

**THE PORTRAIT OF WOMAN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MAIN CHARACTER
IN EMILY BRONTE'S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS***

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the female character initially develop an identity within her immediate family, but this identity is challenged when she engages in a relationship with a man outside of the family. These shifts in identity show that the female character experiences conflict in their shifting identities. Some theories are used to analyze this topic such as Psychoanalytic Feminism, Psychological Theory and Women's Development. The approaches implied on this research are social, psychological and feministic approaches. The finding of this research is the powerful of female caharacter through her voice, manner and mind against male characters. Her powerful can be seen on characterization of Catherine. She depicts woman empowerment in several of her dominant character traits. She is wild spirited and rebellious; these traits suggest a strong will beneath the repressed emotions. She marries for social class and rarely expresses her true feelings. She is romantic and driven by societal forces that prevent her from being conscious of her own deepest feelings and love. Catherine is in this sense as the representation of female for the rise of feminism and the revolution for women's rights.

Keywords: *women empowerment, female, psychoanalytic feminism, powerful*

INTRODUCTION

Women's social status changed tremendously during the Victorian era at the end of 19th century (Hughes, 2015: 15). It can be learned from the literature of that time, not only in the work of the Bronte. When mentioning the literature in 19th century, nobody can avoid *Wuthering Heights*, which laid the foundation of Emily Bronte's significant role in literature in the world. *Wuthering Heights* has been well known for its strangeness both in characters and in incidents. When first issued in 1847, it was not warmly accepted, instead, it was heavily attacked. It took decades for the novel.

The way women are portrayed in Victorian novels clearly raises questions about the

search of their identity. Indeed, they are all faced with the same issue: their position in society, the way they react to it and what comes from it.

The novel was chosen because of the presence of a strong female character in it, Catherine Earnshaw. In *Wuthering Heights* Catherine Earnshaw plays a strong role is not the characteristic of the traditional gender roles of Emily Bronte's time. However, Catherine's independence and strength at varying times mark Emily Bronte as a pioneer ahead of her time. Catherine is one of the main characters who becomes superior during her life. Her characterizations show that a woman is powerful in terms of determining her own future (lives with the consequences).

This research focuses on the women empowerment depicted in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. Some theories are used to analyze the main problems. They are psychoanalytic feminism, empowerment specifically woman empowerment. Those theories are applicable to discuss the topic. Firstly, understanding of psychoanalytic feminism theory cannot be separated in Freud's theory. His theory was later reworked and expanded by Erik Erikson, whose theory according to Madsen, argues that "the developmental stage of adolescence is for boys characterized by the establishment of an autonomous, enterprising self, based upon the necessary industry and mastery of cultural technology necessary for a successful adulthood." (2000: 100)

For a woman, this developmental stage is different, according to Erikson. The developmental stage for girls is described as: "[the girl] holds her identity in abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will rescue her from emptiness and loneliness by filling 'the inner space'" (2000: 100-101). So while men develop an identity for themselves to prepare themselves for the entry out into the world, women seem to develop an identity in relation to other people. Furthermore, a woman's identity will not be fulfilled until she meets a man, as "establishing intimacy is part of the development of identity" (2000: 101). Furthermore, Erikson also claims that intimacy with a person of the other sex is only possible after "a reasonable sense of identity has been established" (1980: 101). So, for a woman to fulfill her identity, she first needs to form an identity, which will later be fulfilled by a man.

Erikson's theory is supported and highlighted by psychoanalytic feminist Carol Gilligan, who (through a study) found that boys define themselves through separation while girls define themselves through connection (2012: 8). Gilligan also claims that boys see responsibility to others as a limitation, while girls see it as an extension. This means that a boy would see responsibility as something that conflicts with his own interests, while a girl would see responsibility as "doing what others are counting on her to do regardless of what

she herself wants”(2012: 10).This agrees with the theory that boys define themselves in separation with the world, while girls define themselves in relation to the world.

Although Erikson’s reworked theory has been highlighted by psychoanalytic feminist Carol Gilligan, it cannot be seen as a feminist theory and as such has to be separated from both psychoanalysis and psychoanalyst feminism. Erikson’s theory can be seen as a step forward from Freud’s theory which might have made way for the feminist theory.

