

# Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights as a Revenge Play

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UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA  
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**Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* as a Revenge Play**

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Literature and Pedagogy

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis discusses Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* through the character of Heathcliff, more specifically the revenge he wreaks on his adversaries. The reasons for the revenge are probed, the ways in which he exerts his revenge, as well as the impact it had on the people around him. Another important aspect of the novel is a singular bond between Heathcliff and Catherine unrolling between frustration and excess. Therefore, the paper maintains a motive of madness in a revenge play. The meanings of Brontë's novel against the Victorian cultural setting are explored.

**Key words:** Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, revenge play, Victorian era

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## INTRODUCTION

*Wuthering Heights* is the only novel written by Emily Brontë, published in 1847 under the alias Ellis Bell. The novel is set in Yorkshire, where Emily was born and raised along with her sisters Anne and Charlotte who were also writers - the famous Brontë sisters.

Brontë presented Heathcliff as a cruel person and Catherine as self-willed, but at the same time it can be noticed that she feels certain affinity towards them despite all their flaws. She writes them with more imagination which is believed to be a result of her private fondness for the freedom and unrestricted life that is not constrained by other people's rules. Her imagination is remarkable, more special than any other that ever took place in the English fiction and it is suitable for such a novel as *Wuthering Heights* is. Since the backbone of this novel is severe continuing conflict, it requires special ability to express brutality (Albashir Mohammed Alhaj 12).

However, not all readers were satisfied with the amount and power of emotions that Emily expressed in the novel. There were some "19th-century opinions" who found themselves offended by the darkness and the strength of the book, as well as the level of brutality Brontë's characters displayed. It was claimed that the novel has some masculine features which raised suspicions that Emily's late brother Branwell has at least participated, if not wrote the novel (Tompkins, Encyclopedia Britannica).

In Clement Shorter's *The Brontës, Life and Letters* (qtd. in Mac Carthy 15), Emily Brontë has been called "the sphinx of literature". The reason behind this lies not only in the fact that Emily was not the type of person to show her feelings very openly, but also in the idea that in her works she managed to include both the earthly and the spiritual. Brontë was a mystery during life, people around her had no insight into her inner life - including even her family - and the mystery is what she continues to be today. Charlotte Brontë, as the Brontë sister who was the last to die, is often considered somewhat responsible for not writing down more about her sister's life for the younger generations. The reason for this is that Charlotte failed to understand Emily's intellectual and creative mind.

People who studied her works tried, by analyzing her novel and poems, find out more about her character. Since most of the success during such studies remained on the professional side of Emily's life, they had to go with the theory that the author puts a big part of himself in his work. However, that is not easy to achieve with *Wuthering Heights* because of the level of objectivity with which it was written. In order to have a chance to extract some conclusions about her character from her works, one must turn to her poetry as the subjectivity of her poems provides more opportunities to gain insight into her emotions and way of thinking. Besides those poems and the novel *Wuthering Heights*, Emily's biographies were written solely based on the smaller fragments from three diaries and the same number of letters. (Mansfield 1-2).

Emily had an ability to create a work founded solely on the overpowering feelings of love and hatred, even with a restricted scene and just a small number of characters. Another one of Brontë's capabilities was to convey strong emotions which can be related to the fact that she had a certain poetic nature, having written more poems than any other literary genre. She was known to have an interesting take on life. She rejected the standard practice of dividing the parts of one's life on positive and negative as that would in fact mean that a person accepts certain events but dismisses others. Emily Brontë was a person that accepted all those events, her life was at the same time both peaceful and turbulent (Albashir Mohammed Alhaj 6).

This paper deals with the analysis of Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*. Firstly, the novel will be put in literary and historical context by exploring the Victorian era in which the novel was written and describing how that affected Brontë's writing. The focus of this work is to represent revenge as a central motive of the novel, emphasized mostly through character of Heathcliff and his relationship with other protagonists.

## 1. VICTORIAN ERA

Victorian era is the name for the period from roughly 1820 to 1914, mostly associated with the reign of Queen Victoria. Novelties that marked this period were an increase in the number of people who are now allowed vote, the flourishing of the economy, the rise of Britain and the society founded on the class system (Steinbach, Encyclopedia Britannica). The motive of class system is emphasized in the novel as well. Brontë centralized the whole novel around Heathcliff and his life-long suffering because he was considered to be of lower class and therefore unworthy of high-quality education and enjoying the same lifestyle as those around him, that is the Earnshaw's and Linton's. Class differences would eventually prompt Catherine to marry Edgar. Edgar, and the whole Linton family, had the qualities every Victorian woman considered important. She decided not to follow her heart, but to prioritize the opinion of society. Not even the great love she felt for Heathcliff could compete with that.

Hierarchy was very important during the Victorian era. People were classified based on where they came from, what they did for living, whether they were white or black and what their religion was. However, the most important categories for the social position were those of class and gender. It was believed that differences between men and women were present everywhere: from the physical strength, their feelings towards sex, the level of independency, the roles they have in society and their rights. Emily Brontë she was fighting against all those social norms that expected from women to be more devoted to the religious beliefs and on a higher moral level, while men had the right to be controlled by their sexual desire (Steinbach, Encyclopedia Britannica).

Women in the Victorian era had no right to have that kind of feelings; they were not allowed to have more sexual partners that are not their husbands, which was not the case with male population. Women were just considered not to be sexual beings; it was not a possibility for them to feel sexual attraction towards someone and let alone think of starting another relationship. That is why Brontë wanted to point out that it was time for a change, and she did so by creating the character of Catherine who has feelings for two men and spent her life choosing between her heart and mind.

There is a certain subjectivity in the novel, which is not openly displayed, but it raises a question of sexual ambiguity. Brontë's character Heathcliff is seen as a result of a gender change. Emily Brontë was in constant confrontation with the rules and regulations, social norms and destiny, having at the same time both male and female characteristics. For that reason, Heathcliff is considered to be Emily herself, for whom this was another way to express her feelings about the gender restrictions. Delineating the character of Heathcliff evinces the authorial differences between the Brontë sisters. Charlotte wrote *Jane Eyre* taking into account the universal principles of comprehensibility and associates herself with her disadvantaged heroine. On the other hand, Emily placed the energy for *Wuthering Heights* away from society and crosses gender limits to connect herself with her ferocious hero (Paglia 290-293).

While the existence of sexuality was often ignored, there still was a smaller number of progressive people who integrated the aspect of sex into their works. Still, the majority never touched upon sexuality, with Brontë being one of them. The novel follows years and years of intense love between Heathcliff and Catherine, but never once did they cross the line and engaged into an intimate relationship. Heathcliff and Catherine are the example of the Victorian sexual restraint. No matter how strong the feelings between the characters are, they stay pure in that sense.

A characteristic which made Victorian perspective unique was the clash of right and wrong, however that is not how Brontë saw human nature and it is not how she represented it in her works. *Wuthering Heights* does not have a confrontation between the rightness, but rather the liking. (Albashir Mohammed Alhaj 7). Catherine is not concerned with the fact whether it is right for her to have feelings for Heathcliff or not, considering the fact they grew up together like brother and sister. She is more occupied with whether Heathcliff fits her criteria and does she like the fact that she has feelings for someone like him.

Apart from society, her private life also influenced her writing. The character of Hindley, whose life fell apart after his wife died and he turned to drinking which ended his life, was inspired by Emily's brother Branwell who was an addict. Apparently, Emily saw Branwell's death as a



liberation of his soul from worldly problems and a way of finding peace which she decided to do with the characters in *Wuthering Heights* (Albashir Mohammed Alhaj 5). Compared to the rest of Victorian writers, Brontë describes the traits of her characters in a more comprehensive way, trying to encompass nearly all aspects of their nature. Paying attention to the hereditary character made her unique since no other writer described their character that way. She used an opportunity in the form of her family which she used to observe how some characteristics are transferred within family, especially from parents to children (Albashir Mohammed Alhaj 10).

