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A Cat-and-Dog Combat: Upsetting the Brute in Wuthering Heights

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A Cat-and-Dog Combat: Upsetting the Brute in *Wuthering Heights*

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THESIS

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Abstract

Wuthering Heights, Emily Brontë's only novel, adapts the tropes of slave narrative to construct a schema of animalized humanity. By reading *Wuthering Heights* as a novel *about* slavery, not just as a novel onto which a reading of slavery can be projected, this thesis proposes a *Wuthering Heights* in which the greatest sin is seeking to deny one's own beastliness by animalizing others. Brontë's animalized humans fall on a spectrum. On one end is the classic brute, a culturally dominant figure of the brutish laborer. At the other end of the spectrum is the British brute, a trope from slave narrative, in which humans lose their humanity by denying the humanity of those they wish to dominate. Heathcliff has often been seen as the singular brute figure in *Wuthering Heights*, but in fact, every character in the novel is multiply animalized, compared to, paired with, and otherwise associated with nonhuman life. By focusing on this spectrum of brutishness, the racialized nature of white characters is made visible, as is their tendency to deny their own animality. The novel makes a distinction between violence and cruelty. While violence can be cruel, cruelty is not always violent, and many of the characters often viewed by readers, including Charlotte Brontë, as the novel's least harmful, are cruel rather than violent. I examine the Earnshaws' enslavement of Heathcliff over two generations, the Lintons' attempts to distance themselves from the sources of their fortune, and the ways that the two estates function as plantation space and British soil. What emerges from this reading is a picture of greater moral complexity and entanglement with the afterlife of British slavery.

Introduction

It is inevitable, in talking of brutes, to turn to *Wuthering Heights* and Heathcliff. Heathcliff is the brute ideal. A laborer, he is also dark-skinned, mysteriously foreign, violent, likely criminal.[1] Charlotte Brontë wrote of her sister's creation, "Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know: I scarcely think it is." In contemporary reviews, the words "brutal" and "savage" appear again and again to describe both Heathcliff and the novel itself.[2] Heathcliff's brutality is the engine driving the novel's plot, and so, though critics and fans alike note the general cruelty of most of the novel's characters, Heathcliff's cruelties are the most studied. Emily Brontë, however, does not limit her portrait of cruelty to Heathcliff. Her novel assumes a spectrum of inescapable brutality on which all humans fall. At one end of this spectrum there is Heathcliff, a classic brute. At the far end of the scale is Edgar, the novel's most fully realized British brute. By combining readings of animality and readings of sublimated slave narrative[3] in *Wuthering Heights*, a new picture emerges, one in which violence and cruelty are separated, and productive violence is valued over unproductive cruelty. The classic brute labors for others while the British brute extracts labor and violence from others. In Brontë's novel, the British brute still outsources labor and violence, but to little end, while Heathcliff, in the role of the classic brute, recreates and

1 A note here to say that it's becoming clear to me that I need a name for the overarching brute trope as well as the counter narrative. Currently using Classic Brute/British Brute, but open to consideration on both of these terms. (Basic Brute seems too cutesy.)

2 *The Athenaeum* (1847), *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Magazine* (1848), *The Examiner* (1848), *The Britannia* (1848), *The Atlas* (1848), and George Lewes in *The Leader* (1850), all make use of one or both of the terms.

3 Whether British slavery was one of the major influences on *Wuthering Heights*, and, indeed, much of the Brontë oeuvre, is an established point of debate among literary critics, with much evidence to suggest it was. While some critics place the influence of the Irish famine higher, through Heathcliff's racial indeterminacy he is able to represent multiple peoples oppressed by British might. Because I am interested in the role of slave narrative in introducing the British brute to nineteenth-century British literature, I will be more focused on the influence of slavery on Heathcliff's origins; this is not intended as a dismissal of his Irish or Romani potentials, which I find equally compelling.

enriches the novel's two estates through his labor and violence. Both forms of brutality are symbolized, throughout the text, in comparisons to, and associations with, dogs, and more rarely cats. In the text, consciousness of one's animality, classic brutality, is associated with the plantation space of Wuthering Heights, while repressed animality and British brutality are associated with Thrushcross Grange.

Every character in *Wuthering Heights* is compared to and paired with a multiplicity of nonhuman animals. The theme is such a constant that Barbara Munson Goff could write in 1984 that "Virtually all critics of *Wuthering Heights* have addressed themselves to the rhetoric of animality in the novel" (479). However, fewer studies of the sublimated slave narrative in *Wuthering Heights* have been paired with the study of its animality, perhaps because, as Ivan Kreilkamp writes in his brilliant "Petted Things," animality as a "figurative strategy is often seen simply as a component of the dehumanization we associate with racism" (55). Animalization becomes less noteworthy when it is seen as inevitable. But Heathcliff's race does not explain the novel's other, and numerous, animal comparisons. If animality suggests abjection, what are we then to make of the animalization of powerful white landowners like Edgar, or delicate white women, like Isabella? In *Wuthering Heights*, animality is too pervasive to be linked to racial oppression alone. The brute figure, human and animal both, presents a new opportunity for refiguring the immoral universe of the novel, one that takes into account race and animality alike.

The theme of the brute is addressed most pervasively through the medium of dogs. While animals of all sorts populate the text in physical form and figurative language, it is the dog that is most constant. Dogs are profuse in *Wuthering Heights*, diverse in purpose and diverse in effect, and the liminal space occupied by the dog, at

once a wolfish, dangerous beast and a familiar, homely pet, is where Emily Brontë both draws and smudges boundaries between human and animal. Dogs mark the uncomfortable collapse of the space between useful and useless, purposeful and purposeless. Dogs, as domestic animals, are often paired with cats, but in *Wuthering Heights* both metaphorical and actual cats are conspicuously rare. Indeed, there is only one living cat in the text, found by Lockwood, the novel's poorest reader of sentience. Cats, in *Wuthering Heights*, are connected with the figure of the British brute, and the British brute cannot read sentience. It is this specific trait that allows him to enslave other human beings, who must be figured as lesser in order to justify their treatment.

In the late eighteenth century, pro and anti-slavery arguments were made through comparisons to animals. Although racist pro-slavery arguments often compared *un*enslaved Africans to wild exotic animals such as gorillas and orangutans, enslaved people were more often compared to domesticated, homely animals familiar to the British. On the pro-slavery side, this comparison was one-to-one, treating enslaved human beings as interchangeable with other animal property: chattel. Formerly enslaved people, however, compared their *treatment* to domesticated animals, with the argument that to treat a human being as an animal creates a loss of humanity in the oppressor. The dog was a common vehicle from both sides, as were horses, cattle, and sheep. The tenor was the debated humanity. Heathcliff slots easily into this dialogue. The boy taken from Liverpool, in 1771 Britain's most active slave port, and brought back to Yorkshire when Mr. Earnshaw is unable to find out "its owner." Heathcliff is described as "dark…as if it came from the devil," "a dirty, ragged, black-haired child," who is "starving," "houseless," and "as good as dumb," since his speech is "some gibberish that nobody could understand" (65). Although Brontë never names

Heathcliff's race or origins, there is ample implication that he is in some way associated with Liverpool's most profitable trade. I suggest that Heathcliff's animalization and racialization are intertwined, and that both, well explored separately, are underexplored as conjoined units. Furthermore, the animality and racialization of characters other than Heathcliff is yet more unexplored, perhaps because Heathcliff, as the racialized other, falls more easily into the tropes expected of an animalized human.