Psychoanalytic feminism deals with how the process of identification occurs in women. It investigates how women can identify with “patriarchal interests” and it suggests that the answer is by “investigating the subconscious structure of gender identity.”The theory is built around Sigmund Freud’s theory of psychosexual development and Jacques Lacan’s work(2000: 95). Even though psychoanalytic feminism is based on the work of Freud, psychoanalytic feminists criticize Freud heavily. While Freud supports a single identity, psychoanalytic feminists see the self as “fractured and fragmented”. Furthermore, they argue that the fragmented self-offers opportunities "to create a new self in the freedom of isolation."They also view the fragmented self as liberating, rather than a psychotic issue. (2000:98)

‘Femaleness’ is regarded to be oppressive, and the idea of ‘femaleness’ denies the concept of the multiple identities and instead forces individuals into “single identities”.(2000:97) Psychoanalytic feminism deals exclusively with the female consciousness and she sees the father as the oppressor, who defines the woman in childhood. Psychoanalytic feminism is therefore different from cultural feminism. Cultural feminists also have criticized psychoanalytic feminists for assaulting the female category (2000: 98) by claiming that the only aspect of gender division is sexuality (Chodorow, 1989: 198). Psychoanalytic feminists have also been criticized for viewing the division as liberating, when cultural feminists view the division itself as oppressive (2000: 98). Rendall states that women who claimed for themselves the right to define their own place in society can be categorized in feminism (1985: 1).

Secondly, the theory of empowerment as one way of thinking about power is in terms of the ability to make choice: to be disempowered, therefore, implies to be denied choice. Sisask states that it is inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability (2001: 18-19). In other words, empowerment entails a process of change. People who exercise a great deal of choice in their lives may be very powerful, but they are not empowered in the sense which is using the word, because they were never disempowered in the first place.

Empowerment thus refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. Sisask also clarifies that changes in the ability to exercise choice can be thought of in terms of changes in three inter-related dimensions which make up choice: resources, which form the conditions under which choices are made; agency which is at the heart of the process by which choices are made; and achievements, which are the outcomes of choices (2001: 19). These dimensions are inter-dependent because changes in each contributes to, and benefits from, changes in the others. Thus, the achievements of a particular moment are translated into enhanced resources or agency, and hence capacity for making choices, at a later moment in time.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion focus on topic which belongs to woman empowerment depicted by Catherine Earnshaw.

1. Catherine's Power in Determining Husband

According to Rowbotham, women were considered to belong in "the more passive, private sphere of the household and home where their inborn emotional talents would serve them best" (1989: 6). Thus, women were supposed to teach their children the standards of society and what was considered to be morally right and wrong.

There are multiple female characters involved in *Wuthering Heights*. The author describes her ideas about the women of society. One such character is Catherine Earnshaw. As the novel begins, Catherine is found as a young girl, living with her parents, brother Hindley, and Heathcliff, an adopted gypsy boy of the same age on the estate of *Wuthering Heights*. As Catherine and Heathcliff begin to grow into young adults, they become inseparable and form a deep personal connection. Though, as time moves along, Catherine and Heathcliff's profound friendship begins to blossom into love. However, this is the moment when we begin to see Ms. Bronte's use of Catherine to depict the women of the time period. Despite Catherine's obvious attraction to Heathcliff, she feels obligated to marry somebody of the upper class, such as Edward Linton, instead of a common, relatable peasant like Heathcliff. Cathy has rejected her emotions in light of security. Consider the following quotation:

"It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly; but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire," (*WH*, 2003: 127).

Catherine's attitudes and manners changes after staying some days in Thrush cross Grange: she not only demonstrates her physical change, but also declares her important, symbolic arrival into the adult world. She reserves more time for Edgar Linton rather than to her childhood friend, Heathcliff.

CATHY stayed at Thrush cross Grange five weeks: till Christmas. By that time her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily; so that, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there 'lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown ring lets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in. Hindley lifted her from her horse, exclaiming delightedly, 'Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely have known you: you look like a lady now. (WH, 2003: 81)

It is clear that Catharine's characterization is also in contrast with her childhood values. Her shift manners develops from individual to social conformity. She as a woman explicitly speaks to Heatcliff:

'I did not mean to laugh at you,' she said; 'I could not hinder myself: Heath cliff, shake hands at least! What are you sulky for? It was only that you looked odd. If you wash your face and brush your hair, it will be all right: but you are so dirty!' (WH, 2003: 83)

Catherine should choose one of the men (Edgar Linton or Heatcliff) to be her husband. She is bravely to be an independent woman in determining her choice. Such kind of oppression events make Catherine have self confident as a woman.

'To get rid of me, answer my question, persevered Mr. Linton. 'You must answer it; and that violence does not alarm me. I have found that you can be as stoical as anyone, when you please. Will you give up Heath cliff hereafter, or will you give up me? It is impossible for you to be MY friend and HIS at the same time; and I absolutely REQUIRE to know which you choose.'

