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THE INCEST TABOO IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

THESIS

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By

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Contemporary analysis of Wuthering Heights necessitates a re-appraisal in light of advancements in the study of incest in non-literary fields such as history, anthropology, and especially psychology. A modern reading suggests that an unconscious incest taboo impeded Heathcliff and Cathy's expectation of normal sexual union and led them to seek union after death. John Milton's Paradise Lost provides a paradigm by which to examine the consequences of incest from two perspectives: that of incest as a metaphor for evil, as represented in Heathcliff; that of incest as symbolic of pre-Lapsarian innocence, as represented in Cathy. The tragic consequences of Heathcliff and Cathy's incestuous fixation are resolved by the socially-condoned marriage of Hareton and Catherine, which illuminates Bronte's belief in the Miltonic theme that good inevitably triumphs over evil.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. HEATHCLIFF AND CATHY . . . . .	12
III. PARADISE DENIED . . . . .	40
IV. CONCLUSION . . . . .	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	87

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Since its publication in 1847, Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights has been admired as a unique and powerful novel of near mythical proportions. The brooding, passionate atmosphere of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, the intense, larger-than-life characters, and the disturbing theme are brilliantly manipulated through the novelist's use of meticulous structural organization, intricate narrative points of view, and delicately counterpoised time sequences. Emily Bronte matter-of-factly lures the reader into a world at once unfamiliar but vaguely comprehended, disturbing but attractive, repelling but seductive. Yet, despite the many strengths of Wuthering Heights, readers inevitably remain puzzled and dissatisfied with the outcome. Who or what is the mysterious Heathcliff? Why does the mutual passion between Cathy Earnshaw and him remain unfulfilled when there is no apparent obstacle to their union? Why is their consuming physical attachment to each other superseded by a morbid fascination with union after death? One way of arriving at a satisfactory reading of this novel is to re-appraise the tragic love affair of Heathcliff and Cathy in light of what modern psychology has learned about incestuous love--its causes, its manifestations, and its devastating

consequences. I propose that an unconscious incest taboo impeded the two lovers' expectations of normal sexual union and led them to spiritualize their attachment to each other, eventually coming to believe that they could find union only after death in a paradise of their own making.

Non-literary disciplines, such as history, anthropology, and especially psychology, significantly contribute to a modern study of incest. The major theoretical tool which I will use to analyze the literary treatment of incestuous love is based on the work of Ernest Becker, a cultural anthropologist, who clarified and simplified many of the complexities of the human psyche by synthesizing discoveries in psychology with the best thought in many fields, from the human sciences to religion. Becker reduces the essential problem of the human condition to the thesis that "the idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity--activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny of man" (ix). I will show how incestuous love is at least one way man tries to overcome his consciousness of mortality, tries to resolve the duality inherent in the knowledge that he is part spirit, part matter, and as part matter is doomed to death and decay.

At the outset, I wish to emphasize that no conscious awareness of the Oedipal complex, the incest taboo, or any of their resulting dynamics need be present in the mind of

Emily Bronte or her characters for this analysis to be valid. The novel was written before science became fully aware of the tremendous complexities of the human psyche. Yet, as is evident in mythology and folklore, literature has always functioned as a means to provide a narrative for our deepest unconscious fears, desires, and guilts; sensitive artists could divine the secrets of the human heart long before scientific psychoanalysis. Charlotte Bronte, in the 1850 preface to Wuthering Heights, excused her sister for creating Heathcliff by saying, "The writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master--something that at times strangely wills and works for itself" (40).<sup>1</sup> In other words, as Freud had postulated, elemental psychic forces can be conceptualized long before they are consciously comprehended.

I also wish to point out that, for an incest taboo to exist, it is irrelevant whether Cathy and Heathcliff are blood relatives, as a few critics have tried to suggest.<sup>2</sup> Although Mr. Earnshaw brought the foundling Heathcliff home under mysterious circumstances and gave him the name of his dead son, there is no evidence in the text upon which to base the supposition that he was Mr. Earnshaw's illegitimate child. What is essential is that Cathy and Heathcliff were raised as brother and sister. Heathcliff entered the family when he was seven and Cathy was six. They shared all living arrangements as brother and sister, including sleeping together. When Mr. Earnshaw died, his natural son, Hindley,

took over as a father-figure, becoming less of a brother to Cathy, while Heathcliff became more of a brother to her. Added weight is given to this theory by the fact that Nelly Dean considered herself to be Hindley's foster sister because she was raised with him (106, 220), although she was quite obviously the family servant.

Central to a discussion of incest is an understanding of modern psychological thought in regard to the Oedipal complex. Becker, clearly diverging from the Freudian characterization of incest as an instinctual sexual drive,<sup>3</sup> argues that the Oedipal complex is motivated solely by the desire for power to deal with the fear of death.<sup>4</sup> Since the child becomes aware of death and his utter powerlessness to escape it as early as age three (Becker 36), a fact too terrifying for him to face on a conscious level, he turns to the powerful parents, and in fantasy possesses them by replacing one with himself and symbolically taking the other as spouse. In other words, the child wants the power of the parent in order to deny his identity as a separate person who will die. According to Becker,

The great scientific simplification of psychoanalysis is the concept that the whole of early experience is an attempt by the child to deny the anxiety of his emergence, his fear of losing his support, of standing alone, helpless and afraid.



Ideally the child works through this phase by around age nine and is able to separate himself from the powerful parent figure. In cases of arrested development, however, this separation process, which results in healthy individuation, fails to take place. The person remains in a child-like state, always attempting to immerse himself in another, unconsciously trying to perpetuate his own life by adding that of another to it. In chapter II, I shall demonstrate how Cathy and Heathcliff both manifested behavioral patterns characteristic of the Oedipal complex and how Cathy was portrayed as regressing into childhood when she was physically separated from Heathcliff.

In the absence of an authentic parent figure, the individual may turn his incestuous attachment to a surrogate parent.<sup>5</sup> According to Luciano Santiago's book-length study of incest, brother-sister incest "appears by far the most frequently in the folklore of almost all ethnic groups" (7). Santiago points out that sibling incest often represents a deliberate replacement of the sister for the mother, as a safer, more readily available substitute (7). Otto Rank had already established in his valuable work on the incest motif in 1912 that the brother-sister relation is predominant in primitive societies. He says:

The brother-and-sister relation, indicated in the Osiris myth, is neither a feebler form of the mother-incest nor a disguise of union with a sister, but, as the traditions of primitive

peoples teach us, a deliberate replacement of mother and wife by the sister--as one who has neither borne the brother himself nor bears him children (145).

The choice of sister as incestuous object "as one who has neither borne the brother himself nor bears him children" strengthens Becker's assertion that the Oedipal complex springs from a desire for power over death rather than from sexual instinct as Freud had insisted. The significance of this idea to our study becomes apparent in view of the fact that Becker argues that fear of death is inextricably bound up with fear of the body, the symbol of one's "animal fate that has to be struggled against in some ways" (44). Becker explains this horror of the body as originating when the child begins the struggle to separate himself from his dependency on the mother. The "sheer physicalness" (Becker's emphasis) of the mother's body reveals the material nature, and thus impermanence, of the child's own body. Becker adds:

The mother's body not only reveals a sex that threatens vulnerability and dependency--it reveals much more: it presents the problem of two sexes and so confronts the child with the fact that his body is itself arbitrary. (40-1)

Becker goes on to say that "if sex is a fulfillment of [man's] role as an animal in the species, it reminds him that he is nothing himself but a link in the chain of being"

(163). This explains why man conceived of sexual taboos; "he needed to triumph over the body, and he sacrificed the pleasure of the body to the highest pleasure of all: self-perpetuation as a spiritual being through all eternity" (163).

In chapter II, I will examine Heathcliff's and Cathy's attempts to deny the body--Cathy by marrying an essentially sexless man, Heathcliff by marrying someone whom he despises and with whom he apparently has intercourse only once. Their denial of the animal side of their natures is strangely at variance with their otherwise passionate natures, but quite consistent with Becker's theory.

Incest, then, can be viewed as an attempt by fragmented man to achieve wholeness and immortality through the most intimate, yet most historically heinous, sexual union possible--that of like with like. Yet incest, which anthropologists tell us has been taboo in almost every society and in virtually every period of history, arising out of a need for integration, paradoxically results most often in the severest disintegration. A variety of disorders follow in its wake, many of which are manifested in the bizarre behavior of Heathcliff, and others which are subtly suggested in the illnesses of Cathy and in her dreams and hallucinations.<sup>6</sup>

In chapter III, I will examine the moral implications of the incest theme, demonstrating how Bronte's inverted image of paradise can be related to John Milton's Paradise

Lost with its archetypal incest figure, Satan, whose incestuous relationship resulted in the birth of Death. I argue that Heathcliff is a metaphorical Satan, whose incestuous fixation results in his descent into bestiality and his propensity to wreak suffering on those around him.<sup>7</sup> I will argue further that Bronte's repeated theme of paradise denied can be paralleled to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after their sin which brought with it the knowledge of evil and death. Adam and Eve can conceivably be considered the first example of earthly incest, for after their sin they became aware of lust and excess; however, I suggest that they represent a kind of pre-Lapsarian innocence that Cathy hopes to recover, paradoxically through incest, but an incest that is not taboo in a world with no evil.

The incest taboo certainly affords a plausible explanation for Heathcliff's perplexing character, for Cathy's inability to form a successful relationship outside the family, and for their mutual obsession with each other which ends in death for them both. Even though Emily Bronte, living on the isolated moors of England and apparently uninitiated into the subtleties of sexual relationships, had no psychological training, she anticipated modern psychology's diagnosis of incestuous desire and guilt by some seventy-five to one hundred years.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>All quotations from the text of Wuthering Heights are based on the 1965 Penguin Classic edited by and introduced by David Daiches.

<sup>2</sup>For example, see Herbert Dingle's article, "The Origin of Heathcliff," Bronte Society Transactions 16 (1972): 131-38. Also see Eric Solomon's article, "The Incest Theme in Wuthering Heights," Nineteenth Century Fiction 14 (1959): 80-83.

<sup>3</sup>According to Becker, Freud never abandoned his view that sexual guilt arises from "a primal crime of patricide and incest committed in the dim recesses of prehistory" (Becker 35). Freud thought that a young child's sexual instinct led him to want to possess the opposite sex parent; at the same time he realized that the same sex parent was his competitor and the child was forced to repress a murderous aggression toward him because he knew the parent was physically stronger than he. Becker says, "Today we realize that all the talk about blood and excrement, sex and guilt, is true not because of urges to patricide and incest and fears of actual physical castration, but because all these things reflect man's horror of his own basic animal condition . . ." (35).

<sup>4</sup>This death fear operates on an unconscious level; although it may be realized abstractly and verbalized intellectually, the effect of the fear is repressed.

<sup>5</sup>An interesting article on Heathcliff as surrogate parent figure is Philip K. Wion's "The Absent Mother in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights," American Imago 42 (Summer, 1985): 143-64.

<sup>6</sup>For a largely Freudian study of these manifestations, see Giles Mitchell's "Incest, Demonism, and Death in Wuthering Heights," Literature and Psychology XXIII (1973): 27-36. Since the early 1970s Mitchell has published a number of fine studies drawing on Becker and existential psychology rather than on Freud.

<sup>7</sup>A similar study of the consequences of incest-- although a conscious and deliberate incest--is Constance Hill Hall's Incest in Faulkner: A Metaphor for the Fall, Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1986.

