

WUTHERING HEIGHTS REPRESENTS THE PERFECT THEME OF GOTHIC NOVEL BY EMILY BRONTE

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ABSTRACT

Gothic novel represents both the horror and romantic parts. The paramount features of gothic novel includes some salient elements such as, terror, mystery, ghosts, haunted houses, gothic architecture, darkness, death, decay, madness, secrets and hereditary curses. In gothic novel, besides the main characters there we usually find the traces of tyrants, villains, maniacs, Byronic heroes, persecuted maidens, femme's fatales, demons, revenants, ghosts and the devil itself. Therefore the aim of the gothic novel is to horrify, shock, and the most important thing is to affect the readers. Gothic novel doesn't follow the conventions of society rather that its main concentration is to present the horrific nature of the story. After the observation of the novel *Wuthering Heights* we have seen the concoctation of gothic elements which has made it as a perfect gothic novel by Emily Bronte. *Wuthering Heights* was mainly the story of two families, and two people, who were incredibly attached through a series of dark, enigmatic and sinister events. Primarily *Wuthering Heights* was an English Romantic novel but the main settings and the story line showed that it was gothic novel from every perspective.

KEYWORDS: Heathcliff, Catherine, Terror, Mystery, Haunted houses, Ghosts, Maniacs, Byronic Heroes, Persecuted Maidens, Femmes fatales, Demons, Revenants

INTRODUCTION

Wuthering Heights was the tale of tragic love by Emily Bronte. The themes of romance and the sense of horror and the supernatural elements made the *Wuthering Heights* as a Gothic novel. In this novel there were some quintessential gothic elements such as, grotesque imagery, dark and foreboding mansions and landscapes, chaos, pain and doomed love. All these themes were beautifully packed in Bronte's work. Bronte was skilled to instil the essential gothic elements which have allowed the novel to transcend the merely romantic novel. In *Wuthering Heights* Bronte has used the gothic style to evoke terror and fear. One of the classic features of Gothic novel is the use of supernatural things and *Wuthering Heights* was very much appropriate with this idea. This novel represented the cognizant description about supernatural beings which has appeared to the character Mr. Lockwood when he stayed at the estate of *Wuthering Heights*. A ghostly, bloody apparition of Catherine appeared at his window,

"The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but, the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice, sobbed, 'Let me in - let me in!'" (Bronte 1847, p. 24)

By these lines we can't guess whether this scene happened in a dream or it has been happened in real life. But the terrific settings of that scene made the readers think about the unearthly and enigmatic dread. Moreover, it is clear that the central character Heathcliff was convinced of the existence of ghosts as he didn't want to believe about any ghostly

appearances. But this eerie incident made him believe that Catherine's spirit remained and roamed around at the Heights. After hearing about that frightening ordeal from Lockwood, Heathcliff was shocked and therefore,

“Got on the bed, and wrenched open the lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears. ‘Come in! Come in!’ He sobbed.” (Bronte 1847, p. 28)

Catherine's essential presence in Heathcliff's mind made him unstable, he didn't able to forget Catherine's memories and therefore the paranormal attitudes manifested in Heathcliff's life. The supernatural scene was manifested vividly towards the end of the novel when we have sensed the two protagonists, Heathcliff and Catherine's accounts of ghostly sightings, and the trace of both character's roaming habit around the moors.

“Country folks, if you asked them, would swear on their Bible that he walks. ... That old man ... affirms he has seen two on ‘em ... on every rainy night, since his death.” (Bronte 1847, p. 356)

These above statement revealed their perpetual and inextricable love which was alive even after their death. Through this supernatural incident it has been proved that, *Wuthering Heights* was the genuine gothic novel by the setting of a dark castle, dungeon or laboratory. In *Wuthering Heights* the fearful environment created by the title, location and the ghostly appearance of the main characters Heathcliff and Catherine. The foreboding apprehension about the Catherine's ghost has created this novel as a potential story of terror. The extremely painful and fearful estate was named as the state of Wuthering Heights which has offered an untamed, dangerous and sinister atmosphere “I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door, above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins, and shameless little boys, I detected the date ‘1500’.” (Bronte 1847, p. 2) The characteristics of the mansion were presented as an atmosphere similar to that of a haunted manor or castle which is one of the features of Gothic novel. Throughout the novel we have come to know that, the Heights was a sinister place, compared with the other location such as Thrush cross Grange, which was bearing the characteristics of civility and genteel. Bronte made the contrast between fearful castle and the peaceful castle in such a clear way in order to hone the sense of unearthly environments of the Heights. The mansion of Heights itself matched with the stormy and wild weather which remained in a enormous way at the Heights.

“Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times, indeed: one may guess of the power of the north wind, ... by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun.” (Bronte 1847, p. 2)

The weather of the Heights also emulated the passion and wildness of the inhabitants of the Heights. Besides the aspects of Heights's wild environment, the moorlands of Wuthering Heights also add the sense of uncontrolled danger associated with the property. Heathcliff's revenge motif and the concept of usurping the estate of Heights made this novel as a novel of wildness, besides of it the devastating weather and the dangerous moors which surround the castle completely to create a real Gothic setting, therefore made the novel *Wuthering Heights* as a real gothic novel.

WUTHERIGHT HEIGHTS AS A GOTHIC NOVEL

The settings of the Wuthering Heights stood alone atop a hill, in the middle of vast and wild moorland. The elements of this novel has expressed that the setting itself was very isolated. After the settings of Wuthering Heights the weather was seemed so wild and stormy. The designs of the house itself represented the sense of old age and also decorated in a way of old fashioned home. All of these gothic characteristics were the most significant and vital to show

this novel *Wuthering Heights* as a perfect gothic novel. The omen of bad and ill fortune resembled with the elements of Storms and rain. Some tragic and traumatic incidents happened during the time of violent storm as we have seen that one night when Heathcliff was running away, there was happening a violent storm. The same event was occurred on the day after Catherine's death. The split up scene also experienced by *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrush cross Grange* with the presence of violent ecosystem that allowed us to ponder over the frightening concept of wild atmosphere in this novel. The uneven, unfriendly moors were seemingly endless, because the mysterious image of moors exhibited the salient symbol of what was on the other side. At the Heights the sign of wild of nature seemed to intimidate and expressed the gothic settings from the perspective of nature.

The protagonists of this novel were deviated from the moral behaviours in Victorian era. They were exhibited themselves as incestuous, adulterous, violent, passionate, vengeful and unrestrained. The family background of Heathcliff was wild with vicious place called Heights while on the other hands the family tree of Lintons was nice and decent. Heathcliff and Catherine were two anti-Victorian characters who didn't follow the decency of the Victorian era. In their characters there was the presence of gothic characteristics. Heathcliff was the main male gothic character who was typically dark, brooding Byronic hero while Catherine was very emotional, sensitive, passionate and temperamental. Revenge motif was one of the significant matters in Heathcliff's life, which made him violent, unjust and ruthless. On the other side's Catherine was also proud, selfish, manipulative and reckless who didn't care about the conventions of the Victorian gentry.

In the earlier life, Heathcliff was an orphan boy who has been brought up in the land of *Wuthering Heights* by Mr. Earnshaw and got pampered more than Earnshaw's own son Hindley. But he was deceived and tortured by Hindley after the death of Earnshaw. Hindley forced Heathcliff to work in the fields and did very rude behaviours after his wife's death. On the other hands Catherine did marry with Edgar Linton who was in the family tree of Lintons the owner of the land *Thrush cross Grange*. After the marriage of Catherine, Heathcliff has left the home town of him and returned with vast and mysterious wealth. Heathcliff then planned to seek revenge on those persons who have wronged with him.

So it was proved in many ways that Heathcliff did insult to a Victorian sense of propriety. Being an orphaned gypsy child he has transcended the barriers of class and prejudice to become a 'gentleman' and owner of two large estates. Besides Heathcliff, many relationships in the story were gothic in nature, as they were tainted by a sense of unease and unfaithful nature. If we try to describe the clash with gothic elements in various characters in the novel we will see Catherine and the Lintons, who were not understandable. Heathcliff and Hindley, who felt that they both were not appropriate for friendship but strong hostility. Isabella and Edgar, who didn't talk to each other after Isabella, did marry with Heathcliff. Most of the relationships in this novel were deprived from true love and trust and hence their broken relationships were not repairable. Yet the love between Heathcliff and Catherine sustained as powerful as ever, despite of quarrels between them Cathy stated that,

"My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being." (Page 81, chapter 9)

Similarly, on hearing of Catherine's death, Heathcliff exclaims "I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!" (Page 148, chapter 16)

This type of extraordinarily and powerful love between Heathcliff and Catherine was also one of the prominent

themes in this novel and which was the explicit contradiction of Victorian morals. Their strong expression of emotion did not match and applicable for the Victorian way of life. Besides the characters of Heathcliff and Catherine's wild, violent, passionate and emotional traits, there were the other inhabitants of Wuthering Heights for those this novel was known as a gothic novel. The ideas of ensnared matters, the supernatural and the disturbing elements that caused the fear of death all appeared within the story of *Wuthering Heights*. One of the first important gothic scenes has been portrayed by Lockwood's nightmare, where a pair of ghostly hands did appear to grab at him through the window. The supernatural events then continued its phase throughout the story when Heathcliff asked Catherine to haunt him, said that he believed in ghosts. Towards the end of the novel we have seen even after the death of Heathcliff and Catherine they both were roaming about the moors. This was the sayings of the village people who have seen them like that way

