





Illness in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights

by

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ABSTRACT

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Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre and Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights are comparable in their symbolic use of physical illness. In both novels, illness symbolizes a basic opposition between a central female character and society. Conversely, excellent health symbolizes that a character is in harmony with society. In Jane Eyre, Jane's illnesses represent her inability to survive as a total outsider. Catherine's illnesses in Wuthering Heights are the opposite, for they represent her inability to be sustained by a conventional life. The illnesses of the central female characters facilitate their escape from unsatisfying situations. The position of Jane Eyre and Catherine Earnshaw as women in male-dominated worlds is central to their discontent and is the reason for their inability to change their lives through less drastic means.



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## INTRODUCTION

Health was an important idea in nineteenth-century Britain. Bruce Haley states that "No topic more occupied the Victorian mind than Health."<sup>1</sup> The state of the science of medicine and the prevalence of illness in part explain this interest in health.<sup>2</sup> Health during this era was surrounded by symbolic thinking. According to Haley: "Total health or wholeness . . . was a dominant concept for the Victorians, as important in shaping thought about human growth and conduct as nature was to the Romantics."<sup>3</sup>

The 1830s and 1840s were years of general contagion in England.<sup>4</sup> It was in 1847 that Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre and Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights were published. Both novels reflect the emphasis upon health typical of the era, for physical illness is a symbolic element of the structure of both works.

Although a significant structural element of each work, physical illness is perhaps one of the less apparent symbols which these frequently compared novels created in the same social and historical environment have in common. Imagery of weather, imprisonment, starvation, and madness are among the novels' other shared symbolic patterns, each of which



combines with the symbol of physical illness to explore common themes.

Initially, the differences between Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights are perhaps more striking than their similarities. The nature of characters, point of view, and temporal structure are among the novels' differences. Among their similarities is a major theme, for both deal with a central female character's coming of age.

Jane Eyre is described as "an exploration of how a woman comes to maturity in the world of the writer's youth."<sup>5</sup> The work's structure as an autobiography, along with its straightforward temporal structure, allows it to be easily classified as a Bildungsroman.

Wuthering Heights has proven to be a problematical work. Mildred G. Christian points out that "The contradictory judgments on Wuthering Heights are the most striking fact in its critical history."<sup>6</sup> One of the generally agreed on elements of the work relates to the theme of Catherine's change from child to adult. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar write,

That the story of Wuthering Heights is built around a central fall seems indisputable, so that a description of the novel as in part Bildungsroman about a girl's passage from "innocence" to "experience" . . . would probably be widely accepted.<sup>7</sup>

Wuthering Heights may be seen as an inverted Bildungsroman--as the novel's temporal structure implies--for Catherine's coming of age is most destructive; in a number of ways it is the reciprocal of Jane's difficult although successful passage from youth to maturity.

The symbol of physical illness in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights is related to the theme of a central female character's coming of age. This symbol represents changes the character undergoes as she gains in knowledge about the world of the novel and her appointed place in it.

As the state of Jane Eyre's own health forms a pattern of symbolism throughout the novel, so the state of the health and attitudes towards illness of other characters (especially the inmates of Lowood, Helen Burns, Bertha Mason, and Mrs. Reed) are part of a larger pattern of symbolism. Q.D. Leavis writes,

A good deal of the effect of the book depends on the reader's making out associations, and the parts are not mechanically linked by a plot as in most previous fictions but organically united (as in Shakespeare) by imagery and symbolism which pervade the novel and are as much a part of the narrative as the action.<sup>8</sup>

The reader of Wuthering Heights can similarly "make out associations" between the way in which Catherine experiences illness compared with Nelly, Frances, Isabella, Linton



Heathcliff, Lockwood, and Heathcliff, all of whom are characterized through imagery which relates to their placement along a health/illness continuum.

In using illness symbolically, these two nineteenth-century novels are attached to a tradition which can be traced from ancient times to the present.<sup>9</sup> Susan Sontag explains,

Illnesses have always been used as metaphors to enliven charges that a society was corrupt or unjust . . . Disease imagery is used to express concern for social order . . . Unlike the Elizabethan metaphors--which complain of some general aberration of social calamity that is, in consequence, dislocating to individuals--the modern metaphors suggest a profound disequilibrium between individual and society, with society conceived as the individual's adversary. Disease metaphors are used to judge society not as out of balance but as repressive.<sup>10</sup>

In both Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, the symbol of physical illness is used in what Sontag describes as the "modern" sense. An analysis of what causes the health of main female characters to fail and of what at other times enables them to regain or maintain their health explains the ways in which they are alienated from society.

Besides its ability to deal with the theme of alienation, there are a number of other aspects of illness as a symbol in these two novels. Symbolic illnesses explore the dichotomy between the body and the mind, which was a particular source of interest and debate in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> This division is explored as Jane and Catherine each attempt to achieve a healthy adulthood.

Punishment is involved in symbolic illnesses.<sup>12</sup> Illnesses function in a punitive way by inflicting punishment on characters who deviate from established rules of behavior (as in the case of Helen Burns, Bertha Mason, and Jane's mother in Jane Eyre), and in preventing a rebellious character from deviating in a more overt way (in the case of Catherine in Wuthering Heights).

The effectiveness of active versus passive behavior and the theme of powerfulness in society are examined through the presentation of physical illness as a necessary means of escape for female characters from situations in which they cannot contentedly exist.

The concept of health has traditionally been used to represent "various kinds of perfection or excellence."<sup>13</sup> Yet Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights manifest the discontent of female characters through physical illnesses, in this way presenting antiheroines.

Helene Moglen sees Jane Eyre as the first antiheroine, in part because of the physical inferiority through which Brontë characterizes her.<sup>14</sup> The outer circumstances of



Jane's life do make her an antiheroine, yet as Moglen points out, Jane Eyre is a novel of interiority, and Jane is a superior character in terms of her inner life.<sup>15</sup>

Relative to her physical beauty, Catherine Earnshaw is, unlike Jane Eyre, a typical nineteenth-century heroine.<sup>16</sup> Her powerlessness, what may be seen as her spiritual flaws, and her physical illness and madness, however, make her very much an antiheroine also.

Both Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, through the presentation of physically vulnerable female characters, are attached to the tradition of the "fragile heroine" in fiction.<sup>17</sup> Yet Charlotte and Emily Brontë re-invent this tradition, for unlike the "indisposed" or fainting heroines in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction, Jane Eyre and Catherine Earnshaw fall into illnesses which are more important symbolically as well as potentially much more serious. The authors have thus taken their characters out of the realm of the merely fragile; they have delivered them, at least temporarily, into the realm of the aberrant.

In this, the novels are part of a sparse tradition: that of aberrant women in fiction. Evelyn Wilde Mayerson comments:

Most aberrant fictional characters . . . have been men . . . I think that the preponderance of the aberrant male in fiction is a revelation of how our society sees women. It is harder to evoke sympathy for

the impaired female because of . . . something to do with the rigidly determined position of women in our society as either adornment, sexual partner, or mother.<sup>18</sup>

Charlotte and Emily Brontë created physically impaired female characters to indirectly explore the rigidly determined position of women. The rigidity of the main female characters' appointed places in their societies presents a threat to each of them, the potential destruction from which only Jane Eyre is able avert.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Haley, The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> According to Haley, pp. 4-5, the early 1800s offered the hope that health could be an exact and efficient science. This was not yet, however, the case. Haley explains, p. 5, that there was a "constant threat of illness in the Victorian home" which "made people conscious of their bodies." Haley shows, p. 3, that there was much debate done on the topic of health, and a variety of theoretical "systems" for health care were developed.

<sup>3</sup> Haley, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Haley, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Q.D. Leavis, Introd. Jane Eyre (New York: Penguin, 1966), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Mildred G. Christian, "The Brontës," in Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research, ed. Lionel Stevenson (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1980), p. 244.

<sup>7</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 253-54.

<sup>8</sup> Q.D. Leavis, Introd. Jane Eyre, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> For a survey of the different symbolic connotations illness has held and their reflections in literature see

Susan Sontag's Illness as Metaphor (New York: Vintage, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Sontag, pp. 71-72.

<sup>11</sup> Haley points out, p. 22, that "Victorian considerations of health" tended to involve "fundamental questions about the mind-body relationship."

<sup>12</sup> Sontag, p. 42, explains that "The idea of disease as punishment" can be traced to classical myth and literature. Henry E. Sigerist, "The Special Position of the Sick," in Culture, Disease, and Healing: Studies in Medical Anthropology, ed. David Landy (New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 393, writes, "There is still a strong survival of the view of illness as punishment for sins."

<sup>13</sup> Haley, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Helen Moglen, Charlotte Brontë: The Self Conceived (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), p. 106. Rebecca West, in her article "Charlotte Brontë," in The Great Victorians, ed. H.J. Massingham and Hugh Massingham (Garden City: Doubleday, 1932), p. 47, sees in Jane Eyre a "sense of inferiority which weaves and needs the story."

<sup>15</sup> Moglen, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Susan Gorsky, "The Gentle Doubters: Images of Women in Englishwomen's Novels, 1840-1920," in Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillion (Bowling Green: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1973), p. 29, points out that although the typical Victorian heroine was not necessarily a perfect classic

beauty, she did tend to be pretty; and her physical characteristics were described in some detail.

<sup>17</sup> Françoise Basch, Relative Creatures, trans. Anthony Rudolf (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. xv, writes, "With Pamela, Clarissa Harlow, and Olivia, Richardson and Goldsmith introduced into English literature the stereotype of the fragile heroine . . . a stereotype which was to dominate the Victorian novel." Marlene Springer, Introd. What Manner of Woman (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1977), p. 135, writes about "Silly women's novels, to use George Eliot's phrase" saying the heroine in these novels "had to be unathletic, sometimes even physically frail, so that she could faint with realistic regularity."

<sup>18</sup> Evelyn Wilde Mayerson, "Creating the 'Outcast' Character," The Writer, May 1981, p. 11.



## CHAPTER ONE: ILLNESS AND THE OUTSIDER

The concept of health dominant in the nineteenth century involved the relationship of the individual to his surroundings. Haley gives the following partial nineteenth-century definition of health: "A person may be seen as whole or healthy when he acts responsibly within his environment" and "the healthy man" is "at one with his environment."<sup>1</sup>

What if, then, the environment in which the individual finds himself is hostile (as it is for Jane Eyre), or antipathetic to the individual's nature (as for Catherine Earnshaw)? How is the individual to be "at one with" such an environment? And what would be the price of "acting responsibly" in an environment bent on the suppression of the individual's nature? These are questions which Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, through metaphoric physical illnesses, indirectly raise, and to which they supply answers reflective of nineteenth-century thinking regarding health.

Both Jane Eyre and Catherine Earnshaw are outsiders. Margaret Howard Blom describes Jane Eyre as "forever an outcast."<sup>2</sup> An orphan from her infancy, poor and plain, the circumstances of Jane's life and her diffident, sensitive

personality cause her to be an outsider. Mrs. Reed articulates her view of Jane as "different" by demanding that she develop a disposition more "child-like" and "natural."<sup>3</sup> Jane explains: "I was a discord in Gateshead-hall: I was like nobody there" (p. 13). Jane further remembers herself in relation to Mrs. Reed as "an interloper, not of her race" and an "uncongenial alien" (p. 14).

Catherine Earnshaw in Wuthering Heights is separated from most of those around her by her emotional intensity. Colin Wilson sees Catherine as "an almost archetypal female outsider."<sup>4</sup> Nelly says of Catherine: "Certainly, she had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before."<sup>5</sup> Nelly further states about Catherine in her youth: "She was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words" (p. 52).

In both novels, the initial representative of the larger social order is a surrogate mother figure: Mrs. Reed in Jane Eyre and Nelly Dean in Wuthering Heights. The plots establish the feelings, attitudes, and actions of these mother figures as typical of society in general.

Excellent health is an important element in the characterizations of Mrs. Reed and Nelly Dean. Initially, Mrs. Reed is described as follows: "Her constitution was sound as a bell--illness never came near her; she was an exact, clever manager, her household and tenantry were thoroughly under her control" (p. 38).

Q.D. Leavis describes Nelly Dean as "the normal woman."<sup>6</sup> John K. Mathison writes that Nelly's characterization through physical healthiness is "a significant" "feature of the total character."<sup>7</sup> Mathison further writes:

Her interpretation of her reading and her experiences, her feelings on various occasions, are, to a large extent, the consequence of her physical health. When the reader refuses to accept her view of things, which he continually does and must do, he is forced to feel the inadequacy of the normal, healthy, hearty, good-natured person's understanding of life and human nature.<sup>8</sup>

Mrs. Reed and Nelly Dean reflect the nineteenth-century view of health as related to ability to fit in with environment.

Through their attitudes towards the illnesses of their wards, Mrs. Reed and Nelly Dean invite the reader's perception of illness as symbolic of the situation of the outsider. Mrs. Reed remembers her reaction to Jane: "I hated it the first time I set my eyes on it--a sickly, whining, pining thing!" (p. 290). Nelly, similarly, has little affection for Catherine, saying, "I own I did not like her, after her infancy was past" (p. 82). Nelly thus claims to have been fond of the very young--and healthy--Catherine. Catherine's illnesses are viewed by Nelly as dangerous and indulgent. Mathison writes, "Nelly never will



grasp the less wholesome, physically or emotionally."<sup>9</sup> He reconstructs Nelly's thinking, with regards to Catherine's serious illnesses: "Why should Cathy have chosen to come down with a fever, become dangerously delirious, and consequently be 'wearisome' to healthy, reasonable people?"<sup>10</sup>

Jane and Catherine react in opposite ways to being outsiders, as an analysis of the symbol of physical illness shows. The illnesses of Jane Eyre occur when she is an outsider. At Gateshead, rejected and cruelly treated by the household, Jane suffers a physical breakdown during the red-room incident.<sup>11</sup> This incident is followed by a period of convalescence. Jane says of Mrs. Reed's treatment of her: "Since my illness, she had drawn a more marked line of separation than ever between me and her own children" (p. 27). Jane's temporary illness is emblematic of her situation as an outsider. Something of a "mark of Cain," it has served to increase this state.

Lowood Institution, where Jane goes after leaving Gateshead, presents very real health threats to all of its inmates, for it is stricken with a typhus epidemic. The formerly weak Jane is able to maintain her health there, however, for she is not alienated. Moglen comments: "Lowood does, paradoxically, provide Jane with a supportive environment . . . the students share her social and economic background. She is no longer an outsider, necessarily inferior."<sup>12</sup>

After Jane goes to Thornfield, her health initially prospers as she lives in the family-like group of Mrs. Fairfax, Adele, and most importantly, Rochester. Jane tells about her early days at Thornfield: "I ceased to pine after kindred, my thin-crescent destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up, my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength" (p. 180-81).

After the arrival of Rochester's house guests, who are members of upper-class society, Jane's health will weaken as she is made to feel inferior largely because of her lower economic position. Jane does not become ill, but her health does weaken to the point where Rochester realizes that something is wrong and asks her: "Did you take any cold that night you half drowned me?" (p. 226).

The minor, two-dimensional character of Blanche Ingram is characterized through health imagery. The apparent favorite of Rochester, Blanche is a person of natural superiority in terms of health and beauty. Rochester refers to her as "a lady, young and full of life and health, charming, with beauty, and endowed with the gifts of rank and fortune" (p. 249). The reader's perception of illness as related to the situation of the outsider is intensified through the presentation of this character as a natural--and healthy--"insider."

At Thornfield, Blanche and the other guests discuss governesses, including Miss Wilson, who is described as "a poor sickly thing, lachrymose and low-spirited" (p. 222). Through this short conversation, the relationship between

oppressively low economic position and a tendency towards physical illness is further established.

At Whitcross, Jane is most intensely an outsider; it is here that she becomes most seriously ill. Jane describes the "drear flight and homeless wandering" (p. 409) she experiences. She comments: "Not a tie holds me to human society" (p. 412); she describes herself by the term "outcast" (p. 413 and p. 421). Jane is aware of the possibility that she might become ill, and she sees this as a humiliating prospect. She says: "I felt it would be degrading to faint with hunger on the causeway of a hamlet" (p. 416). Jane has no food, no shelter, no connections to the community. Her attempts to connect to the community are ineffective. Jane is even suspected of being a criminal by the woman in the bake shop and Hannah. Jane's illness on the Rivers' doorstep is the climax of her alienation.<sup>13</sup>

At Gateshead, Jane was trapped in a destructive relationship; at Whitcross she experiences the opposite as she is excluded from contact with the community. Jane comments on the later period in her life, although perhaps the comment also relates to her life at Gateshead: "The moral degradation" "blent with physical suffering" (p. 419).

After Jane is admitted to the Rivers' home at Marsh-End, she is no longer isolated; she makes a complete physical recovery. The mature Jane is in control of her health. Before Jane leaves Marsh-End, Diana Rivers asks her (having noticed her weakened countenance) if she is well enough to travel. Jane answers: "Nothing ailed me save



anxiety of mind, which I hoped soon to alleviate" (p. 530). This is a great transformation from the Jane Eyre of Gateshead who asked "Bessie, what is the matter with me? Am I ill?" (p. 18).

For Jane Eyre, a life of health is one with strong attachments. Yet it does retain some elements of separateness from the world at large. The places where Jane matures are remote. Lowood, where Jane prospers and is educated after the removal of Brocklehurst, is essentially a place of the outsider. And Marsh-End, which does perhaps the most in leading Jane to maturity, is, as Moglen points out, "poised at the edge of the wild, open moors."<sup>14</sup> The Rivers themselves are unique in their community. Hannah says about them. "There was nothing like them in these parts . . . they had always been 'of a mak' of their own" (p. 438).<sup>15</sup> With this group Jane establishes a sustaining attachment. At Ferndean, Jane also has satisfying bonds. Yet the life she and Rochester lead here is also removed from the world at large.

The reality of Jane's marriage to Rochester is very different from that which he envisioned during their initial engagement period. At that point, Rochester was materialistic in a way typical of society. He stated his intention to Jane to adorn her with jewels and fine clothes, and he explained to her his desire that the world should "acknowledge you a beauty" (p. 326). At secluded Ferndean, however, Jane and Rochester are removed from society. Rochester's injuries, along with his weakened financial

status, are conducive to their leading an isolated life without much traveling or socializing. Charles Burkhart says of Ferndean that "even its name suggests a return to the primeval . . . Charlotte's lovers do not find happiness in the world but away from it."<sup>16</sup> Although Rochester initially believes Ferndean to be unhealthy--he states the "unhealthiness of the situation" (p. 383) as the reason why he did not confine Bertha there--the life he and Jane lead there is probably for her the correct blend of one with attachments and yet at a remove from the world at large to insure her continued health.

In Wuthering Heights, Catherine's breakdowns in health are the result of her rejection of her natural position as an outsider. Catherine's acceptance of the standards of society lead her into illness, for whereas Jane Eyre cannot exist healthily as a total outsider, Catherine is not sustained by a conventional life.

Catherine as a child leads the life of a rebellious outsider and is in excellent physical health. Later, when she is very ill, Catherine articulates the relationship between her youthful health and her position as an outsider with the comment: "I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free" (p. 153).

Upon their initial wandering to Thrushcross Grange, it is significant that Catherine and Heathcliff are believed to be working with "robbers" (p. 60). Their outsider status is apparent to the Lintons. Heathcliff is rejected by the Lintons, but Catherine is symbolically apprehended at

Thrushcross Grange.<sup>17</sup> This initial stay at Thrushcross Grange, as Dorothy Van Ghent illustrates, initiates Catherine into civilization.<sup>18</sup> Imagery relating to illness is involved as Catherine is kept at Thrushcross Grange ostensibly to recover from the bite she receives from the Linton's dog. Heathcliff describes Catherine's entrance to the world of the Lintons: "The man took Cathy up; she was sick; not from fear, I'm certain, but from pain" (p. 60). Gilbert and Gubar write, "assuming that she is a 'young lady,' the entire Linton household cossets the wounded (but still healthy) girl as if she were truly an invalid."<sup>19</sup>

When Catherine emerges from this initiatory stay with the Lintons, she has been dressed and has had her hair arranged in accordance with the rules of society. Catherine has become vain and is willing to reject Heathcliff. F.H. Langman comments on the change in Catherine: "from a deeply fulfilling relationship, from a sense of community, she is seduced by the attractive glitter of mere society."<sup>20</sup>

The day after Catherine's return to Wuthering Heights, an incident foreshadows her self-inflicted fast. Catherine, at the table with Edgar and Isabella Linton, is unable to eat; she is upset because Heathcliff has been banished from their presence. Catherine's later fast also results from her separation from Heathcliff and her inability to function as a member of the Linton's group.

Catherine's first major illness occurs after Heathcliff learns of her plans to marry Edgar Linton. The reason Catherine decides she must not marry Heathcliff: "We should



be beggars" (p. 101). Catherine rejects this role of poverty and alienation; her illness follows immediately.

During the three years of Heathcliff's absence, Catherine lives as "Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange" (p. 153). During this period:

Catherine had seasons of gloom and silence, now and then: they were respected with sympathizing silence by her husband, who ascribed them to an alteration in her constitution, produced by her perilous illness, as she was never subject to depression of spirits before. (p. 114)

These "seasons of gloom and silence" testify to the fact that Catherine has not made a satisfactory adaptation to life with the Lintons at Thrushcross Grange.

Catherine's second major illness occurs when, through renewed contact with Heathcliff, she becomes aware that she can no longer live as Edgar Linton's wife. She states her intention to either "starve, at once . . . or to recover and leave the country" (p. 148).

The end of the story of Catherine and Heathcliff implies for them a continued supernatural existence, intensifying the reader's perception of these two characters as outsiders. Though enigmatic, the life implied for Catherine and Heathcliff is one in which they are together but separate from the world. Van Ghent writes, "Whatever could happen to these two, if they could be happily

together, would be something altogether asocial, amoral, savagely irresponsible, wildly impulsive . . . occult to the civilized adult."<sup>21</sup> Inga-Stina Ewbank comments on another aspect of the life implied for Catherine and Heathcliff: "The ambiguity about the ultimate fates of Catherine and Heathcliff is made possible by the narrative technique: how can the more healthful people know?"<sup>22</sup> The supernatural is a particularly appropriate symbolism for the remove at which Catherine and Heathcliff exist.

Both Jane Eyre and Catherine Earnshaw are placed in conflict between inner satisfaction and worldly needs. Terry Eagleton writes that Jane Eyre lives at "that ambiguous point in the social structure at which two worlds--an interior one of emotional hungering, and an external one of harshly mechanical necessity--meet and collide."<sup>23</sup> Van Ghent writes, "Wuthering Heights exists for the reader as a tension between two different kinds of reality: the raw, inhuman reality of anonymous natural energies, and the restrictive reality of civilized habits, manners, and codes."<sup>24</sup>


The "harshly mechanical necessities" of freedom from imprisonment at Gateshead, food and shelter at Whitcross, and economic independence throughout the work are obtained on her own terms and enable Jane to lead a healthy life.

