

Cathy and heathcliff

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



I am aiming to discuss (the above) whom I may feel most sympathy for and why out of Catherine (Cathy for short) and Heathcliff. *Wuthering Heights* is a novel written by Emily Bronte between 1846-1847 and is vastly influenced and dominated by the characters of Heathcliff and Catherine and their eternal, everlasting love for each other. The novel is told through the eyes of several narrators and most of them do not understand the depth and intensity of Cathy and Heathcliff and so they cannot describe it.

This book is extremely complex and our sympathy for each character constantly shifts from one person to another as Bronte keeps giving us reasons to change our views. Even though Heathcliff is an unreclaimed creature, without refinement and whose purpose in life is to seek revenge on all those who have wronged or crossed him, Bronte changes our views by changing his status from hero to villain. Emily Bronte constantly changes the characters status and this adds intrigue to the book.

Another example of our fluxuating views is when we first meet Cathy as she clearly talks about disliking her whole life in her diary and this makes us sympathise towards her as she practically thinks that nothings worth living for. However when Nelly describes the treatment that Cathy gave Heathcliff, 'spitting at the stupid little thing' (Pg30, line 14), we all change our views about her and instead we sympathise with Heathcliff because of his mistreatment and we start to detest/dislike her. There are many gothic elements in *Wuthering Heights*.

An example of this is when Cathy's ghost taps at the window of Lockwood's bedchamber when a snowstorm throws him on the mercy of Heathcliff's

grudging hospitality and he sees the child's arm on broken glass, (Pg20). Throughout the book Heathcliff is linked with bestial nature and called ghou, goblin and vampire and this is no surprise. Cathy was, at first, awful to Heathcliff but when they became to love each other they were thought to be inseparable. However after her father dies she decides to marry Edgar Linton for further social development and not for love.

This hurt Heathcliff as she said, to Nelly; it would degrade her to marry him and Heathcliff was silently eavesdropping in the dark to her heart-breaking words and so he ran away. 'It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff' (pg67, line 13). This significant event creates sympathy for both Cathy and Heathcliff. She still loves him and she insists that she wants what's best for him-'whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and out of my brothers power' (Pg68, line 12-13).

However Heathcliff flees Wuthering Heights without listening to the rest of the conversation and so he does not know of Cathy's true intentions. During childhood, Heathcliff is brought in off the streets and is abused by both Catherine and Hindley. Even though Catherine grows to love him, Hindley becomes more and more abusive towards him as Heathcliff is quickly becoming the household's favourite. Heathcliff however, defies being understood, and it is difficult for the readers to resist seeing what they want or expect to see in him.

As Heathcliff becomes older Mr Earnshaw sends his son, Hindley, away to college and this feeds Hindley's revenge. The novel teases the reader with the possibility that Heathcliff is something other than what he seems-that his

cruelty is merely an expression of his frustrated love for Catherine, or that his sinister behaviours serve to conceal the heart of a romantic hero. We expect Heathcliff's character to contain such a hidden virtue because he resembles a hero in a romance novel.

Traditionally, romance novel heroes appear dangerous, brooding, and cold at first, only later to emerge as fiercely devoted and loving. However, Heathcliff does not reform, and his malevolence proves so great and long-lasting that it cannot be adequately explained even as a desire for revenge against Hindley, Catherine, Edgar, etc. As he himself points out, his abuse of Isabella is purely sadistic, as he amuses himself by seeing how much abuse she can take and still come cringing back for more.

However even though Heathcliff's childhood excuses his behaviour later on in life, it is only acceptable to a certain extent as he takes it too far. He does this by ruining the lives of the people who have wronged him or taken something/someone (in Edgar Linton's case) that he cares dearly for but he takes his revenge too far as he ruins his own son's (Linton's) life by making him marry his cousin, Cathy Linton (Edgar's and Cathy's daughter), just so that Heathcliff can inherit Thrushcross Grange. This makes you feel deep sympathy for Linton and Catherine Linton.

It is significant that Heathcliff begins his life as a homeless orphan on the streets of Liverpool. When Brontë composed her book, in the 1840s, the English economy was severely depressed, and the conditions of the factory workers in industrial areas like Liverpool were so appalling that the upper and middle classes feared violent revolt. Thus, many of the more affluent

members of society beheld these workers with a mixture of sympathy and fear. In literature, the smoky, threatening, miserable factory-towns were often represented in religious terms, and compared to hell.

The poet William Blake, writing near the turn of the nineteenth century, speaks of England's "dark Satanic Mills." Heathcliff, of course, is frequently compared to a demon by the other characters in the book. Considering this historical context, Heathcliff seems to embody the anxieties that the book's upper- and middle-class audience had about the working classes. The reader may easily sympathize with him when he is powerless, as a child tyrannized by Hindley Earnshaw, but he becomes a villain when he acquires power and returns to Wuthering Heights with money and the trappings of a gentleman.

This corresponds with the ambivalence the upper classes felt toward the lower classes—the upper classes had charitable impulses toward lower-class citizens when they were miserable, but feared the prospect of the lower classes trying to escape their miserable circumstances by acquiring political, social, cultural, or economic power. Catherine's childhood is somewhat different to Heathcliff's as she has no reason to hate or despise anyone, but she does detest the way Heathcliff is treated. As a child, Catherine behaves spontaneously and naturally.

