

**The Themes of Evil and Revenge in “Wuthering Heights”
a Novel by Emily Bronte**

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Abstract

This paper elaborates ill relationships of people to one another and those themes of evil which are presented in the novel. Along with these social evils, this paper also highlights the theme of revenge in the novel. As the novel was written about two hundred years ago, it has faced so much criticism, so literature review highlights the point of view of the critics about the novel Wuthering Heights. In order to get accurate results, qualitative method of data analysis has been used as a research tool. For the correction of findings, qualitative analysis has been divided into two subparts i.e. textual analysis and thematic analysis, in order to investigate the list of evils along with the theme of revenge. And finally it has been tried to prove that how this novel is full of the societal evils and how it shows the tendency of revenge.

Keywords: Love, hatred, revenge, evils, selfishness.

Introduction

“Wuthering Heights” is the first and the only single novel written by Emily Bronte in her whole life. This novel shows the reflection of her elevated individual poetic style. Since the date of publication it has faced very deadly criticism, so many people even resemble it to the Shakespearean play, Romeo Juliet (Watson, 1949). Wuthering Heights is also known as a romantic novel having a passionate love story, but at the same this is also a revenge story. It is based on the life of Heathcliff, a mysterious person who is the main character of the novel. He was adopted by a family and was brought up as a servant. As the story proceeds he falls in love

with the lady called Catherine. He runs away with Catherine in order to get married to her. But fate has decided something else. Catherine decides to marry another young and handsome man just because of his status. His name is Edgar Linton. It becomes the reason of change in his nature of good to evil. His nature is now fully charged with an evil, in order to take revenge. He disappears for a long time, and then a dramatic change takes place in the story of the novel. He returns back as a rich person with higher education. His aim is now only to take revenge from two families to which he assumes that these are the responsible for his spoiled life.

Literature Review

The novel *Wuthering Heights* is written by Emily Bronte. She presents the deep, passionate love as well as she highlights the dark and evil nature of a human. Not just the story of love, but an enormously fervent story of love and fixation, and shorn of all well-mannered notions which emphasizes akin as well as a beast in the man. The entire story contains deep emotions, eating of the heart (jealousy), and panic, anxious love, gloomy and degraded Heathcliff. The story revolves around the behaviors and characters and a life which is warped by fate. The novel faced much criticism by critics. Watson (1949) observes that so many critics compare *Wuthering Heights* with the Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and finally they declare that *Jane Eyre* is more superior to the *Wuthering Heights*.

Wuthering Heights is a pleasant novel with the artistic touch of gothic atmosphere, gothic imagery and passions with a bleak, gloomy and windy night. It is full of horror landscapes and whispered sounds that permit your heart to be seized. And drive you into madness. The portrayal of the characters is so cruel. Somehow the characters are responsible for their tragic end. And almost all haunted by their emotions and fates. There are no suspicions that love is so passionate in this novel, but at the same time violent too. That later reveals its wild aspect. The use of diction in this novel by Emily Bronte is so fantastic. And she also employs interesting description techniques. This makes Emily different from her contemporaries. The technique of narration called suspension of disbelief used by Emily Bronte in *Wuthering Heights*. Without any complaint she did a fine job with this technique. It keeps the novel efficient well. But there are some arguments of critics regarding the structure of the novel. Some of them believe that it is a very carefully constructed novel in English literature (Varghese, 2012). But on the other hand

others say that it is a splendid imperfect novel in which Bronte loses her control over occasionally (López, &Corazón, 2013). The novel provides a very comprehensive interpretation which presents the whole novel as unified.

The depth analysis of the novel reveals that Emily was concerned with what life actually, means for her. She focused on her character's lay in the universe. In which everything is alive, but not intellectual and is animated by spiritual force and one of the forces is a storm. That is harsh, cruel, and wild. The world of our experience is one of the faces of it, full of discord. But that is only because of in the overcrowded condition of their earthly personification. These rules are diverted from following the course that their nature dictates and get in each other's way. They all change from positive into negative forces. The calm becomes a source of weakness, not of harmony in natural scheme; the storm is a force not a fruitful energy.

Oates (1982) observes that the canny Physicality of *Wuthering Heights* is different from the Gothic as well as different from Shakespeare's tragedies, where the presentation is implied with the endurance of good. But not persuaded that is, survival is authentic and not just a thematic opportunity. We cannot say that it is a contrast of its origin. *Wuthering Heights* strikes as so only one of its kind, and surprising. This novel is not directly a contrast to the general hypothesis, and not very much complicated to be managed with the number of things.

