



## Twin Flames of Love and Friendship: Exploring the Immortal Bond of Catherine and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received: 10 September 2023

Accepted: 01 November 2023

#### Keywords:

**Wuthering Heights; Heathcliff; Catherine Earnshaw; Friendship; Mirror; Amalgamation; Inseparable.**

#### Citation:

Manouri Jayasinghe, Suhaib Fathima Hafsa. (2023). Twin Flames of Love and Friendship: Exploring the Immortal Bond of Catherine and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Proceedings of SLIIT International Conference on Advancements in Sciences and Humanities, 1-2 December, Colombo, pages 141-146.

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### ABSTRACT

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is a renowned work in English literature that delves into the complexities of the human condition during the Romantic Era, tackling issues of profound social and emotional significance. This research paper meticulously examines the relationship between the male and the female protagonists, Heathcliff, and Catherine Earnshaw, viewing them as flawed yet deeply human individuals who grappled with various barriers that kept them apart. The evidence from the novel reveals that Catherine and Heathcliff's shared upbringing instilled nearly identical attributes in them, leading to a lifelong struggle to retain their former closeness and compelling them to make agonizing sacrifices for each other. This paper would be studying if the Platonic concept of "Twin flames," which is presented as an almost primal desire for two individuals to become one, by forging an unbreakable bond and an unparalleled friendship that transcends their earthly existence could be applied to the principal characters to explain their strong ties.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Wuthering Heights* stands as Emily Brontë's sole contribution to English literature, capturing the essence of the Romantic and Victorian Eras by exploring themes such as love, betrayal, sacrifice, friendship, loyalty, and the societal pressures of its time. It narrates a tale of transformation, from one generation to the next, from poverty to independence, from friendship to love, and from stagnation to social mobility.

Heathcliff, the story's protagonist, a founding with a mysterious past, serves as an outsider who catalyzes familial and social turmoil within the Earnshaw family and the neighboring Lintons across two generations. Central to the narrative is Heathcliff's relationship with Catherine Earnshaw, initially his adoptive sister, then his closest friend, and eventually his greatest love, forming the core of our discussion on how two distinct individuals can unite to create a perfect whole, complementing and drawing strength from each other. Their connection, initially rooted in platonic friendship, ultimately evolves into romantic love, despite the societal constraints of their era, which ultimately leads to the tragic demise of what could have been a legendary 19<sup>th</sup> century love story.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

For our research, we utilized a Qualitative methodology centered around textual analysis. Our investigation was informed by a diverse array of sources, encompassing books, academic papers, and online content, such as forums and speeches.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the literary device used is that of Multiple Narrators within a Frame Story. The narration is done mainly by two narrators. The first is Nelly Dean, the housekeeper, who tells the tenant Mr. Lockwood about the events that took place in *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*. The second is the new tenant of the

property, Mr. Lockwood who through his reactions to Nelly's story and other additional information observed by him during his stay at the location, helps in the unfurling of the plot of *Wuthering Heights*. However, other narrators too are interspersed throughout the novel.

Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is a timeless force, nourished by shared youth, personality traits, and experiences that shape their perceptions of one another and elevate their self-images. While existing research has explored the individual characteristics of Catherine and Heathcliff and their contributions to the turmoil in their relationship, this paper delves into the qualities within their inseparable bond, shedding light on how their shared upbringing and their profound understanding of each other not only completed but also complemented each other and what role their almost spiritual connection played in shaping their enduring bond?

In the first section of the three sections which the paper explores, the childhood of Catherine and Heathcliff is illustrated. It highlights their nurturing of wild ambitions through constant companionship, even in the midst of the societal and spiritual differences at their home. This segment also considers the qualities that enriched their growth into adulthood, undisturbed by the societal upheaval of their time.

The second section delves into the teenage years of these characters, beginning with Catherine's strategic decision to marry Edgar Linton, motivated by her desire to assist Heathcliff in rising above the societal prejudice which labeled him an undesirable 'Other.' Heathcliff's choice to leave in pursuit of fortune, to become worthy of Catherine's commitment, forms a crucial argument. Both characters make excruciating sacrifices for each other, unwittingly contributing to the disintegration of their relationship.

