

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte: A critical Study in Concreteness.

رواية مرتفعات وثرينج للكاتبة ايميلي برونتي : دراسة نقدية في الواقعية

Dr. Iman Abdullah Al Mahdi

Associate Professor

Faculty of languages, Department of English.

Sana'a University, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen.

المخلص :

حُب هيثكليف و كاترين، سيطر على الرواية أنها عاطفة غير مألوفة ، غالباً روحية في كثافتها و انتصاراتها حتى بعد وفاة كاترين و هيثكليف. وبالتالي ، فهي تناقش موضوع الحب وواقعيته.
الكلمات المفتاحية:

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى اثبات الواقعية في الرواية الوحيدة التي كتبتها ايميلي برونتي وهي رواية " مرتفعات وثرينج " تناقش الدراسة الخلفية التاريخية للحقبة الزمنية وكذلك المشكلات التي كانت شائعة من خلال تعدد المواضيع والموضوع الشخصي للحب والانتقام.

Abstract :

This paper aims to prove the concreteness of the only novel written by Emily Bronte, Wuthering Heights. It discusses the historical background of the age as well as the problems that were common through the multiplicity of themes, the personal theme of love and revenge. The love of Heathcliff and Catherine dominates the novel. It is

an uncommon passion, almost spiritual in its intensity, and its triumphs eventually after the death of Catherine and Heathcliff. Hence it tackles with the themes of the novel and its concreteness .

Key words: Concrete, *Romance, Tragedy, Revenge, Good, Evil, Rich, Poor, Education.*

Wuthering Heights is the only novel that Emily Bronte wrote. It was composed in 1848. It is a novel of romance, revenge and tragedy. The word Wuthering refers to a violent wind. It was published in December 1847 by Thomas Newby under the Pseudo name Ellis Bell. After Emily's death in 1848, Charlotte Bronte revealed Emily as the author of Wuthering Heights in the second edition of the novel and the novel eventually received the praise it deserved. Arnold Kettle points out:

"Indeed Wuthering Heights is essentially the same kind of novel as Oliver Twist. It is not romance, not an escape form life to the wild Moors and romantic lovers. It is certainly not a picaresque novel and it cannot adequately be described as a moral fable, through it has a strong insisted pattern. But the pattern, like that of Dickens novel cannot be abstracted as a neat sentence: its germ is not an intellectualized idea or concept" (P:131).

Moreover, David Ceil writes a significant remark on Wuthering Heights:

"Wuthering Heights, unlike David Copperfield or Pendennis or Jane Eyre, is a spiritual drama. And this means that its characters and incidents are displayed in a different focus from theirs. If we do not realize this, if we try and see them in the same focus we shall inevitably find it baffling and confusing" (P:160).

As a novel it stands, almost unique, its wickedness is something almost unbelievable and it has a high degree of imagination combined with astounding ignorance.

The geographical setting plays a major part in providing the atmosphere for the unfolding of the action. Mainly pasture land for the grazing of sheep and cattle, this part of Yorkshire, even today is sparsely populated and the dreariness of the climate is reflected in the dour, unsociable characters who represents in the novel.

The underlying universal theme of the novel is the co- existence of good and evil. Like Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' , this novel is concerned with the problems of man and destiny; and like Milton's 'Paradise Lost', it recalls the proud challenge of Satan and the conflict between good and evil which has dominated man's entire history. Through the story of the interaction of two families, the authorities amplify concreteness in their theme, showing

the effects of this co- existence true and false love, joy and hatred, health and sickness heaven and hell.

Sir Herbert read discovers that the appeal of Emily's novel resides in its; emotional intensity, an intensity he asserts which to express itself in a 'stricter realism' which leads to the concreteness that was usually not employed at that time, because in Wuthering Heights which tells how Nelly Dean comes upon Heath cliff's dead in his bed by the open window. It stresses the 'economy, directness and speed' of the Bronte's description compared with the stilted attempt at rapidly achieved in the passage which merely succeeds in making pathos artificial with the Bronte's a new vitality and stricter concreteness came into English fiction. It was a return to Swift and Defoe, or rather to the fount of even those writers, for we know that the Bible was the most considerable influence in Emily Bronte's life.

One may go further than this and analyses the concreteness of the prose style in Wuthering Heights as residing in a combination of lyricism and reserve. These opposite traits are brought together in artistic conjunction and create the genuine tone of the novel: without the presence of the lyrical element the note of dourness and reserve would leave the work a pedestrian chronicle of cruelties committed in a backward district, and with little in it to redeem the story; similarly, without the reserve the lyricism would lack conviction. Lockwood's nightmare, Heath cliff obsession, Catherine's, delirium and ghostly reappearance, these by themselves would have made the Wuthering Heights just another Gothic Novel.

The note of reserve emanates mainly from Nelly Dean and Joseph; the former especially represents a norm beside which the extremes and excesses of the other characters are measurable; which Joseph's dourness holds in check the idyllic or pastoral elements in the novel. The note of concreteness on the other hand, stems from the higher- born characters, Cathy and her daughter Catherine in particular, their spontaneous natures, the wildness in their behavior (e.g., Catherine's escapade to Penistone Crags) these things reveal spontaneous temperaments .

The intermarriage between the two contradicted houses brings catastrophic effects. Catherine realizes:

"Heaven did not seem to be her home" (P: 80).

This has repercussions that penetrate through to the following generation. Rahman points out that, it may be said that Bronte uses the second generation so as to revise and resolve the imperfection of the past. A

Moor is tract mostly treeless waste land where thrives and water saturates the earth. When the story begins Lockwood, a strange visitor to the Moors-establishes the remoteness and isolation of setting:

“ *This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I don't believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of Society*” (

P:1.)

The isolated setting of the novel serves to maintain the concreteness. The atmosphere of Wuthering Heights fits the setting of the novel. The setting reflects the actions and personalities of the characters. Emily herself grew up and lived in this place, so her depiction of it is very concrete. She uses her knowledge to emphasize the moods and attitudes of the characters. The novel is rough so the people were rough, uncivilized and rude. The two Mansions are opposed in many ways: Wuthering Heights is dark, cold located on a hill high above the bright and inviting Thrush cross Grange, which is situated in the valley below. They are four miles apart. The house is described as:

“*Wuthering being a significant provincial adjective , descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its situation is exposed in stormy weather*” (1 – 10)

As the two houses are different, the people who inhabit them are completely different. Those who live in Wuthering Heights are rude, wild, bad-tempered and violent. The inhabitants of Thrush cross Grange are polite, well-mannered, calm and genteel. Even now days people who live in a mountain region, they are harder and their manners are different from those who live valleys or coast cities. Thus, this depiction of the characters and settings is concrete. It is not a fantasy.

Thus, the Grange is a symbol of civilization, warmth and goodness; the Heights is a symbol of wilderness, cruelty and evil. These differences between the two household and the people who inhabit them stand for the differences between good and evil and the differences between human beings. This is what was common in the Victorian Society during the days in which Emily Bronte wrote the novel. The description of the people is drawn concrete it would seem strange for the people who inhabit London to read about such people. However, this is exactly what happened to Lockwood.

It is also noted that Catherine's choice to marry Edgar a conventional marriage is a typical Victorian Choice. She violated her nature and follows her culture. Many girls now think in a way that Catherine thinks. They love a person but marry another one for her social status. This proves that Wuthering Heights deals with Concrete issues.

Arnold Kettle points out on the rebellion as the following:

"The rebellion of Catherine and Heath cliff is made completely concrete. They are not vague dreamers. Their rebellion is against that regime in which Hindley and his wife sit in fatuous comfort by the fire whilst they are relegated to the arch of dresser and compelled for the good of their souls to read the Broad Way Destruction under the tutelage of the canting hypocrite Joseph. It is a situation not confined, in the year 1847 to the more distant homesteads of the Yorkshire Moors" (P: 135).

Catherine decided to rebel with Heath cliff against Hindley because of her affinity for Heath cliff. Her bother does not treat her badly or reduces her to the status of Heath cliff. She finds herself united with Heath cliff and she cannot bear looking at him tortured by her brother and his wife. Therefore, she takes a decision to rebel with her affinity. This makes the novel concrete.

With the passage of time, things have changed when Lockwood comes back to Wuthering Heights; he hears a voice of a man trying to read. It is Hareton's voice. He is trying to read and Cathy teaches him. Hareton knows the importance of education that is raises a person's status in society and gets the people's respect.

