

“All human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil”
– Connections between Person and Place in *Wuthering Heights*

“The world of the novel is divided into two rival camps of Edgar and Heathcliff,
Thrushcross Grange Wuthering Heights”
– RC McKibben

“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!”
– Emily Bronte

Emily Bronte’s decision to title her work *Wuthering Heights* denotes deliberate authorial intent to centre [the novel](#) on the notion of place. She chose to use a location associated with trepidation in the novel as the title, as opposed to another place or the name of a person—such as *Jane Eyre* or *Agnes Grey*. This focus on place is further emphasized through Bronte’s use of locations which were emotionally and geographically close to her to develop the settings in her novel. As a result, [setting](#) plays a large role in developing the themes [and](#) motifs of the novel, [and particularly influences](#) the development of the characters. The notion of place in *Wuthering Heights* is advanced by the various elements such as landscape, weather, and architecture [of the primary estates \(Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange\)](#), especially of the houses. According to Weekes-Kinhead, “it may be that the metaphor of the ‘house’ (which can be an expression of self, or an expression of relationship, or something enduring beyond both) will help us to establish the different architectures of the fiction” (78). Analyzing the novel in terms of Weekes-Kinhead’s definition of the metaphor of the house, we see the house, and by extension the other elements of place, as an expression of self, relationship, “or something enduring beyond both.” Thus, the contrasting depiction of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, including their structures and landscapes, are matched with the opposition of the characters residing in these places; Emily Bronte uses the characterization of place to develop the identities of Heathcliff, Catherine, Hareton, Linton, and the young Catherine, [as well as](#) to emphasize the contrasts between the Heights and the Grange and their inhabitants.

In the Editor's Preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Bronte, [the sister of Emily](#), sets the stage for the early reception of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange. She specifies that these two locations are situated in "the wild moors of the North of England" and "the outlying hills and hamlets in the West Riding of Yorkshire" (Bronte 440). Emily Bronte's meticulous observations and her love of the moors elevate her illustrations of these locations from simple places to much more significant descriptions that [relate](#) her emotional connection [with the location to](#) the natural elements, weather, and her impressions.

These settings are amalgamations of a variety of landscapes, adjusted to fit Bronte's textual needs. According to Christopher Heywood, "A northern Pennine landscape from the Yorkshire Dales emerges in the first half of *Wuthering Heights*, overlaid in the second half with a moorland of southern Pennine type" ("Pennine" 188). This double landscape is a source of confusion for many readers and critics; however, it emphasizes the stark differences between the Heights and the Grange, as well as the characters of the older Catherine's generation and the younger Catherine's generation. Heywood comments on the contrasts between these two locations: "Emily used the limestone Dales as a setting for betrayal and death, and the moorland as a setting for progress towards regeneration" ("Pennine" 191). These contrasting geographies in *Wuthering Heights* catalyse the rivalry, not only between the Heights and the Grange, but between the characters inhabiting these locations.

Bronte's subjective experience informs much of the development and characterisation of the Heights and the Grange. She supplements her subjective experiences and observations by including the experiences of other writers and travellers made popular by the Grand Tour in England. The proliferation of the Grand Tour, [in which](#) young, aristocratic gentlemen originally travelled the globe, [caused such youths to realize the beauty of their own homeland, and](#) resulted in a significant increase in travel literature detailing the less-visited areas of Britain. Godfrey mentions several potential sources for Bronte's famous landscapes: "Heywood lists such texts as J. Hutton's 1780 *Tour to the Caves*, Thomas West's 1784 *Guide to the Lakes*, and Frederic Montagu's 1838 *Gleanings in*

Craven as some of the ‘Yorkshire topographical and travel literature’ that Emily Bronte was likely to have read” (Godfrey 1-2). This influence of travel literature is further reinforced in Charlotte Bronte’s *Preface*; Godfrey explains that “in choosing to advertise her sister’s text in terms of its cultural and geographical alienness, she frames *Wuthering Heights* as a work which can take ordinary readers on a wild and strange tour of new landscapes, people, and behaviours” (1). She connects this notion of geographic alienation to tourism, and states that “Charlotte Bronte sought to draw on contemporary appeal of ‘armchair tourism’ among the reading public” (Godfrey 1). Thus, the settings that Emily depicts are unarguably the result of various primary sources in addition her own observations.

