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RESEARCH ARTICLE

POWER DYNAMICS AND THE CULTURE OF THE SELF-MADE MAN IN EMILY BRONTE'S WUTHERING HEIGHTS: A MARXIST READING

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Abstract

This article adopts a Marxist lens to explore not only the treatment of power dynamics, but also the rise of the self-made man in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. Published during the Victorian era, a period characterized by the emergence of the Industrial Revolution and individualism, this novel describes a society in which people were defined by their wealth, social status, and reputation. That materialistic mindset pushed many people from humble origins to aspire to join the elite class. However, that pursuit of power and wealth often led these self-made men to mimic and replicate the same behaviors and adopt the same mindset they once despised.

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Introduction:-

The Victorian Era (1837-1901) was mainly marked by an impressive Industrial Revolution and economic expansion. Britain grabbed the attention of the world by creating life-changing inventions and scientific breakthroughs that are still pivotal to this day (Girouard, 1992). That economic boost could also be explained by the British Empire controlling a large number of colonies worldwide, becoming a symbol of mighty power and dominance. But that ambitious quest brought along other negative aspects as it exacerbated the already existing gap between social classes, known as the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the working class, also called the proletariat. This social stratification was, in fact, a social identity given that people were respected and valued based on their appearances, reputation, and social belonging.

Such a materialistic way of viewing life, propelled by the Industrial Revolution, reshaped the entire British society. Power could shift from one class to another, as one could reach the highest social ranks by making and accumulating wealth, calling himself a "self-made man". That attraction and fascination with luxury nurtured the desire of many frustrated men to exist, fit in, and even seek revenge against that same society.

Literature has sometimes been a tool we have used to denounce and fight injustice. During the Victorian Era, several authors addressed the issue of class struggle, social tragedy, and moral decadence. Emily Brontë is one of those authors who published *Wuthering Heights* in 1847. Her dark story is filled with love, passion, but also hatred and revenge. But all these feelings gravitate around social power and status, the heart of the matter in the Victorian Era. That frenetic quest for power also brought to light the culture of the self-made man, inspiring men to use all possible means to ascend and reach the highest rank of society. That perspective could be quite positive as it showed people

that their success depends on their hard work and determination. But Marx (1909) claimed that the accumulation of wealth on one hand is also the accumulation of misery on the other. This viewpoint summarizes the gloomy story written by Emily Brontë, where the oppressed ended up being the oppressor. This study employs a Marxist framework to not only illustrate how power shifts from one class to another in *Wuthering Heights*, but also how the culture of the self-made man fueled the desire to seek revenge and destroy entire lives.

The Myth of the Self-Made Man: Historical and Social Context:

The culture of the self-made man is the cornerstone of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. The main character of her gothic novel, Heathcliff, appeared in the life of the Earnshaw family as a little "gypsy", adopted by Mr. Earnshaw, who found him in the streets of Liverpool. But that humble beginning radically changed when Heathcliff ran away from *Wuthering Heights*, then came back with a fortune, and nobody knew how he made it.

This storyline mirrors the life of many gentlemen during the Victorian Era. Coming from humble or even poor areas, but still being able to reach the highest rank of society thanks to hard work and determination. The expression "self-made man" became more and more popular in the 19th century. Hazlitt (1819) for instance, called Lord Chatham –a former Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1766 to 1768— a self-made man because he was raised in a camp, not in luxurious courts, and everything he had was due to his talent. During the Industrial Revolution, that concept ended up becoming a mindset embraced by people who wanted to be part of the elite class by amassing wealth and prestige. François Crouzet in *The First Industrialists* claimed that:

During the nineteenth century, it was widely believed - this in itself is an interesting cultural and social phenomenon -that industrialists were mostly self-made men. Born 'in humble circumstances ' (this is a standard expression), i.e. from modest or even poor families, they had started life as wage-earners, often working with their own hands; but, thanks to hard work, thrift, mechanical ingenuity and character, they had been able to set up their own business, to develop it and eventually to become wealthy and powerful. The paternity of these views is often imputed to Samuel Smiles, in his best-seller *Self Help*, published in 1859, and reference is frequently made to 'the Smilesean myth' (Crouzet, 1985: 37).

