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A micro-ebook from *Master Narratives*

Wuthering Heights as Bifurcated Novel

Frederick Burwick

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Chapter 7

Wuthering Heights as Bifurcated Novel

Frederick Burwick

‘Let me beware of the fascination that lurks in Catherine Heathcliff’s brilliant eyes. I should be in a curious taking if I surrendered my heart to that young person, and the daughter turned out a second edition of the mother.’

—Lockwood, *Wuthering Heights*¹

1. Tellers

When two or more witnesses give their account of an event, the story never comes out the same. The differences, as Browning fully realized in *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), provide for powerful ironic tensions. Over and over again, in Browning’s poem, the story is told of what happened on the fatal night when Count Guido Franceschini went in search of his seventeen-year-old bride Pompilia who, in the company of the handsome young priest Giuseppe Caponsacchi, had run away from his ancient villa and returned home to her parents in Rome. And in every telling there is another version of the motives and the consequences. Although Browning allows the Pope to serve as arbiter, he also effectively undermines confidence in testimony. Even Guido’s final confession leaves the reader with uneasy qualms about the claims of truth and justice.

What is expected of a reader who observes that one truth-claim modifies or compromises another? Is the task to decide which version is more deserving

1. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Ian Jack, intr. Patsy Stoneman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), Volume 1, chapter 14, 154.