

Balthus' Picture-Book, Chapter Three:

The Illustrations for *Wuthering Heights*

In 1932, five years after Rilke had given Balthus, in the poem "Narcisse," his first mythical/literary persona, the young artist of twenty-four, on the brink of several major creations, bestowed on himself a second mythic/literary identity in the person of Heathcliff. In a series of attempts at illustration Balthus took the first half of *Wuthering Heights*, selecting moments to interpret and, sometimes, distort, and struggled to narrate some of his own painful concerns. It was not until 1935, before which date he had suffered so severe a personal crisis that he stopped painting for a while altogether, that the sequence of drawings was completed, and ready for publication. The novel's story, offering so many parallels to the artist's life at that period, afforded him the structure within which to face a storm of personal and philosophical issues, so inextricably and frustratingly mixed, to clarify and deflate the conflicts inherent there.

Thus, an examination of the illustrations as an exercise in iconography-- a testing of images against the text that explains them -- divulges a secret story, the story of Balthus' sense of himself as a being initially whole, eventually divided, whose terrible experience of division casts up the authorial intelligence, the

artistic nature spawned during unendurable stress. Like puppets on a small, makeshift stage, the large-headed characters of the *Wuthering Heights* illustrations tell in the delicate manipulations of a familiar script, that life-story of the puppeteer, who needs such a vehicle as a classic fable to distance himself from his too-present and violent passions.

The very first moment Balthus chooses to illustrate (“*Pull his hair when you go by...*”) comes from the first section in which Cathy speaks directly to the reader, through the intermediate reader Lockwood. It is significant that Balthus identifies not merely with Cathy’s immediate sentiments-- expressive of hatred for the ruler of the household (“I wish my father were back again. Hindley is a detestable substitute... Heathcliff and I are going to rebel” (*WH*, Chapter 3) but with the manner in which she perpetuates the story of her life, secretly, inscribing it in the marginalia of an old, respectable book. The illustration depicts that moment in which Hindley encourages his young wife, Frances, to torment Heathcliff by pulling his hair. Balthus’ drawing immediately sets up the duality of Heathcliff/Cathy, his image for the artist’s unified soul, against the officially sanctioned male-female duality of the married couple. Frances, in Brontë’s hands a fragile and insipid figure, is rendered by Balthus as a powerful match for the Hindley who leaves no doubt about his identity as incipient patriarch:

“‘You forget you have a master here,’ says the tyrant. ‘I’ll demolish the first who puts me out of temper. I insist upon perfect sobriety and silence. Oh, boy! Was that you? Frances, darling, *pull his hair as you go by*; I heard him snap his fingers.’” (*WH* Chapter 3)

For the moment, one might really believe that Hindley and Frances, by virtue of their societal power, the official duality they embody, and, in Balthus’ drawing their much larger size, are the stronger of the two pairs. But when, in the next paragraph, Cathy relates how Frances sits on her husband’s knee, so that they may coo baby talk to each other (“foolish palaver that we should be ashamed of” (*WH* Ch.3) we easily see that the direct, honest, significant use of the medium of art, in this context, language, that instrument of immortality, rests securely in the hands of the oppressed, unsanctioned couple. Hindley and Frances do not even know how to use the words that have made their own union lawful, and the puerile babble in which they assert the dominance of their unkindly rule foreshadows the brevity of their sway.

In this illustration, as in all the others, Balthus makes the heads of his figures unnaturally large, as though to let us know unconditionally that these characters are puppets, that they must be received as actors in a play totally controlled by an omniscient intelligence, that they are, as puppets, servants of another meaning, for which the superficial, familiar narrative is only a mask. So, in the first illustration, Balthus introduces the arduous beginnings of the uncategorizable, but true, integrity of Cathy and Heathcliff, in opposition to the societally sanctioned, but spiritually shallow, integrity of the conventional

marriage, the satisfactions of which derive mainly from the experience of dominance and political power, more than from any meaningful existential congress.

In *"I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes"* (WH, Chapter 6), which illustrates a moment later in the scene, after Hindley, at Joseph's urging, has thrown Cathy and Heathcliff into the kitchen for rejecting his religious tracts, the two young people seem larger and stronger. Not only do they preclude all other inhabitants of the space of the picture, they make that space their own by virtue of the activity in which Cathy is engaged-- for Balthus has chosen to illustrate the moment of her literary activity-- and by that of the postures they assume which so strangely identify them with the two plain objects of furniture, the table and chair. As in the painting *"The Children"* (1937), derived from this earlier drawing, the boy, a thoughtful observer, and the girl, another Narcissus figure, gazing into her book, are identified with functions of support and rest, and the implications of nourishment, which these two humble objects convey. The painting, a surreptitious dual emblem of the artist, carries forth the character of Heathcliff in the boy, who wears the dark color of the wuthering world and leans on the table, which the girl's posture imitates, supporting him as in his deliberations he stares out of the frame, towards a space we cannot view. Meanwhile, the girl, who contemplates her reflection in the print on the page, wears just such complex patterns and textures as must identify her with the

vision beyond that still, simple surface. But in the *Wuthering Heights* drawing, the image of the artist as a male/female integrity is less philosophical as well as less passive; the figure of Heathcliff stares down at Cathy rather than out of the picture; Cathy writes as she gazes at her page, though she still holds the posture upon which his existence, since he leans on the table, absolutely depends. Both figures' faces are fully turned towards us, (as opposed to the profile and three-quarter view of the later painting), so that we may feel the direct emotional force of their active interdependence.

"Hindley hurried up from his paradise on the hearth, and seizing one of us by the collar and the other by the arm, hurled both into the back kitchen, where, Joseph asseverated, 'owd Nick' would fetch us as sure as we were living; and so comforted, we each sought a separate nook to await his advent." (*WH*, Ch.3).

The manner in which Balthus here distorts Brontë's text is full of consequence. According to that text, Cathy and Heathcliff, having been hurled into the back kitchen by Hindley, "each sought a separate nook"; but in Balthus's illustration, Cathy and Heathcliff form their own single nook by taking those postures with respect to one another and the humble table and chair (which might be used for either eating or writing, both modes of self-nourishment as well as strategies for survival). Hindley, who has left his "paradise on the hearth" in order to cast Cathy and Heathcliff out of that warm space, initiates the establishment of his siblings' own paradise. For, in the odd, triangular-shaped nook Balthus has

these two figures form, the pyramidal structure of Renaissance sacred images hints at the prefigured heavenliness of Cathy and Heathcliff's state. It is of the utmost significance that Balthus, in his second chosen moment of this text, takes the creative activity, resorted to under duress, of Cathy as his subject, while her other self, who later on will contain her, and be ever haunted by her, as Balthus is by his recurrent Cathys, watches her write, the person of the artist observing the vital activity of his soul.

"I reached this book, and a pot of ink from the shelf, and pushed the house door ajar to give me light, and I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes; but my companion is impatient, and proposes that we should appropriate the dairy woman's cloak, and have a scamper on the moors, under its shelter. A pleasant suggestion-- and then, if the surly old man come in, he may believe his prophecy verified-- we cannot be damper, or colder, in the rain than we are here." (*WH*, Ch.6)

In this moment that Balthus has chosen, Cathy is writing by the light of the stars; she and Heathcliff are about to escape the house and claim the large, dark world as their own, as though the universe in all its breadth and eternity, its limitless space, belonged to them; for, fortuitously, it is raining, and provides an excuse to cover themselves with the great wide cloak of the dairymaid, which makes them one ghostly being immune to the elements, a kind of imitation banshee, and a foreshadowing of the one banished being they will at last become. If all is well, they will indeed, as they hope, be outlawed from dry Joseph's heaven, and

rejoice in the real cold and damp of the buffeting moor-- an infinite freedom compared with the chill, harsh oppressions of the home where the daughter's sometime equal has achieved an incredible and horrible ascendancy. "How little did I dream that Hindley would ever make me cry so!" (*WH*, Ch.3). This remark of Cathy's, following their scamper on the moors, the last moment of her integrity with Heathcliff, confirms Balthus' need to say no to that other male-female duality, of brother and sister, as intrinsically false and even more susceptible of betrayals than the artificial totality of marriage.

