

HEATHCLIFF; A CHARMING ANTI-HERO IN EMILY BRONTE'S WUTHERING HEIGHTS

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine how Heathcliff is portrayed as a Charming Anti-hero in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. The focus on the Anti-hero is a departure from the prominence given to the hero in literature. This article explores the concept of the Anti-hero and how the character has been handled in works of literature. It also examines the evolution of the Anti-hero in works of literature and offers an explanation as to why he should be a significant literary figure to study.

Keywords: anti-hero, character, novel & hero

1. Introduction

The term Anti-hero emerged in the modern times and is a recent development as it came into existence in the nineteenth century with the creation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's modern day hero, in his novel "Notes from Underground". "By mid-twentieth century and especially in the 1960s onwards its usage has grown and never waned since then" (Bolay, 2015, p.1). The term "Antihero" is therefore a modern term that has been invented to describe an entity which has been present in literature, right from the beginning to present day. Kadiroglo postulates, "In every century we have heroes in literature but the anti-heroes are also seen to exist alongside these heroes, though they are not as abundant as heroes" (Kadiroglo, n.d, p.1). The Anti-hero presence is therefore found in many works of literature, but preference and lime-light has mostly been given to the traditional hero.

A large Majority of the literary works or novels have therefore been based on a traditional hero, who represents positive ideas and actions and there have been but a few literary texts, which focus on a flawed Anti-hero. The character and role play of an Anti-hero is unique and different in comparison to a conventional hero. The Anti-hero goes against the grain and has much to offer as he is a fully rounded character with good and evil tendencies at the same time. To put it simply, one can say that "the anti-hero is a bad hero" (White, 2013, p.3). The Anti-hero despite his flawed personality, is hence meant to be a more fascinating, enigmatic, and gripping character compared to the conventional hero. He is a more realistic depiction of the human psyche, which is complex, flawed and yet appealing, "too good to be a villain and too bad to be the hero, the anti-hero is representing a grey area between these two extremes" (Selvik, 2016, p. 6).

There has been a rise in Anti-hero fiction from 1970s to date. Due to the changing literary trends, tastes and socio-political situations, including wars, crime, violence, vigilantism, media influence and so on, there has been an explosion in Anti-hero fiction (White, 2013, p.12). The current works of fiction have come up with various forms of the Anti-hero, who is glorified in gothic fiction, romantic fiction, crime thrillers, historical novels, and contemporary literature.

There is a rising demand for Anti-hero fiction in the 21st century. Stephenie Meyer and Anne Rice are among a few names of popular female authors, of Anti-hero fiction, according to (Young, 2015, para. 6 & 15). Scholars like Smith and Wallace (2004) add that "1990s has witnessed the move of the Female Gothic from the margins into the mainstream" (p. 3). The women's writing has changed drastically over the years and they have shed previous taboos in order to create new unconventional heroes. There is "the emergence of a new American conception of the woman author as literary artist," (Cohen, 2017, p.87). Cohen even attributes this new rise in the production of new heroes, to older women writers, like Ellen Louise, Chandler Moulton and Louisa May Alcott, for shaping present women's literature (p. 88, 2017).

Scholars like Whiskers look at the women authors saying that they have “defanged and sanitized” their vampire Anti-heroes in order to make them fit in the modern culture, (as cited in Review: Contemporary Women’s Gothic Fiction, 2010, para. 6) Anne Rice and Anne Carter’s Anti-heroic vampires have even been seen as a presentation of “*discourses against sexual repression and the social imposition of gender roles*” (Carvalho, 2009, p.3). The female authors are seen to reconstruct gender roles and question patriarchal societies through their Anti-heroes (Carvalho, 2009, p. 5).

However, going back into the past, certain novels like Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* did not receive the same appreciation that our contemporary Anti-heroes and their authors have enjoyed in the present time. The Bronte sisters had to disguise their gender under male pseudonyms known as the ‘Bells’. ‘When the Brontës published *Wuthering Heights*, *Agnes Grey*, and *Jane Eyre* in 1847, they used the pseudonyms of Ellis, Acton, and Currer Bell, as Charlotte later confessed, “*we had the vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice*” quotes (Zlotnick, 2014, p. 34).

