

**DESPERATE MAN VERSUS DESPERATE WOMAN: THE IDEAL
VICTIM IN EMILY BRONTË'S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS***
**Umutsuz Erkek Umutsuz Kadına Karşı: Emily Brontë'nin *Wuthering Heights*
Yapıtında İdeal Mağdur**

Önder ÇAKIRTAŞ

Arş. Gör. Bingöl Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fak.,
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü,
ocakirtas@bingol.edu.tr

Özet

Gubar ve Gilbert'in Infection in the Sentence ve Bloom'un Influence of Anxiety adlı çalışmalarında ortaya koydukları fikirler göz önüne alındığında, Emily Brontë'nin *Wuthering Heights* adlı yapıtında resmettiği karakterler aracılığıyla bu fikirlerin tersi bir görüş ortaya konabilir. Başkişi Heathcliff'i değerlendirip onu "Brontë'nin elinde bir deli" olarak dikkate alırsak, erkek yazarlar tarafından işlenen sözüm ona Viktorya döneminin tüm kötü nitelikleri erkek takma adlı kadın yazar Emily Brontë tarafından erkeklere atfedilip, Viktorya döneminin ataerkil düzeninin ve erkek-merkezli dünyasının kadın odaklı bir atmosfere dönüştürüldüğü görülür.

Romanda, Emily Bronte, önyargılı bir şekilde, başkişi Heathcliff'in *Wuthering Heights*'in en üst tepesinden uçurumdan aşağı sürüklenişini gösterir. Brontë'nin bu romanında, ideal kurban kadın değil erkektir. Ayrıca Gubar ve Gilbert'in çalışmasındaki protestonun aksine, bu romanda, psikolojik olarak kötü şekilde resmedilen erkektir. Emily Bronte, bir bakıma, romanın erkek karakterlerine işkence ederek, Viktorya döneminde yazamayan kadın yazarların intikamını alır. Bu çalışma Gubar ve Gilbert'in *Infection in the Sentence ve Bloom'un Influence of Anxiety* adlı çalışmalarına bir karşıt görüş niteliğinde ideal bir erkek kurbanın (Heathcliff) ümitsizliğini ve mağduriyetini ortaya koymayı hedefler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ideal victim, Heathcliff.

Abstract

Considering what Gubar and Gilbert put forward in their article *Infection in the Sentence and Bloom's Influence of Anxiety*, an opposite point of view can be realized through Emily Brontë's characters in *Wuthering Heights*. Taking her protagonist Heathcliff into consideration and considering him as a 'madman in the hands of Brontë', it is observed that the patriarchal orders and male-oriented World of Victorian era is transformed into female-oriented atmosphere in which all the bad qualities of so called Victorian women which are forwarded by male authors are attributed to men by a male pen-named woman writer Emily Brontë.

In the novel, Emily Brontë, in a biased way, depicts how the protagonist Heathcliff is dragged along the very top Head of the *Wuthering Heights* down the *Cliff*. In this novel, it is not woman that is ideal victim, but man. And in contrast to what Gubar and Gilbert protest in their study, it is men who are psychologically wicked. Emily Brontë, in a way, by torturing male characters in her novel, takes the revenge of woman writers who could not write during Victorian era. This study aims to reveal the desperateness and victimization of a male character (Heathcliff) through considering the opposite views of Gubar and Gilbert and observing Bloom's *Influence of Anxiety*.

Keyword: Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ideal victim, Heathcliff.

Take the road you came...

It is brief advice, but as sound as I can give.¹

These words are said by Catherine Heathcliff when Lockwood tries to find his way back to where he came from. The road a person takes may help him to find the truth; the same road may end up making him a victim or an offender. It is up to the soundness of the advice given. Heathcliff is a victim; he cannot take the road he came. Emily Brontë does not help him find his way. Emily Brontë portrays Heathcliff as a crime machine who is dragged along the very top *Head* of the *Wuthering Heights* down the *Cliff*. So, the ideal victim of *Wuthering Heights* is male.

Who or what are victims, and what is known about them? What makes victims victim in a novel; the readers or the writers? Such questions seem to be merely misleading, in as much as they have various conflicting responses. However, considering the characters of the literary genres, questions relating to the concept and identity of victims are seen to be highly problematic, often controversial and generally call for highly detailed answers. It is therefore significant to clarify the answers to these questions at

¹ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012. "WutheringHeights". i-bookversion. Web.

the outset because the attitudes towards victims and how they should be dealt with are likely to be shaped by the assumptions readers or writers make about them, which may not always be well established.

