The Absence of Fatherhood: Interpreting the Orphan Image in *Wuthering Heights* from the Perspective of Family Complexes[1]

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Abstract   *Wuthering Heights* provides a good "family romance" for psychoanalysis. An interpretation of it from the perspective of Lacan's theory of family complexes reveals the major source of the tragedy: the imbalance of the double function of the father as super-ego and ego-ideal. The neglect of the former leads to indulgence and extreme narcissism on the part of the children, while the deficiency or disillusionment of the latter results in radical diffidence and deformation of character. The orphan Heathcliff remains an orphan because the indulgence of the foster father, while Hindley and Catherine are orphaned by the neglect of the father.

major research areas are British and American literature and western philosophy.

Introduction

There are disagreements on whether the writing of the reclusive Emily Bronte, especially her only novel *Wuthering Heights*, is associated with the society or absolute inherent transcendence. Some believe that "unlike its contemporaneous works, *Wuthering Heights* is not an orthodox Victorian novel and represents a disparate world with the boundless field but without the acculturated blatant society of the nineteenth-century Britain" (Yang 330). Others hold the view that *Wuthering Heights* is a social novel. Terry Eagleton thinks that Emily Bronte grows up near one source of the Industrial Revolution, and she is "far from being mysteriously sequestered from all this (the society)… their (the Bronte sisters') fictions are profoundly influenced by it" (127). By comparison, the former viewpoint seems too arbitrary, while the latter is relatively objective and appropriately elucidates the reason why there are so many orphan images in *Wuthering Heights*. In Emily's only novel, the characters from Heathcliff, Catherine, Isabella and Linton to Little Catherine, Hareton, and Little Linton, are thematically linked by their orphan identity. The orphanhood produced by a loss of roots, death of parents or deserting home is also found in the Gondal context. In the best of Emily Bronte's work, orphanhood thus ceases to be a narrative fact and becomes a poetic figure as Eagleton stated, "to be alive in this social order is to be an orphan" (126). For an orphan is born to himself and establishes his own social penumbra through difficult struggles.

The fatherless orphan searching for his home in an alienated world suffers both physically and mentally. Their inferiority makes them more sensitive than others, and once they are confronted with obstructions, they will undergo a strong trauma in the mind. The long-time repression leads to their self-distortion and hostility to others. What's more, the orphans easily feel being denied and abandoned, which causes their suspicion and insecurity. Finally, because they have no parents to depend on, they will feel more self-condemned when they make mistakes. If they have no one else to communicate with, they will become autistic and depressive. And the home with a patriarch they are searching for is more a medium of "self-knowledge" than a shelter (Taroff 331).

The Causes of Orphanhood

In *Wuthering Heights*, there is a chainless relationship between Heathcliff, Hindley,

Catherine, Hareton and Little Linton that integrates them together to elucidate Emily's presentation of the orphan images. However, their orphanhood results from different causes.

After the death of old Mr. Earnshaw in 1777, Wuthering Heights became a place without a patriarch, then the twenty-year-old Hindley, twelve-year-old Catherine, together with the parentless Heathcliff, became fatherless orphans. Heathcliff's orphanhood metaphorically alluded to the 1840s' Great Irish Famine which catastrophically caused the death of one million of Irish people and drove millions more into exile. According to Terry Eagleton's *The English Novel*, "around three hundred thousand of those Irish emigrants had washed up in the port of Liverpool" (204). Besides the current news reports, Emily had another access to learn of this disaster, that was her brother, Branwell, who happened to be in Liverpool and witnessed a good many of semi-destitute Irish hanging around the city. Emily began writing *Wuthering Heights*, "one of whose main characters is picked up starving off the streets of Liverpool by old Earnshaw, a few months after Branwell returned from Liverpool" (Eagleton 124-125). Heathcliff, who is described as dark as a creature who "came from the devil" (Bronte 25), is most probably the archetype of Irish orphans who lose their roots, and old Mr. Earnshaw says, "not a soul knew to whom it belonged," and the boy is "Starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb" (Bronte 25). Heathcliff has been abandoned by the society before old Mr. Earnshaw picks him up. Having been bereft of all relatives, Heathcliff possesses a self that is "naked, unhoused, and therefore vulnerable" (Eagleton 126). Heathcliff is the very orphan image in the nineteenth century literature in which "the shady picaro is refined into the spiritually energized figure of the orphan, whose freedom from a past he still somehow carries within him endows him with religious and revolutionary energy. He has the power to transform at a touch the decaying houses that he enters, to dispel their lingering pasts, to destroy and recreate: the social climber becomes supernatural scourge. He fades into pathos when this power wanes, and the dark houses he enters threaten increasingly to engulf or extinguish him" (Auerbach 396).

