THE HOLY SPIRIT IN EMILY BRONTË’S WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND POETRY

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Abstract

An examination of Emily Brontë’s poetry is crucial to an understanding of the religious discourse in her novel Wuthering Heights. The poetry’s use of biblical tropes and topoi relating to the Holy Spirit is closely linked to Brontë’s emphasis on the primal nature of religious experience over and above its formal expressions. These same concerns play an important role in Wuthering Heights, especially with respect to the Heathcliff–Cathy relationship and the idea of transgression. This article will begin, then, with a survey of the poetry and move from there to a brief consideration of the novel.

A survey of the notes to the Clarendon editions of the novels of the Brontë sisters will reveal that there are over 450 allusions to and quotations from the Bible in Charlotte Bronte’s novels alone, and more than 130 in Anne Brontë’s. The references are to nearly every book in both the Old and New Testaments, suggesting an impressive familiarity with biblical texts. In stark contrast, however, there are only fourteen biblical allusions or quotations in Emily Brontë’s novel, Wuthering Heights (1847). What is the significance of this comparatively small number? Does her failure to amass a body of scriptural references proportionate to her sisters’ indicate that her knowledge of or interest in the Bible was somehow less than theirs? On the contrary, the fact that Emily Brontë’s allusions, like her sisters’, draw from every type of biblical genre—from the Pentateuch, histories, poetic and wisdom literature, and major and minor prophets to the synoptic gospels and Pauline and Petrine epistles—strongly suggests that her command of the Scriptures may well have equalled that of her sisters. It is only more remarkable that she accomplishes such a broad spectrum with so few references.

Furthermore, there is every reason to believe that, whatever her personal religious beliefs or inclinations, Emily Brontë shared the same education and upbringing that led to such a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures on the part of her sisters. Regular and conscientious reading of the Bible, especially for girls and women, was a matter of social expectation in the Victorian age.
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A lack of scriptural knowledge would have been seen at the most as a moral danger, at the least as a shocking example of ignorance and a serious fault in education and upbringing—only all the more so in the daughters of a clergyman. Indeed, as Juliet Barker notes, ‘in all his teaching and writing Patrick [Brontë] had emphasised the importance of reading the Bible and his children knew their Bibles inside out’. Moreover, the Evangelical emphasis on the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God meant that regular meditation on the Scriptures was perceived as a spiritual necessity of paramount importance. It is likely that both the social and spiritual concerns played a role in the Brontës’ formal education, since they attended schools which provided religious instruction, required regular church attendance and, in conjunction with local clergy, prepared pupils for confirmation. Even simply a regular attendance at church would have meant repeated exposure to biblical texts, since the set lessons for each service ensured that most of the Old Testament was read through once, and the New Testament twice, over the course of the year, with the psalms read through once every month. Though none of the Brontës stated exactly how frequently she attended church, their social position would have obliged them to do so regularly. It seems likely that, whatever may have been her personal convictions, Emily Brontë could not, as the daughter of the officiating clergyman, have easily avoided attending church, since a failure in this respect would have been rather a conspicuous challenge to Mr Brontë’s authority, pressured as he was, according to Juliet Barker, to maintain this authority in the face of the powerful presence of local dissenting congregations.

If Emily Brontë indeed experienced, then, the same expectations and opportunities as her sisters to familiarise herself with the Scriptures, why the small number of biblical allusions? The answer may be found in the fact that there are even fewer allusions to other literary sources: only two allusions to Shakespeare and one to Bunyan, again in striking contrast to her sisters’, and indeed most other authors’ novels. What is apparent here, then, is not a lesser knowledge of, or interest in, the Bible on Emily Brontë’s part, but a lesser use of allusion in general. In the case of a novel as original as Wuthering Heights, this reluctance to draw in a direct way from other established texts should come as no surprise.

All this points to an important difference between Emily Brontë and her sisters in the use of the Bible and its discourse. The more concrete, particular nature of Charlotte and Anne Brontë’s densely allusive approach opens more plainly to the reader the underlying Christian moral and ideological framework of their novels. In contrast, Emily Brontë’s tendency to avoid the use of allusion creates a sense of vagueness—a kind of moral silence—in her use of theological discourse, with which her critics have often struggled, seeing in it everything from atheism to pantheism. Actually the difference lies not so much
in some doctrinal aberration on Emily Brontë’s part as in her concentration on
the non-conceptual, or what Rudolf Otto has called the ‘non-rational’, aspects
of religion. That is, the novel emphasises the primal nature of religious
experience over and above its doctrinal formulations. Indeed, Brontë’s well-
known poem ‘No coward so soul is mine’ (1846) celebrates the immediacy of
the believer’s experience of God even as it denigrates the ‘thousand creeds’
which are the established expressions of such faith.

This and other poems by Emily Brontë are crucial to an understanding of
the religious discourse in Wuthering Heights. Critics have not hitherto observed
that many of the poems, though they perhaps do not actually quote from
specific scriptural texts, nevertheless make extensive use of biblical tropes and
topoi presenting the Holy Spirit as mighty rushing wind, as animating breath
of God and as indwelling Spirit of God. This focus on the Holy Spirit is
closely linked to the kind of valuation, articulated in the poem mentioned
above, of experience over doctrine. For it is the Spirit, more than any other
person of the Trinity, who is involved in the experience of God in the life of
the believer. It is the Spirit who convicts, converts, sanctifies, teaches, directs,
comforts, inspires and empowers the believer. It is even by the power of the
Spirit that the very Word of God is made incarnate. For Emily Brontë, who
tended to eschew the more anthropomorphic analogies for the Deity in favour
of those associated with the natural world, the tropes of wind and breath were
much more appealing than the images of Father or Son. In this sense she is
less interested in the heart of the gospel, forgiveness of sins, than in its fruit,
access into the divine presence. It is in this context that the topos of the
indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer becomes a means of articulating
her own understanding of the ‘God within my breast’ and the ‘Life that in
me has rest’. And these same tropes and topoi, stripped of the linguistic struc-
tures that make their theological underpinnings so readily identifiable in the
poems, play a central role in Wuthering Heights. This study will begin, then, with
an examination of Emily Brontë’s poetry, and move from there to a brief
consideration of the novel.

In the Bible, the three English words—‘wind’, ‘breath’ and ‘spirit’—used
to translate the original Hebrew word ruach, and the Greek word pneuma, all
refer to the person of the Holy Spirit. In this context it becomes significant
that a full third of Emily Brontë’s poems contain direct references to the wind
and breath. In much the same way that the biblical images of the wind and
breath emphasise the power, energy, and life-giving aspect of the Spirit of
God, in Emily Brontë’s poetry, wind and breath represent powerful and
animating forces. For example, a poem such as ‘High waving heather, ‘neath
stormy blasts bending’ (1836) depicts ‘the life-giving wind’ as animating the
landscape, the natural world of creation, giving vivid illustration to the Nicene
Creed’s definition of the Holy Ghost as ‘the Lord and giver of life’.
A remarkable scene of intense flux, of constant change, is pictured in this poem, not with a sense of gradual, progressive evolution but of highly-charged, serial transmutations—a world perpetually:

Shining and lowering and swelling and dying,
Changing for ever from midnight to noon;
Roaring like thunder, like soft music sighing,
Shadows on shadows advancing and flying, ...
Coming as swiftly and fading as soon.  \(13-18\)

