

Unveiling Victor Hugo through Critical Race Theory Feminist Lens: A Social Constructivist Approach

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Abstract:- This study re-examines the life and works of Victor Hugo, one of the 19th century's most influential French writers, through the integrated lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and feminist theory, employing a social constructivist approach. By analyzing Hugo's significant works, including "Les Misérables" and "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," this research explores how his narratives address the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. By critically examining characters such as Fantine, Cosette, and Esmeralda, as well as the depiction of marginalized groups, the study uncovers Hugo's critique of his time's social constructs and power dynamics. This analysis highlights Hugo's progressive empathy for the oppressed and discusses the contemporary relevance of his work in understanding and addressing ongoing social injustices. By situating Hugo's literary contributions within the frameworks of CRT and feminist theory, this research offers new insights into the enduring significance of his critique of systemic inequalities, emphasizing the importance of intersectional perspectives in literary studies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Victor Hugo's literary works have long been celebrated for their deep exploration of social justice, human suffering, and the complexities of the human condition. His novels, particularly "Les Misérables" and "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," have transcended their time, continuing to resonate with contemporary audiences through their rich narratives and profound social critiques. However, to fully appreciate the depth of Hugo's engagement with issues of race, gender, and class, it is essential to re-examine his works through modern theoretical lenses that can uncover the underlying social constructs and power dynamics.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and feminist theory provide robust frameworks for such an analysis. CRT, with its focus on the intersectionality of race, class, and power, allows us to explore how Hugo's narratives reflect and challenge the systemic inequalities of his time. Feminist theory, particularly its emphasis on gender and the patriarchy, offers insights into Hugo's portrayal of female characters and the societal norms that shape their experiences. By integrating these perspectives with a social constructivist approach, which posits that knowledge and social reality are constructed through cultural and societal interactions, this study aims to uncover new dimensions of Hugo's critique of 19th-century French society.

This research focuses on the characters and themes within Hugo's significant works to understand how they embody and resist the social constructs of race, gender, and class. By examining characters like Fantine, Cosette, and Esmeralda and exploring Hugo's depiction of marginalized groups, the study seeks to reveal the complexities and contradictions in his portrayal of social justice. Furthermore, this analysis highlights the contemporary relevance of Hugo's work, offering insights into how his critique of social constructs can inform current discussions on race, gender, and systemic inequality.

Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study enhances our understanding of Victor Hugo's literary contributions and underscores the importance of intersectional analysis in literature. It invites readers to consider how historical narratives can illuminate present-day struggles for justice and equality, reinforcing Hugo's enduring legacy as a champion of the oppressed and a critic of societal injustices.

II. CRITICAL RACE THEORY FEMINIST LENS TO THE WORK OF VICTOR HUGO

CRTF, an interdisciplinary framework rooted in legal studies and critical theory, examines how race, gender, and other identities intersect to perpetuate systems of oppression. Applying this lens to Hugo's works allows a deeper exploration of the marginalized voices and experiences often overlooked in traditional literary analysis.

Through CRTF, Hugo's portrayal of characters from marginalized communities, such as the oppressed underclass in "Les Misérables" or the enslaved Africans in "Bug-Jargal," can be examined through a feminist perspective, highlighting how gender intersects with both race and class to form their experiences of oppression and resistance.

Moreover, CRTF encourages interrogating power dynamics within Hugo's narratives, revealing how dominant ideologies reinforce and perpetuate systemic inequalities. By examining Hugo's depiction of power structures in society, particularly those related to race and gender, readers can uncover the underlying mechanisms of oppression and challenge the normative narratives that privilege specific identities over others.

Applying Critical Race Feminist Theory (CRTF) to Victor Hugo's views on women provides a nuanced understanding of his complex portrayal of gender within his works and personal beliefs. While Hugo was known for his progressive stance on social issues, including the fight for women's rights, a CRTF analysis would scrutinize his representations of women through the lens of intersectionality, examining how gender, race, and class intersect to form their experiences of oppression and agency.

CRT emphasizes the permanence of racism, the critique of liberalism, and the importance of experiential knowledge. Scholars such as Derrick Bell and Kimberlé Crenshaw have highlighted how legal and social systems perpetuate racial inequalities.