Right after this passage, he clarified that the myth of the self-made man appeared way before, in the seventeenth century and even the eighteenth century. Minchinton (1987) examined how English merchants benefited from the trade and industrialization to rise into the upper classes, transform the social hierarchy in Great Britain and form a new elite. Those merchants would start from small businesses to end up amassing a fortune through patience, hard work, and risk-taking. Mill (1859) added that the men composing the State define the worth of that State. This assertion explicitly glorifies individualism as it implicitly claims that before the group, we have individuals forming it and the combined worth of each individual will be the worth of that group. He also added in the same passage that:

The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it and a State which postpones the interests of their mental expansion and elevation, to a little more of administrative skill, or of that semblance of it which practice gives, in the details of business ; a State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes —will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished ; and that the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that the machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish (Mill, 1859:207).

Societies that restrict and muzzle their men may not thrive, as weak and small people can accomplish nothing that could be impressive and praiseworthy. Societies need bold men, people who dare to cross limits and boundaries, go beyond expectations, defy the laws, and challenge the norms so they can reach unexpected results. Mill (1859) praises individualism, arguing that the success of our States must be fueled by the success of the individuals composing them.

This mindset finally became a whole culture during the Victorian Era. Capitalism was gaining more popularity in societies as it was giving hope to anybody who was willing to work hard and succeed. In his passage, Crouzet (1985) gave a detailed explanation of the self-made man culture and went further by crediting Smiles (1859) as the father of that concept. Samuel Smiles published his book titled *Self-Help* in 1859, which is known to be one of the best books covering that topic. According to him, the mindset of self-help is the backbone of individual growth. He also added in his book that:

"HEAVEN helps those who help themselves," is a well-trying maxim, embodying in a small compass the results of vast human experience. The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigor and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done for men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to over-guidance and over-government, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless (Smiles, 1859:15).

The above passage starts with a well-known proverb, urging people to take action first before expecting divine help. Smiles (1859) also emphasized that men need to carry responsibilities on their shoulders. Indeed, when everything is done for them, they lose their competitive instinct. They need to be facing challenges, put in uneasy conditions, and sometimes a hostile environment, and get out of their comfort zone so they can unravel and unleash their true potential. It is like having a child, and always staying next to it, trying to protect it from everything that could jeopardize its well-being. That "over-guidance" will be detrimental rather than beneficial to that child, as it will create a natural dependence on that safe zone created by the parent. At some point, any child needs space and freedom to explore their environment, discover things, and even hurt themselves from time to time during the process. And that will bring along emotional balance, mental strength and experience of life that will be crucial for his survival in the long run. Smiles (1859) encourages men to be left free to grow as individuals and improve their living conditions, even though they have been conditioned to believe that their well-being must be provided by institutions.

This culture of self-growth is also known in the United States as the "American Dream", where people start "from rags to riches". Sandefur (2018) gave the perfect example in his book *Frederick Douglass: Self-Made Man* where he portrayed the life of Frederick Douglass, born to an enslaved mother in 1818 on a Maryland plantation, but became, as Sandefur (2018) claimed it, a world-renowned intellectual, bestselling author, sought-after speaker, international diplomat, bank president, and civil rights leader(11) by the time he died at the age of 77. If we could pick a success story to exemplify and illustrate the American dream, Frederick Douglass's life would be unmatched. Nobody could predict his ascension, considering where his life started. Imagining the child of a slave, climbing the social ladder so fast, could sound unthinkable, but he still made it by himself. Sandefur (2018) explained that:

In fact, individualism was the centerpiece of his creed—a creed he embraced proudly and with full consciousness. The theme of his life was well stated in the title of his most popular composition, the lecture "Self-Made Men," which he delivered over 50 times in the last half of his life. "Personal independence is a virtue," he declared in that lecture, "but there can be no independence without a large share of self-dependence, and this virtue cannot be bestowed. It must be developed from within." Douglass—who taught himself to read, then taught himself the principles of political philosophy, and then rose through his own efforts to become one of the nation's foremost intellectuals—was preeminently a self-made man. And in his mind, the United States should be a society for the self-made (Sandefur, 2018:12).

