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Identity and Desire in *Wuthering Heights*

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In Chapter 9 of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Cathy Earnshaw declares "Nelly, I am Heathcliff" (Brontë 87). Brontë's characters repeatedly stress their belief that they are one another. Such a radical identification is not inconsistent with the extraordinary atmosphere invoked in Brontë's novel. *Wuthering Heights* is, after all, a novel marked by the presence of the supernatural, prophetic dreams, and other odd occurrences. If the events of the novel bend the laws of nature, then it is entirely consistent that Brontë's characters construct their identities in extraordinary ways also. In this paper, I plan to examine *Wuthering Heights* through the theories of Jacques Lacan to how his ideas can help illustrate how the characters of Cathy and Heathcliff identify with each other. In his theory of the Imaginary, Lacan suggests that the subject creates its identity by forming identifications with another in order to avoid the reality that the subject him/herself is split. I believe that Cathy has identified with Heathcliff in this way, and he with her. In this paper, I will examine how Brontë's characters deal with this identification, the implications of such a radical identification for the other characters in the novel, and how these ideas are dealt with or avoided in the 1992 film version of *Wuthering Heights*.

For Lacan, the realms of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real deal with different stages of development. Critics have repeatedly struggled to identify the exact nature of Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship. By examining the novel through Lacan's stages of development, it seems to resemble the Imaginary identification of a child with someone else. However, this is not entirely true, as the relationship expressed by Brontë's characters exceeds even Lacan's conception of the Real. Lacan's ideas can illuminate the nature of Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship, but it cannot explain it entirely.

# I.

When Heathcliff enters Cathy's life as a child, the reader is told how she initially "showed her humour by grinning and spitting at the stupid little boy" (Brontë 10). Cathy's initial reaction to Heathcliff is one of rejection and hostility, which is a common response to a new, unfamiliar person. This reaction is also a reflection of the power imbalance between the two characters, as Cathy is a wealthy, privileged girl and Heathcliff is a poor, orphaned boy. Cathy's grinning and spitting at Heathcliff is a way of asserting her dominance and rejecting his presence in her life.

on the visual. Cathy's silence mirrors the fact that Heathcliff himself does not speak English at this point and that all his speech is dismissed as "some gibberish that nobody could understand" (51). As the initial basis of their relationship is visual, Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship places more emphasis on visual elements than on verbal elements.

These instances of speechlessness demonstrate one of the characteristics of Lacan's Imaginary stage; namely, that the subject has not learned to use language while in the Imaginary. While Cathy is capable of speech, the fact that she is not quoted during her initial introduction to Heathcliff indicates that their relationship is not based on language, but on images--a chief characteristic of the Imaginary. According to Lacan the person with whom the subject usually makes his/her identification in the Imaginary stage is the mother. However, nothing is known about Heathcliff's mother, and Cathy's mother remains a shadowy figure in the novel, dying shortly after Heathcliff's arrival. Furthermore, according to critic Philip K. Wion, Mrs. Earnshaw's death is "referred to only in passing, in a mere adverbial phrase embedded in a long sentence which focuses attention on another matter--Heathcliff's role as 'usurper'" (319). For Cathy, Heathcliff takes the place of her mother, so that "[e]motionally, Heathcliff *is* the world to" her, just as a mother typically is for an infant (Wion 318). Cathy identifies with Heathcliff in much the same fashion that an infant would with its mother. The connection is reinforced by the fact that Heathcliff and Cathy sleep together in Cathy's bed until they are twelve years old. At this point in their lives, they are inseparable and do not conceive of either one desiring anything from anyone else.

There is a significant difference between a mother-child relationship and the relationship Cathy and Heathcliff share. The relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff is a much more reflexive dynamic. In a mother-child relationship, it is the child who looks to the mother for his/her identity. The mother does not define herself in terms of the child. In Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship, both children are constructing their identity in terms of the other. Because their relationship is one of two children who are both trying to be

mothers to each other, it is a much more dependent relationship than that of mother and child. The result is that the actions of one are reproduced in the actions of the other.

The idea that Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship disrupts the normality of everyday life is continued in the fact that the area for their play is the moors--the wilderness of nature. While the moors are Cathy and Heathcliff's favorite place to play, as Margaret Homans points out, "they are never represented on the moors, together or apart" (346). There is something in nature which resists language and symbolization, as evidenced by Cathy's failure to include a description of their "scamper on the moors" in her diary (40). Nature, like Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship, cannot be adequately represented by the language of the Symbolic. Cathy and Heathcliff remove themselves to the moors to remove themselves from the constraints of the Symbolic order. The moors, open areas of wilderness, provide the perfect counterpoint to their resistance of language. Their relationship takes place outside of the enclosed areas of the Symbolic. Nelly is convinced the two will grow up "as rude as savages" (58), showing that Cathy and Heathcliff are seen in opposition to what Nelly sees as the civilized order of society. The relationship that Cathy and Heathcliff see is "perceive[d by them] as lifegiving,...[but others] perceive it as destructive" (Homans 353), which is why it is opposed with such vehemence by Cathy's brother Hindley, Joseph, and--later--Edgar Linton. Because Cathy and Heathcliff's identification with each other is so strong, those around them attempt to control and eliminate it.

To escape the reality of being disjointed and fragmentary, Cathy and Heathcliff see themselves mirrored in the other, producing the illusion of wholeness. They find a sense of completion in being together with the other. This is similar to Lacan's Mirror Stage, in which the subject sees his/her identity in someone else. Identity is constructed in the Mirror Stage, and according to Lacan scholar Jane Gallop, there "is no 'self' before the mirror stage" (79). For Cathy and Heathcliff, this means that their identities are constructed to a

great extent in terms of the other. In order for Cathy to be complete, she needs Heathcliff, and vice versa.

