



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Heaven and Hell: A Human Creation

**Emily Brontë's vision of an earthly heaven and hell in
Wuthering Heights with a Miltonic comparison**

Ritgerð til B.A.-prófs

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Abstract

This essay examines the relevance of the concept of heaven and hell in Emily Brontë's only novel, *Wuthering Heights*. It explores Brontë's vision of two opposing worlds, a human creation of heaven and hell, represented with the two houses of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. The essay shows how Brontë challenged the orthodox beliefs of nineteenth century Christian religion, by creating a concept of a personal heaven and hell, reducing the notion of God as an exterior force and relocating it as residing within the individual. Brontë materializes human versions of angels and demons, represented in exaggerated versions of social snobbishness and human animals, to make the concept more accessible to readers. The essay furthermore aims to show a connection between Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, by exploring the connection between the characters of Heathcliff and Satan, and the female fall of both works to strengthen and support the theme of an earthly heaven and hell in *Wuthering Heights*.

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I. Introduction.

In 1847 Emily Brontë shocked the world of English literature with the publication of her novel *Wuthering Heights*. What the public saw were new types of heroes: a tyrannical evil puppet master, a human Satan, and an unstable married woman, seeking a lost love. Certainly, not what you would consider as the typical stereotypes for the nineteenth century Victorian couple. However, when considering the inspiration for a literary masterpiece such as *Wuthering Heights*, one is bound to look at the author's background. Emily Brontë was the daughter of an ambitious Anglican minister, she suffered the loss of her mother and two sisters at a very young age, and she had a considerably eccentric personality (Bentley 14-15). All her experiences and characteristics are reflected in her works and her only novel *Wuthering Heights* is certainly no exception. Her family loss, religious doubts and secluded upbringing in the West Yorkshire moorlands all contributed to the creation of her novel. She masterfully constructs the themes of the novel around the concepts of life and death, love and loss, and man versus nature. She was also greatly influenced by the literary environment in her family home, and her interest in literature can be said to stem from her father. Katherine Frank tells us that Brontë's father was an admirer of religious works such as John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan's *The Pilgrims Progress*, and he carried that interest over to his children (46).

When looking more closely at the themes in *Wuthering Heights* we can see that references to heaven and hell are exceedingly relevant to the manifestation of Brontë's characterization and surroundings. The concept of heaven and hell was something Brontë was very concerned with, and her ideas on the subject were seen as a challenge to orthodox beliefs and man's connection to God. According to Emma Mason, Brontë was trying to envisage a different kind of religion than what she saw in the conventions of Christianity, a religion that expressed spirituality in a more penetrating and insightful way (274). In this essay I begin by examining Brontë's vision of an earthly heaven and hell and how she represents it with the two houses of *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*. She gives striking images of the two opposite houses and brilliantly materializes the general understanding of angels and demons to make them physically more perceptible to readers. Then I will explore how Brontë portrays an

image of a personal heaven and hell, which can be seen residing within each of her characters, and as Mason suggests, she removes God from his external throne to within, and with that challenges the power of the individual (274). Brontë shows an insightful understanding of the subject of heaven and hell, and she can be said to have shown intellectual maturity and to have been progressive in her writings (Goff 478). Finally, I will draw upon John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost* in comparison, showing how Brontë's ideas of heaven and hell, "the fall" and Heathcliff's revenge, have been connected to *Paradise Lost* and parallels drawn between the two works based on these subjects. The strongest relation between the two works lies in the character creations of Heathcliff and Satan. Heathcliff's formation can be said to derive much of its force from Milton's Satan and we can also say that the theological creature that is Satan, is materialized in human form in Heathcliff. I will examine the connection between Heathcliff and Satan as well as focus on the female fall in both works to strengthen and support the idea of an earthly heaven and hell in *Wuthering Heights*.

II. Vision of an earthly heaven and hell.

Brontë was very interested in the metaphysical and ideas of nature versus man. Barbara Munson Goff supports this argument and adds that "she is concerned only with the moral, social, psychological, and theological implications of natural science" (480). Therefore we can say that Brontë was able to connect the wildness of the nature around her with human emotions, and there lies the foundation for *Wuthering Heights*. Many critics have declared the novel to be a "metaphysical romance" (Gilbert and Gubar 252), and there is much truth in such a statement. The metaphysical in literature, as explained in the *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, is when a writer is capable of noticeable and original images, wit, cleverness and creativity, ingenious use of everyday speech, a striking comparison between dissimilar things, direct manner, humor and understanding of mortality. But most importantly, the metaphysical acknowledges nature as the ruling element above all others and "perplexes the mind with speculations of philosophy" (508). One of the strongest elements in *Wuthering Heights* is in fact a dominating nature, as well as Brontë's personal contemplations of the subject of human existence in this life and the afterlife.

The metaphysical elements which Brontë applies to her novel were counteracting against religious ideas of her time. They were challenging in the way that her ideas of heaven and hell were more relating to earthly visions, rather than to the Christian theology of the concept. Her approach is taking what can be perceived as the spiritual realms and manifesting them in her treatment of nature and environment, as well as in her character creation. The religious beliefs in the novel are more nature bounded than spiritual and in *Wuthering Heights* Brontë brings to life a heaven and a hell that pertain to this world; a human creation. To emphasize this idea, a quote from Irving H. Buchen is appropriate: “The soul is not imprisoned by a devil or liberated by an angel, for the evils of the world are the results of the world itself” (65). God and Satan are forces remaining inside a person, and Brontë masterfully creates a world which consists of a personal heaven and a personal hell.

Very important ingredients in Brontë’s metaphysical recipe are the strong comparisons between absolute opposites. In terms of her vision of an earthly heaven and hell the strongest comparison that we are given is between the two houses of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights. A close examination of the two houses shows us that they are what the story centers around, and a point made by J.F. Goodridge, is that they show two opposite ways of living (62). There is an obvious division seen in the social classes of the two houses, but one can also look at this as Brontë’s scheme to show the hierarchical division between heaven and hell. Brontë constantly applies references pertaining to the idea of heaven and hell and angels and demons, to both houses and their residents.

i. The two houses.

