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# Different Representations of the Orphan Child: A Character Analysis of Emily Brontë's Heathcliff and Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre

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## **Abstract**

This bachelor essay aims to discuss and analyse the main characters in the novels *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* written by the sisters Charlotte and Emily Brontë, respectively. Both novels written in 1847, during a time when orphan narratives were popular, have orphans as the central protagonists. This investigation bases the analysis on the orphans' background and further compares their personalities and actions, both as children and adults. My discussion is mainly about the characters' childhood as well as how they are affected by love and death as adults. It also discusses the importance of narrative structure and religion. The main findings in my investigation are that Jane and Heathcliff develop to be two completely different characters and that this has to do with them having different experiences of love, death and religion. The results further reveal that the narrative structure has an impact on how the characters are perceived, and it stresses the importance of telling one's own story.

**Keywords:** *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, Jane, Heathcliff, Orphan, Identity, Rebelliousness, Passion, Childhood, Characters, Love, Death, Forgiveness, Revenge, Religion, Education, Narrative, Gender and Psychological theory.

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## Introduction

In 1847, two of the most prominent Victorian novels were written: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. In Charlotte Brontë's most famous novel and in Emily Brontë's only novel, both sisters used orphans as their central protagonists. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the orphan was a character, who frequently occurred in novels. The orphan had to fight for a place and a home in the world, but he or she also came to represent the efforts that ordinary individuals have to make, to find their way through the difficulties of life (Mullan para. 2). Like everyone else, the orphan must face the possibilities and difficulties in life. The difference is that they are not bound to established conventions (Mullan para. 2). The reader often gets to follow the orphan during a longer period of time, which results in the reader being able to take part in their life experiences and opportunities (Mullan para. 2). Based on the opportunities that an orphan character provides for both the author and reader, it is not surprising that both Charlotte and Emily chose this particular type of character. In this case, opportunities mean that the orphan is a "tabula rasa – a clean slate" (Peters 9). According to Peters, the orphan can either be perceived as a threat or a hope that they might turn out to be good people (9). Both results are possible, since the orphan is a person with no close family connections influenced both negatively and positively by the people around them (Peters 9).

*Jane Eyre* is a story about an orphan girl who is placed to live with her uncle and his family, against the will of his wife. Unfortunately, her uncle dies when Jane is only one year old, and then the rest of the family starts to show their disapproval of her. Jane becomes an outsider and is harassed by her cousins. When Jane is ten years old, she takes the initiative to attend Lowood, a school where girls who have lost one or two parents are raised. Jane stays at Lowood until she is eighteen and gets a position as a governess at Thornfield Hall. Here she meets Mr Rochester and falls in love, which forces her to question a number of her moral standards.

*Wuthering Heights* is a novel that centres around a "gypsy" boy found walking the streets of Liverpool (Peters 49). Mr Earnshaw brings him home to live with the Earnshaw family and names him Heathcliff. His adoptive father and sister grow very fond of him, but the rest of the family despises him. After the death of Mr Earnshaw, life

gets harder for Heathcliff. The adoptive father is no longer there to protect him, so he gets beaten and harassed by the people around him. The love between Heathcliff and his adoptive sister Catherine grows stronger through the years. Unfortunately, they never end up together and after Catherine's death Heathcliff has a hard time dealing with his grief.

Jane and Heathcliff are both orphans and have a similar background. They both have to grow up without parental love and end up living in families where they are not accepted by all the family members. They grow up to be each other's opposites. Jane becomes a person who lives by religious and moral standards and most of her decisions are based on what is right and what is wrong. At the same time, she speaks her mind when she believes that she is treated unfairly. Heathcliff, on the other hand, becomes a person who wants to take out his revenge on the people around him, for not being able to live with the love of his life. He does not have empathy for other people except for Catherine. Only when Heathcliff is spending time with Catherine does he show a more compassionate and loving side, compared to the rest of the time when he is dark and cruel.

So, why do Heathcliff and Jane develop so very different personalities and what are their major similarities and differences? What does the fact that both characters are orphans bring to the text and how might this affect the readers? The aim of this paper is to provide an in-depth analysis and comparison of Jane and Heathcliff. The text will argue that both characters have complex personalities and that their characteristics both resemble and contrast each other. They have a similar background as orphans, but there are several things that separate Jane and Heathcliff. Furthermore, this essay will argue that Jane's religious standards and morals combined with her positive experience of love is what contrast her the most from Heathcliff, who is deprived of the love of his life and seeks revenge on the people standing in his way. The text will also claim that there are more things that influence the characters' personalities. Subjects which are present within the stories such as narrative structure, religion and education, but also gender, feminism and psychological theory, which are topics used to discuss the novels.

