

Theme of Wilderness in "Wuthering Heights"

MANISHA KHASA

H-B-182, Suncity Sector 34
Opposite Mahendra Model School, Sonipat Road.

Abstract:

"Wuthering Heights" may be stated as a saga of passionate love of Heathcliff for Cathy and the revenge he takes upon various persons, the revenge being prompted by the frustration of his love and by the social contempt heaped upon him by Hindley Earnshaw and Edgar Linton. When Heathcliff was brought to Wuthering Heights as a dirty, ragged orphan in order to be brought up there, Hindley began to adopt a superior attitude towards the boy. He gradually starts loving Catherine who eventually got died during series of events. Heathcliff takes his revenge upon all the major characters and dies too, to meet Catherine's soul.

INTRODUCTION

"Wuthering Heights" is the story of two families the Earnshaw family and the Linton family, and an outsider who has the name of Heathcliff. The Earnshaw family, which lives at a place called Wuthering Heights, consists of Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw and their two children, Hindley and Catherine (or Cathy). The Linton family lives at a place called Thrushcross Grange, situated at a distance of about four miles from Wuthering Heights, down in the valley, and consists of Mr. and Mrs. Linton and their two children, Edgar and Isabella. On one of his visits to the city of Liverpool, Mr. Earnshaw picks up an unknown, dirty, and ragged child from a slum and brings him home to Wuthering Heights to be brought up there. This child is given the name of Heathcliff. Although Mr. Earnshaw himself dotes on the strange, black-haired and black-eyed boy, and although the girl Cathy rapidly becomes intimate with him; all other inmates of the house, especially the boy Hindley, feel hostile to him. In fact, the boy Heathcliff is cruelly treated by Hindley who is older and Heathcliff begins to think in term of revenge upon his tormentor. As the children grow up, Hindley is sent to college, while Cathy and Heathcliff often roam freely in the moors. Cathy becomes quite intimate with the Linton children, Edgar and Isabella. By the time Mr. Earnshaw dies, Hindley has already got married with Frances. Soon afterwards Frances gave birth to Hareton and dies a couple of months later.

Hindley gets into the habit of drinking. Linton marries Cathy Earnshaw. Heathcliff overhears a part of this conversation and disappears from the place, feeling frustrated. Mr. and Mrs. Linton die. After few years Heathcliff comes back and looks handsome and dignified. He is now a rich man.

Isabella, the sister of Edgar, falls in love with Heathcliff, although he is still passionately involved with Cathy, he offers encouragement to Isabella. Edgar rebuffs Heathcliff. Cathy falls dangerously ill because of the stress and strain of situation. Isabella, in the meantime elopes with Heathcliff and marries him.

Heathcliff and Isabella return to Wuthering Heights where Heathcliff was Hindley's guest. Hindley, heavy into debt as a result of his drinking and gambling habits hopes to lend money from Heathcliff. Heathcliff married Isabella to take his vengeance upon. Edgar Linton and partly to lay a claim to Isabella's share in the family estate. Isabella begins to look upon him as a monster.

Heathcliff pays visit to ailing Cathy. Heathcliff is convinced that Cathy could never have been happy as a Edgar's wife and that he could have loved Cathy more in one day than Edgar could have loved her in eighty years. That very night Cathy dies giving birth to a baby girl, who is again named as Catherine, Heathcliff grieves;

"Oh, God! It is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul".

Isabella unable to bear the continuing brutal treatment from Heathcliff flees from Wuthering Heights, after giving birth to a child Linton. Hindley now becomes a total dependent of Heathcliff and begins to drink more heavily. Ultimately he dies. Heathcliff becomes master of Wuthering Heights. Hindley's son Hareton

has grown up under the guardianship of Heathcliff. About twelve years pass. Catherine, the daughter of Edgar and the dead Cathy now grow up. So is Linton, the son of Isabella and Heathcliff. Isabella dies and Edgar brings Linton to Grange. Heathcliff cannot love a son who is unlike him and hopes to acquire entire property of Thrushcross Grange.

Heathcliff in order to acquire whole property, marries Catherine to Linton. Catherine manages to escape from Wuthering Heights. Thrushcross Grange comes in Heathcliff's possession after Edgar's death.

Young Linton, dies prematurely, and Catherine finds herself friendless and comfortless. Hareton's manners begin to improve, and Catherine begins to give him lessons in reading. Nelly thinks that it would be fine if these two could get married, because she sees no other future for Catherine.

Heathcliff's revenge upon the two families is almost complete, but not really complete. He has become the master of both the estates. Both Hindley, the owner of Wuthering Heights, and Edgar, the owner of Thrushcross Grange have died miserable deaths.

Hindley's son, Hareton, has been brought up as brute and is under dominion of Heathcliff. Catherine, widow of Heathcliff's own son, Linton is too under his complete control. Both Hareton the sole surviving representative of the Earnshaw family, and Catherine are at his mercy. But Heathcliff has now lost the capacity to enjoy the exercise of his power to destroy people. So he becomes indifferent to the developing intimacy between Catherine and Hareton.

Heathcliff, is now haunted by memories of Cathy, he allows the window of his room to remain open. In the morning when Nelly peeps into the room, she finds him dead and stark. Heathcliff has died with his eyes open. Nelly tries to close, but they do not shut.

Afterwards different people claim that they have seen Heathcliff's and Cathy's ghost roaming about on the moors. Catherine and Hareton now decide to get married.

Thus "Wuthering Heights" is a saga of passionate love and revenge of a man who is both hero or an anti-hero of the novel. On the one hand he passionately loves Catherine and on the other on not getting her he becomes fierce as a brute and draws his vengeance upon everybody and in the end, finds solace in meeting with Cathy's soul.

REFERENCES:

1. Emile Bronte: Wuthering Heights (Casebook Series): Edited by Miriam Allott.
2. The Brontes: A Collection of Critical Essays: Edited by Ian Gregor.
3. The Art of Emile Bronte: Edited by Anne Smith.
4. Emile Bronte Her Life and Work: By Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford.