A STUDY ON VICTORIAN WOMEN: *ECRITURE FEMININE* IN SEECTED POEMS OF EMILY BRONTE

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Abstract: The study titled "A Study on Victorian Women: Ecriture Feminine in Selected Poems of Emily Brontë" analyzed the patriarchal rules of Victorian women, particularly Emily Brontë, through the theoretical approach of Helene Cixous's Ecriture Feminine (1979). The research used a qualitative method, collecting data from library research and selected poems of Emily Brontë. The study found that Emily Brontë's poems offer an individual portrayal of female subjectivity and freedom, challenging typical Victorian social norms. The research also suggested that Brontë's poetic interpretations significantly contributed to the conversation about women's literary voices during the Victorian era. The study concluded that Victorian women faced repression from societal norms, such as patriarchy and the lack of women freedom to gain voices. This posed a challenge for Emily Brontë, as a woman writer, to represent women's feelings and experiences in her poems.

Key Terms: Victorian women, female subjectivity, women writing, gender studies

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INTRODUCTION

Queen Victoria's reign, lasting from June 20, 1837, to January 22, 1901, marked a significant shift in British Empire's society and economy. This period was characterized by societal norms, particularly for women, who were expected to conform to these norms. Working-class women faced numerous restrictions on their rights, including the right to speak and express themselves. They were expected to be the perfect housewife, care for children and family, and serve their husbands. Patriarchal culture in Victorian times focused on the roles that men and women had to play, with women being expected to be secondary leads and household members. Murdoch (1970) noted that women did not have the same rights as men, leading to additional feminine chores such as housekeeping and artistic pursuits. Petrie (2000) highlighted the achievement of men in maintaining a safe and comfortable home environment for women and their families. This demonstrated that a man could work through hardships with financial support and gain respect from peers and males in society. The Victorian Romantic era began in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, influenced by works of literature, painting, music, architecture, criticism, and history across Western Civilisation. This period had an impact on emotion, imagination, nature, and social class. Poets like James Thompson, William Cowper, William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and John Kates were born during this period, with Emily Brontë's literary work often compared to male classic poems, which explored themes of dualism, self-diversity, and the human psyche. Victorian women writers often published novels or poetry collections as their first works, but faced social rejection, poor income, and unfair criticism. They struggled to access men's social and professional networks due to patriarchal society's strict rules and the belief that women should stay at home. Murdoch (1970) highlights the challenges women faced in voicing feminist issues and advocating for equal status for women. Women writers often wrote under a pseudonym, voicing their opinions and challenging the patriarchal society. From a feminist perspective, it is possible that women made changes to the male-dominated genre due to the widely held perception of literary works. Some works also reflected men's perspectives on women writing and society, criticizing patriarchal society. Despite facing rejection, women writers managed to gain the voice behind the pseudonym name. Despite societal scepticism, women writers like Emily Jane Brontë, born in Thornton, Yorkshire, England, became famous Romantic novelists. Brontë's poetry often critiqued society and represented the real life of women in the Victorian era her poems often expressed women's desire for a lover, challenging the expectations of pure, ideal partners and perfect wives (Gezari, 2007). Emily Brontë's poems, particularly in her works like Faith and Despondency (1846), The Prisoner (1846), Remembrance (1846), Anticipation (1846), Stars (1846), Love and Friendship (1846), XVII Stanzas (1846), and XV (1837), reflects the experiences and characteristics of Victorian women. These poems, often addressing the suffering and loss of women with a love partner, challenge the expectations of Victorian society. Brontë's works, influenced by her life experiences and social circumstances, have a significant impact on literary works. The female voice in Brontë's poems analysed using Hélène Cixous's Écriture Feminine theory, which focuses on writing about women and breaking men's views of women. This study aims to understand and create a new perspective on men using the Ecriture Feminine theory in selected Emily Brontë poems, providing a new understanding of women's writing and the impact of Brontë's writing on society.

