



Research Paper

Neurotic Heights

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ABSTRACT: According to psychoanalytic theory Neurosis should be considered as a reaction to a frustration or a series of frustrating experiences in an individual's life. Neurotic traits can act as a substitute for missing satisfaction or discontentment. Usually a person naturally learns to cope up with the conflicts exist in society and nature. But a neurotic person finds it hard to adjust with them. In neurotic condition the basic conflict is between the unconscious pleasure seeking instincts and the reality-conscious self. This intense inner conflict is accompanied by emotional tension, manifested through neurotic symptoms. People who are unable to solve the conflicting situations within themselves repress or remove them from their consciousness. Apparently forgotten but they remain dormant within the deeper unconscious layers of the mind and exerts active pressure from within, influencing the persons thinking in many ways, distorting the psychological development of the individual. They manifested as different neurotic traits and behaviour in their developed personality. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is a unique literary creation with its peculiar setting and characterization. The passionate love and revenge of the characters leading to their doomed end gave much scope for critical and character analysis. It depicts how a generation of the Earnshaw family is traumatized by apparent neurosis and ended in self destruction and how the later generation cautiously civilize themselves to a much controllable and less passionate behaviour.

KEY WORDS: Abnormality, Consciousness, Neurosis, Psyche, Trauma, ..

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Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is a much discussed Victorian novel. Though Victorian in canon it is a romantic and gothic depiction of passionate love and demonic revenge. Here the artistically confusing and un-compromising story line probes into the inconsistent and abnormal human nature. The reader will certainly be surprised at the intensity of emotions to which human beings are capable of. The Victorian novelists like Hardy, Dickens, Henry James, even the woman novelists like George Eliot and Jane Austen were fascinated by the social life of the characters of middle class and upper middle class society. Emily Bronte's one and only novel is unique in its depiction of the psychological and emotional lives of her characters of the dark moorlands of Yorkshire. Emily stood as a lonely figure as in the words of Miriam Allot "Emily Jane Bronte came into the world in order to write her one remarkable book and then to die" (Miriam Allot 13). *Wuthering Heights* presents a traumatic world. Characters are in-sociable beings, one way or the other distorted personalities.

Neurosis is an emotional maladjustment to reality, arising from some unconscious inner conflicts and manifested by a variety of mental, emotional, physical and behavioural patterns. 'neurosis' is a word coined by the Scottish doctor William Cullen in 1769. It was derived from the Greek word 'neuron' (nerve), with suffix '-osis' (diseased or abnormal condition). However the term was influentially defined by and extensively used by the nineteenth century psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Carl S Jung. Now neurosis is a common term in contemporary theoretic writing, psychology and philosophy.

As an illness neurosis includes several disorders of mind or of emotions such as intense nervousness, neurasthenia, anxiety, hysteria, long lasting and recurring depressions, perversions and emotional instability. As a whole neurosis is a distorted attitude towards life, an exaggerated and unhealthy reaction to inner conflicts as well as external life situations. It is very interesting that there is no clear cut demarcation between normality and abnormality. A neurotic individual differs from the normal only in that his reactions are comparatively tensed, exaggerated and often long lasting and disturbing. Emotions and their effects are experienced by every individual, but for a person with neurotic traits the emotions have deeper effects. Intense and deeper fluctuations in their psyche effect excessive damage to their individual personality resulting to a distorted social behaviour and secluded individuality. Some psychologists even regard the normality as a lower stage of human evolution

compared to the neurotic. According to them normality is a stage of human evolution compared to the neurotic. According to them normality is a stage closer to animals. A neurotic person conscious about the absurd and troubled world, finds it hard to cope with it, while the so called normal being remains happy and contented with the troubled world and its false pretensions and absurd values.

Wuthering Heights is a novel rich for different interpretations. Critics approached it with different stand points and they present incompatible psycho-social, linguistic views. Still it remains as the most fascinating and impenetrable literary creation in world literature. The characters, setting, and the sophisticated style of narration open new vistas of interpretation. From new-historic point of view a literary work and its significance can be traced back to the biography of the author and the socio-political environment at the time of production. Biographical details of Bronte sisters are much influential in the analysis of their novels, especially of Emily who still remains as a mysterious and unique figure in literature. She was a psychologically deprived child; the daughter of an Irish clergy man and a meek Cornish woman, in a family of four sisters and a brother living in Haworth, in an alienated grim, grey parsonage near the churchyard. Emily's parents were Evangelical Methodist living in stern self repression. Grim and secluded physical and social environment death of her mother at the early childhood and the death of two sisters, together with the ill-treatment and suffering at the boarding school must have a baneful effect in the individual development and character formation of Emily. The medieval Gothic childhood inventions of Gondal and Angrian tales show how the children of Bronte family sheltered in romantic mysteries and how much they were displaced from the real. In her womanhood too Emily stood as the most mysterious solitude wanderer in the Haworth moors. Writing was a hidden fascination for her, the innate mystery transverse in paper. Her characters also remain mysterious in their eccentric or neurotic behaviour while the setting is following the same tumultuous pattern heading towards normality.

