“I so identify myself with him”
Identity in Wuthering Heights and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

Sofie Forsgren
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Bachelor of Arts
English

Luleå University of Technology
Department of Arts, Communication and Education
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Introduction

Emily Brontë was born in 1818, while Anne Brontë was born in 1820 (Ingham 1), in Thornton, Bradford, Yorkshire (Frawley xiii). The sisters were socially isolated and lived very close and similar lives (Ingham 2). The sisters tried to break out of this isolation through education and work. However, Emily's and Anne's attempts to become educated and self-supporting have been considered to be largely a failure, as they both suffered from physical-psychological collapses while being away from home (Ingham 13-16).

The novels that will be examined in this analysis are *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë. *Wuthering Heights* was first published in 1847 and it traces the self-destructive journey of Heathcliff, who seeks revenge for losing his beloved Catherine Earnshaw to Edgar Linton, as well as revenge for being abused by Catherine's brother, Hindley Earnshaw. Heathcliff is initially adopted by Mr Earnshaw, the father of Catherine and Hindley, who lives at Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff and Catherine become very close, but when Heathcliff loses Catherine to Edgar Linton, he runs away. The second half of the novel traces Heathcliff's journey as he returns three years later, after the wedding, to exact revenge on everyone who has wronged him. During this time, Catherine becomes ill and dies in childbirth.

In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which was published in 1848, a strange young widow called Helen Graham arrives at Wildfell Hall, a mansion that has been vacant for many years, with her son and maid. She soon becomes the victim of local gossip. Graham Markham is given her diary and discovers her secrets. In her diary, Helen writes about her life with an alcoholic and cruel husband at Grassdale Manor, who Helen finally flees from, to arrive at Wildfell Hall. Graham eventually finds out that Helen has gone back to her husband, Arthur Huntingdon, as he is very ill. Eventually Mr Huntingdon dies and Helen inherits the whole estate of Grassdale Manor.

The novels were chosen because of the presence of strong female characters in them, Catherine Earnshaw and Helen Huntingdon. The novels were also chosen because of the close relationship between the authors. As Emily and Anne were sisters and very close, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* has often been compared to *Wuthering Heights*.

*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* has been criticised as being an inferior version of *Wuthering Heights* (Wilkes 47). Anne has been criticised for lacking the imagination of Emily Brontë, her better known sister, and it has been said that Anne's characters are more repulsive and brutal than Emily's counterparts. On the other hand, Anne's novel does expose “the
rugged natures that inhabit the Yorkshire uplands, the dreary mansions and monotony of savage isolation” that is also present in Emily's novel. *Wuthering Heights* then, is said to possess “the truth of imagination”, while *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is said to possess “the truth of a tract, or a report” (Wilkes 46).

*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* has been argued to be either a rewriting of or an answer to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, which was released less than a year before. This is because of the supposedly structural similarities between the two novels (Frawley 120). One of these similarities is the narrative structure. Both novels are told through men, recounting stories told to them by women. Thus, the women do not have a voice of their own in these novels. This is also pointed out by Frawley, who notes that Helen's narrative centres on the inability to speak for herself, due to her social and psychological situation (Frawley 117).

Another similarity between the novels is that both Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* and Helen in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* end up marrying men that they are bound to be unhappy with, as they are not suited for each other. The choices of setting also connect the two novels as they are both set in mansions in Yorkshire. This might be a coincidence, as the Brontë sister were born and lived in Yorkshire, or a natural choice for them.

Robert Liddell, too, argues that *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* might be an answer to *Wuthering Heights*. Furthermore, Liddell claims that the triumph of conscience in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is an answer to the triumph of passion in *Wuthering Heights* (94).

In both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the female character initially develops an identity within her immediate family, but this identity is challenged when she engages in a relationship with a man outside the immediate family. These shifts in identity will be examined from three theoretical perspectives: Freud's psychoanalysis, Erikson's psychosocial development and psychoanalytic feminism. The goal of this essay is to examine what happens when the female characters experience conflict in their shifting identities. Using these theories I will argue that in these mid Victorian novels, shifting identities are incompatible with positive development.
Psychoanalysis

Overview of Freud

Deborah L Madsen quotes Carol Gilligan who argues that Freud developed and modified his theory of female development to comply with his Oedipus Complex¹ theory: “a problem in theory became cast as a problem in women’s development, and the problem in women’s development was located in their experience of relationships” (Madsen 100).

The Oedipal stage is complicated for girls, as girls do not recognize any differences between their mothers and themselves. Freud therefore argues that the mother’s lack of a penis will result in ‘penis envy’. As a result, the girl will shift her love from the mother to the father and develop an identity “in response to the demands of the father’s (patriarchal) culture.” The objective for the female child is then to replace the mother. (Madsen 95) The girl’s identity will however, unlike the boy, not become completely separated from the mother. The result of this incomplete separation is that the girl does not completely identify with the father or the mother, but still tries to fit in to the father's culture. According to Nancy Chodorow, this partial separation results in a less secure identity in girls than in boys as they become less individuated (Madsen 95).

