world. Joan Burstyn explains, "Not only was it feared that higher education would encourage women to desert domesticity, but it would make marriage seem undesirable"(Burstyn). Young women's education was viewed with great fear by their parents, who felt that if their daughters pursued independent education, their femininity would be undermined and they would become unmarried. In addition, there were many doctors who believed that if women studied too much education, it would affect their ability to reproduce. Therefore, when universities opened to females, a lot of families did not want to send their daughters for fear no one would want to marry them afterward. All of these played a huge role in delaying the enrollment of girls at schools (Burstyn et al, 2021). It was in the midst of all this that Jane attended school. She really had a goal and a vision for her education.

At Lowood School, Jane receives her first formal education. She finds a life of physical deprivation and educational abundance at Lowood. Lowood is a modest place of business that doesn't foster positivity.

"Humility is a Christian grace, and one particularly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood: I therefore direct that especial care shall be bestowed on its cultivation among them," says Mr. Brocklehurst, the institution's supervisor, describing Lowood. I've researched the most effective ways to make them feel ashamed of their worldly pride. As a result of the students' humiliation, Lowood School has frigid rooms with insufficient food and clothing supplies. As a result, the students get sick and become malnourished. Although a life of deprivation is not the best setting for fostering a child's curiosity and capacity for learning, Jane overcomes her limited material resources. Jane attends Lowood for six years, where she receives a well-rounded education in sewing, piano, drawing, and French. She was indeed an exceptional student.

Apart from the sewing, piano, drawing, and French, she gains significant moral and spiritual knowledge from her experiences at school as well. Jane's friend Helen Burns, a fellow Lowood student, serves as her first spiritual guide. Jane is immediately drawn to Helen's profound spirituality and wisdom. J. Jeffrey Franklin asserts in his paper "The Merging of Spiritualities: Jane Eyre as Missionary of Love" that Helen Burns "represents an ideal within the Christian discourse of the novel... Helen does, in fact, embody an ideal that the book implies is too good to be true. Jane is deeply affected and passionate about the wrongs she witnesses, whereas Helen is a devout Christian who is able to look past earthly struggles.

Helen explains to Jane, "*Life appears to me too short to be spent nursing animosity or registering wrongs. We are, and must be, one and all, burdened with faults in this world: but the time will soon come when, I trust, we shall put them off in putting off our corruptible bodies; when debasement and sin will fall from us with this cumbrous frame of flesh, and only the spark of the spirit will remain.*" (674)

This shows that formal education or school does not only teach students academic work but provides an opportunity for people to develop their talents, faith, spiritual and moral values with the help of their peers. Apart from peers, school authorities like teachers serve as caretakers and role models to students. Jane takes advice from her friend Helen, who is modest and kind, but she also looks to Miss Temple, the head teacher at Lowood, for guidance. In the shadows of Lowood, Miss Temple is a ray of hope. "Miss Temple is the nurturing mother Jane has not had," according to Laura Morgan Green in her book *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Literature* (32). In their time together at Lowood, Miss Temple develops into Jane's friend, caregiver, and role model. "To her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements; her friendship and society had been my continual solace: she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and latterly, companion," Jane writes of Miss Temple's influence (692).

Miss Temple represents the ideal woman of that era. When they are together, Jane takes after her because she is a kind, modest, and accomplished person. She aspires to be as kind and moral as Miss Temple is, and she does this because of her presence. "Liberated from Brocklehurst's patriarchal rule, Lowood and Jane flourish under Miss Temple's maternal guidance; however, Miss Temple's departure immediately reveals Lowood's community of teachers and students as static and narrow," writes Green in his discussion of Miss Temple's influence on Jane and Lowood (33).

