

# *On the Sad Life of Emily Bronte---a Lonely Girl in the Wilderness*

Xuecai Lin

*School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Publishing and Printing College, Shanghai, 200093, China  
Linxuecai2003@163.com*

**Keywords:** Emily Bronte, the Moor highlands, Sad life, Inner monologue

**Abstract:** Over the years, both Chinese and Western critics in literature have different comments on Emily Bronte's epic *Wuthering Heights* from different angles, but these comments all make sense. A close reading and comprehensive analysis of Emily Bronte's life and *Wuthering Heights* reveals *Wuthering Heights* clearly shows Emily Bronte's unique growth experience, lonely and eccentric character, sad and lonely heart, deep wasteland complex and helpless love entanglement, which is the true portrayal and inner monologue of the author's sad life.

## 1. Introduction

*Wuthering Heights*, a masterpiece written by Emily Bronte in the 19th century, has been widely welcomed by Chinese readers and warmly commented by scholars. It has gradually become a hot topic in the forum of Western literature in China. *Wuthering Heights* is set in Yorkshire, England in the 18th century. It tells the story of the orphan Heathcliff who is adopted by Earnshaw, the old master of *Wuthering Heights*, and grows up with Earnshaw's daughter Catherine. Heathcliff and Catherine fall in love with each other over time, but Catherine is influenced by the social conventions and status and marries Linton, the master of Thrushcross Grange. Because of humiliation and love, Heathcliff leaves *Wuthering Heights* and goes out to make money. After he becomes rich and goes back to *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff takes a series of revenge on his former girlfriend Catherine and the landowner Linton and his children. In the constant revenge, the love and the hate combine with each other, and the conflicts escalate, and finally all characters end up with death. Throughout the history of Chinese and foreign literature, it is obvious that all writers incorporate their own emotions and life experiences into their works. As many works are to a large extent the reproduction of the author's life experience and inner monologue, *Wuthering Heights* also reproduces the sad life of the lonely girl, Emily Bronte. Every time readers read this work, they feel as if they have experienced a spiritual shock and emotional baptism.

## 2. The Sad Life of Emily Bronte

For Emily Bronte and *Wuthering Heights*, critics and readers have had different opinions over the years. Some people think that Emily Bronte reveals the complex and changeable human nature to readers through the love and hate entanglements of the hero and heroine, criticizes the cruel

social reality's destruction of human nature, and expresses the author's firm belief that good human nature will return eventually. Some critics believe that Emily Bronte reflected the class conflict and compromise in the development of capitalist industrial civilization through the description of emotional entanglements and conflicts between the two families, and revealed the inevitability of the existence of class contradictions in modern Britain. Some readers think that Emily Bronte satirizes the utilitarian restraining of the social reality on human nature and love with the conflict and contest between love and hatred of the hero and heroine, and reflects the deformed social appearance of the Victorian era in England. Some people think that Emily Bronte reveals that the development of human society must follow the law of nature and conform to the law of natural development through the evolution of the fate of characters and social structure in her works. And the natural rule is from harmony to conflict, then from conflict to harmony.

Undoubtedly, no matter from the perspective of human nature, class opposition, social secularism, love and hatred, simple outlook of nature or the relationship between man and nature, all kinds of comments and analysis and interpretations are based on readers' own understanding and cognition of the author and his works. It should be said that these comments and interpretations make sense and are self-contained. However, opinions vary from person to person. After several in-depth studies of the works and the introduction of Emily Bronte's relevant life trajectory, the author of the paper has his own understanding and cognition. Based on the author's understanding, perhaps these typical comments are beyond the original intention of Emily Bronte. Some of the comments seem reasonable but they are exaggerated, and even the critics impose their own unfounded speculation on the author. After careful study of Emily Bronte's growth experience, the author of the paper boldly guesses that the circumstances of Emily Bronte at the time of writing may not be as complex and profound as some critics imagine, and may be just a way for her to pass the time based on the mood and situation at that time. Saying something out is comfortable but not to say is depressed. When there is no one to tell, you can only imagine the story of others by means of the mouth of others. From Emily Bronte's short life experience, we can see that Emily Bronte lived in a very narrow circle, rarely left home, and did not experience herself in the melting pot of the society. It can be guessed that Emily Bronte, who is not very experienced in life, cannot reveal the insufficiency of human nature or the cruelty of class oppression through her works, let alone express the harmonious relationship between man and nature through *Wuthering Heights*. We know that the creation of works requires a rich life experience, whether it is smooth sailing or ups and downs. In fact, in order to truly understand the work and the author's creation intention, the most important thing should be based on facts, objective observation and analysis of the author's life background and growth experience. Only from the aspects of Emily Bronte's family background, living environment, personality characteristics and life experience, can we really understand Emily Bronte and her works without veil.