For Catherine, it is the reality of what society has dictated to be necessities--position, wealth, the materialism associated with being "a lady"--which lead her into serious illness and death. Catherine's compromise of

living in accordance with the rules of society, and especially her internalization of the belief that she must marry for money, make a healthy and satisfied life impossible. Eagleton writes,

The uneasy alliance of social conformity and personal fulfillment for which Charlotte's novels work is not, then, feasible in the world of Wuthering Heights; Catherine's attempt to compromise unleashes the contradictions which will drive both her and Heathcliff to their deaths.<sup>25</sup>

In Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, minor characters also are outsiders. There is a relationship between the health of these characters and the ways in which they are alienated.

 In Jane Eyre, illness is used symbolically in relation to Lowood Institution. The inmates of Lowood become ill because they are outsiders; the girls are orphans, the teachers are unmarried, and they are all poor. The girls and women of Lowood cannot remain healthy in the Brocklehurst-run institution; the rations of food, warmth, and emotional sustenance are too meager. Blom describes Lowood as "pestilence-stricken Lowood . . . monument to the destruction of the most basic human unit, the family."<sup>26</sup> For this group of characters, as for Jane, living outside of a family unit is health threatening.



Helen Burns is an outsider even among the residents of Lowood in Jane Eyre. The reader--and Jane--is introduced to this character through the sound of her cough. Helen has many positive personal qualities and some flaws considered major by a society most interested in order. Helen's illness is different in kind from that of the other inmates of Lowood, as her situation is different, for Helen is consumptive.<sup>27</sup> Helen is aware that her illness and early death are related to her alienation, and that they represent in part defeat by the stronger forces of society which judge her harshly. Helen says to Jane: "I had not qualities or talents to make my way very well in the world: I should have been continually at fault" (p. 96). Helen's estrangement is more extreme than is Jane's.

In Wuthering Heights, Lockwood is an ironic outsider. As Lockwood's characterization develops, so does the polarity between characters who are in harmony with society and those who are not. Although Lockwood initially explains his desire for solitude as the reason he rented the isolated Thrushcross Grange, his personality soon develops as what F.H. Langman describes as "a purely social being, all but incapable of imagining and terrified of encountering the realities of emotional life."<sup>28</sup> Lockwood is an ironic outsider on a number of levels. Elisabeth Th. M. van de Laar points out that Lockwood is an outsider to the events of the tale he is hearing from Nelly, and yet he has been given the task of defining what is the title of the novel and the name of Heathcliff's home.<sup>29</sup> Separated as he is

from the events that happened around Wuthering Heights and the nature of its residents past and present, he cannot effectively explain this name to the reader.

Lockwood becomes ill after his unsettling contact with Wuthering Heights. His illness is the setting for the telling of Nelly's story. The juxtaposition of Lockwood's superficial malaise with the much more serious illness and death of Catherine which he is hearing about perhaps constitutes the major irony in Wuthering Heights.

The illnesses of Catherine and Lockwood are reciprocal. It is a young and healthy Catherine whose story Lockwood is being told when he says "I prognosticate for myself an obstinate cold, at least" (p. 77). As Lockwood regains his health, Catherine's story moves closer to her death. By the opening of Volume II, when Lockwood is able to say: "I am so many days nearer health" (p. 191), Catherine has the look of one "fated, sure to die" (p. 194).

After Lockwood becomes ill, Heathcliff visits him. He says of his behavior toward his guest: "How could I offend a man who was charitable enough to sit at my bedside a good hour, and talk on some other subject than pills and draughts, blisters and leeches?" (p. 112). Lockwood, who is being nursed by Nelly, is also hearing about "pills and draughts, blisters and leeches," through the tale that she is telling him. Yet the story he is hearing is not about the stuff of healing; it is about Catherine's separation from a state of healthfulness.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Haley, p. 20. Haley explains, p. 19, that the concept of "wholeness" during the nineteenth century was closely aligned with that of health, involving the integration of the entire organism, the relationship between the body and the mind, and the relationship of the individual to his surrounding. Haley, p. 19, writes, "in English, the words health, wholeness, and holiness are related."

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Howard Blom, Charlotte Brontë, Twayne's English Authors Series, No. 203 (Boston: Twayne, 1977), p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Eyre, ed. Jane Jack and Margaret Smith (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 3. All subsequent references to this edition will be given in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Colin Wilson, "A Personal Response to Wuthering Heights," in The Art of Emily Brontë, ed. Anne Smith (London: Vision, 1976), p. 236.

<sup>5</sup> Wuthering Heights, ed. Hilda Marsden and Ian Jack (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 51. All subsequent references to this edition will be given in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Q.D. Leavis, "A Fresh Approach to Wuthering Heights," in Lectures in America, by F.R. Leavis and Q.D. Leavis (New York: Pantheon, 1969), p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> John K. Mathison, "Nelly Dean and the Power of Wuthering Heights," in Wuthering Heights: An Anthology of



Criticism, ed. Alastair Everitt (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> Mathison, pp. 85-86.

<sup>9</sup> Mathison, p. 91. He writes, p. 87, that through the character of Nelly Dean, Brontë leads the reader toward "a realization that the 'normal' person is often incapable of feeling for the tortured, emotionally distraught person, and that the latter's tortured failure to understand himself and the sources of his misery partly results from the failure of the imagination of the majority." Charlotte Brontë created a similar, if more two-dimensional, character in Jane Eyre's Mrs. Reed. Yet Charlotte seemingly failed to understand the function of Nelly Dean as a character with limited insight and empathy. Charlotte Brontë writes of the character her sister created: "For a specimen of true benevolence and homely fidelity, look at the character of Nelly Dean," "Editor's Preface to the New Edition of Wuthering Heights," in Wuthering Heights, ed. Hilda Marsden and Ian Jack (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 443. According to Elizabeth C. Gaskell's The Life of Charlotte Brontë (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 251, Charlotte Brontë read the completed Wuthering Heights before she began Jane Eyre.

<sup>10</sup> Mathison, p. 90.

<sup>11</sup> What happens to Jane Eyre in the red-room is described as "a species of fit" (p. 16). The cause will strike the twentieth-century reader as purely psychological; but as Haley explains, p. 23, "In the early nineteenth century, psychiatry and psychotherapy were undeveloped as

distinct areas of study." He continues, p. 32, "The impact of the temperaments theory was so pervasive that doctors (and their patients) could never have made the sort of diagnostic and therapeutic distinctions between mental and physical ailments which is almost routine today." It seems to me that the physical aspects of illnesses are frequently emphasized in these two novels. Jo McMurty in Victorian Life and Victorian Fiction: A Companion for the American Reader (Hamden: Archon, 1979), p. 137, writes, "It makes sense to assume that Victorian readers found the sudden illnesses, deaths in childbirth, and miscellaneous mishaps that so conveniently further the plots of their novels more plausibly aligned with everyday reality than these events seem to us."

<sup>12</sup> Moglen, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Charlotte Brontë's Villette and Shirley parallel Jane Eyre in presenting major female characters who become ill as a result of their experiences as outsiders. Lucy Snowe, the protagonist of Villette, becomes ill when, having no family to go to, she is left alone for the school holiday. Caroline Helstone, a major character in Shirley, becomes ill when her hopes for marriage appear to be dashed. Lord David Cecil, Victorian Novelists (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 128-29, sees a relationship among these episodes in the novels of Charlotte Brontë. He writes of "the moments of solitary emotion, the gusts of inexplicable anguish, yearning, exultation, which sweep across the spirit, unprovoked, by an actively dramatic

incident. And they are the most vivid when some abnormal physical circumstance has heated them to a morbid intensity; the agony of the starving Jane Eyre, lost a whole burning day on the Yorkshire moors; Caroline Helstone's delirious broodings that mingle tumultuously with raging wind and brilliant winter moonlight, as she tosses on her sick-bed; Lucy Snowe's tormented loneliness rising to hallucinations during her three months' sojourn in the deserted school; the strange exaltation induced by drugs that compels her from her sick-bed to wander through festal Villetta. These scenes, indeed, are the peak of Charlotte Brontë's achievement; for in them, as in no others, her imagination finds the perfect field for its expression."

<sup>14</sup> Moglen, p. 133.

<sup>15</sup> A comment made by Hannah the housekeeper at Marsh-End articulates the novel's definition of the outsider state. Hannah asks Jane: "I dunnut understand that: you've like no house, nor no brass, I guess?" (p. 435).

<sup>16</sup> Charles Burkhart, Charlotte Brontë (London: Victor Gollancz, 1973), p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> Inga-Stina Ewbank, Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early Victorian Female Novelists (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966), p. 88, writes of "the complex of opposites formed by the Earnshaws (and Heathcliff) against the Lintons, the Heights against the Grange." As F.H. Langman writes in his article "Thoughts on Wuthering Heights," in Wuthering Heights: An Anthology of Criticism, ed. Alastair Everitt (New York: Barnes & Noble,



1967), p. 82, "The society of the novel is created in the image of the Lintons, its values and its laws are theirs."

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy Van Ghent, "On Wuthering Heights," in Wuthering Heights: An Anthology of Criticism, ed. Alastair Everitt (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), p. 167.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 273.

<sup>20</sup> Langman, p. 78.

<sup>21</sup> Van Ghent, p. 163.

<sup>22</sup> Ewbank, p. 111. She writes, p. 110, that an "opposition between the 'healthful' and the 'wild' goes through Wuthering Heights."

<sup>23</sup> Terry Eagleton, Myths of Power (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Van Ghent, p. 161.

<sup>25</sup> Eagleton, p. 102.

<sup>26</sup> Blom, pp. 87-88.

<sup>27</sup> Sontag writes, p. 15, "Nineteenth-century literature is stocked with descriptions of . . . deaths from TB, particularly of young people." The stereotypical tubercular in Victorian literature was, according to Sontag, p. 35, "someone too sensitive to bear the horrors of the vulgar, everyday world." John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1975), p. 159, writes, "Charlotte Brontë used a traditional deathbed scene to describe Helen Burns' passing in Jane Eyre."

<sup>28</sup> Langman, p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> Elisabeth Th. M. van de Laar, The Inner Structure of Wuthering Heights (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), p. 21.

## CHATER TWO: ILLNESS AS ESCAPE

In Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, illness not only symbolizes alienation from society but also serves as an escape for characters from situations which they find unsatisfying.

Jane Eyre's illnesses result in her escape from the situation of the outsider; they do not occur until she has attempted to change her situation through all means available to her. Jane's breakdowns in health make benevolent persons aware of the severity of her situation. They intervene on her behalf and facilitate her admission into a new environment. This pattern is established at Gateshead and repeated at Marsh-End.

Jane's illness in the red-room summons Mr. Lloyd. Illness is an effective--though not conscious--action on the part of a powerless character; it enables Jane to escape from isolation. Adrienne Rich writes about the change in Jane's life brought about by the red-room incident: "During her convalescence from this 'fit,' she experiences for the first time the decency of the family apothecary and the gentle and caring side of the sharp-tongued young servant Bessie."<sup>1</sup> Jane gains evidence of an outside world

containing sympathetic persons and through the intervention of Lloyd she is able to reach that world.

In the red-room, Jane considers her need to escape from the circumstances of her life. She is aware that her options are very limited. Jane realizes the need for "some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable oppression--as running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die" (p. 13).

Mr. Lloyd senses the great unhappiness of Jane's life at Gateshead. He uses the excuse of physical illness--in a sense a "strange expedient"--to free her from this destructive environment. He verbalizes to himself the excuse he will offer to Mrs. Reed: "The child ought to have change of air and scene . . . nerves not in a good state" (p. 25).<sup>2</sup>

Jane's health is the reason Mrs. Reed decides to send her away. As F.B. Pinion writes, "Mrs. Reed is afraid Jane will have another seizure."<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Reed is not concerned that Jane is unhappy; rather, she fears the physical manifestation of Jane's suffering: weakened health. Through illness, Jane has gained some control over her life. Illness frees Jane from the red-room; the threat of illness will free her from Gateshead altogether.

