CHAPTER IV

Challenging Patriarchy: The Family in Emily Bronte’s

*Wuthering Heights*

Among the three Bronte sisters, it is Emily Bronte who strikes us as the most enigmatic. A shy and private person, Emily found inspiration for her art while taking solitary walks across the Yorkshire moors. Nature together with a puritanical home life, and the passionate creativity of her gifted siblings, stimulated her to pen one of the most tempestuous, unique and controversial books of the 19th century, her only novel *Wuthering Heights*, placed her among the greatest literary legends of Great Britain. The novel is a direct product of Emily’s poetic experience and the child of Gondal. Like Anne, Emily was deeply affected by Branwell’s degeneration. It left a permanent scar on her thoughts. Emily resented the exclusion of Branwell from their literary pursuits, which was mainly due to Charlotte. Emily writes to Ellen Nussey after his death in 1848:

> My unhappy brother, never knew what his sisters had done in literature ... he was unaware that they had published a single line ... we could not tell him of our efforts for fear of causing him too deep a pang of remorse for his time unspent and talents misapplied."(262)

Branwell’s uncontrolled passion, his desperate gestures, his apocalyptic language has entered *Wuthering Heights*.

Published in 1847 *Wuthering Heights* is set against the backdrop of swelling industrial centers and Chartist uprisings. It is a story of England in 1847, “a statement about the life Emily knew, the life of Victorian England” remarks Sandra Gubar in her
study "Looking Oppositely: Emily Bronte’s Bible of Hell"(141). A solitary but strong soul, Emily was a lover of liberty, and this existed for her only in Haworth. She was drawn to her home like a magnet, and always languished when compelled to live away. ‘Home’ and ‘family’ were two very important aspects in her life, and it is these two institutions that form the basis of the story of *Wuthering Heights*. The novel is a story of two families of contrasting values and ideals, tracing the emergence of the modern family in its idealized form. The story of the family’s dissolution and restoration unfolds, as Charlotte reminds us in her preface on the wild moors of England. Lyn Pykett in her critical study “Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*: Gothic Plot and Domestic Fiction” comments that, “Emily’s grotesque narrative, with its inter-familial rivalries and revenge plot may have originated in actual family histories of which she herself knew” (87). Lord Byron influenced her deeply. In Byron, Emily found the champion of the unsociable man. His ill-fated lovers attracted her, because they had contempt for conventional society and boldness for defying their unpropitious stars. The relationship between Lord Byron and Lady Chaworth gave birth to the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. ‘Family’ in this novel plays the vital role of a platform for revenge, for over-coming class restrictions, and for establishing one’s identity. ‘Home’ is figured as a psychological and emotional state a condition of self-fulfillment that is associated with domestic structures and kinship relations. A family romance, it involves changing familial and interfamilial relationships interwoven with sibling rivalry. The family is revealed as a vicious unit, where secure moral codes crumble, violence override charity and tolerance and psychological appositions of pleasure/pain, love/fate, and aggression/affection are tangled in a mesh. James Kavanagh in his book *Emily Bronte* remarks:
Wuthering Heights might be seen as offering the dream of a social family in which the destabilizing, demonically masculine capitalist energies are either/both exiled or/and assigned a dominated position ... the family in Wuthering Heights is certainly a significant institution... a site of both economic and ideological production ...(88)

The opening of Wuthering Heights highlights a sense of domestic routine that conforms to the Victorian ideology of home as refuge. In the very first Chapter, we are given an account of the “ranks of immense pewter dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards towering row after row” (WH 4). This is a satisfactory picture of the family sitting room, which is notable, because it provides a sense of being at the center of domestic economy. A homely and familiar atmosphere pervades the opening pages and this lends a symbolic quality to the novel. This is a life Emily herself has lived in, and carefully observed. Domestic detail is concrete – the life, the hearth, the dishes, the porridge, provide authenticity. To Lockwood, the first narrator, the scene is of a harmonious family, presided over by the “beneficent fairy” comments N.M Jacobs in her study “Gender and the Layered Narrative in Wuthering Heights”(80). She (the fairy) submits to the father/brother/husband’s legal control. But a beautiful lady with unnatural behaviour, whom Lockwood encounters, disturbs this harmonious domesticity. It turns out that the beneficent fairy is a victim of patriarchy, a prisoner – “I cannot escort you. They wouldn’t let me go to the end of the garden wall” (WH 13).

