

GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN COSTANZA CASATI'S CLYTEMNESTRA

by Dinda Sabila

Submission date: 04-Aug-2025 12:09PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2724996735

File name: ROUGH_WOMEN_S_EMPOWERMENT_IN_COSTANZA_CASATI_S_CLYTEMNESTRA.docx (220.59K)

Word count: 5652

Character count: 31940



³
Volume 3 no 1
Tahun 2020

ISSN 2614-277X (Print)
ISSN 2621-814X (Online)

GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN COSTANZA CASATI'S *CLYTEMNESTRA*

Dinda Sabila¹, Muizzu Nurhadi S.S., M.Hum²
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya^{1,2}
dindaasabilaa666@gmail.com, muizzu@untag-sby.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the depiction of gender equality in Clytemnestra by Costanza Casati, using C.M. Hall's theory of women's empowerment as a guiding framework. The analysis centers on six key characteristics: autonomy, demands for equality, resilience, adaptability, moral vision, and solidarity. Applying an extrinsic approach through a gender-focused sociological lens, the research employs descriptive qualitative methods to uncover the complex internal motivations and deeper social interactions that shape the characters. The narrative reveals that resilience emerges as the most dominant characteristic. Despite being situated in a patriarchal system, gender equality is reinforced through women's perseverance and the presence of supportive male figures who respect and acknowledge female autonomy. The study demonstrates that gender equality in the novel is not merely symbolic but serves as a transformative element. It enables women to confront oppression, assume leadership, and build solidarity. Ultimately, the depiction of gender equality in Clytemnestra reflects a vision of empowerment driven by inner strength, ethical conviction, and a commitment to collective justice and progress.

Keywords: characteristics; gender equality; women empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Social norms refer to the implicit rules or shared expectations within a society about what behaviors are considered appropriate (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020: 3). These norms also extend to the concept of gender norms, which dictate how individuals are expected to behave based on their gender. According to Saguy et al. (2021: 1), gender differences are frequently perceived as biologically determined, reinforcing the idea that men and women belong to separate and distinct categories. These perceptions shape societal expectations and influence how individuals are treated based on their gender. This rigid division between male and female roles often pressures individuals to conform to traditional expectations, reinforcing unequal power dynamics. Such pressures contribute to the persistence of gender gaps, which are a clear manifestation of gender discrimination. As noted by Zhang (2024: 135), this discrimination disproportionately affects women, who continue to

face systemic disadvantages in both institutional structures and interpersonal relationships (Saguy et al., 2021: 1).

Literature plays a vital role in challenging and redefining traditional gender expectations by presenting alternative perspectives that question societal norms. Through its narratives, literature not only reflects cultural beliefs but also critiques and influences them. As Rajput and Ekka (2023: 1) explain, gender roles in English literature are deeply shaped by historical context, cultural values, and prevailing social norms. This highlights literature's function as both a mirror of society and a tool for transformation. By engaging with literary texts, readers gain insight into how gender roles have been socially constructed and how these roles have evolved or been resisted over time. Thus, literature becomes a powerful medium for examining and reshaping perceptions of gender.

Costanza Casati's novel *Clytemnestra* (2023) offers a powerful portrayal of gender equality while challenging traditional gender norms. The story follows Clytemnestra's evolution from a bold Spartan princess to a queen driven by vengeance, shaped by personal loss and systemic injustice. Rather than depicting her as a one-dimensional villain, Casati presents her as a multifaceted character—warrior, mother, and leader. This retelling reclaims Clytemnestra's narrative from classical portrayals, framing her actions as a response to betrayal, grief, and the limitations imposed on women. Through this lens, the novel emphasizes the strength of women who defy societal expectations and resist subjugation, offering a feminist reinterpretation of myth that centers female autonomy, agency, and resilience.