Due to the incomplete separation from the mother, women are said “to have weaker ego-boundaries, to be more vulnerable to psychosis (being ‘influenced in their judgements by feelings of affection or hostility’)” (Madsen 100). This theory seems to comply with the general patriarchal view of women, where women are seen as irrational, submissive and emotional.

Freud has often been criticised, but Lois Tyson claims that Freud’s theory can be explained through the cultural context of which Freud made his observations: the Victorian era. Furthermore, Tyson argues that the gender roles of the Victorian society were used to oppress women and elevate men into positions of power. Lois Tyson reinterprets Freud’s theory of ‘penis envy’ into ‘power envy’ and claims that the reason for girls wanting to be

¹ “The Oedipus Complex begins in the pre-Oedipal stage when the child experiences no distinction between itself and the world and is therefore pure ego. The Oedipal crisis comes about when the boy [between 3-6 years old] discovers that he is different to his mother (he has a penis) but he is the same as his father. His mother is perceived as castrated through her lack of a penis and this symbolises the inferiority of the feminine, the child’s love for which threatens to incite his father’s anger and rejection. As a result, the boy shifts his allegiance and his love from the powerless mother to the authority of the father; in this way, the boy child differentiates himself from the surrounding and in the process develops both a superego (social consciousness) and an id (instincts). The boy then, emerges from the Oedipal stage in possession of a masculine gender identity.” (Madsen 95)
If boys in Freud’s theory is because they envy the amount of power and freedom men have (Tyson 26).

That Freud’s theory could be explained through the era it was observed in makes sense, however, Freud’s theory is very lacking in its explanation of the female development. I do not agree with this theory myself; however, as both Freud’s theory and the two novels were written during the Victorian era, I find it to be relevant for my essay.

**Psychoanalysis in Wuthering Heights**

When Catherine is about 8 years old, her mother dies. According to the psychoanalytic theory, the mother’s and the daughter’s identities are never completely severed as the girl turns to her father to forge her identity around her father's patriarchal culture. Catherine however, does not seem to turn to her father, to forge her identity around his culture, as the Freud claims. Instead she is constantly trying to provoke him: “His peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him ... doing just what her father hated most” (E. Brontë 56) Furthermore, Catherine cannot turn to her mother either, as she is dead. According to Freud, Catherine would not completely identify with neither her mother nor father, but identify with both of them. Catherine however, does not seem to identify with neither of them at all.

In Identity and the Life Cycle, Erik Erikson introduces us to Freud, who claims that the superego is forced upon the child through the critical influence of the parents (Erikson 19). Mr Earnshaw’s absence of love for his daughter, seems to harden her instead of influence her, as Nelly explains that her reaction changes when she is repeatedly told that her father cannot love her, “That made her cry, at first; and then, being repulsed continually hardened her” (E. Brontë 56). Catherine does not seem to be influenced by her father at all. Thus it seems that as a little girl, Catherine either does not want to form her identity according to her father’s patriarchal culture or that she cannot form her identity to her father’s culture because he does not display any affection towards her. Furthermore, the objective for Catherine would be to replace her mother. However, Catherine does not have a mother and as a consequence, she cannot adhere to Freud's theory of 'penis envy'.

**Psychoanalysis in The Tennant of Wildfell Hall**

Helen Huntingdon's mother died when she was born, so she has no relationship with her birth mother. Furthermore, she has no relationship with her biological father. However, as Helen was adopted by her aunt and uncle, Mr and Mrs Maxwell, one can assume that the aunt and uncle substitute the mother and father relationship for Helen. According to Freud's theory,
Helen would shift her love from the mother (aunt) to the father (uncle) and try to develop an identity that conforms to the father's patriarchal culture. This can be seen in Helen, as she repeatedly ignores and dismisses her aunt's plentiful advice in favour of her own viewpoint. Making her own decisions is approved by her uncle, as he exclaims “Now that's a good honest answer - wonderful for a girl!” (A. Brontë 139) Helen thus seems to value her uncle's advice higher than her aunt's, which shows the shift of love in Helen. Helen also seems to be quite pleased with her position in life and as such her position in this patriarchal society.

In the beginning of the novel, Helen's aunt warns her to not be tricked into a marriage with someone deceitful and careless. Helen however, dismisses her aunt's advice.