In the next illustration, "*It was one of our chief amusements to run away to the moors*" (*WH*, Ch.6), we encounter a flashback. This is Balthus' image for the generalized paradise of the time that recedes the division of Cathy and Heathcliff's integrity. Thus, correctly situated with respect to the books' narrative order, this image nevertheless precedes chronologically both the previous two. Here, strangely, we meet another of Balthus' pregnant distortions, for these are not the children of the first illustration, undersized in comparison with their elders, but an amorous couple of young lovers such as, in the gentle, idyllic imagery of this portrayal, surely Cathy and Heathcliff never were.

The image, deceptively simple in its pastoral associations, is actually another icon of the artist before his fall into division. The false but official totality of marriage has laid absolute claim to the dark house, so Cathy and Heathcliff claim the vast realm of nature as their own. As Heathcliff stared down

at Cathy in the previous illustration, while she wrote, so he gazes down at her now, holding her in his arms, while she beholds and gestures out at the far-flung reaches which constitute their kingdom. It is she who has access to the heaven of nature, and he holds her as his precious treasure because he partakes in that access through her. Heathcliff, Balthus' image of himself, cradles in his arms like the tenderest lover that aspect of his being which sees through the still surface of nature to meet itself beyond, in the undersurface of the world. No separate being could be more treasured by the artist than the soul towards whom he's been carried out of nameless chaos by arbitrary rescue, to find himself deposited, an orphan, in a world of ambivalent riches.

The next two illustrations go on to illustrate Cathy and Heathcliff's last moments in this paradisaical existence. In "*Cathy and I escaped the wash-house to have a ramble at liberty*" (WH,Ch.6), they are escaping the house, the confining box, for their boundless natural realm. As in the previous two plates, the figure of Heathcliff, who is rendered in profile, fixes his attention on Cathy, who faces fully towards us, poised on the ledge of the window. Balthus/Heathcliff is ushering his soul into the freedom of the wide, limitless world; Cathy needs him in order to climb out of the patriarchal box, for in the traditional scheme of things girls cannot roam the wide world by themselves. Either they must go in the company of a man, or disguised as one; and here, in the double nature of Balthus' pictorial rendering, we have both romantic stories at once. For

Heathcliff helps Cathy to escape from the house, even as he seems to support her in the frame of the window, as though to foreshadow the imaged immortality he will give her and the absolute immortality she will have when he has finally lost her; so, the man is the vehicle by which his soul enters the world, as though he were its guide, its containing protector, the disguise for Cathy's wild soul.

The window in which Cathy is poised, even as she descends from it, is the pivotal element in the picture, meaning several things that seem both to contradict each other and coexist with equal significance. In the context of her escape, Cathy is not merely climbing out of the window of her "father's" grim house, she seems to be caught in the moment of framing, as though the image of woman, the severe structure of established perceptions, were what she is climbing out of, as though she were that other girl of Balthus' intense fancy, Alice, who passes to the further side of another rectangle of glass, and finds a world as strange, albeit natural, as the heath, with its plenitude of chaos and order. Not only is she leaving the conventions of a distasteful and oppressive civilization behind, to immerse herself in the undifferentiated nature in which she and Heathcliff can exist as one being, she is also escaping the limitations of art, by climbing out of her frame into that paradise for which Balthus feels such grieving nostalgia, the world of absolute communion with his own artist's soul, the loss of which requires the development of an artistic nature for mere survival's sake. Yet, in a further ambiguity in this so simple element of the composition, Heathcliff, seeming to steady her in the frame, as he gazes at her, a

being in her own right, suggests Balthus' respect for the independent life of his own created images, to which he must always refer from a nether position, for angels they are, icons of an unchristian heaven, "immeasurably superior," as Heathcliff says of Cathy "to everyone on earth".

So intense and absolute is Balthus/Heathcliff's referral to Cathy as the absolute essence of himself, that in the following image, illustrating the text "*We ran from the top of the heights...*," Heathcliff's figure is not even needed, Cathy stands for them both, he is wholly contained in her, absorbed in her possession of her heaven, as he, unhappily, can never fully contain her later on, for her power, in Balthus' reading of Brontë, is of a different order than his altogether.

Like the girl in "The Mountain" (another intellectual refinement of an initially passionate image) whose reach rivals the highest peaks, and who strides into a seemingly limitless landscape, and like the small figure of the artist heading away into the dark, unsculpted hill of his future, Cathy flails her arms and runs into her landscape of mountains and sky, starting from the peak, the "top of the heights." Little does she suspect that this passionate escape is the descent into hell, for the ultimate frame, a house of art, Thrushcross Grange, which she will one day re-enter as mistress, lies at the end of her way. Her rush from the top of the heights leads her not only out of Heathcliff's sphere, but into that deathful artistic, conventionally formed existence in which procreation inevitably accomplishes the real death of the artist's soul.

The next plate ("*The devil had seized her ankle*") illustrates the critical moment of that long fall. "*The devil had seized her ankle,*" (*WH*, Ch.6) Heathcliff tells Nelly, as he relates how the Lintons' bulldog attacks them, sinking its teeth into Cathy's leg, as they try to flee. In this vital moment, the last of Cathy and Heathcliff's oneness, Heathcliff stands above her while the dog, antagonist to Balthus' cat-self, immobilizes Cathy with all the mindlessly possessive hunger of man's loyal retainers.

As the "devil," the dog that wrenches Cathy irrevocably from the paradise of her integrity with Heathcliff, throws into relief once again Balthus' sense of the cat. A being incapable of servitude, mysteriously independent, who leads a secret life which overlaps the domestic world and another, unknowable one, the cat travels back and forth through the still, reflecting surface of reality as Alice, the girl with the cat, found it so natural to do. In contrast, the dog, guardian of Hell's gate, is no such traveller; his world never changes, he stays in one spot. He could never be a priest-figure, or a King, for he is always somebody's servant. He adores his master, and takes loud, raucous, pride in his servitude, a being as little capable of independence as of any of those sentimental capacities which demand autonomy for their nurturance. In the planted, ordered garden of the valley world of Thrushcross Grange, Cathy is seized by the ultimate retainer of a more gentle father than the master of *Wuthering Heights*, but a father who, nevertheless, will receive her into his house only as a soul rendered ineffectual by divorce from its masculine self, for he sends Heathcliff home straightaway.

Then, in the living room of Thrushcross Grange, in the very next plate, we see Cathy, Balthus' figure for his artist's soul, idolized, the idea of her wildness acceptable, even wonderful, as long as, divested of its vehicle, its "impatient companion," it does not threaten to manifest itself.

The first thing Mrs. Linton does, upon recognizing Cathy for the daughter of her late neighbor, is to take off the dairymaid's cloak that Cathy is still wearing, expostulating with her even as she makes her welcome. For, as Heathcliff notes in the same sentence, "they made a distinction between her treatment and mine" (*WH*, Ch.6). That treatment, signaling the division of his and Cathy's integrity, places her henceforth in the interior, falsely religious world where she will become a young lady, part of the already "made," seductive (because artistically constructed) world of traditional patriarchal order, while Heathcliff, who threatens to make the soul of Cathy an effective being, transcendent of that patriarchal order if not actually capable of breaching its walls with exemplary violence, is exiled to the heath. There, amidst a chaos of plenitude he cannot even see, much less use, without Cathy, he has little choice but to make his way back to the home in which the new metamorphosis of his "father," that initial rescuer from chaos, has absolutely disinherited him.