She is selfish and believes she may act autonomously. Nelly Dean describes Catherine as 'mischievous and wayward'. Evidence of Catherine's wildness can be seen from the pledge she and Heathcliff made: "promised fair to grow up as rude as savages" in response to the terinay of Hindley. Catherine is defiant of authority and seemed to enjoy the wrath of others: "she was

never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once" Catherine's passionate nature, evident throughout her childhood, seemed not to exist in her early months of her marriage to Edgar.

Her passion was described as: "gunpowder which lay as harmless as sand because no fire came near to explode it". As the book is based on Cathy and Heathcliff's profound love for each other it seems strange that they both marry other people. Although Cathy is the one who triggered Heathcliff's revenge by marrying Edgar Linton but what Heathcliff didn't realise was that it wasn't for love but for money to help him escape the clutches of Hindley.

Before Cathy decides to marry Edgar Linton, Nelly reminds her how Heathcliff would feel about the idea and questions how they'll both bear the separation. As soon as you become Mrs Linton, he loses friend, and love, and all! Have you considered how you'll bear the separation, and how he'll bear to be quite deserted in the world? ' (Pg67, lines 36-39). Even though Cathy believes she is doing the best for her and Heathcliff, he alternately thinks she is being selfish and only wants social advancement. This creates sympathy for Heathcliff but also for Cathy as she is disillusioned to what Heathcliff wants as he would gladly be tormented for the rest of his life if that was the only way they could love and be together with each other.

However when Cathy nears death she abandons Edgar and pleads instead for Heathcliff to stay. 'Oh, don't go, don't go! ' (Pg138, line 12), however Cathy spent a few days of solitude in her room without talking to her husband even when he made the effort. This gives us enough to slightly resent her as Edgar loves her even if she does not love him. After Cathy dies,

Heathcliff grows to become deranged and he begs her spirit to remain on Earth and he didn't care if she haunted him or drove him mad as long as she never left him alone.

This shows Heathcliff is unwilling to let go of Catherine and this attracts our sympathy for Heathcliff as he clearly loved Cathy and she meant the world to him. In chapter 29 there is another example of Heathcliff's unwillingness to let go as he explains to Nelly that he felt Cathy's presence. 'I felt her by me-I could almost see her' (Pg244, lines 25-26). The reader would not believe this however, but they would believe that Heathcliff thought he did feel her as he has suffered a lot of anguish from Cathy dying recently.

Shortly after, Isabella flees to London and she gives birth to Linton (Heathcliff's son). This shows us that Isabella wanted her son to have nothing to do with his father. Thirteen years after, Isabella dies and Linton comes to live with Heathcliff and he is treated as bad as his mother was. When young Linton meets Cathy they start a secret romance through a collection of letters but Nelly destroys Catherine's share. Although it becomes more and more obvious that Heathcliff is making his son pursue her, just so that they can marry each other.

This was all part of his revenge as once they married he would have legal claims over Thrushcross Grange and his revenge upon Edgar would be complete. He made them marry by taking Catherine and Nelly hostage at Wuthering Heights until Catherine married Linton. After Heathcliff made sure this happened he then made sure that his son left Thrushcross Grange to him in his will. This reveals that Heathcliff no longer cares about anyone and

not even his son, his own flesh and blood. It also reveals that Heathcliff will stop at nothing to get what he wants and it shows us that he can practically overcome all obstacles to do it.

Our opinions constantly change throughout this book. At first I think that when Heathcliff comes back he is a sophisticated and reformed man who has risen high above his ill treatment as a child. However soon after his return he reveals that he is not and you see this towards the end of the book as he ruins most, if not all, of the characters lives. We can feel sympathy for him however because the causes of what he is by the end of the novel is the disloyalty of Cathy and the constant abuse by Hindley as a child.

These bad influences on a young child provide slight excuses for his bad behaviour in the future but there is no excuse for Heathcliff taking revenge on their children as well, even though they are innocent but he believes as they share the same blood as their parents they are also in the wrong. This is also why Heathcliff has brought suffering on himself. Cathy is the dominant female spirit in this novel. I believe she has brought her suffering on herself, as she has not been true to her nature and she had swapped the outdoor life she had with Heathcliff to be the lady of Edgar's manor.

As she breathed the stifled air of the Grange instead of the wild air of the moors, she has effectively cut off her oxygen supply and then she eventually dies, a situation entirely her fault. However in death she had regained her freedom by returning to nature, the dire consequences of her failure to remain loyal to her true self. When Cathy dies and her coffin is buried, Nelly describes that she is buried in the corner of the yard between Edgar and

Heathcliff. I believe Emily Bronte is trying to show Cathy's conflicted loyalties to each character as she had reasons to marry Edgar and to love Heathcliff.

My conclusion about her is that she represents wild nature in her lively spirits and her occasional cruelty. I feel most sympathy for Heathcliff as he has had the worst in life despite inflicting pain on others. I think this because Cathy has had a better life and other characters in the novel have treated her better whereas Heathcliff has been badly treated by nearly all of the characters. I also feel sympathy for his character because he is not sure what Cathy wants, him or Edgar, as she says she loves him and yet she marries Edgar?