Before giving answers to these questions, it is almost vital to incline to clarifying what the word 'victim' refers to. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary* the word "victim" comes from the Latin word *victima*, which is used to describe animals sacrificed in religious ceremonies. *Oxford English Dictionary* gives a few different definitions: "a person harmed, injured, or killed as a result of a crime, accident, or other event or action-a person who is tricked or duped-a person who has come to feel helpless and passive in the face of misfortune or ill-treatment-and a living creature killed as a religious sacrifice". By the late seventeenth century, the English Language had incorporated the word "victim," apparently under the influence of translators of the Bible. This word, in the connection in which it appears, is an expression, though doubtless unintentionally, to create prejudice against the accused. When somebody is referred to as "a victim," the impression is naturally created that some unjust power or dominion has been exerted over his person.

Whether they are victims or offenders, the characters are considered to be the pillars of literary works. While classifying the characters as protagonist or antagonist, this does not necessarily end up with their being victims or offenders. So, it turns into a great difficulty to define what or who the victim is. In *From Crime Policy To Victim Policy*, Nils Christie's celebrated stereotype of "the ideal victim"² is one helpful starting point in exploring what readers may conclude about the identity and attributes of victims. Christie suggests six main attributes related to the 'ideal victim', however, it is much more suitable to choose one out of these six to address 'the ideal victim' in this paper. Paraphrasing him, it is stated that "The victim is blameless for what happened"³. This statement, considering the literary analysis, changes from reader to reader in identifying the 'ideal victim' of a narrative work; because, confirming something or someone 'blameless' is changeable in respect with the social, political, psychological, sexual and even economic grounds. In this respect, this paper will, alternatively, focus on Heathcliff, reflecting him as an 'ideal victim'.

Taking into consideration all the suggestions above, we may identify

² FATTAH, E. A. 1986. "From Crime Policy to Victim Policy". Macmillan. Print. p. 18-19.

³ FATTAH, E. A. 1986: 19.

Heathcliff as ‘the ideal victim’ whom Emily Brontë portrays as somebody unwanted. Heathcliff is an ideal victim, for he is blameless for what happened. Despite the increased inclinations that are accorded to Catherine by some critics as her being a victim, there are still many unanswered questions, for instance; relating to the innocence of Heathcliff or Catherine. Centering around the story of Heathcliff, the first paragraph of the *Wuthering Heights* draws a physical picture of Heathcliff. Considering the descriptions of Heathcliff given, it seems quite easy to classify Heathcliff as an ideal victim. Lockwood describes his suspiciously-looking “black eyes”⁴ (3) while he withdraws them under his brows at Lockwood’s approach. Even the narrators’ description of Heathcliff provides some hidden details about the victimization of Heathcliff. It is appropriate to use the word ‘hidden’ or ‘concealed’ about the descriptions given, because, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar notes, Emily Brontë reveals some “ironic tensions that inhere in the relationship between surface drama and concealed authorial intention”⁵ in *Wuthering Heights*. This “concealed authorial intention” reminds us some ‘hidden revenges’ that Brontë tries to take through torturing Heathcliff’s physical appearance. This torture, however, does not end up with what perhaps Brontë desired to portray: Catherine as a victim. The torture has evidently something to do with Victorian male-dominating background and Brontë’s protest against patriarchal pressures. By torturing a male character (Heathcliff), Brontë, perhaps unintentionally, reveals her “concealed authorial intention”⁶. Regarding that Emily Brontë was male-pen named and she concealed her femaleness under the pseudonym titled ‘Ellis’, it is almost vital to conclude that disguising as a man for the sake of being approved in a male society makes her take her revenge on males and she does so; she tortures Heathcliff damaging him both physically and spiritually. The statement that “You’re fit for a prince in disguise”⁷ made by Nelly to tease Heathcliff is likened to Emily’s ‘being fit for a princess in disguise’ (Emily in disguise of Ellisas a Princess). Considering the related words of Charlotte Brontë reflecting the fear the Brontës had during Victorian era, Emily’s ‘authorial intention’ which she concealed turns to be clearer;

⁴ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012. “**WutheringHeights**”. i-bookversion. Web P. 3

⁵ GILBERT, S. M. and SUSAN G. 2007. “**Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë’s Bible of Hell**” in *Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretations: Wuthering Heights*. Infobase Publishing. Print. p. 33.

