

*The Source of Eternal Charm
——On the Imagery of
Wuthering Heights*

永恒魅力的源泉——
《呼啸山庄》的艺术特色研究



谷素华
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Preface

Gu Suhua is my former classmate. During the years at college she was an industrious and excellent student. From the start, she has been working assiduously to achieve excellent outcome. In recent years she has published many papers on literature and some works about teaching methods and skills in the classroom such as a teaching book called *Rudimentary English on Construction Engineering and Arts Design* in June, 2011, *Approaches to English Language Teaching as a Foreign Language* in December, 2012 and *Skills and Practices to English Language Teaching as a Foreign Language* in June, 2013. She has been teaching English for 30 years and is good at giving systematic guidance and has been working tirelessly in teaching students. After she got her master degree in 2001, she continued her research on the imagery of *Wuthering Heights*. The book *The Source of Eternal Charm — On the Imagery of Wuthering Heights* is the fruit of her hard work and wisdom. It differs greatly from other books about *Wuthering Heights*, which did researches on the characters in the novel and the writing styles and so on. This book explores the everlasting charm from a creative perspective — imagery Emily used in the book. The book plays the roles of deepening understanding the theme and characters. It is also an opportunity to fill in the some theory blanks about the study of writing styles on *Wuthering Heights*. It supplies a gap in the style of imagery as a series, and has important guidance for further research on the novel. It has important theoretical and learning value.

As time goes by, people have been appreciating and enjoying the novel from the start till the 21st century. More and more people attracted by the

from the start till the 21st century. More and more people are attracted by the unusual story and the novel has been studied, analyzed and discussed from many aspects. About the theme, the narration and the writing styles there are dozens of other viewpoints or comments such as those from psychoanalysis, class struggle, clash of element forces etc. They will not be touched here for they are more or less discussion for discussions sake. Then, what is Emily's real intention of creating *Wuthering Heights* and why is it still attracted more critics' attention? The book will lead us to take a glimpse of the mystery answer.

Wuthering Heights could be described as a classic masterpiece no matter from what angle such as techniques, conception, exhibition, artistic values and its legends. Scarcely anyone denies that *Wuthering Heights* is first of all a poem compared with other novels partly because Emily herself is a poet and partly because one can rarely feel such intensive passions in others except this one. While Emily's true intention is hidden so deeply inside the book that we can hardly understand what it is, and the author of this book merely offers another method to discuss the imagery of *Wuthering Heights* and to know Emily and her novel well from another perspective.

Emily Bronte included images throughout her novel *Wuthering Heights*. However, up to present, many critics have written essays or books on *Wuthering Heights*. Yet there has been no systematic analysis of the imagery of this novel. The author here, through this kind of detailed analysis, provides a new insight into the exploration appreciation of the classic novel.

The book *The Source of Eternal Charm — On the Imagery of Wuthering Heights* facilitates the theory development of literature researches of the novel and is beneficial to understanding and appreciation the masterpiece.

The book *The Source of Eternal Charm — On the Imagery of Wuthering Heights* becomes the artistic rare and beautiful flower in gorgeous arts gardens of literature teaching and research. I wish this flower may bloom magnificently and fragrantly.

Tian He

Master's Tutor

Examiner of Trinity College, Cambridge

Professor,

University of Chinese Academy of Sciences

Introduction

Wuthering Heights ranks highly on the list of major works in English literature. But the first publication of this novel was actually criticized and ignored by her contemporaries. It was not until the 20th century that the true value of this novel was rediscovered. The ignorance of the novel in Victorian Age and the discovery of it in the modern 20th century are not by chance. Emily Brontë was such a gifted and original writer that the unique theme and writing techniques had surpassed her own age. By using modern techniques like symbolism, Emily makes a powerful depiction of the setting, characters, plots and important events of the story. And through symbolism, Emily shows the dramatic changes in the cycles of life, and expresses her philosophic views about the fate of human beings and universal progress. With its universal theme and modern writing technique, *Wuthering Height* can be regarded as a classical forerunner works. Symbolism in literature began in the latter half of 19th century and lasted to the early 20th century. The act of symbolizing, or the state of being symbolized; as symbolism in Christian art is the representation of truth, virtues, ices, etc., by emblematic colors, signs, and forms. It thrived in the literature of Europe in the late 19th century in reaction to naturalism and realism. Complex and deliberately planned, a Symbolist work was to express perfectly an intention on the part as the recovering for poetry of music, which communicate more subtly and precisely than any language could. Hence Symbolist poetry made use of the figurative powers of language: tone, association and metaphor. It became an art of elaborate structure, developing an image or network of images which caused the dislocation of normal syntax. Though this pure symbolism is

