EMILY BRONTË: THE MIND OF A VISIONARY

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This dissertation is dedicated to Yajna & Matthew

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Typescript

Kindly note that when I originally commenced this research I was working on the Dos system. I subsequently transferred all the material onto the Windows model which is far superior in quality. However, I did experience some difficulties which I have endeavored to correct, but insofar as there may be any discrepancies this is the result of the transfer. For example, when I amended the text on the Windows model I found that the inverted commas were different to the Dos system and the spacing between paragraphs is not always consistent.

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Editions

All references to Emily Brontë's works are to the Clement Shorter edition in respect of the poetry and to the Penquin edition for Wuthering Heights. I have basically followed the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers with one or two minor exceptions.

ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is an investigation of the visionary and philosophical aspects of Emily Brontë's works. The first five chapters deal with the visionary process such as visions, spirit guides, dreams, imagination, encounters with the darker side of the self and a union with the divine. There is considerable evidence of these mystical avenues in both her poetry and in Wuthering Heights which have been explored. It is shown how Emily Brontë's mysticism is a direct result of personal experiences which augment her reputation as one of the leading mystics in the world of literature. There are however tensions in her works, such as the cynicism of her own intellect in accepting the visionary experiences as authentic and periods of suffering when her faith is tested. These tensions have been considered within the context of her mystical encounters and philosophy.

The remaining four chapters deal with the philosophy of Emily Brontë per se. Her beliefs in respect of heaven and hell, mercy and justice, power and survival, and pantheism are considered in depth. It is argued that she is an unorthodox thinker who does not believe in an eternal hell and that she has drawn inspiration for this idea from Frederick Maurice and Ralph Waldo Emerson. It is also shown how issues of power have been of interest to her from a young age and how this needs to be integrated within her philosophy. To the writer power needs to be tempered by compassion if it is to be of use to society or the individual. Her pantheistic spirit is also investigated and related to the mystical ideas.

CONTENTS – CHAPTERS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to explore the visionary and philosophical side of Brontë's works. I will demonstrate how her visionary experiences have both informed and shaped the ideas that she espoused. At the outset it should be noted that her mysticism is taken seriously and her experiences of other dimensions accepted as possible truth rather than the product of a deluded mind. The first five chapters will be devoted to the visionary process itself, that is, the methods she used to access her own truths. The second half of the thesis will attempt to encapsulate her philosophical ideas in four chapters. The nexus between her sources for inspiration dealt with in the first five chapters and her philosophical conclusions in the remaining four, is that her mystical awareness has directly impacted on her sometimes unorthodox beliefs.

It should be noted that the exploration of her beliefs has not been an unexacting one. Indeed, there are paradoxes that need to be resolved, ambiguities that need to be unravelled if her ideas are to be comprehended. These paradoxes appear prima facie to contradict a unified philosophy. In this thesis the paradoxes are embraced and confronted in an attempt to explore her ultimate truth. It is however the conclusion in this work that the paradoxes merely enhance the integrity of her philosophy, the cross-currents add a profundity to her ideas which elevate the insights. Indeed, Brontë's opinions are not the result of facile or glib moralizing but the product of a mind that has wrestled with life's conundrums.

In order to establish a framework for her visionary encounters certain primary academic texts on mysticism are chosen: these works provide research into the field of mysticism on an extensive basis and establish a structure as well as succinctly offering definitions of key concepts. Definitions will be particularly valuable when assessing such subjects as visions, voices, dreams, imagination, ecstatic raptures and divine union. Once these terms are clarified it will be possible for the reader to follow the train of thought in this thesis more easily as a foundation based on research in the field of mysticism has been laid down. Three primary academic texts have been chosen for this purpose: William James's The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study In Human Nature, Evelyn Underhill's Mysticism: A Study In The Nature And Development Of Man's Spiritual Consciousness, and E. Herman's The Meaning And Value of Mysticism.

I will also make extensive references to Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist whose works have given mankind an extraordinary insight into the depths of the human psyche. The rationale for choosing Jung is because he was both a psychologist and a mystic: as such, his writings have a direct bearing on this study of Brontë's visionary nature. Jung is also complementary to the academic mystical writers alluded to above; they all explore the ramifications of a visionary nature and its relationship to conventional religion. Key Jungian terms such as animus, shadow, individuation, collective unconscious, archetypes and self will be explored in the course of the argument.

The third strand in the methodology is to investigate the extent to which Brontë digressed from conventional Christian thought and, paradoxically, the extent to which she reiterated or confirmed biblical lore. This aspect of the research will be accentuated in the second

half of the research which deals with four chapters of a more philosophical nature, that is, concepts of heaven and hell; power/evil; justice/mercy/redemption and pantheism and the natural world in her works. Her background in the Church of England cannot be discounted in a discussion on her visionary mind, and her relationship to the Bible is critical in comprehending the audacious manner in which she has subtly extended the boundaries of conventional thought. There is, for example, some evidence that she confirmed the views of Frederick Maurice, a radical theologian in the nineteenth century. Brontë's relationship to the burgeoning Unitarian movement will also be examined as many of her ideas can either be traced to this divergent stream of thought or they are supported by its tenets.

This work offers an `inventive step' (to use a term drawn from patent law) because the critical literature available tends to deal with Brontë's mysticism in a brief, auxiliary manner. Most mystical subjects are dealt with either as part of some other study such as a biography or as part of a separate article without any attempt being made to relate her mysticism to the overall picture or philosophy. This study, on the contrary, will attempt to show the relationship between visions, voices, dreams, imagination and raptures, on the one hand, and, on the other, how they have influenced and guided her philosophy: the study will show how the eternal or divine is glimpsed through all of these avenues in different ways. There is also a paucity of literary criticism on the mystical elements in Brontë's poetry which this study aims to redress. The details in the poetry itself provide innumerable clues in respect of her mystical ideas and experiences which are so often glossed over. This thesis will reveal how the mystical avenues mentioned above supply the reader with a background to the philosophy, which is to be discussed in the second

half of the research.

In respect of sources, texts are referred to which she is likely to have read or could possibly have consulted. We know that there was a library at the parsonage. An indirect reference to this Haworth parsonage library occurs in Shirley written by Charlotte:

> `... some mad Methodist Magazines, full of miracles and apparitions, of preternatural warnings, ominous dreams, and frenzied fanaticism; the equally mad Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe from the Dead to the Living' ; a few old English Classics.... (Shirley 308-9)

The Haworth Parsonage have published a list of texts which were to be found on the shelves of the Brontë library during her lifetime and use has been made of this invaluable list. We also know that the Brontës were avid readers of Blackwood's Magazine and books which were made available to them at Keighley library and through a circulating library. Christine Alexander confirms their indebtedness to this serial magazine:

> There were of course many other sources for the Brontës early imaginative world: old geography books, contemporary newspapers, the Bible, the Arabian Nights, the writings of Scott and Byron, to name a few; but none were as influential as Blackwood's in the early years of the Brontë juvenilia.[1]

It should be borne in mind that the Gondal poems, which draw on the texts referred to by Alexander, form part of a saga which was developed by Brontë and her sister Anne. While Charlotte and Branwell were writing their Angrian adventures, which have been preserved in the juvenilia and poetry, the other two sisters were inventing their own private world of the Gondals.[2] Unfortunately no records of the Gondal tale have survived save for the

poems from which the reader needs to reconstruct the events.[3] According to Winifred Gèrin the Gondal saga was a reaction against the tedious war games with repeated mustering of troops developed by Branwell, which enabled Brontë and Anne to evolve their medieval drama.[4] It is within the context of the adventures of the Gondals that some of Brontë's most creative poetry is to be found and the saga acts as a medium through which she was able to refine her literary talent.

I will also focus on Brontë's relationship and indebtedness to the Romantic poets such as Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley. The influence of the Romantic poets is evident in many of her poems and she shares a similar pantheistic vision with them. In the course of my analysis it will become apparent that she has used a number of specific poems from the Romantic period which have enhanced her compositions.

In conclusion to this introduction it should be noted that considerable attention is given to an analysis of individual poems and Wuthering Heights. The aim of the analysis is however to understand the visionary aspects of her work, to discuss her ideas and to resolve the paradoxes in an attempt to present the overriding philosophy. There are certain features of a visionary mind which are explored and presented for consideration before Brontë's metaphysical stance is discussed. The task is not an easy one but it is suggested that a close attention to detail and the sources which have been employed yield a prevalent pattern.

ENDNOTES

1. Christine Alexander, "Readers And Writers: Blackwood's And The Brontës," Gaskell Society Journal 8 (1994): 58.
2. Margaret Lane, The Brontë Story: A Reconsideration Of Mrs Gaskell's Life Of Charlotte Brontë (London: Collins, 1971) 127.
3. Lane 127.
4. Winifred Gèrin, Branwell Brontë (London: Nelson, 1961) 50.

CHAPTER ONE

VISIONS: 1836 - 1844

In this chapter I shall examine the nature of Brontë's visions, as revealed in her poetry from 1836 until 1844. Her visions, which are one of the central features of her mystical experience, will be scrutinized and their relationship to her spiritual unfolding noted. There are three areas which will be discussed as far as the visions are concerned: `positive' visions, `negative' visions and Brontë's guide or comforter who bears an inseparable relationship to her visions.

These visions must however be appreciated within the context of the theological transformation that gained momentum during the Victorian era particularly as regards the burgeoning of the Unitarian movement. There was a liberal theological movement developed by such radical Unitarian exponents as Coleridge, Emerson and Maurice which was changing the religious landscape in many parts of England and America.[1] The liberalization of theology had its progenitors in the likes of Milton and John Locke but it was only in the early nineteenth century that Unitarianism gained a firm foothold, flourishing as never before. It was in 1813 that it ceased to be a criminal offence to be a Unitarian in England and The British and Foreign Unitarian Association was formed in 1825.[2] As Parsons points out, nonconformist ideas and a civic gospel developed during the Victorian epoch in the urban centres of Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool as the Unitarian influence inspired more radical ideas.[3] The orthodox churches were so threatened by what they considered a heretical movement that they lambasted it at every available opportunity but its roots were augmented by the law and by gifted individuals

which made it impossible to eradicate. Unitarianism at this time was comprised of two strands of thought: the one infused by the Bible but distinguished from other evangelical movements by a rejection of the doctrine of the trinity; and the other one exponents of rationalism and a calm intellectualism.[4] The Unitarians as a result of this pragmatism contributed substantially to social progress in England and the fostering of unorthodoxy.

It was against this theological background that Brontë was to develop her visionary ability, in a climate which increasingly would have supported her preoccupation with the powers of the mind as well as the radical ideas which she has left behind. That she would have been aware of the thriving Unitarian centres in such cities as Manchester or Liverpool or that she would have been privy to the fundamental doctrines espoused by the movement is difficult to gainsay. The cardinal ideas of the Unitarians would certainly have met with her approval although it is important to realise that some views are germane to individual thinkers and not necessarily the movement per se. As Maurice, the avowed mentor of Brontë, asserts:

> The Unitarians were the great assertors of the absolute unqualified love of God, in opposition to all mythologies and theologies which had preceded. And Unitarianism was the first of all theologies or mythologies which denied that the Almighty had, in His own person, by some act of condescension and sacrifice, interfered to redress the evils and miseries of His creatures.[5]

The Unitarians believed in the unity of God and therefore to teach that Christ was God undermined the concept of divine unity. To Unitarians God, nature and man were one and any division was resolutely denied. There accordingly existed divine laws in nature and an innate moral sense enabling any individual to distinguish between right and

wrong with the corollary that the individual was naturally drawn towards right.[6]

It was Coleridge who was to inspire both Emerson and Maurice with his neoplatonic thought. Indeed, in some respects they were both disciples of Coleridge re-affirming his view that the human mind and not the external world provided the source of order in the world, views which he derived partly from the German transcendentalists such as Kant. In the words of Mary Cayton:

> By asserting that the intellect mirrored the mind of God and thus not only could know that nature was lawful, but also could discover the laws that governed it, the transcendentalist philosophers insisted that the best way for the individual to discover this spiritual reality was in the sanctity of his own conscience.[7]

The mind was given a pre-eminent place and visions were seen by the likes of Emerson and Coleridge, two devout Unitarians, as the gateway to spiritual knowledge.[8] Brontë was to follow their example as will seen from the discussion that follows.

Visions form a vital component of a mystic's life and Brontë is no exception: however, it is striking that, generally speaking, she displays a reticence when describing her visions. There is a reluctance on Brontë's part to give the reader details as to the visions themselves, and the reader is consequently often left in the dark as to the `pictures' which she saw within her mind. She is often emotional when she describes her guide or angel, but seems to be intent on retaining privacy when the visions themselves are dealt with. The point, therefore, that must be borne in mind when assessing her visions, is that the reader is only shown what she chooses to reveal: her actual experience or inner sight is

consequently hidden from public scrutiny. She knows more than she reveals and retains a sibyl-like quality in spite of the poetry which we have before us. Charlotte Brontë has perpetuated this sphinx-like perception of her sister and notes her reluctance even to have the poetry published:

> This I accepted; for Ellis Bell is of no flexible or ordinary materials. But by dint of entreaty and reason I at last wrung out a reluctant consent to have the `rhymes' as they were contemptuously termed, published. The author never alludes to them; or when she does, it is with scorn. But I know no woman that ever lived wrote such poetry before.[9]

There is clearly a deep-seated desire to retain her private world intact, and she refuses to divulge too much in the printed form. The poems, when written, were never intended for publication, but Brontë must have suspected a later exposure because she has deliberately refused to spell out the exact nature of her visions. There is no doubt that she has a keen interest in writing poetry as is shown in the poem `Alone I sat; the summer day', but the conflict between private spiritual unfolding and public exposure is immediately apparent. Ironically, she suggests that God had denied her a poetic talent:

> I asked myself: `Oh, why has Heaven
> Denied the precious gift to me,
> The glorious gift to many given
> To speak their thoughts in poetry? (11-14)

In other words, she desperately wants to be a poet but she is ambivalent about seeking fame; she wants to compose but fears the intrusion of her audience, or simply lacks confidence in her ability.

Before offering a detailed consideration of the poetry itself, it is necessary to give

adequate attention to the relevance of visions within the mystical process. Where exactly do visions fit in and what is their ultimate significance for the perceiver? How do visions relate to or differ from images that the artistic individual is able to perceive within the mind's eye? These questions will now be considered before turning to the poetic texts available to us.

The work of Evelyn Underhill published in 1930 entitled Mysticism: A Study In The Nature And Development Of Man's Spiritual Consciousness provides a lucid and detailed account of the different types of visions which are experienced by mystics.[10] She has divided visions into three main categories, that is, intellectual, imaginary and corporeal: these three categories answer to substantial or inarticulate, interior and distinct and exterior worlds respectively. The intellectual vision is best described by Underhill herself:

> The intellectual vision, as far as we can understand it, seems to be a something not sought but put before the mind, and seen or perceived by the whole self by means of a sense which is neither sight nor feeling, but partakes of the character of both. It is intimate but indescribable: definite, yet impossible to define.[11]

The difficulty with definition in the case of intellectual visions is reduced in the case of imaginary visions which are easier to denote and certainly more common both amongst mystics and inspired artists. I refer again to Underhill's description of imaginative visions:

> In Imaginary Vision, as in "interior words," there is again no sensorial hallucination. The self sees sharply and clearly, it is true: but is perfectly aware that it does so in virtue of its most precious organ - "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude.[12]

It should also be noted that imaginary visions are a spontaneous and automatic occurrence, which is vital because they are to be distinguished from `pictures' which are within the control of the perceiver. In the latter case the perceiver is using the imagination and no exalted visionary experience is involved. Another point to note is that imaginary visions can be active or passive: the experience in either case is markedly different. In the active imaginary vision the `self' participates in the action:

> In this vision which always has a dramatic character, the self seems to itself to act, not merely to look on. Such visions may possess many of the characters of dreams....They may entail a journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, an excursion into fairyland, a wrestling with the Angel in the Way.[13]

In the passive imaginary vision, on the other hand, there is no direct involvement by the `self': In the symbolic form there is no mental deception: the self is aware that it is being shown truth "under an image.[14] The exposition given above should suffice to differentiate the distinctive types of vision which exist. The subject of visions is no doubt more complex than may at first appear and the distinction between intellectual and imaginary visions must be clearly drawn. Robert Alfred Vaughan has also succinctly noted this fundamental difference:

> Visions are intellectual or representative. The former is a consciousness of spiritual proximity, indescribable, unaccompanied by any appearances. The representative or imaginative vision presents some definite form or image.[15]

The different types of visions have now been demarcated, but where is their place within the mystic's life? Are they an end in themselves or part of a larger process? It is interesting to observe that academic writers on the subject of mysticism have unanimously claimed that visions per se are not the final goal: visions are a means of perception, but they are not the ultimate state of union or transcendence which the

mystic habitually seeks. Herman is careful to place visions in perspective:

> We must remember that the goal of the mystic is not the passing flash of vision, but "the blessed country which is no vision, but a home". On the other hand, this principle must not be strained to imply that only those visions whose permanent effect upon the personality can be traced are valid. The spirit of man again and again wins heights which it is not competent to keep, and sees promised lands upon which it is not yet permitted to set foot.[16]

In other words, visions assist the aspirant and provide glimpses of a divine world but they are not a state of bliss or a mystic oneness with God. (In Buddhism this goal is referred to as nirvana and visions can clearly only point the way towards this ineffable state.) The occurrence of visions is exciting to the layman but to the mystic visions are treated only with the respect they deserve. Edward Ingram Watkin has described the true goal which is sought by aspirants as follows:

> As the mystical union progresses, the soul's visits to the sphere of its eternal life become more frequent and more prolonged, until finally the centre abides habitually in this Divine world of Reality and truth.[17]

Underhill has also noted the relative value of visions to the contemplative: she claims that they are often distrusted because they can be liable to deception, and this is particularly true of visions which are `felt' rather than seen.[18] These statements and caveats must be borne in mind when the poetry of Brontë is focused on.

Thus, it can be concluded that visions may be divinely inspired or they may equally be distortions presumably brought about by the mind of the contemplative. They may be

glimpses of higher realms or on other occasions products of the imagination, fantasies conjured up within the mind . They are not the goal of the mystic but a means to perceive truth along a road that leads to a state of bliss. They are not the `homecoming' that is sought after, but a tool to be used judiciously by the contemplative. The visions are, furthermore, not subject to the control of the mystic and they come and go at their own whim: they are erratic and the mystic is powerless to govern them. In the words of Clark:

> It indicates that the course of the mystic experience, like that of true love, seldom runs smooth, for the mystic's most poignant experience is that of finding that he has lost the Vision. For a time nothing that he is able to do seems to be able to restore it.... The traveller in the Mystic Way who perseveres will eventually reach his goal of union with God.[19]

Visions are uncontrollable and spontaneous; they are unpredictable and bear a relationship to dreams although the former take place during the waking hours and the latter usually at night. Despite their unpredictability however, visions, according to Emerson, may lead to wisdom and even union if the recipient of the vision takes cognisance thereof.[20]

Brontë's poetry contains a number of references to the prevalence of visions in her life, an occurrence which began in childhood. In the autobiographical poem `Alone I sat; the summer day' the poet gives the reader an insight into her inspired visions but bemoans her inability to translate these lofty perceptions into the poetic form. With hindsight there is no doubt that Brontë needlessly feared her lack of a poetic gift, but at the time (that is, August 1837) she is confident about her inspirations but not her ability to compose verse. Stanzas two and four are particularly informative as far as her visions are concerned:

stanza two appears to refer to the intellectual vision discussed above:

And thoughts in my soul were rushing
And my heart bowed beneath their power;
And tears within my eyes were gushing
Because I could not speak the feeling,
The solemn joy around me stealing
In that divine, untroubled hour (5-10)

At the age of nineteen (the time when the poem was composed) Brontë is describing a mystical experience which transcends words; she evidently has difficulty transposing her visions or sensations into words since she states in line eight:`I could not speak the feeling...'. She also sees this feeling as divinely inspired as she refers to a `solemn joy' and a `divine untroubled hour' in lines nine and ten respectively. All the aspects of an intellectual vision are present in her description of a joy that surpasses words.

In stanza four she unequivocally refers to imaginative visions: the reader learns of Brontë's effortless and frequent experience of visions:

`Dreams have encircled me,' I said,
From careless childhood's sunny time;
Visions by ardent fancy fed
Since life was in its morning prime.' (15-18)

These are positive, healthy visions which have inspired the poet but her reticence leaves the subject of the visions themselves to conjecture. She must have experienced problems in expressing the indescribable on paper (at least as far as the intellectual visions are concerned) but the imaginative visions could have been transcribed if she so wished.
In the poem `O Mother! I am not regretting' the speaker, who has probably been

abandoned by Fernando de Samara in favour of Augusta Geraldine Almeda, has referred to her visions as a palliative or compensation for the loss of her lover:

> And I would seek in summer's evening
> The place that was our last farewell,
> And there, a chain of visions weaving,
> I'd linger till the curfew bell. (69-72)

It would appear as if these visions mentioned in the extract above are closer to daydreaming or imaginative fantasies in contrast to the spontaneous, uncontrolled visions mentioned in stanza two of `Alone I sat; the summer day'. However, Brontë probably never sought to differentiate between visions that are spontaneous and those which arise within the mind's eye during a state of daydreaming. It is important to note this fluidity in the use of terms, the extent to which the term `vision' can refer to different states of awareness. To Brontë a vision can be an overpowering, divinely inspired event or simply images or symbols that arise within the mind as in `O Mother! I am not regretting'. There is likewise a fluidity that exists between her personal poems and the Gondal saga: thoughts and ideas are often projected into the mouth of one of the characters in the Gondal epic and, therefore, the line between the personal and Gondal poems is not always easy to maintain. `Alone I sat; the summer day' is a personal poem, while `O mother! I am not regretting' clearly falls within the Gondal epic, but the speakers in both poems are subject to visions. Jacques Blondel has incisively dealt with this inextricable bond between the personal and Gondal poems:

> Some have been surprised that she sometimes incorporated her revelations into the Gondalian cycle. To explain this fact, we have referred to the vital link between the two worlds of creative imagination and illumination. She projected her feelings into her character's movements, with as much ease as in her proper dreams....[21]

The poem `Gleneden's Dream' deals with a captive (Gleneden) who dreams of destroying the tyrant who has captured Gondal. Gleneden has been imprisoned but God has given him the courage to survive; God has blessed the incarcerated Gleneden with a heavenly vision:

> Watcher, in this lonely prison,
>
> Shut from joy and kindly air,
>
> Heaven, descending in a vision,
>
> Taught my soul to do and bear. (17-20)

This is evidently another example of an inspired vision, a vision that has divine origins and has been granted by a higher power during a perilous period for the recipient. Another common characteristic of visions is that they are received or experienced during a solitary condition and Gleneden's imprisonment in a dungeon is a perfect state for this occurrence. Gleneden has sketched the perfect scene for a visionary experience:

> It was night, a night of winter;
>
> I lay on the dungeon floor,
>
> And all other sounds were silent,
>
> All, except the river's roar. (21-24)

To Brontë the earth itself is often depicted as a dungeon, a temporary imprisonment for the soul which will soar into a more sublime world after death. It is a dungeon compared to the state of bliss that awaits the soul beyond the grave; nevertheless moments of visionary intensity are possible within the `earthly dungeon'. Gleneden's incarceration is similar to the soul's bondage on earth and his vision is similar to the inspired moments Brontë herself experienced. Once again the ideas and sentiments expressed in the personal poems find their counterpart or are reiterated within the Gondal epic. Another

example is to be found in the poem `The Caged Bird' (a personal poem): Brontë has poignantly captured this inextricable nexus, this tension between earth as the soul's prison and a world of liberty that awaits the individual:

> Ah! could my hand unlock its chain,
> How gladly would I with it soar,
> And ne'er regret and ne'er complain
> To see its shining eyes no more.
>
> But let me think that if to-day
> It pines in cold captivity,
> To-morrow both shall soar away
> Eternally, entirely free. (9-16)

For Brontë, visions are one of the means available to access a transcendent world and to temporarily escape the prison bars of a terrestrial dungeon.

The second area which needs to be addressed is that of negative visions or visionary encounters that leave the recipient distraught and fearful. These negative or horrendous visions were definitely experienced by Brontë from the 10th of June 1837 until the 7th of August 1837: the poems `The night of storms has passed;' (June, 1837) and `O God of Heaven! The dream of horror,' (August, 1837) contain references to visions that severely affected Brontë. In these poems visions and dreams are sometimes interrelated: in both cases the visions occur within the dream state but their intensity is no less dramatic. Thomas Fawcett has recorded this interrelationship between visions and dreams as follows:

> We can understand something further of the nature of visions if we note that they are regarded in the biblical literature as interchangeable with dreams.

Indeed, dreams are often referred to as night visions.[22]

Fawcett is somewhat misleading in suggesting that visions and dreams are interchangeable, but it is true that visions can occur while the individual is asleep.

In `The night of storms has passed;' the speaker retrospectively recalls the turmoil suffered on the previous night. The speaker is clearly disturbed by the visions encountered and seeks to obliterate memories that still linger:

And I would leave my bed,
Its cheering smile to see,

To chase the visions from my head
Whose forms have troubled me. (5-8)

These are haunting visions that are decidedly unwelcome to the speaker and their presence needs to be expunged from the mind. In a rare occurrence the speaker informs the reader as to the nature of the vision, an encounter with a ghoulish being that curdles her blood during the dream state:

And truly at my side
I saw a shadowy thing,
Most dim, and yet its presence there
Curdled my blood with ghastly fear,
And ghastlier wondering. (17-21)

The speaker then proceeds to relate how this ghoulish being originated in a world that is completely alien to this earth and is separated from this world by the `sea of deep eternity' (38) (the sea is a common metaphor used by Brontë to delineate the chasm between this world and other spheres). This is a horrendous encounter that has severely shaken the speaker, leaving her praying that this ghoul should never re-appear. The poem reaches a

climax in the final stanza as the ghoul is described with `its lips opened, and a sound/ Awoke the stillness reigning round...' (43-44). This is a vision the speaker hopes never to encounter again, one that would not be out of place in a Gothic novel.

A possible source for this poem is Poems of Ossian which was found on the shelves of the Parsonage, and which was marked by one of the Brontës at the following passage:

> The hero struck the shield of alarms, the warriors of the night moved on. The rest lay in the heath of the deer, and slept beneath the dusky wind. The ghosts of the lately dead were near, and swam on the gloomy clouds; and far distant, in the dark silence of Lena, the feeble voices of death were faintly heard.[23]

The lines `It was just the time of eve,/ When parted ghosts might come' (13-14) in stanza four may be compared to `ghosts of the lately dead were near' in the Poems of Ossian. A possible explanation for Brontë's consternation is also to be found in the extract quoted above. There was the ancient Scottish legend that when a death was about to occur a ghost was to be heard shrieking nearby, an idea which is encapsulated in the above quotation. Was Brontë terrified of an impending death in her family, or perhaps her own, when she came face to face with the ghoul? The poem was written in 1837 and a few years later the family was decimated by illness. Did she perhaps see the encounter with a ghost personifying the `angel of death' as an omen of future illness to be inflicted on her family?

In `O God of Heaven! The dream of horror,' Brontë has again described the horror of visions that emanate from a darker region either within her own mind or from another sphere. This poem is as compelling and disturbing as `The night of storms has passed' and

represents a milestone in the poet's development. These two poems have a unique place within her collected verse and clearly point to a period of intense anguish that occurred during 1837 when the poet was nineteen years old (both poems are initialled by Brontë which clearly suggests that they are autobiographical experiences since poems initialled by her are personal as opposed to Gondal compositions). These two poems are not only interrelated, but represent a dark and awesome time for Brontë, recalling Jung's explication of self-development:

> At first we cannot see beyond the path that leads downward to dark and hateful things - but no light or beauty will ever come from the man who cannot bear this light.[24]

In other words, according to Jung, it is a prerequisite for inner growth to confront and come to terms with the darker side of the psyche.

In stanza fifteen the speaker describes `phantom horrors' (68) that have shown her the worst possible suffering of mankind: she has literally seen the state of hell, but after this dreadful revelation she escapes into a renewed period of contentment:

> But this is past, and why return
> O'er such a path to brood and mourn?
> Shake off the fetters, break the chain,
> And live and love and smile again. (70-73)

There is a prevailing motif in Brontë's work that deals with confrontations with darkness and a subsequent rebirth, hell-like encounters and a luminous renascence. `O God of Heaven! The dream of horror,' is a tormented account of the poet's resurgence from the throes of a dismal nightmare. As in the poem `It's over now; I've known it all;' she re-emerges into a more blissful state after an emotionally draining, cathartic experience:

It's over now; I've known it all;
I'll hide it in my heart no more,
But back again that night recall,
And think the fearful vision o'er. (1-4)

The third area that is of cardinal significance in the context of visions is Brontë's description of her guide or comforter. This is one of the most remarkable features of her poetry that places her firmly within the lineage of the mystical poets who preceded her such as Blake or Coleridge: she has a personal relationship with a spirit who often inspires her visions and comforts her during times of severe stress. It is a single spirit rather than a plurality of spirits with whom Brontë is in contact, a personal figure as opposed to an impersonal, objective one. Blake claimed to have mediumship powers and to be in contact with many spirits in another dimension, but with Brontë it is a solitary guide who is responsible for her spiritual growth and she yearns for this guide's support during times when he is absent. Visitations by this guide are a frequent occurrence as Derek Stanford asserts:

> But if the idea of spiritual discipline appears absent in her poems, the sense of visitation (which we also associate with mysticism) is powerfully present.[25]

This communication which Brontë maintains with her guide both sustains her during difficult times and compensates for a non-existent romantic life. It is her link to another dimension, her bridge into realms that are seldom traversed. It is informative to compare Brontë's guide to Jung's depiction of the animus who is also responsible for guiding women into the deeper regions of an inner world (the animus is the male personification of the unconscious mind within the psyche of a woman):

> As I mentioned before, the positive side of the animus can personify an enterprising spirit, courage, truthfulness, and in the highest form, spiritual profundity.[26]

I am not suggesting that Brontë's guide is approximate to Jung's doctrine of the animus, which is an aspect of a woman's psyche, but the role of Brontë's guide as a bridge to other dimensions is similar to the animus' function to open up the `inner world'.[1]

The first poem of significance here is the poem dated November 1837, `I'll come when thou art saddest,' in which Brontë's guide informs her that he will appear when she is in the deepest state of melancholy, when darkness has enveloped her psyche. He also claims that he will temporarily bear her soul into a region of relative bliss:

> I'll come when the heart's worst (?) feeling
> Has entire, unbiased sway,
> And my influence o'er thee stealing,
>
> Grief deepening, joy congealing,
> Shall bear thy soul away. (6-10)

The third stanza then gives the reader some idea of the preparatory stage that Brontë undergoes before this spirit arrives: the guide asks her the preliminary question: `Dost thou not feel upon thy soul/ A flood of strange sensations roll,' (13-14). Unusual sensations are felt within her soul, an extraordinary prelude takes place before the guide is made manifest himself within her mind. Winifrid Gérin, in referring to this poem, notes the momentous nature of the guide's appearance in Brontë's life:

> They tell of a moment of spiritual experience - dramatized in human terms - as of a real presence breaking in upon her bondage and challenging her to

surrender to its liberating power.[27]

From this poem the basic features of the guide's appearance and function can clearly be discerned: the guide usually becomes manifest during times of stress and despair; strange sensations occur prior to his arrival; the appearances are involuntary and Brontë has no control over whether they transpire or not; the guide brings peace and serenity to Brontë; it is a personal contact that is established. There is a reference to the appearance of guides, or `Genii' as they are called, in the work of Elizabeth Rowe which, according to Charlotte, was to be found in the Haworth Parsonage library:

> The heavenly Genii that attend you, have made a thousand impressions on your sleeping fancy, to warn you from the desperate attempt. Sometimes you have been led through the desolate shades where unhappy ghosts complain; the gloomy caverns, the abodes of eternal horror, have been opened to your view; sometimes the rewards of patience and constant virtue have displayed their glories to your pleased imagination;....[28]

Brontë probably read Letter VIII by Amintor which would have assisted her in her own description of her guide. The `Genii', like her guide, transport their charge through desolate regions and ultimately to heavenly realms.

One of the features mentioned above is that of the involuntary nature of the visitations and in 1840 Brontë is battling to come to terms with her guide's inexplicable withdrawal. In the poem `It is too late to call thee now:', which is entered after number seventy-five in the notebook, Brontë laments the unfathomable absence of her guide and her loss of visionary prowess:

> Besides, the mist is half withdrawn;

The barren mountain-side lies bare;

And sunshine and awaking morn

Paint no more golden visions there... (5-8)

It is common for poets to suffer periods when their inspiration temporarily dries up and usually attempts are made to invoke the proverbial Muses for renewed illumination. Brontë's predicament in 1840 is similar, but she does not turn to God or the Muses for assistance: she petitions her guide for succour in re-activating her visionary powers. As stated previously, there is therefore an inextricable, if somewhat mysterious, bond between Brontë's visionary capacity and her relationship to her guide. This relationship is also borne out in an earlier poem dated the third of November, 1838 entitled `O Dream! where art thou now?': Brontë indirectly alludes to her guide's influence in stimulating visions referring to his `angel-brow' (3) and lamenting her `Lost vision!' (15). Brontë needs her guide to inspire the visions which are central to both her spiritual growth and her artistic output.