The paper concludes with an examination of the complete amalgamation of these characters, highlighting how they shared parts of themselves with each other, creating a bond that transcends the boundaries between life and death. Their love for each other forms a superhuman force that forges a private heaven unique to them.

The conceptual framework in this paper revolves around the analysis and exploration of the relationship between the characters Heathcliff and Catherine in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. The framework involves several key elements. Literary Analysis being the first, this paper delves into a detailed literary analysis of the novel, focusing on the character development, actions, and interactions of Heathcliff and Catherine. It considers their roles, behaviors, and the consequences of their decisions within the context of the story. Psychological and Emotional aspects being the second, the paper explores the psychological and emotional dimensions of the characters. It emphasizes their emotional bond, highlighting how they mirrored and complemented each other, and how their emotional connection led to both joy and suffering. Societal and cultural influences is the third, where the characters and their relationship within the societal and cultural norms of the Romantic Era are exposed. It discusses how social expectations, class distinctions, and the prevailing values of the time affected their choices and their ability to be together. The fourth is Friendship to Romantic Love. The framework examines the evolution of Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship from friendship to romantic love. It investigates the factors that contributed to this transformation, including personal sacrifices and societal pressures. Finally, the Twin Flames concept is explored as this research paper incorporates this concept and could perhaps explain the profound and spiritual connection between Heathcliff and Catherine. This concept is used to shed light on the idea that

they were destined to be inseparable, and their bond transcended the earthly realm.

### 3. DISCUSSION

At various stages of the novel, Emily Brontë dissects the lives of Catherine and Heathcliff while realistically capturing the essence of society and its expectations. Though it is easy to dwell on the negative aspects of the characters and their surroundings we have attempted to humanize them, focusing on their experiences and the way they lived and loved in their world.

The strong companionship of Catherine and Heathcliff debuts with the arrival of Heathcliff into the Earnshaw family at around age six. Catherine being only five, being of almost the same age as Heathcliff, they become friends quite easily. As the young housekeeper, Nelly explains, "...from the hour she came down-stairs till the hour she went to bed, we had not a minute's security that she wouldn't be in mischief... She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him... she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words... (she) had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness: how the boy would do HER bidding in anything." (Brontë, pp. 42-43). The audacity of Catherine's character and her defiance of social norms emboldened Heathcliff's rebelliousness. Their unity defied the authority of the household, and their attachment grew stronger with time. "They both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages... it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at... they forgot everything the minute they were together again: at least the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge..." (Brontë, pp. 46-47)

Their mirror-like bond, resembling the Aristotelian concept of a friend as a 'second self,' allowed them to see their hopes and ambitions reflected in each other. "... when we wish to see our own face, we do so by looking into the mirror, in the same way when we wish to know ourselves, we can obtain that knowledge by looking at our friend. For the friend is, as we assert, a second self." (Aristotle, 1915, p. 15) This unyielding connection was both spiritual and physical, and it could not be destroyed by external abuse or cruelty. The bond was so strong that circumstances conspiring to separate them marked the beginning of their devolution in character.

Heathcliff and Catherine saw themselves in each other, perfect reflections of hopes and ambitions, and their intractability in the face of control caused them to become so co-dependent, and so much a part of each other that they were fused together in every way. They were the other's sanctum and their devotion to each other was as spiritual as it was physical that no amount of abuse or cruelty other than their own, could wield any power to destroy what blossomed between them. That they held up a mirror to each other in the critical years of growth in their lives was also the cause of their devolution in character when circumstances conspired to pull them apart.

Cracks in Catherine and Heathcliff's unique connection appear when the Lintons enter their lives. Heathcliff is bullied away, assuming a servile position socially acceptable for an immigrant foundling, while Catherine is drawn to a more luxurious life, primarily driven by the societal expectation of marrying someone of higher status. Catherine's decision to marry Edgar Linton and her intention to support Heathcliff in rising above societal prejudice represent a remarkable sacrifice. She chooses to marry a man she does not love, forsaking her true love, with the sole purpose of rescuing him from abuse and poverty.

