

12. THE CRIME AGAINST HEATHCLIFF

The most striking feature of *Wuthering Heights* is its originality. Other English novelists, including her sisters, dealt with relationships, manners and morals in a highly civilized society. Emily Brontë had no social life, few relationships outside the household, and neither knew nor cared about the world beyond Haworth. Her inner life was turbulent and passionate. She found on the moors around her living manifestations of those same forces which warred within her.

There is little place for nature in the English novel before Hardy; none for wild nature, even in the rural novels. Dorothy van Ghent writes:

In George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, where there is relatively a great deal of 'outdoors', nature is man's plowfield, the acre in which he finds social and ethical expression through work; this is only a different variety of the conception of nature as significant by virtue of what man's intelligential and social character makes of it for his ends. [251]

Emily Brontë's own nature led her to wild nature as its mirror. She exulted in the freedom, wildness and purity of the moor, its summer profusion and blossom and birdsong, its space for the spirit to soar in. She knew also the wuthering wind on the heights, the desolation, the inhuman cruelty of its storms and winters. Still, she chose the heath as her heaven, even if that meant choosing exposure and death. So the landscape of the novel is also her own psychic and spiritual landscape, which she explores with single-minded unfaltering honesty.

Emily Brontë's relationship with Nature was not (like, say, Coleridge's) complicated by any Christian affiliation. She was completely confident in her inner lights. Her imagination was not cowed by guilt. Like Blake she was well aware of the dehumanizing influence of Christianity, as preached and practised in England at that time. Her Blake-like confidence in the abnormality and unnaturalness of it enables her to treat it largely in a comic mode, which takes for granted that the reader will share the writer's norms. It was very disconcerting for her first readers to find their sympathies being drawn into an alliance through comedy against the most sacrosanct beliefs of the time. Joseph is almost the only spokesman in the novel for religion, which in his mouth becomes gibberish. His vocation, we are told, was to be where there was plenty of wickedness to reprove. Emily Brontë must have known Wesley's description of Yorkshire: 'that place suits me best where so many are groaning for

redemption'. The effect is to make it impossible to take seriously, to puncture and empty of all moral or spiritual content, such words as 'wickedness' and 'redemption'. The poetry of the novel invests with the deepest meanings another set of words and images altogether.

Unlike Blake, she found in Nature the only heaven she needed. Unlike Wordsworth, she yearned for no imperial palace elsewhere. Catherine's dreams of such a place are nightmares of alienation and exile. Emily Brontë must, from an early age, have rejected the 'lumber' thrust upon her in the form of Methodist tracts, and rebelled against the patriarchal God in all his forms in favour of the God within her breast, the 'Almighty ever-present Deity / Life'. In 'No coward soul is mine' she writes:

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main.

How she would have loved Whitman:

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am
touch'd from,

The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

['Song of Myself' 24]

Like Whitman she believed that Life was Undying and infinite. She was not offended by what Whitman called life's 'perpetual transfers and promotions' [49]:

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears

...

There is not room for Death
Nor atom that his might could render void
Since thou art Being and Breath
And what thou art may never be destroyed.

This is amazingly close to Whitman's

The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to
arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.
All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier. [6]

With Whitman she could have written: 'I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow
from the grass I love' [52]. Catherine, in her grave, achieves this atonement: 'It
was dug on a green slope, in a corner of the kirkyard, where the wall is so low
that heath and bilberry plants have climbed over it from the moor; and peat
mould almost buries it.' [205]

No fear of death and decay could frighten her, no promise of heaven
seduce her, from her attachment to mother earth:

Indeed, no dazzling land above
Can cheat thee of thy children's love. ...
We would not leave our native home
For *any* world beyond the Tomb. ['I see around me tombstones grey']

Life includes pain and death. If Life cannot be sustained on earth, it
continues under it. There is nothing aesthetic or anthropomorphic or in any way
selective about Emily Brontë's Nature. It is as harsh as any depiction of nature
in our literature. While Wordsworth's birds die of happy old age, Emily
Brontë's are lucky if they manage to leave the nest.

