HEATHCLIFF'S NEUROSIS IN BRONTË'S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to explore Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* novel psychologically. The researcher was aimed to find out the factors which contributed to the development of Heathcliff's neurosis and to reveal the neurotic trends that appear in Heathcliff as he attempts to fight against his conflicts. The researcher used qualitative method with content analysis approach in conducting this research. The researcher analyzed Heathcliff by applying the literary theory and psychological theory. The researcher found that the main cause of Heathcliff's neurosis as portrayed in *Wuthering Heights* novel was basic anxiety produced by the social environment where he lived. The factors that contributed to his development of neurosis were familial interference and the Victorian culture based on competition. Consequently, he developed three (3) neurotic trends as his defense mechanism to fight against his conflicts. These neurotic trends were (1) moving toward people; (2) moving against people; and (3) moving away from people.

Key words: neurosis, basic anxiety, neurotic trends, heathcliff, wuthering heights

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengeksplorasi Heathcliff secara kejiwaan dalam novel Wuthering Heights karya Emily Brontë. Peneliti bertujuan untuk menemukan faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap perkembangan neurosis Heathcliff dan untuk mengungkap apa saja kecenderungan neurotik yang tampak pada dirinya sebagai usahanya untuk melawan konflik. Peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis isi dalam penelitian ini. Peneliti menganalisa Heathcliff dengan mengaplikasikan teori sastra dan teori kejiwaan. Peneliti menemukan bahwa faktor utama yang menyebabkan neurosis pada Heathcliff seperti yang digambarkan dalam novel Wuthering Heights adalah kecemasan dasar yang dihasilkan oleh lingkungan sosial dimana dia tinggal. Faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap pekembangan neurosisnya adalah gangguan hubungan dalam keluarga dan budaya Victorian berdasarkan kompetisi. Akibatnya dia mengembangkan tiga (3) kecenderungan neurotik sebagai mekanisme pertahanan dirinya untuk melawan konflik-konfliknya. Kecenderungan neurotik ini adalah (1) bergerak mendekati orang lain; (2) bergerak melawan orang lain; (3) bergerak menjauhi orang lain.

Kata kunci*: neurosis, kecemasan dasar, kecenderungan neurotik, heathcliff, wuthering heights*

A. INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the nineteenth century was known as the Victorian Age. During this period, the development of the novel as a form of literary works run into rapid progress. Ciobanu and Golban argued this literary movement was more concentrated on the truthful portrayal of the influence of social and environmental circumstances toward characters in literary texts (227). This literary texts depicted the social turmoil which affected the emotion and psyches of individuals within a society. *Wuthering Heights* novel was one which considered representative of this phase of the Victorian novel in England. It was a novel written by Emily Brontë under the pseudonym of Ellis Bell and published in 1847.

In the Twentieth Century, criticism on *Wuthering Heights* novel has been voluminous. Although Brontë's novel reflected the particular place and time in which it was written, it had an appeal that seemed to be universal and enduring. She was certainly one who had intuitively portrayed similar kinds of phenomena that psychological theory has tried to explain. It was portrayed through Heathcliff who was one of the most discussed characters in literature. His passionate nature, intolerable frustration, and overwhelming loss that had ruined him, make him stripped of his humanities. He was subtle portraits of a troubled character whose inner lives and patterns of behavior was best understood if seen through a psychological study in literature. It was proof that the theory helped to talk about what the great writers knew, but literature also helped to know what the theory was talking about.

Seeing literature from the perspective of a psychological insight greatly enriched the readers understanding not only of the text, but also enriched the understanding about human compassion. By analyzing the characters in literary works, "It can help us to understand the behavior of characters in literature from the past, to enter into their feelings, and to enrich our knowledge of ourselves and others through an understanding of their inner conflicts and relationships" (Paris 2). So that, literature helped the reader to see the enduring humanity of people from a culture that gave a sense of connectedness, not only to the past but to the present and future as well. It was because literary characters could enhance the reader's intellectual and empathic understanding of human behavior all the time.

Based on the explanations above, Heathcliff became the object of this research since he was suffered the impact of social and environmental circumstances toward his psyche. In this research, the researcher formulated two questions related to the forces and factors which contributed to the development of a psychological condition called *neurosis* suffered by Heathcliff and the defense mechanism that appeared in him as he attempts to solve the conflicts when his basic needs for safety, love, and esteem have not been well met. The aims of this research are (1) to find out the factors which contribute to the development of Heathcliff's neurosis; and (2) to reveal the neurotic trends that appear in Heathcliff as he attempts to fight against his conflicts. There are two kinds of significance of the research: (1) to enrich the comprehension about the psychological condition

called neurosis reflected in a work of literature; and (2) this research can give a contribution as a reference for other researchers in studying literary works related to the psychological issue.