In the opening text of the novel we are introduced to Wuthering Heights with Mr. Lockwood’s first arrival at the house. There is much admiration for the destitution of nature in his words as he applauds it as “a perfect misanthropist’s heaven-” (Brontë 3). These lines indicate the isolation of the house, it being far from civilization and any human interaction, and as Steven Vine points out, on the boundary of being too inaccessible (1). It is the perfect place for someone that dislikes any human encounter. The servant, Joseph, explains to Mr. Lockwood that the name of the house is derived

from the turbulent and stormy weather in the surrounding area (Brontë 4). Vine points out this connection as well, and expresses it in greater detail:

Wuthering Heights is a house under stress; its very stability is the result of a climatic “tumult” that means its windows are sunk, desperately and defensively, deep into its walls, and its clean corners are broken up by obtruding stones. If the house is less slanted, stunted, and stretched than the firs and thorns that gather round it, its strange grotesqueries- disappearing windows, jutting walls- nevertheless betray the turbulence that conditions it. Wuthering Heights is skewed by extremity: it is an architectural torsion wuthering between stability and instability. (339-340)

The atmosphere is unwelcoming even though Mr. Lockwood tries to tell himself otherwise and it is through his eyes that we are shown the inside of the house. The first notion is that the Heights is not the average family residence. There is the central room of the house which consists of a kitchen and a parlor. The kitchen does not appear to be in use as there are no traces of anything domestic in it. The sitting room consists mostly of a very large oak dresser which is covered with raw meat, the floors are uncarpeted and the walls are covered with various firearms. The insides are colorless and unpleasant with largely built furniture, and Goodridge claims that the lifeless, antique furniture is revealing a secret life, a life compelled by savagery and barbarity (10-11). Indeed this house is driven by something seemingly unworldly and even the animals are hostile and hateful towards this new guest and they appear more like little beasts than pets. Lockwood’s usage of words when describing some of the things he sees and hears are very befitting for the atmosphere given. The words “haunted,” “deep” and “depth” are appropriate and give indication of the vastness of the house. In the words of Gilbert and Gubar, this appears to be more the dwelling of a “bloodthirsty giant” than a gentleman’s (261).

At this point in the novel, Heathcliff is ruling the household as an evil tyrant, holding everyone and everything captive in a grip of insanity. It is evident that the household is residing there on account of something other than free will. Wuthering Heights seems to be only the remains of something formerly human, what is left is something animalistic and malicious. This house is not haunted by something evil, but rather haunted by what it has been deprived of: joy, love, family and friendship. To

support this statement we only need to look at Catherine's old bedroom which Heathcliff keeps completely intact from when she lived there, and does not let anybody "lodge there willingly" (Brontë 15). Mr. Lockwood describes her room as old fashioned, but yet convenient, with several books and writings on the walls: "... a few mildewed books piled up in one corner; and it was covered with writing scratched on the paint" (Brontë 15). The books are very old and musty and he refers to them as "Catherine's library" (Brontë 15). Inside every book, on every margin, is Catherine's diary, and every book has obviously been well used. Catherine's room is nothing but a memorial of something that is no longer, a childhood that is lost and love that is forsaken.

If comparing Brontë's portrayal of Wuthering Heights to that of Thrushcross Grange we see that there is a whole other element at work. Gilbert and Gubar tell us that Brontë "thought in polarities" (273), and therefore, if the Heights are the materialization of hell, then the Grange is its polar opposite. It is situated in a valley with high walls surrounding it, sheltering it from any natural forces. Goodridge remarks that a contrasting element between the houses can be seen in the weather conditions, and that the weather around the Grange is not of the same extremities as at the Heights (61). The insides of the Grange are first known to us through Heathcliff while he spies through their window with Catherine. Where the Heights is described as cold, dark and raw, the description of the Grange is the exact opposite. It is a beautiful place, with beautiful furniture and decorations, "a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers" (Brontë 38). It is very respectable and characterized by luxury and amenities whereas the life at the Heights is all about survival. The Heights portrays deterioration in human culture, while the Grange represents restoration, which can be seen when Catherine is bitten by a dog and spends time at the Grange to recover and restore her strength. Gilbert and Gubar also declare it a "Palace of Instruction" for young Catherine (274) in terms of her wild nature. The given view of the Grange, a view that is consistent as the novel progresses, is that the Grange is this apparent sublime place, representing everything that is good, and is capable of subverting the wildest human natures into civilized ones. It has everything that one could want and is a place where one can be treated with excessive indulgence. A note has to be made on the fact that when Heathcliff comes into

ownership of the Grange, he rather rents it out instead of moving there himself. His wild nature does not coincide with what the house symbolizes, heaven, and the few times we see him enter the house he always seems to be out of place there.

ii. The two households.

Brontë's character creation in *Wuthering Heights* was widely criticized by her contemporaries, due to the animalistic features she applies to human nature. According to Barbara Munson Goff, Brontë's early ideas of animalistic features in humans can be related to Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, in the way that they emphasize the idea of the transmutation of species. Even though Brontë's novel was published long before Darwin's *Origin of Species*, her novel shows that the pieces of the evolutionary puzzle were falling into place decades before the publication of Darwin's *Origin* (Goff 478). Her ideas conflicted with the general public's beliefs regarding the uniqueness of humans as hierarchical beings and were therefore highly controversial. Not only does Brontë take human emotions and turn them into the rawest form of animalistic attributes, but she also takes the biological features of humans and turns them into animalistic ones, which we are clearly shown in the character of Heathcliff. These non-conformist ideas Brontë applies to her anti-hero, Heathcliff, reinforce the argument of a human creation of hell: Heathcliff is the inhuman, satanic landlord who is the creator of the hellish Heights.

