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The Structure of Wuthering Heights

(Lecture - 3)

The Method Employed to Arouse the Reader's Interest

The method employed to arouse the reader's interest and to lend vividness and realism to the story is one which was afterwards used with great success by Joseph Conrad. But this method ~~aquri~~ requires great skill. After Edgar Linton's death, Mr. Lockwood, the narrator takes Thrushcross Grange on rent for one year. He goes to call on his landlord, Heathcliff, at Wuthering Heights and is puzzled to find there a shy young woman and an awkward boor. At first he thinks the girl Catherine to be Heathcliff's wife, but he is told that she is Heathcliff's daughter ~~daughter~~ in-law. He then thinks that Hareton is Heathcliff's son but he has again to be corrected. He, and the reader also, are naturally puzzeled at this strange trio (Heathcliff, Catherine and Hareton). Lockwood calls again, and is forced to spen the night at Wuthering Heights. because of a ~~snow~~ heavy snowfall. In his room he finds some books with the name Catherine Earnshaw and Catherine Linton on them, and a sort of a diary of Catherine's in a childish hand which gives a vivid picture of the situation just after her father's death. At that night, Lockwood has a nightmare in which Catherine's spirit comes to the window and he also witnesses a strange scene of Heathcliff imploring Catherine's spirit. The reader's interest cannot now fail to be exited, because several questions arise in his mind. Who is this strange man and this strange

household? Who was this Catherine who died years before? What were her relations with Heathcliff? Naturally, Lockwood's curiosity is greatly aroused. On his way back next day, Lockwood ~~catches~~ catches a cold and becomes ill. To pass the time he asks Ellen (Nelly) Dean, the housekeeper at Thrushcross Grange what she knows about the family at Wuthering Heights. Nelly, who was first Hareton's nurse and then the younger Catherine's, tells him the story of the past thirty years in considerable detail. During the major part of the book, Lockwood is telling us what he has learnt from Nelly, but sometimes also what Nelly herself had been told by someone else — Isabella, for instance. Only a small part, perhaps one-length of the book, consists of a direct narrative of Lockwood of what he has learn at first hand. But such a scheme is likely to confuse the reader. This confusion will pertain mainly to the dates.

An Artistically Well-constructed Novel

Wuthering Heights is as well-constructed artiscally as it is intellectually. It is designed, that is, not only strictly in relation to the general ideas that inspire it, but also in the form best fitted to convey those ideas effectively to the reader. This was not the customary manner of writing a novel in those days. Emile Bronte was as independent artistically as she was intellectually. She did not borrow the form of her novel from other authors; she made it up herself, as she made up her philosophy of life, with the result that, judged by the standards established by other authors, her form is hard to understand.