### **Marriage During The Victorian Era**

It was widely accepted that marriage was a woman's profession in the Victorian era. Like a racehorse, a girl was trained for courtship and marriage. A young Victorian lady needed to possess certain qualities in addition to being able to sing, play an instrument, and speak a little bit of French or Italian (Phegley, 2013). These qualities included being innocent, virtuous, biddable, dutiful, and ignorant of intellectual opinion. Victorian women were expected to be frail, delicate flowers incapable of making decisions beyond choosing what to cook and making sure her numerous offspring were raised with moral principles, regardless of whether they were married or not. A lady made sure her family and husband were comfortable in the house away from the strains of Industrial Britain (Martin, 2010). The main purpose of a woman was to bear many children and keep the family dynamic harmonious so that a man did not have to worry about household duties. In order for him to continue making money, he thought his house would run smoothly. Victorian men expected their wives or mistresses to be faithful regardless of their own transgressions, even though they maintained mistresses in high positions. It was kept a secret when a woman took a lover. She would lose social standing if people found out. Men, however, could stroll into any of their gentleman's clubs and always find a friendly greeting. It was customary for a wealthy wife to read, sew, host guests, go on visits, write letters, take care of the servants, and dress appropriately for her husband's social role. Secondhand clothing was commonplace. In a wealthy household, the leftover food was consumed by servants. The typical impoverished mill worker could only afford the crappy stuff, like stale bacon, stale veggies, green potatoes, tough, stringy meat, sour bread, porridge, cheese, kippers or herrings.

There were significant differences between society's members by the end of Queen Victoria's reign, but the most obvious difference was seen in the clothes people wore. The head of the household in Victorian times dressed his women to flaunt the family fortune. Dress became more and more extravagant as the 19th century went on, to the point where as the new century got underway, articles of clothing were dripping with

lace and beads. Etiquette rules ruled the day for a wealthy woman, requiring her to change her clothes up to six times a day, according to the three distinct seasons of the year. As the situation required, the woman dressed in a variety of outfits.

The love story at the heart of *Jane Eyre*, between the poor, plain governess and her commanding master, is a significant reason for mutual relationship. Mr. Rochester adores Jane as much as he does in his own flesh. He does, however, attempt to dominate Jane on numerous occasions. Similarly, St. John Rivers attempts to control Jane through his language as he proposes her. Both men use direct orders to persuade Jane.

It is worth noting that Jane is not the kind of woman that the Victorian era would have her be. She is filled with intense love and companionship feelings. The conflict between Jane's expectations and the presumptions of Mr. Rochester and St. John expresses a significant issue with Victorian marriage ideals. Finally, Mr. Rochester acknowledges his error and embarks on a mutually beneficial marriage. However, St. John doesn't change his view on marriage. The novel *Jane Eyre* is set in nineteenth-century England, a time when Victorian women were supposed to be orderly, obedient, courteous, and opinionless. However, Charlotte Brontë was a trailblazing female novelist who raised awareness and consciousness among women about marriage and choosing the correct life partner.

Stated differently, Brontë's *Jane Eyre* delves into Jane's journey towards gender parity and reciprocity while she pursues a companionable marriage with Mr. Rochester (Mirani, 2021a). Jane is a driven young lady who battles potentially oppressive unions and longs for a happy union that will ensure her independence and status as an equal. Given that the central themes of this book are marriage and love, the idea of companionate marriage is discussed towards the conclusion of the narrative. In this marriage, duty and love are combined. A classic marriage is exemplified by the union of Mr. Rochester and Bertha. Even though Mr. Rochester and Bertha are duped into getting married, there is passion in their union, but he neglects his responsibilities.

St. John's marriage proposal to Jane also demonstrates the obligation without emotion. Mr. Rochester's impetuous passion forces him into an unhappy marriage. He does not care about his responsibilities as a result. Brontë makes the attempt to claim that a marriage founded on sexual desire and disregarding one's obligation will result in more than just a loss of passion. Thus, the main idea of this study is that, in order for married couples to be happy for all time, they must take care of their responsibilities in addition to their shared love. However, St. John River makes the decision not to wed Rosamond Oliver. Despite their mutual attraction and affection, St. John completely abandons his passion to focus on his ministry to God.

To fulfill his missionary role, St. John only makes the proposal to Jane. It is his missionary duty, not love, that leads him to ask Jane to marry him. The image of St. John, who is completely different from Mr. Rochester, is presented by Brontë here. For example, St. John avoids duty, while Rochester avoids passion.