METHOD

This study is analysing the writing style of women and representation social circumstances of Victorian women portrayed through the main object in selected poems of Emily Brontë with *Ecriture Feminine*. Following the collection

of data, the qualitative method is a method in which the researcher focuses on one or more cases over time and collects detailed, in-depth data from multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). First, the researcher reads the poems and chooses eight selected poems Faith and Despondency (1846), The Prisoner (1846), Remembrance (1846), Anticipation (1846), Stars (1846), Love and Friendship (1846), XVII Stanzas (1846), and XV (1837) by Emily Brontë. Second, according to Hélène Cixous' Ecriture Feminine theory of feminine writing and the freedom of women to express themselves in the literary world (Cixous et al., 1976). The researcher examine how Victorian women writings are represented in a few of Emily Brontë's poems. The researcher analyses the problem with the applied theory of Ecriture Feminine that contains of women experienced on repression, patriarchal issues in the Victorian era, which is focusing on the social circumstances of Victorian women represented in Emily Brontë's selected poems. And third, the researcher elaborates in detail on how Emily Brontë impacted the perspectives of society by applying Hélène Cixous' Ecriture Feminine theory from analysing the selected poems as main object from point of view critical feminism.

Furthermore, researchers use Library Research technique, that a method of research in which knowledge and information are obtained by reading genuine books or using computer engines to assist answer the research question (George, 2008). To gather information about literature might be viewed as library research, which is also the kind of research that is frequently called literary research or literature study. First, researcher collecting and selecting the data from Emily Brontë's poems by reading the book The Complete Poems by Emily Brontë. Second, researcher find the relation of the poem that represent of society in Victorian women experienced, repression and desire through the selected poems of. Third, researcher also collect some source information from journal, articles, thesis, and books that support the theory and analyse both offline and online source to considering the main data of Emily Brontë's poem as the object in this study. Lastly, the researcher categorises the poems of Emily Brontë by selecting the poems with feminine issues that related to *Ecriture Feminine*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher collecting the data of Emily Brontë's poems and analysing with *Ecriture Feminine* by Hélène Cixous as the main theory. The portrayal of Victorian women lives on Emily Brontë poems because the background of story in the poems that contains of patriarchal issues that Emily Brontë tried to explain the society life through the poems. The researcher uses theory by Hélène Cixous with the *Ecriture Feminine* to discuss the patriarchal issues in selected poems of Emily Brontë, that portrayed the society of Victorian women. *Ecriture Feminine* theories focusing on gaining the female voice through the literary work. To be more

particular, the researcher used Hélène Cixous theorist who was obscured by the topic of gaining female voice through the patriarchal issues to analyse the literary work. As a women writer, Emily Brontë describes her feelings, life experiences, and uses nature as metaphor.

A. PATRIARCHAL OPPRESSION EXPERIENCED BY VICTORIAN WOMEN IN SELECTED POEMS OF EMILY BRONTË 1. Woman and Her Relationship

In 1975 Hélène Cixous write an essay The Laugh of Medusa, arguing the oppression of phallocentric language and patriarchal norms by propound the new form of women writing with *Ecriture Feminine*. *Écriture feminine* is an important feminist concept that highlights the importance of female authors, as well as the unique perspectives and experiences they can bring to the literature they create. It also highlights the ways in which female authors may use language and writing as a means of addressing and overcoming the society setbacks that women have often faced. As a feminist writer, Emily Brontë faces the patriarchal system in Victorian era. in her poems, Emily Brontë writes her voice representing the women voice at the time with break through the phallus language with all her experiences. Emily Brontë have frequently been criticized as self-indulgent and self-dramatizing, crude and extravagant, or lacking in judgement (Gezari, 2007).

Father, in early infancy, When you were far beyond the sea, Such thoughts were tyrants over me! I often sat, for hours together, Through the long nights of angry weather Raised on my pillow, to descry The dim moon struggling in the sky; Or, with strained ear, to catch the shock, Of rock with wave, and wave with rock; So would I fearful vigil keep, And, all for listening, never sleep. But this world's life has much to dread, Not so, my father, with the dead. (Brontë 1846 – Faith and Despondency: p.2)

