

The Responsibility Of Awareness And Control

This research project proposes an in-depth study of the emergence, construction, and outcomes of feminism on men within myriad contexts. Applying this theory to three British novels written by Emily and Anne Bronte – *Wuthering Heights*, *Agnes Grey*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*- this study will draw important correlates between female abilities, capacities, and innate talents and the use/abuse of these elements to alter or supersede male potentialities. For example, Catherine's misuse of her natural female strengths and talents was used to override Heathcliff's reticence against and desire to withdraw from her controlling manipulation, culminating in tragedy to both characters.

Additionally, much has been written about the Bildungsroman in Bronte's adolescent-to-adult theme in *Agnes Grey*. The careless application of feminine potential and power toward men found in this novel underscores the deleterious effects of negligence and misanthropic use in not only gender-based interfaces but against the self, as well. Similarly, female power and control in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is measured through Helen Graham's various roles and interactions with the men in her life. Much more subtly, Anne Bronte reveals this power and manipulative awareness in her protagonist, but the theme remains intact: women often have inordinate amounts of power and control over men in myriad realms of their lives.

Other examples of such feminine-seated power and manipulation found in classical literature might include Helen of Troy in the *Odyssey* and Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's immortal play, *Macbeth*. Paradoxically, these latter examples emerge from the creativity of male writers, and through each author's ambitious innovation and influence of his era, dominant ideology prevails. Through this lens, then, the complexity of male/female dyads is scrutinized by threats to the dominant and prevalent view of patriarchal heroism and roles while the women are repressed. Orthogonally, the Bronte authors developed female characters that defied the framework in which they were born to function and revealed the resulting destruction when females neither correctly understand nor properly apply their power.

Statement of the Problem

This thesis will attempt to address the problem of imbalance when women fail to recognize the nature of their true power and dysfunctions and the damage ensuing from this. As a contribution to human science, this problem is highly significant for socio-cultural, gender-based, and psychological awareness of conflict source and resolution, contributes to the literature's body of knowledge, and suggests further unbiased and non-propagandized research into gender-based outcomes. While the literature is rife with widely diverse discourse and study on feminism, the body of knowledge is seriously deficient in considering the damages that feminism run through. Solving this problem will require a major paradigmatic change since the major outcomes of feminism have

been militant and reject feminine limitations while creating male-opposition toward many of its tenets.

Subsequently, the research will demand scrupulous objectivity and non-bias in order to extract meaningful realities, while producing conclusions that will be seriously read and applied. In addressing the problem, then, a thorough review of the selected works, combined with a thorough literature review of existing studies and findings will begin the process. Intellectual application, comparison, and balance will be mandatory if the hypothesis is to be recognized and validated. The theoretical approach to such a potentially incendiary problem must therefore begin with objectivity, scrupulous research methodology, and a non-biased analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will involve comparing three British novels, written by sisters, through whom female power is used to effect masculine changes, behaviors, and affect situational outcomes. Demonstrating the application of feminine power in relationship dyads will support the hypothesis that when misapplied or misunderstood, this power can be used to manipulate, control, and cause harm to men and, through them, sociopolitical constructs which affect everyone. The study is delimited by the aforementioned two Bronte novels as primary sources and those feminist studies in the literature which serve to amplify the feminine use of power to manipulate or form outcomes. The paper will analyze the conditions that have stated in the novels with an aim at extracting facts that will seek to support the thesis. This will be done through an in depth analysis of the novels and with an aim of getting to a tangible conclusion in support of the thesis.

According to Berg, in a patriarchal society where women are faced with challenges of identity, expression and recognition- the general treatment of women is implied to be like treatment of animals. This statement is harsh and seems to fall into a perception that women have no place in the society. However, given the powerful nature of literature in the society, the imagery of women in current literature works have depicted a more candid statue of women in the society. In other words, in an attempt to compare the 19th century literature and the 20th century literature in reference to Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Anne Bronte's *Agnes Grey*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the great revolution in terms of content and theme is highly reflected.

Wuthering Heights's first publication was in 1847. The main theme of the story is the passion and love between Catherine and Heathcliff which is all encompassing and also so disenchanted. The novel which has come to be classified as one of the everlasting English literature classics has had a lot of criticism since its first appearance. This is due to the straight forward depiction of both physical cruelty and emotional turmoil. The novel is not just a straightforward love story but one that has pulled along some quite a lot of revenge. The main reason as to why the novel has maintained its superiority in the realms of literature is the originality that came along.

Agnes Grey, first published in 1847, is based on the life of the author who served as a governess for a period of her life. The story tries to outline the danger and the expository nature of the position of a governess to a young lady. The main character has been used to bring out some issues of gender centralized oppression, abuse of women, empathy and isolation. The story highlights the need for a young woman to know how to survive and the nature in which wealth can be misused to spoil social values of nature and the social norm.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is the final novel by Anne Bronte, published in 1848. The novel has been a target of much criticism and controversy. The novel is remarkable for the way that it has put across the changing roles of men and women in marriages. Still, although the novel depicts a change in marriage status, it provides no indications for a change in the tenets of domestic violence and abuse.