Love and marriage, in Brontë's opinion, go hand in hand. Brontë's perspective on marriage deviates greatly from the Victorian ideal in this regard. Balancing duty and passion by both partners is Brontë's main idea about marriage. Only Jane and Rochester's marriage at the book's conclusion exemplifies the qualities of love, sharing, and care that precede responsibility. Even though Jane first considers getting married to Rochester, she can't compromise her honor by continuing to be his mistress as long as his insane wife Bertha is alive. The only reason she declines to wed Rochester is because of his current spouse, Bertha. She lacks enthusiasm for Rochester. Jane waits to wed Mr. Rochester until she is certain of his genuine love for her. She is aware of Rochester's real-life circumstances. After Bertha passes away, she returns to Rochester, aware that he is now disabled. Thus, we can observe a reversal of power when Mr. Rochester becomes totally dependent on Jane after losing his sight. Brontë, however, does not intend to portray Rochester as weak and Jane as strong. Jane believes that everyone has a duty to one another. They eventually have a happy marriage.

A general view of marriage is presented by Brontë, considering Jane's opinions regarding Rochester's error in renunciation duty and St. John's indulgence in it. Often considered a semi-autobiographical novel, *Jane Eyre* is the first published novel and masterwork by Charlotte Brontë. Prior to anything else, the heroine's

character will be examined. Jane has a compelling personality. The romantic heroine's appearance is not what she possesses. Not particularly beautiful, she is plain. Though she defies the accepted notion of beauty, *Jane Eyre* is the most well known heroine. In today's literary world, Jane, the unassuming, diminutive heroine, is a sensation thanks to her remarkable, rebellious, and unusual life trajectory.

Women were portrayed in Victorian novels as the angels of the home because that was the social mores during that time. They believe that being beautiful is a prerequisite for marriage, which Brontë portrays as a sign of submission. Because Jane is unglamorous, she is banished from her aunt's house. Rochester pretends to be married to Miss Blanch Ingram while he is in love with Jane. Despite Miss Ingram's beauty, she is not loved in Rochester. He only does this to pique Jane's interest in him by making her envious of their relationship. As a result, Miss Blanch Ingram is portrayed as the beauty tool.

Beauty, according to Jane, stems from the inner heart and intellect. As a result, Jane is more than just a romantic heroine, as she appears at first glance. She is a fully aware woman. Jane, a plain girl, meets the dark handsome and wealthy Edward Rochester, but she refuses to marry him until he accepts her marriage ideals.

St. John's marriage proposal is also rejected by her. St. John could never love her as she deserves to be loved. Jane considers marriage without love to be disrespectful. She desires a marriage filled with love and companionship.

Furthermore, women's rights were severely restricted and their status was deplorable during the Victorian era (Mirani, 2021b). Victorian society could hardly offer any opportunities for single women. The only jobs available to the impoverished women were factory work, farm labor, and domestic service. The women from the middle class worked as schoolteachers and governesses. While some women attempted to support themselves by writing against the pervasive social prejudice, literature as a whole could not and should not be a woman's business. Few people, like Charlotte Brontë, were able to make a living mostly through writing after much struggle (Nashat, 2021). The only thing middle-class women could hope for was a happy marriage that would improve their social standing and financial stability. Married women were not economically independent and had far fewer legal rights. As soon as a woman got married, her property and legal rights were taken away from her, and her husband received the money she had earned before.

Women's submission to men was influenced by their financial reliance on men, which increased the risk of mental health issues in women (Pedersen, 1979). Bertha Mason, the covertly hidden wife of Rochester in the book, is a metaphor for the generally deplorable situation Victorian married women found themselves in. Through Bertha's portrayal, Charlotte Brontë incisively highlights this common Victorian social issue. Brontë, a student, teacher, governess, and writer herself, disapproves of the biases, customs, morals, and ideas that gave women status in Victorian architecture.

Her beliefs completely contradict the notion that a woman is the angel of the home. By employing her remarkable and demanding heroine Jane, Charlotte Brontë elevates the status of women's consciousness without being a rebel. Brontë discusses marriage, which is predicated on a companionate relationship, in order to probe women's consciousness. Before she married Arthur Bell Nicholls, she even feared being subject to such a restriction. On the other hand, *Jane Eyre* highlights the interdependence of marriages.

Moreover, getting a suitable husband in Victorian society is one of Jane's biggest challenges (Ferdows & Ferdows, 2021; Pedersen, 1979). Jane makes an effort to develop her own conception of marriage throughout the book, which stands in for women's awareness of gender equality. Mr. Rochester and Jane share a strong intellectual connection, a lasting love, and a sexual attraction that doesn't go away. But the relationship is more complicated than just two characters falling in love and getting married. It is a marriage covenant based on the dependence and relationship of two pure souls on one another.