Despite over thirty years of critical examination of slavery in *Wuthering Heights*, Susan Gillman writes that it remains "both read as a literary classic and overlooked as a literary source of the history of slavery" (5). While some critics place the influence of the Irish famine higher than the influence of slavery, Heathcliff's racial indeterminacy allows him to represent multiple peoples oppressed by British might. Because I am interested in the role of slave narrative in introducing the British brute to nineteenth-century British literature, I am more focused on the influence of slavery on Heathcliff's origins; this is not intended as a dismissal of his Irish or Romani potentials, which I find convincing. That is to say, *Wuthering Heights* can be a novel that both interrogates the legacy of British slavery and a novel in which Heathcliff's racial indeterminacy serves to undermine the usefulness of race as a taxonomizing apparatus in the nineteenth century. The presence of slavery in *Wuthering Heights* is often read as a critical choice rather than an authorial choice, but Gillman goes further, claiming the novel as, "arguably from the start, a historical novel of slavery" (5). She asks, "why would Brontë in 1847 have set her novel in late-eighteenth-to-early nineteenth-century England (it opens in 1801, extends back to the 1770s), when slavery had not yet been abolished, and then veil its presence?" (5). She has several answers, among them the possibility of throwing the Brontë family into conflict with their neighbors. *Wuthering Heights* enters

a British literary tradition of sublimated references to British slavery,[4] one that begins with the Treaty of Utrecht.[5] Slavery is visceral and present in American literature; there is no separation between the enslavers and the human beings they claim as property. British slavery, however, often took place out in empire, not in the homeland. As the ongoing Legacies of British Slave-ownership (LBS) project reveals, British wealth was often founded on hidden legacies of enslavement.

This hidden legacy plays out in the two households between which *Wuthering Heights* is divided. Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, separated by four miles and a gulf as wide as the Atlantic, have very different relationships to slavery. The gulf marks the separation between plantation space and England, a separation that allowed for the continued sublimation of slavery. The Earnshaw family, long established at Wuthering Heights, are landowners, though they are not wealthy and the Heights requires laborious physical toil from its inhabitants for its maintenance. This family, more directly connected to the land and labor, can also see the benefits of violence and enslavement. The Linton family, landed gentry, lives at Thrushcross Grange, and there the duty of a magistrate is passed down from father to son. Both families collect rent on holdings in their local region of Yorkshire; only one family makes enough from this rent to live without laboring for livelihood. The two properties are forcibly combined in the person of Heathcliff, an abject outsider from Liverpool, who, over the course of decades, gains control of both, only to lose both properties in his early death. However, in reshaping the younger generations with purposeful cruelty, Heathcliff undoes much of

4 Sublimation is a common literary tactic in books published in the 1840s; in subjects of controversy, indirection is common.
5 This history of avoidance is traced by John Richardson in "Alexander Pope's 'Windsor Forest': Its Context and Attitudes Toward Slavery."

the harm done by luxury and social pretension, and when the properties are finally reunited with the remaining representatives of the two families, there is some hope that they will be better managed because of his brutal interference. In *Wuthering Heights*, the people of the Grange can largely keep themselves unaware of the violence and enslavement taking place at the Heights, the source of their own wealth now separated from their more genteel estate, much as "Antigua" can function as a source of wealth in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* without examination of what takes place at the site. The Lintons' income is passive. The Earnshaws work themselves and others for theirs.

Though the Lintons might wish it otherwise, slavery was not foreign to Yorkshire, as Christopher Heywood made clear in 1984. In "Yorkshire Slavery in *Wuthering Heights*," Heywood unearths the then-recent history of enslavement in the near vicinity of the Brontës' home at Haworth. Not only did some neighbors make their fortunes on Caribbean slavery, but the Sills, a landowning family in Dent, "practised slaveholding in Dentdale" (193). Heywood quotes a 1758 advertisement:

> Run away from Dent, Yorkshire, on Monday 28 last, Thomas Anson, a negro man, about 5ft 6ins high, aged 20 years and upward, and broad set. Whoever will bring the said man back to Dent, or give any information that he may be had again shall receive a handsome reward from Edmund Sill of Dent, or Mr. David Kenyon, of Liverpool. (193)

The advertisement appeared in *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*. Yorkshire slavery was not just a product of the Liverpool trade, but an intimate local practice of the eighteenth century, and Heywood supplies prolific circumstantial evidence that the Brontës were aware of the Sills' history. That history now appears in the Sills' entry in the LBS website. The LBS project relies on the fact that British slavery ended by law and

British slaveowners were compensated for their loss. In order to receive compensation, British slaveowners had to register both that they were slaveowners, and how many people they owned, and the LBS tracks both this registration, and where the money from compensation went afterward. In a page on Ann Sill, who was compensated for 174 enslaved people, a short note citing Heywood reads, "The Sill family have been proposed as the model for the Earnshaw family in *Wuthering Heights*" ("Ann Sill"). Sill money built their home, West House, on land that had previously belonged to the Masons, a more genteel family who do not appear in the LBS, as their slave trade money came from part ownership of two slave ships, rather than the direct ownership of enslaved people (Heywood 193). Heywood suggests the Masons as models for the Lintons.

Wuthering Heights' eighteenth-century setting is not incidental to its portrayal of a nonwhite man in a town sixty miles from Liverpool. Gillman points out that this distance demonstrates the reach of British slavery:

> *Wuthering Heights*, set among the people of the rural hinterland beyond the slave trade of Liverpool and Lancaster, demonstrates, first, that slave ownership was spread across the British Isles, by no means confined to the old slaving ports, and included men and women of varied ages, ranging from the aristocracy and gentry to sections of the middle classes; and, second, that slavery did not end with Emancipation but continued in other forms of unfree labour. (14)

If *Wuthering Heights* was always about slavery, Gillman claims, then its lack of recognition in its own time and periodic rediscovery by scholars marks what Toni Morrison has called a "national amnesia" (1). Even now, she notes, "few readers anywhere would recognise a 'black' *Wuthering Heights*" (2). Its animality is easier to

grasp. Animals are not sublimated in the text. They overrun it, often in ways that defy the easy racialized reading of Heathcliff's animal associations. Slavery, in *Wuthering Heights*, does not make one animal, though it does corrupt. Animality precedes action. Everyone is always animal, and everyone has always been animal.

Rather than marking him as uniquely animal, Heathcliff's shifting racial identity marks the racial anxieties of the period and place, not least in terms of racial mixing and the smudged boundaries that result. The Celtic Brontës lived in a society that still saw them as outsiders although Emily's generation had been born and raised in Yorkshire.[6] They were themselves seen as racial others in their home, a fact reiterated in Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë, in which Charlotte's childhood friend Mary refers to Charlotte's "strong Irish accent" (78). The Brontë children, who had never lived in Ireland, were nevertheless viewed as Irish by many of their acquaintances. Though *Wuthering Heights* should not be read as an autobiography,[7] Heathcliff's otherness is not wholly alien to his author. Like Heathcliff, the Brontës could be read as gentlefolk, but would remain somehow outsiders, foreign. Though Heathcliff's racial identity remains uncertain throughout the novel, its very uncertainty suggests that he can, at least partially, pass. This identification does not suggest that Brontë meant Heathcliff as an avatar for herself or her kin, but that his position is somewhat familiar and often sympathetic. As recently as 2018, the author of a book about Heathcliff has referred to his "psychopathy" (Michael Stewart). This overlooks the ways Heathcliff is unable to

6 Indeed, the Brontë Parsonage Museum webpage states that "Yorkshire people like to think of the Brontës as true Yorkshire folk, but the truth is they were entirely Celtic by birth. With an Irish father and a Cornish mother their connection with Yorkshire was purely through settlement rather than blood" ("The Brontës and Haworth – Haworth Places"). The Brontë children were all born in Yorkshire.

7 Though it has been, often with unsettling result. A 1957 biography of Emily Brontë by Norma Crandall reads the Heathcliff/Cathy relationship as a confession of the incestuous love between Emily and Branwell.

obliterate his own humanity even though many in his orbit either try to obliterate or fail to see it. Heathcliff is not a monster, but a human being who is first seen as monstrous, then performs monstrosity. He experiences the hypervisibility/invisibility of a racialized body in a primarily white space. Though Hindley is as or more violent and cruel than Heathcliff, he is afforded the expectation of belonging, while Heathcliff is regarded as an intruder.

Sentience and Species

The creation of belonging and intrusion is the work of narration. *Wuthering Heights* is mediated through two narrators, the outsider Lockwood and the insider Nelly Dean. Lockwood's contributions are limited, bookending the primary narration by Nelly, a woman who played with the Hindley and Cathy Earnshaw in childhood, served them as a housekeeper from her teens, and later became the housekeeper to the Lintons on Cathy's marriage to Edgar. When we meet her, she is serving as a housekeeper to Lockwood, then a tenant of Thrushcross Grange. Her views of the family are comprehensive; she sees, or claims to have seen, most of the principal action firsthand. Lockwood comes in after most of the action, in 1801, as Heathcliff's tenant after Heathcliff has united the two properties under his ownership. Lockwood views little of the action in person and hears most of the tale after he asks Nelly for information about his landlord. Though these two narrators are strongly differentiated in their subject positions, the earliest introductions to Lockwood and Nelly show that they share a deep flaw in their potential reliability as narrators.