B. THEORY OF NEUROSIS

To understand the development of neurosis, Horney explains the dynamic processes of it as follow:

1. Basic Anxiety as The Foundation of Neurosis

The nature of which constitutes the core of neurosis is basic anxiety or basic insecurity. Basic anxiety defined by Horney as "a feeling of being isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world" (*New Ways of Psychoanalysis* 75). Basic anxiety produced by familial life and the environment where individuals live in. It creates helplessness which contends that the environment dreaded as a whole because it felt to be unreliable, mendacious, unappreciative, unfair, unjust, begrudging and merciless.

a. Familial Interference

Schultz says that childhood dominated by the "safety need", which he means as the need for "security and freedom from fear" (162). Basic anxiety is deep insecurity and fear developed in children because of the way they treated by their parents. According to Horney in *Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis*, the varieties of parental behaviors which can arouse children's hostility are:

> "direct or indirect domination, indifference, erratic behavior, lack of respect for the child's individual needs, lack of real guidance, disparaging attitudes, too much admiration or the absence of it, lack of reliable warmth, too much or too little responsibility, over-protection, isolation from other children, injustice, discrimination, unkept promises, hostile atmosphere in the family, and so on " (41).

Because of those disturbing conditions, a child may feel the need to repress this hostility for reasons of helplessness, fear of the parents, need for genuine love, or guilt feelings. This sequence of the lack of genuine warmth and affection from the parents or family in childhood, moreover, become the crucial factor in the genesis of neurosis (Schultz 163).

b. Cultural Condition

Horney states that the relationship between culture and neurosis is the relation between the quality of cultural trends and the quality of individual conflicts. Competitiveness is another powerful factor in creating personal insecurity. It is certainly the fears created by the general potential hostile tensions such as:

> "fear of envy in case of success, fear of contempt in case of failure, fear of being abused and, on the other hand, retaliation fears for wanting to shove others aside, to disparage and exploit them" (Horney in *New Way of Psychoanalysis* 174).

Competitiveness in western culture is the circumstances which can create emotional isolation, potential hostile tension between people, insecurity and fears, and a feeling of individual powerlessness. It is because most human experiences are the result of this entire cultural condition. This condition finally affects any failure that the individual ascribes to his deficiencies, whether the failure occurs in social, professional or love life.

2. Neurotic Trends

According to Horney, there are three neurotic solutions to the stresses of life caused by anxiety; moving toward, against, and away from people. She termed these coping strategies neurotic because of the overuse of one or more of these interpersonal styles compulsively.

a. Moving Toward People

The neurotic trend to move toward other people displays attitudes and behaviors that reflect a desire to be a compliant person. When moving toward people, individual tries to win the affection of others and to lean on them. He always tries to do whatever the other person wants and threatening others into providing the desire for affection. He is being submissive as his self-protection that involves complying with the wishes either of one particular person or everyone in his social environment. Only in this way, he feels safe with others in his social environment (Schultz 166). This movement manifests an intense and continuous need for affection and approval, an urge to be loved, wanted, and protected. He shows a marked need for affection and approval, and an especial need to have "partner" like a friend, lover, husband or wife who must take charge of his life and offers protection and guidance.

b. Moving Against People

The neurotic trend of moving against people displays aggressive attitudes and behaviors. He accepts and takes for granted the hostility around him and determines by consciously or unconsciously to fight against others. For any reason, he wants to be the stronger and defeat others, partly for his protection, partly for revenge. So that, the tendency to "move against" people have the aggressive characteristic. He thinks that he can achieve security through a sense of superiority because he believes that if he has power, no one harms him. He needs for power, a need for control and exploitation, and maintenance of a facade of omnipotence (Schultz 167). While moving toward people tends to appease, a person with this tendency does everything he can to be a good fighter and never display his fear of rejection. He tends to argue, criticize, demand, and do whatever that is necessary to achieve superiority and power. He is never so "naive" to show his any manifestation of ambition, greed, ignorance, or anything else that may obstruct his own goals.

c. Moving Away from People

A person who tends to move away from other people to maintain an emotional distance portrayed as a withdrawn person. When an individual moves

away from people, he wants neither to belong nor to fight with others. He is psychologically to become withdrawn from other people by keeping his confidentiality and seclusion. He is being aware of anything that resembles an interference into his privacy. He develops techniques for keeping others at a distance because he prefers to become independent by not relying on anyone else. To achieve this total withdrawal, he strives to become self-sufficient. By this way, a withdrawn person aims to avoid being hurt by other people (Schultz 168). Furthermore, a person with needs to be independent, refused to tie himself to anyone or anything. He thinks that he must rely on his resources and not to ask or to accept any help from others, no matter how much he needs it.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was qualitative research since the data explained in the form of words without numeric data or statistical procedures. Specifically, this research categorized as literary criticism by using a qualitative method. The term of literary criticism related to the activity of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of a literary work (Peck and Coyle 49). The researcher has done the activity of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the data in a literary work descriptively.