## **II. Struggle For Equity In Victorian Marriage**

Being the most influential character in *Jane Eyre*, Jane has her own moral convictions, laws, regulations, and philosophy. Marriage is the main theme of this book. Getting a suitable husband in Victorian society is one of Jane's biggest challenges. Jane makes an effort to develop her own conception of marriage throughout the book, which stands in for women's awareness of gender equality. Mr. Rochester and Jane share a strong intellectual connection, a lasting love, and a sexual attraction that doesn't go away. But the relationship is more complicated than just two characters falling in love and getting married. It is a marriage covenant based on the dependence and relationship of two pure souls on one another.

The idea that women are destined to be obedient and dependent on their husbands after marriage served as the foundation for the Victorian era (Phillips). Jane states, going against this traditional aspect of marriage:

*"Women are supposed to be very calm generally, but women feel just as men feel, they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer, and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making pudding And knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex". (95)*

In many ways, *Jane Eyre* is a rebel against the domestic feminine ideal that the Victorians of the nineteenth century worked hard to establish. It openly questions and criticizes the expectations of the ideal domestic woman. Jane's employment as a governess at Thornfield Hall allows her to let go of her conception of what it means to be a woman. The notion that women and men are equals with respect to needs was obviously absurd and unaccepted by Victorian society. Consequently, Jane's defiance of the domestic feminine ideal. Several academics have observed that from their first meeting, Mr. Rochester exercises control over his youthful governability. Jane has a great desire to please Mr. Rochester because of her love for him and her position as governess in his home. According to social norms, Jane is never going to marry Rochester since she is an impoverished orphan who has no desire to get married. Mr. Rochester's power over Jane plays a role in the improbable marriage. David Cecil asserts that Mr. Rochester is the only "flesh and blood man" who is solely made up of virility, violence, and masculine vanity, gives her the courage to form her own opinion and moral

code.

By treating Jane like an employee, even when it comes to private matters, and by prioritizing his own needs over hers, Rochester takes advantage of his power over her.

The way their romantic relationship develops is significantly influenced by Mr. Rochester's orders and Jane's submissive reactions to his dominance.

Furthermore, Brontë has addressed a number of issues related to marriage. The struggle between emotion and reason is one of them. According to David Lodge, "writing that is poetic and visionary, evoking intense emotional states, emphasizing the importance of individual self-fulfillment gained from a struggle between passion and reason conducted at an extraordinary pitch of imaginative perception" is important. Lodge demonstrates how Brontë's idealistic view of marriage is revealed by emphasizing the drive and justification for placing a high value on personal fulfillment.

The intense love that exists between Jane and Mr. Rochester is the basis for the novel *Jane Eyre*. They both come from different backgrounds and have quite different personalities and life experiences. Jane is outcast by her aunt, Mrs. Reed, because she is impoverished, unremarkable, plain, and parentless. Jane experiences numerous physical and psychological traumas as a result of her life in Gates Head Hall and at Lowood School. She turns into a recluse. She looks for love all the time, but all she finds is hate and suffering. Jane is more courageous in her fight against injustice the more hate she encounters.

Jane is a strong, independent, forward-thinking, and radical in the sense of marriage woman who has established her own laws at Lowood and Gateshead schools (Shokhrukhovna et al., 2024). Her uncle has left her in the care of Mrs. Reed in Gateshead. Jane's harsh and cruel aunt is the one person in her life that she dislikes. Jane finds it extremely challenging to live her entire life with her deceitful and untruthful cousin. Nonetheless, Jane's resilience and bravery are a result of her willingness to endure numerous painful evenings and anxious, agonizing days. Using Jane's tenacious character as support, Katheleen Tillotson claims:

*"Jane is self-critical but also self-respecting; her modesty attracts while never making the reader take her at her own initial valuation. We watch a personality discovering itself not by long introspection but by a habit of keeping pace with her own experience. It is from her own explicit record that we are convinced both of her plainness and her charm, her delicacy and her endurance, her humility and her pride. (Tahmid, 2024)*

Katheleen contends that although Jane endures a lot of terrifying and painful days, she is able to keep up with her own experiences. She embodies both the traits of self-criticism and self-respect. She is straightforward but fairly intelligent. She attempts to get past every challenge in her life and speaks fearlessly in. As a result, Jane is shown as a conscious woman in this book. She speaks with a man's voice, thinks like a man, and sees with human eyes. This is the central idea that the book seeks to convey. Brontë employs a remarkable character that is capable of opposing the male chauvinism prevalent in Victorian society.