When Jane learns she is to leave Gateshead, she makes a complete physical recovery. She says: "I gathered enough of hope to suffice as a motive for wishing to get well; a



change seemed near" (p. 27). Jane no longer needs to be ill.

Later, at Marsh-End, it is an isolated, hungry, rain-soaked and exhausted Jane who is refused admission to the Rivers' house. Jane's physical strength gives out. She says: "I sank on the wet doorstep: I groaned--I wrung my hands--I wept in utter anguish" (p. 428). St. John Rivers' observation of Jane's physical condition makes him aware of her situation. She is admitted to the Rivers' home where a sick-bed episode of three days follows.<sup>4</sup> Jane escapes from isolation and poverty as she discovers that the Rivers are her relatives, and she receives the inheritance from her uncle in Maderia.<sup>5</sup> Jane regains her health and leads a satisfying existence at Marsh-End and Morton.

The characters who aid Jane in her escape from the situation of the outsider are marginal members of society. Jane Eyre thus develops a polarity between success in society and such positive personal characteristics as evidenced by Lloyd, the Rivers sisters, and Jane's Uncle Reed. Mr. Lloyd is an apothecary and, as the narrative indicates, would not have been called in to treat the Reed family themselves.<sup>6</sup> Yet the qualities of insight and compassion shown by this briefly introduced character establish him as a savior figure for Jane.

The Rivers sisters do much to aid Jane. They have many positive characteristics; but like Lloyd, they are not very powerful in the world at large. Before the inheritance in which they share, Diana and Mary Rivers are oppressed

outsiders themselves, for they were forced to take positions as governesses which reduced their exuberance and health.

At Gateshead, the idea of her uncle helps Jane to muster courage against the oppression of her life. She comments: "I doubted not--never doubted--that if Mr. Reed had been alive he would have treated me kindly" (p. 15). Mr. Reed had opposed the disowning of Jane's mother when she made a marriage economically beneath her; he, like the other characters who aid Jane in her escape, was not totally interested in worldly success. Jane is able to say to Mrs. Reed: "What would Uncle Reed say to you, if he were alive?" (p. 28) and have it be an effective weapon.

In Jane Eyre, illness serves as an escape for minor characters also. At Lowood, illness provides escape for the entire institution. Illness alerts the outside world to the predicament of the poorly fed, clothed, and sheltered inmates. Jane's narrative comes close to stating that illness had a specific function at Lowood. Jane reports: When the typhus fever had fulfilled its mission of devastation at Lowood, it gradually disappeared from thence; but not till its virulence and the number of its victims had drawn public attention on the school" (p. 98). Jane explains how Lowood is improved:

Several wealthy and benevolent individuals in the county subscribed largely for the erection of a more convenient building in a better situation; new regulations were made;

improvements in diet and clothing introduced; the funds of the school were entrusted to the management of a committee. (p. 98)

† For Helen Burns in Jane Eyre, illness and death offer conscious escape from a hostile world. The possibility of a satisfied life for Jane Eyre does exist, but Helen feels that her own life would necessarily be unfulfilled. She says, "By dying young, I shall escape great sufferings" (p. 96). As Blom writes, "Helen Burns, realizing her difference from those about her, gratefully escapes from a lonely past and a dangerous future."<sup>7</sup>

Death is a possibility for other characters in Jane Eyre as well. Nancy Pell writes, "Jane's commitment to life is so strong that we are likely to forget how thoroughly this novel is pervaded by death."<sup>8</sup> She lists Jane's parents, half of the girls at Lowood, Helen Burns, Mrs. Reed, Mr. Rivers, Jane's uncle in Maderia, and Bertha Mason, all of whom die.<sup>9</sup>

It is in this context of illness and death that Jane Eyre encompasses the motif of death and rebirth. One work says that this motif:

Is often in earlier works associated with a literal journey into the place reigned over by Death. In more recent works, however, the death is more symbolic than literal . . . The death--real or symbolic--signifies an end to a former way of life and the emergence of a



new outlook or insight or way of coping with life. Generally it is water (a female symbol) that is the means of rebirth.<sup>10</sup>

Jane's illness in the red-room deals directly with the theme of death. Her uncle has died there, and the near-hysterical Jane believes "I shall be killed" (p. 16) if forced to remain within it. Thus, Jane takes a symbolic journey to "the place reigned over by death."<sup>11</sup>

The red-room incident marks the end of the unhappy, Gateshead period of Jane's life. Bessie says to Jane about the change in her behavior after this incident: "You've quite a way of talking. What makes you so venturesome and hardy?" (p. 43). The change in Jane after the red-room incident involves the psychologically healthy rejection of the Reed family, and, as Bessie's comment implies, this is related to her re-gained health; Jane is indeed now more hardy. Jane takes more control of her life when she asks Mrs. Reed to send her to school soon.

The change in Jane due to the red-room incident involves increased self-understanding. Sontag writes, "The romantic view is that illness exacerbates consciousness."<sup>12</sup> Jane not only gains insight into herself and her relationship with the Reeds through her illness, she also learns new facts about her identity. Soon after the red-room incident, Jane learns the circumstances of her parents' lives when she overhears Abbot talking to Bessie. Most significantly, she learns that her mother's marriage to a

poor clergyman involved a rejection of the standards of society, that it resulted in her mother being disowned by her family, with these events being followed closely by her mother's illness and death. The danger of the outsider status her mother accepted is hinted at.

Jane's illness at Whitcross also embodies the motif of death and rebirth. It is foreshadowed by an incident which occurs after Jane has learned of the existence of Bertha, when she is realizing that she must begin a new life away from Thornfield. Jane, lying on her bed, weak with trauma and fatigue, has the following daydream or fantasy:

I seemed to have laid me down in the dried-up bed of a great river; I heard a flood loosened in remote mountains, and I felt the torrent come: to rise, I had no will, to flee I had no strength. I lay faint; longing to be dead. (p. 374)

Jane begins a new life soon at the home of the family whose name is, perhaps not coincidentally, Rivers.

Before Jane yields to exhaustion and exposure at the Rivers' home, death again seems like a real and welcome possibility to her. Jane's period of recovery at Whitcross establishes for her a much more positive life than the one she had been living. She has many of the advantages the lack of which she felt so intensely before: family ties with the Rivers, money, respect from the community. She even uses, temporarily, a new name. Moglen comments on Jane's recovery

at Marsh-End, which she links with the return to health of central characters in the other novels of Charlotte Brontë: "For all, recovery marks a period of psychic rebirth: an entry into a new life."<sup>13</sup> Jane's new life at Marsh-End almost makes it seem as if she now has fate--so much against her before--on her side.

The motif of death and rebirth functions in regard to Lowood Institution in Jane Eyre. After the illness which kills many of its inmates, Lowood is much improved. Pinion writes, "Spring flowers had, ironically, coincided . . . with low fever."<sup>14</sup>

The theme of a spiritual rebirth is alluded to for Helen Burns. Jane does not forget Helen--nor perhaps the threat to her own life which she evidenced--for fifteen years after Helen's death, Jane visits her grave to place the epitaph "Resurgam" upon it.

For Jane Eyre, as for Lowood Institution, the cost of escaping from unbearable situations is high. Jane suffers much in her illnesses. She says the red-room experience "gave my nerves a shock; of which I feel the reverberation to this day" (p. 19). The Whitcross episode was so unpleasant that Jane does not tell all of the details of it to Rochester. Lowood loses half of its residents before anything is done to improve it. Although benevolent characters do exist in the world of Jane Eyre, gaining their assistance for Jane and Lowood has required extreme behavior.



In Wuthering Heights, illness facilitates Catherine's escape from her role as Edgar Linton's wife. Although Catherine has agreed to live as "Mrs. Linton," she is not sustained by the role; Gilbert and Gubar write of Catherine's "self-imprisonment" in it.<sup>15</sup> Catherine's illnesses involve imagery of imprisonment and escape.<sup>16</sup> Van Ghent shows that windows function symbolically in Wuthering Heights; window imagery is involved in the two main illnesses of Catherine.<sup>17</sup> During her final illness, Gilbert and Gubar point out that it is a window that "Catherine in her 'madness' begs Nelly to open," as it was a window that Catherine chose to close three years earlier when she married Edgar Linton.<sup>18</sup>

Nelly and Kenneth see the illnesses of Catherine as attempts at escape. Kenneth comments to Nelly after the death of Hindley: "Who's given us the slip now, do you think?" (p. 228), illustrating that these two characters wish to keep characters from using illness and death as a path of escape.<sup>19</sup>

Catherine's illnesses do, in a number of ways, provide her with escape from her unsatisfying life. Catherine, through her first serious illness, escapes from some of the restraints of adult womanhood. Nelly speaks of the indulgence with which Catherine is treated by her brother after her illness: "tutored by Kenneth, and serious threats of a fit that often attended her rages, her brother allowed her whatever she pleased to demand" (p. 110). Edgar also, because of the potentially extreme behavior Catherine is

capable of, as evidenced through her first illness, "had a deep-rooted fear of ruffling her humour" (p. 113). Nelly reports:

She . . . thought that her recent illness gave her a claim to be treated with consideration. Then the doctor had said that she would not bear crossing much, she ought to have her own way; and it was nothing less than murder, in her eyes, for anyone to presume to stand up and contradict her.  
(p. 110)

The indirect threat of a relapse has freed Catherine from the obligation of attending to the needs of her brother and husband.<sup>20</sup>

Through her final illness after Heathcliff's return, Catherine escapes from her uncomfortable adulthood; a childhood-related madness attends her illness. Catherine, in a cognizant moment, wishes she were a child again. In her delirium, Catherine imagines she is a child and wishes to return home to Wuthering Heights. Nelly comments: "Catherine was no better than a wailing child!" (p. 152) and "she seemed to find childish diversion in pulling the feathers from the rents she had just made" in her pillow (p. 149).<sup>21</sup> It is a tormenting illusion of childhood for Catherine, for she again suffers with her early separation from Heathcliff. Yet only childhood can offer any peace for her. Langman states about the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff: "The love begins in childhood and

rebellion and its genesis explains its nature."<sup>22</sup> Rebellion, the presence of Heathcliff, and, somehow, a return to childhood are necessary for Catherine. She manages, symbolically, to re-attain all three.

Nelly describes the death of Catherine: "She drew a sigh, and stretched herself, like a child reviving, and sinking again to sleep; and five minutes after I felt one little pulse at the heart, and nothing more" (p. 204). The simile here is significant, for as the adult Catherine dies, her childhood self is reborn as she is metamorphosized into a child ghost: a waif.<sup>23</sup> J. Hillis Miller writes of the theme of loss of an earlier joy in Wuthering Heights.<sup>24</sup> Through her enigmatic, difficult escape from adulthood, Catherine may be seen as struggling to regain that which she has lost.

Through her final illness, Catherine escapes from some of the illusions she had been living with. Sontag writes about one of the symbolic functions of illness in literature: "disease can clear the way for lifelong self-deceptions."<sup>25</sup> Through her final illness, Catherine becomes aware of the enmity which exists between herself and Nelly. Catherine says to Nelly during the sick-bed episode: "I begin to fancy you don't like me" (p. 149) and "Nelly is my hidden enemy" (p. 157). During her final illness, Catherine becomes consciously aware that she needs to escape from her role as Edgar's wife. According to van de Laar,

The marriage to Edgar, so ill-suited to her nature, has taken place and caused a serious



disturbance of her inner nature, of which she becomes increasingly aware after Heathcliff's return. . . . If she cannot find a way out of this, it will destroy her in the end.<sup>26</sup>

Catherine's escape through illness and death is ambiguous: she both finds a way out and is destroyed.