However, Brontë's attempted rationalizations of the guide's departure do not always work. In `It is too late to call thee now:' the poet takes solace in remembering the past and the blessings of her earlier, inspired years:

Yet, even in my grateful breast,

Thy darling shade shall cherished be;

For God alone doth know how blest

My early years have been in thee! (9-12)

But by the eighteenth of May, 1840 Brontë grows more desperate and appeals to her

Guide, referred to as `mine angel' (11), to re-appear in her life (`The Appeal'). She needs her guide, but is powerless to recall him, she needs sustenance but can only beseech his return. Nevertheless, she is convinced that she will re-establish a relationship with her beloved guide:

> Yes, by the tears I've poured thee,
> By all my hours of pain,
> Oh, I shall surely win thee,
> Beloved, again! (13-16)

The use of the noun `beloved' (16) is significant here because it suggests that Brontë needed her guide in much the same way as a lover needs her mate: separation is a painful soul-wrenching ordeal which is only assuaged by a renewed union.

This notion of renewed visitation is also to be found in the Gondal poem `The Visionary' as the speaker awaits the return of an angel in much the same way as Brontë looked forward to the return of her guide. The speaker has set up a small lamp to guide the angel towards her silent house and she waits patiently by the window in an atmosphere that is both haunting and riveting:

> What I love shall come like visitant of air,
> Safe in secret power from lurking human snare;
> Who loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray,
> Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay. (18-22)

The speaker awaits the arrival of this masculine angelic being and guards her experience from those who would deride the validity of her encounter. The reader is also told that this is a nightly occurrence and its frequency again suggests a parallel to Brontë's personal meeting with her guide. Once again it appears as if Brontë has infused her own personal experience into this Gondal poem, which would account for its authentic quality. The concluding lines to `The Visionary' would not be out of place in one of the personal poems dealing with Brontë's guide; they can be equated to the poet's unwavering affiliations to her own helper :

> He for whom I wait thus ever comes to me;
> Strange Power! I trust thy might ; trust thou my constancy. (23-28)

ENDNOTES

1. Cf. The comment of Lawrence Hanson:

> ... Unitarian doctrines were aired with an eloquence which brought the lecturer the admiration, and later the friendship and substantial help of John Prior Estlin, the well-known Unitarian minister and schoolmaster, ...

Lawrence Hanson, The Life of S.T. Coleridge: The Early Years (London: Allen, 1938) 75.

2. Raymond V. Holt, The Unitarian Contribution To Social Progress In England (London: Lindsey, 1938) 271.
3. Gerald Parsons, Religion In Victorian Britain vol.1 (Manchester: Manchester, 1988) 80.
4. Parsons 80.
5. F. D. Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ vol.1 (London: Clarke, 1959) 139.
6. Mary Kupiea Cayton, Emerson's Emergence in Self and Society in the Transformation of New England, 1800-1845 (Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 1989) 73.
7. Cayton 73.
8. Cf: The statement by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

> Do you not believe that advertisements are given you continually of that which most imports you to know; but you, in the din and buzz of the senses, do not regard the vision? Miracles are continually occuring in the privatest spiritual experience which the man heeds not in his headlong partisan fury to celebrate and assert the miracles of the Church. By attention and obedience to the heavenly vision he would bring his perception to a finer delicacy.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson vol. 6. (Boston: Riverside, 1911) 113.

9. Charlotte Brontë, "from a letter to W.S Williams," Penquin Critical Anthologies: Emily Brontë, ed. Jean-Pierre Petit (Middlesex: Penquin, 1973) 34-35.
10. Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism: A Study In The Nature And Development Of Man's Spiritual Consciousness (London: Methuen, 1930) 281.
11. Underhill 282.
12. Underhill 281.
13. Underhill 290.
14. Underhill 285.
15. Robert Alfred Vaughan, Hours With The Mystics: A Contribution to the History of Religious Opinions vol.2 (London: Gibbings, 1895) 174.
16. Herman, The Meaning And Value Of Mysticism (London: Clarke, 1915) 61.
17. Edward Ingram Watkin, The Philosophy of Mysticism (London: Grant, 1919) 261.
18. Underhill 281.
19. Walter Housten Clark, The Psychology of Religion: An Introduction to Religious Experience and Behaviour (New York: Macmillan, 1958) 277.
20. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Intellect," The Works Of Ralph Waldo Emerson:Essays And Representative Men, ed. George Sampson, vol.1 (London: Bell, 1913) 180.
21. Jacques Blondel, "Emily Brontë: Experience Spirituelle et Creation Poetique," Penquin Critical Anthologies: Emily Brontë 147.
22. Thomas Fawcett, The Symbolic Language of Religion: An Introductory Study (London: SCM, 1970) 182.
23. Poems of Ossian trans. James Macpherson (London: Walker, 1819) 280.

Cf. The following passage which was also marked by one of the Brontës:

> Rise, ye dark winds of Erin, rise! Roar, whirlwinds of Lara and hinds! Amid the tempest let roses die, torn, in a cloud, by angry ghosts of men; amid the tempests let Cadmar die, if ever chase was sport to him. so much as the battle of shields! (271).

24. C.G. Jung, Modern Man In Search of a Soul, trans. W.S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (London: Routledge, 1933) 248.
25. Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford, Emily Brontë: her life and work (London: Owen, 1953) 194.
26. Carl Jung, Man and his Symbols (London: Aldus, 1964) 207.
27. Winifrd Gèrin, Emily Brontë: A Biography (London: Clarendon, 1971) 85.
28. Elizabeth Rowe, Letters from the Dead to the Living (n.p., 1816) 18.

CHAPTER TWO

VISIONS: 1846 AND WUTHERING HEIGHTS

> I have beheld this same vision on three occasions: I think it is the sublimest vision which the Lord has granted me grace to see, and it brings with it the greatest benefits. It appears to have a wonderfully purifying effect upon the soul and almost destroys the power of our sensual nature. It is a great flame, which seems to burn up and annihilate all life's desires; for, although - glory be to God! - I had no desires for vain things, I was clearly shown here how everything was vanity, and how vain, how completely vain are all worldly dignities.[1]

> `Why then does not the Soul abide yonder? Because it has not yet wholly left its earthly abode. But the time will come when it will enjoy the vision without interruption, no longer troubled with the hindrances of the body. The part of the soul which is troubled is not the part which sees, but the other part, when the part which sees is idle, though it ceases not from that knowledge which comes of demonstration, conjectures, and the dialectic. But in the vision that which sees is not reason..., but something greater than and prior to reason, as is the object of vision.[2]

In considering visions in the poems of 1846, there are two compositions which are cardinal:`The Philosopher' and `The Prisoner'. Both of these poems have gained notoriety, are frequently anthologized and worthy of special consideration. Therefore, the first

section of this chapter will be devoted to these seminal pieces. In the second section close attention will again be paid to Brontë's guide since there are a number of key poems in the 1846 publication which deal with her comforter and his inspirational influence in activating the visionary powers. The third section will concentrate on the visions of Catherine Linton and Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights and comparisons will be drawn to another visionary, Catherine of Genoa. The aim of this chapter is to further demonstrate how her visions are revealed through key areas in her works and form an integral part of her mysticism. It should be borne in mind that a close nexus exists between the poems of 1846 and Wuthering Heights since they were all written during approximately the same period: Wuthering Heights was accepted for publication by Thomas Newby in July 1847.

In `The Philosopher' a conversation takes place between the seer or poet and the philosopher although it is not always certain who the speaker is from stanza to stanza. Tom Winifrith, for example, suggests that the philosopher repeats the refrain in the second and third stanzas, while the interlocutor is the speaker in the first verse.[3] He then suggests that someone else relates a vision in the fourth stanza while the fifth stanza is again a reply by the philosopher addressed to a seer.[4] Janet Gezari, on the other hand, provides a more integrated approach by suggesting that there are only two speakers in the poem, the philosopher and the seer or poet.[5] (Other than this difference the allocation of stanzas to the philosopher is basically in accordance, except that Gezari sees the second stanza as attributed to the philosopher, but spoken by the seer.) The approach adopted here will be similar to Gezari's except that the second stanza will follow Winifrith and attribute the words spoken to the philosopher. Therefore, in my reading, the seer is the speaker in stanza one, the philosopher in stanzas two and three, the seer in stanza four and the philosopher in stanza five. I suggest that this is a plausible allocation of stanzas as

will appear from the analysis below.

The philosopher in this poem is distraught and torn by an inner conflict. In this state of woe he takes little heed of the seer's opening words suggesting that he refrain from excessive thought. Unable to resolve this torment he yearns for oblivion where the warring factions within his being will cease to be a dilemma:

`So said I, and still say the same;
Still to my death, will say -
Three gods within this little frame,
Are warring, night and day;
Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
They all are held in me... (15-20)

The immediate question which arises is what the philosopher is alluding to when he refers to `Three gods '(17): the answer to this is critical because it is directly related to the seer's sublime vision in the fourth stanza. It is apparent that, whoever these gods or forces are, they exist in a state of antagonism rather than harmony. There is a sense that the philosopher is unable to control these forces which are tearing his being apart. It is at this stage of desperation that the seer shares his lustrous vision of the three rivers with the philosopher, thereby providing an answer both to the riddle of the three gods and how to harmonize them:

`I saw a spirit, standing, man,
Where thou dost stand - an hour ago,
And round his feet three rivers ran,
Of equal depth, and equal flow -
A golden stream - and one like blood;

And one like sapphire seemed to be ... (27-32)

Although one should not be dogmatic, I suggest that the three gods are related to the three rivers and in turn relate to three aspects of the philosopher's being: that is, the golden represents his spiritual faculty, the sapphire symbolizes his intellect, while blood refers to both his physical and emotional desires. The clue to this interpretation lies in Brontë's use of colour since gold is often associated with perfection, the sapphire stone is usually blue which, as a primary colour, may be associated with the intellect, and blood is red which connotes passion. (The philosopher's reference to his `sentient soul' (52) in stanza five also leads one to believe that the three gods are a part of his innermost being.)

In the vision itself the seer explains how he saw a spirit literally kindle the three rivers, transforming them into a transcendent white light. The `inky sea' spoken of in line 34 is transmuted into a brilliant light which is far superior to the rivers in their separate form. It is clear from this vision that the seer is suggesting to the philosopher that it is possible to transform these warring factions within his breast into a divine, euphonious whole. He holds out the prospect of peace to this beleaguered individual. The vision itself is one of the most dramatic in Brontë's works and lucidly demonstrates how visions are portrayed in symbolic form and need to be interpreted. As a visionary experience it is similar to Coleridge's `Kubla Khan' in which the opium-entranced poet sees a sacred river plunge into an ocean akin to the `inky sea' (34) in stanza four of `The Philosopher':

Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,

Then reached the caverns measureless to man,

And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean. (26-28)

Coleridge also alludes to some transforming process and the extraordinary phenomenon of a sun-filled dome rising from `caves of ice' (36) which is similar to Brontë's vision of

the rivers becoming `White as the sun ... ' (39):

It was a miracle of rare device,

A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice! (35-36)

(Incidentally, J. Whiteman refers to what he terms the `Vision of Archetypal Light' as a true vision of God and claims that it is a common experience among mystics. The mystic often encounters a bright light that is believed to emanate from the divine source, which is usually an experience that transforms the recipient for the remainder of his life.)[6]

The tragedy in this poem is the inability of the philosopher to be truly moved by the vision of the seer as he laments his inability to find this spirit for himself. He is not content with second-hand information, preferring oblivion to a life without a glimpse of this spirit, who can also represent wisdom in the poem. The vision of the three rivers seems to leave the philosopher untouched as he bewails his hopeless quest for knowledge. In order to terminate the ceaseless internal conflicts the philosopher yearns for death and one final 'repose' (56) in preference to a life devoid of certain knowledge :

Oh, let me die - that power and will

Their cruel strife may close;

And conquered good and conquering ill

Be lost in one repose!' (53-56)

It is also possible to conclude from these lines that one of the three gods is power or will which is at war with the other faculties: power or will in turn relates to the river of blood which symbolizes desire. It is power or will which destroys the `good' (55), one of the

other gods in his being, symbolized by the golden river in the seer's vision. The battle clearly continues in spite of the vision and the reader is left with a vacuous feeling at its conclusion. The issue of power in Brontë's works will be fully explored in chapter eight, but its presence in this poem should not go unnoticed.

The other relevant poem which merits close attention is `The Prisoner' which is a fragment taken from a longer poem and published in the 1846 volume. The completed poem is dated 9 October 1845 and is found in the Gondal Poems notebook. After Charlotte Brontë persuaded her sister to publish some of her verse, her sister selected certain extracts from the longer work, `Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle' and re-named the poem `The Prisoner'. Thus, it must be remembered that this is a portion of a more substantial piece and some reference must be made to the completed poem, at least as far as the plot is concerned. Julian M. discovers his former, fair-haired playmate A. G. Rochelle incarcerated in a dungeon. In the completed work Julian M. liberates his childhood playmate from the throes of prison and earns her love, but this episode is omitted from the fragment published in 1846. Instead of this scene where Julian M. liberates A. G. Rochelle, Brontë has inserted a new four-line stanza in which A. G. Rochelle appears to claim a moral victory over her captors. There are consequently two different endings to this poem, the one leading to the death of A. G. Rochelle and the other to her liberty and subsequent romance with a heroic lover.

The poem `The Prisoner' contains one of the most striking descriptions of a mystical experience. The speaker in this case is the prisoner, A. G. Rochelle, and she refers to a guide or `messenger of hope' (62) who offers her solace and visionary experiences as compensation for imprisonment:

> Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,

And visions rise, and change,

that kill me with desire. (68-70)

She then describes the nature of the mystical experience with singular accuracy referring to such familiar features of an encounter as: a sense of calm; divine music; a temporary paralysis of the body; an ineffable sense of a transcendent power. There is `a strong sense' that Brontë has expressed her own private encounter through the words of A. G. Rochelle:

`But, first, a hush of peace - a soundless calm

descends;

The struggle of distress, and fierce impatience

ends;

Mute music soothes my breast - unuttered

harmony,

That I could never dream, till Earth was lost to

me.

`Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth

reveals;

My outward sense is gone, my inward essence

feels:

Its wings are almost free - its home, its harbour

found,

Measuring the gulf, it stoops - and dares the final

bound. (77-91)

She has escaped the body temporarily and is embraced by a divine power, which is a

clear indication that this is an intellectual vision. A. G. Rochelle is evidently battling to find the correct terminology and her words referring to `the Invisible' (84) or `the Unseen' (84) are understandably nebulous. She has, however, reached her inner centre or `inward essence' (86) entirely transcending her corporeal frame or `outward sense' (86). This experience with an invisible power is typically shortlived as she is painfully drawn into the physical body; she must return to earth and delay her entrance into a more effulgent world.

This poem does raise an important and recurring motif in Brontë's work, an unfeigned desire to enter this other world and a concomitant love of death which is heralded as a release. There is a paradox involved here because this fascination with death does not necessarily mean that Brontë is dispirited or that she would wish to die before her `natural' time on earth has expired. In the journal entry dated 30 July 1845 she describes herself as being perfectly contented and only wishes that all the members of her family were similarly so disposed.[7] But when the moment of death arrives she will gladly welcome the 'grim reaper', as does her creation, A. G. Rochelle:

> The more that anguish racks, the earlier it will
> bless;
> And robed in fires of hell, or bright with heavenly
> shine,
> If it but herald death, the vision is divine!' (102-106)

Her acceptance of death was apparent in her last days when she refused any medical care and preferred to face it unaided either by medical or homeopathic treatment. This is perfectly in accordance with the visions expressed throughout her life: it would be anathema for her artificially to delay death when she can enter into a divine world for

which she has prepared for so long. Charlotte has misunderstood her sister in her final days and her anxiety blinds her to Brontë's true predilection. This is not virtual suicide but a compliant acceptance that her time on earth is approaching an end. Irene Taylor has summed up Brontë's attitude towards her quietus:

> In psychological terms she has convinced herself that death must not be feared; that it must be embraced because the integrated contentment of infancy, the "unsullied light" she longs for, will be recovered beyond the tomb. In sum, she locates her muse, her beloved source of creative energy, in an experience that approaches death as its limit and goal.[8]

It would, on the contrary, be surprising if the intrepid Brontë had shown any real reluctance as death approached her; it would contradict the very philosophy she had expounded from the outset. True to her character, she calls for a doctor only when she knows that she will have passed over to a finer abode (possibly to appease the distraught Charlotte). Cecil Day Lewis is one of the critics who has comprehended Brontë's paradoxical attitude towards death in his observations on the poem `Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle':

> But nothing we know about Emily suggests that she was a victim of the Death-Wish, and the passage I have quoted conveys not a retrogressive yearning for oblivion but something much more positive - a struggle towards a life, and a mode of being, beyond death.[9]

Like A. G. Rochelle, Brontë has had visions of death and the hereafter long before the event dawns on her and, as a result, she is able to welcome its advent. The visions act as a palliative since knowledge of the hereafter has dispelled fear.

I will now consider Brontë's guide within the context of her visions. When the poems in

the 1846 publication, which deal with Brontë's guide are examined, it is apparent that this guide bears a relationship both to visions and the theme of death. There are so many references to death in these 1846 selections that it can be deduced that Brontë was subconsciously preparing for her own end which occurred two years later on the 19th of December, 1848. In the poem, `The Anticipation', for instance, she refers to a `thoughtful spirit' (23) who taught her that death is a benign prospect:

> A thoughtful spirit taught me soon,
> That we must long till life be done;
> That every phase of earthly joy
> Must always fade, and always cloy: (23-26)

Not only has this guide provided Brontë with glimpses of a divine world, but the poet asserts that he will assist in the journey into another dimension. He is apparently waiting to assuage her transition from the corporeal into the incorporeal, lending her a hand when she needs it:

> `Glad comforter! will I not brave,
> Unawed, the darkness of the grave?
> Nay, smile to hear Death's billows rave -
> Sustained my guide by thee? (45-48)

It can not be over-stressed that it is the visions she experiences that provide Brontë with the assurance and fortitude in facing death. Without these mystical revelations she would be as apprehensive as the next person. It is, therefore, no surprise that she has repeatedly made this point in the 1846 selection at a time when her own death is only two years away. She turns repeatedly to her guide for renewed knowledge of `real worlds' (30) as is evident in the poem, `To Imagination':

But thou art ever there, to bring
  The hovering vision 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)

This preoccupation with death in the 1846 compilation can also be seen in some poems in which her guide is not mentioned. In `A Day Dream' Brontë alludes to an invisible veil that separates this world from other worlds, an image that could have been drawn from Shelley's use of metaphor in Prometheus Unbound in which he states that `Death is the veil which those who live call life:/ They sleep, and it is lifted:...(III.iii. 111-114). She reiterates the same doctrine in `A Day Dream' as is expounded by Shelley in Prometheus Unbound :

`And, could we lift the veil, and give
  One brief glimpse to thine eye,
Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live,
  Because they live to die... (65-68)

Another example is the appropriately named poem, `Death', in which the poet describes the relentless, austere qualities of destruction. Even in the natural world, however, Brontë sees a resurgence of life, a renewal of the indestructible life-force (but there is no romanticizing in this harsh account of nature's need to destroy in order to make room for new life-forms):

Sorrow passed; and plucked the golden blossom;
Guilt stripped off the foliage in its pride;
But, within its parent's kindly bosom,
Flowed for ever Life's restoring tide. (11-14)

A pantheistic vision of nature is present here in which `Eternity' (5) is celebrated, but the harshness of the dying young leaves gives the poem a grim overtone. Death in this poem is depicted as cruel, rather than benign, and the speaker's emphatic remarks in the concluding stanza are ruthless and cynical. There is clearly another surly side to death which can be focused on - it depends on which aspect the mind is concentrated:

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
Where that perished sapling used to be;
Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will
nourish
That from which it sprung - Eternity. (34-38)

Stanford has summed up the significance of `Eternity' (38) in this poem in the following terms:

> That which is negated is earthly life, with its prospects of hope and joy; and that which is asserted is "Eternity" - the state beyond time and human existence, and the reservoir out of which these come.[10]

In these 1846 poems Brontë's guide and the visions inspired by him are also called into account to contend against an encroaching rationalism within her psyche. She explains in `Plead For Me' how she has foresworn worldly pursuits in favour of a spiritual relationship with the guide, but at the moment of composition rationalism or logic is challenging this choice in life. This is similar to the Blakean world where Urizen or the

intellect repeatedly challenges Los or spiritual intuition as they fail to live in harmony. Even as gifted a mystic as Brontë passes through phases of doubt, which is attested in `Plead For Me' (a subject which will be considered later in the chapter, The Dark Night of the Soul). She invokes her guide who is now referred to as `My slave, my comrade, and my king.' (25) to intervene and drive `Reason' (2) away:

> Speak, God of vision, plead for me
> And tell why I have chosen thee! (40-41)

It is important to note here that Brontë is aware of possible conflicts that can arise within the psyche between the intellect and the spiritual, intuitive side. Reason in this poem mocks or scoffs at her visions, refusing to acknowledge their substance. Reason can be a dangerous cross-current threatening to undermine and even destroy the mystical visions she relies upon. (This poem also sheds some light on the three warring gods within `The Philosopher': the intellect (sapphire stream) and the intuitive side (golden stream) are likewise in disharmony in `The Philosopher'.)

The final poem dealing with Brontë's guide in the 1846 selection is `My Comforter' which bears some resemblance to `The Prisoner' in its stress on an inner light. There is, however, a recalling of the painful duality of a negative mystical encounter (note that stanza five alludes to her initial visions). An experience of both heaven and hell is a common occurrence for Emily Brontë during these initial mystical interludes:

> So stood I, in Heaven's glorious sun,
> And in the glare of Hell;
> My spirit drank a mingled tone,

> Of seraph's song, and demon's moan;
>
> What my soul bore, my soul alone
>
> Within itself may tell! (21-26)

This poem is the final direct reference to her guide and Brontë fittingly refers to this spirit as her `thoughtful Comforter?' (32): he has both provided and protected her during the visionary encounters. She has both seen and spoken to him for much of her life and this poem is a final acknowledgement of gratitude.

Wuthering Heights also provides interesting insights into the visionary dimension. The starting point on the subject of visions in Wuthering Heights is difficult to pinpoint. However, a statement by the narrator, Lockwood, serves as a useful introductory remark:

> I am sure you have thought a great deal more than the generality of servants think. You have been compelled to cultivate your reflective faculties, for want of occasions for fritting your life away in silly trifles. (102)

Lockwood's observation on both Nelly Dean and the Yorkshire inhabitants is significant because it suggests that they have the time and the relative solitude to develop their intellectual and visionary prowess. It is in a secluded environment that the visionary faculties can flourish because, as Lockwood had noted prior to this compliment addressed to Nelly Dean, `They do live more in earnest, more in themselves, and less in surface change, and frivolous external things' (102). They have the opportunity to plumb the depths of their own beings avoiding the fragmented shifts from external object to object so typical of city life. Lockwood, the urbane city dweller, is brought face to face with a world where visions and the supernatural are accepted as part of the very fabric of rural existence.

For example, in chapter twelve Catherine is delirious , a state caused by lack of sleep and food: she has visions and hallucinations which necessitate comment. It has already been suggested that Brontë often uses characters as a means of portraying her personal visionary experiences and this appears to be the case here. The visions or hallucinations may originate from a delirious state but I suggest that Brontë had intimate knowledge of these encounters. Nelly Dean focuses on Catherine's temporary derangement and delirious state, but the reader can also see these visions as valuable mystical occasions. Nelly Dean is, after all, a conservative narrator who prefers to see Catherine as simply raving in this instance, whereas the visions have a personal value for the heroine of the novel. When Catherine's delirious visions are compared to those of Catherine of Genoa it will become apparent that a genuine parallel exists to a documented visionary experience. Nelly Dean's dismissal of these visions or hallucinations need not be taken as the gospel.

In this state of feverish exhaustion Catherine imagines herself to be back at Wuthering Heights and the last seven years of her life have been obliterated from memory. She has `no command of tongue or brain' (162) while in this condition and feels herself transported back into the past:

> - I thought as I lay there, with my head against that table leg, and my eyes dimly discerning the grey square of the window, that I was enclosed in the oak-panelled bed at home; and my heart ached with some grief which, just waking, I could not recollect - I pondered, and worried myself to discover what it could be; and most strangely, the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank! I did not recall that they had been at all. I was a child; my father was just buried, and my misery arose from the separation that Hindley had ordered between me, and Heathcliff - I was laid alone,

> for the first time, and, rousing from a dismal dose after a night of weeping - I lifted my hand to push the panels aside, it struck the tabletop! I swept it along the carpet, and then, memory burst in - ... (163)

Catherine has returned in her vision to a time when she is a child of twelve years old and is perturbed at her separation from Heathcliff. In her delirious condition she is re-experiencing a painful psychological moment of division, but can this be dismissed as meaningless ranting and raving? The reader knows that Catherine betrayed her deepest emotions in marrying Edgar and she is always plagued, at least on a subconscious level, by her disavowal of true love. It is in a semi-paralytic state that Catherine is again brought into contact with her subconscious mind, in spite of the veneer of culture and respectability she shares with Edgar. She can no longer deny events and emotions that traumatized her on a profound level:

> But supposing at twelve years old, I had been wrenched from the Heights, and every early association, and my all in all, as Heathcliff was at that time, and been converted, at a stroke, into Mrs Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger; an exile, and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world - You may fancy a glimpse of the abyss where I grovelled! (163)

Charles Sanger has meticulously documented the key dates in Wuthering Heights which are of assistance in dealing with Catherine's vision quoted above.[11] Catherine is born in 1765 and her father, Mr. Earnshaw, dies in October 1777 when she is twelve years old. This is exactly in accordance with the facts denoted in the quotes above, but it is meaningful that Catherine only leaves Wuthering Heights at eighteen when she marries Edgar in April, 1783. Why, then, does she imagine that she was wrenched from her home

at twelve years of age and not at eighteen when she enters into matrimony? The answer to this is psychological: in Catherine's unconscious her fundamental rift with Heathcliff occurred when Hindley reduced Heathcliff to a stable boy, thus creating a rigid class distinction between Heathcliff and herself. The turning point of her life, in psychological terms, is at twelve years. In visions , as can be seen from this time lapse, there is a time sequence but this does not necessarily follow chronologically: it resembles the `stream of consciousness' utilized by Joyce and Woolf. This is no idle hallucination, as Nelly Dean suggests, but a profound recall by Catherine of an event that shaped the rest of her life. (Catherine has, in addition, no memory of the courtship with Edgar during this vision because this is of minor significance to her).

Comparing Catherine's feverish speeches with documented visionary experiences by, for example, Catherine of Genoa, suggests interesting parallels. Catherine of Genoa was also subject to semi-paralysis, pain, an inner fire and vomiting, although there was no medical cause for her condition.[12] She similarly re-experiences certain traumatic events in her life prior to death:

> And in a vision she saw many of the wretched parts of her life, and that greatly distressed her. When she could speak of them she did, and then the distress left her .[13]

It is also stated that Catherine of Genoa `...could not recognize any of those who stood around her.[14]' which is paralleled by Catherine's inability to recognize her husband, `At first, she gave him no glance of recognition...he was invisible to her abstracted gaze.' (165; ch.12). (Note that Catherine even remains in a `half-dream' (167; ch.12) for a substantial period after the visions are over.) Emerson, in his discussion of Swedenborg or the mystic makes a similar observation:

> The trances of Socrates, Plotinus, Porphyry, Behmen, Bunyan, Fox, Pascal, Guion, Swedenborg, will readily come to mind. But what as readily comes to mind, is, the accompaniment of disease. This beatitude comes in terror, and with shocks to the mind of the receiver.[15]

Visions in Wuthering Heights are not confined to Catherine: even Heathcliff is subject to hallucinatory encounters which are equally compelling. In chapter 34 Heathcliff sees Catherine's spirit and is transported into an ecstatic state:

> `Mr Heathcliff! master!' I cried. `Don't, for God's sake, stare as if you saw an unearthly vision.'
>
> `Dont, for God's sake, shout so loud,' he replied. `Turn round, and tell me, are we by ourselves?'
>
> `Of course,' was my answer, `of course we are!' (361).

It is again Nelly Dean who remains sceptical about this visionary experience and she attributes this sight to Heathcliff's prolonged abstinence from food. But the supernatural element of the novel evidently plays a pivotal role and the return of a ghost or spirit either within a dream, as in the case of Lockwood, or in a vision as in the case above, can not be dismissed so easily. From chapter three onwards when Lockwood encounters Catherine's spirit in an ominous dream, the reader is urged to take the possibility of a ghost or disembodied spirit seriously. When Heathcliff sees Catherine's ghost the reader already knows that her spirit has been forebodingly hovering around Wuthering Heights and accordingly would not be so quick to dismiss Heathcliff's experience as an illusion. The reader has been well prepared for such comments as:

> Now, I perceived he was not looking at the wall, for when I regarded him

> alone, it seemed , exactly, that he gazed at something within two yards distance. And, whatever it was, it communicated, apparently, both pleasure and pain, in exquisite extremes; at least, the anguished, yet raptured expression of his countenance suggested that idea. (361)

Heathcliff has at last come into contact with Catherine's spirit in a state of visionary rapture, and his yearning for death intensifies. Visions are part of the supernatural element in Wuthering Heights without which the novel would lose much of its compelling force.[16]

It is Brontë's visionary nature which assists in opening her mind to unorthodox viewpoints. It becomes increasingly difficult for her to remain within the confines of her father's faith in the light of her encounter with a spirit guide or the visions that she encounters in other ways. She would have been declared a heretic by the Church of England had they been aware of her visions and, aware of its dogmatism, she turns increasingly to the non-judgemental Unitarian movement. This is a trend followed by many Victorians including the illustrious Dickens who similarly rejects the rigidity of theological dogma in favour of the Unitarian outlook:

> This dislike of theological dogma was one that had been growing upon him steadily. He had been interested to find that many of his American friends in Cambridge and Boston belonged, as Forster did, to the Unitarian faith. Dickens did not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, and was able to sympathise with the leading features of the Unitarian creed.[17]

ENDNOTES

1. Saint Teresa, The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus, trans. and ed. Allison Peers, vol.1 (London: Sheed, 1946) 274.
2. Plotinus, The Philosophy of Plotinus ed. W.R. Inge, 3rd ed., vol.2 (London: Longmans, 1929) 141.
3. Tom Winifrith, The Brontës (London: Macmillan, 1977) 42.
4. Winifrith 42.
5. Janet Gezari 227.
6. J.H.M. Whiteman, The Mystical Life (London: Faber, 1971) 27.
7. > I am quite content for myself: not as idle as formerly, altogether as hearty, and having learnt to make the most of the present and long for the future with the fidgetiness that I cannot do all I wish; seldom or never troubled with nothing to do, and merely desiring that everybody could be as comfortable as myself and as undesponding, and then we would have a very tolerable world of it.

   Emily Brontë, "Journal Entry" 30 July 1845 of Shakespeare Head Brontë: The Life And Letters, ed. Thomas James Wise and John Alexander Symington, vol.2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1932) 49.
8. Irene Taylor, Holy Ghosts: The Male Muses of Emily and Charlotte Brontë (New York: Columbia, 1990) 64.
9. C. Day Lewis, "The Poetry Of Emily Brontë," Brontë Society Transactions 13 (1950): 93.
10. Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford 221.
11. C.P.Sanger, "The Structure of Wuthering Heights, Penguin Critical Anthologies: Emily Brontë 75-88.

12. Catherine of Genoa, Three Classics of Western Spirituality, trans. Serge Hughes (London: SPCK, 1979) 140-148.
13. Catherine of Genoa 146.
14. Catherine of Genoa 147.
15. Emerson "Swedenborg or the mystic," The Works Of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. George Sampson, vol.1, 407.
16. Sheila Smith offers an interesting analysis of how the supernatural elements work in Wuthering Heights. For centuries visions have formed part of the culture from the Scottish Highlands to the Yorkshire moors which Brontë could draw upon:

> ...the novel's power lies in Emily Brontë's perception of the supernatural as an essential dimension of the actual, and this theme, central in ballad and folk-tale, is expressed by techniques which can be related to those of ballad and folk-tale.

Sheila Smith, "At Once Strong and Eerie: The Supernatural In Wuthering Heights And Its Debt To The Traditional Ballad", The Review of English Studies 43 (1992): 516.

17. Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy And Triumph (Middlesex: Penquin, 1979) 256.

