Wuthering Heights: Stream of Consciousness

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Abstract

Emily Bronte' struck the rock to obtain the living waters of beauty from the rugged moors and she extracted a solace which she could not seek in any gentler place. A sombre and majestic music sounds through her lines in her masterpiece, Wuthering Heights (1847). This work is subject to many eulogies and appreciations. This piece of literature carries the in-flow and out-flows of movements which runs inwards and out words. The intense and deep feelings thus mirrored highlight the overlapping of complete and incomplete thoughts. The images produced make the plot and the characters complex. .Notwithstanding, the perplexity of the plot and the awkwardness having an elaborate and wildly passionate story told by a faithful housekeeper, the novel is one of the major imaginative creations of a psychology leading to stream of consciousness form of writing.

Keywords: Gaze, Poetical vowel, Animus, Hiatus, Meta narrative, Nostalgia, Post colonialism, Microcosm, Displacement, Outsider.

Introduction

C. P. Sanger's *The Structure of Wuthering Heights*[1] is probably the best known, judging by the number of times it has appeared in quotation over the last fifty years. It is certainly one of the most rewarding pieces to read. He foregoes any discussion of the novel's literary merits, and instead, offers a factual basis as to why *Wuthering Heights* belongs in a separate category, distinct from all other fiction of the nineteenth century. *Wuthering Heights* is set apart from the tradition of the fiction of the Victorian literature. It is one of its kinds and, even today, allures the attention of many critics. It has been interpreted from various angles and yet, stands the test of time.

More than a hundred years of idolatrous literature have swelled the myth; more than a hundred years of critical interpretation, carried out almost universally in that tone "of personal tenderness, even passionate homage", have deepened the enigma. -- for Emily Bronte' is still several steps ahead of her critics[2].

The space of life, body and soul is replete with intense expressions and outlets with rapidity and power. Emily was a landscape painter of great power and charm, presenting her unit of moorland earth with equal fidelity and felicity. *Wuthering Heights* can also be called a metaphysical work. Though, misfortune and misery pervade the air throughout the novel, yet, the core of the story lies in the death-defying love of Heathcliff and Catherine. The action covers the period from 1778 to 1802. It was the time when England passed through the first phase of the Industrial Revolution and the continent witnessed the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars. However, there is no direct reference to these historical events in the novel.

Web Structure and Technique

One of the raging controversies about *Wuthering Heights* has been the nature of its plot construction and the mode of narration. One group of critics believe that the plot structure is obscure and complex whereas the other maintains that it is due to lack of attention on the part of the reader.

The novel is divided into two distinct halves. After chapter seventeen there is sharp turn in the story line. The reader is introduced to the new cast of characters. Besides, the plot develops in six movements: first is introductory, the second describes the childhood and adolescence of the older generation of characters and the third deals with their adult life. Then, all the other characters, except Heathcliff, are eliminated from the active participation. This makes the second section of the book, which details the childhood and maturity of the younger generation. In the fifth movement, Catherine enters the story and two set of lovers, one from each generation, Heathcliff and Catherine, after death and Hareton and Cathy in reality – attain successful union. The sixth movement brings the book to a peaceful end.

Emily deliberately has chosen two narrators as vehicles for her tale in order to bestow credibility and authenticity upon her story. The two narrators, Lockwood and Nelly dean tend to say to each other with supreme confirmation and assurance: 'This is true; I was there; and this is what happened.'

Among these minutely focussed, specialized critical interpretations-- and they are legion, for example, "The image of the book in Wuthering Heights"[3]; "Infanticide and Sadism in Wuthering Heights";[4] Dorothy Van Ghent's "Two children

figure"[5] in the novel, and Thomas Vargish' s "Revenge and Wuthering Heights"[6] is like occasionally adding a 'jewel'. G. *J.* Worth's contribution to the reader's understanding of Lockwood in "Emily Bronte'' s Mr Lockwood"[7] is one such article, for it is straight character analysis, uncluttered by Lockwood's role as one of the narrators and completely devoid of the more usually cumbersome elaborations which Wuthering Heights generally invites critics to ponder, if they are to deal with 'everything'. Worth's patient and thoughtful examination of Lockwood's character, from the sole standpoint of 'Lockwood as a man', saves hours of laborious 'cut and sew' analysis for those wishing to examine some larger, related topic. Thorough-going character analyses permit many commentators to fairly catapult themselves into their work; indeed, a good, unpretentious piece on one or more characters, of all the marginal pieces available, very often becomes chiefly rewarding as a preserver of time and energy, and Worth's article makes just this kind of valuable contribution.

The narration commences with Lockwood, who deals with the present and then is shifted to Nelly, who relates the incidents of the past in flashback manner. The narration of the novel brings to the mind Robert Browning's, 'The Ring and the Book' and Joseph Conrad's, 'Lord Jim'. The method adopted by Emily Bronte' has positive disadvantages. It brings about confusion and strains the probabilities. The advantage of this method is that it produces effects of great suspense, excitement, drama, by means of the very limitations it imposes.

Bronte' uses Meta narrative with the themes like revenge, love, societal customs and entrapment, particularly of women. It appears through the stories that other characters have told Nelly, who narrates those stories and her own experiences to Lockwood, who, in turn, narrates all of this to the reader. This complex use of Meta narrative has the potential to make the reader feel quite distanced from the novel.

But, Bronte' manages to disguise this distancing (from the events in the novel) by writing Nelly's tale with a lot of dialogue. This makes the events being narrated to Lockwood feel like they are happening now, rather than in the past. Nelly's dialogue –heavy recount of past events allows the reader to form their own opinions and judgements of characters and events, without Nelly's biases colouring the reader's perceptions[8].

The above mentioned point also finds momentum in the epistolary narrative (it includes letter and diary entries from other characters) used by the author. This gives space to the reader to experience a deeper and more meaningful exploration of the themes. This allows the reader to make a more accurate judgement about various characters and events. It provides a constructive way to the reader to explore the psychology of the characters. This suspense built in the novel is unfolded beautifully if the thoughts of the minds of the characters are analysed systematically.

Images and Sensations

The book's title offers indications of a real depth in the whole character and manners of the story. "Wuthering " suggests an association of meanings: it combines 'weather' and 'wither'-in the Yorkshire senses of a hard, cold and often unpredictable climate. In addition to this, the volley of winds and the lack of shelter, with sensations of giddiness produced by "Heights", and the aura of the book with its centrepiece-the isolated, monolithic farmhouse set well-up on a rugged moorland hillside-becomes unforgettably defined in the imagination. *Wuthering Heights* is onomatopoeic; it is poetic in its compression of images and sensations. Similar qualities emerge in the story's uneven episodes. They reveal the distinctiveness of Emily Bronte's style and express the wildness and free violence in much of the novel as a whole. In 1947, Klingopulos wrote an article for *Scrutiny*[9] in collaboration with Dr and Mrs Leavis, which considers *Wuthering Heights* as a dramatic poem here, the idea of a prose work as a poem shows the seemingly limitless variety of approaches available to the critic of the novel. Not only this, but Klingopulos's particular method of approach has an instinctive rightness as a way of accounting for the actions of the characters and the story's formal shape, since Emily Bronte' invests the book with qualities often nearer to poetry than to prose.

Some of the enquiries in to diverse aspects of the novel are so minute that they serve best as 'spade-work' done for much larger pieces of critical interpretation. The novel's peculiar symmetry is that the structure and the narrative function as co-terminus, that is, the one is necessary part of the other.

Microcosm of Disorder

The world of *Wuthering Heights* appears as a microcosm of disorder, of the kind found in *Macbeth* and *King Lear* and other Shakespearean tragedies. Themes and effects occurring in these two plays in particular, abound in the first half of the novel, which seems to indicate that Emily Bronte' drew upon her knowledge of Shakespeare for the essential pattern of the story.

In the second half, the violence and exaggerated reality of the Heights becomes muted as the story shifts to events occurring, for the most part, at Thrushcross Grange. The world of the story retains its similarity to Elizabethan drama by becoming disordered through disease. Energy is absent from part two of *Wuthering Heights*, except in the closing sequence of the story where a resurgence of energy combines with sickness to be purged from the world of the novel by Heathcliff's strange death. *Wuthering Heights* presents a Shakespearean world as a structural foundation for the novel.

Macbeth forms a good comparison from which the parallel might be drawn. The world of *Macbeth* shows political and moral disorder reflected in three ways. To begin with, events in the play compound unnatural crimes and horrors...violence,

visions and unwonted cruelty become Shakespeare's themes which underline Macbeth's lack of fitness to be Scotland's natural king. These themes transcend the play's entire atmosphere, becoming part and parcel of the metaphysical correlatives wherein the heavens reflect the aura of sickness and disunity with the rest of Britain. Scotland becomes cut off from reality, as though it were a boiling centre containing evil. The principle characters, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as the third way of reflecting disorder, fire one another to promote this atmosphere of evil spreading as if by instinct. The play ends with its small world restored to peace. Lady Macbeth dies, leaving Macbeth to struggle uselessly against his doom and his tragedy.

Wuthering Heights has a similar kind of movement and effect. The three qualities of Macbeth exist around and between Heathcliff and Catherine. Heathcliff and Catherine are bad for one another and the small world of Wuthering Heights. Their love works through them as well as upon them. After Catherine dies, Heathcliff becomes a victim of their own love and events in part two of the novel, as in Macbeth, become inevitable. Heathcliff dies as tragically as the woman he worships. *Wuthering Heights* is basically a love story containing the sophistry of self-delusion. Catherine and Heathcliff try to create a purpose for their impossible, consuming passion. But, the love is its own end, and as such, cannot survive in the changing worlds of Heights and Grange. Catherine and Heathcliff are intensely human, poetic and spiritual. The storms which their separations and deaths produce come as Shakespearean correlatives to show how these uncommon attitudes to all forms of life which Catherine and Heathcliff share, and the curiously balanced set of feelings the two people have for one another. Heathcliff is the catalyst through which the contained horrors find release.

The Shakespearean intention in Wuthering Heights shows a world latent with disorder to be released from without, rather than within. Together they form a formidable pair and there appears to be no motive for their unruly behaviour, which matures at a pace with their own physical and mental developments, creating eventually, an imbalance in the Heights' world of forbidding proportions, well beyond the control of human intervention until, with Catherine dead, Lockwood arrives.

The behaviour of Catherine and Heathcliff turns more inward, they become unruly and in this, their special enjoyment of a world personal to themselves, their actions become pivotal to the story's structure. From the seeds of childhood impishness grows unchecked and increasingly serious sequence of events which end in tragedy. There is an almost existentialist detachment from the field of normal human response. In their thoughts and actions they have a savage and unnatural approach to civilised life which goes beyond the animus of unconscious childhood cruelty. Their shared attitude has a brutish rationality behind it which becomes enlarged during adulthood and

appears, at times, thoroughly hideous to behold. Later, their spiritual union becomes abnormal. Heathcliff's gaze upon her and a poetic vowel runs in him and it does not matter to him that she ignores him from time to time. It contains a single minded passion which simply absorbs him to the exclusion of everything else. Romantic love exists when the sensations it produces become limited by description in words, because the sensations dwell in regions connected with the soul of the lover. The love between Heathcliff and Catherine comes of 'violent soul': the violence release of energy expresses love and hatred together in this novel, dispensing with the need for words. Emotions become real in the explosiveness of action being simultaneous with thought and feeling.