When the deluded Lockwood, who describes himself as a misanthrope and "exaggeratedly reserved," takes "the honour of calling as soon as possible" on his

landlord, he is greeted by stern disapproval from Heathcliff and the dogs of the Heights (37). Lockwood's first sight on entering Wuthering Heights is a large common room that is both kitchen and parlor in which "[i]n an arch, under the dresser, respose[s] a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies, and other dogs haunt[] other recesses" (38-9). The combination of dimness and depth limiting Lockwood's view suggests a cavern, turning the dogs of the Heights into a pack of wolves. Despite this visual warning, Lockwood moves to pet the mother dog, Juno, even though, as he puts it, she is "sneaking wolfishly to the back of [his] legs, her lip curled up, and her white teeth watering for a snatch." Since she is nursing pups and displaying aggression, it is clear that she feels threatened by his presence, but Lockwood pets her anyway, and then is surprised by her "long guttural growl" (40). When Heathcliff goes out of the room, Lockwood, left with the company of the mother dog and two "grim, shaggy sheep-dogs," amuses himself by making faces at the dogs, not imagining that they can be provoked by his teasing. The dogs attack him, and when Heathcliff enters on the scene again, the dogs and the master are explicitly linked. "Guests are so exceedingly rare in this house that I and my dogs, I am willing to own, hardly know how to receive them," Heathcliff says, in lieu of apology (41). In this first encounter the text joins the man described by Lockwood as a "dark-skinned gipsy" to his animals, suggesting an animalizing of the racial other common in Victorian novels (39). Furthermore, a second visit to the Heights is marked by a second dog attack, this one provoked by Lockwood's grabbing of a lantern, which the ancient servant, Joseph, believes him to be stealing. Again, the farm dogs are figured as wolves, when Joseph calls to them, "Hey, Gnasher! Hey, dog! Hey, wolf, holld him, holld him!" Lockwood describes "two hairy monsters" that fly at his throat, although neither bites him, showing that they are in fact,

domesticated. Heathcliff's laughing response to this incident once again links him to the dogs, this time in his understanding of their behaviors, the understanding that Lockwood so conspicuously lacks (49).

The view of Heathcliff as a racialized animal is backed up when Lockwood convinces his housekeeper, Nelly Dean, to tell him Heathcliff's history. She begins by describing Heathcliff as a "cuckoo," and his ward Hareton as "an unfledged dunnock," or hedge-sparrow (64). The cuckoo bird lays its eggs in the nests of birds of other species, where the baby cuckoo quickly hatches, and then pushes the other eggs out of the nest so that the cuckoo chick will be raised alone by the unsuspecting parents, devouring all the sustenance meant for their own young. By calling Heathcliff a cuckoo, Nelly is implicitly making him out to be of a foreign species, usurping the rightful place of the native sparrow. Nelly's tale of Heathcliff's arrival in Yorkshire is marked by similar othering. The child is found by Mr. Earnshaw, the former master of Wuthering Heights, on a trip to Liverpool, and brought back to Yorkshire when the farmer is unable to find out "its owner," language spoken by Nelly, but meant to be descriptive of Mr. Earnshaw's account. Heathcliff is described as "dark…as if it came from the devil," "a dirty, ragged, black-haired child," who is "starving" (here likely meaning "freezing"), "houseless," and "as good as dumb," since his speech is "some gibberish that nobody could understand" (65). This is the classic racialized othering that turns a dark-skinned human being into an animal in Victorian fiction. Heathcliff is referred to as "it,"[8] understood to be "dumb" like a nonhuman animal despite his speech, and treated as disposable by most of the household. Nelly herself, then a teenager, tries to rid them of

8 Nelly also refers to babies as "it," but Heathcliff is around seven years old at the time of his arrival. His lack of English seems to be the primary reason for his ungendered dehumanization.

the child: “[The Earnshaw children] entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw’s door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber” (66). This language is remarkably similar to descriptions of the behavior of dogs. Heathcliff curls up outside the door of the one person in the house who has treated him with some kindness.

Though Lockwood is the bumbling outsider and Nelly a canny insider, they are soon revealed to be two of a kind. In a textual echo of Lockwood’s inability to imagine that a dog could be insulted by his mockery, Nelly tells how she and Hindley, the eldest Earnshaw child, used to torment the boy, who would “stand Hindley’s blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches moved him only to draw in a breath, and open his eyes as if he had hurt himself by accident, and nobody was to blame” (66). Nelly says of Heathcliff’s endurance that “[h]e complained so seldom, indeed, of such stirs as these, that I really thought him not vindictive—I was deceived, completely, as you will hear” (68). Heathcliff feels and resents, but it is impossible for the English characters to imagine him truly understanding his plight, since they have already marked him as inhuman. That he does not audibly complain tells Nelly that he does not mind his treatment, much as the dog Juno’s inability to speak tells Lockwood that his caress should be welcomed.

In another example of Nelly’s imperception, she describes a particular incident in which Heathcliff, his arm already “black to the shoulder” from Hindley’s beatings, uses his injuries to blackmail Hindley into exchanging horses with him. Heathcliff, finding his own horse less than satisfactory, tells Hindley that if he doesn’t exchange horses,

Heathcliff will show Mr. Earnshaw his extensive bruises and "tell him how you boasted that you would turn me out of doors as soon as he died" (67-8). Hindley gives him the horse, but only after calling Heathcliff a "dog," throwing a heavy iron weight at the child's chest and kicking him to fall under the horse's hooves, with the express intent to murder him. His tirade is violent and racist: "'Take my colt, gipsy, then!' said young Earnshaw, 'and I pray that he may break your neck; take him, and be damned, you beggarly interloper! And wheedle my father out of all he has, only afterwards, show him what you are, imp of Satan—and take that! I hope he'll kick out your brains!" Though Hindley is seven years older than Heathcliff, Nelly shares this story not as evidence of Hindley's abuse of Heathcliff, but Heathcliff's abuse of his adopted family. Nelly is the same age as Hindley, played with him as a child, and tends to sympathize with him no matter how violent he reveals himself to be. Though she had earlier claimed that Hindley had "lost his last ally" (67) when she gained some amount of sympathy with Heathcliff, after the horse incident, she "persuaded [Heathcliff] easily to let [her] lay the blame of his bruises on the horse" (68), covering up Hindley's attempted murder of his father's favorite. As hedge-sparrows, the Earnshaws have rights of possession—and violence—that the intruder lacks. The abused child is still framed as the outsider and aggressor because of his status as an outsider, not just to the country, but to humanity. The novel, however, figures this not as fact, but as a lack in Nelly herself, a lack shown by her own admission that Heathcliff *did* resent this treatment. Heathcliff's animality in this exchange is not separate from his racialized status. Nelly frames him as unreadable, and yet, like Lockwood, can correctly describe evidence that suggests feeling and resentment, including his "sullen" patience (66).

Nelly and Lockwood are united in their inability to correctly read sentience. The entirety of the novel is filtered through their lenses, but from the beginning, the reader is warned that they do not always understand what they see, particularly in observing nonhuman behavior or behavior they mark as nonhuman. Heathcliff, initially viewed by Lockwood as a "capital fellow!" if "more exaggeratedly reserved than myself" (37), is quickly reframed as animal and monstrous. As Nelly witnesses Hindley's violence without critique of Hindley, so Lockwood listens to the tale without critique of Nelly, praising her uncommon thinking skills and admiring her observation (86-7). Nelly interprets Heathcliff as the animalistic cause of unrest in the Earnshaw household, but in fact that household is the cause of its own discomfort. Heathcliff is not a cuckoo, but a foundling, and even his abandonment by his original family or community is unclear, since Mr. Earnshaw can't speak, or even recognize, Heathcliff's first language. If Nelly's interpretations of these events are removed, we are left with a child who is picked up and carried off by a strange man who can't understand him but seems at least marginally less hostile than the other inmates of his house. He becomes a stolen child, rather than a lost child.

Heathcliff's Transatlantic Hypervisibility

White normativity masks white racialization, and marginalized bodies are both overseen and underrealized. Hortense Spillers describes this process in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" when she introduces her essay with the words "Let's face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name" (65). She interrogates the rote stereotypes available to classify Black women, who are both highly visible and rarely *seen*, called out of their names by the generalities of spectacle available to index the

descendants of the enslaved. What Christina Sharpe refers to as slavery's "wake" haunts the racialization of Black people in the white societies that formerly enslaved them. Surveillance both produces and obscures sight, and racialization of bodily difference serves to create a "marked" people, marked by the afterlife of the lasting wrong of chattel slavery, what Saidiya Hartman calls the "dominative imposition of transparency and the degrading hypervisibility of the enslaved" (36). Hypervisibility inherently strips a person of context, both community context and personal context. Names are important because "…the animal-black analogy is not only a question of racial or species elision, but also one of (hyper-) visibility and addressability" (Boisseron xix). To be private is a privilege denied owned animals and marked humans alike, and to be addressed by a name not of your choosing is a moment of forced exposure (Boisseron xix).

Heathcliff is a marked man, and no one knows his name. The name Heathcliff is one chosen by the Earnshaw family, though the child is about seven years old and surely already has a name given to him by his community. (He either never recalls or never shares his given name.) His bodily difference is noted by almost every white character in the text; though he is apparently sufficiently ambiguous that his race is never definite, he is also always seen as visually singular. Spillers says that Healthcliff is made legible in the role of "the notorious bastard," the unacknowledged Black son who threatens property rights (65).[9] Heathcliff's hypervisibility is revealed in moments in which he is viewed as spectacle. At Thrushcross Grange, separated from Wuthering Heights by a

9 Spillers groups Heathcliff with "notorious bastards" Caliban and Joe Christmas. Heathcliff's disruption of inheritance, as well as his favored status with Mr. Earnshaw, is perhaps why two recent novels, *Ill Will* and *The Lost Child*, position Heathcliff as Mr. Earnshaw's bastard son with an enslaved woman.

distance Isabella Linton will later call “the Atlantic” (151), Heathcliff becomes yet more foreign than he is in the plantation space of the Heights. Heathcliff is petted and labors at the Heights. At the Grange, he is subject to the gaze of the British subject at home.

The differences between the Grange and the Heights are marked in dogs. The Heights, with its combination kitchen/parlor, its plethora of dogs ranging over the house, its cavernous smoky interior, is completely unlike the Grange’s majesty of crimson and gold with a “shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains” dripping from the ceiling (74). But when in Nelly’s story the children of the Heights, Cathy and Heathcliff, sneak up to peer into the Grange, imagining that it is “like Heaven,” they see the Linton children, Edgar and Isabella, ranged at opposite ends of the room. Heathcliff tells Nelly

> Isabella—I believe she is eleven, a year younger than Cathy—lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red hot needles into her. Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog shaking its paw and yelping, which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them. The idiots! That was their pleasure! to quarrel who should hold a heap of warm hair and each begin to cry because both, after struggling to get it, refused to take it. (74-5)

At the Grange, where the farming is done by others, there is the luxury to have a small, decorative dog for the house, rather than the farm dogs than live and work with the Earnshaws. With that luxury comes idleness and covetousness and cruelty of a different sort than the abusiveness of Hindley Earnshaw. The active violence of the Heights is less energetic at the Grange, but the results are equally cruel. The helpless dog, probably a

toy breed if it is small enough to be on the table, is coveted only when and because the other child has it. Whereas Heathcliff and Hindley's fight over the horse is triggered by its efficacy, the Lintons' fight over the dog is triggered by its status as a luxury. The dog is a part of the accumulation of wealth and disconnected from its own animal nature and the uses the novel associates with animality.

And there is a second type of dog at Thrushcross Grange, very different than the first, the dog that must guard what the gentleman has accumulated. When the Linton children realize that they are being watched, they scream until their parents loose the bulldog, Skulker, which catches and bites Cathy. Although the bulldog has a utilitarian purpose that the toy dog lacks, Emily Brontë was writing in the 1840s, after an 1835 law made bull baiting illegal (Ritvo 108). Since bulldogs had been bred specifically to fight bulls, their utility was gone with a stroke of the pen. Harriet Ritvo writes that after the law had passed, "[w]ithin twenty years it was announced that 'this fine specimen…is at the present day almost dying out'" (109). The significance of a bulldog at the Grange is that even the dog kept for utility is still an extravagant animal, bred for a cruel purpose, and not particularly useful outside of that purpose. The bulldog can guard because it has a fierce bite, but it cannot be a good farm dog.[10] Bulldogs, moreover, were associated with Saxon heritage and English identity (Ritvo 107), lending credence to the claim that the Grange represents England. Like the inhabitants of the Grange, Skulker is disconnected from purpose associated with the land. He exists as an avatar of the sort of human the Grange breeds: a guardian of wealth with a cruel bite. Violence in *Wuthering*

10 Historically, any dog who fought a bull could be considered a bulldog, and even in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, appearances of bulldogs could vary wildly. However, specialized breeding of bulldogs for the qualities best suited for fighting bulls made the dogs less useful in other roles (Ritvo 108).

Heights is not automatically wrong, but Brontë differentiates between violence that has a natural purpose and superfluous cruelty. The brute who bites to protect wealth is worth less than Juno, the brute who bites to protect her family.

Cathy, a twelve-year-old girl caught in jaws bred to hold and tear bulls, eventually passes out from the pain, and when the adults of the Grange arrive, they prove themselves to be of the Lockwood and Nelly school of reading. Mr. Linton mistakes the children for members of a robber gang after the rent money that he has collected the day before. Linton land is still farmed, but at a distance from the Grange, and the Lintons live partially on the money of the people who do the farming. As the local magistrate, Mr. Linton is ready to pass judgment over the children immediately, especially Heathcliff, who is proffered to Mrs. Linton as an exotic specimen: "Oh, my dear Mary, look here! Don't be afraid; it is but a boy—yet the villain scowls so plainly in his face; would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him at once, before he shows his nature in acts as well as features?" (76). Though there is a small girl who has just vomited out of pain, the family fixates with fascination and horror on the dark-skinned, uninjured child. Mr. Linton holds Heathcliff under the light; Mrs. Linton puts on her spectacles to look upon him and "raise[] her hands in horror;" the children creep nearer (76). The scene is not unlike the displays of racialized people such as Sarah Baartman, Tono Maria, and Oto Benga in the nineteenth century. Though Heathcliff's masculine gender prevents the full hypersexualization placed on Sarah Baartman and Tono Maria, his proximity to Catherine suggests a potential reproductive threat.[11] Heathcliff's

11 Indeed, both Linton parents comment on the potential for corruption in Heathcliff's companionship to Cathy, and Mr. Linton gives Hindley a lecture on allowing Heathcliff access to the young lady (76-7).

hypervisibility makes him an object of curiosity and stereotype at the very real expense of Cathy, at that moment injured and likely unconscious, but less visible.

Isabella Linton pipes up to say that he looks like the gipsy child who stole her "pet pheasant," a sure sign of the topsy-turvy backwardness at the Grange. The pheasant is a game bird, but at the Grange, a nominal farm, it is kept for a pet. Moreover, though Heathcliff's origins are unknown (the Lintons speculate, in addition to the Romani origin, that he might be "a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway"), Isabella immediately moves to associate him with the stereotype of theft attached to Romani travelers. Though hypervisibility makes a marginalized body theoretically legible to the majority, "[h]ypervisibility is more of a blindness than a clarity" (Johnson 167). The stereotyping associated with hypervisibility performs a dehumanization that offers "excusable means for exploitation and violence" (Mowatt, et al. 645). Isabella's observation is accompanied by a request to "put him in the cellar, papa" (76), a gentler recommendation than Mr. Linton's proposition that the boy should be hanged without trial. As a representative of the state through his status as a magistrate, Mr. Linton demonstrates the use of race as "a technology aimed at permitting the exercise of biopower, 'that old sovereign right of death'" (Mbembe 17). Heathcliff's unexpected difference, his ambiguous race, his potential Blackness, marks him as available to disabling and disassembly.