Ironically, the Bronte sisters and their works turned out to be too bold and outrageous for their era. Scholars like Oliphant, said that Emily Bronte was a person of so much force that “*she almost had a violent personality and wrote a wild story*” (as cited in Watson, 1949, p. 251). Others like Virginia Moore said that “*the book is a lesbian affair*” (as cited in Watson, 1949, p. 260). Not only did the Bronte sisters go against the Victorian social expectations and write their novels, but their plot and characters were also immoral and vulgar by Victorian standards and era (Selvik, 2016, p. 54). There was serious scholarly and ethical debate “*the critics were in general accord as to what they deemed the coarse nature of the novel due to a wide range of reasons, from the novel’s unforgiving and indecorous dialogue to ‘the brutalizing influence of unchecked passion’ demonstrated by many of its characters*” (Pike, 2009, p. 2). The works of Emily Bronte therefore came under huge criticism and debate and her creativity was therefore ignored.

This article therefore, goes back into history to study the initial trend setter or Anti-hero created by Emily Bronte; a talented female author of the past who has been ignored or neglected by critics and her work has been overlooked. It is therefore essential to explore and examine the classic, *Wuthering Heights* and see how the Anti-hero of the past has been projected and portrayed by Emily Bronte. The fact that the text was written by a woman author, also makes the subject very intriguing and unique. This article, therefore investigates her works and explores and explains how a female author created a Charming Anti-hero. There is more scope for research and exploration, which is why the above topic has been selected. The uniqueness of the study fills existing gaps in scholarly works and has come up with new insight for future scholars.

2. Theoretical Framework

This article adopts Reader Response Theory as the framework of analysing the Anti-hero in the text. The theory originates from the scholarly works and findings of the literary theorist and English educator, Louise Rosenblatt (Becker, 1999, p. 104). Her theory proposes that both the reader and the text are interconnected and play a role in giving the text meaning. Reader response critics argue that meaning and text are the creation of the reader and that there may not be one interpretation or meaning of the text but several possible interpretations.

This theory places focus on the importance of the reader, the act of reading and the interpretation of the reader. In her text “Literature as Exploration” Rosenblatt postulates that “*a novel or poem are as good as ink spots on paper until and unless a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols*” (Roen & Karolides, 2005, p. 60). It was her above work that pioneered the reader oriented approach to the study of literature.

Reader Response Theory’s criticism become stronger in 1960s and 1970s, through the works of theorists and scholars like Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, Norman Holland and others. The theory recognises the reader as an active agent in giving meaning to the book through interpretation. It argues that the meaning of a text is never self-formulated but is acted upon by the reader in order to give meaning to it (Reader Response Criticism, 2017).

The meaning therefore will also vary from reader to reader from past to present day as “*Our attempts to understand a questions which our own cultural environment allows us to raise*” (Selden, Widdowson & Brooker, 2005, p. 51). Hans suggests that over a period of time a book can have several interpretations based on

the various individuals and time frames. Our attempts to understand a text depend on questions which our cultural environment allows us to raise. Due to the era, exposure and individual perception, a text is said to have various interpretations, and therefore there cannot be one fixed universal interpretation of a literary work.

For the purpose of this study, Reader Response Theory would be suitable, as the study seeks to analyse and interpret the selected texts. The reader or researcher's response to the texts is the most essential aspect of this research. The reader would be best suited to give meaning to the text and interpret it in various ways, and also bring in experience, memories, findings and be able to search for deeper meanings in the texts. Reader response theory makes the reader look past the words of the text and search for deeper meanings.

According to Imitiaz (2004, para. 11) the Key Tenets of Reader Response Theory are as follows:

- a) *In literary interpretation, it is the reader and not the text, which is the most important component.*
- b) *In fact, there is no text unless there is a reader, and the reader is the only one who can say what the text is.*
- c) *The reader creates the text as much as the author does.*

The weaknesses of applying this theory however are, that it is limited to the reader's or researcher's interpretation and understanding. Other schools of thought such as Formalism look upon it as a subjective way of approaching a text as the reader is allowed to interpret a text in any way they want to. This also makes the scope narrow as there is not much room to compare or contrast or bring in external ideas. Another weakness could be that student might also not be able to interpret it properly or do justice to the text. However, every theory has its own weaknesses and strengths, and it is up to the researcher to deem fit, which theory will be suitable for a study.

For purposes of this research Reader Response Theory seems to be the most relevant and appropriate theory, which is suitable for this particular study. This study seeks to examine the Adoration and recognition of the imperfect Anti-hero in *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte. Due to the nature of this study, which relies heavily on critical reading, understanding and the need for giving a deeper meaning and interpretation to the texts under study, it is essential to apply the Reader Response Theory, as it alone gives the researcher or reader, the leverage to engage in the above cognitive processes in order to give meaning to the texts and interpret them for purposes of this article.

