Lockwood’s Dreams and the Key to Wuthering Heights

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whether it was a reality or a dream, I never could entirely settle. . . . waking in the morning, I shudderingly remembered it all, . . . I lost myself in confounding attempts to explain the mystery. Nay, to this very hour, I often puzzle myself with it.

Ishmael in Moby-Dick (Ch. IV), 1851.

In a morbid condition of the brain, dreams often have a singular actuality, vividness, and extraordinary semblance of reality . . . so artistically consistent, that the dreamer, were he an artist like Pushkin or Turgenev even, could never have invented them in the waking state. Such sick dreams always remain long in the memory and make a powerful impression. . . .

Dostoevski, Crime and Punishment (Part I), 1866.

I’ve dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they’ve gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind.¹

Catherine Earnshaw to Nelly Dean, 1847

Thus three haunted writers haunt their readers with dreams at the beginnings of their novels. Lockwood’s nightmares indeed “color” the reader’s mind; they are a gateway to the wuthering world of the novel; they contribute to patterns of imagery; they articulate themes.² The device is traditional, an

¹ Emily Brontë, Wuthering Heights, ed. William M. Sale (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 72. All future page references are to this edition and are indicated parenthetically.

² The more comprehensive analyses of function include Dorothy Van Ghent's
offspring of the pervasive and multiform dream-vision, sister perhaps to the nightmares in Gothic novels, but under the duress of personal experience, in an epoch balanced between mysticism and scientism, Emily Brontë's genius fused the traditional forms into a new dream device whose crux is the dreams' realism. My purpose is to demonstrate that the dreams are one of the novel's "spasms of realism," a fact that existing critical commentary has not properly acknowledged, and that their rhetorical function is understood only by distinguishing between their realistic elements and their obviously contrived elements. First I want to review the dreams, emphasizing their electric realism. They are typical: how much they resemble the night terrors of childhood or the anxiety dreams of youth and adulthood; how conventional is much of their symbolism. And they capture the dream-atmosphere, its fluctuation between vagueness and clarity, its absurd transitions, its fantastic events gathered in a charmed web of credibility.

Lockwood's first dream begins with Joseph and Lockwood "floundering" through the snow toward Thrushcross Grange, and Lockwood relates: "My companion wearied me with constant reproaches that I had not brought a pilgrim's staff, telling me I could never get into the house without one, and boastfully flourishing a heavy-headed cudgel, which I understood to be so denominated" (28). This merging of pilgrim's staff and cudgel into one instrument is typical of "condensations" in actual dreams. "For a moment I considered it absurd that I should need such a weapon to gain admittance into my own residence" (28).


*Adapted from E. M. Forster's "spasmodically realistic" (Aspects of the Novel [New York, 1927]). He is describing "prophetic fiction," under which he classifies Wuthering Heights. Also relevant is his remark about Dostoevski's prophetic propensities: "never, I mean, could Jude step forward like Mitya and release floods of our emotion by saying 'Gentlemen, I've had a bad dream.'" The epigraphs from Dostoevski and Melville are intended to hint that the transportation of "real" dreams into fiction with concern for the artistic and scientific implications of their insistent realism is a mid-nineteenth century trend, whose full examination is naturally beyond the scope of this essay.
recognition of absurdity are often incipient flaws in the dream-
camouflage and result in awakening or in an altering of the “plot”
of the dream. For Lockwood the latter occurs: “Then, a new idea
flashed across me. I was not going there; we were journeying to hear
the famous Jabes Branderham preach...” (28). Absurd gaps and
revisions such as these establish the realistic dream-tone. In
psychoanalytic typology, the staff would have a phallic significance,
and the chapel with its surrounding terrain would be a symbol for
the female genital area: “[the chapel] lies in a hollow, between
two hills—an elevated hollow, near a swamp, whose peaty mois-
ture is said to answer all the purposes of embalming on the few
corpeses deposited there. The roof has been kept whole hitherto”
(28). After the strange sermon on the “Seventy Times Seven” text
and Jabes’ condemnation of Lockwood, “the whole chapel re-
sounded with rappings and counter-rappings” (29). As Lockwood
awakens, he discovers that the noise of Branderham’s club was
“merely the branch of a fir tree that touched my lattice, as the
blast wailed by, and rattled its dry cones against the panes!” (29).
After identifying the branch, Lockwood dozes again and dreams
that he is trying to get back to sleep, as the fir-bough repeats its
“teasing sound”: “it annoyed me so much, that I resolved to
silence it, if possible; and, I thought, I rose and endeavoured to
unhasp the casement. The hook was soldered into the staple, a
circumstance observed by me when awake, but forgotten” (30).

Two exquisite touches should be observed here: the paradox of
dreaming that one is in bed and trying to get to sleep, frequently
a prelude to nightmare; and the knowledge of the soldered hook,
lost to waking memory, but available to the unconscious for the
dream-work. “‘I must stop it, nevertheless!’ I muttered, knocking
my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to
seize the importunate branch: instead of which, my fingers closed
on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!” (30). Here, as in the first
dream, an absurd situation is the vehicle for a sexual expression.
Lockwood intends to break the branch that rubs against the case-
ment so that he might sleep, but window-shattering, literally en-
acted, would defeat his purposes. Again the logic is dream-logic.
Lockwood attempts to withdraw his arm, but it is held fast, and the
plaintive voice of Catherine Linton cries, “Let me in—let me in!”
“Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking
the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and
rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes...” (30). Here an obscurely defined sexual act and the dreaded punishment for that act are combined into one dream expression. Finally, Lockwood pyramids books against the hole and covers his ears to isolate himself from the threat outside—or, symbolically, inside. His “frenzy of fright” as the waif’s feeble scratching moves the books is the anxiety of the ego threatened by a censored but energized wish.

Now a “realistic” dream is not an obvious virtue in fiction, nor is the literary relevancy of the above psychoanalytic musings obvious; but these possible dreams are also probable. Dorothy Van Ghent is wrong to consider their violence inconsistent with Lockwood’s bland character, and Edgar Shannon’s intended corrective—that indeed all men are capable of cruelty when provoked—also confuses the manifest dream with the latent dream, two levels which must be distinguished if the esthetic criterion of probability is to be applied to dreams at all.4 People frequently act “out of character” in their dreams; consequently the esthetic validity of Lockwood’s dreams is not a function of whether we think Lockwood “actually” would or would not rub a child’s wrist across a broken window.

The probability, then, must be demonstrated by comparing the latent dream with the character of Lockwood as the reader perceives it. On the lower level, the cruelty in the dreams is a result of terror (“terror made me cruel”) rather than viciousness. It is the phantasied punishment for the wish—not the wish itself. Moreover, Lockwood is precisely the kind of highly repressed, sexually anxious man who would be troubled with anxiety dreams. The very summer before he came to Thrushcross Grange he had a romantic failure. When invited (or should we say “challenged”?) by the encouraging glance of a girl he admired, he “shrank icily” into himself “like a snail” (15). Impotence, sexual timidty, and nightmares are counterparts of the unconscious fear of castration so abundantly symbolized in Lockwood’s nightmares; most notable perhaps is his inability to withdraw his extended arm from the broken window (variant of the archetypal vagina dentata fantasy) which associates his inhibitions with an actual fear of women. The latent dream is very likely a phantasy of sexual gratification merged with its imagined consequent retri-

4 Cf. Van Ghent, p. 160; Shannon, p. 98.
bution, and the upsurge, at this time, of this unconscious conflict is probable. For months Lockwood's social isolation has preserved an internal equilibrium; his censored passions have not been aroused since the encounter with the girl on the beach, but Catherine Linton energizes his long-buried libido. In his imagination the imprisoned Catherine is reciprocally attracted and looks to the shining city-knight for deliverance. The "wish-fulfillment" of the nightmares cannot be Lockwood's violent revenge upon his tormentors of the day, for that leaves the terror unexplained; rather it is a sexual wish promoting a phantasy that Catherine Heathcliff would come to his room, knock, and ask to be "let in."

