THEME OF WILDNESS IN *KING LEAR* AND *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

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Abstract: In *Wuthering Heights* too, as in *King Lear* the wildness being created in the wild workshop of the unconscious of the protagonist takes three phases in between the beginning and the end. In the first phase we have both the negation and assertion of the acquisitive instinct by turns; at the assertion stage we have the clash with the love instinct. In the second phase, this clash results in wildness, not only of the personality of Heathcliff but also of Catherine. In the third and the last phase there is the resurgence of humanity and complete surrender to the divinity of love. These two characters, like King Lear, pass from love to love through the turbulence of their wild mind and wild nature.

For the convenience of understanding we will put the whole theme of the novel moving through these three phases into two categories– personal and social. The personal category concerns the pure, personal love of Catherine and Heathcliff for one another. The social category concerns the clash of the world of refinement and the world of passion and spirit. Here, to gain a better perspective of the theme of contention, we shall start with the second category knowing full well that the two categories are not mutually exclusive since it is these two characters that play the primary role in the social category too. The critics often talk of the contrast between the two houses in the novel– *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange. There is a long description of Wuthering Heights given by Lockwood–

> Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. "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…[i]

This description is enough to suggest that *Wuthering Heights* is symbolic of all things passionate, primordial and elemental–

"atmospheric tumult", "stormy weather", "pure, bracing ventilation" and "power of the north wind". And the man living there is also passionate, primordial and elemental. We may call Wuthering Heights as an incarnation of all the attributes centered in Heathcliff. Severe, gloomy and brutal in aspect and atmosphere, firmly rooted in local tradition and custom, it is an appropriate background for the life of bare and primitive passion to which its owner is dedicated. It resents any approach towards it of the decadent's world of civilization and culture. Lockward coming from a different society symbolizes that world. When he approaches it his first feeling is that it is a world apart. "This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist's heaven…."[ii] "And thus it makes the entry of Lockwood so difficult and dangerous. In the very beginning, it is made clear to him that he is not welcome there. He is a "stranger" to the place–"A stranger is a stranger"[iii]. "Even the dogs bite the man who tries to beat them. Heathcliff, according to Lockwood, has "an aversion to showy displays of feeling–to manifestations of mutual kindliness"[iv].

These are the pretensions of the decadent world of civilization and culture. And so residents of Wuthering Heights never show these things in their life nor like their manifestation by anybody within Wuthering Heights. Then, there is another house at some distance form Wuthering Heights. Thrushcross Grange is quite different. Like its inhabitants it is more agreeable and more human. It gets the approval of Nelly Dean's common sense and reason for she fails to see its underlying decadence. The Lintons, the inhabitants of this Grange show refinement, kindness, an amiability which makes life tolerable. Beneath all this is a moral flaw that helps the tragedy to overtake it. Just as Wuthering Heights has an outside visitor in the form of Lockwood, so Grange also has outside visitors who are its external and Critical observers. The two children Heathcliff and Catherine– climb up its walls to look into the illuminated windows of the Linton mansion. Its illumination makes them have a very dark view of the place. They get the feeling of contemptuous hostility which will always remain with them. They form this hostility not because they have been overawed by its illumination and sophistication. They have it because they hold in contempt this illumination and sophistication for they are decadent and a mere show. What is the use of these things if the inhabitants there, especially the

children, do not feel happy in the midst of all the luxuries? The children fight bitterly over a lap-dog which each desires to handle and pet:

> And now, guess what your good children were doing? Isabella–I believe she is eleven, a year younger than Cathy-lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red – hot needles into her. Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them. The idiots! That was their pleasure! To quarrel who should hold a heap of warm have and each begin to cry because both, after struggling to get it, refused to take it. We laughed outright at the petted things; we did despise them![v]

To them the Linton children are "idiots" for they derive "pleasure" by petting "a little dog" which, for Heathcliff and Catherine, is just "a heap of warm hair" and also "cry" for it. These words used by them for the Lintons carry the Weight of a biting contemptuous irony. This is the image of the decadent world that they get from this scene. Its pleasure comes from a pet dog "a heap of warm hair". Their pleasure comes from bracing the air-warm or cold – in the open field or on the mountains. It is a pure elemental pleasure; their pleasure is impure, mixed with "cry" and "quarrel". So their contempt for this world arises out of their felling of unacceptability of this form of culture and civilization and a feeling that their pleasure is superior to the pleasure of the Lintons. These words of contempt reveal the attitude of a soul in which the fundamental, elemental passions are so intense that they hold in contempt a world, which claims to be superior but is in reality trivial, selfish and empty.

The world of the Lintons is so deceptively charming even to these children of passion that they are also, for a moment, allowed by it, they call it "beautiful"

> We saw–ah! it was beautiful–a splendid place carpeted with Crimson, and Crimson – covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the center and shimmering with little soft tapers.[vi]

The sight of so much luxury undoubtedly makes a certain appeal to the children, strikes them from outside as "beautiful". That might

be due to their social graciousness which Wuthering Heights does not have. But when they come to its meaning and essence they find it to be a sham and a deception. Immediately the youthful intruders from this other world have a feeling of repudiation which is further intensified by the behaviour of the dwellers in this paradise. The "gold", the crimson carpets and chair-coverings which serve to deaden, to mollify the impact of life, the slightly unreal prettiness of the "shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains" and the barely defined sense of exquisite decadence in the reference to the "little soft taper" burning in the room: all these, seen through eyes already dedicated to passionate sincerity, point to a contrast which lies at the very heart of the novel.

Thus, these two characters, like King Lear, start their life with a preference for the life of intense, pure passion. But, as they grow young, the decadent world of civilization and culture, stars entangle them in its tentacles. Heathcliff and Catherine – both – fall a victim to this decadent world of civilization and culture although they are already dedicated to the passionate sincerity of love. Here, they resemble King Lear in their mundane possessive instinct which creates a cleavage, as it does in the case of King Lear, not only in their conscious state of life but also in their unconscious–the center of the wild workshop–state of life and, along with it, a wild storm which, to use King Lear's words," Like an engine, wrenched my frame of nature from the fixed place, drew from my heart all love, and added to the gall…."[vii]

This is exactly what happens in the case of Heathcliff and Catherine too.

In the novel Heathcliff is introduced with the label of "bastard" as Edmund is introduced in the drama *King Lear.* Nelly Dean has doubts that Heathcliff is an illegitimate son of Earnshaw. Gloucester has the courage to introduce Edmund as his unlawful son. Earnshaw has not that courage. He only gives him the name of his dead son. But he does not give him his title. He is given the name and affection of a son but he is denied, as in the case of Edmund, the entitlement and, thus, any access to the family property. This denial is certainly a cause of irritation to them both. In the case of Heathcliff it remains suppressed in his unconscious for two reasons; he is still a child and, at this stage of his life, he gets a companion in Catherine who symbolizes a complete dedication to the pure passionate life. At this stage, they

together, repudiate the life of Thrush cross Grange. Edmund does not have such an opportunity in his life; so he pursues his own mundane affairs single-mindedly.

But in the case of Heathcliff too obstruction arises as it arises in the case of King Lear. King Lear too, has the assurance of the care and love of, Cordelia's "nursery". But soon he becomes a victim to his possessive instinct. Events compel Heathcliff, the young man, to grab this possessive instinct and be swayed by it. The possessive instinct is already prominent in him. Once introduced to the Earnshaw family, this dirty, ragged black-haired child, almost an outsider, lays claim on everything that he wants to have. He does not care if he is hated for that by everybody. Hindley treats Heathcliff brutally but Heathcliff always manages to get what he wants – the better horse – by threatening to tell Mr. Earnshaw of his ill – treatment. With every thwarting of his desire he grows more and more eager to acquire the thing denied to him. It turns out to be the desire of the moth for the star. In his life, after the death of old Earnshaw, events take such a quick turn that each turn whets his possessive instinct and his intolerance of any obstruction to that instinct. Slowly that intolerance turns into violence and cruelty. Even in the midst of all sorts of torture, he is not discouraged from pursuing his ambition. Rather, he grows all the more determined. Here is his statement that shows his strong determination:

> "I am 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." [viii]