3. Contextualizing the Study

Scholars like Selvik argue that an Anti-hero is a character who falls into a grey area, thus there are no rules written as to what the Anti-hero may do or not do. Every Anti-hero like characters in literary works tends to be different due to his circumstances and there is room for different actions and deeds of the Anti-hero (Selvik, 2016, p.13). Anti-heroes most of the times may be fighting for justice but their manner raises questions. On the other hand, Cruise argues that Anti-heroes actions are justifiable because their aim is to achieve justice which comes through their rebellion. Cruise says that "*It is this desire for justice which makes them become outlaws*" (as cited in Selvik, 2016, p. 40).

For instance, the Biblical version of Genesis was transformed by John Milton into *Paradise Lost* in 1667. This is a classical text where Satan has been transformed into an Anti-hero (Seamen, 1967, p. 2). Satan has been compared with a hero from Homer's *Illiad*, saying that Satan is an Anti-hero like Diomedes, who is cautious of fighting the gods. Diomedes has been warned by his mother not to fight the gods as this would prove harmful for him and similarly Satan too is a recently fallen spirit from heaven and "*clings throughout the poem to the illusion that he is still the archangel spirit of heaven*" (Seamen, 1967, p. 3). Lineage, flyting and reluctance to do battle are all the common themes which Satan shares with Diomedes. "*Echoes from such a scene in Homer help to clarify in greater depth Satan's role as an anti-hero*" (Seamen, 1967, p. 3). There is sympathy for the fallen Satan and God is seen as wrathful and harsh on Satan. Some scholars say that "*there are moments when the reader can identify with Satan's desires and his disappointments.*" Milton makes Satan more heroic figure

which every reader can relate with (Paradise Lost, 2016).

Anti-heroes can be traced as way back as the Greek epic like the Illiad, where Odysseus is able to win the Trojan war by using trickery instead of valour and honesty. According to (White, 2013, p. 14), “*even the most famous achievement, the Trojan Horse, is as an act of deception which ultimately wins the day.*” Another prime example according to (White, 2013, p. 14) is of the escape from the lair of the Cyclops, where Odysseus blinds the Cyclops in its sleep in order to escape under the sheep. This again is an act not suitable for a hero but an Anti-hero, “*this methodology seems to be in direct defiance of other traditional heroic depictions which value strength, animal fury and direct confrontation*” (White, 2013, p. 14). White postulates that the “*Anti-hero embodies what we are, with faults and vices that come part and parcel with everyday living*” (White, 2013, p. 20). He adds that “*an Anti-hero opts to trust in direct observation and knowledge gleaned from experience rather than relying on traditional and hegemonic values. He is not the defender of the status quo but a crusader of self*” (White, 2013, p. 21).

Anti-heroes have been present in ancient Indian literature. The famous epic of Mahabarata also has an Anti-hero named Duryodhan, who according to Gitomer (1992, p. 2) is a brave hero who stands his grounds against Krishna. Gitomer argues that Duryodhan who refuses to reconcile with his equally guilty cousins the Pandavas is a man of older Aryan values and says that “*in him, resides also the remnants of an older "heroism" devoted to this-worldly dharmic values and hostile to the new bhakti of Krishna*” (Gitomer, 1992, p. 2). Duryodhan wishes to stick to his ideals and belief system, and is Anti- hero who dies for what he believes in. Gitomer argues that King Duryodhan is an Anti-hero who believes in upholding Aryan traditional values despite being challenged by the Vaishnava God, Krishna.

(Neimneh, 2013) adds that the modern men lack the cultural and spiritual substance of the traditional heroes. The preference and emergence of the Anti-hero has gained momentum during the recent centuries and is seen in the seventeenth and eighteenth century literature. “*With rapidly changing times and cultural upheavals, the human race questioned moral values*” (Neimneh, 2013, p. 2). The older traditionalist thinking and ideals of heroism have been gradually replaced because of the Great War, makes other traditional hero talents useless. The modern man is faced with a chaotic and disturbed socio-political environment and has to think and act in a way that is appropriate or in line with his current situation.

The Anti-hero is seen to be on a journey where he is experiencing different phases and challenges. The Anti-hero ventures from the bourgeoisie state of existence and takes a plunge into the underworld of darkness and negativity, where he is exposed to vices and vicious elements which transform him and send him back to the world of the bourgeoisie. He returns with a mission this time, and the mission is revenge. He intends to avenge the bourgeoisie for their mistreatment and rejection of him. “*The Anti-hero comes back with power to avenge himself on the bourgeoisie state and the society of reprobates, which he rejects summarily because they rejected him*” (Sohlich, 2017,p.11).

