

# A critical analysis of an extract from emily bronte's wuthering heights



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The extract in focus is typically gothic, with the protagonist, Lockwood, finding himself alone at night for the first time in Heathcliff's sinister home, Wuthering Heights. The central tensions of the novel are evident from the passage: the contrast between freedom and confinement; the line between being awake and asleep; and finally, fear evoking madness. These tensions allude to the boundary between fantasy and reality which is obscured in the extract, making it both terrifying and simultaneously, exciting to read.

The first tension that will be analysed is that between freedom and confinement. The passage begins with references to nature, 'the gusty wind', juxtaposed with Lockwood who was 'lying in the oak closet', the monosyllabic, consonant, words implying a claustrophobic sense. The novel's setting is based on the moors, barren fields, and contrary to the situation in the extract, where Lockwood is trapped inside his room, with the fear of the 'child's face' motivating his prison like state.

The 'hook... oldered into the staple:' symbolises Lockwood's entrapment physically, and even the ellipsis after the words underlines his lack of freedom. Yet ironically, although Lockwood at first wanted to 'unhasp the casement', later in the extract he emphasises his state of imprisonment, by 'pil(ing) the books up in a pyramid' against the window, showing how his fear is controlling his actions. Moreover, the fact the main action takes place at the window is significant as a window acts as a barrier, blocking freedom, yet also alludes to the mirage of freedom, a metaphor of the central tension.

Furthermore, as the glass is monotonously referenced to and glass makes up a window; its transparent quality could suggest the emptiness and falseness

of the characters illusion of reality, linking to the fantasy, reality tension and even the theme of madness within the extract. Hence the theme of madness is also prominent in the extract. Lockwood states the child was 'maddening (him) with fear' underlining how the terror was succumbing him into a psychotic state. In addition, as the extract is a recollection, 'This time, I remembered... it almost connotes a psychiatrist and patient situation, as if trying to remember the core reasons for his developed madness.

The gothic excess suggesting madness is also notable, from the 'melancholy voice sobbed' to 'a frenzy of fright.' The alliteration heightens the fear, quickening the words and thus evoking a sense of panic which enables the tension to rise. Additionally, the breaking of the glass could be perceived as figurative for the loss of control or madness. The breaking of glass happens on numerous occasions in the extract, 'I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane.

The act is foreboding for the mythical bad luck reasons, yet it also shows a complete loss of sanity and breakdown of emotions. Furthermore, glass also relates to mirrors, which too have providence in the novel as they have the underlying connotations of a divided self, a paramount theme in Wuthering Heights and immediately linking to the theme of madness. This idea of a divided self is also used in Frankenstein through both Frankenstein himself and the monster he created. More obviously however, it is shown that the relationship between male and female is divided.

Whereas in Wuthering Heights, Cathy and Heathcliff need one another to survive as a whole, Frankenstein's relationship with Elizabeth cannot survive

as the monster will not allow it due to Frankenstein's refusal to 'create a female' for the monster. Just as Frankenstein hoped for happiness with his marriage to Elizabeth, the monster also wishes for a companion equal to him that will, in turn, 'perfectionate' as Elizabeth would do with Frankenstein, in his 'weak and faulty natures.

Frankenstein's marriage to Elizabeth would enable him to regain his lost innocence, which was lost, due to the creation of his 'abhorred monster,' thereby creating within Frankenstein an internal division, until this union occurs. Shelley's uses language to highlight the theme of giving birth to an embodiment of ones self, clearly depicting the physical, mental and spiritual void in both Frankenstein and his creation. The monster represents the division within Frankenstein's sub conscience, primitive self, "We are unfashioned creatures, but half made up.

Yet just as the monster is divided due to lack of companionship, one may also see his creator suffering the same fate that has not resulted, as in *Wuthering Heights* from outside influences, but due to his own actions. Heathcliff is also divided within himself which is the reason for his melodramatic state, epitomising his madness, his 'vigorous hand', 'face as white as a wall', and the simile 'startled... like an electric shock. 'This static madness is due to the fact he thinks Lockwood's screaming is actually his beloved Catherine's, the reason for his loss of sanity.

Heathcliff's madness is accentuated through his animalistic transgression from human to a beast, 'crushing his nails into the palms' and 'grinding his teeth' which he also repeats later in the novel. These descriptions are

comparable to many other gothic texts, such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* as the main characters in both novels transgress the human boundaries with animal traits and monstrous qualities, demonstrating their loss of control and madness.

The last central tension within the extract is the fear of sleep and the thin line between being awake or asleep. This central tension is very similar to that in *Dracula*, as Lucy also fears sleep as when she is sleeping she is bitten causing her to become weak. The idea of being semi-unconscious and therefore unprotected and vulnerable is the reason why sleep is so feared in *Wuthering Heights* and is described as 'the intense horror of nightmare.' Lockwood notes that he 'observed... when awake' and Heathcliff states 'no one will thank you for a doze in such a den!', implying that, in Gothic fashion, the supernatural terror that occurs only does at night when the victim is asleep and oblivious.

This idea of being oblivious is comparable to Lockwood distorting the truth, 'I had the misfortune to scream in my sleep, owing to a frightful nightmare', which further leads to madness as already mentioned. Therefore, in conclusion, the extract analysed has many typical gothic traits as well as being enigmatic as the passion the characters demonstrate gives the novel and extract a human twist, making the supernatural elements more realistic and thus more terrifying.