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## CHAPTER II

### HEATHCLIFF AND CATHY

Any discussion of behavioral patterns which suggests an incestuous fixation must begin with Heathcliff, for he is the one who has beguiled readers and critics alike since the publication of Wuthering Heights. David Daiches, in his introduction to the novel, insists that we must ascertain the nature of Heathcliff in order to solve some of the intricacies of the novel. But he maintains that "we get no direct presentation of Heathcliff: he is seen almost always as a force acting on others, and it is to his effect on others that we must pay particular attention if we wish to come to the heart of the mystery" (18). On the contrary, Heathcliff is revealed not only by the observations of others (in fact every major character participates), but by his own candid comments about himself. He never attempts to dissemble in order to cast a better light on himself. In fact, it is he who tells us that he wishes he had Edgar Linton's "great blue eyes and even forehead" (98) and that he is jealous of him, just as he tells us that he will get revenge on Hindley and Edgar and that he never misrepresented himself to Isabella but let her see him "hang up her little dog" (187).



The mysterious nature of Heathcliff's origins, as well as his bizarre behavior throughout the novel, has been the basis for much of the conflicting interpretation of his character. To the first generation of critics he was a "fiend," "an incarnation of evil qualities," filled with ingratitude and "implacable hate" (Twitchell 116). The second generation of critics mitigated this harsh view, interpreting Heathcliff as victim of a "social or natural process in which he was pathetically powerless" (117). I believe that the present generation of critics can best view him as representative of fallible humanity, desperately trying to survive in as heroic a manner as possible. As Nelly Dean told Lockwood: "Oh! here at Wuthering Heights we are the same as anywhere else, when you get to know us" (103). In fact, Bronte, whether conscious of it or not, was portraying in clinically accurate terms someone suffering from the guilt of incestuous desires.

The environment in which Heathcliff and Cathy were raised was extraordinarily conducive to the development of an Oedipal situation. Inhabitants of the lonely moors, "completely removed from the stir of society" (WH 45), the family circle was closed to all except the servants and a handful of neighbors who lived at some distance. The sense of isolation is conveyed through a number of images, including doors, gates, and locks. The prevailing imagery of the book creates an atmosphere quite consistent with Lockwood's avowal that the locale was "a perfect misanthro-

pist's heaven" (45). I maintain that it was also a perfect breeding-ground for an incestual attachment.

Psychologists point out that in cases of brother/sister incest, the siblings are likely to be introverted people (Justice 106) who substitute the home as a haven from the outside world (64). The parents are most often weak and neglectful, unwilling or unable to provide a strong, positive influence (104). Typically, the mother is passive and ignores her responsibilities; the father is preoccupied and uninterested in the chaotic conditions which exist within the family (104).

Heathcliff arrived at Wuthering Heights as a seven-year-old orphan. Mrs. Earnshaw was opposed to his coming, patently neglected him, and "never put in a word on his behalf" (79). Soon Heathcliff and six-year-old Cathy became inseparable. As Nelly tells us, Cathy always acted the "little mistress" (83), and Heathcliff would "do her bidding in anything" (84). Mrs. Earnshaw died within two years of Heathcliff's entry into the family, and Mr. Earnshaw was "strict and grave" with his children, becoming even "crosser and less patient" as his health declined (83). The two children formed a rebellious alliance against the rest of the family, becoming abnormally attached to each other. Nelly tells us that Cathy "was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him . . ." (83).

The role of isolation is a significant aspect in incest, as both a motive for the relationship and as an effect of its practice (Justice 135). Although incest arises from a yearning for completeness and belonging, it most often results in further alienation, for the incestuous lover, rather than turning outward instead turns inward, a situation which can only end disastrously; in a sense he is attempting a kind of union with himself (Hall 43): Cathy came to believe "I am Heathcliff" (122); Heathcliff said, "I cannot live without my soul!" (204).

When Heathcliff was thirteen and Cathy twelve, Mr. Earnshaw died. Justice maintains:

During adolescence the final form of renunciation [of the incest drive] occurs when the youngster completes the job of redirecting his or her energy from inside the family to outside. (54)

At this time, however, Hindley returned from college and took over his father's position as head of the household. Hindley's antipathy to Heathcliff curtailed any chance for Heathcliff to achieve a healthy socialization in the outside world.

Denied the benefits of education and cultivation, Heathcliff, according to Nelly, "bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields" (87). However, "They both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages" (87), thwarting attempts by Hindley, Nelly, Joseph, and

the curate to tame them (87) and actively rebelling against their religious instruction (63, 363).

Heathcliff's behavior deteriorated in direct proportion to the injustice he suffered at the hands of his surrogate father, Hindley, whom Cathy characterized as a "detestable substitute" (62), and the corresponding frustration of his desire to be with Cathy. The classic Oedipal conflict between father and son is suggested by Hindley's repeated attempts to separate Cathy and Heathcliff and his threats to "turn him out of the house if [they broke] his orders" (64). Hindley succeeded in physically separating them when he forbade Cathy at age twelve to sleep with Heathcliff, the first time that she "was laid alone" (163). But more importantly, Hindley succeeded in erecting formidable barriers to the relationship as a whole, which eventually resulted in Cathy's disastrous marriage to Edgar.

Hindley seemed to have won a temporary victory over his rival, Heathcliff, when Cathy protested to Nelly that she could never marry Heathcliff after Hindley had brought him so low (121), but this victory was rendered meaningless by her succeeding statements that it would be impossible for anyone to separate her and Heathcliff and that her motivation in marrying Edgar was to "aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of [her] brother's power" (122).

According to Justice:

A brother and sister who are kept together without

much outside contact may become closely attached and build up mutual admiration, which at some point gets converted to sexual attraction. . . . The brother and sister have such a rapturous love for each other that sex seems inevitable. (106)

Justice goes on to say, however, that "sex is not the basic issue in most incest cases" (87), an observation which concurs with Becker's insights into the Oedipal motive. Erich Fromm pointed to an "incestuous striving inherent in man's nature" that arises from deep needs for shelter and belonging (qtd. in Justice 28). Justice maintains that case studies of incest indicate that the frightening insecurity of the outside world prompts a person to turn "inside the family to get his or her needs met and closes the door behind" (28). He adds that "the basic issue in incest is not sex but the need for closeness, nurturing and stimulation" (29).

As passionately attached as Heathcliff and Cathy were to each other, there is little physical contact between them of an overtly sexual nature. This curious lack of sexual expression between two such unbridled and seemingly amoral characters has prompted critical discussions of repressed sexuality which surely seem to have merit. The novel derives much of its power from the implied sexual energy and tension, but a careful reading confirms that the only physical contact between Heathcliff and Cathy after they reached puberty occurred as Cathy lay dying. Even when they

were re-united after Heathcliff's absence of three years, Cathy only "seized Heathcliff's hands" (135, 136) twice.

Nelly tells us that at age sixteen Heathcliff "ceased to express his fondness for Cathy in words, and recoiled with angry suspicion from her girlish caresses, as if conscious there could be no gratification in lavishing such marks of affection on him" (108). Of course it is possible to presume that Heathcliff refrained from physical contact because he was jealous of Cathy's friendship with Edgar Linton by this time. But this line of reasoning is unsatisfactory when we remember his active rivalry for Cathy's companionship, even keeping account of the evenings that she spent with each of them (109). I propose that it is more likely that Heathcliff's conviction that there could be no sexual gratification arose from his adolescent sexual awareness of Cathy and the guilt which attended such a feeling for a sister. Hindley had forbidden them to share sleeping quarters some three years previously (163), a measure which would have called into consciousness their budding sexuality, even if they had been unaware of it up until then. We shall see in our discussion of Cathy how deeply this affected her. I believe that it affected Heathcliff just as deeply, prompting him to begin his descent into "savage sullenness and ferocity" (106) and "unsociable moroseness" (108), resulting by age sixteen in "exciting the aversion rather than the esteem of his few acquaintance" (108). Nelly tells us that from the time he

was thirteen years old, he "lived a selfish, unchristian life" (363), turning away from the Bible and Christian teaching, a significant fact when we recall that at age thirteen Heathcliff was physically separated from Cathy--his idea of Heaven, as I shall point out in chapter III.

Heathcliff, as menacingly seductive as he appears to readers, was actually all but sexually sterile, as is indicated when close attention is paid to the text.<sup>1</sup> His very name suggests barrenness, for an English heath is defined as "uncultivated ground; an extensive tract of wasteland, a wilderness" (Oxford English Dictionary 170). (The word "heath" is also the "name given to plants and shrubs found upon heaths or in open or waste places" [170].)

Heathcliff persuaded Isabella, whom he openly despised, to elope with him because she was Edgar's heir, and their union produced only the weak and insipid Linton, an "ailing and peevish creature" (218), who died at an early age--a subtle symbol of sterility. The reader is given several hints that Heathcliff consummated his marriage only once: Isabella said that within 24 hours she regretted her marriage (173); Heathcliff said: "The very morrow of our wedding she was weeping to go home" (187); and Isabella told Nelly that Heathcliff refused from the very first to let her share his bedroom (181).

In fact, Heathcliff and Cathy both, while consistently identified in the novel with animal imagery and the forces of nature, and portrayed as untamed rebels against civiliza-

tion and religion, were paradoxically lacking in sexuality. The great passion which they had for each other was of a spiritual nature rather than a physical one. It is not surprising that, suffering from the fear and guilt of forbidden desires, they replaced their longing for physical union with an obsession to merge their minds and souls.

We have said that incest offers the most nearly perfect way of achieving oneness, providing the metaphor of like with like merging into complete possession; by suppressing the sexual instincts, this possession can be untempered by fleeting physicality, can be based on the eternal union of the spirit--that love which man normally aspires to as the perfection of heavenly love.

Heathcliff had to submerge the sexual side of his nature in order to keep his intense physical longing from consciousness. Becker explains man's denial of the body as his attempt to deny "the drag of his animality that haunts his victory over decay and death" (162). Nelly called him "simply insensible" (80). When he was contemplating marriage to Isabella, he looked at her as "one might do at a strange repulsive animal, a centipede from the Indies, for instance, which curiosity leads one to examine in spite of the aversion it raises" (144). His inability to show physical affection was evident as he told Cathy, "You'd hear of odd things, if I lived alone with that mawkish, waxen face" (145), and we do later hear of his brutality and insensitivity to his young wife, of his "experiments on what



she could endure" (188). Heathcliff associated the romantic love of Isabella with irrationality and delusions (187). He was revolted by her "silly smiles and grimaces" (187) and called her "pitiful," "slavish," and "abject" (188).

In modern times it has become a psychological commonplace that the instinctual self, when consistently rejected, eventually surfaces elsewhere, often in a tragic form. The combination of Heathcliff's deprived early environment and his equally deprived adolescence indicates that he never received the kind of nurturing necessary to grow out of a symbiotic relationship. As a result he spent much of his energy keeping his unmet dependency needs out of his awareness. He did this through sadistic behavior, at times bordering on depravity and self-destruction. With the possible exception of Nelly, only Cathy saw the all-giving, all-loving side of his nature.

Along with sadism, Heathcliff exhibited other bizarre traits which we, as modern readers, can understand in light of psychological breakthroughs in the study of incest. Psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, in his book On the Nightmare, demonstrated empirically the relationship between incest, Satanism, vampirism, lycanthropy (or werewolfism), and necrophilia--all of which were manifested by Heathcliff. In folklore and myth, all of these disorders are considered demonic, a predominant characteristic of Heathcliff. Critics have pointed out the dozens of passages in which he is referred to as "fiend," "ghoul," "devil," etc., but there

are also many allusions to vampirism in general and two of its specific forms, lycanthropy and necrophilia, so it is to these forms of aberrant behavior that I will direct attention.