CHAPTER THREE

DREAMS

> When we dream, we can learn to bring back something of value to society. The creative dreamer does not return empty-handed. He or she is an explorer of the dream world, returning with a song, a dance, a cure, with information about a distant place or with a new idea of some kind.[1]

> It becomes apparent, then, that Tennyson located in the dream state one center of the life of the imagination, like others not always predictable in its operations, but ultimately rewarding as no exclusively objective awareness ever could be.[2]

Another important vehicle within the repertoire of the visionary is the existence of dreams and dream analysis. Dreams, like visions are, according to Jung, beyond the control of the conscious mind and can, therefore, provide invaluable insights into both an individual's psyche and the transcendent dimensions. They offer glimpses into the unconscious realms of the individual psyche often revealing conflicts or ambiguities that the conscious mind punctiliously denies or represses. Jung has expressed the value of dreams thus:

> As a general rule, the unconscious aspect of any event is revealed to us in dreams, where it appears not as a rational thought but as a symbolic image. As a matter of history, it was the study of dreams that first enabled psychologists to investigate the unconscious aspect of conscious psychic events.[3]

Dreams have a widespread significance ranging from the trivial to the transcendent,

from the mundane to the prophetic: hence each dream must be evaluated on its own merits. The world of the unconscious is by no means clearly demarcated; the sacred and the profane, the sublime and the secular, the personal and the universal are all expressed through the same medium of dreams. Jung, an adept in dream analysis, has noted this protean quality which manifests itself within the dream state:

> There are, it is true, dreams which manifestly represent wishes or fears, but what about all the other things? Dreams may contain ineluctable truths, philosophical pronouncements, illusions, wild fantasies, memories, plans, anticipations, irrational experiences, even telepathic visions, and heaven knows what besides.[4]

In Jungian psychology the scope of dreams is unbounded, and the language of dreams is symbolism, which needs to be deciphered to ascertain the meaning. The unconscious communicates its message via the medium of symbolism, which forms a pattern that needs to be unravelled or interpreted if it is to have any value to the conscious mind. The symbols and their personal association for the dreamer are of paramount importance, the relevance of a particular symbol to the individual psyche provides a clue to its intent. In other words, it is, generally speaking, no use fixing a certain meaning on each and every symbol and mechanically interpreting a dream in terms of that set signification. The personal value of a symbol to the dreamer always needs to be assessed, even where an archetypal symbol is involved (that is, a symbol drawn from the collective unconscious which has a universal meaning). Mary Anne Mattoon comments on Jung's approach as follows:

> Despite the vast amount of attention Jung gave to the study and amplification of archetypal images..., he warned that "the collective unconscious influences our dreams only occasionally".... It is essential to valid dream interpretation, therefore, to explore thoroughly the personal

> associations. This exploration is necessary even when archetypal amplifications are applicable.[5]

Steven Starker has similarly defined the content of dreams as a `language, a language of images, rather than of sounds'.[6] These broad principles of dream interpretation are crucial when the dreams in both Emily Brontë's poetry and Wuthering Heights are assessed. The approach adopted here will be expansive and creative, rather than limiting dream interpretation to a set of preconceived ideas, or in fixing meaning on symbols in an intransigent manner. An attempt will be made to evaluate the dream concerned in relation to the personality of the dreamer; for example, Lockwood's personal associations for the symbols in his dreams will be drawn from urban rather than rural life.

One final point needs to be noted before the dreams themselves are considered: the relationship that exists between the unconscious and our surroundings. The unconscious mind, according to Jung, has knowledge of many aspects of both society and the universe which far surpasses any comprehension available to the conscious mind. The unconscious is, therefore, able to transcend the space-time continuum as ordinarily understood, drawing on information or events from the past and glimpsing future happenings. The unconscious mind has a more accurate comprehension of the conflicts that beset the psyche as well as the path ahead; a wealth of knowledge as to both individual problems and the universal truths is apparently stored within this treasure house:

> In ways that are still completely beyond our comprehension, our unconscious is similarly attuned to our surroundings - to our group, to society in general, and, beyond these, to the space-time continuum and the

> whole of nature. Thus the Great Man of the Naskapi Indians does not merely reveal inner truths; he also gives hints about where and when to hunt.[7]

It is thus possible to gain knowledge as to a future event while in the dream state, it is possible to have a prophetic vision of an unforeseen circumstance because the unconscious mind is not bound by time or space. It is also feasible to gain access to other dimensions since the unconscious is on some level already in touch with these other states of mind. To continue with Jungian terminology, dreams are the gateway to the unconscious: the individual is able to bypass the ego and reach the true self while in the dream state, even if this is only on a temporary, fleeting basis.

There is no doubt that dreams played a notable role in Brontë's life, and this has found a firm basis in her poetry. In August of 1837, in the poem `Alone I sat; the summer day' she has already documented the fascination with dreams:

> `Dreams have encircled me, I said,
> `From careless childhood's sunny time... (15-16)

Brontë also refers a number of times to dreams in poems dealing with the Gondal saga. For example, in the poem `In the same place, when nature wore', which is entitled `H.A and A.S' in the Gezari edition, dreams play a pivotal role. (The poem itself is found in the Gondal Poems notebook and was the first poem composed during Brontë's sojourn in Brussels.) The poem commences with a retrospective statement by the speaker as he recollects having seen the two individuals before him on a previous occasion: apparently, their hair colouring has been altered since the first encounter. The boy referred to had blond hair and the girl a raven colour, but this has since been reversed. No reason has been given for the change in hair colouration, but the reader can already discern Brontë's predilection for a dark-blonde antithesis which is

employed later in Wuthering Heights.

In stanza three the speaker refers to dreams which have clearly left their mark on the psyche: the importance of dreams in transforming the individual or of leaving an indelible impression on the psyche is again to be seen in Catherine's notorious dream in chapter nine of Wuthering Heights, which will be discussed in due course. The speaker laments his lost blithe spirit:

> Besides, I've dreamt of tears whose traces
> Will never more depart;
> Of agony that fast effaces
> The verdure of the heart. (9-12)

In stanza four the speaker then begins to recount a dream of the couple in a vivid account of a tragic separation. The speaker has clearly been haunted by this impressive dream which has penetrated profoundly into his psyche:

> I dreamt one sunny day like this,
> In this peerless month of May,
> I saw her give th' unanswered kiss
> As his spirit passed away. (13-16)

Before discussing the details of the dream itself, it should be observed how foreshadowing of Wuthering Heights is taking place within the Gondal epic. It is not only the themes which are familiar, but also the characterization in certain instances. There is a fair amount of experimentation in the Gondal story, which assisted Brontë in the development of both characterization and technical ability. For instance, Heathcliff has his precursors or models in Gondal, as Mary Visick has noted in `The Genesis of Wuthering Heights': `There is a mysterious Gondal character, the outlaw Douglas, who

contributes something to Heathcliff'.[8] By the same token, in the aforementioned poem, `In the same place, when nature wore', the familiar theme of grieving over a lost lover is articulated. The agony of separation experienced by Heathcliff is already to be found in this poem of 1842, except that it is the young girl who mourns for her deceased lover. If the general tenor of the poem is considered, it can be seen that the atmosphere of deep lamentation, coupled with remorse at some form of betrayal, is the same as in Wuthering Heights. For example, the young girl flings herself upon the grave of her departed lover, as does Heathcliff in the novel:

> Then she upon the covered grave,
>
> The grass grown grave did lie:
>
> A tomb not girt by English wave
>
> Nor arched by English sky. (25-28)

The analogy becomes even more conspicuous in stanza nine as the young girl seems to beckon the return of her lover's spirit, which in this case seems fruitless:

> And if he came not for her woe,
>
> He would not now return;
>
> He would not leave his sleep below,
>
> When she had ceased to mourn. (33-36)

Indeed, Gezari considers the essential subject of this poem to be the possibility of recalling a departed soul to the earth, a theme which is obviously central to Wuthering Heights and to Heathcliff's torment:

> Like Wuthering Heights, this poem considers the possibility that the pain of those who have been left behind can recall the dead to life.[9]

It is difficult to piece together the complete episode of which `In the same place, when nature wore' is but a part; nevertheless, the anguish and passion of the surviving lover

are clearly paralleled in Wuthering Heights. The return of a departed spirit within the dream state is also a key feature within the novel, as will be seen when Lockwood's dream of Catherine's return is considered.

In ` Gleneden's Dream', another Gondal poem, a captive in prison dreams of slaying the tyrant who has usurped Gondal's throne. He dreams of avenging his community in a gruesome but effective murder:

> Glorious Dream! I saw the city
> Blazing in Imperial shine;
> And among adoring thousands
> Stood a man of form divine.
>
> None need point the princely victim:
> Now he smiles with royal pride!
> Now his glance is bright as lightning;
> Now the knife is in his side! (57-64)

This account of a dream is notable for both its vivid imagery and as an instance of wish-fulfillment, which is appropriate in this instance . Indeed, this `Glorious Dream' (57) is essentially a substitute for a real murder, an acting out of revenge by a man who is impotent to take up arms for his kindred. As stated previously, dreams have multifold functions and Gleneden's dream is quite simply a palliative for an individual who is trapped in prison, a desire which must inevitably remain stultified. There is no concealed meaning here, nor a symbolical pattern that needs to be analysed: the events described are chronological, unequivocal and to the point. When

Gleneden awakes he realizes that this experience is but a dream and that the Gondal usurpers remain in control: he also realizes that the dream was activated by a fever (as were a number of the visions in Brontë's works):

> Shadows come! What means this midnight?
>
> O my God, I know it all!
>
> Know the fever dream is over:
>
> Unavenged the Avengers fall! (69-72)

There is much evidence that Brontë was personally inspired by her dreams, and even her imaginative constructions as in `Gleneden's Dream'; it is only necessary to examine the poem `Stars' which was published in the 1846 collection and which refers to her dreams oscillating 'Like petrel on the sea'. Katherine Frank while commenting on the poem 'Stars' states that to Brontë the sea was 'more a state of mind than a geographical expanse of water' which suggests that she was drawing ideas and symbols from the amorphous depths of her unconscious while in the dream state.[10]

In this poem Brontë virtually eulogizes both night and her dreams in a description of herself as having `revelled in my changeful dreams' (11). The poet, like Donne in `The Sun Rising', is incensed that daylight is about to destroy her blissful state and she reacts against the sun's interference:

> O stars, and dreams, and gentle night;
>
> O night and stars return!
>
> And hide me from the hostile light
>
> That does not warm, but burn ... (41-44)

It is this `other-worldly' twilight zone of dreams that appeals to the mystical poet in

contradistinction to the glaring rays of Phoebus and what is described as `his blinding reign' (47). This poem, `Stars', bears some resemblance to Donne's aubade, `The Sun Rising', in that both poems show a marked vehemence against the diurnal course of the sun. The ostensible thematic distinction is that Brontë is reluctant to depart from her inspirational dreams while Donne is in anguish at the prospect of leaving his lover for a single day:

> Busy old fool, unruly sun,
> Why dost thou thus,
> Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
> Must to thy motions lover's seasons run? (1-4)

It is the mysterious nature of the night which lends itself to a transcendent experience as the rigid boundaries of sense perception are circumvented. It is during sleep that Brontë is once again able to contact those dimensions which are so vital to her existence, those ` boundless regions' (14) that act as the afflatus on both an artistic and a personal level. However, as in Donne's poem, there is also an erotic dimension in `Stars' as Brontë yearns to continue her embrace with the night and `only wake' (48) in a continuous union.

There is also a relationship to be found between dreams, guardian angels and guides. As with spirits in general, the veracity of guardian angels is presented as a fact by Brontë and their kinship with dreams is clearly articulated. Guardian angels need to contact the individual and the dream condition is a perfect time for this communication to take place. In the poem `Yes, holy by thy resting-place' which is generally agreed to refer to a farewell by A.G.A to a wronged husband (although his identity is disputed) the interrelationship between dreams and guardian angels is made explicit:

And will not guardian angels send
kind dreams and thoughts of love,
Though I no more may watchful bend
Thy loved repose above? (5-8)

In this instance the guardian angels will assist A.G.A in recovering from the loss of her departed husband: a balm is to be held out for the suffering survivor. Similarly in the poem `Encouragement', which was published posthumously by Charlotte Brontë in 1850, the speaker refers to her deceased mother who is guiding those still alive from the heavenly worlds:

And from that world of heavenly light
Will she not always bend
To guide us in our lifetimes night
And guard us to the end? (17-20)

This is intriguing because the possibility of a departed soul acting as a guide from another dimension is postulated.[11] Although departed spirits are not visible to the naked eye, some apparently do remain connected to this world and assist in the denouement of the drama pertaining to those who are left behind. This notion of the return of a departed soul again comes to the fore in these words of encouragement:

Thou know'st she will; and thou may'st mourn
That we are left below:
But not that she can ne'er return
To share our earthly woe. (21-24)

This guidance from a departed spirit who returns will often occur during dreams as the

phrase `our lifetime's night... ' (19) suggests.

The dreams in Wuthering Heights have always been a source of interest for critics of the novel. The first of Lockwood's dreams, when he falls asleep while perusing the title of a sermon by Jabes Branderham, is crucial, because prima facie it deals with events that are extraneous to the plot of the novel. However, on a closer inspection, it becomes apparent that this dream points the way to the corrosive themes that abound in Wuthering Heights. Brontë has deliberately written in a convoluted manner providing the reader with a subtle dream that contains symbolic clues of her intention and viewpoint. The dream contains irrational shifts in emphasis, but a clear meaning can be detected beyond the apparent chaos.

Lockwood describes how he set out with Joseph as a guide on a journey towards his own home. Joseph berates Lockwood for failing to bring his pilgrim's staff while wielding an awesome cudgel himself:

> The snow lay yards deep in our road; and, as we floundered on, my companion wearied me with constant reproaches that I had not brought a pilgrim's staff: telling me that I could never get into the house without one, and boastfully flourishing a heavy-headed cudgel, which I understood to be so denominated. (65)

The symbolic significance of both the pilgrim's staff and cudgel within the dream are critical. Joseph, the narrow-minded Calvinist, insists on a pilgrim's staff which connotes a restrictive moral code of Christian ethics while the cudgel palpably evokes images of fear and punishment. Joseph is attempting to impose his restrictive code of morality on the narrator; he is representative of a wrathful, punitive God.

Instead of travelling to his residence, however, Lockwood and Joseph proceed towards the chapel where they are treated to a protracted sermon by Jabes Branderham from the text entitled `Seventy Times Seven', either one of the travellers having committed the `First of the Seventy First,' (65) sin. They are compelled to sit through an exhausting sermon:

> However, in my dream, Jabes had a full and attentive congregation: and he preached - good God - what a sermon! divided into four hundred and ninety parts, each fully equal to an ordinary address from the pulpit and each discussing a separate sin! (65)

If the text on which Jabes' sermon is based is examined, it can be seen how the preacher has subverted the intention of the message. The text itself is drawn from Matthew 18:21-22, in which Christ advises Peter of the extent to which forgiveness of sins should be taken:

> 21. Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?
>
> 22. Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Jabes Branderham has taken a text from the Bible which deals with forgiveness and transmuted this into an extensive documentation of sins for which the transgressor shall be punished. When Lockwood stands up in outrage and condemns Jabes as a sinner, it is reasonable to assume that Brontë is on his side:

> I was condemned to hear all out - finally, he reached the `First of the Seventy - First.' At that crisis, a sudden inspiration descended on me; I was moved to rise and denounce Jabes Branderham as the sinner of the sin that no

> Christian need pardon. (65-66)

While Lockwood is correct in opposing a punitive moral code, he has surely been too literal in supposing that there is a sin which is unforgiveable. However, Jabes Branderham, in turn, inveighs against Lockwood accusing him of being the culprit and of over-stepping the boundaries of human fallibility:

> ...-Lo, this is human weakness; this also may be absolved! The First of the Seventy-First is come. Brethren, execute upon him the judgement written! such honour have all His saints!' (66)

Jabes Branderham has wielded his own restrictive code, and his own literal interpretation of the Bible (that is, there is an unforgivable sin which is the First of the Seventy - First) and condemns Lockwood to death, although he paradoxically realizes that it is a martyr's plight. Lockwood is a martyr who has dared to oppose the restrictive code of the preacher and must suffer the execution of a saint. There are two unavoidable conclusions to be gleaned from the above extract: firstly, Lockwood or any man who opposes the rigid system of conventional, Calvinist ethics will face the wrath of the Church authorities; secondly, the Bible has been subjected to a literal interpretation by Jabes Branderham: Christ never intended any sin to be unpardonable, whether it is the First of the Seventy-First or not, but this is exactly what Jabes Branderham declares.

Following Branderham's pronouncement, quoted above, the congregants turn on Lockwood brandishing their pilgrim's staves, while the besieged Lockwood attempts to wrench a weapon away from Joseph, who proves to be his most truculent foe:

> With that concluding word, the whole assembly, exalting their pilgrim's staves, rushed round me in a body, and I, having no weapon to raise in self-defence, commenced grappling with Joseph, my nearest and most ferocious

assailant, for his. (66)

The reader will inevitably recall the pilgrim's staff and cudgel mentioned in the beginning of the dream, and it is now glaringly apparent that these can be used as weapons of murder, as instruments of oppressive authority. It is no coincidence that Joseph is the `most ferocious assailant' (66) because he is the cynical representative of merciless, hypocritical religious practice throughout the novel. As suggested, Brontë, in this instance, is on the side of Lockwood, and, as such, supports a flexible, liberal interpretation of the Gospels. Forgiveness and mercy should override a list of punitive sins. Edgar Shannon has aptly described the ultimate purport of this dream:

> Lockwood's dreams, with their overtones of unforgiveable sin, introduce [Brontë's] search for a definition of evil - a quest that results in a paradigm of love. Instead of prescriptive morality, she offers a transcendent ethic. Love, in her metaphysics, is the primary law of human nature and the paramount principle of the universe.[12]

Cates Baldridge likewise notes the struggle of Lockwood against authority, but stresses the repressive social forces rather than the religious autocracy:

> What we are witnessing in this dream is an enactment of the failure – or, if you like, the impossibility - of Lockwood's rebellion against bourgeois conventionalism, an enactment which partakes of the conflationary quality so common in dreams. The punishment for rebellion, according to bourgeois law is death.[13]

The remainder of this dream reaches a dramatic climax. Lockwood is impotent in the face of a coercive code, and his pathetic attempts to grasp a cudgel (a phallic symbol of control and power) only reinforces his dilemma. Even if he manages to lay his hands on

the cudgel, thus empowering himself for the first time, he will be overwhelmed by the congregants wielding a multitude of staves. Lockwood sets out on his journey without an instrument (that is, without a phallic symbol) and ends up trapped by an empowered mob. Lockwood is an overrefined, ineffectual city-dweller who enters the savage world of Heathcliff without protection or power. As Levy has noted, `The phallic implications of Lockwood's status as the only man without a staff have been stressed by many critics'.[14] However, the congregants also destroy themselves in an internecine battle that foreshadows the destruction that is to follow in Wuthering Heights: as in Genesis 16: 12 (on which the line `Every man's hand was against his neighbour;' (66) is based) where the Lord informs Hagar that she will give birth to a son named Ishmael, who will be `a wild man' causing strife, Wuthering Heights is to be torn apart by the intrusion of Heathcliff, who bears a mythical association with Ishmael.

Lockwood's second dream has a direct connection with the plot. He falls asleep for a second time and hears the rattling of a fir-bough on the window. He then resolves to open the casement in an attempt to reach the fir-bough, but finds that the hook is soldered. In an initial act of violence he smashes through the glass with his bare knuckles, reaches out for the branch but finds himself clutching an `ice-cold hand!' (67). He then hears the voice of a young woman moaning to be allowed entrance:

> `Let me in - let me in !'
>
> `Who are you? I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.
>
> `Catherine Linton,' it replied shiveringly (why did I think of Linton? I had read Earnshaw twenty times for Linton), `I'm come home, I'd lost my way on the moor!' (67)

There is clearly a supernatural element to this dream as is evidenced in the above

extract. Lockwood had read the name of Catherine Earnshaw in the diary papers and Catherine Linton was scratched on the ledge, but he is in the dark about the precise historical events or her true character. Brontë wants the reader to believe that Catherine's ghost or spirit has returned to Wuthering Heights or is haunting the place, and that she now wishes to return. This is no imaginative escapade, but a crucial supernatural event that sets the tone for Nelly Dean's retrospective narrative of the events at Wuthering Heights.

Lockwood, however, reacts violently to this attempted intrusion. He mercilessly pulls her wrist across the window pane which he had shattered previously. The spirit still clings on tenaciously, demanding entrance through the casement and only releases her grip when Lockwood deceives her into believing that he will grant her request. Instead of acceding to her request, however, he uses the books to build a pyramid, thus blocking the hole at the window. This is a gruesome, violent opening to the novel even if it is contained within a supernatural dream. Nevertheless, Lockwood is unlikely to be adjudged as a repressed man of violence by the reader. I would argue that the reader will automatically feel a close kinship with Lockwood because both are introduced to the milieu of Wuthering Heights without any prior cognizance of its inhabitants or history. The reader will, therefore, immediately empathize with Lockwood's macabre encounter rather than responding in condemnation to an action which is grotesque. Ronald Fine correctly notes that Lockwood's action must be seen within the context of the dream and not as a latent potential for violence:

> People frequently act "out of character" in their dreams; consequently the esthetic validity of Lockwood's dreams is not a function of whether we think Lockwood "actually" would or would not rub a child's wrist across a broken window.[15]

Note, in addition, that Catherine has manifested herself as a child rather than as an adult: she has returned in the guise of a child presumably because she was a child while in the precincts of Wuthering Heights (her ebullience diminished when she left Wuthering Heights).

Having successfully impeded any entrance through the casement, Lockwood refuses to be moved by a ceaseless lamentation from the outside:

> I seemed to keep them closed above a quarter of an hour, yet, the instant I listened again, there was a doleful cry moaning on!
>
> `Begone! I shouted,`I'll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years.'
>
> `It's twenty years,' mourned the voice, `twenty years, I've been a waif for twenty years!' (67)

Catherine has been a waif or homeless person for the past twenty years: she has been a ghost compelled to haunt the vicinity of Wuthering Heights from the moment of her death. The dream that she has in chapter nine, when she considers herself unfit to enter heaven, has proved to be a premonition. She is trapped within the earthly realm, but is unable to participate in daily existence; she is manifestly in a state of suffering and bereavement. The time frame of twenty years could however be of biographical significance as it is likely that Brontë's sister, Maria, passed away approximately twenty years before the composition of the above extract. Brontë has kept alive the spirit of her deceased sister in the form of Catherine's ghost which may have

been necessary for her to do from a psychological point of view. Catherine continues to haunt Wuthering Heights in a similar way in which the spirit of Maria hovers in the memories of the Brontë family at the parsonage. Chitham observes, while commenting on the above passage, that Brontë also suffered from guilt at the death of Maria who had been cast in the role of a mother figure:

> ;... the twenty-year ghost-life of Catherine is unlikely to be a coincidence. It seems likely that the death of Maria involved Emily in some feeling of guilt, as the death of a mother-figure is often seen by a small child as an occasion for guilt;....[16]

A belief in ghosts, is, of course, found in many diverse myths and cultures, dating back to the Platonic era, although the existence of ghosts is undeniably often questioned in the twentieth century. Plato claims that ghosts are disembodied souls who are unable to make the transition into another region because that soul's passions are so vigorous that it is drawn back into corporeal life:

> ... and thus encumbered, such a soul is weighed down, and dragged back into the region of the seen, through fear of the invisible and of Hades; and it roams among tombs and graves, so it is said, around which some shadowy phantoms of souls have actually been seen,....[17]

Catherine is such a soul whose passions draw her back into the earthly domain as she is not fit to enter or stay in the other world. We see evidence of this need for the passionate being to return in chapter nine where Catherine discusses the nature of her dreams (and one dream in particular) with Nelly Dean. She commences with a statement on the general nature of her dreams stressing the transformative effect which they have:

> `And so do I. I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through and through me, like wine

through water, and altered the colour of my mind. And this is one - I'm going to tell it - but take care not to smile at any part of it.' (120).

Dreams, which emanate from the unconscious, can (according to Catherine) change the very mode of thinking; they can alter preconceived notions and allow the individual to perceive the truth, rather than gilded falsehoods enshrined within the mind. Catherine's particular dream which she relays to Nelly Dean is an astute illustration of this process:

> `But it is not for that. I dreamt, once, that I was there.'
>
> `I tell you I won't harken to your dreams, Miss Catherine!
>
> I'll go to bed,' I interrupted again.
>
> She laughed, and held me down, for I made a motion to leave my chair.
>
> `This is nothing ,' cried she ; `I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights, where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other . I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; .... (120)

This dream operates on both an allegorical and a personal level. On an allegorical level, Catherine, being the passionate, lively creature that she is, is eminently unfit to enter a serene, paradisal environment after her death. Indeed, she is forced to wander the earth as a waif, she is compelled to return to earthly precincts as was discussed previously. The dream, however, also has a personal meaning which Catherine herself has managed to interpret: on this level heaven is associated with Edgar and Thrushcross Grange, whereas Wuthering Heights is synonymous with Heathcliff.

Catherine realizes that she is not fit to inhabit heaven (Edgar/Thrushcross Grange) being far better suited to the wild terrain of Wuthering Heights (Heathcliff). Her personal tragedy stems from her rejection of the dream's oracular advice in a determination to pursue glamour and wealth. The dream has acted as an oracle to remind Catherine of the truth, to remind her of the unsuitable alliance she is about to enter into. The dream has reiterated the common destiny that she ought to share with Heathcliff but she refuses to heed the advice:

> Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.' (121)

Dreams refuse to lie, they refuse to utter platitudes that will satisfy the conscious mind. Dreams are certainly the gateway to the unconscious mind which Brontë has used to gain knowledge and to reach her inner self.[18]

ENDNOTES

1. David Coxhead and Susan Hiller, Dreams: Visions of the Night (London: Thames, 1976) 16.
2. E.D.H. Johnson, The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry: Sources of the Poetic Imagination in Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold (Hamden: Archon , 1963) 26.
3. Carl G. Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," Man and his Symbols ed. Carl Jung (London: Pan, 1964) 5.
4. C.G. Jung, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung: The Practise of Psychotherapy 2nd ed., trans. R.F.C. Hull, vol. 16 (London: Routledge, 1966) 147.
5. Mary Anne Mattoon, Jungian Psychology in Perspective (New York: Free Press, 1981) 251.
6. Stephen Starker, Fantastic Thought: all about dreams, daydreams, hallucinations, and hypnosis (New Jersey: Prentice, 1982) 251.
7. M.l. von Franz, "The process of Individuation," Man and his Symbols ed. Carl Jung (London: Pan, 1964) 220.
8. Mary Visick, from "The Genesis of Wuthering Heights," Penguin Critical Anthologies: Emily Brontë 147.
9. Janet Gezari 268.
10. Katherine Frank, A Chainless Soul: A Life of Emily Brontë (London: Hamish, 1990) 138.
11. Incidentally, there is an enduring tradition of contacting ancestors in both Native American and African cultures: these ancestors are deceased souls of a particular tribe and they remain connected to the land and its people in some inexplicable manner. The ancestors act as guiding spirits to the tribe and need to be shown

obeisance and respect if the group is to flourish as it should.

12. Edgar F.Shannon JR., "Lockwood's Dreams and the Exegesis of Wuthering Heights," Nineteenth Century Fiction 14 (1959-1960): 109.
13. Cates Baldridge, "Voyeuristic Rebellion: Lockwood's Dream And The Reader Of Wuthering Heights," Studies in the Novel 20 (1988): 282.
14. Eric P Levy, "The Psychology of Loneliness in Wuthering Heights," Studies in the Novel (North Texas: Texas, 1996): 168.
15. Ronald Fine, "Lockwood's Dream and the Key to Wuthering Heights," Nineteenth Century Fiction 24 (1969-1970): 19.
16. Edward Chitham, A Life of Emily Brontë (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) 47.
17. Plato, Phaedo, trans. David Gallop (Clarendon: Oxford, 1975) 31.
18. Cf. The comment by Stanley Romaine Hopper on the workings of the unconscious:

> Art, as Plato said, is a dream for awakened minds: it is a means whereby we "dream the myth onwards." Nietzsche's "recluse" also brings us very close to this recognition: for it is he who has become "a cave-bear, or a treasure-seeker, or a treasure-guardian and dragon in his cave,". These images are dream images. They are also conundrums, such ciphers to be decoded (like much drams of the absurd) as the Unconscious brings them to awareness through the medium of dream work.

Stanley Romaine Hopper, "Myth, Dream and Imagination," Myths, Dreams And Religion ed. Joseph Campbell (Dallas: Spring, 1970) 131.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMAGINATION

Throughout these infinite orbs of
Mingling light,
Of which yon earth is one, is wide
Diffused
A Spirit of activity and life,
That knows no term, cessation or decay[1]

Imagination is another avenue by which the poet can ascertain deeper truths that shape her world. I will explore Brontë's relationship to imagination in tandem with her connection to the Romantic poets. It is possible to reach critical moments of illumination through the imaginative powers that have their seat within the human mind. The imaginative power is par excellence the natural domain of the inspired artist and poet; it is, indeed, this power of imaginative perception that has given the world such a rich array of artistic works. As Harold Bloom has noted, imagination can even lead the poet to the source of the inner journey:

> Shelley's Prometheus Unbound is the most dramatic High Romantic version of internalized quest, but there are more drastic versions still in our own age,....The hero of internalized quest is the poet himself, the antagonists of quest are everything in the self that blocks imaginative work, and the fulfillment is never the poem itself, but the poem beyond that is made possible by the apocalypse of imagination.[2]

Imagination is the well from which the artist draws his creative pieces: it is the source of his genius. In the words of Coleridge:

> The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal I AM.[3]

Indeed, the reality that is perceived by the mind is inevitably shaped by the imagination: whatever is objective in the world is transformed into a subjective experience by the imagination. The artist's perception of a natural object, such as a fir tree, will vary from the same depiction by another artist. If Van Gogh's works are used as an illustration, it is noticeable that his imagination has transmogrified the landscape focused upon. It has been shaped by his imagination into a living, vital organism that is unique to the artist. Richard Kroner has noted that perception incorporates not only the senses and the intellect but also the imaginative faculty:

> Thus totality has an imaginative background or frame. Reality therefore in its full meaning is always imaginative; it can only be grasped by the help of imagination, for to grasp it includes interpretation of its meaning which cannot be accomplished without imagination.[4]

Imagination is the fons of creative power and a vital component of the mental anatomy of humans. Through the imagination a poet can create a world that does not exist on earth (a paradisal environment) or he can transform what he sees into a novel vision, either benign or macabre, depending on his own perception or mental disposition. Whatever the poet perceives is ultimately subjective because his imagination has been employed in the act of perception. I.A. Richards refers to Coleridge's view on this point of subjective perception:

> The Imagination projects the life of the mind not upon Nature in Sense I, the field of the influences from without to which we are subject, but upon a Nature that is already a projection of sensibility. The deadest Nature that

> we can conceive is already a Nature of our making.[5]

The imagination, as an organ of apprehension, can also touch on truths that are universal. If Plato and Kant are correct, then certain knowledge is innate or a priori; that is, it is drawn from the mind itself and not from experience of the world (a posteriori knowledge). Plato claims that this innate knowledge stems from the soul itself, which preceded birth in a physical form. In other words, the soul or mind contains ineluctable truths which are innate and inextinguishable. If this is true, then it is possible to use the imagination to access these universal truths or principles that have an impact on our lives. What is imagined may, therefore, on occasion be true: it may be a symbolic representation of a true state of affairs. Keats, in a letter to Benjamin Bailey, captures this Platonic idealism:

> I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination - What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth - whether it existed before or not ... The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream - he awoke and found it truth.[6]

Before considering Brontë's reliance on the Romantic poets it is necessary to analyse how she compares to the later Victorian poets' use of this tradition such as Tennyson or Browning. Clearly the later Victorian poets and the Victorian novelists in general have predominantly moved away from the soaring passion and unabated idealism to be found in the Romantic epoch. There is a more down-to-earth approach to issues that concerned them as is noted by George Levine:

> Victorian fiction typically lives at low altitudes. It finds it difficult to

> breathe the air of the terrifying reaches of Mont Blanc,....While Wordsworth believed that the Romantic mind and Romantic Nature could interfuse and marry, even at the heights, Victorian Romantics – novelists in the realistic tradition – seem to have been interested in less lonely, more literal marriages.[7]

The above extract refers in particular to Victorian novelists but this is by and large true of the major poets as well. Tennyson's concordance for example has only twenty-seven entries on the imagination whereas Blake's has eighty-five which indicates the shift away from imagination so integral to the Romantic tradition.[8] In Tennyson's poetry there is a shift towards a more mundane, a more tangible form of expression. Ernest Pereira notes that Tennyson '...seldom attained to vague symbolism that lends significance to Wordsworth's greatest poetry,....'[9] Paradoxically, Tennyson has drawn on his forebears in the Romantic era but the mode of expression is more subdued which sets him apart from this school. He lacks the Romantic poets' enthusiasm but nevertheless resembles them in his 'intellectual sentiment' as appears from the following comment:

> It is most natural to compare him to Keats and Shelley. The kind of readers he addresses is, as we observed, the same: a sort of intellectual sentiment pervades his works as well as theirs: the superficial resemblances of the works of all the three are many. But, on the other hand, Mr. Tennyson is deficient in the most marked peculiarity which Shelley and Keats have in common. Both of these poets are singularly gifted with a sustained faculty of lyrical expression. They seem hurried into song; and what is more, kept there when they have hurried there.[10]

It could be argued that Tennyson has reached a maturity and balanced perspective which is lacking in the Romantic poets such as Shelley or Byron who died young, or perhaps the momentum of the Romantic era simply ran its course and led to the more measured response which followed in the Victorian verse. Tennyson is however not less worthy as a poet because his expression is different to his Romantic predecessors as his craftmanship remains exemplary. Poetry is a dynamic force which inevitably changes with time as new forms are evolved but it would be difficult to imagine a Tennyson without the preceding period of Romanticism. Indeed, there are echoes of this movement in his verse as has been noted and other similarities also apply such as the use of the romantic epic as well as a focus on nature. As H McLuban comments:

> Because of its most serious research and experiment, the Romantics, the Victorians, and the moderns were agreed in using the romantic epic as their major instrument.[11]

A certain matured response also pervades the works of Browning as he refuses to inhabit the 'ethereal planes' of a poet such as Shelley. An idealistic belief in the inner benevolence of man is not a doctrine espoused by Browning as he prefers to illustrate the failings in human nature rather than an innate virtue. Duckworth comments as follows:

> But so far from believing in the sacredness of the emotions or the essential good-heartedness of man (as Rousseau is said to have done), Browning believed in "The Corruption of Man's Heart".[12]

His philosophical ideas also move beyond the Romantic legacy as he develops an

individualised approach to the universe. Instead of embracing the Romantic notion of the self merging with the absolute or nature he proposes an open-ended universe in which the self continues to evolve. Browning has drawn on the Romantic tradition but has ultimately become an individual poet within the Victorian milieu espousing an intricate religious system. Clyde de L. Ryals refers to Browning's philosophy as nonteleological:

> Browning, on the other hand, maintains that it is the function of the imagination not to reconcile opposites but to transcend them by accepting them as antimonies, thereby substituting for the Romantics' circle of enclosure an upward-tending spiral. It is, I believe, this idea of nonteleological becoming that from the beginning sets Browning off from Shelley and other Romantics from whom he is traditionally said to be descended, first as an eager son and then as a rebellious heir.[13]

It is suggested that Brontë's ties lie more with the Romantic heritage than with the Victorian dynamic. It is only necessary to compare the verse of Brontë with that of her sister Charlotte, who is clearly a product of the Victorian sensibility, to see that her leaning in both thought and expression derive primarily from the Romantics. As will be seen in the discussion that follows her expression and philosophical outlook bear a marked resemblance to the likes of Shelley or Coleridge. In contrast to Browning, for example, she believes in the union of the self with the absolute. There is also a sustained lyricism in her verse which is different to that of Tennyson or Browning. The area, however, where she does show a Victorian slant is in her refusal to shy away from the cruelty of man and, in this sense, her habitation of the 'ether' is not an idealistic escape from reality.

