FICTION AND REPETITION

Seven English Novels

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the manuscript and the Trustees of the late Miss E. A. Dugdale for allowing me to reproduce these words.

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3

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Repetition and the "Uncanny"

"I don't care—I will get in!"

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

LOCKWOOD'S "EJACULATION," as Brontë calls it, when he tries to get back into the Heights a second time, might be taken as an emblem of the situation of the critic of *Wuthering Heights.* This novel has been a strong enticement for readers. It exerts great power over its readers in its own violence, and in its presentation of striking psychological, sociological, and natural detail. It absorbs the reader, making him enwrapped or enrapt by the story. In spite of its many peculiarities of narrative technique and theme, it is, in its extreme vividness of circumstantial detail, a masterwork of "realistic" fiction. It obeys most of the conventions of Victorian realism, though no reader can miss the fact that it gives these conventions a twist. The reader is persuaded that the novel is an accurate picture of the material and sociological conditions of life in Yorkshire in the early nineteenth century. The novel to an unusual degree gives that pleasure appropriate to realistic fiction, the pleasure of yielding to the illusion that one is entering into a real world by way of the words on the page.

Another way the novel entices the reader is by presenting abundant material inviting interpretation. Like *Lord Jim,* it overtly invites the reader to believe that there is some secret explanation which will allow him to understand the novel wholly. Such an interpretation would integrate all the details perspicuously. It is in this way chiefly that the first, grounded form of repetition is present in this novel. The details, the reader is led to believe, are

the repetition of a hidden explanatory source. They are signs of it. By "materials inviting interpretation" I mean all those passages in the novel which present something evidently meaning more than what is simply present. The surface of "literal representation" is rippled throughout not only by overtly figurative language but also by things literally represented which at the same time are signs of something else or can be taken as such signs. Examples would be the three gravestones by which Lockwood stands at the end of the novel, or the "moths fluttering among the heath, and hare-bells" and the "soft wind breathing through the grass" as he stands there.[1] Such things are evidently emblematic, but of what? Passages of this sort lead the reader further and further into the novel in his attempt to get in, to reach the inside of the inside where a full retrospective explanation of all the enigmatic details will be possible. Nor is this feature of style intermittent. Once the reader catches sight of this wavering away from the literal in one detail, he becomes suspicious of every detail. He must reinterrogate the whole, like a detective of life or of literature on whom nothing is lost. The text itself, in its presentation of enigmas in the absence of patent totalizing explanation, turns him into such a detective.

The reader is also coaxed into taking the position of an interpreting spectator by the presentation in the novel of so many models of this activity. Lockwood, the timid and civilized outsider, who "shrunk icily into [himself], like a snail" (I, ch. 1) at the first sign of warm response demanding warmth from him, is the reader's delegate in the novel. He is that familiar feature of realistic fiction, the naive and unreliable narrator. Like the first readers of the novel, like modern readers, in spite of all the help they get from the critics, Lockwood is confronted with a mass of fascinating but confusing data which he must try to piece together to make a coherent pattern. I say "must" not only because this is what we as readers have been taught to do with a text, but also because there are so many examples in the novel, besides Lockwood, of texts with interpretation or commentary, or of the situation of someone who is attempting to make sense of events by narrating them.

Lockwood establishes the situation of many characters in the

novel and of its readers as interpreting witnesses in a passage near the start of the novel. He first boasts of his ability to understand Heathcliff instinctively, and then withdraws this to say he may be merely projecting his own nature: "I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling—to manifestations of mutual kindliness . . . —No, I'm running on too fast—I bestow my own attributes over liberally on him. Mr Heathcliff may have entirely dissimilar reasons for keeping his hand out of the way, when he meets a would be acquaintance, to those which actuate me" (I, ch. 1). The second chapter gives additional examples of Lockwood's ineptness as a reader of signs or as a gatherer of details into a pattern. He mistakes a heap of dead rabbits for cats, thinks Catherine Linton is Mrs. Heathcliff, and so on. His errors are a warning to the over-confident reader.

Lockwood is of course by no means the only interpreter or reader in the novel. Catherine's diary is described by Lockwood as "a pen and ink commentary—at least, the appearance of one—covering every morsel of blank that the printer had left" (I, ch. 3) in all the books of her "select" library. That library includes a Testament and the printed sermon of the Reverend Jabes Branderham. Catherine's diary is written in the margin of the latter. Branderham's sermon is an interpretation of a text in the New Testament. That text is itself an interpretation by Jesus of his injunction to forgiveness as well as a reading of certain Old Testament phrases which are echoed, just as Jesus's interpretation (or that of the Gospel-maker) comes accompanied, characteristically, by a parable. A parable is an interpretation by means of a story "thrown beside" that which is to be interpreted, as in fact all of *Wuthering Heights* might be said to be, since Lockwood's narration is adjacent to or at the margin of the enigmatic events he attempts to understand. Branderham's sermon is "interpreted" by Lockwood's dream of the battle in the chapel, in which "every man's hand [is] against his neighbor" (I, ch. 3). The sound of rapping in the dream, in turn, is rationally "read," when Lockwood wakes, as the fir-branch scratching against the window, like a pen scratching on paper. That scratching is reinterpreted once more, in Lockwood's next dream, as the sound of Catherine's ghost trying to get through the window. Lockwood, when he wakens again, and Heathcliff, when he comes running in response to Lockwood's yell, of course interpret the dream differently. Lockwood sees Heathcliff's frantic calling out the window to Catherine ("'Come in! come in!' he sobbed. 'Cathy, do come.'") as "a piece of superstition" (I, ch. 3).

These few pages present a sequence of interpretations and of interpretations within interpretations. This chain establishes, at the beginning, the situation of the reader as one of gradual penetration from text to text, just as Lockwood moves from room to room of the house, each inside the other, until he reaches the paneled bed inside Catherine's old room. There he finds himself confronting the Chinese boxes of texts within texts I have just described. The reader of *Wuthering Heights* must thread his or her way from one interpretative narrative to another—from Lockwood's narrative to Nelly's long retelling (which is also a rationalizing and conventionally religious explanation), to Isabella's letter, or to Catherine's dream of being thrown out of heaven, to her interpretation of this in the "I am Heathcliff" speech, and so on.

The novel keeps before the reader emblems of his own situation by showing so many characters besides Lockwood reading or learning to read.[2] The mystery Lockwood tries to understand is the "same" mystery as that which confronts the reader of the novel: How have things got the way they are at Wuthering Heights when Lockwood first goes there? What is the original cause lying behind this sad disappearance of civility? Why is it that the novel so resists satisfactory reasonable explanation? Lockwood, at the point of his deepest penetration spatially into the house and temporally back near the "beginning," encounters not an event or a presence open to his gaze, but Catherine's diary, another text to read. Catherine and Heathcliff, in their turns, are shown, in the diary, condemned to read two religious pamphlets, "The Helmet of Salvation" and "The Broad Way to Destruction," on the "awful Sunday" when they escape for their "scamper on the moors" under the diary-woman's cloak. Edgar Linton reads in his study while Catherine is willing her own death. He tries to keep her in life by enticing her to read: "A

book lay spread on the sill before her, and the scarcely perceptible wind fluttered its leaves at intervals. I believe Linton had laid it there, for she never endeavoured to divert herself with reading, or occupation of any kind" (II, ch. 1). Much later, the taming of Hareton is signaled by his patiently learning to read under the second Catherine's tutelage. Reading seems to be opposed to the wind on the moors, to death, and to sexual experience. Yet all the readers, in the novel and of the novel, can have as a means of access to these is a book, or some other mediating emblem.

Brontë's problem, once she had agreed with her sisters to try her hand at a novel, was to bend the vision she had been expressing more directly and privately in the Gondal poems to the conventions of nineteenth-century fiction, or to bend those conventions to accommodate the vision. Each technical device contributing to the celebrated complexity of narration in *Wuthering Heights* has its precedents in modern fictional practice from Cervantes down to novelists contemporary with Brontë. The time shifts, the multiplication of narrators and narrators within narrators, the double plot, the effacement of the author, and the absence of any trustworthy and knowing narrator who clearly speaks for the author are used strategically in *Wuthering Heights* to frustrate the expectations of a reader such as Lockwood. They are used to invite the reader to move step by step, by way of a gradual unveiling, room by room, into the "penetralium" of Brontë's strange vision of life.

The first who accepted this invitation was Brontë's sister Charlotte, or rather one should say almost the first, since the first reviews of *Wuthering Heights* precede Charlotte's essay. Charlotte Brontë's two prefaces, the "Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell" and the "Editor's Preface to the New [1850] Edition of *Wuthering Heights*," are often the first thing the modern reader of the novel encounters, with the exception of some twentieth-century critic's introductory essay. The novel comes to the reader wrapped in layers of prefatory material. It is difficult to be sure where the margin of the introductions ends and where the novel "proper" begins. Where does the reader step over the threshold into the novel itself? If the modern critical essay is definitely outside, a kind of alien presence within the covers of the book, Charlotte's prefaces would seem to have privileged access to the house. They seem to be the last layer before entrance, the inside outside, or perhaps the first region actually within, the outside inside, an entrance room. Perhaps they should be thought of as liminal, as the threshold itself. In any case, the language of Charlotte's prefaces is often continuous with Emily's language, for example in its use of figures of speech drawn from Yorkshire scenery, though whether or not Charlotte's language distorts Emily's language by misusing it is another question.

Charlotte's prefaces establish the rhetorical stance which has been characteristic of criticism of this novel. This stance involves dismissing most previous critics and claiming one has oneself solved the enigma, cracked the code. Charlotte's prefaces also establish the situation of a reader confronting an enigmatic text as the appropriate emblem for those both inside and outside the novel:

> Too often do reviewers remind us of the mob of Astrologers, Chaldeans, and Soothsayers gathered before the "writing on the wall," and unable to read the characters or make known the interpretation. We have a right to rejoice when a true seer comes at last, some man in whom is an excellent spirit, to whom have been given light, wisdom, and understanding; who can accurately read the "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" of an original mind (however unripe, however inefficiently cultured and partially expanded that mind may be); and who can say, with confidence, "This is the interpretation thereof." (P. 438)

Charlotte is here ostensibly praising the one previous review of which she approves, that by Sydney Dobell in the *Palladium* for September 1850. Dobell was persuaded that Charlotte Brontë had written *Wuthering Heights*. His review is by no means unintelligent, for example in what he says of Catherine Earnshaw: "in the very arms of her lover we dare not doubt her purity." In the end, however, Dobell only restates the enigma rather than solving it: "one looks back at the whole story as to a world of brilliant figures in an atmosphere of mist; shapes that come out upon the eye, and burn their colours into the brain, and depart into the

enveloping fog. It is the unformed writing of a giant's hand; the 'large utterance' of a baby god."[3] Charlotte, in spite of her praise of Dobell, means to present herself as the first genuine reader of this "unformed writing," the first true interpreter of the "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."

Charlotte's preface of 1850 confidently tells the reader, before he has even read the novel, what the text is to mean. The difficulty is that she presents in fact at least four incompatible readings, citing chapter and verse for each interpretation she proposes, without apparent awareness that they differ from one another. Her readings, moreover, function to throw the reader off the track. They attempt to shift the blame for the novel away from Emily by reducing its meaning to something Charlotte imagines Victorian readers will accept.

Emily Brontë was in *Wuthering Heights,* says Charlotte in the first reading she proposes, simply following nature. She was warbling her native woodnotes wild. The novel is not Emily speaking, but nature speaking through her. The novel "is rustic all through. It is moorish, and wild, and knotty as a root of heath. Nor was it natural that it should be otherwise; the author being herself a native and nursling of the moors" (p. 442).

This reading is immediately qualified and replaced by a new one. The true source of the novel, says Charlotte now, is the actual wild way of life of the peasants of Yorkshire. The novel is sociologically accurate. Emily is merely the innocent transcriber of fact: "She knew them; knew their ways, their language, their family histories; she could hear of them with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate . . . Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny, more powerful than sportive, found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine. Having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done" (pp. 442–443).

No, after all, this is not it either, Charlotte in effect says in proposing yet another reading. In fact Emily Brontë was a Christian. The novel is a religious allegory, with Heathcliff, for example, an incarnation of the Devil: "Heathcliff, indeed, stands unredeemed; never once swerving in his arrow-straight course to

perdition." His love for Catherine is "a passion such as might boil and glow in the bad essence of some evil genius; a fire that might form the tormented centre—the ever-suffering soul of a magnate of the infernal world: and by its quenchless and ceaseless ravage effect the execution of the decree which dooms him to carry Hell with him wherever he wanders" (pp. 443, 444).

No, says Charlotte finally, this is not the true explanation or excuse. In fact, whatever the nature of the work, Emily is not to be blamed for it because she was not responsible for it. She was the passive medium through which something or someone else spoke, just as, for Rimbaud, in "les lettres du voyant," the metal is not to blame if it finds itself a trumpet ("Je est un autre."); and just as the speaker in some of Brontë's poems is subject to a "God of visions" who speaks through her without her volition. "But this, I know," says Charlotte; "the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master—something that at times strangely wills and works for itself . . . Be the work grim or glorious, dread or divine, you have little choice left but quiescent adoption. As for you—the nominal artist—your share in it has been to work passively under dictates you neither delivered nor could question—that would not be uttered at your prayer, nor suppressed nor changed at your caprice" (p. 444).