Surrounded by a network of indifference and contempt, with protective benevolence embodied only by old Mr. Earnshaw (Catherine is too young to protect him), Heathcliff must learn to control and direct the torrent of his temper and his hormones to live a peaceful life, but his inherent violence refuses to wear a mask. Heathcliff's first introduction to Wuthering Heights seems to predict the coming of oppressive life in this family. Unfortunately, the partiality from old Mr. Earnshaw does not promise Heathcliff's happy life, but results in Heathcliff's "pride and

black temper," which deteriorates Heathcliff's staying after the death of old Mr. Earnshaw. Heathcliff loses his protector, and then his following years in Wuthering Heights is dominated by sufferings: being degraded to a servant, being deprived of the instructions of the curate, and tragically, being prohibited to marry Catherine. "His (Hindley's) treatment of the latter(Heathcliff) was enough to make a fiend of a saint" (Bronte 46). Naturally, this description informs us readers how Heathcliff is tortured by Hindley before he grows up. What's more, Heathcliff is metaphorized as "'an evil beast' which 'prowled between it and the fold'"(Thompson 70). He is deadly grief after Catherine's death, and from Mrs. Heathcliff's observation, we learn that during that period he is "fallen" and weak: "His forehead, that I once thought so manly, and that I now think so diabolical, was shaded with a heavy cloud; his basilisk eyes were nearly quenched by sleeplessness- and weeping, perhaps, for the lashes were wet then; his lips devoid of their ferocious sneer, and sealed in an expression of unspeakable sadness" (Bronte 131). The above-mentioned descriptions bring out both the violent Heathcliff and the depressed one. All in all, Emily portrays him as "savage, lunatic, violent, subversive and uncouth — all stereotypical nineteenth century British images of the Irish" (Eagleton, 125).

Heathcliff is the very type of the nineteenth-century orphan: a "supernatural scourge" (Auerbach 395) who trusts no one, fighting desperately in silence to manipulate a social identity out of a hostile world.

"Emily Bronte's novel resonates with a variety of illness as well as debilities" (Torgerson 89), which results in a series of orphan images including the Earnshaw children in two generations in *Wuthering Heights*.

Catherine Earnshaw loses her mother when she is only eight, and then her father at the age of twelve. Her "demonic temperance" (Wilson 50) is probably related to old Mr. Earnshaw's, her father's being "strict and grave" (Bronte 29). Gradually, "being repulsed (from father) continually hardened her" (Bronte 29) and without the motherly care, Catherine's intrinsic female characteristics are replaced by the role of a male "tyrannical autocrat" (Wilson 50), and she even promises to grow up "as rude as savage" (Bronte 32). The defensive formation of Catherine's character keeps her from accepting men except as "interiors" (Wilson 50), and that's probably one of the reasons why she married the "girlish" (Wilson 51) Linton but not the "brutally male" (Wilson 52) Heathcliff.

Hindley is sixteen when his mother dies, and then, his father dies four years later. As the culturally legitimated heir to Wuthering Heights, he perceives the threat of usurpation by Heathcliff before his father's death. With old Mr. Earnshaw passing away, the orphan Hindley becomes the master of Wuthering Heights, and he

then begins his revenge on Heathcliff. In the meantime, Hindley is uxorious after he marries a "rather thin, but young, and fresh complexioned" wife. However, "Hindley Earnshaw is like a 'stray sheep' which 'God had been forsaken'" (Thompson 70), which shows Hindley's incorrigible self-destructive life after his wife's death and confirms old Mr. Earnshaw's prediction that he "would never thrive as where he wanders" (Bronte 28).