## 2. REVENGE PLAY

Revenge play is one of the most important dramatic genres of the Elizabethan period. It is precisely Shakespeare who was an inspiration to Brontë during the writing of *Wuthering Heights*. She went as far as actually mentioning Shakespeare's play *King Lear* in the scene where Lockwood gets brought down by Heathcliff's dogs.

The similarities between Brontë's novel and Shakespeare's plays can be found in many aspects, the most obvious being the theme of revenge. Both Heathcliff and Hamlet take their time in getting their revenge and think that death of their rivals is not enough to bring them satisfaction, they would rather make them suffer (Girdler 388). The character of Catherine also has similarities with Shakespeare's character Ophelia. What ties the two of them is element of madness; they both have episodes of ravings and die of broken heart (Girdler 389-390). Even the literary device of embedded narrative, in this example embedded play, was already used by Shakespeare in his plays *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* (Girdler 391).

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the noun *revenge* has three similar definitions. Revenge is "a desire for vengeance or retribution", "an act or instance of retaliating in order to get even" and "an opportunity for getting satisfaction". Generally, in the focus of revenge play is a character who believes that a serious injustice has been done to him. He manages to conquer every problem that befalls him and carefully devises a retaliation. However, at the same time he becomes just as wicked as those who had hurt him (Broude 38-39). Brontë's Heathcliff is the typical main character of a revenge play who did all those things: he regards Hindley and all the bad things he did to him as a source of serious injustice. As a result of the traumas he bears, Heathcliff spent years planning his revenge. Along the way, he lost himself and ended up repeating Hindley's mistakes by mistreating Hareton.

*Wuthering Heights* perceived as a revenge play pertains to some further elements of drama rendered in the novel. The atmosphere in the novel has been created as mystical, harsh and agitated right from the beginning when Mr. Lockwood conveyed the meaning of the name Wuthering Heights:

"'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun" (Brontë 46).

The word "Wuthering" which denotes turbulent weather does not only refer to the weather outside, it also announces the relations between the household members. That is tightly connected to another element of drama which is conflict. The whole novel is rife with conflicts as all the characters are temperamental and it does not take long for them to explode.

The strangeness, a feeling of difference in relation to the reader's real life, is one of the most common emotions that *Wuthering Heights* arouses (Krupat 270). Her aim was to leave the world in a wild state, which explains the dramatic aspect of *Wuthering Heights* that can be read from the tension, frequent conflict and foul mood (Krupat 280). Heathcliff's vision of Catherine as a ghost certainly added to that weirdness the novel radiates. He was so desperate to see her again and not lose her that he tearfully begged Catherine's ghost to torment him as long as he lives, as a way to punish himself for his role in her death.

Heathcliff is not the only character who saw the ghost of Catherine, she also appeared to Lockwood in his dreams. Regardless of the fact that she introduces herself as Catherine Linton, which became her last name after marrying Edgar, her ghost was a child. Even as a child, Catherine was always strong and combative, displaying that once again when she grabbed Lockwood by his hand as a symbol of trying to live through him (Paglia 298). That is why while Heathcliff's madness can be related to supernatural element, Catherine's madness seems to be more similar to mental illness. She experienced so called "episodes" which are described as her not being able to sleep, refusing to eat, having illusions and being in a semi-awake state. In the novel "madness is seen to partake of the supernatural; the diabolical; the mystic; the expression of passion; and, more prosaically, the physical symptoms of illness" (Beveridge and Renvoize 411).

### 3. THE NOVEL FORM

The first chapter of *Wuthering Heights* starts in 1801 when Mr. Lockwood visits Wuthering Heights to introduce himself to his new landlord. Lockwood moved into Thrushcross Grange, a residence owned by Mr. Heathcliff, an older man who did not even try to hide his hostile attitude not just towards the unknown man, but also towards his employees, people who live with him and animals.

