

Gypsy of Wuthering Heights

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Emily Bronte's novel is an important work in the 19th century, particularly when describing the nature of people. One of the Characters, Heathcliff, is very interesting because his decent and parentage is never truly defined. Because of this uncertainty, the reader is lead to believe Heathcliff may have a Gypsy heritage. Gypsies were thought to be dark-haired, dark-skinned, dirty, messy and uneducated. Gypsies were often objects of discrimination usually because they look different from the typical whites and because of their traveling lifestyle made them people without a nation or land. Heathcliff's gypsy ways are commonly attributed to the Irish Travelers. Heathcliff's representation is based on this native Irish gypsy group. It was a group Bronte was familiar with the history of and she was a well read individual despite her seclusion growing up. This novel was written in a period when the theme of gypsy's and gypsy-tales were in fashion and may have had some influence on the characterization in this novel. Heathcliff ended up in Liverpool from seeking refuge from the Great Famine of Ireland. The English look at the Irish as animals, this explains the hatred from the family toward Heathcliff. The Irish were represented as the Africans of Europe. This is an ironic representation of the combination of the Irish and the Africans because after Mr. Earnshaw dies, Heathcliff is enslaved and out casted from the family. The first description of Heathcliff's outward appearance almost exactly mimics the stereotype:

“I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk - indeed, its face looked older than Catherine’s - yet, when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated ...

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... able to reach Hareton in time before any damage was done. It is also precarious that Heathcliff even bothered to catch the son of his oppressor who he despises. Other mysterious things surrounding the character of Heathcliff include it is never revealed where and how he made his fortune after returning to [Wuthering Heights](#). The parentage and origin of Heathcliff before he was taken into shelter by Mr. Earnshaw are unknown and his reasons behind digging up Catherine’s body after her death except that we know his obsession with her grew stronger after her death. Heathcliff appears as a person of Gypsy heritage from all the features of his character presented in the novel when comparing to the stereotypical view of Gypsies represented in that time period.

Works Cited

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