Precisely because the dreams are both realistic and probable, their symbolic and thematic function is crucial, and their latent meaning asserts its relevance. Dorothy Van Ghent argues to the contrary:

Had the dream used any other agent than the effete, almost epicene Lockwood, it would have lost this symbolic force; for Lockwood, more successfully than anyone else in the book, has shut out the powers of darkness (the pun in his name is obvious in this context); and his lack of any dramatically thorough motivation for dreaming the cruel dream suggests those powers as existing autonomously.\(^5\)

But this careful distinction between serving realistic and symbolic ends avoids the task of evaluating Emily Brontë's psychological awareness, and it gives a distorted impression of her esthetic. It implies she began first with an idea about the nature of man and the forces of the universe; she then contrived the dream to represent that idea; and finally she stitched this fabricated dream into the novel with the seams showing, so its function as a literary symbol would not be missed. In short, it assumes that the dreams are merely the traditional literary device signalling a gateway to the metaphysical. I suggest that, on the contrary, Emily Brontë begins with real dreams, or fragments from them, which to her seem *essentially symbolic* and fuses them into a thematically related narrative in the hope that no seams would show. The dreams are not simply literary constructs, injected with thematic significance by the author; they are psychological realities, givens, with their own pre-established symbolic implications, which are then explored rather than created through the translating and articulating processes of art. Beginning with these elements of real

\(^5\) P. 160.
experience, she heuristically elaborates narrative situations out of them—much as a generative grammar produces variants out of a fundamental grammatical configuration—which hopefully will clarify the nature of the dream experience which has "altered the colour" of her mind. Whether she cracked the "dream code" or not, she at least was aware that the episodes of the dream were symbolic; that they shadowed forth some hidden meaning, with reference not necessarily to transcendent realities but also perhaps to experiences sleeping in one's memory; and finally that because dreams were thus charged, they could lend their energy to a narrative. Consequently we are advised to resist the temptation to make a facile distinction between dream-symbol—or psychological symbol—and literary symbol.

Before considering the way in which Emily Brontë articulates the mystery of the dreams, I want to indicate briefly how the dreams provide the template for the narrative which they introduce. First, they contain elements which recur throughout the novel, such as books, blood, windows, wind, weapons, frustration, anger, terror. The covert meanings of the dream-symbols drift along associative pathways and diffuse into the novel like wine through water, creating what appears to be a consciously symbolic structure. For example, the transition between the two dreams identifies the weapons—tokens of masculinity—with the wildness of nature in the form of wind and branch; thus the untamed external nature is "libidinized." The dream-combination of the window, the sound of the firs against the lattice, and the blast of wind from the heath recurs at critical points, always carrying the sexual connotations which it acquired in the dreams. And Lockwood's blockade of books, symbol of the ego-mechanisms of defense, extends its connotations throughout the novel. Hence Nelly Dean remarks that Cathy Linton's books have presented a limited view of human nature with the extremities or depths blocked out.6 Books are also instruments of torture: Joseph turns the "staff" of religion—the Bible—into a "cudgel" and punishes the children.

Second, the actions of the dreams are archetypes for crucial narrative actions. The fundamental pattern is one of grappling.

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or reversal, or action-reaction. In the first dream, Lockwood, "having no weapon to raise in self-defence, commenced grappling with Joseph ... for his" (29). As Lockwood awakens and falls asleep again, the weapon is identified respectively with the tree branch and the child's hand, and another grappling occurs. The first dream includes the following reversals: Lockwood denounces the preacher, and then he is condemned; during the fight, "several clubs crossed," and the "chapel resounded with rappings and counter-rappings" (29); Lockwood is "condemned" to remain in church but later is condemned to remove himself from the fold. In the next dream Lockwood's hand closes over the fingers of a tiny hand; then somehow it is his hand that is gripped with superhuman tenacity. First his arm extends through the broken pane; then the other hand is drawn through, again reversing the roles.

These dream-gestures extend their formative influence to every page of the novel, but let us examine a few central instances. On the night of Catherine's funeral, Heathcliff exposes Catherine's coffin, hears her breath over his shoulder, and returns to the Heights, where Hindley waits for him with a strange weapon: "'Look here!' he [Hindley] replied, pulling from his waistcoat a curiously constructed pistol, having a double-edged spring knife attached to the barrel... I cannot resist going up with this, every night, and trying his [Heathcliff's] door" (118–119). The combination weapon recalls the staff-cudgel condensation of the first dream—also associated with a "gaining entry." Here it carries from the second dream the sense of horrible catastrophe if entry is allowed. Echoing Lockwood's competition with Joseph, Isabella describes her examination of Hindley's weapon: "I surveyed the weapon inquisitively; a hideous notion struck me. How powerful I should be possessing such an instrument! I took it from his hand, and touched the blade. He looked astonished at the expression my face assumed during a brief second. It was not horror, it was covetousness. He snatched the pistol back,

