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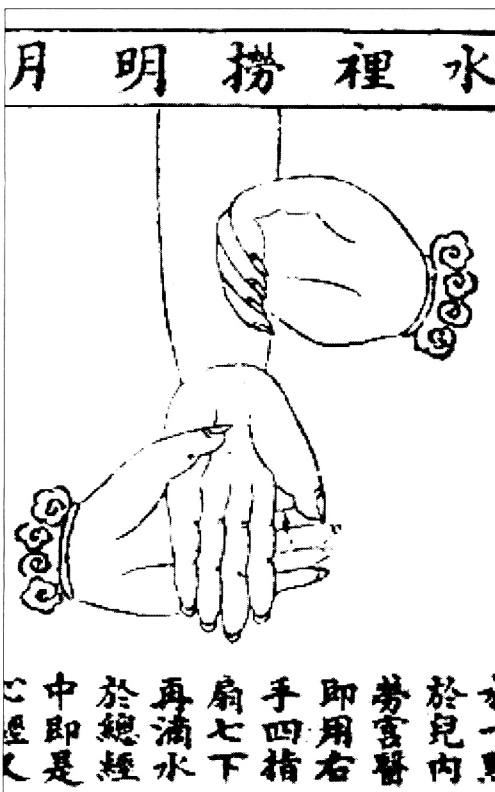
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## Wuthering Heights: Two Women and Their Chronic Unrest

by Ton van Huffelen

*"How cruel,  
your veins  
are full of ice-water  
and mine  
are boiling."*

— Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* <sup>1</sup>

*Working with the five elements at the basis of our practice, we all know every patient has a tendency to one imbalance. In a way, they all stick to a kind of chronicity. Nevertheless some seem to overcome their imbalance better than others. That's the case with Andrea and Evelyn.*

### Andrea (1)

In my memory her entrance was loud. When I opened the door to the waiting room, there was a small, broad, and overweight woman. She stared at me with blue piercing eyes. Although she must have been at least 60, her hair was brown and curly (some women seem to keep their natural hair colour throughout their lifetime). However, Andrea's curls were not natural and her straight hair had begun to grow in.

It was a sunny day, June 12th, 2002. I had just finished my TCM education. A month before, I took over the practice of a burned out colleague. The practice was at his home in the countryside.

The loudness that accompanied Andrea was not so much hers, as it was her husband's. The front door to the garden and parking place was open. He was sitting in the car, listening to tearjerkers at a volume of some 100 decibels. The car and he had had their best days.

It didn't long to get the volume down. The colleague's wife, who happened to be at home, was pretty clear with her thoughts about the music.

My estimation had been fairly accurate: Andrea was 62. Her main complaint was unrest. She experienced cystitis now and then. Had low backache, cold hands and feet, and was always tired. From TCM textbooks, I recognized the peeled, swollen, and scarlet tongue. I was shocked and woke up from my book learning.

### Evelyn (2)

Her entrance was loud too. I could hear her outside on the street hastily ascending the stairs on her high heels. She was brisk, ceruse with lively green eyes. She sighed a lot as she collapsed into the chair. Her main complaint was that she got

dizzy when grocery shopping while turning from her shopping cart to the cashier. People come in with very strange complaints. My first thought was: "Why me?"

I felt a little intimidated by her sharp, shouting voice. Evelyn was the 36-year-old mum of kids aged three, six, and nine. She had a very close relationship with her parents. She took care of her father who had been a severe heart patient since her childhood. She was also a well-known dance teacher and a meritorious singer. So this busy bee was very restless too. It was some years later, September 22, 2006. I had quit my TCM practice after a one-year post-graduate Toyohari course in 2004 and had started treating solely with Japanese acupuncture.

### Andrea's Treatments

Andrea's main complaint was unrest. Working with TCM at that time, I treated her for liver qi stagnation and kidney yin deficiency. It took her one, sometimes two days to recover from the treatment. However she seemed at ease with acupuncture and with me. She started to come for treatment every month. After switching to Toyohari, I began all over again with her.

Based upon her pulse, which was little floating, a little rapid and weak, combined with her hara (spleen, heart, and kidney very empty) I started to treat spleen sho and kidney as secondary sho with the teishin. I learned Andrea calmed down very quickly, already during the treatment, and she didn't have to recover afterwards. Of course this has to do with dosage, which is not really an item in TCM, but is such a big thing in Japanese acupuncture.

Treating patients with chronic complaints, they also tend to be chronic visitors to our practice. Over the years, we develop close relationships with them. I found out Andrea's youth wasn't very easy. She was the eldest of four children. Her parents were religious and austere. Her favorite brother one day disappeared. He died of meningitis. The family never spoke about him again. Andrea married a man who physically abused her. They had four sons; she lost one seven weeks after his birth. After her divorce, she had to nurture three little rascals on her own. She had a relationship with the man who had brought her to the clinic for the first time. He had borderline *Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)*. Some people seem to have all the bad luck.

