

Book Review of *Wuthering Heights* Written by Emily Brontë

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Project akhir ini menganalisis novel *Wuthering Heights* karya Emily Brontë. Tujuan dari penulisan project akhir ini adalah mengetahui kelebihan dan kelemahan Novel *Wuthering Heights*. Penulis menyimpulkan bahwa kelebihan novel ini terletak pada tema cerita, tokoh dan penokohan serta rangkain cerita yang penuh dengan *suspense*. Sedangkan kelemahan novel *Wuthering Heights* ini terletak pada penggunaan nama tokoh yang hampir mirip, deskripsi tentang situasi dan emosi dalam novel yang terlalu detail serta plot yang membingungkan.

Kata Kunci: tema, karakter, karakterisasi, *suspense*, plot

Introduction

Nobody is perfect. Human being is full of characteristics. They have both good and evil characters. In this life, sometimes people meet someone with friendly, humble and good personality. However, there are also people who meet the opposite, such as sadistic, vengeful and cruel personality. These human characteristics can easily be found not only in real life, but also in literary works as reflected in novel *Wuthering Heights*. Wellek and Warren stated that "literature represents life and life is, in large measure, a social reality even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation (1973:94)." This statement means that literary works are imitation of the real life since they include and reflect human life. There is a close relationship between the world where an author lives and the literary works which they produce. The authors will show their opinion toward reality, phenomenon and situation around them in literary works, so this is why literary works portray the life of society and the authors. The portrait may be formed in character, plot, setting, and etc.

In this novel, the writer will review the characters of the novel. The central character, Heathcliff, has a cruel figure. Heathcliff is very sadistic taking vengeance toward people who have hurted him. Revenge has made his heart blind. Anger and hatred have deeply rooted in Heathcliff's heart and changed him into a cruel figure. These human characteristics make this novel interesting to read.

Wuthering Heights is a classical novel that really has something to attract the reader to read. This review explores the strengths and the weaknesses of the novel *Wuthering Heights* written by Emily Brontë.

Discussion

1. Strengths of the Novel

1.1 The Themes of the Novel

A. Revenge

The theme of a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight. It is the unifying generalization about life stated or implied by the story (Perrine, 1959:117). This means that the theme is a main or central idea of literary works that may be stated directly or indirectly.

Wuthering Heights involves many aspects in life, such as family, desire, religions, freedom, social class, friendship, hatred, death and etc. Nevertheless, revenge becomes the most prominent idea in the story. The story shows how Heathcliff takes revenge on people who have wronged him.

Heathcliff enters Earnshaw's family as an orphan, he soon becomes favourite of Mr. Earnshaw. This makes Hindley so jealous since his father has favoured an orphan than his own biological son. Hindley's jealousy makes him abuse and humiliate Heathcliff all the time. Even though Heathcliff is abused and humiliated by Hindley, he is able to endure it because there is Catherine who always consoles and accompanies him. However, when he finds out

that Catherine is engaged to Edgar Linton due to social status he has devastated, he promises to take revenge both on Earnshaw and Linton.

B. Love

In *Wuthering Heights*, several kinds of love stories can be found, such as between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Earnshaw and Edgar Linton, and little Catherine and Hareton Earnshaw. Nevertheless, love story between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw seems to be the centre of *Wuthering Heights*.

Catherine and Heathcliff's passion for one another is very strong. They have love power beyond ordinary people. Catherine, even though she has married Edgar Linton, still loves Heathcliff so much. Catherine thinks that marriage cannot separate them because they are a soul mate and cannot possibly live apart. Even at the end of Catherine's life, at the time of her illness she only remembers Heathcliff. When she is dying, people she wants to meet is still Heathcliff, not Edgar her husband.

1.2 Character and Characterization

A. Cruel Man, Heathcliff

Heathcliff is interesting character. Heathcliff is dynamic character which his physical appearance and characteristics develop from the beginning into the end of the novel. Heathcliff is a little orphan that is found in the Liverpool Street by Mr. Earnshaw. He is tall, dark and athletic. He also has a black hair and thick brow. When he first enters *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly Dean describes him as a dirty and ragged child with a black hair, "I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk" (Brontë, 1847: 26).

However, after three years of his absence since he has left *Wuthering Heights*, he has transformed. He is no longer a dirty kid, he becomes a handsome, tall, athletic and intelligent man. Nelly describes Heathcliff as follows:

“He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man; beside whom [Edgar] seemed quite slender and youth-like. His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army. His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton's; it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though stern for grace” (Brontë, 1847: 70).

Based on the quotation above, not only in physical appearance, Heathcliff's character also develops. This is what makes Heathcliff character interesting. At first, Heathcliff is a patient and tough child. Even though his jealous stepbrother always mistreats and bullies him throughout his childhood, Heathcliff accepts it because Catherine is always there for him. The revenge culminates when he overhears the conversation between Catherine and Nelly that Catherine will marry Edgar Linton due to social status. He runs away, filled with hatred for all who have hurt him. When he comes back to Wuthering Heights, he is totally different. He is no longer a poor child, he changes into a cruel and abusive person. Heathcliff's revenge is getting brutal, even to the Hindley and Edgar's younger generation. His revenge story dominates the story and appears throughout the novel.