I not only should think it wrong to marry a man that was deficient in sense or in principle, but I should never be tempted to do it; for I could not like him, if he were ever so handsome and ever so charming in other respects; I should hate him - despise him - pity him - anything but love him. My affections not only ought to be founded on approbation, but they will and must be so: for without approving I cannot love. (A. Brontë 104)

Initially, as the quote shows, Helen seems to be a very independent, intelligent and strong willed woman who seems to have her own values. Furthermore, she thinks that she is impervious to the charms of a handsome man. By claiming that she cannot love a man she does not approve of Helen tries to claim some power for herself. She may not be able to possess all the power and privileges of a man, however she can possess the power of making her own choices. When Helen is faced with a marriage proposal by Mr Boarham, she refuses and claims that they are too different from each other. Interestingly, this changes when Helen meets Arthur Huntingdon, whom she is immediately smitten by, much to her aunt's dismay.

Huntingdon is everything Helen promised she would not marry. This agrees with Freud's theory that women are easily influenced by feelings of affection in their judgements. That Helen is charmed by Huntingdon confirms that she is as easily receptive of the charms of him, confirming that her identity is not as secure as she might have believed and that she does have weak ego-boundaries. Helen quickly falls for someone who does not share her own morals and principles and this shows that she is emotional and these emotions make her irrational in her choice of Huntingdon, a man she would not have chosen if she had not developed feelings for him. According to Freud's theory, the reason for Helen being able to take on this new identity is that women have weaker ego-boundaries, and thus weaker identities.
Psychosocial Development

Overview of Erikson

Freud’s theory was later reworked and expanded by Erik Erikson, whose theory according to Madsen, argues that “the developmental stage of adolescence is for boys characterised by the establishment of an autonomous, enterprising self, based upon the necessary industry and mastery of cultural technology necessary for a successful adulthood.” (Madsen 100)

As a woman, this developmental stage is different, according to Erikson. The developmental stage for girls is described as: “[the girl] holds her identity in abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will rescue her from emptiness and loneliness by filling ‘the inner space’” (Madsen 100-101). So while men develop an identity for themselves to prepare themselves for the entry out into the world, women seem to develop an identity in relation to other people. Furthermore, a woman's identity will not be fulfilled until she meets a man, as “establishing intimacy is part of the development of identity” (Madsen 101). Furthermore, Erikson also claims that intimacy with a person of the other sex is only possible after "a reasonable sense of identity has been established" (Erikson 101). So for a woman to fulfil her identity, she first needs to form an identity, which will later be fulfilled by a man.

Erikson's theory is supported and highlighted by psychoanalytic feminist Carol Gilligan, who (through a study) found that boys define themselves through separation while girls define themselves through connection (Gilligan 8).

Gilligan also claims that boys see responsibility to others as a limitation, while girls see it as an extension. This means that a boy would see responsibility as something that conflicts with their own interests, while a girl would see responsibility as “doing what others are counting on her to do regardless of what she herself wants.” (Gilligan 10) This agrees with the theory that boys define themselves in separation with the world, while girls define themselves in relation to the world.

Although Erikson’s reworked theory has been highlighted by psychoanalyst feminist Carol Gilligan, it cannot be seen as a feminist theory and as such has to be separated from both psychoanalysis and psychoanalyst feminism. Erikson’s theory can be seen as a step forward from Freud’s theory which might have made way for the feminist theory. The reason why I decided to place Gilligan’s theory under this chapter and not the psychoanalytic
feminism chapter is because this part of Gilligan’s theory connects to Erikson’s theory and she supports some of Erikson’s findings.

**Psychosocial Development in Wuthering Heights**

Instead of building her identity around her father, Catherine seems to turn to Heathcliff, whom she fast becomes very close to. Catherine and Heathcliff are even described as being inseparable, “She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him” (E. Brontë 55). So while Catherine does not seem dependent on the love or approval of her father, she instead becomes inseparable from Heathcliff.

Instead of shifting her love from the mother to the father, Catherine seems to develop her identity in relation to Heathcliff, who is seen as a savage and hardened. This is reflected in Catherine, who Nelly describes as being a “wild, hatless little savage” (E. Brontë 63) as a child. As Catherine and Heathcliff promise each other to grow up as savages, one can assume that Heathcliff influences Catherine’s behaviour and thus also her identity. The idea that Catherine seeks comfort with Heathcliff confirms Erikson’s theory that women develop their identity in relation to other people. If Catherine depends on building her identity around Heathcliff, what happens to Catherine if they are separated?

After Catherine stays for five weeks at Thrushcross Grange, where the wealthy and refined Lintons live, she returns to Wuthering Heights, considerably changed. During Catherine’s stay at Thrushcross Grange, her brother’s wife, Mrs Earnshaw, often visits her, as she has made it her mission to reform the wild and savage Catherine. The combined influence of her sister-in-law and the refined Lintons, once again shapes Catherine’s behaviour, as she returns as “a very dignified person” (E. Brontë 63). Not only Catherine’s behaviour is altered when she returns. Her appearance also seems to have changed, as she is described as beautiful when she returns. Thus, several characteristics of Catherine have changed during her stay at Thrushcross Grange. As a result, Catherine’s identity has shifted from being very masculine, to being very feminine.