In *Chronicles and Stories of the Craven Dales* by J.H. Dixon, we see a contemporary connection between the landscape of Craven, which contains the West Riding of Yorkshire, and Emily Bronte’s landscape in *Wuthering Heights*:

But there are three other writers in whose romances we have most unmistakeable sketches of Craven scenery and character, viz.: Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; for so the three talented members of the Bronte family chose to call themselves. Their melancholy history is well known through the biographical memoir from the pen of the late Mrs. Gaskell. Let the reader turn to “*Wuthering Heights*,” and if he know anything of Craven or its scenery, he will find in that wonderful novel some truly graphic sketching. Long before we knew anything of the author, we said “This is Craven!” and we knew where to find the bleak and barren moorland solitudes, where the misanthropic hero had his crazy dwelling. Perhaps, we could have pointed out the misanthrope himself. (18)

Though the connection between the landscape and the characters might be entirely of Bronte’s creation, the landscape themselves are not. The intricate detail Bronte employs in *Wuthering Heights* reflects how the structure of the novel itself complements the detail of the landscapes. The intense detail with which Bronte textually illustrates the landscapes also manifests itself in her close attention to the lineage and familial structure within the novel. Sanger notes:

The most obvious thing about the structure of the story is the symmetry of the pedigree. Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw at *Wuthering Heights* and Mr. and Mrs. Linton at *Thruscross Grange* each have one son and one daughter. Mr. Linton’s son marries Mr. Earnshaw’s daughter, and their only child Catherine marries successively her two cousins—Mr. Linton’s grandson and Mr. Earnshaw’s grandsons (9).

This symmetry between the families [aids the audience in following](#) the movements of characters between the Heights and the Grange; this mobility offsets the balance of characters in these two places as created by the [rigid](#) and symmetrical familial structure, which is eventually reconciled by a combining of person and place through marriage.

Though the differences between the Heights and the Grange are obvious through their individual influences, these differences are also made clear within the text, both by the inhabitants and the settings. The purpose of the place itself is important to keep in mind when talking about the Heights; “The Heights is a working farmhouse, a place where laundry is washed, water pumped, and pigeons cultivated” (Gezari 55). Since the place is so focused on work, the inhabitants reflect this purpose. On the other hand, the Grange is more connected to societal and societal expectations; its purpose is more focused on beauty and societal perceptions. This is evident when Edgar and Isabella fight over the dog for its purpose as a pet as opposed to as a hunting dog, as it would be in the Heights, and then ultimately both become tired of the dog. Thus, the Grange is more focused on materialism and societal perceptions.

Bronte chose the [names](#) Wuthering Heights and Thruscross Grange for her two primary settings [for](#) paying close attention to the connotations and denotations associated with the specific terms in each location name. For example, “the *OED* treats ‘wuthering’ as variant of ‘withering,’ and adjective derived from the Scottish and dialect verb ‘wither’: ‘to move with force or impetus, to rush; to make a rushing sound, to whizz, to bluster or rage, as the wind’” (Gezari 43). Contrastingly, the name Thruscross Grange is more serene and delightful in comparison to the rigidity of the name Wuthering Heights. According to the *OED*, thrush comes from the song thrush, a singing bird, showing a focus within the Grange on music and other entertainment, and a grange is a country house or the residence of a gentleman farmer, emphasizing the gentility of the Grange. This gentility is emphasized when Catherine returns to the Heights from her stay at the Grange and is illuminated through Gezari’s annotation of the text:

Ladies had personal maids. Nelly's suggestion that she is only "playing" this role takes in Catherine's new pretensions as well as the difference between the servant economies of the Heights and the Grange. Nelly performs the functions of nurse, housekeeper, and cook at the Heights; several different servants perform these functions at the Grange. (Gezari 107)

This contrast in **the roles of** servants further emphasizes the idea of purpose of place in that the servants of the Heights perform a greater number of roles; each individual has greater utility and a greater workload. On the other hand, the Grange is a seemingly easier life with fewer jobs. The distinction lies in the amount and difficulty of the labour required.