In society, the concepts of sex and gender are commonly used to define men and women (Assidiqi & Muttaqien, 2025: 25). Traditionally, gender is seen as a fixed identity based on biological sex, with men expected to display masculinity and women femininity (Fitriani & Sunggingwati, 2021: 290). This binary perspective creates rigid expectations that influence behavior, appearance, and social roles. As a result, women are often restricted to passive, domestic roles, limiting their personal growth and opportunities. These norms hinder gender

equality by reinforcing stereotypes and limiting women's potential in broader societal spheres.

Butler (1999: 13) argues that bodies have no inherent meaning until gender is assigned to them, highlighting that gender is not innate but formed through repeated behaviors shaped by social norms. In *Clytemnestra*, the female character challenges conventional gender roles by demonstrating strength and leadership, proving that gender is not biologically fixed but socially constructed and fluid. Through this portrayal, Casati critiques traditional gender expectations and offers a new lens on femininity and power. Her retelling shows how women can embrace both strength and femininity, reclaiming agency in a male-dominated world. This narrative reveals how gender performance can be a tool for challenging inequality and advancing a more inclusive understanding of gender identity.

Gender equality involves providing equal rights, fairness, and opportunities to all individuals, regardless of gender, and is essential to achieving human rights and social justice (Dutta, 2024: 3). Women play a key role in challenging traditional gender norms and can contribute to reshaping society, allowing both women and men to reach their full potential without restriction (Safitri & Marsih, 2024: 38). Women's empowerment supports this by promoting autonomy, equal access, and self-expression. According to Butler (1999: 24), when gender identities diverge from societal expectations, they are often dismissed or misunderstood. However, these deviations can disrupt conventional norms and open space for more diverse and transformative expressions of identity.

Gender equality is not just a question of fairness; it is also a crucial prerequisite for establishing a sustainable, peaceful, and affluent society (Shanti & Mitravinda, 2020: 1). Achieving gender equality, in the context of women's empowerment, enables women to engage in decision-making processes, have access to resources, and seize opportunities. It fosters independence, enhances self-assurance, and empowers women to lead lives of respect and meaning.

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the ongoing discussions of gender equality in literature by exploring how *Clytemnestra* portrays women's empowerment and female characters who embrace strength while reclaiming their

femininity. Rather than conforming to submissive roles, characters like Clytemnestra are depicted as capable, trained, and assertive. Using C.M. Hall's concept of women's empowerment as the analytical framework, the study examines key characteristics that define women's empowerment. Through this lens, the research emphasizes how literature can challenge traditional gender roles and promote a more balanced representation of women. Ultimately, it underscores the role of empowerment in advancing gender equality and advocating for fair treatment of women in society.

The novelty of this study lies in its approach to how *Clytemnestra* by Costanza Casati portrays gender equality through the lens of women's empowerment. Unlike previous studies that primarily analyze gender roles, patriarchal culture, or gender stereotypes, this research emphasizes how women's empowerment traits, by C.M. Hall, are illustrated in the novel to challenge traditional norms. By highlighting how female characters embrace their identities and uplift one another through shared experiences, the study provides a deeper understanding of gender equality beyond the confines of the normative gender system. It also explores how empowerment enables women to assert power while maintaining their femininity, rather than compromising it.

Women's empowerment is essential for achieving gender equality (Reshi & Sudha, 2020: 1353). By enabling women to define their own identities beyond conventional norms, empowerment allows them to seek leadership, independence, and personal fulfillment. Women regain control over their lives and choices by rejecting the binary framework and are free to accept both their strength and femininity on their terms. Therefore, to advance gender equality and empower women in every sphere of life, it is necessary to dismantle these societal structures. In this article, the author uses the idea of women's empowerment traits because it is pertinent to how this movement promotes gender equality and how it impacts the female characters.

This research carries significant social relevance by fostering conversations around women's empowerment and their right to occupy positions of power without abandoning their femininity. It challenges rigid traditional gender norms by

illustrating that qualities such as resilience, leadership, and strength are not contradictions to femininity but essential parts of it. By presenting these characteristics as natural components of female identity, the study advocates for a more inclusive and progressive understanding of gender. This perspective not only reshapes how women are represented in literature but also encourages broader societal change in how women's roles and identities are viewed and valued.