However, Catherine recovers enough to hear and laugh at Isabella, and her laugh makes her visible to Edgar, who recognizes her from church. Unlike Heathcliff, Cathy in context is not biopolitically disposable, and concern is refocused on her injuries once it becomes clear that she is not a classic brute, though she accompanies one. Heathcliff is also contextualized by the Lintons' recognition of Catherine, and while the Lintons are

horrified by his person and the inappropriateness of his association with Catherine, he is released while the injured Cathy is kept. Looking in through the window, where Catherine is now installed in the crimson and gold room, Heathcliff sees her, “merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog and Skulker, whose nose she pinched as he ate” (77). Associating with superfluous dogs is, as much associating with superfluous gentry, a problem for a person who lives in a utilitarian world. When Catherine is returned, five weeks later, she is too fine for the Heights. Although her eyes “sparkled joyfully when the dogs came bounding up to welcome her, she dare hardly touch them lest they should fawn upon her splendid garments” (78). Useful dogs and superfluous luxury do not mix easily.

Cathy’s previous cruelties were direct. When, at age six, she realized her father had acquired an urchin and lost her hoped-for whip, she spat on Heathcliff (66). In play, as a child, she liked to “act the mistress, using her hands freely, and commanding her companions” (70). Her violence, while inappropriate for a person of her gender, fits into the usual violence of the Heights. When Cathy spits, she “earn[s] for her pains a sharp blow from her father to teach her cleaner manners” (66). Hindley regularly beats Heathcliff, Nelly pinches him, Joseph, the Heights’ rent collector and man of work, advises and administers physical punishment to the children. Mrs. Earnshaw observes violence and looks the other way, particularly when she sees Heathcliff wronged (66). In the plantation space of the Heights, violence is free and natural. Everyone hopes to wield the whip; no one wants to be hit by it. While physical violence is harmful, Cathy’s childhood violence is also easily confronted because it is easily visible. In contrast, on her return for the Grange, her brutality has moved from alignment with the classic brute to the British brute. When she meets Heathcliff once more, she deals him a blow that

hurts more than any slap she may have previously dealt, laughing and crying out, “Why, how black and cross you look! and how—how funny and grim! But that’s because I’m used to Edgar and Isabella Linton” (79). When Heathcliff expresses hurt, she offers a non-apology, asking “What are you sulky for? It was only that you looked odd—if you wash your face and brush your hair, it will be all right. But you are so dirty!” (79). She accompanies this with a glance of worry at her own body and clothing, “which she feared had gained no embellishment from its contact with his” (79). Heathcliff is now subject to her British gaze, and her cruelty has become polite, in that it is aligned with the values and expectations of her society. That Cathy will always be pulled between the two poles of brutality available to Britons is hinted at by Hindley’s wife Frances’s warning that “she must mind and not grow wild again *here* [emphasis mine]” (78).

Slavery and Pet-keeping

Heathcliff’s presence at Wuthering Heights cycles through the two main roles of the enslaved Black person in eighteenth-century Britain: he is first kept as something akin to a pet, and then for his labor. Mr. Earnshaw serves as the pet-keeper, and Hindley as the slaver. Both of these roles are animalized in different ways, but it is essential to the novel that both are filtered through Nelly and Lockwood and that animality is not limited to the enslaved character. Ivan Kreilkamp writes that

> In recent decades, we have tended to view Victorian rhetoric that dehumanizes and animalizes certain characters or human beings primarily as one aspect of racialization, presuming that to view someone as animalistic is more important a way to define him as nonwhite. But the human-animal distinction bears consideration as operating according to a

logic of its own that is not only a matter of defining normative whiteness. (55-6)

As I have noted, though Heathcliff is frequently compared to animals, especially dogs, so too are the other characters. Hindley pulls Nelly "by the skin of [her] neck, like a dog" (95). He threatens to crop his toddler son Hareton's ears, saying, "It makes a dog fiercer and I love something fierce—get me scissors—something fierce and trim!" (96). He tells Cathy she is "as dismal as a drowned whelp" (107). Isabella Linton calls Cathy a "dog in the manger" when the two of them are arguing over Heathcliff (120). Cathy refers to Heathcliff as "a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man" (121). The servant Joseph glares "like a hungry wolf" (151). Heathcliff calls Isabella a "pitiful, slavish, mean-minded brach" (bitch) when she lives at Wuthering Heights as his wife (162). He tells of how he hung her springer spaniel as a symbolic substitute for herself (162). Heathcliff calls Joseph a "toothless hound" (183). The younger Cathy is like "a young greyhound" (211). Linton, Heathcliff's son with Isabella, escapes his father "exactly as a spaniel might which suspected the person who attended on it of designing a spiteful squeeze" (259). Heathcliff calls the younger Cathy a bitch, although Lockwood hides the term behind a dash in his recounting (60). Hareton accompanies Lockwood "in the office of a watchdog" (280). The adult Hareton is characterized by the younger Cathy as "just like a dog" because "[h]e does his work, eats his food, and sleeps eternally" and "twitche[s] his shoulder as Juno twitches hers" (290). Though Heathcliff's animality is linked with chattel slavery, the book does not allow him to stand alone as animal, nor even as dog. Whiteness in *Wuthering Heights* plainly does not mean "not animal."

At the same time, Heathcliff, the only nonwhite character, stands alone in his enslavement. Though he will try to place Hareton in the same position that Hindley

placed him, he will ultimately fail, not just through his early death, but through his failure to overcome his own humanity. Though Heathcliff is violent and cruel, he is never successfully able to act as cruelly as he wants to. His revenge on Hareton is thwarted from its first moment, when Heathcliff saves Hareton's life when Hindley endangers it, and in so doing, realizes he has lost an opportunity for vengeance (96-7), and continues after he gains guardianship of Hareton. Though he forces Hareton to labor without pay and keeps him from gaining an education, as Hindley did with him, he does not subject Hareton to the beatings Hindley dealt him. Hareton, indeed, loves Heathcliff, and Heathcliff, despite his repeated intent to enact revenge on Hindley through Hareton, is constantly finding traces of himself and his beloved Cathy in the boy. Heathcliff's brutality does not preclude the possibility that, against his will, he loves Hareton. Of Hareton, he says, "'It will be odd, if I thwart myself! … But when I look for his father in his face, I find *her* every day more!'" (283). Though he is partially able to reenact his own childhood through Hareton, Hareton never occupies the same enslaved pet or laborer role that Heathcliff does.

This is not to excuse or ignore Heathcliff's very real cruelty. Though his treatment of Hareton is somewhat moderated, it is still cruel, and Heathcliff's violence toward characters such as Isabella, Linton, and the younger Cathy is unjustified, though it sometimes results in positive change. Heathcliff, in feeling unwanted affection for Hareton, yet denying him property and education, mimics the father/slaver-owner who keeps his children as property, though not so successfully as the Earnshaws. Though Hareton is Hindley's son, the text positions him as the phantom offspring of Cathy and Heathcliff: he looks like the first and is raised by the second to share many of his traits. It is Hareton alone who will mourn Heathcliff at his death, the man to whom he owes

"filial loyalty" (von Sneidern 186). Maja-Lisa von Sneidern points out that "we are hard pressed to remember that Hareton is Frances and Hindley's son," positioned as he is as "Heathcliff's 'immaculate creation,' embodying his masculinity and vigor," unlike Heathcliff's actual son, the sickly Linton (186-7). Heathcliff desires the ability to subjugate others. He tells the elder Cathy, describing her as his slaver, "The tyrant grinds down his slaves and they don't turn against them; they crush those beneath them. You are welcome to torture me to death for your amusement, only allow me to amuse myself a little in the same style" (129). I suggest not that Heathcliff is moral, but that, in the immoral world of *Wuthering Heights*, the brute who knows his brutishness ironically maintains more of his humanity than those who never think to question theirs.

