Cristian Vîjea[*]

TRANSFORMATIONS OF MORAL VALUES IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS *AND LATER CRITICAL METAMORPHOSES*

Keywords: *moral rebirth, unreliable narrator, postmodern work, pantheism, reversed symmetry, Victorian morality.*

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to prove that, despite the seemingly innovative narrative technique,* Wuthering Heights *belongs to its period and can hardly qualify as a modern or postmodern work ahead of its time. The proponents of the latter view (Shunami, Frangipane) have to overly emphasize two things in the novel: the unreliable narrator and the unresolved psychological conflicts. While these features uncovered by later criticism have a clear basis in the novel, a critical endeavour which tries to move the novel forward in time is bound to fail. In order to pursue this line of interpretation, the critic is forced to insist upon the unreliability of the whole narrative in the work and to gloss over the embedded moral messages. This is the point where this line of criticism departs from the work and gets trapped in a spiralling microphone proximity effect.*

My paper claims that many passages, flagged by these critics as uninterpretable otherwise than as a metafictional ironic play of the author, become interpretable in the case of the informed reader, conversant with the Bronte sisters' religious upbringing, their education and the literary works which influenced their childhood. A closer look betrays the fact that these very passages make perfect sense if we take into account the rebirth the person-oriented morality based on royal-path Christian values and virtues, in the early Victorian society, and particularly so in the Yorkshire communities in which the Bronte sisters grew up, as well as the death knell sounded to the Romantic pantheistic-tinged morality.

Then, these interpretations are completely unable to take into account the reversed symmetry between the two Catherines, and Heathcliff's sudden curb put on his revengeful plan. To what extent the novel that this critical stunt leaves behind is still WH *we leave to our readers to decide.*

In this paper we will draw attention to the fact that, although Wuthering Heights seems a work ahead of its time in point of narrative technique, it reflects the cultural preoccupations of its age. Severing Wuthering Heights from its cultural background can lead to interesting critical results, yet the text of the novel might at times contradict such interpretations. Our argument will show that Wuthering Heights is deeply steeped in Victorian morality; more exactly it reflects the early Victorian times and the influence of Sir Walter Scott.

Are the author and his community entirely dead? Could we say that it is only the reader's task to project meaning into a literary work? Each critical endeavour brings about the demise of the work analyzed and the resurrection of a cultural remix

[*] University of Bucharest, Romania.

of the same work, function of the critic's views and the cultural codes pertaining to the critic's community. This transformation might not be very easy to detect, but there are situations, where the author's cultural, political and religious assumptions remain present in the work and force the critic to overlook them or to relegate them to the periphery.

This happens especially when the author's community shared some interests and preoccupations which are no longer present in the critic's world. For example, the author's contemporary reader and his community are present in early Victorian texts and the critic can do what he likes with a novel only after having surgically eliminated these elements from the novel.

For the purpose of this demonstration I have chosen a well known novel from the Victorian period, *Wuthering Heights*. We will see that critical endeavours project upon the novel the critic's own ideological views and reinterpret the work to squeeze the novel into that frame. However, each and every time the critic operates a selection, rather arbitrary, foregrounding some elements and giving them a paramount importance and obscuring other elements or feigning complete oblivion of their existence in the novel, precisely because these very elements would upset the imposed critical interpretation. However these elements relegated by recent critics to the periphery reveal what was of interest back in Emily Bronte's day.

Early critics discovered in the novel their own contemporary mindset; they encountered principles and feelings experienced and lived at the time, and not theoretical assumptions read in a remote study of the Victorian age.

An unsigned review *in Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* (15 January 1848) remarks*:*

> *Wuthering Heights* is a strange sort of book,--baffling all regular criticism; yet, it is impossible to begin and not finish it; and quite impossible to lay it aside afterwards and say nothing about it. . . . the reader is shocked, disgusted, almost sickened by details of cruelty, inhumanity, and the most diabolical hate and vengeance, and anon come passages of powerful testimony to the supreme power of love--even over demons in the human form. The women in the book are of a strange fiendish-angelic nature, tantalizing, and terrible, and the men are indescribable out of the book itself. (Allott 228)

The bold characters are mine and emphasize the concern with a certain theme in the novel, the power of love over demons. Was it in any way of importance to Bronte's contemporary readers?

The question of interest regards the extent to which *WH* is a work ahead of its time. It certainly raised the hackles of many contemporaries, but mostly on account of the novel's slur on the contemporary social structure, on the narratives of social progress and seeming disregard for the sensitive palates of contemporary readers.

Mr Ellis Bell, before constructing the novel, should have known that forced marriages, under threats and in confinement are illegal, and parties instrumental thereto can be punished. And second, that wills made by young ladies' minors are invalid.The volumes are powerfully written records of wickedness and they have a

moral – they show what Satan could do with the law of Entail. (*The reader's guide to Emily Bronte's classic*)

The greatest shock comes in the wake of the novel's supposed uncensored descriptions of brutality, as I have already hinted. An anonymous reviewer in Graham's Lady's Magazine (USA) writes in 1948: "How a human being could have attempted such a book as the present without committing suicide before he had finished a dozen chapters, is a mystery. It is a compound of vulgar depravity and unnatural horrors…." (*The reader's guide to Emily Bronte's classic*). Other reviews reiterate the same shock and horror at the description of a fiendish character and dismal, sunless, remote corner, coupled with praise for the author's narrative skill which the critics consider to have been squandered in vain. But contemporary reviewers hit all the time upon one, in their vision, core element: the power of disinterested love and its effect on Heathcliff. Edwin P Whipple writes in North America Review in October 1848:

> He [the author of *WH*] appears to think that spiritual wickedness is a combination of animal ferocities, and has accordingly made a compendium of the most striking qualities of tiger, wolf, cur, and wild-cat, in the hope of framing out of such elements a suitable brute-demon to serve as the hero of his novel. [Heathcliff] is a deformed monster,….His mode of delineating a bad character is to narrate every offensive act and repeat every vile expression which are characteristic. Hence, in *Wuthering Heights*, he details all the ingenuities of animal malignity, and exhausts the whole rhetoric of stupid blasphemy, in order that there may be no mistake as to the kind of person he intends to hold up to the popular gaze. Like all spendthrifts of malice and profanity, however, he overdoes the business….His attempt at originality does not stop with the conception of [Heathcliff], but he aims further to exhibit the action of the sentiment of love on the nature of the being whom his morbid imagination has created. This is by far the ablest and most subtile portion of his labours, and indicates that strong hold upon the elements of character, and that decision of touch in the delineation of the most evanescent qualities of emotion, which distinguish the mind of the whole family. (*The reader's guide to Emily Bronte's classic*)

This demonstration could go further, but only to show the same results: Bronte's contemporary critics were shocked at the seemingly disgusting characters and setting, because the novel seemed to offend their moral sense, impressed with the author's skill and her original twist in which she confronts the monster with the power of love.

Later critics capitalize upon these early findings and focus on a certain parallelism which exists in the novel. It was but natural for the structural criticism to do the same. Catherine the younger is constantly contrasted with her mother. An early review underlines already this fact:

> Catherine the elder—wayward, impatient, impulsive—sacrifices herself and her lover to the pitiful ambition of becoming the wife of a gentleman of station. Hence her own misery—her early death—and something of the brutal wickedness of Heathcliff's character and conduct... Catherine the younger is more sinned against

> than sinning, and in spite of her grave moral defects, we have some hope of her at the last. . . . (*The reader's guide to Emily Bronte's classic*)

I intend to give further evidence of this critical approach later, when contrasting it with more recent critical endeavours.

We have to remember that *WH* was not written in a period very remote from Romanticism. Yet people seemed to have moved away from the Romantic, quasy-pantheist "morality" to a more Christian emphasis on the importance of personal relations. The well-known dictum "charity begins at home" (Dickens uses it in Martin Chuzzleewit, ch. 27) gains ground precisely because of this moral turn. Most Romantic texts harbour a certain type of morality/spirituality, verging on pantheism or at least slightly flirting with it. Improvement comes via self-discovery by means of a return to some forms of society based on natural affiliations, living in nature, away from a corrupting society, its norms and institutions. This in turn signifies a return to a primordial innocence, to a self untainted by the corruption accumulated in this world. A return to the origins, to the deity of which we have a spark in ourselves. Discovering your inner-self, listening to your true self seems to be the rather narcissistic norm. Spiritual experiences are very much thought after by Romantics, but mostly in some remote past, nature, where one could be closer to the initial innocence and the all-pervasive deity.

Things change in the first period of Victorian writings, when a different morality gains ground, based more on the importance of one's relations with others and the way in which one treats the others. The main moral ideas were imbibed by Emily from Patrick Bronte who followed a more middle-of-the-road Christian outlook and from the novels she avidly read, chief among which, the *Waverley Novels* (Winnifrith, Chitham 55). The dislike of Catholicism is also present in the morality at play in *WH* (even more so in Charlotte Bronte's *Villete* and *The Professor*). Reparation other (self-punishment of a different sort) than that which corrects the vice or bad deed was considered useless (Pykett 28-30) and hypocritical. The Bronte sisters were closer to the tolerance and emphasis on good conduct present in the Broad Church of England. The way out of a difficult situation was not flight into a Romantic paradise and self-discovery, but facing the task and hardship of fixing the moral error[1], retracing through hardship the way back to normality. Another great influence at the time was sir Walter Scott's Waverley Novels (Pykett 33), evincing the same moral change from Romanticism to a more human relations oriented spirituality.

Earlier critics until late structuralist times took into account this moral reorientation, even though they accounted for it in terms of a split structure of the novel, having at the center Catherine's declaration "it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff" and Heathcliff's subsequent departure. The first part of the novel is dominated by Catherine's moral choice and its consequences; the second part shows Cathy's gradually emerging power against the monster. "Catherine guilefully plays a

[1]Even on American soil we have a similar development in The Scarlet Letter, where flight into nature and a Romantic paradise is no longer acceptable and only redressing the moral mistake offers the solution.

double role and cheats two men. Cathy innocently sacrifices herself for one man and is the means of saving another" (Jordan 11).

The second part of the novel illustrates a gradual delivery of Hareton from the stage of savage automaton to which he had been reduced, to that of a person with an interest in life and originality, by means of Cathy's loving care to "forget" books laying around, to arouse his curiosity and to bear with his rough impulses etc.. She manages to breathe life back into the automaton and a different character emerges, showing traces of his aristocratic origins. Here the influence of Scott is also visible, in whose writings aristocracy was inborn and regardless of the hardships and layers of neglect, it would eventually resurface.

> When Hareton was there, she generally paused in an interesting part, and left the book lying about: that she did repeatedly; but he was as obstinate as a mule, and, instead of snatching at her bait, in wet weather he took to smoking with Joseph; and they sat like automatons, one on each side of the fire, the elder happily too deaf to understand her wicked nonsense, as he would have called it, the younger doing his best to seem to disregard it."(Bronte 229)

Gradually Heathcliff cannot attack Cathy and Hareton because they no longer permit evil to percolate through them, and block its circuit; they pity Heathcliff. "They are afraid of nothing...Together they would brave Satan and all his legions" (Bronte 248). To Heathcliff's monstrous revenge Cathy opposes her forgiveness and her sacrifice in nursing Hareton back to normality.

The turning point in the second half of the novel is Cathy's moral decision which is the very opposite of old Catherine's choice. This gives her an authority which Heathcliff cannot undermine:

> 'I know he has a bad nature,' said Catherine: 'he's your son. But I'm glad I've a better, to forgive it; and I know he loves me, and for that reason I love him. Mr. Heathcliff you have nobody to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater misery. You are miserable, are you not? Lonely, like the devil, and envious like him? Nobody loves you—nobody will cry for you when you die! I wouldn't be you!'(*211*)

Recent approaches however come with very useful insights regarding the unreliable narrator in *WH*. However, in order to ascribe postmodern prescient features to *WH* the critics have to deliberately overlook or even deny the existence of these very elements which were of paramount importance to earlier critics. The question to be answered is whether at the end of such a critical endeavour we can still talk of *WH* and how much one needs to rewrite it in order to fit into the desired mould.

