



A Comparative Study of Love and Mystery in Emily Bronte's 'Wuthering Heights' and Michael Ondaatje's 'The English Patient'

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Abstract: Emily Bronte is the English novelist of 19th century. 'Wuthering Heights' is the only novel by Emily Bronte which is the great piece of 19th century English fiction. The love story of Catherine and Heathcliff is immortal and everlasting. Michael Ondaatje is a Sri Lanka born Canadian writer. 'The English Patient' is the Booker Prize winner novel by Michael Ondaatje. The love affair of the English patient, Almasy and Katharine Clifton is one of the domineering themes of the novel 'The English Patient'. 'Mystery' is another aspect which is common to both 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The English Patient'. Mystery is an inseparable part of the narrative of both novels. Therefore, the present research paper is an attempt to throw light upon these two different aspects of 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The English Patient' i.e. 'love' and 'mystery'.

Key Words: Love, Mystery, Gothic-romance, World War-II.

Introduction: Emily Bronte (1818-1848) is English novelist of 19th century England. She wrote only one novel 'Wuthering Heights' through her short life span of thirty years, which is the great work of English literature. Emily Bronte "sees human beings not...in relation to other human beings, or to human civilizations and societies and codes of conduct, but only in relation to the cosmic schemes of which they form a part". The novel, 'Wuthering Heights' was published in 1847, one year before her death. Love and mystery are the two different aspects of the plot of this novel. The love of Cathy and Heathcliff is one of the important subject matters of the study of the novel. The entire life of Heathcliff is a sort of mystery.

Michael Ondaatje is Sri Lanka born Canadian Booker Prize winner writer of late 20th century. Ondaatje writes about national identities, racial issues and cultural disparities. 'The English Patient' is the Booker Prize winner novel by Michael Ondaatje. It was written in 1992. World War-II Italy is the major socio-political background of the novel. Love, mystery and history are predominant themes of the novel. Love of Katharine Clifton and English patient, Almasy is the main love- story in the novel. Besides, there are other love stories in the novel. Every character in the novel unfolds his or her story. Therefore, everybody in the novel becomes narrator. And that makes the novel mystery of characters.

Human love is an abstract phenomenon. Love is the major theme of both 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The English Patient'. Both novels encompass love stories at

different levels. But the present research paper will try to focus on love story of Catherine and Heathcliff and Katharine Clifton and Almasy in 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The English Patient' respectively. Different layers of human love have been presented by both writers i.e. Emily Bronte and Michael Ondaatje. In 'Wuthering Heights', besides the love story of Cathy and Heathcliff, there are other love stories like Catherine- Hareton, Edgar Linton and Cathy. In 'The English Patient', the Canadian nurse, Hana, devotedly looks after her patient, Almasy, whose identity is mysterious till the middle of the novel. Hana considered him as her despairing saint. That is purely platonic and spiritual love. At the end of war in Italy, the entire hospital staff decided to leave the battle-ravaged villa. However, Hana refused to do so. The reason was that there was nobody to look after English patient, Almasy. Her love for unknown English patient is true and noble. She was entertaining English patient by reading books loudly.

Objectives: The objectives of the present study can be stated as below:

1. To study love and mystery in relation to select novels 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The English Patient'.
2. To compare love stories of Heathcliff and Catharine and Almasy and Katharine.
3. To make a comprehensive statement on 'mystery' as predominant theme of both novels i.e. 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The English Patient'.

Method: In order to achieve the above stated objectives following methods are employed:

1. Both novels are read thoroughly to study love and mystery. A comparative study is done in order to make a comprehensive statement.
2. Video clips of both novels were watched on YouTube and an attempt was made to study love and mystery in both novels.

'Wuthering Heights' is the story of two families namely Earnshaw and Linton and an outsider Heathcliff. Wuthering Heights is the residence of Earnshaw family and Thrushcross Grange is the residence of Linton family. There is almost four miles distance between two. It was the generosity of Mr. Earnshaw i.e. Cathy's father that brought Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights. Cathy's father gives shelter to Heathcliff in his house. However, everybody hated Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, especially Cathy's brother Hindley. It was Cathy who became his intimate friend and they enjoyed their childhood together. As children, Cathy and Heathcliff were rebellious in nature and often used to cause trouble. Cathy and Heathcliff fall in love with each other. The love of Cathy and Heathcliff is different in nature. Cathy and Heathcliff often roam freely upon the moors. Both of them were deeply in love with each other. Their love is rather passionate and intense.

Nelly Dean, the house-keeper working at Earnshaws is the main connecting link of various happenings in the novel 'Wuthering Heights'. Catherine narrates Nelly, how passionately Heathcliff and she were in love with each other.

“He’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton is as different as a moonbeam from lightening or frost from fire”. (Wuthering Heights, p.82)

Catherine loved Heathcliff passionately and devotedly, even then, taking into account the social status of Heathcliff, she could not marry Heathcliff. Heathcliff is presented in the novel as a social outcast. Therefore, in order to avoid her social degradation, Catherine did not marry Heathcliff. After realizing the fact that Cathy was likely to marry Edgar Linton, Heathcliff suddenly disappears for the period of three years. Where did he go? What was he doing during these three years? That is the mystery in the novel. However, he returns as a wealthy and polished person. That is his surprising entry in the novel. Meanwhile, the marriage of Catherine and Edgar Linton took place. Even then, he was deeply in love with Cathy. Cathy also wants to remain his friend. However, her husband Edgar had objection over that. The hostility between Heathcliff and Edgar Linton causes too much trouble to Catherine. Even more, Heathcliff was not allowed to meet her at Thrushcross Grange. As a result of this kind of enmity between two, Catherine falls seriously ill. Before her death, Heathcliff secretly meets her. In Chapter-15 of the novel, writer narrates in detail how vehemently and passionately Cathy and Heathcliff made love to each other. That is the most beautiful love-scene in the novel. Subsequently, in the same night, Catherine dies giving birth to a girl child. That is the climax of the story in the novel ‘Wuthering Heights’.