Difficulty and labour **in the estates are** correlated with the difficulty and harshness of the landscape. Thus, the connection to force, rage, and wind developed through the name "Wuthering Heights" is important in interpreting the characters in light of location. Lockwood expounds upon the definition of "wuthering" and offers that it is a "significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult of which its station is exposed, in stormy weather" (Bronte 43). The wind is **highlighted** during Lockwood's arrival at the Heights, and the force and rage of the wind are also channelled by Earnshaw and Heathcliff especially. Enid Duthie comments on this connection between the name Wuthering Heights and weather: "Wuthering Heights, as we are made to feel from the beginning, stands on the defensive against both weather, as its name suggests, and against all comers. It is both farm and fortress" (224).

This notion of the Heights as a fortress is supported by the presence of locks, doors, and other boundaries. Since the Heights is clearly isolated from civilization, the locks are not necessarily for keeping people out—the landscape and distance do that already. Instead, the locks and doors are often used to keep people in. For example, in the case of the young Catherine, who is kidnapped by Heathcliff and forced to marry Linton. Hence, the Heights functions simultaneously as a symbol of imprisonment and intense labour. These locative characterizations wholly inform the identities, attitudes, and actions of the inhabitants.

After both of the Earnshaw men die and Heathcliff becomes the owner of Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff and the Heights become one and the same, sharing similar characterisations

without any clear realisation of which entity first developed each quality. For example, Heathcliff loses Catherine to Edgar, and we see that “the atmosphere of the Heights is dominated by suffering, and the nature of this suffering is to propagate itself. One soul in torment can find relief only in the reproduction of its agony in those around it” (McKibben 35). This feeling in Heathcliff is the result of another characteristic of the Heights: “the language of love is not only antisocial, it is also impersonal. Now it is individual and loving beyond personality, beyond life, beyond death” (Weekes-Kinkead 77). It’s obvious from Catherine’s statement “I am Heathcliff” that their love extends beyond personality and life.

Catherine is the first character who tries to move from one landscape and one residence to the other, by marrying Edgar and going to live in Thrushcross Grange. This contrasting idea of love in the Grange that Catherine chooses Edgar for “is concerned with the power of love to fulfil the self, it is also concerned to bring loving relationship into harmony with the continuing social, moral, and religious order, still to some extent public” (Weekes-Kinkead 77). Based on Catherine’s reasons for marrying Edgar, which she shares with Nelly, it is obvious that this choice is founded primarily on the social benefits, despite her metaphysical connection to Heathcliff. These reasons are a result of this idea of love in the grange because:

Loving Edgar is love in the world of the Grange. It is love in a relationship where contact with that personality creates a pleasant and happy ambiance and behaviour is loving and lovable. . .It is love in a society too, where income and status also have a place in the quality of life (Weekes-Kinkead 86).

Emily Bronte also has more of a focus on presenting the landscape of Wuthering Heights than that of Thrushcross Grange, which might be an obvious skewedness related to the fact that one is the title landscape—similar to the focus of other novels on their title characters:

By contrast the reader has a much less clear impression of Thrushcross Grange, though it is obviously a far more imposing residence. It is the material luxury of the interior which fascinated Catherine and Heathcliff as children, when they gaze in from without, and this could belong to any country house of the period. There is, despite its affluence, a curious air of emptiness and defencelessness about the Grange (Duthie 224-225).

In addition to being the larger residence, Thrushcross Grange is the newer residence, showing that the Lintons come from newer money, whereas the Earnshaws have worked the Heights for three hundred years. The overall characteristics of the Grange are summed up effectively by McKibben:

The atmosphere of Thrushcross Grange is one of normalcy and convention; but since convention is merely an accepted method of simplifying reality, and since this simplification usually involves a modification or avoidance of the more unpleasant aspects of life, the Lintons, as they are portrayed by the outcast Heathcliff, exist in a polite and petty play-world (36).