So long he can wait and have patience. He has his own method; here he uses his possessive instinct to the best advantage. His method is slowly to acquire the property of his enemy and to reduce him to penury. In that state he is left to suffer and to torture himself. So his possessive instinct and his violence are the two faces of the same coin. The best example of Heathcliff's operative method is his marriage to Isabella. Catherine explains it to Isabella. She says that Heathcliff "couldn't love a Linton, and yet he'd be quite capable of marrying your fortune and expectation." [ix] Heathcliff never liked–what to talk of love–Isabella; he could not tolerate any Linton. The marriage was a part of revenge on Edgar and Cathy's marriage and part of his desire to won both the properties. The very marriage was based on hatred and selfishness. He wants to torture Edgar and Isabella's weakness gives him the chance to enter that house. He

avails of this opportunity and is successful in breaking Linton's heart, inch by inch, by snatching Cathy, Isabella the property and finally his daughter also. He grabs everything–man, woman and property–that belongs to his enemy. He inflicts pain by possessing everything worth the name.

The most important event that poses a serious challenge to his possessive instinct is Catherine's attraction towards Edgar. Their nearness in childhood has made them believe that they were inseparable and that they could go on, unchallenged, mocking at the decayed world of grace and refinement. But this is not to be. For Hindley is there to obstruct them. He tries to keep them apart as for as possible. This obstruction they could obviate by secretly running away together from home into the wildness without. So, as long as the obstruction is external and obvious, they can scuttle it easily by running away from it. But when the obstruction is at the mental level, when the obstruction comes from within their own mind and feeling, when it becomes purely subjective, they fall an easy prey to it.

This subjugation comes in the form of Catherine's fascination for Thrushcross Grange, for Edgar and their ways of life. Consequently, there is a change in Catherine's physical make-up and mental attitude she had been to Grange as a tomboy, Heathcliff's equal but she returns transformed into a dignified, well-groomed elegant young lady. And that is the first shock–a severe one– to Heathcliff's possessive instinct–the instinct that made him feel that Catherine belonged to him. Now, to him, this reality seems to have changed. Now Catherine herself seems to be taking to the ways of the decayed world which both together, had sneered at. This he sees and feels not only at the physical level but also at her mental level when she starts looking even at Heathcliff from the angle of the decayed world. He feels betrayed by her as if one half of his own body and soul is trying to play hide and seek with another half. This feeling of betrayal continues up to his death.

In Chapter VII of the novel, Heathcliff has this greatest shock of his life when he feels his possessive instinct not only betrayed but also becoming more ferocious and aggressive. His reaction makes him move in two ways. First, it appears in a positive form; he decides to change himself and adopt, like her, the ways of the decayed world. He leaves Wuthering Heights for three years. The purpose he explains himself–

> But, Nelly, if I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn't make him less handsome or me more so. I wish I had light hair and a fair skin and was dressed and behaved as well and had a chance of being as rich as he will be![x]

Nothing can express the positive feelings of Heathcliff. The fascination of the worldly ways is upon him; he wants to keep Catherine fascinated towards him. But soon he feels that he is losing the game. Here is a grim situation for him–

> He ran to the window and I to the door, just in time to behold the two Lintons descend from the family carriage, smothered in cloaks and furs and the Earnshaws dismount from their horses they often rode to church in winter. Catherine took a hand of each of the children, and brought them into the house and set them before the fire, which quickly put colour into their white faces.[xi]

Their faces are coloured but his face is discoloured. That puts a deep scar on his psyche. With this there is a dwindling of his passion for Catherine and his determination to have her purely and only for himself. Here is a conversation between the two–

> And he would have broken from the Circle, but Miss Cathy seized him again. 'I did not mean to laugh at you", she said; I could not hinder myself: Heathcliff, shake hands at least! What are you sulky for? It was only that you looked odd. If you wash your face and brush your have, it will be all right; but are so dirty!
>
> She gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own and also at her dress; which she feared had gained no embellishment from its contact with his.
> You needn't have me!' he answered, following her eye and snatching away his hand. 'I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty.[xii]

Then again there is a significant dialogue between them–

> Order Ellen to say you are engaged, Cathy,' he persisted; 'don't turn me out for those pitiful, silly friends of yours! I'm, on the point, sometimes, of complaining that they - but I'll not'–
>
> 'Nothing–only look at the almanac on that wall'; he pointed to a framed sheet hanging near the window, and continued – 'the crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me. Do you see? I've marked every day.'