peculiar to Mallarme and Valery, and there are elements of it in such diverse writers as Hopkins, Eliot, Proust and Joyce. Symbolism can be defined as the art of expressing ideas and emotions not by describing them directly, nor by defining them through overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these ideas and emotions are, by recreating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained symbols. (Chadwick, 1971) Many of the major writers of the modern period exploit symbolism which are in part draw from religious and esoteric traditions and in part invented (M. H. Abrams, 2004,p.314).They prefer to imply more than the surface meaning of language by symbolism. Many modernist fictions are symbolism. Many modernist fictions are symbolistic in their settings, their agents, and their actions as well as in the objects they refer to. Writers often use different literary techniques in order to bring greater understanding and reveal some truth about a character to the reader. One of these techniques is the usage of symbolism. A symbol is something that means more than what it is; it has a different, abstract meaning apart from its literal significance. It can be an object, a person, a situation, an action, or any other thing presented in a story. *Wuthering Heights* evolves around two families in Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. With the further progress of the story, an intricate web of familial relationship arises and the core of the story includes mainly two aspects. One aspect is the love between Heathcliff and Catherine and the other aspect is the process of Heathcliff's revenge program.

Emily Bronte uses both symbolism and imagery in her novel. The two houses — Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, are highly symbolic. The Heights represents a “storm,” whereas the Grange stands for “calm.” Lockwood explains the meaning of “wuthering” as “descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather.” Brontë takes pains to stress the house's ordinary, unfinished, and provincial

nature. But its chief characteristic is exposure to the power of the wind, which makes it appear fortress-like. It is an appropriate house for the Earnshaw family: they are the fiery, untamed children of the storm, especially Heathcliff, the foundling. On the other hand, Thrushcross Grange is set in a civilized valley and stands in a sheltered park. Here, the effects of weather are always gentler, filtered, and diluted. The Grange is a house of soft, clinging luxury, and its inhabitants are guarded by servants and bulldogs. It is “a splendid place,” rich, carpeted and cushioned with crimson. In contrast to the Heights, it belongs to “civilization,” which values comfort more than life itself. Thus, it is a natural home for the children of calm: the gentle, passive and timid Lintons. Animal imagery is used by Emily Brontë to project her insights into human character. Catherine describes Heathcliff as a wolfish man. Isabella Linton, after she becomes his wife, compares him to “a tiger, or a venomous serpent.” Nelly Dean sees his despair after Catherine’s death as not like that of a man, but of a savage beast. Heathcliff himself, when he wishes to insult his enemies, compares them to animals. However, these are not wild creatures he respects for their strength, but gentler animals that he despises. Edgar Linton is “a lamb” that “threatens like a bull.” Linton, Heathcliff’s son, is a “pulling chicken.” Heathcliff hates Hindley Earnshaw because he sees him as the author of all his misfortunes. When he dies before the arrival of the doctor, Heathcliff brutally says that “the beast has changed into carrion.” Symbolism is implicit also in various events of the novel. For example, on the fateful night of Heathcliff’s departure from the Heights, the storm comes “rattling over the Heights in full fury.” It symbolizes the storm that eventually destroys the lives of Cathy and Heathcliff. Then again, after three years, on Heathcliff’s return, he and Cathy meet by the light of fire and candlelight, symbolizing the warmth of their affection for one another. In these ways, and many

others, images and symbols in *Wuthering Heights* add meaning to characters, theme, tone, and mood.

The Source of Eternal Charm — On the Imagery of Wuthering Heights includes 16 chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction to Emily and the imagery in the novel. Emily Brontë's achievement is an intrinsically different kind from that of any of her contemporaries and it is specially distinguished by the power of its imagination. McCullough has called *Wuthering Heights* "a triumph of the imagination." Schorer speaks highly of the personal character of its imagery. The most curious imaginative experiences in literature are recorded in the substrata of this novel. The characters, settings and images used in *Wuthering Heights* are the elements that raise it above a mere gothic story or romance. The novel becomes a fierce examination and condemnation of the social mores and attitudes of the time

Chapter 2 relates to Window image. Windows are used all the time as the symbolic images from the beginning to the end of the novel. The images of the locked or open windows symbolized imprisonment or freedom of the characters' souls. Here the window is the joint between "in" and "out". The windowpane is the thin transparent glass pieces, but it forms an invisible wall which is difficult to exceed and separates sharply the inner world from the outer world. Catherine can't resist the temptation of sight within the window, so Catherine begins to realize that the former inside beauty of the window has become a confinement of her soul. Heathcliff's death finally frees him from this earthly boundary, and his soul now is free to go through the window and find his love. The open window is a symbolic image, which is the gateway to the happiness and freedom.