In the next chapter when Lockwood reads Catherine’s diary he comes across another girl protesting against patriarchal authority. Patriarchy was an intrinsic feature of the Victorian family, and patriarchy forms a dominant theme in Wuthering Heights. The head of the families controlled the domestic space and governed kinship structures,
restricting female mobility. During the period in which the Bronte sisters were growing up "The life of a woman be she saint or sinner, Vegetable or Virgin Many had possibly never been more codified and restricted" (Prentis 117). Juliet Mitchell in her essay 'Feminity, Narrative and Psychoanalysis' remarks that Emily Bronte:

Is not using a carnivalesque to the patriarchal order... yet she is through a kind of irony, posing questions about patriarchal organization. (429)

Wuthering Heights focuses on the enormous powers of the head over the weaker members of the family, and "locates the brutality, sometimes psychological, sometimes physical in civilized families" (Jacobs 76). In the novel "the head of both houses possess all the features of benevolent patriarchy" (Armstrong 368) and Emily uses the family to reveal the oppression of the young by the father figure. The narrative of the second narrator highlights this and opens with the arrival of a "ragged, black-haired child" (WH 29) that the patriarch Earnshaw brings back when he returns from Liverpool. Earnshaw fits into the role of a Victorian father, who remains periodically absent and brings back gifts to compensate for his absence. He thrusts this waif, which threatens the close-knit structure of the Earnshaw family – "See here wife, I was never so beaten with anything in life; but you must take it as a gift of God, though its, as dark almost as if it came from the devil." (WH 28). The child's entry tests the tight family system by introducing an alien element, into a "jealously guarded system of parental and filial relations of inheritance and possession. (Holderness 84). Hindley the son breaks into tears on learning that this child broke his promised fiddle. Catherine the daughter spits at the strange being, when she comes to know that her long desired whip was purchased but lost. Mrs. Earnshaw lashes out at her husband for burdening her with another mouth to feed. Even Nelly Dean the housekeeper, refuses to acknowledge him as a human being. They marginalize the
unwelcome child as 'it' and 'thing'. His introduction provokes violence, in that defensive exclusive family unit. The sanctity of the family is violated leading to bad feeling in terms of familial competition both among siblings and between the patriarch and his dependants. This overstepping of limits incorporates the novel's pattern of patriarchal assertions of power, through the manipulation of family structure. The waif "is a touchstone of other’s responses a liberating force for Catherine and a stumbling block for other’s" (Eagleton 120). He is stripped of determinate social relations of a given function within the family. But like Jane Eyre, the orphan has a benefactor and protector in Earnshaw, and the "gipsy brat" (WH 29) gains a place in the interior family bedrooms. Thus the patriarch’s authority prevails inspite of protest and defiance. His acceptance however, remains incomplete without the Earnshaw surname.

Leo Bersani has observed that *Wuthering Heights* contains a drama of sibling rivalry. The initial protest of the Earnshaw children against Heathcliff, is the ambivalent reaction of any child in the birth of a rival sibling. Emily Bronte splits this ambivalent emotion between Hindley who embodies passionate hostility and Catherine who embodies passionate attachment. As heir to the Heights, Hindley understandably feels his social role subverted by the irrational and unpredictable intrusion. "Hindley Earnshaw exercises power out of class, anger and fraternal rivalry" with the sole aim of obstructing legitimate desires (Armstrong 368). After Earnshaw’s death, Hindley drives Heathcliff from their company to the servant’s quarters, deprives him of the instructions of the Curate and insists that he should labour hard as any other lad on the farm. But Catherine accepts him, and teaches him whatever she has learnt. To Hindley he is an usurper of his parent’s affection — "be damned you beggarly interloper! And wheedle my father out of all he has, only afterwards show him what you are, imp of Satan... I hope he’ll kick out your brains" (WH 31). To Catherine he acts as an ally in her challenge against the
authority of both patriarchs father and brother – "Hindley is a detestable substitute – His
conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious – H and I are going to rebel – we took our initiatory
step this evening" (WH 16). The story of Catherine and Heathcliff is a "tragic tale of
conflict and separation by family enmity, class, marriage and death that gives way to a
narrative reconciliation"(Holderness 85). Emily Bronte’s patriarchy conforms to
Victorian convention, which is however met with corollary acts of protest by women and
children, who manipulate the family structure to their advantage. The initial act of
defiance comes in the form of refusal to share their room with the waif. The next instance
of defiance in the family is the marriage of Hindley, to an unknown girl Frances, whom
he brings home only after the patriarch’s death. Their marriage marks the decline of
Catherine, and it also marks the beginning of another reign of terror “you forget you have
a master here” says the tyrant, “I’ll demolish the first who puts me out of temper (WH
16).