### Evelyn's Treatments

Evelyn's pulse was little sinking, a little rapid, and a little strong. I started by treating her for liver sho,



uncertain about my diagnosis. There was something of a release, but not very spectacular. With the third treatment I decided to treat spleen sho. Evelyn's reaction was pretty remarkable. Treating her with a silver teishin, after the first point, SP-3, she emptied like a balloon; after the second point, PC-7 her eyes reflected drowsiness. With a thick tongue, she said: "Nice ...." Being not too rigid in the theory, I added LR-3 with hoho: her head fell slightly sideways and her eyes closed. Ending with CV-6 she woke up again and with crystal clear eyes said: "Good." There was one other astonishing effect. The treatment really unwound her vocal cords: her voice lowered at least a third and her volume dropped.

Evelyn had told me, since childhood, she would always sit at the edge of her chair, ready to fight like a tiger for her dad, and for all others like him, needing help. At a young age she married a man 15 years her senior. She said it gave her a safe base and a stable father for their three children.

Evelyn came in, slouched and sighing. Collapsing on the chair, she said: "Put me back in the box ..." I knew I just had to wait for her thunderstorm of anger to pass. She would sit and rant for some time, using some really original expressions that I won't repeat.

Other times, Evelyn was sad. After high school she had lived for a year in Scotland, which she considered her second homeland. I knew when Evelyn was sad she needed something else. "Please, I need my comfort tea," she would ask, sobbing. Very black tea with a cloud of milk. Angry or sad, with generally the same treatment she always left the clinic lighter, happier.

## The Rest of the Story

It is now 2016. What happened to Andrea and Evelyn during these years? Andrea had a hard time with her 84-year-old mother in a retirement home nearby. Her mother would call her eight times a day demanding Andrea come. Andrea suffered severely from cystitis these days. She really was pissed. Acupuncture would help her, soothing her bladder complaint, but the cystitis returned and unrest would always be there. Her mother died, which to be honest was a great relief to her. She gained some insights into her own suffering and stopped doing that one unhealthy thing: Andrea found the courage to break off her relationship. Two years ago she underwent an angioplasty. Recently, she became grandmother. The unconditional love from her grandchildren softened her blue piercing eyes and made it possible for her to give love in return. And .... she knows it.

Evelyn has come a long way too. At the very beginning of her treatment, she too concluded she was unhappy in her relationship. "But I can't face that now." Over time, she started recognizing her own patterns. She took leave of so-called friends. She left her job as a secretary and took up the study of psychology. Her father died quietly and in peace. She too had a demanding mother who called her eight times a day. Evelyn had the guts to be very clear to her mum. Their relationship is better now. This year, she faced her last major obstacle: her marriage. The divorce went relatively smoothly and quickly. Three weeks later she met a man who understood her need for understanding. Three months later they moved in together and she has a completely different life. Valleys and peaks.

## In the End

Both women's main complaint was unrest and they were treated as spleen sho. The treatments were relatively simple and straightforward. Chinese medicine, Chinese philosophy is about change. Or perhaps better said, the one Thing of Life is change. I think Andrea has been too damaged to change very much. Efforts to help her further, like consulting a psychologist or a hypnotherapist, all stalled when coming too near to her. Her chronic unrest still comes and goes, like her cystitis. And of course she is getting older. But she is still there and relatively okay. Evelyn made big steps and has managed well at taking care of herself and not only others, and in loving herself. She really made a transformation.

And I also made a transformation. Stepped into a new life. A life as an acupuncturist. I learned the difference between TCM and Toyohari. With patients like Andrea and later Evelyn I was thrown in the deep end. Straight from TCM books into life. Hello Life. I unlearned my chronic need to talk so much when facing of my own unrest and uncertainty. I learned to shut up, sit still, listen, wait for whatever to come. I learned that although we cannot always cure people, we can be part of their healing. Just by being there, and by being in their process. I learned to look at my own wuthering heights. And not to be too distracted by them. With many thanks to Andrea and Evelyn.

## Notes

1. *Wuthering Heights* was written in 1846 by Emily Brontë and is regarded as a classic of English literature. The highly romantic novel describes the passionate and tumultuous relationship between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff. Catherine has a very powerful internal life and is moved between heaven and hell.

*Ton van Huffelen (1965) studied History in Groningen, the Netherlands and thoroughly practiced Taiji and Qigong. He started a course on acupuncture with an introduction on Chinese Philosophy in 1997. Completely optional. He thought. From hobby his attention shifted to serious study and a deepening towards a profession. That's how acupuncture found him. In 2002 he graduated. Since 2003 he has specialised in Japanese acupuncture, in particular Toyohari. He is president of the Dutch Branch of the Toyohari Association/ Nederlandse Toyohari Vereniging (NTV).*