"Con – trary! said a voice as sweet as a silver bell. That for the third time, you dunce, I'm not going to tell you again. Recollect or I will pull your hair! Contrary, then, answered another in deep but softened tones: and now, kiss me, for minding so well" (291 -2).

This conversation shows that Cathy is a good teacher. She adopts an excellent way of rewarding. When Hareton pronounces a word without any mistake, she has to kiss him. Cathy's attitude towards Hareton changes when he starts learning. This is a typical Victorian attitude, like her mother she rejects Hareton because he lacks education. Since he starts learning she

starts admiring him. In short education is very important in man's life. It brings dignity, respect and power. The issue of education is universal. Now in the Twenty – First Century a lot of people are still illiterate. They do not go schools. They either work or beg on streets. This is another evidence for the concreteness of the novel.

The creative imagination works on their personal experiences, transforms and transmutes them. Their renderings of the real worlds are not photographs, but pictures, colored by their individual, idiosyncrasies, vivid and vital. Often the picture is fanciful and romantic. At other times, it sticks close to the facts of actual existence, but these facts are always fired and colored by the authoress individuality. The act of creation is always performed in the novel.

In some respects the Bronte's may be regarded as even greater lovers of nature than anyone of the romantic, for their love of nature is all – comprehensive. The novelist presents sides of nature, the beautiful and the gentle, as well as the harsh and ugly. She is not one sided, like Wordsworth. She passionately love the objects of nature the glowing sky, shining stars, clouds, Moors and the wild waving wood etc. Emily had eyes for the beauties of nature and heart to feel them. She loved nature with an almost religious devotion and enthusiasm. It is her love of the moors that inspires her to write of them so vividly, realistically, accurately and minutely. These are examples of concreteness of the novel.

The haunting atmosphere along with the violent, fierce and rough weather is created by the skillful use of telling images and epithets:

"The first creak of the oak startled him (Heath cliff) like an electric shock. Cutting up the wings of a goose pulling the feathers from the pillow, dreary, chill and dismal, all evoke a weird atmosphere. His hair and clothes whitened with snow and his sharp cannibal teeth, revealed by cold and wrath, gleamed through the dark" (P: 92).

So as to create terror in the hearts, Emily was more reserved and isolated her love of the somber, the gloomy and the furious in nature is more intense which reflects in the concreteness of her characters, such as Heath cliff. The novel has a well-constructed plot. The story is not loose, but compact, and events are well arranged and inter – connected. It appears that novelist devoted a good deal of thought to concrete construction of the story. The story develops mainly through three movements. The first

movement ends with Heath cliff's sudden disappearance from the heights on discovering that Catherine has promised Linton to marry him. The second movement deals with Catherine's marriage with Linton, Heath cliff's return to the Heights about three years after her marriage and Catherine's illness ending in her death. The third movement deals with the events after Catherine's death leading to the death of Heath cliff and engagement of Hareton and the Second Catherine. These three movements are very well inter-connected, so that we imperceptibly glide from one into the other without any sense of gap or break after each movement.

The symbolism of the novel stands another concreteness of the novel. The tempestuous storms blowing outside are symbolic of the equally tempestuous passions of men. At Wuthering Heights, violent winds are perpetually howling. There are only a few calm scenes in the novel, and they occur at the Grange where nature is mild. But even their calmness is disturbed by Heath cliff. Edgar Linton and his wife Catherine lead a calm and happy married life until Heath cliff returns to the Heights. He brings with him a love which is violent fury and which ultimately destroys the very objective of love. The violent fury of love and hatred is symbolic of the tempestuous storms in nature.

The other noted concreteness is two central themes of the novel. The themes, which correspond to aspects of it which we might call respectively personal and social stand in the closest relationship to one another. The personal theme, by which the whole tragedy is illuminated, concerns the love of Catherine for Heath cliff and of Heath cliff in turn for her. The relationship between these two is based, no doubt on the familiar romantic conception of irresistible passion.