A very significant feature of the family is that like the children in the Bronte
household, the children in Wuthering Heights are left to fend for themselves early in life,
without the love and protection of their mother Catherine Earnshaw is hardly eight when
her mother dies, Catherine Linton’s birth coincides with her mother’s death, Hareton’s
mother dies within a year of his birth and Heathcliff is an orphan by the time he is seven.
Without the care of their mothers the children find themselves in a fierce struggle for
survival against actively hostile adults, who seem obsessed with the desire to kill or maim
them. The infant Hareton, is in great danger of being killed by his father in a drunken
stupor, whereas Linton Heathcliff is tortured to death by his father Heathcliff, whose
desire to kill him is overwhelming. Reared in a strong puritanical dictum, and nourished
by the Wesleyan and Evangelical traditions, the self-conscious father of middle-class
families believed “devotedly in original sin and the need to break the child’s will”
Directly or indirectly, Emily Bronte envisions a world in which the young and weak live in constant peril. She seems to be obsessed with the vision of a young, happy, child growing up to a life of misery or crime. Another feature linked to the family is the prevalence of pain as an elementary condition of life. Pinching, slapping, cutting stabbing, threats of choking, suffocation and strangling of animals form the basis of nervous metaphors. The family in the world of *Wuthering Heights* is one where sadism, violence and wanton cruelty reign and where children, without the loving protection of their mothers have to struggle to survive. The motherless author of *Wuthering Heights* releases through the voice of her characters, the universal cry of this need of maternal love. In this world hate replaces love, cruelty replaces kindness, and survival depends on Darwin’s theory of the survival of the fittest.

In the Victorian Age it was the Nanny or foster – mother, who played an important role in these motherless families. Nelly Dean in *Wuthering Heights* is patriarchy’s paradigmatic housekeeper, the man’s woman who has been traditionally hired to keep men’s houses in order, by taking on the role of the foster- mother. Nelly Dean “is a specimen of true benevolence and homely fidelity”(C.Bronte 11) A Victorian family is incomplete without members like Nelly Dean, who play a vital role in straightening parlours, looking after the daughters and their stories. Nelly Dean plays a “censorious agent of patriarchy”(Gilbert 151). Nelly Dean declares, “my heart invariably cleaved to the master’s in preference to Catherine’s side”. (WH 83). Nelly’s position in the family is not fixed. Gilbert and Gubar maintain that she is an outsider, a poor man’s daughter and a family servant. But Nelly and Hindley share a brother-sister bond. Throughout the novel we find in Nelly a desire to go back to her childhood, when she was a constant companion to the Earnshaw children. A matronly figure, she manages domestic affairs in a cool, ambivalent and distanced manner. She fits into the role of the Victorian
Nanny, a mother-substitute who was more aware about the affairs of home and children than the actual mother. All the young girls are seen through the shrewd eyes of Nelly, a woman sans personal life, but with a deep devotion to her children Hareton and Cathy. A practical woman she advises Catherine not to marry Edgar for selfish reasons. It is Nelly who makes Isabella see sense and warns her against Heathcliff. Later in the novel she warns Cathy not to write off Hareton because he seems uncouth. Conforming to Victorian standards, it is Nelly who stands by the children in moments that are crucial and critical. She alone is the confidant of the principal members of both families, and towards the end establishes herself as a typical old family retainer.

Bound to the theme of patriarchy is the question of female identity that existed in the family structure of the 18th century. Women were socially recognized as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers leading to a popular designation of the Victorian women as 'relative creatures', a term derived from Sarah Ellis's book, *The Woman of England* (1839). The two families of the Heights and the Grange regulate all female movement in *Wuthering Heights*. Patricia Meyer Spacks sees Catherine Earnshaw as a subversive creation, in everyway opposed to her century's ideal prototype:

She conforms to no Victorian standards. Almost devoid of 'family affection' though she weeps for her father's death, she dies immediately after giving birth, having displayed no evidence whatever of desiring motherhood. Ravaged by sexual feeling of some confusing variety she seems an anti-heroine. (134)

She embodies the adolescent revolutionary, articulating a new set of values for the heroine. Catherine is a figure peculiarly eloquent of the oppressed position of Victorian woman in society. Devoid of family affection her story is a struggle and protest against her subordination. Her alliance with Heath cliff breaks up the order of what we take to be
a fairly common Victorian setting, where parental authorities have absolute power to compel children to do what they wish, where children are made to suffer discomfort and privation of their souls. Friendship with him offers her relative freedom of being outside the structure of her family and class, as he is untouched by patriarchy which determines her identity as daughter / sister.

The story of Catherine and Heathcliff is a story of bisexuality, the story of hysteric ... Heathcliff is what Cathy wants the rest of her life... Each is the bisexual possibility of the other one, evoking a nation of oneness, which is the reverse side of the coin of diverse heterogeneity. (Mitchell 429)

Her identification with Heathcliff transcends social boundaries and she asserts – "I am Heathcliff – he's always in my mind – not as a pleasure any more than I always a pleasure to myself – but as my own (WH 64). "Catherine Heathcliff" is thus a signifier of her desire to break free of the containment, imposed by her patriarchal family. It subverts the conventional Victorian female that reveals her identity in connection with her father brother and husband, and offers a symmetry that the significations Earnshaw's daughter, Hindley's sister and Linton's wife deny. Their love "stands as a paradigm of human possibilities which reach beyond and unlocks the dominative system of the Heights" (Eagleton 30). Even as a child of six years, she hankers for power, and asks for a whip, which is an appendage of self-empowerment. Heathcliff serves as her potential whip to disrupt family order, and challenge the patriarchal authority.

In *Wuthering Heights* the freedom of movement is the prerogative of the male. Earnshaw goes to Liverpool, Hindley goes to college, but Catherine like her creator Emily Bronte is restricted to her home (the Heights), so she responds spontaneously to the gifts which are her only link with the world outside her family. Her sudden entry into
Thrashcross Grange brings her face to face with the civilized luxury of the aristocratic Linton family, and they administer the crucial moment of separation for Catherine and Heathcliff. Class differences are certainly a major issue in Wuthering Heights, and the novel highlights the concept of patriarchal/male power on women as well as weaker male members. Catherine is welcomed into the Linton family, but Heathcliff is dismissed as “a little Lascar, an American or Spanish Castaway. A wicked boy at all events and quite unfit for a decent house” (WH 39). Catherine’s temporary stay in Thrashcross Grange transforms her from “the hatless little savage to a very dignified person” (WH 40) and she becomes accustomed to a style of living where class, status and privilege place her above those who work for her. Heathcliff is now inferior-“Should I be sitting with you? ...what good do I get? What do you talk about? You might be dumb as a baby for anything you say to amuse me” (WH 54). Her struggle is evident in her reaction to Heathcliff once a fast friend. She longs to escape the restricted bonds of patriarchy and the death of Frances stands as a lesson and warning of the fate of a woman in that society. Frances dies having fulfilled the female function allotted to her by a patriarchal society. The boy she brings into the world is Hareton. In her essay “Looking Oppositely: Emily Bronte’s Bible of Hell”, Gilbert suggests that Bronte has timed two events together – Catherine’s separation from Heathcliff marks her decline, and the birth of Hareton reasserts the old patriarchal line.