In the next plate Cathy reclines on the couch while Mr. and Mrs. Linton, on one side, and Edgar and Isabella on the other, gaze at her. It illustrates the

text of Heathcliff's observation, "*I saw that they were full of stupid admiration.*" The paragraph is worth quoting in full:

"She sat on the sofa quietly. Mrs. Linton took off the grey cloak of the dairy maid which we had borrowed for our excursion, shaking her head and expostulating with her, I suppose; she was a young lady, and they made a distinction between her treatment and mine. Then the woman-servant brought a basin of warm water, and washed her feet; and Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of negus, and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood gaping at a distance. Afterwards, they dried and combed her beautiful hair, and gave her a pair of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire; and I left her, as merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog and Skulker, whose nose she pinched as she ate, and kindling a spark of spirit in the vacant blue eyes of the Lintons-- a dim reflection from her own enchanting face. I saw they were all full of stupid admiration; she is so immeasurably superior to them -- to everyone on earth, is she not, Nelly?" (*WH*, Ch.6)

There is in this paragraph that culminates in Balthus' chosen text something religious and ceremonious which accounts for the deific expression of Cathy's face and the benedictory gesture, as of a Byzantine Christ-child, that she makes from her couch. The Lintons, though they are too puny to know what they are admiring, nevertheless admire it; they do not recognize that Cathy and Heathcliff are one, nor do they perceive that Cathy contains Heathcliff. But the fact that only she faces towards us with a whole face, while all the others are in profile or three-quarter view, illustrates precisely Heathcliff's perception of how flat, thin and lifeless these people are in comparison to her fullness, springing

from her containment of him. This fullness is juxtaposed with two more sets of official male-female duality, the husband and wife on the left, the brother and sister on the right. It is the unrecognized, unlawful completeness Cathy possesses in her relation with Heathcliff, contrasted to those shallow reflections of integrity which flank her, in the manner of visitors at a holy accouchement, which gives her that expression of sad wisdom, and makes the gesture of her left hand appropriate, as though she were made holy by virtue of her extraordinary state, and the doom which the attack of Skulker foreshadows.

For Cathy has already become the dead god who reflects all of Brontë's and Balthus' feelings about the destructive weight of Christianity. The Lintons, with a biblical, almost oriental, sense of ritualistic proprieties, perform all the self-abasing gestures of devotees before an idol enshrined. A woman-servant, who must be nameless, since only a humility of Hindu proportions could approach the idol at first, leads off the sequence by bearing in a basin of water, with which she washes Cathy's feet, and coincidentally her wounds; then Mr Linton, the master, initiates the liturgical performance as he mixes her a goblet of hot wine; when this is done, the young female child Isabella comes forward and showers her with manna-offering, while the boy, who dares not even venture near so divine a hypostasis of woman (for he has learned in his father's house to regard her with irritation and contempt), does little more than gape, an absolute worshipper. Then, having confirmed Cathy's holiness with these liturgical gestures, they proceed with more intimate attentions to the idol; comb her long

hair, as though it were the incarnation of radiant sun and flowing water, give her great slippers, so her feet need never touch the ground, move her closer to the fire on her own little car, and put in her lap a living toy, the pet dog over whom Edgar and Isabella were so recently fighting. But Cathy, with the truly divine impartiality of so powerful an idol as Juggernaut (whom she will prove herself to be with regard to each member of the family before her) shows no more affection towards the lap-dog than she does towards Skulker, whose nose she pinches playfully, for now, absorbed completely into the hell of official integrities, the patriarchal tradition, she has earned the loving allegiance of the devil himself, and need not fear his teeth anymore. The vacant eyes of the Lintons reflect sparkling glints of multi-colored light dispersed by the splendor of their jewel-embellished statue. Clearly Brontë was injecting the protagonist of an eternal story into her narrative of odd, but recognizable, Yorkshire events.

There is, however, another way to read Cathy's gesture that enhances its intimacy and its special meaning for Heathcliff. It must be remembered that Heathcliff, who relates to Nelly the scene illustrated, has already been sent on his way, while Cathy was taken inside. But Heathcliff, worried over Cathy, and thinking she might not wish to stay at Thrushcross Grange without him, lingers in the garden, and peers through a window to watch what is become of her. It is at this point that he sees the whole scene just quoted; therefore, Balthus' drawing is taken from Heathcliff's point of view. This grouping of figures is what Heathcliff, his nose anxiously pressed to the glass, would himself have seen; and

in that context, Cathy seems to be waving goodbye. Surprised by the devil, she has nevertheless made a choice.

In Chapter Seven of *Wuthering Heights* we find Cathy returned home, in her very fine silk frock, her hair curled so wonderfully that Frances, joining her husband in enthusiastic approbation of her sister-in-law's new status as art object, urges her fastidiously, "Stay, dear, you will damage your curls-- let me untie your hat" (*WH*, Ch.7).

Cathy looks around for Heathcliff, who is not to be found; but the first thing she does when he finally appears, very sullen, dirty and uncombed-- is to laugh at him. Hindley condescendingly urges Heathcliff to shake hands with her, but he refuses, and when Cathy then rushes at him and seizes his hand, apologizing, even as she remarks on his dirtiness, Heathcliff cries out, "*You need't have touched me!*" (*WH*, Ch.7). Balthus has chosen this moment, the beginning of Cathy and Heathcliff's death as one entity, as the text of his next illustration. It is the moment of Heathcliff's recognition that he and Cathy no longer inhabit the same world. So clean and ladylike now, she is no longer a part of nature, and will henceforth stay indoors so as not to soil her burnished shoes. From this moment on, they will live in division, always yearning toward one another, he dirty, she clean, he outside, she inside, she married to one, he to another, she dead, he alive. The dog Skulker, in the light of ensuing events, seems ever more and more truly to have been the devil, for he it was who precipitated this

separation, their loss of the mutual world on the moors which Cathy will later understand was paradise.

Cathy and Heathcliff dominate the center of the picture, she rushing toward him as an emanation from that staunch duality behind her, like Botticelli's Chloris escaping the zephyr to merge into Flora. Hindley, legs spread wide, owns the ground upon which this desperate scene is being enacted, clearly the patriarch who smiles upon, not merely Cathy's new status as art object, but the distance it puts between her and her effective vehicle, as soiled with the matter of the world as a painter after a long day's work. Frances, expressing in her frown their disapproval of Cathy's old wild impulsiveness, grips Hindley's arm, asserting solidarity with him. But although Cathy winds her arm round Heathcliff in an attempted embrace, so that even as she emanates from Hindley and Frances, she entwines with her other self, this balance is decided finally in negative favor by the emblem of domesticity in the rear of the room. The outer edge of the cupboard contains Cathy's and Frances' figures in its frame, uniting their two fates. The head of each woman is framed by one panel of the cupboard doors, raising once more some of those issues discussed in relation to the plate "*Cathy and I escaped from the wash house to have a ramble at liberty*". Both women, different as they are, will be absorbed into the ultimate perils of domesticity, and suffer extinction in the same manner. The doors of the cupboard are ominously connotative of larger, more mysterious doors. Meanwhile Nelly, whose detachment from this maelstrom of purpose and emotion is exemplified by her

severe profile, stands to the side of Cathy's rush upon Heathcliff, and his recoil. She seems solid as a rock, as though she were ready, and confident in her ability, to catch them if they should fall.

The most remarkable thing about this moment that Balthus has chosen is how it immediately casts up the figure of Nelly Dean into the group portrayed. Suddenly, although in the book she is no more prominent at this moment of the narrative than she has been for many, many pages, Balthus finds it necessary to include her as a witness to the event. Here we find a new element in the puppeteer's secret story revealing itself. Nelly, who relates Cathy and Heathcliff's history to Lockwood, is the authorial intelligence, the mind who imposes some order upon the chaos of events, who seeks to bring the volcanic eruptions of nature inside the bounds of traditional telling. In Balthus' secret story her entrance at this moment betokens her necessity, which is found in the meaning of Heathcliff's division from Cathy, in the artist's traumatic disjunction from his own soul. In Balthus' allegory, it is that loss of essential oneness, the great quality of childhood, which formed the subject of that precocious series of illustrations, the picture book *Mitsou*. Here the same loss precipitates the birth of the detached authorial nature, the person who handles material realities and in the midst of tragedy and chaos carries on. Nelly, the aspect of the artist who makes him more than a being potentially capable of art, is the aspect that arises only in the presence of a great, life-rending division; it is Nelly who must come

into the picture now, for without her, the artist in his torn state of nature could not survive.