In this research, the researcher used content analysis approach to analyze the meanings and relationships of such certain words or concepts within the texts, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text. Content analysis approach used to determine the psychological or emotional state of a character named Heathcliff in the text of *Wuthering Heights* novel. Thus, the researcher was the key instrument who observed, collected, analyzed, interpreted all of the data related to research questions.

The source of data was a novel entitled *Wuthering Heights* written by Emily Brontë. It published by Harper Collins *Children's Books* in 2009. The data in this research were collected by the researcher in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. The data were the narration, dialogues, and monologues in the novel. In the process of collecting the data, the researcher read the novel comprehensively and the researcher written notes about the data related to Heathcliff accordance with the formulation of research questions.

D. FINDINGS

Based on research questions, this section divided into two parts. In the first part, the researcher analyzed the data which contributed to the development of Heathcliff's neurosis. The second part, the researcher analyzed the data related to the kind of neurotic trends that appeared in Heathcliff.

1. Basic Anxiety as The Foundation of Heathcliff's Neurosis

There were certain factors which created Heathcliff's neurosis, that was his fears or anxiety that brought by conflicts and the defenses he built up to against it. The main factor that contributed to his fears and his defenses was unpleasant experiences and negative events in his life. The parental behavior and hostile impulses from the family were the key factors that promote Heathcliff's insecurity. This insecurity feeling called as basic anxiety.

a. Familial Interference

Heathcliff's sense of basic anxiety began through his relationship with his adoptive parents and members of the family. This feeling developed in him as a child because of the way he treated by his parents and family members. Over the times, his unpleasant experiences with the family affected how he viewed and engaged with the world. The result of these attitudes was he did not develop a feeling of belonging, loved and wanted but propounded the feeling of insecurity. There were certain factors of parental attitude that made him developed basic anxiety: discrimination, lack of reliable warmth, over-protection, and hostile atmosphere in the family.

- **Discrimination**

The hardships that he experienced from his very arrival at the Wuthering Heights house was discrimination. The discrimination that he experienced was because of his skin color and the inferiority ascribed to him. He was described as a dirty, ragged, black-haired child whose appearance, behavior, and attitude made everyone feel frightened. The language he spoke also was unfamiliar to all the characters as the narration stated:

> We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy's head I **had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child**; big enough both to walk and talk: indeed, its face looked older than Catherine's; yet when **it** was set on its feet, **it** only stared round, and **repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand. I was frightened**. . . (Brontë 48)

From the narration above, it conveyed the message that the boy had an unknown origin where his looks were identified as foreign. The discrimination indicated by the pronoun used to describe him. It was because Nelly and Mr. Earnshaw referred to him as '**it**' instead of him. It could be apparent that from the very first moment of the boy arrived at the house, he was dehumanized. He was regarded as "**it**", devoid of human qualities like any other inanimate object.

- **Lack of Reliable Warmth**

Heathcliff's insecurity was the consequence of his broken relationships with the members of the Earnshaw family. His stepmother never tried to do whatever she could to make him felt safe and secure. Furthermore, all members of his new family rejected him completely. It could be seen through the narration below.

> Miss Cathy and he [Heathcliff] were now very thick; but **Hindley hated him**: and to say the truth **I did the same**; and we plagued and went on with him shamefully: for I wasn't reasonable enough to feel my injustice, and **the mistress never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged.** (Brontë 49)

From that narration, Heathcliff's childhood was full of rejection from who was supposed to be his primary caregivers. They never be attentive to his needs and give warmth or compassionate feelings for him. Every member of the family withdrawn their emotional support to him when he need it. His stepmother failed to respond to his emotional need for protection because she never cared about him

who was being bullied by Hindley and Nelly. Heathcliff did not have an emotional attachment with his stepmother that lead him struggling to manage any emotion.