The most important part of this scene describes what seems to be a combination of apocalypse and apotheosis: ‘Earth rising to heaven and heaven descending, / Man’s spirit away from its drear dungeon [sic] sending, / Bursting the fetters and breaking the bars’ \((4-6)\). This suggests that the same ‘life-giving wind’ which drives forth the ‘rivers their banks in the jubilee rending’ also makes possible the similarly transgressive release of the ‘spirit’ from the ‘drear dungeon’ of the body, from the ‘fetters’ of the flesh and the ‘bars’ of the physical senses. Similarly, in ‘I’m happiest when most away’ \((1838)\), it is only ‘on a windy night’ that the poet\(^{15}\) finds \((s)he ‘can bear my soul from its home of clay’ and become ‘only spirit wandering wide / Through infinite immensity’ \((7-8)\).\(^6\) And in ‘Aye, there it is! It wakes to-night’ \((1841)\), the presence or power of the ‘glorious wind’ precedes or makes possible the escape of the poet’s ‘prisoned soul’ from the constraints of its fleshly ‘dungeon’.\(^{17}\) This connection between the power or energy of the wind and the kind of transcendental or numinous religious experience hinted at above and in other poems, such as ‘The night is darkening round me’ \((1837)\) and ‘I’ll come when thou art saddest’ \((1837)\), reaches its culmination in the poem ‘The Prisoner’ \((1845)\).\(^{18}\) Here the imprisoned soul is literally a ‘captive’ locked in ‘the dungeon crypts’, watching nightly for ‘a messenger of Hope’ who ‘comes with western winds, with evening’s wandering airs’, bringing ‘visions’ which are ‘divine’, and offering ‘eternal liberty’. A ‘vision’ or foretaste of this liberty is granted to the prisoner (‘Then dawns the Invisible, the Unseen its truth reveals / My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels’ \((81–2)\)), but its reality or realisation cannot be bestowed in this life, echoing the Pauline notion of the ‘holy Spirit of promise’ as the ‘earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession’ \((Eph 1:13–14)\).\(^{19}\) In all these poems, then, the wind is the sign of the Spirit which gives life to all creation, and which makes possible the kind of liberating, epiphanic apprehension of the divine nature that is the primal religious experience for the poet.

In addition to the poems that utilise biblical tropes presenting the Spirit as wind and breath, Emily Brontë also makes use, in a series of poems she selected for publication in 1846, of several New Testament topoi relating to the various
roles of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. For example, in the gospel of John, especially in the passages that form the gospel reading for Whitsunday (also known as Pentecost, the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit) in the Book of Common Prayer, the Spirit is often referred to as the ‘Comforter’ (Jn 14:16). Utilising this topos, Brontë’s poem ‘My Comforter’ (1844) describes a ‘thoughtful Comforter’ who is ‘like a soft air’ or a ‘thaw-wind’, bringing ‘calm’ to the poet. Likewise, the later poem ‘Anticipation’ (1845) describes a ‘Glad comforter’, a ‘thoughtful Spirit’ who teaches the poet how to hope and look forward. The Greek word Paraclete, translated as ‘Comforter’ in John’s gospel, is also translated as ‘Advocate’ in 1 John 2:1. It is this term that the poem ‘Plead for me’ (1844) appropriates, describing a ‘radiant angel’, a ‘God of Visions’ whom the poet has chosen over the worldly idols of ‘Wealth and Power’, and whom (s)he addresses as ‘my advocate’. Even the aforementioned concept of the Spirit as life-giver plays a role in the poem ‘To Imagination’ (1844), where a ‘benignant power, / Sure solacer’ and ‘true friend’ is described as having the power to create and renew:

But thou art ever there to bring  
The hovering visions back and breathe  
New glories o’er the blighted spring  
And call a lovelier life from death,  
And whisper with a voice divine  
Of real worlds as bright as thine. (25—30)

As in the poem ‘Death, that struck when I was most confiding’ (1845), in which the ‘wind and rain’ help to ‘restore’ life (see Hos 6:3), here ‘Imagination’, like the Spirit of God in Ezekiel 37:1—14, has the power to ‘breathe’ forth ‘life from death’. The idea of the Spirit as charism is also utilised in some of the poems, such as ‘The Night-Wind’ (1840). Here the ‘breathing’ of the wind speaks to the poet of the beauty of creation (‘It told me Heaven was glorious / And sleeping Earth was fair’ (7—8)), drawing from New Testament accounts of the spiritual phenomenon of glossolalia to describe its power to impart nature with a form of utterance:

The thick leaves in my murmur  
Are rustling like a dream,  
And all their myriad voices  
Instinct with spirit seem. (13—16)

Similarly, the prophetic aspect of charism is a topos central to the poem ‘The Philosopher’ (1845), which borrows imagery from the dreams and prophecies in
The Spirit bent his dazzling gaze
Down on that Ocean’s gloomy night,
Then—kindling all with sudden blaze,
The glad deep sparkled wide and bright—
White as the sun; far, far more fair
Than the divided sources were!