Soon after Hareton Earnshaw's birth, his mother, Frances dies from consumption. At the loss of the beloved wife, Hindley, Hareton's father, grows "desperate" (Bronte 46) and takes little care of his son, "provided he saw him healthy and never heard him cry, was contented, as far as regarded him" (Bronte 46). Hareton's degradation from "the finest lad" (Bronte 44) to a boy embodied with the "expression of malignity" (Bronte 76) and kinds of rude behavior, to a great extent, is caused by the ignorance of his father after his mother's death. Heathcliff grabs the opportunity to "teach" (Bronte 79) him into a tactless boy, who even "swears at" (79) his father. Ultimately, he is "acculturated" (Glen 90) by little Catherine. Thereby, Hindley's fatherhood is vulnerable or negligent from the beginning, which is no better than the absence of it.

Linton Heathcliff loses his mother when he is not quiet thirteen, and then he is picked up by his uncle Edgar Linton from somewhere near London, but soon grabbed by his vicious father Heathcliff to live in Wuthering Heights. He is a "pale, delicate, effeminate" (Bronte 145) boy with "sickly peevishness" (Bronte 145), and he is fragile both physically because his illness makes him extremely weak, and psychologically for he even dares not disobey his father's unreasonable commands. Tortured and misled by his father, Linton has exposed his extreme selfishness and distorted humanity totally when it comes to his right of possession. On the one hand, he desires his uncle's death: "Doctor Kenneth ... says uncle is dying, truly, at last. I'm glad, for I shall be master of the Grange after him." (Bronte 203) On the other hand, he deprives his wife, little Catherine's right of inheriting her father's possession: "... and Catherine always spoke of it as her house. It isn't hers! It's mine — papa says everything she has is mine ... She offered to give me them ... but I told her she had nothing to give, they were all, all mine. And then she cried ..." (Bronte 203). What's more, he is so self-centered that he gives no comfort to his wife after his awareness of her grief towards her father's (his own affectionate uncle) approaching death and her own dispossession. All in all, he has "no commendable qualities in the eyes of anyone" (Goff 501) and is "the worst throwback of all the characters" (Goff 501), blending both "the ferocity of the poor (from his father) and the willfulness and selfishness from his mother" (Goff 501). It's obvious that Linton Heathcliff enjoyed

no paternal love with his father living but a tormenting monster leading him to hell. This vicious fatherhood is worse than the absence of it.

The orphanhood also inevitably brings difficulties to the Lintons. As the old Mr. Linton dies from fever, simultaneously with his wife, Edgar Linton becomes an orphan at eighteen, and his sister, Isabella Linton, is only fourteen. They could no longer have the privilege of getting love from parents either.

The Allusive Orphan Image in the Victorian Context

Realistically, the orphanhood in *Wuthering Heights* alludes to the social context in the Victorian society.

Industrialization and urbanization caused by the Industrial Revolution (1760s-1840s) had been going on in the early nineteenth century, which brought prosperity to many cities and in the meantime, resulted in serious social problems that led to many conflicts, such as the conflicts between the rural and the urban life, or, industry and agriculture, etc. Emily's life was "shaped by some of the most typical conflicts of early Victoria England" (Eagleton 127). So deeply was Emily involved in the society that she expressed her feelings towards the current society in her novel through a series of orphan images. The Industrial Revolution rapidly accelerated the development of social productivity in Britain, and made Britain the most advanced capitalistic country out of the backward agricultural one. Some industries, such as textile industry, metallurgical industry, coal industry, machine industry and transportation industry, were established and expanded during the revolution for their high profits. Consequently, there emerged industrial zones and cities, and a large number of rural population rushed into those industrialized places to work, the reason of which will be illustrated in the later part of this section. According to statistics, "until 1840s, the urban population had occupied three quarters of the whole, and the total number of workers had reached to 4.8 million" (Eagleton 94). The revolution changed social relations, which means the industrialists got the dominant position by exploiting the labor force — the rich became richer, while the poor poorer.

The Industrial Revolution had brought the high-speed economic growth, but at the same time, it caused series of social problems, such as the over-loaded urban population, hard living conditions of the workers, intensified environmental pollution, and so on. Emily grew up near one of the sources of the Industrial Revolution, and had witnessed the ruination of hill-cottages, which were replaced by mechanized factories for higher efficiency and benefit. "Solitude...seems, ironically, the situation of all men and women in a brutally individualist society which

abandons them to their devices" (Eagleton 126), from which we can speculate the indifferent relationship between people.