In the first chapter, I will briefly discuss the fictional orphan and from there I will discuss Jane and Heathcliff as being representations of 'the other'. In this chapter I will also discuss their childhood and family relations based on identity, power, rebellion and passion. In the second chapter, I will focus on discussing the personality of the characters and their development from the perspective of their relation to love, death,

forgiveness and revenge. In the third chapter, I will discuss Jane's and Heathcliff's personalities from the perspectives of narrative structure, gender and feminism, religion, education, personality and psychology.

## **The Orphan and the Childhood of Jane and Heathcliff**

During the Victorian era, an orphan child was defined as someone who had lost either one parent or both parents. Peters claims that "the family needed a scapegoat" and she further claims that the scapegoat was found "in the orphan" (1). A scapegoat was needed since the family and what it symbolises was an unmanageable ideal (Peters 1). This means that the image of what a family should be was far from how it was in reality. Peters claims that a scapegoat was needed so that the family was able to reaffirm itself "through the expulsion of [a] threatening difference" (1-2). The orphan became a person the family could blame for their mistakes. Her ideas can be applied to both Jane and Heathcliff, since both children are blamed for the families being miserable, and they are seen as the black sheep of the family.

In her book, Peters also discusses three different types of narrative orphans within Victorian literature: "[T]he mysterious foundling with seemingly no known origins; the association of the orphan figure with travelling peoples (gypsies) [...] and the criminalised orphan figure" (31-32). Peter's observation of orphan narratives agrees with the narrative of *Wuthering Heights*, where Heathcliff is perceived to be a gypsy orphan that no one knows anything about. However, neither of the narratives seem to agree with the narrative of *Jane Eyre*. She knows where she is from and she does not occupy her time with criminal activities. Therefore, I would suggest that there might exist another kind of orphan narrative, in which the orphan is placed with family and relatives, knowing where they come from and who they are.

It is possible to say that, as a representation of the orphan child, both Jane and Heathcliff are outsiders and perceived as 'other'. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines otherness as "The quality or fact of being other; difference, esp. from an expected norm; separateness from or oppositeness to a thing, or from or to an observer; diversity". Already from Heathcliff's first encounter with the Earnshaw family, he is described by Nelly Dean "as dark almost as if it came from the devil" (Brontë, E. 39, Ch. 4).

Furthermore, Nelly continues to describe him as a “dirty, ragged, black-haired child”, who talks gibberish that neither of them are able to understand (Brontë, E. 39, Ch. 4). From day one, Heathcliff is labelled as ‘other’ by the family. One night, Nelly even leaves him on the stairs, hoping that he will be gone by the next day (Brontë, E. 40, Ch. 4). Similar passages occur in *Jane Eyre*. One scene which clearly states that Jane is not part of the family is the one where she is reading in the window-seat while the rest of her adopted family is sitting by the fireside (Brontë, C. 1-2, Ch. 1). Jane is not allowed into the Reed family and does not have a legal place within it, something that John Reed states when he takes the book Jane is reading and tells her that it belongs to him. When John does this, he also points out that he is the heir of the estate and she is not.

Their roles as the ‘other’ is given to them at different stages in life. Jane is a small child when she enters the Reed family, meaning that she knows nothing but being the other and unwanted. When Heathcliff enters the Earnshaw family, he looks like he is older than Catherine, who is six years old at this point (Brontë, E. 38-39, Ch. 4). This implies that Heathcliff should be able to understand that he is not accepted by the majority of his new family and that they instantly judged him based on his appearance. Since we know nothing about Heathcliff’s early life, there is no evidence of him being portrayed as the ‘other’ before Mr Earnshaw finds him walking the streets of Liverpool. Lamonica claims that Heathcliff has something Jane does not. Heathcliff has the love of and protection from Mr Earnshaw, and that this gives him a place within the family (98). This would argue against Heathcliff being a representation of ‘the other’. Mr Earnshaw passes in the beginning of the novel and therefore, Heathcliff loses the father’s love and protection (Brontë, E. 45, Ch. 5). Also, I would argue that Jane does have love and protection from the father of the family but unfortunately she does not get to experience it due to his early death.

Fegan discusses the topic of identity. She argues that Heathcliff’s origin does not matter as much as the fact that he is “eternal ‘Other’, alien and outcast” (74). It appears to mean that the fact that Heathcliff does not get a true place within the Earnshaw family has more impact on his identity than the fact that he does not know where he is from. Fegan also claims that Heathcliff is not a real part of the Earnshaw family, since the story focuses on inheritance and descent, and because of this he has no economic and biologic security (74). Heathcliff is awkwardly placed in the Earnshaw family when he

was given the first name of Mr and Mrs Earnshaw's dead son, yet he never got the family's last name which would have established his belonging to them (Fegan 74). The absence of a place within the family seems to have a similar impact on Heathcliff's personality as the absence of his personal history.