Catherine also seems to look at Heathcliff differently, as she remarks “If you wash your face, and brush your hair, it will be all right. But you are so dirty!” (E. Brontë 65) According to Stoneman, Catherine “begins to despise Heathcliff's lack of culture” (Stoneman 139). Having lost her mother as a child and as a result having lost almost all female influence, Catherine has not previously cared about her appearance or anyone else’s appearance. However, when she is finally subjected to this female influence, both from her sister-in-law
and Mrs Linton, she quickly assumes their expectations as well as their view on culture, as she has previously not had her identity formed around the patriarchal culture of her father.

Catherine thus seems to have changed her values to reflect those of Mrs Earnshaw and the Lintons. Catherine changes her behaviour according to the people who influence her, confirming Erikson’s theory that women develop their identity in relation to other people. Being isolated from Heathcliff reduces his influence drastically, and this allows Mrs Earnshaw and the Lintons to influence Catherine instead.

Nelly seems to think that the well-mannered Catherine is just an act as Catherine shocks Edgar Linton through lying and acting violent, “It's a kindness to let you have a glimpse of her genuine disposition.” (E. Brontë 79) While Nelly seems to think that Catherine has not changed at all; Catherine has merely developed her identity as she has met Edgar. This development does not mean that her initial identity has completely disappeared. It appears that even though Catherine knows that she should behave in a certain way around the Lintons, she cannot completely shy away from her initial identity.

Another explanation would be that Heathcliff, as a hard and strong man, has more influence over Catherine. Having grown up with Heathcliff, he has had more time to influence Catherine, as they are alike. Robert Liddell notes that Catherine “was made captive and tamed by the enemy ... but nothing could keep her from Heathcliff.” (Liddell 33) Although Catherine wants to advance in her social standings, her love for Heathcliff will try to counteract it.

Catherine's change can be credited to Edgar Linton as well. Catherine at this point seems to have decided that Edgar is the one that she will marry. If Catherine has a void in her identity that can only be filled when she establishes intimacy with a man, Catherine would have to marry Edgar, as he is so different from Heathcliff. This is confirmed by Catherine, as she explains to Nelly why she will marry Edgar, and not Heathcliff:

It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire. (E. Brontë 86)

According to Catherine, it is impossible for her to advance in life if married to Heathcliff, no matter how much she loves him. She explains that their souls are the same, the result of Catherine forming her identity in relation to Heathcliff. If Catherine would marry Heathcliff, who are very much the same as Catherine, Catherine would not be able to fill that void in her
identity, as they are already the same person. As a consequence, marrying Heathcliff would not let Catherine further develop her identity and as such would not promote positive growth in this theory.

Catherine also acknowledges that Edgar Linton and she are very different. In contrast to Heathcliff, a marriage with Edgar would allow Catherine's identity to develop and be fulfilled, as they are so different.

**Psychosocial Development in The Tennant of Wildfell Hall**

According to Erikson's theory, a girl needs to establish intimacy to fulfil her identity. Helen's way of assuring intimacy is very different, as she is constantly making excuses for Huntingdon's mishaps, even though he does things that go against Helen's values and wishes. This happens continually both before the marriage and during the marriage. One of the reasons why Helen does this, may be that she has already decided that she wants to marry Huntingdon and as such has to make excuses for him to justify her choice of man. Furthermore, Helen has to establish intimacy with Huntingdon, a man that is clearly unfit for her. The excuses then seem to be more reassuring for herself than anyone else.

After being invited to the estate of Staningley by Mr Maxwell, Huntingdon finds a drawing of himself made by Helen. Helen is immediately embarrassed and ends up throwing the drawing into the fire, destroying it. Even though Huntingdon goes against Helen's wishes, as she does not want him to look at her sketches, she makes herself the offender and makes excuses for Huntingdon.

He meant no harm - it was only his joyous, playful spirit; and I, by my acrimonious resentment - so serious, so disproportioned to the offence - have so wounded his feelings - so deeply offended him, that I fear he will never forgive me - and all for a mere jest! (A. Brontë 128)

Helen immediately elevates Huntingdon above herself, making herself the perpetrator. Furthermore, she undermines the very morals and values that she was so proud of before she met Huntingdon. Instead of him being insensitive to her feelings, she is too serious to appreciate a joke. Helen thus seems to not only want to change the way she behaves to make herself a better fit for Huntingdon, she also seems undermine her own identity in favour of his. It is her identity that is faulty, not his. If Helen needs to meet a man to fulfil her own identity, she also needs to embrace these new characteristics, as it is filling the void in her identity. Helen initially, does not seem to see these new characteristics as an issue; instead her original identity is seen as problematic.
After burning the drawing, Huntingdon treats Helen coldly, and turns his attention to Annabella Wilmot, friend of the family, who was also invited by Mr Maxwell. As Huntingdon interrupts Helen's piano playing by urging Annabella to play and sing, Helen becomes bitter, but quickly forgives him again.