Catherine, during her long final illness, considers her need to escape when she talks of her options of either starving to death or recovering and leaving the country.<sup>27</sup> Leaving the country would make her an outsider to the only world she has known. It is surprising to hear Catherine even state this possibility, for the narrative never even places her in the neighboring village of Grimmerston. Catherine selects the other option for escape. Perhaps it is the only one which she is psychologically capable of.

Van Ghent comments on Catherine's escape from her life as Mrs. Linton, which she sees as part of Catherine's "human destiny." She writes, "By her marriage to Edgar Linton, Catherine yields to that destiny; later she resists it tormentedly and finds her way out of it by death."<sup>28</sup>

Catherine escapes through her illness from some of the restraints of the physical plane. She says, "the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired of being enclosed here" (p. 197). Catherine speaks to Edgar at the beginning of her final illness, showing her consciousness that through her death she will be symbolically dividing herself into the components of body

and mind: "What you touch at present, you may have; but my soul will be on that hill-top before you lay hands on me again" (p. 156). For Catherine, the body is something of the world, and it needs to be discarded. Richard Chase writes, "Cathy dissolves into pure matter and force almost before your eyes . . . yet retains enough of sensibility to make the experience articulate."<sup>29</sup> She is able to verbalize the experience, in part, because she has chosen to undergo it.

Keith Sagar also writes of Catherine's reaction to her physical self: "There is no reverence for the life of the body as such in Emily Brontë. Rather, the body is thought of as the prison-house of the tortured soul."<sup>30</sup> Catherine's physical illness has a specific symbolic function, for through the self-inflicted destruction of her body, Catherine frees some other, more essential aspect of herself.

In a way similar to Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights is permeated by death. Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw, the elder Mr. and Mrs. Linton, Frances, Hindley, Catherine, Linton Heathcliff, Edgar Linton, Isabella, and Heathcliff all die in the course of the narrative. Wilson sees in the novel "A Poe-like absorption in death and corruption."<sup>31</sup> Although the story of Catherine and Heathcliff is "dree," to use Nelly's term, Lord David Cecil accurately says of it: "For all the story is so somber, there is nothing morbid about it. On the contrary, its atmosphere breathes a wild exhilarating health."<sup>32</sup> The story of Catherine and

Heathcliff creates this effect, in part, because their deaths betoken their escape as much as they indicate their defeat.

W A. Craik believes that it is *Wuthering Heights* to which Catherine is symbolically rejoined after her death. He writes, "The Heights become a symbol of her lost and unattainable wholeness and happiness, now to be reached only through the grave."<sup>33</sup> He continues, with reference to Catherine, "Neither she nor Heathcliff can find release from their trouble by revenge, and have only death left to them as an escape."<sup>34</sup> Anne Smith also writes of the enigmatic end to the story of Catherine and Heathcliff: "if the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff walk, it would seem they walk together, and in peace, with a quietness that haunts the reader."<sup>35</sup> The denouement of Jane Eyre implies a life which is the correct blend of one with attachments but at a remove from the world at large to insure Jane's continued health, but the non-corporeal life implied for Catherine is one beyond all things of this world, including health and illness.

Both *Jane Eyre* and *Catherine Earnshaw* comment on the necessity of escape before they become ill. Catherine more consciously chooses illness as her method of escape; however, for *Jane Eyre*, illness is an unconscious last resort. Catherine causes her first illness when she remains all night in her wet clothing and anticipates her final illness when she gives Nelly a message: "Say to Edgar . . .



that I'm in danger of being seriously ill--I wish it may prove true" (p. 143).

The reasons for both of Catherine's illnesses are, on a literal level, similar to Jane's experience at Whitcross which involves starvation and exposure to the elements. Jane's illness is preceded by active behavior on her part; Catherine's illness involves passivity. Jane Eyre travels as far as she is able on her limited money to get away from Thornfield and Rochester; she traverses the area until her strength runs out. Catherine, before her first illness, "came in and lay down on the settle, all soaked as she was, turning her face to the back, and putting her hands before it" (p. 105). The image is a passive one. The descriptions of Catherine's actions during this episode indicate that they are non-effective, wasted movements. Catherine paces "from the gate to the door" and is shown "wandering to and fro" (p. 104). She does not run after the just-departed Heathcliff but tells Nelly that she "shouted at the top of the fold as loud as I could" (p. 103). Significantly, Catherine sends Joseph after Heathcliff instead of more actively seeking him herself.

The ways in which the feminine role is defined in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights severely limits the lives of female characters, making their escape not only desirable but necessary.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman," Ms. 2, No. 4 (October 1973), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> In using the excuse of a change of scene being needed, Jane Eyre reflects a nineteenth-century system of health care written about by Haley, p. 34, as "Change of Climate," which with other "nature-pathologies," "in the latter half of the nineteenth century . . . fell from respectability."

<sup>3</sup> F.B. Pinion, A Brontë Companion (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> St. John "pronounced it needless to send for a doctor: nature, he was sure, would manage best, left to herself" (p. 433). Haley, p. 16, writes of Bulwer-Lytton's belief in the first half of the nineteenth century that "the only way to cure a disease is to let Nature herself dispose of it."

<sup>5</sup> Villette and Shirley parallel Jane Eyre in presenting female characters who escape from isolation as a result of illness. In Villette, Lucy Snowe is recognized by her godmother and her godmother's son (a doctor) during the sick-bed episode which follows her illness. In Shirley, Caroline Helstone, (abandoned by her parents as a child), is

claimed by her mother after she becomes ill. Coincidence is a factor in all three novels, for Jane, Lucy, and Caroline all find relations in unlikely places.

<sup>6</sup> McMurdy, p. 126, explains that "The Victorians recognized three ranks of medical men." These were the physician, the surgeon, and the apothecary.

<sup>7</sup> Blom, p. 88.

<sup>8</sup> Nancy Pell, "Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 31 (1977) p. 404.

<sup>9</sup> Pell, p. 404.

<sup>10</sup> David J. Burrows, Frederick R. Lapidus, and John T. Shawcross, eds. Myths and Motifs in Literature (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> Moglen, p. 111, writes of the red-room as the place where Jane "feels herself to be totally alienated from the living, thrust alone into the world of the dead and the supernatural" and from which "she is born into a new state of being."

<sup>12</sup> Sontag, p. 35.

<sup>13</sup> Moglen, p. 96.

<sup>14</sup> Pinion, p. 110.

<sup>15</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 278.

<sup>16</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. xi, see claustrophobia as a motif throughout literature by women.

<sup>17</sup> Van Ghent, pp. 168-69.

<sup>18</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 279.



<sup>19</sup> There is a significant difference in "healer" characters in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights. The benevolent Lloyd aids Jane Eyre, but Kenneth and Nelly--whose task it is to nurse a number of characters--are not the allies of Catherine. Q.D. Leavis, "A Fresh Approach to Wuthering Heights," p. 120, writes about "the unconscious brutality of the family doctor." And Gilbert and Gubar, p. 270, describe Kenneth as "the lugubrious physician, who functions like a medical Greek chorus throughout Wuthering Heights."

<sup>20</sup> Sigerist, p. 393, comments on the effect of illnesses in many cultures: "Illness releases. It releases from many of the obligations of society."

<sup>21</sup> In her illness, Catherine believes that "they put pigeons' feathers in the pillows--no wonder I couldn't die!" (p. 149). Her belief that this will prevent her escape reflects folklore. Marsden and Jack, in their "Explanatory Notes," p. 425, write of the belief that "The soul cannot free itself if the dying person has laid on a bed containing pigeon feathers."

<sup>22</sup> Langman, p. 78.

<sup>23</sup> According to the OED (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933), XII, 18, "waif" means both "a person who is without home or friends" and "an unowned or neglected child." In becoming a waif, Catherine becomes again both a child and an outsider.

<sup>24</sup> J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), p. 179.

25 Sontag, p. 41.

26 van de Laar, p. 172.

27 Marsden and Jack, p. 415, in their "Explanatory Notes," point out that "country" could mean "region" or "district."

28 Van Ghent, p. 167.

29 Richard Chase, "The Brontës, or, Myth Domesticated," in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1948), p. 114.

30 Sagar, p. 151.

31 Wilson, p. 234.

32 Cecil, p. 162.

33 W.A. Craik, The Brontë Novels (London: Meuthen, 1968), p. 20.

34 Craik, p. 17.

35 Anne Smith, Introd., The Art of Emily Brontë (London: Vision, 1976), p. 27.

### CHAPTER THREE: ILLNESS AND WOMANHOOD

Throughout myth and literature, women have been portrayed as defective men.<sup>1</sup> Gilbert and Gubar remind the reader of "Aristotle's notion that femaleness was in and of itself a deformity."<sup>2</sup> Related to the view of women as defective or deformed is the idea that women are innately unhealthy.<sup>3</sup> Robert Palfrey Utter and Gwendolyn Bridges Needham write of the eighteenth-century "idea of feminine delicacy."<sup>4</sup> This idea is illustrated through the following statement by Edmund Burke:

Beauty . . . where it is highest in the female sex, almost always carries with it an idea of weakness or imperfection. Women are very sensible of this; for which reason they learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness. In all this they are guided by nature. Beauty in distress is much the most affecting beauty.<sup>5</sup>

There are many physically ill female characters in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction.<sup>6</sup> By the nineteenth century, Marlene Springer explains, the "frail"



heroines in the popular fiction of the day had one "primary obligation" and that was "submissiveness to authority."<sup>7</sup> Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights reflect thinking in which there is a desirable relationship between womanhood and physical illness, for they indirectly counter it. Female characters in these two novels are characterized through graphic images of non-idealized physical illness.

Jane Eyre describes herself upon her admission to the Rivers' home which directly precedes her three-day illness as "trembling, sickening; conscious of an aspect in the last degree ghastly, wild, and weather-beaten" (p. 429). Nelly describes Catherine in her final illness in terms of her "ghastly countenance and strange exaggerated manner," "entangled locks" and "wasted face" (p. 148). These images portray the illnesses of Jane and Catherine as limiting and painful.

In Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, it is most frequently women and girls who are physically ill. Both novels relate the situations of female characters to symbolic physical illnesses. Through this symbol they explore the theme mentioned by Springer: submissiveness to authority.

In Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, maleness is associated with physical health and strength. Rochester and Heathcliff, the main male characters, are portrayed as extremely strong and healthy. Like Jane and Catherine, Rochester and Heathcliff are outsiders. These male

characters, however, have power in the world at large in ways which can at least in part be explained by gender.

Moglen comments: "Rochester is also an outsider . . . he embraces this definition of himself."<sup>8</sup> Rochester's robust health mirrors his general effectiveness. Rochester is maimed near the end of the novel, yet it is an injury, not an illness, which afflicts him. It is the result of forces outside of himself and not of any innate weakness.<sup>9</sup> The fact that he is not more injured in the terrible fire which destroys Thornfield may be seen as proof of Rochester's physical prowess. Jane says of the Rochester she finds at Ferndean: "His form was of the same strong and stalwart contour as ever . . . not in one year's space, by any sorrow, could his athletic strength be quelled, or his vigorous prime blighted" (p. 551).

