

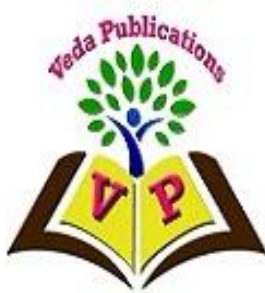


THE DUALITY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

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ABSTRACT



Wuthering Heights, the most interesting novel, presents the duality of human existence. It describes the female vampire in the character of Catherine Earnshaw Linton. Catherine and Heathcliff create whole selves only when fused together. In objection to this relationship with Heathcliff, Catherine feels that her acceptance of Edgar's marriage proposal is an acceptance of her self-imprisonment in the role of lady, wife, and mother. Catherine accepts the fact that her heart is with Heathcliff, but her mind suggests that she should marry Edgar Linton and does not like to marry an orphan who has to dance according to her brother. Heathcliff overhears this fact, and leaves *Wuthering Height*. The peaceful serenity of Catherine is broken with the return of Heathcliff, with a changed personality in order to take revenge. Heathcliff and Catherine have dual existence as vampirism is in. Catherine's wish is to return to the earth as a vampire after her death. Twenty years later Heathcliff returns to Catherine's grave and is shocked to find that Catherine's appearance had not changed, decomposed, despite the passage of nearly twenty years. Later on Heathcliff faces Catherine and is changed into a vampire himself. Catherine's conversion into a vampire is an escape from the social and psychological restrictions of her role as wife, lady, and mother.

Keywords: *Duality, Human, Existence, Relationship, Imprisonment, Restriction, Vampire, Revenge.*

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INTRODUCTION

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is the most interesting novel as it presents the duality of human existence. It is in the violent figures of Catherine and Heathcliff striving to identify themselves as human, but disrupting all around them with their monstrous appetite for an inhuman kind of intercourse, and finally disintegrated from within by the very eagerness out of which they are made.

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* portrays a remarkable maturity and complexity in the management of the technique of narration. She does not use the techniques which were in vogue in her time. One of the most remarkable and incredible things about *Wuthering Heights* is its bleak and rugged setting. The strange events recounted in the novel are difficult to imagine. The moors symbolize freedom, absence of restraint as well inaccessibility and inhospitality. This setting harmonizes totally with the passionate and rugged natures of Catherine and Heathcliff. Thrushcross Grange is also part of the setting, however, and we discover that the novel ends with the flowers of the Grange being transplanted near the Heights.

DUALITY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

The Grange and The Heights are the two houses that form a contrast in setting as well as in the character of their occupants. *Wuthering Heights* stands for the principle of storm whereas *Thrushcross Grange* is set in a pleasant valley, surrounded by a walled park with trees and flowers. It depicts the principle of calm.

Wuthering Heights is a spacious farmhouse in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the northern moors. It is the forebear home of the Earnshaws. In the beginning of the story the Earnshaw household consists of Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw, their son Hindley and their daughter Catherine or Cathy. At a distance of four miles there is *Thrushcross Grange*. It is the home of rich Linton family: father and mother and their children, Egar and Isabella.

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, however, describes an interesting argument that Bronte created her own female vampire in the character of Catherine Earnshaw Linton. Catherine and Heathcliff create whole selves only when fused together.

In Catherine, this anger began at an early age, with asking her father for a whip. Further, she got Heathcliff, whom Gilbert and Gubar opine as Catherine's metaphorical whip. Heathcliff's actions are as Catherine's "alternate self," allowing her to perfect herself and to break free from the oppressiveness of nineteenth-century patriarchy.

In objection to this relationship with Heathcliff, Gilbert and Gubar offer to Edgar Linton and Catherine's marriage to him as what pulls her back into the patriarchal world from which Catherine wishes to escape. Catherine must adjust herself with the world of *Thrushcross Grange*, a painful, upsetting and sometimes violent experience. It is this experience which sets the base for the issues of power and powerlessness that weave themselves throughout the novel.

At the same time Catherine also feels that her acceptance of Edgar's marriage proposal is an acceptance of her self imprisonment in the role of lady, wife, and mother. Degrading or no, Catherine makes the only choice she sees available in her effort to win control over her life and over the patriarchy in which she finds herself involved.

