

Characterization in Wuthering Heights

1818-1855

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Character portrayal is always regarded an important aspect of a novel. Emily Brontë proves herself a consummate artist in drawing characters in her classic novel 'Wuthering Heights'. She has created many memorable characters in the novel, particularly Heathcliff and Catherine. Her reading of the chronicles of Gondal Kingdom and the stories of mystery, violence and horror of the German Romantic writers, had been major literary influences to portray her characters. But above all for her characters she depended upon her own personal experiences. As Maughan says Emily Brontë: "Found Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw in the hidden depths of her own soul." Even the minor characters of the novel like Hindley, Lockwood and Nelly are facets of their creator.

Emily Brontë while portraying her characters put emphasis on terrible and tragic elements of human life. As her sister Charlotte Brontë describes Emily's disposition was not naturally gregarious and that circumstances developed in her a tendency of seclusion. She rarely crossed the threshold of home, yet she knew the ways, the terror and mysteries of the people ^{living} around the particular locality of her home. By her powerful imaginative insight she was capable of ^{visualizing} transmuting the human ^{life} experiences of the region with graphic accuracy and then using them as material for character portrayal. It speaks of the greatness of ^{Emily} Brontë that in the novel she has successfully transmuted ~~her~~ regional Yorkshire obser-

- vations into of life and people into deeply Symbolical universal experience.

(Emily Bronte in her delineation of human character shows her belief in heredity. Her characters inherit the vices and virtues of their parents. The daughters of Catherine and Edgar, strongly resembles her mother in many respects. She has her mother's handsome dark eyes and she also imbibes) In Wuthering Heights the universalisation of theme has been achieved mainly by making the major characters represent certain symbols. Heathcliff and Earnshaws are the children of wild passion and storm, while the Lintons are the children of calm. The two different groups of characters represent two opposite aspects of human nature. Wuthering Heights, the home of the Earnshaws, is the dark, storm tossed centre of violent passions where elemental ~~passion~~ forces hold complete sway. Thrushcross Grange, home of the Lintons, is set in the lush smiling valley, and it has a suitable environment for the gentle, gracious people who possess it. Respectively the two worlds stand for passion and reason, discord and harmony, dynamic energy and stasis. Mutually destructive as they are, yet they seem to impelled to seek reconciliation. In the novel the conflict between them is resolved only through tragedy.

In the novel we find both 'flat' and round characters. Joseph is

a 'highly' 'flat' character. He is a static character, as we find him unchanged from the beginning of the novel till the end. But the major characters of the novel are three dimensional or 'round'. Thus Heathcliff and Catherine are truly 'round' characters. Emily Bronte shows the evolution of their characters with the progress of the story. Her men and women are developed by what happens to them, and change under the stress of events. Hindley's original jealousy of Heathcliff is born^{out} of his father's favoritism towards his rival. Heathcliff's hatred and vengeance are fostered by Hindley's ill treatment and Catherine's preference for Edgar. Heathcliff's persecution is responsible for Isabella's peevishness, young Cathy's proud and sullen defiance, Linton's timidity and cruelty. In this constant interaction of varied passions and emotions, the characters lose and acquire various traits, giving symbolic significance to the ultimate course of the story. In this sense the leading characters, in reality, represent various passions rather than personalities, like the characters of the pagan tragedies of ancient Greece.

In *Wuthering Heights* Emily Bronte has created some unforgettable characters. Such insight into human experience as displayed here, is reflective of the genius of the novelist. "The chief characters in the story are scarcely human beings at all, and defy all psychological standards; they are

(4)

the primal forces of Nature incarnate passions; yet such fierce intensity of feeling has gone into their creation, that we accept them at their creator's imperious command."

The characters of Emily Brontë have stood to the test of time and once acquainted they become integral part of the memory of the readers.
