

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN EMILY BRONTË'S WUTHERING HEIGHTS

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INTRODUCTION

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After Mr. Earnshaw dies, Hindley becomes the master of Wuthering Heights and relegates Heathcliff to servant status.

Catherine marries the wealthy Edgar Linton, and Heathcliff marries Edgar's sister to inherit her money.

Catherine dies after giving birth to a daughter named Cathy. Edgar's sister flees Heathcliff's abuse and gives birth to a son named Linton.

Heathcliff gains ownership of Wuthering Heights. Edgar and Linton die, and Heathcliff dies after realizing that he wishes to rejoin his beloved Catherine.

❖ **Emily Brontë's life**

Bronte is a British writer. She is the author of Wuthering Heights, now considered a classic of English literature.

About Emily Bronte Emily lived a quiet life in Yorkshire with her father the Reverend, her brother Branwell, and her sisters Charlotte and Anne. Her two sisters wrote and published poetry and novels under the pseudonym Ellis Bell.

Emily wrote Wuthering Heights in 1847, and it was the only published novel of hers to ever be so popular. Emily died in 1848.Emily Bronte published her novel "Wuthering Heights" as two volumes in 1847. Initially it received mixed reviews from critics due to its innovative structure based on doomed love, social commentary and mystery. It was condemned for depiction of immoral passion, but later the novel became a classic.

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Amelie Bronte was born on the thirtieth of July 1818 in the city of Thornton in the county called Yorkshire to poor parents, Mary Branwell and Father Patrick Bronte. She was the younger sister of Charlotte Bronte and the fifth of six children. In 1824 the family moved to Haworth, an area flourishing with their talents for English literature.

her personality Emily Bronte remains a mysterious figure and a challenge for biographers because information about her is sparse and sparse,[1] due to her solitary nature and being somewhat isolated.[2][3] She also does not appear to be the type to have friends outside the family. [4] Her sister Charlotte remains the main source of information about her, although she is her older sister but decided to write publicly about her shortly after her death, Charlotte is not an impartial witness.[5] In 1850, Charlotte wrote: My sister's disposition was not naturally gregarious, and circumstances fostered her tendencies to solitude, but she went to church sometimes and sometimes walked on the hills, and she seldom crossed the threshold of the house. Although she was benevolent to others, she did not mingle with them.

❖ Her Works

The writing style of Emily Bronte was figurative and self-effacing interspersed with poetic prose. Emily was famous for romantic poetic style because she explored the themes of nature, solitude, romanticism, religion, loss, death, revenge and class. Her popular poems include “Faith and Despondency,” “Anticipation,” “Fall, Leaves, Fall,” “A Little While, A Little While,” “Me Thinks this Heart,” “A Little Budding Rose,” “Remembrance,” “A Day Dream,” “A Death-Scene,” “Come, Walk with Me,” “Encouragement,” “At Castle Wood,” “The Philosopher,” “Stars,” “Plead for Me” and “Interrogation.”(6)

❖ **characters**

– **Heathcliff**

An orphan brought to live at Wuthering Heights by Mr. Earnshaw, Heathcliff falls into an intense, unbreakable love with Mr. Earnshaw's daughter Catherine. After Mr. Earnshaw dies, his resentful son Hindley abuses Heathcliff and treats him as a servant. Because of her desire for social prominence, Catherine marries Edgar Linton instead of Heathcliff. Heathcliff's humiliation and misery prompt him to spend most of the rest of his life seeking revenge on Hindley, his beloved Catherine, and their respective children (Hareton and young Catherine). A powerful, fierce, and often cruel man, Heathcliff acquires a fortune and uses his extraordinary powers of will to acquire both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, the estate of Edgar Linton.

– **Edgar Linton**

Well-bred but rather spoiled as a boy, Edgar Linton grows into a tender, constant, but cowardly man. He is almost the ideal gentleman: Catherine accurately describes him as “handsome,” “pleasant to be with,” “cheerful,” and “rich.” However, this full assortment of gentlemanly characteristics, along with his civilized virtues, proves useless in Edgar's clashes with his foil, Heathcliff, who gains power over his wife, sister, and daughter.

– **Lockwood**

Lockwood's narration forms a frame around Nelly's; he serves as an intermediary between Nelly and the reader. A somewhat vain and presumptuous gentleman, he deals very clumsily with the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. Lockwood comes from a more domesticated region of England, and he finds himself at a loss when he witnesses the strange household's disregard for the social conventions that have always structured his world. As a narrator, his vanity and unfamiliarity with the story occasionally lead him to misunderstand events.