The poem expresses the speaker's want for solace and closeness, requesting their father to listen and understand their worries. The speaker highlights the value of family and the emotional connection they have with their father by expressing a strong desire for the safety and protection given by their father's presence. The speaker's sentiments of hopelessness and sorrow as they consider the passing of loved ones, and the transience of life are then described in a different section of the

poem. This poem is distinguished by its reflective and profound emotional quality, which is indicative of *ecriture feminine* in the sense that it questions traditional concepts of power and authority by highlighting the speaker's intimate relationship to their feelings and experiences. The line "The dim moon struggling in the sky;" conveys the speaker's emotional condition and their desire to have a relationship with their departed loved ones with the nature symbol. The speaker uses the image of the faint moon struggling in the sky to represent their inner anguish and difficulty adjusting to the loss. Using the term "struggling" to define the moon highlights the speaker's feeling of helplessness and her battle to find comfort in the face of grief. In alongside conveying an obvious representation of the speaker's emotional condition, the image of the moon battling in the sky highlights the speaker's intense sadness and desire for an emotional connection to the past. The lines "So would I fearful vigil keep" is a statement of the speaker's feelings and their desire to have a relationship with the departed loved ones. The speaker expresses worry and uncertainty as she talks of keeping a frightened listen to, emphasising her desire to be vigilant for any indication of loved ones, regardless of whether it means she would never sleep again. This statement emphasises the speaker's intense emotional suffering and their frantic desire to hold on to the past. The word "vigil" refers to being aware and alert, frequently connected to a sense of responsibility or duty. The speaker keeps a vigil, both physically and emotionally, as they always watch for their loved ones' presence, even when they are asleep. This sentence emphasises how the speaker is struggling to deal with the loss and their inner distress.

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim; 'Shall I be won to hear; Dost think, fond, dreaming wretch, that I shall grant thy prayer? Or, better still, will melt my master's heart with groans? Ah! Sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones

'My master's low voice is low, his aspect bland and kind, But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind; And I am rough and rude, yet not more rough to see Than is the hidden ghost that has its home in me.' (Brontë 1846 - The Prisoner (A Fragment): p. 19)

This poem is a strong study of issues such as hope, desperation, and the conflict for freedom. The poem focuses on the speaker's experience with a captive woman imprisoned in a dungeon, and it investigates how the woman's feelings and experiences are affected by her imprisonment and her dreams for the future. The poem's examination of the woman's feelings and experiences reflects the ways in

which women's perspectives and life experiences are frequently marginalised or overlooked in traditional system, while conveying the woman's emotions and experiences demonstrates the power of women's writing to challenge conventional notions of language. The line *"Hoarse laughed the jailor grim; 'Shall I be won to hear";* emphasises the conflict that exists between both the speaker and the jailor along with the speaker's compassion for the prisoner. The term *"won"* implies that the speaker is attempting to convince the jailor to hear the prisoner's narrative, and the word *"to hear"* highlights how crucial it is to pay attention and comprehend. This line interprets the speakers for being imprisonment of being woman that the voice often unheard express the patriarchy system of society in Victorian era that voice of women not having the freedom of speech (Fincken, 2023).

In "Than is the hidden ghost that has its home in me," the speaker refers to a darker side of themselves that they refer to as a "hidden ghost," implying that this is something they are admitting. The poem address's themes of imprisonment, hope, and the conflict among the speaker's dark nature along with their desire towards redemption. The use of the term "ghost" in this context enhances the poem's overall image. The "ghost" emphasises the concept that the speaker is a prisoner not just of the world around them but additionally of their individual inner demons, serving as a metaphor of the speakers emotional.

2. Personal Emotion and Individual Experiences

Emily Brontë's poems emphasises personal experiences and emotions. Her poems explore into aspects of love, loss, and memory, which are firmly established in her particular individual experiences and emotions. Her poems are distinguished by their intense focused on her own experiences and emotions, which are strongly influenced by her own life and sufferings.

Sweet Love youth, forgive, if I forget thee, While the world's tide is bearing me along; Other desires and other hopes beset me, Hope which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

No later light has lighten'd up my heaven, No second morn has ever shone for me; All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given, All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee (Brontë 1845 - Remembrance: p. 10)

The line "While the world's tide is bearing me along" in Emily Brontë's "Remembrance" demonstrates ecriture feminine ideals through its metaphorical complexity, sensory experience, and research into feminine identity in connection to external forces. It portrays the speaker's journey through life's flows, remarking

on the difficulty of integrating society expectations and personal development. This phrase relates to the poem's general topic of reflection and self-discovery, as well as demonstrating writing's transforming capacity to explain and strengthen feminine experiences. The statement is understood to be a representation of the hardships and suffering that Victorian-era women experienced. The metaphor of the *"world's tide"* may be used to represent the social and cultural influences that limited women's life and made them feel like they were being swept along by the wind rather than in charge of their own fate.

