

Wuthering heights: a tale of two loves

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In Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine redeems her mother's inability to love another tenderly with her love towards Linton. Catherine's lovingness is not one of intense self-consuming passion where the object of love is over-looked and the love itself is the focus, but rather a love which nurtures the loved, embracing them with compassion. Cathy's love for Heathcliff is not a tender love, but rather one of necessity. Cathy loves Heathcliff as one loves a part of one's self: her love is purely self-indulgent. The relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff is one of intense, unmitigated passion. Cathy constantly taunts Heathcliff and often abuses his undying love for her. Heathcliff is harsh to Cathy as well, making it his life's work to gain revenge on her for marrying Edgar Linton instead of himself. Neither one's love benefits the other and, in fact, their love is a great source of misery for the both of them. Cathy is unable to love in any level of moderation, instead pouring every iota of her being into her burning obsession. Catherine's love, however, is a nurturing love. While Cathy's love is purely self-indulgent, Catherine's love is described as being "never fierce; it was deep and tender." (p187) Cathy's capacity for loving is limited to an all-consuming passion whereas Catherine's love is one of compassion. Catherine's adoration of Linton is a sustaining love. Linton's desires to be enamored by Catherine's feelings towards him aren't fickle and surpass any conflicts which may arise between the two of them. While Cathy pours every iota of her being into her emotions, Catherine rarely allows herself to be completely overcome by emotion, and if she finds that her previous actions reflect ill-thoughts she hastens to make amends whereas Cathy never takes responsibility for what she has done: while Cathy's mercurial behavior

seldom undergoes any periods of reflection, Catherine is apologetic for any of her misbehaviors. Linton craves to be in the presence of Catherine whereas Heathcliff often goes through elongated periods of wanting nothing less than to be in the presence of Cathy. And while Cathy and Heathcliff's raging love is the source of all major conflict throughout the bulk of Wuthering Heights, Catherine's love for Linton is one of the few redeeming traits which any of the characters in Wuthering Heights possess. Even in her earlier years Catherine's growing ability to acknowledge her misdeeds is evident. Though throughout their childhood Catherine and Linton are for the most part quite fond of each other there are, as is to be expected with any two youths (or adults for that matter), sporadic conflicts between the two." Cathy [Catherine], beside herself, gave the chair a violent push, and caused him to fall against one arm. He was immediately seized by a suffocating cough that soon ended his triumph. It lasted so long, that it frightened even me. As to his cousin, she wept with all her might, aghast at the mischief she had done, though she said nothing." (p236) Catherine's immediate recognition of her ill behavior distinguishes her from her mother. While Cathy had been able to torment Heathcliff without remorse Catherine is unable to conceal her regret for having harmed Linton. There is no period after her having pushed over Linton's chair where Catherine is not overcome with grief and remorse. So taken aback by her own misconduct is Catherine that she cannot speak. This degree of regret, or even any degree of apologetic nature is rarely if ever found with Cathy's many mischievous deeds. As Linton's condition grows worse, the compassion in Catherine's love seems to grow. Now confined to his bed, Linton has kept insisting that his cousin visit

him, despite her being forbidden to do so. Catherine has been sneaking out of her house to be with her cousin for the purpose of providing some form of comfort to him while he lingers in his sickly state. Catherine has the maturity to treat Linton with even more gentleness saying "I knew I mustn't tease him, as he was ill; and I spoke softly and put no questions, and avoided irritating him in any way." (p247) Catherine is using restraint and judgment which would not have been present in her mother's actions. Whereas Cathy never allowed any sense of sorrow to affect the way she treated Heathcliff, Catherine's behavior seems to be governed by her almost maternal instincts towards Linton. Catherine realizes the condition which Linton is in and how to act accordingly. In consciously deciding to avoid pestering and instead speaking pleasantly towards Linton, Catherine is demonstrating a level of maturity never present in her mother. Later on in the novel, Catherine further demonstrates her selflessness in her love towards Linton. When Catherine visits Linton at Wuthering Heights, Linton and she begin to quarrel. Linton refuses to tell Catherine what he really wants from her (marriage), instead dangling and then retracting information pertaining to his true desires. Though this is of the utmost annoyance to Catherine, who simply wants to know what Linton wants so she can give it to him and end his suffering, she tolerates his staunch defiance and "her magnanimity provoked his tears; he wept wildly, kissing her supporting hands, and yet could not summon the courage to speak out." (p264) Catherine's ability to not only tolerate but embrace Linton's short-comings is further evidence of her maturity. Cathy pestered Heathcliff constantly, particularly about his affairs with Isabella, using no restraint and acting with the maturity of a spoiled

child. Catherine is able to observe the condition which Linton is in and the importance of what he dare not say, thus allowing her to act accordingly. There is no doubt that she is flustered by Linton's stubbornness, but she acts with magnanimity, thereby eschewing any resentment which she may hold towards Linton for acting in such a way, an ability which her mother lacked. Catherine redeems Cathy's limited and brutally intense love of Heathcliff with her own tender, nurturing love of Linton. Catherine hastens to make amends for any wrongful acts she commits whereas Cathy simply ignores the consequences of her misdeeds. Catherine's adoration of Linton is shown through compassionate and magnanimous acts whereas her mother is often harsh and cruel in her treatment of Heathcliff. Cathy's short-temper is redeemed by her daughter's vast tolerance for things which may perturb her. While Cathy's love for Heathcliff ate them both away and filled their days with misery, Catherine's love was something without which Linton felt his life was not worth living. And so, at the end of the story, we see a Catherine who is ruled by tenderness in stark opposition to her mother's callous-selfishness. While Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange once served as battlefields upon which a war of passionate and violent emotions was waged between Cathy and Heathcliff, it now serves as testimony to a love between Catherine and Linton which withstood trial and tribulation until Linton's parting day.