The most potent single metaphor of her own nature is wind. Her choice
of title for *Wuthering Heights* indicates her own awareness of its centrality. Of
the same wind on the same heights Ted Hughes wrote:

The house

Rang like some fine green goblet in the note
That any second would shatter it. Now deep
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,

Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
Seeing the window tremble to come in.
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

Wind represents all the 'wandering elementals' which, if let into our consciousness, would make impossible the continuance of our complacent round of reading, thinking and human relationships. Wind at its most beneficent is the breath of life. At its most destructive it is the wind which twists and stunts and kills. At the Heights, the 'atmospheric tumult' is such that 'the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones' [46]. Etymologically, 'window' means 'wind's eye'; and the eye is the window of the soul. A window is like a delicate membrane keeping out ghosts, demons, all the dark, anarchic forces which inhabit what we would prefer to think of as the safely locked cellar of the unconscious. Heathcliff's eyes are described as 'the clouded windows of hell'.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the window does come in. Its breaking is associated with violent emotions, bloodshed, violation and the supernatural. What has there been shut out is not only the stormy elements, but a child from her rightful spiritual home and inheritance. You cannot shut out death and danger without shutting out nature, and therefore life and love.

Emily Brontë's Nature is not specifically feminine. Nature presents itself to her as the universal mother insofar as it is the womb and tomb of life; but between those extremes it is rather that which is other than her own vulnerable femaleness, the not-self beyond the ego (or the ego extending without limit), wild, free, energetic, challenging, harsh. It is not Nature the loving or devouring mother, but Nature the exhilarating elemental exposure of heath and cliff, 'where the wild wind blows on the mountain side'.

Deprived from early childhood of a mother, Emily Brontë might have been expected to be particularly exposed to the pressures of a patriarchal society. But because of her own extreme independence of spirit (or bloody-mindedness), she seems to have been totally immune to whatever pressures were put upon her from the outside to modify her ideas or behaviour in any way. The relatively high degree of conventionality in her sisters indicates that the pressures were there. The combination of Emily Brontë's character and circumstances gave her the terrible choice between death-in-life and life-in-death. Like her sisters, she could have tried to make what she could of society and human relationships, even perhaps marriage, and have repressed as childish her immortal longings. But she was wiser than Cathy and knew what would

have to be given up. Rather she chose not to reject her inner life, but to nurse it and live through it and defend it against the world. But because, despite the rare tolerance of Patrick Brontë, her spirit was under continual siege, it drove her further into isolation, harshness, and a degree of brutality against both herself and others. It was a cold wind which bit her breast. She chose what seemed to her the lesser of two evils. The good which was not available to her in life, she sought in her art.

* * *

Charlotte Brontë claimed that Heathcliff

exemplified the effects which a life of continued injustice and hard usage may produce on a naturally perverse, vindictive, and inexorable disposition. Carefully trained and kindly treated, the black gypsy-cub might possibly have been reared into a human being, but tyranny and ignorance made of him a mere demon. The worst of it is, some of his spirit seems breathed through the whole narrative in which he figures: it haunts every moor and glen, and beckons in every fir-tree of the Heights.

[Petit 33-4]

Her prejudices against him are exactly those of Mrs. Earnshaw, who was 'ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up - asking how he could fashion to bring that gypsy brat into the house' [77]. The child's obscure origins and dark colouring do not make him a gypsy, and gypsies, in any case, are human beings. No-one heeds Earnshaw's warning: 'you must e'en take it as a gift of God; though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil'. The injustice and hard usage begin at once. Spontaneous rejection is the child's first experience at the Heights, before he can have done anything to deserve it. We know nothing of his natural disposition or his origins. Having been found in Liverpool, he could be, as Nelly later tells him, the son of the Emperor of China for all they know, or even a bastard of Earnshaw's. It is the very obscurity of his origins, geographically, racially and morally, which determines that he shall be persecuted. That Heathcliff should be given the name of a son who had died feeds their suspicion that he is a fairy changeling.