Charlotte's prefaces, with their multiple interpretations, each based on some aspect of the actual text of *Wuthering Heights,* establish a program for all the hundreds of essays and books on *Wuthering Heights* which were to follow. They do this both in the sense that most readings could be lined up under one or another of Charlotte's four readings. They do it also in the sense that all these books and essays are also empirically based on the text. Each tends to be plausible, but demonstrably partial, though each also, like Charlotte's prefaces, tends to be presented with confident certainty. Each critic presents himself as the Daniel who can at last decipher the writing on the wall. Though the many essays on the novel do not exist on a common axis of judgment, that is, though they do not even raise the same questions about the novel, much less give the same answers, each critic tends to claim that he has found something of importance which will indicate the right way to read the novel as a whole.

There have been explanations of *Wuthering Heights* in terms of its relation to the motif of the fair-haired girl and the dark-haired boy in the Gondal poems; or by way of the motifs of doors and windows in the novel (Dorothy Van Ghent); or in terms of the symmetry of the family relations in the novel or of Brontë's accurate knowledge of the laws of private property in Yorkshire (C. P. Sanger); or in more or less orthodox and schematic Freudian terms, as a thinly disguised sexual drama displaced and condensed (Thomas Moser); or as the dramatization of a conflict between two cosmological forces, storm and calm (Lord David Cecil); or as a moral story of the futility of grand passion (Mark Schorer); or as a fictional dramatization of Brontë's religious vision (J. H. Miller); or as a dramatization of the relation between sexuality and death, as "l'approbation de la vie jusqu'à la mort," the approbation of life all the way to death (Georges Bataille); or as the occult dramatization of Brontë's lesbian passion for her dead sister, Maria, with Brontë as Heathcliff (Camille Paglia); or as an overdetermined semiotic structure which is irreducibly ambiguous by reason of its excess of signs (Frank Kermode); or as Brontë's effacement of nature in order to make way for specifically female imaginative patterns (Margaret Homans); or as the expression of a multitude of incompatible "partial selves" dispersed among the various characters, thereby breaking down the concept of the unitary self (Leo Bersani), or in more or less sophisticated Marxist terms (David Wilson, Arnold Kettle, Terry Eagleton).[4]

This list could be extended. The literature on *Wuthering Heights* is abundant and its incoherence striking. Even more than some other great works of literature this novel seems to have an inexhaustible power to call forth commentary and more commentary. All literary criticism tends to be the presentation of what claims to be the definitive rational explanation of the text in question. The criticism of *Wuthering Heights* is characterized by the unusual degree of incoherence among the various explanations and by the way each takes some one element in the novel and extrapolates it toward a total explanation. The essays tend not to build on one another according to some ideal of progressive elucidation. Each is exclusive.

All these interpretations are, I believe, wrong. This is not because each does not illuminate something in *Wuthering Heights*. Each brings something to light, even though it covers something else up in the act of doing so. The essays by Bataille, Kermode, Bersani, and Homans seem to me especially to cast light, but each could nevertheless be shown to be partial. No doubt my essay too will be open to the charge that it attempts to close off the novel by explaining it, even though that explanation takes the form of an attempted reasonable formulation of its unreason.

My argument is not that criticism is a free-for-all in which one reading is as good as another. No doubt there would be large areas of agreement among competent readers even of this manifestly controversial novel. It is possible to present a reading of *Wuthering Heights* which is demonstrably wrong, not even partially right, though I believe all the readings listed above are in one way or another partially right. They are right because they arise from responses determined by the text. The error lies in the assumption that the meaning is going to be single, unified, and logically coherent. My argument is that the best readings will be the ones which best account for the heterogeneity of the text, its presentation of a definite group of possible meanings which are systematically interconnected, determined by the text, but logically incompatible. The clear and rational expression of such a system of meanings is difficult, perhaps impossible. The fault of premature closure is intrinsic to criticism. The essays on *Wuthering Heights* I have cited seem to me insufficient, not because what they say is demonstrably mistaken, but rather because there is an error in the assumption that there *is* a single secret truth about *Wuthering Heights*. This secret truth would be something formulable as a univocal principle of explanation which would account for everything in the novel. The secret truth about *Wuthering Heights*, rather, is that there is no secret truth which criticism might formulate in this way. No hidden identifiable ordering principle which will account for everything stands at the head of the chain or at the back of the back. Any formulation of such a principle is visibly reductive. It leaves something important still unaccounted for. This is a remnant of opacity which keeps the interpreter dissatisfied, the novel still open, the process of inter-

pretation still able to continue. One form or another of this openness may characterize all works of literature, but, as I suggested in Chapter 1, this resistance to a single definitive reading takes different forms in different works. In *Wuthering Heights* this special form is the invitation to believe that there is a supernatural transcendent "cause" for all events, while certain identification of this cause, or even assurance of its existence, is impossible.

Wuthering Heights produces its effect on its reader through the way it is made up of repetitions of the same in the other which permanently resist rational reduction to some satisfying principle of explanation. The reader has the experience, in struggling to understand the novel, that a certain number of the elements which present themselves for explanation can be reduced to order. This act of interpretation always leaves something over, something just at the edge of the circle of theoretical vision which that vision does not encompass. This something left out is clearly a significant detail. There are always in fact a group of such significant details which have been left out of any reduction to order. The text is over-rich.

This resistance to theoretical domination, both in the sense of clear-seeing and in the sense of conceptual formulation, is not accidental, nor is it without significance. It is not a result of Brontë's inexperience or of the fact that she overloaded her novel with elements which can be taken as having meaning beyond their realistic references. The novel is not incoherent, confused, or flawed. It is a triumph of the novelist's art. It uses the full resources of that art against the normal assumptions about character and about human life which are built into the conventions of realistic fiction. The difficulties of interpreting *Wuthering Heights* and the superabundance of possible (and actual) interpretations do not mean that the reader is free to make the novel mean anything he wants to make it mean. The fact that no demonstrable single meaning or principle of meaningfulness can be identified does not mean that all meanings are equally good. Each good reader of *Wuthering Heights* is subject to the text, coerced by it. The best readings, it may be, are those, like Charlotte Brontë's, which repeat in their own alogic the text's failure to satisfy the

mind's desire for logical order with a demonstrable base. *Wuthering Heights* incorporates the reader in the process of understanding which the text mimes in Lockwood's narration. It forces him to repeat in his own way an effort of understanding that the text expresses, and to repeat also the baffling of that effort.

Wuthering Heights presents an emblem for this experience of the reader in a passage describing Lockwood's reaction to Nelly's proposal to skip rapidly over three years in her narration: "No, no," says Lockwood. "I'll allow nothing of the sort! Are you acquainted with the mood of mind in which, if you were seated alone, and the cat licking its kitten on the rug before you, you would watch the operation so intently that puss's neglect of one ear would put you seriously out of temper?" (I, ch. 7). This, I take it, is an oblique warning to the reader. Unless he reads in the "mood of mind" here described he is likely to miss something of importance. Every detail counts in this novel. Only an interpretation which accounts for each item and puts it in relation to the whole will be at once specific enough and total enough. The reader must be like a cat who licks her kitten all over, not missing a single spot of fur, or rather he must be like the watcher of such an operation, following every detail of the multiple narration, assuming that every minute bit counts, constantly on the watch for anything left out. There is always, however, a neglected ear, or one ear too many.