However, the idea of the whole and complete self is not the only awareness that comes out of the Mirror Stage. The awareness of the *corps morcélé*, the "body in bits and pieces," (qtd. in Gallop 80) also arises from the Mirror Stage. In order for the subject to imagine completion, the idea of a disorganized body is needed as a logical point of contrast. The subject then sees him/herself as complete and whole rather than face the reality of being chaotic and disorganized. However, "[t]hat 'object' will always be a false object...a trap in which the ego pursues its own image" (Borch-Jacobsen 49). Thus, these identifications will, for them, "maintain a false appearance of coherence and completeness" (Leader 26). For Lacan, the subject is always split, as the identification with another is used to hide the idea of the *corps morcélé*. As the mirror stage itself is a form of self-delusion, Cathy and Heathcliff, caught up in this delusion, no longer see themselves as whole without the other.

For Lacan, the object the child identifies with becomes the imago. Because the world is so chaotic, the imago is an image around which the child constructs his/her world in order to give it some order. The imago assumes the place of the subject's identity. Thus, the subject's identity is based on an object outside of his/herself, and when the subject says "I", she or he is speaking from the point of an identification. Heathcliff is the image on which Cathy projects her desire for wholeness and unity. To her mind, as long as she has Heathcliff, she will be whole. Heathcliff may be a fictional construct for her identity, but he is a necessary fiction.

The Mirror stage is the one element of the Imaginary where the subject constructs its identity by identifying with others outside him/herself. What, then, is the Symbolic? According to Lacan scholar Darian Leader, the Symbolic is "the networks, social, cultural, linguistic, into which a child is born" (42). Language is an important sign of the Symbolic, because its use indicates that the subject realizes it is separate from its imago. In

*Wuthering Heights*, the Symbolic is represented by the world of Edgar Linton and Thrushcross Grange, for it is after Cathy's first encounter at the Grange that her separation from Heathcliff begins in earnest.

The Linton children, on the other hand, are initially pictured as divided against each other, "quarrel[ling as to] who should hold a heap of warm hair" (60). From a first glimpse, the world of the Lintons, the world of polite society, is associated with division and violence. The Lintons provide an inverse identification for Cathy and Heathcliff. They do not identify with them, but in opposition to them. Heathcliff, in particular, can never envision himself "wishing to have what Catherine wanted...or...divided by the whole room?" (60). Yet, the reader only has Heathcliff's impressions of the incident. Cathy's opinions are absent from the text, revealing a disparity between the two children. Heathcliff's opinion of the Grange is decidedly negative, while Cathy's silence is more equivocal. From this seemingly innocent, initial contact with the Symbolic, via Thrushcross Grange, Cathy and Heathcliff begin to be separated.

Cathy is soon separated from Heathcliff for the first time since she was a very small girl. The loss of that early childhood relationship is visualized in the way that Mrs. Linton "took off the grey cloak of the dairy maid which we had borrowed for our excursion" (62). The state of union she and Heathcliff enjoyed up until this point will be altered through the rest of the novel, and Cathy will be torn between union with Heathcliff and the life of the Lintons. Heathcliff becomes Cathy's phallic signifier. The phallic signifier, for Lacan, is something which promises meaning for the individual. It is seen by the subject as something she once possessed, no longer possesses, but if she did possess it, she would again be whole and complete. Cathy will look to Heathcliff to promise meaning and will eventually look back to her childhood as a time of wholeness and completion. Mrs. Linton is right when she fears Cathy "may be lamed for life" (62). However, it will be her psyche, not her body, which will be permanently crippled. As Lacan scholar Philip Hill suggests, Cathy comes away from the encountering the Symbolic with "problems that are more complicated

and difficult than the simple needs [s]he started out with" (63). The grounds for her eventual decision between Heathcliff and the Lintons are laid here.

Cathy returns from the Grange, in the eyes of Nelly, "a very dignified person" (63). For the next three years, she attempts to divide her time between social visits with the Lintons and time spent with Heathcliff. In order to do so, Nelly tells how Cathy must "adopt a double character" (75). According to critic Sandra Gilber, her adoption of a double character is something she learned at the Grange, "the home of concealment and doubleness" (274). The split in Cathy's behavior also shows Cathy trying to act within the Imaginary and the Symbolic at one time. Cathy would like to preserve her relationship with Heathcliff while partaking of the privileges enjoyed by the Lintons.

Nelly's description of Cathy as ladylike upon her return from the Grange reminds the reader that Cathy and Heathcliff's actions are mediated through both Nelly Dean and Mr. Lockwood. The only accounts of Cathy and Heathcliff come from impartial narrators who each have their own spin on the story. Nelly, who formerly worked for the Linton household, rarely lets a chance go by to denigrate Cathy and Heathcliff. Lockwood, on the other hand, is the uncomprehending narrator, determined to extract a moral tale from Nelly's story. The story thus comes to the reader filtered two Symbolic sources. The construction of the narrative, within this frame, further illustrates the Lacanian concept of misidentification. Nelly and Lockwood see the story as they wish to, placing their own values on it.

Cathy thinks that she can still preserve her sense of childhood unity with Heathcliff and be "a lady" (63) at the same time. She attempts to speak both languages simultaneously. However, Cathy does not realize that, according to Lacan scholar Darian Leader, "[t]o take on a place in the Symbolic world means leaving the world of the Image" (46). Therefore, there is increasing pressure to choose one or the other. The Symbolic is attractive to Cathy, and why shouldn't it be? As Nelly puts it, in trading the Imaginary bond with Heathcliff for the luxurious life of the Lintons, she is "escap[ing] from a disorderly, comfortless home into a wealthy, respectable one" (85). She will have the chance to be the



"greatest woman of the neighbourhood" (84). With the economic temptations the Lintons provide, the limited opportunities for women, and the stress of her double character, there is considerable temptation to conform to the greater social realm of the Lintons, and Cathy appears to give in.

Nelly, perhaps the one person who might possibly present a sympathetic ear, is also no help. Nelly openly admits that she "did not like [Cathy]" and that Cathy "vainly strove to hide [her troubles] from my [Nelly's] mockery" (74, 75). However, the reader should be aware that Nelly will not be of any help in Cathy's plight. In Chapter 4, she refers to Catherine Heathcliff *née* Linton as the last "of us--I mean, of the Lintons" (50). Nelly's sympathies are partial to the Symbolic world of the Lintons. "[A]s a servant she must identify her interests with those of her male employer and of the patrilineal family" (Homans 347); therefore, she is rooted in the world of the Symbolic, and dismisses anything--such as Cathy's relationship to Heathcliff--that she can't understand.

Cathy's efforts to exist in both realms account for her disastrous decision to marry Edgar Linton, and there is every indication in the text that she is making the wrong decision. Her reasons for marrying Edgar are superficial and unconvincing--the reader comes away with the feeling that Cathy is desperately trying to rationalize her decision to herself. She admits that "I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven" (86). Furthermore, Cathy recounts a dream to Nelly in which she is thrown out of heaven and finds happiness on the moors. For Lacan, dreams are an intrusion of the Real. Philip Hill says that the Real is "about impossibilities...of language and life" (48). The Real deals with options which must be repressed as the result of compromises with the Symbolic. The "real always returns" (49), in some form or another, showing that, according to Lacan scholar Slavoj Žižek, "the reality of the social universe...turns out to be an illusion that rests on...overlooking the real of our desire" (17). Society, through this process of repression, demands that some things in life become impossible, and the Real "fill[s] out the place of

this void that gapes in the symbolic" (Zizek 33). One mediation of the Real occurs in dreams. Cathy's dream, therefore, is an important window into her mind at this point.

In Cathy's dream, she is thrown out of a Heaven that others enjoy and finds comfort on the moors. The moors serve to represent that Imaginary bond she and Heathcliff shared as children. The dream, an insight into what is Real for Cathy, reveals what is impossible for her and what is the truth of her desire. The impossibility of Cathy's life is that she can never reattain that childhood sense of unity that she shared with Heathcliff. It also reveals that she will not find contentment in what is enjoyed by others, as evidenced by her admission that "[i]f I were in heaven,...I should be extremely miserable" (Brontë 84). Cathy, a woman so marked by the extraordinary bond she felt with another as a child, will not find satisfaction in the world of the Lintons without completely repressing her childhood self. Instead, her happiness lies with Heathcliff. It is not possible for her to have the same relationship she had in childhood with him, but a relationship is still possible. While her demand, the impossible return of childhood union, cannot be realized, it would be possible for her desire, life with Heathcliff, to be realized.

What, then, is meant by demand and desire? According to Philip Hill, the subject demands in order to test the limits of the other, to demonstrate what is impossible for the other. The subject demands an object that the other cannot supply; therefore, demand can never be fulfilled. The subject, in testing the limits of the other, must realize that it cannot be dependent on the other to fulfill all the subject's needs. There will always be the object of demand that the other cannot provide. Once the limits of the other are recognized, the subject begins to desire. Desire is marked by the use of language and signifiers, and is a "lack" for something that is missing: the object of desire" (Hill 65). Desire grows out of demand--after the subject realizes what is impossible for the other, she begins to realize her own desire separate from the other. The object of desire, unlike the object of demand, is a possibility--it does exist and the subject might be able to attain it. However, once "the object of desire is reached, then it no longer remains the object of desire; another object will

become substituted in its place" (Hill 67). Therefore, according to Slavoj Žižek, "the realization of desire does not consist in its being 'fulfilled'...it coincides rather with the reproduction of desire as such, with its circular movement" (7). Desire will not go away once the object of desire has been attained, so the subject often pushes the object of desire away in order to keep desire intact.

Cathy's demand is to return to her childhood relationship with Heathcliff. But out of her frustrated demand has risen the desire to be with Heathcliff. She realizes that "he shall never know how I love him...because he's more myself than I am" (86). But in order to keep her desire intact, she must push Heathcliff away. Her admissions that "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now" and "if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars" (86-87) are the devices which maintain the "circular movement" of the "reproduction of desire" (Žižek 7). This is why her reasons for marrying Edgar Linton--"if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise" (87)--sound like rationalizations: they are rationalizations. It will be, in effect, a comfort marriage. Cathy's marriage amounts to a repression of the imago, which precipitates Heathcliff's departure.

Heathcliff's return after a three year absence reintroduces to Cathy the conflict between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. She will, in effect, be returned to the "the same mental strife between her two loves that she experienced before and just after he went away" (Homans 353). Heathcliff's return, then, is a demonstration of the Real, in that it "erupts in the form of a traumatic return, derailing the balance of our daily lives" (Žižek 29). Heathcliff, someone who has been repressed from Cathy's life, reenters it. A more important demonstration of the Real is the fact that Cathy attempts, once again, to straddle both the Symbolic and the Imaginary, to keep the privileges of being Mrs. Linton while still keeping Heathcliff near her. Heathcliff's return re-situates Cathy in the same conditions she was in before her marriage.

When Edgar finally does demand that Cathy choose between him and Heathcliff, it is, in the words of Philip K. Wion, "tantamount to a splitting apart of Cathy's very self" (321),

for she is forced to face the fact of her fragmentation. Cathy finally realizes her marriage to Edgar was a mistake. As critic John T. Matthews puts it, she ultimately sees that "there is no term, no form for the relationship that would fulfill [her] needs" (152) and would rather return to Heathcliff and the Imaginary. However, the circumstances of her life no longer permit that. Thus, Heathcliff has become the repressed choice, the Real.