> 'Yes – very foolish: as if I took notice!' replied Catherine in a peevish tone: 'And where is the sense of that'?
>
> 'To show that I 'do' take notice', said Heathcliff.
>
> 'And should I always be sitting with you'? She demanded, growing more irritated: what good do I get? What do you talk about? You might be dumb, or a baby, for anything you say to amuse me, or for any thing you do either'!
>
> 'You never told me before that I talked too little or that you disliked my company, Cathy'! Exclaimed Heathcliff, in much agitation.
>
> 'It's no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing' she muttered.Her companion rose up, but he hadn't time to express his feelings further....[xiii]

The sum-total of Heathcliff's reaction to these events has been noted down in these lines–

> Catherine and he were constant companions still at his seasons of respite and labour; but he had ceased to express his fondness for her in words, and recoiled with angry suspicion from her girlish caresses, as if conscious there could be no gratification in lavishing such marks of affection on him. [xiv]

The one word "suspicion" and the half sentence "as if conscious there could be no gratification in lavishing such marks of affection on him" are remarkable. Their worldly ways have brought in a division in between them; love and affection have been clouded by "suspicion". Then nothing short of total possession of Catherine would satisfy him; this partial "gratification" of physical "caresses" are simply "marks" not the content of "affection". He wants the content–the complete Catherine to himself.

Here is a stage in their love where the interference of the decayed love embroils them in turmoil–both physical and mental. It is the mental turmoil that is more tortuous for them both. Heathcliff runs away but without Catherine he feels as if he is living in hell; that is his mental agony at its highest point. For this he can not take revenge on Catherine; so he directs his aversion and revenge towards others. It is a psychological truth that when we cannot punish the loved ones we divert our anger and anguish towards others. This is what Heathcliff does with this diversion of his personal anguish and anger his failed acquisitive instinct turns itself more violently and brutishly towards the acquisition of everything material, everything towards which

Catherine had felt attracted and for which she had betrayed Heathcliff. He does it with such an intense passion and determination that he forgets to notice that, thereby, the people are getting tortured. Their torture is thus the by product of his acquisitive instinct. The more he acquires; the more he desires the more the people are tortured and the more he is pleased.

Catherine's position is no better. Her fascination for the decayed world of civilization and culture makes her betray not only Heathcliff and their world of passion but also herself. In her mind there is a head–long collision between the two worlds and the consequence is physical and mental violence and torture. Here is a long dialogue between Catherine and Nelly which makes her mental agony amply clear; she herself is perfectly aware of the cause of her agony. One thing is amply clear about Emily Bronte's characters; their minds are very much clear about their thoughts, passions and actions. As in the case of King Lear, there is reason even in their madness. Catherine does not lose her reason even in her mad desire for the decayed world of Lintons. Hence she makes a well reasoned argument with Nelly–

> I love the ground under his feet and the air over his head, and every – thing he touches, and every word he says I love all his looks and all his actions and him entirely and altogether. There now!
> And. Why?
> Nay; you are making a jest of it, it is exceedingly ill natured! It is no jest to me!' said the young lady scolding, and turning her face to the fire.
> I' m very far from jesting, Miss Catherine', I replied. You love Mr. Edgar because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful and rich and loves you. The last, however, goes for nothing; you would love him without that, probably; and with it you wouldn't unless he possessed the four former attractions
> No, to be sure not; I should only pity him – hate him, perhaps, if he were ugly, and a clown.
>
> He is now; and I have only to do with the present. I wish you would speak rationally.
> 'Well that settles it; if you have only to do with the present, marry Mr. Linton'.
> I don't want your permission for that – I shall marry him; and yet you have not told me whether I'm right.
> 'Presently right; if people be right to marry only for the present. And now, let us here what you are unhappy about your brother will be pleased; the old lady and gentleman will

> not object, I think; you will escape from a disorderly, comfortless home into a wealthy, respectable one; and you love Edgar, and Edgar loves you. All seems smooth and easy; where is the obstacle? [xv]

