



Representation of Elemental Passions And Negotiating Violence and hatred in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is on elaborating the elements of violence and hatred in Emily Brontë's novel, Wuthering Heights. Catherine, the heroine of the story, has to make a choice. She makes a mistake marrying Edgar Linton, leaving her true love, Heathcliff. The consequences of her mistake are tragic and cause suffering to all characters in the novel. Strong and passionate love leads to extreme hatred and eventually violence that destroy the lives of everyone in the story. These elements are an essential part of not only the storyline, but also its characters' personalities. The statements are followed by clear examples from the unabridged version of the book. For the sake of better understanding, the research is divided into three main parts; the elements of violence and hatred in the early years of the main characters, their adulthood, and the lives of their children. The violence and harshness of the weather and landscape, and the symbolism of the word Wuthering in terms of the main topic are included. Love and hatred run side by side, and the borderline between them is so thin that under bad circumstances, even the strongest love turns into selfishness and hatred. Still, the underlying reasons for these emotions to interweave are emphasized in this research paper.

Keywords: violence and hatred, love and hatred, wuthering, elements, underlying reasons

Introduction

Emily Brontë's 'Wuthering Heights' is unanimously regarded as one of the great works of art and rightly held a position among the classics of world literature. The main element behind this greatness is Brontë's treatment of the elemental raw passions in a poetic language that is as raw as the characters themselves. Brontë allows her passions to flow naturally throughout the novel and introduces elements like violence that arises from hatred and let these passions to decide the fate of her characters. As a typical Victorian novel, it tends to be thickly plotted, crowded with characters, and of an improving nature, with a central moral lesson at heart. But instead of this set pattern we have a story told in a different way that does not have the linear way of unfolding a story which is very much a central feature of Victorian narrative. There are people from two families only representing certain values concerning the whole mankind. The concepts like violence and hatred are very central to the growing up of the human civilization and Brontë just allows her characters to develop around these two central ideas. Throughout the novel these two elements play significant roles in deciding the course of action.

1. The elements of violence and hatred in Wuthering Heights

Violent passion and cruelty run through the entire novel. The intensity of violence and cruelty is beyond every limit, and hatred is more powerful than the strongest love. Notwithstanding to this, there exist the underlying causes for hatred to culminate. Violence and hatred are shown even at the beginning of the story, when Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff home. Jealous of their father's affection for Heathcliff, Catherine and Hindley look at this poor child with contempt. Nevertheless, Catherine and Heathcliff's love inevitably develops. Heathcliff is the object of violence. He seems to be a silent child, even when Hindley beats him. The bad treatment he suffers makes him a violent and hateful man in the future. Hence, Heathcliff doesn't know for a better way to express himself than to be coarse. He doesn't learn to be kind, nor does he want to learn.

The main characters of *Wuthering Heights* are wild by nature and act impulsively. Catherine acts impulsively and very often slaps Nelly in the cheek. She is not that strong, but her bad temper sometimes makes her violent to the people around her. Catherine and Heathcliff cannot destroy their temper even when they act like gentry. That can be seen in the part where Catherine, after being injured, stays at Thrushcross Grange for a short period.

When Catherine returned, we expected to see a wild, heedless little savage jumping into the house. Instead, stepping down from a handsome black pony, we saw a very dignified young person, with brown curled hair falling from the cover of a feather hat (Brontë, 2007).

Still, by her frisky behavior several months later, it can be seen that Catherine is as savage as she was before staying at Thrushcross Grange and that her sophistication was something temporary. During Catherine's residence at Lintons' house, Heathcliff suffers. Hindley treats him badly and beats him whenever he has the chance.

He had become ten times more wild, and no one had cared for him while Catherine was away (Brontë, 2007).