– **Nelly Dean**

Nelly Dean (known formally as Ellen Dean) serves as the chief narrator of Wuthering Heights. A sensible, intelligent, and compassionate woman, she grew up essentially alongside Hindley and Catherine Earnshaw and is deeply involved in the story she tells. She has strong feelings for the characters in her story, and these feelings complicate her narration.

– **Hindley Earnshaw**

Catherine’s brother, and Mr. Earnshaw’s son. Hindley resents it when Heathcliff is brought to live at Wuthering Heights. After his father dies and he inherits the estate, Hindley begins to abuse the young Heathcliff, terminating his education and forcing him to work in the fields. When Hindley’s wife Frances dies shortly after giving birth to their son Hareton, he lapses into alcoholism and dissipation.

– **Young Catherine**

For clarity’s sake, this SparkNote refers to the daughter of Edgar Linton and the first Catherine as “young Catherine.” The first Catherine begins her life as Catherine Earnshaw and ends it as Catherine Linton; her daughter begins as Catherine Linton and, assuming that she marries Hareton after the end of the story, goes on to become Catherine Earnshaw. The mother and the daughter share not only a name, but also a tendency toward headstrong behavior, impetuosity, and occasional arrogance. However, Edgar’s influence seems to have tempered young Catherine’s character, and she is a gentler and more compassionate creature than her mother.

– **Linton Heathcliff**

Heathcliff’s son by Isabella. Weak, sniveling, demanding, and constantly ill, Linton is raised in London by his mother and does not meet his father until he is thirteen years old, when he goes to live with him after his mother’s death. Heathcliff despises Linton, treats him contemptuously, and, by forcing him to marry the young Catherine, uses him to cement his control over Thrushcross Grange after Edgar Linton’s death. Linton himself dies not long after this marriage.(7)

❖ **Summary Wuthering Heights:**

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Nelly, Lockwood’s housekeeper, recalls working at Wuthering Heights and tells Lockwood how Mr. Earnshaw adopted a boy called Heathcliff. Mr. Earnshaw’s daughter, Catherine, develops a close friendship with Heathcliff while his son, Hindley, envies Heathcliff’s close relationship with Mr. Earnshaw.

After Mr. Earnshaw dies, Hindley becomes the master of Wuthering Heights and relegates Heathcliff to servant status.

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Catherine dies after giving birth to a daughter named Cathy. Edgar's sister flees Heathcliff's abuse and gives birth to a son named Linton.

Heathcliff gains ownership of Wuthering Heights. Edgar and Linton die, and Heathcliff dies after realizing that he wishes to rejoin his beloved Catherine.

The main conflict in the novel is between the desires of the heart and the economic and social constraints on that desire posed by family and society.

Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff love each other deeply and would love to get married, but Heathcliff, degraded to a farmhand by his older stepbrother Hindley, makes that an unrealistic possibility. Catherine does the practical thing and marries the rich man in the neighborhood, Edgar Linton. Heathcliff runs off in despair and comes back after a mysterious absence of three years, having fashioned himself into a gentleman. Because of her marriage, Catherine and Heathcliff cannot be together, as Linton increasingly won't even endure Heathcliff's presence. The separation eventually kills Catherine and leaves Heathcliff in a state of grief and rage.(8)

❖ **PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF WUTHERING HEIGHTS**

Psychological interpretation of Wuthering Heights talks about relationships between individuals and society. It can also be taken as a representation of society where situations and vistas change thinking and mental actions of people. We will use some Freudian theories while studying different characters and their implication on society.

According to Freud, there are three different kinds of mental processes that result in three kinds of personalities. Those are Id, Ego and Superego.

Id is related to man's animalistic instinctive and attitude. It seeks pleasure in pain and roughness of life. According to Psychology, two most important characteristics of id are pleasure and death principles or pain, which is also known as Thanatos. In Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff represents all the qualities of id. His losses of identity, untamed nature, and vengeful attitude towards society are all the traits of id. Id shows primitive feelings of human beings and remains unaffected by time. So is the case with Heathcliff. Until his death, his vengeful nature and his desperation remain unchanged. He shows roughness of life, on which love has no effect. It remains embedded in his unconscious which is also

referred to as a ‘dark continent’ in psychology, a continent where all the evils hide and justify themselves.

Ego relates to society. It is said to be self-reliant and has an internal sense of right and wrong. Full of emotions and excitement, ego is not wild as id. Catherine possesses the characteristics of ego in *Wuthering Heights*. She knows what is right and what is wrong and has space to accept or reject something. She tests the patience of id (Heathcliff) and tries to keep a balance between id and superego, which is Linton in this novel. It is said that ego has the capacity to improve and when improved, it becomes superego. Because what one person (ego) thinks, right and wrong, if coincides with the thinking of a larger group of people, it results in society (superego). As we see, that when ego (Catherine) stays at superego’s (Linton) for three months, she transforms into superego.

