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DREAMS AS VISION OF LIFE: A STUDY OF EMILY BRONTE'S WUTHERING HEIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

The very title of the novel *Wuthering Heights* is enough to set the imagination vibrating. It is regarded as a novel of unequal genius, revealing some flashes of extraordinary imagination. It introduces two of the most startling characters in all literature. Heathcliff - the one, an unfathomable mixture of savagery and gentleness, and Catherine the other, a woman of strong will, but later driven into madness. This classic, unforgettable novel has truly been called, as the strangest love story ever told, and the selected study embodies the discovery of self through dreams and aspirations, as portrayed in the novel. It throws light on the dreams of the characters and their impact upon themselves. It makes a study of the lives of the characters' dreams and shows how their dreams drive them to their self - discovery. To be brief, it compiles the discoveries of the characters and shows the fact that dreams and desires are independent factors which constantly absolves the issue of reality.

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Wuthering Heights pictures a mystic vision of life. The characters of the novel have a symbolical meaning, and stand for certain ideas. This novel is not only a painting of life, but also an interpretation of it. Though the characters may seem misfit in the real, factual world, they are quite appropriate for the world which they belong to. The story begins towards the close, and then recounts the events of some forty years which have already happened. The story travels back in time, and the events of some forty years rapidly pass before the readers' eyes.

Wuthering Heights is an expression in the imaginative terms of art, of the stresses and tensions, conflicts, personal and spiritual, and of nineteenth century capitalist society. It is a novel without false comforts, without any implications that power over their destinies rest outside the struggles and actions of human beings themselves. Its powerful evocation of nature, of moorland and storm, of the stars and the seasons is an essential part of its revelation of the very movement of life itself. The men and women of

Wuthering Heights are not the prisoners of nature; they live in the world and strive to change it, sometimes successfully always painfully with almost infinite difficulty and error.

The theme is filtered through the minds of two onlookers and the stirring incidents are being presented through the mouth of Mr. Lockwood, a tenant of Thrushcross Grange and Nelly Dean, the housekeeper of *Wuthering Heights*. It explores how the narrative of one's life and dreams can be an assessment as well as a release and relaxation. Eventually it replaces the absolute mental agony which can expand the dreams of the writer. It seeks to contradict the psychological danger played out in its characters' dreams and their discourse on it.

The dreams of three generations cover Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw, living at *Wuthering Heights*. They have two children, Hindley and Catherine. Mr. and Mrs. Linton, living at Thrushcross Grange, have likewise two children, Edgar and Isabella. Subsequently, after their respective marriages, Hindley Earnshaw begets a son who is named Hareton while Cathy gives birth to a girl who is also named Catherine. Isabella, the daughter of the Lintons, marries Heathcliff, of this marriage is born a son, who gets the name Linton. Towards the end of the novel, Hareton and the younger Catherine are preparing to get married. It is in this way that the novel deals with the dreams of three generations.

Cathy's dreams, during her illness, are clearly symptoms of the disturbance of her mind. She says *I dread sleeping; my dreams appal me* (*Wuthering Heights*, p.124). But she is appalled by the behaviour of her husband, who responds to her illness by retreating into his library and the society of his books. She protests to her nurse when she learns of his whereabouts. *What in the name of all that feels, has he to do with books, when I am dying?* (p.121, 122).

Wuthering Heights has a double frame, as if its world is doubly removed from that of its readers, but Lockwood, the first narrator, moves from a confident detachment to the bewilderment of a fearful victim. He tries to interpret what he sees in his way in *Wuthering Heights*. Lockwood's reaction to the dreams in the paneled bed that once belonged to Catherine Earnshaw, where Catherine has dreamt as well, has carved her name into the wooden panels, and had preserved parts of her childhood in a diary and Heathcliff's dream, finally dying triumphantly in the very chamber where Lockwood had dreamed of Cathy struggling to enter is discussed in a grim manner in the beginning of the novel. The setting for their dreams make up part of the content: The paneled bed and its window appear as images not only in Lockwood's dream of entrance, but also in Cathy's feverish dreams of her childhood and in Heathcliff's final vision of Cathy as well. The site and substance of their dreams represent a psychic center for the novel, coloring all its events. Lockwood's dreams, like his entire experience at the Heights, present a challenge to his sense of himself, a challenge that he explored and discovered. Evidently, these dreams are the axles, which urged him to penetrate into the wheels of *Wuthering Heights*.

From the very beginning Heathcliff is the cause of bad signs in the Earnshaw's family. Hindley feels antagonistic to the stranger from the very start. Heathcliff endures Hindley's ill-treatment of him. He is, perhaps, not destructive and revengeful. He is capable of intense love and making great sacrifice, as is evident from his love for Catherine. As a child, he seems to be sullen and indifferent to his surroundings. Mr. Earnshaw shows a lot of affection for Heathcliff. Mrs. Earnshaw, the mother of Hindley and Cathy, died two years after Heathcliff's arrival. Mr. Earnshaw has brought Heathcliff with the dreams of love and affection. His key of intention opens up some new phases in the history of *Wuthering Heights*.