No wonder he should hunger and thirst to hear her sing. I now forgave him, from my heart, his reckless sight of me, and I felt ashamed at my pettish resentment of such a trifle - ashamed too of those bitter envious pangs that gnawed my inmost heart, in spite of all this admiration and delight. (A. Brontë 130)

Once again, Helen undermines her own identity and feelings in favour of positive feelings for Huntingdon. Thus it seems like Helen's love for Huntingdon overrules the feelings of reservation she would have for him, as he is nothing like her. This might be a sign of Helen embracing Huntingdon and choosing him to fill the void in her identity. If Helen has to abandon her initial values to fill the void in her identity, is her initial identity then worth less than the new fulfilled identity she will develop with Huntingdon? Erikson claims that some kind of identity needs to have formed before intimacy can be established between a man and a woman. If Helen completely shies away from her initial identity, how can her identity develop in a positive direction once Huntingdon fills the void in her identity?

Helen also seems to take responsibility for what has happened, agreeing with the theory in that women accept responsibility whether or not they want it or not. As Helen takes responsibility for the event, she makes it easier for herself to disregard her own reservations about Huntingdon. This seems to be the first step for Helen to develop her new identity that will live up to the expectations of Huntingdon.

After the newlyweds' first quarrel, Helen is determined to show Huntingdon that she does not need him, seeming to reacquire some of her lost identity. “I was determined to show him that my heart was not his slave, and I could live without him if I chose” (A. Brontë 164). This is the first time in the novel, after meeting Huntingdon, that Helen does not undermine herself or her values. Helen thus seems to try and develop her original identity instead of just develop a completely new identity. Helen also seems to contradict the theory. If Helen needs a man to fulfil her identity, she does need Huntingdon and if he indeed fulfils Helen's identity, how can she live and develop in a positive direction without him? Without him, according to Erikson's theory, Helen cannot fully develop her identity.
Shortly after the quarrel, Huntingdon takes Helen to London, where she is forced to go against her initial moral values and preferences, to please her husband.

It was something to feel that he considered me a worthy object of pride; but I paid dear for the gratification, for in the first place, to please, him, I had to violate my cherished predilections ... I was continually straining to satisfy his sanguine expectations and do honour to his choice, by my general conduct and deportment, and fearing to disappoint him by some awkward misdemeanour ...

(A. Brontë 170)

This is the biggest change in Helen so far. Frawley claims that Helen struggles with trying to establish and uphold an identity that does not agree with the expectations that are established by other people (118). She consciously violates her own values to take on an identity that Huntingdon can proudly display to his friends. Instead of being strong willed and independent, she turns into Mrs Huntingdon who is the compliant and obeying wife. This is also the kind of wife Huntingdon wants Helen to be, as she is now inferior to him. As Helen changes, she also confirms Erikson's theory that people develop their identities in relation to other people. As Helen meets new people, she changes her identity to something that fits better into the expectations of these new relations.

One can also assume that the combined influence from Huntingdon and his wealthy and refined friends help to make it easier for Helen to change. However, as Helen describes violating her principles as straining and as a violation, violating these principles do not come easily. This is a sign of Helen's initial identity being stronger than presumed, as she consciously acknowledges her changes and the issues she has with changing. However, as Helen needs a man to fill her void in her identity, Helen has to change to fulfil her own identity.

Helen eventually leaves Huntingdon as their marriage is riddled with abuse and adultery, however, as Huntingdon becomes ill, Helen returns back to Grassdale Manor to nurse her husband. Huntingdon is delirious and initially mistakes Helen for other women. When he realises that it is Helen, he believes that Helen leaving him was all a dream, though Helen denies this.

No Arthur, it was not a dream, that your conduct was such as to oblige me to leave you; but I heard that you were ill and alone, and I am come back to nurse you. You need not fear to trust me: tell me all your wants, and I will try to
satisfy them. There is no one else to care for you; and I shall not upbraid you now. (A. Brontë 333)

Even after leaving Huntingdon for a better life without him, Helen still feels responsibility over Huntingdon, even if she does not want to. According to Gilligan's research, Helen will do what others expect her to do, even if she does not want to do it. The general opinion would be that a woman should take care of her husband. However, as Helen has left Huntingdon, there is no one to influence her decision in the direction of returning to Huntingdon to care for him, rather the opposite. Thus, this expectation to do what others expect from her seems to be innate in Helen, as she knows what these mid-Victorian expectations are. As Helen in herself has no choice other than to do what others expect from her, Helen has to return to Huntingdon, according to the theory.