Cathy's madness reveals the extent of her current crisis. According to Leader, "[t]he truth of the ego emerges precisely in madness where the world seems to dissolve" (28). Cathy's world is certainly dissolving. The carefully constructed world she has built has collapsed around her. Desire "must insistently repeat itself until it be recognized" (Gallop 104); Cathy has now recognized her desire. However, her desire for Heathcliff now belongs to the realm of the Real. However, since the Real only deals with "the impossibilities of...life" (Hill 48), she chooses the only method left to get back to that sense of childhood unity she shared with Heathcliff--she chooses to die. Since Heathcliff is Cathy's imago, the object her ego identifies with, the removal of Heathcliff from her life would be "tantamount to a splitting apart of her very self" (Wion 321). Cathy needs Heathcliff and cannot remove him from her life, as Edgar demands.

In her hallucinations, Cathy recounts the moment of her initial separation from Heathcliff--from the moment she was "laid alone, for the first time" (121)--and the events of the last seven years have been the consequences of that separation. Therefore, it is perfectly understandable that Cathy finds herself unable to recall the last seven years--she is trying to erase them from her memory. In order to go back to the state of union she enjoyed with Heathcliff, she must once more become the child she was at Wuthering Heights. This wish is put into words when she states, "I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free...and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed?" (121). She realizes the reason she is "so changed" is that she is now "Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange,...the wife of a stranger, an exile, and outcast" (121). It is the role of Mrs. Linton which disturbs her and leads Cathy to reject the Symbolic order.

Repeatedly in her madness, Cathy expresses a desire to be outside, specifically to feel the wind. Nature, for Cathy, is the area where she and Heathcliff escaped to as children. Each plea to feel the wind which comes from the moors is followed by a reference to her childhood or Wuthering Heights. Yet, as critic David Sonstroem says, "[t]ime will not oblige [her] by doubling back on itself" (32). Cathy can never become a child again with Heathcliff. Because there is no space in the Symbolic for a relationship with Heathcliff, Cathy rejects the Symbolic in favor of an supernatural simulation of reunion in the Real.

Edgar seeks to nurse Cathy in her final illness and proves a more capable mother than the obviously deficient Nelly. However, his tenderness towards Cathy is unwelcome, as she "turn[s] petulantly away...or even push[es] him off angrily" (145). His efforts, while well-intentioned, are futile. Heathcliff, however, recognizes that Edgar's "duty and humanity" (139) are insufficient. Edgar has demanded that Cathy become someone else entirely, that she annihilate her very self. This is something she cannot do, and therefore "[Edgar] might as well plant an oak in a flower-pot and expect it to thrive" (143). The only possible cure for her condition is reunion with Heathcliff--something Edgar will not allow.

As Heathcliff ushers Isabella upstairs, he exclaims "I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral teething, and I grind with greater energy, in proportion to the increase of pain" (142). Heathcliff attempts to deflect his pain onto the others around him by avenging himself on those who separated him from Cathy. His plans for revenge involve the manipulation of property laws, mortgage laws, marriage laws, and other legal issues: all items earlier associated with the Symbolic order. Revenge, therefore, places him within the Symbolic realm, and this will be a barrier to his joining Cathy.

In order to obtain power over Edgar, Heathcliff follows Cathy into the Symbolic. Like Cathy, he chooses marriage to a Linton as his entry into the Symbolic. Because this is where Heathcliff will choose to invest his time and energy, he will not be reunited with

Cathy until eighteen years later. He follows her into the Symbolic; but in order to join her again a supernatural expression of the Real, he must also refuse the Symbolic order.

Nelly repeatedly refers to Cathy at this point as either Mrs. Linton or Catherine, Edgar's name for her. Nelly, so invested in the Symbolic order, attempts to keep Cathy in the Symbolic by refusing to use the names associated with her Imaginary relationship with Heathcliff. As she has been throughout the book, Nelly is disturbed by Cathy's behavior because it is a "refusal to enter...the Lacanian symbolic order" (Homans 344). In its refusal to enter the Symbolic, Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship transgresses the normal order of things, and this is something Nelly cannot face. Therefore, she tries to impose the Symbolic on Cathy by the use of the names Mrs. Linton and Catherine. It is a futile gesture, once more indicating that Nelly is "out of her depth" (Wion 327).

Cathy's claim that she will share Heathcliff's sufferings underground raises some questions about how accurately Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship can be described in Lacanian terms. For Lacan, there is no core self, because the self is always divided between the demands of language and its own desires, and the Real is the result of those divisions. Thus, for Lacan, the idea of a soul or ghost would be in direct opposition to the idea of the divided self. Lacan's ideas can explain Cathy's desire for Heathcliff, but it cannot explain the afterlife that Brontë constructs for her characters. Indeed, as Lacan scholar Philip Hill notes, the Real is "about impossibilities of language and life" (48); it does not apply to death. Therefore, Brontë's construction of an afterlife allows her characters to transcend the Symbolic. If the impossibilities of the Real can be recovered after death, it is possible that the divided self may also be united. The fact that Cathy's ghost surfaces after her death appears to support this idea.

Cathy faints before Edgar arrives, and Nelly describes her as a "lifeless-looking form" in Edgar's arms (150). Edgar and Nelly "resort...to many means...to restore her to sensation; but she was all bewildered; she sighed, and moaned, and knew nobody" (151). At two the following morning, Cathy dies "having never recovered sufficient consciousness to miss

Heathcliff, or know Edgar" (151). Her rejection of the Symbolic is complete in that she cannot recognize Edgar after being roused by both Edgar and Nelly. Nelly is also right when Cathy and Heathcliff embraced and she feared "my mistress would never be released alive" (149). As seen earlier the Symbolic, for Cathy, is a living tomb. The only real life for her is in death, where she can be reunited with Heathcliff. Although Cathy is now free of the Symbolic realm, she must wait for Heathcliff to reject it also until she can be truly reunited with him. Nelly's view of Cathy's "repose that neither earth nor hell can break" is again proved false (152).