Cathy's alienation from Heathcliff, so fiercely intuited by him upon her homecoming, has by this time progressed so far that Balthus can depict it as a more settled state of affairs. The degree to which they have grown in different directions is made visible in several ways. Although Heathcliff in the next plate (*Why have you that silk frock on, then?* (WH, Ch.8)) still gazes at her from his uneasy seat, this time he does so with anxiety and suspicion, while Cathy's expression has lost its clear wonderment and seems intent upon something eminently of this world. Furthermore, the orientation of her figure and gaze-- as though Heathcliff barely exists for her, she is so close to turning her back upon him-- is closely tied to her suddenly emergent sexuality. The sharp, exaggerated outline of her breasts, nowhere so delineated in the previous illustrations, makes it evident that her turning away from Heathcliff is a turning toward Edgar Linton, who will come across the world outside the open window that frames the direction of her thought.

To emphasize further how much they already inhabit separate worlds, while living in the same house, both the text and the drawing stress the disparity between their appearances. Heathcliff is completely unshorn, rumped and darkened with the grime of his labors, neglected as much by himself as by the family that surrounds him, while Cathy's very poise suggests the lack of anxiety

that a certain amount of elegant grooming, and a servant to perfect one's toilette, might well afford. But perhaps the most telling sign of how far the tragic development of their drifting apart has proceeded is to be found in the fact that the figure of Nelly, wide and strong, is planted firmly between them, so that Heathcliff's gaze must circumnavigate her thick concentration before it can penetrate to its heart's desire.

That Heathcliff must look at Cathy across Nelly, is an essential element of Balthus' allegory, now that the poor, bedraggled artist finds himself so deserted by his elegant soul. For Nelly, who represents that aspect of the artist who actually constructs coherent visions, as opposed to the merely sensitive being, only comes into existence in response to a grand experience of loss. When the artist, feeling himself an outcast in the world, loses the most important thing in his life, that thing-- whatever it is-- through which he gains access to experience and meaning, he must conjure a new aspect of himself who can re-supply that loss. This aspect performs its function through the activity of making. And, in Balthus' allegory, it is another, unrelated "sibling." For, despite Balthus' distortion of Nelly into a person very much older than Cathy and Heathcliff, Brontë has her only a couple of years older than they. The representation of her as a woman in advanced middle age, the age at which, in the novel, she is masterfully weaving her long tale for Lockwood and ourselves, establishes that Nelly's most important aspect of Balthus lies in her function as a storyteller, and fixes firmly in the actual process of response to loss the production of that

detached and sexless maternity which characterize the maker aspect of the artist's personality.

So Nelly, whom Heathcliff must look across in order to see Cathy at all, serves as a kind of go-between, even as, by standing just where she does, she bars Heathcliff immediate access to his other self. This is precisely the post-Edenic scenario that allegorizes the artist's fate: the very function which enables him to accompany that part of himself that may travel abroad in the paradise of experience, forever inhibits him from completely melding himself with that traveller. And yet since, after the fall out of childhood, such total unity of one's being is impossible, the detached maker aspect becomes the artist's sole defense against absolute exile from the world he once so wholly and unconsciously possessed.

Cathy, even in her newly enamored and housebound state, is still that aspect of the artist who is capable of travelling abroad and entering other worlds. In this sense she is Balthus' alternative figure for the cat, that image of himself as traverser of the mysterious paths that link this visible world to another. He further identifies Cathy as an aspect of himself by having her allude to herself as Narcissus in her grasp of the vanity table with its mirror. Nelly, who combs Cathy's hair, seems to pay more attention to Cathy than to Heathcliff, but the negative space left by her erect stance offers so perfect a shape for Heathcliff, in his unhappiness, to lean into, that one must conclude she is equally available to either of her charges.

Although the relative dates of composition are uncertain, this drawing relates to the painting “Cathy Dressing,” in which Balthus portrayed Cathy as his wife-to-be, Antoinette de Watteville, and Heathcliff as himself. In details and mood the drawing is more truthful to the book than the painting is. Through the direction of Heathcliff’s gaze, and the more specific emotional content in all three of the faces, the figures in the drawing are set into a more dynamic relationship, that situates them entirely in the context of Story. In “Cathy Dressing” the polarities of Cathy and Heathcliff are so changed in nature and exaggerated as to make a singular and definitive statement. Heathcliff wears a gentleman’s out-fit, Cathy’s dressing-gown falls open to expose her pale nudity. Even the figure of the authorial Nelly, who remains fairly constant throughout Balthus’ oeuvre, differs mainly in the greater abstraction of mood in the face; and this is appropriate, for “Cathy Dressing” is a fully developed icon of the artist, while the drawing is an episode in the allegory of the artist’s development.

In the succeeding plate (“*By a natural impulse he arrested his descent*” (WH, Ch.9)), Balthus effects several significant distortions of Brontë’s text in the interest of the explication of his own secret story. The illustration deals with the episode in which Hindley, far on in the degeneration begun at his wife’s death, tries with alternating tenderness and violence to draw some affection out of his toddler son, Hareton. Nelly, who has minded Hareton since his birth, has taken pains to hide the child from Hindley in his mad, drunken state; but Hindley

comes upon her stowing Hareton away in a cupboard, and claims him for his own. After threatening Nelly with a carving knife, Hindley carries his son up the stairs, and holds him out over the banister, in some incomprehensibly perverse impulse characteristic of his present frame of mind. He hears a noise below, which attracts Nelly's notice also; it is Heathcliff entering the house; but at the moment Nelly removes her anxious gaze from Hareton the child wriggles in his father's incompetent grasp, and falls. Heathcliff, not even thinking what he does, is upon the spot and catches him:

There was scarcely time to experience a thrill of horror before we saw that the little wretch was safe. Heathcliff arrived underneath just at the critical moment; by a natural impulse, he arrested his descent, and setting him on his feet, looked up to discover the author of the accident.

"A miser who has parted with a lucky lottery ticket for five shillings, and finds next day he has lost in the bargain five thousand pounds, could not show a blanker countenance than he did on beholding the figure of Mr. Earnshaw above. It expressed, plainer than words could do, the intensest anguish at having made himself the instrument of thwarting his own revenge. Had it been dark, I dare say, he would have tried to remedy the mistake by smashing Hareton's skull on the steps; but, we witnessed his salvation; and I was presently below with my precious charge pressed to my heart." (*WH*, Ch.9)

The text that Balthus has chosen to illustrate, "*By a natural impulse he arrested his descent,*" contains an interesting ambiguity. For although it is clear from the context that the possessive pronoun refers to the falling baby, when that portion of the sentence is isolated as a caption, it becomes easy to read "his" as

referring reflexively to Heathcliff. So Balthus, even more than Brontë herself, has Heathcliff, “by a natural impulse,” halt the process of his own damnation even as he saves the child of his enemy from death. In his visualization of this fragment of text, Balthus illustrates the consequences of such an act for both men, more than he depicts the actual nature of the moment as Brontë described it.

The main point of the drawing is the degree to which the transfer of the child from Hindley’s arms to Heathcliff’s, through the patriarch’s own careless fault, gives Heathcliff a confident stance he never had before in that house, even as it makes Hindley, cowering behind the bars of the banister, a prisoner in his own home. For not only has Heathcliff acquired a son in this moment, and in him all the future and possibility we know that Hindley has long since forsworn, he has also, in a split-second of unthinking intuition, rescued the only integrity that his mortality will ever regain; someday, within the bounds of Nelly’s story, but after Heathcliff’s own death, Hareton will marry Cathy’s daughter by Edgar. In the loving marriage of their “children,” Heathcliff and Cathy will be united in this world even as their ghosts will roam the moors together. It is significant that Balthus, agreeing with Brontë, chooses the unofficial relationship, Heathcliff’s relationship to Hareton, rather than to his real son, as the vehicle of meaning in this world. But perhaps even more important is the way in which Balthus reverses the attitudes of the characters in this scene. In the text Heathcliff, realizing he has unwittingly done Hindley a service, is shocked and dismayed; while Hindley, who is nowhere described as taking so

odd a posture as Balthus has him assume, is so relieved by this lucky outcome that he actually becomes rather sober and, though he feebly blames Nelly, seems to recognize the fact of his fault. Balthus however, completely changes their attitudes. Revenge, loathing and disappointment seem to be the things furthest from Heathcliff's heart, if his expression means anything; while Hindley's intense anxiety cannot simply be attributed to the danger of the moment which is now quite resolved, but rather seems to attach to the passage of the future out of his hands into Heathcliff's. The representative of patriarchal culture will always experience such disbelieving anxiety at seeing an outcast's power confirmed by the action of chance; for in patriarchal culture, power pretends to identify with fate to justify itself. Meanwhile Nelly rushes in full of careful solicitude to shore up the fragile inception of this small shoot of that struggling integrity, Heathcliff as bearer of a new soul towards which the vestige of Cathy's soul upon earth will someday be tending.