It is a romance tale that brilliantly challenges the previous romance and gothic tales. The novel reveals the temperamental opposites; innocence that was lost and a necessary defeat of childhood. *Wuthering Heights* as a manuscript is very strong. Not a single component is without evidence that is untamed, puzzled, displaced and improbable. A man has the ability to affect others by his own actions and intention. That can be good or can be worse, which harms others. And choices are very much available for all, either to choose good or evil. Destructive path was chosen by Heathcliff. As Þórarinnsson, (2013) says that his cruel behavior brings destruction upon him and also upon those who are close to him. Furthermore, he says that throughout the play, he tries to prove himself as a wicked person. Love has both the power of the positive change as well as negative. Unhappily it affects Heathcliff negatively.

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research is a method of inquiry which is adopted in various academic disciplines. It begins with various assumptions, a world view, the possibility of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning of an individual or a group as in an association to a society or a human problem. In-depth analysis of human behavior and the motivating factors governing such behavior can be well understood. This method of inquiry involves the why and how aspects of decision making along with what, where, when and who. The report consists of the voices of the participants, the re-flexibility of the researcher, the complex descriptions and interpretation of the problem and in fact it extends the literature to call for an action.

Qualitative Research traverses the totality of a situation by bringing in symbiotic interactions between various participants. It helps in large data analysis in a more scientific and empirical manner. Out of the different forms of analysis in qualitative research; thematic analysis, which has a wide range of flexibility, has been employed here. Pinpointing, examining and recording themes inside a given data are given greater weight age in thematic analysis. Themes form the core as they help in narrowing down the researcher to a specific question. The themes also take up the various categories for a complete analysis. The thematic analysis gives a greater assignment on the organization and description of a situation and from henceforth a solution or a call of action can be derived which has the potential of offering a permanent solution to the problem under consideration. Along with the explicit meaning the implicit meaning of the whole process can be easily derived with the help of this kit. By comparing different themes to establishing a relationship between different themes the analysis involved here is of greater benefit to lay out a conclusion based on various circumstances and scenarios. Thematic analysis can be further broken down into various subordinate themes which further help in solving complex coordinates. A main theme which forms the umbrella to all the subordinate themes is given the maximum quota whereas the subordinate themes are given quotas according to the circumstance and scenarios in which they are placed in. By this way the historical phenomenon, geographical settings, religious practices, tradition and customs; all depending upon a broad factor known as the time scale, can be used for analysis of a much broader & in-depth study of a scenario involving a possible call of action in the future.

Research Questions:

RQ1: What are the social evils of the Victorian era that have been highlighted in the novel?

RQ2: How far revenge is the theme of the novel?

Discussion

In application of our qualitative research under thematic analysis, the whole novel falls under the theme of violence. In the novel, a point reaches where the work done by the author is under complete fire because of the satanic nature of the novel, where not a single character encompasses love or affection. Even at some points where love blooms between two individuals the societal norms taught for generations come into play and put an end to the only areas in the novel where love and affection are seen.

With respect to RQ# 1 which is regarding the evils during the Victorian era highlighted in the novel, the very first sub theme is gender inequality in which Catherine out of social norms marries Edgar Linton even though her love for Heathcliff is far greater than her affection for Edgar. This brings to the forefront on the unwritten norms established in the minds of a woman right from her birth that a man with wealth & education can be the only one eligible for being her husband rather than the one her heart truly craves for. Even Cathy was a bit hostile towards Hareton owing to his lack of education. As it is affixed in the mind of a woman; right from her birth that monetary security is the only criteria for marriage. Heathcliff's brutal treatment of his wife also confirms that gender inequality has been persistent since centuries. Fearing her husband; Isabella runs away as this also brings to the forefront that a woman after marriage becomes the property of her husband and she has nowhere to hide for cover rather than finding a place of her own. So it can be said that female characters of this play depict a whole picture of woman's nature in general (Oda, 2010).

The next thing which leads to another evil activity is revenge, paying back of revenge by Heathcliff to Hindley and his son Hareton. Heathcliff after returning back to Wuthering Heights gets in contact with Hindley only to make him fall into debt and by taking his land as a mortgage for the money he has been lending to Hareton; so that he spends more money on alcohol &

gambling and destroys his self and at the end Heathcliff can get to inherit all the property of Hareton. Heathcliff also shows his revenge by teaching Hareton undesirable habits, in this way he takes his revenge from not only Hindley but also from his son Hareton. This degree of revenge is very large in comparison to the other degrees of revenge because Heathcliff tries to destroy the family tree of Hindley; which his action and intentions clearly highlight to us. Hence the madness of revenge gives a way to the aesthetic and psychological power as it supports the story of the novel and its main characters (Vargish, 1971).

