



Paradoxes Concerning the Love in Wuthering Heights

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Abstract

This article tries to analyze novel Wuthering Heights. It is known Cathy and Heathcliff love each other. However, revolving around their love, there exist many paradoxes. Paradoxes related to their love and paradoxes related to the narration of the novel are what this article is trying to analyze. The analysis uses Genette's Theories in the narrative analysis. First, the article discusses the role of the narrative levels and paradoxes that can be found concerning these narratives. Second, it states some events that are connected with the paradoxical love between two main characters. Finally, the article makes a conclusion by summing up the paradoxes found concerning this love.

Key words: Paradox; Narration; Love

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INTRODUCTION

It is well-known the main characters, Cathy and Heathcliff love one another very much. However, there are many paradoxes related to this love. I'll discuss the paradoxes around this love.

The understanding of "paradoxes" is quite different from the usual case. A rather broad understanding of "paradoxes" will be used in this article. It means that any type of contradiction in what they say about the other or expressions of contradictive emotions, or contradictive actions will be regarded as a paradox.

The narration of Wuthering Heights is complex, it is narrated by several characters and its narration frequently changes its perspective of time. As a result, the narration is difficult and unreliable. This can be seen in a way to further the paradoxes found in this novel.

My article is based on the two questions:

- (a) What paradoxes can be found relating to the love?
- (b) How does the narration add paradoxes to the story?

1. GENETTE'S NARRATIVE THEORIES

Genette believes that on the essence of the narration, narration is based on specific narrative discourse (Genette, 1980, p.27). Therefore his study on narration is mainly focused on narrative discourse. In his Narrative Discourse, he points out narration includes three levels of concept. First, narrative (narrative discourse), it refers to the narrative text that tells one or a series of events in oral or in written form. Second, story, it refers to the events that are being narrated. The events are either true or invented. Third, narrating, it refers to the process of producing discourse, the retelling of the events (Genette, 1980, p.27). Moreover, Genette divides narration into three categories: tense, mood, voice. Tense copes with order, speed and frequency-the different relations between the story and narrative; mood deals with the degrees and forms of which the narrative is represented; voice deals with the act of narrating (Genette, 1980, p.31).

2. PREVIOUS STUDY

Many scholars in home and abroad have done the study on Wuthering Heights.

Chen (2012) works on the study of comparison between Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights. In her article on Comparison of the Narrative Patterns between Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights she let us see the differences between these two novels through narrative angle,

narrative structure and narrative time. The different narrative modes result in different situation.

Stevenson (1988) takes up the many problematic issues surrounding likeness in *Wuthering Heights* in “Heathcliff is me!”: *Wuthering Heights and the Question of Likeness*. He mentions that it is difficult to see just what the similarities between Catherine and Heathcliff are because these similarities are not specifically expressed in the novel. He also mentions how this likeness is difficult to apply since we do not know much about Heathcliff, and we do not know much about what caused Cathy and Heathcliff to become so close, making it even more difficult to see exactly what these similarities could be.

3. PARADOXES RELATING TO NARRATION

As to voice, *Wuthering Heights* consists of many levels of narration. There are several narrators. Nelly Dean, Mr. Lockwood, even Isabella and Heathcliff have taken up the story as narrators for a time. But it is Mr. Lockwood and Nelly Dean, the two most important narrators, who control the process of speed at which the whole story is going on. It is called frame narration when there are narratives contained within each other. In this frame there are three different levels of narration (Genette, 1980, p.228). The first level is extradiegetic. It refers to the writing of the text by the character that gathered all this information, not by the actual author, Emily Brontë. The second level is intradiegetic. It refers to the events that happen in this text. The third level is metadiegetic. It is connected with narratives told within the intradiegetic narrative (Ibid., p.228). Lockwood is the extradiegetic narrator because it is his journal that makes up the text of *Wuthering Heights*. Lockwood asks Nelly to tell him the story of Cathy, so she is the intradiegetic narrator in Lockwood’s extradiegetic narrative. The letter written by Isabella that Nelly reads for Lockwood, and the notes written by Cathy that Lockwood read when he spent the night at the Heights are metadiegetic narratives. The narrators in *Wuthering Heights* are all homodiegetic narrators (Ibid., p.245), for examples, Lockwood and Nelly. But they are different in a way that Nelly has been present for most of Cathy’s and Heathcliff’s story while Lockwood is only present at some parts of the story. In fact, Lockwood never met Cathy since she died long before he became the tenant of Thrushcross Grange.