Although Hugo's works primarily focus on class struggles, his depiction of marginalized characters can be analyzed through a racial lens. For instance, Esmeralda in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" represents the Romani people, a group subjected to racial discrimination. This portrayal can be examined for its alignment with CRT principles, particularly the social construction of race and the systemic oppression of ethnic minorities.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, which explores how various forms of oppression intersect, is pertinent to Hugo's characters. Fantine in "Les Misérables" embodies the intersection of gender and class oppression, and Esmeralda's racial and gendered identity can be explored through this framework.

Hugo's writings often feature strong female characters who challenge societal norms and assert their autonomy. Characters like Fantine in "Les Misérables" and Esmeralda in "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame" exemplify this complexity, navigating the intersections of gender, class, and power in their respective contexts. Through a CRTF analysis, these characters can be seen as embodying the struggles of marginalized women within Hugo's narratives, confronting the systemic inequalities that perpetuate their subjugation.

However, despite Hugo's sympathetic portrayals of women in his works, a CRTF analysis would also interrogate how his privilege as a white male author may have influenced his representations. It would explore whether Hugo's depictions of women reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies surrounding gender and race and how his societal position may have shaped his perspectives.

Moreover, a CRTF analysis of Hugo's views on women would focus on his fictional portrayals and examine his public statements and actions regarding gender equality. While Hugo advocated for women's rights and supported movements for gender equality, a CRTF analysis would question whether his advocacy extended to all women, particularly those from marginalized racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. It would explore how Hugo's feminism intersected with his understanding of race and class and whether his activism addressed the intersecting

oppressions of women of colour and lower social classes.

In sum, applying Critical Race Feminist Theory to Victor Hugo's views on women offers a critical lens through which to analyze the complexities of gender representation within his works and personal beliefs. Exploring the intersections of gender, race, and class, a CRTF analysis can illuminate both the progressive and potentially problematic aspects of Hugo's engagement with women's rights, inviting readers to critically engage with his legacy as a feminist writer and advocate.

III. METHODOLOGY: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM ANALYZING THE WORK OF VICTOR HUGO

Social constructivism posits that knowledge and meaning are constructed through social interactions and cultural contexts. Applying this approach to Victor Hugo's work allows us to explore how his narratives reflect and challenge the social constructs of 19th-century France. Hugo's literature provides a rich tapestry for analyzing the construction of identity, power, and societal norms.

Social constructivism holds that knowledge and reality are socially constructed through shared understandings and cultural contexts. Applying this methodology to the study of Hugo's works allows for exploring how race, gender, and other social categories are constructed and negotiated within his narratives.

By analyzing how characters navigate and challenge societal norms and expectations, readers can gain insight into the fluidity and complexity of identity within Hugo's fictional worlds.

Furthermore, Social Constructivism encourages examining the role of language and discourse in shaping social reality.

Social constructivism, rooted in the works of scholars like Lev Vygotsky and Peter Berger, emphasizes that individuals and groups construct knowledge through social processes. This theory suggests that realities are socially constructed through language, communication, and cultural practices. When applied to literature, social constructivism examines how texts both shape and are shaped by the cultural and social environments from which they emerge.

A. *Themes in Hugo's Work through a Social Constructivist Lens*

➤ *Construction of Social Identity*

Hugo's characters often embody the social identities constructed by their cultural and societal contexts. In "Les Misérables," Jean Valjean's transformation from a hardened criminal to a compassionate benefactor illustrates how personal experiences and societal interactions can reshape social roles and identities.

Esmeralda in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" represents the construction of otherness. As a Romani woman, her identity is shaped by the prejudices and cultural narratives imposed by the dominant society.

➤ *Power and Oppression*

Hugo's works frequently highlight the power dynamics and structures of oppression within society. Social constructivism helps us understand how social narratives maintain and challenge these power relations.

In "Les Misérables," the rigid class structures and the criminal justice system are depicted as constructs that perpetuate inequality and suffering. Valjean's repeated encounters with the law illustrate how societal power structures oppress individuals.

➤ *Cultural Norms and Social Critique*

Hugo's literature often critiques the cultural norms and values of his time. Using a social constructivist lens, we can see how Hugo's narratives challenge the status quo and propose alternative ways of understanding society.