By combing through the important stages of Emily Bronte's short life, perhaps we can discover the reason why Emily Bronte wrote her work. Emily Bronte was born in 1818.07, moved to Howorth Heights with her family in 1820.02. Her mother died in 1821.09. She went to Cowan School in 1824.11, went home in 1825.06 because of the death of two older sisters. In 1829.11 -- 1830.12 she and her sister Anne wrote "The Legend of Mandahl". In 1835.07 -- 1837.08 she studied at Roughead School; and in 1837.09 she taught at Patchett Girls' School for six months and resigned to return home; and in 1842.02 she studied piano in Brussels and returned home shortly afterwards; and in 1842.10 her aunt died and she went home for mourning; thereafter, she stayed at home and composed *Wuthering Heights* in the winter of 1845 -- 1846. Then she died in 1848.12. In such a short life she was unable to see the nature of society, but could experience the warmth and cold of life.

Throughout the important stages of Emily Bronte's life from birth, study, teaching, butler, creation to death, it is not difficult to see that Emily Bronte spent almost all her short 30 years in the desolate hometown of Howorth Highland, and Emily Bronte almost never left the moors in her life, and perhaps this was her spiritual home. The empty wasteland is monotonous and heavy, and deep in it one feels lonely and alone, isolated and imprisoned. The wasteland, with being untouched or barely touched by the civilized society of the time, remained the primitive desolation and roughness of nature. Emily Bronte loved nature, the primitiveness of the wilderness, and she had absorbed herself into the desolation of the mountains. [1] The desolation surroundings had a profound effect on Emily Bronte's psychology. Even if she went out to study and work, she ended her out-life early due to homesickness, and she experienced hardships at a young age. "From a psychological perspective, apart from genetics, early childhood experiences play an important role in the formation of a person's personality." [2] For a person, lack of maternal love in childhood will lead to a lack of security. That means boys become indecisive and cautious while girls are more solitary and sentimental. The double blows of losing her mother and her sisters when she was three years old and seven years old made Emily Bronte feel sad and lonely in her young heart. Since then, she has become silent, unhappy, lonely and eccentric. Apparently, she did not want to go out and meet people. The wild highlands of her home town became the only place Emily Bronte could go, and perhaps she could find much joy in this desolate and lonely place. It was only here that she was happy. She loved the wilderness, as if she could feel the joys and sorrows of the world and experience freedom. Clearly, circumstances make man while empty and desolate highlands make no comfortable life. With Emily Bronte's character and environment, *Wuthering Heights* can only be the representation and expression of her lonely heart. At the same time, Emily Bronte's wandering and grazing on the wasteland in her hometown provided her with a vast space for her imagination. The empty wasteland gave her life and gave her the source of imagination. Although a man proposed to her when she was 21, the love affair soon fizzled out for a variety of reasons. For Emily Bronte, who was already sad, this short love life is even worse, and she has experienced one after another suffering of the world. It is clear that, whatever the age is, there are many factors that prompt a writer to take up the pen to express his feelings and insights, the most important of which are his formative upbringing, his life history, and his personality. Emily Bronte's works contain the aggregation of blood and emotion. There is warmth in pure love and cruelty in darkness, which is a reflection of the struggle of life and environment.[3] Mo Yan, the winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature, is successful because, as he said, "all his works are memories from childhood." Understandably, for Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* is a childhood memory and an adult experience. Perhaps she can only live in her own imagination, and only through the creation of characters, she can reflect her life experience and vent her unhappiness. In this sense, *Wuthering Heights* is the true portrayal and inner monologue of Emily Bronte's sad life.

