

# Protagonist in wuthering heights

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



Compare and contrast how the main protagonists experience being outsiders within their respective societies. The experience of being outsiders is explored by William Shakespeare in 'Othello', Emily Bronte in 'Wuthering Heights' and Robert Browning in his Dramatic Monologues. Shakespeare explores the theme of alienation through a character considered an outsider by the society in which he lives in. Similarly Emily Bronte explores Heathcliff and the obstacles he faces at Wuthering Heights. Browning's Dramatic Monologues illustrate the minds of psychotic lovers who are all possessive and delusional.

In all the three texts the outsiders are rejected and are to an extent responsible for their own position in the society. While some are underprivileged others deprive and almost punish themselves for not being accepted. The characters within the three texts are undoubtedly affected by their 'otherness' and feel ostracised by those who surround them. In Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff is an outsider because he is never accepted as part of the Earnshaw family. He is described as a "dark-skinned gypsy" and this prevents him from being acknowledged as a foster brother to Catherine and Hindley.

Mr Earnshaw was the only character Heathcliff could trust, however Hindley began to terrorise and mistreat him which made him feel unwanted. He labelled him as a "beggarly interloper!" and an "imp of Satan". However, the most eccentric aspect of Heathcliff's character is his name. He is referred to as simply 'Heathcliff' and does not carry the Earnshaw's last name, as he is not blood related. Furthermore the name Heathcliff is a name of a

deceased son of Mr Earnshaw, therefore Heathcliff is seen as an inferior character who is deprived of a sense of identity.

Similarly in Shakespeare's 'Othello' the protagonist is a black military man, but unlike Heathcliff he is considered to be a noble and respectful soldier amongst the Venetian people. Othello seems to be proud of his heritage and his achievements and although he is a foreigner, he is seen as a useful character that can bring success to the city of Venice. From the beginning of the play he is referred to as a "moor" and "thick lips" by both Iago and Roderigo. This may suggest that Iago and Roderigo are simply jealous that an outsider can receive so much recognition from their own people.

Both Othello and Heathcliff are labelled for their differences by characters that see no place for them in the community. Othello's vocation is not the only aspect of his life that is envied by characters; his marriage to Desdemona evidently causes problems with her father, Brabantio, but also fuels Iago's jealousy and hate. Brabantio accuses Othello of "enchanting" his daughter and using witchcraft to lead her astray as she would not have loved him voluntarily. It seems contradictory to allow Othello to fight the city's sieges, but oppose his marriage to a Venetian woman.

Othello's marriage to Desdemona grants him a theoretical citizenship, where he would have to be recognised as a Venetian. Othello is a powerful figure within the society and it is patent that he favours it above any nation. In spite of this, Brabantio, and Iago in particular, feel that this is an invasion of their country. His 'otherness' impedes him from being an equal and although he is seen as a virtuous military leader, society would not accept his relationship with Desdemona.

Likewise Heathcliff's relationship with Catherine cannot be accepted by society, but unlike Othello, Heathcliff is not a respected or useful member of society thus society cannot tolerate someone they won't benefit from. Robert Browning's Dramatic Monologues illustrate the minds of characters that become psychotic and aim to possess their lovers. 'My Last Duchess' presents a manipulative and heartless Duke, who is completely made redundant by his wife. Browning presents the Duke as a character who lacks remorse and whose jealous nature introduce us to dark and sinister qualities. He portrays his character as naive and ignorant even after the death of his wife. Browning's choice of not allowing the Duke to blame himself for his failed marriage and realising that he is an outsider builds on the image of a psychotic character that will not rehabilitate any time soon. Heathcliff similarly does not accept that he is in the wrong. " I do hate him- I am wretched -I have been a fool! " Isabella realises the extent to which her naivety has played a role in Heathcliff's evil intention. Heathcliff on the other hand his not regretful for the way he used Isabella as a means to an end and his plan to terrorise Hindley and Edgar.

The Duke has not realised how his actions had an impact on his wife, not mentioning that he himself killed her. He is not sorry for the way he behaved but Isabella on the other hand has realised her wrong doing and is at this point regretful. Both Heathcliff and the Duke continue to live life on the outside and have not taken the opportunity of renewing themselves to be accepted. The Duchess rejected the Duke by disregarding the expensive gifts he brought for her. Heathcliff too is rejected by Catherine and later by Isabella. " How very black and cross you look!

And how- how funny and grim! But that's because I'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton". Catherine has begun to distance herself from Heathcliff because she's realised that there would be a possibility of the two living as "beggars", while life with Edgar will "aid Heathcliff to rise". He therefore no longer had someone on the same wavelength as him. This ulterior motive Catherine had, which she believed would reward both her and Heathcliff, demonstrates Catherine's naivety to the social structure of the Victorian era and the limitations set by society.

The narrator in 'The Last Ride Together' is also rejected by his mistress but in contrast his acceptance of this makes him dissimilar to the Duke and Heathcliff. In this poem Browning portrays human success and the limitations people face. Although the lover's life has been "meant for fails", he has accepted his fate with his mistress and so accepts his failure of not being able to get her as part of his success. Othello on the other hand has major success in "wooing" Desdemona which could suggest that the rejection and success these characters receive could reflect the extent to which they are seen as outsiders.