Before Heathcliff enters the Earnshaw family, he lacks an identity, but living with them still does not give him the identity he might be searching for. At the beginning of the novel, Mr Lockwood asks Nelly what she knows about Heathcliff's story and she answers: "I know all about it; except where he was born, and who were his parents, and how he got his money" (Brontë, E. 37, Ch. 4). The absence of identity might have an impact on the fact that Heathcliff as an adult treats the people around him badly and that he does not feel any remorse for the fact that he takes his revenge on them. In contrast, Jane has a different relation to her identity. She knows that her mother married a clergyman and that they died of typhus fever, after a year of marriage, and that this is the reason to why she is living with the Reed's (Brontë, C. 24, Ch. 3).

Despite the fact that Jane and Heathcliff have different relations to identity, they do have similar experiences in their adopted families. Both orphans are brought into their new families by the adoptive father against the wife's will (Lamonica 72). Mr Earnshaw and Mr Reed adore their adopted children and favour them more than their biological children. This is most likely one of the reasons for the hatred Mrs Reed feels towards Jane (Lamonica 72). Thormählen proposes that Hindley hates and treats Heathcliff badly because of the fact that Mr Earnshaw shows his preference for Heathcliff openly (*The Brontës and Education* 42). The jealousy that Hindley feels towards Heathcliff and the love Mr Earnshaw has for him result in Hindley trying to make life as difficult as possible for Heathcliff after Mr Earnshaw's death. Jane is suppressed by her cousin John Reed, similar to the form Heathcliff is suppressed by his adoptive brother Hindley (Lamonica 72). Hindley being older and the rightful heir of Wuthering Heights give him the power to treat Heathcliff the way he prefers. In the same manner John Reed has the power over Jane since he is the rightful heir of Gateshead.

Jane is a rebellious child in the form that she speaks her mind when she feels that she is unfairly treated. Jane is revolutionary because of this, since previous child characters, feeling the same passion and anger, were always perceived as bad children who needed to learn how to behave (Shuttleworth, "Jane Eyre and the rebellious child")



para. 1). In this case, it seems like Charlotte Brontë intended for the readers to feel for and with Jane when she stands up for herself (Shuttleworth, “Jane Eyre and the rebellious child” para. 1). In the novel, there is one passage where Jane tells Mrs Reed about her feelings towards her:

I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved *you*; but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed: [...] I am glad you are not a relation of mine. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if anybody asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty. (Brontë, C.36-37, Ch. 4)

This is an interesting passage where Jane already as a ten-year-old has the courage to stand up for what she believes is right and wrong, a quality she possesses already at an early age. Thormählen claims that *Jane Eyre* is a novel that concerns rebellion and protest and that the novel states that it is good to protest against things if they are unfair (*The Brontës and Religion* 133). Jane is accused of being deceitful, which Shuttleworth argues, is the “worst possible crime for a child” (*The Mind of the Child*, 66). Jane has the courage to challenge Mrs Reed and she stresses the importance of being treated fairly, something Jane works hard for especially, when she is a young child (Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child*, 66). On the other hand, it is not possible to say that Heathcliff is rebellious the same way as Jane. Heathcliff does not stand up for himself when Hindley oppresses him; instead he collects his feelings towards Hindley and takes his revenge as an adult. Jane has an outlet for her rebellious behaviour as a child something Heathcliff has not. This might have affected their behaviour and personality as adults. Jane learns how to control her rebellious side, whereas Heathcliff becomes a person who wants to treat the people around him the way he was treated as a child.

Another subject closely connected with Jane’s rebellious side is her passion. Within her character there is a constant battle between reason and passion. Johnson argues that Jane is a very passionate character from the very beginning of the novel where she rebels against her cousin John Reed (Para. 6). From here, her passionate side continues to appear during the whole novel, constantly fighting her reason. Johnson compares Jane’s passion to the one of Bertha Mason. Bertha Mason’s passion destroyed her and

therefore Jane must control her passion or it will ruin her as well (Para. 9). Unlike Bertha, Jane finds balance between reason and passion. This is possibly one of Jane's most important character developments. Jane goes from being a passionate and rebellious child, who has troubles controlling her feelings and turns into a woman who does not lose her beliefs or passion. She learns to control it. In contrast, there is no battle between reason and passion in the character of Heathcliff. He is completely controlled by his passion for revenge and to some extent his passion for Catherine.