There are three successive poems printed in the 1846 Collection which epitomize Brontë's reverential attitude towards the powers of the imagination. In a `Day Dream' the poet reclines on the moors and enters an imagined state of celestial proportions:

A thousand thousand gleaming fires
Seemed kindling in the air;
A thousand thousand silvery lyres
Resounded far and near:
Methought the very breath I breathed
Was full of sparks divine,
And all my heather-couch was wreathed
By that celestial shine! (45-48)

In the process of using her imagination Brontë has entered a paradisal state which is akin to a mystical encounter. She has transcended the mundane limitations of existence and experienced a symphony that appears to be of divine origins. Pythagoras claimed that each planet in the solar system produces a chord which in unison creates what he termed the music of the spheres. There is, according to Pythagoras, a cosmic symphony which can only be heard by the pure at heart, by the religious devotee. Perhaps this is the very cosmic symphony that Brontë has unwittingly tuned into, a celestial orchestra that has found her worthy. Indeed, in stanza thirteen she refers to this symphony as `that strange minstrelsy' (50) which suggests the other-worldliness of the celestial music. A possible source for the above extract is to be found in Rowe's Letter VIII in which it is stated that, `A thousand dazzling wonders met my view; the heavens in pomp unfolded their glories; the paradise of God opened before me in all its blissful and transporting scenes![14]

While in this state of imagined bliss spirits communicate with the poet or at least appear to do so. The message conveyed is unequivocal: death is to be welcomed because the after-life is far more appealing than this world. There is a veil that separates this earth from other worlds, which the spirits can penetrate:

> `To thee the world is like a tomb,
> A desert's naked shore,
> To us, in unimagined bloom,
> It brightens more and more! (61-64)

These lines are difficult to interpret, but it appears as if the spirits are referring to the bliss of the next world as opposed to this earthly domain. The difficulty in interpretation stems from the use of the word `imagined' in line 65: this earth, as far as the spirits are concerned, becomes brighter because of the joys that await the soul in the hereafter (presumably it is `unimagined' because the spirits are cognizant of the truth and have no need of imagination in contacting this other dimension). The spirits are able to exist in the world of `unimagined bloom' (63) while possessing the means of penetrating through the invisible veil into this world. The poet, as far as this poem is concerned, is dependant on her imagination in accessing this other dimension: in contrast to the spirits it is her imagination that provides the doorway to this knowledge. Imagination may have led her to a universal truth:

> The music ceased; the noonday dream,
> Like dream of night, withdrew;
> But Fancy, still, will sometimes deem
> Her fond creation true. (69-72)

Her `Fancy' (71) or imagination clings on to this visual creation as a true representation of another dimension. Maurice Bowra suggests that Romantic poets were generally

conscious of the value of visual representation:

> So far from thinking that the imagination deals with the non-existent, they insist that it reveals an important kind of truth. They believe that when it is at work it sees things to which the ordinary intelligence is blind and that it is intimately connected with a special insight or perception or intuition.[15]

This poem `A Day Dream' is also of vital significance because it provides internal evidence of Brontë's familiarity with the works of Coleridge, one of the major exponents of the imagination within the Romantic movement. (Since there is no record of Brontë referring to any of the Romantic poets by name, such evidence is to be cherished.) The day-dream is concerned with the poet, who is a wedding guest at the marriage of May to her lover, June. However, she is the only one of the wedding guests who is an outcast, the only one of the guests who has a sullen, clouded disposition. In `The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner' the bearded mariner detains one of the guests outside the wedding proceedings to re-tell the fable of sin and redemption symbolized by the slaying of the albatross, an omen of benign fortune for the crew. Brontë has used Coleridge's poem as a starting point although she does not carry this analogy too far, preferring to move into her own imagined encounter. But, although the analogy itself is not continued, the ambience of `The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner' is reflected in both the lilting rhythm and the images.

The general atmosphere of Coleridge's ballad-like composition is maintained in the use of such phrases as `very grey rocks' in line 15 or `a clouded eye' in line 19 of ` A Day Dream'. Such internal indebtedness is further exemplified in the phrases `thousand thousand gleaming fires' (41) and `thousand thousand silvery lyres' (43) which are

reminiscent of line 238 of `The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner':

> The many men so beautiful!
>
> And they all dead did lie:
>
> And a thousand thousand slimy things
>
> Lived on; and so did I. (236-239)

The speaker, like the ancient mariner, remains an outcast but resorts to a reverie to inspire her. There is a sense in `A Day Dream' that the speaker continues to suffer in spite of the reverie: she relies on spirits to soothe her pain rather as the ancient mariner's pain is assuaged by the hermit. But in spite of transcendent help both the speaker and the ancient mariner will need to travel an arduous road on this earth. One final illustration will suffice to demonstrate how subtly Brontë has used Coleridge's masterpiece in her own creative verse. She has used a classic poem in imaginative literature as a springboard for her own creative composition: the `strange minstrelsy' in line 50 of `A Day Dream' has its prelude in the ninth stanza of `The Ancient Mariner':

> Nodding their heads before her goes
>
> The merry minstrelsy. (35-36)

In the next poem published in the 1846 collection, `To Imagination', Brontë virtually explains how she turned away from the external world in pursuit of happiness that was only to be found within her own mind. The fons of her contentment lies within her being, the inner world of the imagination: `The world within I doubly prize ... ' (8). This turning inwards is a deliberate choice made in the face of societal pressures which she believed to be productive only of discontentment. Margaret Lane considers this recoiling from ordinary life as a symptom of all the Brontë dispositions:

> Briefly the conclusion to which that path has brought me is this - that all

> four of them, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne, were involved in a profound turning away from, or refusal of ordinary life; that they spun their separate, and quite different substitutes for it, out of their own imagination, and that they became addicted to their daydream world as completely as an addict to his drug.[16]

This comment is useful provided that it results in no diminution of the importance of the imagination as a means of attaining universal knowledge, which Brontë accentuates in her works. There is the contrary view not unknown in the Victorian era that imagination is mere fancy, or an escape from reality that bears no relevance to day-to-day existence. It is often vilified as mere fantasy that should be taken with a pinch of salt, so to speak, or as childish regressive tendencies. Indeed, the Brontës themselves were not oblivious to the ridiculing of what they considered to be a precious gift. In Shirley Charlotte has shown an acute awareness of the precarious nature of this gift which she considers to be an elixir of truth:

> ...who cares for imagination? Who does not think it a rather dangerous, senseless attribute - akin to weakness - perhaps partaking of frenzy - a disease rather than a gift of the mind?
>
> Probably all think it so, but those who possess - or fancy they possess - it. To hear them speak, you would believe that their hearts would be cold if that elixir did not flow about them; that their eyes would be dim if that flame did not refine their vision; that they would be lonely if this strange companion abandoned them. You would suppose that it imparted some glad hope to spring, some fine charm to summer, some tranquil joy to autumn, some consolation to winter, which you do not feel. An illusion of course; but the fanatics cling to

their dream, and would not give it for gold. (149)

In `To Imagination' the conflict between cold logic (`Reason') and the imaginative faculty is also highlighted . Reason represents both a part of Brontë's own psyche and the cynical disapproval of society. Society or `the world without' (7) so often rejects the esteemed dreams of the individual, and the individual who values this imaginative world is forced to hide the gift for fear of derision. The two worlds are, unfortunately, so often at loggerheads refusing to see the value of one another within the psyche:

Reason, indeed, may oft complain
For Nature's sad reality,
And tell the suffering heart how vain
Its cherished dreams must always be;
And Truth may rudely trample down
The flowers of Fancy, newly-blown... (19-24)

The `Truth' referred to in line 23 is the perception of `Reason' (19) or society which has been held up as the only reality, a grim and brutal affair that mocks idealistic visions of other worlds or of rebirth. The power of the imagination, however, re-asserts itself in stanza five suggesting `real worlds' (30) much brighter than this one. In the light of this ultimate triumph of imagination the poem, `Truth' (23), referred to earlier must be seen as ironic, since it does not reflect the poet's eventual philosophical position. Nevertheless, the antithesis between reason and imagination in `To Imagination' is so stark and pronounced that the reader is compelled to confront this antipodal process, this debate that has existed throughout history.

This theme of escaping a lurid world is continued in `How Clear She Shines!' Brontë

invokes `Fancy' (5) to visit her with a bliss that is not found in this world:

Yes, Fancy, come, my Fairy love!
These throbbing temples softly kiss;
And bend my lonely couch above,
And bring me rest, and bring me bliss. (5-8)

There are no new ideas that are not found in the previous two poems discussed above, but the poem has an intensity which is all its own. There is the same turning away from society, the same imagined world of cosmic proportions and the same reaction against the notion of death as a state of annihilation for the soul. Her imagination reaches its zenith from stanzas 6 to stanzas 10 as she fantasizes about other worlds where peace, harmony and wisdom are said to prevail:

And this shall be my dream to-night;
I'll think the heaven of glorious spheres
Is rolling on its course of light
In endless bliss, through endless years;

I'll think, there's not one world above,
Far as these straining eyes can see,
Where wisdom ever laughed at love,
Or Virtue crouched to Infamy... (21-24)

In all three poems discussed above, Brontë has challenged her readers to confront possibilities that society had often ridiculed. Her view of society may be overly pessimistic at times, but this is compensated by imaginative verse of cosmic expanse. If the reviews of this 1846 compilation are assessed, it is evident that Brontë was

immediately recognized as a poet of inimitable imaginative potential, in contrast to her sisters whose verse was met with a lukewarm reception. The following review appeared in the Atheneum on the fourth of July 1846:

> A fine quaint spirit has the latter [Bell – my addition], which may have things to speak that men will be glad to hear, - and an evident power of wing that may reach heights not here attempted....[17]

A second review in the Critic again reflects the respect with which her verse was received by some critics:

> With very few exceptions, the poems of Ellis deal with abstract ideas rather than with actual events. He is the most metaphysical of the three.[18]

There are further illustrations of Brontë's overall reliance on romantic poetry in both the poems published posthumously in the 1850 edition of Wuthering Heights and in other poems unpublished during her lifetime. In the poem 'A Little while, a little while,' which Charlotte suggests was composed by Brontë in her sixteenth year while at Miss Wooler's school at Roehead, but in all likelihood was written while she was a teacher at Miss Patchett's school in Law Hill or during her sojourn in Brussels, there is a fanciful yearning for the parsonage and moors which is characteristically under siege from reality:

> Could I have lingered but an hour
> It well had paid a week of toil;
> But Truth has banished Fancy's power:
> Restraint and heavy task recoil. (37-40)

The poem `Aye - there it is! it wakes to - night' which also appears in the posthumous 1850 edition of Wuthering Heights demonstrates Brontë's romantic spirit in full flight. Charlotte has added an explanatory note to this poem suggesting a possible interpretation of the surrounding events:

> In these stanzas a louder gale has roused the sleeper on her pillow: the wakened soul struggles to blend with the storm by which it is swayed. (qtd. In Hatfield 44)

This desire to merge oneself with the wind or to transcend this material world is a recurring motif in Romantic literature and here Brontë appears to have registered Shelley's `Ode to the West Wind' as a precedent for this poetic genre, or the poem has had a subconscious influence. On the other hand, as M. H. Abrams has noted, the prevalence of the wind is a Romantic motif or icon of a distinctive nature:

> Yet the correspondent breeze, like the guilt-haunted wanderer and the Prometheus or Satanic figure of the heroic rebel, can justly be identified as a distinctively Romantic image, or icon. For one thing, there is no precedent for the way in which the symbolic wind was called upon by poet after poet, in poem after poem, all within the first decades of the nineteenth century.[19]

The ubiquitous, omnipresent nature of the wind finds expression in both Shelley's and Brontë's poems. In `Aye there it is! It wakes tonight' the wind is seen as a `universal influence' (17) that permeates the essence of all creation, a truly pantheistic vision:

> And thou art now a spirit pouring
> Thy presence into all -

The essence of the Tempest's roaring

And of the tempests' fall ... (13-16)

Shelley's `Ode To The West Wind' is similarly replete with pantheistic overtones. Indeed, it is the wind which is responsible for transporting seeds to fertile soil, it is the west wind which, like the hand of God, guides both the processes of creativity and destruction:

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill

(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)

With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;

Destroyer and preserver: hear, oh hear! (10-14)

There is also a similar absorption into the wind, a co-mingling of the soul with this force in both the poems under discussion. In Brontë's 'Ay there it is! It waits tonight' the speaker merges with the wind, becoming part of this universal force, which in turn ensures immortality for the spirit:

A Universal influence

From thine own influence free -

A principle of life intense

Lost to mortality ... (17-20)

In Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' the impelling fifth section contains a yearning by the poet to merge with the west wind, being, as it were, the spokesperson or lyre for this universal force. It is not difficult to discern how close this is to Brontë's description of the imprisoned soul escaping its temporary dungeon to merge with the ether. Shelley

in both this poem and `Hymn To Intellectual Beauty' submits himself to this mysterious force, thereby hoping to become a prophetic voice for humanity. In the final supplication before the wind, Shelley hopes to surrender his will to the universal will, he hopes to submerge his ego allowing the will of the universe to be effected:

> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
> What if my leaves are falling like its own!
> The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
> Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
> Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
> My Spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one! (57-62)

Shelley clearly uses his poetry to disseminate a message which is morally persuasive.

In the Gondal poem `Aspin Castle' the extent of Brontë's imaginative scope comes to the fore. There is a blend here between her romantic sensibility and a medieval framework, an interaction between her romantic mode of expression and a medieval or Gothic setting. The poem deals primarily with the spirit of Lord Alfred who returns to his feudal domain, Aspin Castle, to come to terms with his past. Lord Alfred seems to have left his ancestral home and family, including his blonde daughter, to pursue the dangerous love of Augusta Geraldine Almeda. Incidentally, Fannie Ratchford suggests that Lord Alfred's daughter is in fact the blonde, blue-eyed Angelica: Brontë's use of the dark-blonde antithesis is already apparent and will be developed further in Wuthering Heights (qtd. in Gezari 269).

`Aspin Castle' commences with the speaker painting an idyllic portrait of Aspin Castle and its surrounds. The reader is introduced to a supernatural setting that includes the

familiar image of a `gnarled tree' (21) and a `fairy path' (22) to entice the appetite for what is to ensue. Fancy is again both capitalized and invoked as the approach of dusk draws ever closer:

> Far less when evening's pensive hour
> Hushes the bird and shuts the flower,
> And gives to Fancy magic power
> Over each familiar tower. (26 - 29)

Apparently, tales are then circulated of a phantom with blue eyes who haunts the precincts of the castle, a woeful spirit whose angelic mien is counteracted by a tragic despair. As is the case with many fables, the story-tellers suggest that their tales are true, that the events which they relate around the fire-side are indubitably verifiable. In this case, the spirit is said to be Lord Alfred who has returned to his feudal domain, a man who has probably pursued the perilous Augusta Geraldine Almeda at some cost. Did Augusta Geraldine Almeda coerce Lord Alfred to abandon or betray his daughter, Angelica, in pursuit of their union? Was Lord Alfred so infatuated that he turned his back on his own kith and kin? This is certainly Ratchford's reconstruction of the poem which contains a number of missing clues: her justification for suggesting the presence of Augusta Geraldine Almeda in the intricate plot, is her identification of `Sidonia's deity' in line 77 with the Gondal queen (qtd. in Gezari 269).

It is difficult to disentangle fantasy or imagination from fable, by which is meant the legendary heritage, in `Aspin Castle', as is the case in the conclusion to Wuthering Heights. Brontë has deliberately cast some doubt or conjecture in both `Aspin Castle' and her novel by the introduction of rustic story-telling. Where does superstition end and truth step in? How much of any legendary fable is based on actuality? Can the

dissemination of this story about Lord Alfred be trusted or is it an embellished account? Equally, can the country folks who swear that Heathcliff still haunts the environs of Wuthering Heights be trusted, or is it simply a legend that has been fostered by a superstitious disposition?:

> But the country folks, if you asked them, would swear on their Bible that he walks. There are those who speak to having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house - Idle tales, you'll say, and so say I. Yet that old man by the kitchen fire affirms he has seen two on 'em looking out of his chamber window, on every rainy night since his death –
>
> and an odd thing happened to me about a month ago. (366)

Note that Nelly Dean herself suggests that these are `Idle tales' (366), but then she introduces another personal event where she encounters a young boy who swears he has witnessed Heathcliff and Catherine near the Heights. This story is summarily dismissed as a chidhood fantasy caused by the local village gossip, but subsequently Nelly Dean reveals a reluctance to remain alone at the Heights. Is this because she is afraid of the ghosts which she professes to denounce as nonsense?:

> He probably raised the phantoms from thinking, as he traversed the moors alone, on the nonsense he had heard his parents and companions repeat - yet still, I don't like being out in the dark, now - and I don't like being left by myself in this grim house - I cannot help it, I shall be glad when they leave it, and shift to the Grange! (366)

Brontë has created a deliberate haziness here as she covertly challenges the reader to decide what is truth and fantasy. She challenges the reader to come to his own conclusions as far as the entire gamut of fable and superstition is concerned.

In `Aspin Castle' there are also important intimations that Brontë may have read Blake, a Romantic poet with whom she shares a mystical affinity. These intimations are significant because not all the critical writers are in agreement as to whether Brontë would have had access to his compositons. Mary Sinclair, for example, notes the parallel between the two writers vis-à-vis their visionary capacity, but casts doubt on her reading his verse:

> It is doubtful if she ever read a line of Blake; yet it is Blake that her poems perpetually recall, and it is Blake's vision that she has reached there...[20]

It is easy to equate Brontë's universality, stress on a unification between heaven and hell and her mediumistic claims, with the eccentric Blake, but it is not easy to provide convincing clues that she read his poems. If she did pore over any of his works it would have had to be the earlier Songs rather than the complex prophetic works which enjoyed only a limited circulation. Ferber succinctly sums up the popularity of Blake's pieces:

> Of these [Songs and minor Prophetic Works] only a few of the short songs became widely known; of the longer poems at most a score of copies survived, and not many of them were produced or sold.[21]

Therefore, it can be deduced that `The Songs of Innocence and of Experience' enjoyed wide circulation and may have fallen into the hands of the Brontës at some stage, whereas the major prophetic works, Milton and Jerusalem, would have remained undiscovered. (Indeed, these later prophetic works were only really understood for the first time by the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, in the twentieth century.)

It is stanza fourteen that contains a possible allusion to Blake's `The Tyger' which was published in the `Songs of Innocence and Experience' in 1794. The phraseology is

remarkably similar in the third line of the stanza as is the syllabic count, except that there are eight syllables in line 70 of `Aspin Castle' and only seven syllables in `The Tyger'. `Aspin Castle' contains the following lines:

> Daughter divine! And could his gaze
> Fall coldly on thy peerless face?
> And did he never smile to see
> Himself restored to infancy? (68 - 71)

In the `Tyger' which is the counterpart to `The Lamb' in the `Songs of Innocence' stanza five is the relevant extract:

> When the stars threw down their spears
> And watered Heaven with their tears,
> Did he smile his work to see?
> Did he who made the Lamb make thee (17 - 20)

The relevance of this allusion to `The Tyger' is borne out in the basic theme of betrayal of innocence and purity in `Aspin Castle'. Brontë is careful to depict the portrait of Lord Alfred's daughter as evincing the guise of an innocent, divine grace: she is `an infant fair' (62) and has a `forehead white' (66), as pure as Blake's lamb in the `Songs'. Lord Alfred has turned his back on his own creation; he has rejected this angelic daughter for the sake of personal gain as Jehovah has done in `The Tyger':

> And did he never smile to see
> Himself restored to infancy? (70 - 71)

In `The Tyger' Blake is posing the question, in a rhetorical sense, whether God was content with his creation of both the tyger (experience) and the lamb (innocence). Blake is suggesting, perhaps heretically, that God was not content with his dualistic creation of the earth. The lamb is symbolically similar to the daughter in `Aspin Castle'

and has been rejected or violated in the bitter world of experience. God is akin to Lord Alfred in `Aspin Castle', both of whom are responsible for the sacrifice of innocence and natural piety. The lamb, as symbol of Christ, is sacrificed in the vexatious world of experience. (Note that line 70 of `Aspin Castle' is also rhetorical as we learn that Lord Alfred's spirit is an outcast because of this cruel deed of betrayal.)

Finally in stanza nineteen of `Aspin Castle' there is another possible allusion to a poem in the `Songs of Innocence', one which has been referred to by Gezari.[22] In Aspin Castle', there is a reference to `Nature's face divine' (98) as a restorative balm to counteract the horror of Lord Alfred's outcast state: the speaker suggests that his audience return to the paradisal natural world and forget about the annals of history. In Blake's `The divine Image' there is the phrase `human form divine' (11) which is again strikingly similar in its phraseology. `The Divine Image' is to be found in the `Songs of Innocence' which represents an undefiled world of perfection similar to the pastoral ideal in the closing stanza of `Aspin Castle'.

The influence of Romantic poetry, is, indeed, predominant in Brontë's verse; she is a true daughter of the Romantic era. She would undoubtedly have a place in Shelley's vision of the poet as expressed in his `Defence of Poetry':

> But poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary and painting: they are the institutors of the arts and life and the teachers, who draw into a certain apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion.[23]

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL AND UNION

This chapter will consider the dark night of the soul and the union with an inner divinity. It will be shown how, according to Jung and Underhill, a relationship exists between the harrowing encounter with what has been termed the dark night of the soul and an ultimate union with the divine, the consummation of the spiritual journey. The dark night of the soul is a process that every aspirant towards spiritual attainment must pass through: it is an experience of utter despair, worthlessness and a negation of any visionary illumination that may have been gained previously. It is a veritable desert that the individual is compelled to traverse, a barren stretch of road that leads to self-doubt and a sense of hopelessness. Underhill describes this tortuous road as follows:

> The "Dark Night of the Soul," once fully established, is seldom lit by visions or made homely by voices. It is of the essence of its miseries that the once-possessed power of orison or contemplation now seems wholly lost. The self is tossed back from its hard-won point of vantage. Impotence, blankness, solitude, are the epithets by which those immersed in this dark fire of purification describe their pains.[1]

Another characteristic of this encounter with the dark night of the soul is that it is both intermittent and ongoing until such time as a final consummation is attained. In other words, the process of spiritual development is erratic as shades of light and dark interact on the soul. Underhill notes that `for every affirmation of the mystic life there will be a negation waiting for the unstable self'.[2] The fluctuations between periods of ecstasy and despair are a feature of the mystic quest as is noted by the seventeenth

century religious devotee, George Herbert, in the poem `The Flower'.[3] The first encounter with ennui and emptiness will certainly not be the last, a truth which is borne out in the varying oscillations in Brontë's verse. It is not necessary to detail the flux in Brontë's verse as this has already been explored above to some extent, but it should be recorded here that her encounters with the dark night of the soul are no exception. Herman's observation on this phenomenon sums up the plight of the mystic or aspirant towards eternal bliss:

> Their spiritual treasure was stripped from them as a garment, love itself was inexplicably removed, hope died within them; only the naked intention of a surrendered will remained, only a dry and dumb faith waited blindly in the dark.[4]

One poem in the 1846 collection will serve as an example of the desolation into which Brontë was often plunged: indeed, this dire encounter with emptiness occurs approximately only two years before her consummate statement as far as union with the self is concerned, i.e. `No Coward Soul Is Mine' (`Hope' is dated 18 December 1843 and `No Coward Soul Is Mine' is dated 2 January 1846). It would be difficult to comprehend how the same poet could compose such diametrically opposed verse so close to the end of her life if the tradition of the dark night of the soul were not taken into account. In `Hope' she imagines hope playing a false, wanton game while luring her from beyond the proverbial bars of her prison. Hope taunts and teases the poet offering the opposite of whatever emotion was being experienced, but never delivering the much-sought-after balm:

> Like a false guard, false watch keeping,
>
> Still, in strife, she whispered peace;

She would sing while I was weeping;

If I listened, she would cease. (9-12)

There is a sense of frustration in this poem, a sense that somehow her destiny was pre-ordained and that hope itself was an illusion used by God to torment her. The third line in stanza one, `Watching how my fate would tend...' suggests that there was really no hope from the outset: this so-called `timid friend' (1) was a treacherous deception lurking in the precincts of her mind but offering only empty promises. The final stanza poignantly depicts the nadir into which a soul visited by the dark night of existence can plummet:

Hope, whose whisper would have given

Balm to all my frenzied pain,

Stretched her wings, and soared to heaven,

Went, and ne'er returned again! (17-20)

It is not difficult to discern the echoes of Romanticism in this forlorn piece: melancholy reflection is one feature of a particular strand of the movement. The idea of hope fleeing the hapless individual is, for example, to be found in Coleridge's verse. Brontë, in all likelihood, had read one or more of the following lines from Coleridge:

But HOPE outruns the other -

Yet ever flies she with reverted Face... (`Hope and Time' 20-21)

or,

That Hope, which was his inward bliss and boast,

Which waned and died, yet ever near him stood...

(`The Visionary Hope' 18-19)

or,

When Hope, but made Tranquillity be felt:

A flight of Hope for ever on the wing (`Hope and Tranquility' 1-2)

The power of the poem resides in its intense focus on the poet's agony: at no stage does the reader manage to take cognizance of a brighter, more optimistic poem by the same poet. As readers we witness her sense of despair and empathise with a state of mind which appears to be permanent. In other words, the reader is drawn into her despair and the dark night of the soul appears to be of perennial duration. This is the very nature of dejection: when Coleridge lost his poetic inspiration while delving into German metaphysical philosophy he felt distraught precisely because he believed he would never again be visited by the muses.

The confrontation with the darker side of existence or with the human psyche is described by Jung as an encounter with what he termed the shadow. It is part of the development of the human personality, however painful and disillusioning it might be. A confrontation with one's shadow side will patently lead to a sense of despair and possibly outrage at the human psychic constitution but it cannot be avoided on the road to integration. Indeed, one of the most coruscating illustrations of this encounter with the shadow or alter ego is to be found in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre. When the heroine, Jane Eyre, finally stares in the mirror and witnesses a reflection of Bertha Mason's contorted visage, she believes that it is her own image in the glass. The wild, savage Bertha Mason, whose violence leads to the destruction of Thornfield, can be read as the alter ego of Jane herself - all the savage libidinal tendencies within Jane's own psyche which have been repressed. By facing these tendencies Jane is able to neutralize them and reach an integrated state of maturity (she has integrated her shadow

side to use Jungian terminology). Bertha Mason symbolically wears Jane's wedding apparel before tearing the veil asunder and Jane associates her with the mythical vampire:

> `This sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me ?'
>
> `You may.'
>
> `Of the foul German spectre - the vampire.' (311)

This other side of the personality can be likened to unbridled libido, a vampire or any other description which connotes wanton destruction. Facing this shadow is a prerequisite to union; the relative distance in time between `Hope' and `No Coward Soul Is Mine' becomes comprehensible within this framework. Despair oscillates with inspiration; darkness and light are interwoven as Jung has noted in Memories, Dreams, Reflections:

> The complexis oppositorum of the God-image thus enters into man, and not as unity, but as conflict, the dark half of the image coming into opposition with the accepted view that God is "Light". (emphasis added).[5]

Suffering is thus a prerequisite for growth and not necessarily a punishment for past transgressions. Job's ordeals become explicable within this context: man's suffering may well be visited by God on the individual as a test for the soul. Slaying the dragon is another myth which, with all its varying trials, can be equated with the conquest or integration of the shadow.

Before shifting the focus from the dark night of the soul to a discussion of unity with

the inner self, a more detailed exposition from Jung might be borne in mind. For instance the following statement by Jung encapsulates his belief in the need to come to terms with the inferior side of human nature:

> Among these is the "realization of the shadow," the growing awareness of the inferior part of the personality which should not be twisted into an intellectual activity, for it has far more the meaning of a suffering and a passion that implicate the whole man.[6]

Jung stresses that the ego must not be allowed to dominate the self, nor should it be sublimated in relation to the self as this will lead to a saviour-like individual who has not allowed his divine light to struggle against the darkness. He stresses that true wholeness can only be achieved by a union of the ego and the self in which each maintains their intrinsic qualities rather than either one taking precedence over the other.[7] Jung draws an analogy to St. John of the Cross who also emphasises the "dark night of the soul" as part of the spiritual quest:

> In very different language, St. John of the Cross has made the same problem more readily accessible to the Westerner in his account of the "dark night of the soul." That we find it needful to draw analogies from psychopathology and from both Eastern and Western mysticism is only to be expected: the individuation process is, psychically, a border-line phenomenon which needs special conditions in order to become conscious:....[8]

Jung makes the point repeatedly that the journey of discovery is arduous or as he describes it, '...a sacrifice which daunts even the gods' but that every descent will lead to an ascent with new knowledge.[9] The union of the ego with the self, or the union of the soul with God is the ultimate destination, the individuation of the

individual that leads to peace. This union is reflected in such symbolism as the mandala and the square which denote a transcendent apotheosis:

> The miserable and ineffectual compromise of the church dream is completely overcome in this mandala vision, where all opposites are reconciled. If we hark back to the old Pythagorean idea that the soul is a square, then the mandala would express the Deity through its threefold rhythm and the soul through its static quaternity, the circle divided into four colours. And thus its innermost meaning would simply be the union of the soul with God.[10]

Brontë was likewise on a spiritual quest to reach a union of her self with the absolute which she achieves so resolutely in 'No Coward Soul Is Mine' but not without daunting sacrifices.

That Brontë was aware of a process in the development of mankind appears clearly in one of the devoirs while she was sojourning in Brussels.[11] `The Butterfly', written on 11 August 1842, shows that Brontë was cognisant of the process of metamorphosis in both nature and within the soul. The idea of unravelling perfection is the central theme of this brilliant but brief devoir composed when she was twenty four. (M. Constantin Heger, their teacher of literature, set his pupils essays to write, based on a selection of French writers - the subject was to be their choice but he forbade the utilization of any dictionaries.) As stated, the devoirs form part of these essays composed under supervision, and `The Butterfly' demonstrates to what extent Brontë was contemplating the darkness and subsquent metamorphosis in the universe.

After ruminating on the nature of survival in the natural world (the subject of a later

chapter) she mentions the caterpillar, a dark embryonic stage through which nature must pass before reaching fruition:

> In the course of my soliloquy I picked a flower at my side. It was pretty and newly opened, but an ugly caterpillar had hidden among the petals and already they were drawing up and withering. (17-18)

This caterpillar and the mature butterfly become a symbol for Brontë of the ultimate unity of both the individual and the very globe itself. Her initial cynicism is replaced or overhauled by a sense of the culmination of God's purpose, even if this unfolding remains a mystery to the human eye:

> I was silent, but an inner voice said to me, "Let not the creature judge his creator, here is a symbol of the world to come - just as the ugly caterpillar is the beginning of the splendid butterfly, this globe is the embryo of a new heaven and of a new earth whose meagerest beauty infinitely surpasses mortal imagination. (18 - emphasis added)

It is possible that Brontë may have used Emerson's essay entitled The Oversoul as a source for her image. Emerson states that:

> The soul's advances are not made by gradation, such can be represented by motion in a straight line, but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis - from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly.[12]

Transformation and unity are again the dominant themes in what is in essence Brontë's parting statement to posterity, `No Coward Soul Is Mine'. There is no doubt that this is an ultimate statement on the immortality of the soul and an inner apotheosis. It may have been her penultimate poem, and not her last, as Charlotte had believed, but it

remains as her beacon for those who followed her.