Catherine’s desire to escape finds its fulfillment in her decision to marry Edgar, which is however a social and conventional choice, conforming to the Victorian tradition of a girl marrying into a family of her father’s choice, Hindley had always haboured a hope, that Catherine would honour the family, by an alliance with the Lintons. Nelly also congratulates her- “you will escape from a disorderly comfortless home to a wealthy respectable one” (WH 61). Driven from the Heights to the Grange by her brother’s
marriage, held fast to reason, education and decorum she has to marry Edgar because there was no one else to marry and a 'lady' must marry. Juliet Mitchell remarks “Edgar provides only an illusion of complementarity”(429). Catherine’s declaration of love for Edgar is a bitter parody of a genteel romantic declaration, and shows how effective her education has been in indoctrinating her with romanticism deemed suitable for ladies of that period – that swooning feminity that identified with the charisma of fathers/ husbands / lovers. *Wuthering Heights* may be seen as constituting a kind of feminine protest. Unlike her sisters, Emily is not direct in her protest but the novel suggests her own desire to transcend the socialized boundaries of a woman’s novel, with its habitual stress on engagement or marriage being the most desirable of conclusions. Contrary to Charlotte, the parts assigned to men in Emily and Anne’s novels were secondary roles, subservient to the leading female roles. Nourished on the sheer romance of Scott’s novels, Emily found the prototype of her ideal woman in the heroines of the former and recognized in them kindred spirits, parallel figures to her own in their fight for existence. Their adventurous destinies, that placed them at the heart of some desperate action, were the very compensations Emily’s ardent nature craved to overcome.

Edgar and Catherine’s marriage is one of convenience. Motivated by ulterior considerations it brings misery to both of them. Catherine argues, “If Heathcliff and I married we should be beggars? Whereas if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise and place him out of my brother’s power” (WH 63). According to Terry Eagleton, Catherine like Lucy Snowe of *Villette*, tries to lead two lives and hopes to square authenticity with social convention – “running in harness an ontological commitment to Heathcliff with a phenomenal relation to Linton”(119). According to Patricia Meyer Spacks, Catherine confronts:
The universal problem of the young: to discover and to assert the self. Unwilling to accept the dictum that girls must understand their place, they feel it necessary to find their place. For Catherine in the nineteenth century, the nation of ‘place’ must be psychic … she won’t just dwindle into a wife but insists on preserving her specialness by maintaining her commitment to Heathcliff (a commitment to her untamed self) while nominally sustaining the marriage bond. (149)

Catherine tells Nelly that Heathcliff would remain as much to her, as he always has been. The plight of Catherine is presented as a unique personal history, a method of discussing what being a woman means and tragedy of being caught between socially incompatible cultures. Emily Bronte intended to create a coherent, deeply responsible novel, preoccupied with childhood and family. Marriage to Edgar locks Catherine into a social system that denies her the autonomy she is searching for, and she breaks up into two parts – the rebel Catherine fathered in Wuthering Heights, and the new, more docile and acceptable fathered by Thrushcross Grange. She finds herself imprisoned in confined spaces: the house, her room and finally “this shattered prison” (WH 124), her body from which she longs to escape. The domestic space, which was once a refuge, is stripped off its emotional trappings. Sandra Gilbert in her essay “Looking Oppositely: Emily Bronte’s Bible of Hell”, points out that the distorted body that Catherine sees on the mirror is analogous to the distorted body of a woman in confinement –“Birth after all is the ultimate fragmentation that the self can undergo just as confinement is for the woman the ultimate pun on imprisonment”(149). This distorted image in the mirror can be associated with a struggle for control, a sense of identity and competence in a patriarchal society.
Stevie Davies in her study “Three distinct and unconnected tales: The Professor, Agnes Grey and Wuthering Heights” remarks that Catherine’s story is one of “exogamy, change of name, movement away from origins, the normal pattern for women but a norm her nature cannot endure”(94). She finds the comfort of Thrushcross Grange stifling and longs to undo this change in her life – “I am tried, tired of being enclosed here. I’m wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there” (WH 124). Catherine longs now to return, not to the reality of her child hood home, but to the dream place of fulfillment where she enjoyed undisturbed union with Heathcliff. In her delirium Catherine tears at her pillow and pulls out feathers which symbolizes “a tug of war over truth – whether to collude with society’s hypocrisy or to face the terror of what it conceals”. (Marsh, 30). The return of Heathcliff is a feverish infection, which leads to her decline and finally her death.