⁶ GILBERT, S. M. and SUSAN G. 2007: 33.

⁷ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012. “**WutheringHeights**”. i-bookversion. Web P. 48.

Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we didn't like to declare ourselves women, because – without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine' – we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise.⁸

In *Wuthering Heights*, while Hindley describes Heathcliff with the words “gipsy”, “beggarly interloper”, and “imp of Satan”⁹; he is described by Isabella as “the brute beast,” “incarnate goblin,” “monster,” and “the tyrant”¹⁰. Considering what Gubar and Gilbert argue in *Infection in the Sentence*, taking Bloomian model of ‘anxiety of influence’ into consideration, these inhumane words used for a male character do reflect Emily’s “conflict with her own sense of her self- that is, of her subjectivity, her autonomy, her creativity”¹¹. The conflict with her ‘subjectivity’ arises from her non-objective approach in description and characterization. This conflict forces her to ‘dehumanize’ Heathcliff for the sake of her ‘female power’. In order to reflect her autonomy – an autonomy aimed to take over male patriarchy – she challenges to reduce a male character to what G&G note: “extreme stereotypes”¹². The determination to make her autonomy and authorship approved, and the revenge to make the patriarchal maleness upside down to femaleness forces Emily to create an extreme stereotype. This stereotype is male, not female; Emily tries to prove her autonomy and her creativity by drastically reminding the reader that Heathcliff is “the brute beast”, “incarnate goblin”, “monster”, and “the tyrant”¹³. In *The Victorian Age in Literature*, G. Keith Chesterton paradoxically addresses the conflicts

⁸ BRONTE, C. 22.10.2012 “**Biographical Notes on the Pseudonymous Bells**”. i-book version. Web. p. 7.

⁹ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012. “**WutheringHeights**”. i-bookversion. Web. p. 33.

¹⁰ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012: 151-53.

¹¹ GILBERT, S. M. and SUSAN G. 1979. “**The Madwoman in theAttic: The Woman Writer and theNineteenth-Century Literary Imagination**”. London: Yale University. Print. p. 48.

¹² GILBERT, S. M. and SUSAN G. 1979: p. 48

¹³ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012. “**WutheringHeights**”. i-bookversion. Web. p. 151-53.

of Emily Brontë and her struggles to ‘embellish’ Heathcliff with evil ornaments;

Her imagination was sometimes superhuman-always inhuman. *Wuthering Heights* might have been written by an eagle. She is the strongest instance of these strong imaginations that made the other sex a monster: for Heathcliff fails as a man as catastrophically as he succeeds as a demon.¹⁴

Heathcliff is deliberately reflected as a ‘monster’. From the very beginning to the end of the novel Catherine is narrated to be someone blameless for what went on. Considering the very beginning and the end of the novel, it is seen that Heathcliff is something other than what he seems—that his cruelty is merely an expression of his frustrated love for Catherine. He tries to remind everybody his eternal love for her. However, Catherine, instead of stinging to her love for Heathcliff, she, as if indifferent to her love, expresses that “It will degrade me [Catherine] to marry Heathcliff”¹⁵. The other significant detail arises from Emily’s attempts to redefine Catherine. She, insistently, tries to revive Catherine. This brings into mind what G&G forwards for the definition of a female to be regarded as an author. They believe that a female “in order to define herself as an author she must redefine her socialization”¹⁶. Emily, through recreating Catherine – as Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Linton, and Catherine Heathcliff – redefines her autonomy as an author. In all three re-creations of Catherine, there seems to be no humiliating characteristics of Catherine. Catherine, in all three figures, seems to be highly social and welcomed. However, when it comes to Heathcliff, though he turns back having a good-looking appearance after three years, Emily categorizes him into the group of a cruel ‘monster’. He is reflected to have no sociality, and the re-definition of Heathcliff does not change the level of his degrade position. Because, three years ago, he was described “a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect”¹⁷ (5) while as naïve as a child in manners; after three years he was re-described “in dress and manners a

¹⁴ CHESTERTON, G. K. 22.10.2012. “**TheVictorian Age in Literature**”. i-bookversion. Web. p. 134.

¹⁵ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012. “**WutheringHeights**”. i-bookversion. Web. p. 68.

¹⁶ GILBERT, S. M. and SUSAN G. 1979. “**The Madwoman in theAttic: The Woman Writer and theNineteenth-Century Literary Imagination**”. London: Yale University. Print. p. 49.