The *Ecriture Feminine* emphasises the significance of women regaining their voices and choice, especially in establishing their own stories and experiences. The speaker seeks forgiveness, admitting that she may have forgotten the memory of her beloved despite the world's distraction and desire. *Ecriture Feminine* places a particular focus on embracing the complexity of feminine subjectivity and experience, that emerges in this acknowledgment of fallibility and vulnerability (Chakraborty, 2013). Moreover, the speaker's emotional connection with her lover, highlights how their relationship was the source of happiness. In the above interpretation, the speaker emphasizes her freedom of choice of memory and emotion. the recipients of memory, the speaker is engaged with it, reflecting the fluid and subjective nature of forgetting and remembering.

When those who were thy compeers, Equals in fortune and in years, Have seen their morning melt in tears, O clouded, smileless day; Blest, had they died untried and young, Before their hearts went wandering wrong, – Poor slaves, subdued by passions strong, A weak and helpless prey! (Brontë 1846 – Anticipation: p. 17)

In Emily Brontë's "Anticipation," the line "O clouded, smileless day" delves into issues of emotional control, societal expectations, and women's need for authenticity. This statement is in keeping with ecriture féminine's analysis of perceptual and emotional experiences along with its criticism of patriarchal systems that restrict women's freedom of expression. It depicts a vulnerable and introspective moment when the speaker considers how outside influences have affected her sense of self and a state of emotional health. The poem criticises the double standards placed on women, whereby they are expected to keep up an appearance of cheerfulness and positive regardless of their truthful emotional state, by characterising the day as "smileless.". The statement "Poor slaves, subdued by passions strong" questions patriarchal norms that repress women's identities and feelings while providing an opportunity for discussion of the complexity of feminine experiences. This phrase relates to the poem's examination of emotional honesty and the profound capability of writing to strengthen and enhance the voices of women. A figurative critique of society limitations on emotional expression may be observed in the usage of the term's "slaves" and "passions strong" in contrast to images of the natural world. Writing that is feminine frequently uses the natural world as a metaphor to examine and question social mores that restrict women's ability to express their emotions and express their individuality.

B. VICTORIAN WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO PATRIARCHAL OPPRESSION IN EMILY BRONTË'S SELECTED POEMS. 1. Women Response Against Patriarchy

All through the night, your glorious eyes Were gazing down in mine, And with a full heart's thankful sigh I blessed that watch devine! (Brontë 1843, Stars: p. 4)

This stanza of Emily Brontë's "Stars" exemplifies the characteristics of ecriture feminine through expressions of intimacy profundity of feeling, and metaphorical analysis of the natural world. It recognises the feminine attributes of affection, intuition, and self-expression and questions conventional gender roles by demonstrating the stars as critical participants throughout the speaker's emotional journey. This stanza emphasises the transformational potential of individual and emotional writing while encouraging the poem's main topic, finding refuge and connection in nature. Ecriture feminine emphasizes writing that challenges traditional forms of speech and patriarchal structures. The poem subverts conventional passive roles related to women and naturalizes the feminine nature as an engaged, nurturing force by showing the stars to be key participants in the speaker's emotional surroundings "gazing down in mine". In this poem, Bronte broke the stereotype that women in the Victorian era had pure minds by emphasising the societal position of women from the speaker's point of view when she is by herself in her bedroom. The poem's desire subject explored the sexuality and mind of Victorian women as they reflected on their romantic relationships. In addition, Bronte criticized the traditional Victorian feminism that persuaded women to live as "angels of home" in a patriarchal society (Murdoch, 1970). The strict traditions of the historical society, which included being silent, submissive, and sexually pure.

Love like wind-rose brier; Friendship like the holly-tree The holly is dark when the rose briar blooms, But which will bloom constantly?