Chapter 3 expounds the image of the "two-children". The strangest and the most shining figuration that Emily has given to her subject is the "two children" figure, which is also a metamorphic figure of breaking -through

and transformation. Here the separating medium is the body and personality of the other. The type of this figure is a girl with golden hair and a boy with dark hair and shadowed brows. The two children are bound in kinship and in a relationship of kindness and passion, having a change of character with potential in the relationship. The beautiful girl will make the dark boy brightened, happy and angelic. This apparently is what should happen. But the motive forces of the change are not perfectly dependable.

Chapter 4 explains Whip image. In *Wuthering Heights* whip is a gift that Catherine asks for when her father goes to Liverpool. Emily employs the whip as a metaphor to indicate Heathcliff and his fate and to symbolize his character. The whip is so powerful that it destroys the Heights and smashes the Thrushcross Grange to pieces and also smashes Catherine to death. After her death, the whip is even wilder and plays the tyrant without its owner's control. Heathcliff carries out his revengeful plan cruelly and finally owns the two places — Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange.

Chapter 5 does the research of the book. Books are used as a medium to melt the misunderstanding and create a kind of reconciliation. Books are a symbol in that they represent the culture and sophistication of the Lintons. Traditionally, a book is the production of culture; it is the symbol of civilization and development. It is treated with different attitudes under different circumstances. The two worlds — wild Wuthering Heights and cultivated Thrushcross Grange, contradict each other in their views and values, which is showed especially in their different treatment of books. The image of book also functions differently to the two generations. The first generation of the two worlds has misused the book, and in consequence they are victimized by the influence of the book. And the second generation, with their newborn merits, takes book as their weapon and has made full use of it.

Chapter 6 shows another image of Lapwing. The lapwing image shows

that love and violence, love and death are identified in him and in the medium of their relationship. Emily uses the traditional natural images like birds to symbolize the union of man and nature. The lapwing story here is a hint foreshadowing later development in the novel. It implies the coming cruelties of Heathcliff's actions. In the natural world laying the trap leads to the cut off with the parent and the death of the young ones. A terrible scene of the little skeletons leaves deep impressions on the reader. In human word Heathcliff will also lay the trap over the nest of the child Hareton, his own son Linton Heathcliff as well as young Cathy. Without a bit of sympathy and a hint of regret he degrades the one and tortures the other. Finally he trapped Cathy with some cunning tricks to let her marry his son. Therefore to an extent his disappearance from *Wuthering Heights* can be regarded as a trap for Catherine. In his action, Heathcliff took the bars and the other people Hindley and Edgar unconsciously help to make the trap.

Chapter 7 interprets the Caterpillar image. In *Wuthering Heights* Emily also expresses her view of concerning the nature of life and the significance of death. According to her opinion, pain and torture are necessary for the everlasting day. In the novel she employs the image of a caterpillar changing into a butterfly to interpret her theme — a symbol of human activity upon the earth, which can only derive nourishment from destruction.

Chapter 8 introduces setting image. *Wuthering Heights* represents nature and the storm. The protagonists Catherine and Heathcliff are driven by irresistible passion-lust, curiosity, ambition, intellectual pride, and envy and are full of wildness just like *Wuthering Heights*. Thrushcross Grange appears to be calm, refined and welcoming. It represents the calm and civilization and together with the Linton family symbolizes culture, sophistication, tradition and development.

Chapter 9 discusses the meaning of names. Thrushcross Grange is the

symbol of calm and the people of the Grange are like creatures of calm: gentle, cultured, and obedient. Wuthering Heights is just the land of storm and the inhabitants of the Heights are the creatures of storm. They are irritable, rough and energetic and are constantly being torn by strong passions, and violence is their natural language. “Heath” is an area of flat uncultivated land, and “cliff” is steep, usually high, face of rock. So “Heathcliff” becomes a symbol of evil of human nature. Repetition is another tactic Brontë employs in organizing *Wuthering Heights*. It seems that nothing ever ends in the world of this novel. Instead, time seems to run in cycles, and similar names indicate that similar events happened in the past repeat in the present. The repetition of the names shows the cycle of the universal laws.

Chapter 10 is about imagery of characters in the novel. The first generation in Wuthering Heights is represented typically by Heathcliff and Catherine on the one side, Edgar and Isabella Linton on the other side. Living on the barren moorland, Heathcliff and Catherine are more close to the wild nature. In their characters exist the similar elements like high spirits, intense feelings and different degree of cruelty; while Edgar and Isabella are more delicate and exquisite.