It is however not only dehumanization Brontë assigns to her characters at the Heights, but she also shows off, almost to an exaggerated level, the more civilized version of human nature with her characters at the Grange. It is the tamed, well behaved, Christian nature, reaching to the extent of being angelic. This scheme emphasizes the distinction between the two houses and strengthens the materialization of angels and demons, giving the idea of heaven and hell more capability of being envisioned by the reader.

We have to bear in mind that as the novel progresses we are shown different stages of change in the households, both at the Heights and at the Grange, through the narration of various characters. Without the historical descriptions of the decaying households, the impact of Heathcliff as the evil landlord would not be as powerful to the

reader. The time frame ranges from Heathcliff's arrival at the Heights as a very young boy and follows him until his death, as the landlord in possession of both Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights.

iii. A household from hell.

On Mr. Lockwood's second visit to the Heights, we become more acquainted with the residents of the house and their relationship with each other. They are extremely hostile towards each other and their guest, they seem to substitute normal conversations with cursing and swearing, and violence is a measure of expression in the house. The household at this point consists of the three family members Heathcliff, Cathy and Hareton, with the two servants Zillah and Joseph, and there is a dominating "every man for himself" mentality where no one lends a helping hand. Gilbert and Gubar point out that, although the three cardinal household members are tied by family relationship, the overwhelming madness and chaos has turned them away from any harmony and order. They live in a chaos of being, fighting for their position in the house, completely "without the structuring principle of heaven's hierarchical chain of being" (261-262).

The extremities on the outside are manifested on the inside as well, with Heathcliff as the internal natural force causing the disorder, or the inside wuthering. To expand on this idea, we can look at Vine's analysis and see that the definition of the word "wuther" is "an attack, onset; a smart blow, or stroke" but it can also be referred to as "to tremble, shake, quiver." As Vine points out, "to tremble" is something that originates from within a person rather than being executed from exterior influences. Therefore, the turbulence is taking place inside as well as outside, "the Heights wuthers internally" (340). Vine further adds that it is Heathcliff who is determined to shake the foundations of the world Brontë creates, and that there is no distinction between the inside of Heathcliff's dwellings and the outside (340-341). This passing of boundaries resonates directly with Brontë's theme of heaven and hell, where the boundaries between the two worlds are constantly overlapping.

When taking into account the animalistic features of the characters at the Heights, it is relevant, as Gilbert and Gubar mention, to give notice to Brontë's choice

of names. She applies strange animal and nature related names to the characters at the Heights, names such as Heathcliff, Hareton and Hindley compared to the more religious names such as Catherine, Nelly, Edgar and Isabella at the Grange (259). Name giving aside, however, if we look at the strongest example Brontë gives of the human animal, Heathcliff himself, we see a creation far from the respectable Victorian gentleman the general public was familiar with. With Heathcliff's first arrival at the Heights as just a young boy he is referred to as "it" by the family members, and described as, "a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk – indeed, its face looked older than Catherine's - yet, when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (Brontë 29). This shows us, as Goodridge calls it, "an image of human nature reduced to its bare animal essence, the naked will to live" (21). There is little known about Heathcliff's background before coming to the Heights, and the description of him along with his unknown origin, strengthens the idea of him being a creature "from the devil" (Brontë 29), who later on will turn this loving family home into real hell on earth.

Heathcliff and Catherine experience their own little world of heaven at the Heights as children, and at this point in the novel, the Heights does not symbolize hell as it does during Heathcliff's ownership of the place. It is rather a joyful and loving place. It is not until after Mr. Earnshaw's death, and Hindley's inheritance of the Heights, that Heathcliff starts to be alienated from the household and his bitterness starts to grow. Hindley's ill treatment of Heathcliff can be seen as a key factor in the development of Heathcliff's character and the description of Hindley's conduct towards Heathcliff is best explained in Nelly's words: "His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint" (Brontë 51). Heathcliff's battle for his place in the household never ceases and Catherine's statement that it would be degrading for her to marry Heathcliff utterly humiliates him. He leaves the Heights at that time only to return three years later as a wealthy man on a revengeful mission. The sources of his newfound fortune are unknown, as so many things concerning him, but he is more determined than ever to demolish those who dishonored him and cheated him out of his lifelong love.

Heathcliff's appearance at his return is more likely to be seen as closer to the nineteenth century gentleman, but his animalistic and evil nature easily shows through. Nelly depicts him as matured and grown, both in manners and appearance, but a "half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire" (Brontë

75). Heathcliff's eyes are often mentioned, and it seems that even though he is a hard man to read, his eyes always give him away. Even when he is a child Nelly describes his eyes as a "couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting under them, like devil's spies" (Brontë 45). Mr. Lockwood even seems to notice that there is something not human about Heathcliff when he first meets him. He also describes Heathcliff's black eyes that are suspiciously withdrawn under their brows, his fingers are sheltered and his teeth are closed (Brontë 3).

Heathcliff is also seen as being more prone to growling, sneering and grinning, than conveying what would be seen as normal human expressions. Nelly is overwhelmed by Heathcliff's behavior on Catherine's deathbed: "... he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog, and gathered her to him with greedy jealousy. I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species; it appeared that he would not understand, though I spoke to him; so I stood off, and held my tongue in great perplexity" (Brontë 125). This sense of unearthliness, of being more a devilish creature than a human being, follows Heathcliff from beginning to end, as he makes his way through each and everyone he considers to be his enemy. He uses unscrupulous trickery to defraud Hindley out of the Heights ownership, he shamefully deceives Isabella Linton into marrying him, solely to hurt Edgar Linton and upset Catherine, and then makes Isabella's life a living hell till the point that she is forced to run off pregnant with their unborn child, Linton. Heathcliff then contributes to the death of Linton, his son, and forces Cathy to marry Linton, to manipulate the ownership of the Grange in his favor. Heathcliff is, without a doubt, the manifestation of a human Satan, a natural force, who can be seen as animalistic in both appearance and nature. He is an evil tyrant and puppet master, a creator of an earthly hell, and one who consciously turns everyone around him against each other.

iv. A heavenly household.