As to the tense, there are four types of narrating: beforehand narrating, subsequent narrating, interpolated narrating and the same time narrating. Two types of narrating are included in *Wuthering Heights*. They are subsequent narrating and interpolated narrating (Ibid., p.217). We know that most of the narrating is done in the past tense. Both Lockwood and Nelly talks about what has

happened before. In addition to that the novel is written in journal form, so everything that is said is automatically in past tense. However, even if the journals are in past tense, Lockwood and Nelly also stop and take pauses in their narrating in between some events. The time perspective shifts back and forth this way. We should notice that while Nelly is telling Lockwood about Cathy, several years have passed between her present and parts of the story. She stops from time to time to reflect on the things that have passed, so somehow, she is recalling everything and stopping in between different events, making it seem more interpolated than it actually needs to be.

As to mood, focalization, Genette distinguishes three types or degrees of focalization—zero, internal and external (Ibid., pp.189-190)—and explains his typology by relating it to previous theories:

The first term (zero focalization) corresponds to what English-language criticism calls narrative with omniscient narrator and Pouillon “vision from behind” and which Todorov symbolizes by the formula Narrator > Character (where the narrator knows more than the character, or more exactly, says more than any of the characters knows). In the second term (internal focalization), Narrator = Character (the narrator says only what a given character knows); this is narrative with “point of view” after Lubbock, or with “restricted field” after Blin; Pouillon calls it “vision with”. In the third term (external focalization), Narrator < Character (the narrator says less than the character knows); this is the “objective” or “behaviorist” narrative, what Pouillon calls “vision from without” (Ibid., pp.188-189).

Genette points out that these types do not necessarily have to be applicable to the entire work of a novel, but only a short passage of text (Ibid., p.191). In *Wuthering Heights*, there is “internal focalization” the focus of the narration is on a character that takes place in the narration. Variable in this context means that the focus of narration switches characters, as it does between for example Nelly and Cathy, they take turns in narrating different parts of the story (Ibid., p.189). Part of the focalization is external which means that we are never allowed to hear the thoughts and feelings of the protagonists, which kept from us (Ibid., p.190). Lockwood plays the role of the externally focalized narrator since when he first meets Heathcliff he doesn’t know what Heathcliff has been through or why he acts the way he does. Lockwood rather sees his own characteristics in Heathcliff, claiming to know why he acts the way he does, though Lockwood does realize that he cannot be sure that this is actually the case, he is aware that he might be, as he is, projecting his own characteristics onto Heathcliff (Emily, 2003, p.5).

Having various narrators is helpful to the story and also makes the story more complicated. Homodiegetic narrators are helpful to the story in the sense that they actually have been present for parts of the story. Nelly is the witness to the events that she describes whereas Lockwood recounts Nelly’s narrative which he has never seen himself. However Homodiegetic also makes the story

more complicated. The varying degrees of homodiegetic narratives mean that Nelly and Lockwood have not been present at the same events and don't know the same things from one another. This makes them able to tell the story and alter it without the other narrator being aware of this. That is to say, Nelly might tell Lockwood a lot of things that were not real because he has no way of knowing whether she was telling him the truth or not. Nelly's narrating is subsequent narrating, which can cause problems because it has been a long time since the event of Heathcliff and Cathy happened. When Nelly tells the story of Heathcliff and Cathy Nelly would not be able to remember quite as clearly as she seems to do. Memories usually fade or disappear over time. Therefore her recounts of the entire conversations are not very reliable. On talking about Narrative being unreliable, it is worthwhile to mention that Nelly wouldn't like to go to Thrushcross Granges after Edgar and Cathy got married because she wanted to stay with young Hareton. But Cathy wanted her to go, so Cathy made her brother force Nelly to go (Ibid., p.70).