Strictly speaking, Heathcliff was not a vampire, for the term designates a re-animated body or soul of a dead person who sucks the blood from the living in order to draw him into death, the vampire himself being re-animated in the process (Jones 99). But the predominant imagery of vampirism throughout the novel is so pervasive that it seems fair to say that Bronte created at least a metaphorical vampire. Jones demonstrated that the incest complex underlies the vampire one (127), paralleling the vampire who sucks blood to sustain himself to the infant who receives life-sustaining nourishment from the mother's breast. The whole superstition of vampirism, according to Jones, is "shot through with the theme of guilt" which is generated in the incest conflicts in infancy (127).

Jones points out that the relationship between the werewolf, or in clinical terms the lycanthrope, and the vampire superstitions are closely connected. In many parts of the world the idea is prevalent that "werewolves become vampires after their death" (139). From the blood-sucking of one to the ravenous lust of the other is but a small step (148).

Images of both vampirism and lycanthropy abound in the novel in regard to Heathcliff's appearance, as well as his

behavior. According to folklore, "Werewolves could be recognized when in human form by having heavy eyebrows that met together . . ." (Jones 137). Nelly described Heathcliff as having "thick brows, that instead of rising arched, sink in the middle" (97). When he arrived at Wuthering Heights, Nelly tells how he spoke some "gibberish that nobody could understand" (77), even though he must have been seven years old. By sixteen he had "acquired a slouching gait, and ignoble look" (108), and he had "sharp cannibal teeth" (212). Cathy told Isabella that he was a "fierce, pitiless, wolfish man" (141), who would "seize and devour her up" (145). Nelly likened his living at Wuthering Heights after Cathy's marriage to that of a wolf being in their midst: "I felt that God had forsaken the stray sheep there to its own wicked wanderings, and an evil beast prowled between it and the fold, waiting his time to spring and destroy" (146). Heathcliff told Nelly that he would never have harmed Edgar as long as Cathy loved him, but "the moment her regard ceased, he would have torn his heart out, and drunk his blood" (185).

The manifestations of vampirism in general and lycanthropy in particular heightened as Cathy neared death. Heathcliff, in his own words, "haunted" the Grange garden every night for six hours (189). Nelly reveals his behavior during Cathy's final hours: he embraced her so madly as she lay ill that "four distinct impressions left blue in the colourless skin" (195); he "gnashed" and "foamed like a mad

dog" (197) until Nelly felt as if she were not "in the company of [her] own species; it appeared that he would not understand, though [she] spoke to him" (197). After Cathy's death, he "howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears" (204), and Nelly "observed several splashes of blood about the bark of the tree, and his hands and forehead were both stained" (204).

A month after Cathy's death, Isabella appeared at Thrushcross Grange, obviously having been beaten, calling Heathcliff an "incarnate goblin" (208), and claiming in terms suggestive of vampirism that Heathcliff had taken her heart "and pinched it to death, and flung it back" (209). Then she related that Heathcliff had not eaten with them for a week, just "come home at dawn, and gone upstairs to his chamber, locking himself in" (209). Isabella said that Heathcliff's "mouth watered to tear [Hindley] with his teeth; because he's only half a man" (216). Heathcliff himself tells us that he had a "savage feeling" towards those who feared him, and that he would consider a "slow vivisection" of the younger Catherine and Linton to be an "evening's entertainment" (302).

Heathcliff manifested the symptoms of necrophilia immediately after Cathy's death. Modern psychology recognizes necrophilia as a sexual aberration which, like vampirism, arises from incestuous desires and guilt. Jones explains that the necrophiliac believes that "a dead person

who loves will love forever and will never be weary of giving and receiving caresses" (110). This fantasy particularly appealed to Heathcliff, for "the dead being allows everything, can offer no resistance, and the relationship has none of the inconvenient consequences that sexuality may bring in its train in life" (Jones 111). Heathcliff would violate no incest taboo by dreaming of "sleeping the last sleep, by that sleeper," with his "cheek frozen against hers" (320).

Nelly discloses Heathcliff's necrophilic tendencies; she reveals that he visited Cathy's funeral chamber at night, a fact that she realized because of the "disarrangement of the drapery about the corpse's face" (205). We learn from Isabella that he slept on Cathy's grave during the summer months (213). We later discover from Heathcliff himself that the night of Cathy's burial he had attempted to remove the dirt from her coffin, but as he bent over the grave he seemed to sense her presence "not under [him], but on the earth" (321). The sense of relief caused him to recover the grave and return home. All the way back, he "could almost see her, and yet [he] could not" (320). After that he continued to be tortured by the feeling of her presence, yet the inability to see her.

Heathcliff's obsession with the dead Cathy is so persuasive that the reader must make an effort to remember that he is merely projecting his own ideas onto the dead body. Actually Bronte is careful not to suggest that Cathy

is visible to Heathcliff after her death--that he only senses her presence.

Jones explains this insatiable desire to be revisited by the dead as mostly a "mechanism of identification":

It is as though the living person whose unconscious wishes have been exemplified by the life and conduct of the recently deceased felt that if he were dead he would not be able to rest in his grave and would be impelled by various motives to return. (99-100)

Jones goes on to say:

The deepest source of this projection is doubtless to be found in the wish that ultimately springs from childhood memories of being left alone by the loved parent. (100-01)

Likewise the insistence on complete possession is, according to Jones, "particularly urgent with those who have not succeeded in emancipating themselves from the infantile desires" which are characteristic of the Oedipal conflict (110).

Cathy's Oedipal characteristics are drawn as accurately as Heathcliff's, if more subtly. At the inception of Cathy's Oedipal attachment to Heathcliff, she acted as a kind of surrogate mother to Heathcliff and is portrayed in terms which suggest a maternal superiority. According to Nelly, she acted "the little mistress" (983), the "queen of the country-side" (106), "a haughty, headstrong creature"

with a "wondrous constancy to old attachments" (106). Heathcliff would "do her bidding in anything" (84) and was easily controlled by her "pretended insolence" (84), and so he was devastated by her rebuke for being dirty and ill-kempt (194) or for being poor company because he was not educated enough to amuse her (110). Heathcliff, on his part, idolized her much the way a small boy does his mother, thinking her face was "enchanting" and that she was "immeasurably superior" (92). She was full of ambition, willing to marry Edgar for his money so that she could "aid Heathcliff to rise" (122)--a sacrifice suggestive of an indulgent mother on behalf of her deprived offspring.

When Cathy was separated from Heathcliff, however, she easily lost her maternal superiority and reacted in a child-like fashion, throwing tantrums (127), obstinately refusing to take shelter from the elements (125, 103-4), refusing to eat (99, 158), having appalling nightmares (162), and threatening self-destruction (128, 155, 159, 165). Nelly tells us, "Our fiery Catherine is no better than a wailing child" (162).

Cathy was indirectly given a share of Heathcliff's vampiristic tendencies. She asked Nelly, "Who is to separate us [Heathcliff and her], pray? They'll meet the fate of Milo!" (121). Milo, according to a textual note, was a "Greek athlete who, when trying to rend a tree asunder, was trapped in the cliff and eaten by wolves" (WH 370). When Edgar tried to force her to choose between

Heathcliff and him, she is described in vampiristic terms as "dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, so that you might fancy she would crash them to splinters!" (156). Nelly further described her reaction to separation from Heathcliff: "She stretched herself out still and turned up her eyes, while her cheeks, at once blanched and livid assumed the aspect of death. . . . 'She has blood on her lips!' [Edgar] said, shuddering" (157). This description is suggestive of Heathcliff when he learned of Cathy's death. The vampiristic image is evident as Nelly continues: "She started up--her hair flying over her shoulders, her eyes flashing, the muscles of her neck and arms standing out preternaturally" (157). Cathy's appearance as she neared death furthers the image: "Her present countenance had a wild vindictiveness in its white cheek, and a bloodless lip, and scintillating eye . . ." (195). When she thought Nelly had betrayed her, "a maniac's fury kindled under her brows" (166), and she associated Nelly with witchcraft, saying, "I'll make her howl a recantation!" (166).

According to Leo Bersani, desire in Wuthering Heights is presented as essentially vampiristic: "The protagonists want to devour being," and they have a "cruel appetite for others" (213). They have a "gluttonous and yet almost ascetic, an erotic and yet sexless, passion for otherness" (215). Bersani adds,



They are rather, in the etymological sense of the adjective, an aspiring openness, which sucks in and becomes other forms of being. Heathcliff's wild embrace almost kills Cathy, as if he wants to crush her into himself. (213)

Bersani's insights concur with the notion of incest as a means of adding to one's own life by merging with that of another. As Becker puts it, "These feelings are embedded in one's earliest experiences of comfortable merger with the mother" (134). Erich Fromm has labeled this passionate need for what he calls "a magic helper" as "incestuous symbiosis" (Fromm 180-201), which can be defined as the fear of leaving the family and facing the world on one's own; or, as Becker puts it, "the desire to keep oneself tucked into a larger source of power" (134).

Just as Heathcliff consistently rejected his instinctual self, so did Cathy. Whereas Heathcliff's repressed sexuality surfaced in a number of bizarre behavioral traits, Cathy's emerged as a variety of disorders. Cathy suffered a succession of illnesses in the novel, variously referred to as "delirium" (127), "a fever" (127), a "kind of fit" (167), "brain fever" (171), and severe headaches (64, 155). In fact, every time that Cathy was physically separated from Heathcliff, she became physically ill, most seriously on the occasions which threatened total separation: when Heathcliff left for three years, and when Edgar

refused to allow Heathcliff at Thrushcross Grange, resulting in her eventual death.

We learn through Lockwood's reading of Cathy's diary (64) and through Nelly's account of Cathy's delirium just prior to her death (162-3) about her headaches and "temporary derangement" when Hindley separated Heathcliff and Cathy at ages thirteen and twelve respectively.

The text is unclear whether Cathy and Heathcliff actually shared the same bed, which was described as a closet-like structure affording complete seclusion (61). (This was the same bed in which Lockwood had his nightmare and in which Heathcliff died.) It is possible that they merely shared the same room, although Cathy's statement, "I was laid alone for the first time" (163), certainly leaves room for conjecture that they shared the same bed, especially since it figured so prominently throughout the novel. Nevertheless, they at least shared the same room, apparently just the two of them for the three years that Hindley was away at college.

Santiago, after studying patterns of sibling incest, recommends that "sleeping arrangements should be based on separating the sexes" (171). He quotes a 1970 study of "Sexual Play among Children": "When a brother and sister share a bedroom, it invites sex play. When they share the same bed, it practically guarantees it" (171). He concludes by saying that if it is impossible for a child to have his own bed and room, it is "more practical to put three

siblings rather than two in a room" (171). Of course, Hindley remedied this situation when he became head of the household by banishing Heathcliff from Cathy's room.

Cathy suffered a second hysterical attack, which eventually led to her death, when Edgar barred Heathcliff from Thrushcross Grange. The doctor, Kenneth, commented that he could not "help fancying there's an extra cause for this [her hysteria]" (167).

Critics have questioned Cathy's statement in Lockwood's dream that she has been "a waif for twenty years," for she had been dead only eighteen years when she appeared in his nightmare. I propose that the physical rejection that Cathy experienced at age fifteen when Heathcliff "ceased to express his fondness for Cathy in words, and recoiled with angry suspicion from her girlish caresses" (108) explains why Cathy specifies twenty years, for twenty years previously would have put Cathy at age fifteen or sixteen. Because Bronte elsewhere has manipulated the time sequences flawlessly, I do not think she would have carelessly made a two- or three-year error if she had intended Cathy to be referring to herself as a waif since her marriage (eighteen years) or since her death (seventeen years).

