

Chapter One:

Summary:

It is 1801, and the narrator, Mr. Lockwood, relates how he has just returned from a visit to his new landlord, Mr. Heathcliff. Lockwood, a self-described misanthropist, is renting Thrushcross Grange in an effort to get away from society following a failure at love. He had fallen in love with a "real goddess", but when she returned his affection, he acted so coldly she "persuaded her mamma to decamp." He finds that relative to Heathcliff, however, he is extremely sociable. Heathcliff, "a dark-skinned gypsy, in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman" treats his visitor with a minimum of friendliness, and Wuthering Heights, the farm where Heathcliff lives, is just as foreign and unfriendly. 'Wuthering' means stormy and windy in the local dialect. As Lockwood enters, he sees a name carved near the door: Hareton Earnshaw. Dangerous-looking dogs inhabit the bare and old-fashioned rooms, and threaten to attack Lockwood: when he calls for help Heathcliff implies that Lockwood had tried to steal something. The only other inhabitants of Wuthering Heights are an old servant named Joseph and a cook—neither of whom are much friendlier than Heathcliff. Despite his rudeness, Lockwood finds himself drawn to Heathcliff: he describes him as intelligent, proud and morose—an unlikely farmer. Heathcliff gives Lockwood some wine and invites him to come again. Although Lockwood suspects this invitation is insincere, he decides he will return because he is so intrigued by the landlord.

Analysis

This chapter introduces the reader to the frame of the story: Lockwood will gradually discover the events which led to Heathcliff—now about forty years old—living with only his servants at Wuthering Heights, almost completely separated from society. Here, Heathcliff is characterized by casual violence and lack of concern for manners

or consideration for other people. This is only a hint of the atmosphere of the whole novel, in which violence is contrasted with more genteel and civilized ways of living.

Chapter Two:

Summary:

Annoyed by the housework being done in the Grange, Lockwood pays a second visit to Wuthering Heights, arriving there just as snow begins to fall. The weather is cold, the ground is frozen, and his reception matches the bleak unfriendliness of the moors. After yelling at the old servant Joseph to open the door, he is finally let in by a peasant-like young man. The bare kitchen is warm, and Lockwood assumes that the young and beautiful girl there is Mrs. Heathcliff. He tries to make conversation but she is consistently scornful and inhospitable, and he only embarrasses himself. There is "a kind of desperation" (11) in her eyes. She refuses to make him tea unless Heathcliff said he could have some. The young man and Heathcliff come in for tea. The young man behaves boorishly and seems to suspect Lockwood of making advances to the girl. Heathcliff demands tea "savagely" (12), and Lockwood decides he doesn't really like him.

Trying to make conversation again, Lockwood gets into trouble first assuming that the girl is Heathcliff's wife, and then that she is married to the young man, who he supposes to be Heathcliff's son. He is rudely corrected, and it transpires that the girl is Heathcliff's daughter-in-law but her husband is dead, as is Heathcliff's wife. The young man is Hareton Earnshaw. It is snowing hard and Lockwood requests a guide so he can return home safely, but he is refused: Heathcliff considers it more important that Hareton take care of the horses. Joseph, who is evidently a religious fanatic, argues with the girl, who frightens him by pretending to be a witch. The old servant doesn't like her reading. Lockwood, left stranded and ignored by all, tries to take a lantern, but Joseph offensively accuses him of stealing it, and sets dogs on him. Lockwood is humiliated and Heathcliff and Hareton laugh. The cook, Zillah, takes him in and says he can spend the night.

Analysis:

Brontë begins to unveil the natural setting of the novel through snowstorms and the rugged moors, showing how the harsh landscape mirrors the roughness of its inhabitants. *Wuthering Heights* is firmly rooted in its location, reflecting the wild beauty of Emily Brontë's homeland, though its danger is palpable - strangers could easily lose their way and succumb to the elements. Heathcliff, much like the relentless wind, shows no mercy for weakness. The presence of numerous dogs at *Wuthering Heights* underscores its menacing atmosphere; they serve a practical rather than a domestic purpose.

The power dynamics within the household are significant, with the girl fearing Heathcliff and showing disdain for Hareton. Hareton, sensitive about his status, resorts to aggression, while Heathcliff uses his physical strength and imposing personality to dominate. This dominance hierarchy highlights the stark reality that force often prevails over intellect or compassion. The girl, despite her subversive and intellectual nature, struggles to attain freedom or respect.

Lockwood's attempts at conversation only serve to highlight his social ineptitude in this unforgiving environment. His misguided flattery, such as referring to the girl as a "beneficent fairy," falls flat. This chapter underscores the stark contrast between social ideals and natural realities, with grace and pleasant interactions clashing against storms, frost, bluntness, and cruelty embodied by Hareton and Heathcliff. While social ideals are ridiculed, the harshness of the natural world is equally unpalatable. Yet, these depictions will evolve as the novel progresses.