As argued before, Thrushcross Grange is the polar opposite of Wuthering Heights, and therefore, if the household at the Heights is a hellish one, the household at the Grange must be a heavenly one. The residents at the Grange are far from being as connected to the nature around them as the residents at the Heights are. When considering the contrast this provides in the two households, one being calm and the

other wild, it is relevant to give notice to Goff's argument which suggests that Brontë is attempting to show off a seemingly weaker side of human nature with the characters at the Grange compared to the characters at the Heights. She intends to show them as the "artificial" types of humans with "artificial wealth" (493). Goff also points out that Brontë was a hard worker herself, her whole life, and had much more respect for the working classes than those of a higher social status (481). Therefore her portrayal of the Grange characters is a superficial one, which shows how corrupted the "breed" has become from its original animalistic state. Goff further suggests that Brontë is showing how the human beings have weakened themselves, as they have "cut themselves off from the land, do not work for a living, and act out a town scenario in the midst of rugged moors, which they keep out of sight and mind by the gardens, fences, and hedges of Thrushcross Park [*sic*]" (493). As Brontë imitates life in its bare animalistic form, so does she imitate its aristocratic snobbishness.

With this in mind, when exploring the household at the Grange, we find out that even though the Lintons have a seemingly weaker nature, compared to the characters at the Heights, they have many valuable characteristics as well. The concept of family is highly regarded by them and they care for and respect each other. The members of the family are educated, well behaved and well guarded which can be seen in how Edgar keeps Cathy secluded from the surrounding environment. She is kept within the boundaries of the park for the first thirteen years of her life, which is most likely to be seen as Edgar's way of keeping her away from the Heights. The Grange is, as Goodridge notices, Cathy's secluded Eden (39), and this again connects the Grange to the idea of heaven. The house has several servants who are attentive and take proper care of the house and its surroundings. It is a peaceful home which leads a quiet and gentle life. The appearance and personality Brontë applies to the Lintons can be seen as the exaggerated manifestation of the angelic human being: they are the epitome of the social elite. They have a slender and delicate figure, blond, curly hair and great blue eyes. The only time they spend outdoors is for recreational purposes and they therefore have very light and fair skin. Their temper and mood is in accordance with their appearance, it is calm, light and fragile.

These two archetypal models of human nature, which Brontë creatively pits against each other, can be seen in polarities in a similar way as the two houses. Many of the characters have a correspondent character, which Brontë relates to one side or the

other, nature against civilization, demons against angels. Consequently, we can see that Catherine and Isabella are polar characters. They have a contrasting physicality: one being dark in appearance and the other light. Additionally, their spirit is far from being compatible: Catherine has a bad temper, an unrestrained personality and can be vengeful and spiteful, whereas Isabella has a more even temper and is down to earth. Shirley Foster explains Brontë's portrayal of the two women as either the "submissive, loving 'angel in the house' or the monstrous evil creature striving against patriarchal authority" (95). Isabella is an example of the "stereotypical young lady patriarchal education is designed to produce" (Gilbert and Gubar 287) whereas Catherine is the wild child of nature.

We can see that Heathcliff and Edgar are polar characters as well. The unlikeness of Heathcliff and Edgar is contrasted in their physique. Heathcliff is seen as a "tall, athletic, well-formed man, beside whom [Edgar] seemed quite slender and youth-like" (Brontë 75). The dark and light features are contrasted, "the contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country, for a beautiful fertile valley" (Brontë 55). When considering the physical contradiction in the characters of Heathcliff and Edgar one has to bear in mind that strength does not only pertain to the body. Edgar's appearance is often described as angel like, slender and even inferior in stature compared to Heathcliff, but according to Gilbert and Gubar, the affirmative quality of maleness that is applied to Heathcliff is undermined by the fact that Edgar is constantly and reflexively referred to as "master," "Mr. Edgar," "the master" and "Mr. Linton" while Heathcliff is only referred to as Heathcliff, undermining his authority (280-281). This indicates that Edgar's power is not of the physical but rather lies in his scholarly qualities. Edgar as well as the Grange is the representation of the "principle of heaven's hierarchical chain of being" (Gilbert and Gubar 280-281) and, this version of the supposedly sublime heaven, that is the Grange, is the exaggerated version of the nineteenth century patriarchal home.

III. Personal heaven and hell: Heathcliff and Catherine.

The direct references to heaven and hell rely heavily on each of the characters' perception of the concept. The idea of what constitutes as heaven and what as hell varies between each character. Gilbert and Gubar explain that the world that Brontë creates in

Wuthering Heights is centering on both heaven and hell, and has the most unlikely opposites coexisting without giving any notion to the fact that they are fundamentally different (259-260). The line between the two worlds is blurred and they seem to overlap. It can be seen as a kind of contradictory to the obvious: heaven is hell and hell is heaven. Goodridge points out that Brontë's frequent use of heaven and hell references derive much of their imaginative force from the conjecture that they exist as "objective, theological facts." He goes on explaining that "the theological facts appear to exist only as shadows of Victorian hypocrisy; the reality to which they refer varies from person to person" (65). This theme is consistent throughout the progression of the novel, portraying individual perceptions of the concept. The focus here, however, will be on Heathcliff and Catherine, and how exterior forces and individuals are able to influence their vision of the personal heaven and hell.

Heathcliff and Catherine's spying expedition to Thrushcross Grange shows the children running from the Heights in search for a place that "seems authentically heavenly" (Gilbert and Gubar 271). The Heights, which hitherto had been their childhood heaven, was being transformed by Hindley into a hellish place for them. Hindley's takeover at the Heights, after Mr. Earnshaw's death, implies that he finally has regained the power to establish his very own paradise with his new wife Frances, an idea which then becomes unattainable with her death, and ends with Hindley's destructive behavior (Gilbert and Gubar 271). However, what the children, Heathcliff and Catherine, do not realize is what they assume is heaven, the Grange at this point, is ultimately going to be their hell (Gilbert and Gubar 271).