METHOD

This research adopts an extrinsic approach to examine gender equality in Costanza Casati's *Clytemnestra*. According to Wellek and Warren (1949), the extrinsic approach focuses on aspects outside the literary text, such as ideology, sociology, morality, and societal structures. In this context, the study uses a sociological lens with an emphasis on gender studies to analyze how external cultural and societal factors influence character behavior and development. It draws upon C.M. Hall's (1992) framework on women's empowerment, which highlights how social environments shape women's autonomy, resilience, and leadership.

The study utilizes a descriptive qualitative research method to investigate the narrative's thematic depth, character interactions, and symbolic representations (Susanto et al., 2024: 1). Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes numerical analysis and hypothesis testing, descriptive qualitative research provides a rich, detailed interpretation of social behavior, motivations, and internal dynamics (Creswell, 2014: 312). This method focuses on context and meaning, offering insight into the complexities of gender expression and empowerment without seeking definitive causal relationships. It prioritizes depth and nuance over generalizability (Busetto et al., 2020: 1).

This research utilizes C.M. Hall's concept of women's empowerment to analyze how *Clytemnestra* by Costanza Casati illustrates gender equality through its narrative elements, including dialogue, phrases, and sentence structures. The analysis focuses on six key empowerment characteristics: autonomy, demands for equality, resilience, adaptability, moral vision, and solidarity. Hall's framework examines how external influences—such as family, religion, work, global conditions, and feminist thought—shape women's perceptions, decisions, and

actions (Hall, 1992: 2). She emphasizes that factors like social class, ethnicity, and age impact the empowerment process, making it unique to each individual's experience. Empowerment, according to Hall, is not a fixed or uniform process; it does not require all six traits to be present to be valid. This study applies her theory as a foundation to understand empowerment as a dynamic process rooted in personal agency and collective transformation. By highlighting women's active engagement in their lives and environments, this research affirms empowerment as a critical component in achieving broader gender equality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research reveals that the novel portrays all six characteristics of women's empowerment, along with both supportive and oppressive environments influencing their movements. Among these characteristics, resilience stands out as the most dominant, as shown in Table 1. The story emphasizes how women navigate challenges and persist despite societal pressures, highlighting resilience as a key factor in their empowerment and in resisting systems that seek to limit their roles and autonomy.

Table 1. Characteristics of women's empowerment in *Clytemnestra*

No	Characteristics	Quotation Total
1.	Autonomy	98
2.	Demands for equality	68
3.	Resilience	124
4.	Adaptability	122
5.	Moral vision	122
6.	Solidarity	65
Total data		599

Discussion

This section discusses and analyzes the findings about gender equality. Costanza Casati's *Clytemnestra* presents gender equality by portraying powerful women whose traits align with C.M. Hall's idea of women's empowerment. This study examines how the novel portrays women's empowerment and emphasizes the supportive male figures in their lives who see their independence. The book establishes that the women are autonomous in making their own choices, from expressing their opposition to injustice, and innovating on conventional norms such as marriage, motherhood, and even religious beliefs to suit their needs. The novel creates an atmosphere where its female characters not only advocate for gender equality but also win the respect and acceptance of others.

Autonomy

In depicting autonomy, the main character, Clytemnestra, reflected this behavior through her actions, particularly when she chooses to defend her family. One striking example is her reaction to a degrading rumor about her mother, as the quotation suggests: *"Of course, she must have liked it," Clytemnestra heard a boy say in the gymnasium once. "The queen is different... Her people are more barbaric." Clytemnestra hit his face with a rock but didn't tell her mother. (Casati, 2023: 22).*

According to the context of the quotation above, the rumor originates from the belief that Helen's lack of resemblance to Tyndareus proves she is the daughter of Zeus, suggesting that Leda was assaulted. Because of Leda's Aetolian heritage, the boys gossip that she must have enjoyed the act, portraying her as wild and lacking honor. In response, Clytemnestra takes immediate action by hitting one of the boys with a rock, choosing to defend her mother's reputation without informing anyone.