Joseph, Heathcliff's servant, is a first character we are introduced to. He is a grouchy old man who endures Heathcliff's harsh words daily and begrudgingly does the work he is ordered to do, such as taking care of Lockwood's horse, feeding the dogs and milking the cows. During the Lockwood's visit, a fierce storm broke out which prevented him from leaving Wuthering Heights and forced him to spend the night there. Once again that news was not warmly welcomed by Heathcliff, but it did serve to introduce Lockwood to the rest of the household.

When the time for dinner came, Lockwood saw at the table two young people once again in a tense situation. He addressed the woman with Mrs. Heathcliff, who turned out to be Catherine, and tried to strike up a conversation, but all he got were short and downright rude answers. The second person at the table was a young man called Hareton Earnshaw, for whom Lockwood was not even sure whether the man was a servant or not based on his old clothes and impolite way of talking. Apart from them, in the house also lived a housekeeper called Zillah.

Inside the room Lockwood was placed in for the night, he found a pile of old books. There were three different writings on the books: Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff and Catherine Linton. Catherine's library, as Lockwood called it, contained diaries written by young Catherine more than 25 years ago. A funny sketch of Joseph which Lockwood saw, urged him to start reading about the life of the Earnshaw family as Catherine saw it.

The story starts when Hindley is already back and married; and behaving towards Heathcliff so brutally that him and Catherine decided they were "going to rebel" (Brontë 64). That was when Lockwood felt a cold hand grasping him, a woman who introduced herself as Catherine

Linton. Out of fear and panic, Lockwood raised his voice which led to Heathcliff finding him and another discussion occurred between the two.

The next day Lockwood could not contain his curiosity and began to question Mrs. Dean about the family. Mrs. Dean, or Nelly as Catherine called her, was a servant in the Earnshaw house for eighteen years. She commenced the story from the start, when Catherine was only six and Hindley fourteen years old, and Mr. Earnshaw brought Heathcliff home with him from his visit to Liverpool. Nelly recounted how Heathcliff had a difficult childhood, having only Catherine on his side, while Hindley, Mrs. Earnshaw and even Nelly felt strong dislike towards Heathcliff and did not hesitate to show it. Mr. Earnshaw sent Hindley away to study, and he returned after Mr. Earnshaw's death married and even more cruel than before. Hindley's conduct towards him and the fact that Catherine chose Edgar Linton, resulted in Heathcliff running away and coming back only years later.

Nelly continues her story describing how, once he returned, Heathcliff decided to marry Edgar's sister Isabella. She is just another person he treats horribly which leads to her fleeing to London and giving birth to his son Linton there. Heathcliff on the other hand stays raising Hindley's son Hareton after his death. Catherine dies after giving birth to a girl named after her mother Catherine, called Cathy. After Isabella's death, Linton comes to live with Heathcliff and joins him in misbehaving towards Hareton. When Cathy turns 16, she comes to Wuthering Heights against her father's wishes and meets its residents. Heathcliff sees this as another way to seek revenge and forces Cathy to marry Linton. He is of bad health and soon dies, which brings back Nelly to the present since all of that happened last winter.

In 1802, Lockwood returns for a visit and finds out that Nelly now lives in Wuthering Heights, which he decides to visit. There he finds an atmosphere quite different than it was last year. Cathy is now teaching Hareton how to read, opposite of how she used to ridicule him for his lack of knowledge, and they seem to be romantically involved instead of hating each other as they did last year. Nelly explains how she returned to Wuthering Heights soon after his departure and that Heathcliff died three months ago which finally brought peace to the Earnshaw dwelling.