Wuthering Heights is doing something that the contemporary novel is just starting to do, something that the contemporary novel has come to as a result of living with postmodernist assumptions about narrative and knowledge for decades: it is telling us what narrative cannot tell us. At a time when narrative was building credibility as a mode of transmitting knowledge, Emily Brontë was already

questioning it, exposing narrative's inability to convey truth. At the onset of postmodernism Lyotard writes that 'the narrative function is losing its functors', but Emily Brontë already seems aware of this. Bruce Jackson writes that 'one key difference — maybe the key difference — between narrative fiction and real life is narrative fiction usually has to make sense but real life is under no obligation', and indeed, Emily Brontë seems to be showing us exactly this, in the way that her narrative tries to make sense, but the plot refuses to fit the form. (Frangipane 36-7)

Such an approach must go the extreme of hijacking the unreliable narrator and modifying the rest of the text in order to squeeze *WH* into that interpretation. What happens is a process of filling in and even rewriting the passages which resist such an interpretation, in order to put a label of absurd narrative upon the text, making the whole text unreliable.

The story of Wuthering Heights is its own pure simulacrum. Baudrillard writes that a simulacrum is 'never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference of circumference'. By this equation, Emily Brontë's unique choice of narrative structure cannot help but comment on narration. It is put into dialogue with itself. By calling attention to faults in the representational powers of narrative Emily Brontë is doing something akin to what modernists and postmodernists have been doing: she is grappling with metanarratives in the sense that Jean-François Lyotard uses the term. (Frangipane 33-4)

Nowadays, in the society distant from the Victorian values we might fail to grasp many moral innuendos and ascribe the "difficult" passages to an ironic metafictional play.

At the end, when young Cathy, the last of the Lintons, is to marry Hareton, the last of the Earnshaws, someone whom she previously despised, the set-up is almost too contrived to believe. There are many such moments in the novel, in which a classic or standard narrative manoeuvre seems at odds with what we would expect from these characters, or at odds with general plausibility. These manoeuvres call our attention to the things that narrative form is traditionally supposed to give us, and what Emily Brontë's novel denies us. Emily Brontë seems to be building a theory about the limits of the power of narrative through some ironic scenes in which the novel cannot quite achieve what we as readers have come to expect fiction to achieve. (35)

The moral lesson and the moral core mentioned earlier in the views of early critics seem to be in the way of critical interpretations purporting to rank Emily Bronte among the prescient postmodernists. While the unreliable narrator is a reality in the novel, the work itself might not necessarily be equally unreliable, unless one deliberately deletes some parts from it or even changes the text.

Shunami, in his case for an unreliable narrator, has to prove that Nelly is the guilty person in an attempt to overlook Catherine's moral choice, shoving in Nelly's lap the whole guilt of Catherine's decision. Immediately after Catherine's declaration, Nelly observes Heathcliff slip outside, but she says nothing about it to Catherine. Nelly's surprising behavior, as a result of which Catherine is gradually destroyed during the course of the novel, results from her latent feeling that she can manage her mistress' life better than her mistress (Shunami 455)

Whereas earlier critics ascribed Nelly the role of a narrative tool, used by Emily Bronte to gradually reveal the moral lesson to the readers, starting with Gideon Shunami, Nelly has to shoulder the moral blame. But the text shows us a Nelly entirely different, helping Heathcliff in the first part of the novel against the abuses to which he was repeatedly exposed. The final abuse is Catherine's decision to reject Heathcliff and comply with the norms of the same society which seemed to sanction other forms of abuse directed at Heathcliff. Only after Catherine's confession spots Nelly Heathcliff's departure, and Nelly was trying to oppose rather than support Catherine's marital choice. The text of the novel contradicts the critic.

> I went into the kitchen, and sat down to lull my little lamb to sleep. Heathcliff, as I thought, walked through to the barn. It turned out afterwards that he only got as far as the other side the settle, when he flung himself on a bench by the wall, removed from the fire and remained silent . . . hat will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.' Ere this speech ended I became sensible of Heathcliff's presence. Having noticed a slight movement, I turned my head, and saw him rise from the bench, and steal out noiselessly. He had listened till he heard Catherine say it would degrade her to marry him, and then he stayed to hear no further. My companion, sitting on the ground, was prevented by the back of the settle from remarking his presence or departure; but I started, and bade her hush! (Bronte 58-9)

Nelly's agency is also proven weak in the case of Cathy, who can restore peace only by pursuing the path of rectifying the mistakes of her predecessor, against Nelly's remonstrances. Shunami concludes: "Thus, interpretation of reality is left up to the reader, who cannot rely on the convenience of a homogeneous and dependable point of view. Instead, the reader is constantly involved in a difficult search after the true meaning of the events in Wuthering Heights."(Shunami 467). However, this interpretation holds water only after deleting the moral center in the novel and the passages related to it. While a decent amount of ambiguity and unreliability can be presupposed, carrying to the extreme the "unreliability" mantra completely departs from the original text. Both Nelly and Lockwood could be means in the hands of the authoress who might come with a master narrative voice and impose a certain view, albeit using an innovative technique(not very innovative though if we take into account *Redgauntlet*).