Heathcliff is very much an outsider.<sup>10</sup> Yet as Craik comments, "Heathcliff, to gain his ends, can manipulate existing circumstances."<sup>11</sup> Heathcliff's effectiveness is related to his status as an adult male. He is able to leave the area and acquire wealth and the demeanor associated with being a "gentlemen," although it is hinted that he may have achieved this in some illegal manner. Corresponding to the adult Heathcliff's effectuality is his robust physical health. When a powerless and much-abused child, Heathcliff once was very ill; Nelly indicates he was near death (p. 47). The adult Heathcliff is not unhealthy; in fact, he is almost supernaturally strong and healthy. Heathcliff threatens Edgar: "I'll crush his ribs in like a rotten

hazel-nut" (p. 142), and the reader can all too easily imagine that he is capable of such an action both physically and psychologically. It is hard to imagine that the laws of nature could restrain Heathcliff, had he his mind made up on their defiance. When male characters in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights are physically ill, their illness is symbolic of either a flawed character or a lack of manliness.

In Jane Eyre, Jane's two male cousins bring early deaths upon themselves as a result of their improper ways of living. They represent opposite extremes: John Reed engages in dissipation; St. John Rivers denies his physical self completely. Neither finds the proper balance between the life of the body and of the mind which the novel indicates is essential for a healthful life. Although these two minor characters die, their illnesses are not described in detail and do not function as elements of characterization.

In Wuthering Heights, Linton Heathcliff's sickliness is the major element in his characterization. He is "A pale, delicate, effeminate boy," with a "sickly peevishness" about him (p. 245). Joseph and Hareton use the word "lass" in reference to him (p. 253 and p. 269), and Nelly points out that he has a "defective character" (p. 322). It is not Linton Heathcliff but the robust Hareton who will eventually be the master of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, for Linton Heathcliff does not survive to adulthood.



Edgar Linton in Wuthering Heights is also portrayed as physically weak. Catherine states that: "He always contrives to be sick at the least cross!" (p. 120). She has no sympathy for this trait in Edgar, although she herself is similarly susceptible.

In both Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, women as a group are presented as outsiders to the world of men. Their alienation is explored through symbolic physical illnesses.

The male-dominated order is presented as a direct threat to the health of Jane Eyre. John Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, the early Rochester, and St. John Rivers all threaten Jane's autonomy in ways which relate to economics.<sup>12</sup> The first threat Jane encounters is from John Reed. Karen Mann writes that Jane is imprisoned for using force against her "metaphorical brother."<sup>13</sup> In his assertion that the books Jane enjoys are his--"they are mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years (p. 8)--he is correct. His decision to deny Jane the books which are one of the few sources of her satisfaction is followed soon by her rebellion and her enclosure in the red-room.

Jane's illness in the red-room relates to her gain in knowledge about the restraints of the world in which she is living. Rich comments: "Her ensuing illness, like much female illness, is an acting-out of her powerlessness and need for affection, and a psychic crisis induced by these conditions."<sup>14</sup>

When Jane is imprisoned in the red-room, Mrs. Reed says to her: "It is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you" (p. 16). The message is clear: Jane must submit to the male-dominated order, of which John Reed is an example and of which the Reed household is supportive, or be severely constrained.

Lowood presents a threat to Jane through the person of Brocklehurst, who Gilbert and Gubar describe as "that merciless and hypocritical patriarch."<sup>15</sup> When Jane is introduced to him, she further realizes the threat to her health from the predominant order. She answers Brocklehurst's quizzing about how she will lead her life: "I must keep in good health, and not die" (p. 34). Pell sees the comment as significant; she writes, "This simple reply may be taken as a rubric for the rest of the novel. Jane is candidly committed to her own survival; but more than that, she plans to keep in good health."<sup>16</sup> Through the language of health, Jane indicates that she plans not just to survive, but to lead a satisfying life as well. Jane's decision to "keep in good health" is a wise one; at times, however, she falls short of this goal.

When Jane is not able to remain healthy, her illness explains the ways in which her life is unsatisfying. Annis Pratt writes, "The patterns of pain in the female bildungsroman are embedded in image, leitmotif, and larger narrative patterns; their antitheses are images of desire for authentic selfhood."<sup>17</sup> For Jane Eyre, the pattern of

illness is one, literally, of pain; the quest for health is related directly to Jane's "desire for authentic selfhood."

At first, Jane believes that Lowood "belongs" to Miss Temple. She is still somewhat innocent about the pervasiveness of the male-run order. After Lowood is freed of Brocklehurst, it provides Jane with a healthy environment of female friendship and learning. Moglen writes that "it is important for her development that the school is exclusively female."<sup>18</sup>

At Thornfield, during their initial engagement period, Jane becomes aware of the potentially destructive nature of her relationship with Rochester. She realizes that she would be dependent on him financially, and discusses the threat which this poses to her through health imagery. She reports about the shopping trip they take: "The more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation. As we re-entered the carriage . . . I sat back, feverish and fagged" (p. 338). It is at this point that Jane sends the letter which postpones the marriage.

Rochester encourages Jane to see her constitution as precariously delicate. Although Rochester realizes that Jane saw Bertha in her room on the night of the torn wedding veil incident, he encourages her to believe that the details she relates to him are the result of her imagination. He describes to her the state he wishes her to believe she was in as "feverish, almost delirious" (p. 360). He tells her



that "nerves like yours were not made for rough handling" (p. 359).

After Jane learns of the existence of Bertha Mason, she leaves Rochester and Thornfield. The temporary home she establishes at Morton is one of health and economic independence. She compares the life she leads at Morton with the one she would have led had she consented to be Rochester's mistress:

Whether it is better, I ask, to be a slave in a fool's paradise at Marseilles--fevered with delusive bliss one hour--suffocating with the bitterest tears of remorse and shame the next--or to be a village-schoolmistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England? (p. 459).

Again, health is associated with independence.

St. John Rivers represents the final threat Jane encounters from the male-dominated order. Rivers suggests to Jane a marriage in which she would be subservient and give up the inheritance which insures her independence. Physical exhaustion leading to death with Rivers as a harsh task-master in India is what Diana and Mary fear for Jane should she consent to marry their brother. LeRoy W. Smith relates the threat from Rivers to that which Jane experienced earlier from Rochester; he sees them both as in part physical. He writes, "From without both Edward Rochester and St. John Rivers seek to control Jane, her

emotions and spirit as well as her body. They offer opposing forms of the possibilities of tyranny to which one is vulnerable."<sup>19</sup>

Rivers would have Jane deny her physical self, and it is this aspect of her nature which enables her to resist him. She receives from Rochester what LeRoy W. Smith describes as the "eerie, urgent cry . . . that . . . passed to her extremities like an electric shock, and transformed her into a state of acute sensory alertness."<sup>20</sup> This call, sensed by Jane's physical self, causes her to seek out Rochester. The Rochester she finds is no longer a threat to her, for the two have been equalized, physically and financially. Jane is able to lead a healthy life with him.

In Wuthering Heights, Catherine's situation as a woman in a male-dominated world severely limits her power. Pratt writes of "the slow, inexorable process by which gender norms drive a Catherine Earnshaw . . . to self destruction."<sup>21</sup> This process is explored through the means the character chooses for this destruction: illness.

Catherine's first mentioned illness occurs on the night of her father's death. Nelly's narrative relates no details of this illness, but she describes Catherine's behavior due to it, saying "Miss Cathy had been sick, and that made her still" (p. 53). Mr. Earnshaw asks of the passive Catherine, who he does not realize is ill, "Why canst thou not always be a good lass, Cathy?" (p. 53). Mr. Earnshaw's interpretation of Catherine's illness and its passivity as "goodness" is significant. Later, when Catherine becomes

seriously ill, her behavior may be seen as a re-summoning of a proper woman's (or girl's) behavior; through this self-inflicted passivity, perhaps Catherine prevents herself from acting in a more overtly rebellious way. Like Jane Eyre in the red-room, Catherine Earnshaw is made aware through an episode involving illness of the value placed on passivity and submission.

Because she is a female, the boundaries of Catherine's world are very limited. Hindley and Catherine are siblings from equal circumstance, but the difference in their gender has given them very different realities. Unlike Catherine, Hindley has access to the outer world; he leaves the area.

In addition to the geographic differences in their lives, there is also an economic difference between Catherine and Hindley. Hindley is free to marry Frances, although she probably has no fortune of her own, for he is the inheritor of the family estate. If much of Catherine's discontent is caused by her need to marry for money, this must be seen as related to her status as a female.

After the death of their father, Hindley becomes a dominating authority figure over Catherine. "How little did I dream that Hindley would ever make me cry so!" writes Catherine in the diary-like entry which Lockwood finds (p. 27). She is becoming aware of the limitations placed on her. Hindley, in that he reduces the status of Heathcliff, is responsible for much of the unhappiness of Catherine's life.

As Gilbert and Gubar point out, many critics view Catherine's acceptance of a marriage with Linton as a



serious error on her part, a "moral failing."<sup>22</sup> Gilbert and Gubar do not think that Catherine's decision to marry Linton can be considered evidence of a flawed character. They write:

Morality only becomes a relevant term where there are meaningful choices . . . Catherine has no meaningful choices. Driven from Wuthering Heights to Thrushcross Grange . . . seized by Thrushcross Grange and held fast in the jaws of reason, education, decorum, she cannot do otherwise than as she does, must marry Edgar because there is no one else for her to marry and a lady must marry.<sup>23</sup>

It is the nature of the world in which she is living that is the cause of Catherine's unsatisfying adult life, that and her necessary submission to the authority of that world.

The motif of coming of age is embodied through Catherine's initial illness-related stay at Thrushcross Grange. Pratt writes that "the quest for youthful self-identity" is "an adventure often formalized in a ritual initiation into the mysteries of adulthood."<sup>24</sup> Catherine's coming of age separates her from her natural state of contentment and health. Gilbert and Gubar term the first visit of Catherine to Thrushcross Grange "some sinister ritual of initiation."<sup>25</sup> The mysteries of adulthood Catherine encounters there are, for her, terrible ones.

Wuthering Heights deals with Catherine's unsatisfied adult life and with the concept of health and wholeness, relating the two through Catherine's illness after the departure of Heathcliff. Keith Sagar writes,

To be separated from Heathcliff is to be cut off from part of herself, that part upon which health, sanity, and capacity for fulfillment depends . . . Thus Catherine reacts to the separation by becoming dangerously ill.<sup>26</sup>

Heathcliff, on one level, is the masculine double of Catherine, from whom the world of the novel demands her separation. Wade Thompson writes, "As a child Catherine is endowed with a kind of masculine power."<sup>27</sup> When Catherine comes of age, she is separated from this source of power and from her health. Adrienne Rich sees Catherine as symbolically separated from the masculine aspects of her personality when she is separated from Heathcliff. She writes:

Wuthering Heights is mythic. The bond between Catherine and Heathcliff is the archetypal bond between the split fragments of the psyche, the masculine and feminine elements, ripped apart and longing for reunion.<sup>28</sup>

Hindley's reaction to the first illness of Catherine presents illness as the province of women characters, and as something foreign and incomprehensible to this male character. Hindley reacts as follows:

"She's ill--" said Hindley, taking her wrist,  
"I suppose that's the reason she would not go  
to bed--Damn it! I don't want to be troubled  
with more sickness here" (p. 107).

Even the illness of his much-loved Frances for Hindley is troublesome. With this comment, Hindley shows his awareness that the illness and death of Frances might have a relationship to Catherine's impending illness.

Catherine's final illness also involves the concept of health as related to wholeness through Catherine's pregnancy-related death. Although Catherine does survive to give birth to her daughter, she is no longer cognizant by this point. She is spiritually absent from it, having already been polarized into the components of body and mind, a division which her death will make absolute. Gilbert and Gubar write, with reference to Catherine, "Birth is . . . the ultimate fragmentation the self can undergo."<sup>29</sup> As Catherine experiences the ultimate loss of wholeness, so she experiences the ultimate loss of health.<sup>30</sup>

Catherine and Heathcliff die in essentially the same way: from self-inflicted starvation. Yet there are major differences in the portrayal of their deaths. Catherine



dies after a sick-bed episode of almost three month's duration.<sup>31</sup> Her behavior is extreme. Heathcliff, in contrast, is not portrayed as "ill" at all; although Nelly tells him "you have something the matter with you now" (p. 399), she reports that "to my judgment he was quite strong and healthy" (p. 394). Heathcliff dies without the bodily suffering endured by Catherine. After his long fast, he is discovered by Nelly on his bed, dead. The body is something which Catherine suffers more through and which, apparently, she needs more to escape from. Heathcliff follows her in her escape.