Heathcliff's role as pet begins when Mr. Earnshaw brings him home. Nelly says that Mr. Earnshaw "pett[ed] him up far above Cathy, who was too mischievous and wayward for a favourite" (66). Writing of pet keeping and slavery, Sarah Hand Meacham notes that "[i]n the eighteenth century, a 'pet' was simply an animal, usually a lamb, that was reared by hand. A 'favorite,' in contrast, was an animal regarded with particular favor" (522). Heathcliff is multiply referred to as Mr. Earnshaw's "favourite," a status that, Kreilkamp claims, is the cause of suffering in his youth (62). And yet, to be denied favored status as an animal denotes "immediate risk of being turned into meat or mere flesh" (Kreilkamp 62). The Earnshaw children, in being denied the role of favorite, are not in danger of being turned into meat, but they do suffer their father's blows, while Heathcliff is protected from them. And yet Heathcliff's favored status is not fully human, either, and he is denied many of the privileges that the Earnshaws enjoy. Despite his favor, Mr. Earnshaw never adopts Heathcliff as a son. The boy is given the first name of

a dead Earnshaw child, but no surname, and no legal standing in relation to the family. When Mr. Earnshaw dies, Heathcliff will not inherit money, name, or property. He will lose his favored status instantly.

In this section of the novel, Brontë collapses the late eighteenth century of the book on the mid nineteenth century in which she was writing. In the early modern period through the late eighteenth century, "Black slave boys – and they usually were boys – became prized status symbols" (Olusoga). These boys appear in portraiture of the period, often clad in "a confused jumble of exoticism, orientalism and geographic confusion" (Olusoga), terms that would seem to apply equally to the confusion surrounding the shifting but exotic racialization of Heathcliff himself. David Olusoga writes of these portraits "Not insignificantly, enslaved Africans are repeatedly pictured alongside dogs, cockatoos, monkeys and other pets. The result is that although such paintings are by definition group portraits, the black people appear in them as lonely isolated figures." In a 1770 portrait by Johan Zoffany, *The Family of Sir William Young, Baronet*, a Black servant appears intimately intertwined with the family, much as Heathcliff seems a child of the Earnshaw family. However, a closer look at the portrait shows that "he is also a support, like the horse, and, like the dog, gazes on the standing boy's face. He is included in the family portrait, like the animals, as an accoutrement or prop to help communicate this family's qualities" (Tobin 42). Though the Black servant is a human being, "[t]he glint of gold…that shines from beneath [his] neckcloth is a metal collar that slaves wore much the same way dogs wear collars" (Tobin 42). The connection between dogs and enslaved people was explicit; a 1756 goldsmith advertisement offers "silver padlocks for Blacks or Dogs; collars, etc" (Tuan 142). When *Wuthering Heights* was composed, pet-keeping had become a measure of nationalized

humanity. Harriet Ritvo, writing about the transition to normalized pet-keeping in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, says that "[t]o some extent, the change paralleled the increased public indulgence of the softer emotions" (85), and by the nineteenth century, could be seen not just as an emotion to be indulged, but a counter to violent tendencies that came to be classed as foreign to the English character (130-1).

Pet owners were satirized, however, as sometimes caring for animals at the very real expense of human beings, particularly those human beings with a family claim to care (Ritvo 134). Mr. Earnshaw, in keeping Heathcliff as a pet, throws off the affections and emotional needs of his own children. He repeatedly tells Catherine that "I cannot love thee" until she becomes inured to his rejection (Brontë 70), and his relationship with Hindley deteriorates to the point that he suffers fits of rage at being too unwell to actively beat his son (69). Worse still, since Heathcliff does not return his affection, he is not the true master of his pet. That role is reserved for Cathy, who likes "exceedingly to act the little mistress" and to "show[] [her father] how her pretended insolence, which he thought real, had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness" (70). The corrupting influence of pet-keeping can be compared to the corrupting influence of slave-keeping. Maja-Lisa von Sneidern quotes an argument of Mr. Hargrave in the Somersett case "that slavery 'corrupts the morals of the master, by freeing him from those restraints . . . so necessary for controul of the human passions, so beneficial in promoting … virtue'" (175). Yi-Fu Tuan makes the connection explicit, writing in his history of pet-keeping that the practice of human pet-keeping can be illustrated in "the role of black domestics in England from the sixteenth to the early part of the nineteenth centuries" (141). Tuan cites the multiplicity of ways that pets, servants, enslaved people, and Black people in Europe occupied similar nonhuman roles: in being named by masters, in humiliation, in

being kept for entertainment value, to demonstrate personal kindness, for labor (141-9). In keeping a human pet, Mr. Earnshaw takes on the role of the British brute, not through overt violence, but through the act of denying a human being the role of a human being.

At Mr. Earnshaw's death, Hindley, by then exiled from the home, inherits and returns to become the master. Though Hindley seems at first more concerned with gentility and status than his father, his plan to add a parlor, "that late eighteenth-century innovation of architectural and class division" (Surridge 166), quickly falls by the wayside. He becomes, instead, the Caribbean planter: rough, uncouth, and possessed of laboring human property. He soon "[drives Heathcliff] from their company to the servants, deprive[s] him of the instructions of the curate, and insist[s] that he should labour out of doors instead, compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm" (73), although unlike the other farm boys, there is no indication that Heathcliff receives any wages. Like an enslaved person in the broader Empire, Heathcliff is denied literacy and put to hard physical work. Though Hindley also abuses his sister Catherine, primarily in punishing her harshly for small offenses (including denying her food), it is Heathcliff who assumes the role of slave. Joseph becomes his overseer, "thrash[ing] Heathcliff till his arm ached" (73), while Hindley, a true plantation master, lounges "down-stairs before a comfortable fire" (51), reminding the children that they "have a master here" (51), and ordering beatings (73). Hindley's wife joins in on the violence, pulling Heathcliff's hair, hard, at her husband's suggestion, after the boy snaps his fingers (52). As Hortense Spillers and Nirmala Erevelles have noted, in slavery, "it is in becoming disabled that the black body is at the height of its profitability" (39). Hindley, previously the primary physical abuser, now lingers, like

Cathy will, between the classic brute and the British brute. His most vicious violence is currently outsourced, but he will slip backward after his wife's death and enact his own violence once more. At the Heights, slavery is never held at a distance. Though the characters occasionally wish to be seen as more civilized, more integrated into England proper, they never wish it enough to give up their violence. The parlour is considered, but never made. Animality is close to the surface in plantation space.

Pray Tell Me, Sir, Whose Dog Are You?

Both plantation space and the more refined home country are populated by numerous dogs. The proliferation of dogs in the text reveals a great diversity of types. Dogs are potentially dangerous, as the frequent and varied dog attacks reveal, and sometimes people are dangerous like the wolves that dogs once were. But dogs can also be fawning, servile toadies, the near opposite of their wild potential. Within the text there are pointers, spaniels, bulldogs, terriers, hounds, lapdogs, greyhounds, and sheepdogs, each bred to a purpose. The pointers and spaniels are gun dogs, bred to accompany men who hunt, although the spaniels in the book show a potential for corruption, bred down as they sometimes are for mere pets. Bulldogs were bred for the cruel sport of killing for amusement. Terriers were bred for pest control, to hunt rats and other devouring vermin. Hounds were bred for hunting by sight or by nose. The greyhound was a courtly dog in medieval times. Sheepdogs herd sheep. But lapdogs serve no purpose other than human desire for a companion that can be loved—and owned. To be a dog is not necessarily a bad thing. Emily Brontë, in another essay for her French teacher, writes that "we cannot sustain a comparison with the dog, it is infinitely too good" (313). But it matters what kinds of dogs people are, or choose as associates.

Many of the characters in *Wuthering Heights* are associated with useless dogs. As previously mentioned, the Linton family owns a toy breed and a bulldog, both of whom act as sites of corruption. Isabella will later own a springer spaniel, ostensibly a companion, but when Heathcliff hangs the dog on their elopement, Isabella makes only slight objection and goes off with him anyway (162). Like the pet pheasant, the springer spaniel marks the upside-down nature of the Grange. Initially bred as a gun dog, at the Grange the spaniel, Fanny,[12] is a companion for a young lady who doesn't hunt. In *Wuthering Heights*, people and animals are valuable in their use, and if they lack a purpose, they are each valueless. From place names it seems that the wealth of the district has been made in sheep. The nearest town is Gimmerton; a "gimmer" is a one-year-old ewe (*OED*). Additionally, the Linton family bears the same name as a breed of sheep common to nineteenth-century Yorkshire, hardy and bred for the rough highlands of Scotland (Goff 495). The word "grange" means a farm, but the Lintons are not farmers. The Lintons, by losing touch with the land (the source of their wealth) and the cruelty of purpose in favor of the cruelty of propriety, have become detached from the animality that still animates them.