Another sub kind of evils is corruption. When Heathcliff runs away from Wuthering Heights for 3 years and in this 3 year span, he amazes wealth by illegal means which brings down the morale of the novel by many basis points. It also teaches that one can become rich in a short span of time by resorting to illegal means which in itself is against the society as a whole. Corruption not only hurts a single person, but it hurts the whole society at large and hence the gravity of the crime is larger compared to the other crimes committed against an individual. But on the other hand, Muller (2012) believes that Heathcliff is not corrupt by birth, but he is cheated by Catherine. So he now does not care about anything because he has to take revenge.

In the very beginning of the novel Heathcliff's racial color is portrayed in a manner which is much likely to change the mindset of a child reading the novel. Also the initial reaction of Hindley towards Heathcliff owing to his racial color further highlights the situation of racial apartheid that was rampant during those days. Racism is a form of violence which comes under both physical and mental violence. This also brings out to the foremost one among the many evil aspects of the novel, which is portrayed in a sublime manner. Althubaiti, (2015) points out that all struggles in the play are just because of racism. He argues that the whole society of England was the core center of all social, political, economical, cultural and racial conflicts. And the character of Heathcliff is victim of these conditions. He grows up like a slave and is left alone by his love just because of his low position and status in the society.

Another aspect of social evils that has been uncovered in Wuthering Height is alcohol addiction. It ruined the life of Hindley which was further exploited by Heathcliff. In fact Heathcliff taught Hareton all the bad habits in which alcoholism and gambling would have definitely formed a part of his teaching. Hindley was so much into gambling that he lost all his property and finally died

as pamper. Jassim, (2006) believes that it was Heathcliff, who taught Hareton to misbehave with his father. In other words Heathcliff had to take revenge from the family of Hindley, so first he made both the son and father addict of alcohols and gambling then he destroyed the respect of parents in the eyes of Hindleys' son.

The evil of physical abuse can also be observed in the novel. The example that can be incited here is the degrading treatment of Hindley towards Heathcliff during their childhood. This shows that the owner or employer has full rights over the fundamental rights of an individual employed under him/her. This has been an eye opener for the various constitutions of the world to bring in labor reform laws. Also the physical abuse by Heathcliff towards his wife Isabella and his son Linton is to be noted here. So Hassan, (2008) thinks that Heathcliff is even worst then the beasts because he pays back the same cruelty, physical abuse and unkindness to others that he had been paid by his masters. In the same way Saleh, (n.d) argues that Heathcliff behaves like an insane because he was abused and neglected in the past. Since his birth to adulthood, he has been facing social injustice and inequality, so now from his point of view all people to him are tasteless. Because of this reason, elements of anger and abuse can be found in his personality in adulthood.

Hatred & selfishness expressed between various characters in the novel; make the novel more satanic. Even Joseph, who is a worker at Wuthering Heights, lacks the slightest drop of kindness or humanity. All the characters, including the main characters are portrayed as persons without any love. Selfishness is also fully visible in the novel. Mr. Earnshaw's love towards his adopted son makes his wife and son turn red cheek. Out of selfishness Hindley mistreats Heathcliff throughout his childhood, which prompts Heathcliff to exhibit his wrath on Hindley when the tide was on his side. Catherine in the want of monetary security selfishly marries Edgar instead of Heathcliff. Heathcliff in the want of acquiring the property of Wuthering Heights detains Cathy and makes her marry his son. A slow poison of making the reader more self-oriented slowly happens throughout the novel. Betrayal and lack of trust between the various characters is also gradually induced in the novel as slow venom. After Heathcliff gets to meet Hindley after a span of 3 years; he plots to destroy Hindley in an unconventional fashion. In fact Isabella is used as a coin by Heathcliff to destroy Edgar Linton. Isabella gets betrayed by Heathcliff and she finally ends up in the hands of an abusive husband. Each and every stage of the novel makes the reader thing that if one has to survive, then the betrayal of trusted ones is of no problem.

Obsession of Heathcliff on Catherine turns out to be the unquenchable fuel for all the flames throughout the novel. Since Heathcliff looked at Catherine as his own property and was more possessive on her; he not able to marry her turned the novel into an evil one. Even after Catherine's death; ironically, his obsession towards her grows leaps and bounds which makes him starve for days and end his life by himself. Once a human being is objectified and looked possessively upon, then it takes ugly turns if the one who is possessive is not able to get what he/she wants. This mad obsession made Heathcliff to take revenge on all; no matter how serious implication they inflicted on others. Selfishness is not only the element of the nature of Heathcliff but it can be observed in the deeds of Catherine. Kurspahić, (2012) says that when Catherine has to select her life partner, she chooses Edgar by rejecting his beloved Heathcliff. The result of this mistake is very much tragic and due to her foolishness all other characters suffer badly.