Owing to the rapid progress of industry, the environment was destroyed by industrial wastes. Polluted gas and water brought diseases, many of which were fatal at that time because the infrastructure of medical organization was not good and the poor could not afford the medical care. Actually, when their mother was fatally sick, Emily and her five siblings came down with a bout of fever, a disease that was "often fatal in the Victorian era" (Torgerson 3). Even though the Brontes lived "at the top of the hill" (Torgerson 3), which insured "cleaner water supplies and better sanitation and sewage conditions" for them (Torgerson 3), they still could not escape the prevailing diseases, not to mention those poor people whose living conditions were dreadful.

The waste water and gas produced in the process of industrialization severely polluted the environment, and deteriorated the public sanitary. Meanwhile, the quick growth of urban population caused by the industrialization intensified the situation. Therefore, diseases caused by the pollution, such as tuberculosis, bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, etc., became popular among people, especially the working class. Another vital cause of the prevailing diseases was the poor condition they lived in and worked in. The poor people lived in the dark, damp and dirty slams or basement, where clean air, water supplies, sanitation and sewage conditions could not be guaranteed.

The prevailing diseases caused by deterioration of environment led to the death of a great number of people, which produced more homeless orphans. In *Wuthering Heights*, we can find the poor Hareton is one of those orphans whose parents or parent died from diseases caused by environmental problems.

To argue the above reasons consist the manipulations of Emily Bronte's orphan images in the novel is too partial, as a matter of fact, the frequent death in the novel resulting in the orphan images can be explained by Emily's living environment: the Brontes lived in an isolated gaunt house "with a graveyard at the bottom of the garden" facing the broad unchanged moorland prospect and "Emily and Anne...were therefore in the enviable position of growing up as conscious of deaths as they were of life" (Spark & Stanford 21-22). Emily expressed herself in the characters of *Wuthering Heights*: like the orphans, Emily lost her mother at the age of four, and her gloomy and harsh father failed to offer the affectionate warmth to the kids, and therefore, the Bronte children were self-contained in their reading and story inventing; like Catherine's fondness of the moorland, Emily loved the moors so much that everything on it — even the humble flowers such as the blue bell and

heath — was healing:

> The blue bell is the sweetest flower
> That waves in summer air;
> Its blossoms have the mightiest power
> To sooth my spirit's care.
>
> There is a spell in purple heath
> Too wildly, sadly dear;
> The violet has a fragrant breath
> But fragrance will not cheer. (Hatfield 97)

Unlike most parents in the Victorian period, the Brontes' father, Patrick, "made no effort to sensor their reading" (Glen 30), on the contrary, he encouraged them to read and was glad to see their "impassioned discussion and debate on the political and religious issues of the day" (Glen 30). Thus, Emily had rich resources to learn about the current events and materials for her work. As for the Great Famine and the ensuing pervasive orphanhood, the access to such information was the newspaper reports and her brother, Branwell, who visited Liverpool two years before the Great Famine. During his trip, he "might well have witnessed such scenes ... There would no doubt have been a good many semi-destitute Irish hanging around the city, most of them Irish-speaking" (Eagleton 25). Caused by the catastrophic fail of potatoes, "one million of Brontes' compatriots died and millions more were driven into exile. By 1847, around three hundred thousand of those Irish emigrants had washed up in the port of Liverpool" (Eagleton 124). There had been one London journal which once portrayed the famished children as "looking like starving scarecrows dressed in rags with an animal growth of black hair obscuring their features" (Eagleton 124), and those orphans shared much similarities with Heathcliff, who was described as "Starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb, in the streets of Liverpool" and "dirty, ragged, black-haired" (Bronte 25). Emily began her writing a few months after Branwell's returning from Liverpool, and she wrote that Heathcliff "repeated over and over again some gibberish, that nobody could understand" (Bronte 25), and this description was correspondent to the Irish-speaking refugees Branwell encountered in Liverpool.

The Absence of Fatherhood

Yet, the afore-mentioned societal factors only serve as necessary rather than

sufficient conditions of the formation of the characters in the novel, for, as we can see, there are many orphans in varied times who turn out to be healthy and kind people. Therefore, the real causes of their psychological or personal deformation should better be sought in the family. In other words, it is the Earnshaw (and later the Heathcliff) family in particular that causes the neuroses or even psychosis (in the person of Hindley and Catherine) of the children from the Earnshaws, the Lintons and the Heathcliffs. As a matter of fact, *Wuthering Heights* does furnish an excellent case to exemplify what Lacan has said about family complexes, including weaning complex, intrusion complex, Oedipus complex, together with his central concept, mirror image.