The wild rise-brier is sweet in spring Its summer blossoms scent the air; Yet wait till winter comes again, And who will call the wind-brier fair! (Brontë 1850 – Love And Friendship: p. 65)

In this poem, Emily Brontë examines the differences between platonic friendship and romantic affection. The phrase "Platonic relationship," which comes from the Greek philosopher Plato, describes a close, loving friendship without any romantic or sexual desire. Literature frequently examines this kind of connection as an alternative to the typical romantic love story. It might have doubts typical ideas of intimacy and love and provide comfort, support, and intellectual challenge. The poem contrasts the fluctuating nature of romantic relationships with the enduring character of platonic friendship through imagery and metaphor. Beginning with the wild rose-briar, that blooms during summer and in the spring but disappears in the fall and winter, the speaker compares romantic love to this. By comparison, "holly trees" are green and consistent all year round, while platonic friendships do not. The two plants are compared to the seasons to emphasize how temporary romantic affection is and how permanent the platonic friendship is. The poem's themes are also reflected in the speaker's language choice. Additionally highlighting the contrast between the two is the use of adjectives like "sweet" to define the rosebriar and "dark" to define the holly-tree during the rose-briar's bloom. With an emphasis on a desire and conflict, her poems frequently portray love as multifaceted and complex. Women's experiences and viewpoints are frequently neglected or rejected under traditional norms, and the poem's themes of individualism, selfdiscovery, and rejecting society expectations are representative of this. In the poem, ecriture feminine subverts conventional ideas about writing and language by highlighting the speaker's intimate relationship to their feelings and experiences.

2. Women's Response on The Liberty

'Oh! Not for them, should we despair, The grave is drear, but they are not there: Their dust is mingled with sod, Their happy souls are gone to God! You told me this, and yet you sigh, And murmur that your friends must die Ah! My dear father, tell me why? For, if your former words were true, How useless would such sorrow be; As wise, to mourn the seed which grew Unnoticed on it parent tee, Because it fell in fertile earth, And spring up to a glorious birth Struck deep is root, and lifted high Its green boughs in the breezy sky. (Brontë 1846 – Faith and Despondency: p. 1)

Emily Brontë expresses of her thoughts of melancholy and her difficulties with faith. The poem dives into the speaker's need to reignite their decreasing enthusiasm for God. They regret the fact that they have forgotten God and that their affection for Him has become distant. The speaker then indicates their wish to get back in touch with God by expressing their desire to regain their faith and be able to pray once again. The poem also delves into the idea with hope and the speaker's attempt to regain their faith. The line "And spring up to a glorious birth" The speaker's willingness to express thoughts and feelings and seek relief represents their faith and desire to be more closely associated with God. Bronte's poem challenges traditional concepts of faith and spirituality, exemplifying ecriture feminine. The speaker's challenges with faith and thoughts of hopelessness are highly personal and reflect on their own experiences. The poem's use for imagery and metaphor provides an obvious representation about the speaker's spiritual challenges, which are firmly entrenched in their personal experiences and feelings. In this stanza, Bronte uses nature as metaphor for expressing the speakers feeling. The word "Spring" refers in profound emotional landscapes, the emergence of suppressed feelings, ideas, or desires can create a sense of freedom and promise. The phrase "its green boughs in the breezy sky" conveys a feeling of fluidity and movement. Écriture féminine highlights writing that avoids rigid, linear frameworks in favor of more fluid, dynamic expressiveness. Here, the "boughs" are described in connection to the "breezy sky," implying that they swing, move, and interact with the atmosphere around them. This represents a vision in which everything is interrelated and in continually movement, which is consistent with the concepts of écriture féminine, which frequently welcome change, transformation, and the dissolving of boundaries.

