



“The Anti-Hero In Charlotte And Emily Brontë: A Psychological Study Of Moral Ambiguity, Rebellion, And Identity In *Jane Eyre* And *Wuthering Heights*.”

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Abstract: The paper explores the psychological aspects of anti-heroism in the works of Emily and Charlotte Brontë: *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*. It considers how traumatised, repressed, inner conflict characters make heroism psychologically complex in the nineteenth century literature. The Victorian concept of ethical stasis and societal conformity is undermined by characters like Edward Rochester, Jane Eyre, Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw. This paper examines the effect of marginalisation, childhood trauma, and repressed emotions on creating anti-heroic identities within psychoanalytic concepts such as Freudian theories, Jungian theories on the shadow self and the traumatic theory. Heathcliff is the anti-hero of destruction, which is dependent on the unresolved anguish and compulsive disorder, whereas Jane Eyre is a character of moral and psychological autonomy. The thesis states that these novels transform anti-heroism as a mere ethical deviation into a complicated psychological state, which makes the inner conflict, identity formation, and emotional conflict a set of the modern literary heroes.

Keywords: Psychological Anti-Heroism; Victorian Literature; Trauma and Identity; Psychoanalytic Criticism; Jane Eyre; Wuthering Heights.

Introduction

According to the English literature of the nineteenth century, heroes and heroines are often depicted as morally right, socially acceptable and emotionally stable persons. Victorian ideals promoted self-control, reason and social norms especially in the gender roles and morality. However, the novels by the Brontë sisters twist these traditional patterns since the main characters are characterised by extreme emotional instability, psychological trauma and morality. Two useful texts that shed some light on this change are *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontes and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë . The two works go beyond the classic idea of heroism by introducing characters whose identities and behaviours develop out of complex psychological struggles instead of good and evil. Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw of *Wuthering Heights* are examples of a kind of an anti-hero whose character was shaped by trauma, marginalisation, and obsessive emotional bonds. Bereavement, abuse, and social rejection have shattered Heathcliff into pieces resulting in revengeful behaviour and obsessive feelings. Catherine and her inner conflict between deep love and social ambition is the evidence of the psychological disintegration created by strict Victorian principles. Similarly, Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester challenge current ideas of heroism. The conflict between the morality, desire, and social norms is depicted by how Jane becomes a self-reliant woman out of an oppressed orphan. Having a cloudy history and lacking morals, Rochester is a Byronic anti-hero, whose salvation is achieved through suffering and

self-recognition. This paper uses the outlooks of Jungian psychology, theory of trauma and psychoanalytic theory to explore psychological aspects of anti-heroism in the two novels. By analysing the internal conflicts and motivation of the characters, the research will prove that the Brontës sisters reconsider heroism as a complicated process of mind that is impacted by pain and thirst, seeking identity.

1. Psychological Anti-Heroism in *Wuthering Heights*.

The most powerful and disturbing depiction of psychological anti-hero in the English literature of the XIX century is that displayed in Emily Brontë's work *Wuthering Heights*. Brontë breaks the stereotypical image of the hero as morally upright, socially embraced, morally upright and good by propping up the character of Heathcliff. Instead of a simple representation of evil, he is a figure of suffering, addiction, overindulgence of emotions, and sin.

Heathcliff is an intriguing theme to study psychologically due to his anti-heroic behaviour based on psychological distress and not just a lack of moral behaviour. He is at the very beginning declared as an outsider: as an orphan of a mysterious origin, displaced, socially marginalised, and racially othered. The adoption by Mr. Earnshaw provides an ephemeral feeling of belonging but this is soon lost by the brutality Hindley brings after the death of Earnshaw. The mistreatment, humiliation and emotional neglect result in Heathcliff developing a fractured psychological self. According to the trauma theory, the experience of abuse and abandonment at an early stage affects identity development and usually results compulsive, self-destructive behaviour within adulthood, therefore, the trauma caused by not being able to resolve psychological trauma seems to have been the root cause of Heathcliff being unable to develop morality and healthy emotional relationships.