- **Over-protection**

Although Heathcliff was tormented physically, emotionally and unloved by nearly everyone, Mr. Earnshaw did the opposite. It could be seen through the narration below:

> **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 50)

Mr. Earnshaw's parental attitude toward Heathcliff was not having a real interest in him as a child, real respect for him, and of such qualities as reliability and sincerity. By treating him like this, Mr. Earnshaw made him won't be able to cope with life. He was not giving Heathcliff a good grounding at a young age in terms of values, morals, and principles. It made Heathcliff never knew the lesson of unselfishness, love for others, generosity, honesty, self-control, and good judgment towards everything. Mr. Earnshaw has neglected a degree of reliable guidance for Heathcliff. Mr. Earnshaw only was so protective of him without giving him affirmation how to cope with others by himself.

- **Hostile Atmosphere in the Family**

The adoption of Heathcliff as a member of the family causing his intense rivalry with Hindley for the love and attention of the father. Heathcliff had the privilege and protection from Mr. Earnshaw. It gave him a place within the family because Mr. Earnshaw treated him well. Through the way how Mr. Earnshaw adored his adopted child, Hindley began to feel that Heathcliff supplanted him from his father's affections. Their hatred was obvious when they were quarreling about horses that brought by Mr. Earnshaw and gave them each one. Hindley yelled toward him, which in his words consisted of humiliation as apparent in their dialogues below.

> 'You must exchange horses with me: I don't like mine; and **if you won't I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you've given me this week, and show him my arm, which is black to the shoulder**.' Hindley put out his tongue, and **cuffed him over the ears**. 'You'd better do it at once,' he persisted, escaping to the porch (they were in the stable): **'you will have to: and if I speak of these blows, you'll get them again with interest**.' **'Off, dog**!' cried Hindley, threatening him with an iron weight used for weighing potatoes and hay.' (Brontë 51)

From their quarrel, Heathcliff wanted to exchange the horse with Hindley by threatening Hindley that he would snitch to Mr. Earnshaw about Hindley's deed to him that made his body injured. It was the fact that Hindley abused him more than one time. Hindley's abusive behavior toward Heathcliff proven through Heathcliff's utterance that he got three thrashings from Hindley. From the quotation, Hindley's scorned for Heathcliff was so obvious. He defined the position of Heathcliff with an animal which not equal as human beings.

b. **Cultural Condition in *Wuthering Heights***

In the *Wuthering Heights* novel, the culture of the Victorians was based on the principle of individual competition where everyone was the potential competitor of everyone else. Competitiveness and the potential hostility that accompanied it was one of the predominant factors in social relationships at that time. The form of competitiveness that Heathcliff had to pass related to the rivalry with Edgar to marry his beloved one, Catherine. Heathcliff was aware of his inferiority due to his skin, education and social status. He was aware that his skin had the power to make him impossible to escape the prejudice related to the inferiority of his skin that white society created upon him. He was anxious after realizing that he might never be fair-skinned or even rich and had good manners like his rival, Edgar. He said to Nelly:

> 'But, Nelly, **if I knocked him** [Edgar] **down twenty times, that wouldn't make him less handsome or me more so**. **I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!**' (Brontë 73)

From Heathcliff's dialogues with Nelly, he took it for granted that Edgar was superior to him, that Edgar was more attractive, rich, and more worth than he. There was an inner struggle between his actual self and the idealized self that the society created in his mind. His actual self was he had black hair and skin, uneducated, and poor while the idealized self was light hair and fair skin, educated and rich. This gave an idea of how low his feeling of self-worth was. At this point, he began to realize the limitation of his participation in society and consequently the limitation on obtaining Catherine's love. Thus, he strove to have interesting looks and high social status like Edgar because those were the qualities that he thought his beloved admired.

2. Heathcliff's Neurotic Trends

Heathcliff had three tendencies in relating to others in order to combat his conflicts caused by fears or anxiety. It was the tendency of moving toward, against, and away from people. His three tendencies in relating to others had a single goal that was to defend him against the conflicts he suffered. This defense was his self-protective mechanism that became the characteristics in determining his behavior toward oneself and others.

a. Moving Toward People (Catherine)

Heathcliff manifested the traits of "moving toward" people by showing a marked need for affection and approval. It was an especial need for a "partner". These needs was the expression of a desire for human intimacy that was a desire for belonging. In this case, he wished that Catherine could be a friend, lover, or wife that would fulfill all of his expectations of life and take responsibility for good and evil. He wanted her to spend quality time together and complementing him with physical and emotional intimacy. It was her responsibility to ensure that he always feels appreciated and wanted. Together they had promised to grow up to be complete savages. The greatest punishment that others could invent for him was to keep her separated from him. His bond with her motivating him to tolerate Hindley's abuse and degradation as long as she remained by his side. It could be proved through the narration below.