So the RQ#1 can be concluded in this way that above all discussed sub themes are all the evil aspects of the novel. The novel makes the reader to think; is this work of a normal human being or is it the work of Satan? Many famous authors have poured in their criticism during all eras. In one final say it can be said that the whole novel has been an evil effect not only for an individual but to the society as a whole. This also serves as a caution for society on what not to do.

Now, as far as RQ#2 is concerned, it can be discussed in this way that among the many themes of this classy novel *Wuthering Heights* "Revenge" theme appears to be stand more prominent, and this character leads the protagonists to their fateful destiny. Bronte actually portrays "revenge" something as chaotic feeling and one which renders the avenger with sleepless nights and doomed eternity, something which is more devastating than the actual wrong being done. In this novel Bronte has not so strictly adhered to the guidelines of the genre, though the novel is a romance, but the love of Catherine and Heathcliff would have been a mediocre love story without the involvement of the revenge theme so this theme actually gives power pact plot. By analyzing this theme we can scan the psyche of Heathcliff where being unable to get the woman he loves, he diverts his attention to avenge his childhood tormentor, the foster brother Hindley. Heathcliff aka a gypsy grows up so enthusiasts to destroy Hindley and so cruelly as well as intelligently becomes master of the two hours. This thing gives opportunity to Heathcliff to demean Hindley every time.

So we can safely say this very desire to take revenge becomes the driving force of the story otherwise Heathcliff would have been no more than an average hero seeking for his love. Though Heathcliff never actually finds peace through revenge, he only achieves happiness when he gives up his feelings and decision for taking revenge. "Revenge is like biting a dog that bit you." This quote states the Heathcliff's immature desire to propagate agony for those who offended him. As far as Catherine is concerned things were no better for her as well. Her revenging feelings for Heathcliff by blaming him for impending death do not calm her mind. Before dying, she describes Heathcliff for her murder. "You have killed me and thriven on it, I think".

The way Heathcliff and Catherine revenge were the reason for this misery similarly Hindley's revenge on Heathcliff causes him bankruptcy and he finally dies, sadly though. Hindley's attempt to murder Heathcliff was the only reason to like a sufferer. And it can be put accurately in the words of Isabella. Treachery and violence are spears pointed at both ends, they would those who resort to them worse than their enemies. Hindley's predicaments are result of his own fault his grief can be understood, but sympathy for him is short lived, he loses Wuthering Heights to Heathcliff and this shows revenge does not make anything better. Bronte wants to show that revenge is not only something which is rash and harsh, but it's something that is neither productive nor beneficial. Thus the revenge theme stands at the peak point among all others.

This proves revenge is only responsible for self-hurt where we can solve the conflicts in better ways. Bronte despises the concept of revenge, showing how negative and devastating it can be. There is no good obeying your instincts of a negative impulse, the revenge feeling of both Heathcliff and Hindley ultimately leads to their downfall, destroying whatever they love, whatever the reason revenge can't be justified.

CONCLUSION

Wuthering Heights presents us with a twofold aspect life. We can safely propose that novel is an elemental struggle between good and evil, the world of darkness versus world of light. These contradictory aspects can be categorized as chaos and calm. And it can be claimed that these two elements are not in contradiction but is a balance to establish the cosmic order of the universe.

It's one of the themes is co-existence of good and evil. This reminds us of the Milton's epic "Paradise Lost" where the conflict between good and evil constructed the whole plot. Similarly Wuthering Heights is the story of Love and Revenge, where Heathcliff the protagonist is brought in to the Earn's family, but his evil designs proceeds the story forward and his death marks the conclusion of the novel. He was himself responsible for his destruction, though he did love Catherine deeply, but it could be considered as a tortured love. His character is seen as a nightmarish representation of fears about self-making which has exceeded so far. As it is rightly said that to gain self awareness, is important to study the human nature. Emily's deep understanding of human nature is clearly manifested in her novel and she has portrayed that the essence of human nature is selfish and cruel. The story tries to draw the line between neutral self-love and harmful selfishness. The character of hero in the novel has a wild spirit and tendency towards violence which are very much visible through his desire for Catherine's love and his need for revenge. So in the words of Nalbant, (2010) Un-destroyable love and passionate desire for revenge are the two main elements that grow up the whole story of the novel.

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