This impulsive yet powerful gesture reflects her strong emotional connection to her family and a refusal to tolerate slander. It also highlights her emerging autonomy, as she acts independently and out of conviction. Her reaction reveals a deep sense of justice and unwavering loyalty, especially toward those she loves. Clytemnestra's defiance against such disrespect marks a critical step in her development as a bold, self-reliant figure who will not accept injustice in silence.

Another thing about autonomy that is visible is shown by Helen after her doubts and regret after marrying Menelaus. Over time, her dissatisfaction grows, especially when Prince Paris of Troy visits Sparta during Menelaus's absence. While her husband attends a funeral, Helen finds herself drawn to Paris and chooses to act on her feelings. She sleeps with him, fully aware of the consequences, and ultimately decides to leave Sparta and follow him to Troy. This decision is not merely a private matter but a public and political act of defiance, as Agamemnon's outrage illustrates; ¹ *"I have told you to tame your family!" he shouts. "And what have you done? You have let your sister fuck the enemy!"* ¹ *"Helen left Sparta with Prince Paris," he says. "They are headed for Troy at this very moment."* (Casati, 2023: 244).

Concerning the previous quotation, Helen's decision to leave Sparta with Paris, as shown through Agamemnon's angry reaction, demonstrates a bold act of autonomy on her part. Though married to Menelaus and bound by political expectations tied to the oath sworn by her former suitors, Helen chooses to follow her desires. Her actions reflect a clear rejection of traditional female roles and the loyalty expected of women. Instead of staying in a life that no longer fulfills her, she asserts control over her destiny. Even though her choice sparks political conflict, Helen prioritizes her freedom over societal demands, highlighting her independence and defiance.

Demands for equality

In her marriage to Agamemnon, Clytemnestra gives birth to four children: three daughters—Iphigenia, Electra, and Chrysothemis—and a son, Orestes. Among them, Iphigenia and Electra experience a deeply traumatic incident when they are nearly assaulted by Kyros and his brother while walking through the streets. The horror of the event is captured in Iphigenia's words as the quotation explains: ¹ *"This is what you get when you marry a Spartan woman. Unruly daughters."* Agamemnon's smile doesn't reach his eyes. *"You demand punishment, Eurybates?" "He wanted to rip our clothes," Iphigenia hisses, fire in her eyes. "He chased us in the streets shouting that we would be forced to marry him after he was done with us."* (Casati, 2023: 199).

In the quotation above, both girls take a stand and report the attempted assault to the megaron—the public hall where legal matters are addressed—to demand justice instead of remaining silent, even as Eurybates wants them to be punished for fighting back. Their decision to speak out and seek help shows their courage and their refusal to accept victimhood. In doing so, they challenge the societal expectation that women must passively endure violence. By confronting the threat and using legal channels to expose the injustice, Iphigenia and Electra claim their right to be heard and protected. Their resistance symbolizes a powerful act of empowerment and a demand for gender equality in a society that often silences women.

The demand for gender equality in Clytemnestra is not championed by female characters alone—some male characters also take a stand in support of women's rights. One example occurs after Helen is kidnapped and raped by Theseus. Rather than seeking justice, her father, Tyndareus, downplays the assault, prioritizing politics over his daughter's well-being as suggested in the quotation: *"Theseus is now king of Athens. Athens is powerful, and we can't go to war against it, not for such a reason." Such a reason. Clytemnestra wanted to tear out her hair, but Polydeuces preceded her. "Your daughter was raped by this man for his entertainment. He didn't even ask for her hand in marriage!"* (Casati, 2023: 89).