The psychological anti-heroism of Heathcliff is also defined by the obsession with Catherine Earnshaw. His love is consumptive, possessive, absolutist but not redemptive or nurturing. He proclaims Catherine his soul meaning that the line between the self and the other is unclear. This, according to psychoanalytic view, means the inability to create a stable ego independent of the love object. The fact that Catherine gets married to Edgar Linton causes in Heathcliff a psychic destruction that Freud would describe as repetition compulsion- the subconscious desire to relive tragedy. The purposeful and premeditated misery that Heathcliff imposes on other people can be viewed to revive and manage his pain. His major way of life is revenge which replaces moral agency with psychological obsession. Heathcliff is not a typical villain because he desires revenge as an emotional means of loss and humiliation instead of money. The disdain and even brutal treatment of Isabella, Hindley, and later generations is a sign of a bitter and emotionally obsessed psyche. The persistence with which Heathcliff pursues revenge makes him fall under the category of the Byronic anti -hero- a character characterised by a rebellious nature, passion and defiance of morals. Still, his denial of moral reconciliation and repentance goes beyond even this model, making his anti-heroism too psychological, as opposed to being moral.

The Gothic environment of *Wuthering Heights* promotes the psychological complexity of Heathcliff. The use of supernatural descriptions, atmosphere, and locale is a common technique in Gothic literature to expel the internal upheaval. The mental instability of Heathcliff that is self-destructive is reflected in the storm-torn moors and the very manor is an epitome of violence and mental instability. The boundary between life and death is shone through the fact that Heathcliff becomes obsessed with the ghost of Catherine which suggests the existence of a mind that is not able to process loss. His obsession of being haunted is an indication of traumatic fixation, which entails an inability to find an emotional closure or to forget the past. Heathcliff becomes a psychologically tortured identity instead of becoming a victim to seek healing. His renouncement of codes of morality also bolsters his anti-heroic status. One that does not make sense within the Victorian norms of progress, self-control, and harmony with the surrounding society, Heathcliff continues to recreate the cycle of misery and hegemony even after becoming wealthy and powerful. In the perspective of moral psychology, his judgements have precedence over emotional damage; his behaviour is influenced by emotion-rage, anguish, desire- than by the conscience or social obligation. This emotional absolutism thus radically alters traditional heroic stories.

More importantly, it is the psychological anti-heroism of Heathcliff that cannot be easily judged. Through the rejection of making a final moral judgement, Brontë is able to press her readers to the uncomfortable fact that in the depth of suffering, extreme brutality may be triggered. Heathcliff exists in a grey ethical area that is made up by mental injury; he is not a traditional villain and a hero who can be redeemed. The fact that his life has been dominated by unresolved trauma and not moral development

is further supported by the fact that towards the end of the book, he ultimately withdraws at the end of the retaliation, implying fatigue instead of redemption.

Heathcliff is an uncontrolled, uncivilised power in the storey and it is a stark contrast to the other characters in the storey like Edgar Linton who are a representation of sanity and restraint in the society. His company reveals the weakness of the moral and social institutions when faced with extreme psychological torment. Brontë anticipates modern psychological fiction through Heathcliff, where the motivation of the characters does not rely on the moral metaphor, but rather on the trauma, desire, and unconscious impulses. Altogether, Heathcliff is one of the most interesting psychological anti-heroes in literature. His cruelty, fixation and his moral crime are the results of marginalisation of society and the long-term trauma to his mind, but not a natural evil. The anti-heroism in *Wuthering Heights* is a subversion of Victorian heroes and it provides a very modern analysis of the human soul by making anti-heroism a psychological disease instead of a moral vice.

1.1 Heathcliff and Catherine: Traumas, Obsession, and Anti-Heroism.

The work of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is a deep exploration of the theme of mental torment and anti-heroic agency in Victorian literature. The heroes, Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw, do not fit the traditional nineteenth-century paradigm of morally steadfast and socially acceptable people because they are driven by uncontrolled urges, trauma anxiety, and destructive desires, thus, going beyond the boundaries of traditional heroism. Their behaviour is against the Victorian moral laws and predicts the mental expenses of repression, abandonment, and marginalisation in society. Their anti-heroism, therefore can be explained by psychoanalytic theory, Jungian ideas of the shadow self, and object-relations theory as the expression of severely traumatic emotional experiences and lacking identity but not moral deviation.