There is no confusion in Catherine's mind about her deep desire for Edgar, about her determination to marry him at all costs and about the reasons for which she is marrying him. There is now this deep desire in her heart for that very world of civilization and culture, which she had, in her childhood, considered to be decayed. But within this very heart there is an "obstacle" to that deep desire she tells Nelly about this "obstacle"–

> Here! And here! Cried Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead and the other on her breast; in whichever place the soul lives. In my soul and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong'"! xvi She is talking about her "soul" – about the deep, secret recesses of her unconscious where the tumult is going on others, like Nelly can not "make it out"xvii because as Catherine herself says, "It's my secret" [xviii]

In her novel, Emily Bronte, like Shakespeare in King Lear, deals with the deep, secret recesses of the unconscious of Heathcliff and Catherine and the wild turmoil that goes on there. Until and unless we sink into those recesses we shall not be able to understand these characters. That is the problem with Heathcliff and Catherine now. In their childhood, they were the children of their unconscious world. The pure world of passion centered at their unconscious was the field of their activity. In youth, rise above it being attracted by the decayed world of civilization and culture where their possessive instinct starts its play. In the case of Heathcliff, his possessive instinct stars with the desire to possess Catherine completely but, with her diversion, it diverts itself to the total possession of everything material round about her and the consequent elimination of everything humane round about her. This possessive instinct works with the desire of totally possessing a world where there are only two beings–Heathcliff and Catherine and where there is nothing else. It is his single–minded devotion to Catherine and nothing else. Whatever he does–violently, passively, voluntarily and involuntarily–he does to satisfy his possessive instinct that moves round Catherine. Its frustration makes him violent and wild. He wants to remain in the state of childhood when Catherine belonged to him to the rejection of the outside, decayed world of civilization and culture belonging to the Lintons.

When he is forced to come out of that by the mundane desire of Catherine for Edgar, he becomes violent and wants to trample this world under his feet. Let him have his own world, his own Catherine and he will go back once again to his cocoon having nothing to do with this world and with material gains.

Catherine has started this wild race to possess the world of the Lintons. Yet she cannot reject her childhood, the secret world of her unconscious world. This ambiguous double vision in which Catherine sees yet does not see herself–in which she recognizes the truth and then straightaway distorts it–has its symbolic counter–part in the scene where she catches sight of her face in the mirror but does not identify it as her own. To her, it appears a strange and frightening countenance–because she has willed not to recognize herself. Her case is exactly like that of King Lear who has also distorted his mind, well and vision because he does not want to see the truth; he wants to see only that what he likes to see. And that is the cause of chaos in human affairs. Chaos starts from her and spreads to Heathcliff's life and finally engulfs the whole world.

Heathcliff is very much aware of this fact–

> You teach me now how cruel you've been – cruel and false. Why did you despise me? Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort you deserve this you have killed yourself yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my Kisses and tears; they'll blight you – they'll damn you. You loved me – then what right had you to leave me? What right – answers me – for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? 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 …[xix]

This is the truth about Catherine which Heathcliff narrates at the time of her death unlike the lower creations of nature; she has gone against the deepest law of her being. This she has transgressed by her marriage to Edgar, when – all the time – she knew that her closest affinities were with Heathcliff. Her motives for this union were pride and social ambition, as well as a feeling of physical attraction. But compared with her basic sympathy with Heathcliff, these – as she admits to Nelly Dean – were insufficient. It is this violation of her integrity and of her self – knowledge which constitutes her tragedy. Whenever she fails to resolve this duality she is abnormal and violent.

From this antagonism, duality, violence, torture and cruelty, both Heathcliff and Catherine now enter the third stage of their life. For Catherine, the only escape out of here excessive self – love lies through complete love of another. But this she does not find with Edgar; and the violation which she inflicts upon herself converts her self love into a force of chaos. When through her illness, this spirit of chaos and utter caprice are in turn, constrained, there exists no remaining outlet for her energies save in a desire for death. With its total annihilating powers; death must stand as the consummation of all chaotic forces. From chaos to reconstruction – that is the movement of the life of Heathcliff and Catherine his movement comes not only from their being parted but also from the strain which the love itself suffers from having to live in a world that simply will not accommodate it. Once again they crave for their lost childhood psychic harmony, which works at three levels – at the level of the personal psyche of each of the characters, at the level of the psyche of both the characters in terms of their mutual love and at the level of their psyche working together with the external nature. We have seen the resurrection of King Lear through such a psychic harmony. They also achieve it –