The peculiarity of the novel lies in the viewpoint which is composed of two narrators: Lockwood, a guest at Heathcliff's estates and Nelly Dean, a longtime servant. Lockwood's narrative about the present-day situation in Wuthering Heights is the frame story, while Nelly's account of events in the family over the past few decades are the inner story of the novel. Nelly, who had the most contact with the protagonists, did not attain the right approach towards such temperamental characters which led to the failure in understanding them, their feelings and reactions. This lack of understanding resulted in misadvising them that often caused damage at the expense of the main characters (Shunami 449, 451). The embedded narrative provides an opportunity to learn about a story within a story. Having two different narrators gave the readers a chance to completely separate those two stories regardless of the fact that they intertwine in the novel. The reader is given a chance to gain an insight into Heathcliff's character from more than one person and then, in the most objective way, compare what Heathcliff was like in his youth, why he changed, what he is like in the present. The inner story is very important because it is the one that influences the characters in the frame story.

Over the years, many critics commented on the ability of each narrator, their roles and relevance. Usually, they felt the need to side with one of them, approving either Nelly or Lockwood and disapproving the other. However, both narrators are essential and dismissing one of them is not an option. Nelly and Lockwood are the representation of the similarities between the city and the countryside. Despite the distinctions between them, in their origin and the level of education, Nelly and Lockwood speak in a similar manner (Krupat 273).

#### 4. HEATHCLIFF AND CATHERINE'S RELATIONSHIP

Right at the start of the novel, it is visible that from the young age Catherine and Heathcliff formed a special bond with Nelly saying they became "very thick" just days after Heathcliff's arrival (Brontë 78). As Catherine and Heathcliff grew up together, they were extremely close, but from an early age Catherine showed a fondness for the lifestyle the Linton family had, which ultimately led to the downfall of Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship. When Catherine returned home after staying at the Thrushcross Grange for five weeks, she greeted Heathcliff by saying that he looks "very black and cross" as well as "funny and grim" (Brontë 94) with an explanation that she was so used to Isabella and Edgar.

Catherine's love for Heathcliff was not enough and after Hindley demoted Heathcliff into a laborer, she decides to marry Edgar Linton. While the love of Catherine and Heathcliff is more profound and constant, the relationship between Edgar and Catherine represents completely different type of love. What Catherine and Heathcliff have is permanent, whilst Catherine she bases her love for Edgar on a momentary feeling. Catherine herself compared her feeling for the two men as she said to Mrs. Dean:

"My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary" (Brontë 122).

Catherine loves what Edgar represents, not him. Those feelings she thinks she has for Edgar are based on all the wrong reasons which was not hard to recognized and eventually caused Nelly to question her about it. When Nelly asks her whether she loves Edgar and if so why, Catherine gives superficial answers claiming she feels love for him because he is "handsome", "pleasant to be with" and "young and cheerful" (Brontë 118). All those feelings are the complete opposite of a relationship she and Heathcliff have; a special connection that only comes from a natural affinity where she can not help loving him even when she does not like him (Albashir Mohammed Alhaj 14).

Catherine and Heathcliff's love is passionate and boundless, they have a special bond that runs deeper than with any other person. Albashir Mohammed Alhaj argues that Catherine and Heathcliff are "expressions of the same spiritual principle" and that the connection they have "interweaves itself with the nature of their existence" (14-15). Catherine says to Nelly "I AM Heathcliff" (Brontë 122) emphasizing how they are one soul in two bodies, it is impossible to separate the two of them. They are "reflections of a unified self" (Jackson 76) who nurture the same intolerance towards tradition in society and desire for freedom.

When Heathcliff and Catherine met again after three years, they were so engrossed in each other that they did not even notice the displeasure of other people, namely her husband Edgar who warned Catherine about her behaviour stating that "whole household need not witness the sight of your welcoming a runaway servant as a brother" (Brontë 134-135). The level of happiness they felt surpassed any shame at their behaviour. Catherine does not hesitate to tell Heathcliff how cruel he has been, therefore not deserving the warm reception. She accuses that he has been "absent and silent" for a long time and did not even think of her (Brontë 136). Heathcliff answer "a little more than you have thought of me" (Brontë 136) thus proving that Catherine often occupied his thoughts and that their love is just as strong as it was years ago.