Human emotions constitute a fertile field for philosophical cultivation. This is the terrain of the various emotions that the characters feel in response to the circumstances. Likewise, Hindley stands for obstinacy and violent temper. From his very boyhood he seems to be cruel and merciless. Mr. Earnshaw dislikes him for his cruelty. He is sent to a university during his father's lifetime. After his father's death he returns home, but he also brings a wife with him. She is consumptive and also silly. The husband and the wife, however, are wholly absorbed in each other's love, and are least interested in the world around them. Hindley's hatred for Heathcliff intensifies after his father's death, and he behaves towards him more cruelly than he ever did before. He grows worse after his wife's death. He regards her death as an instance of divine injustice, and to avenge himself on God deliberately takes evil ways. Faith lends strength to human character,

and in the absence of any faith he grew up to be weak and impulsive. This is proved by Hindley. He shrinks himself in his own world but dreams to capture *Wuthering Heights*. When he becomes the master of *Wuthering Heights*, he forgets his responsibilities and neglects even his sister, Catherine. These emotional responses are found on his mental state which is eventually contrasted with the reality.

In several respects Edgar Linton constitutes his faith in God and religion and understands his duty towards his family. There are two distinct groups of primitive and civilized persons in *Wuthering Heights*. Edgar is heard of the latter group, he is thoughtful, kind and considerate. He loves his wife, Catherine, sincerely, and is a devoted husband. His love is calm and gentle like himself and he dreams at domestic bliss. He does all that; he possibly can do to make Catherine happy. During her illness he nurses her with tender care, and his greatest concern and sincere desire is her recovery. He dreams for a comfortable life which makes him to have faith in everything.

There are mental states whose intentionality is essentially secured by unasserted thoughts. Likewise Edgar's daughter Catherine combines in her nature the character of her father and mother. The outer world has a strange fascination for Catherine. She has the spirit and boldness of her mother, and is not afraid of undertaking adventures. She has also inherited the gentle, affectionate nature of her father. This is well exhibited in the way she loves her father and Linton Heathcliff. She aspires to marry Hareton. Hareton is illiterate while Catherine is comparatively well-educated. He meets the woman, who exerts a good influence on him. She becomes a sort of ideal or dream to achieve, a difficult dream to get through diligent effort. He strives hard and his self-improvement is an illustration of the fact that love ennobles life.

Life embodies love, hatred and revenge which is deep rooted in the psyche of all the characters. Heathcliff and Catherine are very strong in their passions. They love each other with a passion the like of which is seldom known on the earth. It can be perceived that love makes the one an inseparable part of the other. That love leads them into the colourful dreams of marriage. Catherine captures her dreams as,

I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind (p. 79).

The dream may be read as an expression of one's desire to remain unexposed, to suppress the dream by seeing, without making any attempt to penetrate to the latent dream thoughts behind it. The characters together survive the tests of their own betrayals, the divisions and accusations of their families, and as is suggested in their dreams, and also their deaths. Catherine, as her dreams indicate, refuses to accept a purely rational, stable model by the self.

I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of *Wuthering Heights* (p. 80).

Immediately after she has told Nelly her dream of escape from heaven back to Moors, she goes on to claim that Heathcliff is *More myself than I am* (80). When she does so, Catherine is at the very least challenging the categories by which the self was conventionally defined. The depth and intensity of their love turns into a sort of consuming fury which remains even after their death. The conscious mind, obviously takes men into the reality. Dreams are a kind of communication which kindles men to fulfill all his desires in it. To a certain extent, people dream all the time, even while awake, but the process is functioning inside the mind. On their journey of self-discovery, it can be an attempt to touch the unattainable.

Human life has always been an ideal pasture for an artistic grazing and an exploration into the soul. Where some have looked back to the past, while some have constantly gazed at the present condition and texture of life, and some have preferred to look beyond the past and the present to the state of life in future. Life is a bouquet of moments and every moment is a moment of discovery. Likewise *Wuthering Heights* is not just a love story; it is a window into the human soul, where one sees the loss, suffering, self discovery, and triumph of the characters in this novel. Catherine and Heathcliff's passionate nature, intolerable frustration, and overwhelming loss have ruined them, and thus stripped them of their humanities.

The discoveries, which are made by Mr. Lockwood, are very remarkable. He seems at first, unsympathetic, by the end entirely reconciled to all that has taken place. Having recorded the natural reaction

of an observer as yet unacquainted with the deeper cross - currents of emotion, he tends to suspend judgment until the end of the novel. He explains 'Wuthering' as *a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed to stormy weather (p.2)*. It also suggests the extreme states of mind as well as the sense of aspiration to something supreme.