The Grange is more focused on public opinion and conforming to societal expectations, which is most likely a result of its location closer to society as compared to the isolation of the Heights.

The seclusion and distance of the Heights creates a very different home and location of development for its inhabitants. Throughout the novel, Heathcliff is characterized through the dark imagery of the Heights, often with connections to being a gypsy or a beast. He's clearly not of this place, though he adapts its personality, but Bronte also entertains the idea that he is not of this Earth. Through the character of Heathcliff, and later through Linton, Bronte present a discourse on slavery, which is furthered through the general alien-ness which Charlotte presents in *Preface* and the characterisation of Heathcliff as an outsider:

From the very beginning of the novel, Heathcliff, the "gypsy boy", is constructed in a subtly racist discourse as belonging to filthy, wild-looking and dreadfully primitive class, which later makes Catherine dreadfully and bewilderingly unable to marry him though she is irretrievably in love with him. (Althubaiti 204)

This otherness is obvious from Nelly Dean's narration of this arrival where she calls him "a dirty, ragged, black-haired child" and "gypsy brat" (Bronte 87, 88). She also uses the pronoun "it" instead of "he" when referring to Heathcliff in her initial description (Bronte 87-88). She also proclaims that he "repeated over and over again, some gibberish," further focusing on his otherness (Bronte 88). Gezari points out in her annotation to this section that "Heathcliff's speech combines with his dark skin and black hair to mark an origin that has remained mysterious. . .he is racially different from the Earnshaws" (88). In other places throughout the novel, Heathcliff is referred to as this gypsy character. Furthermore, despite the relative darkness of the Earnshaws in relation to the Lintons,

most likely because the inhabitants of the Heights are accustomed to labouring outdoors, Heathcliff is described as being even darker; “and it is certainly true that Emily’s epic protagonists occupy the centre of the stage, and that Heathcliff is not a native of the moors but a towering figure whose shadow darkens them” (Duthie 225). In this sense, it’s uncertain whether Heathcliff’s personality influences the Heights or if the Heights influences Heathcliff’s personality. Perhaps person and place work in tandem to develop a singular identity.

In addition to this darkness represented by the Heights and potentially furthered by Heathcliff’s presence, Heathcliff is presented as a bestial character. After Catherine’s death, Bronte shows a comparison between him and a beast, most likely some form of dog or wolf from the howling; “he dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears” (Bronte 242). This bestial comparison, especially to dogs, is emphasized throughout the novel. When Lockwood first arrives “the dogs are not only biting at Lockwood’s heels but leaping up on him” and this treatment is compared to Heathcliff’s treatment of Lockwood, which he comments on in his narration: “eyeing me in a manner that I could ill endure after this inhospitable treatment” (Gezari 49, Bronte 49). Isabella takes her assessment of him away from the natural realm, referring to Heathcliff as a “monster” and saying “he’s not a human being” (Bronte 248). This bestial comparison and inhumanity of character is accompanied by a “violent nature,” which matches the force and violence of the weather of the Heights (Bronte 114).

This comparison to dogs presents Heathcliff as a work animal, which relates to the purpose of the Heights, while also emphasizing that Heathcliff does not fit in with humanity and society, which fits with the secluded nature of the Heights. In this sense, Heathcliff and the Heights are similar in purpose and need for isolation. However, the Heights also serves as a source of imprisonment, and its owner is no exception. Heathcliff only leaves the Heights once; he’s as much trapped as those that he kidnaps. His only escape from the Heights was by running away in the

middle of the night. Ultimately, Heathcliff withers (wuthers) away at the Heights, being trapped there by its connection to Catherine and his love for her.

Unlike Heathcliff, Catherine manages to escape from the imprisonment of the Heights, though her connection to Heathcliff still causes a tumultuous relationship between her and the Grange. Initially, Catherine is described as wild, a connection to the wildness of the moors at the Heights, and she is more connected with nature than society. However, this changes during her stay at the Grange. It is noted that “she must mind and not grow wild again here,” after her transformation from Catherine of the Heights to the Catherine of the Grange (Bronte 107). Gezari further emphasizes the change by analyzing the details of Catherine’s new dress: “Catherine’s hat, riding habit, and fashionably curled hair mark her new alignment with the Lintons and her increased social distance from Heathcliff” (107). A social distance also accompanies the physical distance from Heathcliff and the Heights. The differences between the Heights and the Grange and their respective inhabitants are already apparent.