Anti-hero works therefore have their pros and cons and effects on the society and vary in Literature. There has been an evolution and huge variation in the roles and projections of the anti-heroes who have over time, mutated and transformed in to various shapes and roles.

3.1. Anti-heroes in Contemporary Literature

The Anti-hero is not an ideal hero as he lacks the perfection of a conventional hero. However despite his flaws, we tend to appreciate and admire him. Currently Anti-heroes have become a literary sensation as there are varieties of books published on the subject. The modern day young adult generation enjoys reading Harry Potter, Fallen, The Lord of The Rings, Twilight Saga, X-men and much more (Love, 2008). “*The anti-hero in American culture and its influence on young adults through young adult literature has become a very intriguing topic.*” Love argues that the Anti-hero has become popular in comic books, action films and novels. He further argues that young generation is skeptical and not able to perceive a perfect and all good hero. “*They look at the fact that their favorite anti-hero character, while flawed, is able to achieve glory and greatness for themselves and for others around them*” (Love, 2008). The practical generation of today identifies with the Anti-hero and feel that though flawed but he is a realistic role model than the virtuous and good hero.

Tolkien in his works enjoys creating Anti-heroes who commit mistakes but become exemplary when they take responsibility for their actions and rectify their mistakes. According to Fitzsimmons (2015, p. 2) an Anti-hero like Boromir deceives his friends in the Lord of the Rings and then repents for his misdeeds by setting things right. *"He took responsibility for his actions and died protecting his defenseless friends"* (Fitzsimmons, 2015, p. 2). Instead of making his Anti-hero sink in despair and shame, Tolkien makes his Anti-hero rectify his mistakes.

Marvel Comics have been among the most popular reading materials in America, because of their Anti-heroes, *"Street level vigilantes, Daredevil and 'The Punisher' and 'in 2013 the comic book market as a whole in North America hit \$870 million in sales'"* (Allen, 2014, p. 10). Comic books have been understudied by scholars because it has been a blossoming industry that has spread all over the U.S.A (Allen, 2014, p. 10). Marvel Comics are not just imaginative comic books but are more of historical records which echo the crime and history of America. *"In 1980's the streets of America were lurking with so much danger that even the police was being distrusted on the roads of Harlem, Bronx, Brooklyn and Lower East side of Manhattan"* (Allen, 2014, p. 13).

The Anti-hero can also have flaws like alcoholism, temperament, infidelity and violence. He says that Hollywood films and genres have produced works which *"have featured anti-heroes who have become some of the most iconic movie characters of all time"* (Michael, 2013). He argues that due to the current global situation where we have had situations like 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Iraq War, Hurricane Katrina, the economic recession and much more, human faith in complete goodness and perfection has been shaken. *"Characters who shine as morally pure and upright don't ring true to us anymore, because it's not who we see around us in the world"* (Michael, 2013). A hero who is a practical reflection of flawed human psyche is a more relatable version of the modern day hero. Redemption or consequence are the two aspects that this generation can relate to and though the Anti-hero may be flawed but at the same time the audience wants to see goodness triumph over evil.

Neimneh postulates that people no longer believe in the traditional heroism after the Great War and that the Anti-hero has rather become the anticipated hero of the modern times. People no longer believe in the perfect hero due to the declining society and culture and age of wars that we live in. *"Modern anti-heroism captures the intellectual, moral and cultural sensibility associated with modernism. A changing society with a changing cultural climate necessitated a change in models of heroism"* (Neimneh, 2013, p. 2). He says that the Anti-hero has become the 'novelistic everyman' and that wars have eroded the existing culture and has brought in more violence, as well as uncertainties and has even changed gender roles. (Neimneh, 2013, p. 2) To add on to all that the modern age has brought in more technological and socio-economic developments, like industrialization, urbanization, commercialization and much more, therefore changing the expectations and adding to more demand for Anti-heroes whose imperfections reflect the present day humans. *"modernity produces its own heroic model; sick, anti-social, and intro-spective heroes whose salvation is individualistic in the midst of social and cultural disarray"* (Neimneh, 2013, p. 4).