Heathcliff's cruelty is not hidden under socially acceptable niceties. While he is brutal, he is also free from many of the vices that plague other characters. Under Hindley, Wuthering Heights falls into disrepair and violent anarchy. He eventually gambles away his home and Hareton's inheritance to Heathcliff. In contrast, Heathcliff is an excellent farmer and manager, though his own activity does not make him sympathetic to the suffering of others; he is described as a hard landlord, and he

12 The name suggests Anne Brontë's King Charles Spaniel, Flossy (sometimes written as Flossie).

frequently mocks, ignores, or causes pain. When Lockwood is awakened out of nightmares in Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff is already awake and up. “Always [to bed] at nine in winter, and always rise at four,” he tells the surprised Lockwood (58). The entire reason that Lockwood is staying at Wuthering Heights is because Heathcliff was unwilling to spare the stock in favor of a man who voluntarily set out on a four-mile walk just ahead of a snowstorm. The sheep must be driven to the barn and the horses cared for ahead of the storm (46, 48). While Catherine’s Grange daughter sets people ahead of animals, murmuring that “[a] man’s life is of more consequence than one evening’s neglect of the horses” (48), Heathcliff has no such hierarchy. Humans and animals alike are measured in use value, and to be animal is no shame in a world in which nonhuman animals can be of more use and value than a human being.

Heathcliff, when he is (frequently) compared to a dog, is most often compared to wolves, and he associates with dogs who are also compared to wolves. In the book, this marks him as pitiless, ungentle. But though the wider world may have preferred a dog more suited to petting, Emily Brontë favored the useful over the superfluous, the fierce over the obsequious. In Elizabeth Gaskell’s biography of Charlotte Brontë, Emily is described as a woman who “never showed any regard to any human creature; all her love was reserved for animals” (199). This love was not sentimental, however. While Anne Brontë had a little pet King Charles spaniel named Flossy, Emily’s dog was a ferocious mastiff named Keeper who had been given to the family with the warning that he was “a dangerous dog, liable to attack anyone who tried to discipline him” (Adams 44). When Keeper continued to climb on the white counterpanes of the Brontë beds despite chastisement, Emily took matters into her own hands. She beat Keeper with her fists until, as Elizabeth Gaskell described it, “his eyes were swelled up” and he was “half-

blind" and "stupefied," before carefully nursing the injured dog back to health. After this incident, the two were inseparable (Adams 48-9). Ivan Kreilkamp views Keeper as Heathcliff's "real-world pet predecessor in the Brontë family" (58). The point of once more recounting this famous incident is that Emily Brontë saw neither violence nor ferocity as morally disqualifying.

In another incident in Gaskell's biography, Emily tried to give water to "a strange dog, running past, with hanging head and lolling tongue" only to be badly bitten. Emily quickly cauterized the wound with a hot goffering iron and kept her injuries secret from her family until she knew the danger of rabies had passed (200). This real-life scene bears a striking resemblance to Heathcliff's account of Cathy's dog bite, when he says that "She did not yell out—no! She would have scorned to do it, if she had been spitted on the horns of a mad cow" (Brontë 75). For Emily Brontë, nature was ungentle in its majesty, and her theological worldview did not believe in a God who could be found in "still calm," but rather, one who "mounts the storm and walks upon the wind" (Pope). Brontë's view of the world was often bleak. As Emily put it in a French essay for her tutor, "Nature is an inexplicable problem; it exists on a principle of destruction. Every being must be the tireless instrument of death to others, or itself must cease to live, yet nonetheless we celebrate the day of our birth, and we praise God for having entered such a world" (Brontë 316). Although in the closing paragraph to her essay Emily resolves God to nature, it is a resolution that can only be met by the death of all life, when "every grief that he inflicts on his creatures, be they human or animal, rational or irrational" is erased on "the pyre of the universe in flames" (317). Until then, the world is cruel, necessarily cruel, and suffering is the natural lot of man and beast. Stevie Davies refers to this as "[t]he abattoir-world of Emily Brontë's vision" (108), that is reflected in

Wuthering Heights' "welter of violence, both human and animal—or rather human-animal and animal" (109). Barbara Munson Goff describes Emily as having a "reverence for the pitiless economy of nature," and it is important to keep that in mind in following her animal associations in *Wuthering Heights*. The pitiless and the cruel are not necessarily the unjust in the fallen and as-yet-unredeemed world.

Sheathed Claws

There are fewer cats than dogs in Brontë's text, but those few are significant. Though humans would not stand up in comparison to dogs, Brontë believed that human beings were quite appropriately compared to cats:

> …the cat, although it differs in some physical points, is extremely like us in disposition.
>
> There may be people, in truth, who would say that this resemblance extends only to the most wicked men; that it is limited to their excessive hypocrisy, cruelty, and ingratitude; detestable vices in our race and equally odious in those of cats.
>
> Without disputing the limits that those individuals set on our affinity, I answer that if hypocrisy, cruelty, and ingratitude are exclusively the domain of the wicked, that class comprises everyone. ("Le Chat" 313)

Brontë's negative characterization of cats was hardly unique. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the cat was "the most frequently and energetically vilified domestic animal," a creature "both deceitful and difficult to train" (Ritvo 21-2). Emily Brontë, then, affirms this common belief, but also distinguishes herself by starting her

essay with a frank assertion that “I like cats” and a claim that “those who despise them are wrong” (313). Cats are the distressing mirrors of humanity, made wicked by the human push away from a guileless and natural animality.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the character most frequently associated with cats is Lockwood, the visitor from a more fashionable social world and by far the most detached from his animal nature. Lockwood, during his one night’s sojourn at Wuthering Heights, somehow finds the only physically present cat mentioned in the entire text. He quickly links himself to this cat, which he says “saluted” him, and he familiarly calls it “Grimalkin” and “my companion” (59-60). As Heathcliff links himself to the wolfish dogs, Lockwood links himself to the lone cat. When he returns to the Grange, he is “as feeble as a kitten” (62), and later describes himself as in “the mood of mind in which, if you were seated alone, and the cat licking its kitten on the rug before you, you would watch the operation so intently that puss’s neglect of one ear would put you seriously out of temper” (86). Lockwood falls at the British brute end of Brontë’s spectrum of brutality. Though he affects to own his cruelties, he neither understands nor accepts them. It is first clear that he is unable to read his own motivations when he declares himself a reserved misanthrope who nonetheless sets out to socialize with his landlord at the earliest opportunity. Lockwood admits himself “unworthy” of a “comfortable home” due to his treatment of a young woman he met at the seaside (39). Though he affects to own his cruelty, he quickly disowns the reputation he received for his behavior (40). More serious, however, is Lockwood’s encounter with Cathy’s ghost.

As Lockwood falls asleep in Cathy’s old room and after reading her diary entries, he is awakened by sounds at his window. Reaching his hand through the pane of glass, he feels small fingers close on his, and a voice crying “Let me in—let me in!” (56). The

voice identifies itself as "Catherine Linton." Though he is on the second floor, he perceives the face of a child looking in, and tells his readers that at this point, "[t]error made me cruel" (56). In his own telling, he "pulled its wrist on to the broken pane and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes" (56). Lockwood frames his cruelty as forced, something that terror "made" him do. He affects to own it, but immediately disowns it. Though he thinks this episode is a dream, he never wakes up. There is no clear severance between the end of this episode and the moment Heathcliff rushes in in response to his yells. Rather than admit his fear and cruelty, Lockwood again moves to blame the child, telling Heathcliff "that minx,[13] Catherine Linton, or Earnshaw, or however she was called, she must have been a changeling—wicked little soul! She told me she had been walking the earth these twenty years: a just punishment for her mortal transgressions, I've no doubt" (57). Though the child ghost's only transgression at this point has been to demand entrée to her former bedroom, Lockwood maintains his bad opinion of Catherine Earnshaw/Linton from this point onward. His own brutality can only proceed from without, while he continues to view himself as a civilized outsider among the rurals who make up the locale of Gimmerton.