Catherine's speech to Nelly of her dream in heaven echoes her vision of a personal heaven and hell:

"If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable." "Because you are not fit to go there," I answered. "All sinners would be miserable in heaven." "I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven." (Brontë 63)

Catherine is cast out of heaven on top of Wuthering Heights, which gives a clear indication of the Heights as a literal hell. Catherine feels a sense of not belonging in heaven in her dream, a hint of what her life will be if she marries Edgar and moves to Thrushcross Grange: it will never be her true home. This argument is reinforced in Catherine's statement to Nelly, in what Gilbert and Gubar call the "mad scene" (254). After Catherine marries Edgar she has a mental breakdown and claims she is "the wife of a stranger; an exile, and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world [the Heights]" (Brontë 98). She feels exiled from her personal heaven, which is her childhood with Heathcliff at the Heights and not the state the Heights is in after Heathcliff's ownership of it, and it is only in death that she can retain her former freedom as a child, and wander the moors once again in spiritual form: "I wish I were a girl again, half savage, and hardy, and free. [...] I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills" (Brontë 98). Therefore we can see that, even though the perception of the Grange is as the epitome of an earthly heaven, it turns out to be the opposite for Catherine. This returns us to the previous stated argument of the blurred boundaries of the two worlds. Heaven is in the eyes of the beholder, and can be seen as a contradictory to the obvious: the presumed heaven turns into Catherine's hell.

Heathcliff's personal heaven is linked to that of Catherine's, the childhood memory of them together at the Heights, and this heaven can only be regained in death. This is made clear in Heathcliff's powerful words to Nelly, "I tell you, I have nearly attained *my* heaven; and that of others is altogether unvalued and uncoveted by me" (Brontë 255). The words signify that he is awaiting his death, and only then will his personal heaven be gained as he will reunite with his love on the moors. His personal hell turns out to be his endurance to live. Heathcliff wants to die at this point, "I cannot continue in this condition! I have to remind myself to breathe – almost to remind my heart to beat!" (Brontë 248). The other household members are aware of his condition, and Joseph points out "that [Heathcliff's] conscience had turned his heart to an earthly hell" (Brontë 248). Both Heathcliff and Catherine choose death over life, simply because their life offers no fulfillment to them (Thompson 73). Charlotte Brontë once wrote that in the progression of the novel, Heathcliff never reforms, and even in death "Heathcliff, indeed, stands unredeemed" (315). Heathcliff's last words to Nelly

tell us that there is nothing that he regrets about his past actions: “as to repenting of my injustices, I’ve done no injustice, and I repent of nothing - I’m too happy, and yet I’m not happy enough. My soul’s bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself” (254). Even though he fulfills his personal heaven by death, his corpse still shows the demonic side of his character, by seemingly sneering at Nelly as she tries to shut his eyes.

IV. A Miltonic comparison.

In the years between 1705 and 1800 Milton’s *Paradise Lost* was according to Lucy Newlyn the most read book of that century with passages from it preached to reform and educate young men and women. It was used to mould the morality of the public and it manifested in what she calls “The Milton Cult” (19). Emily Brontë’s father, Patrick, was one of these young men who were immensely influenced by *Paradise Lost*. He conveyed his literary interest to his children, who would read to each other books from their father’s library. The children shared their father’s interest in religious literature and instead of reading nursery rhymes or fairy tales they engaged in religious classics, such as *Paradise Lost* and *The Pilgrims Progress* (Frank 46). The Brontë children experienced hardship from a very young age, and with the loss of three family members, the seemingly best place in which to look for answers would be religion. However, Emily Brontë did not share her family’s ideas of the spiritual, her thoughts and reflections of God and the afterlife haunted her, and she did not appear to find answers in Christian religion. She did however seem to acknowledge the existence of a higher power, but it appears to be more related to the individual than to God.

Relating Brontë’s creation to Milton’s *Paradise Lost* might at first seem as illogical, but as Gilbert and Gubar tell us, despite the absence of any references to Milton’s *Paradise Lost* in the novel, Brontë’s interest in the ideas of heaven and hell are so strong that “we may speculate, indeed, that Milton’s absence is itself a presence, so painfully does Brontë’s story dwell on the places and persons of his imagination” (252-253). Her interest in Milton is in the form of being “Milton’s admirer’s daughter,” intending to radically rewrite and contradict his patriarchal “mythic creation” (Gilbert and Gubar 252). Brontë has been called a “rebellious child” (Gilbert and Gubar 252) and there is much ground for such a statement. Her novel is full of religious and societal

hypocrisy, and it is in a way Brontë's own rebellion, intended to defy the rules of society. Nineteenth century patriarchal society was not prepared for a female writer who was willing to challenge "the misogynistic context of Western literary culture" (Gilbert and Gubar 252). Feminist critics, such as Gilbert and Gubar, have seen Milton's poem as having a clear gender distinction, portraying Eve as the inferior being and subjecting women to the ideal patriarchal womanhood. What Brontë is trying to achieve in her novel is to find "her own female origins" (Gilbert and Gubar 256). Brontë challenges Milton's mythical creation by creating a reversed version of "the fall" of Eve, with her female characters, especially Catherine, and creating a human Satan in Heathcliff. Brontë can be seen to be giving her female characters, in contrast to Milton's Eve, a strong voice and will, as well as showing a radical new approach to women's obedience, or rather disobedience, of patriarchy. This re-enactment of the female fall, and the human Satan, can be seen to originate from social pressure and gives more insight into the subject of the human creation of heaven and hell.