In several instances after Catherine leaves for the Grange, there is a violent exchange whenever Heathcliff and Catherine interact in the Grange, which is a controlled and polite place unaccustomed to violence. This serves to further juxtapose their actions. Interactions between the Grange and the Heights is not possible without conflict. The force and cruelty of the Heights does not come well with the control and politeness of the Grange:

When with Heathcliff’s return domestic strife becomes the rule in his home, Edgar increases the frequency of his visits to his books: the tranquillity of the Grange is upset by the wild energy of the Heights, and he is personally threatened by those forces which his early education failed to take into account (McKibben 37).

This violence comes from the aggressive force already explained in Heathcliff and the Heights, but the violent nature in Catherine is generally subdued by the expectations of the Grange. Thus, it is only unleashed when her Heights personality is called back to the surface. This regression of character emphasizes Catherine’s dichotomous nature. Duthie emphasizes the contrast between Catherine and the Grange by pointing out, “Cathy’s contrasting accounts of the ideal way of

spending a summer day show both the spiritual distance between herself and Linton and her own position, poised between conflicting impulses" (237). These contrasting accounts lead to the conclusion that Catherine does **not** fit in the world of the Grange. This dichotomy is emphasized through her expression of love for both Edgar and Heathcliff, and her love **of both the** idealistic view of the Grange and the naturalistic realness and wildness of the Heights. This creates a **duality** within Catherine's character because she exists as the Catherine who grew up in Wuthering Heights and the Catherine who conforms to the societal demands of Thrushcross Grange. Heathcliff, on the other hand, maintains his bestial Wuthering Heights persona, **and** his moments of goodness are situated within the idea of love in the Heights (i.e. his connection to Catherine).

The last inhabitant of the Heights who **has been there since birth** is Hareton. Beyond simply being an inhabitant, Hareton is the rightful owner, but he **is** deprived of this knowledge by his own imprisonment within the Heights. The young Catherine initially views Hareton as being somewhat beneath her because he's illiterate; however, through learning to read with young Catherine, Hareton accepts a value of the Grange, which eventually leads to self-empowerment and a friendship within imprisonment. Despite never leaving the heights, Hareton is exposed to the Grange by Catherine's imprisonment in the Heights and her ability to fight the assimilation of the personality of the Heights.

Linton is a peculiar **character** because he is the offspring of Heathcliff, the embodiment of the personality of the Heights, and Isabella, who is undoubtedly characterized by the Grange despite her exile. Nonetheless, growing up with Isabella, Linton has taken to the qualities associated with the Grange; **this** is evident from his feebleness. When **Linton** first enters the novel, he stays in the Grange with the young Catherine and is spoiled by this lifestyle that clearly suits him; however, Heathcliff quickly forces him to live at the **Heights** as his son. Linton primarily remains feeble; however, as a result of being manipulated and controlled by Heathcliff during his imprisonment at the Heights, he becomes more evil and devious, adapting these traits from the Heights. Linton

manipulates young Catherine [in turn](#) by pretending that he still possesses the kindness and good society of the Grange.

It is evident that Heathcliff wishes for Linton to develop some of these Grange qualities in order to attract the young Catherine:

Earlier, Joseph mocked Isabella's request to be taken to the parlor: 'Nay we have no parlours' (Vol. I, Chap. 13). That *Wuthering Heights* now contains a room that can be called a parlor and is well furnished shows Heathcliff's effort to bring Linton up as a gentlement and also to separate him from the other inhabitants of the Heights (Gezari 290).