The intentionality of actions in the novel parallels the intentionality of emotions. There is also a symbolic presentation of human and non - human existence. On the one hand, *Wuthering Heights*, the land of storm; high on the barren Moorland, naked to the shock of the elements is the natural home of the Earnshaw family, fiery, untamed children of the storm. On the other, sheltered in the leafy valley below, stands Thrushcross Grange, the appropriate home of the children of calm, the gentle, passive timid Lintons. Together each group, following its own nature in its own sphere, combines to compose a harmony. It is the destruction and re-establishment of this harmony within the relationships. Heathcliff seems to be a source of discord inevitably disrupting the working of the natural order. He drives Mr. Earnshaw into conflict with the son, Hindley and as a result, there arises a conflict between Hindley and Heathcliff. The order is still further dislocated by Catherine, who enters into the marriage bond with Linton. The shock of her infidelity and Hindley's ill-treatment disturb the natural harmony of Heathcliff's nature and turns him from an alien element into a force active for its destruction. He is not a wicked man voluntarily yielding to his wicked impulses. He stands as a manifestation of natural forces acting involuntarily under the pressure of his own nature.

A person gets angry towards another, if he believes that the latter is a victim of some misfortune, whether of health or family problem. Likewise, Heathcliff's hidden anger takes advantage of Hindley's weakness. He is naturally passionate and violent. He too is capable of extreme love and hates. But he does not have the strength which is a cause for his ruin. He is drawn as a direct contrast to Heathcliff. Each suffers the same tragedy in love, but while one retains his courage, the other simply gives up. The persistence of evil never allows him to discover his self but destroys him.

Catherine Earshaw is introduced as the daughter of prominent and fairly prosperous farmer. She is an embodiment of strong will, passionate and the deepest emotional attachments. She is also egotistical and vain, and will go to considerable lengths to have her own way. When she is crossed, she flies into a passion and becomes completely unreasonable, ignoring the opinions and rights of others, ignoring even reality. Pride leads her to betray Heathcliff for the sake of Edgar's social position, and her passionate temper brings her on an illness which kills her when she realizes her error. Her love for Heathcliff is so strong that she contacts him from the next world and induces him to follow her into death as he had always followed her in life.

An emotion without action leads to the complex notion of an unasserted desire or disposition to act in a specific way. Likewise, this peculiar story of love and revenge is rooted in the peculiar psychology of its characters. Heathcliff and Catherine both are persons of very strong passions. Love makes the one an inseparable part of the other. Love which is a source of life and strength to her at last becomes a cause of her death. Equally strong, violent and tempestuous is hatred developing into revenge. Time has no effect whatsoever either on love or hatred. Their intensity is not abated with the passage of time. Wuthering Heights represents the story of violent love and violent revenge, because it is a story of persons of violent and tempestuous passion. Lastly, there is a close consonance and harmony between the tempestuous storms blowing outside and equally tempestuous passions of men.

The fictional environment provides both necessary and sufficient conditions for the possibility of emotions. It might be wondered, in particular, whether the combination of the dreams and the desires are sufficient to elicit an emotional response towards the reality. The strengthened thought, which is entertained by Catherine and Heathcliff, may in fact amount to substantially different intentional acts which occur in their minds. Heathcliff's behaviour remains weird and unnatural as a result of the cruel treatment by Hindley. He blends all his energies to capture his control over the two properties of *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrush-cross Grange*. This undertaking, symbolizing his desire to be re-united with Cathy, observes him, and he lets nothing stand on his way. He shows considerable subtlety and brutality in arranging the marriage between Linton, his son and Catherine, Edgar's daughter. Thoughts of revenge upon the two families give way to the governing and haunting idea that Cathy had once existed and that he had been deprived of her.

To substantiate the above discoveries, the even and balanced movement of the story brings the novel to a close on a note of great calm and completeness. It is the fact that dreams and desires are logically independent which absolve the issue of reality. The story remains a long fight of the protagonist and finally ends with the discovery of immortal love. Human emotions act as keys to open the doors of real self. The emotions depend upon the circumstances which pave way to enter into the soul.

Human mind captures the events and visualizes them in dreams as reality. Some strive to make their dreams real, some extend it in imagination, some live in dreams and forget the reality, and fortunately some taste the dreams in reality. Though there may be different sort of dreams, which consciously or unconsciously, drive the human beings into their own self, their inner consciousness have discovered as the result of their dreams. Dreams also can determine the destiny. It can help a person to visualise all his unfulfilled desires. It is a special gift from God to men. If an individual tries to imagine his desires in dreams, he, sometimes, can visualise that in reality and his dreams can also enable him to realise his own life and self.

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