

Emily Brontë 『嵐が丘』 論
——文明と荒野に引き裂かれた女性の表象

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Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*¹ is not given as a narration by the author, as the dialogue of ordinal folk is brought to life, the author wanting to lessen the impact of an extraordinarily fearful story.

Brontë, who lived in the Yorkshire countryside of England,² and who died at the young age of 30, wrote only this one novel, but it was serious, abyssal and astounding.

Wuthering Heights was published in 1847, but the story is situated in 1801-1802. Moreover, the main part of the story precedes this by 20 or 30 years, overlapping the genre of the age, the Gothic Novel.

A gentleman, Mr Lockwood, who has tired of city life, hankers for country life and comes to reside in Yorkshire, renting a house called Thrushcross Grange. He thinks of greeting the owner of the house, and so goes by horseback to visit Wuthering Heights. Wuthering has the meaning "the sky is wild." The house is located on a high area, blown by a strong wind all year long. That is why all the trees tilt in one direction.

Contrary to Lockwood's expectation, this house is struck by stark surroundings and strangeness. Heathcliff, the owner, is gruff and incredulous; there is the distraught Catherine Linton, daughter of Catherine Earnshaw and Edgar Linton, widowed by Heathcliff's son, Linton; Hareton, a blunt, young man, son of Hindley Earnshaw, and an aging stubborn, conniving servant, Joseph.

Lockwood visits the house again the following day, but it snowed heavily and the signposts are buried. He decides to stay at Heathcliff's house for

the night because going home would be dangerous because of the snow. There is a boxy-type bed in a room on the second floor where he stays, with a window resembling the window of a horse cart. He goes into the room, and looking around to avoid a sleepless night, finds a Bible dated 25 years ago, and many other books. A lot of notes are scribbled in the margins of the books, with some of them written in the style of a diary.

According to the diary, a girl, Catherine Earnshaw, is friendly with Heathcliff, and together, they get out of the gloomy house on a rainy day, going out on the heath. When they return, her brother Hindley scolds them severely, telling her to never go out with Heathcliff again. He warns her that Heathcliff will be cast out from the house, if she does not follow his order.

Before long, Lockwood sleeps, but is troubled by a nightmare in which he senses a very noisy sound both in the room and outside. This is supposedly because of a branch of the tree hitting the window due to wind. He wants to open the window, but it is difficult to open because the window is solder-mounted. He breaks the window with his fist, grabbing the noisy branch. Then it happens! He catches "the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand," (17)³ not the branch. He withdraws his hands, but the hand freezes to his hands, and a voice, sobbing like a sheep, says:

"Let me in—let me in!" (18)

He asks the hand: "Who are you?" (18) The hand says tremulously, "Catherine Linton."

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Then the hand implored: "I'm come home, I'd lost my way on the moor!" (18) Shockingly, Lockwood sees a childish face against the window. He is paralyzed by fear, scraping his hands against the broken glass. Then blood oozes out.

The hand cried out: "Let me in!" (18)

Lockwood shouts: "Let *me* go, if you want me to let you in!" (18) and the hand loosened its grip. Even so, the lamentable cry moaned continuously, Lockwood crying: "Begone!...I'll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years!" (18)

The voice says: "It is twenty years,...twenty years. I've been a waif for twenty years." (18)

Lockwood hears the sound raking vigorously against the window, and groaning in fear, thinks he hears sound ascending the stairs.

But it was Heathcliff who materialized, Lockwood saying to him: "I had the misfortune to scream in my sleep, owing to a frightful nightmare." (19) Lockwood alludes to a devilkin who wandered the earth for 20 years. Heathcliff is very surprised by the story, telling Lockwood that he should go to the corridor and use another room.

While he waits for Heathcliff in the corridor, he witnesses his strange behavior. Heathcliff forces the grilled window to open with his hands, and dissolving into tears, sobs: "Come in! come in!" ... "Cathy, do come. Oh, do—*once* more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me *this* time—" (20)

However, the ghost does not want to appear, showing her caprice. Only snow and a whirlwind answer, extinguishing the candle.

So, where does this depiction start and end and where does reality start and end? It is difficult to draw the line. It was in a dream that Lockwood was caught by "the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand", it being horrible. Then, the reality of Heathcliff's grievous cry is imposed. The dilemma of love filled

with sorrow is suggested in the first chapter of this novel.

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Somerset Maugham, who said *Wuthering Heights* is one of the greatest novels in the world, analysed Nelly's speech, saying it was extraordinarily archaic and prosaic 18th-century English. Maugham espoused that this traditional English literature has the scent of godly nostalgia of religious paintings of the Middle Ages.

American writers of the middle 19th century such as Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) and Herman Melville (1819–1891) wrote in the 18th-century English vernacular. Thus, Brontë's use of English, similar to mid-19th-century American writers, enabled her to delve deeply into the human psyche.

Notes



1. Laurence Olivier as Heathcliff and Merle Oberon as Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*, directed by William Wyler in 1939.



2. The heath in Yorkshire

3. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1996).