Heathcliff and Catherine accept unnatural horror without pause or thought. They grow stronger from it when they are in malevolent unison. When separated, the physical outrages cease and the spirit within the two people sleeps, though Heathcliff at these times bears an uneasy countenance, in spite of his outward calm. As the story progresses, the growing disorder in the Heights world reaches a hiatus which, when overcome, results in Heathcliff's climactic running away. Their sufferings increase, they move towards tragedy, for they are powerless to control their fates. The disruption in the Heights world infects everyone and everything.

A correlative is found in the storm, such as occurs in *King Lear* and unnatural darkness in *Macbeth*. The violence of this special love becomes expressed in the atmospheres of the *Wuthering Heights* world by the storm- it matches in every detail, the metaphysical descriptions of the different types of love Catherine is aware of in her feelings for Heathcliff and Edgar both.

Critical Aspect

Wuthering Heights has a real life geographical and historical setting. Its poetry and drama gain power and weight from these things alone. There are sound literary and socially historical reasons for why the real life social concern should be there increasing the seamless nature of Emily's artistic achievement. Setting the story in a fairly recent past follows the creative direction established by other writers in the decade. The past was secure and the trend for nostalgic fiction emerged during the decade because the authors and reading public alike felt insecure owing to the immense changes thrown up almost daily, by the rapidly increasing technology of the Industrial Revolution. Such a decade of social change has never in all probability been paralleled to date so that, with specific regard to Wuthering Heights, the change from the Heights way of life to the new Victorian comforts of the Grange with its essentially middle class values rooted in gentry, plots the destruction of an actual social era; a destruction which really began at the turn of the nineteenth century. The sociological novel, in its way, shows a perfect accord with the ideas of destruction and change at the structural level.

Mrs Leavis's, *A Fresh Approach to Wuthering Heights* insists upon the "truly human centrality" of *Wuthering Heights*[9]. *Wuthering Heights* looks backwards and forwards in several ways. It is known for its technique of narration and structure design of the story which together creates a synthesis of form and content in the art of fiction. In this attempt to account for the novel's unique quality, the sociological novel has become submerged, and with it, much of the story's deeply human content with regard to how love between people can be destructive in its all consuming nature. The individual human core of love between characters in Wuthering Heights mirrors aspects of the larger social change seen as a part of the real life novel.

Bronte' has highlighted that intensity of passion which must be modified and controlled to meet the new way of living. The love between Catherine and Heathcliff fails as it is uncontrolled tearing passion. Love between Cathy and Hareton becomes muted, 'civilised' and is educative which can meet the new order of life and are optimistic of success as their love does not consume life. The intensity of passion is modified and controlled to meet the new way of living.

Conclusion

The feelings of displacement and nostalgia evoke a thread of an outsider in the web of the narrative. The characters feel display unfit in the present set up and hover for a better realistic inner self. The outer realities throw them beyond the boundaries of streams which control the body and the mind. The superseded thoughts, feelings and passions bring in a type of discomfort which makes them elusive to the changes surrounding them. Their stream and flow of thoughts makes them ruminates the inner access of the mind which closely knitted with the outside social realities. As, those very social realities are the sprung rhythm of their inward consciousness and awareness.

The stream of consciousness and post colonialism, as it finds its space today in this decade, the roots lie in such works as *Wuthering Heights* and Shakespeare's plays. The delirium and delusion of the madness is closely assigned to the method and system of madness which springs from a system which methodically makes the individual insensible.

In her narrative technique, the author considerably advances the art of fiction in the direction of modern, psychological novels which appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In her use of two secretive and unreliable, yet involved and personally interested characters to narrate the story, both completely realised as actors in the concluding drama, Emily Bronte' achieves a unique synthesis between past and future styles in literature. *Wuthering Heights* remains a timeless love story told by the lonely voice of a brilliant young woman. It gives way unto way to the major part of stream of consciousness technique later found expression in the works of Virginia Woolf and Henry James. Besides, the voice to the voiceless is provided through the subaltern theory of Gayatri Spivak in the post colonial era. The sparks lie in the past and with new fervour the complete expression finds rooted ground in modern era.

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