Nelly describes Lockwood's anxiety about the neglected ear as "a terribly lazy mood," to which Lockwood replies: "On the contrary, a tiresomely active one. It is mine, at present, and, therefore, continue minutely. I perceive that people in these regions acquire over people in towns the value that a spider in a dungeon does over a spider in a cottage, to their various occupants" (I, ch. 7). The kitten's neglected ear, like the spider in the dungeon, is not a "frivolous external thing." It is a small thing on the surface which bears relation to hidden things in the depths. This opposition between surface and depth is suggested when Lockwood says people at Wuthering Heights "live more in earnest, more in themselves" (I, ch. 7). To live in oneself is to be self-contained. This is opposed to living in terms of surface change and frivolous external things. Where people live in

themselves, external things are not superficial or frivolous. They are rather the only signs outsiders have of the secret depths.

Lockwood next provides a final figure for his situation and for that of the reader. This is a somewhat peculiar metaphor of eating. It defines the reader's situation in terms of a possible filling or the possible satisfaction of an appetite. It also puts before the reader the opposition between a single thing which stands for a whole, and therefore may be deeply satisfying, and a multitude of details which make a superficial, finally unsatisfying, whole. Rural life as against urban life, the spider in the dungeon as against the spider in the cottage, are compared in what might be called a gustatory parable: "one state resembles setting a hungry man down to a single dish on which he may concentrate his entire appetite, and do it justice—the other, introducing him to a table laid out by French cooks; he can perhaps extract as much enjoyment from the whole, but each part is a mere atom in his regard and remembrance" (I, ch. 7).

How can the reader interpret this parable? Is it a hunger for "experience," or for "knowledge," and if for one or the other, experience of what, knowledge of what? There is in any case a clear opposition between, on the one hand, a relatively sparse field of experience which allows an intense concentration on what is there to be assimilated, and, on the other hand, a diffuse multitude of things to taste which distracts attention and makes it superficial. The intense concentration leads to satisfaction, a filling of the mind now and in memory. It seems as if the single object intensely regarded leads beyond itself, stands for more than itself. It perhaps stands for the whole. The diffuse multitude reduces each item to something which is not attended to in itself. It therefore neither leads beyond itself nor sticks in the memory as a means of reaching a whole. Each part is a mere atom in the beholder's regard and remembrance.

This parable is a recipe for how to read *Wuthering Heights.* Each passage must be concentrated upon with the most intense effort of the interpreting mind, as though it were the only dish on the table. Each detail must be taken as a synecdoche, as a clue to the whole—as I have taken this detail.

Take, for example the following passages:

> The ledge, where I placed my candle, had a few mildewed books piled up in one corner; and it was covered with writing scratched on the paint. This writing, however, was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small—*Catherine Earnshaw,* here and there varied to *Catherine Heathcliff,* and then again to *Catherine Linton.*
>
> In vapid listlessness I leant my head against the window, and continued spelling over Catherine Earnshaw—Heathcliff—Linton, till my eyes closed; but they had not rested five minutes when a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres—the air swarmed with Catherines. (I, ch. 3)

> I had remarked on one side of the road, at intervals of six or seven yards, a line of upright stones, continued through the whole length of the barren: these were erected, and daubed with lime on purpose to serve as guides in the dark, and also when a fall, like the present, confounded the deep swamps on either hand with the firmer path: but, excepting a dirty dot pointing up here and there, all traces of their existence had vanished; and my companion found it necessary to warn me frequently to steer to the right or left, when I imagined I was following, correctly, the windings of the road. (I, ch. 3)

> I sought, and soon discovered, the three head-stones on the slope next the moor—the middle one grey, and half buried in the heath—Edgar Linton's only harmonized by the turf, and moss creeping up its foot—Heathcliff's still bare.
>
> I lingered round 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. (II, ch. 20)

These three texts are similar, but this similarity is, in part at least, the fact that each is unique in the structural model it presents the reader. This uniqueness makes each incommensurate with any of the others. Each is, in its surface texture as language, "realistic." It is a description of natural or manmade objects which is physically and sociologically plausible. Such things are likely to have existed in Yorkshire around 1800. All three pas-

sages are filtered through the mind and through the language of the narrator. In all three, as it happens, this is the mind of the primary narrator of the novel, Lockwood. As always in such cases, the reader must interrogate the passages for possible irony. This irony potentially arises from discrepancies between what Lockwood knows or what he makes out of what he sees, and what the author knew and made, or what the reader can make out of the passages as he interprets the handwriting on the wall. All of the passages possibly mean more than their referential or historical meaning. They may be signs or clues to something beyond themselves. This possibility is opened up in the fissure between what Lockwood apparently knows or intends to say, and what the author may have known or intended to say. None of these passages, nor any of the many other "similar" passages which punctuate the novel, is given the definitive closure of a final interpretation within the text of the novel. In fact they are not interpreted at all. They are just given. The handwriting on the wall is not read within the novel. The reader must read it for himself.

When he does so, he finds that each such passage seems to ask to be taken as an emblem of the whole novel. Each is implicitly an emblem of the structure of the novel as a whole and of the way that whole signifies something beyond itself which controls its meaning as a whole. Each such passage leads to a different formulation of the structure of the whole. Each is exclusive and incongruous with the others. It seems to have an imperialistic will to power over the others, as if it wished to bend them to its own shape. It expands to make its own special reading of the whole, just as each of Charlotte Brontë's four readings of the novel do, or just as each of the hundreds of readings which have followed hers have tended to do. Each such reading implicitly excludes other passages which do not fit, or distorts them, twisting them to its own pattern.

The first passage would lead to an interpretation of the novel in terms of the permutation of given names and family names. This reading would go by way of the network of kinship relations in symmetrical pedigree and by way of the theme of reading. The critic might note that there do not seem to be enough names to go around in this novel. Relations of similarity and difference among the characters are indicated by the way several hold the names also held by others or a combination of names held by others. An example is "Linton Heathcliff," the name of the son of Heathcliff and Isabella. His name is an oxymoron, combining names from the two incompatible families. How can a name be "proper" to a character and indicate his individuality if it is also held by others? Each character in *Wuthering Heights* seems to be an element in a system, defined by his or her place in the system, rather than a separate, unique person. The whole novel, such a critic might say, not only the destiny of the first Catherine but also that of the second Catherine, as well as the relation of the second story to the first, is given in emblem in Lockwood's encounter with the names scratched on the windowsill and in his dream of an air swarming with Catherines. The passage is a momentary emblem for the whole. That whole, as it unfolds, is the narrative of the meaning of the emblem.