In the quotation above, Tyndareus's statement reduces Helen's trauma to a minor issue, treating it as an obstacle to diplomacy rather than a violation of her humanity. While Clytemnestra is filled with rage, it is Polydeuces who boldly voices the injustice. His response sharply contrasts with their father's indifference. By defending Helen, Polydeuces affirms that her body is not a political pawn but her own. His willingness to speak up emphasizes the significance of male allies in the fight for gender equality by recognizing and validating women's experiences, demanding justice, and challenging systems that attempt to silence them.

Resilience

One depiction of resilience is shown by Clytemnestra as her strength and independence are deeply woven into her identity. She believes that a meaningful

life involves the power to shape her future, rather than living in service of a man's ambitions. This conviction is made clear in her conversation with Tantalus, as the quotation suggests: *"I wasn't born to be in some other man's expedition." "What were you born for, then?" She waits a moment before replying. "My grandmother once said I was born to rule." Tantalus smiles. "All rulers must learn how to follow before they can lead." "Have you spent a long time following others? Before you were king?"* (Casati, 2023: 48).

Following the quotation above, when Clytemnestra declares that she was not born to be part of another man's journey, she asserts her desire for control over her life. Her reply to Tantalus reflects clarity and ambition to lead by making her own decisions and claiming authority over her destiny. She challenges the idea that leadership requires submission, questioning whether following others ever leads to true empowerment. For Clytemnestra, resilience is not just enduring difficulty; it is standing firm in her identity, rejecting limitations, and refusing to let others dictate her path.

Resilience becomes the core of Clytemnestra's strength as she endures years of torment under Agamemnon's rule. His cruelty leaves deep emotional scars that never truly heal, instead hardening into a quiet, steadfast resentment. Over time, that pain transforms into resolve. After years of suffering in silence, she finally chooses to take justice into her own hands, as shown in the following moment, as the quotation suggests: *Agamemnon is lying in the bath with his back to her, his large, scarred arms around the edges. There are no weapons in sight and no guards. She has made sure of that. This is it, then, she thinks. No false steps, no mistakes. She can't afford them.* (Casati, 2023: 366-367).

In the quotation above, Clytemnestra carefully seizes the opportunity she has long prepared for. Her internal monologue reminds her that this act must be flawless, that there is no room for error. She has eliminated every possible threat to her plan when Agamemnon is unarmed and unguarded. This moment is not a spontaneous act of rage but the culmination of years of pain, discipline, and planning. Her resilience is not passive endurance as it becomes focused, decisive action. She refuses to remain powerless beneath Agamemnon's dominance and

instead decides to take control of the situation by turning her long-standing suffering into agency. This act is not only about revenge, but it is also a reclamation of dignity, authority, and voice. Through this, Clytemnestra redefines resilience as the ability to rise through betrayal, bear the weight of grief, and choose a path that restores control over her own life.

Adaptability

In *Clytemnestra*, the female characters demonstrate that adapting to conventional roles does not equate to surrendering autonomy. Instead, they claim the right to make choices—especially about love and partnership—on their own terms. Penelope, for instance, clearly states that she will only marry a man who genuinely respects her and does not value male opinion above her dignity. Her refusal to be treated as a political tool or symbolic reward challenges the notion that women must submit to societal expectations. Instead, she redefines the traditional role of a wife, insisting on mutual respect and emotional equality in relationships. This sentiment is captured in the following quotation: “*Soon you will marry too, I presume,” Castor says. “Not before I find a man who truly respects me,” replies Penelope.* (Casati, 2023: 54).

This quiet but firm response reflects Penelope’s inner strength and unwavering sense of self-worth. Her condition signals her autonomy in shaping her future, echoing Clytemnestra’s earlier assertion that she chooses her path independently. Both women reflect a growing trend in the novel where women do not reject tradition outright, but instead adapt it to align with their principles. Penelope’s words are not rebellious in tone but revolutionary in meaning: she honors tradition while asserting her authority within it. Her approach represents a significant shift in how women navigate gender roles, not as passive participants, but as empowered individuals capable of shaping their lives with clarity, confidence, and intention. Through this lens, tradition becomes a framework to be redefined rather than obeyed.