The name itself suggests something inhuman. Again and again his face is described as clouding, brightening, overcast, like a landscape. He is not, at first, physically ugly. He can look handsome or repulsive according to his mood, as a landscape changes with the weather. It is deprivation which later

affects both his disposition and his appearance. We need not assume that cruelty and spite come naturally to him. Hatred is his anodyne, the only means by which he can relieve the pain of his constant frustration and humiliation. Hindley's treatment of him is, as Nelly says, 'enough to make a fiend of a saint'. Heathcliff becomes a fiend only when his life becomes a hell.

Wuthering Heights demands to be read in such a way that Heathcliff functions simultaneously on three levels. On the surface he is an autonomous character in a drama which is comprehensible in ethical and social terms. Here he exemplifies the effects of cruelty and deprivation upon the young, acts as a critic of the artificial social and moral refinement of the Lintons, and dies broken by the sterile and destructive passions of hate and revenge. The second level is that we have already discussed in relation to his name, a permanent, indestructible reality against which all social values are seen to be flimsy and ephemeral, all moral values relative or impertinent:

My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath - a source of little visible delight, but necessary. [122]

The relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy is not really a matter of 'love'. It is not because the two halves love each other that an oak resists splitting (the metaphor is Catherine's). In passages like these we must be aware also of the third level, the psycho-spiritual. When Cathy says that Heathcliff is necessary to her, and that she *is* Heathcliff, she is speaking quite literally; for at this level Heathcliff is a projection of an essential part of Cathy's own being, the very ground of it. Stevie Davies describes Heathcliff as 'Catherine before she fell into her adult female biology and status. ... He is the illicit access forged (at the price of life itself) from the subconscious to the conscious world ... the electrifying and spellbinding hoardings of the imagination' [80].

The unforgivable sin committed in the novel is the separation of Catherine and Heathcliff, which corresponds to the attempted violation of Emily Brontë's integrity by the imposition on it of a narrowly feminine role. Heathcliff is thus, among other things, Cathy's *animus*. *Animus* is everything women are taught and expected (in those days were virtually obliged) to suppress. It is the unacknowledged content of the unconscious clamouring for expression and acceptance, and turning violent in its desperation. Emma Jung writes of the *animus*:

In the dreams and fantasies of even happily married women, a mysteriously fascinating masculine figure often appears, a demonic or divine dream or shadow lover ... a kind of inherent primal phenomenon.

Shuttle and Redgrove refer to the 'dangerous *negative animus*, the destructive masculine spirit in women'. If a deep instinctual process in a woman is ignored or rejected, they say:

then its spirit will return with all the evolutionary power of those instinctual processes that grew us and continue to energize our physical being. You could say in this way, that the Christian Devil was a representation of the animus of the menstruating woman, in so far as the Christian ethic has Satanised woman and her natural powers. [126]

The novel itself is Emily Brontë's way of releasing and conversing with this body of repressed, exiled energy and information. The purpose of the first generation story is simply to let it speak, to let it find its own way to whatever reintegration it can. The purpose of the second generation story is to subject it to criticism in full consciousness and to attempt to initiate a process of healing there to avoid a repetition of those agonies.

Wuthering Heights is no mere *cri de coeur*. The elder Cathy is deprived of father as well as mother, and no-one at the Heights is able to control her. Nelly is little older than Cathy, and Joseph simply provokes out-and-out defiance. Thus Emily Brontë goes out of her way to avoid blaming anyone or anything other than Cathy herself for her fate. Deprivation seems to be the common lot of childhood, and leads invariably to distortion. Yet, though other characters in the first generation seem helpless, Cathy is given total existential freedom and responsibility. She behaves as though nothing need ever be paid for. She thinks she can have all the advantages of a conventional marriage, of wealth, leisure and social status, even of love, as it is normally understood, without any surrender of freedom or even of Heathcliff. She colludes with, almost initiates, the parting from Heathcliff. He certainly blames no-one else: 'Because misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it' [197]. Thus Emily Brontë defends herself by demonstrating in Cathy's defection to the Lintons and Thrushcross Grange how fatal it would have been to her own integrity to make any such concessions.

The total identification with Heathcliff, the total possession by the animus, left Cathy with no means of satisfying her social needs and softer

affections but to reject Heathcliff (as it seemed to him) and the Heights in favour of Edgar Linton and Thrushcross Grange. At the low lying Grange, with its high garden wall, there is no wind at all. There, in the absence of Heathcliff (the three years of which occupy a mere two pages) her life is in abeyance; she virtually ceases to live. On his return she becomes 'an angel' and radiates sunshine through the house for several days. But her absolute need for Heathcliff is again thwarted.