Heathcliff later avails himself of the opportunity to "bestow...on the fading image of his idol one final adieu" (154). Nelly later finds

on the floor a curl of light hair...I ascertained [it] to have been taken from a locket hung round Catherine's neck. Heathcliff had opened the trinket and cast out its contents, replacing them by a black lock of his own. I twisted the two, and enclosed them together. (154)

Nelly's actions during the last chapters have revealed how limited her understanding is when it comes to Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship. During Heathcliff's last meeting with Cathy, Nelly describes them as a "strange and fearful picture" (147). She later describes Cathy as "directly insensible" and says Heathcliff "foamed like a mad dog. I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species" (149). Nelly simply lacks the ability to sympathize and understand their emotions. Instead, all she can do is mentally chide Cathy, saying "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" (147).

Likewise, Nelly's twisting the two locks of hair together reveals how little she understands the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff. Cathy's last lucid episode in the book is with Heathcliff, not Edgar, and she dies with Heathcliff in her thoughts. Heathcliff

realized it would be more appropriate for Cathy to be buried with his hair in her locket. The placement of his hair in her locket is his attempt to materialize his desire. Nelly, however, is too grounded in the Symbolic to understand the significance of Heathcliff's actions. The burial of the two strands of hair together is not something Cathy would wish, as she had rejected Edgar and the Lacanian symbolic order. Heathcliff's vision, of his hair alone in the locket, is more appropriate than Nelly's compromise.

It is through moments like these that Nelly's role as narrator is called into question. Nelly's narration tries to impose a linear Symbolic structure onto Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship. Nelly's linear narrative reflects her conventional morality and dedication to the social-Symbolic order. Yet Cathy and Heathcliff's story repeatedly resists the linear frame Nelly casts over it. It doubles back on itself, with incidents which refer to something that has been mentioned earlier or has yet to be mentioned. The story of Cathy and Heathcliff is much more circular and does not fit into the order Nelly wishes it to have. Thus, Nelly is subtly undermined by the very story she tells. Cathy and Heathcliff's story resists the spin she puts on it.

Heathcliff may have felt Cathy's presence, disturbing him "night and day, through eighteen years" (246), but he still does not fully realize what the nature of their future union will be. Heathcliff had thought that the mere physical entry into Cathy's grave would allow him to be reunited with her. This proved not to be the case, as Heathcliff gave up on opening the coffin. What stopped him, however, was the feeling that "Cathy was there, not under [Heathcliff], but on the earth" (247). The idea that Cathy is on the earth brings relief to Heathcliff, but it is only a temporary relief. His drive for revenge positions him in the Symbolic and prevents him from seeing Cathy. The idea that Cathy's spirit is with Heathcliff is not enough; he must see her also. It seems to him that the place where she would most logically be is the space where they shared their idea of union--Cathy's bed.

She is there, of course, but Heathcliff still expects to see her physically present around him. He is still expecting to see her again in life. Cathy is trying desperately to



make her presence felt to Heathcliff, as seen in attempts to make her presence known to him, but Heathcliff's own grounding the Symbolic makes him unable to see that they will only be reunited in death. Until Heathcliff realizes that Cathy has always been with him and gives up his plans for revenge, he will not be allowed to join her in the supernatural constructed by Brontë.

The inhabitants of Wuthering Heights notice the early stages of this rejection by signs in Heathcliff's behavior. He seems "almost bright and cheerful...*very much* excited, and wild and glad" and has "a strange joyful glitter in his eyes" (276). Indeed, Cathy is consuming his world, as everything connects her to Heathcliff. Heathcliff reveals to Nelly that Cathy's image, from his point of view at this time, gives meaning to the Symbolic. Her image becomes superimposed on everything, revealing how strong their Imaginary bond is. He is now ready to join Cathy in the Real of death. He is quite correct in saying that "I'm only half-conscious of [this strange change]" (274), for he shall only understand it completely when he rejoins Cathy after death.

On the night of his death, Heathcliff withdraws to Cathy's room. Nelly notes that it storms that night, and the following morning she "observe[s] the master's window swinging open, and the rain driving straight through" (283). Thinking Heathcliff must have left the room, she rushes upstairs. Instead, she finds

his face and throat were washed with rain; the bed-clothes dripped, and he was perfectly still. The lattice, flapping to and fro, had grazed one hand that rested on the sill--no blood trickled from the broken skin, and when I put my fingers to it, I could doubt no more--he was dead and stark! (283)

The conditions under which Heathcliff's body are found and the state of his body are significant. First of all, it storms the night of Heathcliff's death. The storm that night is

connected to the storms which have been linked to other events in the novel--the storm which traps Lockwood at the Heights, the storm which happens the night Heathcliff runs away, the storm during which Cathy hallucinates, and the storm which happens the night Heathcliff first tries to disinter Cathy. Storms have marked incidents of great importance in Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship, and their reunion is similarly marked. The storm the night of Heathcliff's death is merely the end of one long continuous storm, one which began the night of his departure. The first storm marked a large fissure in their relationship; this storm seals their reunion.

Secondly, he is found in Cathy's bed, the bed he shared with her as a child. Cathy, in her madness, repeatedly associated Wuthering Heights and her relationship with Heathcliff with the grave. Heathcliff has taken steps to ensure that his burial next to Cathy will resemble the time they slept together in this bed as much as possible. The resemblance of Cathy's panelled bed to a grave was an indication of where their reunion would take place. Cathy's coffin-like bed, the site where this relationship was first formed, is the most appropriate place for it to end.

Lastly, the conditions under which Heathcliff is found closely mirror Lockwood's experience in the same bed. It is worth noting that the Real is revealed in dreams and that it always returns. Only in Lockwood's case, the Real returns to the wrong person--it is not the Real of his desire, but the Real of Heathcliff's desire. In Lockwood's encounter, we have the Cathy's ghost attempting to get into the house, where Heathcliff is. Upon Heathcliff's death, Nelly discovers that the master's window [is] swinging open, and the rain driving straight through" (283). His spirit has finally gone out to her, through the window she earlier attempted to get through. Critic Dorothy van Ghent asserts that "the 'fiend' has now got 'out', leaving the window open" (18), assuming that Heathcliff's death is a flight out to Cathy. This idea, however, ignores the fact that Cathy has been trying to get in to Heathcliff. According to critic John T. Matthews, the novel proposes "the image of the border,...the imagery of the margin, the shared boundary, the dividing line" as a space for

Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship (156). While he may have gotten out to her at last, she has also gotten in to him. Two people divided by the demands of the Symbolic have now met in that liminal space of the Real, much as the pane of a window divides the space both within and without. It is "the barrier between them [which is] a site for their reunion" (Matthews 157).