This scene of the birth of light out of dark waters also draws in part from the biblical depiction of the role of the Spirit in the Genesis account of the Creation. But it is the idea of the Spirit’s role in the revelation of God’s truth that informs the Philosopher’s subsequent confession, on hearing of this Seer’s vision of prophetic ‘illumination’, that he has himself, ‘for that Spirit... watched and sought my lifetime long’, without success. ‘Had I but seen his glorious eye / Once light the clouds that wilder me,’ he says, his despairing wish for death would never have been made (45–6).

The poetry examined thus far has depicted the role of the Spirit as life-giving wind, as comforter and advocate, and as charism, most significantly in relation to the kind of numinous religious experience involved in the poet’s epiphanic apprehension of the divine nature. But the supreme value attached to this experience is most clearly articulated in Emily Bronte’s penultimate surviving poem, ‘No coward soul is mine’ (1846). The first half of this poem is a celebration of the power of the poet’s ‘Faith’ in granting the ability to ‘see Heaven’s glories’ while at the same time ‘arming... from Fear’. Echoing the words of Christ, ‘abide in Me and I in you’ (Jn 15:4), of Paul, ‘the Spirit of God dwelleth in you’ (1 Co 3:16), and of John, ‘God dwelleth in us’ (1 Jn 4:12), the poet declares:

O God within my breast
Almighty ever-present Deity
Life, that in me hast rest
As I Undying Life, have power in Thee.

The poet's expression of confidence in this mutual inter-relationship, with God resting in the poet and (s)he concomitantly drawing on God's power, appropriates the biblical topos of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer: ‘Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit’ (1 Jn 4:13). The Spirit thus takes on a central role in the believer's experience of God. It is no surprise, then, that in the second half of
the poem the poet’s understanding of the divine nature focuses on the figure of the Spirit:

With wide-embracing love  
Thy spirit animates eternal years  
Pervades and broods above,  
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.  

(17–20)

As in the earlier poems, the idea of the Spirit’s creative or life-giving power is expressed using biblical imagery of ‘the Spirit of God’ as it ‘moved on the face of the waters’ (Ge 1:2), and of ‘the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove’ (Jn 2:32). Similarly, the final lines of the poem make use of the idea of the Holy Spirit as the breath of God: ‘Thou art Being and Breath / And what Thou art may never be destroyed.’ What is articulated in this poem, then, through the use of such biblical tropes and topoi, is a confident belief in God’s all-pervasive, life-giving Spirit; and what is celebrated (at the expense of the ‘vain’ and ‘worthless’ creeds which are the formal expressions of such belief) is the empowering experience of a direct and visceral relationship with such a Deity. These are themes that will play an important role in the study of the religious discourse in *Wuthering Heights*.

We have seen how, in Emily Bronte’s poetry, biblical tropes and topoi relating to the Spirit inform the poet’s depiction of the believer’s experience of and relationship to the divine nature. In *Wuthering Heights*, the same concerns are present but without the linguistic constructions which make the theological framework so apparent in the poetry. Nevertheless, having considered the way in which these issues are approached in the poetry, it is possible to see more clearly their role in the novel’s depiction of the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff, in its treatment of the idea of transgression, and in the closing of the narrative.

On being pressed by Nelly to justify her engagement to Edgar Linton, Cathy attempts to describe the nature of her relationship with Heathcliff:

there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? ... If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it .... Nelly, I am Heathcliff—he’s always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but as my own being.  

Cathy insists that her ‘being’ is so closely linked to Heathcliff’s that her very existence is somehow dependent on his. (Indeed, Heathcliff seems to echo this idea when he raves to the departed Cathy, ‘do not leave me in this abyss,
where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!' (204.) What is significant about this formula of inter-relationship is that it utilises the same language that the speaker of Emily Brontë’s poem ‘No coward soul is mine’ (1846) uses to describe God:

Though Earth and moon were gone
And suns and universes ceased to be
And thou wert left alone
Every existence would exist in thee. (21–4)

This similarity suggests that the novel’s depiction of the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff draws on the understanding, presented in the poem, of the relationship between God and the believer. Since, as we have seen, the poem uses biblical topoi of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to describe the inter-existential relationship of the believer to God, it may be said that Cathy’s use of a similar paradigm to describe her love for Heathcliff suggests that she ‘dwells’ in him in a similar way that the Spirit does the believer. (In this context Heathcliff’s statement that ‘existence, after losing her, would be hell’ (182) may be seen to echo the theological notion that hell is the eternal deprivation of God’s presence.)