3.2. Studies on Anti-heroes in Emily Bronte's Novels.

Unlike today where Anne Rice, Stephenie Meyer and many more women writers have emerged in popular literature. Several contemporary novels are already being studied and there is a lot of awareness on Anti-heroes in contemporary literature. The Brontes have not received the critical attention that their work deserves. The students of literature and literary critiques have only looked at their novels in general, focusing on other elements like style, structure, autobiographical and Byronic themes. The following gives an insight to the studies that have been conducted on the Brontes and what views the critics have come up with.

Scholars like Watson say that Wuthering heights by Emily Bronte is considered to be *"one of the greatest English novels"* (Watson, 1949, p. 2). It has gained recognition after an ongoing battle with critics and reading audience which has lasted for a hundred years since its publication. Watson looks at how critics have dissected the novel and what makes it a work of art. He adds that the protagonist "Heathcliff" is compared with one of the powerful villains of Literature Iago and Hamlet from the works of Shakespeare (Watson, 1949, p. 244). According to Watson, two American journals gave Wuthering Heights very lengthy reviews and felt that it was a powerful novel. However they both condemn the protagonist Heathcliff, for his vile behavior and anti-Christian mannerisms. Also his brutality, passions and spiritual wickedness is criticized by them (Watson, 1949, p. 245).

Oliphant says that “*Emily Bronte had an almost violent character as she wrote a wild story*” (as cited in Watson, 1949, p. 250, p. 10). “*Wuthering Heights, full of fierce life and tragedy, and the breath of moreland winds and storms, and several short poems of a remarkable character.*” Another critic John Malham-Dembleby argues that the novel is based on real life characters and personal love life of Emily Bronte, saying that it is as good as her personal diary (as cited in Watson, 1949, p.253). Autobiographical school of critics has its own reaction towards the author, as critics like Keighley Snowden insist that the passion shown in the novel is the result of the love Emily felt for the curate Weightman (as cited in Watson, 1949, p.259).

Snowden calls it a “*masterpiece of one who had lived through a dire experience of passion and overwhelming doubt, but who had overridden both and put them behind her*” (as cited in Watson, 1949, p.259). Many critics have had their own theories about Emily Bronte’s love life reflecting in her writings. Some like Virginia Moore even go further and propose that there was a Lesbian relationship involved in the author’s life “*since a personality is multiple and ... a novelist often splits his personality to form not one but several characters, Emily in her superficial and acquired aspects par-takes a little of the nature of Cathy and even Ellen Dean*” (as cited in Watson, 1949, p. 260).

The most thorough and penetrating work of analysis has been that of Lord David Cecil, which takes into account the plot, style, setting and majority of the literary devices of the novel giving it a another different dimension saying that “*the setting is a microcosm of the universal scheme as Emily Bronte conceived it, and the theme is the destruction and reestablishment of cosmic harmony*” (as cited in Watson, 1949, p. 262). According to Watson after assessing and analyzing all the possible interpretations and comments by critics, he goes on to add that “*Never, probably, will an interpretation of Wuthering Heights be made which will satisfy all people for all time, for a masterpiece of art has a life all its own which changes, develops, and unfolds as the generations pass*” (as cited in Watson, 1949, p. 262).

‘The Dangerous Lover’ is another term used to refer to the Bronte sister’s heroes .Patchen (2009) says that “*all the Bronte sisters had one thing in common, they had all constructed ‘The Dangerous Lover’ in their works. All three sisters may therefore invoke Byron’s appealing prototype of the morally conflicted and socially isolated (anti-)hero, but they nevertheless incorporate that hero into their own texts in individual ways*” (Patchen, 2009, p. 2). Each of these men is willing to go against social expectations and norms for his heroine. The dangerous lover can play the role of a friend and enemy at the same time. The Bronte sisters were most of the time in conversations with each other as they had a socially withdrawn and isolated life style, due to living on the far away Yorkshire Moors. They influenced each other’s writings and characters, as each one of them included a Byronic hero in her work. Heathcliff and Rochester share the “*virtues*” of the Byronic hero in that “*they are each socially isolated and self-isolating, with enigmatic backgrounds, internalized moral conflicts and a powerful sexual magnetism*” (Patchen, 2009, p. 4). Each of these three men is self-destructive by nature but the powerful presence of the female energy in the texts, acts as the ‘Lover Redeemer’ who saves these men. Patchen (2009) says that the works bear “*the idea that the love of a good woman has the power to save a corrupt and erring man.*” Both the Byronic heroes in their own way come around and are saved from their destructive and dark natures by the power of the women in the texts (Patchen, 2009, p. 14).

