

**SISTERHOOD AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO LIVES IN COLD MOUNTAIN
BY CHARLES FRAZIER**

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ABSTRACT

Charles Frazier's mostly known work *Cold Mountain* written in 1997 is the portrayal of the Appalachian Mountain in the years of the Civil War. This war affects both man and woman in terms of life, love, despair of future and hope for the future. This paper will reveal wide research about the Civil War and its effects on the lives of two women characters in *Cold Mountain*; Ada and Ruby. The main idea of the paper is to examine how a strong and sincere relationship occurs between Ada and Ruby opposite to the name of the landscape; Cold Mountain. Especially, the sisterhood which comes out between two young women who are from different cultural levels and the journeys of these women in the story of *Cold Mountain* will be dealt with. The results of these journeys on the life of women characters is another concern of the article. Therefore, the effects and incomings of these journeys on the relationship of these two women will be examined within the boundaries of the sisterhood idea.

Keywords: Civil War, Sisterhood, Appalachian Woman, Journey, Struggle of Survival

**CHARLES FRAZIER'İN ESERİ SOĞUK SAVAŞ'TA İKİ HAYAT ARASINDA
BİR KÖPRÜ OLARAK KIZKARDEŞLİK**

ÖZ

Charles Frazier tarafından 1997'de yazılmış ve oldukça da tanınmış olan romanı *Soğuk Dağ*, Sivil Savaş döneminde Apalaş Dağları'nın durumu betimlemektedir. Bu savaş gerek hayat, aşk gerekse geleceğe yönelik ümit ve ümitsizlik bakımından hem kanını hem de erkeği derinden etkilemiştir. Bu makale, Sivil Savaşı ve bu savaşın *Soğuk Dağ* kitabındaki Ada ve Ruby adında iki kadın karakterin hayatları üzerindeki etkisini geniş bir açıdan ele alacaktır. Makalenin ana fikri, kitabın adının aksine Ada ve Ruby arasında nasıl bu kadar samimi ve güçlü bir ilişki vuku bulduğunu açıklamaktır. Özellikle, farklı kültürel seviyeye sahip olan bu iki genç kadının arasında hayat bulan kız kardeşlik ve bu kadınların *Soğuk Dağ* hikâyesindeki yolculukları ele alınacaktır. Bu yolculukların kadın karakterlerimizin hayatlarındaki sonuçları da makalenin önemli başlıklarından biridir. Bu sebeple, bu yolculukların bu kadınların hayatlarına getirileri ve etkileri kız kardeşlik fikri sınırları dâhilinde incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sivil Savaş, Kız Kardeşlik, Apalaş Kadını, Yolculuklar, Yaşam Savaşı

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Introduction

American Civil War is consecrated by the government and in this process the church has an important role in persuading men to attend the war (Inscoc, 2003, p. 70). In Salisbury's *Carolina Watchman* this consecration is reflected in these words: "The millions of weeping mothers, wives and sisters, and the millions of prayers going up from hearts burdened with grief, will not restrain the voluntary human offerings which are to be made in defense of our rights and honors, but rather increase them, and nerve them for the conflict." (qtd. in Inscoc, 2003, p. 72). This quotation reveals the strong beliefs of a nation but it needs to be accepted that each war takes many things from the same nation also. In this respect, Inscoc explain that the Civil War makes people flee and hide in mountains, many people becomes prisoners of war and many slaves try to find somewhere to settle in mountains. In addition to that he says the Appalachian society is shaped by these kinds of problems in 19th century (2003, p. 9). The problematic situations which result from the Civil War in Appalachia become a very good source for writers. Some of them write their works on the romanticized life on these mountains, some write on racist issues while some write on the relationships between white people and black slaves (Inscoc, 2003, p. 277). One of these writers is Charles Frazier who uses most of these issues as a ground for his novel, *Cold Mountain*. As it is indicated in Chitwood's essay, some critics assert that Charles Frazier's first novel *Cold Mountain* attracts the reader not only as a Civil War novel but also as a love story (2005, p. 232-233). Moreover, Gardner claims that some critics evaluate this work as a historical novel (54). Whatever the type of novel is not the determinant of the value of this literary work, Chitwood puts forward that the novel appeals many readers who have different tastes (2005, p. 234). Actually, the memories of Charles Frazier's family create the background of the novel (Milne, 2007, p. 1). In addition to that autobiographical background, Frazier makes a significant survey about the mountains in the North Carolina to create the landscape of the *Cold Mountain* (Smith, 2016, p. 1). Yet, there are some imaginary elements such as the town which is described locating on the Cold Mountain. However, there is not any town on this area but a forest called as Pisgah National Forest (Douglass, 2004, p. 54). It can be said that the author creates his fiction on this area combining the historical facts and imaginary elements. Applying the power of imaginary and its harmony with these true life experience, Charles Frazier draws a very descriptive and affective narration in *Cold Mountain*. As it is understood from the wide research of Inscoc, till the last days of the war North Carolina is not in the war as much as South Appalachia, where the worst scenes of the Civil War occur. However, he adds, the people who live in North Carolina are affected psychologically more than witnesses of the war who live in South Appalachia (2003, p. 7). Inscoc reveals that one of the most significant results of the Civil War is the effects of the war on the American people. He gives examples from different witnesses of the war that women experience the war different from men, the people living in Southern part experience the war different from the people living in Northern part and even the Union soldiers experience the sorrows of the war different from the Confederate soldiers (2003, p. 21). Likewise, there are men, women and soldiers in Cold Mountain who have these experiences in different ways. Two of these women are the main concern of this paper; one of them is Ada, the daughter of the minister of Charleston, a well-educated woman; the other woman is Ruby who is a homeless and uneducated woman. The