The reason for the failure of Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship is that he simply does not fulfill the criteria of the education level and social status she wanted in a husband (Vargish 7). While Heathcliff was ready to choose Catherine over anybody else, out of fear she decides to marry Edgar:

"Because misery and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, YOU, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart - YOU have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine" (Brontë 196).

Nelly was afraid of what Heathcliff's reaction was going to be on the news that Catherine died. He used anger as coping mechanism, ordering Nelly not to cry for her and uttering an ironic "Did she die like a saint?" (Brontë 203) when Nelly said she hopes Catherine is now in heaven. The death of Catherine was for Heathcliff "ultimate deprivation" (Vargish 11) and turned him into a person who lives to inflict pain to those he holds responsible.



The relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff is established on an intense attractiveness. While the feelings of deep affection between the characters were brought to the fore, the sexual side of their relationship has been ignored. Their love stems from their similarity and the shared identity, therefore it transcends gender. Heathcliff's sexuality was shaped by Byron's character Manfred and his feelings towards his own sister and similar to that, the topic of incest has been approached. Heathcliff and Catherine may not be related, but they did grow up together as brother and sister (Paglia 294). The incest topic has been fully touched upon with Cathy and Hareton who over time developed feelings for each other, despite their parents being brother and sister.

## 5. HEATHCLIFF - THE VENGEFUL AGENT

### 5.1. Heathcliff's childhood

Heathcliff is a central character of the novel, followed from the moment of his arrival to the Earnshaw house until his death. Heathcliff was brought by Mr. Earnshaw from one of his trips. He found him on the streets, without any family or name, they could not even understand him. The name they christened him was Heathcliff, the name of Earnshaw's late son. Still, that was also his last name as he was not given the last name Earnshaw, symbolizing that he is both "an outsider and an insider" (Ali 1).

He had a hard time fitting into the family who did not accept him all that well. With the exception of Catherine and Mr. Earnshaw, Heathcliff had an enemy in all the other members of the household. Nelly's feelings towards Heathcliff were very similar to the hatred Hindley felt. She does not view him as a human being, using the pronoun "it" when referring to him and saying she had to "wash it, and give it clean things, and let it sleep with the children" (Brontë 77). According to Nelly (Brontë 78), Mrs. Earnshaw "never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged", which is not surprising considering her reaction when she first saw him:

" (...) Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up, asking how he could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed and fend for? What he meant to do with it, and whether he were mad?" (Brontë 77).

When Heathcliff came back after three years, he was barely the same person. He was now wealthy, successful and better looking which "accentuates the internal conflict in Catherine" about her marriage to Edgar (Ali 2). The intellect was one of the main areas in which they insulted Heathcliff, even Catherine. When Heathcliff turned sixteen, the difference between him and Catherine became even more apparent since he lost interest in pursuing "knowledge, and any love for books or learning. (...) He struggled long to keep up an equality with Catherine in her studies, and yielded with poignant though silent regret (...)" (Brontë 107).

After his comeback, it came to Nelly's attention how Heathcliff's mental capacity changed in those three years since he was gone. According to her, Heathcliff now "looked intelligent and retained no marks of former degradation" (Brontë 134). That Heathcliff became sharp-witted and continued to progress on the mental level is also witnessed by Lockwood who commented the first night that he thought Heathcliff was "very intelligent" based on the conversation they had and could not wait tomorrow to come and speak to him again (Brontë 50). Besides intellectual part that Nelly noticed, Heathcliff changed his appearance as well. While in the past his looks worsened along with his mental decline when he obtained "slouching gait and ignoble look" (Brontë 107) that also changed as Nelly noticed that he now looks "quite handsome" (Ali 2).