As soon as Catherine had married to Linton Heathcliff asked her to live in Wuthering Heights. Nelly begged Heathcliff to be allowed to come as well, but was refused (Ibid., p.219). So it is very likely that Nelly altered the story in her narrative because she sought some sort of revenge on the people who had not listened to her wishes, she is in that sense a very unreliable narrator. Nelly recount is not so reliable also because she might have changed her feelings towards a certain event after it happened, and therefore altered the way she told it to Lockwood. Perhaps wanting her reaction to seem different or perhaps not remembering her thoughts at the moment she first felt them, leading her to unknowingly change them to what she feels about the event at the moment she is retelling it. In the parts of the novel where there is external focalization we are not aware of the feelings or thoughts of the protagonist. The feelings and thoughts the narrator claims that the protagonist has can be faulty since the protagonist has not actually said anything, has not shared his or her feelings, therefore the narrator does not have a way to know with certainty what the protagonist is thinking or feeling. This could lead to wrong assumptions or descriptions.

Taking all these factors into account we can see the whole text becomes rather paradoxical since there really is no way we can know with absolute certainty that the things described and told by the narrators are accurate.

4. PARADOXES RELATING TO THE LOVE

One evening Cathy came to see Nelly. She didn't know Heathcliff was in Nelly's room. She told her that she had agreed to marry Edgar and began to cry. Nelly asked Cathy

whether she loved Edgar, she answered that she loved him because he was handsome, young, rich and pleasant, and because he loved her. Nelly told her that all of these are not good reasons for her to marry Edgar. But Cathy seemed not happy and Nelly asked her what's wrong with her. Cathy pointed to her head and heart and said "in my soul, and my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong" (Ibid., p.62). She then proceeded to say that:

I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire. (Ibid., p.63)

Heathcliff heard what they talked about, but Cathy thought he heard nothing, and even though he had heard, she didn't think he knew what love meant (Ibid., p.32). Nelly told her that there weren't any reasons that Heathcliff should not know love just as well as Cathy did and told Cathy that if she left Heathcliff, Heathcliff would be alone and would be the most unfortunate creature that ever was born (Ibid., pp.63-64). Cathy would not hear any of it and she said that nothing would separate her from Heathcliff even if she married Edgar, if their separation was the cost of her marrying Edgar, she would not marry him. She said that if she had married Heathcliff they would have been beggars while if she married Edgar, she could help Heathcliff (Ibid., p.64). Nelly told Cathy she didn't think Heathcliff would like to accept money from Cathy and her husband and she think that was the worst reason for Cathy to marry Edgar. But Cathy told Nelly it was the best reason for her to marry Edgar. She would marry Edgar for the sake of Heathcliff.

What was the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem part of it. 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 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 so, don't talk of our separation again it is impracticable and-. (Ibid., p.64)

Soon Cathy and Nelly found that Heathcliff was missing. Nelly told Cathy that Heathcliff might have heard what she had said and left. Cathy hurriedly ran out to search for him, seemingly not knowing why he would be so unhappy as to leave Heights (Ibid., pp.65-66). Cathy got wet and fell ill, for she looked for Heathcliff in the rain. She was very sad that Heathcliff left the Wuthering

Heights. The doctor came and told Cathy's families she was seriously ill. Nelly tells Lockwood when Cathy recovered from her illness she was "saucier and more passionate, and even haughtier than ever". This was probably caused by Heathcliff's disappearance.

There exist several paradoxes in the event described above.

Firstly, I want to point out the fact that Cathy said that she wanted to marry Edgar to help place Heathcliff out of Hindley's power that if she had been married to Heathcliff, they would have been beggar. Wolpers said that some themes take the form of value in opposition (Wolpers, 1993, p.90). This can be explained to be happening here, the values in opposition are love and wealth. Here wealth conquers love. Cathy certainly thinks she married Edgar out of her love for Heathcliff. But she chooses wealth over her true love in order that she could save him. However, this is not what Heathcliff wants her to do.