"The Hunchback of Notre Dame" critiques the societal norms surrounding beauty, morality, and justice. Though physically deformed, Quasimodo embodies virtue, while the ostensibly righteous figures, such as Frollo, are morally corrupt.

Feminist theory critiques the patriarchy and advocates for women's rights and representation. Key figures such as Simone de Beauvoir and bell hooks have explored the societal structures that marginalize women.

➤ *Language and Symbolism*

Language and symbolism in Hugo's work are crucial for constructing social realities. Hugo's descriptive language and symbolic imagery construct and deconstruct social meanings.

In *Les Misérables*, the barricades symbolize the struggle for social change and collective action against oppressive structures. The language used to describe the Parisian underworld vividly portrays the harsh realities faced by the marginalized.

➤ *The way that he used Language and Symbolism can be Divided in Three Themes:*

- **Constructivist Theory in Literature:** A social constructivist approach posits that knowledge and meaning are constructed through social interactions and cultural norms. This perspective is useful in understanding how Hugo's works reflect and challenge the social constructs of his time.
- **Cultural and Social Critique:** Hugo's works often serve as a critique of the cultural and social norms of 19th-century France. Examining these texts through a social constructivist lens reveals how Hugo's narratives construct and deconstruct ideas about race, gender, and class.

- **Hugo's Influence on Social Perceptions:** Hugo's portrayal of marginalized characters and his critique of social injustice have influenced societal perceptions of race and gender. Analyzing this influence through a constructivist lens helps to understand the lasting impact of his work on social and cultural discourses.

B. *Case Studies for Analyzing the language:*

- **Jean Valjean (Les Misérables)**
Valjean's journey illustrates the social construction of criminality and redemption. Initially shaped by the oppressive legal system, his identity transforms through acts of kindness and community interactions. This transformation challenges the societal narrative of inherent criminality.
- **Esmeralda (The Hunchback of Notre-Dame)**
Esmeralda's character critiques racial and ethnic constructs. Her portrayal as an exotic and enchanting figure constructed by the gaze of the dominant society highlights how cultural narratives shape perceptions of race and ethnicity.
- **Fantine (Les Misérables)**
Fantine's descent into poverty and exploitation showcases the construction of gender roles and the marginalization of women. Her plight criticizes the societal norms that define women's worth and punish their transgressions.

C. *Implications and Contemporary Relevance*

Applying social constructivism to Hugo's work deepens our understanding of his literary contributions and provides insights into contemporary social issues. The themes of identity, power, and societal critique in Hugo's novels remain relevant today, offering a lens through which to examine modern social constructs and inequalities.

When viewed through a social constructivist lens, Victor Hugo's literature reveals the complex interplay between individual identities and societal structures. His works critique the social constructs of his time and challenge readers to reflect on the power dynamics and cultural narratives that shape our understanding of the world. By deconstructing these narratives, Hugo's novels encourage a reevaluation of social norms and advocate for a more just and equitable society.

Hugo's use of language and narrative techniques can be analyzed through this lens, revealing how he constructs and deconstructs prevailing ideologies surrounding race, gender, and power. By attending to the linguistic strategies employed by Hugo, readers can uncover the subtle ways in which hegemonic discourses are reproduced and resisted within his texts.

This paper examines how the combination of theory and practice effectively works in writing and supporting the impact process. The research followed action research methodology, with a plan of action designed in the reading environment.

The research focuses on the interaction of the writer and participants (the readers). Its findings present practical examples of how Victor Hugo used language in the writing process and inflicted his time in society.

➤ *Method: Scholarly*

The scholarly method, often called the academic or scientific method in various contexts, is a rigorous and systematic approach researchers and scholars use to investigate phenomena, generate new knowledge, and validate existing theories. This method is characterized by several key components and practices designed to ensure the research process's reliability, validity, credibility and outcomes. By adhering to this method, researchers and scholars contribute significantly to the academic community and society.

The scholarly method ensures that research is conducted systematically, ethically, and rigorously by adhering to its principles and practices. Mastering this method contributes valuable knowledge to the academic community and society, instilling a sense of accomplishment and motivation in researchers and scholars.

➤ *Skills: Search Engines, Citation Management*

Proficiency in search engines and citation management is a theoretical idea and a practical necessity for conducting comprehensive research. These skills are your research compass and anchor, leading you to accurate and credible sources. In this study, it was leveraged by search engines and citation management to uphold the quality of our sources.