According to the Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis, father plays a pivotal role in a patriarchal family. And, different from his master Freud who thinks the major role of the (image of the) father is the repression of the libidal/sexual desire of a boy towards his mother, i.e. castration complex, Lacan holds that the image of the father has a double function both as super-ego and ego-ideal, and "this double process has a fundamental genetic importance, because it remains inscribed in the psyche in two permanent agencies: the one which represses is called super-ego (surmoi), the other which sublimates ego-ideal (l'idéal du moi)" (Lacan 46), and the subject is structured by both. The dominant image of the father is as important to girls as it is to boys, because it "embodies in boys the ideal of virility and in girls of virginity" (Lacan 56) and it "marks all the levels of the psyche" (Lacan 49). On the contrary, where the effects of this image are weak, there will more often than not be physical lesions, and its energy of sublimation will be diverted from its creative course and the offspring will be more reclusive and withdraw into "the ideal of narcissistic integrity" (Lacan 56), not to speak of the death of the father, which is very likely to "bring the process of the reality into a full stop" (Lacan 56), no matter what stage and what level of development of Oedipus complex the children are at. This point will be illustrated with the children in the novel.

Before the introduction of Heathcliff into Wuthering Heights by Old Earnshaw, the Earnshaws is a seemingly normal family. There are a caring mother and a loving father. We can judge from the fact that Catherine "was hardly six years old, but she could ride any horse in the stable" (Bronte 25) that he is an open-minded, non-conventional person. Hindley and Catherine have thitherto been growing in a free (maybe too free) environment. Hindley has long past mirror image stage, and has a clear idea of his identity as the heir of the ancestral estate, which can easily be observed when he yells at Heathcliff — a dark-skinned gypsy adopted by Old Earnshaw on his expedition to Liverpool — "Take my colt, gypsy, then! ...you

beggarly interloper! and wheedle my father out of all he has" (Bronte 27). But out of nowhere comes a foster brother with revolutionary spirit, who robs him of all of his father's favor. Hindley henceforth suffers greatly from the intrusion complex, though a modified one.

According to Lacan, "the complex of intrusion represents the experience the primitive subject undergoes, most often happens when he sees one or more fellow creatures share with him the domestic relationships, in other words, when he finds he has brothers" (Lacan 36-37). Between a normal pair of siblings, the rivalry or jealousy felt on either side is not very devastating. On the contrary, "each partner confuses with the other and identifies with him" (Lacan 38) and mutual improvement is a frequent scene. The intrusion complex will usually be resolved if the patriarch lives long enough to keep the family intact. Thus most competing siblings grow up to become intimate friends. But, given the huge gap of their age, Heathcliff is a complete intruder for Hindley. And what's worse, Old Earshaw's preference and protection of Heathcliff aggravate Hindley's hatred towards Heathcliff. And the hatred is later on, with the assistance of Oedipus complex, transferred onto the father, thus "at Mrs. Earnshaw's death…the young master (Hindley) had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parents' affections and his privileges" (Bronte 26). The ego-ideal function of the father collapses while the super-ego function is becoming intolerable, both of which have great impact on Hindley. Furthermore, the father's depreciation of the boy by saying "Hindley was naught, and would never thrive as where he wandered" also destroys his narcissistic conception of himself and virility, because, as Lacan presumes, "in the process of identification that resolves the Oedipus complex, the child is far more sensitive to the intentions which are communicated affectively to him in person from the parents, than to what he can objectify in their behavior" (Lacan 79). Therefore, even though the father may sometimes show his love to the child, his depreciative words causes far more injury. This is why the father is totally dead the moment the boy leaves Wuthering Heights for college, but the effect of the depreciation remains in that the diffident boy brings with him a wife who has neither money nor name but a poor health. And, in order to show off his virility, which is lacking because of his father's belittlement, he often does "intimate" things with his wife Frances before others (Bronte 14). In sum, Hindley's fate is doomed the moment Heathcliff arrives at Wuthering Heights, and the major cause is not the gypsy, but his biased father. He is orphaned by his own father.