Additionally linked to cats is the only major character apart from Lockwood or Hindley[14] who is *never* compared to a dog: Edgar Linton. When Edgar is in love with Catherine, but before they are married, he is present when she loses her temper and slaps Nelly, then shakes her toddler nephew. As this comes after her stay at the Grange and occurs at the Heights, it marks the slide back toward classic brutality that Frances

13 In its earliest usage, "minx" meant a puppy, and then later, a wanton woman (OED).
14 Though Hindley is never directly compared to a dog, he does *have* a dog, a legacy of the bulldog Skulker. The dog, Throttler, grew up at the Grange (156).

Earnshaw warned against. When Edgar tries to stop her, Cathy hits him, then weeps and threatens when he tries to leave. Nelly urges him to go, but, she says, "he possessed the power to depart as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed, or a bird half eaten" (95). Gilbert and Gubar note the curious inversion of this phrase: "Is not headstrong Catherine the hungry cat, and 'soft' Edgar the half-eaten mouse?" but of course, as they note, Edgar is after all a "devouring force" (282). He devours people politely, but he devours them nonetheless. Edgar's cruelty is the most genteel of any character in the novel, and yet it frequently has serious effects on the other characters. He is introduced as a fifteen-year-old boy crying at the hearth after almost ripping a dog in two. He will later harm the women he loves most in the world. When Isabella elopes, he offers only to let Nelly tell her that he forgives her, and refuses to write or see her, telling Nelly, "My communication with Heathcliff's family shall be as sparing as his with mine. It shall not exist!" (158). Though he knows and says that he expects Isabella will be unhappy, he refuses to offer her comfort. He is crueler still to his wife. After a fight over Heathcliff, Catherine locks herself in her room and reverts to the punishment of her childhood, refusing to eat for three days. In these days "Mr. Linton, on his part, spent his time in the library, and did not inquire concerning his wife's occupations" (135). This, although she is heavily pregnant, and the last time he saw her she had blood on her lips from her frenzy (134). His cruelty is passive, a withdrawal rather than violence, and he often makes use of Nelly as a proxy to deliver his cruelties, but it is cruelty nonetheless. Neither Nelly nor Edgar take Catherine seriously as a person, but Edgar, though he is master of his house, blames Ellen Dean for his cruelty, telling her "You knew your mistress's nature, and you encouraged me to harass her" (142). Edgar, like a cat, "hides [his] misanthropy under the guise of amiable gentleness" (Brontë, "Le

Chat," 313) until it is time to show his claws. Brontë writes that in a cat, "it is called hypocrisy," but "[i]n ourselves, we give it another name, politeness" (314).

Strangely, in one of the only articles that deals with the problem of cats in *Wuthering Heights*, Graeme Tytler fails to mention Edgar's comparison to a cat. Instead, he relies on a much more tenuous link between cats and Heathcliff, who is very frequently described in doggish terms, but only rarely described in relation to a cat. Shortly before his death, Nelly observes that Heathcliff breathes "as fast as a cat" (303), which is a less decisive comparison than his oft-repeated wolfishness. Earlier, Isabella refers to preferring a tiger over him (157), which might say more about Isabella, who *is* compared to a cat and a tiger by Catherine (123-4). Claws are not sheathed at Wuthering Heights, but at the Grange, and Grange people make better cats than Heights people.

The last character to receive a cat association is the peevish Linton Heathcliff. Heathcliff says that the boy would "undertake to torture any number of cats if only their teeth be drawn, and their claws pared" (260-1). Linton, the product of one of Heathcliff's most useless acts of cruelty, his rape of Isabella, inherits the worst qualities of both his parents. Like Isabella, he is weak, pale, blue-eyed. Like Heathcliff, he is cruel, but unlike either of his parents, he is a coward. Von Sneidern suggests that this is due to the fact that he is a product of miscegenation (184); I suggest that it is equally due to the fact that he is the product of rape. Heathcliff's most purposeless cruelty produces the text's most purposeless person, the most Linton of all the Lintons.

That Linton reflects mid-nineteenth century attitudes toward miscegenation is significant, not just because he reflects the prejudice against such intermixing, but because he is also the whitest of the book's characters. Like so many of the characters, he can be read through multiple lenses and alignments. Though all the Lintons are pale,

Linton Heathcliff is the palest, pale enough that Heathcliff can be sarcastically surprised that his blood is not white (207). Linton, though mixed race, inherits none of his father's qualities save the desire to dominate, a trait he shares with most of the white characters in the book. He cannot and does not labor, and his desires are marked by the Grange preference for luxury and inactivity. Much as Hareton's parentage is thrown into spiritual question by his similarities to Heathcliff and Cathy, Linton is aligned in the text with Edgar and Isabella, spiritually, an incestuous product.[15] Though he does not grow up at the Grange, he is its heir. Though he is Heathcliff's issue, he has only his father's cruelty with none of his father's energy or purpose. In his desire to torture cats, he marks himself as part of the cat contingent, those who would do more cruelties more openly if they thought they could get away with it.

The limited associations with cats in the text are largely attached to people who are closely associated with Thrushcross Grange. Edgar owns the Grange, Isabella grows up there, Lockwood rents it, and Linton, who looks strikingly like Edgar, is a child of the Grange by association. Only the two characters who also go to live at Wuthering Heights, Isabella and Linton, are also compared to dogs, and it is only through living at Wuthering Heights that either of them is able to recognize the cruelty they already possessed. When Isabella leaves Heathcliff, she knows that she hates him and that she can be cruel in her hatred. When Heathcliff is in mourning over Catherine's death, Isabella says that, "I couldn't miss this chance of sticking in a dart; his weakness was the only time when I could taste the delight of paying wrong for wrong" (185). Linton also recognizes his capacity for cruelty at the Heights, when he realizes that he can use his

15 For more on incest in *Wuthering Heights*, see Jenny DiPlacidi's *Gothic Incest* (2018), specifically the chapter "'My more than sister': re-examining paradigms of sibling incest."

power as the younger Catherine's husband to take away everything that was hers (265). Only Edgar and Lockwood can remain convinced of their goodness in the face of their cruelties. Lockwood constantly imposes on other people, and though he tells himself that he doesn't deserve a good home after breaking a girl's heart, he also flatters himself that the hostile young Cathy must be attracted to him (45, 287). Edgar bullies and ignores Catherine in their marriage, rejects his sister, keeps his daughter ignorant and confined, and thinks all along that he is destined for Heaven (188).

The first Catherine is a part of the more animalistic realm of Wuthering Heights until, in the words of Gilbert and Gubar, "the Grange seizes her and 'holds [her] fast'" (271). Gilbert and Gubar see this moment as violently ushering Cathy out of androgynous childhood and into womanhood, and while this is true, it is also the moment in which Cathy is forcibly ripped out of her place in the natural world and indoctrinated into the animalistic but superfluous world of Thrushcross Grange. Cruel instinct and violence are not missing from the world of the Grange, but they are covered over in a polite patina of acceptable violence that is painful but not productive. At the Grange, children nearly rip a dog to two between them because they want to deprive the other child of a possession; at Wuthering Heights, puppies are hanged because they are superfluous to the farm work (186). Edgar Linton politely but brutally abandons his sister for marrying against his wishes (158); Heathcliff abandons Cathy to become someone by whom she cannot be lowered (116). The Grange is seen by most of the characters as a site of refinement and goodness when compared to the unvarnished and open cruelty of the Heights, but an examination of the characters named by Charlotte Brontë as possessing "true benevolence and homely fidelity" or "constancy and

tenderness," Nelly and Edgar (Brontë 343), shows that they are as cruel as anyone else in the story, only with a better finish on their cruelty.

Self-possessed, aware, purposeful violence in *Wuthering Heights* is not fully excused as ideal by its author, but it is always preferable to smug, self-satisfied, polished cruelty. As the human beings of the text detach from their animal natures, they become destructive not just of each other, but of their lands and possessions. It is only through the relentless reshaping of both the lands and the people by the pitiless Heathcliff that some sort of animal order is restored. The spoiled younger Catherine must be brutalized, and Hareton must be worked before they are worthy to become the heirs of both the Heights and the Grange. Even so, their impending departure from the Heights to the Grange at the novel's end suggests an ominous premonition of reversion. Though Frances once worried that the first Catherine might revert to her original wildness at Wuthering Heights, the moral danger of the novel resides in losing access to knowledge of one's brutality. Amongst the temptations of plenty and more, the human working dog is always in danger of becoming a pet, or worse, a cat.

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