Thesis

Women have natural power and abilities; when these innate characteristics are applied to the intellectual, cultural, spiritual, emotional, sociopolitical, and interpersonal world of men, this power can be abused to control and define the opposite sex, with detrimental results to both genders.

Exclusions

This work will not consider the popular feminist literature in its entirety, but only as it applies to a demonstration of factual results from a misapplication of female power toward males. Including traditional feminist literature is contraindicated based on the thesis and the dissonance of militant feminism seeks to obfuscate every area in which women are subordinate or weaker than men.

The Design – Chapter Summaries

Introduction

In the Introduction, the reader will be introduced to the thesis of this study, the justification for the study, the purpose for the study, and a segue to chapter one.

Chapter One

Chapter one will apply the thesis of feminine power and its effects on masculine beliefs, actions, and relative outcomes to Emily Bronte's novel, Wuthering Heights. In the analysis of the novel there will be an insight into the lives of the various characters and the various actions that they have taken part in to prove the power of women against men. A solidifying storyline will be cemented by the love life between Catherine and Heathcliff. Secondary sources will include findings in the literature which provide further evidence or stark contrasts of the thesis. Careful readings will be discussed and

logically applied to the study's findings, final discussion, and conclusion. When completed, the chapter will provide a viable and integral piece of the whole; the thesis will be defensible through the protagonist interactions, dialogue, and story outcomes. Chapter one will be essential to understanding the remaining two chapters, since it is this work that is the clearest and most easily identifiable justification for the topic. As the chapter builds proper segues to the remaining chapters, then, the reader will become more adept at making the logical connections between the thesis and more subtle forms of feminine power distribution in the literature.

There are various available secondary sources that will be utilized in this analysis. They include sources from previous analyses like "Andrews, Sir Linton. "A Challenge by Anne Brontë."

Chapter Two

Chapter two will apply the same thesis of feminine power and its effects on masculine beliefs, actions, and relative outcomes to Anne Brontë's novel *Agnes Grey*. The marked differences between chapter one's novel and this will serve to educate the reader in recognizing this power's influence and potentialities— for good and harm – as a form of tiered example. While far less extant to the thesis, the chapter will be essential to understanding the remaining chapter, since it is this work that will provide a forward and backward contrast toward justification for the topic. Through this chapter, the reader will be able to logically compare the information in the thesis and gain a stronger sense of the feminine power on men in the novels. Again, when completed, this chapter will provide a viable and integral piece of the whole argument.

Through the use of secondary sources, stronger evidence will be obtained to substantiate the thesis. The information in the secondary sources will be compared to the real data in the primary data so as to get to a proper conclusion on the powerful effect that is being portrayed by women in the novel. Some of the secondary sources which will be applicable in this part of the analysis include; *Jane Eyre and the Self-Constructed Heroine.*" Appearing to *Diminish: Female Development and the British Bildungsroman 1750-1850*; by Ellis Lorna, and "A Matter of Strong Prejudice: Gilbert Markham's Self Portrait." *New Approaches to the Literary Art of Anne Brontë*; by Andrea Westcot.

Chapter Three

Chapter three will apply the same thesis of feminine power and its effects on masculine beliefs, actions, and relative outcomes to Anne Brontë's novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The marked differences between chapter one and two's novels and this chapter will serve to bring the reader to a conclusion by comparison of female power's. Chapter three will be essential to understanding the entire work, since it is this chapter that will provide a final and irrefutable logic intrinsic to the topic. The discussion will necessarily aim at revealing the power that the female gender can induce upon men. The

protagonist in this final novel exerts far more subtle and skilled feminine power and influence over the characters and, as such, will present the reader with the final experience toward recognizing the differences, assessing the thesis logically, and hopefully, viewing the thesis without situational or cultural bias.

The secondary sources will be used to support to the argument provided. They will be of so much assistance in that it will be possible to generate a good conclusion resulting from a combination of facts from the novel and thoughts various backgrounds. All this will be geared towards exposing the power of feminism on the male generation. Some of the sources include among others; "A Frame Perfect and Glorious': Narrative Structure in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*" by Elizabeth Signorotti, and Carol Senf's "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall: Narrative Silences and Questions of Gender".

Conclusion

The conclusion will provide a conclusive reference to the novels discussed. This last part will wrap up the whole argument discussed in the preceding chapters and provide more lights into the points mentioned before. If necessary, points of comparison and contrast will be brought up to prove the thesis.