Technically speaking, Heathcliff is the only orphan in the novel. He has been abandoned by parents before Old Earnshaw sees him and never has a father

in a complete sense. For baby Heathcliff, who is only "big enough to walk and talk…and repeated over and over again some gibberish" (Bronte 25) and is thus at his mirror image stage, where the subject recognizes the image in the mirror (the mirror here does not necessarily refer only to a physical one, but also to the reactions other people hold against the subject) and takes it as the subject's reality, Old Earnshaw serves more as a mother than as a father, a mother less than a mother, and a father less than a father (for Old Earnshaw only acts as an ego-ideal but not super-ego to him). A baby at this stage has no ego of his own and will model on his fellow creatures as he perceives them, thus the formation of his ego is distorted by the hostility of the surrounding world and the indulgence of Old Earnshaw and wavers between severe diffidence and strong narcissism. So we can justly say, the retaliation the Earnshaws and Lintons receives in the future is the very backfire of their maltreatment of little Heathcliff. However, but for the relationship he has with Catherine, this story might well turn out an ordinary one between a legitimate child and a bastard or a foster child. Catherine is the entire world to Heathcliff. They are an excellent couple, each seeking and finding in the other what he/she needs, Catherine in Heathcliff an absolute obedience to her over-expanded narcissism, and Heathcliff in Catherine an object of his oedipal libido. Moreover, Catherine's waywardness represents the free spirit of Old Earnshaw, and her kindness coincides with the father's non-conventionality, both serve as the ego-ideal that little Heathcliff identifies with. But the lady's marriage with Edgar and her abrupt death later on throttle every chance of his union with her. In other words, her death makes her a Madonna, an object of jouissance, an impossible love object, a supreme signifier in the chain of his desire. At last, an extreme thirst for revenge and a desperate desire of reunion with his oedipal mother image work together to bring out the tragedy. In his failure to be a normal person, a deficiency of the father's function as super-ego can easily be discerned.

The case of Catherine seems more complicated, since it involves what Lacan denominates as female sexuality which is beyond our current concern. But what is sure is that, her love or affection for Heathcliff is not so sublime or even mysterious as many others have considered it to be. She knows Heathcliff better than anybody else does, and a few words she tells Isabella Linton reveal all, "he's not a rough diamond — a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man…Avarice is growing with him a besetting sin" (Bronte 74). Yet a habitual psychological dependence, which is not uncommon among narcissistic personalities, makes Catherine closely attached to him and does not allow for any violation. Catherine is once the princess of Wuthering Heights, the obedience of

the people around her, the indulgence and looseness of the parents, especially the hasty death of the mother, does not give her any opportunity to go beyond the stage of narcissism. In her eyes, "though everybody hated and despised each other, they could not avoid loving" her (Bronte 88). And this kind of perverted narcissism has remarkably retarded her adaptability to new environment and people and has developed into a sort of megalomania. She becomes so manipulative that a slight protest and disobedience from the manipulated is likely to turn her into a neurotic and psychotic. And it so happens in the novel. First is the secret departure of Heathcliff, and then Edgar's scolding of her, both of which may be a slight thing for normal people, but are big enough to cost her happiness and even life. Her irritability, her self-punishment by fasting and self-confinement, her threat of suicide, her hallucinations and delusions, all these are symptoms of neurosis and psychosis. And an inquiry into the formation of her narcissistic ego can also find the absence of fatherhood, or at least an imbalance of super-ego and ego-ideal on the part of the father.

Conclusion

So far, we have analyzed Hindley, Heathcliff and Catherine. And since they themselves are victims of the dereliction of parental duty, it is very unlikely that they can be good parents. An analysis of the next generation will be a mere repetition. The analysis above may be accused of identifying the image of the father in Lacanian theory with the biological father. However, there is no denying that, biological father plays a pivotal role in a patriarchal family and is frequently the representative and executor of social norms, laws, conventions etc. in a family. We can not hope to exhaust the abundant meaning of the image of the father in psychoanalysis in a single thesis. From the analysis we can draw the conclusion that, though orphanhood is a common phenomenon in various times and a frequently-touched subject in literature, being an orphan does not necessary mean a tragic life and abnormal personality. Social care and interpersonal hospitality can somehow compensate for the loss of parents. On the contrary, if children are raised by indifferent parents and in a hostile or over-indulgent environment, they might well end up a neurotic or psychotic. Given the wide-spread phenomenon of left-behind children in China today, this research may have some realistic significance and pedagogical edification.

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