The parallel has often been observed between this passage from *Wuthering Heights* (Catherine speaking of Heathcliff):

If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. [122]

and this stanza from 'No coward soul':

Though Earth and moon were gone
And suns and universes ceased to be
And thou wert left alone
Every Existence would exist in thee.

More often than not, the comparison has been used to misinterpret the poem. The passage from the novel is assumed to be romantic hyperbole, and that assumption is carried over into the poem, as though a Gondal heroine were here speaking to her lover. But the poem is not addressed to a lover. The whole poem after the first stanza is addressed to Life, 'almighty ever-present Deity', the God within her breast. The poem has nothing to do with romantic love, and the novel, despite the plays and films ('the greatest love-story ever told'), precious little. In its proper context, the stanza can only mean that Life is not only in worlds and creatures and atoms, but in 'Being and Breath', which in turn must mean the animating spirit which 'pervades and broods over' the cycles of creation and dissolution alike. When Emily Brontë uses the word 'love', she has her own completely unromantic and non-sexual meaning for it, which comes clear when we take the full value of such associated terms as 'anchored', 'wide-embracing'; and still clearer when we remember how the equivalent passage in the novel is introduced:

I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? [122]

Love is what prevents any living creature from being an island. It is Coleridge's albatross and water-snakes in 'The Ancient Mariner', the interdependence of all living things, their common sacredness. As Coleridge said, 'we are all one life'. Catherine is not saying that she cannot live without Heathcliff the man. She is saying that she cannot live without her soul, her soul being the opposite of her ego. The self-centred ego can live on, a sort of death-in-life, without awareness of the rest of life; but the soul dies when its links are severed with Nature, that is, with everything beyond itself, with Life.

For all the loving care lavished on her Cathy begins to die simply for lack of the Breath of Life. Her spirit cries to return to the Heights to hear 'that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice'. The novel makes no distinction between her need for Heathcliff and her desire to be 'among the heather on those hills' where she can be 'herself', 'half savage and hardy and free'. Before she can recognize her visitors she must wean 'her eyes from contemplating the outer darkness' [165]. That outer darkness is now her only reality. In her last illness Cathy cries out: 'I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills. Open the window again wide: fasten it open!' [163]. Yet the body cannot bear total exposure. Heathcliff and Cathy reject book, thought, and (insofar as they never regard each other as separate people) relationships. They throw open the windows of their souls to the wind, and achieve that total reunion with each other and with nature which they have yearned for; but the price is death. Cathy challenges Heathcliff to find a way to her 'not through that Kirkyard', but can herself conceive of no other adequate reunion, and Heathcliff accepts that way with relish: 'by the time Linton gets to us, he'll not know which is which!' [319].

* * *

In life, Emily Brontë felt she must choose, like the elder Cathy, between the window fastened open and the window soldered closed. She chose the former, life-in-death, rather than what would have been, for her, death-in-life. In her art she could imagine other possibilities, windows which shut out the wuthering wind, but can be opened to admit the breeze of life and love. The whole structure of the second half of the novel implies that she was well aware that life is not always a matter of such stark choices; that it does offer

possibilities of harmony and fruition if a middle ground can be created between the pampered airlessness of the Grange and the wuthering exposure of the Heights. In the second generation she moves from a tragic mode of fated beings to the mode of Shakespearean comedy, where problems are soluble, where distortion is not allowed to progress beyond the point of no return, where people who are naturally decent and loving can, with a little help from the author, modify the conditions of their lives to allow for a reconciliation of opposites, and move, accompanied by images of sunshine and fertility, towards maturity and happy marriage.

The first half of the novel is singularly non-judgemental; but the second half acknowledges that Cathy/Heathcliff had asked for too much in the name of selfhood and freedom. No human being can merge herself wholly with the life-force. There was ultimately something infantile in their outrageous demands. There must be constraints and modifications, out of respect for the conditions life itself imposes on human beings, out of respect for other people with their different natures, out of respect for one's own body's limitations.