But Balthus goes further, and takes a clue from Brontë's revisionism in his own injection into the scene of an eternal story. With that ease with which he transposes the sex of Christian divinities, he gives the whole plan of the scene the substructure of a simplified nativity. Heathcliff, holding the baby, assumes the character of the Virgin Mary, Nelly rushes in like an angel, while Hindley, representing that other nation of beings, those condemned to the prison of existence, looks on with fear and awe. The whole reinterpretation has, in fact, a comic cast, which gives us some oblique insight into Balthus' sense of how

imperfectly eternal stories are incarnated into our own lives: the baby, far from peaceful or wise, struggles angrily, its parent holds it by one arm and one leg, and has no place to sit, the angel looks more worried than joyful and the beast is so surprised he practically falls down the stairs. But why a nativity? Here we arrive at the next stage of Balthus' allegory, in which Heathcliff, by intuitively attaching himself to the future, shoulders the burden of the uncreated, unformed being. Here we see Heathcliff/Balthus accepting the task of his art. If one follows the line of their gaze, one sees Heathcliff beholding Hareton through Nelly, as he beheld Cathy through Nelly before; he looks only to her, she only to the child. As yet unconscious of the power he has so recently inherited, the outcast must find significance only insofar as he composes it; therefore, Nelly, the composing function of the artist, must modulate his vision of his own posterity. It is this fact of Hareton as Heathcliff's posterity which dictates the Christian substructure of the whole scene. For every artist believes-- in despite of that wiser and more worldly self who tells him how foolish the notion is-- that his work, his child, the gift he has to give to the future, will set the world to rights. It is the artist's conviction that his work contains "the good news" which makes the progress of Balthus' allegory hopeful in inverse ratio to the darkening of the fable in which it is enacted.

The plate captioned by Cathy's question "*Nelly, do you never dream queer dreams?*" (*WH*, Ch.9) is remarkable for the pose that both Cathy and Heathcliff

assume. It is perhaps Balthus' first use of Poussin's figure of Narcissus in a consciously allusive manner. Except for her right arm, Cathy lies exactly as Narcissus does, though a faithful adherence to Brontë's text would have rendered her sitting; while Heathcliff adopts the configuration of Narcissus' limbs more exactly, although he stands. The original meaning of the pose is half-revised in the case of each figure: Cathy, leaning her head on Nelly's foot, stretches languidly in her stride half-way to dream as she proceeds to describe how the angels cast her out of heaven, while Heathcliff alters the gesture of Narcissus' hopelessness, that will lead him to abandon his human form altogether, into the conventional melodramatic miming of agonized despair. By giving Cathy and Heathcliff the same pose, Balthus underscores his assertion that they are one being; and by giving them the pose of that figure he had claimed as his own fictional persona, he further identifies both of them with himself. It is shortly after Cathy's relation of her dream that she delivers that great statement of recognition: "(Heathcliff) is more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same..." (*WH*, Ch.9). So Balthus' strongest statement so far on the original single nature of Cathy and Heathcliff accompanies the most direct assertion of that identity in Brontë's text.

He goes on to illustrate the moment by setting Cathy and Heathcliff, in their reflecting poses, upon axes so divergent that, although one can trace their paths back to a single point behind Heathcliff's right foot and Cathy's left, one sees that it is unlikely they will ever meet to walk together again. And the whole

purport of the scene confirms this, for Cathy has just revealed her decision to marry Edgar Linton, which will take her away from Wuthering Heights, to the “heaven “ of Thrushcross Grange; and Heathcliff, overhearing this, makes his own determination to leave the house where, his unity with Cathy definitively invaded, nothing of value to him can remain.

As they face in opposite directions, each already walking into another life, they are leaving the Eden of the moors where they enjoyed such a unity of being. But the destiny of art, so subtle it might hardly be there, is implicit even in the moment of their going, for both Cathy and Heathcliff set their gaze directly out of a frame, Cathy’s toward the larger world outside the frame of the drawing, Heathcliff inward to what lies behind the door-frame.

Balthus herein seems to reverse the story of *Wuthering Heights*, in which Cathy henceforth stays inside of four walls, while Heathcliff departs to roam the wide world. But despite the overt facts of her limitation and his travel, it is Cathy’s lot which seems to take her into a more open space; her experience is closely intertwined with others, and we learn about it in detail; Heathcliff’s years abroad are uncharted and, it seems clear, charged with emptiness. Cathy, dominant in the foreground, the firm base of a triangle whose sides Nelly and Heathcliff make, is still the experiencing aspect of the artist.

In Poussin’s painting (“Echo and Narcissus”) we encounter the moment of metamorphosis which follows despair. Narcissus, recognizing that he can never obtain the object of his love, that image of himself which lives behind an

infrangible barrier, the still surface of the pool, swoons near the tufted outcropping of flowers into whose form he will soon entirely escape. Echo also suffers from the same extreme hopelessness; brooding upon the unattainable Narcissus, she is slowly acquiring the color of the stone upon which she rests, is becoming one with elemental nature, which does not feel the griefs of desire and separation, but incorporates all such desperate vagaries into its perennial processes. In the light of this moment, Balthus' allegory of the artist's development proceeds, for as Narcissus turns to a flower, and Echo to a rock as a way of surviving the devastating recognition of perpetual estrangement, so now Cathy and Heathcliff, knowing at last and confessing (Cathy openly, Heathcliff implicitly) that they are the same person, and hence cannot possess the other who is not "other," must metamorphose into the "Catherine" and "Heathcliff" who are, much more than before, characters in a conventional novel, stricter and diminished selves. For the Cathy who has left childhood behind as surely and sadly as Balthus ever did, the world of the moors, and union with Heathcliff out in it, are not things she can have in social reality; no more can Heathcliff, growing up, find a way to take Cathy by the hand. These dreams of fulfillment are no less impossible than Narcissus'. A great wall has been met, and either death must ensue, or the heroic leap that the prospect of survival can conjure, must unthinkingly be made. Cathy's rejection of the wisdom of her dream then becomes more understandable. The heaven of the image she sees beyond the pool's surface is an unattainable one, so she opts for the more conventional

heaven, and marries Edgar Linton. If her expulsion from the Eden of the moors is self-willed, one senses it is because she would rather expel herself than wait for Hindley to effect such a change. It would take a writer like Hardy to deal with the consequences of Cathy's acceptance of Heathcliff.

Beneath the surface of this complicated fable we can discover that the artist's development proceeds with no less intricate evolution. The puppeteer, having chosen to illustrate a double moment of self-willed expulsion from Eden (Cathy's dream of being thrown out of heaven is, like all dreams, a wish, less conscious but no less her own than the decision to marry Edgar) engineers his puppets into the critical positions for the next tableau of the allegory. Cathy, the soul of the artist, feels it right to lose heaven, because, as Brontë knew full well, the paradisaical experience for the artist, the experience of transmutation, is only possible upon earth. Narcissus dreams of completing himself by going below, and joining that other self he adores in the pool; while Balthus, ever since he lost his first alter ego, the kitten Mitsou, has dreamed of regaining that essential, vanished self through mysterious travel, across all the seemingly resistant, but actually pliable and inviting surfaces of this world. For the artistic personality to become an artist in fact, the expulsion from Eden, constituted by some irrevocable estrangement within the self, must first occur. And that estrangement is partially enacted by the experiencing self of the artist which assumes, by identifying with all things and events, some guilt, some acceptance of complicity, in the odd division of self that growth forces upon him. Cathy, the experiencing

self of the artist, wills her own expulsion because she has no choice but to do so, but also because the nature of her being demands an imperfect world. For the artist would lose his identity in the country that was perfectly created; it is the condition of possibility inhering for him in the raw, chaotic material world which gives a savior to the authorial nature cast up by his trauma. The whole Christian story becomes, for Balthus and ourselves, a story of God as the artist who rises up inside each of us to achieve the heaven that has been lost, only to lose and achieve it again. As the destiny of the puppets winds vertiginously down, Balthus' secret story continues to tend upward, for the small figures of Cathy, Heathcliff, Nelly and Hareton suffer their story in order that the larger soul whose components they are can achieve and justify his hard, blissful state as a maker.