## **Jane and Heathcliff: Love, Death, Forgiveness and Revenge**

Love and death are very important subjects within the novels. Jane falls in love with her employer, Mr Rochester, while working as a governess at Thornfield Hall. Their love story is complicated, not just for the fact that his first wife Bertha Mason is still alive, living in the attic, without Jane's knowledge, but also because of the imbalance of power. Rochester is an older man with money and estate as well he belongs to a higher social class than Jane. Despite this she finds a kinship in Rochester and Thornfield Hall, something that she has, for a long time, searched and longed for. She feels included and has personal freedom which she did not have when she lived with the Reeds at Gateshead (Lamonica 82). By moving to Thornfield Jane finally finds a place to call home, as she states:

I grieve to leave Thornfield: I love Thornfield: - I love it; because I have lived in it a full and delightful life – momentarily at least. I have not been trampled on. I have not been petrified I have not been buried with inferior minds, and excluded from every glimpse of communion with what is bright and energetic and high. I have talked, face to face, with what I reverence, with what I delight in – with an original, a vigorous, an expanded mind. I have known you Mr Rochester; and it strikes me with terror and anguish to feel I absolutely must be torn from you for ever. I see the necessity of departure and it is like looking on the necessity of death. (Brontë, C. 302, Ch. 23)

In this passage Jane declares her love for both Thornfield and Mr Rochester, despite the fact that she still believes that he will marry Miss Ingram. Mr Rochester surprises Jane and tells her that she is the one he loves and that he used Miss Ingram to make her jealous. Mr Rochester proposes to Jane and convinces her of his love by claiming that she is his equal and likeness (Brontë, C. 304, Ch. 23).

Jane accepts his proposal and believes that she has found someone that accepts her for who she is, even her simple and plain appearance. The next day, Mr Rochester insists on giving Jane expensive jewellery and clothes, which as Lamonica writes, “transforms his equal and likeness into his object and possession” (82). Mr Rochester says, “I will attire my Jane in satin and lace, and she shall have roses in her hair; and I will cover the head I love best with a priceless veil” (Brontë, C. 310, Ch. 24). Despite the fact that Mr Rochester seems to objectify Jane, she still chooses to marry him. On their wedding day Jane learns that Mr Rochester is already married to Bertha Mason, a mad woman who Mr Rochester has been hiding in the attic at Thornfield Hall. After receiving this news, Jane decides that she has to leave Mr Rochester and Thornfield Hall, despite the fact that Mr Rochester wants them to live together even if it is impossible for them to get married. Even if Jane wants to stay with Mr Rochester, she has to leave since living with a man, unmarried are against her religious and moral standards.

Before leaving, Jane is doing something Heathcliff is not able to do: forgive. Jane tells her reader this:

I forgave him at the moment and on the spot. There was such deep remorse in his eye, such true pity in his tone, such manly energy in his manner: and besides, there was such unchanged love in his whole look and mien – I forgave him all yet not in words, not outwardly; only at my heart’s core. (Brontë, C. 359-360, Ch. 27)

This is not the first time Jane is able to forgive someone who has betrayed her. When Mrs Reed is dying Jane travels to Gateshead and forgives the person who did nothing but treat her badly. Thormählen suggests that the difference between Mr Rochester’s betrayal and Mrs Reed’s betrayal is that he did it out of love while she did it out of hatred (*The Brontës and Religion* 131). Despite Mr Rochester’s betrayal, their love story has a happy ending. During their time apart, Jane finds a family in the Rivers siblings, she inherits money and she gains independence. She learns that she can stand on her own two feet without

depending on someone else. After the fire at Thornfield Hall, Mr Rochester loses the estate, money and he becomes a cripple. These things mean that Jane and Mr Rochester are finally in a relationship where they have an equal amount of power and dependence. Additionally, Godfrey argues that “[t]he peculiar construction of age in the marriage allows both Jane and Rochester to hold and to release power in turn” (864). This states that the age difference between them has a positive effect on Jane’s influence in their relationship. The fact that Jane is younger than Mr Rochester makes him depend more on her.

It could be argued that the two major themes of *Wuthering Heights* are love and revenge. Heathcliff and Catherine meet at an early age and grow up together. At their first encounter, Catherine does not like Heathcliff at all. She spits on him and grins at him (Brontë, E. 40, Ch. 4). It does not take long for Catherine to change her opinion of him and grow very fond of him. Lamonica stresses that at this stage, Catherine has accepted the stranger as her brother and abandoned her brother by blood, Hindley (99). People might believe that Heathcliff’s and Catherine’s relationship is incestuous. There is no evidence of Heathcliff being the illegitimate son of Mr Earnshaw in the text, and therefore this theory will not be discussed in this paper. Their relationship will be discussed since it is impossible to talk about Heathcliff and his personality without mentioning Catherine, but this essay will not take a stand to whether the relationship is incestuous or not.

The relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine is often described powerfully in the novel. They identify with each other and believe that they are each other’s soul. During a conversation between Nelly and Catherine, Catherine explains her love for Heathcliff by saying:

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 into a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. 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. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff – he’s always, always in my mind – not as a pleasure to myself – but, as my own being – so don’t talk about our separation again – it is impracticable. (Brontë, E. 88, Ch. 9)

Catherine states the difference between her love for Edgar Linton and her love for Heathcliff. Catherine's feelings towards Linton are mobile, whereas her feelings towards Heathcliff are static and will never change. The deep connection and love between Heathcliff and Catherine goes beyond my and possibly others understanding. Their love goes beyond family ties and social class. Even if Catherine has family, history and origin: things that Heathcliff does not have, they are able to identify themselves as one individual.

Despite this, Catherine chooses to marry Edgar Linton because it would put Catherine in a lower social position to marry Heathcliff, since Hindley has degraded Heathcliff to such a low point (Brontë, E. 86, Ch. 9). Heathcliff overhears Catherine saying this to Nelly; he leaves Wuthering Heights and does not return until three years later when he has gained money, an education and manners. These are the reasons why Catherine feels that she cannot marry Heathcliff (Marsh 44). Possibly, he is hoping that this will change the situation. When Heathcliff returns, Catherine is married to Linton and she is very ill and eventually dies after giving birth to a daughter. While visiting Catherine before her death, Heathcliff tells Nelly what life without Catherine would be: "Two words would comprehend my future – *death* and *hell* – existence, after losing her, would be hell" (Brontë, E. 159, Ch. 14). Even though they have been apart for three years, he cannot imagine a world where she does not exist. Unfortunately, Heathcliff loses the love of his life and after receiving the news he says:

Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! You said I killed you – haunt me, then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers. I believe – I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul! (Brontë, E. 181, Ch. 2)

Heathcliff states that he cannot and does not want to live without Catherine and he begs her to haunt him as a ghost. The only thing that keeps him from joining her in death is revenge, a desire for revenge, which he does not care to hide from any of the other characters (Fegan 82).

The separation between Heathcliff and Catherine as well as her death become the reasons for Heathcliff to continue the revenge circle which Hindley started several years before. The revenge circle means that Hindley starts to take his revenge out

on Heathcliff for entering the family and for gaining their father's love and affection. In the novel, Catherine says that: "He [Hindley] has been blaming our father (how dared he?) for treating H. [Heathcliff] too liberally; and swears he will reduce him to his right place" (Brontë, E. 23, Ch. 3). Hindley's feelings towards Heathcliff are harsh and cold. Hindley will not allow Heathcliff to sit or eat with the rest of the family and Heathcliff and Catherine are not allowed to play together. If Heathcliff breaks any of Hindley's rules he will be thrown out of the Earnshaw family (Brontë, E. 23, Ch. 3). Because of the way Hindley treats Heathcliff, Heathcliff's hatred and desire for revenge grows, and being treated in a cruel and excluding way most likely affect Heathcliff to turn into a man who lacks empathy for others.

As Heathcliff, himself 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, E. 65, Ch. 7). Heathcliff gets his opportunity for revenge when he returns to Wuthering Heights. Hindley drinks and gambles and loses his possessions to Heathcliff, who becomes the new master of the house after Hindley's death. Despite Hindley's death, Heathcliff's desire for revenge continues. He is vengeful towards Hindley's son Hareton because of his father's doings (Bowen para. 1). Bowen adds that Heathcliff becomes the dominant part of the revenge circle and he goes beyond both law and justice. (Para. 1) He is willing to do anything to fulfil his desire. Heathcliff's desire for revenge is probably the only reason for him being alive after Catherine's death.

Heathcliff is extremely vengeful and also directs his revenge on the Linton family. In a letter to Nelly Dean, Isabella writes:

[W]hatever he may pretend, he wishes to provoke Edgar to desperation – he says he has married me on purpose to obtain power over him; and he shan't obtain it – I'll die first! I just hope, I pray that he may forget his diabolic prudence, and kill me! The single pleasure I can imagine is to die, or to see him dead! (Brontë, E. 162, Ch. 14)

Heathcliff only marries Isabella Linton and treats her badly as an attempt to enact revenge on Edgar Linton, probably for the fact that he marries Catherine, the love of his life. Vindictiveness seems to be the biggest characteristic of Heathcliff's personality. There appears to be a constant battle between Heathcliff's desire for revenge and his love for

Catherine. In the end Heathcliff loses the satisfaction of destroying the other characters' lives. He says: "I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing" (Brontë, E. 344, Ch. 19). The revenge circle ends and the main reason for this appears to be love.