Catherine and Heathcliff's tempers lead to a lot of inevitable quarrels. Two wild people like them can never be calm and peaceful. At that respect, it could have been assumed that something bad would happen. Everything that happens to Heathcliff in his childhood makes him a cruel person. Adult Heathcliff is brutal to Hindley. Heathcliff also degrades Hindley's son Hareton, despite admiring his similarity to Catherine and even himself.

Catherine has to make a decision that is crucial for the fates of everyone in the story. She makes a mistake marrying Edgar Linton, leaving her true love, Heathcliff. Now, Heathcliff wants to get revenge on everyone who hurt him, including Catherine. His love turns into hatred and makes him extremely violent. Both Catherine and Heathcliff are guilty for their unfortunate love. Their love is as passionate and strong as the north wind, and thus it has the capacity to destroy everything that gets into its way. The impossibility of being with his beloved Catherine makes Heathcliff destructive and more resolved to seek for revenge on those culpable for his misery. Catherine tells him that sometimes she has the feeling that his true passion is hate, rather than love. Judged by his bare deeds, Heathcliff seems to be a monster of evil. Catherine and Heathcliff are well-aware of their nasty behavior. Catherine dreams that she is in heaven and feels like she doesn't belong there.

If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable... I dreamt, once, that I was there... heaven did not seem to be my home; I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth, and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights... (Brontë, 1994).

Heathcliff, monstrous to people he hates, gets his revenge by letting things take their own course. He seeks to get revenge by possessing everything that belongs to his enemies in order to have control over them. This gives him power. Power and hatred together give him great satisfaction. Heathcliff marries Edgar's sister Isabella to torture her with repulsion. He first lies that he will love her, and later states that Catherine is the only woman he will ever love. Heathcliff wants to let Catherine be miserable and live bearing the consequences of her own decision. Despite knowing that she is his only chance for happiness, the hatred caused by her betrayal outbalances his love. He desires to make her regret for what she has done, even if that means him being miserable as well. Many conflicts are present in the novel. There exists an inner conflict in each character, and not just between them. The boundary between Catherine and her world is transcendental and problematic. After being shaken up by the quarrel between Heathcliff and Edgar, she decides to get ill and die. Thus, she is self-destructive.

...and Catherine refused to eat... On the third day, Catherine unlocked her door. She had finished her water that always stood in her room in a jug, and she wanted some more, as well as some soup. She believed she was dying. I decided she had only told me that in order to worry Edgar. I believed she was telling a lie, so I kept it to myself, and brought her some tea and dry bread. She ate and drank eagerly, and then sank back on her pillows again, groaning.

Oh, I will die,-she exclaimed,-since no one cares anything about me. I wish I had not eaten that (Brontë, 2007).

Catherine is selfish and capable of shameful conflict, so everything she does is violent and impulsive. She rankles herself just to gain notice. In the end, that becomes the main physical reason for her death. Although both Catherine and Heathcliff are extremely violent and hateful, they are still human beings with the need for affection. After Cathy's death, Heathcliff's whole life is concentrated on the suffering caused by his loss, and on the violence of his desire to get Cathy back. The obsessive love for Catherine is shown in Heathcliff's words after he finds out she is dead:

Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you, so punish me, then!
I know that ghosts have wandered on earth. Oh, God! It is awful! I cannot live without my soul!
(Brontë,2007).

His love for Catherine Earnshaw is the only principle of his being. Heathcliff is cruel to her, and doesn't let her be happy. And yet, he loves her. A clear example of Heathcliff's most violent physical act is the capture of Catherine's daughter Cathy. He hits her badly after she defends his own son Linton from him.

Ignoring this warning, she grabbed at his hand that held the key, scratching and biting in trying to get it. She did not see his face, but I did. It was full of hate. He opened his hand, letting her get the key, but then he gave her two terrible blows across the head(Brontë,2007).

The intensity of Heathcliff's hatred can be seen in the next quotation:

The master grew pale and rose from his chair, looking at her with hate in his eyes. He was about to strike her. He had his hand in her hair. Hareton tried to free her, begging him not to hurt her. Heathcliff's black eyes flashed. He seemed ready to tear Cathy to pieces (Brontë,2007).