The drawing contains two co-existing structures, the more prominent being the equilateral triangle formed by the characters, the more recessed being a series of juxtaposed frames. That Balthus should compose his figures into the classic triangle of Renaissance altarpieces reiterates his conviction of the artists' nature as a locus for divine emergence into the world. That tense, awkward area at the very center of the drawing, the triangles's inner space, is such an area as the invisible Madonna and Child alluded to might easily inhabit; at any rate, between the three striving sides which contain it, some miracle might happen, some wondrous insight be conjured. Cathy lies on the floor, and Heathcliff in his great pain leans from the point of her foot towards the apex; but this triangle is

not quite the rival of the traditional one, it must be said, for Nelly, who holds Hareton in her arms as she turns anxiously toward Heathcliff, hearing him leave, fails to complete that side, and so fails to hold Cathy and Heathcliff together. While the two young people stride off from each other in their fragmented agony, Nelly, the detached authorial intelligence, sits secure, her dismay tempered by comprehension of the necessity of this division she is watching, supported and framed by a set of rectangles which lend solidity and strength to her figure, and make it the architectural center of the picture. As the authorial intelligence she cannot exist outside art; therefore the frames cluster round her, to keep her from touching the rending experience she recognizes and beholds. She sees Heathcliff lurch through the doorway, so even his agony is framed. Detached from this doom, and holding the artist's future in her arms, who also, like Narcissus and every contented baby, dreams of his heart's ineffable desire, Nelly is the still center of the wuthering world.

Studying the last three plates of the series ("*No, no, Isabella, you shan't run off*" (WH, Ch.10), "*There, you've done with coming here*" (WH, Ch.11) and "*Cathy's arms had fallen relaxed and her head hung down*" (WH, Ch.15)), one realizes that the latest one discussed shows the culmination of Balthus' allegory. From here on, Nelly does not appear, except as a sketchy background figure in the very last drawing. Having constructed another great inclusive statement on the nature of the artist, Balthus has freed himself from the need to depict Nelly, for in the

grand wake of his solution he has absorbed her fully into himself. It is interesting to note then, that the next three scenes he chooses to render are all ones of violence, different views of the ongoing conflict between Cathy and Heathcliff, the two aspects of himself that remain in unresolved tension. From this one can infer that Balthus, despite having realized some order and achieved some supremacy over the warring forces within, nevertheless goes on experiencing the fundamental conflict which impelled him to select *Wuthering Heights* as a fable; the war between Cathy and Heathcliff continues, but Balthus, by having absorbed Nelly into himself, states that he is in control of it. In the last three plates it is as though he is watching the struggle of that duality work itself out. But in these final drawings, and particularly in the last two, a certain tension is gone. It is as though, having decided to trace out the consequences of the dissolution of the artist and his soul, now that he feels secure from that fate himself, he can indulge a certain penchant for melodrama. The will deal with the continuing war, and carry on in its strong, iconic composition, all the significant structure of the preceding drawings; but in the last two, it is as though the dissolution of this firm, telling architecture makes the point of the allegory most clearly, for here Balthus is trying to figure out what such a dissolution would mean.

The illustrations pass over Heathcliff's long absence with even less remark than does Brontë's text; the next finds Heathcliff and Cathy meeting at

Thrushcross Grange after Heathcliff's return. In the scene depicted, Cathy, having divined Isabella's unlucky infatuation with Heathcliff and jealousy of herself, reveals both to him in the girl's presence, mortifying her, and causing her to rise from her seat and make for the door. Cathy catches her as she attempts to flee, saying "*No, no, Isabella, you shan't run off.*" It is this sentence which forms the caption to Balthus' drawing.

It is clear from both text and illustration that Cathy is urging Isabella into Heathcliff's unloving arms. The drawing shows Cathy and Heathcliff acting in concert for the first time since the illustration that shows the moment they escaped from the washhouse together. In the later image, Heathcliff is grown so much taller and calmer, and Cathy so much more dynamic, that we can see them as titans playing with the fate of a mere mortal, for it is now only through the medium of another person who submits to their usage that they can come together. Though they act here in concert, it is no retrieval of the paradise they once owned together. It is through their satisfied manipulation of Isabella that we see most distinctly how they can no longer be alone together and have what they once had.

Balthus has composed the scene so that Heathcliff stands over against Cathy, leaning back on the chair he so casually holds; Cathy strives toward him in her struggle with Isabella. Yet, though she and Heathcliff lean toward each other, he crosses one leg over another, while she braces herself in a violent stride;

she holds her arms out while his are tightly clenched to his sides. They may be acting in concert, but they are no longer one.

The most remarkable feature of the composition, however, is the way in which Cathy and Isabella seem to form a single two-headed figure; the abdominal region could belong equally to either woman. It is as if Balthus were showing us Cathy in her two attitudes towards Heathcliff, as she who recognizes him and acts with him, and as the woman who flees him, revolted. Nelly's absence is conspicuous. Not only has she ceased to be a composing power in terms of the actual events of the story, her withdrawal from the scene is the precondition for its violent dénouement. Now that the authorial intelligence has exited the stage, that final dissolution between artist and his soul is ready to occur with a vengeance. In Brontë's text Nelly is as present as ever; but Balthus has removed her from the setting of the illustrations by absorbing her into himself. This subsuming of Nelly into his own authorial identity contributes to his encompassing authorial power and fuels his capacity to depict a dissolution which he can now regard as a fate happily escaped. In this, the first tableau of that dissolution, Balthus shows, in the double-headed figure of Cathy/Isabella, how the artist's experiencing soul wishes to act with him on the one hand, if for quite the wrong reasons, while feeling at the same time a desperate, nauseated revulsion from him and yearns to escape. Without Nelly, the distilling agency of form, there can be no solution between the artist and his ambivalent soul. This is the subject of this allegorical tableau; without Nelly, the artist cannot manage his

experiencing self at all; so it is with this realization that Balthus' allegory regains some consonance with the tragical tending of Brontë's own story.

But Balthus' drawing departs in significant details from Brontë's telling, in which Heathcliff is nowhere described as leaning on a chair in so predatory and contemptuous a fashion. If we look back through the illustrations, however, we find that the last time Isabella appeared (in "*I saw they were full of stupid admiration*"), she sat in just such a chair; so the chair Heathcliff handles is not merely the one from which she has lately risen in alarm, it is in a manner her object-self. Whereas earlier Isabella sat in that chair raptly beholding Cathy, now she suffers the very arm that once blessed her to restrain her. It is in Isabella's dive for the closed door, which definitely frames her and not Cathy, that she is clearly identified with the chair which stands for her absent self; even as she pulls at the handle, she is framed. Thus Isabella's rebellion is counted useless, even as she, by being so framed, is destined to art. Even that part of the artist's soul which flees and rebels is destined to art, is locked into the room which the artist himself wholly dominates, despite what turmoil might occur there. Heathcliff leans on his combination of frames, which is at once to him a support and the common representative of the intimate furniture of his world. He "has" that rebellious, mortified, nauseated aspect of his experiencing soul as surely as he holds the fragile chair.

