

# Wuthering heights: true love exists within death itself essay

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Wuthering Heights: True Love exists within Death itself Wuthering Heights has developed from the brainchild and literary magnum opus of Emily Bronte to a novel interpreted and re-interpreted by critics and readers from the time of its publication in 1847 till today.

There is an uncanny sense of power and mysticism in the words, the sinuous web of love entrapping lives, aware and unaware selves immersing themselves into the fatal charm of the call of love beyond the social impositions of relationships, duties and obligations. The uneasy resolution of the tensions between human and supernatural, dreams and realities, love and possession makes the readers eager to bring multiple layers of meaning into the haunting story of Catherine, Heathcliff, Linton and Isabella of the first generation and the caged souls of the next generation living in dread of the tenacious control of the unredeemed Heathcliff. The isolation of the moors and the lack of conventional morality in the structure of Catherine's life reflect Emily Bronte's own persona. Her fascination with pain and starvation in real life is given manifestation in Catherine's mental and moral design. The love affair with Heathcliff is a struggle of wills, an unearthly passion which echoes beyond the familiar world of Victorian orthodoxy, throbbing with fervor even past the realm of human existence. Love, for Catherine Earnshaw, has selfish connotations. Within the strictures of her self-enclosed life, Heathcliff is a welcome diversion for the fiercely independent Catherine.

Linton on the other hand represents a facet of social life attractive yet remote to her existence. Charmed by the advances and pampered by the

pliable handsome youth, Catherine finds the newness and luxury of the life offered by Linton a fresh change from her dark and violent days at the Heights. The life at the Grange appeals to her curiosity, vanity and ego while her vicious attachment to Heathcliff is the custody of her soul. Heathcliff is her wild alter-ego; their love and passion do not require the sanction of the superficial social bonds of matrimony. As Catherine gropes for a verbal expression of her feelings for Heathcliff, she says: I cannot express it; but surely you and every body have a notion that there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger.(Wuthering Heights 18)The lingering wisps of Catherine's essence even after her death, and Heathcliff's angst at her loss are evidenced in the agonized cries emanating from the core of his heart when Lockwood experiences the gory presence of Catherine's ghost at the window.

Even the graveyard scene of "disturb[ing] the dead" (Wuthering Heights 189) is Bronte's continued fascination with the Gothic idea of the interface of the other-worldly through the strong earthly ties of love, memory and attachment. The conventional idea of heavenly reunion of lovers' souls is rudely violated when Heathcliff opens Cathy's coffin and wishes to invade the sanctity of the dead in his fervent desire for absolute possession of his

love even in death. Catherine's diary and Nelly's account explain the complexities of the mind and soul impacted by the events and influences of childhood. Hindley's obsessive jealousy and animosity with Heathcliff and Catherine's rooted support and affection mould the repressive character of Heathcliff and pave the way for the complications in human relationships in the later part of the novel, especially the next generation. His despotic behavior with young Catherine and pitiable treatment of Hareton stem from the early suppression of his love and possession of Catherine by social constraints. Even Catherine's inability to surmount the gap of status and stigma in accepting Heathcliff openly is reflected in her anguished confession: It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and [Edgar's] is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.(Wuthering Heights 18)The novel not only charts the sinuous course of the dominant love of Catherine and Heathcliff but also illuminates the effect of love and loss on other characters.

Hindley, an otherwise cruel tyrannical personality has a soft corner for his beloved wife, but her untimely death hurls him into an abyss of hatred towards everything particularly the sight and presence of Heathcliff. Linton's love for Catherine has a protective attitude, a husband shielding his love from the torrents of a human storm of destruction that Heathcliff's return envisaged. Isabelle's fierce passion for Heathcliff is more a stubborn rebellion against Catherine's dictates against Heathcliff as also a blind trust

in the romantic gentlemanly image that Heathcliff deliberately portrayed for his selfish reasons of entrapping the Linton sibling in his well-calculated snare. The dark mysterious ways of human psyche and emotions are stroked to life by Bronte's deft imagery of the wild winds, lonely moors, unfulfilled passions and cravings, and bonds of love which outlive the limitations of frail life. Heathcliff's obsessive nature and Catherine's narcissistic almost infantile desire for love both from Linton and Heathcliff (in radically different ways – Linton being the genteel devotee and Heathcliff the rough crude lover) transgresses the limits of time and space. When Cathy is issued the compulsion of choice between Linton and Heathcliff, she surrenders to the clutches of sickness and insanity, finally succumbing to death.

In a curious way, her abandonment of the Other, that is Heathcliff from her life would be tantamount to death – if not physical demise, at least a spiritual death. The novel presents a unique love triangle between the cultured but physically weak Linton, the dominating Catherine and the avenging violent Heathcliff. Yet interestingly, there is no consummation of the indomitable love of Heathcliff and Cathy; rather, it is after her death, that her lover can see her corpse and yearn for union with her. Heathcliff's stony hearted tyranny of Hareton and his daughter-in-law Catherine is derived from his intense frustration at being thwarted in love. The paradox of being with a living spirit of Catherine yet unable to reach out and see her is a continual torture for Heathcliff. As he nears his end, he as if self-wills his annihilation with anticipation and joy: You might as well bid a man struggling in water, rest within arm's length of the shore! I must reach it first, and then I'll rest...

I'm too happy, yet I'm not happy enough. My Soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself.

( Wuthering Heights 333)In the end, the union of Hareton and young Cathy is an attempt of Bronte to set right the misbalanced equation of love and fulfillment, operating as a substratum throughout the texture of the novel – Hareton is a reflection of Heathcliff while young Cathy, though temperamentally different from her mother is the living presence of Heathcliff's Cathy. The novel in its powerful depiction of the stormy lives playing out their unique drama of love, loss, jealousy and revenge transgresses the boundaries of stereotype, convention, taboo even the barrier of physical death and presents true love surviving and surmounting the vicissitudes of circumstance and destiny. With the marriage of Hareton and Catherine, the wheel has “ come a full circle” (Cecil) and cosmic order has been established once more.

The final peace settling on Wuthering Heights is an uneasy resolution, and Emily Bronte deliberately wills it so. As Julia Kristeva asserts, the peripheral elements, the exclusions for proper structural pattern of the story, can never fully be obliterated but hovers at the borders of our existence, threatening the apparently settled unity of the subject with disruption and possible dissolution. (qtd. in Grosz) The novel thus remains an open-ended question in the minds of the readers with its complex past and unknown future in the labyrinth of human relationships.;;; Works Cited; Bronte, Emily.

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