However, the novel, though it does seem to endorse the supreme value of some kind of transcendental experience of relational existence, cannot be said to celebrate such a relationship in the way that the poem does, for Cathy and Heathcliff are tormented by the problematic nature of their love. The indications of profound conflict in Heathcliff and Cathy’s supposed unity seem to suggest that the spiritual paradigm outlined in ‘No coward soul’ cannot be successfully applied to personal relationships, if only because a finite, imperfect being cannot perform the work of an infinite, perfect being. This becomes apparent as Cathy finds herself drawn to Edgar Linton. Initially, Cathy believes that since her existence is ‘contained’ in Heathcliff’s, and his in hers, he ‘comprehends in his person’ her own ‘feelings to Edgar’ (101). But this expectation proves to be unfounded, with disastrous results. However much both Cathy and Heathcliff desire to be ontologically one, they find themselves at odds, tormented nearly until the very moment of her death by resentments, regrets, and recriminations:

‘You have killed me ... I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn’t you suffer?’ …
‘Don’t torture me ... You know you lie ... how cruel you’ve been—cruel and false.... I have not one word of comfort—you deserve this.’ …
'Let me alone. Let me alone... If I've done wrong, I'm dying for it. It is enough! You left me too; but... I forgive you. Forgive me!'...

'How can I?' (195–8)

and so on. Even after Cathy’s death, indeed for the remainder of his life, Heathcliff’s torment continues, as he goes on seeking something which he cannot quite find, demanding something which she cannot quite give: ‘I could almost see her, and yet I could not! I ought to have sweat blood then, from the anguish of my yearning, from the fervour of my supplications to have but one glimpse! I had not one’ (350–1). Yet despite this torture, he persists in his desire, saying: ‘I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it... it has devoured my existence’ (395). In the end, ceasing to eat and feverish with anguish, Heathcliff follows his desire down the path to his own destruction in much the same way Cathy did eighteen years before.

This question of the consequences of the love between Cathy and Heathcliff raises the issue of the larger significance of their relationship, its place in the novel as a whole. In this context it is useful to regard the matter in terms of transgression, that is, the overstepping of boundaries. The everyday boundaries and distinctions which help us to define and shape our understanding of the world are repeatedly broken down and blurred in Wuthering Heights, creating a constant state of fluctuation which is profoundly unsettling to the reader, and which calls into question conventional notions of reality. This perpetual shattering of bonds and bounds is characteristic of Emily Brontë’s poetic imagination, which celebrates, as we have seen in the poem ‘High waving heather ’neath stormy blasts bending’ (1836), the liberating experience of ‘bursting the fetters and breaking the bars’ on every level of existence. Yet Wuthering Heights dramatises the problematic nature of crossing boundaries in a way that the poem does not. For every barrier breached in the novel, confusion, disorder and even tragedy follow. Thus Cathy’s doomed attempt to eliminate the distinction between herself and Heathcliff when she states, ‘I am Heathcliff’ may be seen to be highly transgressive, in that it sets out to eliminate individual identity by breaking down the boundary between Self and Other. Notions of individual identity are further undermined as Lockwood’s nightmare vision of the variations of Cathy’s name—Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, Catherine Linton (24)—rehearses the circular and in-folding history of both her own and her daughter’s tragic marriages. On a familial level, there is a similar pattern of name-repetition among the two generations of Earnshaws, Lintons and Heathcliffs, the confusing result of the various ill-fated intermarriages between foster siblings Cathy and Heathcliff and actual siblings Edgar and Isabella, as well as their respective offspring.