"There, you've done with coming here," the penultimate illustration, is best regarded as a pendant to the second drawing of the series, *"I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes."* The stage is essentially the same; Cathy and Heathcliff, table and chairs, the otherwise empty room. The children have secluded themselves in a nook of their own making, Cathy to write, Heathcliff to watch her; in *"There, you've done with coming here,"* Cathy is in the act of banishing Heathcliff from the house. In the textual scene that immediately precedes that illustrated, Edgar, shamed by Cathy's outrageous words and Heathcliff's abuse, has struck his enemy a blow on the throat. Heathcliff reels back, choking, and Cathy cries, *"There, you've done with coming here."* (*WH*, Ch.11)

One feature most remarkably resonates against the narrative context: Heathcliff, in Balthus' rendering, seems to have suffered no blow. He is utterly composed, seated cross-legged on a chair which he tips back in a casual, confident manner, observing the hysterical Cathy. Here, in the conflict between the artist and his rebellious soul, who chooses against all the laws of the universe to reject him, we have the artist's confident assertion that he will survive. Though the chair, that once was Cathy, has toppled for him, and Cathy herself is a figure with which his own body no longer rhymes, the central image which takes no part in the dissolution around him is the figure of himself. Heathcliff does not even have to stand to hold his own, though in the text he is nowhere described as seated; his seated posture conveys how absolutely his victory is already assured.

The clue to the identity of the winner and loser is conveyed in the two features of the drawing which do *not* appear in in the drawing of the two children studying: the corner of the room, and the door just ajar. The uncertain and incipiently meaningless architecture of the later room takes its place in the allegory against the clearly defined, unambiguous space of the earlier as surely as the deterioration of Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship is reflected in the opposing stances they now take, so unlike that stable structure their combined postures made in the earlier drawing. Now, in "*There, you've done with coming here,*" Cathy's figure coincides with the corner, where two walls of the parlor meet. She is in the corner, and in this confrontation is "cornered," while Heathcliff's figure overlaps with the barely open door, his small, uncertain edge over Cathy. Though the artist's victory in this conflict may not be great, it is at least a foregone conclusion in terms of the fable, that he *has* a future. Cathy, we know well, does not. Indeed, she is already "cornered" in the preceding plate, "*No, no, Isabella, you shan't run off*".

In "*There, you've done with coming here,*" the notion of an artist's banishment by his own soul, from the place he would claim, is explored. Balthus is investigating and trying to depict a peculiar circumstance that occurs when his authorial aspect is absent or non-functioning. At such times a terrible doubt of his own effective power gives strength to the tendency of his dissociated experiencing soul to make an overwhelming pronouncement; to pass upon his actual physical self the sentence of absolute unworthiness. This is an experience

all artists have. Their ability becomes a separate persona with whom they can only achieve unity through authorial action. When not engaged in such action, that ability stands apart, and is apt to pronounce a severe judgment upon the artist who is only, while not making, a human being. This odd sense, of being cast out from the place and self one inhabits, by an aspect of one's self not being used, is one of the least described of perennial phenomena. Yet even when the artist withstands the decree of banishment, which Heathcliff does, though he obeys the letter and leaves the house for a while, in the moment of its utterance the whole world trembles and becomes insecure; it is this queer dislocation that is portrayed in the uncertain space of the room in the penultimate illustration.

The last illustration of the series depicts the consequences of Cathy's rash act of banishing. Heathcliff has returned yet again to see her, not waiting for an answer to the letter he put into Nelly's hands; Edgar is away at church. There follows a passionate exchange that stands as one of the great and devastating love scenes in fiction. Cathy knows she is going to die; even when she hears Edgar on the stairs, she begs Heathcliff not to leave her. Nelly expostulates with him, Edgar hears the argument as he hastens up the stairs, and Cathy faints in Heathcliff's arms. Nelly's remark forms the caption: "*Catherine's arms had fallen relaxed and her head hung down.*"

Heathcliff's posture in this drawing recalls that in "*By a natural impulse he arrested his descent,*" when he caught Hareton falling. Here again, Heathcliff

possesses the ground upon which he stands, if daemonically and in despair. In the struggle of dissolution, it is finally Cathy who is banished, and Heathcliff who remains. The grim victor now in the war with his difficult soul, Heathcliff faces us, his visage the only clear one in the picture, while Nelly in the background sets up a lament. Once again, Cathy is transposed into a divinity; Heathcliff, who once inherited the house and the future, standing so, now holds his divine self dead in his arms. The whole scene takes on the dimensions and character of the final episode in the great Christian story. Having died (she has not yet done so in the text, but her only remaining act is to bear a child), Cathy will yet live, as the gratuitous, upright chair, bright and clear in the background informs us: art will go on. Though the artist himself wins the final pyrrhic victory over his soul, which, in trying to banish him, itself dies instead, he wins only through the cancellation of his loss. The presence of Nelly, balanced by the upright chair, assures us that Heathcliff has not totally lost his effective soul. If Cathy were utterly dead, neither Nelly nor the chair would make sense in the picture. But what of Edgar? He provides the occasion for the crisis, for Cathy's faint, and Heathcliff's proprietary claim, and Nelly's unrestrained lament. Cathy may be Heathcliff's divine self, his mirrored being and soul, but she is also the wife of Edgar, her official mate. Edgar is the world with all its conventions, to whom the artist's soul, possessed as it may be from time to time by his genius, is also inextricably married. It is part of Heathcliff's genius and harsh honesty to recognize, even in his despair, that since Cathy's estrangement from him, since

the loss of their paradise, if he possesses her at all it is in an illicit manner; he must wrest her from the grip of the world in order to possess her. In this picture we see Heathcliff in the very act of such wresting, even as Edgar, the literal owner of the floor upon which Heathcliff stands so determinedly, as well as the literal possessor of Cathy, his wife, approaches to bear angry witness to the intruder's defiant act. For Heathcliff is a Promethean figure, who takes Cathy into his own arms as by divine right. It is this act of wresting that sets the chair upright again. In this, the last drawing of the series, Balthus vividly portrays the ultimate solution to that ancient estrangement within the self: the life of art consists in a perpetual, violent reclamation of one's soul from its killing marriage to the world. This is the life Heathcliff faces at the end of Balthus' telling; this is the living artist's fate.

There is a wonderful, unfinished drawing, a study for an illustration of a passage in Chapter 12, which Balthus finally excluded from his series. After Heathcliff and Cathy's confrontation (Chapter 11), Cathy locks herself in her room, and fasts for three days, venting on herself her rage against the two men. At the end of this time she accepts some tea and toast from Nelly, who finds her delirious. Balthus depicts the moment at which Cathy, believing that the mirror on the wall is the black press back at Wuthering Heights, sees a face looming through it, and cries out "*Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I'm afraid of being*

alone" (WH, Ch.12). Nelly tries to make her understand that it is her own face that she sees, but to no avail; at length, Nelly covers the mirror up with a shawl.

Balthus here returns to the characterization of Cathy as Narcissus that was so explicit in "*Why have you that silk frock on, then?*" and "*Nelly, do you sometimes dream queer dreams?*" Indeed, Cathy says earlier on in the chapter, "I thought though everybody hated and despised each other, they could not avoid loving me" (WH, Ch.12), a most narcissistic, if not quite Narcissus-like remark. In the illustration of this incident Balthus finds, and is able to compose into a drawing as strong as any of his previous ones, the meaning of the dissolution he has sought to portray in the last three plates of the official series. In "*Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I'm afraid of being alone,*" (WH, Ch.12), Cathy, as Narcissus, cannot recognize her reflection at all, It matters little whether the face she sees in the mirror is actually her own, and in her delirium unfamiliar to her, or the visage of her other self, Heathcliff, so recently banished, returned upon her guilty imagination as a haunting. The crucial fact is that, rather than desiring union with it, as Narcissus would, she fears it most anxiously, and calls upon Nelly not to leave her alone with it. Thus Cathy's identity with Narcissus, gazer into surfaces, rapt lover of illusion, is shown to have deteriorated so far that she has fallen from the beatific state of that mythic character. Since one must suppose that, to Balthus, for Narcissus to lose his dreaming courage so utterly would represent the quintessence of meaninglessness, one must enquire as to why this tableau was eliminated at last from his series. And the reason is not far to seek,

for having set up his allegory so that the dissolution of the artist's nature must occur in the absence of his authorial self, he cannot have Nelly present.