Cathy rivaled Heathcliff in her apparent contempt for romantic love. She likened Hindley and Frances to "two babies, kissing and talking nonsense by the hour--foolish palaver that we [she and Heathcliff] should be ashamed of" (63). She was condescending in her attitude toward Isa-

bella's infatuation with Heathcliff, characterizing her as "pining" and "raving" (145).

Whereas Heathcliff married a woman whom he despised, Cathy married an essentially sexless man, one "in general lacking spirit" (107) according to Nelly, whom Cathy called "a sucking leveret" (154). Certainly the relationship lacked vitality and sexuality. Heathcliff told Cathy, "This lamb of yours [Edgar] threatens like a bull!" (153)--an obvious sexual slur. We are told by Cathy that Edgar's "blood cannot be worked into a fever" and that his "veins are full of ice-water" (156). There appeared to be little display of emotion between Cathy and Edgar despite Nelly's rather weak assertion that the first six months of their marriage (during Heathcliff's absence) gave her reason to believe "that they were really in possession of deep and growing happiness" (132). At the same time, however, she admitted that "the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand, because no fire came near to explode it" (131). We see how little affection Cathy had for Edgar when she invariably took Heathcliff's side against her husband, saying, "I'd rather see Edgar at bay than you [Heathcliff]" (154).

The vapid Edgar remained faithful to Cathy, nursing her diligently during her illness (brought on by his banishment of Heathcliff). When he attempted to amuse her, she "endured his efforts placidly, only showing their uselessness by now and then suppressing a weary sigh . . ." and at

other times, "she would turn petulantly away, and hide her face in her hands, or even push him off angrily" (193).

Anthropologists consider the primary purpose of the incest taboo to be survival, for it promotes the propagation of the species outside the family (Hall 3). In mythology and folklore, as well as in Biblical lore, one of the consequences of incest is sterility. (See, for example, Leviticus XX. 21.) We have already examined Heathcliff's sexual impotence; Cathy, too, is depicted as lacking in sexual vitality. Her union with Edger which resulted in her pregnancy apparently occurred within the span of her jubilation over Heathcliff's return after his three year absence (139); the result was the premature birth of a "puny successor" (219), a "feeble," "seven months child" (201). Since Cathy never regained consciousness after the birth, she could be said to have died childless.

Cathy denied her sexual instincts as heartily as did Heathcliff. But she did not always deal with their mutual feelings for each other as consciously as he did, as is apparent in her vacillating statements about him. Some of her comments are so inconsistent that the reader is tempted to doubt her sincerity altogether, but if we are to trust Nelly's assessment that "she was not artful, never played the coquette" (107), then we must assume that rather than being affectatious, she was unconsciously denying the true nature of her feelings for Heathcliff. In fact, in a story which is essentially a magnificent love story, the heroine,

prior to her deathbed, only openly admitted her love for Heathcliff on one occasion--when she was telling Nelly of her decision to marry another man. In that same conversation she claimed to love Edgar also, but we are led to discount that protestation of love as Cathy's superficial conformity to Victorian concepts of love and marriage by her saying, "I love all his [Edgar's] looks, and all his actions, and him entirely, and altogether. There now!" (119).

When Cathy told Nelly of her decision to marry Edgar, she wanted to be "convinced that Heathcliff has no notion of these things" (121)--what "things" are unclear, but we can assume that she meant matters of love and marriage since that is what she and Nelly had been discussing; her question of Nelly, "He does not know what being in love is?" (121) seems almost facetious, being tucked in between two of her most impassioned statements: ". . . he's more myself than I am" (121) and ". . . my great thought in living is himself" (122). The reader shares in Nelly's astonished reaction: "I see no reason that he should not know, as well as you" (121).

When Heathcliff talked of marrying Isabella, Cathy said, "I'm not jealous of you. . . . If you like Isabella, you shall marry her" (150). The reader applauds Heathcliff's disbelief, which prompted him to reply: "If I imagined you really wanted me to marry Isabella, I'd cut my throat!" (151).

Even more unconvincing is Cathy's remark to Nelly when she was relating the delirium brought on by Hindley's separating her and Heathcliff at age twelve--she was "laid alone, for the first time" (163), indicating that they were not allowed to sleep together--and she said, "I cannot say why I felt so wildly wretched--it must have been temporary derangement for there is scarcely cause" (163). "Scarcely cause" seems the grossest kind of understatement to be made by one who in the same breath asserted that Heathcliff was her "all in all" at that time (163).

Perhaps the most significant example of Cathy's refusal to admit consciously her unbounded love for Heathcliff was when Edgar demanded to know if she loved "that wretch, Heath--" and was not even allowed to complete his question. "Hush!" cried Mrs. Linton. "Hush, this moment! You mention that name and I will end the matter instantly, by a spring from the window" (165).

At least one critic, Ronald Hatch, has suggested that Heathcliff's death constituted a kind of suicide (49-64). Mitchell notes that Heathcliff turned his "aggressions inward in so radical a way that he need not, in the usual sense, kill himself. He simply cease[d] to remind himself to breathe" (33). It is easy to infer from the text that Cathy's fatal illness also was brought on by Cathy herself, for Nelly tried to restrain her from opening the window onto the frosty night, warning her that she would catch her "death of cold" (163). As Leo Bersani explains, Heathcliff

and Cathy came to conceive of death as "another kind of unceasing life" (213).

A period of eighteen years elapsed after Cathy's death in which Heathcliff continued to seek the wholeness which had eluded him in incest, yet he did not forsake his incestuous longing. His obsession with the dead Cathy and his desire to have her possess him did not abate, but grew stronger. One thing that kept Heathcliff alive was his illusion that Cathy was with him spiritually if not physically, for he told Nelly that Cathy chose "a strange way of killing, not by inches, but by fractions of hair-breadths, to beguile [him] with a spectre of a hope through eighteen years" (321).

Heathcliff returned to the bed that he and Cathy had shared until separated by Hindley at age twelve and surrendered to his "soul's bliss" (363). When Nelly found him dead, she tried to close his eyelids to shut out the "life-like gaze of exultation," but "they would not shut" (365), typical of the corpse of a vampire (Jones 103). Hareton and Nelly fulfilled Heathcliff's wish to be buried with his coffin opening into Cathy's, free now that he had shed his mortal being to "dissolve with her" (320) so that one would "not know which [was] which" (319).

Bersani points out that "the visible destruction of this body, with its all too particular history, is the condition for being nothing in particular, the ambiguous license to roam eternally in other bodies and other his-



tories" (213). If we are to take seriously the rumors of the countryside after Heathcliff's death, though, we must concede that Heathcliff and Cathy chose no other bodies, no other histories, than their own. Since they re-appeared as adults, not children, the implication is that the union which had been forbidden to them in life found fulfillment in death.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Moser, in his article "What Is the Matter with Emily Jane? Conflicting Impulses in Wuthering Heights" (Nineteenth Century Fiction 17 [1962]: 1-19), maintains that Heathcliff possesses a "magical sexual power" and that his "presence was vital to the conception of all three children of the second generation [Hareton, young Cathy, and Linton]" (16). Moser seems to refute his own argument, however, for he admits that Heathcliff "has little personal impact upon Hindley's relations with Frances, and one could attribute Hareton's conception after their arrival to the potent atmosphere of Wuthering Heights" (16); he damages his argument further by admitting that "apparently Emily Bronte imagines [Heathcliff and Isabella] sleeping together only the first night" (17)--hardly characteristic of a lusty male married to a "charming" eighteen year old. Moser's observation that Heathcliff has an "immense effect . . . on relations between Cathy and Edgar" (16), influencing the conception of their child, falls short of pointing up Heathcliff's potency, for Edgar is obviously the father.

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### CHAPTER III

#### PARADISE DENIED

John Milton's use of the incest theme in Paradise Lost affords two opposing perspectives by which we can examine the moral implications of incest in Wuthering Heights: first, the aspect of incest as represented by Heathcliff that incest can be a willful act committed as an arrogant defiance of God, which correlates with the idea that incest, the most repugnant of sins, is a metaphor for evil and represents mortal man's attempt to convince himself of his immortality by daring to commit the "sin that no Christian need pardon" (WH 166); second, the aspect of incest as represented by Cathy that incest can be an attempt to recover the lost innocence of childhood, which correlates with the idea that the incestuous person yearns for a return to a child-like state out of the desire to merge himself with a larger source of power (Becker 134).

Paradise Lost places incest at a pivotal point in both the Fall of the Angels and the Fall of Adam and Eve, prompting Constance Hill Hall to theorize that Milton viewed incest as a "metaphor for original sin" (11). Satan's incest with his "daughter" and "darling" Sin (II. 870) occurred immediately after his revolt against God and produced his offspring Death.<sup>1</sup> Adam's incest with Eve, his

"daughter" and "fair consort" (IV. 610), occurred immediately following their disobedience and was a "seal" of their mutual guilt (IV. 1043). Prior to their disobedience, their union was innocent, but afterwards they acquired the shame consequent to carnal knowledge, a knowledge which brought with it an awareness of death as well.

Milton's view of incest as the harbinger of catastrophe, then, is borne out by what Hall maintains are the consequences of the two Falls in Paradise Lost: the loss of Paradise, the resulting alienation and disintegration, a descent into brutehood, and, finally, the most terrible consequence of all, the birth of death (Hall 11). We find the same consequences implicit in Wuthering Heights.

A study which draws comparisons between Wuthering Heights and Paradise Lost must begin by taking note of the foreboding symmetry between Satan and Heathcliff, which best exemplifies the consequences of incest, as well as the consequences of both Falls.<sup>2</sup>

We have already noted that the characteristics which Heathcliff manifested--sadism, vampirism, lycanthropy, and necrophilia--are disorders which are considered demonic in folklore and myth (Jones, Nightmare 89-98). Justice points out that "incest became identified in people's minds with witches and witchcraft" and "that incestuous unions were mandatory" at witches' conclaves (46). Hence, "incest became an act inspired by the devil, and people who practiced it were doomed to hell" (46).

The dozens of passages in which Heathcliff is referred to as "fiend," "devil," "evil genius," and "imp of Satan," as well as characterized as "diabolical," "hellish," and "inhuman," lend credibility to the readers and critics alike who have branded him a Satanic figure. Clearly Bronte intended to stress his affinities with evil in her portrayal of him, a portrayal which strongly suggests his kinship with Milton's Satan as characterized in Paradise Lost.

Much like Milton's magnificent Satan, whose "courage never to submit or yield" (I. 108) has spawned countless debates over who the real hero of Paradise Lost is, Heathcliff has endured in the hearts of many readers as the tragic hero of Wuthering Heights, for he, too, is magnificent in his grand passion. Like Satan, Heathcliff is the essence of primitive savagery and brutality, but at the same time he is ruthlessly idealistic and passionately sincere, qualities which give him a kind of tragic integrity. Nevertheless, if we scrutinize his obsessive single-mindedness, we must acknowledge that Heathcliff was driven by the same "obdurate pride and steadfast hate" (PL I. 58) that drove Milton's Satan.

Charlotte Bronte's description of Heathcliff in her apology for her sister's creation of him is appropriate to both Satan and Heathcliff:

[He], indeed, stands unredeemed; never once swerving in his arrow-straight course to perdition. . . . [He] betrays . . . a sentiment fierce

and inhuman: a passion such as might boil and glow in the bad essence of some evil genius; a fire that might form the tormented centre--the evil-suffering soul of a magnate of the infernal world: and by its quenchless and ceaseless ravage effect the execution of the decree which dooms him to carry Hell with him wherever he wanders. (1850

Preface to WH 40)

Heathcliff, then, is like Milton's Satan, who lamented, "Me miserable! which way shall I fly / Infinite wrath, and infinite despair? / Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (IV. 73-5).