By refining these skills, this research could conduct efficient and effective literature searches, critically assess sources, and produce well-referenced and scholarly articles. These contributions not only advance knowledge in the field but also enhance the credibility and impact of the research.

IV. FINDINGS

Victor Hugo, the renowned French author of the 19th century, lived during a time of great social upheaval and change. While critical race theory (CRT) and feminism, as we understand them today, were not explicitly formulated during Hugo's lifetime, we can certainly explore how his life and works intersect with the ideas and principles underlying these movements.

➤ *Critical Race Theory:*

- **Social Justice Themes:** Hugo's works often tackled themes of social justice, human rights, and the plight of the marginalized. His novel "Les Misérables" is a prime example, depicting the struggles of the poor and oppressed in French society.
- **Critique of Racism:** While Hugo's portrayal of race may not align with contemporary CRT, his writings did challenge prevailing attitudes towards race and ethnicity. Characters like the noble-spirited Jean Valjean and the street urchin Gavroche reflect Hugo's belief in the fundamental dignity inherent in every individual,

independently of his background.

- **Intersectionality:** Although not explicitly articulated, Hugo's exploration of poverty, injustice, and discrimination in his works can be seen as an early form of intersectionality, recognizing the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression.

➤ *Feminism:*

- **Strong Female Characters:** Hugo's novels often feature strong, complex female characters who defy traditional gender roles and expectations. Characters like Fantine and Cosette in "Les Misérables" challenge societal norms and assert their agency in adversity.
- **Advocacy for Women's Rights:** While Hugo himself may not have identified as a feminist in the modern sense, his writings advocated for women's rights and highlighted the injustices faced by women in French society. For example, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" sheds light on the constraints placed upon women in the Middle Ages.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Hugo's empathetic portrayal of female characters and his exploration of their inner lives demonstrate a sensitivity to women's struggles and experiences, laying the groundwork for future feminist movements.
- **Victor Hugo, while not a feminist in the modern sense, exhibited progressive views on women's rights and gender equality through his writings and personal beliefs. Here are some vital feminist points of view evident in Hugo's life and work:**

➤ *Literary Representation:*

Strong Female Characters: a) Fantine ("Les Misérables"): Fantine's tragic story highlights the exploitation and suffering of women in 19th-century society. Her plight underscores the need for social reform and empathy towards marginalized women and b) Esmeralda ("The Hunchback of Notre Dame"): Esmeralda is portrayed as a resilient and compassionate woman who defies societal norms. Her character challenges the prejudices and injustices women face, particularly those from marginalized communities.

Critique of Patriarchal Society: Hugo often critiqued patriarchal structures that oppressed women. In "Les Misérables", he vividly depicts the struggles of women like Fantine, who are forced into desperate situations by an uncaring and judgmental society.

➤ *Social and Political Engagement:*

Influence on Social Reform: Through his writing, Hugo influenced public opinion and brought attention to the social issues affecting women. His works often served as a call to action for social justice and reform.

Advocacy for Marginalized Women: Hugo's characters often represent the most vulnerable members of society, including women who are poor, uneducated, or otherwise marginalized. By giving voice to their struggles, Hugo highlighted the need for societal change to uplift and protect these women.

Like many young writers of his generation, Hugo was deeply inspired by François-René de Chateaubriand, a famous figure of the Romantic literary period and the pre-eminent literary luminary in France at the beginning of the 19th century.

Victor Hugo was also inspired by the June Rebellion of 1832 to write *Les Misérables*. The main character, Jean Valjean, was loosely based on Eugène François Vidocq, who was the subject of many novels at that time due to his adventurous life.

Notre Dame de Paris - in English, our *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* - is a broad work in its symbolism, but as a reader while reading it, there is one singular protagonist in the work. That protagonist, perhaps something more, was at the heart of Hugo's inspiration when he wrote the novel.

➤ *Personal Life:*

Relationships with Women: Hugo's relationships with women, including his wife Adèle Foucher and his long-time mistress Juliette Drouet, were complex and sometimes reflective of his respect for their intelligence and capabilities. Despite the traditional gender roles of his time, Hugo's personal life showed an appreciation for strong, independent women who played significant roles in his emotional and intellectual life.