> They were silent – their faces hid against each other, and washed by each other's tears. At least, I suppose the weeping was on both sides; as it seemed Heathcliff could weep on a great occasion like this. [xx]

All their disharmony and tumult are washed away by sincere tears. All their division is brought to an end by their feeling of forgive and forget –

> "Let me alone. Let me alone; sobbed Catherine. If I have done wrong, I'm dying for it. It is enough! You left me too but I won't upbraid you! I forgive you. Forgive me!" [xxi]

We are reminded of the great scene in *King Lear* where King Lear begs pardon of Cordelia's and the two resolve never to be separated again. But this union can be achieved only in and through death. Catherine has recognized the virtual impossibility of their love as a relationship to be realized on earth. She realizes it in this long speech on her death – bed –

> Oh, you see, Nelly, he would not relent a moment to keep me out of the grave. That is how I'm loved! Well, never mind. That is not my Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet; and take him with me: he's in my soul. And", added she, musingly, "the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it, and in it. Nelly, you think you are better and more fortunate than I in full health and strength; you are sorry for me – very soon that will be altered. I shall be sorry for you. I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all. I wonder he won't be near me!' she went on to herself: I thought he wished it. Heathcliff, dear! You should not be sullen now. Do come to me, Heathcliff. [xxii]

Here, there is recognition of strain, limitations and impossibility of union. It can be attained only in death. There is a realization that the pain which the love causes to both the lovers is not merely circumstantial but is intrinsic to the nature of the love as something requiring realization in an actual world.

This psychic harmony was first, in the beginning of the novel, a fact; later, it becomes a recovered possibility and last, it becomes impossibility in earthly terms. Is it to be consummated in heaven? This is what Heathcliff feels. We should take with seriousness Heathcliff's desire to have his dead body blended with Catherine's, his going with blind joy to his death because he senses her presence calling him, and the vision which the shepherd boy sees and Nelly later senses of the dead lovers reunited on the heath. Heathcliff speaks of the coming reconciliation –"I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself."xxiii

It is reasonable to see this mutual yearning as a yearning not so much to possess each other – their possessive instinct has long been dead – but rather to be made free, each through the other, of his own identity and of the universe. They might not be thinking of any transcendent reality and unity with it but their yearning is for self – transcendence through death – the highest point of passion and love.

All this analysis will explain the mystery of Heathcliffe's brutalities. For Heathcliff, a union between him and Catherine is so patently dictated by their very natures that he must possess her in the fullest way. It is only in childhood, then, that their love was idyllic; in its later stages, it is the torments, which are, insisted on rather that the satisfactions. Catherine is not only Heathcliff's heaven she is also his

hell. What can be there in hell – violence, torture and Cruelty? So to explain his character in terms of mere revenge is surely to cheapen it. The motive, dimly apprehended even by him, seemed to be to dominate a world in which Catherine has not only betrayed him but has left on every person and thing the imprint of her spirit. And when she is no more in the world, he has lost his appetite for everything – no food, no drink, no coercion and no brutality. Then he fought for possession of Catherine and now he must fight for a union with her in death. That fights was pleasurable; this fight is unbearably long–"O God! It is a long fight, I wish it were over"![xxiv]
He makes things clear by himself –

> I could do it, and none could hinder me. But where is the use? I don't care for striking; I can't take the trouble to raise my hand! That sounds as if I had been labouring the whole time only to exhibit a fine trait of magnanimity. It is far from being the case; I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destructive, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing.[xxv]

"I am too idle to destroy for nothing"–these words explain the violence of Heathcliff best; there was enough reason in his wild madness. And that helps him attain the heights of a Shakespearean tragic hero of King Lear and Macbeth. Here is his dialogue that presents him in this light –