Even the breakdown of fundamental received distinctions between male and female, civilisation and brutality, life and death, bode ill for those involved.
For example, Linton Heathcliff’s effeminacy contributes to the reversal of the expected passive and active gender roles in his unfortunate relationship with Catherine Linton. Additionally, the genteel Lintons are capable of increasing violence and hatred, the women not the least among these. Finally, Heathcliff’s refusal to acknowledge Cathy’s death (‘Where is she? Not there—not in heaven—not perished—where?’ (204)), and his preoccupation with her corpse, challenge the very distinction between life and death. He literally breaks down the barrier surrounding her body, opening her coffin (349–50) and arranging for the removal of the panel separating her casket from his (‘and then, by the time Linton gets to us, he’ll not know which is which’ (349)). Thus Heathcliff’s desire to tear down the walls between the living and the dead merges with his desire to dissolve the distinction between the Self and the Other, leading ultimately to his own destruction.

The world of Wuthering Heights may then be seen as one in which boundaries are constantly strained, breached, and broken down, where the overriding principle is one of fluctuation rather than stability, change rather than stasis. It is a world much like that envisioned by Emily Brontë’s poem ‘High waving heather, ’neath stormy blast bending’ (1836), a world constantly ‘Shining and lowering and swelling and dying / Changing for ever from midnight to noon.’ In this poem the wind, a figure for the Holy Spirit, is the force behind such flux, enabling the transgression of boundaries on every level, natural and spiritual, as the rivers ‘rend’ their banks, and the soul transcends the flesh. Similarly, the ‘spirit’ of God in the poem ‘No coward soul is mine’ (1846) ‘Pervades and broods above, / Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.’ With such a spirit ‘animating’ the world, change becomes a ‘principle of life’. But while in the poetry transgression seems almost a path to transcendence, in the novel it is indeed a dangerous road to travel.

Given a world in which transgression is a pervasive principle, the question arises as to whether any final resolution of the conflicts in the novel is at all possible. There is a trend in criticism which reads the latter half of Wuthering Heights as effecting a kind of healing process, bringing, after the first generation’s violence and destructiveness, a measure of peace and harmony to the next, and culminating in the marriage of Hareton and Catherine. Such a reading sees the conclusion of Wuthering Heights as a deeply satisfying resolution of all previous conflict. However, this interpretation is highly problematic in that it ignores the pervasive element of transgression noted above. All of the characters in the novel are depicted as being capable of violence—or at least of violent hatred or anger—even the supposedly civilised Lintons. With the several previous intermarriages between the Grange and the Heights (Cathy and Edgar, Heathcliff and Isabella, Linton Heathcliff and Catherine Linton) all ending in disaster, there has certainly been no precedent within the novel for the kind of reformation and healing presumed to result from the Hareton–Catherine union.
The ending of *Wuthering Heights* therefore becomes an important indication of the possibility or impossibility of final resolution. The two major narrators of the novel, Nelly and Lockwood, present two contrasting images of closure. Nelly, while disavowing any belief in the accounts, describes the local people's sightings of the ghosts of Heathcliff and Cathy wandering the Heights and the nearby moors (412). Lockwood, in contrast, visits the site of their graves and sees only a vision of peace and tranquillity:

> I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath, and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers, for the sleepers in that quiet earth. (414)

Thus there are held up before the reader the 'unquiet' image of Heathcliff and Cathy's ghosts, and the 'quiet' image of the peaceful landscape. Which of the two, if either, represents the true conclusion of the story ultimately remains unclear. All that is left, the only sound which remains, is that of 'the soft wind breathing through the grass'. Admittedly it is a much gentler scene than that which opened the book:

> Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr Heathcliff's dwelling, 'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few, stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. (4–5)

Although to some critics the 'atmospheric tumult' of the Heights is simply indicative of the 'stormy' violence of its inmates, it should be noted that it is not just 'in stormy weather' but 'at all times' that the 'power of the ... wind' shows its force, literally shaping the direction of life in the surrounding world. It is this 'wind' that, however much softened, remains present at the novel's close, 'breathing through the grass'. 'All flesh is grass,' says a voice to Isaiah, 'the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass' (Isa 40:6–7). The biblical tropes of Holy Spirit as 'wind' and 'breath' are thus called upon to depict an eternal force which moves through all creation, which 'Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.' This is the final image of *Wuthering Heights*, not an image of resolution or peace, nor of violence or despair, but of a universe whose only element of constancy is its everchangingness.

