



# Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights" - Diversity in (contemporary) reviews

*Ingo Westermann*

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Seminar paper from the year 2007 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg (Seminar für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), course: Outsiders in Victorian fiction, 11 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Emily Bronte's novel Wuthering Heights is a controversial piece of literature. Its discussion over the decades has been as diverse as is the range of its characters.

When it was first published in 1847, in the beginning of the Victorian era, its reception was of a considerable diversity, ranging from absolute rejection to baffled appreciation due to its originality.

Differences in reception become even more extreme and obvious when contemporary reviews are being compared with the way the novel is being received nowadays:

Rejection has transformed into a matter of wide appeal that does not only attract film makers, painters, musicians and other authors, but has also found its way into many a teacher's English lesson.

Wuthering Heights has made its way from the ignorance of public appreciation to the status of being a classic and masterpiece of English literature.

On the following pages I will focus on reviews of the novel, predominantly on contemporary criticism intermixed with recent comments, and address the question as to why such a spectrum of opinions can exist and be expressed about one and the same novel.

In my opinion, the importance of this question stems from the impression that the reading of Wuthering Heights leaves on its recipients "[...] a strange sort of book, [...] it is impossible to begin and not finish it; and quite as impossible to lay it aside afterwards and say nothing about it." As a reader and especially as a student of English, I feel a rather large obligation to look deeper into the differences and controversies that the novel in question has caused during the last hundred and fifty years and thus to also get a better sense of awareness how the field of literature is subject to cultural and historical changes as a whole. Wuthering Heights appears to be an especially apt piece of literature to exemplify these dynamics being at work as will be subsequently shown.

However, I will also arrive at the conclusion that a certain tendency in opinions concerning the novel overwhelms.

I will attempt to examine various aspects such as language, gender of the author and the estimation of 'his' abilities, etc. in order to gain some insights.

The retracing of opinions will be supported by a second part of this research paper dealing with the time in which Emily Bronte created her first and only novel.

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