Clytemnestra also embraces traditional roles of wife and mother, not as acts of submission, but as conscious choices to reclaim purpose and identity in her life. Although she harbors deep resentment toward Agamemnon for murdering her first

husband and child, the birth of her children becomes a turning point. Through them, she finds a renewed sense of meaning and strength. This transformation is illustrated in the following quotation: ¹ *Agamemnon can't take this from her. She has carried them in her womb, nursed them, watched over them at night, their breath in her ear, their little hands fitting in hers. She has clutched her children one by one, shielded them until they have grown, and in return, they have given her her life back.* (Casati, 2023: 165).

The quotation above shows that motherhood becomes more than a traditional duty, and it grows into a source of healing and empowerment for Clytemnestra. Though her marriage to Agamemnon is unwanted and shaped by violence, she does not allow it to consume her identity. Instead, she reclaims agency by choosing to invest emotionally and physically in her children. She nurtures them not out of obligation, but as an act of personal will, an act that restores what was once taken from her. Her children symbolize resilience, hope, and the possibility of building something meaningful from pain. Clytemnestra's experience shows that empowered women are not defined by the roles they occupy, but by how they choose to inhabit those roles. Rather than rejecting wifehood or motherhood entirely, she redefines them on her terms, turning them into spaces of strength, defiance, and renewal. Her adaptability proves that even within the confines of tradition, there is room for resistance, healing, and self-determination.

Religious belief, like marriage and motherhood, is another traditional role that takes a complex and transformative form in Clytemnestra's life. Unlike her mother Leda, who follows Artemis with deep devotion, Clytemnestra expresses little reverence for the gods in a conventional sense. However, she does not reject divine stories entirely. Instead, she reshapes mythological narratives, especially those involving Artemis, into tools of empowerment and moral instruction for her daughters. This reinterpretation becomes clear in the following quotation: ¹ *"Our tutor in Sparta taught this song to me and my sisters," she says. "Do you know the story of the goddess Artemis and the hunter Actaeon?" Electra scrutinizes her mother, her eyes narrowed. "He watched her as she was bathing?" Iphigenia says. "And called the rest of his hunting party to watch too?" "He was driven by lust, as*

men often are. But Artemis punished him and turned him into a stag.” (Casati, 2023: 197).

Through this quotation, Clytemnestra uses Artemis’s myth not as a religious ritual, but as a lesson in justice and power. Clytemnestra uses the myth of Artemis and Actaeon to teach her daughters to recognize and resist injustice, reframing the tale into one of female rage and divine retribution. Rather than presenting religion as passive worship, she transforms it into a source of empowerment. By encouraging Electra and Iphigenia to see themselves in goddesses like Artemis, she instills in them resilience, courage, and the right to demand justice. Clytemnestra’s spirituality becomes a radical reinterpretation of tradition—one that equips the next generation with moral clarity and emotional strength rather than submission. Her daughters learn to view divine power not as something distant or fearful, but as a reflection of their own agency and capacity to defend themselves. This approach redefines spirituality as a tool for survival and empowerment in a world that often seeks to silence women. Clytemnestra’s teachings show that empowered women do not need to reject religion; instead, they can adapt and reshape its narratives to challenge oppressive norms and inspire change through stories that affirm dignity, boundaries, and inner strength.