Individualism was the heart, the engine of his well-oiled machine he used to inspire entire generations. Just like Smiles (1859) and Mill (1859), Frederick Douglass believed that personal growth and self-help must be the steam engine of any thriving nation. This belief mainly came from the fact that he was an autodidact, teaching himself how to read and learn all the ideologies and principles that would shape his political vision, which would impact a whole nation. Frederick Douglass's life parallels at some point, the fictional story of Heathcliff, with both of them, despite having close links with slavery, still managed to reach unexpected living conditions. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff was adopted by Mr. Earnshaw, who found him in the streets of Liverpool. He was loved by his foster father, but loathed by his foster brother and sister. As Brontë (1847) explained it:

He seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment: he would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt himself by accident, and nobody was to blame. This endurance made old Earnshaw furious, when he discovered his son persecuting the poor fatherless child, as he called him. He took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said (for that matter, he said precious little, and generally the truth), and petting him up far above Cathy, who was too mischievous and wayward for a favourite (Brontë, 1847:47).

Heathcliff was rejected due to his physical appearance. The little "gypsy" would constantly be bullied by Hindley Earnshaw, Mr. Earnshaw's biological son. When we see later in the story how Heathcliff changed his life by

becoming a wealthy man, in a span of three years, the narrative of the self-made man sparks again, becoming the master of the house where he once was persecuted and ill-treated.

The industrial revolution came along with many opportunities, giving people the chance to own their destiny and become who they want to be if they play their cards right. Nonetheless, this culture of the self-made man was severely criticized and rejected by people like (Marx, 1959) who claimed that the exploitation of others is the foundation of the success of a “self-made man”. To Karl Marx, the upper classes claim that their success is due to hard work, inventiveness, and creativity while in reality, it is just the outcome of the exploitation of the working class. In *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx declared that:

According to the economic laws the estrangement of the worker in his object is expressed thus: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the more powerful labor becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labor becomes, the less ingenious becomes the worker and the more he becomes nature’s servant (Marx, 1959:30).

Marx (1959) shows in this passage how laborers lose their value by delivering and showcasing their best skills. He tore apart the individualism and asserted that the myth of the self-made man only exists because one class is exploiting another. In *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx & Engels (1910) demonstrated how capitalism disrupted the social norms and created new ones. As they asserted it:

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborers. The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation (Marx & Engels, 1910:16).

They claimed in this passage how the upper class changed the social standards and most importantly, they mentioned how the family relations were negatively impacted as money became more valued. This assertion implies that individualism exacerbated the materialistic side of our societies as wealth, belongings and mostly reputation came before anything else. We see the same scenario happening in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, when Catherine Earnshaw rejected the man she truly loved to marry another one because of his social status. That rejected man was Heathcliff, and that was when he understood that, in reality, life was all about power and domination.

Power Dynamics, and Domination, leading to Oppression:

Weber, (1968) declares that power is the situation when one person can fulfill his desires and carry out his own will, despite resistance and hostility coming from others (53). When we can impose our will without having to fear others’ reactions and reluctance, we consequently have the capacity to dominate, command, and they will obey, willingly or not.

When Heathcliff was introduced to the Earnshaw family, he was instantly rejected because he did not belong there. His physical appearance, his origins, and social class were making them believe that he was inferior. Brontë (1847) described him as a “dirty, ragged, black-haired child”, shocking Mrs. Earnshaw, who wanted to get rid of him as she thought he came from the devil. This rejection did not only come from Mrs. Earnshaw, but also from her children, Catherine and Hindley, who refused to share the same room, even space with him. Worse, he was physically abused by Hindley and other members of the house and that infuriated Mr. Earnshaw, who had to defend him against his persecutors.

This reaction from Mr. Earnshaw triggered and aroused jealousy in his home. Seeing his father taking care of that defenseless little boy, petting him and playing with him was not a pleasant scene to watch for his son, Hindley. At that age, a boy generally sees his father as a hero, a mentor, somebody he can look up to. He does his best to attract his father’s attention. We could therefore understand how bad Hindley felt when he saw his father spending more time with his foster son than his own biological son. Growing up, nurturing such negative feelings towards Heathcliff ended up consuming Hindley who then loathed him for stealing his spot. As Brontë (1847) argued it:

So, from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house; and at Mrs. Earnshaw's death, which happened in less than two years after, the young master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges; and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries. I sympathized a while; but when the children fell ill of the measles, and I had to tend them. Heathcliff was dangerously sick; [...] However, I will say this, he was the quietest child that ever nurse watched over. The difference between him and the others forced me to be less partial. Cathy and her brother harassed me terribly: he was as uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness, made him give little trouble (Brontë, 1847:47).