We have noted that incest is a strategy designed by mortal man to screen from himself the knowledge of his own mortality (Becker 36, 152). Central to this idea is its corollary--man's need to believe in his own immortality. Becker explains that mortal man goes about proving to himself that he is immortal, a belief that springs from the deepest recesses of his being (2), by seeing himself as heroic, a creature of "cosmic specialness" (5).

According to Becker, "One of the key concepts for understanding man's urge to heroism is the idea of narcissism" (2). In the healthy ego, narcissism is essentially a person's sense of self-worth and acts as a positive force. Man works desperately to justify his existence as a creature of primary importance in the universe; he must contribute to life, must be a hero.

An exaggerated sense of self-worth, however, becomes a negative force leading to alienation and disintegration. As early as Greek tragedy, excessive pride, or hubris, led many protagonists to disaster.

Heathcliff and Satan both exhibited a fatal excess of pride. Heathcliff was arrogant, angry, absolutely without conscience where all but Cathy were concerned from the time he was separated from Cathy at age thirteen by Hindley. His vengefulness bordered on madness, embodying a hatred of heaven itself. He resembled Satan, the haughty "antagonist of Heaven" (II. 509), who in his arrogance asserted that he and his fallen angels were "self-begot, self-raised," saying, "Our puissance is our own" (V. 860, 864). Just as Satan "trusted to have equalled the most High" (I. 40), Heathcliff placed himself on a par with the supernatural, arrogantly assuring Cathy before her death that "nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted [them]," only she herself (197).

Along with Satan's determination to equal God, he wished to "set himself in glory above his peers" (I. 39). Heathcliff, too, we are told, found it "pleasant" to "frame high notions of his birth," as Nelly urged him to do (98). His frown disappeared as she told him:

You're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows, but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and



Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors, and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer! (98)

Heathcliff willingly embraced the concept suggested to him that he "count[ed] for more" than the ordinary man, that he was somehow "heroic," which Becker tells us is the primary way man attempts to deny his mortality (Becker 4).

The arrogance of incest as an attempt to deny mortality can best be demonstrated by noting that "the privilege of incest was restricted almost always to royalty" (Hall 8). According to Kirson Weinberg, "In preliterate and ancient societies, the 'deified' royalty who were considered of divine descent could resort to practices that were expressly forbidden to ordinary mortals" (240). Hall explains this further:

What a great temptation, how god-like, to be whole, to be alone, unified, integral, to be the more completely self-sufficient, entirely independent, something reserved for a deity, by union with a part of oneself. (43)

One attraction of incest to Heathcliff would have been the pride of having conquered Cathy, the "queen of the country-side," the "haughty, headstrong creature" (106), who at one time "refused to have [Heathcliff] in bed with [her

and Hindley], or even in their room" (78). His ambition was fed by the preferential treatment he received from Mr. Earnshaw, which caused the natural son, Hindley, to grow "bitter with brooding over these injuries" (79).

In Paradise Lost, Satan's revolt against God arose from pride, ambition, and envy. Too proud to bend to God's will that "all knees in Heaven" should bow to His Son and "confess Him Lord" (V. 608), Satan "resolved / With all his legions to dislodge, and leave / Unworshipped, unobeyed the throne supreme" (V. 668-70). Cast out of Heaven and tormented by the thought "both of lost happiness and lasting pain" (I. 55), he vowed to avenge himself out of a "sense of injured merit" (I. 98).

Heathcliff, too, revolted out of a sense of injured merit. After Mr. Earnshaw's death, Hindley, who regarded Heathcliff as "a usurper of his parent's affections, and his privileges" (79), set out to establish his power and reassert his position as head of the household. His first act was to separate Heathcliff from Cathy--Heathcliff's idea of Heaven, as we shall see further in this study.

Nelly confirms that Hindley's treatment of Heathcliff was "enough to make a fiend of a saint" (106). By age thirteen, Heathcliff had resolved to pay Hindley back, telling Nelly, "I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it, at last. I hope he will not die before I do!" (101). Heathcliff's resolution recalls Satan's resolve to "pursue /

Vain War with Heaven" (II. 8-9), for "to be weak is miserable / Doing or suffering" (I. 157-58).

Heathcliff's rejoinder to Nelly when she pleaded with him to leave justice to God, "Let me alone, and I'll plan it out: while I'm thinking of that I don't feel pain" (101), is suggestive of Satan's immediate response to being cast out of Heaven: he rallied his cohorts to retaliation, which action re-invigorated the fallen troops and their leader alike, diverting them from their loss in their determination to wrest "resolution from despair" (I. 191).

And reassembling our afflicted powers,  
Consult how we may henceforth most offend  
Our enemy, our own loss how repair,  
How overcome this dire calamity. . . . (I. 186-9)

Perhaps the most compelling illustration of Heathcliff's descent into the brutehood consequent to evil is Bronte's portrayal of him as child of nature, and as such, kindred to the savagery of animals and the violence of the elements.

The animal imagery in Wuthering Heights forms a vivid point of comparison between Heathcliff and Milton's Satan. According to Hall, "One consequence [of incest] stressed by Milton is a loss of humanity--a descent into brutehood illustrated by the monstrous Hell Hounds engendered in Death's rape of his mother" (82).

In the first chapter of Wuthering Heights, we are introduced to Heathcliff's Hell Hounds, a relationship he

proudly acknowledged to Lockwood as "I and my dogs" (49). The dogs resembled Milton's hideous Hell Hounds, who "never ceasing barked / With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung / A hideous peal" (II. 654-56). They embodied the concept of incest, not only because they were the offspring of Sin and her son Death ("And in embraces forcible and foul / Ingendering with me, of that rape begot / These yelling monsters . . ." [II. 793-95]), but because "when they list into the womb / That bred them they return, and howl and gnaw / My bowels, their repast . . ." (II. 798-800). These passages from Paradise Lost bear a striking resemblance to Lockwood's description of Heathcliff's dogs: "Half-a-dozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes, and ages, issued from hidden dens to the common centre. I felt my heels and coat-laps peculiar subjects of assault . . ." (49).

Anthropologists, in their attempts to define the origin of the incest taboo, are far from unanimous in their thinking. Many, however, put the incest taboo "at the heart of our humanity" (Fox 56). According to Robin Fox,

If, the argument goes, man had not at some time or other instituted the ban on intra-familial sex, then there would have been no culture, no society; man would have remained in an incestuous animal-like state. (56)

Fox agrees with Freud that "we had to become non-incestuous to become human" (Fox 61). The many references to Heathcliff's wolfish characteristics, as well as his

apparent preference for the companionship of his dogs, seem to emphasize that Heathcliff was closer to an incestuous animal-like state than to a socialized human being.

The violent storms, which Lockwood tells us gave *Wuthering Heights* its name (46), provide another association with the primitive forces of nature, which critics believe Cathy and Heathcliff are intended to represent. The storms occur at significant points in the story, just as the violence of nature erupted in Paradise Lost immediately after Satan's Fall (I. 170-77) and Eve's Fall: "Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat / Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe, / That all was lost" (IX. 782-84).

Emile Durkheim, whose classic work on the incest taboo among primitive tribes remains an important historical source of information on incest, tells us: "According to primitive ideas, the terrible powers which inhabit the world react, with automatic necessity, against everything that offends them, just as do the physical forces" (18).

In Wuthering Heights, a number of storms occur which appear to symbolize a corruption of the natural order which cannot be allowed to go unpunished. The first storm occurred when Lockwood penetrated the "dismal spiritual atmosphere" of the family circle (56). All of the other storms specifically mentioned in the novel occur when some aspect of Heathcliff and Cathy's togetherness is at issue.

At the beginning of the novel, Lockwood was forced to remain overnight at *Wuthering Heights* because of the

inclement weather. Given quarters in the bedroom that Heathcliff and Cathy had shared as children, Lockwood lay down to sleep in Cathy's bed, reading her diary. As the storm howled outside, he read of Cathy's anguish at being separated from Heathcliff by Hindley. (She was "laid alone for the first time" [163]).

The second storm took place immediately following the death of Cathy's father, while Cathy and Heathcliff, according to Nelly, comforted each other with thoughts of Heaven. Nelly does not reveal their concept of Heaven, but does characterize it as "innocent" (85); therefore, we cannot definitely include this storm as a reaction of the forces of nature against evil unless we recall that Heaven had a specialized meaning for Cathy and Heathcliff--that Heaven was togetherness.

The third storm occurred the night Heathcliff and Cathy went to Thrushcross Grange to spy on Edgar and Isabella, their initiatory act of rebellion (88), which resulted in Hindley's separating them.

The fourth significant storm occurred the evening that Heathcliff overheard Cathy telling Nelly that she could not marry him because Hindley had brought him so low, a conversation in which Cathy revealed her true feelings for Heathcliff (125). Heathcliff ran away to begin an exile which lasted for three years, and as the storm raged, Nelly concluded that it "must be a judgment on us," but attributed the evil to Hindley (125).

The fifth storm took place the day of Cathy's burial. We learn from Isabella and later from Heathcliff himself that he had gone to Cathy's grave that night and had attempted to exhume her body so that he could hold her in his arms again, but abandoned the idea when he got the feeling "that Cathy was there, not under [him], but on the earth" (321).

The night of Heathcliff's death is the last specific mention of a storm. Nelly tells us, "As I took my morning walk round the house, I observed the master's window swinging open, and the rain driving straight in" (364). Primitive societies might have interpreted this storm as nature's rebellion at an incestuous longing finally fulfilled: having shed his mortal body, Heathcliff was at last free to join "his soul's bliss" (363). We recall that when Adam joined Eve in eating the forbidden fruit:

Earth trembled from her entrails, as again  
 In pangs, and nature gave a second groan,  
 Sky lowered, and muttering thunder, some sad drops  
 Wept at completing of the mortal sin  
 Original. . . . (IX.1000-04)

Finally, the elements are identified with Heathcliff and Cathy's togetherness at the end of the story when rumors were circulated after Heathcliff's death that the two lovers appeared to be looking out of the chamber window "on every rainy night since his death" (366).

Other parallels can be drawn between Wuthering Heights and Paradise Lost which further illustrate the disintegration and chaos resulting from the Fall in which incest occupied a central position. The Fall itself embraces images of descent and expulsion. Eden and Wuthering Heights were located at the summit of hills. According to Hall's study, "In Milton's epic, the role of the hill or cliff is clear; it witnesses the descent into the world of time and history, the fall into toil, sex, pain, and death" (59). Cathy's descent into the world of Thrushcross Grange, like Eve's, represented a fall into the realities of life, especially sex, the body, and death.

Paradise Lost and Wuthering Heights, from one perspective, are stories of revenge. The revenge motive is closely akin to the desire for immortality, as John Irwin pointed out in his study of revenge in Faulkner (99). Man, if he is god-like, cannot admit that he is inferior to another man, cannot be bound by "artificial standards" or external "circumstances" (Irwin 99). Heathcliff and Satan both set out to avenge themselves on the artificial standards and external circumstances that determine who are strong and who are weak. In doing so, they exemplified the alienation and disintegration and the corresponding descent into brutehood which are characteristic of incest and of both Falls in Paradise Lost.