As Catherine seemingly becomes more like the Lintons her links to Heathcliff seem to weaken. An off-hand remark that Heathcliff hears when he is eavesdropping on Catherine and Nelly's conversation saying that, "it would degrade (her) to marry Heathcliff, now..." (Brontë, 2003, p. 81), is the final straw that breaks the camel's back where Heathcliff's passion for Catherine is dulled and he unfortunately, departs hastily before the completion of Catherine's explanation for this decision which goes as "...whereas, if I marry Linton I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power." (Brontë, 2003, p. 82). She chose to be unhappy, unfulfilled and afflicted by the company of a man who is her polar opposite with the sole intent of rescuing Heathcliff from abuse, poverty and a static existence. Heathcliff's decision to leave the only home known to him and the only person who sincerely loved him is also a significant sacrifice, and their separation over three years tortures their souls and irrevocably changes them. Catherine's speaking to Nelly says that "you and everybody have a notion that there is or should be an existence of yours beyond you" (Brontë, 2003, p. 82), proving without a doubt that her entire being is incontrovertibly linked to Heathcliff. Indicating thus the strength of their link which surpassed all earthly boundaries.

Catherine's admission, "I AM Heathcliff!" when confronted with concerns about her friendship with Heathcliff while married to Edgar, exemplifies the supernatural force that binds the two characters. "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: I should not seem a part of it... Nelly, I AM Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind... as my own being. So don't talk of our separation again: it is impracticable..." (Brontë, 2003, pp. 82-83).

This admission by Catherine when confronted with Nelly's concern over maintaining her friendship with Heathcliff while married to Edgar, is a powerful indicator of the almost supernatural force that binds the two characters. They are emotionally and physically one and the same, and like empaths, experience each other fully, replicating both joy and sorrow, gain and loss, and isolation and company.

As Virginia Woolfe so eloquently stated, Emily Brontë, through Catherine unveiled the "suggestion of power underlying the apparitions of human nature and lifted them up into the presence of greatness" (Woolfe, 1966, p. 189)

The idea that this power surpassed the limitations of the mortal plain of man's existence is further emphasized by Nelly's reaction to Catherine's death subsequent to childbirth and her belief that "(Catherine's corpse) asserted its own tranquility, which seemed a pledge of equal quiet to its former inhabitants..." (Brontë, 2003, p. 167), implying Catherine and Heathcliff's 'shared identity'. With the passing of the first – and only – person Heathcliff ever loved in his ultimately miserable and lonely life, the part of him that lived within Catherine leaves the world with her, and his revenge plot aside, he spends the remainder of his life pursuing and finally attaining what he calls "my heaven" (Brontë, 2003, p. 333), where she dwells.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research paper examines Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* by closely scrutinizing the profound relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff. It aims to view them as individuals, free from the distortions of the overarching themes in the novel, such as treachery, classism, subjugation, and hatred. Catherine and Heathcliff were fundamentally human, marked by their flaws and fallibility. Their love serves as evidence of the profound capacity for love and friendship to

transcend cruelty.

The goal is to humanize and appreciate these characters for their most noteworthy actions, those that led to heartache and turmoil. While it is easy to focus on their conflicts and harsh words and actions, they are complex, genuine, and unwaveringly devoted to each other. They were blind to the societal expectations that hindered their union, and their circumstances worked against the formidable force of their love.

Catherine and Heathcliff were humans first, and through their love, they displayed inherent virtues. Their love story is a testament to the power of good to triumph over cruelty. Their connection, initially grounded in friendship, showcases the strength and consistency of early connections, elevated to a higher level, despite conflicts and harsh exchanges. They provided emotional sustenance, essentially raising their friendship to a profound level.

In the end, they were the only people they ever loved during their time on earth, and no force on heaven or earth could extinguish what they had between them. Their love is timeless, and it transcends the limitations of their existence, proving Aristotle's idea of 'second self' and the concept of 'Twin Flames'.

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