Wuthering Heights is the narrative saga of Earnshaw family living at the tempestuous heights and Heathcliff, an orphan Gipsy child who represents the peak of passions. The Earnshaw children Hindley and Cathy were insouciant, arrogant, and cruel in their early ages as it is depicted. Psychologically imbalanced growth is well traced in the character formation of these children. Mr. Earnshaw brought Heathcliff as a gift to Cathy, a dirty rugged black haired Gipsy child speaking a gibberish language. Cathy and Hindley behave revengeful to the usurper of their father's affection. Later Cathy befriends Heathcliff but Hindley turned more and more revengeful towards him. Hindley never missed any opportunity to ill-treat him. Mrs. Earnshaw also shows dislike to the boy. The socially rejected atmosphere in the Earnshaw family turned him to a hostile towards the society. He never needs any love or support from anyone outside his intense love and passion in his later life. He feels himself as a rejected individual both actively and passively, and was rejected. Bullying, teasing and ridiculing turned him an outwardly insensitive individual, but highly sensitive and revengeful inside. He grew up determined and ungrateful to everyone, obstinate and steadfast in his revenge, and himself pave way for his tragedy.

After his father's death Hindley degraded Heathcliff to a mere farm labourer, banished from household, cut off his lessons. Physical exercise hardened his body and also his mind. This brought about terrible effects in his character, estranged him socially, and degraded him morally. His manners turned morose and attire shabby. Unsophisticated behaviour and abusive language were his self-defence mechanism. All shows his degradation mentally socially and spiritually. The psychologically distorted Heathcliff later suffers from romantic rejection when he has separated from Cathy. Unrequited love caused frustration, intense anger, and resignation and despondence. The sense of desolation heightened as Cathy has rejected him because of her fear of losing social respectability. His social antagonism increased in this acute sense of shame and indignation. He left *Wuthering Heights* and returned after a few years only to quench his thirst for revenge. He ruined Hindley and took control over Hareton, only to make him an image of himself. He as a crooked villain married Edger's Sister Isabella, only to persecute her and trapped Cathy's daughter by marrying her to his dying son and made her a widow. He is like a monster trapping the two youngsters one Hareton the other Catherine the daughter. He behaves cruelly and antagonistically to Lockwood his ward shows no intention to speak to him, and when attacked by dogs he was thrilled at the spectacle as he enjoyed Hindley's suffering and of Hareton.

Heathcliff is a sadomasochistic character, finds enjoyment and thrill in hurting somebody and in being hurt. He has dashed his head against the tree trunk at the night of Cathy's death until it bleeds. He scolds Nelly and attempts to sneer her. He cried with frightful vehemence and stamped his foot, grows in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion, wishing for Cathy's ghost to haunt him, muttering incoherent words. The same is his state when in Lockwood's room he believed that he was a defeated man. He craves for death after he had visited by Cathy's ghost. From there his character changed, a delirious man seeing his death was a union with Cathy. He is neurotic always muttering troubled things to himself without food he stood there staring at something unseeing and dies in the same neurotic state.

Catherine Earnshaw, the heroine of the story, is the equivalent counterpart for the revengeful Heathcliff. She was a naughty child, naughtier than the other children of her age. Self willed, capricious and brave "Her spirits are always at high watermark, her tongue always going, singing, laughing, and ploughing everybody who would not do the same" (Bronte 45), egotistical and vain, capable of deepest emotional

attachments who finds a kindred spirit in the deprived and wild Heathcliff, primitive and extremely passionate, of stormy and uncontrollable creatures. They love and hate with an intensity which is not commonly found.

Like Heathcliff, Cathy is also more or less a neglected child in the Earnshaw household. He assumed religiosity Mr Earnshaw doesn't like her wayward behaviour. He is more concerned with the fatherless child Heathcliff than her own children. The others in the household pampered Hindly as he is the male child. Even servants hated her because of her headstrong and masterly behaviour. As she grew up to womanhood in the company of Heathcliff her wild and sadistic instincts also grew up. They spent hours together in the wild moors. They visit Threshgoss Grage in the tempestuous night. When she was hardly six she chose a whip as a present from her father. All this shows her wild and wilful nature. Her distorted psyche remains the same in spite of Linton's attempts to reform her.

During Edger's visit to Wuthering Heights she behaves in a sadistic and neurotic way to Nelly. Cathy pinched Nelly and snatched the cloth from her hand, shouted to justify herself with her hands tingling her ears red with rage and her whole complexion in a blaze. She stamped her foot and slapped Nelly. Her uncontrollable rage then stormed towards little Hareton and then to Edger, who had tried to prevent her "she never had power to conceal her passion"(Bronte 73)Under the fit of temper she is hardly better than a mad woman. The same violent passion is revealed by her at the night of Heathcliff's departure. This sadistic and uncontrollable temperamental affinity prompts her to regard herself as inseparably united with Heathcliff. After her father's death Hindly left her to Joseph, the irritating male servant who behaved cruelly towards her, checked her little joys and liberties. She lived in the house like an imprisoned princess guarded by evil spirits. When Hindley turned to a heavy drunkard the Earnshaw family is truly ignored by the society. Cathy's need for love, care, attention remained unfulfilled. She lived in a stifling atmosphere without opportunities to grow out of herself.