The second passage offers a model for a somewhat different form of totalization. The passage is a "realistic" description of a country road in Yorkshire after a heavy snow. If the reader follows Lockwood's example and considers every detail as possibly a clue to the whole and to what stands behind or beneath the whole, then the passage suggests that the novel is made of discrete units which follow one another in a series with spaces between. The reader's business is to draw lines between the units. He must make a pattern, like the child's game in which a duck or a rabbit is magically drawn by tracing lines between numbered dots. In this case, the line makes a road which leads the reader from here to there, taking him deeper and deeper across country to a destination, away from danger and into safety. The only difficulty is that some of the dots are missing or invisible. The reader must, like Lockwood, extrapolate. He must make the road to safety by putting in correctly the missing elements.

This operation is a dangerous one. If the reader makes a mistake, guesses wrong, hypothesizes a guidepost where there is none, he will be led astray into the bog. This process of hypothetical interpretation, projecting a thesis or ground plan where there is none, where it is faint or missing, hypotrophied, is risky for the interpreter. He must engage in the activity Immanuel

Kant, following rhetorical tradition, calls "hypotyposis," the sketching out of a ground plan where there is no secure indication of which line to follow.[5] Such an operation gives figurative names to what has no literal or proper name. The reader's safety somehow depends on getting it right. There is a good chance of getting it wrong, or perhaps there is no secure foundation for deciding between right and wrong.

Exactly how the activity of reading *Wuthering Heights* concerns the reader remains to be seen. It is clear that Lockwood, the reader's vicarious representative in the novel, often gets it wrong. If he is the reader's representative in the novel, he is an example of how not to do it, of how not to do things with signs. His relation to Heathcliff in the second passage cited above, as he is guided toward a goal he could not reach himself, may be taken to figure the relation between Lockwood and Heathcliff in the novel as a whole. That relation, in turn, inscribes within the text a figure of the reader's relation to the violent and inscrutable events he must try to interpret. If Lockwood is the outsider, seeing events from a distance, Heathcliff is the male character who is most involved and who ultimately dies into the heart of violence and mystery. He returns whence he has come, leaving Lockwood behind as survivor to tell the tale. Heathcliff may be a trustworthy guide, but he is also a dangerous one to follow all the way where he is going.

The third passage quoted makes explicit the situation of the survivor. This too may be taken as emblematic of the whole text in relation to what lies behind the events it narrates, or as emblematic of the narrator's relation to the story he tells, or as a figure of the reader's relation to the story told. Just as many of Wordsworth's poems, "The Boy of Winander," for example, or the Matthew poems, or "The Ruined Cottage," are epitaphs spoken by a survivor who stands by a tombstone musing on the life and death of the one who is gone, so all of *Wuthering Heights* may be thought of as a memorial narration pieced together by Lockwood from what he can learn. The first Catherine is already dead when Lockwood arrives at the Heights. Heathcliff is still alive as the anguished survivor whose "life is in the grave." By the end of the novel Heathcliff has followed Catherine into death. At the end, Lockwood stands by three graves. These, like the three versions of Catherine's name in my first emblematic text, can stand in their configuration for the story of the first Catherine: Catherine Earnshaw in the middle torn by her love for Edgar Linton, in one direction, and for Heathcliff, in the other, destroying their lives in this double love and being destroyed by it.

A gravestone is the sign of an absence. Throughout the whole novel Lockwood confronts nothing but such signs. His narration is a retrospective reconstruction by means of them. This would be true of all novels told in the past tense about characters who are dead when the narration begins, but the various churchyard scenes in *Wuthering Heights,* for example the scene in which Heathcliff opens Catherine's grave and coffin, keep before the reader the question of whether the dead still somewhere live on beyond the grave. The naiveté of Lockwood, even at the end of the novel, is imaged in his inability to imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in the quiet earth. The evidence for the fact that this earth is unquiet, the place of some unnamable tumultuous hidden life, is there before his eyes in the moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells. It is there in the soft wind breathing through the grass, like some obscurely vital creature. These are figures for what can only manifest itself indirectly. If Lockwood survives the death of the protagonists and tells their story, it may be this survival which cuts him off from any understanding of death. The end of the novel reiterates the ironic discrepancy between what Lockwood knows and what he unwittingly gives the reader evidence for knowing.

Each of these three passages can be taken in one way or another as an emblem of the structure of the whole narration and of the relation of that whole to the enigmatic ground on which it rests, the origin from which it comes and the goal to which it returns. Beginning with any one as starting place the reader or critic can move out to interpret the whole novel in the terms it provides. Each appropriates other details and bends them around itself. Each leads to a different total design. Each such design is incompatible with the others. Each implicitly claims to be a center around which all the other details can be organized.

Different as are the several schematic paradigms for the whole,

they share certain features. Each is a figure without a visible referent. Whatever emblem is chosen as center turns out to be not at the center but at the periphery. It is in fact an emblem for the impossibility of reaching the center. Each leads to a multitude of other similar details in the novel. Each such sequence is a repetitive structure, like the echoes from one to another of the lives of the two Catherines, or like the narrators within narrators in Lockwood's telling, or like the rooms inside rooms he encounters at the Heights. Each appearance is the sign of something absent, something earlier, or later, or further in. Each detail is in one way or another a track to be followed. It is a trace which asks to be retraced so that the something missing may be recovered.

The celebrated circumstantiality of *Wuthering Heights* is the circumstantiality of this constant encounter with new signs. The reader of *Wuthering Heights,* like the narrator, is led deeper and deeper into the text by the expectation that sooner or later the last veil will be removed. He will then find himself face to face not with the emblem of something missing but with the right real thing at last. This will be truly original, the bona fide starting place. It will therefore be possessed of full explanatory power over the whole network of signs which it has generated and which it controls, giving each sign its deferred meaning. Through this labyrinth of linkages the reader has to thread his way. He is led from one to another in the expectation of reaching a goal, as Heathcliff leads Lockwood from marker to marker down that snowcovered road.

A further feature of this web of signs behind signs is that they tend to be presented in paired oppositions. Each element of these pairs is not so much the opposite of its mate as another form of it. It is a differentiated form, born of some division within the same, as the different Catherines in the passage discussed above are forms of the same Catherine; or as Heathcliff and Lockwood are similar in their exclusion from the place where Catherine is, as well as opposite in temperament, sexual power, and power of volition; or as Cathy says of Heathcliff not that he is her opposite, other than she is, but that "He's more myself than I am"; or as, in the passage describing the three graves, Edgar on one side of Catherine or Heathcliff on the other each represents one aspect of her double nature. The novel everywhere organizes itself according to such patterns of sameness and difference, as in the opposition between stormy weather and calm weather; or between the roughness of the Heights and the civilized restraint of Thrushcross Grange, or between inside and outside, domestic interior and wild nature outside, beyond the window or over the wall; or between the stories of the two Catherines, or between those who read and those who scorn books as weak intermediaries, or between people of strong will like Heathcliff, who is "a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man" (I, ch. 10) and people of weak will like Lockwood.