What does Heathcliff die of? It should be noted that, for Lacan, the object of desire can never be attained. Instead, as Philip Hill states, "[o]bjects circulate around the subject and only achieve a proper resting place in death" (79). As noted earlier, the relationship of Cathy and Heathcliff is a reflexive relationship. Throughout the novel, they have been circulating around each other, much as Cathy's ghost circles around Heathcliff. Heathcliff's death, then, is self-willed in order to rejoin Cathy in death. It is the termination of his desire.

Nelly, who has frequently demonstrated that she is not capable of understanding Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship, insists to Lockwood that "the dead are at peace," but also admits that she "[doesn't] like being out in the dark, now--and [she doesn't] like being left [alone] in [Wuthering Heights]" (284-5). Nelly had earlier insisted that Cathy was at peace after her death, but "[t]he pathetic agony of the ghost-child in Lockwood's dream contradicts Nelly's sentimentalism" (Jacobs 116). It is not that Cathy and Heathcliff are not at peace, but that they are at a different peace than Nelly imagines.

If Nelly is only partially right, Lockwood is less so. When Lockwood observes the graves in the kirkyard, he notes

I sought, and soon discovered, the three head-stones on the slope next the moor...I lingered around them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath, and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth. (285)

The telling statement is the final one. Lockwood looks to the "quiet earth" for proof that the dead are no more in this world, that Cathy and Heathcliff do not "*walk*" (284-5). However, the earth of their's grave is anything but quiet. Cathy's grave is buried under plants, moths flutter by, and the wind blows through the grass. The graves Lockwood sees are not the tranquil resting-place he imagines them to be; they are a hotbed of activity. If the relationship of Cathy and Heathcliff was so unusual while they were alive, then their reunion must be an equally odd event. It seems inconceivable that Cathy and Heathcliff are "sleepers in that quiet earth" (285). The quiet Lockwood seeks is not here.

The reader simply cannot take Lockwood at his word. During the course of Nelly's narration, it becomes clear that Lockwood wants a proper tale, one with a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end. Thus, according to Carol Jacobs, he "tries to convert a disturbingly menacing tale into...benign entertainment" (115). For Lockwood, the story is less important than what he wishes it to be. His narration are Symbolic attempts to impose order onto Cathy and Heathcliff's story. However, the order imposed by Lockwood seems to be one more mistake--a continuation of his many mistakes upon first encountering Wuthering Heights. Lockwood's impressions frequently fail to reflect the nature of events at Wuthering Heights.

The account of the little shepherd boy has more believability than anyone else, as he happens to be the most credible source with regards to whether or not Cathy and Heathcliff are reunited as they had hoped. Joseph has been discredited earlier, Nelly is only partially right, and Lockwood is dead wrong. Considering the novel's emphasis on childhood, on the formative stage of the Imaginary, it is highly appropriate that the most credible testimony about Cathy and Heathcliff beyond the grave should come from a child. The shepherd boy provides evidence that "these lovers do not rest quietly in the grave but walk together as spirits on the Heights" (Anderson 115). They are, at last, "neither properly dead nor properly married (the only true endings for books)" (Gallop 185).

Lacan's realms of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real help to clarify the unique bond between Cathy and Heathcliff. While their treatment of and refusal to let go of each other might seem selfish and cruel to some, because of the Imaginary bond they formed as children, they know no other way. In creating memorable characters such as Cathy and Heathcliff, Brontë offers a subtle critique of the Symbolic. The Symbolic, through characters such as Nelly and Lockwood, is repeatedly shown to be inadequate. Thus, through Nelly and Lockwood, Brontë criticizes the nature of the Symbolic. While Nelly is able to enter the Symbolic, she never has the hold over the reader that Cathy and Heathcliff do. Neither to Catherine and Hareton, two characters who do successfully enter the Symbolic. The fact that Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship is not allowed to exist is to be lamented, not championed, as Nelly does.

Brontë's attitude towards youth and the results of Imaginary identification is much more ambivalent. While acknowledging the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff as unstable, Brontë creates an alternative space for such an Imaginary relationship to exist. The Real, in *Wuthering Heights*, acts as an idealization of the Imaginary; the possibilities closed off by the Symbolic. Brontë's treatment of Cathy and Heathcliff displays a preference for the exclusive union of the Imaginary over the social obligations of the Symbolic.

## II.

In 1992, a new film version of *Wuthering Heights*, directed by Peter Kosminsky, had a limited release in the United Kingdom. Although several versions of *Wuthering Heights* had been filmed previous to this version--most notably the 1939 version directed by William Wyler--this version was the first to portray the second half of the novel. It seems that in attempting to include most of the major events of the novel, along with moving the narration to an unnamed character who the viewer assumes to be Emily Brontë, the film-makers viewed their adaptation as the 'correct' interpretation of Brontë's work. This is further revealed in the choice of the film's title--as the title of *Wuthering Heights* is copyrighted to the 1939 version, the complete title of the 1992 version is *Emily Brontë's Wuthering*

*Heights*. The issues surrounding the film's belief in its fidelity to Emily Brontë's novel raise the issue of whether or not it succeeds in its aim. Film critic Brian McFarlane believes that any film adaptation of a novel should focus on what elements of the film can be transferred from the novel, what elements need adaptation proper, and "production determinants which have nothing to do with the novel but may be powerfully influential upon the film" (10).