One of the reasons to why Helen still feels responsibility towards Huntingdon may be that they share a son, Arthur. Even if Helen wants to cut all connections to Huntingdon, she will still have their son to remind her of him. On the other hand, Arthur would be the biggest reason for Helen to cut all connections to Huntingdon, as it would protect her son.

Psychoanalytic Feminism

Overview of Psychoanalytic Feminism

Psychoanalytic feminism deals with how the process of identification occurs in women. It investigates how women can identify with “patriarchal interests” and it suggests that the answer is by “investigating the subconscious structure of gender identity.” The theory is built around Sigmund Freud’s theory of psychosexual development and Jacques Lacan’s work (Madsen 95).

Even though psychoanalytic feminism is based on the work of Freud, psychoanalytic feminists criticise Freud heavily. While Freud supports a single identity, psychoanalytic feminists see the self as “fractured and fragmented”. Furthermore, they argue that the fragmented self offers opportunities "to create a new self in the freedom of isolation." They also view the fragmented self as liberating, rather than a psychotic issue. (Madsen 98) ‘Femaleness’ is regarded to be oppressive, and the idea of ‘femaleness’ denies the concept of the multiple identities and instead forces individuals into “single identities”. (Madsen 97) Psychoanalytic feminism deals exclusively with the female consciousness and they see the father as the oppressor, who defines the woman in childhood.
Psychoanalytic feminism is therefore different from cultural feminism. Cultural feminists have also have criticised psychoanalytic feminists for assaulting the female category (Madsen 98) by claiming that the only aspect of gender division is sexuality (Chodorow 198) Psychoanalytic feminists have also been criticised for viewing the division as liberating, when cultural feminists view the division itself as oppressive (Madsen 98).

**Psychoanalytic Feminism in Wuthering Heights**

From a psychoanalytic feminist's point of view, the father would be seen as the oppressor who tries to define the woman during her childhood. Catherine's father does seem oppressive, as he says that he cannot love her if she does not act and appear the way he wants her to. Thus Catherine’s father tries to define her and reacts negatively if she does not respond to his wishes. As Catherine refuses to be defined by her father and his patriarchal culture, she consequentially releases herself from the patriarchal oppression. As a result, Catherine seems to be very independent from an early age.

Catherine seems to have issues with upholding her two identities. As Edgar Linton arrives for a visit, she wants to looks respectable for her friend. However, during this stay, Edgar gets to see Catherine’s wild and savage side, as she verbally and physically abuses Nelly. Catherine is also caught telling lies to Linton, to defend herself. Previously she had always behaved like a lady in the presence of the Lintons, now Catherine seems to have a hard time keeping her new-forged identity up. This could be seen as a problem with the psychoanalytic feminist theory. If the fragmented self is liberating, would not both identities be equally easy to uphold?

Even though Catherine has agreed to marry Linton, she still refuses to give up Heathcliff: “Not as long as I live, Ellen - for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff.” (E. Brontë 87) She simply does not seem to be able to live without him, another consequence of them being so much alike - they might as well be the same person. However, As Heathcliff leaves, it makes it easier for Catherine to both advance in life and create her new identity isolated from Heathcliff. As Catherine has been so influenced by Heathcliff for such a long time, it is impossible for her to completely explore her new identity if Heathcliff is still an influence. As a consequence, Catherine has to give up her soul mate for her to be able to develop in a positive direction.
Catherine’s will to advance in life, according to Liddell “led her to adopt a double character, without exactly intending to deceive anyone.” (Liddell 33) This would explain Catherine’s two identities as the two identities should be liberating for Catherine. According to Steve Lukits, Catherine's decision to marry Edgar is fatal, as she is deprived of her individuality and independence (Lukits, The Devastated Nest: Crises of Identity in Wuthering Heights and Antigone). But if the other choice is marrying Heathcliff, would Catherine really be individual and independent? As Catherine and Heathcliff are the same, she cannot truly be independent, as they depend on each other to exist. As a result, Catherine cannot be truly individual or independent with neither Edgar nor Heathcliff.

Psychoanalytical feminists would argue that this divided identity and separation from Heathcliff gives Catherine an opportunity to create a new self for herself, which she seems to do. As Catherine marries Edgar, Catherine becomes a very compliant and quiet wife, which is the very opposite of her original identity. This might be a consequence of constantly having to behave as Edgar wants and value what Edgar values, as she is once again forced to act and look the Linton way, as well as being away from Heathcliff and his influence.

As a consequence, Catherine seems to have lost some of her individuality, as she is now forced to act and look a certain way to appease the others. On the other hand, Catherine might be developing her new fragmented identity that she did not have opportunity to develop earlier in her life and as such, this new identity would only be another side of Catherine.