Catherine occupies a state of feminist liberty skin to Blake’s Hell: her power is exercised through her instrument Heathcliff who is simply an extension of her female will. Her history is that of an inverted ‘fall’ into patriarchal society symbolized by Edgar Linton and Thrushcross Grange, an environment in which she cannot survive. Her daughter finally makes her peace with patriarchy, and we are left with a mythical memory of feminine freedom and power. (Holderness 86)

Like the heroines of Scott’s novels she become neurotic and dies because of a wrong marriage, sacrificing real happiness to a false idea of gentility. Her story can thus be considered as Emily’s commentary on the familial positioning of female selfhood, which for Catherine proves ultimately destructive.
Similarly the story of Isabella Linton focuses on the lot of the female as a choice between degrees and varieties of imprisonment, as Isabelle flees the stifling confinement of the genteel household for a more brutal domestic incarceration at the Heights, a stronghold of male violence. Introduced as Edgar’s sister, Catherine’s sister-in-law Heathcliff’s wife and Linton’s mother, Isabella is a parallel to Catherine but whereas Catherine’s fall is destined and unconventional. Isabella’s is conventional and willful. She patently chooses her own fate, by refusing to listen to Catherine, who warns her against Heathcliff—“He is not a rough diamond … he’s a fierce pitiless wolfish man” (WH 80). When Heathcliff becomes aware of her feelings, he takes undue advantage, using her as a weapon for revenge. He marries her without any emotional bond and often looks at her as one would do “at a strange repulsive animal, a centipede from the Indies” (WH 82). After the marriage, Isabella finds it hard to reconcile to the fact that Heathcliff hates her. Emily Bronte here, points out the sheer folly of sheltering young girls from harsh realities that govern life. Isabella symbolizes the stereotypical young lady patriarchal education is designed to produce. She is disillusioned when her romantic notion of marriage shatters and regrets exchanging her identity from Isabella Linton to Isabella Heathcliff. She cannot decide whether she has married a man or a devil. Their marriage is a hideous parody of the marriage between Catherine and Edgar, and it damages every member of her family. Once she is within his legal power, Heathcliff subjects her to the brutalizing process of ill treatment, injustice oppression and denial of affection. Susan Meyer in her book *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women’s Fiction* argues:

In *Wuthering Heights*, Bronte makes an extended critique of British imperialism. She explores the nature of forces external to, subordinated to, marginalized by or excluded British social order. Like Charlotte, Emily invokes a metaphorical link between white
women and people of non-white races as she explores the energies of resistance to the existing social structure. In *Wuthering Heights* these energies have universal resonance—they suggest the external, untamable, energies that forever threaten the cozy domestic internal. (153)

Tormenting Isabella, gave Heathcliff immense pleasure—"I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails" (WH 118). Isabella longs to break free and unlike Catherine who allows her imprisonment to overcome her, Isabella actively continues to escape from this tormented life. She vows to smash her ‘wedding band’ a symbol of her marital status and imprisonment. But she also realizes that her security was at stake even in Thrushcross Grange her home. So like Helen of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* she decides to live in hiding and raise her child by herself. This radical escape was a rude shock to the Victorian readers as it went against the idea of ‘women’s sphere’ i.e. the home and family. Unlike Helen Huntingdon, Isabella however gains a victory over her relative identity as Heathcliff’s wife. She manages to bring up her child without the interference of Heathcliff. She is removed from the story and we hear only of her death towards the end of the story. Emily Bronte here seems to take the easy way out. This removal of Isabella is an erasure to avoid complications in the story.