In this story, love and hatred are interweaving. Love causes hatred. Hatred causes violence. Violence causes misery. Even the kindest person expresses violence. Although Edgar Linton is a calm man, during his quarrels with Catherine he raises his voice and says unspeakable things. He hates Heathcliff and becomes furious when Catherine talks about him. He is even willing to fight with Heathcliff. Though, he is timid by nature and not used to violence.

For Hindley and Heathcliff, family relationships seem insignificant. They do horrible things to their own children. Little Hareton is afraid of his father because his father always threatens him to break his neck. There's a part where Hindley takes Hareton in his arms and goes upstairs. He shakes Hareton until he falls from his hands. Heathcliff tortures and hates his son Linton, because of the resemblance to the appearance of Linton's Uncle Edgar. Hindley hates the fact that Heathcliff is the new owner of Wuthering Heights, the place that once belonged to him. At one moment he tries to kill Heathcliff with a knife and a gun, but he fails. That is the last violent thing Hindley tries to do. After all violent deeds, Heathcliff gets property of everything, including Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights. He fulfills his intentions. Heading towards death, he gives up hatred and concentrates on his love for Catherine.

Young Catherine, Hareton and Linton are not violent and hateful like their parents. There is hatred and love between them, but these emotions are not as strong as the ones between their parents. The elements of violence can be seen in Hareton's behavior in the period of childhood. Nelly takes care of Hareton. They are being separated when she moves to Thrushcross Grange and Hareton stays on Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff teaches Hareton to act impolite. One day, Nelly, eager to see Hareton, visits him. Hareton, not recognizing her, throws stones and swears at her. When he grows up, Hareton acts rapturously when Cathy thinks that he is a servant. He feels offended by Cathy, who scorns his gestures of friendship. Both Cathy and Linton make fun of Hareton's ignorance, which leads to a quarrel.

The second generation is much more civilized than their parents. They act rationally and do not ruin their lives with destructive emotions of monstrous hatred and bitter love. The prevailing emotion between Cathy, Hareton and Linton is not hatred, but love. Their civilized behavior without extreme violence leads Cathy and Hareton to a brighter future with no misery and suffering.

2. The violence and harshness of the weather and landscape and Setting:

The tempestuous climate represents tempestuous and wild tempers of Catherine and Heathcliff. The climate also represents the lives of the inhabitants of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights that are fulfilled with turbulent changes of its course. Wuthering Heights is a large and dark place, as Heathcliff's hateful soul is. Unlike Wuthering Heights, Thrushcross Grange is brighter and full of life and people. The wild landscape is an appropriate surrounding for violence and passionate events to occur.

Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling, *Wuthering* being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed; one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large, jutting stones (Brontë, 1994).

This impressive and realistic description introduces us with the atmosphere in the novel and with the kind of life of the main characters. The entire novel is full of strong, mad and destructive emotions of hatred and love that makes it extremely exciting. An epithet *Wuthering* is not only related to the weather, but in a metaphorical way to the features of main characters whose emotions have *the power of the North wind*, and *winds always blow* in their souls.

Conclusion

The causes of hatred and violence, where Heathcliff seems to be the mastermind of evil, are: mistreatment in the early childhood, Catherine's betrayal, and innate wild temper. His cruelty rises from his greater misery. Everything bad experienced in life makes him the hateful man he remains until the very end. Heathcliff is being transformed from the object of violence to the originator of hatred. In the end he gets the revenge he longs for.

In spite of all bad things that happen in the novel, the end can be seen as a happy end. Hatred doesn't completely win after all. Cathy and Hareton stay together, as well as Catherine and Heathcliff in their afterlife.

The analysis of violence and hatred in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* shows the magnificence of Emily Brontë's writing style, with a terrific basis for a thorough psychological analysis even applicable to the psychological states of modern society's individuals.

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