Research Timeline

The timeline to project completion follows:

Research for all chapters

May, 2011

Writing

Chapter 1 - June, 2011

Chapter 2 – July, 2011

Chapter 3 – August, 2011

Introduction – September, 2011

Conclusion – September, 2011

Revision

Chapter 1 – October, 2011

Chapter 2 – November, 2011

Chapter 3 – December, 2011

Final Development Polish and Summary Review

January, 2012

Project Defense Date

February, 2012

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bronte, A. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1999.

Brontë, C., Brontë, E., & Brontë, A. *The Brontë Sisters : Three Novels*. New York: Penguin Books. (2009).

Secondary Sources

Berg, M. "Hapless Dependents": Women and Animals in Anne Bronte's *Agnes*

Grey." *Studies in the Novel*, 34(2), 177+. (2002).

Comparing animals to the oppressed nature of women under a patriarchal society, Berg provides a viable contrast to Grey's perceived 'fall' from a moral governess to one who commoditizes relationships as she comes to see animals in relationship to food. This perspective will provide catalysts to the thesis since *Agnes Grey* is largely considered a non-philosophical text but has deep undercurrents to feminine power and control.

Braithwaite, W. S. *The Bewitched Parsonage: The Story of the Brontes*. New York: Coward-McCann. (1950).

Braithwaite provides germane insights into the lives of the Bronte sisters which informs their writing and perception of the world around them as well as their own influence and power (or lack thereof) in their lives. This work will contribute valuable insights into the sisters' defenses, perceptions, and belief systems among an unusually tragic set of circumstances.

Bump, J. "The Family Dynamics of the Reception of Art." *Style*, 31(2), 328+. (1997).

Bump's article has been selected for this work due to his exploration of the self as it applies to understanding and applying the work of the Bronte sisters. A "socially isolated and individualistic view of the self that precludes the possibility of enduring attachments

or responsibilities to another” (328) fully informs the thesis upon which this work is grounded.

Dalley, L. L. "The Least 'Angelical' Poem in the Language": Political Economy, Gender, and the Heritage of Aurora Leigh." *Victorian Poetry*, 44(4), 525+. (2006).

A decidedly secondary, perhaps even tertiary source to this work, Dalley's insight into Victorian women's power and political effects is critical to understanding the view women held of themselves during this era and further lends scholarship to the hypothesis that such unchecked power can be very destructive.

Donaldson, L. E. *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender & Empire Building*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. (1992).

Donaldson's book was selected to lend a particular misprision – a psychological and cultural mis-recognition of gender-solipsistic power and influence among women across many cultures and eras. This work will enhance the thesis by providing a compass for where to begin recognizing the subtleties of feminine power and control.

Ermarth, E. D. *The English Novel in History, 1840-1895*. London: Routledge. (1997).

Ermarth's book was selected for its contribution to the way “social common denominator” construct toward “social problems ... corporate order and personal identity” (vii) form a basis for feminist thinking in Victorian times and the methods by which the Bronte sisters overrode masculine power to achieve their objectives. The significance will be found in applying these writer's personal impetus within their books with the hypothesis of this study.

Flynn, E. A. *Feminism beyond Modernism*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press. (2002).

This book is essential as a secondary source since it serves to support the debunking of several feminist myths which prevent women from recognizing both their innate power and ultimate responsibility in using that power over men. As Flynn separates and identifies the political, intellectual, and social perspectives of feminism beyond the modern construct, this work will serve as an essential text to support the thesis of women's ultimate power over their environment, in general and men, in particular.

Joshi, P. “Masculinity and Gossip in Anne Bronte's *Tenants*.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 49(4), 907+. (2009).

Joshi's work could almost be a source of primary literature support for the thesis; relegated to a secondary one, however, will provide equally important substantiation for the hypothesis of this study. Comparing feminine influence and Bronte's novel, Joshi attempts to find middle ground between “repudiation of women's culture...” and

“...aggrandizement of women’s influence” (908) through modern debates on the subject.

Langland, E. “The Angel out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England.” *CLIO*, 32(3), 351+. (2003).

In this secondary source, women’s roles as philanthropists are examined for the inherent power in class and gender-based activities. Through Langland’s findings, the subtle power and control viewed through this lens is insightful and lends themselves to this hypothesis.

Levy, E. P. “The Psychology of Loneliness in 'Wuthering Heights.:. *Studies in the Novel*, 28(2), 158+. (1996).

Exploring the construct of loneliness in *Wuthering Heights* consequently lends a psychological depth to the understanding of this hypothesis’ premise of feminine control and power in interrelationships with men. The article was selected for this contribution to a well-balanced study that offers most readers a platform on which to stand.

McKernan, S. “Feminist Literary Theory and Women's Literary History: Contradictory Projects.” *Hecate*, 17(1), 150+. (1991).

Although McKernan writes to a primarily Australian readership, the concepts of feminism and literature’s history provides valuable insights into the movement and its determined rejection of women as an accountable force in relationship management. This article will provide an accurate backdrop and contrast to this hypothesis and will largely compare to the remaining literature used in this study.