Heathcliff her husband is an indirect symbol of the aggressive industrial bourgeoisie of Emily Bronte’s time. Kate Flint in her study “The Return of the Repressed: Passion and Violence in *Wuthering Heights*” comments that “he may be seen as a self-made man with power to disrupt established family life and traditions.”(73). It is money alone that empowers him to infiltrate the timeless institutions to serve his own interest. Gaining possession of both houses, Heathcliff initiates a new form of tyranny that undoes all former systems of kinship and erases boundaries between class as well as family lives.
Patrick Bratlingar in his essay “Race and the Victorian novel”, remarks, that race and empire were major in the juvenile fantasy world constructed by the Bronte sisters and their brother Branwell. “The gender positioning of British women writers requires them to negotiate an association with inferior races.” (Bratlinger 159). In *Wuthering Heights* analogies between gender, class, race are evident in the story of this ‘gypsy brat’ whose unclear dark racial identity is linked to his untamable passions and to the slavery like oppression he experiences in the Earnshaw family. In the beginning Heathcliff is a nameless man, whom no young woman can marry but he is determined to found a dynasty of his own and assert his power – “I want the triumph of seeing my descendents fairly lord of their estates” (WH, 160). He makes an individual rise enacting in a vengeful form the individual rags to riches plot. Susan Meyer argues that:

> Heathcliff starts off in the novel as a metaphoric vehicle for the oppression of women – Catherine in particular, but as the novel goes on ... Bronte unleashes Heathcliff’s energies of social resistance and that resistance takes the form of the worst nightmare of imperialistic power: reverse colonization. As Heathcliff takes his revenge on an oppressive British society, he himself becomes a subjugator of women. (107)

Through the ownership of marriage he secures ownership of property, as marriage is the quickest way to usurp a women’s position by claiming her inherited property. Emily Bronte was well aware of the laws affecting women in 1800 and the history of Catherine II asserts this. Although spirited as a young woman she chafes against the bonds of gentility and the sheltered environment of the Grange. Catherine II reassesses her former prison as a shelter after she is forced to marry Linton Heathcliff. She is a prisoner by matrimonial laws, and her father-in-law’s (Heathcliff’s) financial power. In
her transition from dependent daughter to wife, she ceases to be the legal property of her father and has become the property of her husband. When she is widowed and orphaned she comes under the legal control of her father-in-law. This legal control over women plays an important part in the novel’s plot. When Catherine II runs away from the Heights to be with her dying father, Heathcliff comments:

No more runnings away? Where would you go? I’m come to fetch you home and I hope you’ll be a dutiful daughter, and not encourage my son to further disobedience. I was embarrassed how to punish him, when I discovered his part in the business.

(WH 217)

_Wuthering Heights_ begins with Catherine Earnshaw and ends in a full circle with younger Catherine Earnshaw. The second Catherine “differs in being a culture’s child, a born lady.” (Bersani 221-22). She is profoundly dutiful as a daughter, and unlike her mother who runs away from her family, she runs back to her father. Sandra Gilbert remarks that “Where her mother was a heedless wild child, Catherine II promises to become an ideal Victorian woman, all of whose virtues are in some sense associated with daughterhood, wifehood and motherhood”(Gilbert 154). Catherine II conforms to the Victorian ideal and is also well versed in lessons of patriarchal Christianity. She is willing to forgive Heathcliff and Linton — “I know [Linton] has a bad nature ... he’s your son. But I’m glad I’ve a better to forgive it.” (WH 218) Emily Bronte ultimately authorizes Catherine’s longing to return to her childhood love by proxy. Catherine II is about to return to the Grange as Hareton’s wife. For her, fraternal love and married love cohabit; she doesn’t have to choose between the two. “Emily Bronte dividing her focus between the two young women recognizes the girl’s heroism of acceptance counterpoising her mother’s heroism of defiance”(Spacks 149). By marrying her brother figure, and
returning home she fulfils the desires of her mother and also manages the domestic subversions that her mother and aunt were not able to negotiate. She evades the irreversible location that marriage typically required of a wife. "She deliberately humbles herself with Hareton as a first step towards adulthood, learns to share and anticipate a shared future" (Spacks 142). Her presumably happy marriage to Hareton whom she originally regards as her social inferior in contrast to the superficially attractive Linton reminds one of how Catherine should have behaved towards Edgar and Heathcliff.