Emily Brontë was fascinated by the effects of both heredity and environment. Linton Heathcliff, inheriting the worst qualities of both parents, seems to lack the capacity to become a viable human being. But even a good seed will produce a healthy plant only if it has space, soil and nourishment. The human equivalents of these are freedom (within reason), home and love. Hareton and the younger Cathy, though motherless and vulnerable are not lacking in vitality. Hareton's birth is accompanied by auspicious imagery of sunshine:

On the morning of a fine June day, my first bonny little nursling, and the last of the ancient Earnshaw stock, was born. We were busy with the hay in a far-away field, when the girl that usually brought our breakfasts came running, an hour too soon, across the meadow and up the lane, calling me as she ran. 'Oh, such a grand bairn!' she panted out. 'The finest lad that ever breathed!'. [104]

Here is ripening sun, fertility, nourishment, and a clear indication in the phrase 'bonny little nursling' that, despite the death of the mother, the child will not entirely lack maternal care. Ten chapters later, the same imagery reappears:

Still I thought I could detect in his physiognomy a mind owning better qualities than his father ever possessed. Good things lost amid a wilderness of weeds, to be sure, whose rankness far over-topped their

neglected growth; yet, notwithstanding, evidence of a wealthy soil that might yield luxuriant crops, under other and favourable circumstances. [231]

Cathy is not quite 'a second edition of the mother', but very near it. She combines the best features of either side:

She was the most winning thing that ever brought sunshine into a desolate house - a real beauty in face, with Earnshaws' handsome dark eyes, but the Lintons' fair skin, and small features, and yellow curling hair. Her spirit was high, though not rough, and qualified by a heart sensitive and lively to excess in its affections. That capacity for intense attachments reminded me of her mother; still she did not resemble her; for she could be soft and as a dove, and she had a gentle voice, and pensive expression. her anger was never furious, her love never fierce; it was deep and tender. [224]

Cathy 'grew like a larch', while Hareton suffered under Heathcliff's attempt to 'see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it'. It is not only the same wind, the same deprivation which had deformed Heathcliff's life; it is also virtually the same tree. Hareton is as much a second edition of Heathcliff as Cathy is of Catherine, though completely unrelated to him. Inheritance, therefore, cannot be the determining factor.

Emily Brontë clearly wishes to recapitulate the childhood of Heathcliff and Catherine with a few small but decisive adjustments. These adjustments are partly genetic, but mainly environmental. Heathcliff probably could have made Hareton as crooked as himself had he been able to keep up the pressure. What Heathcliff is denying Hareton is, in its largest sense, education. Without that, Hareton's natural intelligence becomes ineffective, so that Cathy asks 'Is he all he should be?... or is he simple - not right?' [254] Nelly rebukes her for despising him so unjustly: 'Had *you* been brought up in his circumstances, would you be less rude? He was as quick and intelligent a child as ever you were' [282].

Heathcliff is not the only source of the deprivation. The Heights are still exposed and wuthering. When Cathy as a child looked out from her nursery window to Penistone Crag, Nelly 'explained that they were bare masses of stone, with hardly enough earth in their clefts to nourish a stunted tree'. Joseph is still the malign human embodiment of the spirit of the Heights. Zillah has replaced Nelly. She acquiesces in the worst excesses of Heathcliff's regime.

Though education means for Emily Brontë anything which fosters the healthy growth of the whole personality, she does not despise formal learning. Hareton's illiteracy is presented as perhaps the most shameful manifestation of his degradation. His reclamation is effected by a combination of love and books. Books have made several earlier appearances in the novel. The first separation of Heathcliff and Catherine resulted from an incident involving the burning of books - the lumber thrust upon the children by Joseph which made Catherine resolve that she hated a good book. But primarily we have associated books with Thrushcross Grange with its well-stocked library in which Edgar had read, unaware, during Catherine's fatal illness. It is something to be spurned or destroyed or over-written if it cannot be seen to contribute directly to the life of wilful passion. At the Grange it offers a refuge and a retreat, an alternative, neatly-processed version of human life and nature which prepares the second Cathy very badly for her exposure to the reality at the Heights.

