Intimating Intimacy: Self-Shattering Intimacy in Christopher Paolini's Inheritance Cycle

Although children's and young adult literature often define intimacy in the context of familial and sexual relationships, intimacy encompasses so much more. Following the thoughts of Georges Bataille, intimacy shatters the self-contained individual; it changes the perception of the world. It brings people and nature into continuity. Intimacy overcomes the evil of subjugating others to the meager existence of utility. This result of intimacy becomes exceedingly important because it seeks to restore connection between people. Through dissolving the self, intimacy breaks the barriers people place around themselves, exposing them to others. This exposure breaks the cycle of disjoint individuals to shape continuity among people. The foundational movement here breaks the individual self by completely opening them to another being. Intimacy changes societal dynamics by denying the utility of others, moving beyond people as only a means to an end. People count as human beings again rather than only the service(s) they perform. In this way, intimacy brings people out of individualized self-centeredness into continuity across existence.

Christopher Paolini's *Inheritance Cycle* imagines intimacy as fostering a deeper connection with other forms of life. Paolini's novels bring intimacy to the fore, creating a fantastical story of good triumphing over evil through intimacy. The intimacy of the *Inheritance Cycle* allows a person to see beyond the discontinuous individual self, moving to a space of continuity with the world. This understanding of intimacy follows directly from Georges Bataille's theoretical understanding of eroticism and intimacy. This intimacy shatters the self and moves people into a space of continuity with all living things. Using Bataille's theoretical approach, several examples will show how Eragon has intimate encounters that lead to the dissolution of his self into the world around him. Like a drop of water in a stream, Eragon becomes one with everything in his world. He loses his notion of personal boundaries, moving to a place of continuity across all life. This intimate connection ultimately leads to Eragon defeat the evil emperor; thus, intimacy overcomes the evil of the world.