As described earlier, Heathcliff gives Catherine some sort of support as a whip, a means of breaking free from the patriarchal oppressiveness of her brother. Where he is able to give her with an alternate self to lessen her female vulnerability, a soul, a voice, a language with which she can communicate cultured men like Edgar. Gilbert and Gubar find Catherine and Heathcliff, together, forming an autonomous whole.

Heathcliff is the dirty boy of the streets of Liverpool who has been picked up by Mr. Earnshaw. He has a stormy nature and speaks unfamiliar language that nobody can understand. Mr. Earnshaw brings him to *Wuthering Heights* and provides him shelter. He gives him the name Heathcliff, which was the name of one of his children, now dead. Heathcliff very soon wins the love of father and the daughter, but this makes Hindley jealous of Heathcliff. Hindley feels hatred for Heathcliff. Heathcliff also starts developing ill feeling for Hindley. Hindley goes abroad for study but comes back on the death of his father. Hindley becomes the head of the house, now



avenges himself on Heathcliff. Now Heathcliff is treated as a farm servant. Both Heathcliff and Catherine feel care for all this and they come closer to each other than ever before.

Further, Catherine's awareness becomes keen when she encounters with Lintons at Thrushcross Grange, where she is forced to live for five weeks. She feels attracted towards charming Edgar Linton. In fact, she likes him very much. When she comes back to Wuthering Heights, there is a complete change in her personality. She is no longer the 'wild, hateless little savage' that she has been, but speaks frequently on the life of the Lintons. Catherine's changed behavior gives wild jealousy in Heathcliff.

Catherine discloses with Nelly Dean that her heart is with Heathcliff, but her mind suggests that she should marry Edgar Linton and does not like to marry an orphan who has to dance according to her brother. Heathcliff overhears some parts of their conversation, becomes mad and leaves Wuthering Height. Catherine searches for him over the rainy night and falls ill.

Three years have passed after Heathcliff's departure and Catherine, who has fallen a victim to Edgar Linton's charms, accepts the marriage proposal of Edgar. Catherine has married Edgar. She enjoys the peaceful serenity of Thrushcross Grange. But the peaceful serenity is broken with the return of Heathcliff, with a changed personality. Now he is looking prosperous, refined and smart. The change is only external and at hearts he is not yet changed. He has come back to take revenge.

Hindley feels happy to find in Heathcliff a companion for his drinking and gambling and at the time invite him to live at Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff, who is now changed into an evil, finds this a chance to avenge on his former oppressor. Soon the happy life of Edgar, Catherine, and Isabella at Thrushcross Grange was troubled by the arrival of changed Heathcliff. Edgar's jealousy is increased towards Heathcliff; Catherine cannot tolerate this. Heathcliff very cleverly makes Isabella fall in love with him. After a fight with her brother Isabella eloped with Heathcliff. With this act Heathcliff gives a strong attack on Edgar and starts living at Wuthering

heights. Soon after, Catherine, an expected mother, fell seriously ill with a fever. Edgar refuses to see his sister and stops Heathcliff to enter his house. With the unwilling assistance Ellen Dean, Heathcliff managed a final visit to Catherine during Edgar's absence at church. The pain of the quarrel between him and her husband caused the premature birth of Catherine's daughter named after her mother. A few hours after the birth of the child, Catherine died, having vowed to Heathcliff that her spirit would never leave him.

Heathcliff has black hair, dark skin and bushy eyebrows that made him look like gypsy. He has something fascinating in his nature. The moving principle of his life is his relationship with Catherine. Heathcliff who was first innocent, supportive and a good friend of Catherine turns outward and destroys others. Injustice and ill-treatment make him a cold and crafty destroyer. Heathcliff seems to personify evil in his nature. Good is passive in the face of evil. Evil and violent nature and the success with which he take his revenge convert him from a credible being into a fiend. He has the ability to paralyze anything good.

Moreover, it is clear that Heathcliff has dual nature. The novelist portrays him both with blazing warmth and the destructive powers of nature like the storm. There is a motiveless cruelty in him. Although his range of emotions is limited in the novel he has not described with any sexual passion for Catherine as there is something sexless in his passion for Catherine.

Catherine is portrayed in the novel as a lover of life in the wild and open moors. She has the sweetest smile and lightest foot in the parish. She seems to have great insight into her own nature. The other part of Catherine's personality is that she is frustrated, selfish, wild, and destroys herself.