According to the Freudian view, the personality of Heathcliff is controlled by the natural desires which pertain to id, such as rage, lust, revenge and obsessive love. He had gone through the initial years in *Wuthering Heights* where he was neglected, humiliated and discriminated among classes. The demise of Mr. Earnshaw has taken away the only person he loved, but the cruelty of Hindley has reduced him to the position of a servant. Freud argues that. Early rejection usually leads to repression and unconscious hatred that later finds its outlet in perverse or violent manifestations. Adulthood of Heathcliff is an expression of oppressive feelings. Instead of coming to terms with society, he invests his psychic power in revenge. His manipulation of marriage, property and inheritance are a compulsion to re-play the trauma. Here, one can observe the concept of the Freudian idea of the return of the repressed: Heathcliff repeatedly repeats his childhood tragedy by causing pain to other people. Such predominance of the id suggests a weakened ego, which is the mediating factor, which usually balances impulse and reality. Heathcliff shows little moral reasoning or self-control, and therefore, the superego, or internalised social conscience, does not develop fully. He does not have Victorian principles of mature masculinity in terms of self-control, honour and responsibility. This imbalance is what makes him an anti-hero: he is not bad and not good, he is a traumatised character who lives according to crude emotional forces. His drastic behaviour is an example of a fallacy that moral order will always lead to civilised citizens. Brontë even hints that suffering and loneliness cause mental disturbance.

Where Freud model is beneficial in explaining the violence of Heathcliff, the concept of the shadow self as proposed by Jung can help to understand the symbolic meaning of Heathcliff. Jung believes that the shadow is the dark side of the psyche which is repressed but something that society disapproves. Heathcliff is the epitome of such an abandoned aspect of the Victorian society. His indeterminate background, alien features and nonbelonging make him an object of otherness. He is the personification of the fears and wants the collective tries to repress. Therefore, Heathcliff is a personality and a cultural shadow. His aggression and rage are the hidden side of what civilised society hides behind the semblance of decency.

The shadow energy is projected into the Gothic nature of the novel, its storms, darkness, and wild landscapes, which supports the assumption that the unconscious can never be completely controlled. The psychological growth of Catherine Earnshaw is also anti-heroic and is based on the inner struggle. Catherine is passionate, hot-tempered and emotional, which can be contrasted with the perfect Victorian heroine who is the embodiment of modesty and obedience. Her legendary statement, I am Heathcliff, is an indication of the loss of the distinction between self and other, an illustration of the precarious attachment of the object-relations theorists. In this theory, emotional attachments one has at an early age

affect their sense of self and security. The identity of Catherine is founded on her deep-rooted love to Heathcliff. She breaks this structural relationship when she gets married to Edgar Linton to gain social standing, which gives birth to a conflict between the real attraction and the social norm. Such division is expressed in the form of a psychological split. Catherine is trying to maintain two mutually incompatible identities: on the one hand, the wild of passionate and, on the other hand, the sophisticated, socially acceptable self, embodied by Thrushcross Grange. The struggle to hold on to both causes fragmentation of emotions. Her hysterics, insanity and subsequent demise highlight the negative consequences of holding back true impulses.

According to the Jungian view, Catherine cannot integrate her shadow, it is rather fragmented. Her anti-heroism is based on the fact that she does not or cannot quite adapt to Victorian womanhood. She does not turn out to be a dutiful wife or a rebellious character, but exists in a fateful ambivalent territory. The relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine is obsessive and is characterised using the object-relations theory. Their marriage is not a healthy love but a mental addiction where everyone becomes the lost object of the other. Heathcliff cannot dissociate with the death of Catherine, and this fact illustrates examples of melancholy obsession according to scholars. He lives with self-destructive passion by holding onto her memories, instead of living in the present. This inability to accept separation makes him even more cruel and lonely. Love is turned into pathological instead of redemptive, which proves the anti-heroic status of his character.

Finally, the issues of trauma, repression, and broken bonds in the form of anti-heroism are evident in the film as the origin of ill, instead of evil, in *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff and Catherine are both terrifying and tragic, devoid of stability, self-destructive desires, and agonistic. Their inner feelings contradict Victorian models in case of morality and identity. The turbulent emotions that underlie societal norms are emphasised by the intensity of Gothic and complexity of psychoanalysis that Brontë uses. Anti-heroism, in turn, becomes a sign of psychological reality, which unveils how thin the boundaries between love and hate, civilisation and savagery, self and shadow are.