'I require to be let alone?' exclaimed Catherine, furiously. 'I demand it! Don't you see I can scarcely stand? Edgar, you-you leave me!' (WH, 2003: 188)

2. Catherine's Rebellious to Mr. Earnshaw

Catherine's fairly hard rebellion against her father can find its best expression in three aspects: the offense against her father, the negligence of her father's power, and the replacement of him by others. When her father lives, she loses favor with him. Here's an example:

His peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him: she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words; turning Joseph's religious curses into ridicule, baiting me, and doing just what her father hated most—showing how her pretended insolence, which he thought real, had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness: how the boy would do HER bidding in anything, and HIS only when it suited his own inclination. After behaving as badly as possible all day, she sometimes come fondling to make it up at night. 'Nay, Cathy,' the old man would say, 'I cannot love thee, thou'rt worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask God's pardon. I doubt thy mother and I must rue that we ever reared thee!' That made her cry, at first; and then being repulsed continually hardened her, and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry for her faults, and beg to be forgiven. (WH, 2003: 66)

Obviously, the quotations show Catherine's offense against her father, her disobedience and the old Earnshaw's resentment towards her. In her father's eyes, she is not as good a girl as others; what's worse, she refuses to obey her father's wishes and even retorts.

These episodes depict that Catherine is powerful and not becoming inferior in rebelling to the male.

3. Catherine's Rebelling to Hindley

Catherine Earnshaw is 12 years old when her father died in 1777. After the death of her father, Hindley, Catherine's brother, gets inheritance from old Mr. Earnshaw. Hindley's characterization is very different from his father. He has no affection for Catherine and hates Heathcliff. Hindley degrades Heathcliff to a servant; he flies into a temper if Catherine shows any affection for Heathcliff. Without any doubt, Hindley turns the family into one imbued with indifference, liveliness, dread and disorder. Consider the following description:

She expressed pleasure, too, at finding a sister among her new acquaintance; and she prattled to Catherine, and kissed her, and ran about with her, and gave her quantities of presents, at the beginning. Her affection tired very soon, however, and when she grew peevish, Hindley became tyrannical. A few words from her, evincing a dislike to Heathcliff, were enough to rouse in him all his old hatred of the boy. He drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead; compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm. (WH, 2003: 70)

Both Catherine and Heathcliff show strong and implied yearns to be together, to be joined and unified. As Catherine says herself, her love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Catherine's love to Heathcliff

suffers Hindley. Despite his objections, Catherine still refuses to give it up. Catherine in cooperates with Heathcliff to rebel against Hindley in order to enjoy the freedom to be herself. It is her bottom love that enables her to realize her self-identity.

4. Catherine's Rebelling to Edgar Linton

Before marrying Edgar Linton, Catherine says to Nelly that she loves Edgar Linton, because he is civilized and well-mannered. And afterwards, she acts as a docile wife until the reappearance of Heathcliff. Then it could be proved that only when Catherine feels robbed of the rights to enjoy her natural love does she begin to rebel against her husband.

“It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly; but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire,” (*WH*, 2003: 127).

Catherine's eternal love for Heathcliff is the strongest opposition against her husband. Catherine's love for the former by a long way surpasses that for Linton. In her eyes, everything related to Linton is superficial, unimportant to her; and her real, underlying life is permanently stuck to Heathcliff's. She feels angry with her husband. She wants to have her right to enjoy freedom.

My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. So don't talk of our separation again: it is impracticable,” (*WH*, 2003: 70).

Equality is a very important foundation for happiness in love and marriage. The equality between men and women is the sublimation of personal independence and freedom. In Catherine's opinion, equality between men and women does not only refer to equal position and equal rights in the society, it also means the spiritual equality and soul similarity in heaven. Thus, keeping self-integrity is the most important to Catherine.

CONCLUSION

The woman empowerment is depicted by Catherine Earnshaw's attitudes and manners. Firstly, her power in determining a husband, Edgar Linton is such kind of impossible act conducted by Catherine because the woman position must be inferior at Victorian era. However, Catherine is powerful in deciding her husband. Secondly, Catherine

rebels to her father, Mr. Earnshaw. As a woman, Catherine should be calm and patient to her father's instruction but she tries to be superior. She does not obey her father's rules. Thirdly, Catherine opposes to her brother, Hindley. She joins Heathcliff to take revenge Hindley. Finally, Catherine is in contrast with her husband, Edgar Linton. The condition is different from former days of her marriage. She wants to have her right to enjoy freedom. She desires the same equality in position, rights and spiritual one.

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