Moral vision

In expressing a shared moral vision, the novel presents women as sources of strength for one another through their common experiences. Clytemnestra consistently demonstrates empathy toward other women, even those who might traditionally be viewed as rivals, such as Cassandra, Agamemnon’s new concubine. Cassandra is not merely another woman in Clytemnestra’s household because she is a war captive and claimed as a sex slave by Agamemnon after the Greek victory at Troy. Rather than seeing Cassandra with jealousy or disdain, Clytemnestra recognizes her as another victim who’s equally harmed by the structures of war and male dominance. This sense of empathy becomes deeply evident when Aegisthus kills Cassandra after mistaking Clytemnestra’s intentions. Rather than reacting with satisfaction, Clytemnestra is overcome with grief, as illustrated in the quotation: *“She did nothing to you! Why did you have to sacrifice her?” she shouts, spitting*

at him. The expression on Aegisthus's face shifts. Pain and fear—fear of her—are tearing him apart. "I thought you wanted her dead," he says. She sinks her head into Cassandra's robe and weeps. She weeps for the Trojan girl, but mostly for everything she has lost. (Casati, 2023: 372).

In the quotation above, Clytemnestra's heartbreak emphasizes her refusal to see other women as collateral damage. Cassandra's youth and desperation recall Iphigenia, Clytemnestra's daughter, reminding her of the recurring cycle of women being sacrificed for the ambitions and egos of men. Her grief becomes more than personal as it evolves into a mourning for all women caught in the machinery of patriarchal violence. Clytemnestra's empathy in this moment does not stem from weakness but from profound moral strength. She confronts Aegisthus not simply because he defied her will, but because he betrayed the moral principle she clings to in which women, no matter their status, deserve to be protected from harm, not added to its toll.

Clytemnestra's response transforms her into more than just a grieving mother or vengeful queen; she becomes a symbol of female solidarity in the face of shared suffering. She does not let betrayal harden her into cruelty. Instead, she allows herself to feel deeply, to mourn openly, and to extend compassion even when it brings more pain. Her tears for Cassandra represent a defiance of the roles assigned to women as passive, submissive, and enemies to one another. Through her sorrow, she upholds the belief that empowered women support one another in the face of injustice. They do not just endure; they honor the pain of others and find strength in mutual recognition. This shared pain binds them, creating not division, but unity against the violence that seeks to reduce them to silence.

Solidarity

In Clytemnestra, solidarity among women is taught and internalized from an early age, shaping their identities and giving purpose to their actions. Drawing from C.M. Hall's concept, this form of solidarity is grounded in shared values and visible actions that promote social change. In Spartan society, these values are

encapsulated in the motto: ¹“Survival, courage, and strength are our duties” (Casati, 2023: 25). The significance of this motto becomes apparent when a woman is harmed, triggering a united emotional response from others. This is demonstrated when Clytemnestra notices a bruise on a servant’s neck and instantly recognizes it as a mark of Agamemnon’s violence, as shown in the quotation: ¹“It was Agamemnon, wasn’t it?” Clytemnestra says. The servant nods. The bruise is turning green at its edges. “Did he force himself on you?” Clytemnestra persists, her voice cracked with anger. Timandra stops tugging, alert, scanning her sisters’ faces. The helot shakes her head. “He isn’t interested in servants,” she mumbles. ¹“We should tell Mother,” Helen says. “This isn’t the first time it has happened. Have you seen those poor women who prepare his bath?” (Casati, 2023: 75)

In the quotation above, the moment demonstrates how solidarity manifests through women’s mutual recognition of harm and refusal to remain indifferent. Clytemnestra’s response is filled with unfiltered anger and moral clarity as she speaks up, even when the victim downplays the situation. Helen immediately follows with a reminder that this abuse is a recurring pattern, not a single offense. Their reactions carry the weight of a shared moral duty. This moment exemplifies the quiet, persistent strength women hold when they stand together against the exploitation of power. Though they do not act immediately, their recognition and open discussion of the violence is in itself an act of defiance against the silence imposed by patriarchal authority. In a world where male dominance thrives on women’s isolation and submission, this mutual validation and concern become powerful tools of resistance. They recognize the importance of bearing witness and voicing discomfort, even when the system does not support justice. Clytemnestra and Helen’s solidarity challenges the normalization of such acts, creating a moral line that refuses to be crossed without acknowledgment. Their bond, shaped through observation, shared pain, and collective memory, plants the seed for a deeper resistance—one rooted in empathy, truth, and sisterhood.