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'There is almost no evidence for Emily rebelling against the conventional practice of religion... Backsliding on the part of Charlotte, Emily and Anne would have been very difficult; there is little to suggest that they ever openly challenged their father's authority on any matter, and particularly little evidence for any challenge on religion.' T. Winnifirth and E. Chitham, *Charlotte and Emily Brontë: Literary Lives* (London: Macmillan, 1989) p. 33.


4 As a young woman, Charlotte Brontë valued not only the 'treasures of the Bible' but also the 'communion' with God it afforded. She also referred critically to those 'to whom the Bible is a sealed book'. Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey, 10 May 1836, 5 May 1838, and July 1842, in M. Smith (ed), *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol. 1: 1829—1847 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) pp. 144, 177, 290.

5 See Barker, pp. 124, 282.

6 See Knight, p. 44.


10 Cf. Schleiermacher's 'interpretation of religion as grounded in a pre-linguistic and unmediated form of experience. In this perspective experience is primary, and religious doctrines, symbols, myths and rituals are secondary expressions of this foundational inward state. ... religions and their doctrines are assessed not in terms of their cognitive status but by virtue of how effectively they bring to expression this basal experience'. S.G. Devaney and D. Brown, 'Postliberalism' in A. McGrath (ed), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) p. 454.

symbolic significance of the wind in Emily Brontë's work, he does not discuss the biblical resonances of this 'symbol' (170). Indeed, none of the above studies has examined the role of pneumatological tropes and topoi in Emily Brontë's work, which is the subject of the present article.


14 C.W. Hatfield, The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë (New York: Columbia UP, 1941) p. 31. Line numbers are given parenthetically in the text.

15 I use the term 'poet' throughout this section to signify not Emily Brontë herself but the primary speaker of the poem. The existence of multiple speakers in many of the poems precludes the use of the customary designation, 'the speaker'.

16 Hatfield, p. 63.

17 Hatfield, p. 165.

18 See Hatfield, pp. 236–42.

19 See also 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5.

20 See also John 15:26 and 16:7.

21 Hatfield, pp. 195–7.

22 Hatfield, pp. 231–3.

23 Hatfield, pp. 208–9.

24 Hatfield, pp. 205–6.


26 'Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived' (Eze 37:9–10). See also vv. 5 and 14.

27 The technical term "charism" refers to the "filling of an individual with the spirit of God"...the most pervasive aspect of this feature of the Spirit relates to the question of prophecy" (McGrath, p. 281).


29 See Acts 2:1–4: 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come,...suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting,...And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.'

'And it came to pass...that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river' (Ge 41:1). 'And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river' (Eze 47:6). 'And he shewed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb' (Rev 22:1).

Hatfield, pp. 220–1.

30 'In the beginning God created the heaven and earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light' (Genesis 1:1–3).

31 Cf. Martin Bucer's 1536 commentary on the gospels: 'Before we...are inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are...completely unable to apprehend anything relating to God. So all the wisdom and righteousness which we possess in the absence of the Holy Spirit are the darkness and shadow of death' (cited in McGrath, p. 286).


33 Cf. Paul's description of 'the whole armour of God' which includes 'above all...the shield of faith' (Eph 6:11, 16).

34 See also John 14:17, 'the Spirit...dwelleth with you, and shall be in you'; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 'your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you'.

35 See also Job 26:12–13 and Psalm 104:30. The image of the Holy Spirit as dove is common not only in Christian poetry but also in hymns such as Charles Wesley's well-known 'Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire': Expand thy wings, celestial Dove, / Brood o'er our nature's night; / On our disordered spirits move, / And let there now be light.'

to the novel are given parenthetically in
the text.
39 Catherine Earnshaw becomes Catherine
Linton, and has a daughter named
Catherine Linton who becomes Catherine
Heathcliff and then Catherine Earnshaw.
Thus there are two Catherine Earnshaws,
two Catherine Lintons, and two
Mrs Heathcliffs (both of whom are
Miss Lintons).