common point in their life is that both of them try to live without a man; a father, a husband or a brother. This paper will reveal a satisfying research about the effects of Civil War on the lives of these two women characters in *Cold Mountain*, the strong and sincere relationship between them opposite to the landscape's name Cold Mountain. Especially, the sisterhood which comes out between two young women who are from different cultural levels and the physical and spiritual journeys of these women throughout the novel will be dealt.

Sisterhood Existing Under the Hard Living Conditions

In wartime, women try to continue their lives after their men, but they could not plow their lands as well as their fathers, husbands and sons (Inscoc, 2003, p. 168). This situation is exemplified in *Cold Mountain* in these words: "Women and children and old men worked the crops, since every man of age to fight was off warring." (Frazier, 2007, p. 90). In fact, Ada's father has been a churchman who has workers to plow the fields and servants to do the households. Her father brings her up as a sophisticated and cultured friend, who has the knowledge of French, Latin and Greek beside a talent to play piano (Frazier, 2007, p. 14). It is obvious that her upbringing does not enable a prosperous life to Ada in nature without her father. Nevertheless, she cannot leave the Cold Mountain as if there is something bounding her to the Blue Mountains (Frazier, 2007, p. 32). Furthermore, the women suffer from depression and hopelessness because of psychologically effects of the war (Inscoc, 2003, p. 191). It can be said that Ada is in despair before Ruby comes to Black Cove. However, at first sight, Ruby is described in the novel as: "She was a dark thing, corded through the neck and arms. Frail-chested. Her hair was black and coarse as a horse's tail. Broad across the bridge of her nose. Big dark eyes, virtually pupil-less, the whites of them startling in their clarity. She went shoeless, but her feet were clean. The nails to her toes were pale and silver as fish scales." (Frazier, 2007, p. 33) This depiction reveals how a hard life experience affects a women's appearance. Behind this appearance there is a young girl but a woman of the world who claims that she can plow, harvest, cut firewood, and do all the other works that needs man power. In comparison with Ada, Ruby is not educated that she even does not know how to write her own name. Although both of these women grow up motherless, Ruby's father has nothing but trouble in her life while Ada's father has been her best companion on this world. Actually, Ada sympathizes Ruby because this young mountain woman does not want to be hired as a worker. In fact, she wants to share the works of the farm with Ada in equal conditions (Frazier, 2007, p. 33). As it is understood, Ruby grows herself and gives a praiseworthy struggle in her poor life. This hard life experience gives her a high self-confidence that she does not want to be seen as an uneducated slave but she wants to have the same rights with an educated lady. Therefore, it can be said that this newcomer is a key and a friend for Ada to open the doors of a new life without any need for male power. At first, Ruby finds out the necessities of a new life and decides the steps they need to follow (Frazier, 2007, p. 46). As a matter of fact, these are the first bricks of the sisterhood bridge between Ada and Ruby. In addition to that in the last year of the war, the mountain people have economic problems (Inscoc, 2003, p. 134). In *Cold Mountain* these economic problems are stated in one passage that:

In the spirit of partnership and confidence, she had shared with Ruby the details of her shattered finances. When she told Ruby of the little money they had to work with, Ruby said, I've never held a money piece bigger than a dollar in my hand. What Ada came to understand was that though she might be greatly concerned at their lack of cash, Ruby's opinion was that they were about as well off without it. Ruby had always functioned at arm's length from the buying of things and viewed money with a great deal of suspicion even in the best of times, especially when she contrasted it in her mind with the solidity of hunting and gathering, planting and harvesting. (Frazier, 2007, p. 47)

It can be inferred that the processes of the sisterhood in the novel; that is to say the necessities, hardships and the common problems make this relationship closer in time. As it is indicated in this passage, Ruby has nothing to do with the money because she has not been grown in a wealthy family. More importantly, Ruby has not seen her father regularly to be able ask for money for her and her family's need. On the contrary, as a daughter of a churchman, Ada has all kinds of facilities because the churches and churchman are accepted as holy institutions where the community donates. Another essential point is that Ada has not buy anything by herself until this day and this confusing situation is depicted in these words:

At present, matters had pretty much borne out Ruby's darkest opinions. Scrip had gotten so cheapened in its value that it was hard to buy anything with it anyway. On their first trip together into town they had been stunned to have to give fifteen dollars for a pound of soda, five dollars for a paper of triple-ought needles, and ten for a quire of writing paper. Had they been able to afford it, a bolt of cloth would have cost fifty dollars. Ruby pointed out that cloth would cost them not a cent if they had sheep and set about shearing, carding, spinning, winding, dyeing, and weaving the wool into cloth for dresses and underdrawers. All Ada could think was that every step in the process that Ruby had so casually sketched out would be many days of hard work to come up with a few yards of material coarse as sacking. Money made things so much easier. (Frazier, 2007, p. 47)

This financial incapability could be interpreted as there is a kind of dependence of this pair to each other that Ada has the properties and Ruby has the intelligence and power to overcome the economic, social and cultural matters. Instead of spending money on products Ruby believes they can produce their own manufacture. All of these efforts show that Ruby is in a struggle to refresh the Black Cove in other words she will refresh Ada. According to Ada all the sentences of Ruby consist of verbs; "plow, plant, hoe, cut, can, feed, kill". Further, this new comer refreshes Ada that they share their memories and specific information on their families (Frazier, 2007, p. 99). They comb each other's hair and watch the sunset leaning against each other (Frazier, 2007, p. 124). This information reveals the sisterhood idea in the book so that they behave like real

sisters despite of all their differences. It can be said that despite of all the negative sides of war, the Civil War creates a bond between Ada and Ruby.

The Spiritual Journeys of Two Woman

It is obvious that the spiritual journey, Ada and Ruby undergo, is shaped by books and literature. Ada reads from Greek literature, Homer which creates an inexpressible taste and effect in Ruby (Frazier, 2007, p. 52). Furthermore, Ada reads from *Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare (Frazier, 2007, p. 126) which shows that Ada feeds Ruby literally. Reading aloud activities of these two young women creates an interaction between their minds and the most important effect of these activities is that Ruby fulfills a cultural improvement. Instead of criticizing each other, Ada and Ruby make fun of their differences and try to get something from each other's life experience and knowledge (Bauer, 2016, p. 5). According to Bryant, Ada and Ruby are trying to find out the inner side of human being (2011, p. 592). In this respect, it can be said that Ada wants to feel the landscape in her veins with the fresh and pure nature. Thus, Ruby makes Ada close her eyes to feel the thrills and joys of nature in her heart (Frazier, 2007, p. 150). Indeed, Ada realizes that she has a theoretical knowledge while Ruby has a practical knowledge (Frazier, 2007, p. 201). In other words, Ada has a general knowledge of nature but Ruby has a detailed knowledge of the nature from general to specific. In short, cultural and educational background of Ada and the natural and authentic side of Ruby create a harmony of art and nature in *Cold Mountain*. In spite of this cultural and natural dependence of these women there is a fact that Ruby is not a slave but she is a friend who can leave Ada and everything on a foggy morning whenever she wants (Frazier, 2007, p. 51). Nevertheless, Ada knows that Ruby will not leave her alone within all these hardships and at the beginning of this spiritual journey.