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7 Both Van Ghent and Moser have sensed archetypal principles or rituals which underlie the novel as a whole. Van Ghent discusses the variations on the "two children" figure, the "golden child" and the "dark child," and the manifestations of the "windowpane": "the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the 'inside' from the 'outside,' the 'human' from the alien and terrible 'other'" (p. 160). Moser calls attention to the "series of scenes involving Heathcliff, Cathy, and, in most cases, an ineffectual male. Each scene dramatizes a dispute of some sort over entrance through a door or window" (p. 219). These observations enhanced my suspicion that Lockwood's dreams contained a paradigm for the narrative action.
jealously; shut the knife, and returned it to its concealment” (119). Hindley and Isabella tensely await Heathcliff’s arrival, and she cries: “you may keep him out the whole night, for me... Do! put the key in the lock, and draw the bolts...” (145). When she realizes Hindley’s murderous intent, she runs to the lattice and warns Heathcliff to stay away. Her ambivalence of terror and fascination at the prospect of Heathcliff’s entry are precisely Lockwood’s feelings in the second dream. As with the rattling of the chapel and the breaking of the window, Heathcliff’s entry is violent. He breaks the casement but is unable to get through the narrow opening which results. This opening between the stanchions corresponds to the broken window of Lockwood’s dream-conflict. Twice Heathcliff cries “let me in”—another echo of the dream—and Isabella refuses. Hindley rushes forward: “He’s there, is he?” (146). Heathcliff flings himself upon the weapon as it emerges, and the grappling re-enacts elements of both dreams:

The charge exploded, and the knife, in springing back closed into its owner’s wrist [recall the torn wrist of the waif]. Heathcliff pulled it away by main force, slitting up the flesh as it passed on, and thrust it dripping into his pocket. He then took a stone, struck down the division between two windows [recall the “house with two rooms threatening speedily to determine into one” (28)], and sprung in. His adversary had fallen senseless with excessive pain, and the flow of blood that gushed from an artery, or a large vein.” (147)

Another weapon-reversal occurs on the next night, when Isabella flees from the Heights. At the dinner table she has needled Heathcliff to the breaking point. He snatches a dinner knife and imbeds it in the side of her head. As she rushes to the door to make her escape, she pulls the knife out and flings it back at Heathcliff, hoping, she says, that it will go in “a little deeper than his missile” (150).

These uncanny gestures involving knife, gun, or hand also occur using another prop, the key. Lockwood’s first dream covertly associates “key” with “weapon” by the remark about the staff: you cannot “get into the house” without one. When Heathcliff, Catherine, and Edgar meet in the kitchen, Edgar tells Heathcliff to leave Thrushcross Grange, and then motions Nellie to bring help. Catherine prevents her from leaving, locks the door, and derides her husband for “feigning more valour” than he possesses. “No, I’ll swallow the key before you shall get it!” (99) He grapples with her but is unsuccessful, and his reaction to being “un-keyed” is
extreme: "for safety she flung it into the hottest part of the fire; whereupon Mr. Edgar was taken with a nervous trembling, and his countenance grew deadly pale. For his life he could not avert that access of emotion: mingled anguish and humiliation overcame him completely" (99). Echoes of Lockwood's first dream reverberate in the outcome, as Edgar's men come armed with bludgeons (recall the congregation attacking Lockwood), but Heathcliff grabs a poker, smashes the lock on the door and escapes, upon which Catherine exclaims: "A thousand smiths' hammers are beating in my head!'" (100) recalling the end of Lockwood's dream, in which "the whole chapel resounded with rappings and counter-rappings." In Chapter xxvii Cathy is imprisoned at the Heights and demands that Heathcliff give her the key. This leads to another grappling and reversal: "She snatched at the instrument, and half succeeded in getting it out of his loosened fingers; but her action recalled him to the present; he recovered it speedily" (215). She grabs his closed fist, and after clawing and biting it she manages to get him to open his hand. As she takes the key away he grabs her and gives her "a shower of terrific slaps on both sides of the head" (215; cf. "smiths' hammers" above), which completely subdues her, after which he calmly repossesses the key.8

The dream items, then, constitute the symbolic elements of the narrative, and the dream actions establish its archetypal rituals. It remains to demonstrate that the meanings of these items and actions as dream symbols in a real dream are relevant to Emily Brontë's conscious literary and philosophical intentions. The best argument is again to be found in the dreams themselves. I have suggested that they ring true, but there are elements—particularly Branderham's sermon on the "Seventy Times Seven, and the