When Mr. Earnshaw passed away, his son Hindley Earnshaw inherited the property and became the master of Wuthering Heights and started to seek revenge as soon as he seized the power. He obviously became authoritative, tyrannical as Brontë (1847) put it. Heathcliff was deprived of almost all the rights and privileges his foster father gave him when he was alive. He was sent to work outdoors, forcing him to work hard, putting his sweat and energy into the farm.

But still, despite all that hostility, Heathcliff was accepting that downfall and dealing with it as long as he could be with Cathy. They would play together in fields and despite going through hard times inflicted by Hindley, they would be happier than ever the minute they were together. But Catherine's betrayal was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Their relationship went from rejection to attraction then rejection again even though the attraction was still there. When Cathy started to visit the Lintons, her passion for luxury started to take over, becoming more and more materialistic. Indeed, she spent five weeks at Thrushcross Grange because of an injury, and staying in that environment improved her manners and her tastes. Changing the way she dresses up by wearing fine clothes, changing the way she speaks by using a more sophisticated language, that wild girl playing with Heathcliff the savage, was gone, a new Cathy came back to Wuthering Heights. Her manners changed, and so did her relationship with Heathcliff. When they finally met again at Wuthering Heights, Brontë (1847) described a quite embarrassing scene as she explained that:

Cathy, catching a glimpse of her friend in his concealment, flew to embrace him; she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and then stopped, and drawing back, burst into a laugh, exclaiming, 'Why, how very black and cross you look! and how funny and grim! But that's because I'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton. Well, Heathcliff, have you forgotten me?' She had some reason to put the question, for shame and pride threw double gloom over his countenance, and kept him immovable. 'Shake hands, Heathcliff,' said Mr. Earnshaw, condescendingly; 'once in a way, that is permitted.' 'I shall not,' replied the boy, finding his tongue at last; 'I shall not stand to be laughed at. I shall not bear it!' And he would have broken from the circle, but Miss Cathy seized him again (Brontë, 1847:66).

The short time she spent at Thrushcross Grange changed her behavior towards Heathcliff as she started to make odd remarks about his appearance, simply because she was used to being next to Edgar Linton. That reaction did affect Heathcliff who could bear humiliation coming from anybody but Cathy. The final blow came when she decided to marry Edgar Linton. When she was having that conversation with Nelly, she did not know that Heathcliff was eavesdropping until he heard Cathy claiming that it would degrade her to marry him. Those words felt like a dagger and he could not take it anymore. Nelly noticed that:

'Ere this speech ended I became sensible of Heathcliff's presence. Having noticed a slight movement, I turned my head, and saw him rise from the bench, and steal out noiselessly. He had listened till he heard Catherine say it would degrade her to marry him, and then he stayed to hear no further. My companion, sitting on the ground, was prevented by the back of the settle from remarking his presence or departure; but I started, and bade her hush (Brontë, 1847:102).

By uttering those words, Cathy literally stabbed Heathcliff in the back and even though she proclaimed her true love to him, he did not stay to hear anything more. What we conclude from there, Heathcliff, at that moment, understood that the society he was living in was governed by power and power only. When you are not wealthy, people will treat you disrespectfully and hurt you in the worst way they can. When you have power, you can exert your domination and impose your will and people will still accept it as they will be given no choice.

Three years had passed since that moment, "on a mellow evening in September", he came back to Wuthering Heights, completely transformed. "The Gipsy", the "ploughboy" became, as Nelly described him when he went to

visit Cathy and Edgar Linton, a tall, well-built and athletic man. His physical appearance suggested he spent time in the army. His demeanor and manners were dignified, refined, and his speech was eloquent, but most importantly, he came back with wealth. She was simply amazed by his transformation.

But Heathcliff came for a much darker reason that turned out to be a well-plotted revenge against those same people who used to oppress him and tried to break him. His first target was the acquisition of Wuthering Heights thanks to a simple but effective plan. When his nemesis, Hindley Earnshaw, lost his wife Frances, he started drinking and gambling, two addictive vices that would trigger his downfall. He started to run out of money, but Heathcliff was there to lend him. This might look nice and innocent at first, but in reality, he was just giving him the shovel to dig his own grave. The money was given as debt, and Hindley Earnshaw had nothing else than his land to mortgage. As Brontë (1847) put it:

The guest was now the master of Wuthering Heights: he held firm possession, and proved to the attorney who, in his turn, proved it to Mr. Linton that Earnshaw had mortgaged every yard of land he owned for cash to supply his mania for gaming; and he, Heathcliff, was the mortgagee. In that manner Hareton, who should now be the first gentleman in the neighborhood, was reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy; and lives in his own house as a servant, deprived of the advantage of wages: quite unable to right himself, because of his friendlessness, and his ignorance that he has been wronged (Brontë, 1847:239).