The most noteworthy feature of this book is the idea and concept employed through Jane's character. As Mrs. Reed lies dying, she realizes the injustice and cruelty she has done to Jane and begins to honor her as the fearless, strong-willed woman. Jane's moral philosophy presents a brave and fearless girl. Jane responds, "I care for myself, the more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself"(28). This demonstrates her readiness to overcome any challenge in her life. Since she was raised as an orphan, Jane is particularly aware of her position.

Men from the middle class and upper aristocracy in Victorian times had distinct perspectives on marriage. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, marriages between members of the upper classes were typically arranged by one's parents and entered into for the purpose of social, political, and financial gain. This also occurs to Mr. Rochester. His father and brother con him into getting married to Miss Bertha. Their sole motivation for doing this is to improve their financial standing. Despite being aware of Bertha's family's insanity, Rochester's father withholds this information from Mr. Rochester, and as a result, he ends up losing his entire life and confining Bertha to the Hall's third floor. Because his wife is insane and is kept sequestered under Grace Poole's supervision, no one is aware of her existence. Ultimately, it is revealed to Jane by Mr. Rochester that he is married:

*"I now inform you that she is my wife, whom I married fifteen years ago, Bertha Mason by name; sister of this resolute personage, who is now, with his quivering limbs and white cheeks, showing you what a stout heart men may bear... Bertha Mason is mad; and she come of a mad family; idols and maniacs through three generations?...as I found out after I had wed the daughter: for they were silent on family secrets before." (258)*

Rochester marries for money and lust before learning about Bertha. After his wife's insanity and realization of his immoral deed, Rochester leaves Jamaica and heads back to Europe. After securely settling Bertha in Thornfield Hall's third floor, he heads to the continent in search of a woman. The woman with whom he might get into an illicit "marriage" based on equality and love. In order to learn from the mistakes of his first, terrible union, he seeks an equality marriage. After searching for that woman for many years, Rochester becomes disillusioned and travels throughout Europe, taking on and leaving mistresses. It should come as no

surprise that this approach falls short of Rochester's expectations, leading him to return to England with the intention of changing. He meets Jane and discovers a sincere personality in her. He chooses to commit bigamy in order to be with her because it is something he has not found in his restless wandering. He thinks her positive influence will make him change his bad habits. However, as a result, he ends up losing Jane. Wives were not permitted to file for divorce during the Victorian era (Landale & Guest, 1986; Suleymanovna, 2024; Uysal, 2023). Given that at the time, English law prohibited a man from divorcing an insane wife, Jane's relationship with Mr. Rochester as his husband and wife would have been extremely problematic, illegal, and immoral. The situation in Rochester is likewise the same. He is unable to legally divorce his insane wife or give up on Jane. He states, "My fixed desire was to seek and find a good and intelligent woman, whom I could love: a contrast to the fury I left at Thornfield." This desire is to find the intelligent girl he can love, and he can only find this in his relationship with Jane.

### III. Conclusion

The Victorian Era saw significant advancements in education, and the educational system was distinct during this time period. Public education evolved greatly during this period, owing mostly to new legislation enacted to make education obligatory for a broader range of people. Though considerable advances in education were made in Victorian England, there were still significant disparities between socioeconomic groups and genders. Literacy rates among the populace increased considerably at the end of the era as a result of all of these multifaceted components of British education.

In addition, the role and societal expectations of women began to change in the late Victorian era. According to *Jane Eyre*, marriage cannot be reduced to a contract and needs to be maintained by equals having conversations. However, the marriage of equals between Jane and Rochester that is depicted in the novel's epilogue cannot be confused with the early nineteenth-century marriage laws' official institutionalization of sexual inequality. The conclusion has a political statement written in it. Legal reform is necessary for equality to survive in early nineteenth-century Britain. Jane cannot be Rochester's equal if she is only his mistress, and she cannot be his equal if the laws governing marriage are not changed. In their conversation, Jane and Rochester reinvent themselves to one another and to marriage as the social embodiment of this kind of freedom.

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