The notion of the personal heaven and hell is also present in *Paradise Lost* as well as in *Wuthering Heights*. In *Paradise Lost* the concept is portrayed in Satan's words, "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (Norton, 1.255). Brontë can be seen as taking Milton's concept of the personal heaven and hell and interpreting it in her own way in *Wuthering Heights*. Brontë's ability to associate the two worlds, as well as materializing them as coexisting perceptions which have the ability to coincide with each other and overlap, can be seen as an influence from Milton's work. Saif Patel discusses the matter of a personal heaven and hell in *Paradise Lost*, and points out that:

The invincibility of "the mind and spirit" is something which even the foes of God understand. Though the fallen angels corrupt their "heavenly Essences" with disobedience and revolt, they still have a keen understanding of the powers of perception, of personal reaction to one's environment—"for neither do the Spirits damned / Lose all their virtue." (Patel)

The concept of a personal heaven and a personal hell is crucial in Brontë's novel, and a concept that she was very concerned with. She understood the meaning of the invincibility of the mind and spirit, and the ability to control one's perception. It is a distinguishing feature of her characters, as well as Milton's, and gives more depth in

understanding the conditions of the characters, and why one person's hell can be another one's heaven. The concept shows a strong connection between *Paradise Lost* and *Wuthering Heights*, and can be seen as a correspondence between character creation and environment.

i. Heathcliff as Satan.

Milton's portrayal of Satan in *Paradise Lost* has always been seen as very controversial. For many readers Satan is the true hero of the poem, a character who is so unique because of his qualities of being both a hero and a villain. Umesh Ramjattan observes that Heathcliff and Satan can be seen as the strongest link between the two works as they are mirroring characters, attributed with the same qualities (Ramjattan). The cross relation of the two works is the subjection of humans to Satan. Milton applies certain aspects of humanity in his characterization of Satan, whereas Brontë applies the theological idea of Satan into her characterization of humanity, especially her character creation in Heathcliff.

To be able to fathom the characters of Satan and Heathcliff, it is vital to point out what their motivations and desires are. The main drive in both of the characters is a selfish mission to destroy the heavenly hierarchy, a revenge that is powered by an "injured merit" (Norton. 1.98). They both feel that they have been scorned and suffered injustice, and neither of them can find peace without revenge. As Ramjattan rightly argues, Heathcliff could never become the rightful owner of the Heights as he is not a legitimate descendant of the Earnshaw family, and therefore he loses his one and only love, as it would be degrading for Catherine to marry a man of such low status. As for Satan, he rebels against God after God bestows power on his son Messiah; thus his obedience loses him his place in heaven (Ramjattan). Neither Satan nor Heathcliff is willing to accept that he is not in charge of what is inevitably predetermined. It is a matter of unacceptable fate. They are both fighting for respect and believe that it is something that can be gained with power over others. They can both be seen as "nihilists" (McInerney) who show no will to yield to a higher authority, a total rejection and destructiveness, fired up by a fierce sense of pride. Satan's pride is best revealed to us in his words, "Better to reign in Hell, than to serve in Heav'n" (Norton, 1.263), and

Heathcliff possesses a similar attitude as is shown in his comment to Nelly when he returns alone from his and Catherine's spying expedition to the Grange: "I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thruscross Grange" (Brontë 38). These statements bring more depth to the idea of a personal heaven and hell and in Heathcliff's case show more understanding of the social pressure in the creation of his human hell. Heathcliff never accepts the Grange and what it stands for, heaven, and he therefore creates his own hellish kingdom at the Heights. Many readers of both works have pointed out a positive side to Satan and Heathcliff's rebellion. A.E. Dyson and Julian Lovelock agree that Satan metamorphoses into "the role of archetypal defender of personal autonomy and freedom, fighting arbitrary law and tyranny embodied, in *Paradise Lost*, in the person and nature of God" (19-20). Heathcliff can in some ways be seen as a victim of social prejudice, fighting against concepts such as breed and gentry, concepts that were linked to high social classes at that time. Thus, many might associate both Satan and Heathcliff as fighting against hierarchy and promoting individual freedom. The Industrial Revolution made men like Heathcliff capable of earning the title "a gentleman" through money. Heathcliff does not use his newfound wealth for good purposes, which can be seen as Brontë's portrayal of the corrupted side of the new aristocracy.

The subject of temptation is a crucial element in *Paradise Lost* as well as *Wuthering Heights*, and the state of being tempted is constant through the development of both works. The meaning of the word *temptation* can be said to arrive from the doings of Satan, which Milton depicts in his poem. Heathcliff and Satan are both seen in the role of the deceiving and tempting serpent. Heathcliff is seen prowling around the Grange, uninvited and out of place, similar to Satan in the Garden of Eden. They use similar maneuvers when spying on their victims. Their intentions are never benign but driven by selfish reasons, their methods of deceiving are similar as they start by laying a foundation of doubt, distrust, rebellion and disbelief. Heathcliff deceives Isabella by appealing to her vanity in the same way as Satan does with Eve. He encourages Cathy to disobey her father by appealing to the young girl's curiosity, telling her that she already knows his son. Ramjattan points out that not only is Heathcliff encouraging disobedience, but Cathy is also exploited by Heathcliff for his benefits, as he has a malicious plot to join her and Linton in matrimony (Ramjattan).

McInerney quotes one of Romanticism's critics, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and points out that Coleridge recognizes the most powerful influence in Milton's Satan which is the effect of confusion on his readers. Milton is able to distort the reader's susceptibility and make the reader unaware of the brutal criminality of Satan. This produces fascination in Satan as a character and causes the reader to participate in his thoughts, emotions and choices. Furthermore, Milton was one of the first writers to introduce to his audience what McInerney calls "sympathy for the devil," which had immense influence on the literary genre of Milton's time and future generations (McInerney). Brontë certainly was influenced, and can be said to have created a character from Milton's satanic prototype. What she is able to do, as Milton does, is to create a sense of fellow-feeling or a congenial disposition between the reader and character. The main reason Heathcliff is so accessible to the reader is his relationship with Catherine. His rejection and solitude are relatable, but the contrasting capability of animalistic brutality along with the capacity to carry an eternal love, are what leaves the reader so baffled. The powerful destructiveness of Heathcliff's love is best described in McInerney's characterization of him as a "Satanic Don Juan" (McInerney). These contrasting characteristics that Brontë applies in her manifestation of Satan and his hell leaves the reader more fascinated and interested in Heathcliff and the Heights, and gives Brontë more leverage to imply that Heathcliff's actions might be influenced by society.

ii. The female fall.