The universal sentiments expressed in `No Coward Soul is Mine' have precursors within the Victorian epoch itself as well as in other generations. It is to Carlyle and Emerson that we should turn if the underlying sentiments and approach to religion are to be compared. To commence with Carlyle, there is adequate evidence to suggest that Brontë either read some of his impassioned prose, or at least had heard about the fiery Scot's unorthodox approach to religion (Charlotte, for instance, makes repeated references to Carlyle in her letters to W. S. Williams).[13]

In August 1843 there appears a fairly substantial review of Carlyle's ideas in Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine which is printed three years before the composition of `No Coward Soul Is Mine'.[14] It is easy to imagine Brontë avidly reading this article and recognizing a kindred spirit who is, like her, opposed to any sectarianism in religious practise. The very notion of a self at the centre of every individual is a thought espoused by Carlyle and this is referred to as an `ever-present Deity' (6) by Brontë in `No Coward Soul Is Mine'. Both are ad idem that there is a central spiritual self within each human, that this self cannot be destroyed. Carlyle is acutely conscious of the soul which lies beneath layers of civilization:

> What in such a time as ours it requires a Prophet or Poet to teach us, namely, the stripping-off of those poor undevout wrappages, nomenclatures and scientific hearsays,-this, the ancient earnest soul, as yet unencumbered with these things, did for itself.[15]

The difference between Brontë and Carlyle in this regard is that the former believes in

the realization of this inner deity and the latter does not consider this a worthwhile pursuit. Carlyle emphasises the self but considers its realization to be concealed: the following passage from Past and Present is quoted in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine:

> "The latest Gospel in this world, is, know thy work and do it. `Know thy-self;' long enough has that poor `self' of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to `know' it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual;....[16]

Carlyle's answer to life's difficulties is to labour at the correctly chosen task and to practise the eternal laws of justice and mercy: principles and not creeds are accentuated, a statement that Brontë has reiterated in `No Coward Soul Is Mine'. The review continues:

> His History of the French Revolution, like his Chartism, like the work now before us, his Past and Present, is still an appeal to the consciousness of each man, and to the high and eternal laws of justice and of charity - lo, ye are brethren![17]

In Past and Present Carlyle states further that `work is of a brave nature; which it is the aim of all religion to be'.[18]

There is a prophetic strain to Carlyle's prose in which he attempts to persuade others as to the veracity of his ideas. The following comment illustrates the depth of his inquiry, the profundity of his quest, which Brontë would have approved of:

> Intellect, insight, is the discernment of order in disorder; it is the discovery of the will of Nature, of God's will; the beginning of the capability to walk according to that.[19]

Brontë does not deliberately set out to proselytize but there is nevertheless a prophetic or sybilline quality to her words.

The other prophetic figure in the nineteenth century whose ideas are even more closely akin to those of Brontë, is Emerson. Emerson was perhaps the most distinguished philosophical writer in America during his age. His works, particularly his diverse essays, have had a profound influence both in his native land and abroad. In 1841 his first volume of essays was reprinted in England, was followed by his second series of essays which was reprinted in England in 1843, and became more widely known.[20] Emerson's ideas may well have acted as an inspiration to Brontë: indeed she would have been able to draw support for some of her more radical ideas. The likelihood of her being aware of Emerson's thought is increased by the above printed editions of his essays in England in 1841 and 1843 respectively. Even if she never came into contact with any of these essays per se, and this is an unknown factor, she had in all probability heard about this galvanizing writer from across the Pacific. Emerson had even been in contact with writers within the Romantic school of thought, which Brontë admired. Cook tells us that:

> In England Emerson visited Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. His visit to the latter and their "quiet night of clear, fine talk," was the beginning of a warm friendship and a strong mutual admiration.[21]

In December 1847 a review of Emerson's essays appears in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine which is exactly one year before Brontë passed away in December 1848. This article can be used as a useful summary of Emerson's fundamental notions, ideas

which, as stated, were prevalent in England from 1841 onwards. In other words, although the article itself could not have influenced `No Coward Soul Is Mine' the ideas contained therein were already widespread and may have influenced Brontë in her composition from 1841 onwards.

It is interesting to analyse the similarities between Brontë and Emerson: she was not alone as a rebellious thinker. As far as the notion of a centre or self is concerned, Emerson is in accord with Carlyle. In Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine the ensuing passage is found:

> Whatever the most exalted characters of history, whatever the most opulent of literatures, has displayed or revealed, of action or of thought, - the germ of all lies within yourself. This is his frequent text.[22]

It is not an immeasurable leap to equate this with the `God within my breast,' (5) referred to by Brontë in `No Coward Soul Is Mine'. They have the same idea in mind, the same philosophy of a spiritual core at the centre of each and every human being. In his essay The Oversoul Emerson's description of the inner divinity within the human breast is even closer to Brontë's idea:

> Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable.[23]

Emerson goes even further in his advancement of the notion of an oversoul and the access of anyone to this source. The following extract is taken from Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine but is originally found in the essay entitled History printed in

England in 1841:

> "There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same, and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate.[24]

Is this oversoul not similar to the pantheistic spirit referred to by Brontë in the fifth stanza of `No Coward Soul Is Mine'? Nomenclature may vary but the underlying ideas remain alike (Emerson was also known for his pantheistic visions):

> With wide embracing love
> Thy Spirit animates eternal years,
> Pervades and broods above,
> Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears. (17-20)

One further example should suffice to demonstrate that Emerson and Brontë shared many of the same philosophical tenets. There is a passage in the essay entitled Self – Reliance quoted in Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine which may provide a clue to the manner in which stanza three of `No Coward Soul' should be addressed:

> Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, then old things pass away, - means, teachers, texts, temples fall. Whence then this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and majesty of the soul....[25]

Emerson is asserting that divine wisdom is a direct intuition and not necessarily to be experienced in a text, biblical or otherwise. As Edward Wagenknecht has noted:

> He believed in the existence of One Mind, whose potentialities were available to all and to which the individual mind aspired to expand.[26]

Emerson is not denouncing religion but pointing out the value of direct intuitive understanding. Now, if stanza three of `No Coward Soul Is Mine' is examined, it can be argued that Brontë is saying something similar to Emerson:

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main. (9-12)

These lines are difficult to integrate with Brontë's previous utterances on religion and her utilization of biblical texts in her compositions. Prior to this poem no outright rejection of creeds or religion has occurred: there has been a modification of Christian tenets and it seems inexplicable that she should have gone so far in this closing poem. The answer to this conundrum is rather to suggest that religion itself is not the same as a direct intuitive response but this in no way negates the intrinsic value of the biblical texts, some of which were originally derived from visionary encounters such as the Book of Ezekiel. Emerson's attitude as expressed in Self - Reliance has provided an answer to an otherwise puzzling stanza. Similarly the accentuation of the God within in `No Coward Soul Is Mine' should not be seen as a negation of God or his influence in the universe (there have been far too many references in Brontë's works to God to warrant such a conclusion).

There are a number of references to Emerson in letters written by Charlotte to W. S. Williams. There is a profound respect for Emerson even if she does not always agree with his assertions. She acknowledges his spiritual advancement but warns against rejecting `creeds and forms in religion' in letter 310,[27] as this would be disastrous for

mankind whose relative immaturity needs firm guidelines (the difference between Charlotte and her sister is apparent in this regard). In letter 301 she acknowledges the value of Emerson to her friend with the words, `Emerson, if he has cheered you, has not written in vain'.[28]In letter 329 she continues with the mixed response:

> Emerson's Essays I read with much interest, and often with admiration, but they are of mixed gold and clay - deep and invigorating truth, dreary and depressing fallacy seem to be combined therein.'[29]

Finally, and most significantly, Charlotte alludes to the time when she read one of Emerson's essays to her sister while she lay on her death-bed. She must have recognized the natural affinity between Emerson and Brontë even if she had some reservations herself: it is symbolically of note that the last essay read to Brontë is from the works of Emerson:

> ...- their perusal occupied her for many a weary day; the very evening before her last morning dawned I read to her one of Emerson's essays - I read on till I found she was not listening - I thought to recommence next day - Next day, the first glance at her face told me what would happen before night-fall.[30]

Brontë was not alone in her quest for a more liberated theology: Carlyle and Emerson were already at the forefront of transformation. Their ideas were already disseminated on a broader scale during the Victorian era.

There is also one Romantic poem which cannot be ignored in assessing `No Coward Soul Is Mine': Wordsworth's `Ode: Intimations Of Immortality From Recollections Of Early Childhood'. This ode was published in 1807 and was probably in Brontë's mind

when she composed her penultimate poem. It is not only the theme of immortality of the soul and the pantheistic perspective that are similar, but also the incentive to write such a direct, daring account of immortality without allusions to the Bible for support. In stanza four of `No Coward Soul Is Mine' Brontë talks about `Thy infinity' (14) and being `...anchored on/The steadfast rock of Immortality' (15 - 16). There is no doubt that the self survives death, immortality is assured even if the planets themselves disappeared. In Wordsworth's ode a similar neo-platonic notion is postulated: that is, the soul was created elsewhere and life on this earth is a temporary excursion. Both would agree that the soul was created elsewhere and would return home once again. Wordsworth depicts the return of the soul in memorable terms:

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The soul that rises with us, our life's Star'
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar... (58-61)

and,

> Our Souls have sight of that immortal
> sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither... (167 - 169)

This idea of merging into the divine after death is a common leitmotif in the 1846 Collection immediately preceding the composition of `No Coward Soul Is Mine'. In `Faith And Despondency' the sea is similarly employed as being synonymous with eternity or the passage to the beyond and the merger of the soul is re-emphasised:

> I know there is a blessed shore,

Opening its ports for me and mine;

And gazing Time's wide waters o'er,

I weary for that land divine,

Where we were born, where you and I

Shall meet our dearest, when we die;

From suffering and corruption free,

Restored into Deity.' (55-62)

Immortality is not a sporadic concern in Brontë's writings, but rather a preoccupation that underlies much of her verse and Wuthering Heights. In `Self-Interrogation' sentiments of survival beyond the grave are enshrined in stanza five:

`Then art thou glad to seek repose?

Art glad to leave the sea,

And anchor all thy weary woes

In calm Eternity? (17-20)

The familiar metaphor of the sea is reiterated and the verb `anchor' (19) makes its appearance as a prelude to the use of `anchored'(15) in `No Coward Soul Is Mine'. Did Brontë draw this metaphor of the sea from Wordsworth's celebrated ode? Wordsworth concludes his representation of paradise in stanza IX with a homecoming onto a shore of bliss:

And see the Children sport upon the

Shore.... (169-170)

The self not only exists and can be realized as a mystic state within the life of the individual, but this self is imperishable. `No Coward Soul Is Mine' represents the

attainment of a union with the absolute, and this self is indestructible. All the poems written previously, and Wuthering Heights, can be seen as leading up to this moment of transcendent unity. The other works contain constant intimations of a state of unified bliss, or what Jung calls the final individuation. In Wuthering Heights, for example, the ensuing passage is a forerunner of the sentiments expressed in `No Coward Soul Is Mine': Catherine is cognisant of a new life beckoning if she marries Edgar and she stresses the inviolable bond with Heathcliff which will survive irrespective of her choice of a legal spouse:

> I cannot express it; but surely you and every body have a notion that 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. (122)

All that has changed between this statement, which is akin to stanzas six and seven of `No Coward Soul Is Mine', is the absolute assurance in the poem. There is no reasoning process in the poem: immortality of the self is stated as a fact whereas in Wuthering Heights Cathy first rationalizes as to the need for survival before asserting her convictions. Cathy believes that existence for her is only possible in an androgynous union with Heathcliff whether in this world or in any other. In `No Coward Soul Is Mine' Brontë's self will survive by itself:

> There is not room for Death,
> Nor atom that his might could render void:
> Thou - Thou art Being and Breath,

And what Thou art may never be destroyed. (25-28)

Brontë has referred to the atom in the above extract to illustrate her ideas: the atom is described in the Oxford Dictionary as a `particle of matter indivisible chemically'. This atom is not only indivisible but indestructible; the atom can be transformed but not annihilated. Atoms are the building blocks of the natural world and cannot be destroyed - the atom and the self are of a similar nature.

`No Coward Soul Is Mine' is her ultimate statement on the immortality of the spirit. The self is indestructible whether its full potential has been realized or not, whether the individual is conscious of it or not. This poem is personal but Brontë must have realized it had wider ramifications. It is inconceivable that she would have regarded her inner self as immortal and not the selfsame inner self of others. She had evidently experienced some kind of realization of this inner self variably described as samadhi in Hinduism and nirvana in Bhuddism. The world of nature may be cyclical but the self, whose realized or individuated potential Brontë had experienced, remains unassailable. This inner self is not subject to time and space but exists regardless of its surroundings:

Though earth and moon were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee. (21-24)

When Brontë acclaims in `My Comforter' that `Deep down, concealed within my soul,/That light lies hid from men;' (6-7) we now know in retrospect that this light would be shared with posterity, much of her work becoming popular posthumously.

`No Coward Soul is Mine' can be seen as the conclusion to her mystical journey which has reached a stage of maturity or, to use the Jungian framework, she has reached the consummation of the individuation process. L. P. Hartley's observation is still pertinent:

> The desire for the absolute ruled her thoughts and feelings, and the reader who is infected by this longing soon comes to regard her as a priestess rather than a writer.[31]

ENDNOTES

1. Evelyn Underhill 381.

2. Underhill 383.

3. And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing: O my onely light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fall all night. (36-42).

4. Herman 194.

5. C.G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections trans. Richard and Clare Winston (Glasgow: Collins, 1975) 366.

6. C.G. Jung, The Structure And Dynamics Of The Psyche trans. R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge, 1969) 208.

7. C.G. Jung, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung vol. 8, 224-225.

8. C.G. Jung, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung vol. 8, 225-226.

9. C.G. Jung The Collected Works of C.G. Jung vol. 5, 357.

10. C.G. Jung, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung vol. 2, 72.

11. Emily Jane Brontë, Five Essays Written in French trans. Lorine White Nagel (Texas: Texas, 1948) 17-19.

12. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Oversoul," The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1940) 265.

13. Charlotte Brontë, "To W.S.Williams," 16 April 1849, letter 346 of The Brontë Life And Letters ed. Clement Shorter, vol. 2 (London: Hodder: 1908) 44.

> I like Carlyle better and better. His style I do not like, nor do I always concur in his opinions, nor quite fall in with his hero-worship; but there is a manly love of truth, an honest recognition and fearless vindication of intrinsic greatness, of intellectual and moral worth, considered apart from birth, rank, or wealth, which commands my sincere admiration.

Charlotte Brontë, "To W.S.Williams," 15 June 1848, letter 292 of Brontë Life and Letters, vol.2, 424.

14. Rev. of Past and Present by Thomas Carlyle, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 1843, vol. 54: 121-137.
15. Thomas Carlyle, on Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (London: Chapmans, 1841) 9.
16. Rev. of Past and Present by Thomas Carlyle, Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine 1843, vol. 54: 138.
17. Rev. of Past and Present by Thomas Carlyle, Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine 1843, vol.54: 122.
18. Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present (London: Dent, 1912) 192.
19. Thomas Carlyle, Selected Writings ed. Alan Shelston (Middlesex: Penquin, 1971) 223.
20. George Willis Cooke, Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life,Writings and Philosophy (London: Sampson, 1882) 113.
21. Cooke 34.
22. Rev. of Emerson, Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine 1847, vol. 112: 644.
23. Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1940) 265.

24. Review of Emerson, Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine 1847, vol. 112: 644.

25. Review of Emerson, Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine 1847, vol. 112: 645.

26. Edward Wagenknecht, Ralph Waldo Emerson: Portrait of a Balanced Soul (Oxford: Oxford, 1974) 45.

27. Charlotte Brontë, "To W.S.Williams," 18 October 1848, letter 310 of Brontë Life and Letters, vol.1, 458.

28. Charlotte Brontë, "To W.S. Williams," 31 July 1848, letter 301 of Brontë Life and Letters, vol.1, 444.

29. Charlotte Brontë, 4 February 1849, letter 329 of Brontë Life and Letters, vol.2, 24.

30. Charlotte Brontë, "To W.S.Williams," 25 Jun. 1849, letter 451 of Shakespeare Head Brontë: The Life And Letters, ed. Thomas James Wise and John Alexander Symington, vol.2, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1932) 356.

31. L.P. Hartley, "Emily Bronte In Gondal And Gaaldine," Bronte Society Transactions 16 (1965): 1.

CHAPTER SIX

HEAVEN AND HELL

The next four chapters will focus more closely on Brontë's philosophy which is partly inspired by her personal experiences discussed previously. Inevitably there is some degree of overlapping particularly as far as chapter five is concerned where aspects of her philosophical standpoint have been explored in respect of the dark night of the soul and union with the self. There is often a nexus between her experiences and her viewpoints although she has also relied on her reading and intellect.

The subject of heaven and hell has been the source of critical debate since time immemorial. Theologians of all the mainstream Christian movements have unanimously postulated that these states of heaven and hell are both eternal and irreversible. To put it bluntly once a soul has been judged and assigned a place in either heaven or hell there is no possibility of altering the status quo. Catholics and Protestants might have crossed swords over issues pertaining to rituals or the relevance of the Virgin Mary but they were in agreement that Christianity is the only path to salvation. There were disagreements about the stringency of the practices necessary to secure a place in paradise but the eternity of either heaven or hell was never seriously challenged within either Protestant or Catholic movements. Winifrith has noted the religious milieu that prevailed in the nineteenth century:

> The most important division for the Brontës was probably that between moderates, who did not lay down strict rules for salvation, and extremists, who said that only

> the few who followed their own particular path were worthy of heaven. Extreme Low Churchmen and Nonconformists are usually thought to be on the opposite end of the scale from extreme High Churchmen and Roman Catholics. They are in some respects, but Charlotte Brontë saw that they both set up an arbitrary standard for salvation and condemned them for it.[1]

It is against this background of religious dogmatism and intolerance of any unorthodox views that Emily Brontë's attitude towards individual salvation must be judged. On reading the poems in particular it is abundantly evident that Brontë was opposed to any notions of eternal punishment as being contrary to the very nature of the Godhead. This influence is to find root in Charlotte's prose, where she also obliquely inveighs against the doctrine of eternal damnation: in Jane Eyre, for instance, Helen sounds much like a modern day Mother Theresa in her universalist sentiments as she assures Jane that heaven is the destination of even the wayward:

> Surely it will never, on the contrary, be suffered to degenerate from man to fiend? No, I cannot believe that: I hold another creed, which no–one has ever taught me, and which I seldom mention, but in which I delight, and to which I cling, for it extends hope to all; it makes eternity a rest – a mighty home – not a terror and an abyss. Besides, with this creed, I can so easily distinguish between the criminal and the crime .... (91)

The radicalism of Brontë's opinions is further accentuated by the conventional home life she was exposed to. Her father Patrick Brontë was the local village pastor and his ideas on religion were firmly entrenched in the Church of England tradition. A number of his poems have survived which demonstrate an orthodox persuasion. As far as Patrick Brontë

is concerned, the road to salvation is clearly demarcated and only possible through the Christian faith. Arthur Pollard regards Patrick Brontë as less radical in his affiliations but this does not alter his views on the hereafter:

> The liberality which marked his letters to Franks went broader still in his daughters Anne and Charlotte (Emily we cannot judge). As opposing camps of Tractarians and Protestants arrayed themselves against each other, they were content to remain loyal members of the Church of England, independent of all –isms, demonstrating a generous, love-filled (wider even than Wesley's) interpretation of that vital Christianity which they received as their father's faith.[2]

Pollard's view is useful to contextualize Brontë's family influence, but Brontë nevertheless rebels against what she perceives as its limitations. It is Patrick's daughter who has subtly thrown down the guantlet to both her father and the Church of England; it is her radicalism that was to galvanize Charlotte into questioning assumptions that were held to be sacrosanct. It seems safe to assume that Brontë's mysticism inspired these departures from the norm, that her conclusions are drawn from her personal intuitions, but there is also authority for at least one theologian whose writings had a bearing on her attitude towards individual salvation. Fortunately for posterity Mary Robinson, who was the only biographer personally acquainted with Ellen Nussey (a personal friend of the Brontës), has recorded her attitude towards the eminent theologian, Frederick Maurice. Indeed, she goes so far as to say that Brontë considered herself a disciple of this passionate individualist, even though Robinson perceives some degree of Calvinist influence over Brontë:

> Yet this very Calvinism influenced her ideas, this doctrine she so passionately

> rejected, calling herself a disciple of the tolerant and thoughtful Frederick Maurice, and writing, in defiance of its flames and shriekings, the most soothing consolations to mortality that I remember in our tongue.[3]

This is a vital intimation of how Brontë's ideas were formed in her rejection of eternal punishment by a wrathful deity. The connection to Maurice will be given extensive coverage in this chapter, but before this is undertaken I would like to consider Brontë's understanding of the nature of heaven and hell: through an exploration of the poetry it is possible to ascertain how she perceived these states of existence, to understand how she viewed these religious locations. The terms heaven and hell are on occasion used to refer to potentials within the human psyche, as energies that exist within the mind: these allusions have caused confusion in the past because they are confounded with references to heaven and hell as locations beyond the grave, with dubious results.

There are a number of poems which suggest that to Brontë heaven is a location to which the soul at last returns: it is a place where the soul can continue to exist in undisturbed harmony and beauty although the traditional epithets to describe heaven are generally absent. The popular image of angels with harps and haloes is not emphasised as Brontë depicts a paradise that is in essence a habitat or abode for the soul to continue living. This is her notion of eternity; a place of serenity unimpeded by the afflictions of corporeality. This is borne out in a rather simple verse entitled 'Far away is the land of rest' in which the familiar allegory of the traveller is used to convey the voyage of life itself; often an onerous endeavour. The speaker in this poem adopts an omniscient tone in encouraging the weary at heart to continue to strive for a land that will surely be attained:

But yet faint not, mournful man;
  Leagues on leagues are left behind
Since your sunless course began;
  Then, go on, to toil resigned.

If you still despair, control,
  Hush its whispers in your breast;
You shall reach the final goal,
  You shall win the land of rest. (13-20)

There is no embellishment here in describing heaven but rather a simple statement that there is a land of relaxation for the weary. This characterization of heaven in unadorned terms is continued in `I DIE; but when the grave shall press' in which Brontë uses the recognisable metaphors of the sea and anchoring to convey her understanding of the process of dying, before closing the poem with an optimistic utterance:

But long or short though life may be,
'Tis nothing to eternity
We part below to meet on high,
Where blissful ages never die. (13-16)

Not only will souls continue to exist but they will re–connect in a state of everlasting bliss. It is a location where souls will automatically be re–united: indeed, as the speaker notes in the aforementioned poem, she is the only one who should be concerned to leave her lover behind in a storm–tossed earth. This notion of soulmates and continuance of the love beyond death is a leitmotif throughout Wuthering Heights. It is a recurring theme which, as can be seen from `I DIE'; but when the grave shall press', has its origins in

poetry written as early as 1837. Brontë's dramas unfold against the backdrop of eternity; the denouement of her dramas will be continued in eternity beyond the mortality of the flesh. Brontë is not the first poet to contemplate the nature of soulmates and the survival of a love that is immutable and indestructible. Shelley has composed two fragments which are apposite in this regard: in the poem entitled `Fragment: Wedded Souls' the following depiction of the nature of soulmates is a consummate portrait:

I AM as a spirit who has dwelt
Within his heart of hearts, and I have felt
His feelings, and have thought his thoughts, and known
The innermost converse of his soul, the tone
Unheard but in the silence of his blood ... (1-5)

Shelley is, however, less certain whether souls will automatically re-unite in eternity but his phraseology in `Fragment: Is it that in some brighter sphere' is poignantly similar to the extract quoted from `I DIE; but when the grave shall press':

Is it that in some brighter sphere
We part from friends we meet with
here?
Or do we see the Future pass
Over the Present's dusky glass? (1-5)

Brontë commits herself to a reunion of lovers after their parting from earth whereas Shelley is unsure what will ensue after the parting and movement into another sphere.

The exhortation by the speaker in `I DIE'; but when the grave shall press' that there

should be no mourning at his departure has a parallel sentiment expressed in Elizabeth Rowe's `Thoughts On Death'. As Elizabeth Rowe's Letters from the Dead to the Living, of which `Thoughts on Death' formed a part, was to be found in the library at Haworth parsonage, it is safe to assume that Brontë had perused this volume (given her natural bent towards mysticism). While Rowe's writings were controversial and even considered to be strange by Charlotte (Shirley 308), there are some affinities to Brontë particularly as regards the portrayal of spirits and the relationship between the so–called spirit world and this world. It is thus a useful source which may have influenced Brontë's compositions, although the extent of such indebtedness is conjectural. The following extract from Rowe is consistent with Brontë's beliefs:

> Indeed, if the soul, in some degree united to these, finds itself also united to God by a holy love, though the privation of the creatures causes some emotion, yet it sinks not into despair. For this divine principle sustains it: and growing more active, confirms its hopes of being shortly united to, and overwhelmed in abyss of pleasure, which alone can satisfy all its capacity of loving.[4]

In an apparent communication from a child of two from another dimension the necessity for mourning is likewise refuted: this is an idea repeatedly propagated by the poet:

> If you could conceive my happiness, instead of the mournful solemnity with which you interred me, you would have celebrated my funeral rites with songs and festivals.[5]

Then, in a dramatic conclusion to this apparent transmission the young boy reiterates the need for those in the land of bliss to mourn for the living (cf. stanza three of `I DIE'; but when the grave shall press'):

> Pardon me, Madam, it is you now seem the infant, and I repay you that superior

regard and tenderness, which you lately bestowed on me.[6]

In `Start not! Upon the minister wall' any need for fear at the impending plight of all men is waylaid in the same assured tone:

And why should mortals fear to tread
The pathway to their future home? (11-12)

There is also a relationship that exists between the heavenly realms and this earth; a bond that leads to a continuous emanation of succour to those individuals or families still left below. There is an ongoing concern for the plight of those on the terrestrial level and support is afforded in various ways. In the poem `The night was dark, yet winter breathed', composed on 12 January 1839, the speaker has abandoned his steed which refused to continue on the journey. He reluctantly untied the reins, set his horse free and within a short period found himself beset by the tempestuous weather. It is at this stage of the narrative that he encounters a `shadowy spirit' (24) who has evidently arrived to assist the traveller in travail:

`What seek you now, on this bleak moor's brow?
Where wanders that form from heaven
descending?
It was thus I said, as, her graceful head,
The spirit above my couch was bending. (29-33)

This spirit has been sent on a mission from the heavenly realms and promptly informs the traveller that she has already breathed new life into the ailing steed. The heavenly messenger is in essence a nature spirit whose function is to protect a designated region by

supplying assistance to those in jeopardy. This idea of a guardian spirit or nature spirit is a common occurrence in literature: they either provide succour from above or are sent on a specific mission, such as the angelic spirits in `The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' who are assigned the task by their guardian saint of breathing life into the corpses aboard the fateful vessel, thereby working the ropes and directing the ship. The `shadowy spirit' (24) in `The night was dark, yet winter breathed' also assists sailors who are in dire straits and casts spells over the local seabirds.

Another way in which relief is provided from a heavenly state is via a departed relative whose concern can apparently traverse the boundaries that separate worlds. The ties are so unyielding that the departed spirit remains in touch with those left behind and provides advice and protection to them. In `A.S. to G.S.', a poem published posthumously in the 1850 edition of Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey, A.S., who is identified by Ratchford as Angelica (the daughter of Lord Alfred S. of Aspin Castle), attempts to console her half–brother, Gerald, after the death of their mother. This loss of a mother is obviously of psychological importance to Brontë and it is no surprise that so many of her poems refer to motherhood: even nature is at times invoked or addressed in maternal terms which, although part of a broader convention, takes on added poignancy for her. There is indeed an attempt either to explain the maternal loss or to find substitutes for her motherly deprivation. (Brontë lost her mother, who died of cancer, when she was only three years old.) In 'Encouragement' Angelica has accepted this deprivation but draws comfort from the belief that her departed mother is watching over them as a guide from the heavenly world:

And from that world of heavenly light
  Will she not always bend
To guide us in our lifetime's night,
  And guard us to the end?

Thou know'st she will; and thou may'st mourn
  That we are left below:
But not that she can ne'er return
  To share our earthly woe. (17-24)

It is worth noting that this notion of a departed spirit as a guide is not a biblical one: the question therefore arises as to where Brontë found this idea? Belief in the immortality of the spirit is separate from a belief that deceased souls can guide their siblings or in any way influence the course of events on earth . Her belief may have been derived from the Celtic tradition but it would certainly have been confirmed in Rowe's `letters' referred to earlier. In letter XIV, for example, the following statement made by a departed spirit to her sister is persuasive:

> My dear sister, I have often, since I left the world, had the privilege to supply the place of your guardian angel. I have been an invisible witness of your tears for my death; and to allay the excess of your grief for me, I have been at last permitted to let you know that I am happy.[7]

The futility of mourning is accentuated in `Grave In The Ocean' composed on 1 May 1843 while Brontë was alone at the Haworth parsonage, due to Charlotte's residence at Brussels for a second time and Anne's and Branwell's return to the Robinsons at Thorp Green. It

is a desolate poem in which the speaker sounds unconvincing and hardly seems able to assuage the grief of the addressee; the language used is maudlin and, if anything, would only contribute to the gnawing grief of the Gondal character being spoken to. The stress appears to be laid on an eternal rest in death rather than an eternal bliss referred to elsewhere; there is a morbid fascination with images that evoke only darkness:

Where can the weary lay his head,
And lay it safe the while
In a grave that never shuts its dead
From Heaven's benignant smile?

Upon the earth is sunlight;
Spring grass grows green and fair;
But beneath the earth is midnight,
Eternal midnight there. (5-12)

Gèrin suggests a possible allusion to Blake's `Holy Thursday', comparing `Eternal midnight there' (12) in `Grave In the Ocean' to `It is eternal winter there' (12) in the former poem.[8] Both of the above phrases appear in line twelve of the respective poems. This serves to strengthen the likelihood of Brontë having `Holy Thursday' in her mind, which appears in `The Songs of Experience', at the time she wrote `Grave in the Ocean'. `Holy Thursday' is also a bleak poem focusing on the abject poverty rife in England during the eighteenth century: the subject matter of `Holy Thursday' is different to `Grave In the Ocean' but the morbidity and stark imagery evoke the same windswept atmosphere. A further similarity between the two poems is the accentuation on earth as a bleak

dungeon. In `Holy Thursday' the emphasis on an `eternal winter' (12) clearly suggests that there is no hope for the impoverished babies `reduced to misery' (3) which is paralleled in `Grave In The Ocean' referring to `earth's dungeon tomb' (14).

Before turning to a detailed discussion of the impact of Maurice on Brontë's maturation as a philosopher, I would like to explore the way in which the terms heaven and hell are sometimes employed to reflect different states or potentials within the psyche. One clue to when heaven and hell are to be comprehended as potentials within the psyche is the occurrence of these terms in short succession either within the same line or in one stanza. For example, in `My Comforter' this juxtaposition of heaven and hell in stanza five is not meant to be taken literally:

> So stood I, in Heaven's glorious sun,
> And in the glare of Hell;
> My spirit drank a mingled tone,
> Of seraph's song, and demon's moan;
> What my soul bore, my soul alone
> Within itself may tell! (21-26)

This is surely a psychological interplay between the forces of light and darkness within Brontë's own mind: it is a battle between a seraphic beauty and a demonic side to the poet herself, one which at this stage reaches an intense tautness. It is a battleground between the purity of the soul and the Jungian 'shadow' which has little to do with the traditional notions of heaven and hell or seraphs and demons for that matter. By the same token the speaker's assertion in `The Philosopher' that he has sought for the spirit `in heaven, hell,

earth, and air' in line forty three must be read figuratively. He has searched within the regions of his own mind encompassing both the states of heaven and hell within his psyche.