Solidarity among empowered individuals extends beyond women, as demonstrated through Castor’s meaningful bond with his sisters. Castor’s actions display genuine care and an acute awareness of the social dynamics that threaten

female autonomy. He expresses his concern to Clytemnestra and Helen by warning them about men who prioritize the opinions of other men over the dignity of women, as emphasized in the quotation: "*Men who find solace only in other men are to be distrusted,*" Castor told Clytemnestra and Helen one morning as they were watching Theseus and Pirithous fight in the gymnasium. "*They don't respect anyone else, let alone a woman.*" (Casati, 2023: 87).

In the quotation above, Castor's observation highlights how solidarity is not restricted by gender. His protective and perceptive role in his sisters' lives reveals not only familial affection but also a shared moral vision. Castor speaks from a place of experience and discernment. His warning, delivered while the group watches Theseus and Pirithous—two figures emblematic of hypermasculinity and entitlement—makes his insight especially relevant in the context of patriarchal power structures. Castor's message is not meant to control his sisters but to equip them with the awareness necessary to navigate a world that often devalues them. His willingness to speak out against harmful masculine norms distinguishes him as a rare male ally, one who does not reinforce hierarchy but instead uses his voice to challenge it. In doing so, he reinforces that empowered women thrive not only through sisterhood but also through the presence of men who respect their agency and actively promote it.

This moment illustrates that solidarity, when rooted in honesty and mutual respect, has the power to transcend traditional gender roles. Castor's support becomes a crucial form of empowerment, helping his sisters remain vigilant and assertive in environments that are designed to suppress them. His words embody a form of masculine care that is both protective and progressive by seeing empowerment not as a competition but as a shared human right.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis presented in the previous chapter, it becomes clear that Clytemnestra by Costanza Casati presents gender equality through its consistent portrayal of empowered women. The novel emphasizes that resilience stands as the most defining characteristic of empowerment. By embodying resilience, women are able to fulfill their lives with purpose and gain strength not

in isolation, but through solidarity, especially among fellow women, which serves as the foundation for bravery, emotional strength, and leadership. Characters such as Clytemnestra, Helen, Penelope, Iphigenia, and Electra display their power through protectiveness, emotional endurance, and unwavering determination. Their empowerment emerges from shared support and collective values that allow them to resist injustice and reclaim their agency. Helen's choice to leave her marriage exemplifies her assertion of independence, while Clytemnestra's burning hatred for Agamemnon transforms into resilience and justice on behalf of those she has lost.

Additionally, support from male characters who honor women's autonomy reinforces the novel's depiction of gender equality. Castor's warning to his sisters about the misogyny among men who disregard women's worth reveals how men can become allies in the struggle by challenging patriarchal attitudes. Furthermore, Polydeuces's act of defending Helen after her assault, especially when Tyndareus dismisses it for political reasons, illustrates the importance of male solidarity in acknowledging women's experiences. Through these interconnected relationships, the novel asserts that gender equality is not solely about women rising alone; it is about a shared commitment to dismantling oppressive structures and uplifting one another. Resilience, in this context, becomes the root of all empowering traits, enabling women to survive, resist, lead, and transform their world through courage, loyalty, and collective strength.

GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN COSTANZA CASATI'S CLYTEMNESTRA

ORIGINALITY REPORT

12%	12%	0%	1%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	d-pdf.com Internet Source	11%
2	Submitted to Christian Community Ministries Student Paper	<1%
3	Submitted to Universitas PGRI Palembang Student Paper	<1%
4	Submitted to Victoria University Student Paper	<1%

Exclude quotes Off
Exclude bibliography Off

Exclude matches Off

GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN COSTANZA CASATI'S CLYTEMNESTRA

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

/0

PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7

PAGE 8

PAGE 9

PAGE 10

PAGE 11

PAGE 12

PAGE 13

PAGE 14

PAGE 15

PAGE 16

PAGE 17