Paradise Lost and *Wuthering Heights* both focus on the concept of "the fall," its repercussions, and the promise of restoration (Norton 1830). In *Paradise Lost* it is the fall of the angel Lucifer from heaven into hell as well as the human fall of men, a fall from grace. In *Wuthering Heights* the concept of "the fall" has however, as Gilbert and Gubar explain, always been disputed. The novel does center on a human fall, that is indisputable, but both the moral nature of the fall, as well as what it implies has made critics disagree (253). There are several incidents in *Wuthering Heights* that can be interpreted as "the fall," but the ones that will be explored here are the fall of the females, Isabella, Cathy and Catherine.

When looking at the fall of Isabella and Cathy we see that Heathcliff is related in some way to both of these instances. Isabella is intentionally misled by Heathcliff

into believing that he is in love with her, with the sole purpose to cause damage to Edgar and Catherine. Isabella is banished by Edgar from Thrushcross Grange, her Eden, by her marriage to Heathcliff, only to find out that her marriage is a fraudulent scheme and her reality is now the hellish situations at the Heights. Heathcliff misleads Cathy into accompanying him to the Heights, evoking her curiosity in his son. Similarly, Eve is encouraged by Satan “To satisfy the sharp desire... / Of tasting those fair apples” (*Norton*, 9. 584-585). Eve falls for Satan’s inducement just as Cathy falls for Heathcliff’s trickery, thus both disobeying their “heavenly” fathers, resulting in the banishment from their Eden. Cathy’s fall from her secluded Eden at the Grange to the hell at the Heights, however, is the only fall in the novel which has a joyous and satisfying ending, manifested in her union with Hareton. This union brings the two opposite worlds of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together promising restoration and peace. Finally, Catherine’s fall in the novel can be seen as a reversed re-enactment of the fall of Eve in *Paradise Lost*, but, referring to Gilbert and Gubar, instead of a fall from heaven into hell, it is a fall from “hell” into “heaven.” Catherine’s wild nature, in her heaven at the Heights as a child, can be seen as her loss when she falls “not from grace but into grace” (255), when she becomes domesticated, in a sense, while staying at Thrushcross Grange. This comes back to our earlier point regarding Brontë’s search for “her own female origins” (Gilbert and Gubar 256), and the influences of nineteenth century patriarchal society on Brontë as a writer.

Gilbert and Gubar argue that Catherine can be seen as the “Satanic” character in the novel and imply that her rebellion against hierarchical conditions, and defiance of any fatherly authority at the Heights, can be seen in relation to Satan’s character in *Paradise Lost* (266). However, even though Catherine can be seen as a rebel, in relation to Milton’s Satan, she does not follow her convictions through when she decides to marry Edgar. She chooses the socially correct husband, lured by worldly materials and financial comfort, instead of listening to her heart. She therefore surrenders to all the social mechanisms she had hitherto been unwilling to obey. Consequently, with this decision Catherine is instigating her own fall in the novel, a fall from her childhood heaven into what can only be seen as her hell. What Brontë is portraying with Catherine’s fall, and loss of personal heaven, are the patriarchal and social rules thrust upon women. Therefore, one would have to disagree with Gilbert and Gubar’s suggestion to see Catherine as the “Satanic” character. We are confronted with many

issues arguing that Catherine is the true Satan of the novel, and Gilbert and Gubar's evidences of a connection between Catherine and Milton's Satan are not convincing enough. Even though Catherine can be seen to turn into the "madwoman," she is still not as devilishly convincing as our anti-hero Heathcliff in the role of the ultimate villain. Catherine's decisions and actions through the novel counteract Gilbert and Gubar's notion, as she can rather be seen as a woman who is struggling with her assigned femininity, than as a deceiving evil serpent such as Heathcliff and Milton's Satan. To expand on this notion, it is worth noting that Shirley Foster agrees with this, because to view Catherine as the female version of Satan does not contribute to the examination of the thematic pattern of the novel (95). Catherine's role in the novel is rather that of the contrasting character of Eve.

Catherine's fall can be seen to echo as the reversed version of the fall of Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Even though Brontë applies stronger personality and characteristics to her feminine heroine there are many factors that suggest that the two females correspond to each other. Gilbert and Gubar point out that the reason for Eve's fall is her desire to be "as Gods" and that she is not satisfied with her marginal status of being inferior to Adam, and subjected to serve him and God (196). Chikako Tanimoto's essay on *Paradise Lost* claims that Satan deceives Eve by boasting liberty and freedom and the instigation of her fall is the urgency of equality (81). She wants more than what she has and by acting on her impulses, urged by Satan, she ultimately loses her freedom. In Catherine's case, her desire for a richer life and a higher social status, which Edgar can give her and not Heathcliff, is what instigates her fall. Catherine's stay at the Grange, after she is wounded by their dog, can be seen, as mentioned before as a "Palace of Instructions" for her (Gilbert and Gubar 274). When she returns her mentality has changed and she does not feel that she has any other choice but to accept Edgar as her husband. Her "fall" into the seemingly heavenly world of Thruscross Grange is, as Gilbert and Gubar point out, violent and forced (274). The social mechanisms of patriarchy have taken hold of her and in her speech to Nelly, on why she chooses Edgar, we see her true conflict: "... [Heathcliff is] more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (Brontë 63). She feels that she belongs with Heathcliff, their nature is the same, but rules of society are against her. Catherine's "heavenly" place becomes her ultimate hell and she also loses her freedom, gaining "the social disease of ladyhood" (Gilbert and Gubar 269).