To turn now to the influence of Frederick Denison Maurice on the ideas of Brontë it is useful to start with some historical data. Maurice was a professor of theology at Kings College, London and he was responsible for a body of work which included sermons and treatises on comparative religion. However, in 1853, Maurice, whose ideas were periodically questioned prior to this date, came into unfettered conflict with the authorities at Kings College after the publication of his Theological Essays. The problem for the hierarchy at Kings College was that Maurice had openly debunked the doctrines of eternal damnation; he had dared to question a time-honoured traditional interpretation of the Bible. The consequence of this so–called heresy was the immediate expulsion of Maurice from Kings College: the revered theologian was an outcast with immediate effect:

> While several passages received criticism it was a passage near the end of the book which caused the explosion, since Maurice in these pages seemed to be denying the possibility of everlasting loss for the impenitent.[9]

Maurice also forms part of the emergence of the new Unitarian movement which was having a significant impact on Victorian society particularly in a re-interpretation of fundamental ideas concerning the afterlife. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

This all transpired in 1853, five years after Brontë's death, but it must be borne in

mind that Maurice was already famous in England long before this date and that many of his ideas were disseminated through his writings and sermons. Volumes such as The Kingdom of Christ were already published in 1842 and subject to the critical review of the orthodox. Eanne Oram in her study of the influence of Maurice on the emerging poet makes the following point:

> That she may have known a good deal about him is not in doubt. True, when she died more than half his books were unwritten, his great controversies unfought,... but before she saw Cowan Bridge he was an outstanding character, and by the time she was home from Belgium he was a marked man.[10]

Brontë entered Cowan Bridge in 1824 and returned from Brussels in 1842: Maurice was notorious during her emergence as a poet and his ideas were widely disseminated in England. His philosophy denying eternal damnation may only have been transcribed in the Theological Essays in 1853, but these ideas may well have been argued from the pulpit. It is indeed probable that these heretical concepts were shared with some parts of the populace in the form of sermons. There were already scarcely veiled criticisms of the traditional concept of heaven and hell in The Kingdom of Christ:

> The wretched notion of a private selfish Heaven, where compensation shall be made for troubles incurred, and prizes given for duties performed in this lower sphere - - had infused itself into our popular teachings and our theological books.[11]

I will argue here that Brontë found support for her notions of heaven, hell and eternity in what she had heard about Maurice or what she could read into his published works. After all, according to Robinson, she considered herself to be a disciple of this revolutionary figure and it was precisely his radicalism that attracted her. Maurice's writings had always stressed the immortality of the soul anyway and the revelation of God as opposed to a

concentration on rewards and punishments. Oram sums up the situation:

> Emily did not live to learn of his interpretations of the word eternal; it appeared in the 1853 Essays, and was the basis of his rejection of the accepted doctrine of everlasting punishment. The idea of God as the undying Life of the soul was, however, always fundamental to his thought.[12]

Maurice based his ideas of heaven and hell on a unique understanding of the term eternity. To Maurice eternity connotes God's immutable perfect being which is in contrast to the vagaries of the temporal world. The notion of eternal life and eternal death must be read in relation to this concept of eternity. Consequently, eternal life after the cessation of earthly existence means union or fellowship with God, whereas eternal death or hell denotes a separation from God. Eternity is not to be seen as being of endless duration and therefore neither eternal life nor eternal death can be viewed as future eternal states. It is possible to live within eternal life even on earth provided fellowship with God is fostered and the sensual side is overcome.[13] In Sermons 1V Maurice expresses his notion of eternity as follows:

> Men tremble at eternity, whether they think of it as present or to come; they must tremble at it, unless there comes forth from it a Gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is no sham terror, begotten by the arts of priests, which I feel when the thought flashes on me, `I am an eternal being, I cannot shake eternity from me. It belongs to me; it goes with me where I go; it stays with me where I stay'.[14]

Brontë has stressed the notion of an eternal world, where development is fostered

and the soul continues to act, which is more readily explicable if Maurice's ideas on eternity are borne in mind. To both Brontë and Maurice heaven is not described as an abode where angels cavort amidst celestial music in an idyllic paradise but rather as a location of harmony where individuals are active. The traditional depiction of heaven has been rejected by Maurice and Brontë has followed his example in stressing the notion of states of mind or locations in which the soul continues to function but at a higher level within serene conditions.

This perception is akin to Brontë's pronouncements on the self in `No Coward Soul is Mine'; it is a statement about the indestructibility of the soul. This soul may end up in hell, which is of its own making, but this is not of endless duration. According to Maurice God still battles to redeem souls from hell and attempts to persuade the errant to enter into fellowship with the divine. There is no doubt that Maurice's exposition on eternity is complex but he does hold out hope for the prodigal; he assails the notion that God's powers of redemption cease after judgement and reverses traditional ideas on endless fire and brimstone for the unrepentant at the time of death. His emphasis is on a personal choice and the ability to turn the tide at any stage including while trapped in the precincts of hell. In his Lectures On the Apocalypse this personal freedom to embrace God is clarified:

> There is no way of describing their condition but that. A fire is burning in them which nothing can quench. As I said before, if we look at this fire merely as reason, without Revelation, looks at it, we could find in it only despair. When God enters, despair ceases. He is called in Scripture the God of Hope. That which we think of as His must give us Hope.[15]

These ideas on the temporal relativity of heaven and hell are so frequent in the poetry that Brontë must have wished to leave behind some evidence of her discord with the church on this subject. However, it is unlikely that she would have sought any open confrontation, as Maurice had done, preferring rather to leave these statements enshrouded in unpublished Gondal verse. There are no blatant assertions on the relativity of heaven and hell in the selection of poems published in 1846, which suggests that Brontë was assiduous in avoiding public confrontation with the church. She has eschewed any confrontation which would both undermine her father's role as village pastor and project herself as a public figure.

An illustration of how Brontë has enclosed her views within the Gondal epic can be seen in `Far far away is mirth withdrawn;': the speaker refers to a man who was maligned while alive, although the reason for this disdain is not given. She adopts a protective tone towards this deceased soul attempting to shield his spirit from the vituperation of a scornful world. In a melodramatic voice the speaker alludes to his tears flooding her heart:

> They deluge my heart like rain
> On cursed Gomorrah's howling plain
> Yet when I hear thy foes deride
> I must cling closely to thy side. (17-20)

The reference to Gomorrah, the city destroyed by God, is not coincidental since it evokes the question of justice or vengeance that is central to the poem. The deceased soul was evidently guilty of unspecified crimes, but the point is made that God's vengeance will

not be of permanent duration:

> But God is not like human–kind;
>
> Man cannot read the Almighty mind:
>
> Vengeance will never torture thee,
>
> Nor hunt thy soul eternally. (25-28)

The message is unassailable: hell is a temporary phenomenon and God will never allow his creation to suffer indefinitely. Men may seek revenge in brutal fashion but not God whose essential nature is mercy. This is confirmed in stanza eight in which the speaker re-assures the miscreant that God can still respond to his prayers in his `night of grief' (29), that even while the sinner languishes in hell God can hear his invocations and respond to them. There is, however, a twist in the closing stanza as the reader is led to believe that this plea may in fact be a dream, but Brontë has already imparted her beliefs in a subtle manner, and an impression of the temporary nature of hell will endure.

One of the reasons that hell is not eternal is that the soul is in its quintessential nature pure and incapable of defilement. Brontë has consistently followed this line of thought asserting on numerous occasions that the soul cannot be contaminated by this temporal world. Perhaps she was cognisant of this notion from the works of Plotinus, whose ideas are so proximate to those of Plato, both of whom would at the very least have been indirectly encountered in her readings of Milton. William Inge argues, in a comparison of Plotinus with Proclus, that the former stresses the inviolable nature of the soul:

> We must, however, remember that for Plotinus, though not for Proclus, it is only the lower part of the Soul that can sin and be punished. This inferior part he sometimes calls the `image of the Soul'. The higher soul is sinless.[16]

In the poem `Geraldine' which is found in the Gondal Poems Notebook and dated 17 August 1841, this assertion leaves the reader with no scruple as to the purity of the soul:

`Why did I doubt? In God's control
Our mutual fates remain;
And pure as now my angel's soul
Must go to Heaven again.' (45-48)

The auxiliary verb `must' suggests that there is ultimately no choice in the matter: all souls must return to the source of their being which is emphasised again in `Love's Contentment'. In this poem Augustine Geraldine Almeda addresses her lover, who appears to be Lord Alfred S., and exalts the power of love in transporting the lovers to a paradisal state. This is all in accord with the general theme of the poem but stanza four seems to be artificially grafted into the argument. Brontë has craftily included an incongruous thought in `Love's Contentment' encapsulating her own viewpoint in the Gondal tale:

I know our souls are all divine;
I know that when we die,
What seems the vilest, even like thine
A part of God himself shall shine
In perfect purity. (15-19)

She does not overtly challenge the orthodox interpretation of the Bible in her published works but the discerning reader can easily see where she stands in these verses which were published posthumously. After the dissonant stanza referred to above, Augustine Geraldine Almeda continues to apotheosize true love comparing its ultimate effect to the spiritual ecstasy reached through a life in the cloister. The reader would expect the

passionate heroine of the Gondol saga to prefer the elixir of love to a life of abstinence and prayer: her sentiments in stanzas nine and ten are in accordance with her character:

By dismal rites they win their bliss,-
By penance, fasts, and fears;
I have one rite: a gentle kiss;
One penance: tender tears. (38-41)

Brontë is not judging either her heroine or Lord Alfred S., but rather revealing their character flaws and arguing that they still have a place in heaven's dominion. They are not expected to spend a life in sheltered seclusion, nor need they be religious in a conventional sense, to warrant the grace of God. Augustine Geraldine Almeda has not minced her words in referring to Lord Alfred S. as the `vilest' soul (17) and yet the reader is informed that he will return to the source.

In the next chapter on heaven and hell which focuses on mercy, justice and redemption further consideration will be given to the interplay between these issues.

ENDNOTES

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4. Elizabeth Rowe 53.
5. Rowe 8.
6. Rowe 9.
7. Rowe 37.
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15. Frederick Denison Maurice, Lectures On The Apocalypse or Book Of Revelations Of St. John The Divine (London: Macmillan, 1861) 414.
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CHAPTER SEVEN

HEAVEN AND HELL II

> Embryos we must be till we burst the shell,
> Yon ambient azure shell, and spring to life,[1]

> Our sense then of right and wrong, declares us candidates for immortality, for we cannot suppose the Almighty would have wantonly tortured us with the stings of a condemning conscience, any more than he has the beasts of the field, if we, like them, were at death to be eternally annihilated; ... .[2]

This chapter will focus on the integral themes of mercy, justice and redemption in an amplification of Brontë's treatment of heaven and hell. It will be shown that the notion of a merciful deity can not be separated from God who demands that justice is also served: in other words, a recalcitrant individual can not simply rely on God's compassion without expecting some divine retribution for his or her misdeeds. When Charlotte Brontë delineated her sister's attitude towards the creator in the 1850 edition of Wuthering Heights she unwittingly presented only half of the picture, perhaps misleading her readers in the process:

> She held that mercy and forgiveness are the divinest attributes of the Great Being who made both man and woman, and that what clothes the Godhead in glory, can disgrace no form of feeble humanity.[3]

It is true to assert that mercy is ultimately superior to justice since God's essence consists of the attribute of compassion, but this does not imply that punitive sanctions

are not meted out where deserved by the miscreant. There is a complex interaction between mercy, justice and the need for redemption that will be explored in both the verse and Wuthering Heights. An underlying philosophy permeates Brontë's work. In much of the poetry and in Wuthering Heights Brontë attempts to expound and justify the statement made on 11 August 1842 in the devoir entitled `The Butterfly':

> God is the God of justice and mercy; then, assuredly, each pain that he inflicts on his creatures, be they human or animal, rational or irrational, each suffering of our unhappy nature is only a seed for that divine harvest which will be gathered when sin having spent its last drop of poison, death having thrown its last dart, both will expire on the funeral pyre of a universe in flame, and will leave their former victims to an eternal realm of happiness and glory. (19)

This is an idealistic view of the destiny of all creation, one which she seeks to vindicate without detracting from the suffering of mortals or the animal kingdom: the suffering is also meted out under divine auspices but the conclusive design is a paradisal return. The volume by Jeremy Taylor entitled The Golden Grove: A Choice Manual which was in the Haworth library contains these informative lines on the nature of God's mercy:

> O mighty God,
> Let not thy bruising rod
> Crush our loins with an eternal pressure;
> O let thy mercy be the measure:
> For if thou keepest wrath in store,
> We shall all die,
> And none be left to glorify
> Thy name and tell

How thou hast saved our souls from hell.

Mercy![4] ('Of Hell', 17-26)

It should also be noted that Brontë's ideas on mercy and justice are not drawn from conventional Christianity although her profound knowledge of both the Old Testament and the New Testament is indisputable. Her assiduous avoidance of mentioning Christ throughout the poetry is no coincidence: it is a deliberate attempt to distance herself from the narrow conclusions of the Protestant and Catholic priesthood in her day that refused to entertain any alternatives to their predilection for the doctrine of eternal damnation and a general mortification of the flesh. From the times when the Christian faith rejected the platonic ideas of Origen there has been a narrow construction placed on the Bible, which decision was taken at a meeting of the Fifth Ecumenical Congress of Constantinople in 553 at the instigation of the Byzantine emperor, Justinian.[1] However, the Bible has exerted some influence on her style and religious propensities even if this is subliminal. It can be argued that Brontë, like her predecessor Blake, has reinterpreted the message of the Gospels. The conclusions of Derek Stanford bear out the subconscious emergence of biblical influence:

> On the whole, it would probably be true to say that the mark of Christianity is not to be located in any definite statement; either in Emily's prose or verse, but rather passages of gentler colouring than we are apt to associate with her. What, I think, its influence did effect was a certain melioration of an otherwise primitive instinctive nature.[5]

I suggest, therefore, that Brontë's emphasis on compassion is germane to her own spirituality. It is a direct intuitive response to the universe in action and not dependent on

[1] Joseph Wilson Trigg, Origen (Atlanta: Knox, 1949) 254.

gospel dogma, although it is shaped at times by a Christian influence. Her emphasis on compassion is akin to the teachings of Christ vis-à-vis forgiveness of sins which is endorsed by Stanford:

> Christian in sentiment, then, as this compassion, it derives not from any Gospel doctrine as from some intuited notion of "the workings of the cosmos".[6]

Brontë has, however, also drawn inspiration from the pervasive attempts by certain Unitarians to soften the doctrine of eternal damnation, to stress the compassionate nature of the Godhead and to accentuate the intuitive road to divine understanding. This trend continued after her death as other novelists and poets during the Victorian era denounced this doctrine as a pernicious teaching. In some ways a revolution was taking place in religious circles which was to have an impact throughout the Victorian epoch. For instance, Elizabeth Gaskell was criticized for her Unitarian views:-

> Elizabeth Gaskell, for example, as a Unitarian who did not believe in hell or the last judgement, was criticized for the failure finally to condemn even her more reprehensible characters.[7]

Thomas Arnold attempted to broaden the acceptance of divergence of opinion within the Church of England and wanted the Church of England to admit Dissenters.[8] The influence of Maurice was profound in rescuing some Victorians from the psychological terror of the doctrine of eternal damnation as Robert Wolff has noted in a reference to this religious teacher:

> The transformation of a vengeful Calvinist God into a loving Broad-Church God, still stern, still paternal, but not condemning any of his children to

> perpetual hellfire, saved literally tens of thousands of mid- and late-Victorians from depressions that often bordered upon psychopathic despair.[9]

Brontë herself was part of this movement to emphasise the compassionate nature of God who could not possibly condemn his own creations to an eternal hellfire and which elevated the importance of intuitive perception as opposed to dogma. She was part of a movement which was to become a widespread opposing force throughout the Victorian period and whose banners were taken up by some of the leading writers. There is an emphasis placed on intuitive thought rather than dogma, on a personal understanding of spirituality in contrast to theological precepts. In the words of Emerson:

> Meantime, whilst the doors of the temple stand open night and day before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this namely, it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second-hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul.[10]

This spiritual reformation was also to find practical expression in the formation of `The Working Men's College' in which both Maurice and John Ruskin were instrumental. The influence of Unitarianism spread to the domain of the labour force:

> The Working Men's College, the first serious attempt made in England to help workmen to attain a full and satisfactory life, not by following the great social illusion of rising into a different class, but by simply fulfilling the most urgent needs of intellect and spirit, had been founded by Frederick Denison

Maurice, Lowes Dickinson and others, ...[11]

There is however one poem which mysteriously appears to echo the crucifixion, that is, `There let thy bleeding branch atone'. This poem was originally included in Anne Brontë's anthology of poems, published in 1920 but, as Gèzari avers (282), the manuscript is in Brontë's writing and the tone is distinctive of her style.[12] Muriel Spark has likewise referred to the mistake which was originally made by a misdirected editor:

> `There let thy bleeding branch alone' has received little attention apart from being wrongly ascribed to Anne Brontë by an editor who later amended his sad fault.[13]

It is now safe to assume that Brontë is the author of this abstruse poem which contains a subliminal allusion to the crucifixion:

> There let thy bleeding branch atone
> For every torturing tear
> Shall my young sins my sins alone
> Be everlasting here? (1-4)

On a literal level the unidentified speaker in this Gondal poem appears to take comfort from the suffering of the addressee whose limb is metaphorically compared to a bleeding branch: there will clearly be a joint suffering for both the speaker and the addressee for some unspecified sins committed previously. This is a familiar vignette in Brontë's verse where an injured lover prays for the just recompense of his or her departed paramour, but the `bleeding branch' (1) metaphor evokes the crucifixion and atonement even though Brontë never overtly subscribed to this doctrine. This is a perfect illustration of how Christian imagery has been subtly crafted into her verse on occasion, although the tenets

of Christianity are not countenanced. Stanford has duly recorded what kind of response the above lines are likely to evoke in the reader:

> We may think, as we register the physical impact of this horrific and potent figure, of the rough blood-stained cross of the Crucifixion, or of the Wood of Suicides in Dante's Inferno, where boughs that bleed when they are broken are inhabited by those who take their own lives.[14]

This rather obscure, brief poem is paradoxically one of the most evocative in Brontë's anthology; there is a sense of mystery in `There let thy bleeding branch atone' that leaves a lasting impression. The `bleeding branch' (1) also serves as a prelude to Lockwood's dream in Wuthering Heights when the narrator encounters Catherine and gruesomely cuts her arm across a broken glass. Perhaps this violent image of a `bleeding branch' (1) is influenced by a passage in Byron's `Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' which Brontë would have read:

> The thorns which I have reap'd are of
> The tree
> I planted; they have torn me, and I
> bleed;
> I should have known what fruit would
> spring from such a seed. (Third Canto, x , 10-15)

The speaker and Childe Harold both sin in their youth and suffer the relentless torment of their actions.

There are also other illustrations of her philosophy in this regard. A poem which sheds considerable light on Brontë's perspective on mercy and justice is dated 6 January 1840

and entitled `Thy sun is near meridian night,'. The nexus between divine mercy, justice and the hereafter is also clarified as the forlorn Fernando De Samara raves against an erstwhile impenitent Augusta Geraldine Almeda who has imprisoned him. It is interesting that yet another persona in the Gondal epic has alluded to the impossibility of God inflicting eternal retribution on anyone, regardless of past transgressions:

No! that I feel can never be;
A God of hate could hardly bear
To watch through all eternity
His own creation's dread despair! (9-12)

The implication here is that not even a God who hated mankind would impose eternal punishment let alone a God whose primary attribute is mercy. Fernando De Samara's further comments on justice suggest that, in his opinion, it is possible to expiate sins by suffering while on earth and there would consequently be no need for subsequent punitive measures imposed by God once he has died. Indeed, he is convinced that the pangs of unrequited love and treachery he had endured are sufficient to expunge any prior sins:

The pangs that wring my mortal breast,
Must claim from Justice lasting rest;
Enough, that this departing breath
Will pass in anguish worse than death

If I have sinned, long, long ago
That sin was purified by woe:
I've suffered on through night and day;
I've trod a dark and frightful way. (13-20)

This poem is primarily concerned with the question of divine retribution and it is no coincidence that 'Justice' in line fourteen is capitalized whereas `mercy' in line twenty-three is not. It is almost as if justice is invested with an abstract power of its own which needs to be satiated. There is to be no blithe exoneration without the exacting of due punishment by an abstract force of justice. The message here is clear (if Fernando De Samara's speculations are to be accepted): God demands repayment for misdemeanours committed but this restitution can sometimes occur while the miscreant is still alive (even if unaware of the sin, punishment will follow, since Fernando De Samara uses the conditional `If I have sinned...' in line seventeen).

Stanzas six, seven and eight delineate the speaker's attitude towards mercy. Quite simply, Fernando De Samara does not believe that his suffering can be palliated by a fervent request for mercy. If fate has denied him the love he hankers after, there is no agony more intense than unrequited ardour. Fate has dealt a cruel blow from which mercy cannot begin to rescue him:

> How could I ask for pitying love,
> When that grim concave frowned above,
> Hoarding its lightnings to destroy
> My only and my priceless joy? (25-28)

The speaker is cynical as he refers, as Hardy would later, to the heavens as a `grim concave' (26) turning against him and exacting their price. Stanzas seven and eight also foreshadow the equivalent response evinced by Heathcliff when he refuses to entertain any suggestion of heaven in preference to union with Catherine (this will be discussed later). Suffice to say at this stage that Fernando De Samara has no interest in `Heaven's

undreamt felicity' (31) as an antidote to forgotten love.

After extensive self–laceration the speaker starts to reminisce, wondering if Augusta Geraldine Almeda can still recall these episodes or whether her memory is clouded by a `Lethean rest' (53), a Hadean reference that suits the ambience of the poem. The reader is then transported to an idyllic setting where the hapless guitar player entertains his lover casting `Virtue and faith and Heaven away' (72). As is typical in Byron's works the reader is left to surmise what transgressions were in fact committed, but the sense of justice that ensues can not be gainsaid. The final stanza is almost an invocation seeking vengeance against the Gondal heroine which proves to be both prophetic and true:

> Well, thou hast paid me back , my love!
> But, if there be a God above,
> Whose arm is strong, whose word is true,
> This hell shall wring thy spirit too! (77-80)

Fernando De Samara believes that justice must be effected eventually, that no–one is exempt from reprisal. This belief takes on an oracular strain as the reader is informed as to how Augusta Geraldine Almeda suffers an equal torment near the end of her life. In `Were they shepherds, who sat all day' Brontë has vividly demonstrated the principle that a framework of justice does exist in the universe from which no-one, not even the august heroine of the Gondal saga, can escape:

> But nothing mutable was there!
> The face, all deadly fair,
> Showed a fixed impress of keen sufferings
> past;

And the raised lids did show

No wandering gleam below

But a dark anguish, self-destroyed at last. (274-279)

Augusta Geraldine Almeda's demise is a bloodthirsty one as she is murdered by the outlaw Douglas and she perishes a `wreck of desolate despair ... ' (318): the torment she inflicted has indeed come full circle.

Augusta Geraldine Almeda even has a premonition of the torment she will have to endure as restitution for her misdeeds in `This summer wind with thee and me' composed on 2 March 1844. Brontë has evidently reached the point where she has decided to remove her heroine from the script of the Gondals and the above poem serves as a warning for what is to follow in `Were they shepherds, who sat all day' which contains an account of her murder (Brontë's own death followed only approximately four years after the death of her primary protagonist in the Gondal epic). Both Augusta Geraldine Almeda and Catherine in Wuthering Heights have their lives cut short either by murder, as in the case of the former, or illness in the latter. It may well be that Brontë knew intuitively that her own life would be truncated as are the lives of her heroines. Augusta Geraldine Almeda has an insight into the workings of the cosmos and realizes that she cannot escape the consequences of past actions:

I know that I have done thee wrong

Have wronged both thee and heaven;

And I may mourn my lifetime long'

And may not be forgiven

Repentant tears will vainly fall

To cover deeds untrue;

But for no grief can I recall

The dreary word, - Adieu. (9-16)

There is no reason to doubt that some of these notions reflect the ideas of the poet herself as we have already seen how the Gondal heroine is employed as a mouthpiece for her creator on numerous occasions. Augusta Geraldine Almeda has confirmed the notions expressed by Fernando De Samara and added an authenticity or plausibility to his utterances. In addressing Lord Alfred S. she finally acknowledges her treachery and realizes that in all likelihood a lifetime of repentance will not lead to forgiveness: divine justice will probably not be countermanded. Letter XX in Letters from the Dead to the Living may have served as a useful precedent in this context as it deals with the dire repercussions of infidelity, the most prevailing trespass of the Gondal queen. Theodosius sends a message to Varius in which he admonishes him against continuing an adulterous affair:

> Can you unmoved recall the distress into which a crime of this nature plunged my heedless youth? What remorse, what confusion, a moment's madness cost me? you was the only confident, to whom I discovered the secret wound it gave my bleeding soul.[15]

Suffering, according to the departed spirit Theodosius, is the inexorable consequence of infidelity. In the final stanza of `This summer wind with thee and me', which Gèrin notes has been written above four cancelled lines in the Gondal Poems Notebook, Augusta Geraldine Almeda apprehends that her contrition will eventually come to an end in another dimension:

Till far beyond earth's frenzied strife,

That makes destruction joy,

Thy perished faith shall spring to life,

And my remorse shall die. (21-24)

The fact that Brontë has re–written the final stanza suggests that she was fastidious in ensuring that her ideas were clearly conveyed. The words `my remorse shall die' (24) are consistent with both the demands of justice and a concomitant mercy manifested by the creator. (Theodosius is however more fortunate than the Gondal queen as he is forgiven by an auspicious spirit at the eleventh hour):

> Yet the sincerity of my repentance found acceptance: and as my last hour approached, some propitious spirit breathed peace and divine consolation to my soul and in these gentle whispers reproved my infidelity,....[16]

To Brontë mercy consists in the ability to atone and through atonement to reach a state of tranquility, rather than salvation and forgiveness by accepting Christ. But at least the road to salvation, even through the doors of repentance, is available to all.

Before turning to an analysis of Heathcliff in the context of retribution and mercy, the nature of mercy in Brontë's philosophy deserves closer scrutiny. Brontë is astutely conscious of the extent to which mortals can profane themselves, the extent to which the divine spark in every man can be defiled: in `Filial Love', the third devoir, she inveighs against the imprudence in disobeying the commandment to love one's parents:

> Now, this commandment is not given, this threat is not added for nothing: there may be people who are so contemptuous of their own welfare, their duty and their God, that the spark of heavenly fire within them dies and leaves them a

moral chaos without light and without order, a hideous degradation of the image in which they are created. (13)

`Filial Love' was written on the 5 August 1842 and succeeded by `The Butterfly' in which the deity is referred to as `the God of justice and mercy' (18): the implication in `The Butterfly' is that God is ultimately compassionate and any punishment inflicted is only for growth of the individual. Mercy is accordingly fundamentally superior to justice as the miscreant is brought back to 'an eternal realm of happiness and glory' (19). In the words of Edward Young, whose text `Night Thoughts On Life, Death and Immortality' was to be found in the Haworth library, this world is but a shadow of the true heaven beyond. The implication in Young's poem is that change and growth are earthly phenomena which will be superseded by an immutability in the afterlife:

All, all on earth is shadow, all beyond
Is substance; the reverse is Follys' creed:
How solid all where change shall be no more?[17] (120-122)

That God is ultimately merciful is borne out in an ominous poem `The starry night shall tidings bring:' in which the speaker instructs the addressee to watch out for the omen of a bird dripping in gore. This portentous sign is supposed to point the way to the place where the addressee must supplicate God in prayer for an undisclosed reason.:

What fortune may await thee there,
I will not, and I dare not tell;
But Heaven is moved by fervent prayer,
And God is mercy; - fare thee well! (9-12)

There is a hint of impending suffering in this poem as is attested by the reluctance of the

speaker to reveal the future, but the addressee is reminded that beyond whatever punishment will ensue, the mercy of God can be invoked to ameliorate the chastisement. (Stylistically, it can be seen how Brontë has incorporated the supernatural to intensify the suspense: the use of this omen has pagan connotations which add to the sense of mystery in the poem).

A further illustration of the pre–eminence of mercy in the divine plan occurs in the Gondal poem `Geraldine'. Stanza eleven contains another quintessential prayer to the divine attribute of mercy:

"Say, sin shall never blanch that cheek,
Nor suffering change that brow;
Speak, in Thy mercy, Maker, speak,
And seal it safe from woe." (41-44)

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, Brontë has relied on her own intuitions, rather than the Bible, in her exploration of the mercy of the creator. She would, however, certainly have drawn support for her intuitions from Milton who has lucidly depicted the relationship between mercy and justice in Paradise Lost:

....in Mercy and Justice both,
Through Heaven and Earth, so shall my glorie excel,
But Mercy first and last shall highest shine. (III. 132-34)

Milton was relatively unorthodox for the seventeenth century and his Arianism, in terms of which Christ is seen as a messenger from God rather than as coterminous with Him, may have led Brontë to place a higher value on Paradise Lost than would otherwise be the case. (There are also neo–platonic influences in Paradise Lost which she would

have recognized as emanating from a non–Christian source.) The aforementioned quote from Paradise Lost is in accordance with Brontë's ideas as expressed in the devoirs and poetry: mercy is the hallmark of God's nature. Another possible confirmation for Brontë is an article published in the 1835 issue of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine which reviews religious poetry of the seventeenth century, in particular Fletcher and Milton. There are extracts from seventeenth century religious poets and those of Fletcher and Milton which deal extensively with the issues of mercy, justice and redemption. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore this article in depth: the article does, however, serve to demonstrate that the pre–eminence of mercy is apparent for Fletcher:

> Whether we were right or not in saying that Fletcher was more successful in impersonation of Justice than Mercy, we are sure that we are right in saying that the Address of Mercy to the Deity far excels that of Justice – nor can it be heard but with profoundest emotion by every Christian – by every human heart.[18]

To further comprehend the pervasive framework of mercy, justice and redemption it is only necessary to peruse the text of Wuthering Heights whose pages bristle with the problems posed in this area. Heathcliff is par excellence the example of a man driven by a ruthless passion to avenge his sense of destitution. His irreverence and self–torment certainly evoke the dramatic heroes created by Byron and it will be shown here how Brontë has drawn on this Romantic poet in her depiction of an essentially amoral hero in her one and only novel.[19] It is as if Byron had sanctioned and publicised this type of anti–hero, making it acceptable for Brontë to develop a character whose lack of remorse and ruthless exploits have now taken on a mythological status.

The exchange between the narrator, Nelly Dean, and Heathcliff in chapter thirty-four exemplifies the dichotomy between conventional standards of piety and irreverence carried to dangerous proportions. The views of Nelly Dean as narrator or those of Heathcliff as leading protagonist are not necessarily of course the views of Brontë herself whose convictions have already been explored above. It is Heathcliff's response to Nelly's `....you'll be spared to repent on your many injustices, yet!' (362) that causes the reader to wonder at the fate of a protagonist they have witnessed plunder all before him:

> Well, never mind Mr. Green; as to repenting of my injustices, I've done no injustice, and I repent of nothing – I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself.' (363)

It is self–evident that Heathcliff's imminent contentment stems from a much–awaited reunion with Catherine, but his lack of remorse is more disturbing. Even the errant Dr Faustus repents bitterly at the arrival of his final hour, a drama Brontë was probably aware of: the closing remark by Joseph suggests that the author was cognizant of the closing scene in Marlow's masterpiece when the devils transport their victim to the dungeons of Hades:

> `Th' divil's harried off his soul,' he cried, `and he muh hev his carcass intuh t' bargain, for ow't Aw care! Ech! What a wicked un he looks girnning at death!' and the old sinner grinned in mockery. (365; ch. 34)

There is a dramatic irony here since Brontë has delighted in lampooning the hypocritical, Calvinistic Joseph whose soul will apparently fare no better than Heathcliff's: the reader can imagine Joseph being harried off as well. There is however a certain ambiguity in the fate of Heathcliff that Brontë has deliberately constructed

The destiny of Heathcliff depends on the viewpoint of Nelly Dean, Lockwood or the local rustics as Thormahlen has pointed out:

> Wuthering Heights offers three possible views of Catherine's and Heathcliff's fate after death: (a) Catherine (who shows some contrition on her death-bed, if only towards Heathcliff) goes to heaven and Heathcliff (who dies unrepentant) to hell. (b) Both sleep quietly together in the earth by Gimmerton Kirk,.... (c) Catherine and Heathcliff find the joint heaven they both dreamt of – at least partly, one must assume, by courtesy of the powers of darkness, as they are seen to `walk' on stormy nights.[20]

The lack of remorse referred to in the above extract appears to have Byronic overtones. Byron's trapped, fallen heroes are equally disdainful of any divine force who will be able to impose punishment. One of the most lucid illustrations occurs in Manfred:

> Must crimes be punish'd but by other
> crimes,
> And greater criminals? - Back to thy hell!
> Thou hast no power upon me, that I feel;
> Thou never shalt possess me, that I know:
> What I have done is done; I bear within
> A torture which could nothing gain from
> thine:
> The mind which is immortal makes itself
> Requital for its good or evil thoughts,-
> Is its own origin of ill and end (III. iv. 189-99)

Like Byron, Brontë has tapped into the gothic genre, with its remorseless demonic hero: the emphasis placed by Manfred on individuality, the absence of divine retribution, the inner torture and the immortality of the mind are all ideas espoused by Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights. The very nature of Heathcliff as a restless interloper has its prelude in the romantic, ruinous escapades of Byron's frenzied heroes and within the Gothic genre. Childe Harold has already been alluded to but Cain and The Deformed Transformed are further examples of how Byron's heroes have been coerced to wrestle with rejection in one form or another. Arnold in The Deformed Transformed is a scarcely veiled disguise for the deformities of its creator:

> At home – What home? I have no home,
>
> no kin,
>
> No kind – not made like other creatures, or
>
> To share their sports or pleasures. Must I
>
> bleed, too,
>
> Like them? Oh, that each drop which
>
> falls to earth
>
> Would rise a snake to sting them, as they
>
> have stung me!
>
> Or that the devil, to whom they liken me,
>
> Would aid his likeness!.... (I. I. 9-19)

The parallels to Heathcliff in the above drama are again noteworthy: Heathcliff is an outsider who is relegated to servant status after Mr. Earnshaw's death; he yearns for revenge and exacts a crude form of justice; he is deformed in mind if not in body; he is repeatedly associated with the devil by the other characters in the novel. When

Rutherford describes Childe Harolde as `...the conception of a noble nature doomed by some fate, blasted, and perverted from Promethean potentialities to almost Satanic evil' this description would be apt for Heathcliff whose heroic nature is perverted into a ruthless decline.[21]

In chapter seventeen this association of Heathcliff and the devil is accentuated in the conversation between Isabella and Nelly Dean after the former's escape from Wuthering Heights. Isabella was habitually abused by Heathcliff as she was compelled to exist in the infernal darkness of Wuthering Heights and her tormentor:

> Even if he had doted on me, the devilish nature would have revealed its existence, somehow. Catherine had an awfully perverted taste to esteem him so dearly, knowing him so well – Monster! would that he could be blotted out of creation, and out of my memory!' (209)

Nelly Dean attempts to support Heathcliff with the rather feeble `He's a human being,....' (209; ch. 17), but by this stage in the narrative the reader is already beginning to speculate as to whether Heathcliff has turned into an infernal fiend: his violence towards Hindley and his hurling a knife at Isabella hardly improve an already tarnished image. The story being relayed to Nelly Dean may be uttered from the lips of an abused and scorned woman, but this does not detract from its veracity particularly since other characters in the novel have endorsed this judgement. When Isabella later in this chapter refers to Heathcliff as being the instrument of a satanic god the reader is inclined to be convinced:

> There he has continued, praying like a methodist; only the deity he implored is senseless dust and ashes; and God, when addressed, was curiously confounded

with his own black father! (209-210).