Moreover, to found so crucial a statement upon a scene in which Nelly is not only an actor, but Cathy the main actor, and Heathcliff wholly absent, would have been to deflect the severe course of his secret story's unfolding; "*Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I'm afraid of being alone*" is, indeed, a scene out of another puppet-play. Nonetheless, it is a drawing worth noting, for its marvelous clarity indicates how little, out of his trinity of aspects, Balthus needs the figure of Heathcliff, that superficial image of himself. This ability to do without the male figure of the artist constantly makes itself felt throughout his whole oeuvre.

It is in this small, rejected sketch that Balthus captures most succinctly and sincerely a meaning of that dissolution he has determined to explore. Cathy, the artist's soul, calls upon Nelly, the authorial self, to hide the vision of her true face from her. This tragic and frightening situation consummately describes the fate of many a wayward artist, who continues to work at his *métier*, but uses his art to cover up the truth of his life's knowledge, rather than to reveal it. The perversion of artistry into the dishonest purposes of evasion and escape constitutes, for Balthus, the most horrifying disintegration possible within his own given character. For actually to cease to make art altogether, and still to survive, is not to be imagined.

Balthus' attraction to Brontë, and his affinity with her character that could so body forth a text once novel and myth, deserve a close look. For it is not merely that Balthus uses *Wuthering Heights* as both vehicle and mask for his personal story, as Brontë in her poems adopts the voices of the great figures of Gondal, her invented land, and thus distills that experience she cannot directly express; all artists do the same thing, more or less.

Brontë's famous diary-paper of 1834, written with her sister Anne, relates the following events:

This morning Branwell went down to Mr. Driver's and brought news that Sir Robert Peel was going to be invited to stand for Leeds. Anne and I have been peeling apples for Charlotte to make a pudding... Taby said just now Come Anne pilloputate (i.e. peel a potato). Aunt has come into the kitchen just now and said Where are your feet Anne Anne answered On the floor Aunt. Papa opened the parlour door and gave Branwell a letter saying Here Branwell read this and show it to your Aunt and Charlotte. The Gondals are discovering the interior of Gaaldine. Sally Mosely is washing in the back kitchin...

(any biography of EB may be consulted for this quotation)

Here we have Brontë's eloquently unselfconscious assertion of the coexistence of two worlds, and a sense of their absolute equality. If we receive more detail about the morning routine of the Brontë household than we do about the Gondals' explorations of Gaaldine, it is only because the writer happens to be, at the moment, immersed in the former. But it is clear, even from her brevity of statement, that one world is no less real than the other. This sense of a double-

layered reality continues to engage Brontë in the structure of *Wuthering Heights*, where novel and myth struggle for control over the story. The structure of the novel and the powers of myth can struggle because they meet in the same time and place, even as, in a painting by Balthus, an event is portrayed that is simultaneously quotidian and eternal.

Brontë injects into the inhabitants of the Yorkshire heath, among whom she lives, the dynamism of her Gondal-titans, in much the same way that Balthus injects the dramas of eternal stories into present-day, bourgeois interiors.

What is gained from this projection of voice through a mask or puppet is more complex than it seems. For the Brontë of the poems and the land of Gondal, the masks of Julius Brenzaida, Augusta Geraldine Almeda, Gerald, Douglas, and all the other archetypal characters who will find, in new disguises, a place in *Wuthering Heights*, enable her to speak a personally felt, but absolutely projected emotion; but this is the lesser gain. The larger is that since the emotion and thought expressed is so appropriate to both worlds-- to the lost plot of Gondal, as well as to Brontë's own life-- the implicit assertion of Gondal's existence in this world becomes a valid artistic statement.

It is finally to the success of the poems, and the unity of the persona behind them, that one must look to find this idea expressed in its clearest form; indeed one suspects that the whole project of the poems was a long attempt to realize this idea, finally brought to conscious fruition in the novel. To put it more specifically, in terms off the writer's own experience, one might say that Brontë

did not write of emotions and ideas that were essentially hers, using the masks of her characters, but rather that Emily Brontë and Augusta Geraldine Almeda and the others were often one, the poems exist in two worlds simultaneously, and their success testifies to the coexistence of those two worlds. This is what Balthus recognized in Brontë, his own obsession with that strange simultaneity of being which he explores so relentlessly in the paintings.

For Balthus, not only in the *Wuthering Heights* illustrations, but perhaps most vividly there, the story of the artist cannot be told in the fable's absence. The adopted masks of the fable are essential, for it is the mask of a character, his story-identity, rather than any human or personal quality, that defines him. If character is fate, then character is also predetermined by story, for what is fate but the ineluctable repetition of the old stories? Where does all this then leave Balthus and Brontë as related artists? It seems clear that for both, the act of composition, the making of art, is a manner not only of affirming, but also of embodying, the oneness of two invisibly coexisting worlds.

Image Links for Chapter Three: “The Illustrations for *Wuthering Heights*”

“Pull his hair as you go by...” at http://books.google.com/books?id=UO_HTonZ31cC&pg=PA40&lpg=PA40&dq=balthus+wuthering+heights+illustration&source=bl&ots=9jYx8RBdmj&sig=BF Cbm_eY7e_K6ibGX50fgLyPYoY&hl=en&sa=X&ei=OfSPUrXQMpDPkQeu6oG4Bw&ved=0CG0Q6AEwDg#v=onepage&q=balthus%20wuthering%20heights%20illustration&f=false

“I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes” at <http://sauerthompson.com/conversations/archives/001478.html>

“The Children” (1937) at <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/balthus/children-1937>

“It was one of our chief amusements to run away to the moors” at <http://limitededitionsclub.com/wuthering-heights/>

“Cathy and I escaped the wash-house to have a ramble at liberty,” at <http://limitededitionsclub.com/wuthering-heights/>

“We ran from the top of the heights...” at <http://www.artinvestmentnews.com/free/20131016.html>

“The Mountain” (1937), at <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1982.530>

“The devil had seized her ankle,” at <http://www.artvalue.com/auctionresult--balthus-balthasar-klossowski-d-pl-4-from-wuthering-heights-3377012.htm>

“I saw that they were full of stupid admiration” at <http://www.heritagebookshop.com/details.php?id=66039>

“You need't have touched me!” at http://www.google.com/search?q=balthus+wuthering+heights+illustration+cathy+heathcliff&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=kP-QUrKaCLC2sAT67YHABw&ved=0CCkQsAQ&biw=1440&bih=707#facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgsrc=fTbsACTBqjUewM%3A%3BVAsmclPehBWksM%3Bhttp%252F%252F25.media.tumblr.com%252Ftumblr_lctqujhtZK1qbql5oo1_400.jpg%3B

<http://0black0acrylic.blogspot.com/2013/02/balthus-wuthering-heights.html%3B398%3B472>

Botticelli's *Chloris and Zephyrus in the "Primavera"* at [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sandro_Botticelli_\(Primavera\)_Chloris_and_Zephyrus_made_Flora.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sandro_Botticelli_(Primavera)_Chloris_and_Zephyrus_made_Flora.jpg)

"Cathy Dressing" at http://terresdefemmes.blogs.com/mon_weblog/2008/09/6-septembre-193.html

"Why have you that silk frock on, then?" at <http://dailyglean.salebooks.com/2013/08/books-as-art-art-of-book-julie-harris.html>

"By a natural impulse he arrested his descent"

I could not find a link for this image on the web, but it is reproduced, as are all the illustrations, in the catalogues by Rewald and Clair.

"Nelly, do you sometimes dream queer dreams?"

This image likewise was not to be found on the web. See note above.

Poussin's *"Echo and Narcissus"* at

<http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/nicolas-poussin/echo-and-narcissus-1630>)

"No, no, Isabella, you shan't run off" at

<http://www.artvalue.com/auctionresult--balthus-balthasar-klossowski-d-emily-bronte-wuthering-heights-1931916.htm>

"There, you've done with coming here"

This image likewise was not to be found on the web. See note above.

"Cathy's arms had fallen relaxed and her head hung down" at

<http://0black0acrylic.blogspot.com/2013/02/balthus-wuthering-heights.html>

"Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I'm afraid of being alone" at

http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A317&page_number=2&template_id=1&sort_order=1