Emily Bronte never portrays Catherine's becoming a vampire in *Wuthering Heights* but some clues offer how Catherine becomes a vampire in the novel. Catherine has always been different, independent minded, and wild. This independent is first described in the novel when Catherine is a young child. Her father is traveling to Liverpool for the day and asks what his children want him to bring back for



them. Hindley chose a fiddle and Catherine, though hardly six years old, strongly demand a whip. Catherine sees in her dream of being cast out of heaven. Catherine's dream of such unhappiness in heaven, as well as her only wish to remain on the earth and at Wuthering Heights for eternity, would definitely be viewed as a sin in both the eyes of the church and nineteenth-century society in general. This great wish of Catherine makes it clear that her return to the earth as a vampire after her death. This dream also foreshadows what will happen to Catherine at the time of her death as she will not be welcomed into heaven. Instead, she will be throwing out of heaven, forced to roam the earth for eternity as a vampire.

Catherine could also be changed into a vampire by being bitten and drained of blood by another vampire. Although Bronte never describes a vampire preying on Catherine, there is evidence in the novel that such an act occurs. While Catherine is nearing death, she discloses to Nelly that she has been haunted in the night: "These three awful nights, I've never closed my lids.... Don't *you* see that face?" (Bronte 95-96)

In this scene, Catherine is fascinated by the vampire who has probably been preying on her during these nights. And although Nelly believes that Catherine is seeing her own reflection and is simply unable to identify it, Catherine may be looking at something other than the mirror. It can be said that she may be seeing the actual vampire standing in the shadows which Nelly is unable to see. Later in the novel, Heathcliff sees Catherine, who has been sucking his blood. Further, in the novel, Nelly is unable to see the vampire Catherine. Nelly's inability to see the supernatural at the time of Heathcliff's death mirrors her inability to see it at the time of Catherine's.

In another scene Catherine so shortly before her death, asking for the midnight air from the moors to be let in for her to breathe, Catherine is completing one of the requirements to ensure that she become a vampire after her death. Heathcliff puts another guarantee that Catherine will become a vampire by cursing her directly after her death. Heathcliff has a healthy faith in the results of his

curse upon Catherine at the time of her death. The final point is the fact that Catherine died in childbirth. It can be said that the woman who died in childbirth will become vampire. In Nelly's words to Lockwood, she discloses the birth of the second Catherine and the subsequent death of the first that Catherine's daughter was born about at twelve o'clock that night and after two hours Catherine died.

Twenty years later Heathcliff returns to Catherine's grave when the sexton is burying Edgar Linton and convinces the sexton to dig up Catherine's coffin. He is shocked to find that Catherine's appearance had not changed; she had not decomposed, despite the passage of nearly twenty years. Catherine cannot exist without Heathcliff, or he without her. Later on Heathcliff's final days, when he faces Catherine and is changed into a vampire himself.

CONCLUSION

Catherine's conversion into a vampire in Wuthering Heights permits her an escape and a freedom from the social and psychological restrictions of her role as wife, lady, and mother. The death involved in becoming a vampire offered Catherine the chance to move beyond these limitations and become the person she should have always been in life, a creature true to her nature. She is free to roam the moors and seduce the man she loves. Lockwood notices, the first sighting of the vampire Catherine, she is a young girl, with "a little, ice-cold hand!" (Bronte 20). Before she converted Heathcliff into a vampire, Catherine still seemed to others as the young girl who wanted to enter the house and get what she wanted. After she has converted Heathcliff, however, she has finally achieved what her mortal life would have.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Bronte portrays the first female vampire in English literature. The vampire Catherine stands all of the things which women in the nineteenth century were not supposed to be. After her death and conversion into a vampire, however, Catherine enjoys to live these characteristics in a manner befitting her personality and existence. Catherine's rebelliousness against authority, against the church, and against the ideals forced upon women by society, makes her existence



as a vampire a successful one. Catherine Linton, as many scholars think, is the first female vampire in English literature. Catherine could have been identified as a vampire by the reader whether her vampirism were openly mentioned or not. In this way, Bronte uses her knowledge of the vampire to criticize and comment upon woman's role in the society.

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