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8 The above examples and their sexual implications are enumerated by Moser (pp. 229-228). I have reconsidered them in order to demonstrate their intimate association with Lockwood's dreams. Van Ghent also observes sexual overtones in the actions of the novel, among them the "symbolic emasculation" in which "Cathy literally teaches the devil out of Hareton" (p. 165). When Hareton is out hunting, his gun explodes: "a splinter cut his arm, and he lost a good deal of blood before he could reach home. The consequence was, that, perforce, he was condemned to the fire-side and tranquility, till he made it up again. It suited Catherine to have him there..." (246). The next day Cathy re-enacts the drama by grabbing his pipe from his mouth: "Before he could attempt to recover it, it was broken, and behind the fire" (247). After these two incidents, Hareton becomes increasingly docile, and he and Cathy become fast friends. Again the symbols are those developed first in the dreams.
First of the Seventy-First"—which were probably consciously grafted into them. These contrived elements very likely represent both Emily Brontë's conscious estimation of the more spontaneous parts of the dreams and her attempts to appropriate them thematically.

Different interpretations of Branderham's sermons have resulted from different assumptions concerning its biblical origins. Ruth M. Adams suggests Gen. 4:23–24: "And La-mech said unto his wives, Adah and Zill-lah, Hear my voice; ye wives of La-mech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly La-mech seventy and sevenfold." Following this, Edgar Shannon objects that the verse has "no relevance whatever to Branderham's pious discourse," which instead derives "both its title and substance from Matt. 18:21–22: 'Then came Peter unto him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.'" 9

Shannon is guilty of two distortions here. First, although the lines about Cain and La-mech are not relevant to Branderham's sermon, they might well be in the back of Lockwood's mind after he has just been escorted to his room by Zillah, Heathcliff's (La-mech's?) "housewife." Furthermore they certainly resonate with the central actions of the novel, the many thwarted revenges against brothers' sins, the theme of banishment, the marked man, and the wanderer. And the line in the dream, "every man's hand was against his neighbor," echoes the Heavenly pronouncement upon Ishmael, another wanderer: "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him..." (Gen. 16:12). The second limitation of Shannon's interpretation is that Matt. 18:21–22 contains no mention of an "unpardonable sin," which is the "substance" of Branderham's sermon. Actually, speculation about an unpardonable sin is based upon varying interpretations of Matt. 12:31: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." If Emily Brontë's biblical knowledge surpassed Branderham's, then she has purposely created a mysterious alternative "sin that no Christian need pardon" and has made its formulation a consequence of

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*Shannon, p. 96.*
what Lockwood calls Branderham’s “private manner of interpreting the phrase [i.e., ‘Seventy Times Seven’].”

Probably, all three biblical passages were in Emily Brontë’s mind when she constructed the moral framework of the narrative. Taken together, they present an ambivalent attitude of revenge versus forgiveness for a brother’s sins which is relevant not only to Catherine and Heathcliff but also to Hindley, Edgar, Isabella, and others who find themselves guilty of or unable to forgive outrages of brother against brother.

An additional “contrivance” of Lockwood’s dreams can be used in conjunction with the motif of the unpardonable sin to locate the author’s intentions: actually, there are four important dreams—not two. Catherine Linton has two dreams which are contrived to parallel—and thus retrospectively to elucidate Lockwood’s dreams. Catherine’s first dream is also about an unpardonable sin for which the dreamer is ejected from the ranks of the holy. Whereas Lockwood was miserable in church, Catherine finds herself miserable in Heaven: “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” (72). That she associates “heath” with Heathcliff is affirmed when in her next breath she speaks of him: “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; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn’t have thought of it” (72; italics mine). Catherine’s second dream resembles Lockwood’s second dream. Lockwood screams, discovers that his “yell was not ideal,” and that Heathcliff has overheard him, while Catherine’s dream ends with a “piercing shriek” which brings Nelly running. “Oh, if I were but in my own bed in the old house! . . . And that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice. Do let me feel it—it comes straight down the moor—do let me have one breath!” (106) cries Catherine, and these words echo the beginning of Lockwood’s second dream. The waking dream she has matches Lockwood’s for terror, but it is the specific terror of being deprived of her prince and left alone in bed:

I thought . . . that I was enclosed in the oak-panelled bed at home; and my heart ached with some great grief which, just waking, I could not
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recollect. I pondered, and worried myself to discover what it could be; and, most strangely, the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank! I did not recall that they had been at all. I was a child; my father was just buried, and my misery arose from the separation that Hindley had ordered between me and Heathcliff. I was laid alone, for the first time ... (107; italics mine)

Catherine's two dreams embody the desire to be reunited with Heathcliff, her first love. When her feverish mind erases the seven years, her confinement in Thrushcross Grange becomes the confinement of being in the panelled bed without Heathcliff:

Oh, I'm burning! I wish I was out of doors—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? why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather [again, Heathcliff] on those hills. Open the window again wide, fasten it open! Quick, why don't you move? (107)

Ignoring Nelly's warnings, Catherine finally throws open the window and leans out, "careless of the frosty air that cut about her shoulders as keen as a knife" (108). Again, as with Lockwood's dream, there is the open window and the cutting, but Catherine invites what Lockwood in his dream was trying to avoid, and, significantly, her opening the window is the partial cause of her destruction.

At various levels of explicitness, the four dreams merge the theme of incest with the theme of the unpardonable sin and set them forth in various general forms which, taken in summary, constitute an irony. The dreams define a moral-sexual dilemma and indicate its practical and universal ramifications. The sexual meaning of the dream symbols infuses the narrative, and the various action patterns established by the dreams represent different aspects of the encounters in family triangles.\(^{10}\)

This perspective focuses most directly upon Catherine and the profound moral ambiguity of her situation. The dreams give us Catherine, the waif, outside trying to get in; Catherine, the wife, inside trying to get out; Catherine condemned to eternal banishment; Catherine finding her only joy in banishment. Edgar Shannon argues that the parallel between Lockwood's "excommunica-

\(^{10}\)At the level of plot the incest motif is evident. All the important marriages with the significant exception of Catherine's to Edgar are quasi-incestuous, and Heathcliff breaks up two brother-sister relationships.
tion" and Catherine's banishment from heaven establishes "the thematic problem of the novel—the nature of Cathy's offense," which, he argues quite convincingly, is marrying Edgar Linton. But again Shannon limits his interpretation by being too specifically "New Testament." "I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven" is the remark of one who already has sinned and feels irrevocably damned. When Mr. Earnshaw dies, Heathcliff and Catherine console each other by thinking of him in heaven, but later when she is frustrated by conflicting desires for Edgar and Heathcliff, she tells Nelly: "If I were in heaven, . . . I should be extremely miserable" (72). As children Heathcliff and Catherine identify the world of Thrushcross Grange with "heaven," and Heathcliff is amused that Edgar and Isabella cannot be happy there. But later when Catherine is in that "heaven" married to Edgar, she refers to herself as "an exile, and outcast" (107). Perhaps Catherine's "original" sin is not in marrying Edgar but rather in loving Heathcliff more than goodness or heaven (i.e., Thrushcross Grange, Edgar) itself. The Miltonic echo, obvious in Catherine's dream of falling from heaven onto the hearth, associates loving Heathcliff with eternally turning one's back upon heaven. The unpardonable quality of this evil would be in Catherine's inability to desire a reformation; in biblical terms this constitutes a denial of the Holy Spirit. Or perhaps her sin is in denying the principle of life. Then Catherine's suicide would be the "sin against brother" which Heathcliff cannot forgive. Other specifications of Catherine's offense could be made, but these suffice to reveal the moral predication shifting and reversing with ultimate irony. Catherine herself opposes a simplistic definition of responsibility by saying she would not have thought of marrying Edgar, "if the wicked man in there [Hindley] had not brought Heathcliff so low." Blame may thus be passed on to Hindley, and another blossoming of ironies results.12

Incest and the crime against one kin involve mechanisms of banishment, repudiation, and revenge, if the stories of Cain, Oedipus, and Hamlet are representative. As children Hindley,