"Cathy and Hareton are legitimate final representations of a closely knit family tree" (Winnifrith 161). The symbolic incest between Catherine and Heathcliff is not only actualized by Cathy and Hareton but also licensed, since Hareton in Cathy's cousin. They are bound by blood ties but spared the taboo of an incestuous bond. There were plenty of marriages conducted between cousins in the Victorian society and these marriages in *Wuthering Heights* probably draws symmetrical patterns in the family tree of the Brontes.

*Wuthering Heights* is a nineteenth century novel that educates the heart through the institution of the family. It perceives a spiritual home. Catherine II and Hareton represent a compromise between ultimate possession and unbounded freedom, redefining the excesses of Catherine and Heathcliff into a viable domestic relationship. It suggests a prospect of continuity, wherein one can imagine a full family stemming from the union – a fantasy opposed to the others pairs in the novel. Victorian pieties are satisfied at last. The young woman identifies her place under the control of affection rather than passion. Both Catherine II and Hareton overcome the obstacles of a restrictive society, where values both social and co-active, are renewed within the bosom of the family. The novel ends in the protective domestic bliss of the ideal nuclear family that restitutes family fortunes and restores disruptive stability. Catherine's inheritance is about to come back to her and Hareton's patrimony is returned via the female line. Like Jane Eyre's legacy,
Catherine II property equalizes the balance of power between members of the family. Lyn Pykett in her book *Emily Bronte (1989)* comments that:

In its transition from patriarchal tyranny, masculine competition, domestic imprisonment to the remised companionate marriage of Catherine II and Hareton, *Wuthering Heights*, both participates and engages with the feminization of literature noted by Nancy Armstrong and Jane Spencer. (177)

Emily Bronte investigates changing patterns of fiction and the emergence of new forms of the family. She traces the process by which the modern family (Hareton and Catherine II) replaces the loosely related former household. The cultivation of the garden symbolizes Catherine II’s civilizing influence importing the culture and softening the wilderness of the house. The garden is a symbol of Heathcliff’s end of revenge, because it transforms the Heights into a domain of feminine values, a haven of peace and tranquility to which man retires from a busy and hectic competitive world, to cultivate a domestic ideal. *Wuthering Heights* at the same time also traces the emergence of the modern family. The narrative disruptions, the dislocation of chronology, Bronte’s historical displacement of her story, all combine to produce a novel that traces changing patterns of new forms of family. Tom Winnifrith, sees the old world yielding to the new in contrast to Terry Eagleton who reads the conclusion as the victory of tradition over innovation. The critical contention reflects the real ambiguity in the novel. Out of the pieces of earlier fiction comes a new kind of narrative art where value no longer resides in the claims of the individual, but rather in the reconstitution of the family. Value is reinvested in traditions that bind family and class. As in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* we return to the world of normality, as Hareton and Cathy return to Thruscross Grange, and some version of domestic bliss, that was the Victorian ideal. Patriarchal history is redefined renovated,
restored and as Sandra Gilbert comments “nineteenth century can truly begin with tea-parties, governess and parsonages” (156). The novel concludes with the restoration of the lawful master and the ancient stock, in Hareton Earnshaw, who now assumes control of both Heights and the Grange. This indicates a reassertion of a world of dominant patriarchy but with a less-rebellious relative female in Catherine II. The final journey represents a compromise between ultimate possession and unbounded freedom, in a relationship that in enabling and co-operative rather than repressive and restrictive giving shape to a viable domestic relationship. Emily’s challenge against patriarchal authority is continued by her elder sister Charlotte, who also uses the theme of the family to examine the situation of women in a patriarchal society. Emily inverts her sister’s cherished pupil-teacher relationship. “The rules of her game are the same, but the man must accept the subordinate role and the women becomes the regulator.” (Wilson 126) Unlike Emily’s heroines who make a compromise with patriarchy Charlotte’s heroines try to find an identity outside the enclosed family boundary, forming the way for an untraditional concept of ‘family’.
Works Cited