## 5.2. Heathcliff's reprisal

The hatred Heathcliff felt towards Hindley and Edgar, he transferred to their children. Cathy and Hareton have deserved to suffer for the sins of their parents according to Heathcliff who spent his whole life ruining theirs. The whole novel is based on the feelings of love and loathing, both closely intertwined with revenge. However, Heathcliff's behaviour differs from others: "(...) Heathcliff's cruelty is projected towards his enemies, the Earnshaws and the Lintons, in the form of willed, responsible and controlled by purpose scheme of revenge, and this controlled scheme distinguishes his attitude from all the other types in the novel" (Albashir Mohammed Alhaj 18). Heathcliff's revenge path is special because he spent years plotting how to get vengeance not only on Hindley and Edgar, but on their innocent children as well.

Heathcliff knew that the first thing he required in order to obtain the revenge on Hindley, was wealth. He uses the money to destroy Hindley as planned, however he continues his revenge path by hurting those who are not in any way responsible for the events of his childhood. The central object of Heathcliff's revenge ended up being the younger generation. The children, especially Hareton, received maltreatment as they were forced to live in his house and therefore in a way depended on him. By doing so, Heathcliff showed that no one was truly blameless. The importance of the family in the novel is diminished by all that fighting since "father is turned against son, brother against sister, servant against master, husband against wife, lover against lover" (Bell 190).

Feelings of both love and hate are the reason why Heathcliff came back and that is why his revenge has no foundation without Catherine. Catherine was the most important person in his life and the only person he loved. For that reason, Heathcliff uses love as a tool in his revenge path. He manipulates Isabella's feelings to achieve his goal and takes from Edgar people he loves the most – his daughter Cathy and his sister Isabella – all because he married a person Heathcliff loved.

Heathcliff's main motivation for the return and the main cause of revenge was Hindley. To Nelly he says: "I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!" (Brontë 101). Since he was a small child

Heathcliff fantasized how he would retaliate and later he just transferred that resentment from Hindley to Hareton. Hindley's downfall and tragic death were not enough for Heathcliff, he wanted to degrade Hindley's son the same way Hindley degraded him. Therefore, he raised Hareton in an obvious lack of knowledge by preventing him from getting a decent education, as well as in a lack of manners (Vargish 13).

### 5.3. Heathcliff and Isabella

A very important character in Heathcliff's revenge is Isabella Linton, Edgar's sister and later Heathcliff's wife. She is used as a sort of transition between the older and younger generations in the novel, more specifically between Catherine and her daughter Cathy. She is also a mother of one of Heathcliff's objects of revenge from the second generation, his only son Linton (Vargish 11).

Isabella was aware of the feelings Catherine and Heathcliff were harbouring. She knew how weak Catherine's feelings were for her brother and how much Catherine influenced and, consciously or unconsciously, controlled Heathcliff's life. That is why she refused to listen to Catherine when she tried to warn her that marrying Heathcliff would be a wrong decision and answered her with words: 'I love him more than ever you loved Edgar, and he might love me, if you would let him!' (Brontë 141).

For Heathcliff, Isabella had two roles in his revenge. By marrying her, Heathcliff saw an opportunity to gain a part of Thrushcross Grange and thus hurt Edgar financially. At the same time, he took out his anger towards Edgar for marrying Catherine by behaving ruthlessly towards Isabella (Vargish 11). Isabella's declaration when she said "the single pleasure I can imagine is to die, or to see him dead" (Brontë 188) shows how horribly he treated her and how trapped she felt in that marriage.

Heathcliff's good quality that Nelly praised when he was a child, the fact that he was honest, disappeared when he married Isabella just to hurt both her and her brother. That is another example to show how much Heathcliff changed since he grew up and that change can also be related to the fact that he is now without Catherine. He lost Catherine after she married Edgar, and as a result the real Heathcliff went missing as well. (Vargish 12).