I will walk, but not in old heroic traces, And not in paths of high morality, And not among the half-distinguished face,

The clouded forms of long-past history (Brontë 1850 – XVII STANZAS: p. 80)

This stanza highlights Emily Brontë's tendency to confront criticism or rejection for her decisions or behaviour from others. The speaker claims that even if they receive criticism or warns often for defying society standards or expectations, they nonetheless come back with their personal natural instincts and desires. The desire emphasises the significance for woman to break with norms and limitation that patriarchal societies have imposed on females. It encourages women to write about their own bodies and desires, leading to now forms of subvert traditional language that are centred upon man. Such as stated in the ecriture feminine that women must have write their bodies, the line "And not in paths of high morality," express the speaker's freedom desire to break the society norms that controlled women and reject the traditional morals and determination to make their own path free of society limitations. The speakers tries to break the norms of women as being pure, because women has right to expressed themselves. In the line "And not among the half-distinguished face," Brontë places a subject following or behind these "halfdistinguished" faces. While "distinguished" frequently indicates a socially accepted or valued identity, this might be interpreted as a rejection of the norm. The ecriture feminine oppose prevailing identity conventions, particularly those imposed by patriarchal standards. Then, Brontë's statement might be read as a subtly critical statement against the tendency of society to partly acknowledge or respect people based on shallow or patriarchal standards, advocating instead for an acknowledgment of the subject's complete, complicated individuality. The use of "face" rather of a more particular identification such as "person" or "individual" tends to create a sense of fluidity. Faces are frequently used to represent identification, but in this case, they are "half-distinguished," implying that the identity is not completely developed, acknowledged, or appreciated. This is consistent with écriture féminine, which highlights the fluid, dynamic aspect of identity, particularly female identity, which is sometimes marginalised or misinterpreted under strict rules of society. Brontë's language promotes an everchanging identity, challenging patriarchal conventions that typically perpetuate static identities.

Strong I stand, though I have borne Anger, hate, and bitter scorn; Strong I stand, and laugh to see How mankind have fought with me.

Shade of history, I condemn All the puny ways of man; Free my heart, my spirit free. Beckon, and I'll follow thee (Brontë 1837 – XV: p. 108)

Through this poem, Emily Brontë describes the speaker's feeling and emotion about suffering of the speakers experienced. Emily Brontë's language conveys passion and emotional depth, immersing the reader in the speaker's inner world. The line "Strong I stand, though I have borne" shows emotional resilience in voicing the sense of dreamt freedom experienced by the speakers. The use of phrases like "strong," "borne," and "scorn" conveys a feeling of force and determination, yet the imagery of "anger, hate, and bitter scorn" provides emotional depth and complexity. The line "How mankind have fought with me" expresses a sense of pressure and struggle. The speaker gives the impression of being at conflict with "mankind," which is taken to stand for larger patriarchal and societal forces that want to silence or subdue the feminine voice and identity. By implying that the feminine has not been passive but actively resists these influences, the word "fought" emphasizes the speaker's active opposition. In the line of "Free my heart, my spirit free." expresses the speaker emotion for being emotionally trapped and voice for liberation from the injustices conducted on women by the rule of patriarchy. Throughout the ecriture feminine, this poem's primary topics of resilience, determination, and individual experience illustrate how women's lives and opinions differ from traditional language. The speakers voice a burning passion on behalf of women who experience repression and the demands of a society that restrict the freedom and lives of Victorian women, in order to gain freedom against the patriarchy that is always ruled by the society norms.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the expression of women's voices in Victorian literary works, particularly by Emily Brontë. Brontë's works, based on her experiences and representing Victorian women's lives, critique the oppression of women by societal norms and patriarchy. Brontë's poems explore themes of love, grief, and memories, deeply rooted in her unique experiences. Her creative language uses nature poetics words as metaphors, representing women as enigmatic figures integrating with their natural environments. The research examines the repression and response experienced by Victorian women in Brontë's poems. Repression was experienced by women who ideally became mothers and wives under societal rules, lacking freedom of education and expression. Brontë's poems also express the thoughts of women who lacked freedom of expression and choice and were forced to follow the norms of ideal women. Brontë's writing supports and challenges Victorian expectations of female writing, rejecting traditional narrative structures in favor of

more introspective, fragmented forms that emphasize the emotional depth and subjectivity of women. By using striking imagery and expressive language, Brontë expresses a uniquely feminine voice that challenges patriarchal limitations of the time. This research establishes Emily Brontë as an important figure in the study of feminist literary theory and Victorian literature, focusing on issues of inner struggle, desire, and solitary existence.

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