B. A Naive Girl, Catherine Earnshaw

Catherine is a Heathcliff's stepsister and Heathcliff's beloved. Catherine is very pretty, as Nelly describes in the book with the blondest eye, the sweetest smile and she also has long brown hair (Brontë, 1847: 30). Catherine becomes one of the strengths of the novel because she has a very complex character. She betrays herself and, in the end, it destroys herself. Catherine loves Heathcliff so much, she said that Heathcliff is her soul and their love is so strong even death can separate them. She also admits that her love for Linton will change over time, but her love for Heathcliff will remain the same. She chooses to marry Edgar Linton because Heathcliff is below her social status and getting married with Heathcliff is just degrading her status. She marries a man based on social class, and not love. It infuriates

Heathcliff so much. Her wrong choice to marry Edgar Linton and betraying her own feeling ultimately destroys her, and she dies at an early age after giving birth to a daughter.

1.3 Full of Suspense

Suspense is the pleasurable anxiety we feel that heightens our attention to the story (Kennedy, 1991: 7). *Wuthering Heights*' Emily Brontë is full of suspense that makes the reader wants to keep reading. The first suspense comes when Lockwood dreams about Catherine's ghost appearance through the window. Brontë describes how Lockwood scared of Catherine's ghost. This adds to the mystery and makes readers wants to find out what Lockwood could be afraid of. The supernatural elements in Lockwood's dream makes *Wuthering Heights* is surrounded with mystery and gothic situation. Brontë also increases the tension in the novel which is initially start with Lockwood's arrival and his strange treatment by Heathcliff. All of those occurrences lead Lockwood to try to solve these mysteries by asking Nelly Dean about Heathcliff.

The story then is seen through Nelly Dean's eyes. She narrates rest of the story, telling Lockwood all about *Wuthering Heights* and the circumstances. The suspense that Heathcliff creates within characters, the environment, and the novel plot, becomes a crucial role in the narrative of *Wuthering Heights*. It is narrated that Heathcliff and Catherine love each other, but she changes during her recovery stay at the Grange. She starts to like a boy named Edgar Linton. These occurrences make the reader wants to know what will happen with their love relationship.

The next suspense comes from Heathcliff's compassion for Hareton, Hindley Earnshaw's son. Hindley treats him badly since the first time he came to *Wuthering Heights*.

Heathcliff wants to take revenge, but when baby Hareton is dropped by his father off the staircase deliberately and Heathcliff arrives just in time to catch him. The suspense is developed in this part because the rescue is unexpected. Then, Heathcliff takes responsibility for Hareton and keeps the boy away from Hindley. He ends up raising him, although not with an education, but he keeps him healthy and strong.

2. The Weaknesses of the Novel

2.1 Identical names of the characters

One of the weaknesses of *Wuthering Heights* is identical names of the character. It is easy to get confused when reading this novel because the author makes similar names for each character, for instance, there are Hareton Earnshaw, Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Linton, Edgar Linton, Linton Heathcliff, and others. By using the similar names, Brontë wants to show us that the characters are related in one way or another because this novel tells us about two families, the Earnshaws and Lintons. The readers should focus on reading this novel or they will get confused on remembering the names.

2.2 Too Detailed Description of Situations and Emotions

The detailed description of situations and emotions in the story becomes one of the weaknesses of the novel because it distracts the readers to follow the ongoing story. This novel is told with complete details. However, since the details are everywhere, the reader will be bored just to read all tiny details. The well described emotion and situation makes the novel stretched into 247 pages. Besides the details in the novel are so many, the conversations are also too long. This long conversation is not followed by the clear details of who the speaker is. If the readers have no focus and concentration, they will be hard to understand what is going on in the conversations. It forces the readers to read it twice or more.

2.3 Complicated Plot

Plot is the author's arrangement of incident in the story. In this novel, Brontë uses two plots, forward and backward. The two plots will confuse and distract the reader to follow the story because the story jumps back and forth in time. In the opening of few chapters, the timeline is in the present in the year 1801 and then it flashback and jumps back to around 1771 when Mr. Earnshaw brought back the little orphan Heathcliff to the home. That makes the reader a bit hard to follow the story in the beginning/opening because the timeline of the first few chapters actually takes place at the end of timeline. Therefore, the story begins with Mr. Lockwood's visit to Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, *Wuthering Heights* brings the big curiosity for Mr. Lockwood so he asks Nelly Dean to tell the story and Nelly jumps into flashback. After the main story is told in flashback, the timeline goes back to the present again.

CONCLUSION

Wuthering Heights is a great novel written by Emily Bronte. The novel tells the readers about Heathcliff's revenge toward people who have wronged him. Heathcliff takes revenge on the Earnshaws and Lintons family. His revenge on Earnshaw is due to Hindley's action toward him throughout his childhood who always abuses him, while his revenge on Linton is due to Edgar Linton steal Cathrine from him.

The novel has some strength that makes it as a good reading. The strengths inside the novel are theme and characters. The various themes inside the story, such as revenge and love bring the readers to experience many situation and emotions. The theme of revenge gives perception to the readers about replying the same thing to others. The theme of love

makes the readers feel the romantic side and the power of love. Meanwhile the interesting characters inside the novel such as a cruel Heathcliff and naive Catherine build up a good story.

This novel also has some weaknesses that disturb the reader when following the story, such as complicated plot, using the identical names of the character and too detailed descriptions of situation and emotion that can make the readers lose the focus in following the story. Even it has some weaknesses, this novel is recommended to be a good reading.

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