The love story of the English patient, Almsy and Katharine Clifton is the main attraction of the study of love in the novel ‘The English Patient’. That was the bygone love-affair of the English patient with Katharine Clifton. Katharine was Geoffrey Clifton’s wife. Adventurer Geoffrey Clifton joins their expedition in Cairo along with his newly married wife Katharine.

“As an explorer and a person who is engaged in mapping of deserts and other unknown lands, the English patient was somewhat alienated from human love and passion”.

Almsy, the English patient was member of “Oasis Society”, a small group of explorers. One night, in the party, Katharine recited a poem for them. Almsy, the English patient clearly confesses that night in real sense, he fell in love with her voice.

“That night I fell in love with a voice. Only a voice. I wanted to hear nothing more”. (The English Patient, p.144)

Katharine was almost fifteen years younger than Almsy. Katharine asked him about the copy of his Herodotus for reading. Initially, Almsy was not ready to give her his copy. However, later, after returning from short expedition, he offers her the book. In the party, Katharine reads the famous story from *The Histories* by Herodotus. That was the story of King Candaules and his queen. Actually, Almsy does not want that Katharine should read that story. However, Katharine reads the story in the party.

The implied meaning behind her selection of the story of King Candaules was that, she had fallen in love with Almasy.

In the love story of Katharine and Almasy, one may notice 'sacrifice'. Moreover, sacrifice makes their love affair everlasting and eternal. One day, Katharine confesses Almasy that they could not continue their affair as her husband Geoffrey will go mad after realizing that. Besides, she tells Almasy that they cannot see each other again. Almasy decides to behave according to Catharine's suggestions. In 'Wuthering Heights' after the death of Catherine, Heathcliff behaves like a mad. He takes revenge upon Hindley Earnshaw i.e. Catherine's brother. He becomes the owner of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. He takes revenge on both families i.e. Earnshaw and Linton. No doubt, Heathcliff loved devotedly and sincerely to Catharine; however, Heathcliff did not possess any heroic or good qualities that may redeem his wickedness.

'Wuthering Heights' is the gothic-romance in English. The description of Wuthering Heights in the novel creates a mental picture of a haunted place in the minds of readers. Then, Mr. Lockwood's nightmare while staying for a single night in Wuthering Heights, mysterious death of Mr. Heathcliff, people's claim that ghosts of Heathcliff and Catherine roaming about together on the moor etc. are a few examples of gothic elements in the novel. Emily Bronte has successfully employed the flash-back technique in the novel in order to unfold the mystery and to reveal the story of three generations of Earnshaw family and Linton family. There are two narrators in the novel 'Wuthering Heights'. Nelly Dean, the house-keeper is the omniscient narrator in the novel and Mr. Lockwood, the tenant is the detached and disinterested person who connects different stories as well as opening and closing part of the novel.

In the novel, 'The English Patient', there is no single narrator. Each character narrates his or her story, it may be English Patient, Almasy, the Canadian nurse, Hana, the sapper, Kip or Caravaggio, everybody narrates their past experiences. Mystery is an inseparable part of the narrative of the novel. Everybody in the novel unfolds their past experiences. Therefore, there are distinctive variations in their narration. For example, Caravaggio knows a lot about the past life of the English patient, the man without name and identity. It is Caravaggio, who tells Hana that the English patient is not an English man in real sense, but he is a Hungarian man named, Almasy. Such variations create confusion in the minds of readers while unraveling the plot as well as characters. Especially in the past life of the English patient, Almasy and Geoffrey Clifton, such duality in narration occurs. It is the major reason that makes the plot complex. Thus, the novel 'The Patient' exposes the mystery of individual characters like the English Patient, Almasy, Geoffrey Clifton, Hana, Kip and Caravaggio.

Conclusion: To sum up, Emily Bronte's 'Wuthering Heights' and Michael Ondaatje's 'The English Patient' are the rare combination of love and mystery. However, love story of Heathcliff and Catherine is different at certain levels from love story of Almasy and Katharine. The love of Heathcliff for Catharine seems to be

barbaric and violent. One may notice excessive 'possessiveness' in Heathcliff's love for Catherine. Furthermore, the enmity between Heathcliff and her husband Edgar Linton is one of the reasons of her premature death. On the contrary, in the love-affair of English patient, Almásy and Katharine Clifton, one does not find any kind of 'possessiveness'. In real sense, that seems to be a mature love between two.

Mystery is one of the important aspects of the study of both novels i.e. 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The English Patient'. The novel 'Wuthering Heights' is described as 'gothic-romance'. The frightful dream of Mr. Lockwood, screaming and wailing of Mr. Heathcliff and finally the ghosts of Heathcliff and Catherine roaming on the moors, etc. are the examples of gothic elements in the novel. Heathcliff is introduced in the novel as an orphan. He is picked up from Liverpool by Mr. Earnshaw. Heathcliff's entry as well as his exit for three years is mysterious. In the novel, 'The English Patient', the World War-II is the major socio-political background. Michael Ondaatje has employed unique narrative technique in the novel. Each character in the novel, 'The English Patient' narrates the story. Therefore, everybody tries to unfold the mystery of their lives one by one. And that makes the plot interesting. From the beginning till end, the references of World-War-II, sappers engaged in defusing bombs, the description of cave, Italian-villa, plane-crash, German army, and finally the news of the atomic bomb dropped on Japan etc. make the novel unresolved mystery of human life.

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