Secondly, one paradox that can be found as to Cathy and Heathcliff love is the fact that even if Cathy loves Heathcliff more she chooses to marry Edgar. Cathy said that she had decided to marry Edgar in order to help Heathcliff out of his brother's control. As Nelly indicates that it was not likely that Heathcliff would have accepted help and money from the Lintons, and Cathy who knew Heathcliff better than any other people should have realized that he would have been unlikely to accept the help from Cathy and Edgar. What is more paradoxical is that even if Cathy had good reasons for choosing Edgar over Heathcliff she didn't follow her own feelings and her true nature, since she said in her heart and soul she was sure that it was wrong to marry Edgar.

Thirdly, another paradox that can be found is that Cathy told Nelly it was impracticable for her and Heathcliff to separate and she would not have married Edgar if she had to be separated from Heathcliff. She told Nell that Edgar would have to like and accept Heathcliff and Edgar would soon learn of her true feeling for Heathcliff (Emily, 2003, p.64). It seems that Cathy didn't realize how Heathcliff would react to hearing the news that she was going to marry Edgar, which is odd since she knows Heathcliff better than any other person. Everyone knows how Heathcliff would react to this. Heathcliff left when he heard Cathy say it would degrade her to marry Heathcliff. How contradictive and unlikely it was! Cathy expected that Heathcliff would not mind she would be married to Edgar and expected Edgar would not have any resentment towards Heathcliff just because she loved Heathcliff. On Heathcliff's personality and Edgar's personality we can see that they would not let go of any resentment towards each other. Heathcliff and Edgar had been opponents or, we can say, enemies ever since they first met. Cathy wished they would get on well with each other, it's impossible. Cathy treated both of them very well, but that changed nothing. They are still enemies. It seems that Heathcliff resented Linton more than Linton

resented him, which can be seen from the fact that Heathcliff marked the day Cathy had spent with him and the days she had spent with the Lintons.

Fourthly, I want to point out another paradox that Cathy claimed that she was Heathcliff, and he was more herself than she was, their soul were made of the same things and her great miseries in the world had been Heathcliff's miseries. From many aspects we can see this is paradoxical. First, she could not be Heathcliff, they were two separate individual and could not be one another or one, at the same time. We can also see it was likely that her words were metaphor. It means that their personalities and feelings were exactly the same. But that was not likely either. Two individuals couldn't have the same thoughts and views on everything, which can be seen from Cathy and Heathcliff. Cathy contradicted herself in declaring that she did not think Heathcliff was able to feel love while she was. If they were really one and exactly the same, she should know that Heathcliff was capable of feeling love as she was. Except that Cathy and Heathcliff have different living conditions in their childhood and they were brought up differently, considering that they had rather different experiences in life, it is unlikely that they should be one and the same and have the same "miseries". Even if Cathy understood Heathcliff and the torment he had been suffering she had her own problem, for she tried to keep her two natures apart. Therefore it is impossible that her miseries were entirely of Heathcliff's miseries and she was Heathcliff.

CONCLUSION

Heathcliff and Cathy love each other very much. Their love is powerful. No matter what one did to the other, their love never faltered. However, paradoxes can be found in *Wuthering Heights*. These paradoxes are related to Cathy and Heathcliff and their love for one another. The paradoxes concerning their love for each other is that Cathy chose Edgar over Heathcliff and Cathy claimed that Heathcliff killed her. These paradoxes are concerned with Cathy's double nature.

Another biggest paradox is that Cathy considered herself and Heathcliff as one and the same. They are different first because the way they acted is different and second because the way they were loved and cared for is different. Cathy was loved by almost everyone in *Wuthering Heights*, but Heathcliff was loved only by Cathy and at one period Mr. Earnshaw. Stevenson mentions that it is hard to find exact similarities between Cathy and Heathcliff, mainly because they themselves were very vague as to how they were similar (Steven, 1988), which shows it is not reasonable to say the Heathcliff and Cathy were one and the same.

What Cathy and Heathcliff did and said is paradoxical in many ways. There are many paradoxes surrounding their love. It is debatable whether these paradoxes are

truly Cathy's and Heathcliff's or whether they have been portrayed as paradoxical through the narrators. It is our readers who should decide if the paradoxes lie solely on Cathy and Heathcliff, on the narrators or on both.

Paradoxes make the meaning of the novel deeper and make us reflect on things we might not have. They enrich our life and make us think critically.

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