We say what kind of environment makes what kind of person, the two parts complement each other. On Howorth Moor in Yorkshire, northern England, stands a solitary grey stone parsonage--*Wuthering Heights*. *Wuthering Heights* is an isolated place in the wilderness of the mountains.[4] *Wuthering Heights* is the name of the hero, Heathcliff's house. From the word "Wuthering", it is obvious that how harsh the environment around the Heights is.[5] Outside *Wuthering Heights* was an open, empty moor, which is the place where Emily Bronte little left, here grey and emptiness are the main tone. Her only recreation was to walk on the moors, where every tree and grass filled her with imagination and only here she can find fun. "In her eyes the darkest heather will bloom fairer than a rose. In her mind, a dark valley on a leaden hillside would be paradise on earth." [6] Such empty living environment, lonely inner world and infinite attachment to the wilderness make it easy for Emily Bronte to place the characters in her works in the natural background of the wilderness, and to write the joys and sorrows of life in the vast world so as to more truly express her inner

feelings and thoughts, and it can be imagined that it is impossible for the characters in her works to have a brilliant life and romantic feelings. She attached herself to nature, to the wilderness and to home, nature and wilderness are the final life destination of Emily Bronte. In *Wuthering Heights*, the deep complex of the wasteland is embodied incisively and vividly through *Wuthering Heights* located in an empty place and *Thrushcross Grange* lying prone in a verdant valley, and through the love and hate entanglements between the owner Heathcliff and the mistress Catherine, as well as the relationship between the next generations. Perhaps, such an attachment to wilderness can only be expressed through such relationships.

A succession of family changes left Emily Bronte silent and confined to the desolate highlands. It is clear that the lonely young men and girls need more love, which girl will not yearn for love? Ordinary women crave love, let alone sentimental Emily Bronte. However, the short emotional experience made her both eager and afraid of love, and the tangle of longing and fear of love may have prompted her to pick up a pen. The love she can't get in real life can be gained in the imaginary world and the love can be expressed in the works by the words of the characters. Only borrowing the description of love passion of love, she can relieve the depression and loneliness, from the spirit, to make up for her life. Only in creation can she open the floodgates of passion and allow the protagonist, who is as fanatical as she is, to love passionately and hate persistently. In the work, the love between the owner Heathcliff and the mistress Catherine is both admired and feared by people. This may be the revelation and catharsis of Emily Bronte's inner love entanglement, which makes love freely used by her in the imaginary world. According to Freud, an unfulfilled wish is largely a craving for desire. Emily Bronte did not get true love in her life, and projected her emotional world to the beautiful and capricious Catherine through *Wuthering Heights*. In fact, every work in the history of literature is a confession and revelation of the relevant author's inner heart. Of course, we readers can also understand Emily Bronte and *Wuthering Heights* from another angle. Perhaps *Wuthering Heights* was just a way for the depressed Emily Bronte to pass the time through virtual characters, virtual events and virtual plots. It's just a way to not only pass the time and but also express the writer's inner feelings.

### 3. Conclusion

To sum up, Emily Bronte witnessed the death of her loved families, experienced the bitterness of love, and got through the gray life in her short life. Perhaps Emily Bronte found solace in the creation of *Wuthering Heights* through her powerful imagination. It is not difficult to see that it is Emily Bronte's sad life, introverted character of depression and shyness, sad and lonely feelings, her inextricable wilderness complex, and her desire and fear for beautiful love that attribute to Emily Bronte's lonely life. It should be said that *Wuthering Heights* is, in a sense, the true portrayal of Emily Bronte's inner monologue and sad life.

### References

- [1] Huang Bo. *Wuthering Heights -- A Cycle of the Natural Order*. *Journal of Huainan Institute of Technology*, 2000, 03(12). (in Chinese)
- [2] Maolin Chen. *Return to Nature and Keep Childlike Innocence*. *Foreign Language Education*, 2007.01. (in Chinese)
- [3] Shi Jiao, Sun Baoheng. *Love and Hate in Waste Land---Analysis on Connotation and Enlightenment of Wuthering Heights*. *Journal of Changjiang Institute of Technology*, 2018. 06 (35). (in Chinese)
- [4] Linmei Bai. *The decline of the pastoral world in Wuthering Heights from the space-time theory*. *Foreign Studies*, 2020.06(08). (in Chinese)
- [5] Zhaoqi Zhong. *A Study on the Tragic Theme of Bronte's Wuthering Heights*. *Comparative Study of Cultural Innovation*, 2020, 21: 89-91. (in Chinese)
- [6] Jingyuan Yang. *The Brontë family sisters' study*. *China Social Science Press*, 1983.11. (in Chinese)