We picture Catherine as an outcast gazing through an open lattice towards the Heights while a bitter wind rustles the pages of an unread book Edgar has left on the sill for her. The younger Cathy's position at the Heights is exactly the contrary, exiled against her will from the Grange with its library of well-read, well-loved books, the books she has smuggled in burned or confiscated, escaping at last through the very lattice at which her mother's ghost is to beg admittance of Lockwood. Her home is the Grange, but it is not her heaven:

Mine was rocking in a rustling green tree, with a west wind blowing, and bright, white clouds flitting rapidly above; and not only larks, but throstles, and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pouring out music on every side, and the moors seen at a distance, broken into cool dusky dells, but close by, great swells of long grass undulating in waves to the breeze; and woods and sounding water, and the whole world awake and wild with joy. [280]

Home for Cathy is not a retreat, an artificially cultivated park surrounded by a high wall. It is a place to move out from to confront life in all its fullness. She is not attracted by the hot dreamy stillness and unbroken blue of Linton's heaven. In hers there is wind and cloud, but not storm. Her mother's moors are there, but 'at a distance'. Cathy's heaven is filled with birdsong. Her list of songbirds cannot fail to remind us of the birds which filled her mother's imagination shortly before her death - wild duck, pigeon, moorcock and lapwing, all birds commonly shot. The lapwing in particular dominates her

thoughts, a bird with a plaintive cry, feigning a broken wing to protect the young, helpless and exposed in their ground nest. Heathcliff once set a trap over such a nest so that the parents dare not come, and they found the nest 'full of little skeletons' the following winter. This image of the deserted nest, the vulnerability of the young, wanton cruelty, suffering and death, contains within it the central theme of the novel.

When books, towards the end of the novel, come to play a more positive role, it is not so much their content that matters as the fact that they symbolize a human faith in communication and social intercourse. The importance of the books is established long before Hareton is able actually to read them. The first sympathetic act of co-operation towards Cathy he makes, or is allowed to make, is when he reaches down some books in the dresser which are too high for her. From her cruel mockery of Hareton's efforts to teach himself to read she progresses gradually to the point of neatly wrapping a handsome book and tying it with riband as a peace offering, grudgingly accepted, together with the promise 'if he take it, I'll come and teach him to read it right' [345].

Love effects a remarkable transformation:

His honest, warm, and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance and degradation in which it had been bred; and Catherine's sincere commendations acted as a spur to his industry. His brightening mind brightened his features, and added spirit and nobility to their aspect. [351-2]

The human transformation is only the first of a series of transformations it generates. The process of the first generation where the house helped to distort its occupants is now reversed. Joseph's currant bushes are displaced to make room for an importation of plants from the Grange. Lockwood, on his next visit, is greeted with 'a fragrance of stocks and wall-flowers' and is amazed to find the gate unlocked and doors and lattices open. Nelly has also been 'transplanted' from the Grange, and fills the house with 'Fairy Annie's Wedding'.

Of course this transformation is made possible only by the collapse of Heathcliff. Cathy expresses her compassion for Linton in the words: 'He'll never let his friends be at ease, and he'll never be at ease himself!' [286] The idea of being at ease, like the idea of being at home, is central, and particularly relevant to Heathcliff. The opposite of ease is torment. It is torment Heathcliff expects to suffer for the rest of his life after the death of Catherine. The best he can hope for is the distraction of his revenge. And it is torment with which he

curses Catherine's ghost. It is the need for ease which, after eighteen years of torment, drives Heathcliff to Catherine's grave, to make preparation for their reunion in death. Heathcliff's heaven is six feet under ground.

In the final chapter each generation simultaneously reaches its heaven. Hareton and Cathy stand at the threshold of a life of rewarding fruitfulness. They are at ease with themselves, each other and the world. Their children will lack for nothing. But they feel it necessary to end the three-hundred-year Earnshaw occupation of Wuthering Heights. They must put a distance between themselves and unaccommodated nature; they commit themselves, like Shakespeare's late heroines, to a civilized living which neither capitulates to nature, nor cuts itself off from nature's sustaining sources of vitality.

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