¹⁷ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012: p. 5.

gentleman”¹⁸ while having bad qualities like a “monster” – or a gipsy who is “not a human being!”¹⁹. Emily’s description of Heathcliff as an anti-social character is reflected by D. Van Ghent in the article *On Wuthering Heights* as follows; “Emily Brontë insists on Heathcliff’s gipsy lack of origins, his lack of orientation and determination in the social world, his equivocal status on the edge of the human”²⁰.

Here, considering the insistent word ‘gipsy’ used for Heathcliff, another problematic and ambiguous question arises. This question is what Bloom forwards; “Is the story of Heathcliff that of the risen slave?”²¹ Nelly narrates the events with an introduction of Heathcliff into the Earnshaw family; the entire plot is dominated by Nelly’s odd descriptions. Emily’s vengeance continues even when the narrator changes; Emily’s hate of male autonomy urges her to use every ‘degrading’ word for Heathcliff. Nelly’s question that “Is he [Heathcliff] a ghoul or vampire?”²² clarifies Emily’s non-ending torture. From the very beginning to the very end, the insistence on the usage of the word ‘gipsy’, and Nelly’s ambiguity regarding Heathcliff’s identity does remind what Bloom asks; the question of slavery. Nelly’s remarks urge the reader to follow the details which may produce some clues;

Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week’s income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!²³

When Emily makes Nelly ask “But where did he come from, the little dark thing, harboured by a good man to his bane?”²⁴, she intentionally tries to strike into minds the identity of Heathcliff. Bringing together these

¹⁸ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012: 5.

¹⁹ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012: 129.

²⁰ GHENT, D. V. 2007. “**On Wuthering Heights**” in *Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretations: Wuthering Heights*. Infobase Publishing. Print. p. 16.

²¹ Bloom, Harold. 2009. “**Bloom’s Modern Critical Views: The Brontës**”. Infobase Publishing. Print. p. 18.

²² BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012: 276.

²³ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012: 48.

²⁴ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012: 276-77.

two remarks said by Nelly, it is not surprising to conclude that the former remarks are ironically related with the origin of Heathcliff's identity. They are not pushed out of mouth just to tease Heathcliff for the possibility that he might come from a noble family. If so, Nelly would not be forced to use "the little dark thing" afterwards. Pin-Ching Huang, in an essay titled *Of Humans and Monsters*, analyses the remarks above and according to him/her, "the reference of China and India has a three-fold implication: his foreign origin, his supposed Gypsy origin and his being a victim of imperialism"²⁵.

Describing Heathcliff as an outsider or stranger may have something to do with Brontë's anxiety; by portraying him as a stranger, she highlights the feeling of 'otherness'; she wants to emphasize the feeling of 'belonging to nowhere' while making a male to feel himself alone in the community he is in. Charlotte Brontë notes Emily's anxiety and her fear, because the Brontës may believe that during Victorian era "for strangers they were nothing, for superficial observes less than nothing"²⁶. Emily Brontë degrades Heathcliff to the degree of 'nothingness'; a protest against the patriarchal way of life and male-dominancy during the period. Heathcliff does always remember his being a stranger – an outsider, or Emily does let him forget his background; therefore, when Lockwood asks him to permit him to stay the night, the answer given is meaningful: "A stranger is a stranger, be he rich or poor"²⁷. G&G states that "Emily Brontë's Heathcliff "forgets" or is made to forget who and what he was"²⁸ and they associate this with a disease. The analysis is made through patriarchal culture and they root the idea that such diseases arise from patriarchy and cause females to forget their "female power"²⁹. However, the contradiction is that it is not Catherine that is made to forget her past, but Heathcliff. The thing that is caused to be forgotten is a male character's background; his original identity.

G&G, in the article *Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell*, note the fight between males in *Wuthering Heights*. They contend that Emily Brontë "introduces us to a world where men battle for the favors of apparently high-spirited and independent women"³⁰. The emphasize on 'high-spirited and independent women' reflects something from Emily Brontë. Taking Victorian patriarchy and male-dominancy into consideration,

²⁵ HUANG, P-C. 22.11.2012. "Of Humans and Monsters". Web. p. 4.

²⁶ BRONTE, C. 22.10.2012: 20.

²⁷ BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012: 14.

²⁸ GILBERT, S. M. and SUSAN G. 1979: 59.

²⁹ GILBERT, S. M. and SUSAN G. 1979: 59.