Critics who support the view that Emily Bronte shows signs of postmodernism, well aware of the previous views which accepted the unreliable narrator, but not the unreliable narrative in *WH*, come with an interesting distinction:

> Most authors, he says, alert us to the fact that a narrator is being unreliable through a 'process of authorial flagging' by which a novel 'teaches us how to read its narrator'.In the case of unreliably unreliable narration, however, there is no

> 'authorial flagging' indicating when and to what extent the narrator is being unreliable. (Frangipane 32)

Is Nelly Dean devoid of such an authorial flagging? Let us look in the text.

> I went about my household duties, convinced that the Grange had but one sensible soul in its walls, and that lodged in my body. I wasted no condolences on Miss, nor any expostulations on my mistress; nor did I pay much attention to the sighs of my master, who yearned to hear his lady's name, since he might not hear her voice. (Bronte 88)

The view she takes of the story, the denouement she prepares and fails to achieve, also flag her as unreliable, as a mirror of social standards questioned by Emily Bronte. Lockwood is also discredited from the very beginning, when he believes he just entered a Romantic paradise.

Recent critical approaches are very precious because in their selection of the material which they wish to overlook, they give us unawares clues with regard to the moral center of the novel and the moral dilemmas smouldering in Bronte's time.

As I have already hinted, the proponents of these interpretations have to overly emphasize two things in the novel: the unreliable narrator and the "unresolved" psychological conflicts.

> All we can imagine are unquiet slumbers! Lockwood's nightmares early in the novel directly deny the possibility of quiet slumbers. The novel has been filled with restless ghosts and lives cut short. But the end of a novel is supposed to settle things, and this ending tries in vain to settle things. (Frangipane 36)

We will see later what gives the lie to the presupposed unlikely denouement.

While both the unreliable narrator and the unresolved psychological conflict are present in *WH*, the critical approaches which attempt to qualify the work as postmodern ahead of its time have to exaggerate, beside the unreliable narrator, the issue of "unresolved" psychological conflicts. In order to pursue this line of interpretation, the critic is forced to insist upon the unreliability of the whole narrative in WH, in order to qualify it as an ironic play on the notion of fiction writing. This is the point where this line of criticism departs from the work and gets trapped in a microphony effect.

The work might illustrate an ironic play on the part of the author, but is it necessarily a postmodern metafictional reflection? Or is it just another narrative with an ironic message, forcing reflection on the validity of previous Romantic values and norms of social respectability? Hindley and Edgar have no power over Heathcliff's evil plot. It is Cathy and her dedication to love, defiantly stated, which curbs Heathcliff's pursuit of revenge and stops the evil from spreading. The cure resides in love and forgiveness, and Cathy becomes untouchable, despite her being labelled as a witch. Heathcliff remains imprisoned in his fixation with Catherine, without the power to go further with his revenge strategy.

The postmodern interpretation is also bound to erase the comic aspects and rewrite the novel in an entirely tragic light. But we have a tragic comedy, with a

comic relief at the end, in Frye's sense of comic. If we take into account Scott's view on aristocracy and aristocratic features (so much present in *Guy Mannering*), the *WH* denouement cannot come as a surprise.

Our empathetic feelings are drawn at first towards the unhappy love between Heathcliff and Catherine. We side with Heathcliff and hate the social influence which marred the fulfillment of their love. Later on something changes and the reader's sympathies are drawn towards Cathy and Hareton. Fate, the close ally of tragedy, has no role, the characters take their decisions without deterministic coercion. There is no mechanicist argument and it would have been hard for Emily to reconcile such an argument with her other ironic narrative techniques. Therefore tragic determinism could hardly have found a place to creep in *Wuthering Heights*. Through Cathy and Hareton the community values are restored and preferred to the social values which sanction Heathcliff's abuses (both those inflicted upon him and later inflicted by him upon others).