Eaton (2012) says that, a rough hero is like an Anti-hero- a flawed protagonist, but unlike the Anti-hero the rough hero’s flaws are more gross, as he is more negative. For instance he can be a criminal, a sadist, a murderer or Satan incarnate. The admirable flawed rough hero like Milton’s Satan is an example of a rough hero, “*which generates respect and sympathy for the grand but evil being*” (Eaton, 2012, p. 284). Eaton adds that “*appealing mean-spirited person includes protagonists who are manipulative, petty, self- ish, ill-tempered, duplicitous, malicious, or cruel.*” Heathcliff from the Wuthering Heights fits this description and falls into the rough hero category (Eaton, 2012, p. 284).

3.3 A Charming Anti-hero

Scholars and earlier studies conducted on the works of the Bronte sisters and have merely dissected different aspects, concepts and themes in the novels. So far nothing significant has been done on the topic under investigation; Heathcliff; A Charming Anti-hero. The only aspect which seems to bear a certain familiarity or closeness to the Anti-hero, is the element of the Byronic hero, who is seen to also contain Anti-heroic aspects. The Anti-hero aspects are merely a part of the structure which forms a Byronic hero, therefore the emphasis of

earlier studies are on the Byron type of aristocratic hero and not directly on the Anti-hero. Studies and research conducted only touches the various elements of the personality of the Anti-hero in consideration. The Anti-hero has not been tackled or investigated as a stand-alone or independent entity deserving literary attention or investigation.

There seems to be a gap in this area, which is why this article is adding a new dimension to Anti-hero studies. It is essential that we look into literary history and dissect the Anti-hero of the past, who have not received sufficient literary attention in this particular dimension. Heathcliff; A Charming Anti-hero in *Wuthering Heights* is therefore is a unique research, that has not been explored or studied before. It therefore attempts to add new information and light, on the Anti-hero by the Emily Bronte.

4. Emily Bronte

Emily Bronte was daughter to Patrick Bronte and Maria Branwell Bronte. There were six siblings in the Bronte family, Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Branwell (brother), Emily and Anne Bronte. Emily Bronte was born on 30th July 1818, but only four children of the Bronte family survived and developed a strong bond with each other (Bock, 2017).

Their father was a teacher, who later turned to a clergyman and provided education to his three daughters and son from home. Their mother was from a rich family and was the daughter of a merchant but died early (Bock, 2017). They went to the “Clergy Daughter’s School” for a short while. Later she travelled to Brussels, Belgium and study languages; French, German and Music, for a year (Brontes, 2017).

Emily returned to Hawthorne, her homeland and discovered the natural beauty of the moors, and also believed in the existence of ghosts and supernatural beings, and began to write about such elements in her poems (Encyclopedia of World Biography, 2017). Their first works, the poems were published under the pseudonyms of “Bell” in 1846; Ellis Bell (Emily), (Bock, 2017). This was followed by the publication of Emily’s novel “Wuthering Heights” which was set against the background of the moors and countryside environment was a dark love story, published in 1847. Emily died on 19th December 1848.

4.1 A Synopsis of Wuthering Heights

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte is a novel set in England during the Victorian era; 1800 onwards. The novel begins in the year 1801, with the narrative of a Tenant named Mr. Lockwood, who on his walk in the moors gets caught in a snow storm and ends up spending the night at Mr. Heathcliff’s house. He is given a room, where he tumbles into a dreaded secret of Mr. Heathcliff, as the ghost of Catherine makes contact with him and frightens him out of his wits.

Later Mrs. Ellen Dean, who has been the caretaker of the Earnshaw family and Wuthering Heights, talks to Mr. Lockwood, and narrates the story behind his mysterious ghost encounter, telling him about the history of the Wuthering Heights and the people who form part of it.

Wuthering Heights is the name of the home, of the Earnshaw family, which include Catherine Earnshaw, her brother Hindley Earnshaw, their father Mr. Earnshaw and his wife, their caretaker, who happens to be Mrs. Nelly Dean, also known as Ellen. One fine night Mr. Earnshaw comes home with an orphaned child, whom he found in the streets of Liverpool and decided to adopt him. The child is introduced in the Earnshaw family as a brother to the other siblings Catherine and Hindley, and is named Heathcliff.

Hindley despises Heathcliff, who immediately develops a strong bond with Catherine. After the death of the old man, Hindley reduces Heathcliff to a servant. Despite having deep love for Heathcliff, Catherine decides to marry Edgar Linton, who lives in the neighbourhood and Heathcliff runs away.