Chapter 11 explores the Natural images of the weather and moon. Emily Brontë’s love of nature makes it one of indispensable elements in her novel. Nature in *Wuthering Heights* is portrayed with life and truth. When it is connected with the human being who lives there, it can no longer be seen as a mere universal existence, for its very mood changes with joys and sorrows of the inhabitants. Natural images function as symbols to show the characters’ psychological activities. Throughout the novel, Emily put the main characters in the vivid scenes of interaction of weather. The weather is changing with the mood of the characters. When the characters are under

disastrous circumstances, Emily always presents the wretched weather as symbolic nature images, such as the storm, the thunder, the strong wind, the rain, even the snow in summer, to parallel the characters' emotional pain.

Chapter 12 showcases the image of dreams. Dreams was another technique Emily used in the novel to express her theme. Lockwood's dream embodies the passionate love and the subtle relationships between Catherine and Heathcliff which will be unrolled latter in the novel. Though the old Catherine died as a mature adult, but in the dream her ghost actually appeared as a child, which is also symbolic.

Lockwood rebels at last in the dream, but he undergoes the same fate as them, he is shouted down by the preacher and is attacked with clubs by the whole congregation, especially Joseph. Lockwood's suffering in his dream vividly shows young Catherine and Heathcliff's miserable life under the control of Hindley and Joseph. The also prefigures the tumult in the novel and Heathcliff's violent revenge latter in the story.

Chapter 13 explains the meaning of conflicts in *Wuthering Heights*. There are three rounds of conflicts involved in the love story of two generations, which spondently symbolize the conflicts between two universal forces, nature and culture. The first round is about the love story of the first generation. This round ends in Catherine's betrayal of Heathcliff and her marriage with Edgar, which symbolizes the failure of nature in the first confrontation with culture. The second-round conflict begins with the return of Heathcliff and ends with his successful revenge on the two families. This time the furious and side of nature takes on the weapon and gives a hard blow on culture. The third round is between the new generation and the old Heathcliff. The revenge desire has faded in Heathcliff who now thinks only his unification with old Catherine. The young Cathy and robust

Hareton fall in love with each other and are happily married. At last, the furious revenge ends and harmony is restored in the universe, which symbolizes that nature and culture joins together.

Chapter 14 exhibits the meaning of moor. Emily Brontë used metaphor to illustrate the plentiful meanings of the moor. The Moor works as a soul prop of the whole story. Emily Brontë, with her complex but subtle sentiments, gave the moor vitality, emotion and entrusted it with rich meanings. The moor was not merely the place on which she lived, but also her own little happy world. Moreover the moor was her constant companion, even became an essential part of her life. Thus the moors in *Wuthering Heights* symbolize the wild humanity of Catherine and Heathcliff. The moors serve as symbols of the wild love of Catherine and Heathcliff, who seem almost a part of the wildness of nature.

Chapter 15 probes into the pictures of the story, the scenes of the tombs, the flowerbeds and the ghosts, winds and trees, dogs, locket and doors. The location of Catherine's coffin symbolizes the conflict that tears apart her short life and also suggests her conflicted loyalties. On the one side lies her matrimonial union, it shows her social ambitions and wishes to be a member of the civilized world, but this choice finally destroys her. When she leaves her original home, she begins to realize that she is the true child of wild nature and genteel culture can never fit her real disposition. She lives a spiritless and meaningless life without the wild moors and Heathcliff. The three tombs are just the earthly evidence of her tragic fate, but her try of going from natural camp to cultural camp has its own significance. She forms a bridge for the two poles, and it is her first try that makes it possible for the second generation to overcome all the obstacles and establish a new age.

The transformation of currant-bushes into flowerbeds is only the

beginning of a new life in human history. It is a symbol of renewal and growth in the universe.

In many ways the ghosts in *Wuthering Heights* symbolize a lack of closure for the lovers Emily Brontë used metaphor to illustrate the plentiful

Chapter 16 concludes the meaning of imagery and symbolism. In the above analysis of *Wuthering Heights*, this book tries to explore the significance of symbolism in interpreting the universal theme of the novel. Symbolism in *Wuthering Heights* grows out of the settings, characters, plots, images and events. There are three rounds of conflicts involved in the love story.

The Source of Eternal Charm — On the Imagery of Wuthering Heights aims to lead us into the imagery world to enjoy Emily's arts of writing.

Wuthering Heights is a world of symbolism and imagery. With great efficiency the authoress employs symbolism to correlate the natural environment with the complicated inner world of characters with a view to achieve a fascinating effect, and she made it!

There are other images such as fire, lighting, thunders, heath, the bells, butterflies that are not touched in this book not because they are unimportant but the author wants to find out more details before discussing them.

Since the author's limited knowledge of English culture, literature as well as the language itself, there must be a lot of mistakes, misunderstandings and improprieties, in this case, all constructive criticisms are sincerely welcome.

Writer