These apparently clear oppositions have two further properties. The reader is nowhere given access to the generative unity from which the pairs are derived. The reader never sees directly, for example, the moment in childhood when Cathy and Heathcliff slept in the same bed and were joined in a union which was prior to sexual differentiation. This union was prior to any sense of separate selfhood, prior even to language, figurative or conceptual, which might express that union. As soon as Cathy can say, "I *am* Heathcliff," or "My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath" (I, ch. 9), they are already divided. This division has always already occurred as soon as there is consciousness and the possibility of retrospective storytelling. Storytelling is always after the fact, and it is always constructed over a loss. What is lost in the case of *Wuthering Heights* is the "origin" which would explain everything.

Another characteristic of the oppositions follows from this loss of the explanatory source. The separated pairs, differentiations of the same rather than true opposites, have a tendency to divide further, and then subdivide again, endlessly proliferating into various nuances and subsets. Once the "primal" division has occurred, and for Brontë as soon as there is a story to tell it has already occurred, there seems to be no stopping a further division. Once this primitive cell is self-divided it divides and subdivides perpetually in an effort to achieve reunification which only multiplies it in new further-divided life cells.

The sequence of generations in *Wuthering Heights,* for example, began long before the three presented in the novel. The name

Hareton Earnshaw and the date 1500 carved in stone above the front door of the Heights testify to that. The marriage of the second Cathy and the new Hareton at the end of the novel will initiate a new generation. The deaths of Heathcliff, Edgar Linton, and the first Catherine have by no means put a stop to the reproductive power of the two families. This force finds its analogue in the power of the story to reproduce itself. It is told over and over by the sequence of narrators, and it is reproduced again in each critical essay, or each time it is followed through by a new reader. The words on the page act like a genetic pattern able to program the minds of those who encounter it. It induces them to take, for a time at least, the pattern of the experience of those long-dead imaginary protagonists. The emblem for this might be that concluding scene in which Lockwood stands by the triple grave prolonging the lives of Edgar, Catherine, and Heathcliff by his meditation on the names inscribed on their tombstones. In this act and in the narration generated by it he prevents them from dying wholly. Many Victorian novels stress this double form of repetitive extension beyond the deaths of the protagonists, for example *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* the topic of Chapter 4. *Wuthering Heights* gives this familiar pattern a special form by relating it to the question of whether Cathy and Heathcliff are to be thought of as surviving their deaths or whether they survive only in the narrations of those who have survived them.

Any of the oppositions which may be taken as a means of interpreting *Wuthering Heights* has this property of reproducing itself in proliferating divisions and subdivisions. Just as, for example, the name of the maiden Catherine caught between her two possible married names becomes an air "swarming" with Catherines, so the neat opposition within Christianity between good and evil, salvation and damnation, "The Helmet of Salvation" and "The Broad Way to Destruction," becomes the separation of sins into seven distinctions, and this in turn, in the Reverend Jabes Branderham's sermon, becomes a monstrous division and subdivision of sins, a dividing of the text, as Protestantism has multiplied sects and set each man's hand against his neighbor. Two becomes seven becomes seventy times seven, in a grotesque parody of a sermon: "he preached—good God! what a sermon: divided into *four hundred and ninety* parts—each fully equal to an ordinary address from the pulpit—and each discussing a separate sin!" (I, ch. 3).

Wuthering Heights is perhaps best read by taking one or more of its emblematic oppositions as an interpretative hypothesis and pushing it to the point where the initial distinction no longer clearly holds. Only by this following of a track as far as possible, until it peters out into the trackless snow, can the reader get inside this strange text and begin to understand why he cannot ever lucidly understand it or ever have rational mastery over it. The limitation of many critical essays on the novel lies not in any error in the initial interpretative hypothesis (that storm and calm are opposed in the novel, or that windows, walls, and doors are used emblematically, for example). The limitation lies rather in the failure to push the given schematic hypothesis far enough. It must be pushed to the point where it fails to hypothecate the full accounting for the novel which is demanded in the critical contract. At that point the mortgage on *Wuthering Heights* is foreclosed and the reader, it may be, confronts his mortality as reader, that vanishing of lucid understanding which his critical reason, the reason that divides and discriminates in order to master, has done everything to evade.

Why is it that, with this novel, the logical mind so conspicuously fails? What does this have to do with the gage or promissory note that both holds off death and risks death, puts one's death on the line, as a kind of mortgage insurance? Why is it that an interpretative origin, *logos* in the sense of ground, measure, chief word, or accounting reason, cannot be identified for *Wuthering Heights?* If such an origin could be found, all obscurity could be cleared up. Everything could be brought out in the open where it might be clearly seen, added up, paid off, and evened out. What forbids this accounting?

An economic metaphor of course pervades *Wuthering Heights.* Heathcliff uses his mysteriously acquired wealth to take possession of the Heights and the Grange. He takes possession of them because each thing and person in each household reminds him of Catherine. By appropriating all and then destroying them, he can take revenge on the enemies who have stood between him

and Catherine. At the same time he can reach Catherine through them, in their demolition. This is a violently incarnated way to experience a paradoxical logic of signs:

> "What is not connected with her to me? and what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day, I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men and women—my own features mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her!" (II, ch. 19)

In this strange numismatics, each thing is stamped with the same image, the face of the person who is Queen to Heathcliff's Jack. In this novel no man is King or Ace. The Queen's countenance makes everything have value and pass current. There are problems with this coinage, however. For one thing, no one of these stamped images has a distinct number which indicates its worth in relation to other images or its exchange value in relation to goods or services. No orderly economic system of substitution and circulation is set up by this mint. Neither Heathcliff, nor Lockwood, nor the reader can buy anything with this money. There is, in fact, nothing left to buy, since there is nothing which is not coin stamped with the same image, of infinite value and so of no value.

The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda. Memoranda of what? Here is the second problem with this coinage. Each thing stands not for the presence of Catherine as the substance behind the coin, the standard guaranteeing its value, the thing both outside the money system and dispersed everywhere in delegated form within it. In this case, each thing stands rather for the absence of Catherine. All things are memoranda, written or inscribed memorials, like a note I write myself to remind me of something. They are memoranda that she did exist and that Heathcliff has lost her, that she is dead, vanished from the face of the earth. Everything in the world is a sign indicating Catherine, but also indicating, by its existence, his failure to possess her and

the fact that she is dead. Each sign is both an avenue to the desired unity with her and also the barrier standing in the way of it.