The once powerful master of Wuthering Heights, who found pleasure in humiliating and degrading Heathcliff, became a gambling and alcohol addict, sponsored by his own enemy, who was, in fact, giving him the poison that would destroy him in the long run. But Heathcliff's plan did not stop there. Hindley and Frances had a son they called Hareton Earnshaw. When they both passed away, Heathcliff, who became the owner of the property rather than Hareton, started to behave tyrannically towards him, willingly kept him uneducated and deprived him of all the advantages he had rights to, just like Hindley did to him.

We see here how power shifts from one hand to another and whenever it falls into the hands of the wrong people, they use it to fulfill their darkest desires, even if it means destroying somebody else's entire life. Heathcliff did not stop there, as he went further by marrying Isabella, Edgar Linton's sister, not out of love, but simply out of revenge. With that union, Heathcliff managed to make both Cathy and Edgar jealous, but also set foot on Thrushcross Grange, the next property he wanted to control after Wuthering Heights.

Heathcliff's revenge symbolizes the downfall of capitalism, as the poor class was taking over. Cathy was consumed by jealousy until her death, leaving behind the daughter she had with Edgar Linton. Heathcliff also managed to have a son with Isabella and when Edgar passed away, he forced a marriage between his son, named Linton Heathcliff and Young Cathy, Edgar Linton's daughter. This sinister plan, orchestrated by Heathcliff, took time, but he finally reached his goal when his son died and he legally inherited the Lintons' property.

The cycle was completely reversed. The underdog, the dirty gipsy, the ploughboy was now the master of the two properties where he lived the worst days of his life. Through manipulation, intimidation, calculation, mixed with a dose of cynicism, mercilessness, and ruthlessness, the working class defeated the upper class by gaining and controlling power. Unfortunately, that ascent did not breed the expected outcome, as at the end of the day, all that quest for revenge was just a deceptive vision, a mirage that would consume Heathcliff in return.

The Illusion of Power: A Vicious Circle:

When a person has been wronged and ill-treated, they have the choice between forgiving and seeking revenge. In both situations, that person tries to find a way to heal from the wound inflicted by somebody else, but sometimes, the outcome is completely different. The hardest way is to be harmed, but still decide to let things go and move on. It can take time, but in the long run, it is by far the most rewarding decision one can ever make. The easiest way is to try to hurt that same person back because we want them to feel our pain. Seeing them suffer could give us a slight feeling of satisfaction as psychologically, we know we are not alone in that turmoil. But after all, what kind of person are we if we find satisfaction in seeing others suffering?

As a matter of fact, it turns out that when we seek revenge and even when we fulfill that desire, it gives us the illusion of feeling good, of healing from our pain, but deep inside, the wound remains. Heathcliff learned that the hard way. When he spent all those years plotting his revenge that spread in two generations –his and his son's—he

believed that it would take away all his scars, all his pain and frustration but things only got worse. When he became the master of both Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, he believed that he could celebrate his victory over those people who used to oppress and hurt him in his youth, but at that same moment, when he reached his goals, he was the only one feeling that emotional emptiness, loneliness and bitterness as all his enemies were gone and worse, he lost himself on the way.

When Heathcliff was introduced in the novel, he was that innocent, harmless boy, cherished by his foster father and loved by Catherine, who ended up becoming that cold and ruthless man hated by everyone, as his wife deplored it: 'Don't put faith in a single word he speaks. He's a lying fiend! a monster, and not a human being! I've been told I might leave him before; and I've made the attempt, but I dare not repeat it! Only, Ellen, promise you'll not mention a syllable of his infamous conversation to my brother or Catherine. Whatever he may pretend, he wishes to provoke Edgar to desperation: he says he has married me on purpose to obtain power over him; and he sha'n't obtain it I'll die first! I just hope, I pray, that he may forget his diabolical prudence and kill me! The single pleasure I can imagine is to die, or to see him dead!' (Brontë, 1847:193)