➤ *Advocacy and Beliefs:*

Support for Women's Rights: Hugo publicly supported women's rights and advocated for their education and empowerment. He believed in women's intellectual and moral potential and often spoke against their subjugation.

Empathy and Compassion: Hugo's correspondence and speeches reveal a deep empathy for women's suffering and a desire to be respected and treated with decency and respect. His humanitarian outlook extended to advocating for better conditions and opportunities for women.

It is possible to affirm that Victor Hugo *was* a feminist in some ways. He believed in and fought for equal rights for women and men. For him, everyone has the same natural rights. In addition, he recognized how hard it was for women to succeed without having the same privileges as men.

In a journal note, Hugo summed up such a woman's choice as a social issue: "*Dowry or poverty/women forced to choose between buying a man, which is called marriage, or selling themselves to men, which is called prostitution.*"¹

Hugo's support for women's rights extended to his friendship with the remarkable George Sand (1804-76). Sand, a woman author who defied conventions by wearing pants, smoking cigars, and demanding equal treatment to male writers and artists, was Hugo's close companion.

Despite their victimization, Hugo's female characters often display significant agency. For example, Cosette's transformation from an abused child to a strong young woman in "*Les Misérables*" can be seen as a feminist empowerment narrative. This aspect aligns with feminist theory's focus on highlighting women's agency within oppressive systems.

In his *Les Châtiments* poems, Hugo not only criticized President LBonaparte's son Bonaparte's coup d'état but also celebrated the bravery, strength, and tenacity of the women who had opposed it. His poem

"Pauline Roland", for instance, is a tribute to the courageous peasant woman (1805-52) who, as a socialist, dedicated herself to helping women and children in need.

Roland also fought for women's rights until the government imprisoned and exiled her. Hugo manifested his support of politically engaged women, such as writer Louise Julien, who died as a result of bad prison and exile transport conditions. In his eulogy at her funeral, Hugo famously declared, "*The eighteenth century proclaimed men's rights; the nineteenth will proclaim women's rights . . .*," even as he praised by name over a dozen other women activists.²

Victor Hugo, a visionary ahead of his time, championed the cause of equal education for women during his tenure as a legislator. His advocacy, a radical stance for the era, eventually paved the way for French law to recognize this principle, albeit 30 years later, in 1880-81.

Victor Hugo's unwavering support for Louise Michel (1830/33? -1905), a revolutionary writer and teacher, even after her involvement in the 1871 Commune revolt, a movement that he found appalling due to its violent actions, showcases the depth of his loyalty and admiration. His poem "Viro major" (a Latin title that means "greater than a hero") is a testament to his respect for Michel, who sometimes signed herself "Enjolras," after the *Les Misérables* barricade hero.

Perhaps Victor Hugo best summed up his position when he was seventy: "*Half the human race is excluded from equality; we must bring them back in That will be one of the great glories of our great century: making women's rights a counterweight to men's rights.*"³

¹"*Question sociale*": "*Sous la vieille société... / dot ou misère / la femme obligée de choisir entre acheter un homme, ce qui s'appelle le mariage, ou se vendre aux hommes, ce qui s'appelle la prostitution.*" (1854; *Œuvres complètes*: Océan, éd. Laffont, 122)

Victor Hugo asserts that a woman can't live life without children, he maintains that notion by saying such a case would be "unfortunate". Those words may have come from Hugo's personal beliefs, but those beliefs were not his alone. The 19th century, as well as most of human history, is known for putting women in the role of mother. The majority were hardly ever offered roles beyond child rearing and homemaking. This was largely due to societal pressures, such as [the belief in women's inherent nurturing abilities and the lack of educational opportunities for women], which confined them to these roles. The few that ambitiously attempted to take the reins either failed miserably or found themselves judged by others around them.