> Afraid? No!' he replied, 'I have neither a fear, not a presentiment, nor a hope of death. Why should I? With my hard constitution and temperate mode of living, and unperilous occupations, I ought to and probably shall remain above ground till there is scarcely a black hair on my head. And yet, I cannot continue in this condition! I have to remind myself to breathe – almost to remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending backs a stiff spring; it is by compulsion that I do the slightest act not prompted by one thought; and by compulsion that I notice anything alive or dead, which is not associated with one universal idea. I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it will be reached – and soon – because it has devoured my existence. I am swallowed up in the anticipation of its fulfillment. [xxvi]

It is in the light of these sincere "confessions"xxvii (the word belongs to Heathcliff) – that the whole action of Heathcliff is to be judged. Vincent Buckley, in his essay "Passion and Control in *Wuthering*

Heights", has this to say about the Shakespearean dimension of the novel and its tragic hero –

> I am inclined to think that, if we look for the explanation of Heathcliff's motives as the actions they prompt are actually before us, we shall find only confusion. The actions are to be estimated in retrospect in the perspective provided both by the speeches and by his behavior in this final scene. Here again the affinity with Shakespeare is noticeable yet we are horrified by his brutalities as he commits them; we judge them to be evilly in appropriate to the nature of the harmony which both Catherine and he say they feel. We judge them, but we do not judge him; the Shakespearean dimensions of the drama as a whole will not allow us to[xxviii]

J. Hills Miller, in his essay "Themes of Isolation and Exile", explains the violence in the novel in this sentence – "The violence of Emily Bronte's characters is a reaction to the loss of an earlier state of happiness"xxix As we have explained earlier the violence, especially of Heathcliff is not for violence's sake. The violence of Heathcliff is purposive; there is reason even in his madness. It shows his anxious eagerness to posses his Catherine who, to satisfy her greed for the forbidden fruit – the decayed world of civilization and culture symbolized by Thrushcross Grange and Edgar had forced him out of the Paradise – the childhood world of pure passion. Not only he but also Catherine craves and grooms for this lost paradise. Their helplessness in regaining it makes them violent and desperate – doing violence not only to themselves but also to others living round about them. Heathcliff and Catherine work under this simple psychology.

References

[i] Emily Bronte; *Wuthering Heights*; New Delhi: UBSPD, 1974 p.10 Chapter I

[ii] Ibid., p. 9 Chapter I

[iii] Ibid., p. 22 Chapter II

[iv] Ibid., p. 11 Chapter IX

[v] Ibid., p. 14 Chapter I

[vi] Ibid., p. 14 Chapter I

[vii] William Shakespeare: *King Lear*; Act I, Sc IV; Lines 264 – 68.

[viii] Emily Bronte: *Wuthering Heights*; New Delhi: UBSPD; p.54 Chapter VII.

[ix] Ibid., p. 89
[x] Emily Bronte: *Wuthering Heights*; New Delhi: UBSPD; 1994 p. 59 Chapter VII
[xi]Ibid., p. 60 Chapter VII
[xii] Ibid., p.56 Chapter VII
[xiii] Ibid., p. 71 Chapter VIII
[xiv] Ibid., p. 71 Chapter VIII
[xv] Ibid., p. 71 Chapter VIII
[xvi] Ibid., p. 80-81 Chapter IX
[xvii] Ibid., p. 81 Chapter IX
[xviii] Ibid., p. 71 Chapter VIII
[xix] Ibid., p. 157 Chapter XV
[xx] Ibid., p. 71 Chapter VIII
[xxi] Ibid., p. 71 Chapter VIII
[xxii] Ibid., p. 71 Chapter VIII
[xxiii] Ibid.,p.308 Chapter XXXIII
[xxiv] Ibid., p. 306 Chapter XXXIII
[xxv] Ibid., p.306. Chapter XXXIII
[xxvi] Ibid., p. 71 Chapter VIII
[xxvii] Ibid., p.308. Chapter XXXIII
[xxviii] Vincent Buckley: *Passion and Control in Wuthering Heights; Critics on Charlotte and Emily Bronte; Reading in Literary Criticism;* edited by O' Neill Allen & Unwin Ltd. ; 1968 p. 94
[xxix] Hills J. Miller. *Themes of Isolation and Exile*; *Critics on Charlotte and Emily Bronte*; *Readings in Literary Criticism*; edited by O'Neill Allen & Unwin Ltd.; 1968 p. 101.