Heathcliff violated all the rules of decency, honor, pity, and compassion in his quest to establish his own



dynasty. His desire to usurp Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange represents what Jones terms "the normal solution of the Oedipal complex," that is, the succession of the father in due course (Hamlet and Oedipus 90). Hindley, as substitute father, bore the brunt of Heathcliff's vindictiveness. Jones explains the deep-seated source of such hostility:

A child very often unreasoningly interprets the various encroachments on its privileges, and the obstacles interposed to the immediate gratification of its desires, as meaningless cruelty, and the more imperative is the desire that has been thwarted the more pronounced is the hostility towards the agent of this supposed cruelty, most often of course a parent. (Hamlet and Oedipus 72-3)

Heathcliff's determination to ruin Hindley intensified in direct proportion to Hindley's determination to separate Heathcliff and Cathy. When Heathcliff overheard Cathy telling Nelly that it would degrade her to marry him because Hindley had brought him so low, he abruptly left Wuthering Heights for a period of three years. Upon his return, he told Cathy that he had come back to "settle [his] score with Hindley; and then prevent the law by doing execution on [himself]" (136); obviously, his threat implied murder, or at least bodily harm. Cathy's welcome changed his plans, however, and he ostensibly gave up the idea, setting out

instead to ruin Hindley financially, eventually usurping all his possessions, including his son.

The relationship between Heathcliff and his substitute father, Hindley, bears resemblance to that of Satan and his incestuous son, Death; both relationships can be said to illustrate Freud's explanation of the origin of the incest taboo, the Myth of the Primal Horde. According to Freud, patricide and incest were the only two crimes which troubled primitive society (Totem and Taboo 246). In the myth, the brothers killed the father because he "stood so powerfully in the way of their sexual demands and their desire for power" (248). The incest taboo originated as a result of the guilt which then overwhelmed them (250).

Heathcliff bears a resemblance to both Satan and Death. Satan, who challenged his son's identity--"Whence and what art thou, execrable shape?" (II. 681)--was equally unknown to his son, who replied, "Art thou that traitor angel?" (II. 689); Heathcliff and his son, Linton, likewise did not recognize each other and yet hated each other intensely. Heathcliff also resembled Death, who warned his father/brother Satan not to breathe "defiance" and "scorn" where he (the son/brother) reigned (II. 697-98), for Heathcliff became the menacing abuser of Hindley, once he got the financial upper hand. Hindley told Isabella, "Damn the hellish villain! He knocks at the door, as if he were master here, already!" (211).

In Paradise Lost, Satan and Death did not recognize each other and would have killed each other had not Sin-- daughter and consort of Satan, mother and consort of Death-- "Risen, and with hideous outcry rushed between" (II. 726). Only Cathy (symbolic mother and sister) "stood between [Hindley] and bodily harm" (216).

Freud's myth of the father slain by the sons because they lusted for his power and his mate provides a basis for the consequences of revenge and death, which follow in the wake of incest. As Jones explains, "There is a close relation between adult jealousy and the desire for the removal of the rival by the most effective means, that of death . . ." (Hamlet and Oedipus 72-3). The details of Hindley's death approximately one year after Heathcliff returned from his three-year sojourn are recounted by Nelly in such a way as to imply that Heathcliff could have murdered him.

At age sixteen, Heathcliff had wished that Hindley would drink himself to death but feared that because of his strong constitution he would "outlive any man . . . unless, some happy chance out of the common course befall him" (116). Only six months before Hindley's death Isabella tells us that Heathcliff had nearly killed him (213) but desisted only through a "preter-human self-denial" (213), perhaps because of Isabella's presence as a witness.

Suspicion surrounding Hindley's subsequent death is planted in the reader's mind by Nelly, whose first thought upon hearing of the death was, "Had he fair play?" (221).

She hastened to Wuthering Heights to learn from Heathcliff that Hindley had deliberately drunk himself to death. Joseph confirmed the story, but not without muttering that Hindley had been alive when he (Joseph) had gone for the doctor and that Heathcliff should have gone himself for assistance, leaving Joseph to nurse the sick man. Nelly seemed unconvinced of Heathcliff's innocence, saying that his deportment "expressed a flinty gratification at a piece of difficult work, successfully executed" and that there was "something like exultation in his aspect" (222) when the body was being removed. Nevertheless, no one questioned the death further, resulting in Heathcliff's obtaining sole control over Wuthering Heights and Hareton.

Heathcliff's revenge did not stop with Hindley. He was determined to ruin everyone around him. Cathy associated him with Milton's Satan, saying "Your bliss lies, like his, in inflicting misery" (151). Satan, after his Fall, had boasted, "To do aught good never will be our task, / But ever to do ill our sole delight" (I. 159-60). After Cathy's death, Heathcliff devoted all of his energy to inflicting misery on those around him, avenging himself on Hindley and Edgar and exploiting Isabella, Linton, Hareton, and young Catherine. His sole justification for living seems to have been the acting out of his revenge.

Mitchell and others have considered the question of why Heathcliff died when he did, a full eighteen years after Cathy's death (Mitchell 34). According to F. H. Langman:

Heathcliff's love for Catherine is inextricably involved in the motives of his long drawn-out struggle for mastery over his enemies. The two concerns are kept alive together until just before the end, and the survival of the love must be understood or puzzled over--along with the perpetuation of the struggle. The meaning of the one provides the motive for the other. (307)

According to Heathcliff's own testimony, his revenge kept him alive; when he "lost the faculty for enjoying [his old enemies'] destruction," he lost his will to live, saying, "I cannot continue in this condition!--I have to remind myself to breathe--almost to remind my heart to beat!" (354-5). Just "when everything [was] ready, and in [his] power," and his victory over his enemies was assured, his will to do evil vanished. Like Satan, who returned to Hell to celebrate his victory over seduced Man, only to find that "a greater power / Now ruled him" (X. 515-16) and turned "triumph to shame" (X. 546), Heathcliff, "instead of fruit / Chewed bitter ashes" (PL X. 565-66).

Nelly believed, as did Joseph, that "conscience had turned [Heathcliff's] heart to an earthly hell" (355). Satan himself was not free from the pangs of conscience. Milton says of him:

. . . Now conscience wakes despair  
That slumbered, Wakes the bitter memory  
Of what he was, what is, and what must be

Worse; of worse deeds worse suffering must ensue.

(IV. 23-6)

Heathcliff, like Satan, discovered that evil "like a devilish engine back recoils / Upon himself; horror and doubt distract / His troubled thought . . ." (IV. 17-19). Nelly confirms that just prior to Heathcliff's death his state of mind made her wonder "greatly how it would end," as she watched him "pace the room, muttering terrible things to himself" (355). The final blow to his vain attempt "out of good still to find means of evil" (PL I. 165) was Heathcliff's failure to pervert Hareton and his inability to come between the love of him and the younger Catherine. Like Satan, he realized that:

. . . All his malice served but to bring forth  
 Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown  
 On Man by him seduced, but on himself  
 Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance poured.  
 (I. 217-20)

Because Heathcliff's Satanic image seemingly symbolized his defiance of God, his incestuous longing can hardly be construed as positive. At least at some point, however, Cathy's incestuous longing can be regarded as an attempt to recapture the innocence of the Garden of Eden. Her love for Heathcliff appealed to her as a means of reversing time, of retreating to the lost innocence of childhood, in a sense, of returning to the Edenic state shared by Adam and Eve before the Fall.<sup>3</sup>

Heathcliff and Cathy's pure love for each other and for the natural environment bears a striking resemblance to that of Adam and Eve in a pre-Lapsarian Eden. Bronte's complex story of love and evil invites no such simplistic comparison, however, for Heathcliff's and Cathy's ambiguous natures shifted back and forth between perversity and innocence. This is the identical paradox to be found in incest, too. Historically the most heinous of crimes, the motive as elaborated by Becker is innocent in origin--the intense desire to return to the mother's womb to avoid the dangers of life and especially those of death.

At the beginning of the novel Cathy is portrayed as "fully human, sprightly, lovable . . . essentially normal," according to Langman (300). She acted as surrogate mother to Heathcliff, as well as his inseparable companion. Bronte portrays her as mischievous, close to nature, and somewhat charmingly vexatious. As Nelly says, "Her spirits were always at high-water mark, her tongue always going--singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody who would not do the same" (83). Although she was "a wild, wick slip," she had "the bonniest eye, and sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish" (83). She and Heathcliff roamed the moors in a childish innocence similar to the "youthful dalliance" enjoyed by the guiltless Adam and Eve (IV. 338). Milton might have been speaking to Heathcliff and Cathy as to Adam and Eve when he warned: "Ah gentle pair, ye little think

how nigh / Your change approaches, when all these delights /  
Will vanish and deliver ye to woe" (IV. 366-68).

Heathcliff and Cathy's woes began at Mr. Earnshaw's death, at which time Hindley returned from a three-year stint at college, bringing a wife with him. As his wife "grew peevish" in regard to Heathcliff, Hindley's old animosity was renewed, and "he drove [Heathcliff] from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labor out of doors . . ." (87). Cathy, of course, took Heathcliff's part, and as Nelly watched them "growing more reckless daily" (87), she avowed that "they both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages" (87). In other words, along with the alienation and disintegration characteristic of incest, the descent into brutehood which Milton had demonstrated as a consequence of incest was a corresponding result.

Several references at this point associate Cathy with Heathcliff's Satanic characteristics. Just as Satan rose in "proud rebellious arms" (II. 691), Heathcliff and Cathy rebelled. Cathy, in her diary, revealed, "H. and I are going to rebel--we took our initiatory step this evening" (62). The reader is then left to decide if Cathy intended that the initiatory rebellious step was when she and Heathcliff cast their religious volumes into the dog-kennel (63), or when they set off across the moors to spy on Edgar and Isabella at Thrushcross Grange (64). In both cases, the rebellion takes on religious significance.



In the first case, it is obvious that throwing religious volumes is symbolic of defiance of God; Nelly later in the novel accused the grown Heathcliff of having lived a "selfish, unchristian life" since he was thirteen years old (363), which would coincide with this incident. (Heathcliff was "beaten out" [321] of Cathy's chamber at age thirteen also.)

The trip to Thrushcross Grange also takes on religious significance when we parallel it to Satan's stealthy view of Adam and Eve in Paradise, the first step in their seduction. Milton's characterization here of Satan as a "prowling wolf . . . / Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve / In hurdled cotes amid the field secure" (IV. 103-06) associates him with the intruders on Thrushcross Grange and renders as sinister Heathcliff's and Cathy's subsequent relationships with the Lintons.

Like Milton's Satan and Sin, whose hearts moved together in "secret harmony" (X. 358), Heathcliff and Cathy stood together in opposition to Hindley, Edgar, and Isabella. The role of incest as a bid for power is implicit in their alliance against the others. In each case, Heathcliff stood to gain power and wealth; he reminded Cathy that his goods were hers also (145).

We have already noted (chapter II) that in her rages and delirium Cathy took on some of Heathcliff's demonic qualities. Nelly marks their resemblance to each other as she recounts the events preceding Cathy's death: "The two, to a cool spectator,

made a strange and fearful picture. Well might Catherine deem that heaven would be a land of exile to her, unless, with her mortal body, she cast away her mortal character also" (195).

One of the primary motives of incest is the desire to immerse oneself in another in order to perpetuate one's own life by adding that of another to it (Becker 134). Arising out of a need for integration, incest results in most cases in the severest disintegration, as we noted in chapter II. The consequences of Heathcliff and Cathy's unconscious incestuous longing were no less dire than those of the fallen Satan and the fallen Adam and Eve. Denied the Paradise of togetherness, they responded to the expulsion from their own personal Heaven in much the same manner.

The concepts of Heaven, Paradise, and Hell shifted ambiguously in Paradise Lost, at times overlapping, at other times being juxtaposed to each other, at still other times representing the opposite of the conventional definitions. This can best be illustrated by imagining Heaven, Paradise (or Eden), and Hell as three different strata, Paradise occupying the center or earthly position. Satan and his cohorts, after their Fall, were cast down from Heaven (upper) to Hell (lower). Adam and Eve, until their Fall, occupied Paradise (center). But these three distinctions began to shift and merge as Milton illuminated a philosophy which was popular in his time: "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven" (I. 254-5).