Cathy's marriage with Edgar is only a marriage of convenience, for the sake of social acceptability. Her heart is torn between Edgar and Heathcliff. She cannot reject Heathcliff as he is his soulmate. Catherine was masochistic and wished to be ill and die as she can't live without her soul mate. In her delirium she discarded food, dashed her head against the arm of sofa as Heathcliff dashed his head against the tree trunk. She grinds her teeth as if she would crush them to splinters. She behaved in an abnormal manner, sees visions and her thoughts are distorted "the full stream of her mind has turned back towards the past. The present save as a dimension of pain, possesses no reality for her. The future holds only a sense of death."(Muriel Spark, Derek Stanford 248).She wished to be a child again, the free, wild and savage girl, innocent and primitive. She completely deprived of the realities around her, wishes her soul to be free from her aching body and from the fretful life. She realized that an intense masochistic dissolution, her tortured death is the only way for it.

Like Cathy, Hindly also shows distortions in his personality. He is cruel and merciless. He hated Heathcliff and never spares an opportunity of thrashing or beating him whenever he had a chance. He was revengeful to Heathcliff because he believes that Heathcliff because he believes that Heathcliff takes away the love and affection of his father and makes him an outsider in his own house. His mother's death intensifies the situation. Mr Earnshaw hated Hindley's heartless behaviour to Heathcliff. He sent Hindley to university mainly to avoid their clashes. The deprived feeling in him turned out to be cruel vengeance after his father's death. To a great extent He is responsible to make Heathcliff an inhuman creature.

He neglected his duties as a son, a brother, a husband and a father. His invalid wife's death is incomprehensible to him. He considered it as a divine injustice to him and tried to avenge himself on God. Absence of faith deprived him of any consolation that will help him to face the catastrophe. He persecuted and destroyed himself in wine and gambling. Fully drunk, he created riotous scenes in the house. Servants left Wuthering Heights and he never spared Hareton from his cruelties. "Hareton was impressed with a wholesome terror at encountering either his wild beast's fondness or his madman's age ; for in one he ran a chance of being flung into the fire or dashed against the wall"(Bronte 75)

The main reason for Hindley's neurotic retreat from life is his self-centredness. He is incapable of loving anyone other than himself and his wife whom he considered as part of her own self. The remaining world is meaningless to him. This attitude leads to his destruction. He had a neurotic inability to find consolation in what God left for him. He wishes to avenge God, whom he considered as responsible for his misery. Unable to accept the hardships of life he tries to escape from it with the momentary pleasure of drinking and gambling. To hasten his ruin Heathcliff came there with his revengeful intention to kill him. Hindley lead a stupid life and meets an equally stupid end like a madman.

In spite of the neurotic oddities of the major characters we can attribute some of the odd characteristics of minor characters in Wuthering Heights such as Mr Earnshaw, Joseph and even Lockwood to neurotic abnormality, even though the reader is incapable of tracing them to their early life, the prosperous farmer in Wuthering heights is a philanthropist who brings a Gipsy child to his house and loved him more than his own children. He even began to hate his motherless children for the fatherless orphan, considered his wayward children are too cruel to be pampered. As his health began to fail he confined himself to the chimney corner and grew grievously irritable, suspects everyone and everything happens in the household as a challenge to his authority. Heathcliff was his weak point. Joseph, the old servant too gained great influence on him .He inflict in

him the idea that his wayward children especially Cathy were devil incarnates and troubled him by speaking the need of curbing her freedom.

Joseph, the old male servant of Wuthering Heights is also a mysterious character. He assumed religiosity and had a knack for sermons and pious discourses. He is odd and at times comic. Attends church services and reads Bible every day. But in spite of all these he is devoid of a good heart. He is self-righteous hypocrite like an old psychotic he flung curses on his others and tyrannical religious rules over Cathy and Heathcliff. He has an apparent grudge towards intruders in Wuthering Heights. He denied to open the door for Lockwood when he was attacked by Heathcliff's hounds. He is a grumbling selfish old neurotic hope for a better life in the other world making this world the most uncomfortable.

Apart from Mr Earnshaw and Joseph, Lockwood, the primary narrator of the novel also shows some abnormal and neurotic traits. He is of a peculiar character of a peculiar character ,failed in his attempt to make a family as he is there, to gain his spirits after a great depression from romantic rejection' insociable and loveless to an extend . During his visit to Wuthering Height he provokes Heathcliff, and ventured for walk in the moors in worse climate. His dreams at that night revealed his troubled consciousness. He finds it difficult to maintain his mental equilibrium .in the two narrators Lockwood stood for abnormality and Nelly represents normality

Wuthering Heights is a novel of actual but unnatural combination of normality and abnormality. The new generation in Wuthering Heights, Catherine Linton and Hareton Earnshaw are portrayed as persons of adequate control over their passions and emotions while previous generation were tempestuous like a **whirl wind**. The novel is a depiction of progress from normality to abnormality, a transition from neurotic tribulation to neurotic equilibrium.

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