³⁰ GILBERT, S. M. and SUSAN G. 2007:33.

the desire to be independent and free is something too much yearned by females during that time. Emily pursues her freedom in writing. She, involuntarily, goes far away from her life; she lives an isolated life, and this is stimulated by the trivia confinement inside the family. So, she begins writing. Because, as Charlotte pointed out, "Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils; without it, she perished"³¹. Her protest against the prevalence of male standards makes her a writer in disguise. This protest causes Emily to confine Heathcliff into an isolated life between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. She challenges to take Heathcliff's liberty; thus, locking Heathcliff into confinement, she takes her revenge on those who locked her into 'Ellis Bell'. A poem by Charlotte Brontë forewords the ambiguous anger and vengeance of Emily that never end;

How can I love, or mourn, or pity him?
I, who so long my fetter'd hands have wrung;
I, who for grief have wept my eyesight dim;
Because, while life for me was bright and young,
He robb'd my youth – he quench'd my life's fair rosy –
He crushed my mind, and did my freedom slay.³²

So, how can she love somebody like Heathcliff who 'robbed her youth' – because Heathcliff, though ironically, robbed Catherine's youth; 'crushed her mind' – because the so-called Victorian patriarchy did cause her to *crush her mind* into male pseudonym; and 'did her freedom slay' – because male autonomy did not allow her to be as free as *Ellis Bell*. Freedom is deeply correlated with both Emily and Catherine. To free herself from the patriarchal Victorian life, Emily earnestly devoted herself to writing. What Emily did was, in fact, to reflect cohesion, conflict, and change to embody experiences of the mass of the people: their lives and deaths, desires and frustrations, pains and pleasures. There are not only conflicts, changes, deaths, lives but also desires, pains and pleasures in *Wuthering Heights*; because Emily had all those above. She suffered a lot and these sufferings made her think that death is the only way of freedom, let alone writing. That's why; she killed Catherine in order to make her free. By her death, she freed herself from the Victorian patriarchy. She never let Heathcliff die. Because, she aimed to make Heathcliff – in a way, all males - suffer the unhappiness of confinement in a world where there is 'no road to take back'.

³¹ BRONTE, C. 22.10.2012: 175.

³² BRONTE, E. 22.10.2012. "Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell". i-bookversion.Web. p. 7.

Emily, for the sake of taking her revenge, she never let Heathcliff suffer even the greater wretchedness of death. She portrayed two distinctive lives, Catherine and Heathcliff, as expressed by Catherine Gallagher, “only making sure that “life and death” replace “pleasure and pain” as the relevant binary”³³. However, this binary is reflected by Emily and Heathcliff in a way that seems to be just the vice versa of the statement forwarded by Gallagher. They replaced ‘pleasure and pain’ with ‘life and death’ for nothing other than their love. Because, to them, this

Love is anterior to life,
Posterior to death,
Initial of creation, and
The exponent of breath.³⁴

Their desperate life resulted from their passionate love. Life, death, creation and breath all existed for the maintenance of their love.

Conclusion

Heathcliff’s character contains a hidden virtue because he resembles a romantic hero. The metamorphosis into a cruel monster is nothing more than for the sake of his lover. Emily Brontë does not portray Heathcliff simply as a foreigner; his brutal revenge seems to make him a monster. Because Heathcliff is not different from other characters in the novel except for his dark skin and impulsive character; however, he is depicted as a monster. What makes him monster is his lifelong devotion of all his life to his love. Brontë makes the reader forget that the monster-like manners arise from the great love and passion that Heathcliff has. Heathcliff’s devotion resembles Emily Brontë’s desire to write. She has a strong love towards writing. Heathcliff’s love for Catherine turns him into ‘monster’ while Emily’s love for writing turns her ‘female power’ into ‘male disguise’ (Ellis). They both love to the extreme; As Poe states; they “loved with a love that was more than love” (104).

The ideal victim was male in *Wuthering Heights*, created by and through ‘Emily’s love of writing’. Just like Emily Bronte, who was a Victorian female governed by patriarchy of her time, Heathcliff was a male

³³ GALLAGHER, C. 2006. “**The Body Economic Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel**”. Princeton University Press. Print. P. 91.

³⁴ (ED) TODD, M L. 22.10.2012. “**Poems by Emily Dickinson**”. i-book version. Web. P. 76.

whose life was governed by a female. Heathcliff was confined in Catherine, while Emily was in Ellis.

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