The consequences of the emotion so expressed, in the contrast which the novel so consistently stresses between Heath cliff and Linton may be held in a certain sense, to symbolize the superficial graces of civilized life, in which Heath cliff is totally lacking. It is perfectly natural that Catherine should be attracted to Linton. Courtesy, charm and urbanity are all qualities worthy to be admired and it is on their account that she is at a certain level of her nature impelled to respond to Linton's affection; but as she herself recognizes it is not the deepest part of her nature which is thus involved:

*"My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods :
time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the
trees. My love for Heath cliff resembles the eternal rocks
beneath; a source of little visible delight, but necessary"* (P:92).

The conflict between two types of feeling is stated with the a simplicity fundamentally intellectual in its sense of definition, which emphasizes the absence of all purely transitory or sentimental consideration, in the contract between the agreeable and the necessary, between emotions which serve at best to adorn life and others where absence is felt to be equivalent to spiritual death, we can observe once more the peculiar inspiration of the novel and our judgment of it as a whole is likely to depend upon our reaction to these words.

Thus, Emily's basic purpose is to show how good may conquer the evil in nature. What interests her even more is the conflict between one all-demanding love itself contaminated with vindictive resentments and several fully grown hatreds in one man's soul. In her novel Emily Presents, Heath cliff as an orphan to show the abuse of orphan at that time. She adds that the society led him to be a demon obsessed with revenge. Society is involved in his transgression. Heath cliff is brought from the slum of Liverpool. Novelist inspired with incidents that really existed in the Victorian Society.

The setting of the novel Wuthering Heights is concrete. Yorkshire, the people and their names are drawn from our daily life. The description of the novel is alive. We seem to smell the kitchen of Withering Heights, to feel the force of wind across the Moors to sense the very changes of the seasons. The degradation of Heath cliff by Linton and Hindley. The rebellion of Catherine and Heath cliff against Hindley is justified. Anyone facing that humiliation and degradation will do the same. Heath cliff does the same first he escapes with Catherine from Hindley's harsh regime. They feel that they are chained in Wuthering Heights; therefore they decide to escape to the open Moors. Second, he escapes far away and comes back strong, rich and educated. This time, he escapes because he is hurt by the one whom he loves. He has tolerated all the degradation and humiliation by other people but when Catherine behaves like them towards him, he runs away.

Heath cliff feel the injustice of the people around him. He comes back to the same place to revenge and to see his beloved who reject him. The choice of Catherine is the choice of any girl that decides to get married. And there are two men proposing to her. One of them is rich and handsome. The other is poor and low. Any girl would choose the first for the same reason that Catherine does. The struggle that she undergoes is the struggles of the self when someone repents and between nature and culture. Catherine does so because she feels that she has made unjust to Heath cliff. She fells ill and died after giving birth to her daughter Cathy. The desire she wishes to climb

the social ladder is the desire of any person in the twenty first century. It is universal. It is endless struggle, Arnold Kettle concludes:

“This unending struggle, of which the struggle to advance from class society to the higher humanity of a classless world is but an episode, is conveyed to us in Wuthering Heights precisely because the novel is conceived in actual .Concrete, particular terms, because the quality of the oppression revealed in the novel is not abstract but concrete, not vague but particular” (P:144).

Wuthering Heights is basically romantic, however, the concreteness of life belong to nineteenth century.

Works Cited :

- 1) Bronte Emily. Wuthering Heights. New Delhi. UBSPD, 2007.
- 2) Ceil, David. (1934). Early Victorian Novelists: Constable and Co Ltd, (160).
- 3) C. P. S. Sanger. (1926). The structure Wuthering Heights: Hograh Press, London.
- 4) Emily Bronte. Wuthering Heights, Thomas Cautley Newby Publications, UK. 1847.
- 5) F. S. Dry.(1937). The sources of Wuthering Heights: Cambridge University Press.
- 6) Irene Cooper Willis. (1936). An Ingenious analytical study: The Authorship of Wuthering Heights: Manchester England, National Labor Press.
- 7) Kettle, Arnold. (1994). An introduction to the English Novel. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall, (131), (144).
- 8) Muriel Spark and Derek. (1953). Emily Bronte. Her life and work. Google Books, Stanford.
- 9) Miran Rahman. New Film of Wuthering Heights to stay true to Emily Bronte’s Classic. May 8, 2016.
- 10) Phyllis Bentley’s. (1947). The Bronte’s: Home and Van Thal.
- 11) Sir Herbert Rad. Herbert read Critical Essays. Complex and Passionate Flowering in Wuthering Heights, www.enotes.com