Superego, as discussed above, is society. It manifests the qualities of sophistication, balance and proper behavior. It can never be wrong completely. It is full of love and compassion and morality as well. Linton is portraying superego in this novel, full of civilized culture, proper behavior. He is an educated person who knows how to handle difficult situations and work hard. Unlike Heathcliff, which is slave to his unconscious, Linton uses his conscious and judges all the situations dispassionately.

This novel also shows the ‘alternation of generation’ quality i.e. in the next generation, all the characters and their personas are altered. In the next young generation, young Catherine has now improved to superego, Linton changes from superego to ego and Hareton represents id.(9)

❖ **The Futility of Revenge**

Revenge is a central focus of Heathcliff’s life and, in fact, drives most of the decisions he makes later in the novel. Though Heathcliff gains some bitter satisfaction through causing pain for others, he does not achieve any personal happiness. Instead, his single-minded pursuit of revenge leaves him empty and exhausted. After being tormented by Hindley as a child, Heathcliff becomes obsessed with the idea of getting revenge. By taking advantage of Hindley’s debt, Heathcliff gains control of *Wuthering Heights* and becomes the master of the house, a great irony considering he was once forced to work there as a de facto servant.

Heathcliff seeks further revenge on Hindley by raising Hareton, who should have grown up to be a gentleman and a landowner, like a common servant, forcing on the boy the same indignity Hindley had once heaped on Heathcliff. Heathcliff is fully aware of his cruelty. As he explains to Nelly, he understands and desire Hareton’s suffering: “I know what he suffers now, for instance, exactly—it is merely a beginning of what he

shall suffer, though.” Moreover, Heathcliff has the perverse pleasure of knowing Hareton loves and respects him no matter how badly he treats him .

Heathcliff eventually achieves his entire plan of revenge, including marrying Cathy and Linton so that he also gains control of the Grange. However, Heathcliff’s death, alone and desperate for his lost love, represents the futility of his struggle. Though he achieved his desired revenge on those, living and dead, who had wronged him, he remains unfulfilled in his true desire—to be reunited with Cathy, which can only be achieved in death.(10)

❖ Love

‘My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I’m well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff!’

Catherine describes to Nelly the different types of love that she has for Heathcliff and Edgar Linton. While her love for Edgar will change over time, Catherine sees her love for Heathcliff as solid and eternal, as if she and Heathcliff inhabit the same body. Catherine refuses to give up either relationship: Edgar brings her the comfort and status she’s always desired, but Heathcliff satisfies her passion and completes her soul. This love triangle and conflict becomes the intertwining theme of love throughout the novel.

‘You know as well as I do, that for every thought she spends on Linton she spends a thousand on me! . . . If he loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn’t love as much in eighty years as I could in a day. And Catherine has a heart as deep as I have: the sea could be as readily contained in that horse-trough as her whole affection be monopolized by him...It is not in him to be loved like me . . . ’

Here, Heathcliff passionately speaks with Nelly about how his capacity to love Catherine far exceeds Edgar’s ability to experience love. This discussion comes as Nelly tries to convince Heathcliff to leave Catherine alone in order to save her from physical and mental distress. Heathcliff’s declaration echoes Catherine’s passionate description of her love for him at the beginning of the novel. Their passion consumes them, depicting a detrimental and destructive aspect of love.

The intimacy thus commenced grew rapidly; though it encountered temporary interruptions. Earnshaw was not to be civilized with a wish, and my young lady was no philosopher, and no paragon of patience; but both their minds tending to the same point—one loving and desiring to esteem,

and the other loving and desiring to be esteemed—they contrived in the end to reach it.

Nelly describes to Mr. Lockwood how young Catherine and Hareton Earnshaw fell in love. She depicts a thoughtful, mutual relationship, where both young Catherine and Hareton Earnshaw accept each other's weaknesses while giving to one another what they need. The balance in their relationship contrasts with the destructive love of Catherine and Heathcliff. Young Catherine and Hareton Earnshaw represent the theme of healthy true love in this novel as their newfound love ends a decades-long conflict between the Linton and Earnshaw families.(11)

❖ Critical Essays Heathcliff's Obsession

Throughout *Wuthering Heights* two distinct yet related obsessions drive Heathcliff's character: his desire for Catherine's love and his need for revenge. Catherine, the object of his obsession, becomes the essence of his life, yet, in a sense, he ends up murdering his love. Ironically, after her death, Heathcliff's obsession only intensifies.