The question of human forgiveness of sins as opposed to God's forgiveness is highlighted in chapter seventeen and elsewhere in the novel. Do the victims of injustice ever forgive the perpetrator or is the world of Wuthering Heights an essentially unpardonable one? The conventional piety of Nelly Dean and her belief that humans should not seek vengeance is starkly juxtaposed against Isabella's response to her maltreatment at the hands of a cruel man. Nelly Dean shows an inveterate recourse to the Bible in explaining how she believes humans should behave but this approach, although providing Christian overtones for the novel, is not supported by the victims of iniquity (it should also be borne in mind that Nelly Dean is not herself one of the sufferers.) There ought to be forgiveness according to the leading narrator but reality is a far cry from this idealistic state. Isabella is evidently obsessed with revenge as she invokes the Old Testament in her vituperative response to Heathcliff and his atrocities: in response to Nelly Dean's `If God afflict your enemies, surely that ought to suffice you' (215) Isabella turns to Deuteronomy:

> `But what misery laid on Heathcliff would content me, unless I have a hand in it? I'd rather he suffered less, if I might cause his sufferings, and he might know that I was the cause. Oh, I owe him so much. On only one condition can I hope to forgive him. It is, if I may take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, for every wrench of agony, return a wrench, reduce him to my level. (215–216)

Subtle argument this may be but forgiveness it is not. Isabella wants to taste the satisfaction of seeing her tormentor squirm at her own hand. She describes her flight

from Wuthering Heights as similar to `a soul escaped from purgatory ... ' (217)

but she is no martyr willing to take on the ills of an infernal world. For Isabella, to have absconded is a blessing, but her indictment of Wuthering Heights and the news now relayed to the reader leaves one in no doubt that matters are deteriorating at an alarming rate. She has given an intimate account of a Stygian world at a time when Nelly Dean is residing at Thrushcross Grange: her proclamation that Wuthering Heights is a hell on earth paints a dire picture:

> And far rather would I be condemned to perpetual dwelling in the infernal regions, than even for one night abide beneath the roof of Wuthering Heights. (217- 218).

The contention made above that Wuthering Heights is an inherently unforgiving milieu is again proven in the resentment of Catherine in chapter twenty– nine:

> `I know he has a bad nature,' said Catherine; `he's your son. But I'm glad I've a better, to forgive it; and I know he loves me and for that reason I love him. Mr. Heathcliff, you have nobody to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater misery! You are miserable, are you not? Lonely, like the devil, and envious like him? Nobody loves you – nobody will cry for you, when you die! I would'nt be you!' (319).

Catherine commences by suggesting that she has a nobler nature capable of forgiving the bad–natured Linton but this nobility soon pales as she basks in the misery of Heathcliff. She is not above the satisfaction of revenge, nor does she pray for the miscreant's salvation. Vengeance, whether justified or not, is at the very root of Wuthering Heights.

The conclusions that can be gleaned from the above discussion in relation to the turbulent world of Wuthering Heights are as follows: there is no forgiveness demonstrated towards Heathcliff by the characters in the novel; Nelly Dean offers Heathcliff the road to salvation in traditional Christian terms which he fails to avail himself of and is accordingly damned in her eyes; Brontë has not commented unequivocally on Heathcliff's damnation in Wuthering Heights, as is evident from the earlier quote by Thormahlen, but the general tenor of the poems suggest that even a felon of his nature will be redeemed at some stage even if he does not seek this salvation (God, according to Brontë, is merciful and this extends to all creation).

ENDNOTES

1. Edward Young, Night Thoughts On Life Death and Immortality (London: Livington, 1790) 5.
2. G Wright, Thoughts in Younger Life, on Interesting Subjects; or, Poems, Letters, and Essays, Moral, Elegiac, and Descriptive; Written principally on, or at the request of, Young Friends; With Memoirs of the Author (London: Buckland, 1778) 204.
3. Charlotte Brontë, "Editor's Preface to the New Edition of Wuthering Heights 1850," Penguin Critical Anthologies: Emily Brontë: 42.
4. Jeremy Taylor, The Golden Grove: A Choice Manual (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1849) 116.
5. Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford 179.
6. Spark and Stanford 179.
7. Michael Wheeler, Death And The Future Life In Victorian Literature And Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1990) 111.
8. Robert Lee Wolff, Gains And Losses: Novels Of Faith And Doubt In Victorian England (New York: Garland, 1977) 257.
9. Wolff 323-324.
10. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Errors of Christian Teaching," Essays, Lectures And Orations By Ralph Waldo Emerson (London: Orr, 1850) 510.
11. Derrick Leon, Ruskin the Great Victorian (London: Routledge, 1949) 226.
12. Janet Gezari 282.
13. Muriel Spark, The Essence of the Brontës (London: Owen, 1993) 273.
14. Spark and Stanford 217.
15. Rowe 48.

16. Rowe 49.

17 Young 5.

18. Fletcher, "Sacred Poetry of the Seventeenth Century," Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine 388 (1835): 688.

19. Cf. But there was another poet of Emily's childhood whose verses not only nourished whatever was gloomy in her imagination, but tinged her moorland austerity with a purple dye or romance. This poet was Byron. There is no doubt that Byron was read at the parsonage, for in 1834 Charlotte recommended him to Ellen Nussey, with a caution against Don Juan and perhaps Cain but 'read the rest fearlessly', and both Charlotte and Branwell quoted him.

Helen Brown, "The Influence Of Byron On Emily Brontë," The Modern Language Review 34 (London: Cambridge, 1939) 375.

20. Marianne Thomahlen, "The Lunatic and the Devil's Disciple: 'Lovers' in Wuthering Heights" Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language (London: Oxford, 1977): 195.

21. Andrew Rutherford, Byron: A Critical Study (Edinburgh: Oliver, 1965) 80.

CHAPTER EIGHT

POWER/ EVIL

> THE DEMON OF POWER - Neither necessity nor desire, but the love of power, is the demon of mankind. You may give men everything possible - health, food, shelter, enjoyment - but they are and remain unhappy and capricious, for the demon waits and waits; and must be satisfied.[1]

> The force by which the sexual instinct is represented in the mind we call `libido' – sexual desire - and we regard it as something analagous to hunger, the will to power, and so on, where the ego-instincts are concerned.[2]

The significance of how Brontë has depicted Heathcliff and the key issues of power and evil will be scrutinized in this chapter. Closely allied to any consideration is Brontë's rather ambivalent attitude towards her own creation. The paradox of a possible subconscious sympathy for this tortured individual needs to be unravelled if any sense is to be made of her prevalent philosophy. We come again to the matrix of her beliefs as the complexity of Heathcliff is decoded. It is no surprise that Wuthering Heights has elicited such divergent responses in the light of a creation whose very being contains the seeds of mystery, whose tormented frame conceals profound truths about the universe. Winifrith has succinctly encapsulated the diverse reactions of both the public and the critics:

> Like almost every character in the book, Heathcliff can be defended as a character of superhuman energy transcending normal moral rules, or more conventionally attacked as a creature of the utmost cruelty and brutality.[3]

We already know that Brontë was more than mildly interested in the natural world and issues of strength and survival in a perilous environment. It is this very fascination with the necessity for innate power to survive in the natural world that leads to her paradoxical treatment of the most brooding, the most enduring presence in her novel. It will be imperative for any critic who hopes to make sense of her philosophy to perceive the relationship between raw power in the form of Heathcliff and the precepts of mercy discussed earlier, to comprehend the very forces of flintstone and yielding that are at the centre of existence. One of the earliest critics to recognize these universal principles of intertwining forces that pervade the novel was David Cecil:

> The first is that the whole created cosmos, animate and inanimate, mental and physical alike, is the expression of certain living spiritual principles - on the one hand what may be called the principle of the storm - of the harsh, the ruthless, the wild, the dynamic; and on the other the principle of calm - of the gentle, the merciful, the passive and the tame.[4]

To Brontë the universe is constructed of these interlocking forces and neither can be destroyed without the collapse of momentum in this world. Power and submission remain forces upon which the world of man is constructed, a dynamic process that eludes simplistic answers. As far as Cecil is concerned these forces are only antithetical on the surface and indeed aspects of a mystical process that inexorably leads to harmony:

> Secondly, in spite of their apparent opposition these principles are not conflicting. Either - Emily Brontë does not make clear what she thinks - each is the expression of a different aspect of a single pervading spirit; or they are component parts of a

harmony.[5]

What appears to be unassailable is that a character dominated by a forceful masculine aspect will respond to a given personal crisis differently from one controlled by gentleness, but whether cruelty, as the darker aspect of the masculine force, can be forgiven as part of a cosmic plan needs to be explored. More importantly, whether Brontë believed that naked sadism can be excused on the basis of inevitability needs to be carefully considered.

Cecil is probably correct in his quasi-mystical insight that the `single principle that ultimately directs them sooner or later imposes an equilibrium',[6] but this oversimplifies Brontë's complex relationship to her dark protagonist. Indeed, Cecil believes the very notions of good and evil are obliterated in Wuthering Heights, that such notions are antiquated viewed from the pedestal of the visionary: it is simply a process of intertwining forces of calm and storm that reign in the universe. The question to my mind that should be posed is whether any imbalance between the forces of strength and mildness that may develop justifies whatever actions may subsequently ensue? It will be argued that Heathcliff as the embodiment of fortitude still had a choice in his reactions to betrayal at the hands of Catherine: perhaps his overwhelming passions would drive him to disparage the marriage he loathed but the methods he employed and cruelty evinced really had nothing to do with the principles of the cosmos. It is at this point that the conventional notions of good and evil cannot be cast aside as irrelevant considerations to the mystic, and it is at this juncture that Brontë's own attitude towards Heathcliff is not as sympathetic as Cecil might believe. A critic such as Q.D. Leavis tends to rely on a form of predestination as a sublime excuse for Heathcliff which obscures the differentiation

between inevitability and a response to a given event, the difference between his suffering and unabashed sadism. Leavis, who interestingly draws a parallel to the fairy tale of the`Beauty and the Beast' tends to excuse Heathcliff as a victim of circumstance:

> Catherine's tragedy then was that she forgot her prince and he was forced to remain the monster, destroying her; invoking this pattern brought in much more from the fairy tale world of magic, folk-lore and ballads, the oral tradition of the folk, that the Brontë children learnt principally from their nurses and their servant Tabby.[7]

Brontë is as attracted to the vigour of Heathcliff as Leavis may be but it does not follow that she exculpates her creation for his ruthlessness. She is subconsciously drawn to her protagonist's power but there is no indication that she supports his excesses. Perhaps Charlotte was correct in the observation proffered as a defence of her sister to the Victorian public that Heathcliff's demonism was not entirely of Brontë's making, that she never exonerates a character who virtually has a life of his own (and by implication makes his own choices):

> Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know: I scarcely think it is. But this I know; the writer who possesses the creative owns something of which he is not always master - something that at times strangely wills and works for itself....As for you the nominal artist - your share in it has been to work passively under dictates you neither delivered nor could question - that would not be uttered at your prayer, nor suppressed nor changed at your caprice.[8]

Brontë has plumbed the very depths of evil which a twentieth century reader will be accustomed to encountering; she has delved into the heart of cruelty in the guise of a

tormented man governed by vengeance, and yet he has attractive qualities which his creator admires, a perverse honesty which challenges the cant and privilege inherent in the Victorian self-satisfying edifice.

It is interesting to compare Browning's treatment of the villains he created in his verse as there are some relevant parallels. To Browning, man is a being developing from ignorance to knowledge and from wickedness to morality. As such, man is neither good nor evil but a combination of these forces as he is an imperfect being groping towards a distant perfection.[9] What is more, man exists in a state of uncertainty as to the consequences of his actions which is claimed to be a prerequisite for moral choices to be made.[10] It is within this state of ignorance that man must evolve:

> It is the mixture, or rather the apparent mixture, of shade and light in life, the conflict of seeming good with seeming evil in the world, that constitutes the world a probation-place.[11]

The recognition of right and wrong originates from the Godhead within man. In other words, Browning asserts that God exists not only in the outer world but operates within man "under the higher form of love, in the human heart"[12]. I suggest that Brontë would ascribe to Browning's views on evolution and the inner Godhead within man although she does not condone cruelty as such.

We need to ascertain why Brontë is so enamoured of her demonic hero. Browning 'delighted in making a case for the apparently immoral position' as in the case of 'The Last Duchess' and Brontë is herself fascinated by the darkness in man.[13] There

is a primal aspect to Heathcliff that is accentuated by a recurring reference to animal imagery, thus creating a subliminal effect on the reader. He is attractive to some extent because he embodies the primitive animal side to human nature devoid of the restraints of cultural niceties. It is revealing to trace this `refrain' in the novel as it demonstrates how Brontë has developed our impression of a man governed by the instincts of a beast. Allied to this animal imagery is the philosophical concern with the survival of the fittest and hierarchical relationships of power. In many ways he is the embodiment of the superman advocated by Nietzsche long after Brontë's death:

> At the risk of displeasing innocent ears, I submit that egoism belongs to the essence of a noble soul, I mean the unalterable belief that to a being such as "me", other beings must naturally be in subjection, and have to sacrifice themselves.[14]

Wuthering Heights contains a leitmotif of the jungle. At the outset of the novel Lockwood is plunged into a demonic world in which he is assailed by vicious dogs. He is forced to prostrate himself before the welcome release of his `malignant masters' (59; ch.2). The hapless guest then makes a rather telling remark:

> I ordered the miscreants to let me out - on their peril to keep me one minute longer - with several incoherent threats of retaliation that, in their indefinite depth of virulency smacked of King Lear. (59)

King Lear is a drama primarily concerned with the dissipation of a kingdom and the ruthless ascent to power of the disenfranchised, the outcast in the form of Edmund who connivingly carves a destiny which is denied him as a birthright. One of King lear's famous speeches on the heath is pertinent to the leitmotif of survival and bestiality in

Wuthering Heights: the words of a madman contain a residue of truth:

> Lear: Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more than but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here. (III.iv.105-112)

Besides the milieu of overriding destruction, King Lear and Brontë's work share the concern with survival in an animal world. Brontë has deliberately alluded to King Lear, one of Shakespeare's most gruesome dramas, to draw parallels and elucidate what can happen when individuals are ostracised by civilization, when they are deliberately disadvantaged in the eyes of the law. The beast can re-emerge and claim dominion.

Nelly Dean has no illusions about the role played by Heathcliff at Wuthering Heights: `It's a cuckoo's, sir - I know all about it...' (76). The cuckoo is a usurper stealing the nest and eggs of other birds, a function Heathcliff revels in and he is also described as being `Rough as a saw-edge, and hard as whinstone!' (76). Like Edmund in King lear Heathcliff has an innate harshness which flourishes in the milieu of disintegration. He has a malign role to play in the self-revelations of the other characters, yet he survives both Catherine and Edgar: his longevity is testimony to his being the ultimate survivor. He is the consummate `superman' who cannot be defeated by any of the other characters in the novel. On this level only he reigns supreme but he is also an unwitting agent of a process of regeneration. To this extent his dark aims are gainsaid as he becomes a pawn in the cosmos leading to the resurrection of harmony in the second generation. In the words of Stevie Davies:

> He was the cuckoo in the nest who disturbed the world of the Heights....Yet

> Heathcliff is associated by Emily Brontë with a kind of harmony and fertility which underlie all the other levels of order and disorder that superimpose in complex strata in the novel. Beneath the immaculate and fastidious social order symbolized by Thrushcross Grange and the Linton's way of life, Catherine has discerned a predatory disorder, through her `baby-work' of undoing the pillow. At a deeper level, beneath the disharmony of Catherine's early death and Heathcliff's huge, inexplicable loss, is revealed a buried principle of a benign though pagan shaping-out of a destiny that is ultimately fruitful and kind.[15]

Heathcliff may conquer all before him but he ultimately remains inextricably bound to the denouement and unable to prevent the seeds of fruition re-emerging at Wuthering Heights. It is at this juncture that Brontë leaves behind the world of King Lear, a play whose denouement leads only to death for its leading characters. There is hope in Wuthering Heights but only when its heinous antagonist is no longer alive to devastate those around him.

It is Lockwood who realizes that country-life has contributed to the development of Heathcliff's personality although he appears momentarily to be mesmerized by the earnest life of country-dwellers:

> I perceive that people in these regions acquire over people in towns the value that a spider in a dungeon does over a spider in a cottage, to their various occupants;... (102).

Even Lockwood recognizes the innate predatory quality of the Heights in the short space of time that he sojourns there; he acknowledges his vulnerablility in the face of superior strength. Subconsciously, in the language used, he realizes that he is akin to the occupant

at the mercy of `a spider' (102) bred in the depths of darkness and unnoticeable to the viewer. Effete civility is of no use in the confrontation with this primal force. It is again to Nietzsche that it is worth turning in order to comprehend the likes of a Heathcliff and his world, in which Christianity is anathema:

> I have declared war against the anaemic Christian ideal (together with what is closely related to it), not because I want to annihilate it, but only to put an end to its tyranny and clear the way for other ideals, for more robust ideals.[16]

That Brontë was concerned with the animal world and its relationship to the human kingdom is not only borne out in her depiction of the ineffectual Lockwood vis-à-vis the rural world, but also in an early statement recorded by Mary Robinson in her biography:

> Or Emily, half-reclining on a slab of stone, would play like a young child with the tadpoles in the water, making them swim about, and she would fall to moralising on the strong and the weak, the brave and the cowardly, as she chased the creatures with her hand.[17]

This is a vignette from Brontë's childhood in which she is already fascinated by the survival of the fittest. Although Darwin's Origin of Species was only published after her death in 1859, Brontë was aware of this issue sua sponte. These concerns are later to be transposed into Wuthering Heights in the guise of Heathcliff and the Lintons. A battle is to ensue between the outcast Heathcliff who is pitted against the Lintons with all their trappings, but whose innate weakness appears impotent in the confrontation. On the level of survival per se Heathcliff emerges as the victor; in the animal world of conquest he vanquishes all before him and he has managed, in his feud with the Lintons, to reduce the contest to a basic level. As J. Hillis Miller states:

> There are no laws for an animal to break and there is nothing immoral in the slaughter of one animal by another. The characters in Wuthering Heights have returned to an animal state. Such a return is reached only through the transgression of all human law.[18]

This observation by Hillis Miller is true as far as Heathcliff, Hindley and the debased Hareton prior to his reformation are concerned, but does not in my opinion apply to the Lintons. They are drawn into a struggle of vulgar proportions against their will and are rampantly defeated in the world of predatory instincts from which they have been sheltered. They are the weaker tadpoles too cowardly to survive.

This cowardice of the Lintons is alluded to on numerous occasions. They lack the quality of fortitude that Brontë so admired. It is almost as if the Lintons are destined to be the victims in the cauldron of their rustic life. Edgar Linton becomes an easy prey as Nelly Dean informs the reader in chapter eight:

> The soft thing looked askance through the window - he possessed the power to depart, as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed, or a bird half eaten.
>
> Ah, I thought, there will be no saving him - He's doomed, and flies to his fate! (112)

Familiar linguistic references to power, bestiality and cruelty are found in this extract although the imagery is itself perplexing. At face value Edgar is associated with the cat, powerless to withdraw from his half-devoured prey, whereas in essence it is Edgar who, in the context of the novel, becomes the tormented victim. It is difficult to explain this `inverted' image in the above quotation except perhaps as an accentuation of a potential

inner cruelty hidden beneath the surface of all human beings. Even Edgar could potentially, if driven by untoward circumstances, reveal a savagery of which any man is capable. To Brontë the cat is the animal most akin to the human being. In her devoir entitled The Cat she makes some telling comparisons between the modus operandi of cats and humans:

> A cat is an animal which has more human feelings than almost any other being....In truth, there may be people who would say that the resemblance is close only to the meanest human beings, that it is limited to their excessive hypocrisy, cruelty, and ingratitude - detestable vices in our race and equally odious in the cat's. (9).

The author then proceeds to refute this comparison of cats to only the meanest of humans suggesting that these characteristics are common to all humans. She argues that society, with its emphasis on politeness, compels individuals to conceal their true intent. Like the cat, mankind `hides his misanthropy under an appearance of most endearing gentleness...' (9): mankind dissembles to achieve self-gain. Continuing the hypothetical discourse with an objector who points out the cruelty of cats in playing with their victims before sounding the death knell, she retorts that fox-hunters often allow the fox to be disengaged from the mouth of the bloodhound thus allowing the chase to continue before final annihilation. She then resoundingly supplements her argument referring to the cruelty of a young boy crushing a butterfly between his fingers in view of a mother's tacit approval. Cats, like humankind, are part of a fallen world:

> ...no doubt they still remember that they owe all their wretchedness and bad qualities to the great ancestor of the human race, for surely cats in Paradise were not mean. (10).

This devoir shows that Brontë was concerned with the inherent tyranny of mankind from a young age. If this was all she had written, an accusation of misanthropy would be justified, but, again, this devoir must be seen in the context of her broader vision. She is opposed to finesse concealing selfishness, she is unimpressed by false civility and implicitly repulsed by the pretentious world of the Lintons. It is this hypocrisy in Victorian society and the disparities in opportunity which need to be exposed. This is one of the reasons that she, as the creator of her drama, shows contempt for the plight of the Lintons: weakness and the veneer of civilization are not characteristics that she admired. The Lintons embody both an insipid quality and represent the elite in Victorian society who mask their own darker side behind the trappings of respectability.

The struggle between Heathcliff and the Lintons gains momentum in the mid-section of the novel upon the former's return to claim his denied birthright. As Nancy Armstrong has noted, the second half of the novel `resembles nothing quite so much as the inhumane battleground mapped out in Darwin's biology.'[19] The power of Heathcliff is also allied to a sadism that manifests itself when he loses Catherine. He becomes a harsh predator seeking proprietary gain as a means of taking revenge and his primary victims are the Lintons. Almost without warning the milieu of the novel is transformed into a veritable jungle: in the words of Wade Thompson:

> Directly and indirectly, then, Emily Brontë envisions a world in which the young and weak live in constant peril. How compelling this vision was to the author may be indicated by the persistence of the infanticide motif in her poetry.[20]

In the altercation between Catherine and Isabella in which the former attempts to dissuade the latter from pursuing a relationship with Heathcliff, the language employed is again

deliberately drawn from the animal world. Catherine's words invoke the brutality of struggle but also prove to be prophetic as she warns the purblind, infatuated Isabella that a rude awakening awaits her:

> He's not a rough diamond - a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic; he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. I never say to him let this or that enemy alone, because it would be ungenerous or cruel to harm them, I say - "Let them alone, because I should hate them to be wronged": and he'd crush you, like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge. (141)

Prior to this Catherine refers to Isabella metaphorically as a `little canary (in) the park on a winter's day' (141). The juxtaposition of Heathcliff depicted as a wolf and Isabella as a canary or sparrow's egg is almost banal in its design. The overwhelming vulnerability of Isabella is easily accentuated by this contrast and the astute reader will immediately recall the allusion to Heathcliff as a cuckoo elsewhere. Isabella is the sparrow's egg waiting to be ravaged by the cuckoo who appears in the guise of Heathcliff and this is precisely what transpires as Isabella refuses to heed sound advice. Heathcliff's hanging of her dog and subsequent abuse at Wuthering Heights are fraught with overtones of sadism: he enjoys the destruction of a woman he despises. It is a one-sided contest as the hunter is destined for victory. Brontë, with a touch of irony, dispels the romantic myths about the rustic world: Heathcliff may have been raised in the country but only the naive would imagine that some jewel of kindness lies hidden beneath the surface. There is no romantic vision of rural life, as Lockwood was subject to, nor are there any illusions about the struggle for survival.

In case there is any doubt as to the sadistic pleasure Heathcliff derived from torturing his

victims, an examination of his language in chapter eleven will soon dispel any such illusions. As Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford have observed, even at the denouement of the drama he shows no remorse, no recognition that sadism is wrong:

> But this new tolerance he displays is not one of active kindness; there are no elements of remorse in it, no signs that he wishes to expiate his past. It is just that he is no longer concerned with those who were once his chosen victims.[21]

He is the epitome of tyranny even though his motives are somewhat different from the average demogogue. Brontë is concerned with tyranny as an issue; she is concerned with power that metamorphoses itself into unbridled tyranny, as is evident in one of the last poems she ever wrote, which will be considered in due course. In this sense Heathcliff is a fallen superman embodying the worst aspects of tyranny which Brontë was assiduous in exposing in her poetry: I suggest that she could therefore never countenance what Heathcliff did even if she is subconsciously drawn to the unyielding fortitude of her own creation.

Heathcliff uses language which explicitly draws on the parallel of slavery:

> `I seek no revenge on you,' replied Heathcliff less vehemently. `That's not the plan - The tyrant grinds down his slaves - and they don't turn against him, they crush those beneath them. You are welcome to torture me to death for your amusement, only, allow me to amuse myself a little in the same style - And refrain from insult as much as you are able. Having levelled my palace, don't erect a hovel and complacently admire your own charity in giving me that for a home. (151).

He is clearly amused with the pain he inflicts as he reveals a cynical understanding of the nature of tyranny. Perhaps he is correct in asserting that a downward chain reaction occurs

but this is only because of fear. Ironically, his palace, a word denoting power, has been converted into a hovel, a barren abode for a servant. His only pleasure is sadism as he derives no lasting satisfaction usually associated with dictators. He is the dictator in a world he relishes as, like Ozymandias, he rules without pity, without any comprehension of ethics. Shelley's description of Ozymandias' visage as `wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command...' (5) could equally apply to Brontë's basilisk creation and, like the pharoah, Heathcliff can leave behind nothing of lasting substance. His legacy is a broken home which is left to the resurrection of others. It appears that Brontë was aware of `Ozymandias' as similar wording is found in her description of a princess in `Were they shepherds, who sat all day' which reads as follows:-

> But oh, she had a sullen frown -
>
> A lip of cruel scorn -
>
> As sweet tears never melted down
>
> Her cheeks since she was born! (13-16).

In this poem it is the latent savagery in man and woman that is always omnipresent.

This concern with barbarism continued until her death as her last poems were concerned with issues of power and unrestrained savagery. In `Why ask to know the date - the clime?' which is one of the last entries in The Gondal Poems notebooks dated 14 September 1846 and, as Gèzari states, was first published as a whole in 1938, Brontë explicitly discusses the excesses of power-worship:

> Why ask to know the date - the clime?
>
> More than mere words they cannot be:
>
> Men knelt to God and worshipped crime,

And crushed the helpless even as we ... (qtd. in Gezari 1-5)

The speaker in the above poem acknowledges that they are as ruthless as their forefathers and again recognizes that a hardening of the heart precedes savagery in the words, ` But I grew hard - I learnt to wear/ An iron front to terror's prayer... ' (39-40). Indeed, this poem plays out the familiar drama of the slow torture we witness in Wuthering Heights; like the cat the speaker taunts and goads her victim:

The suppliant groaned; his moistened eye
Swam wild and dim with agony -
The gentle blood could ill sustain
Degrading taunts, unhonoured pain. (104-107)

This is the tale of the `Captive and keeper' (132): even though the speaker is conscious that justice will be visited upon her by God she continues to taunt her victim. The narrative, however, takes a dramatic turn when a comrade of the tormentor appears on the scene conveying the news that her son has been captured by the enemy. Munificently the captive in his dying wish orders his army not to inflict harm on any infant. As Wade Thompson suggests, infanticide is a recurring motif in Brontë's works, but here the reader sees reversal as mercy triumphs over vengeance. The dying captive wakes up for a touching finale:

Twice in my arms twice on my knee
You stabbed my child and laughed at me
And so. With choking voice he said
I trust I hope in God she's dead
Yet not to thee not even to thee

Would I return such misery

Such is that [fearful] grief I know

I will not cause thee equal woe

Write that they harm no infant there (237-245)

The prisoner's daughter is finally released by the speaker as she ironically becomes `weary with her savage woe' (262), which contains a hidden allusion to the possible perpetuation of violence in the future as the daughter of the captive may have sought revenge in a further Gondal tale had Brontë lived to compose it.

It is significant that these final poems are concerned with transcending violence through compassion, in a similar manner to the resurrection through the innate virtues of Hareton and the second Catherine. The composition `Why ask to know what date, what clime?' was first published in Brontë Poems (1915) and according to Gezari is dated 13 May 1848. It is as if Brontë wants to sound the warning bells for posterity in both this poem and the preceding one: if mercy and justice are not embraced the world will continue to be plagued by senseless bloodshed:

Why ask to know what date, what clime?

There dwelt our own humanity,

Power-worshippers from earliest time,

Feet-kissers of triumphant crime,

Crushers of helpless misery,

Crushing down Justice, honouring wrong,

If that be feeble, this be strong. (1-7)

Surely, in the context of such poems which were composed after Wuthering Heights it is

evident that Brontë cannot support the abominations of Heathcliff, nor could she possibly be a silent co-conspirator in his tyranny. Her contempt for tyranny in `Why ask to know what date, what clime?' is apparent as the speaker, another alter ego for Brontë, condemns earlier civilizations who legitimized crime. The speaker's ennui and disillusionment are a prelude to the refrain of many a soldier in the twentieth century:

> I, doubly cursed on foreign sod,
> Fought neither for my home nor God (24-25)

With hindsight the reader is aware that Brontë was correct in the assertion that life will simply continue and savagery transform itself into a greater sophistication, unless a radical change in consciousness occurs. She recognizes the value of the `superhuman' but never allows this to overwhelm her consciousness. Stevie Davies has admirably noticed the connection:

> Her moral strength lies in her `curbing' and containing of her energies, mocking her own taste for the daemonic and the superhuman, relating her fantasies to the down-to-earth, putting down her own rebellions. The world of nature from which she learned so much about `the strong and the weak' also taught her the necessity of a universal and inclusive compassion.[22]

Darwinian theory which became popular shortly after Brontë's death is only one half of the paradigm, one which cannot be ignored, but neither can compassion be ousted from the picture.

Returning to a consideration of the plight of the victim in Wuthering Heights the following trends should be noted. The sadism of Heathcliff is counterpoised with a recurring humiliation of Edgar. The reader is led to disrespect the forlorn victim because

authorial sympathy is not forthcoming. Even his wife is quick to ridicule him:

> Heathcliff would as soon lift a finger at you as the king would march his army against a colony of mice. Cheer up, you sha'nt be hurt! Your type is not a lamb, it's a sucking leveret. (154)

Catherine's scathing attitude towards Edgar Linton, which I suggest is endorsed by Brontë, is accentuated when juxtaposed against `Stanzas To - ' which may well refer to Branwell. In `Stanzas To -' the speaker is most sympathetic to the timid who cannot help their disposition. There is an acceptance of the jungle mentality in this composition which is not granted to either Edgar or Heathcliff:

> Or, would I mock the wolf's death howl,
> Because his form is gaunt and foul?
> Or, hear with joy the leveret's cry,
> Because it cannot bravely die? (21-24)

The speaker in the above poem may not mock the leveret for his cowardice but Catherine certainly shows no remorse in her ridicule of Edgar, referred to as a `sucking leveret' (154). But before the reader's sympathies can shift too far in the direction of Heathcliff he is again depicted as a pagan monster deliberately flouting any conventional notions of humanity. There is a cruelty that can only be redressed through the equilibrium of the second generation. His perverse logic comes to the fore in his discussion with Nelly Dean in chapter fourteen leaving the reader to wonder if he has indeed entered the world of Bedlam:

> I never would have banished him from her society , as long as she desired his. The moment her regard ceased, I would have torn his heart out, and drunk his blood! (185).

His reference to a satanic ritual in the context of the enduring sadism suggests that he may have made a pact with the underworld, that his prosperity is allied to an invisible force that guides him. Indeed, Brontë never informs the reader how Heathcliff accumulates his wealth prior to his return to the Grange, a mystery which suggests the criminal underworld. Besides the repeated allusions to demonism in Ellen Dean's narrative (which might be countered by allegations against her of being a bastion of convention), Catherine, who truly understands him, exclaims that he is part of Satan's legion:

> `Well, I won't repeat my offer of a wife - It is as bad as offering Satan a lost soul - Your bliss lies, like his, in inflicting misery -.... (151).