For McFarlane, it is clear that "in considering what kind of adaptation has been made...one could determine whether the film-maker has aimed to preserve the underlying structure of the original or to radically rework it" (25). It is clear from the title *Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights* and the use of Brontë as a narrator that Kosminsky saw the film as a reproduction of Brontë's novel and no radical changes were made to the underlying story. However, the radical nature of Cathy and Heathcliff's bond was oversimplified in order to appeal to a mass audience. Thus, the extraordinary Imaginary bond formed between the two characters was muted into a more conventional story of adultery.

McFarlane believes the third lens from which to view an adaptation is to view how issues unrelated to the novel but related to the production of the film influence the final result. These "non-literary, non-novelistic influences" are, but are not limited to, "[c]onditions within the film industry [and] the prevailing cultural and social climate" (21).

All films need an audience, and *Wuthering Heights* was no exception. During the time the movie was made "a great deal [was] at stake...[in particular] the future of Paramount UK" (Membrey 96). *Wuthering Heights*, then, was a calculated choice to make money, as "a classic has explicit market value" (Stoneman 208). Furthermore, as Ken Green, the film's marketing director stated, "[m]ost people remember that it is a love story" (Wall, qtd. in Stoneman 208). Thus, as Brontë critic Patsy Stoneman stated, "[t]he marketing response to the public recognition of *Wuthering Heights* as [a love story] was to play up the 'recognized' element of romance" (208). However, *Wuthering Heights* is not simply a love story--it describes a radical bond formed in childhood "so intense that it makes nonsense of the more usual responses to such a situation and upsets conventional value judgements"

(Allott 67). A love story has a direct appeal to its audience, while the tale of a radical relationship formed in early childhood would not. Thus, in the interest of marketability, Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship was presented as a romance between two adults, in order to play up the love story angle. The result is, as Brontë scholar Stevie Davies puts it, that "the novel's coolly articulated abnorms are translated into a hot-blooded...convention" (15). For example, the circling narrative Brontë created has been drastically curtailed in the film, in favor of a narrative told by a character removed from the action of the story. The reduction of the narrative reduces the slants that Lockwood and Nelly place on the narrative in favor of a narration by Emily Brontë. I intend to examine what effects these elements have on the 1992 film, and the ramifications behind these changes.

As mentioned earlier, the film-making machinery of Paramount UK decided to make his version of *Wuthering Heights* a love story. In the interests of this love story, the second half of the novel--Heathcliff's revenge--is dramatically curtailed. This is not a radical departure from Brontë's story, but it is a significant difference. As Brian McFarlane notes, a film-maker "may retain the novel's major cardinal functions while exercising the film's...signifying system in such a way as to give a different emphasis" (197). Paramount UK chose to retain the basic elements of Brontë's story--that Heathcliff arranges for a marriage between Linton and Catherine so that Thrushcross Grange will fall into his hands, thus achieving his revenge on Edgar Linton. The reason for this lies in the way Paramount UK perceived the film. The love story is dominant element in *Wuthering Heights*, and as the marketing director for the film stated, Heathcliff became "central" to the film (Wall, qtd. in Stoneman 208). As the entire film hangs on Heathcliff, "the character of Heathcliff [has] to be charismatic and intriguing to the audience" (Wall, qtd. in Stoneman 208). Kosminsky, in order to achieve this, deletes many of the more unsavory elements of Heathcliff's character. He also removes and simplifies the intense childhood relationship formed between Cathy and Heathcliff.

In the film, both children are considerably older when Heathcliff initially arrives at the Heights. The incident takes place when both children are about twelve years old--old enough to portray their relationship as one of first love, not identification. Cathy's speechlessness, a sign in the novel of an Imaginary identification, becomes love at first sight. In doing this, the film retains the incidents of the novel, but alters them to give its own spin on the story. In the novel, Cathy's speechlessness is a sign of her visual identification with Heathcliff. The film retains the incident, but uses it instead to signify the beginning of a romantic relationship. The film minimizes issues of identification by transforming them into a conventional love affair.

The film's transformation of Cathy's ghost from a child ghost to an adult one is in keeping with this idea. For the film, the crucial issue is Cathy and Heathcliff's romantic love for each other--not their Imaginary identification and the problems that entails. Lockwood's dream is this retained, but the ghost he sees is that of Cathy as an adult, not a child. The idea that Cathy and Heathcliff are trying to recapture their Imaginary relationship is excised from the film. Cathy's ghost as an adult instead emphasizes the romantic relationship between the two. Instead of trying to return to their childhood union, Cathy and Heathcliff are simply trying to have the relationship they were denied in life. The radical identification presented in the book is reduced into a tale of star-crossed lovers.

Instead of using Brontë's method of a tale within a tale within a tale (with several tales in between), Kosminsky creates a narrator who is assumed by the viewer to be Emily Brontë, who then provides the voice-over. In doing so, he removes much of the characterization of Nelly Dean. The softening of Nelly further reduces the need for Cathy and Heathcliff to turn to each other for their Imaginary identification. In the novel, it is somewhat understandable that they should turn to each other, as they receive from each other what Nelly cannot give. Allowing Emily Brontë to narrate the film denies Nelly the opportunities to make herself look good at the expense of Cathy and Heathcliff, but the Nelly of the film does not need to make herself look good--Nelly already appears sympathetic. If



Nelly is already sympathetic, then there is no need for Cathy and Heathcliff to reject her as a mother figure. Thus, the redrawing of Nelly's character continues to emphasize the romantic elements of the film over the Lacanian issues.

Furthermore, Emily Brontë as narrator is removed from the story--she has no vested interest in it, as does Nelly Dean. The result is that the tone of the film comes across as neutral and objective--exactly the result Paramount UK was hoping for. The reason for including Emily Brontë in the text was, according to author York Membrey, an attempt to "convey something of the...way in which Brontë's spirit infects the story" (96). Including Emily Brontë in the film is a calculated attempt to project the "meaning [of the film] onto the figure of the author" (Stoneman 210). Removing the narration from Nelly and giving it to Emily Brontë adds to Kosminsky's hopes that the viewer will see his film as the definitive version of *Wuthering Heights*.