The passage reads as follows: *"The Doll is one of the most imperative needs, and at the same time one of the most charming instincts, of feminine childhood. To care for, clothe, adorn, dress, undress, dress over again, teach, scold a little, rock, cuddle, put to sleep, pretend that something is somebody – the whole future of the woman is there. Even while dreaming and chattering, while making little wardrobes and baby clothes, while sewing little dresses, little shirts and jackets, the child becomes a little girl, the little girl becomes a big girl, the big girl becomes a woman. The first baby takes the place of the last doll. A little girl without a doll is almost as unfortunate and just as impossible as a woman without children."*⁴ Hugo's perspective on feminine expectations is nuanced. He argues that having a doll and eventually having children is an instinctual part of being a woman. He posits that dolls are not just playthings for little girls but rather placeholders (and training wheels) for the real thing. The last line in the cited paragraph encapsulates his view – *"The first baby takes the place of the last doll."*

Victor Hugo, a champion of women's rights, held feminist beliefs that were progressive for his time. He firmly believed in the equality of all individuals, regardless of gender.

Moreover, he was acutely aware of the societal barriers that hindered women's progress, advocating for their rights and opportunities.

The Society for the Improvement of the Condition of Women, recognizing Victor Hugo's influence, sent a letter appealing to him to use his voice in support of women's rights. In response, the poet penned a letter that is characteristic of his views and his commitment to the cause.

²*"Le XVIIIe siècle a proclamé le droit de l'homme; le XIXe proclamera le droit de la femme"* (Œuvres complètes: Politique, éd. Laffont, 440)

³*"Une moitié de l'espèce humaine est hors de l'égalité, il faut l'y faire rentrer Ce sera là une des grandes gloires de notre grand siècle : donner pour contre-poids au droit de l'homme le droit de la femme."* (Œuvres complètes: Politique, éd. Laffont, 854)

⁴Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Lee Fahnestock, Norman MacAfee (New York: Penguin Group, 2013), page 402.

"MESDAMES: I have received your address, which I honour. I am aware of your noble and legitimate demands. In our society, it has been made woman suffers. She is right to claim a better fate. I am only a conscience, but I understand your rights, and obtaining them is one of the duties of my life. You are, therefore, not wrong to rely on my goodwill and assistance. The man was the problem of the eighteenth century; the woman was the problem of the nineteenth. And who says woman, says child -- that is, the future. The question thus appears in all its profundity, and its solution depends on the fate of the supreme social battle. What a strange and anomalous situation! In reality, a man depends on you, for a woman holds a man's heart. Before the law, she is a minor, incapable, without civil action, without political right

*-- in short, she is nothing; before the family altar, she is everything because she is the mother. The domestic hearth is what she makes it; at home, she is the mistress of good and ill. Oppression complicates sovereignty; a woman can do all against a man but nothing for herself. It is imprudent of the law to make her so weak when she is so strong. Let us recognize and protect that weakness; let us recognize that strength and counsel it. There lies the duty of man, and there is also his interest. No, I shall never cease to say it; the problem is laid down, and it must be solved. She who bears half the burden ought to have half the right. Half of the human race is deprived of equality; it must be given to them. This will be one of the grand glories of our grand century. Let women's rights counterbalance men's rights -- that is to say, let the laws be placed in conformity with the morals and manners of the country. Accept, mesdames, my respects"*⁵

This exemplifies how Victor Hugo believed in a society of equal rights for women and even children.

V. SUMMARY

In summary, Victor Hugo's life and works, while not explicitly engaging with critical race theory or identifying as a feminist, resonate with many of these movements' core principles and concerns. His writings, challenging prevailing social hierarchies, advocating for the rights of the oppressed, and highlighting the inherent value and dignity of every human, regardless of race or gender, remain remarkably relevant to contemporary social issues.

Victor Hugo's feminist views, though progressive for his time, were not just a personal belief but a crucial foundation for future feminist movements. His empathetic portrayal of female characters, critique of oppressive societal norms, public advocacy for women's rights and social reforms all played a significant role in shaping the feminist discourse of his era and beyond.

⁵Victor Hugo on women's rights, *New York Times*, 18 April 1875.

Here, Hugo plays out the dramatic and tragic fate of women when they are denied basic human rights.

By applying Critical Race Theory, Feminist, and Social Constructivist methodologies to the study of Victor Hugo's works, we can uncover the complex interplay between race, gender, and power within his narratives. This approach, which centers marginalized voices and challenges dominant ideologies, allows us to reveal the underlying structures of oppression and resistance that shape Hugo's fictional worlds.

Ultimately, this transformative critical approach invites readers to engage with Hugo's works in new ways, prompting us to confront past injustices and envision a more equitable future.

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