From this follows the double bind of Heathcliff's relation to Hareton and to the second Cathy, both of whom he detests and loves because they look so much like the first Catherine. From this also follows the double bind of his relation to the Heights and to the Grange. He has taken much trouble to obtain them, manipulating the property laws of Yorkshire to do this, as C. P. Sanger has shown. If he possesses the two households, he can take possession of Catherine through them, since they are her property, stamped with her image, proper to her, as much hers as her proper name. But to possess her image, like appropriating her by uttering her name ("Cathy, do come. Oh do—*once* more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me *this* time—Catherine, at last!"; (I, ch. 3), is to possess only a sign for her, not Catherine herself. He must therefore destroy the things he has made his own in order to reach what they signify. He must destroy Hareton and the second Cathy, as well as the two houses. If he destroys them, however, he will of course reach not Catherine but her absence, the vacancy which stands behind every sign that she once existed and that he has lost her. In the same way, his goal of "dissolving with her, and being more happy still!" (II, ch. 15) is blocked, in the coffin-opening scene, by the vision of Catherine's spirit not in the grave, "not under me, but on the earth" (II, ch. 15). To merge with her body, like merging with his new possessions by destroying them, is to join only a sign and to destroy its function as sign. When Heathcliff recognizes this, he abandons his goal of destroying the Heights and the Grange. This leaves him as far from his goal as ever. He will be an infinite distance from it as long as he is alive:

> "It is a poor conclusion, is it not," he observed, having brooded a while on the scene he had just witnessed [the second Catherine and Hareton reading a book together, a sign of their growing intimacy]. "An absurd termination to my violent exertions? I get levers and mattocks to demolish the two houses, and train myself to be capable of working like Hercules, and when everything is ready, and in my power, I find the will to lift a slate off either roof

> has vanished! My old enemies have not beaten me—now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives—I could do it; and none could hinder me—But where is the use? I don't care for striking, I can't take the trouble to raise my hand! . . . I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing. (II, ch. 19)

"But where is the use?" This extraordinary passage defines a complex economy of substitution and exchange which has broken down in an infinite inflation which has made the money worthless. The manipulation of the system is therefore of no use. Each element in this system is now without value either in relation to other elements it "represents" or in relation to what it stands for outside the system, since the standard behind the system has vanished, leaving it supported by nothing. It is like a paper currency which has no gold or silver, or no more credit, behind it, and so becomes again mere paper. The two houses and their land have represented Heathcliff's enemies. His enemies are those who stood between him and Catherine, forbidding their union. To destroy the houses is to destroy the enemies. His enemies, Hindley, Earnshaw, and Edgar Linton, are now dead. He must get at them through their living representatives, Hareton and the second Catherine, the scions of the two families, last of each stock. What these have always stood for is Catherine herself. To put this more exactly, they have stood for the infinite distance between Heathcliff and Catherine. This distance always exists as long as there are still signs for her. Everything resembles her, even Heathcliff's own features, but this resemblance is the sign that she is gone. To leave these signs in existence is to be tormented by the absence they all point to, but of which they also block the filling. To destroy them is to be left with nothing, not even with any signs of the fact that Cathy once existed and that he has lost her. There is no "use" in either destroying or not destroying. Within that situation Heathcliff remains poised, destroying himself in the tension of it, so that breathing or doing any slightest act is for him "like bending back a stiff spring" (II, ch. 19).

The critic's conceptual or figurative scheme of interpretation,

including my own here, is up against the same blank wall as the totalizing emblems within the novel, or up against the same impasse that blocks Heathcliff's enterprise of reaching Cathy by taking possession of everything that carries her image and then destroying it. If "something" is incompatible with any sign, if it cannot be seen, signified, or theorized about, it is, in our tradition, no "thing." It is nothing. The trace of such an absence therefore retraces nothing. It can refer only to another trace, in that relation of incongruity which leads the reader of *Wuthering Heights* from one such emblematic design to another. Each passage stands for another passage, in the way Branderham's sermon, as I have said, is a commentary on Jesus's words, themselves a commentary on an Old Testament passage, and so on. Such a movement is a constant passage from one place to another without ever finding the original literal text of which the others are all figures. This missing center is the head referent which would still the wandering movement from emblem to emblem, from story to story, from generation to generation, from Catherine to Catherine, from Hareton to Hareton, from narrator to narrator. There is no way to see or name this head referent because it cannot exist as present event, as a past which once was present, or as a future which will be present. It is something which has always already occurred and been forgotten. It has become immemorial, remembered only veiled in figure, however far back one goes. In the other temporal direction, it is always about to occur, as an end which never quite comes, or when it comes comes to another, leaving only another dead sign, like the corpse of Heathcliff at the end of the novel, with its "frightful, life-like gaze of exultation" (II, ch. 20). "It" leaps suddenly from the always not yet of the future to the always already of the unremembered past. This loss leaves the theorizing spectator once more standing in meditation by a grave reading an epitaph, impelled again to tell another story, which will once more fail to bring the explanatory cause into the open. Each emblematic passage in the novel is both a seeming avenue to the desired unity and also a barrier forbidding access to it. Each means the death of experience, of consciousness, of seeing, and of theory by naming the "state" or "place" that lies always outside the words

of the novel and therefore can never be experienced as such, and at the same time, in itself and in its intrinsic tendency to repeat itself, each emblematic passage holds off that death.

This "death" may be called an "it" in order not to prejudge the question of whether it is a thing, a place, a person, a state, a relationship, or a supernatural being. The various narrations and emblematic schemas of the novel presuppose an original state of unity. This ghostly glimpse is a projection outward of a oneness from a state of twoness within. This duality is within the self, within the relation of the self to another, within nature, within society, and within language. The sense that there must at some time have been an original state of unity is generated by the state of division as a haunting insight, always at the corner or at the blind center of vision, where sight fails. This insight can never be adequately expressed in language or in other signs, nor can it be "experienced directly," since experience, language, and signs exist only in one thing set against another, one thing divided from another. The insight nevertheless exists for us only in language. The sense of "something missing" is an effect of the text itself, and of the critical texts which add themselves to the primary text. This means it may be a performative effect of language, not a referential object of language. The language of narration in *Wuthering Heights* is this originating performative enacted by Lockwood, Nelly, and the rest. This narrative creates both the intuition of unitary origin and the clues, in the unresolvable heterogeneity of the narration, to the fact that the origin may be an effect of language, not some preexisting state or some "place" in or out of the world. The illusion is created by figures of one sort or another—substitutions, equivalences, representative displacements, synecdoches, emblematic invitations to totalization. The narrative sequence, in its failure ever to become transparent, in the incongruities of its not-quite-matching repetitions, demonstrates the inadequacy of any one of those figures.