Cecil cites the description of the final illness of Catherine as evidence of the poetical nature of Wuthering Heights.<sup>32</sup> V.S. Pritchett writes, "To hear afterwards that Catherine was in advanced pregnancy during the wonderful last scene with Heathcliff, which seems to me the finest moment in the English literature of passionate love, is a physical offence."<sup>33</sup> Thus, what many would probably agree is among the finest moments of love in English literature involves a sick-bed episode and a terminally ill woman who is on the verge of madness.<sup>34</sup>

In Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, female characters in addition to Jane and Catherine also experience symbolic physical illnesses. Some of these characters, unlike the main female characters, are typical representatives of their societies; their illnesses comment on the tenuous nature of their positions in their societies.

In Jane Eyre, Mrs. Reed becomes ill when she loses control of Gateshead, for she no longer has the money to maintain the estate. Mrs. Reed would have been quite willing to go on living in the role assigned to her, yet the security she felt in her role was a false one; her son has squandered the family fortune. It is thus Mrs. Reed's own male line--and the first oppressor of Jane Eyre, who has surfaced as a threat. Mrs. Reed is portrayed as powerless in her sick-bed when visited by Jane.

Lowood Institution in Jane Eyre is a paradigm for the situation of females in the male-run order. The serious illness which infects Lowood is symbolically related to the powerlessness of this group.

In Jane Eyre, different kinds of illnesses function symbolically with regards to Helen Burns and Bertha Mason. Both of these characters experience illness as a result of their situations as women in male-run environments. The illness of Helen Burns, representative of her rejection of and escape from the world, also is symbolic of her defeat by the stronger forces of society which judge her as lacking. Helen is very weak physically; Bertha Mason is the opposite. The mad Bertha's excellent physical health is specifically mentioned. She was "as robust in frame as she was in mind" (p. 392). Elaine Showalter sees Helen Burns and Bertha Mason as symbolically related. She writes:

Brontë's most profound innovation . . . is  
the division of the Victorian female psyche

into the components of mind and body . . . which she externalizes as two characters, Helen Burns and Bertha Mason. She resolves her heroine's psychic dilemma by literally and metaphorically destroying the two polar personalities to make way for the integration of the body and the spirit.<sup>35</sup>

Physical illness threatens a number of female characters in Jane Eyre. Showalter explains that madness was seen as an especial threat to women throughout the Victorian period. She writes, "Madness . . . can be seen as a way of labeling deviance from the feminine role; and as we have seen apropos of Jane Eyre, the Victorians evolved a theory of insanity that held women to be particularly vulnerable."<sup>36</sup> Helen's physical illness and Bertha's mental illness label the different ways in which they deviate from the feminine role.

Karen Mann comments on the rebellious behavior of Bertha Mason:

It is at least possible that Bertha's rage--expressed in fits of temper and in defiant acts of sexual indulgence--is the outward expression of malevolence bred by a system which denies her a separate will and imprisons her in a marriage that is primarily a monetary bargain.<sup>37</sup>



Bertha has acted in what can be considered a "masculine" way, and the territory of her illness is different from that of other women in Jane Eyre.<sup>38</sup>

In Wuthering Heights, illness symbolizes the unhealthiness associated with typical womanhood as exemplified by Frances and Isabella. Unhealthiness is the major element in the characterization of Frances. Gilbert and Gubar write that Frances is "like a late eighteenth-century model of the Victorian angel in the house."<sup>39</sup> They continue, "As a metaphor, Frances' tuberculosis means that she is in an advanced state of just that social 'consumption' which will eventually kill Catherine, too."<sup>40</sup> Frances, according to Gilbert and Gubar, incarnates "the social disease of ladyhood, with its attendant silliness or madness."<sup>41</sup>

Isabella, as a Linton, is a representative of the dominant society of the work. Isabella's claimed love for Heathcliff leads to her early death. This infatuation is very different from Catherine's bond with him, yet the result is the same. Gilbert and Gubar write of Isabella's initial reaction to Heathcliff: "like a parody of Catherine, she starves, pines, and sickens."<sup>42</sup> Isabella has been taught to experience this kind of infatuation for a gentleman, which is what Heathcliff now appears to be.

Catherine II in Wuthering Heights is basically healthy throughout the work. Yet illness also works symbolically in relation to her. Philip Drew writes,

The most obvious example of the care with which Emily Brontë works is the ironic correspondence between the two halves of the novel. The younger Catherine, Hareton, and Linton re-enact the parts of Cathy, Heathcliff, and Edgar at Heathcliff's bidding. Catherine's marriage to the sickly and malicious Linton is Heathcliff's bitter caricature of Cathy's marriage to Edgar.<sup>43</sup>

The marriage of Catherine II to Linton Heathcliff parallels her mother's in that each is enclosed, through marriage, to illness and death. For Catherine II, locked in a room with the dying Linton Heathcliff--who is in a sense illness incarnate--this is literally so.

Illness also functions symbolically when Catherine II uses it as an excuse, in a minor incident, to guard the secret of her correspondence with Linton Heathcliff from her father. The "young lady's qualm of sickness" (p. 278) is used as a typically feminine ruse; the potential destructiveness of this can be understood in the light of the more extreme way her mother used a "qualm of sickness."

Nelly and Catherine II are the only major female characters in Wuthering Heights who do not suffer serious illness and early death. Yet Gilbert and Gubar describe Nelly as the "patriarchy's paradigmatic housekeeper, the man's woman who has traditionally been hired to keep men's houses in order by straightening out their parlors, their

daughters, and their stories."<sup>44</sup> Thus, this female ally of the patriarchy is presented in a subservient position. Her excellent health relates, perhaps, to the "deal" she has made with the dominant order.

In Jane Eyre, other women help Jane to regain or maintain her health. The theme of an alliance among women is explored and is related to imagery of hunger and starvation.<sup>45</sup> Miss Temple is a role model for Jane. She offers an example of survival in a hostile environment. Not only is Miss Temple able to maintain her own health at Lowood, but she is also able to offer Jane and the other inmates sustenance material and symbolic. Gilbert and Gubar write of Miss Temple: "By the fire in her pretty room, she feeds her starving pupils tea and emblematic seedcake, nourishing body and soul together despite Mr. Brocklehurst's puritanical dicta."<sup>46</sup>

Moglen writes, "At Lowood, hunger seemed in part to be experienced as a need for love. Now the mature Jane confronts similar but more pressing deprivations--starvation and death from exposure. Both are spiritual as well as physical trials."<sup>47</sup> Through the food, shelter, and affection they offer, the Rivers help Jane to regain her health. They also offer Jane the example of an independent existence. Moglen writes that "it is crucial for her to discover herself anew in the images of women."<sup>48</sup>

The episode in which Rochester dresses as a gypsy and tells Jane's fortune also deals with an alliance among women. Rochester, who had been having a negative effect upon



Jane in his attempt to make her jealous, when disguised as a woman--and one outside British society--comments perceptively on Jane's situation, saying "You are sick; because the best of feelings, the highest the and sweetest given to man, keeps far away from you" (p. 246). Rochester voices more insight into Jane's situation than he has been doing in his own guise.

In Wuthering Heights, there is no alliance among women. Other women, particularly Nelly, Frances, and the elder Mrs. Linton only add to the discontent of Catherine and move her towards illness and death. Gilbert and Gubar write about the effect of Frances on Catherine: "The arrival of Frances is the worst thing that could happen to her. For Frances, as Nelly's narrative indicates, is a model young lady . . . as the twelve-year-old girl must perceive it, to be a lady is to be diseased."<sup>49</sup> Catherine learns too well the ways of womanhood as evidenced by Frances.

The elder Mrs. Linton helps to indoctrinate Catherine into adult womanhood during her first two stays at Thrushcross Grange. She encourages Catherine to reject what is essential for her health and satisfaction.

Imagery of food and starvation functions in Wuthering Heights to explore the nature of Catherine's enmity with Nelly. Jane Eyre depends upon sympathetic women to save her from starvation, but Catherine must reject the food offered to her by Nelly; it would not sustain her. Gilbert and Gubar write, "Catherine cannot swallow the food of culture."<sup>50</sup>

In Western mythology, women are punished for digressions from established rules. The territory of this punishment is the body, and it relates to the very definition of womanhood. In Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, the health of a number of women characters is symbolically threatened, including that of some who do not digress from the rules of their societies.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Burrows et al., p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Cooke and Susan Dworkin, eds., The Ms. Guide to a Woman's Health (New York: Berkeley Books, 1979), p. 1, write of the long prevalent "idea of simple femaleness as a state of compromised health."

<sup>4</sup> Robert Palfrey Utter and Gwendolyn Bridges Needham, Pamela's Daughters (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 422.

<sup>5</sup> Utter and Needham, pp. 180-81. They write, p. 417, that this idea did not lose popularity until "between the third and last quarters of the nineteenth century."

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, both Pamela and Evelina are examples.

<sup>7</sup> Springer, p. 135. Gilbert and Gubar, p. 54, write, "nineteenth-century culture seems to have actually admonished women to be ill". They cite Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness (Old Westbury: The Feminist Press, 1973).

<sup>8</sup> Moglen, p. 188.

<sup>9</sup> Moglen, p. 141, points out that Rochester's injury may be seen as "Christian punishment."



<sup>10</sup> Van Ghent, p. 157, writes of "the daemonic character of Heathcliff, associated as it is with the wildness of heath and moors."

<sup>11</sup> Craik, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Moglen, p. 104, writes that Charlotte Brontë has begun to reject . . . an exclusively biological definition of femininity. To some extent, she begins to see femininity as an existential condition, determined by psychological and social forces. To be powerless, without social, economic, or legal status . . . is to be female."

<sup>13</sup> Karen B. Mann, "Bertha Mason and Jane Eyre: The True Mrs. Rochester," Ball State University Forum 19 (1978), 32.

<sup>14</sup> Rich, p. 69. Rich implies that Jane's illness is reflective of the actual behavior of women and that such behavior would have symbolic content.

<sup>15</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 343.

<sup>16</sup> Pell, p. 403.

<sup>17</sup> Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981), p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Moglen, p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> LeRoy W. Smith, "Charlotte Brontë's Flight from Eros," Women and Literature, 4 (1976), 38.

<sup>20</sup> LeRoy W. Smith, p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Pratt, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 276.

<sup>23</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 277.

<sup>24</sup> Pratt, p. 13.

25 Gilbert and Gubar, p. 273.

26 Keith Sagar, "The Originality of Wuthering Heights," in The Art of Emily Brontë, ed. Anne Smith (London: Vision, 1976), p. 147.

27 Wade Thompson, "Infanticide and Sadism in Wuthering Heights," in Wuthering Heights: An Anthology of Criticism, ed. Alastair Everitt (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), p. 144.

28 Rich, p. 68.

29 Gilbert and Gubar, p. 286.

30 Gilbert and Gubar write, pp. 286-87, "She breaks apart into two Catherine's--the old, mad, dead Catherine fathered by Wuthering Heights, and the new, more docile and acceptable Catherine fathered by Thrushcross Grange."