Porphyria's lover is depicted as an outsider like the Duke but the narrator in this poem is far more psychotic. Browning's use of language indicates that Porphyria is from a higher class than her lover "gay feast", "dripping cloak and shawl", "soiled gloves" paints an image of a wealthy and independent woman. There is a clear issue of class and wealth in both of these Browning poems and it seems to be the root of the problems faced by the lovers. In 'Wuthering Heights' money and power is also a major issue which causes the unfortunate events endured by the protagonist.

When Heathcliff returns to the Heights as a gentleman “ in dress and aspect” rather than a “ scavenger”, there is a rise in his wealth and power. Although he abuses his new status to fulfil his evil intention, he has conformed and it now appears that he is compliant. Unlike Heathcliff, Porphyria’s lover doesn’t conform so that he feels up to par to Porphyria, instead his jealousy of her escalates into murder. Wealth and class are important issues to address when considering the position of an outsider. Othello’s otherness is overlooked because his power and status dictates his class and wealth and his overall reputation.

On the other hand the Duke believed that his wealth was enough for his wife. His psychopathic nature separated him from the Duchess, restricting her liberty and autonomy. The Duchess’ position as a substandard wife could have threatened the Duke’s role as her husband and made her a liability to his wealth and reputation. In comparison, Heathcliff is also a threat and his ‘ otherness’ makes him, not only an outcast but a menace to the established system. Edgar Linton dislikes the fact that Heathcliff is interfering with the already constructed and workable social constitution by behaving in a way that suits him.

Edgar Linton’s reaction to Catherine “ welcoming a runaway servant as a brother” proves that his presence can cause conflict within the family unit as well as the community. “ I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty”. Bronte uses particular language to display a noncompliant and inflexible character whose principles dominate his logic. The semi colon and comma suggests that Heathcliff is trying to convince both Catherine and himself that his decision to remain an outsider is the

right choice. Desdemona is equally a threat to Othello as she is able to tarnish his reputation which defines him as a man.

Iago has made Othello believe this but it is in fact Iago who feels threatened by Othello's success and achievements. Iago may not want to rise in social superiority but seeing someone being regarded as an honourable character makes him resentful. 'The Laboratory' describes a psychotic and revengeful female character whose husband favoured "Pauline" and "Elise", other women besides her. Browning uses religious references to create an image of the narrator before she became a deranged outsider. "Empty church, to pray God in", the narrator has lost her faith in Christianity and her plan to kill proves this.

Killing goes against one of the Ten Commandments, 'Thou shall not kill'. No proper Christian will contemplate murder knowing that it is against their religion. This could suggest that the narrator has lost her faith in God after losing out on love. Christianity also says 'Thou shall not commit adultery' and her ex lover broke this commandment. The narrator here is irrational as she is trying to make two wrongs a right because despite her ex lover committing adultery her plan to kill will not make things right. Shakespeare's use of imagery draws attention to the division between black and white or good and bad between Othello and Desdemona.

When Othello's views begin to resemble Iago's, he becomes cynical about women and relationships. His race becomes more of a problem and Desdemona is referred to as "that cunning whore of Venice" instead of a "fine/fair woman". "Her name that was fresh is now begrimed and black as mine own face", Desdemona is now seen by Othello as an outsider as much

as he is seen as an outsider by Iago. He views himself and Desdemona negatively due to his presumption of her infidelity. Desdemona's actions have reflected on Othello and this has made him almost blame himself for being an outsider and particularly for being black.

Iago convinced Othello that Desdemona would want somebody more like herself, white, middle class and defiantly someone who can be acknowledged by her father as an appropriate suitor. It could be said that he views himself and Desdemona negatively because he doesn't fit the requirements Iago created and made him believe. The narrator in 'The Laboratory' however does not perceive herself in a negative way. "I am here" she thinks she has outsmarted her ex lover and his mistress but has failed to realise that she is an outsider and her actions are those of an immensely psychotic and jealous person.

This has made her see her ex lover's relationship with his mistress as negative instead of understanding that she will soon be in the wrong too. Porphyria's lover is similarly in denial as he has convinced himself that his actions can be justified. "No pain felt she" this quote shows that the lover is adamant his actions have not caused any problems. "I am quite sure she felt no pain", here he tries to manipulate himself into thinking his actions were correct by eliminating any doubts in his mind. Iago greatly benefits from this tactic by using it on Othello but Porphyria's lover is trying to control himself and his mind.

He has an inability to differentiate right from wrong as well as not being able to distinguish his fantasy from reality. Browning presents this as the beginning of the poem by using pathetic fallacy and personification to

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describe his jealous and irrational character," tore the elm-tops down for spite". Browning's use of verbs such as "awake" and "vex" compares human qualities to that of nature, the wind destroys the 'elm-tops' but Porphyria's lover goes further than this and commits murder. The setting is personified to reflect the lover's characteristics and so the coming events are somewhat foreshadowed.

To conclude, the main characters in all the three texts experience alienation within their respective societies. While for some it is due to their psychological impairments others do not quite fit in the social establishment. They are expected to keep within their boundaries as they may cause disturbances to the community. It can be suggested that the outsider's own morals and values are being pushed aside which may force them to conform.

Bibliography Spark notes York notes advance: Othello and Wuthering Heights  
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