The use of Brontë as a narrator also tends to eliminate the endless circles of narrative which characterize *Wuthering Heights*. One of the unique features of *Wuthering Heights* is that Nelly becomes a sounding board for so many different perspectives. However, the film sacrifices these many voices for the sake of one "impartial" voice. The looping incidents, such as Cathy's diary and Heathcliff's first excursion to Cathy's grave, are also missing. Except for the intrusion of Lockwood at the beginning and the end, the film unfolds in a more or less linear fashion. This is rather ironic, for Brian McFarlane maintains that novels are more linear than films. In reading a novel, "to grasp a scene...[the reader has] no choice but to follow linearly that arrangement of arbitrary symbols set out, for the most part, in horizontal rows which enjoin the linearity of the experience" (27). While *Wuthering Heights* (the novel) does proceed in more or less the fashion McFarlane describes, it plays with that linear nature. The reader is repeatedly forced to turn back to prior incidents in order to fully grasp the present one. The alinear form of *Wuthering Heights* mirrors the atypical nature of Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship. It resists Nelly's attempts to make it more or less typical.

Kosminsky's film proceeds in a linear, chronological narrative, except for Lockwood's frame. This also goes against McFarlane's assertion that films are less linear than novels. McFarlane's reasoning for this is that "frame-following-frame is not analogous to the word-following-word experience of the novel...the frame is never registered as a discrete entity in the way that a word is" (27). A word, in isolation, can typically be said to have a meaning; however, images in isolation do not. One frame of film, without a given context, is meaningless. Furthermore, films rely on codes, devices to which meaning is assigned through "frequent exposure to their deployment in a particular way" (27). For instance, there is no fixed proposition that at fade in and subsequent fade out means time has elapsed, but the viewer perceives it that way because of a frequent connection between that meaning and procedure.

One of the more regrettable losses due to this structure is the loss of the various dreams of *Wuthering Heights*. Cathy's dream, which foreshadows the consequences of her marriage, is lost. Heathcliff's dream, of sleeping "the last sleep" beside Cathy, is also missing, along with his plans to "dissolv[e] with her" after his death (246-7). As mentioned in connection with Lacan, dreams are where one "encounter[s] the real of [his/her] desire" (Žižek 17). The loss of the dreams in connection with the paring down of Cathy and Heathcliff's childhood relationship plays down the aspect of the impossibility of their relationship in this life. The loss of these visions weakens the power the Real has over both Cathy and Heathcliff. The reasons why their relationship has such sway over them both are not fully communicated to the viewer.

Granted, the film does try. In her illness, Cathy imagines she sees Heathcliff before her, but her dream of being a child again at the Heights is not mentioned. In fact, her wish to be a child again at this point might be rather confusing to the viewer, considering that the time given to Cathy as a child in this film is very brief. What was so important about this time, the viewer might well ask, that Cathy wishes to return there? The film has no answer.

Similarly, when Heathcliff asks Nelly to "turn around, and tell me: are we by ourselves?" (*Wuthering Heights*), the scene is then photographed from quite a distance away, suggesting we are looking through the eyes of Cathy's ghost. However, Heathcliff then delivers his line "It is a long fight. How I wish it were over!" (*Wuthering Heights*). What fight? He cannot mean his attempts at revenge, for he has just told Nelly "Where's the use [in revenge]?" (*Wuthering Heights*). The viewer has no idea that Heathcliff has been desperately trying to see Cathy's ghost for the last eighteen years. The film, through its use of imagery, tries to suggest the power of Cathy and Heathcliff's bond, but without the sense of impossibility represented by the Real, the suggestions merely seem aimless.

Thus, the film falls into the trap of the "adulterous triangle" (Stoneman 209)--issues of identity have been reduced into a story about adultery. The film gives no sense of how crucial Cathy's identification with Heathcliff is because the crisis of choosing is never directly represented. The most blatant evidence of this "shift [in] relationships" (Stoneman 209) is when Cathy attempts to explain how she "rooted myself in his [Edgar's] life--in the Grange" (*Wuthering Heights*). When Cathy explains she cannot leave Edgar, Heathcliff is quick to respond "Why not?" (*Wuthering Heights*). In reducing the film to a tale about adultery, the complex issues of the "circular reproduction" of desire (Zizek 7) are ignored. The film falls prey to the idea that "as if with Heathcliff grinning at her side, [Cathy] might have had the roof removed from the Heights and set up an authentically natural household, with Nelly serving them supper on the moors" (Matthews 156). The ideology of the film is that this is a story of "all the feelings and fears that young people have inside about their first love" (Membrey 97). Thus, anything that suggests that Cathy and Heathcliff's union is impossible in this life will be ignored. The fact that Heathcliff "maintain[s] the very barriers that keep them apart" (Matthews 157) is never mentioned, and Cathy's refusal to leave Edgar is painted as an act of stubbornness.

Kosminsky's film is an admirable effort. *Wuthering Heights*, with its many narrators, extraordinary occurrences, and complex relationships, is indeed a difficult subject for

adaptation. The fact that Kosminsky decided to adapt the second half of the novel, as no other film director had done, is itself remarkable feat. However, the claim of *Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights* is an overstatement. The only possible film that could be *Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights* is, after all, a film directed by Brontë herself--an unlikely prospect. *Paramount UK's Wuthering Heights* would be a more appropriate title. However, this does not detract from Kosminsky's adaptation. He chose to emphasize the romantic elements of the film, and succeeded in making an extremely romantic film. The fact that the film does not match Brontë's novel is irrelevant, for the film is a work in its own right. Kosminsky's film is not the Brontë authorized version it is presented to be. Instead it is Kosminsky's own vision.

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