This changes again however, when Heathcliff returns. Catherine once again becomes happy and livens up. Edgar is not happy however, and forces Catherine to choose between himself and Heathcliff. Stoneman argues that Catherine's inability to choose between Heathcliff and Edgar corresponds to her “anxiety and uncertainty about her own identity” (Stoneman 161). If Edgar forces Catherine to choose between himself and Heathcliff, and consequentially forces Catherine into a single identity, is he not oppressive? The oppressor is usually the father who tries to define the woman during her childhood, however, Edgar can now be seen as the oppressor as he tries to define and confine Catherine into one identity. The choice between Edgar and Heathcliff is therefore oppressive, as Edgar and Heathcliff correspond to Catherine’s two identities.

After repressing her true identity for so long and finally reuniting with her soul mate again, Catherine is asked to repress one of her identities in favour for another identity. The idea of this sends Catherine into a psychotic state; she simply turns mad. This idea answers a question raised earlier in the essay, what would happen to Catherine if they were separated?
Catherine's madness shows that she still loves Heathcliff and the thought of losing him again is enough to drive her mad. As Heathcliff and Catherine are so much alike, giving up Heathcliff corresponds to having to give up a part of her identity. According to theory, the fragmented self is liberating, while the single identity is oppressive. If Catherine then has to force herself into a single identity after having developed fragmented multiple identities, she would have to give up a part of herself. As a consequence, Catherine cannot cope with her fragmented identity. Thus Catherine’s anxiety may stem from being unable to maintain a personal identity, she does not know herself. The inability to sustain a personal identity would also explain why Catherine is so easily influenced by other people and why she is constantly changing herself.

Catherine then, seems to agree with the psychoanalytic feminist theory that she is able to develop multiple fragmented identities. Furthermore, she develops these identities when isolated from the initial influence. However, the fragmented identities are not liberating for Catherine, as her identities are developed in relation to Heathcliff and Edgar and their values and expectations. Catherine also seems to have issues with maintaining both of her identities when separated from their respective influences.

Psychoanalytic Feminism in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

From a psychoanalytic feminist's point of view, Huntingdon can be seen as an oppressor. Helen's uncle cannot be regarded to be an oppressor during her childhood, as he does not seem to try to define Helen in her childhood. However, Huntingdon can be seen as an oppressor during Helen's adulthood, as he tries to redefine her and her identity, so that she can be what he wants her to be.

Frawley argues that Anne Brontë explores the concept of isolation, both self-imposed and enforced, within the community and the marriage, as well as within one's identity (Frawley 4). Helen certainly seems isolated in both her marriage and in her own identity, as she states how she feels trapped in her own mind:

How little real sympathy there exists between us: how many of my thoughts and feelings are gloomily cloistered within my own mind; how much of my higher and better self is indeed unmarried - doomed either to harden and sour in the sunless shade of solitude, or to quite degenerate and fall away for lack of nutriment in this unwholesome soil! (A. Brontë 191)

Free from her aunt’s and uncle’s influence, Helen is now free to create and develop her new identity with Huntingdon. Interestingly, Helen distinctly separates her originally formed
identity from the identity she has formed around Huntingdon, instead of trying to find a middle ground. It is as if she has one foot in both worlds and does not know how to combine them both or how to choose one world. As Helen has developed multiple identities which in itself is liberating, she has issues with combining these in her everyday life. As a result, Helen's fragmented identities can be seen as an issue, rather than liberating. Helen sees herself as only partly married, as the better part of herself has no companion. She also understands that the better part will either die as it is not stimulated or that she will become bitter since her husband does not share these traits and values with her.

Frawley claims that Helen Huntingdon's identity changes as her husband's identity is altered by alcohol abuse (5). This is seen in the novel, as the love between Helen and Huntingdon cools down as Huntingdon's alcoholism worsens. The fragmented identities, as a result, do both liberate and confine Helen. She is able to access both identities, however, as she begins to return to her original identity, she realises how unhappy she is and how confined she is in herself.

As Helen recounts her marriage with Huntingdon and his increased drinking, she also acknowledges the changes in herself.

... since he and I are one, I so identify myself with him, that I feel his degradation, his failings, and transgressions as my own; I blush for him, I fear for him; I repent for him, weep, pray and feel for him as for myself; but I cannot act for him; and hence, I must be and I am debased, contaminated by the union, both in my own eyes, and in the actual truth. I am so determined to love him - so intensely anxious to excuse his errors, that I am continually dwelling upon them, and labouring to extenuate the loosest of his principles and the worst of his practices, till I am familiarised with vice and almost a partaker in his sins. Things that formerly shocked and disgusted me, now seem only natural. I know them to be wrong, because reason and God's word declare them so; but I am gradually losing that instinctive horror and repulsion which was given me by nature, or instilled into me by the precepts and example of my aunt. Perhaps, then, I was too severe in my judgements, for I abhorred the sinner as well as the sin; now, I flatter myself I am more charitable and considerate; but am I not becoming more indifferent and insensate too? (A. Brontë 206)
Helen has now become so consumed by her identification with Huntingdon that she sees them as one. She takes all of Huntingdon's mishaps very personally, as if she had done them herself. She is as ashamed for everything he has done as she would be for herself. Helen notes that she feels contaminated, as if Huntingdon's wrongdoings have changed the way people look at her. Even though Helen starts to return to her original identity, her identity has been so influenced by Huntingdon that her instinctive feelings and values have begun to change. She still knows what her feelings and values are, but violating them does not affect her like it initially did. Thus Helen's new identity is too different from her original identity and this makes it impossible for her to combine the two.