Thormählen claims that Heathcliff's love for Catherine overpowers his hatred of the Earnshaw family and the Linton family and that this is the reason for him to stop his revenge on the next generation of the families (*The Brontës and Religion* 141). The next generation consists of Hareton and Cathy, Hindley's son and Catherine's daughter, both resemble Catherine which seems to be the reason to why he decides to give up his revengeful side. In addition, Thormählen writes that there is one more reason for Heathcliff to stop destroying people's lives and that is, that he no longer has any enemies and that he "cannot refuel his hatred" (*The Brontës and Religion* 141). Heathcliff's love for Catherine seems to be the reason for him to stop his vindictiveness but he does not talk about his actions and he feels no regret over the pain he has caused to the Earnshaw family and the Linton family (Fegan 82). Shortly after realising that there is no longer a purpose for him to revenge the others; Heathcliff dies. Later he is buried next to Catherine which is the closest they come to a happy ending.

## **Jane and Heathcliff: Similarities and differences**

When discussing differences between Heathcliff and Jane, I believe it to be important to consider the narrative perspective of both novels. The authors have chosen to use different narratives, which means that only the protagonist in one novel is the narrator. The result of this is that the protagonists are affected differently and that the narrative perspectives have an impact on how the characters are perceived. Jane as the narrator has the ability to colour her own story while Heathcliff's story is coloured by the narrators Nelly Dean and Mr Lockwood. *Jane Eyre* is narrated from Jane's point of view, when she is an adult who has had time to reflect on her experiences. This gives her the possibility to tell the reader certain things, but also to leave out other things. Every time Jane's personality or appearance is commented on by the other character it is told from Jane's own perspective,

which mean that Jane has the ability to interpret the other characters' observations. Heathcliff does not have this ability since he is not the narrator of his story.

In contrast to *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* has several narrators, but two main ones: Nelly Dean and Mr Lockwood. The story is also narrated from two different points in time. Mr Lockwood narrates his parts in present time when he visits Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Nelly on the other hand, narrates the part of the story which takes place in past time; the story of the Earnshaw's and the Linton's from the time Heathcliff enters the Earnshaw household. Nelly does have a close relationship to the Earnshaw family since her mother had nursed Hindley (Brontë, E. 38, Ch. 4). Mr Lockwood has not had any encounters with the family before he travels to Wuthering Heights with intentions to rent Trushcross Grange. Therefore, Mr Lockwood be able to have a more objective perception of the characters than Nelly. Fegan observes that Heathcliff's actions of evil are carefully and intentionally described, from the point of view of the characters who are victims of his devilish actions, and therefore should they be seen for what they are (83). Based on Fegan's claim, this could be interpreted in two ways, either that the descriptions of Heathcliff's personality are reliable or that they are twisted by the victims. Since Heathcliff, for the most part, is described by the words of his victims, the people that possibly dislike him the most, one might assume that their observations are coloured by their feeling towards him. It is also possible that the victims are only able to see the bad sides of Heathcliff and not the few potentially good ones.

Marsh argues that the reader cannot trust Mrs Dean as a narrator because she does not know the state of the mind of the characters. She speculates and also tells the reader that she does that (14). Moreover, Marsh suggests that "Mrs Dean is an active participant in this part of the story, and she acts on the basis of what she believes, introducing her concepts of good, evil, and Heathcliff's character, into her own words" (14). By stating this Marsh claims that Nelly's understanding of Heathcliff's character does not have to be a hundred percent accurate. Additionally, Marsh suggests that Nelly Dean is touched by Heathcliff's grief and that she feels sorry for him even though she believes that he is a cruel savage. If Nelly both feels pity and dislike towards Heathcliff, it is possible that her opinions of him are less accurate. Based on this Marsh claims that she is "a narrator who is at war within herself ... [and that her ] psychological needs drive her behaviour, and distort her narrative" (16). Nelly tries to defend herself from



Heathcliff's feelings and emotions by pitting her moral vapidities against Heathcliff's grief (Marsh 16).

Also, Lamonica argues that Nelly's narrative is affected by her involvement in the Earnshaw family. While Heathcliff and Catherine get closer, Hindley and Nelly unite their resistance towards the newcomer (99). Based on these claims one might draw the conclusion that the readers' perception of Heathcliff is coloured by another character's personal opinion of him. The different narratives result in Jane having a voice of her own, whereas Heathcliff, apart from a couple of pages, gets his story told by someone else. He does not have the ability to reflect on his behaviour like Jane. This may influence the reader's experience of the characters' behaviour and actions.