Wuthering Heights, as I have said, is an example of a special form of repetition in realistic fiction. This form is controlled by the invitation to believe that some invisible or transcendent cause, some origin, end, or underlying ground, would explain all the enigmatic incongruities of what is visible. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is another example of such a repetitive form, as is *Lord Jim,* discussed in Chapter 2. It is by no means the case that all realistic fiction takes this form, as my other examples will show. The special form of "undecidability" in *Wuthering Heights* or in other narratives in which repetition takes this form lies in the impossibility, in principle, of determining whether there is some extralinguistic explanatory cause or whether the sense that there is one is generated by the linguistic structure itself. Nor is this a trivial issue. It is the most important question the novel raises, the one thing about which we ought to be able to make a decision, and yet a thing about which the novel forbids the reader to make a decision. In this *Wuthering Heights* justifies being called an "uncanny" text. To alter Freud's formulas a little, the uncanny in *Wuthering Heights* is the constant bringing into the open of something which seems familiar and which one feels ought to have been kept secret, not least because it is impossible to tell whether there is any secret at all hidden in the depths, or whether the sense of familiarity and of the unveiling of a secret may not be an effect of the repetition in difference of one part of the text by another, on the surface.[6] In the oscillation between the invitation to expect the novel to be an example of the first, grounded form of repetition and the constant frustration of that expectation, *Wuthering Heights* is a special case of the intertwining of two forms of repetition described in Chapter 1.

I have suggested that the narration in *Wuthering Heights* somehow involves the reader's innocence or guilt. It may now be seen how this is the case. Any repetitive structure of the "uncanny" sort, whether in real life or in words, tends to generate an irrational sense of guilt in the one who experiences it. I have not done anything (or have I?), and yet what I witness makes demands on me which I cannot fulfill. The mere fact of passive looking or of reading may make one guilty of the crime of seeing what ought not to have been seen. What I see or what I read repeats or seems to repeat something earlier, something deeper in. That something hidden is brought back out into the open in a disguised repetition by what I see. It should be brought out now into full clarity. At the same time perhaps it should be kept secret, since it may possibly be one of those things which, to para-

phrase Winnie Verloc in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, does not stand much looking into. One way or the other I am forced to do something for which I will feel guilty. I am guilty if I reveal what ought to have been kept secret. I am guilty if I refuse the demand it makes on me to "get in," to penetrate all the way to the bottom of the mystery. The situation of the reader of *Wuthering Heights* is inscribed within the novel in the situations of all those characters who are readers, tellers of tales, most elaborately in Lockwood. The lesson for the reader is to make him aware that he has by reading the novel incurred a responsibility like that of the other spectator-interpreters.

"Thou art the man!"—this applies as much to the reader as to Lockwood or to the other narrators. The double guilt of Lockwood's narration as of any critic's discourse is the following. If he does not penetrate all the way to the innermost core of the story he tells, he keeps the story going, repeating itself interminably in its incompletion. This is like the guilt of the one who keeps a grave open, or like the guilt of a sexual failure. On the other hand, to pierce all the way in is to be guilty of the desecration of a grave, to be guilty, like Heathcliff when he opens Cathy's grave, of necrophilia. The punishment for that is to be condemned to go where the vanished protagonists are. Really to penetrate, to get inside the events, rather than seeing them safely from the outside, would be to join Cathy and Heathcliff wherever they now are. The reader's sense of guilt is systematically connected to the swarm of other emotions aroused in any good reader of *Wuthering Heights* as he makes his way through the book: affection for the two Catherines, though in a different way for each, and mixed with some fear of her intransigence in the case of the first Catherine; scorn for Lockwood, but some pity for his limitations; awe of Heathcliff's suffering; and so on.

The line of witnesses who feel one or another form of this complex of emotions goes from the reader-critic to Charlotte Brontë to Emily Brontë to that pseudonymous author "Ellis Bell" to Lockwood to Nelly to Heathcliff to Cathy, the inside of the inside, or it moves the other way around, from Cathy out to the reader. The reader is the last surviving consciousness enveloping all these other consciousnesses, one inside the other. The reader

is condemned, like all the others, to be caught by a double contradictory demand: to bring it all out in the open and at the same time to give it decent burial, to keep the book open and at the same time to close its covers once and for all, so it may be forgotten, or so it may be read once more, this time definitively. The guilt of the reader is the impossibility of doing either of these things, once he has opened the book and begun to read: "1801—I have just returned from a visit to my landlord" (I, ch. 1).

The reading of the first present-tense words of the novel performs a multiple act of resurrection, an opening of graves or a raising of ghosts. In reading those first words and then all the ones that follow to the end, the reader brings back from the grave first the fictive "I" who is supposed to have written them or spoken them, that Lockwood who has and had no existence outside the covers of the book. With that "I" the reader brings back also the moment in the fall of 1801 when his "I have just returned" is supposed to have been written or spoken. By way of that first "I" and first present moment the reader then resurrects from the dead, with Lockwood's help, in one direction Hindley, Nelly, Joseph, Hareton, the two Catherines, Heathcliff, and the rest, so that they walk the moors once again and live once again at the Heights and the Grange. In the other direction are also evoked first Ellis Bell, the pseudonymous author, who functions as a ghostly name on the title page. Ellis Bell is a male name veiling the female author, but it is also the name of a character in the book: someone who has survived Lockwood, an "editor" into whose hands Lockwood's diary has fallen and who presents it to the public, or, more likely, the consciousness surrounding Lockwood's consciousness, overhearing what he says to himself, what he thinks, feels, sees, and presenting it again to the reader as though it were entirely the words of Lockwood. In doing this Ellis Bell effaces himself, but he is present as a ghostly necessity of the narrative behind Lockwood's words. The name Ellis Bell functions to name a spectator outside Lockwood, who is the primary spectator. Ellis Bell is another representative of the reader, overhearing, overseeing, overthinking, and overfeeling what Lockwood says, sees, thinks, feels, and writing it down so we can in our turns evoke Lockwood again and raise also that thin and

almost invisible ghost, effaced presupposition of the words of the novel, Ellis Bell himself. Behind Ellis Bell, finally, is Brontë, who, the reader knows, actually wrote down those words, "1801—I have just returned . . ." at Haworth on some day probably in 1846. Brontë too, in however indirect fashion, is brought back to life in the act of reading.

If in Lockwood's dream the air swarms with Catherines, so does this book swarm with ghosts who walk the Yorkshire moors inside the covers of any copy of *Wuthering Heights*, waiting to be brought back from the grave by anyone who chances to open the book and read. The most powerful form of repetition in fiction, it may be, is not the echoes of one part of the book by another, but the way even the simplest, most representational words in a novel ("1801—I have just returned . . .") present themselves as already a murmuring repetition, something which has been repeating itself incessantly there in the words on the page waiting for me to bring it back to life as the meaning of the words forms itself in my mind. Fiction is possible only because of an intrinsic capacity possessed by ordinary words in grammatical order. Words no different from those we use in everyday life, "I have just returned," may detach themselves or be detached from any present moment, any living "I," any immediate perception of reality, and go on functioning as the creators of the fictive world repeated into existence, to use the verb transitively, whenever the act of reading those words is performed. The words themselves, there on the page, both presuppose the deaths of that long line of personages and at the same time keep them from dying wholly, as long as a single copy of *Wuthering Heights* survives to be reread.