> Emily Bronte's novel appeared just at the time when attempts to differentiate between community and society were becoming particularly prominent in the work of her Victorian contemporaries.... In the frame story, however, the narrative moves toward the ascendancy of Gesellschaft and the cash-nexus, whereas in the main story, we are led toward the restoration of Gemeinschaft relationships (Farrel, 178, 183).

The restoration of peace in the community is very important, because it relies on moral values and starts from within. The first part of the novel is the way out of conformity with nature and moral principles, the second part of the novel is the way back towards normality, towards nature restored.

Yet the values of the community and humanity lead the way out of crisis and back to peace and normality. The Gothic machinery by means of which Heathcliff inveigles Cathy and forces her into a marriage with Linton against her will is sanctioned by the common law and empowered by acquired wealth. Emily Bronte's irony is obvious here in questioning social evolution. We have a social convolution. Society with its mechanisms of validation separated Heathcliff from Catherine in the first half.

Precisely the encoded moral messages function as a hindrance in the path of the already mentioned critical approaches. Nelly's double dealing and control attempts function both on the narrative level and on the moral plane. The story escapes her, gets an entirely different ending, but one which fits to perfection into the moral canon of the times. Could we state that the narrative is entirely absurd and a metafictional play with the sole aim of destroying the trust in the narrative itself? Is *WH* questioning metanarratives, or making a point regarding the emerging Victorian morality, coming with a rebirth of a certain type o morality encoded in her text?

Conclusions

Criticism implies a projection of the critic's values and of his community's values into the work of literature analyzed. While all critical approaches are highly

valuable and reveal various sides of a work of literature, early critics might have an advantage, because being closer to the author's cultural codes, do not have the need to twist the text too much, in order to make it fit into their interpretation. In the case of WH we could see how a critical interpretation which attempts to fix the label "postmodern" upon WH has to delete the very passages which were of paramount importance to previous critics, namely it has to delete the moral core of the novel and reinterpret the passages dedicated to it. There are moments when the text resists such changes. The passages deleted by later critics give us the clue regarding the text's moral lesson.

An escape into an all healing nature, where the divine soul finds its link with the divinity, is no longer a possibility. What you do to others becomes important, it remains impregnated into your whole person and torments you or gives you peace, regardless of the idyllic surroundings. *WH* gives us a Romantic paradise gone wrong, on account of a twisted moral choice, and the return back to normality via a moral choice which is the very opposite of the first one. This is another reason for which we state that, while able to fix the postmodern label on Emily Bronte, new critics deal with another novel, a remix of *WH* in postmodern terms, yet not with the 19th century work itself. Many passages, flagged by these critics as uninterpretable otherwise than as an ironic play of the author in a metafictional endeavour, become interpretable in the case of the informed reader, conversant with the Bronte sisters' religious upbringing, their education and the literary works which influenced their childhood and the early Victorian society at large.

Then, postmodern readings are completely unable to take into account the reversed symmetry between the two Catherines, and Heathcliff's sudden abandonment of his revengeful plan. Other critics support our findings:

> So it is that in the second half of the novel, the conventions of earlier literature, thus dismantled, become the subject matter of a new kind of fiction. The structure of social relationships erected from the ruins of the old calls forth a cast of characters much more in line with Victorian norms and expectations....Capitalism replaces a belated feudalism as the chief source of villainy, and competition is treated as a fact of life that converts sentient beings into objects in the marketplace. At the same time, an idealized notion of the long-banished aristocracy, still conveniently remote from a society operating according to the laissez-faire principle, comes to serve as the repository of ethical value. But Dickens and Thackeray do not change from one historical frame of reference to another. For all the inconsistencies swarming about in their cultural milieu, they operate consistently from within Victorian categories and paradigms. Brontë's novel, on the other hand, appears to fall into their world from another of necessity, as the idealist categories of Romantic discourse break down. (Armstrong, 98)

The central turning point, triggering Heathcliff's departure and return as a revengeful monster is "it would degrade me…." moment. Catherine does not undertake the task to refine Heathcliff and, would rather use Edgar in order to help indirectly Heathcliff. This would not however mean self-renunciation. Cathy, on the other hand, takes the lowly bear, and helps him regain his aristocratic features, elevating him to the rank of a partner, going against social prejudice in a movement

of self-sacrifice. Is the reader really empowered to read in his own way, or is there a master authorial view present?

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