The Physical Journeys of Two Woman

Throughout of the book, it is observed that Ada experience a physical journey within the hardships of a mountain life. Although at the beginning Ada thinks that only a male power and hand can help her in the farm, she understands in the course of events that Ruby is the right person for being a companion for herself (Bauer, 2016, p. 5). Correspondingly, Danny Miller states that "Mountain women long for land as the one sure and abiding reality in their lives. ... [T]he land sustains them both physically and spiritually. For them it represents freedom and independence as well as security." (qtd. in Bauer, 2016, p. 8). As a mountain woman, who has a real desire for land, Ruby helps the physical changing process of Ada. At first, Ada feels as if she is dying because of her body aches (Frazier, 2007, p. 89), her mouth trembles because of the fatigue (Frazier, 2007, p. 91) in each work which she is inexperienced at when her father has been alive. Ada describes her physical change in these sentences that:

I cannot begin to recount all such rough work that I have done in the time since Father died. It has changed me. It is amazing the physical alterations that can transpire in but a few months of labor. I am brown as a penny from being outdoors all day, and I am growing somewhat rosy through the wrists and forearms. In the glass I see a somewhat

firmer face than previously, hollower under the cheekbones. (Frazier, 2007, p. 169)

In addition, she realizes that her fingers' skin changed color from the milky and healthy to browner and work-worn. These bodily changes are the results of a gentle woman's struggle in the mountain life like a mountain woman. Besides, Ruby drives Ada to work and to wear the old clothes, even she does not want. Ada begins change; for example, she does not take her books while going to work and she can produce their own butter (Frazier, 2007, p. 52). As a matter of fact, Ada gets accustomed to the real face of the wild life in nature. This familiarization is the result of the struggles of an uneducated mountain woman, as Vandier states in his article: "Ada's friend and mentor Ruby... combines elements of Athena, of Eurycleia, of Penelope's resourceful side..." (2). As Bauer claims, in time Ruby has turn Ada into an Appalachian woman who can come over all the difficulties (2016, p. 4). As a result of this changing process, Ada can go on her survival in a foreign landscape in where she has no relatives.

Further, Charles Frazier surprises the reader at the end of the novel; that is to say, the male protagonist of the novel dies at the end of the novel. Still, he leaves a daughter with Ada (Frazier, 2007, p. 232) which means that Ada has two women with her no longer. Vandiver clarifies that instead of a happy end with Inman, Ada has a future with Ruby (2006, p. 2). This end shows that the novel represents a kind of freedom and success story which can be evaluate in the boundaries of the sisterhood idea. However Cold Mountain is written by a man, the female characters; Ada and Ruby, ends the novel with the victory of woman who can achieve her life without a man (Bauer, 2016, p. 10).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be interpreted that the power of feelings and the strength of woman body helps her live in mountains. Ruby who is one of these mountain women, changes a townswoman into an Appalachian woman who is not different from a bird. The freedom idea in nature impresses Ada; therefore, she tries to feel the attractions of nature within the chain of sisterhood idea. Another essential point is that the end of the novel proves that all the things Ada undergoes are the steps of a new life without male power. The course of the events in the book can be summed up as Ada's life experience in Black Cove is like a heroic narration which starts lyrical; then, develops heroic and concludes dramatic. At the beginning of the mountain life, Ada loses her father and she must do everything in Black Cove by herself. After a while the country woman, Ruby, takes the first steps of sisterhood idea showing Ada the real power of woman. At the end of the narration it is witnessed by the reader Ada cannot have a future with her beloved but she has a new woman companion, a daughter, from Inman. Above all there is a satisfying fact that she is prepared and matured by life itself. Additionally, Ada's and Ruby's spiritual and Ada's physical changes are the cut stones of the sisterhood bridge. To sum up, this research proves and illustrates that these two women build their future leaning against each other and they achieve all these under the limitations of the patriarchal society.

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