Hence, for Adam and Eve, the earthly Paradise seemed "A Heaven on Earth: for blissful Paradise / Of God the garden was . . ." (IV. 208-9). And Satan, possessing "a mind not to be changed by place or time" (I. 253), upon his expulsion from Heaven, embraced Hell and made it his kingdom, building the magnificent Pandemonium; he consoled himself in his loss that it was "better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven" (I. 263). When Satan discovered that "on earth / God [had] dispensed his bounties as in Heaven" (V. 329-30), however, he sought to claim earth as his new empire, telling his cohorts: "Now possess, / As lords, a spacious world, to our native Heaven / Little inferior (X. 466-9). . . . What remains, ye gods, / But up and enter now into full bliss" (X. 503). But God denied Satan's plans to usurp Paradise as his new Heaven, resulting in the renewed despair of the fallen angels, who discovered: "To [those], who with eternal famine pine, / Alike is Hell, or Paradise, or Heaven. . ." (X. 597-8).

Adam and Eve, likewise, were denied permanent residence in Paradise, their personal Heaven, because of their disobedience. But Eve found consolation in the companionship of her husband and discovered:

. . . With thee to go  
 Is to stay here (Paradise); without thee here to stay,  
 Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me  
 Art all things under Heaven, all places thou,  
 Who for my willful crime art banished hence.  
 (XII. 615-20)

Heathcliff and Cathy, like Satan, Adam and Eve, discovered that "the mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven" (PL I. 254-55). We noted in chapter II that Heathcliff and Cathy came to conceive of death as "another kind of unceasing life" (Bersani 213). Just as they reversed the concepts of life and death (Cathy opposed Nelly's attempt to keep her from catching her "death of cold," saying, "You won't give me a chance of life, you mean" [163] ), Heathcliff and Cathy reversed the concepts of conventional religion, re-defining their own personal Heaven.

The metaphorical Paradise in Wuthering Heights is less complicated than in Paradise Lost, for Bronte merely re-designates the meaning of the words "Heaven" and "Hell." Within the opening paragraph of the novel, Lockwood denoted the setting of the story as "a perfect misanthropist's Heaven" (45), an oxymoron which sets the tone for the amended image of Heaven/Hell to follow. So persistent is this theme that Heathcliff and Cathy stipulated no less than ten times that for them Heaven was being together, Hell was being separated (89, 120, 133, 150, 163, 186, 190, 196, 358, 363).

This desire for togetherness was associated with marital love when Cathy deemed Hindley and his wife in "paradise on the hearth" (63). When Cathy scorned this Paradise, saying, "There they were, like two babies, kissing and talking nonsense by the hour--foolish palaver that we

should be ashamed of" (63), we are reminded of Satan's jealous anguish upon viewing the innocent Adam and Eve in the Garden:

Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two  
 Imparadised in one another's arms  
 The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill  
 Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust,  
 Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,  
 Among our other torments not the least,  
 Still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines. . . .

(IV. 506-10)

Cathy and Heathcliff, like Satan, were denied the Paradise of togetherness, forcing them to change their concept of Heaven/Hell from the conventional religious one. Heaven became synonymous with togetherness, Hell synonymous with separation. As they spied on Edgar and Isabella Linton through the window at Thrushcross Grange, Heathcliff said, "We should have thought ourselves in heaven!" (89). We are reminded that Satan had agonized at the blissful sight of Adam and Eve after he had entered the Garden by stealth: "Aside the Devil turned / For envy, yet with jealous leer malign / Eyed them askance . . ." (IV, 502-5).

Perhaps the most significant revelation of Cathy's concept of Heaven and Hell was her dream of being miserable in Heaven and so was cast out and back to Wuthering Heights. Deterred by Nelly's superstitions from recounting the dream she wanted to, one of the ones that had "gone through and

through [her], like wine through water, and altered the colour of [her] mind" (12), Cathy went on to tell another dream that she confided would "do to explain my secret, as well as the other" (121). In the account of this dream to Nelly and the ensuing conversation, Cathy revealed her love for Heathcliff, which I believe is the "secret" that both dreams concerned. In the dream, Cathy was in Heaven, but so miserable there that the angels cast her out, and she awoke sobbing with joy to find herself back at Wuthering Heights. We can infer from her next statement, "I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven" (121), followed directly by her declaration of love for Heathcliff, that her misery in Heaven resulted from her separation from Heathcliff. Indeed the very choice of words, "The angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights [emphasis added]," reveals her "secret," for "heath on the top" suggests that the angels symbolically flung her onto Heath-cliff, a subtle sexual image. (Milton actually uses the word "cliff" several times to designate the location of the Garden in Eden [for example: IV. 546, V. 275, IX. 146, XII. 639].) Therefore, Bronte implies that, for Cathy, Heaven was Heathcliff.

Heathcliff just as clearly identified Cathy as his idea of Heaven. At Nelly's suggestion that Cathy had nearly forgotten him during his three-year absence, he expressed his dismay at the thought: "Two words would comprehend my

future--death and hell--existence, after losing her, would be hell" (186). Of Cathy's living with Edgar he said, "Every day I grow madder after sending him to heaven!" (150). As he neared death, he told Nelly, "Today, I am within sight of my heaven . . ." (358).

When Nelly tried to comfort Heathcliff after Cathy's death by assuring him that Cathy died peacefully and would "wake as kindly in the other world," she was met with a "sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion" (204). The idea of Cathy in a conventional Heaven was "unutterable" to Heathcliff: "May she wake in torment!" he cried. Then he begged Cathy to haunt him, to drive him mad, urging her passionately, "Only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!" (204). Once again, the reversal of the conventional concepts of Heaven/Hell is obvious. It is as though Heathcliff, by damning Cathy and himself both to Hell, can guarantee to keep her for himself forever, just as Satan did by dragging Sin to Hell with him.

Cathy's dream image of being flung out of Heaven and onto the "heath on the top of Wuthering Heights" becomes another recurring motif that is a consequence of incest--that of isolation and alienation. There are numerous references in the novel to "exiles," "outcasts," and "beggars." This image forms another association with Paradise Lost, with its frequent references to both Satan and his fallen angels, as well as the disobedient Adam and Eve, as outcasts and exiles: "And they outcast from God, are

here condemned / To waste eternal days in woe and pain" (II. 694-5).

The words "outcast," "exile," "beggar," "castaway," "waif," "vagabond," and "gypsy" appear no less than fifteen times in Wuthering Heights, primarily in reference to Heathcliff and Hareton (his second generation double). Cathy, too, exemplified the theme, calling herself a "waif" (67), and in her delirium before her death referring to herself as an "exile" and "outcast" after being "wrenched from the Heights" (163); heaven seemed to her a "land of exile" (195).

Concurrent with the theme of alienation that is a result of incest is the theme of isolation, which in Wuthering Heights is symbolized by a number of images representing barriers in one form or another--gates, fences, windows, doors--but, primarily, locked doors. We noted earlier that incest results in part from a sense of isolation, which in turn is amplified and perpetuated by the incestual activity. The incestuous personality turns back in upon the self rather than going outside the family circle. The image of locked doors occurs most frequently in regard to Heathcliff and Cathy: Heathcliff always slept with his door locked (179), twice he was locked out by Hindley (88, 121), and he locked Nelly and young Catherine in (301); Cathy locked Edgar, Heathcliff, and herself in (153), then locked herself up for three days when Edgar threatened to bar Heathcliff from Thrushcross Grange (156). These images reflect the



self-imposed, or locked-in, isolation of the incestuous person.

James Frazer, in The Golden Bough, explains that open doors were thought to ease the processes of both birth and death, man's entry into and exit from the world (Hall 109, Frazer 279-83). The emphasis on locked doors rather than open ones in Wuthering Heights, then, is consistent with Becker's belief that incest is an attempt to overcome the fear of death and the related repugnance of sex and the body.

In Paradise Lost, there is a similar emphasis on barriers as the consequence of incest. The gates of Heaven are barred to Satan and his followers, and the gates of Paradise are barred to Adam and Eve. The gates of Hell, however, are depicted as wide open.

Satan disdained attempts to bar him, forming another association between him and Heathcliff and Cathy. Satan easily leaped over the highest wall into the Garden, where he spied on Adam and Eve (IV. 180-83), reminding us that Heathcliff and Cathy spied in much the same manner on Edgar and Isabella at Thrushcross Grange.

The verbal similarity is striking between Paradise Lost and Wuthering Heights when Satan is likened to a "prowling wolf . . . watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve" (IV. 183, 185), calling to mind Nelly's characterization of Heathcliff: "I felt that God had forsaken the stray sheep . . . and an evil beast prowled . . . waiting his time to spring and destroy" (147).

Whereas doors most often act as barriers in Wuthering Heights, windows seem to offer a liberating alternative. In a number of instances, entrance was denied through a door, but gained through a window; such was the case also with Milton's "grand thief," who, deterred by "substantial doors, cross-barred and bolted fast . . . / In at the window climbs" (IV. 189-91). Heathcliff gained access to Hindley through a window when the door was barred against him (213); he gained access to Cathy's dead body when Nelly left the parlor window open for him (204); and the window was open when Nelly found him dead (364), suggesting that his spirit escaped to join Cathy's spirit, which had tried to enter the window of Heathcliff's bedroom (70). Cathy, on a number of other occasions, was associated with windows, either gazing out of them (192), insisting that they be opened (160, 163), or threatening to spring out of them (128, 165).

The bed in Heathcliff and Cathy's childhood room had panels which acted as a type of door/window, for one entered the bed through them, in which case they functioned as a door, but at the same time resembled "coach windows" (61). Cathy's and Heathcliff's coffins closely approximated the same kind of structure, having removable side panels, which Heathcliff bribed the sexton to remove after his death so that he and Cathy could be symbolically buried together. It is possible to construe these panels as serving a dual metaphorical function: that where they barred entry in life, functioning as doors and forcing separation, they afforded

entry in death, functioning as windows and permitting togetherness.

Although Cathy undeniably shared with Heathcliff the consequences of incest as outlined in Milton's Paradise Lost, there is some textual evidence that Cathy returned to an Edenic state of innocence before her death. Upon Heathcliff's return from his exile of three years, Hindley was no longer able to keep Heathcliff and Cathy separated; with Cathy's Heaven in view, she took on the characteristics of Eve before the Fall. She told Nelly:

The event [of his return] has reconciled me to God, and humanity! I had risen in angry rebellion against Providence. . . . However, it's over, and I'll take no revenge. . . . I can afford to suffer anything, hereafter! Should the meanest thing alive slap me on the cheek, I'd not only turn the other, but I'd ask pardon for provoking it. (139)

Cathy's intense desire to recapture her childhood concurs with her incestuous attachment to Heathcliff. Her bliss in Heathcliff's presence suggests a child's adulation of a parent: she "kept her gaze fixed on him as if she feared he would vanish were she to remove it" (135).

As she neared death, the allusions to her childlikeness increased. Edgar nursed her through one crisis, and Nelly tells us, "No mother could have nursed an only child more devotedly than Edgar tended her" (171). As she lay ill, she "seemed to find childish diversion in pulling

the feathers from her pillow, so that Nelly sharply reproved her to "give over with that baby work!" (160). In her delirium she fancied that she could see the lights of Wuthering Heights and that she was a child again, with Joseph waiting to lock the gate behind her (164), which might be interpreted as an attempt to deny her adult sexuality by returning to the locked-in security of childhood innocence. She believed that she was back in her old room at Wuthering Heights, with the black press against the wall (161). Nelly avowed, "Our fiery Catherine was no better than a wailing child!" (162). She told Nelly: "I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free. . . . I'm sure I should be myself again were I once again among the heather on those hills" (163), suggesting another play on Heathcliff's name. Adam, too, had yearned to flee the consequences of guilty knowledge, saying: "O might I here / In solitude live savage" (IX. 1084-85).