He comes back after three years and begins to take revenge on everyone who mistreated him and made him lose Catherine. He reduces Hindley to a servant at the Wuthering Heights and becomes the owner of the property. He also marries Edgar Linton’s wife Isabella Linton and avenges the Linton family by mistreating Isabella. His actions generate an overall chaotic effect in the story and eventually Catherine passes away after giving birth to a

daughter, also named after her.

Heathcliff remains a bitter man, who continues his revenge strategy by inflicting the next generation of the Earnshaws, Lintons and also his own son. The saga of revenge also tortures and hurts the next generation, but eventually Heathcliff begins to experience and transformation as his days on earth seem numbered. He dies, leaving behind the new generation, free to enjoy their new life and the novel thus ends with an optimistic note. (Bronte, 2000, p. 1-245)

4.2 Adoration of Heathcliff's Dark and Gothic Looks

The Reader Response Theory gives power to the reader, who is the key player in giving meaning and interpretation to the text. Therefore a critical reading and analysis of the novel indicates that Emily Bronte describes Heathcliff as a dark child, when he is brought into the Earnshaw family house, "*as dark almost as if it came from the devil*" says Mr. Earnshaw when he brings him home to the Earnshaw family (Bronte, 2000, p. 25). He is described with such strong words that he almost seems like a non-white - a gypsy boy. "*how could he fashion to bring that gypsy brat into the house*" (Bronte, 2000, p. 25). "*He is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect*" (Bronte, 2000, p. 3). On the same note, he's still seen as an attractive and appealing individual "*he has an erect and handsome figure*" (Bronte, 2000, p. 3). Emily Bronte strongly creates a non-white, gypsy hero, as a new role model of dark, gothic and yet handsome looks. She goes against the Victorian norms and ideologies to prove that there are other races and communities who also deserve to be worthy of literary attention. In her novel she proves that a non-English or European hero is more handsome than a regular English hero.

Heathcliff's dark and rugged personality is deified further, by statements like "*don't you think of yourself handsome?.. you're fit for a prince in disguise*" remarks Mrs. Dean (Bronte, 2000, p. 40). Emily Bronte promotes this idea further by making the fair and beautiful Catherine fall in love with him. Catherine doesn't care about his non-English appearance and is even seen to kiss him repeatedly after her visit from Thrushcross Grange, "*she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within a second*" (Bronte, 2000, p. 37). Emily therefore breaks the social taboos of English romance by making her heroine fall in love with a handsome, non-English hero.

Emily Bronte is seen to make a statement which glorifies Heathcliff's dark appearance and nature, such that she makes Catherine admit that she likes him because he's handsome but also because he seems to be a reflection of her own nature. "*how I love him; and that not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am*" (Bronte, 2000, p. 57). Heathcliff has a personality that is very attractive and more appealing to Catherine, than the man she is marrying. Had it not been for Heathcliff's social status which is that of a beggar, she would have married him, "*had it not been for that wicked man who brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now*" (Bronte, 2000, pg. 57).

It is evident through the reader's interaction with the novel, that Heathcliff has been intentionally created as a character with dark and gothic looks, by Emily Bronte, who is persevering to prove, that a non-white hero can still be more charming than a regular white hero. By virtue of this, her work goes against the grain, of the English traditional Victorian hero. She has clearly created a non-white hero, a gypsy, with long black hair, "*black-haired child*" (Bronte, 2000, p. 3) and given him more appeal than a regular English hero. This attempt stands out as an act of defiance and a challenge to age-old European writing and culture. It can also be considered as an act of depicting other non-European races, as worthy of literary attention and heroism.

4.3 An Attractive and Desirable Hero

Emily Bronte even introduces a love triangle, as she makes Isabella fall in love with Heathcliff almost immediately, "*new source of trouble sprang from the not so anticipated misfortune of Isabella Linton evincing a sudden and irresistible attraction towards the tolerated guest*" (Bronte, 2000, p. 72). In fact Isabella is so overwhelmed with his looks and charismatic appearance that she has a cat fight with Catherine over Heathcliff, where she professes extreme love for him. Both the two ladies are seen to be mocking each other in the presence of Heathcliff, where Catherine uses strong words to express feelings they both have for him, and also praises his good looks, '*My poor sister-in-law is breaking her heart by mere contemplation of your physical and moral beauty!*' (Bronte, 2000, p. 76).