Continuing the argument on Catherine and Eve's connection, it is important to look at the relation they each have to their male counterparts, Heathcliff and Satan. Critics have long pointed out a connection which Milton creates between the characters of Satan and Eve. Lucy Newlyn argues that there is a parallel between the two characters, which can be seen in their "shared plight of subjection" (7). Gilbert and Gubar add to this argument that the likeness between the two characters, Satan and Eve, is such that it difficult to define one sin from the other (196). There are certainly joining characteristics between Satan and Eve, much to the dislike of feminist readers and critics, and Satan's rebellion against the hierarchy of God and Eve's subjection to Adam, can be seen as similarly arbitrary. Consequently, the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine can be seen in a similar light. Heathcliff can be said to mobilize Catherine's desire to rebel against the patriarchal conditions at the Heights during their childhood. According to Gilbert and Gubar, Heathcliff's advent results in a practical shift in the Earnshaw family for young Catherine. Old Mr. Earnshaw's affection for Hindley is reduced and replaced with Heathcliff, and Heathcliff's relationship to Catherine is to her advantage, as he becomes the "tool of the dispossessed younger sister." His presence gives Catherine a fullness of being, enabling her to break (momentarily) from her destined femininity, and turning the Heights into the "queendom" of her liking (265). The similarities between Heathcliff and Catherine can be seen as combined in many ways, and are best shown in Catherine's speech to Nelly regarding their souls being of the same material.

Eve has a dream in book V in *Paradise Lost*, where she encounters Satan, who lures her to taste the tree of knowledge:

Here, happy creature, fair angelic Eve,

Partake thou also; happy though thou art,

Happier thou may'st be, worthier canst not be:

Taste this, and be henceforth among the gods. (*Norton*, 5.74-77)

This dream is a clear premonition of Eve's approaching fall, and according to Newlyn, it also shows an internalization of Satan into the female psyche (7). It is a portrayal of the satanic nature in the female character and strengthens the argument of the bond Milton creates between the two. Similarly, Catherine's dream of being cast from heaven

on top of *Wuthering Heights* is a foreshadowing of her fall. The dreams echo each other in many ways, and both wake up to a tremendous joy knowing it was but a dream. Eve's words, "but O how glad I waked / To find this but a dream!" (*Norton*, 5.92-93), can be compared to Catherine's, "where I woke sobbing for joy" (Brontë 63). According to Newlyn, Eve's dream can be explained in relation to her dissatisfaction with her place in Eden and her desire for more. It gives meaning to her aspirations, her battle with her inner self and her longings for personal freedom (156). Likewise, Catherine is struggling with her inner self and her dream shows her upcoming disappointment with her decision to marry Edgar. She is possessed with the same desire as Eve, the desire for more than she has. She is under the influence of society, believing that more power, in the social sense, will give her more freedom.

V. Conclusion.

The *Atlas* had this to say about Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*:

The general effect is inexpressibly painful. We know nothing in the whole range of our fictitious literature which presents such shocking pictures of the worst forms of humanity. It harasses, it exenterates... A more natural story we do not remember to have read. Inconceivable as are the combinations of human degradation which are here to be found... (283)

In spite of the harsh reviews the novel received, critics were not able to overlook the raw form of humanity Brontë depicts. The religious contradictions of animal nature in humanity, Satan in human form, versus the exaggerated angelic version, are very ambiguous concepts, but brilliantly addressed by Brontë. Hume suggests that these concepts arise from the insufficiency of reason or explanation in religion regarding the complexities of life (Hume 290), and Brontë can be said to have been searching for something similar to an "other world," and in her novel, her search seems to end within each of her characters, showing the spiritual struggle that resides within each of them (Mason 274).

This essay establishes how Brontë materializes the two houses of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange as a human creation of heaven and hell. The concept is cleverly formed in the novel, and Brontë is very successful in drawing parallels between

the two opposite worlds. However, the message of the novel is deeper than simply the materialization of heaven and hell. This essay has also examined Brontë's idea of a personal heaven and hell, which is seen as residing within her characters. According to Mason, Brontë is seeking to express a spirituality that is rooted in strong feelings and is free from the restraints of an external catalyst. Whether it is found in a Christian God or in the authority of nature (274) does not matter, the message is that heaven and hell reside within each individual, or in the eye of the beholder, and ideas on them vary according to individuals. Brontë can be seen as having been far ahead of her literary contemporaries in many ways and the close relationship that Brontë depicts between nature and humanity, manifested in metaphysical imagery, gives assurance and coherence to the story.

The social message of the novel is also very powerful, showing the degeneration of humanity and morality, which can be seen as a direct result of social changes such as the Industrial Revolution. People adapt their behavior for various reasons as they are exposed to a variety of circumstances and situations, and Brontë is clearly showing the more negative side of nineteenth century British society, and the social rules thrust upon men and women. Brontë was in many ways an extraordinary woman and her raw approach to human emotions and conditions certainly did not invalidate the force and authenticity of Heathcliff and Catherine's emotions. We see Brontë as a very reserved and secluded person but even despite her faults, and the fact that she never experienced true love or romance in her lifetime, she was still able to give humanity the most baffling love story ever written, filling its readers with emotions of terror, romance and heartache.

This essay has furthermore compared Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* to Milton's *Paradise Lost* showing a strong connection regarding the concepts of heaven and hell and the fall of the female, as well as establishing a parallel between the character creation of Heathcliff and Satan. Brontë refused to be restricted by her gender, and she can be seen as belonging to a small group of female writers of her time, who spoke frankly and who were not afraid to rewrite misogynist texts such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*. What was expected of Brontë as a female writer was something completely different from what she gave. Her writing, brilliantly enacts the imaginary world of Milton, but whereas Milton justifies God to man, Brontë justifies nature to man. Sheila Smith writes that Brontë plays with the familiar to give insight into human nature (516),

and that is very true. Milton's poem and its moral meaning was something Brontë was very familiar with, and she bravely creates a male anti-hero with all of the characteristics of Satan and rewrites the role of Milton's primary female icon, Eve.

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