> **He** [Heatchliff] **bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields** . . . **they** [Catherine and Heatchlif] **forgot everything the minute they were together again** (Brontë 60).

From the narration, Catherine's companionship was one fact which made Heathcliff's degradation bearable. Even though he was abused and humiliated by Hindley at that time, he was able to endure it. It was because there was her who always consoled and accompanied him. Although they were both punished by Hindley for their actions, they seemed to forget all about the pain they suffered as soon as they were together again. Under such conditions, Heathcliff grew increasingly close and emotionally dependent upon Catherine. It made him feel that her affection was so important to him because of his feeling of security in life depend on it.

b. Moving Against People (Hindley and Edgar)

A compulsive craving for power, ambition, and a strong need to exploit others, to outsmart them, to make them of use to himself had constituted roughly the factors involved in Heathcliff's trend to move against people. In his world, everyone was his enemy where the fittest and the most cunning survived. Supremacy, strength, and ferocity were his paramount virtues. He acted tough, domineering and had no regard for others. To achieve the control and superiority was so vital to his life. The traits which proved his movement to against others was seen through his monologue when Hindley persecuted him and locked him to his chamber as punishment. All the time he was thinking of how he would pay Hindley back for what Hindley did to him, as he said:

> 'I'm trying to settle how **I shall pay Hindley back**. **I don't care how long I wait**. . . **I hope he will not die before I do!** . . . I only wish I knew the best way! Let me alone, and **I'll plan it out**: **while I'm thinking of that I don't feel pain**' (Brontë 78).

From Heathcliff's utterance, Hindley's treatment toward him could be seen as all the sources of his hostility that he felt for Hindley. He was aware of his own reaction to Hindley's treatment because he inclined to regard these hostile impulses as provoked by Hindley. In this case, he began to against Hindley by planning to revenge over Hindley. It was a form of his self-protection. He intended that he should pay Hindley back no matter how long he had to wait for his revenge. So that, Heathcliff utterance could be seen as a direct expression of hostility under the pressure of feeling attacked. He did not want to accept the threat from others again. In this case, he began to be stronger partly for his own self-protection partly for revenge.

c. Moving Away From People

Heathcliff was driven to move away from people by withdrawing to maintain an emotional and physical distance. He decided to rely on his own resources and withdrawn from other people. To achieve his total withdrawal, he strove to isolate himself from life. He needed to spend as much time as possible alone because he realized that there was no one who could understand and reduce

his suffering. So that, he achieved his withdrawal by becoming aloof from others and no longer seeking to satisfy his emotional or even his physical needs. He had so little interest in his daily life such as to eat and drink as the narration stated:

> For some days after that evening **Mr. Heathcliff shunned meeting us at meals**. . . He had an aversion to yielding so completely to his feelings, choosing rather to absent himself; and **eating once in twenty-four hours seemed sufficient sustenance for him**. (Brontë 416)

From the narration, it could be apparent thay Heathcliff began to take a resigned attitude toward life in general, expecting nothing good, feeling simply that his life must not be endured again. Over several days, he virtually starved himself to death. He began to stop for eating and he would not to see anyone. He made himself isolated from others. The outcome of it all was that he lost faith in himself and in his development as a human being. He tended to give up─an attitude which, although it may pass unnoticed, was in its consequences grave enough to be called as psychic death. He needed for privacy where there was no one who could bother his sense of isolation. This suggested that by emotional and physical isolation, it would bring him face to face with his own conflicts that he was not be able to solve it.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the researcher drawn two conclusions in this research based on research questions. First, the cause of Heathcliff's neurosis was **basic anxiety** produced by the social environment where he lived. The factors that contributed to his development of neurosis were familial interference because he was a victim of discrimination, lack of reliable warmth, over-protection, and grew in a hostile atmosphere. The other factor was the culture based on competition which always made him felt rejected. These conditions made him failure to fulfill his needs such as the need for affection, approval, and the need for a partner, thus he felt unsafe to live in his environment.

Second, the traits that appear in Heathcliff as he attempts to fight against the conflicts that caused him suffered neurosis where he had tendencies to move, against, and away from people. He dependent on Catherine because he thought that she could provide him the affection that he lost; he was vindictive because of his unpleasant experiences with Hindley and Edgar; he withdrew because nobody understood him. To get the feeling and reassurance defense, he used coping strategies from neurotic trends most dominant in himself that was moving against people. It was only toward the end of the novel he developed a sense of withdrawal. He put emotional as well as physical distances between himself and other characters. So that, isolation was the final resolution of his conflicts where he died in his isolation, alone in his room.

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