Helen does not seem to be able to maintain his new identity she has formed. Instead she is torn between her original identity and the characteristics of Huntingdon. According to the psychoanalytic feminist theory, the fragmented self is seen as liberating. This is not seen in Helen however, rather the opposite. Having always known who she is and what her values are, this change instead seems to make Helen anxious. Thus Helen seems unable to maintain her fragmented personalities as they seem to be completely opposites to each other.

During the stay at Grassdale Annabella Wilmot, now Annabella Lowborough, and Huntingdon begin a romance, which Helen is initially blind to. Eventually however, Mr Hargrave, friend of Huntingdon, reveals that Huntingdon entrusted him with his plan to sneak behind both his own wife, and his friend, Lord Lowborough, Annabella's husband. Helen confronts Huntingdon, who forbids her to leave with their son and her money.

‘Then I must stay here, to be hated and despised - But henceforth, we are husband and wife only in the name.’

‘Very good.’

‘I am your child's mother, and your housekeeper - nothing more.’ (A. Brontë 241)

With this, Helen finally separates herself from Huntingdon, reclaiming her own identity. From a psychoanalytic feminist’s point of view, a single identity is oppressive. However, if Helen herself chooses to force herself into a single identity is she then oppressing herself or does Helen not adhere to the psychoanalytic feminist theory? As Helen fails to maintain her fragmented identities but instead escapes an unhappy life and an unhappy marriage, Helen can be seen as both being successful and a failure. Helen has failed to maintain multiple identities. However, these fragmented identities only made Helen anxious and unhappy and thus maintaining a single identity is the only viable option for Helen.
Conclusion

This essay set out to examine how Catherine Earnshaw and Helen Huntingdon develop their identities. Furthermore the essay set out to examine how their identities shift as they meet men outside their immediate families and how these shifting identities are incompatible with positive development and the consequences of them both trying to maintain these shifted identities.

There are both similarities and differences between Helen and Catherine. As children, they both lose their parents, however they seem to develop their original identities differently. Catherine does not conform to Freud's theory of 'penis envy', as she does not seem to try and build her identity around her father's patriarchal culture. Instead, she develops her identity in relation to Heathcliff and as such adheres to Erikson's psychosocial development theory.

Helen on the other hand, seem to adhere more to Freud's theory of 'penis envy' than Catherine does. Helen substitutes her mother and father with her aunt and uncle. Furthermore, she dismisses her aunt's advice and she seems to value the opinion of uncle higher than that of her aunt. This might be a sign of Helen's shift of love from the aunt to the uncle. Moreover, Helen seems to be heavily influenced by her feelings in her judgement of Huntingdon, as he is the sort of man Helen says she would not love or marry.

When Catherine and Helen meet Edgar and Huntingdon, they both begin to change. They shift their identities, and according to Erikson's theory, this is because their identities are incomplete and can only be fulfilled by a man. However, these shifts in identities goes to the extreme. Catherine initially changes according to the expectations of her company and shifts between both of the identities continually. Helen tries to change to be a better fit for Huntingdon, however, it is not easy for her to shift her identity, instead she becomes anxious.

These fragmented identities agrees with the psychoanalytic feminist theory, as Helen and Catherine both establish fragmented identities. However, the outcome of these fragmented identities are very different as well as very similar. Neither Catherine or Helen successfully manage to develop in a positive direction with these fragmented identities.

Catherine succumbs to psychological issues because of her love for two very different men, who very much adheres to her two identities and when she is forced to choose between these two identities she becomes mad. Instead of trying to combine her fragmented identities and have them co-exist, the identities of Catherine are so different from each other that they cannot be present at the same time. Hence Catherine is unable to adhere to one single identity as she does not know herself, because of her two identities and the changes she has gone
through. As a consequence, Catherine is unable to maintain a positive development of her identity.

Helen as well cannot deal with her fragmented identities, as it makes her anxious and insecure on who she really is. Helen however, makes the decision to leave one of her identities behind as she leaves Huntingdon, and as such forces herself into a single identity. This however, does not cause any psychological issues for Helen as maintaining a single identity seems to be the only way Helen can develop in a positive direction.
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