Nonetheless, Linton's character is quickly brought into the rhetoric of slavery that exists in the novel, which is mostly presented through the foreignness of Heathcliff. This rhetoric emphasizes the development of a harshness and cruelty within Linton that can only be associated with the weather and atmosphere of the Heights. This connection to slavery is presented by Bronte's image where "Linton lay on the settle, sole tenant, sucking a stick of sugar candy" (Bronte 366). Gezari points out in her annotation to this image that "slavery was an inextricable part of the economy of sugar plantation and Liverpool was both an important slave-trading port and a center of sugar production" (366). Gezari also notes that "Bronte could not have found a better way to signal that Linton has now fallen to a new low point of self-involvement and cruelty" (366). [Falling from grace](#), Linton transforms from the politeness of the Grange to the cruelty of the Heights. This contrast is further emphasized through the comparison of this image to "Heathcliff's infantilizing description of Edgar Linton as a 'sucking leveret' (Vol I. Chap. 11), but the sugar candy signals how much more contemptible Linton is than his uncle" (Gezari 366). This contrast between the contemptible Linton and the infantilized Edgar contributes to the contrast between characters that is emphasized by the contrasting locative characterizations associated within the Heights and the Grange.

The young Catherine is born into the Grange, in contrast to her mother. As such, she is instilled with a kindness and politeness indicative of the societal expectations of the Grange. Catherine is imprisoned in *Wuthering Heights* as the majority of characters within the novel are, and

in a sense, she begins to develop [the](#) hostility associated with the Heights; however, she seems to possess an inner strength capable of rejecting the full assimilation of the qualities of the Heights. This strength exists as a source of hope for perseverance and regeneration. The young Catherine retains a love of books indicative of the Grange and shares this with Hareton by educating him, which serves to reverse his previous degradation at the Heights.

Throughout the novel, the polarization of the Heights and the Grange seems to lessen, as these locations seem to [coalesce](#) as Heathcliff and Catherine [interact more](#). This is seen through the prevalence of violence at the Grange, previously attributed to the Heights, the marriage of Isabella and Heathcliff, and eventually, Catherine and Hareton's relationship and marriage. This last marriage serves to unite the Grange and Heights and bring the Heights out of isolation, while emphasizing the innate goodness that exists in Hareton despite being raised under the brutality of Heathcliff. Christopher Heywood noted this reintegration in his comments on the landscape in the second volume of the novel.

Heathcliff, Catherine, Hareton, Linton, and the young Catherine cannot become fully incorporated into places where they do [not](#) belong. This is most evident in the case of Catherine. As such, it is apparent that "*Wuthering Heights* is a reminder that tourism, by nature, creates a hopelessly artificial interaction between tourists and the landscapes they visit" (Godfrey 5). This artificial interaction is seen in the characters that [avoid](#) becoming submerged in the places that they visit or move to.

The easiest way to [contrast](#) the Heights and the Grange would be as bad and good or light and dark; however, in regard to the Gothic tradition, MacAndrews points out that "throughout *Wuthering Heights*, the traditional symbolism of good and evil, light and dark, is filled with enigmatic, ambiguous meaning" (204). [As such, no](#) clear distinction can be drawn between the Heights and the Grange, especially as they converge towards the end of the novel. MacAndrews continues to point out the differences in the two homes and the two sets of children: "the two children [Heathcliff and Catherine] grow up together in the dark and gloomy old house, two wild

creatures beleaguered... In contrast, the Linton children grow up in light, airy, sunlit Thrushcross Grange" (204). As shown in the familial structure of the novel, the Grange and the Heights mix:

The contrast between the light and dark houses separated by the wild moor and inhabited respectively by the blond Lintons and the dark Earnshaws is set up, however, only to be broken down again and confused. The characters who seem to represent lightness and dark intermarry with results that at first are disastrous and then later are beneficial. (MacAndrews 204-205)

This intermarrying of Linton, Earnshaw, and Heathcliff [on top of](#) the convergence of the Heights and the Grange represents coexistence of the dichotomies presented [in the novel](#). In this sense, the novel ends with a balance returned to realism and nature, where these extremes become more moderate. As such, each character represents certain aspects of each light and dark and the Grange and the Heights.

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¹ For the in-text citations, Gezari's name is used when referring to her annotations, and Bronte's name is used when referring to her original text.

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