He married Isabella Linton simply because he wanted to use her as a pawn on his chessboard. Heathcliff ended up becoming a "monster", a "lying fiend" in the eyes of his wife who could not see him as a human being any longer. He had the same behavior, the same mindset as the people he used to hate and loathe when he was younger. This story shows us that the culture of the self-made man is just an illusion, attracting people who were once rejected by the upper class, felt ashamed and belittled, and tried to prove that they can be like them. When they ultimately reach their goal, they find themselves behaving like those same people they used to execrate. We see the same pattern in *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald (1925) with his main character, trying to be part of the upper class, to attract the woman he loves. Jay Gatsby would throw the most lavish parties, hoping to finally attract the woman he is into as Fitzgerald (1925) depicted it:

On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before (Fitzgerald, 1925:37).

Jay Gatsby came from a humble background, but managed to become wealthy and tried to be part of the upper class. His strategy was flashing his wealth, throwing parties and spectacles, inviting rich people like bankers, politicians and members of the elite class. But Fitzgerald (1925) also added that sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission (38). This short passage summarizes the mindset of the elite class. They did not care much about Jay Gatsby, but rather, what he had to offer, the entertaining parties, the luxury and the status. Fitzgerald (1925) described a selfish world where people only care about themselves. It was a message to make the reader understand that, despite Jay's wealth, he was still not considered a member of that class he was trying so hard to be part of.

Heathcliff, as well as Jay Gatsby, believed that power and wealth would help them achieve their goals and dominate the people who used to reject them. They both embodied the spirit of the self-made man, amassing wealth carrying out their agenda but both ended up disappointed and deceived. Finally, we understand that power is just a vicious circle that people who hold it cannot get away from unless they decide to forgive and break that infernal cycle. When Heathcliff became wealthy, he could have chosen to start a new life, being around new people who could love him for who he was, but instead, he decided to come back and destroy the life of his oppressors, and destroyed his own life in the process.

Conclusion:-

During the Victorian Era, several literary works were published to highlight the materialistic side of society. Power and wealth defined the social status of people who were judged based on that. Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is a critique of individualism as she showed in her novel the negative consequences it could have.

The idea of seeing somebody coming from nothing, but still being able to build an empire, is actually praiseworthy when it is done legally and morally. In fact, many people perceive individualism as a virtue, a way for people to always hope and work for a better future. Carnegie (1900) explained that:

Let one select the three or four foremost names, the supremely great in every field of human triumph, and note how small is the contribution of hereditary rank and wealth to the short list of the immortals who have lifted and advanced the race. It will, I think, be seen that the possession of these is almost fatal to greatness and goodness, and that the greatest and the best of our race have necessarily been nurtured in the bracing says: school of poverty —the only school capable of producing the supremely great, the genius (Carnegie, 1900:64).

Andrew Carnegie was a business mogul who used to be one of the richest men in the United States of America. Coming from a poor environment helped him toughen his personality, build great business skills that helped him create a whole empire. He believed in the “school of poverty” as it taught valuable lessons that anyone would need to become successful.

But in reality, that desire to climb the social ladder is fueled by dark and negative feelings as some of those people want to take revenge on the society that ill-treated them. Indeed, the rise of Heathcliff in Emily Brontë’s fiction is the perfect example and illustration of the self-made man, but in fact, it was mainly motivated by dark motives that ended up reproducing the same devastating oppression he was once a victim of. The rise to power doesn’t echo liberation but rather changes the cycle of domination: the oppressed becomes the oppressor and the oppressor becomes the oppressed. This idea had been backed up by Marx (1909) when he concluded that:

It establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with the accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital. This antagonistic character of capitalistic accumulation is enunciated in various forms by political economists, although by them it is confounded with phenomena, certainly to some extent analogous, but nevertheless essentially distinct, and belonging to pre-capitalistic modes of production(Marx, 1909:449).

The above passage explains how things work in both extremes. When one amasses wealth, another is amassing misery and turmoil. When one is thriving, another one is collapsing. Exploitation and misery are then the price of the self-made man’s myth and until nowadays, people are still fighting against it. We now have tech moguls who claim to be self-made billionaires, but the companies they are running are always facing legal charges for either exploiting their employees or considerably damaging the environment surrounding them. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?(Mark 8:36)

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