2. *Jane Eyre*: Psychological Anti-heroism.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë is an in-depth study of mental conflict challenging the traditional concept of heroism. In contrast to the traditional Victorian heroines whose qualities are defined by their submission, passivity, and purity, Jane is a psychologically complex woman whose identity is determined by the suffering, denial, desire, and moral conflict. There is Edward Rochester who is in her company and he carries with him an anti-heroic tradition of morally unstable masculinity. These characters help Brontë to create an argument where courage is less about conformity to social norms as it is about self-delimitation in moral aspects and mental strength. Psychological interpretation of the novel implies that Jane Eyre is an anti-hero because of the struggles within her.

The anti-heroic identity to Jane is determined psychologically by her early experiences. She is clingy and an orphan and at Gateshead she is abused verbally and emotionally, particularly by Mrs. Reed and John Reed. The atrocious event in the Red Room is used as a metaphor of breakdown of the psyche. Jane is lonely, furious, and terrified as she is kept in a section related to death, revenge. These childhood experiences of injustice and desertion, according to the trauma theory, play a role in shaping the self. But Jane gets a better feeling of moral knowledge and self respect rather than submissiveness. When she does not indulge in the aggression of John Reed, she starts rebelling against repressive authority.

In Lowood School, Jane faces repression in the form of hypocritical religion in the name of Mr. Brocklehurst. The inner conflict makes itself even more complicated when she strives to weigh her passionate wishes and the Christian values of fortitude and humility of Helen Burns. The psychoanalytic theory explains this tension as a conflict of moral restraint and desire including anger and self-assertion. Jane gets to know how to control her passion without killing it, thus making her different as compared to other deadly anti heroes like Heathcliff. Her ability to control emotion is also based on her unwavering self-affirmation in the face of repression and not disobedience.

The fact that Jane was involved with Edward Rochester at Thornfield Hall complicates the psychological aspect of anti-heroism. Rochester displays Byronic archetypal characteristics such as a tendency to brood, secrecy, and perversity in his emotions and immoral compromise because of his past, including a failed marriage to Bertha Mason and a lover-takes-two affair. However, Brontë does not make Rochester an unambiguous antagonist or evil leader, rather, she characterises him as a lonely, guilty, and unstable person.

Psychoanalysis assumes that Rochester is filled with a conflicted ego. His external control over Thornfield as the ruler is a mask of the internal battle and dissatisfaction. According to Jung, Bertha Mason is constellated embodiment of a suppressed past of Rochester, a shadow self. She symbolises wild passion and insanity, both sides of the personality of Rochester that he tries to control but cannot defeat completely. The fact that Bertha was locked up in the attic is the ideal representation of repression, implying that the darkness of the mind cannot help to destroy the mask of decency. As a result, the anti-heroism of Rochester is not manifested through open hostility but through the lack of morality and the mindlessness.

The emotional reaction of Jane towards Rochester pushes her internal psychological dilemma to extreme. She is deeply in love and desire and they are inappropriate with her social status and ethical beliefs. Although she is seen to be happy when Rochester asks her to get married, the realisation of the existence of Bertha leaves her with a severe ethical dilemma. This scene is the critical turning point in the anti-heroic change of Jane based on moral-psychology perspective. Jane, in refusing to compromise her morals, opts to go into self-exile instead of acquiescence to passivity that is the prerogative of passive heroines. The fact that she leaves Thornfield proves her attachment to individual moral values instead of conforming to the norms. Furthermore, she refuses to become the mistress of Rochester at the emotional price claiming that self-respect and spiritual equality is something that cannot be ignored.

The fact that the choice made by Jane to depart Thornfield can at times be viewed as a morally heroic one, nonetheless, bears anti-heroic aspects. She accepts loneliness, doubt and pain and denies the patriarchal protection. The basis of a nonviolent resistance is her own determination. As a result, Jane fills the role of an anti-heroine who builds up the agency through the psychological resistance in the context of a muted battle with the Victorian gender rules. This motif is also developed in the course of her stay at the Rivers family; St. John Rivers is an example of cold rationality and religious extremism who can provide Jane with life of duty unaccompanied by passion. His marriage proposal does not promote the idea of collaboration but instead insists on self-erasure. This refusal of Jane in turn reiterates her commitment towards maintaining psychological purity. She opposes the sacrifice of her emotional identity to the outside approval.

In the novel, Brontë utilises Gothic motifs in order to manifest inner pain. Thornfield Hall is the representation of a divided mind with its underground corridors and mysterious laughter. The fire which ultimately destroys Thornfield is the symbol of catastrophe and purification at the same time. After this conflagration, Rochester is literally blinded, and such change has some symbolic significance since it creates self-awareness and humility. Unlike the course of Heathcliff, suffering in Rochester starts a process of moral re-emergence. As Jane finally comes back to Rochester, their relationship is restructured to be more equitable and the psychological shift of Rochester is in line with him losing physical control.