Jane's and Heathcliff's personalities can be analysed from a psychological perspective. Here I will use Sigmund Freud's theory about the unconscious part of the mind. Freud divides the mind into three parts, the id, the ego and the super-ego (Thurschwell 79-80). The id is the part of the mind that controls a person's desire, the "I want" this or that (Thurschwell 82). The ego is the part of the mind which controls the person's image of him- or herself as "a self-conscious being" who is set aside from the world around (Thurschwell 82). Thurschwell continues to explain that "the super-ego is the self-critical aspect of the ego; that which judges the conscious and unconscious decisions of the id and the ego" (91). This means that the super-ego is the part of the mind which stands for morals. This is the part of the mind that tells you what is right and what is wrong. Applying this on to Jane and Heathcliff could indicate that Heathcliff is representing the id whereas Jane is representing the ego. Heathcliff focuses on his desire to avenging the people around him, that either did him wrong as a child or kept him from Catherine. Heathcliff does not reflect on how his actions might not be justified and he has no desire to forgive or ask for forgiveness. Jane, on the other hand, is a rebellious child who is controlled by her desire of being fairly treated, but at the same time she learns how to control this part of herself. She knows when and how she can let go of her desires. She is also a person who is controlled by the morals and standards set by the society she lives in. Therefore, Jane becomes a good example of how the ego mediates between the id and the super-ego.

Heathcliff was perceived as a cruel, evil and a horrible person. Charlotte Brontë felt that she had to apologise for her sister's creation in a preface, published for

the first time in 1850, written in an edition of *Wuthering Heights*. Charlotte Brontë writes this about Emily Brontë: “Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny, more powerful than sportive, found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine. Having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done” (Charlotte Brontë, preface para. 4). Here she indicates that Emily Brontë was controlled by her imagination and did not know what she was doing when she created the protagonists in *Wuthering Heights*. Charlotte Brontë also discusses Heathcliff’s lack of humanity:

Heathcliff betrays one solitary human feeling, and that is not his love for Catherine; which is a sentiment fierce and inhuman; a passion such as might boil and glow in the bad essence of some evil genius; a fire that might form the tormented centre – the ever-suffering soul of a magnate of the infernal world: and, by its quenchless and ceaseless ravage effect the execution of the decree which dooms him to carry Hell with him wherever he wanders. No; the single link that connects Heathcliff with humanity is his rudely-confessed regard for Hareton Earnshaw – the young man whom he has ruined; and then his half-implied esteem for Nelly Dean. These solitary traits omitted, we should say he was child neither of Lascar nor gipsy, but a man’s shape animated by demon life – a Ghoul – an Afreet. (Charlotte Brontë, preface para. 7)

In this passage, Charlotte Brontë chooses to comment on Heathcliff’s humanity. She claims that Heathcliff’s only human feature is that he cares for Hareton. Charlotte Brontë also claims that Heathcliff’s love for Catherine is something inhuman. Here I am willing to disagree; love is possibly the most animate feeling of all and if Heathcliff has the ability to love there is a part of him which is human. In passages where Heathcliff and Catherine declare their love for each other, I would suggest that Heathcliff has a more caring and compassionate side. Also, Heathcliff grieves Catherine’s death, a feeling I would claim is human.

Many people would probably disagree with me; they would argue that Heathcliff is more of an animal. Several passages in the novel discuss Heathcliff’s humanity. In a letter to Nelly, Isabella asks her if “Mr Heathcliff is a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” (Brontë, E. 145, Ch. 13). The devil is one of many

inhuman creatures which Heathcliff is compared to. In his article, Kreilkamp discusses Heathcliff's humanity and why he is so frequently associated with animals. He talks about how Heathcliff was found walking the streets of Liverpool and how this resembles a lost pet (99). As early as Heathcliff's first appearance in the novel, he is compared with an animal which needs care from the humans (Kreilkamp 99). From the very first moment at Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff is dehumanized, Nelly chooses to refer to him as an 'it' instead of him. Before any of the characters have the chance to get to know his personality, he is referred to being inhuman.

When Heathcliff constantly is portrayed as an animal or inhuman, it is logical to assume that this might affect his behaviour. Potentially, he starts to act as the things he is resembled to. Kreilkamp also suggests that Heathcliff is resembling a "loyal dog" because of his intense mourning after Catherine's death (102). In my opinion, this can be seen differently, mourning, love and loyalty are human feelings as well as animal. Kreilkamp's idea of dehumanization is not the only thing that makes Heathcliff a complex character. Bowen argues that he has two qualities that contradict each other: "a reckless and passionate intensity that is indifferent to the feelings of others" and "an ability rationally to plan and sustain his vengeance over decades" (Para. 1) Despite the fact that Heathcliff seems to have feelings that are more intense than others, he is still smart enough to succeed with his revenge plans, something which I interpret to be a human characteristic. Among other things, the question whether Heathcliff is human or not makes Heathcliff an enigma to the characters and possibly the readers.