Emily Bronte makes both the heroines from the novel, fall madly in love with Heathcliff, which proves that he is a desirable hero, who has a charisma that attracts women. Infact, Heathcliff seems to be so attractive and desirable that both the British heroines are fighting over him, which proves that his charm is overwhelming and perhaps irresistible for the characters in the novel.

4.4 An Enigmatic Personality

Heathcliff

Heathcliff is surrounded by complex emotions such as mystery which starts from his very birth. Mr. Earnshaw brought him from the streets of Liverpool where he was starving and adopted him as a member of his family but no one really knew where exactly he came from and who his parents were. Everyone in the novel is left guessing or trying to describe him as a “dark gypsy boy”, “black-haired child” (Bronte, 2000, p. 3). Ellen even tells him to conjure high ideas and thoughts about himself being a prince “Who knows but your father was emperor of China and mother an Indian queen...and you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England” (Bronte, 2000, p. 39).

He is also portrayed as a child with a strange level of patience and ability to bear torture and mistreatment. He doesn't cry and react like other children his age would, if beaten as badly as Hindley treats him, instead he takes it in quietly. “He seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened-perhaps, to ill-treatment, he would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear” (Bronte, 2000, p. 26). Heathcliff stays calm and eventually only tells Ellen that he is planning how he will pay Hindley back, “I'll plan it out; while I'm thinking of that I don't feel pain” (Bronte, 2000, p. 43). The fact that he doesn't show his pain externally and plans his revenge upon all who hurt him quietly makes him enigmatic and mysterious, as no one knows the nature of his plans and schemes.

4.5 A Mysterious Hero

The period when he runs away from home is also left a mystery, as no one in the text ever knows where he went or how Heathcliff acquired such wealth. He suddenly returns after three years as a wealthy and well-dressed man, whose wealth remains a mystery and so do the three years of his absence, thus adding on to him being an enigmatic character. From his statements people are left guessing what he did to acquire so much wealth in three years' time, as he only speaks of having fought very hard in order to come back to meet Catherine. “I've fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice, and you must forgive me, for I struggled only for you!” (Bronte, 2000, p. 70). This could imply anything from fighting as a soldier in a war, to doing some odd jobs that could still be related with violence or could even imply a difficult struggle in order to secure wealth. No one can really guess as to exactly how he acquired it, and the audience is left to assume, which is perhaps is done intentionally by the author in order to let Heathcliff remain a mystery.

Throughout the novel he is depicted as a reserved, quiet, stone-hearted individual. He doesn't express himself as much as the other characters do. Isabella Linton however, feels attracted to him & falls in love with him. She too can't make out what the real Heathcliff is like and argues with Catherine telling her that perhaps he may fall in love with her if given a chance “he might love me; if you would let him!” (Bronte, 2000, p. 74). Heathcliff even confirms this delusion later, by confirming that he was no hero like she thought but a man with his own revenge plans. “picturing in me a hero of romance, and expecting unlimited indulgences from my chivalrous devotion. I can hardly regard her in light of a rational creature” (Bronte, 2000, p. 110). Thus she is deceived by his silent, attractive and enigmatic personality. His mysterious personality makes him hard to understand or predict. All the characters seem puzzled around him, which is why they are seen to be guessing, making comments that are full of assumption, in regards to Heathcliff, who is aware of their confusion and thoughts, which enable him to have an upper hand over them.

5. Conclusion

This paper has been able to critically examine the Anti-hero of the past who had been overlooked due to the perfect traditional hero ideologies of the reading audience during the 1840s. It has also been able to go back in

time and see the quality of the literary work produced by the female author, Emily Bronte.

As assumed the female author, Emily Bronte, attempted to experiment with the most unusual form of a hero during the 1840s, who is truly a unique creation, given the times during which he was created. Emily emerges as very bold writer, who tried to create a Charming Anti-hero in their works, which was a concept much ahead of their time, due to its postmodernist qualities.

Emily is able to create an Anti-hero with unique character traits like dark and gothic looks and enigmatic personality. Emily was among the pioneer writers to promote the concept of the Anti-hero and created extremely impressionable and unforgettable Anti-hero, who has stood the test of time and remains an intriguing character. The hero has always attracted the readers' attention but the Anti-hero goes against the grain and has a lot to offer to the contemporary thinking. It would be an area of great interest to the Postmodernists due to elements of Maximalism in the text. The uniqueness of the study, therefore attempts to fill the existing gaps in research and comes up with new insight for future scholars.

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