## 6. HINDLEY - INSTIGATOR OF REVENGE

Hindley Earnshaw's hatred towards Heathcliff derived from the way Mr. Earnshaw treated Heathcliff. Mr. Earnshaw being more lenient towards Heathcliff made Hindley resent him even more which eventually started a chain of revenge that lasted for decades, involved several generations and families and did not end until all its contributors were dead.

Hindley's relationship with his own sister is no better, with Catherine calling him "detestable substitute" for their father as well as "tyrant" based on the way he treats Heathcliff (Brontë 63). Hindley did everything in his power to separate Heathcliff and Catherine, both physically and mentally. He forbade them from sleeping in the same bed, as well as had influence on Heathcliff's demeanor and intellect (Vargish 10). All of that made Catherine inconsolable as she told Nelly:

"My head aches, till I cannot keep it on the pillow; and still I can't give over. Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won't let him sit with us, nor eat with us any more; and, he says, he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders. He has been blaming our father (how dared he?) for treating H. too liberally; and swears he will reduce him to his right place -" (Brontë 64).

Mr. Earnshaw treated the children very differently, creating even greater differences between them that led to the household resenting Heathcliff, and not only Hindley. Earnshaw had a special weakness for Heathcliff, choosing and trusting him above anyone else, as well as punishing those who did not treat him the right way: "(...) Hindley's manifestation of scorn, while his father was near, roused the old man to a fury: he seized his stick to strike him, and shook with rage that he could not do it" (Brontë 82). Every such situation only increased the rage within Hindley.

What Hindley and Heathcliff have in common is inability to grant forgiveness. They both did the same thing; they were angry because of the way one person treated them. For Hindley that was his father, while Heathcliff was furious with Hindley. After years when the object of their

anger died, they decided to seek revenge from a person who was not at fault, Hindley mistreated Heathcliff who later did the same thing to Hareton. That desire for revenge is what made *Wuthering Heights* a place of moral disorder (Bell 190).

Hindley's tyranny arose largely under the influence of his wife, whom he brought when he returned after three years for his father's funeral. She did not have to say a lot, just a handful of words to express her distaste for Heathcliff, and all of the old feelings of resentment and hatred were stirred up in Hindley. Hindley is another character from the novel who died because of love; after his wife's death he started excessively drinking and neglected his own son. Nelly said: "(...) I was very sad for Hindley's sake. He had room in his heart only for two idols - his wife and himself: he doted on both, and adored one, and I couldn't conceive how he would bear the loss" (Brontë 105). He and Heathcliff were the same in that aspect as well: obsessively loving one woman, destroying themselves over the fact they are unable to recover from it and failing to care for their own sons.



## CONCLUSION

Emily Brontë only ever wrote one novel in her life, but with it she left an enormous impact on the English literature. Victorian era was a period with many specific rules about acceptable behaviour, approved activities and class. Most of those rules only applied to women who had to be chaste and compliant, having a lot less rights than their husbands who were allowed to be more spiritually and sexually free. Brontë touched on those most important topics and controversies of the Victorian society by writing a novel where a woman has feelings for two men and chooses between them based on their social class.

*Wuthering Heights* has Heathcliff as a central character who carries a lot of anger and resentment within, and a very small number of people managed to escape his rage. Heathcliff's obsession with getting revenge opens this novel toward another literary genre - revenge play.

Heathcliff and Hindley had an intense relationship where they both hurt each other intentionally, but the rest of the characters did nothing to deserve the treatment they received from Heathcliff. At the end, it is visible that the basis for Heathcliff's revenge is Catherine and their unusual relationship which borderlines with codependency.

Brontë pushed the boundaries of Victorian women and the way they were portrayed, neither Catherine nor Cathy are quiet women who sit calmly in their homes and listen to the orders of the men in their life. She also presented hereditary character in literature and demonstrated her talent by writing a complex and unique novel ahead of her time.

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