Heathcliff's love for Catherine enables him to endure Hindley's maltreatment after Mr. Earnshaw's death. But after overhearing Catherine admit that she could not marry him, Heathcliff leaves. Nothing is known of his life away from her, but he returns with money. Heathcliff makes an attempt to join the society to which Catherine is drawn. Upon his return, she favors him to Edgar but still he cannot have her. He is constantly present, lurking around Thrushcross Grange, visiting after hours, and longing to be buried in a connected grave with her so their bodies would disintegrate into one. Ironically, his obsession with revenge seemingly outweighs his obsession with his love, and that is why he does not fully forgive Catherine for marrying Edgar.

After Catherine's death, he must continue his revenge — a revenge that starts as Heathcliff assumes control of Hindley's house and his son — and continues with Heathcliff taking everything that is Edgar's. Although Heathcliff constantly professes his love for Catherine, he has no problem attempting to ruin the life of her daughter. He views an ambiguous world as black and white: a world of haves and have-nots. And for too long, he has been the outsider. That is why he is determined to take everything away from those at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange who did not accept him. For Heathcliff, revenge is a more powerful emotion than love.(12)

❖ **The dilemma of marriage**

The only time when we see the ideal of a marriage for love, from the beginning to the end of *Wuthering Heights* is when young Catherine marries Hareton Earnshaw at the end of the novel. Other than that, what we get is a continuous obstacle course between true love and the importance of social status, mostly starting with the first Catherine.

Although Heathcliff and Catherine love each other and share a form of cosmic connection nearly, the fact remains that Catherine clearly preferred Edgar over Heathcliff because she would become the richest woman in the county, and appearances mean more to her than anything else. This, however, is not a behavior inherent only to Catherine: It was the way society viewed marriage during her lifetime. However, we also can see that Catherine never respects the institution of marriage, as she openly demonstrates over and over that she still and always will love Heathcliff.

Similarly, Heathcliff ends up marrying Isabella, Edgar's sister, because he would become the sole heir to her estate once Edgar dies, or she dies herself. He does it as a way to avenge the marriage between Catherine and Edgar and, at the same time, remain close enough to monitor all of the activities between the marriage. He also wants to ensure that he makes them suffer like he, himself, suffered at the hands of Hindley plus the humiliation he received from Catherine's refusal.

Additionally, Heathcliff makes the young Catherine marry his invalid son just to take control of *Wuthering Heights* at the time of his son's death. In that time, the males took control of the wife's possessions at the time of marriage. Plus, what best punishment to Edgar than to have his beloved daughter marry the son of his nemesis, Heathcliff?

Therefore, *Wuthering Heights* is far from depicting the ideal love connection, nor the best love story there is. Even the young Catherine and Hareton seem to hate each before they make their ultimate love connection. All of the marriages are orchestrated to serve a specific purpose, and marriage is only seen once as a conduit for true love.(13)

CONCLUSION

The author's purpose of writing *Wuthering Heights* is to describe a twisted and dark romance story. Thus, the author conveys the theme of one of life's absolute truths: love is pain. In addition, the mood of the book is melancholy and tumultuous. Lastly, the single most important incident of the book is when Heathcliff arrives to Edgar Linton's residence in the Granges unannounced to see Catherine's state of health. Heathcliff's single visit overwhelmed Catherine to the point of death. Emily Brontë's purpose in writing *Wuthering Heights* is to depict unfulfilled love in a

tragic romance novel and hence the theme of *Wuthering Heights* is love is pain. Emily Bronte reveals an important life lesson that love is not sufficient for happiness and if anything, stirs up more agony. This message is important because, although it is difficult to accept, the message is devastatingly honest. In *Wuthering Heights*, two characters named Heathcliff and Catherine loved each other immensely. However, their pride and adurance disabled them from making any progress on their romantic relationship. In fact, Heathcliff and Catherine purposely hurt each another through reckless and cruel actions. The author is exemplifying a recurring theme in history that love is associated with pain. The message allows readers to be aware that love is not constant perfection and happiness *Wuthering Heights*'s mood is melancholy and tumultuous. As a result, the book gives off a feeling of sorrow and chaos. For example, Catherine's marriage with Edgar Linton made Heathcliff jealous and angry. In retaliation, Heathcliff married Edgar's sister, Isabella, to provoke Catherine and Edgar. Heathcliff and Isabella's marriage ignited a chaotic uproar with Edgar and Catherine because Linton disapproved of Heathcliff's character, and Catherine loved Heathcliff in spite of being married to Edgar. Inside, Catherine wanted to selfishly keep Heathcliff to herself. Their relationships all had tragic endings because Catherine died giving birth to Edgar's child. Isabella also died, leaving behind her young son. Heathcliff and Edgar resented each other because of misery they experienced together. The transition of the mood in the story is from chaotic to somber

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