As the supernatural elements means something extra ordinarily freighting, therefore the supernatural characters Heathcliff and Catherine were also different from everyone else. Catherine's didn't leave the earth and was roaming, lingering because of Heathcliff. Her soul was actually waiting for him. Once Heathcliff has died, they both have stayed together and forever in the moors. They both considered this condition as greater than heaven. The theme of trap was the important part in the story. There were the examples of physical entrapment, where Nelly and Cathy were imprisoned in Wuthering Heights, besides this there was the emotional entrapment, where Isabella didn't able to leave Heathcliff once they have been married, Heathcliff made a complex situation for Isabella which was the spiritual entrapment, where Catherine felt she was trapped in her body, and said,

"The thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there; not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it, and in it." (Page 143, chapter 15).

Emily Bronte enlarged this theme of imprisonment for both the physical and spiritual matters. And this theme of imprisonment essentially upholds the gothic theme. To highlight the gothic nature of this novel there were the presence of morbid and gristly elements. The prominent gruesome scenes in this novel became manifested by Heathcliff's violent attitudes after hearing the news of Catherine's death. He banged his head against a tree until he bleeds. In another scene, Catherine's grave was disturbed by Heathcliff because he wished to see her again. When Catherine was alive that time once she was bitten by a dog at Thrush cross Grange and Hindley's wrist was slashed by Heathcliff's knife. All these gristly incidents made us remember about a wild place and the inhabitants of the Wuthering Heights.

The gothic and sinister affairs of the plotline are a constant reminder of the nature of this place, and of the people who live out their lives under its shroud. A stormy night, a shattered window, a woman's cry, a dog's bark; an endless land, a deathless love, a quiet earth—all the traits of the gothic and the romantic married into one story of struggle and torment. The wilderness and harshness of the land, the passion and violence of the people, and the strangeness of the situations show the truly gothic character of Wuthering Heights.

As a Byronic hero, Heathcliff was a man who seemed so adamant to take revenge upon all who didn't treat him well. In many ways Heathcliff was an archetypal Gothic character. He is mysterious, dark and exceedingly dangerous.. Like many Gothic anti-heroes, Heathcliff's love and fury leads him to destroy the woman he wished for. But in the end it is Catherine's love for Heathcliff which eventually ruined her and she didn't able to live with herself anymore, she told to Heathcliff

“You have killed me - and thriven on it, I think.” (Bronte 1847, 167) Though he most certainly did not wish Catherine harm, he also certainly played a part in her mental and physical capitulation.

The another negative traits in Heathcliff was he didn't feel any doubt to destroy the life of Isabella in order to take revenge towards the Lintons family. Though he knew that Isabella loved him, but he abused her so heartlessly that she was forced to leave him.

“I assure you, a tiger, or a venomous serpent could not rouse terror in me equal to that which he wakens... I hate him - I am wretched - I have been a fool.” (Bronte 1847, p. 153)

After destroying the life of Isabella he felt no remorse for her fate nor even their son Linton. Instead of caring his son Linton, Heathcliff used him to fulfil his purpose in usurping the Thrush cross Grange. Heathcliff was so ruthless that he had no sympathy or compassion towards the victims who has been suffered in unlimited way, this nature of Heathcliff showed his extreme disregard for human's sufferings. Heathcliff's unceasing tyrannical nature appeared through his use of torture and imprisonment which are the classic gothic features. To make Edgar as emotionally weak, Heathcliff imprisoned young Cathy. He did like that because he considered Edgar was the man who took Catherine from him, but it was the sign of tortuous to poor Cathy

“If papa thought I had left him, on purpose, and if he died before I returned, could I bear to live?” (Bronte 1847, p. 290)

Heathcliff therefore proved as a man of cold-blood which has elevated him beyond the mere man of passion. And he became a disturbed and cruel monster like figure. Like any other Gothic anti-hero, Heathcliff has presented him as a man of vengeance who didn't care who must suffer in order to achieve his goal or to accomplish the task of taking revenge. This type of wicked and wild nature made him a gothic protagonist and as a whole the novel *Wuthering Heights* became one of the famous gothic novels.

CONCLUSIONS

Wuthering Heights was Gothic in every possible ways. In this novel the Gothic elements which allowed the gristly story to transcend the genre of tragic romance and made it unique. The ghostly appearance of Catherine haunted the tale from the very first chapters onwards, and this eerie apparition was the main focus of this novel. The another gothic element has expressed through the undying love between Heathcliff and Catherine which was alive even after their death. The mysterious and uncontrolled setting of Wuthering Heights provided the perfect backdrop for the horrifying events of the narrative. And Heathcliff's grim tenacity and quest for revenge through pre planned torture made him the classic Gothic anti-hero. Emily Bronte thus made the perfect use of gothic elements to present the terror, the sense of fear, pain and sufferings of the innocent characters by the wicked natured characters.

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