Whether or not Jane is human is not doubtful; however, other topics are frequently discussed in relation to her character. Both novel and character have become an important symbol for feminist ideas and gender discussions. Charlotte Brontë does not seem to have been a feminist. She did not believe in women having the right to vote, but she points out that women should be allowed to work (Shuttleworth, "Jane Eyre and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century woman" para. 2). In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë lets Jane illustrate that women should be able to use all their talents and not just be connected to the domestic duties (Shuttleworth, "Jane Eyre and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century woman" para. 2). In the following quote, this is clearly expressed by Jane:

[W]omen feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (Brontë, C. 129, Ch. 12)

By claiming that men's and women's feelings are the same and that women need to develop their talents the same way men do; one might say that Jane is revolutionary and it is not a surprise that this novel has been a representative for feminist thinking.

Another aspect, which differentiates Jane and Heathcliff is their relation to education. Jane is both a student and teacher at Lowood and later she works as a governess, teaching a little girl. Jane is surrounded by different kinds of knowledge, which I believe has an impact on her mature and moral personality. In contrast, education in *Wuthering Heights* is not as present and important as in *Jane Eyre*. In *Wuthering Heights*, the characters have received knowledge without going to school. They receive it on their own or when they are absent from the story (Thormählen, *The Brontës and Education*, 159). According to Thormählen, the perfect example of receiving education while being absent is Heathcliff's three-year disappearance. Heathcliff leaves *Wuthering Heights* as uneducated and he returns as an educated man, without anyone knowing how he became educated. It is hard to determine how education affects Heathcliff's personality, since the reader does not know under which circumstances he received it. However, being educated might help Heathcliff to structure and plan his revenge and if this is the case education affects the characters differently. For Jane, education is positive and for Heathcliff it is negative.

Jane's and Heathcliff's relation to religion and God are very dissimilar. Jane has a strong religious belief which gives her comfort and guidance. Before Jane can reconnect with Mr Rochester, she realises that her love for Mr Rochester cannot stay in the way for her love of God (Thormählen, *The Brontës and Religion*, 58). Compared to Jane, Thormählen claims, that Heathcliff lacks "Christian virtues" (*The Brontës and Religion*, 103). Heathcliff is repeatedly referred to as "a devil, demon, goblin, Satan, imp and fiend" which are the opposite to God and heaven (Thormählen, *The Brontës and*

*Religion*, 103). Heathcliff also constantly refers to himself being in hell. I suggest that the fact that Heathcliff and Jane have different relations to religion is one reason for them developing diverse personalities. Jane feels secure in her belief and it helps her to control her passion and rebellious side. In contrast Heathcliff's lack of religious belief realises his evil and devilish side.

## **Conclusion**

As the thesis states, Jane and Heathcliff are two very different characters, despite the fact that their background as orphans are very much alike. They are both treated as 'other' and outcasts and they grow up under similar family situations. Despite this Jane is able to forgive the past. She can learn from her bad experiences, and make something positive out of them; something Heathcliff is not able to do. From being a young, rebellious and passionate child, Jane grows up to be a morally strict and caring woman. Jane manages to control her passionate and rebellious side with the help of education and religious belief. On the other hand, Heathcliff cannot break free from a pattern of cruel and revengeful behaviour. Heathcliff is determined to treat people as bad or possibly worse than he was treated when he was a child and he is unable to forgive and make peace with his past.

As the discussion states, Heathcliff is a cruel and devilish person. However, it is also possible that a smaller part of him is more human. That part is his strong love for Catherine. The death of Catherine causes Heathcliff unbearable grief which acts as fuel on his revengeful character. In contrast, Jane's love for Mr Rochester might not be as strong as Heathcliff's love for Catherine, but she gets her happy ending and a relationship where she as a woman has equal power with her husband. The narrative structure of both novels has a large impact on how Jane and Heathcliff are perceived as characters. Compared to Jane, Heathcliff does not have the ability to tell his own story which affects our perception of him as a character. The story told from his perspective would probably give a milder picture of who he is.

To conclude, the most important reasons to why Jane and Heathcliff develop completely different personalities seems to be love, death, narrative structure, complex characteristics and religion. Furthermore, all aspects discuss seem to help constructing the characters of Jane and Heathcliff. This analysis is a discussion over some

of the most prominent reasons for Jane's and Heathcliff's personality division but it can be further investigated if more aspects are analysed.

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