The associations drawn between Heathcliff and the devil may not be only metaphoric or allegorical: Brontë knows that her hero has been transformed into an agent of darkness; she has ensured that sympathy for him is eroded. Any man who can indifferently exclaim that he has no pity, who tampers with graves, destroys innocent animals and talks of drinking blood is either insane or a member of a more sinister cult. The motive of love is not sufficient to redeem him. His own words are enough to condemn him:

> `I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral teething, and I grind with greater energy, in proportion to the increase of pain.' (189)

It should be borne in mind that entrails are often used with demonic intent in a witches' brew. Thormahlen's article specifically refers to Heathcliff's supposed pact with the devil and it is noted that this was a prevalent feature in both British and continental fiction of the time:

> In M.G. Lewis's The Monk (1796), C.R. Maturin's The Fatal Revenge, or Melmoth the Wanderer (1820), and E.T.A Hoffmann's Die Elixiere des Teufels

> (1816, English Translation in 1824), to mention just a few specimens in an abundant flora, men sell themselves and their souls for love, wealth and power. The Brontës will have known of, if not read, these works.[23]

The power plays are carried through into the interrelationship of the second generation characters with Heathcliff as the arch-manipulator. The dialectic of strength, survival and unfitness to live resurfaces again and again in the plot. It is Linton, paradoxically the offspring of Heathcliff, who is too sickly to live; a weak, weary figure who awaits his fate like the Lintons whose genes he inherits. On the other hand Hareton is the true prince in disguise waiting to be redeemed from his world of savagery, the true inheritor of the fiefdom from which he will carry the torch of regeneration. Brontë is too realistic to suggest that either Hareton or the second Catherine are faultless beings but they nevertheless contain the seeds of a redemption. In the words of Joan Carson, rebirth is a fundamental motif in Wuthering Heights:

> The desire for rebirth to a new oneness and immortality appears to lie at the deepest level of the plot of Wuthering Heights which in symbol and in sequence is remarkably like the myth of the sun god - or as Rank would express it - the birth of the hero.[24]

The shift in power occurs when Hareton stands up and protects Cathy against the threats of Heathcliff. The scales begin to tilt from this point onwards although it is only Heathcliff's weariness which allows this regenerative process to commence. Like a vessel that loses direction he relinquishes desire for control over his self-proclaimed dominion and his efforts are counteracted. The true hero of Wuthering Heights is Hareton as he embodies the qualities of strength, courage and compassion which represent Brontë's

ultimate human. An equilibrium has finally been created, a balance on which the future of the Heights and the Grange depend, and the very moors themselves.

ENDNOTES

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, The Dawn of Day trans. J.M. Kennedy (Edinburgh: Foulis, (1911) 248.
2. Sigmund Freud, The Standard Edition Of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud trans. James Strachey vol.107 (London: Hogarth, 1955) 137.
3. Tom Winifrith, The Brontës 64.
4. Lord David Cecil, " Emily Brontë and Wuthering Heights: Early Victorian Novelists," Penquin Critical Anthologies: Emily Brontë 94.
5. Cecil 94.
6. Cecil 94.
7. Q.D. Leavis, "A Fresh Approach to Wuthering Heights," Norton Critical Edition: Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights: Authoritative Text Backgrounds Criticism 3rd ed., ed. William M Sale JR. and Richard J. Dunn (New York: Norton, 1990) 308.

   Cf. The comment by John K. Mathison:

   > The reader must progressively lower his estimate of the value of the normal and healthy, develop a comprehension of and sympathy for genuine emotions however extreme and destructive, and in so doing become an active interpreter of the meaning of the novel. The reader's active involvement and sympathy with the conventionally despicable makes the power of the book.

   John Mathison, "Nelly Dean and the Power of Wuthering Heights," Nineteenth Century Fiction 11 (1956): 121.
8. Charlotte Brontë, "Editor's preface to the new edition of Wuthering Heights 1850" Penquin Critical Anthologies: Emily Brontë 43.
9. Henry Jones, Browning As A Philosophical And Religious Teacher (London:

Nelson, n.d.) 235.

10. Jones 248.

11. Jones 253.

12. Jones 268.

Cf. The following point made by J Hillis Miller:

> There is another motive for Browning's passionate desire to place himself in the interior of the other lives and find out their secrets. He assumes that God exists behind every thing or person, and delights himself in the unique flavour of each life.

J. Hillis Miller, "from The Disappearance of God," Browning: 'Men and Women' and Other Poems ed. J.R. Watson (London: Macmillan, 1974) 160.

13. Robert Langbaum, "The Dramatic Monologue: Sympathy Versus Judgement (1957)," Browning: 'Men and Women' and Other Poems 134.

14. Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: A Prelude To A Philosophy Of The Future trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh: Foulis, 1909) 240.

15. Steve Davies, Emily Brontë: the artist as a free woman (Manchester: Carcanet, 1983) 109.

16. Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power: An Attempted Transvaluation Of All Values trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh: Foulis, 1909) 29.

17. Mary Robinson 49.

18. J Hillis Miller, "from the Disappearance of God," Penguin Critical Anthologies: Emily Brontë 210.

19. Nancy Armstrong, "Emily Brontë: In and Out of her Time,: The Brontë Sisters: Critical Assessments vol.2: 389.

20. Wade Thompson, "Infanticide and Sadism in Wuthering Heights," Penguin Critical

Anthologies: Emily Brontë: 196.

21. Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford, Emily Brontë: Her Life and Work 239.

22. Davies 70.

23. Marianne Thormahlen, "The Lunatic and the Devil's Disciple: Lovers in Wuthering Heights," Review of English Studies: A Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language 48 (1977): 192.

24. Joan Carson, "Visionary Experience In Wuthering Heights," The Psychoanalytic Review 62 (1975): 148.

CHAPTER NINE

PANTHEISM AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Pantheism, defined in the Oxford Dictionary as the doctrine `that God is everything and everything God', plays a crucial role in Brontë's philosophy, but there are aspects of her representation of nature which need illumination. It would be more accurate to state that Brontë experiences a transcendent tranquillity within the matrix of the natural world. It is as if she is temporarily absorbed or transported into the cosmos, reaching moments of unutterable peace. I also suggest that the expression of this apotheosis in nature would not have been possible without the Romantic era. She uses a tradition which has already become acceptable in the literary world; she deifies the earth without needing to lay the framework for the public. The foundations have already been laid and she is at liberty to reflect on her experience of the essence of creation within the natural order. The tradition of Wordsworth and the Romantics which Brontë could draw upon is expressed by E Sneath as follows:

> The mind must be passive as well as active. It must be open to the subtle influences and powers with which it is in relation. Therefore let us occasionally dream away the hours, and feed our minds in a wise passiveness. Let us listen to the voice "of things for ever speaking," and learn the lesson intended for the receptive soul. It is Wordworth's familiar story of a spiritualized Nature close to the spirit of Man, speaking a language which his heart and mind can understand, and bearing a message of wisdom and truth.[1]

However, there are paradoxes and problems which cannot be ignored if her philosophy is to be understood in its entirety. One of the paradoxes is that her pantheism is not always

in alignment with her views on immortality of the spirit or the visions of eternity the reader is privileged to share. There are moments when it appears as if she is too infatuated with the very earth she yearns to transcend in so many of the mystical poems. A poem which epitomizes the paradox that surfaces from time to time in her works is `I see around me tombstones grey'; in which a strange agnosticism appears to grip the speaker. The blissful heaven, held out elsewhere as a place of certain paradise for all at some stage, is juxtaposed against earth and its tombstones where `tenants haunt each mortal cell...' (18). The tombstones which she saw every day at the Haworth parsonage were surely in her mind when she composed this poem as well as the subliminal autobiographical references to a mother for whom she yearns. In this poem death is initially portrayed as an endless oblivion in dark cells:

I see around me tombstones grey
Stretching their shadows far away
Beneath the turf my footsteps tread
Lie low and lone the silent dead ... (1-4)

Yet the fascinating feature of this composition is that the speaker, like Catherine in Wuthering Heights, eschews the idea of inhabiting heaven if earth is to be gainsaid.

It is the language reflecting eternal tombstones that is most disturbing in this poem and that needs somehow to be reconciled with Brontë's mysticism. The only salvation offered by the speaker, and this is only offered as a possibility, is that the earth itself shall be transported to an eternal world elsewhere:

We would not leave our native home
For any world beyond the tomb.

No, mother! On thy kindly breast
Let us be laid in lasting rest;
Or waken but to share with thee
A mutual immortality. (41-46)

It is possible to simply dismiss this poem as the opinion of an individual character in the Gondal saga, but there are other poems such as `Death' which express annihilation even more trenchantly. It is also plausible to intimate that the speaker is an alter ego for Brontë and that only reunion with a mother could possibly satisfy a deep craving, thus providing a heavenly state which the traditional heaven could not produce. Earth is therefore the maternal figure on the literal level, but on a more personal level the loss of her mother can only be replaced with a reunion on `the kindly breast' (43) of another mother figure. Nevertheless, the agnostic statements in this poem, the welcoming of an eternal rest on earth should a mutual rebirth of earth and the soul prove to be impossible, needs to be reconciled with the visionary we have encountered. In this context the observation by Martin Turnell reflecting the poet's testing of her beliefs is cogent:

> Her poetry derives its dramatic intensity from the struggle to harmonise the worlds of internal and external experience, from the courage with which she sifted and tested her experience, the honesty with which she weighed her doubts about its validity and her refusal to be taken in by pseudo-religious experience.[2]

It is also necessary to see Brontë's approach to nature in the context of the age which saw the emergence of Darwin as a primary inflluence to comprehend the paradoxes referred to above. A thinker of such stature as Darwin does not generally arise in a vacuum and some groundswell prior to his theory of natural selection and

the survival of the fittest must have existed before his seminal publications. Indeed, L Henkin argues that Lord Monboddo was considered to be a forerunner of Darwin by Thomas Peacock who states in his novel Melincourt (1817):

> Lord Monboddo was firmly convinced of the humanity of the orang-outang (man of the woods), a species of ape. Orangs are, he said, further advanced than many savages found in other parts of the world....[3]

Furthermore, Robert Chambers provoked the antagonism of the Christians by suggesting in 1844 that the world was in essence one vast intricate machine operating according to regular laws:-

> In this daring speculation, Chambers had placed the issue squarely between two rival theories, the theory of creation by law, and the theory of creation by a number of miraculous interferences with the course of nature; and had cast his ballot for creation by uniform law.[4]

Brontë clearly grapples with the paradigm of the survival of the fittest within the natural world which needs to be reconciled with the pantheistic euphoria and her mystical tendency. Perhaps she was aware of such arguments of Lord Monboddo as regards the `orang-outang' referred to above which may have been encountered in a newspaper article circulated in Haworth, as she tends to face the complexities of nature directly. Roger Ebbatson astutely makes the point that Romanticism is often juxtaposed against the struggle of nature in the tradition of the novel and, indeed, this conflict is borne out in Wuthering Heights as survival of the fittest comes face to face with idealism:

> The Wordsworthian natural harmony is discomposed by the cries of suffering and struggle discerned by Tennyson.[5]

The above poems reflect pantheism taken to an extreme level but we can reconcile what appears on the surface to be contrary currents in the works of the author. My argument is as follows: there are moments of supreme bliss on earth for some and there are also those who would prefer to return to the `slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' (Hamlet III.i.58) on this earth rather than dwell in some sublime heaven where they do not belong; there are reasons to desire a return to an earth which, despite its travails, provides a challenge that an inexorable tranquility cannot offer. Therefore we can explain Catherine's yearning to return to earth and the speaker's similar predilection in `I see around me tombstones grey' as being related to the nature of their respective beings, that is, neither is fit for heaven and accordingly they feel stultified in the precincts of a milieu which offers no challenge, no overriding expression of untamed passion. Herbert Dingle provides an interesting comment on this question:

> One might read the poems on the Earth and pronounce her a pagan, while from the mystical poems the conclusion might be drawn that the Earth meant nothing to her. Both are right, but they are not contradictory because they refer to different occasions and are not presented as aspects of a single, more general state of being (`unuttered harmony that I could never dream till earth was lost to me'....).[6]

Dingle is suggesting that, even though her pantheistic or pagan love of the earth often contradicts her indifference to the earth in the visionary verse, this is no cause for concern. The question, however, remains as to why Brontë, who must have been cognizant of this paradox, wrote in this fashion, and it is my contention that some reconciliation must be sought if her ideas are to be sufficiently comprehended. The pagan elements of her verse which embody the experience of the divine within nature are not per se in opposition to

the visionary encounters described elsewhere. What needs to be reconciled is rather the inordinate attachment to earth and the statements alluding to eternal graves or endless death. In so many of her visionary poems she yearns both to free herself from attachments to terra firma and she certainly stresses the world of eternity awaiting all mankind as discussed previously. This oscillation between attachment to the terrestrial and an embrace of the eternal seems almost deliberate in its evocation. The poem `I see around me tombstones grey' was written in July 1841 and the immediately preceding poem in the Hatfield collection is `The Caged Bird' written on 27 February 1841 which contains the following stanzas:

Ah! could my hand unlock its chain,
How gladly would I with it soar,
And ne'er regret and ne'er complain
To see its shining eyes no more.

But let me think that if to-day
It pines in cold captivity,
To-morrow both shall soar away
Eternally, entirely free. (9-16)

In `The Caged Bird' Brontë, using an image drawn from nature, metaphorically depicts the entrapment of the soul on earth and the promise of its eternal liberation. The caged bird, which can also be interpreted as the soul trapped in ignorance, bears a remote resemblance to the allegory of the cave used by Plato with which Brontë was probably familiar.[7] To Plato the soul will only find true contentment when it escapes from the confines of a lower state of consciousness and rises into spiritual illumination. The

yearning of the soul to escape into a limitless eternity is familiar territory but why should it be juxtaposed alongside a poem preoccupied with tombstones and souls that `...struggle still and strive to trace,/With clouded gaze, thy darling face' (39-40), that is, the earth. One conclusion which can be gleaned from the above is that Brontë herself, on a personal level, vacillated between a profound love of the earth and an equally compelling desire to transcend its limitations once and for all. The depiction by Charlotte of her almost willing her own death is only half the picture: the other half is of a woman in love with the natural world, a true pantheist at peace with and inspired by her surroundings.

In the context of this cross-current, the poem `Death' which was published in the 1846 collection is pertinent. Gezari refers to Juliet Barker who believed this to be a Gondal poem and to Chitham who contradicts this viewpoint regarding this piece as a remembrance of Maria and Elizabeth.[8] One certain fact is that Brontë never transcribed this poem into the Gondal Poems notebook and it may well reflect a pantheistic vision of nature which somehow fails to comfort. The familiar reference to `the fresh root of Eternity' (5) is found here as are allusions to regeneration, but the verse lacks the salvation of any personal rebirth:

> Sorrow passed, and plucked the golden blossom;
> Guilt stripped off the foliage in its pride;
> But, within its parent's kindly bosom,
> Flowed for ever Life's restoring tide. (11-14)

There are again nuances alluding to the maternal feeding of new offspring or leaves but this is always at the expense of the foliage which is decimated. Eternity may provide a second spring but the individual is forsaken in the inexorable cycle of nature which has no

concern for individuals: it is only the survival of the species for which mother nature is solicitous. Enid Duthie, in her exposition entitled The Brontës and Nature, has reached a similar conclusion:

> Nature in itself rarely seems to present for Emily the same possibilities of spiritual elevation. It is a source of unmixed joy for the child, and affords precious consolation and refreshment to those oppressed by the trials of life, but it cannot offer lasting protection from personal sorrow or the ills of this world. Above all it cannot change the fact of death.[9]

Duthie further contrasts the pantheism of Wordsworth, whose spiritual communion with nature reveals a moral force, that is not prevalent in Brontë's works.[10] I suggest that Brontë's ambivalent attitude towards nature is twofold: she experiences a sublime joy roving on the moors but is too pragmatic to gloss over the cruelty inherent in the process, and she has a psychological attachment to a lost maternal bosom which has been transposed onto the natural world as mother earth. In other words, although her visionary verse alludes to a halcyon world beyond the grave, she remains attached to the bosom of life as personified in this earth on this side of creation. Referring again to `Death', words such as `sap' (8), `kindly bosom' (13), `flowed for ever' (14) and `Lavished glory' (23) all either directly or subliminally refer to the abundance of mother earth in providing milk for the regeneration of its offspring. Indeed, the concluding stanza contains a final reference to nourishment and regeneration but at the expense of the forsaken boughs. Perhaps Brontë at some level felt that her survival was associated with the premature death of Maria and Elizabeth. After all Brontë, Charlotte, Anne and Branwell were the boughs who survived:

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
Where that perished sapling used to be;
Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will
nourish
That from which it sprung - Eternity. (34-38)

The ambivalence in Brontë is between a world of visionary paradise and a yearning for maternal sustenance which results in a vacillation between the two in her works. Irene Taylor has also commented on this nexus in Brontë's world in her consideration of `Death':

> It is as if we only "live" so long as we suckle at the maternal breast; to remove our mouths from that source of living sap is to do wrong, or be wronged, in a way that only literal death can cure -....[11]

If the paradox of nature's failure to provide a solution to the riddle of death is laid aside, it is evident that nature is oftimes a healer, a balm amidst the strife. Nowhere is this more apparent than in `Shall earth no more inspire thee,' to which Charlotte inscribed the words `but in it the Genius of a solitary region seems to address his wandering and wayward votary....' Gezari, however, refers to the speaker of the poem on page 265 as a `feminine Earth' who exhorts her charge to return. Without wishing to labour a point the maternal earth plays the role of mother in watching over her child and offers solace amidst the world's travails:

I know my mountain-breezes
Enchant and soothe thee still,

I know my sunshine pleases,

Despite thy wayward will. (9-12)

The pantheistic attributes of nature are emphasised in this poem as nature is exalted as the ultimate healer, a place of refuge for weary souls, but this is hardly innovative. The Romantic tradition is strewn with poems such as Wordsworth's `Tintern Abbey' in which nature is `The anchor of my purest thoughts, the/ nurse' (109), the refuge to which poets can retire to escape the rigours of city life. Brontë does however equally possess with her Romantic forbears the gift of exaltation within nature, the gift of receiving its pervasive balm. In Walter Scott's `The Lay Of The Last Minstrel', a copy of which was to be found on the shelves at the Haworth Parsonage, a similar sentiment in respect of the healing potential of nature is to be found:

So passed the day - the evening fell,

"Twas near the time of curfew bell;

The air was mild, the wind was calm,

The stream was smooth, the dew was balm;

E'en the rude watchman, on the tower,

Enjoy'd and bless'd the lovely hour. (Canto 3. XXIV. 1-6)

In `Shall earth no more inspire thee', the `maternal earth', who evidently understands the nuances of her charge's heart, makes the telling observation that she fain would like heaven to mirror this earth. The tranquillity of earth is such that Brontë would be jubilant to experience it elsewhere.

Another attribute of nature and one which is fundamental to pantheism is the existence of

a pervasive spirit or force that permeates all of creation: human, animal, vegetable and mineral. Brontë experiences a close proximity to this supernal force in nature: she relates with consummate ease to the universal spirit in much the same manner as her Romantic forbears:

> `And thou art now a spirit pouring
> Thy presence into all:
> The thunder of the tempest's roaring,
> The whisper of its fall:
>
> `An universal influence,
> From thine own influence free;
> A principle of life - intense -
> Lost to mortality. (`Ay-there it is! It wakes to-night' 13-20)

It is not necessary to dwell on this `sixth sense' within nature as it is common knowledge. But behind these rather grandiose, sweeping allusions to the pantheistic spirit pervading the natural world is an accuracy and attention to detail that is impressive.

It is necessary to examine Emily Brontë's attention to the minutiae within the natural world because, as Lawrence Starzyk has noted, her `almost pantheistic adherence to nature as the ultimate ethical sanction derives from her ability to discern there the very foundation of existence itself'.[12] Her attention to the natural milieu in which she lived provides her with both a framework for her literary works and an insight into the workings of the cosmos. For example, she is able to use her knowledge of the terrain to reinforce

the drama that unfolds in both Wuthering Heights and the Gondal episodes. She is able to depict the boglands as a place of mystique and hidden legend in much the same way as Seamus Heaney has done in the twentieth century. Indeed, the swamps or boglands almost circumscribe the drama in Wuthering Heights providing a source for spirits to arise to haunt the local precincts. The reader is almost imperceptibly introduced to these swamps by Lockwood in chapter three:

> We came to the chapel - I have passed it really in my walks, twice or thrice: it lies in a hollow, between two hills - an elevated hollow - near a swamp, whose peaty moisture is said to answer all the purposes of embalming on the few corpses deposited there. (65)

The juxtaposition of the church and the swamp is of course significant and will be referred to in due course, but it should be noted that Brontë has used the verb `embalm' which is reminiscent of the Egyptian mummies. As the corpses will survive for a longer period, so will some of the trapped souls continue to haunt Wuthering Heights and its surrounds. The reader again encounters the interminable peat mould in chapter sixteen when we are informed as to the whereabouts of Catherine's burial place. The villagers may be surprised that Catherine has been interned `in a green slope' (205) where it has been covered by `peat mould' (205) but the symbolism drawn from the boglands is deliberately used to emphasize her continued ostracism from the church and her self-imposed exile therefrom even in death. The wild heath, bilberry shrubs and peat mould are elements the reader can easily associate with Catherine:

> The place of Catherine's internment, to the surprise of the villagers, was neither in the chapel, under the carved monument of the Lintons, nor yet by the tombs of her

> own relations, outside. It was dug on a green slope, in a corner of the kirkyard, where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry plants have climbed over it from the moor; and the peat mould almost buries it. (205)

It is Catherine's corpse which acts like a vortex in the novel drawing first Edgar and then Heathcliff into the swamp which lies outside the confines of the church and the accepted burial rites. In the words of Goodridge, `...for Edgar and Heathcliff, the masters of the two houses, this grave takes the place of the kirk as a centre of devotion and the traditional Christianity of the parish, once common to the Lintons and the Earnshaws, is superseded'.[13]

Even the rocks have a basis in reality as is apparent in her description of Penistone Crag. In her delirium Catherine imagines Nelly Dean transformed into an old hag intent on maliciously harming their heifers. According to Charles Simpson Penistone Crag is based on a foreboding rock called Ponden Kirk which in turn has been associated with the Druids.[14] There is apparently an opening in this rock which has been termed a fairy cave, which suggests that Brontë drew her image of Nelly Dean as a witch `gathering elf-bolts to hurt our heifers' from the legends surrounding Ponden Kirk (161).

This parallel between Penistone Crag and Ponden Kirk is strengthened by the existence, according to Simpson, of the Crow Hill bog at the base of the rock.[15] In chapter twelve, Catherine, recovering from her delirium, exclaims:

> I`m not wandering, you're mistaken, or else I should believe you really were that withered hag, and I should think I was under Penistone Crag, and I'm conscious

it's night.... (161).

Catherine is indeed buried in a bog at a later stage and it is not implausible to suggest that Brontë may have had this bog at Ponden Kirk in her mind when she depicted the place of internment. Christopher Heywood in a carefully researched article has also pointed out the accuracy of her descriptions:

> ... the appearance, locality and atmosphere of the hills in the novel exactly match those around Ingleborough, Yorkshire's most celebrated natural landmark, as they appear in the view from the coaching road.[16]

Another illustration of how the author authentically portrayed nature can be seen in her treatment of the moon. The constant flux of the moon is observed and at times combined with elements of the supernatural and legend. This process will be examined by first reflecting on the poems in which the moon is accentuated and then showing how accurate her discernment actually was. For Brontë nature is the handiwork of a divine force and by observing its mysterious functioning she is able to discern the patterns of the universe. This has a direct impact on the emotional vagaries of her literary characters.

Brontë has made extensive references to the moon in both her poetry and Wuthering Heights, which is no coincidence. The mysterious aura of the moon creates a sense of wonder in her work and, in particular, new and full moon are alluded to frequently. It is at new or full moon that spirits (either good or evil) are considered to be most prevalent or efficacious. In `Song (by Julius Brenzaida)' the moon plays a central role in the poem. The poem commences in the present tense with a reference to the moon: `the moon is

shining/With so soft, so bright a ray...' (1 - 2), which, in all likelihood, alludes to the potent radiance of a full moon. In stanza four the tense changes into the past as Julius Brenzaida reflects on their previous failure to heed nature's warning signs:

But when winter storms were meeting
In the moonless midnight dome,
Did we heed the tempest's beating,
Howling round our spirit's home? (13 - 16)

Here, Brontë has made full use of the moon as an omen and has combined this with midnight, yet another auspicious supernatural sign. She regularly evokes a haunting atmosphere by using such devices as a moonless night or, as in the succeeding stanza, trees that have been assailed by violent winds. She refers to `that tree with branches riven' (17) which is a familiar image employed by Brontë. (Her pencil drawing of a fir tree is another illustration of how her imagination worked as the desolate, windswept branches evoke an atmosphere of eerie devastation.) The poem then concludes with another reference to the moon as Brontë sustains the imagery to the penultimate line, 'And in Cynthia's silver morning' (23).

In 'I paused on the threshold, I turned to the sky' the familiar juxtaposition of a full moon and wild, eerie winds is again discerned. In this case these omens are used to intensify the misery of the speaker who evokes the accustomed image of a 'dark prison-house' (8):

The full moon sailed bright through that ocean on
high,
And the wind murmered past with a wild eerie

sound. (4-7)

(This poem and the succeeding one, 'Oh, come with me: thus ran the song', are conjecturally dated in November 1838, and, as such, may refer to her toils and struggles at Law Hill.)

In 'O Dream! where art thou now?' the speaker recalls halcyon days when he or she was united with a loved one. The tone of the poem is nostalgic as the speaker remembers a vision that has now been blighted: in this case the full moon is associated with their love, its rotundity emblematic of their union:

The silent night of solemn calm,

The full moon's cloudless shine,

Were once entwined with thee ... (11-13).

Yet again, Brontë's predilection for multiple omens to reinforce the meaning is evident. In this instance, the full moon is juxtaposed with a solemn calm night to accentuate the acme of their bond. (Note that the full moon in itself does not indicate whether it has a constructive or destructive effect).

The accuracy of her descriptions is verifiable by examining Shackleton's records of the weather during the relevant periods when the above poems were composed.[17] The `Song (by Julius Brenzaida)' was written on October 17, 1838 when the moon's age in Shakleton's records is described as 28.6 days which suggests that there was, indeed, a new moon at the time of composition:[18] this obviously inspired stanza four's `moonless midnight dome' (14) (the moon is at its height at fifteen days and thereafter wanes). With

the knowledge that Brontë often wrote her poems with an accurate description of nature and the lunar cycle, it is possible to conjecture the date of a poem's composition. For example, in the poem 'I paused on the threshold, I turned to the sky' discussed above, Chitham suggests that the date of composition was the second of November because a full moon appeared on this date.[19] (In Shakleton's records the moon's age on the first of November is described as 13.9.)[20] In the final poem discussed above, `O Dream! where art thou now?', the date given is the fifth of November 1838. On the fifth of November Shakleton gives the age of the moon as 17.9 which, although not strictly full moon, is sufficiently mature for Brontë to refer to the 'full moon's cloudless shine' in line twelve.[21]

There is a similar accuracy to be discerned in Wuthering Heights, in which the harvest moon plays a critical role. Stuart Daley pioneered research into the significance of the harvest moon (i.e. 'the full moon closest to the autumnal equinox, which is the twenty-second or twenty-third of September') and concluded that three major episodes in the novel are accompanied by a harvest moon.[22] (The harvest moon traverses a low path above the horizon, thus intensifying its brightness, and it has a rich orange or golden colour). The three episodes accompanied by a harvest moon are: the return of Heathcliff in chapter ten (September 1793); the death of Edgar Linton and the abduction of Cathy Linton in chapters thirty-seven and thirty-nine; and the final episode of the novel in September 1802. It is evident that Brontë was acutely aware of the waxing and waning of the moon, of the profound effect it exerted on the lives of her characters. The moon as a symbol also connotes the passage from life to death and subsequent rebirth which is a fitting rite of passage in Wuthering Heights. In the words of Joseph Campbell:

> The wonderful ability of the serpent to slough its skin and so renew its youth has earned for it throughout the world the character of the master of the mystery of rebirth - of which the moon, waxing and waning, sloughing its shadow and again waxing and waning is the celestial sign.[23]

In the final analysis Brontë's pantheism and attention to the natural world are part of a process of discovery for her. She experiences elation from time to time and discerns patterns in the world of nature. This elation and observation need to be seen in the light of her visions which add a further spiritual dimension to her encounters with the world of nature. As Turnell has noted, her understanding of her milieu is not an easy process:

> In the novel the `polite' world is rejected in favour of the elemental world. This world is not an order in itself. Emily Brontë believes that there is, or ought to be, an order of which it forms part. She is trying to find out what it is and this accounts for the speculative note which runs all through the novel.[24]

Her visions serve to fortify the occasional euphoria in nature and assist her in believing that the patterns in nature form part of a divine order.

ENDNOTES

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14. Charles Simpson, Emily Brontë (London: Country Life, 1929) 110.
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16. Christopher Heywood, "Yorkshire landscapes in Wuthering Heights," Essays In Criticism (Oxford: Oxford, 1998): 17.
17. Shakleton's Records, Table 1 printed in Dingle 107-121.

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19. Edward Chitham, A Life of Emily Brontë (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) 110.

20. Shakleton's Records, Table 1, 109.

21. Shakleton's Records, Table 1, 110.

22. Stuart Daley, "The Moons and Almanacs of Wuthering Heights," Norton Critical Edition: Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights: Authoritative Text Backgrounds Criticism 338.

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CONCLUSION

This research has shown how Brontë used certain channels to gain access to and formulate her own truth. Her visions, both spontaneous and otherwise, gave her glimpses into other dimensions and her guide apparently assisted in accessing these other realms. She was influenced by experiences within the dream state which, in turn, provided her with glimpses of other worlds and helped her to contact her guide. At times Brontë relied on her imagination in much the same way as the Romantic poets who preceded her in order to imagine how these other realms function and to create metaphors which express what she believed to be the divine truth. She was a mystic whose quest led her to an experience which was a realization of the self as expressed in 'No Coward Soul Is Mine', a transcendent, ineffable experience that is the goal of any authentic mystic. Her experiences and ideas must however be seen as part of the Unitarian framework in which the supernatural was given more credibility, and radical new ideas permeated Victorian society. In many ways her works are influenced by Maurice, Emerson, Coleridge and other Unitarian thinkers as she aligns herself with a movement aiming to liberalise religion.

However, the path of Brontë towards this divine consummation was not easy. She encountered ghoulish beings within the dream state that led her to the threshold of despair and she experienced a profound sense of barrenness along the way. This battle with the darker side of existence, usually described as the 'dark night of the soul' by mystics, emerged from time to time during her inner quest. She also passed through stages of self-doubt and the questioning of the truth of the mystical experiences upon which she had

come to rely. A tension surfaced at various times between her logical side and the imaginative faculty, which caused Brontë to feud within her own mind. At times rationalism contended against her intuitions and gained the upper hand. Her only novel Wuthering Heights, in spite of its supernatural qualities, is left inconclusive as the reader is invited to decide whether Catherine and Heathcliff sleep forever in the peat-mould or whether the spirits of Heathcliff and Catherine indeed haunt Wuthering Heights, or alternatively are re-united in some blissful union elsewhere (or perhaps suffer to expiate their sins).

There are, nevertheless, mystical expressions in Wuthering Heights which reinforce much of the visionary poetry that Brontë composed. It is in the light of the mystical verse that Wuthering Heights can be interpreted and, if so, a prevailing pattern or philosophy emerges. It is possible for the reader to interpret Wuthering Heights as an agnostic story or to take the supernatural elements seriously and to see a divine framework in operation. However, the poetry generally contains tenets which Brontë clearly believed in, such as: a belief in the immortality of the soul, the assertion that hell is a temporary and not an eternal state, the ultimate forgiveness of any miscreant however heinous the crimes, the existence of heaven as a location where spirits continue to live and learn; the indestructibility of the inner self.

To Brontë, God is merciful but this does not imply that divine retribution or justice will not ensue. Redemption is open to any individual but this is a process which involves suffering and repayment. In this context the experience of hell would be a temporary phenomenon until such time as the soul has cleansed itself.

An issue which concerned Brontë was the element of power and the need for survival in a milieu that was not necessarily conducive to harmony. I have suggested that she admired fortitude and was repulsed by insipidness. She realized, however, that naked power untempered by compassion was dangerous as well as creating an imbalance: unabashed sadism and tyranny were anathema to her. I have suggested further that Hareton was her true prince in disguise, the embodiment of the values she respected. Brontë sees the process of rebirth or regeneration operating within the family, symbolized in the second generation of Hareton and Cathy in Wuthering Heights (and within nature).

Brontë is able to experience transcendent moments in nature and yet she remains acutely conscious of its destructive side and the cyclical process of rebirth. Her mystical experiences and imaginative faculty tend to ignite the natural world. Poems such as 'Death' with their bleak vignettes and emphasis on eternal graves are ameliorated by her philosophy of the immortality of the spirit and visions of other realms. She has a gift similar to that of Wordsworth or Coleridge in that she can be absorbed into the very spirit of the universe. This led her to a pantheistic vision of nature that is so prevalent amongst Romantic poets. She also focused on the minutiae in the natural world leading her to discern patterns in operation which are orchestrated by the hand of the Maker. These patterns of nature such as the cyclical movement of the moon and, in particular, the orange harvest moons, are adroitly used in Wuthering Heights and her poetry adding an authenticity to her works.

In the final analysis Brontë must be seen as a mystic within the context of the burgeoning liberal movement primarily fostered by the Unitarians. There are many

expressions of her mystical encounters in her works that take diverse forms. She is also a radical thinker who moved away from conventional thought in espousing such notions as forgiveness for all, irrespective of religious affiliation or the nature of the misdeed, and the conviction that hell is a temporary phenomenon, all of which accords with the ideas of Maurice whom she regarded as a spiritual mentor. She may have lived in an isolated village in Yorkshire but the dominant trends of thought espoused by the Unitarians during the Victorian epoch managed to pervade her own philosophy and influenced her legacy.

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