The plot of Rochester leads to the suggestion of the development of morals as opposed to the destructive anti-heroism of Heathcliff. Instead of years-long corruption, the city of Rochester is based on ethical weakness. As a character who tries to play around with the situation to fulfil his desires, he later accepts the part of vulnerability and responsibility. This transformation upholds the realistic aspect of psychology and adheres to Victorian ideas of redemption.

Psychological maturation leads to a harmonic unity of principle and passion in Jane. She does not permit her conscience to be under the despicable tyranny of the desire, nor does she repress it. Instead, she attains ego stability defined by the psychoanalytic theory a state of balance between moral law and emotional drive. By getting the independence through the bequest of her uncle, she removes the economic inequality in her relationship with Rochester. Therefore, psychological and social equality are the pillars of their union.

Notably, the anti-heroism in Jane questions the rigorous moral polarities of her world. She is neither shy angelic nor violets rebellious. She employs the forces of affected to drive ethical action despite the fact that she is angry, desires, envies and doubts. Through the focus on the inner dialogue of Jane, Brontë prefigures the psychological fiction that follows in modern times, where the narrative power is created out of the subjective experience. The best example of her anti-heroic attitude is the famous quote of Jane, who says, I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: she simply does not want to be bound by emotional, social, or moral restrictions.

To sum up, in Jane Eyre, heroism is redeemed with moral self-awareness and psychic struggle. Both Jane and Rochester exhibit anti-heroic qualities that are influenced by desire, repression and trauma. Against the backdrop of the tragic destructiveness of Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, Brontë is able to suggest an anti-heroic world view, which could emotionally fuse and change with ethical power. The heroine of the novel is resilient because of psychological strength and independence, which further questions the idea of passive virtue so strong during the Victorian era due to its focused emphasis on the interior and moral conflict. In doing so, the novel, Jane Eyre, is an important addition to the development of psychological anti-hero in the English literature.

Conclusion

Psychological anti-heroism of Emily and Charlotte Brontë exposes how the nineteenth-century literature started to question the traditional Victorian ideas of heroism. The Brontë sisters depict very complicated characters whose personalities are shaped by the traumatic events, emotional instability, and mental discord instead of ideal virtues like perfect discipline and harmony in society. These novels are anticipatory of the psychological aspects of the anti-hero by relocating the centre of heroism and heroism as an outward moral perfect to an inward psychological experience. Anti-heroism that is destructive is depicted by characters like Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff. Their personalities are predetermined by the trauma that is not overcome, emotional dependency, and isolation. The cruelty and vengeance that Heathcliff shows in his extreme devotion and his unstoppable drive towards revenge can be viewed as the examples of how mental trauma can trigger brutality and isolation. The tension between the passion and the social norms in Catherine reveals the loss of identity under the strict Victorian rules. It is through these figures that Emily Brontë explains the bad effects of repression of emotions and the worst aspects of human beings. The characters of Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw can serve as a good example of destructive anti-heroism. The marginalisation, emotional dependence and unresolved trauma shape their identities. The obsessive love of Heathcliff and his obsessive quest for revenge is an example of how mental pain can be the source of cruelty and alienation. The conflict of desires between strong yearning and social demands that Catherine goes through internally is a point of emphasis that indicates the destruction of identity through rigid Victorian standards. In this respect, Emily Brontë reveals the worst sides of humanity and the harmful power of suppression of feelings.

In a similar study Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester both are critical of the dominant ideas of heroism in Charlotte Brontë's eponymous novel. The development of the main character as a suppressed orphan to an independent woman shows how incompatible the moral standards, personal will, and social norms can be. The complicated history and moral weakness of Rochester represent Byronic anti-hero type, whose redemption is facilitated by misfortune and increased self-consciousness. Based on the Jungian analytic psychology, theory of trauma and psychoanalytic literature, the study explores the psychological aspects of anti-heroism in the two works. The paper hypothesises that the Brontë sisters transform the concept of heroism as a complex psychological mechanism that is informed by misery, sexual desire, and identity seeking; this is established by taking a closer look at the inner disputes and informative motivation underlying the characters in both novels.

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