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11 P. 100. Shannon does not discuss any further parallels between the dreams.
12 That the "unpardonable sin" motif should be exercised with a certain tentative athleticism is also implied by Lockwood's description of his dream: "... and either Joseph, the preacher, or I had committed the 'First of the Seventy-First,' and were to be publicly exposed and excommunicated" (28).
Catherine, and Heathcliff are all in competition for the affections of Mr. Earnshaw. Even Catherine must feel some anger toward Heathcliff when her father scolds her: “Nay Cathy, ... I cannot love thee; thou'rt worse than thy brother” (43). Nelly informs us that at first Catherine would cry when her father repudiated her, but later she became hardened and more sassy than ever. Hindley too feels that he has been disowned, and Heathcliff's life is almost a perpetual banishment. Heathcliff and Hindley both renounce their sons, and when Isabella marries Heathcliff, Edgar feels as if he has been denied: “Trouble me no more about her. Hereafter she is only my sister in name, not because I disown her, but because she has disowned me” (113). True to the pattern of reversal revealed in Lockwood's dreams, the repudiations are usually responses to previous hurts.

All the moral paradoxes, injustices, lusts, and cruelties which comprise the novel are germinated from an original incident which is conspicuous by its very absence. Its culmination is Hindley's forced separation of Catherine, then twelve years old, from Heathcliff, then thirteen. Its origin is hidden at the beginning of the novel in what Nelly leaves unsaid. One tends to forget that when Heathcliff first arrives, Catherine and Hindley are thick (“thick” is Nelly's love-word; she uses it to describe Hareton and Cathy in the second part of the novel), and Heathcliff, the newcomer, is rejected. “They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room” (39). After describing her own cruelty to the newcomer, Nelly states that he was christened “Heathcliff”: “it was the name of a son who died in childhood” (39). Then, because Nelly is “banished” by Mr. Earnshaw for putting Heathcliff at the foot of the stairs, she cannot describe the crucial episode for her listener but simply announces without adequate transition that: “Miss Cathy and he [Heathcliff] were now very thick; but Hindley hated him, and to say the truth I did the same. . .” (39). Nelly's history thus omits the germinal action in which the newcomer replaced the brother and won love from the sister stronger than her life. The narrative thus conceals its emanative core. Only in dreams is it indirectly shown forth: in the sexual symbolism and violent gestures of Lockwood's dreams; or through Catherine's captured memory, tortured to hallucination. It is the hidden drama that Heathcliff symbolically enacts, over and over again. He usurps Isabella from Edgar; he attempts
to repossess Catherine from Edgar; he imprisons Catherine's daughter; and finally he tries to re-create the same structure in the second generation.

Herein lies the significance of Cain's mark and its moral profundity. To kill Cain is to become him. Cain's aggression, which must not be revenged, was itself an act of revenge for a repudiation. In their own ways, Hindley, Catherine, Heathcliff, Edgar, and Isabella all become Cains. Each is repudiated; each is embittered and attempts to exact revenge, but the attempt only multiplies each's suffering. Hindley stains and destroys his life in reaction to being replaced by Heathcliff. In turn, Heathcliff, having been banished from Catherine's bed, is driven to become Hindley. Haunted and embittered by the memory of being the favorite, he tries to form Hareton into what Hindley made him. But revenge is only a distortion of a frantic wish to turn time backward and erase the needling outrage. Heathcliff attempts this impossible reversal on the night of Catherine's death. He returns to the Heights from her grave, forces his way past Hindley, and gains entry to Catherine's sepulchral, panelled bed. Thus he re-enacts his original "forced" entry into the house as a Liverpool castaway, when he replaced Hindley in Catherine's bed. But the symbolic gesture is ineffactual. Heathcliff is paralyzed with a desire that reality cannot satisfy, because he has ceased to live in time. Time stopped for him, as it did for Catherine, seven years before Catherine was married, and dreams are, to him also, a beckoning from the past:

"And when I slept in her chamber—I was beaten out of that [cf. Lockwood's first dream]—I couldn't lie there; for the moment I closed my eyes, she was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels [cf. Lockwood's second dream], or entering the room, or even resting her darling head on the same pillow as she did when a child. And I must open my lids to see. And so I opened and closed them a hundred times a night—to be always disappointed!" (230)

The dream that generates *Wuthering Heights* is of two lovers united, of two lovers separated, of two lovers fervently wishing to be reunited. When Lockwood dreams it, it is disguised and fraught with terror. When Catherine dreams it, joy is mingled with self-pity and anguish. But Heathcliff's dream is unequivocally beautiful; waking life, Lockwood's refuge, is Heathcliff's nightmare.