31 Catherine's final illness is labeled "brain fever." McMurty, p. 138, comments that many female characters in Victorian literature suffer from brain fever and that this disease is "difficult to align with any present-day disease." He continues: "The reading public and the medical world were unquestioningly confident of brain fever's real existence in mankind's catalogue of ills."

32 Cecil, p. 169.

33 V.S. Pritchett, "The Implacable, Belligerent People of Wuthering Heights," in Wuthering Heights: An Anthology of Criticism, ed. Alastair Everitt (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), p. 154.

34 J.F. Goodridge, "A New Heaven and a New Earth," in The Art of Emily Brontë, ed. Anne Smith (London: Vision,

1976), p. 168, examines Catherine's final illness in relation to Poe's comment in his Philosophy of Composition that "the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world."

<sup>35</sup> Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 113.

<sup>36</sup> Showalter, p. 167. She cites Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972).

<sup>37</sup> Mann, p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> Mann, p. 31, points out that Bertha is often interpreted as "expressive of the passionate qualities of Jane's own personality."

<sup>39</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, pp. 267-68.

<sup>40</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, pp. 268-69.

<sup>41</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 269.

<sup>42</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 288.

<sup>43</sup> Philip Drew, "Charlotte Brontë as a Critic of Wuthering Heights," in Wuthering Heights: An Anthology of Criticism, ed. Alastair Everitt (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), p. 119.

<sup>44</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 291-92.

<sup>45</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. xi, see imagery of hunger and starvation as a motif in literature by women.

<sup>46</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 345.

<sup>47</sup> Moglen, pp. 132-33.

<sup>48</sup> Moglen, p. 133.

<sup>49</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, pp. 267-68.

<sup>50</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 288.



## CONCLUSION

Vineta Colby points out that by the nineteenth century, "the narrowly didactic function of the eighteenth-century novel had broadened into a vast moral-ethical-philosophical one."<sup>1</sup> *Two of Charlotte Brontë's well-known contemporaries* differed in their reactions to the philosophy each saw Jane Eyre as espousing. According to Laura L. Hinkley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning criticized Jane Eyre for "too boldly defying social conventions" while George Eliot criticized it for "not defying them boldly enough."<sup>2</sup> This difference in opinion is illustrative of more than merely the very different perspectives of these two women writers who, except for Emily Brontë, were "closest to Charlotte in time and talent,"<sup>3</sup> for there was some critical debate surrounding the interpretation of Jane Eyre.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever advantage the modern reader may have in reading Jane Eyre in relation to the period in which it was produced has not lessened the differences in opinion about the extent to which the novel is supportive of typical nineteenth-century concepts of womanhood or speaks out against them; that is, how it deals with what was then called the "woman question."<sup>5</sup>

Gail Cunningham's comments illustrate the view held by a number of modern critics that Jane Eyre, although progressive in the portrayal of its protagonist, is supportive of the status quo of women in the nineteenth century:

Charlotte Brontë, whose novels, perhaps more than any others of the period, reflect a persistent and in many ways revolutionary interest in the essential nature of woman, ultimately endorses the idea that a woman's highest achievement lies in the conventional concerns of love and marriage.<sup>6</sup>

Although Jane Eyre does accept as sustaining her role as Rochester's wife, Charlotte Brontë has significantly re-defined that role. Lawrence Jay Dessner writes,

If Jane Eyre has borne a moral message to its reader, the message has been one of revolution. The novel is an exhibit in the history of feminism, for Jane's plight points to the narrow scope, in employment and education, that was woman's fate in early Victorian England. And Jane insists too on a relationship with the male that, if not of equality, is a long way from simple submission.<sup>7</sup>

The attaining of a healthy, satisfying adult womanhood by Jane Eyre is on her own terms. It is also against great odds.<sup>8</sup> Remembering Q.D. Leavis' statement on the theme of Jane Eyre ("how a woman comes to maturity in the world of the writer's youth"), the novel, in part through symbolic illnesses, illustrates that the protagonist almost does not attain maturity, for her death is a real possibility, and that although she does reach maturity, it is not without a great deal of suffering.

Jane Eyre was a popular as well as a critical success when first published, but Wuthering Heights was not as well received.<sup>9</sup> Sagar writes,

The largely hostile reception Wuthering Heights received from contemporary critics was predictable, given the current notions of what a novel should be ("the aim of fiction is to afford some sensation of delight"), and of the function of the critic as guardian of public taste and decency. The reviews are full of such words as "coarse," "painful," "shocking."<sup>10</sup>

Wuthering Heights initially produced many "morally outraged" critics, according to Ewbank.<sup>11</sup> They were unable to fit the work into the general categories of the purposes of fiction, for it offered no clearly discernible and acceptable message, and it could not have "delighted" them.



If today's reader should attempt to look for a message from Wuthering Heights relative to the "woman question," the statement the novel makes would have to be seen as relating to the fact that there is no possibility of a healthy adulthood offered for Catherine, Frances, or Isabella. Posing as a question for Wuthering Heights, Leavis' statement the theme of Jane Eyre--how does the character come to maturity?--the novel answers that the central female character does not come to any kind of understandable maturity. Symbolic illnesses explain why Catherine is not sustained by adulthood.

Charles Kingsley made the following statement after Mrs. Gaskell's The Life of Charlotte Brontë was published: "Well have you done your work, and given us the picture of a valiant woman made perfect by suffering."<sup>12</sup> Q.D. Leavis writes,

It was just such Victorian attitudes about women, and such an assumption about the improving effects of filial duty, unhappiness, and deprivation that made Charlotte write her novels, which all spring from a passionate need to demonstrate that a good life for a woman, no less than for a man, is a satisfied one.<sup>13</sup>

Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights explore the theme of what satisfied lives for women might--or might not--involve. The suffering the female characters are portrayed as enduring is

not of an improving nature; in each novel, it is potentially limiting to an extreme degree.<sup>14</sup>

Charlotte and Emily Brontë may not have been consciously aware that illness is a pattern of symbolism in their novels. Charlotte Brontë touched upon the idea of the subconscious--though she would not have known this word--at work in artistic production when she wrote in her much quoted "Editor's Preface to the New Edition of Wuthering Heights," "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."<sup>15</sup>

Virginia Woolf has commented on the situation of women as writers, suggesting that "the two main obstacles" as she perceives them are "the Angel in the house" and "the difficulty in telling the truth about my own experiences as a body."<sup>16</sup> Michèle Barrett comments, "Effectively, this means rejecting the pure, ideal image of woman, and frankly exploring sexuality and the unconscious."<sup>17</sup>

Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, published eighty-two years before Woolf wrote the above, deal with the theme of the Angel in the house through Jane Eyre's re-defining of and Catherine Earnshaw's escape from this role.

Sexuality is tangential in the main female characters' different reactions to adult womanhood.<sup>18</sup> Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights tell truths about very individual characters both about and through the territory of the body. Each novel explores what Barrett terms the "unconscious" as

females are not consciously aware of their motivations and the essential actions they produce.

Gilbert and Gubar see many examples of physically ill female characters in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature. They write,

Surrounded as she is by images of disease, traditions of disease, and invitations both to disease and dis-ease, it is no wonder that the woman writer has held many mirrors up to the discomforts of her own nature . . . the great artistic achievements of nineteenth-century novelists and poets from Austen and Shelley to Dickinson and Barrett Browning are often both literally and figuratively concerned with disease, as if to emphasize the effort with which health and wholeness were won from the infectious "vapors" of despair and fragmentation.<sup>19</sup>

Metaphoric illnesses can be found in much that is classified as "women's literature."<sup>20</sup> Yet part of Susan Sontag's thesis in Illness as Metaphor is that metaphoric illnesses in literature reflect a most negative tendency for actual illness to be assigned symbolic content. She writes,

My point is that illness is not a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness--and the healthiest way of being



ill--is the one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking.<sup>21</sup>

Since regarding actual illnesses metaphorically is most negative, how can they be looked at in works of literature? Gilbert and Gubar--who analyze literature in an admittedly experimental way, for they have "sought to describe both the experience that generates metaphor and the metaphor that creates experience"<sup>22</sup>--believe that illness as a symbol in early fiction and poetry by women reflects the social situation of these early women writers, and, more specifically, their situation as authors. They write that early women writers "struggled in isolation that felt like illness, alienation that felt like madness, obscurity that felt like paralysis to overcome the anxiety of authorship that was endemic to their literary subculture."<sup>23</sup> They continue:

The recent feminist emphasis on positive role models . . . should not keep us from realizing the terrible odds against which a creative female subculture was established. Far from reinforcing socially oppressive sexual stereotyping, only a full consideration of such problems can reveal the extraordinary strength of women's literary accomplishments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>24</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Vineta Colby, The Singular Anomaly: Women Novelists of the Nineteenth Century (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1970), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Laura L. Hinkley, Ladies of Literature (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> Hinkley, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> Miriam Allott, The Brontës: The Critical Heritage (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 20, write that although Jane Eyre was "an immediate popular success," it was "the target for a few self-appointed guardians of public morality."

<sup>5</sup> S. Barbara Kanner, "The Women of England in a Century of Social Change, 1815-1914: A Select Bibliography," in Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), p. 178, writes, "As the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed rapid changes in social, economic, and political life, the question of women's roles became an increasingly frequent and controversial point for public discussion." Debated were woman's "nature," "condition," "duties," and "rights."

<sup>6</sup> Gail Cunningham, The New Woman and the Victorian Novel (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Jay Dessner, The Homely Web of Truth (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Blom writes, p. 87, that Jane Eyre "is an individual's desperate struggle against almost insuperable odds." LeRoy W. Smith, p. 37, points out that "in basic character" Jane Eyre "is a fantasy."

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 21, explains that most of what is now considered great literature produced in the 1840s was a popular as well as a critical success in its own time, with Emily Brontë's novel the only one "both great and esoteric."

<sup>10</sup> Sagar, p. 128.

<sup>11</sup> Ewbank, p. 94.

<sup>12</sup> Leavis, Introd., Jane Eyre, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Leavis, Introd., Jane Eyre, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Much has been written about the Brontë's own lives. The health of the family has received attention. One paper by Philip Rhodes, "A Medical Appraisal of the Brontës," Brontë Society Transactions, 16 (2) 1971, 102-08, states that many of the Brontë family's illnesses were "neurotic." And as Christian writes, p. 224, a number of critics believe that Emily "willed her own death." Blom, p. 21, writes, "All four children were plagued by ill health and lived adjacent to the churchyard where the graves of their mother and two sisters were seen daily from the windows of the parsonage."



Whatever the truth is about the health of the Brontë family, illness as a symbol in their novels reflects facts broader than those relating to their own lives.

<sup>15</sup> Marsden and Jack, p. 444. Chase, p. 113, writes of Charlotte and Emily Brontë: "It is true that they do not always seem to be fully aware of what is going on in their own novels. In Jane Eyre, this produces some remarkably naïve and inappropriate dialogue. Emily Brontë's 'innocence,' however, is akin to what Keats called 'negative capability'--the ability of the tragic writer to retain an un baffled, even uninquiring, perception in the midst of awful and confusing events."

<sup>16</sup> Barrett, Michèle, Introd. Women and Writing (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1979), p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Barrett, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that in Charlotte Brontë's only work of fiction with a male protagonist, The Professor, she "comes as close to stating as Victorian propriety will allow, that William's attack of morbidity is the result of suppressed sexuality," Cynthia A. Linder, Romantic Imagery in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Female Imagination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 54, sees illness as a motif throughout Victorian literature; she writes of "the mysterious wasting disease that punishes the sins of so many nineteenth-century fictional women-gone-wrong." But as

Reed, p. 17, comments, illness was a convention throughout Victorian literature. It did not always have a deep symbolic content.

<sup>21</sup> Sontag, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. xiii.

<sup>23</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, p. 51.

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