Before her death, Cathy asked Heathcliff's forgiveness for making him so wretched and said, "I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there" (196), a speech which seems to convey religious sentiments of Christian forgiveness. Nelly seemed to believe that Cathy had left her "evil ways to follow good" (203). She told Heathcliff that Cathy had died "quietly as a lamb" (another religious image) and "like a child reviving" (203).

The most terrible consequence of incest and of the two Falls in Paradise Lost as well, is Death, as personified by

the "grim and terrible" son, "odious offspring" of the incestuous union of Satan and Sin (II. 682, 781). A footnote in the Norton Critical Edition of Paradise Lost (47) explains that Milton drew his genealogy of Sin and Death from two sources: the myth of Zeus, whose daughter Athena sprang fully armed from his head, and the Christian teaching of St. James that "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James I. 15). Milton extended this theme to the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve's first act after eating of the forbidden fruit was a guilty sexual union:

. . . But that false fruit  
 Far other operation first displayed,  
 Carnal desire inflaming, he on Eve  
 Began to cast lascivious eyes, she him  
 As wantonly repaid; in lust they burn:  
 Till Adam thus 'gan Eve to dalliance move.  
 (IX. 1011-16)

The reversal of the concepts of life and death are as clearly drawn in Paradise Lost and Wuthering Heights as is the reversal of the concepts of Heaven and Hell. Along with the knowledge of sin came the awareness of death. After the Fall of Adam and Eve, Adam, when he beheld his companion "defaced, deflowered, and now to death devote," resolved to share the guilt: "However I with thee have fixed my lot, / Certain to undergo like doom, if death / Consort with thee, Death is to me as life" (IX. 952-54). Eve said, "So dear I

love him, that with him all deaths / I could endure, without him live no life" (IX. 832-33).

The significance of the reversal of life and death to our study of incest becomes apparent when we examine modern psychological thought that ideas of sex, birth, and death are extensively associated (Psycho-Myth 19). Jones elaborates on this point by theorizing that death represents a return to the mother's womb (14), forming an obvious association with the incest theme.

The wish to die together is common to both Adam and Eve and Heathcliff and Cathy, and this common notion forms the most compelling basis for comparison of the love relationship in both works. Adam said: "And me with thee hath ruined, for with thee / Certain my resolution is to die; / How can I live without thee . . ." (IX. 906-8). In reply, Eve "tenderly wept, much won that he his love / Had so ennobled, as of choice to incur / Divine displeasure for her sake, or death" (IX. 991-93).

Jones explains that "the wish to die together is the same as the wish to sleep and lie together (originally, of course, with the mother)," making the grave equivalent to the mother's bed (Psycho-Myth 10).

Jones characterizes this notion to die together as:

. . . an infantile desire to defy the father and escape with the mother to some distant place where he cannot disturb their mutual relations; therefore dying together can signify in the unconscious

to fly with the mother and thus gratify secret desires." (14)

This notion certainly seems to pertain to Cathy's yearning for death. As she compelled Heathcliff to hold her, even though Edgar was approaching, she cried, "Oh, don't, don't go. It is the last time! Edgar will not hurt us. Heathcliff, I shall die! I shall die!" (199).

Curiously, Cathy never directly pleaded with Heathcliff to take her away, a plea we feel would have been promptly acted upon by Heathcliff; perhaps this was because of the impediment to their physical union--an unconscious incest taboo--in Bronte's mind. Instead, Cathy in her delirium only fancied that she begged Heathcliff to find a way for them to be together in life: "Find a way, then! not through that kirkyard" (164). Only Nelly heard her insane "ravings" (164). Since their incestuous union was not possible in life, however, Cathy resolved to have Heathcliff join her in death: "I wish I could hold you . . . till we were both dead!" (195).

The graves of Cathy, Heathcliff, and Edgar in the peat bog near Gimmerton Kirk suggest a final fulfillment of incestuous union. We first learn particulars of the burial site in Lockwood's dream about Jabes Branderham, to which Lockwood hastened to add a sense of realism in his description by saying, "I have passed it really in my walks" (65). The location of the chapel and the nearby cemetery contains sexual imagery: "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 . . ." (65). Several points significant to our study of incest become apparent here. First, the hollow between two hills suggests the female body; the embalming quality of the peaty moisture suggests the motive of incest as a desire to perpetuate life by a return to the mother's womb. Second, the paradoxical location of the cemetery in an "elevated hollow" calls to mind the emphasis on hills in Paradise Lost as symbolic of the two Falls in which we have noted the centrality of incest. Third, the fact that all three graves were placed side by side, but Heathcliff had bribed the sexton to remove the panels to the adjoining sides of his and Cathy's caskets, reminds us that Heathcliff had boasted, ". . . by the time [Edgar] gets to us, he'll not know which is which!" suggesting the fulfillment of incestuous desire (319). Finally, in the description of Cathy's grave as being covered by "heath," which had "climbed over it" (205), we find another sexual play on Heathcliff's name, indicating sexual consummation.

The much-debated conclusion of Wuthering Heights seems to offer a harmonious resolution to the forbidden relationship of Heathcliff and Cathy through the socially-condoned marriage of the cousins, Hareton and young Catherine. The garden images, especially that of the two cousins as laborers in the garden (352), and that of Catherine as carver of "figures of birds and beasts" (330), certainly



suggest the innocent Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The emphasis on their importation of bushes for their garden from Thrushcross Grange promises a new fertility based on mingling like with unlike, a reversal of the incestuous striving to merge like with like.

That harmony is achieved at the hands of the unredeemed Heathcliff is understandable when we recall the concept of the Fortunate Fall--that God allows the existence of evil to illuminate His goodness. Hall asserts that a "major theme of Paradise Lost is the concept that evil is often the unwilling and unwitting instrument of good" (61). Heathcliff's evil is impotent when confronted with the love of Hareton and Catherine, a love capable of breaking the relentless cycle of fall and punishment and establishing "order from disorder sprung" (PL III. 713).

As Heathcliff gazed at the two young lovers, he stood "disarmed" (352), reminding us of Satan:

. . . Abashed the devil stood,  
 And felt how awful goodness is, and saw  
 Virtue in her shape, how lovely, saw, and pined  
 His loss. . . .(IV. 846-51)

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>All quotations from Paradise Lost are based on the Norton Critical Edition edited by Scott Elledge, 1975.

<sup>2</sup>Although the comparison of Wuthering Heights to Paradise Lost is purely a speculative reading, Bronte was certainly apt to have been influenced by Milton. Literary historians have pointed out the value of the Bronte's extensive library to the artistic talents of the Bronte sisters. It is tempting to think that Emily Bronte was describing herself when she had Nelly say, "You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into, and got something out of also . . ." (103). Alan Bacon hypothesizes that the paintings in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre form a sequence representing temptation, sin, and death as presented in Milton's Paradise Lost. See "Jane Eyre's Paintings and Milton's Paradise Lost, Notes and Queries 229: 64-5.

<sup>3</sup>Judith May Schelly's dissertation illustrates attempts by five nineteenth century authors to demonstrate the nostalgia of the period for the lost paradise of sibling unity. According to Schelly, this theme arose out of the nineteenth century regard for the family as a refuge from public life (23). In Wuthering Heights this interpretation falls short of explaining the adult eroticism evident between Heathcliff and Cathy as they embraced just prior to

Cathy's death, as well as the return of the ghosts of Heathcliff and Cathy as adults rather than children.

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## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

And did he never smile to see  
Himself restored to infancy?

Never part back that golden flow  
Of curls, and kiss that pearly brow,  
And feel no other earthly bliss  
Was equal to that parent's kiss?  
(from Emily Bronte's Gondal poetry)

Obviously, a novel which has endured the analyses and speculations of critics for nearly a century and a half defies any attempt to neatly categorize or summarize it with one perspective in mind. Indeed, one of the marks of a classic is its ability to surpass all limitations and to transcend time by illuminating and crystallizing the timeless truths of the human heart. A speculative reading such as this paper presents, however, suggests new vistas of thought and affords new prospects for interpretation, new possibilities for admiration.

Advances in disciplines such as psychology, history, and anthropology broaden our perspectives on the study of incest and aid us in interpreting the behavior of characters. Heathcliff's bizarre behavior is understandable in light of Jones's theory that sadism, lycanthropy, vampirism, and necrophilia are manifestations of the Oedipal fixation. Cathy's inability to form a successful attachment outside the family is explained by Fromm's concept of incestuous

symbiosis. The lack of physical passion between two otherwise unbridled characters becomes clear in light of Becker's hypothesis that fear of death can cause fear of sex and the body and can transform physical longing into a yearning for spiritual union.

A historical perspective is helpful in recognizing the predominance of brother-sister incest, which appears frequently in the folklore of almost all ethnic groups. History also provides us with an explanation of the arrogance of incest, which in the past was a privilege restricted almost always to royalty.

Anthropology clarifies for us the universal nature of the incest taboo, "the basis for all human societies, the foundation on which they are erected, no matter how differently they may be structured" (Brain 41). The relentless revenge and murderous rage Heathcliff directed at his substitute father, Hindley, can be viewed as a variation of Freud's Myth of the Primal Horde.

The most important contribution of anthropologists to a study of incest, though, is to reveal the catastrophic consequences which have historically attended the violation of the incest taboo. Emile Durkheim and James Frazer provide valuable insights into primitive fears of violating the incest taboo. The resulting chaos is implied through Bronte's use of animal imagery and her emphasis on the unleashed forces of nature, which act as metaphors for the

corruption of the natural order that incest poses--a corruption that cannot go unpunished.

The most pervasive metaphor in Wuthering Heights, however, is that of incest as a metaphor for original sin, the consequences of which are the same as those incurred by Satan and Adam and Eve after their Falls: expulsion from Paradise, alienation and disintegration, a descent into brutehood, and finally the consciousness of death. Bronte's Heathcliff can be viewed as a personification of Milton's Satan in Paradise Lost; Cathy can be seen as symbolic of Eve, attempting to recover a pre-Lapsarian innocence. Hareton and the younger Catherine represent the new Adam and Eve, joined in a socially-condoned union that "might yield luxuriant crops under other and favourable circumstances" (WH 231).

The mystery and shame which have historically surrounded incest still surround the subject today, even though our society is in the midst of an era of sexual permissiveness. Blair and Rita Justice, when compiling data for their study of incest which was published in 1979, found that "to much of the public, incest is an evil, a horror, a fascination, an attraction. It repels, offends, perplexes, yet it fascinates" (45)--all adjectives which, at one time or another, have been attributed to the hero-villain Heathcliff and to the novel itself. As heinous as the act of incest is, however, modern insights reveal the essentially innocent motivation of incest as a desperate need for nurturing and



security, a desperate attempt to deny one's mortality. Perhaps Emily Bronte's curiously sympathetic treatment of the two lovers was born out of her own inner conflict with the world around her, a world after the Fall that tainted a love which would not have been taboo in a world with no evil. The innocence Cathy yearned to re-capture is suggested by a passage in a poem Bronte wrote at nineteen:

If thou hast sinned in this world of care,  
 'Twas but the dust of thy drear abode--  
 Thy soul was pure when it entered here,  
 And pure it will go again to God. (Poems 45)

We suspect, moreover, that she does not entirely condemn Heathcliff's fateful passion for Cathy,

For whom his spirit unforgiven,  
 Wanders unsheltered, shut from heaven--  
 An outcast for eternity. (Poems 170)

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