The Grasp of the Ice-Cold Hand: The Emergence of a New Kind of Gothic in Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights

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THE GRASP OF THE ICE-COLD HAND: THE EMERENCE OF A NEW KIND OF GOTHIC IN EMILY BRONTË’S WUTHERING HEIGHTS

by

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s thesis advisor, Dr. Hilary Edwards, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Honors College and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences.

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ABSTRACT

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In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë combines elements of both the Gothic and Victorian Realism to create a new genre called Gothic Realism. While most critics accept that Brontë’s novel is a “threshold” work that can be either Gothic or Victorian and place the novel in the genre that best reflects their criticism, critics have yet to define an exact genre that encompasses aspects of both kinds of literature. In this thesis I define a new genre called Gothic Realism, which includes both Gothic and Victorian elements, and argue that *Wuthering Heights* provides an example of this genre. The novel includes fantastic Gothic elements as well as aspects of the realistic everyday terror of domestic violence and psychological instability. In combining the elements of both the fantastic and the realistic in Gothic Realism, *Wuthering Heights* affects the reader more than a traditional ghost story would, because the horror of real life in conjunction with the fantastic terror of the Gothic produces a total physiological fear in the reader.
To Mom and Dad
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I. Introduction

Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* contains both Gothic and Victorian realist elements, and many critics question which genre best describes the novel. Brontë critic Maggie Berg asserts that “in straddling Gothic and realistic genres, *Wuthering Heights* is a borderline or threshold work,” which suggests that because the novel is on the border between two genres, it cannot be a part of either one (7). The novel’s genre duality allows for critics to place the novel in whichever genre best suits their criticism, but it also creates a problem. If a critic asserts that *Wuthering Heights* is a part of one genre and not the other, the critic misses her/his opportunity to address the key elements of the omitted genre in *Wuthering Heights*, elements which could be beneficial to her/his literary analysis. Readers of Brontë’s work recognize that the novel does contain elements of the traditional Gothic\(^1\), which include dark, horrifying, and, most importantly for the purposes of this thesis, fantastic\(^2\) elements. However, readers also acknowledge that *Wuthering Heights* includes depictions of terrifying events that could occur in the real lives of Victorian readers. Given that the novel has both Gothic and Victorian realist elements, to place Brontë’s work in only one genre would be to negate another aspect of the tale entirely. Because *Wuthering Heights* exhibits such a strong genre duality that critics cannot fully prove their claims about various aspects of the book without addressing both the Gothic and realistic, the novel should not be labeled as a “borderline” work but rather be included in a genre all its own.

While criticism on the Gothic and Realist elements in *Wuthering Heights*

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\(^1\) The term “traditional Gothic” will be explained in full detail in Chapter II.

\(^2\) By “fantastic” I mean “rooted in fantasy.”
abounds, the creation of a genre that encapsulates both the fantastic and the realistic horror of Brontë’s novel is necessary in order to undertake a more comprehensive analysis of her work. In this thesis, I describe the Gothic elements with the realism of domestic violence and insanity in *Wuthering Heights*, and argue that Brontë’s incorporation of everyday terrors with aspects of the traditional Gothic creates a new kind of Gothic called Gothic Realism. Additionally, in looking at specific examples of both the Gothic and Realism in Brontë’s work and how these elements produce fear in the reader’s mind, I argue that the comprehensive fear produced in reading a Gothic Realist novel, such as *Wuthering Heights*, affects the reader more powerfully than a traditional Gothic novel alone ever could.\(^3\)

The second chapter, “The Gothic in *Wuthering Heights*,” presents the role of the Gothic in Brontë’s novel and will assist in showing in a later chapter how the effect of fear produced by works of Gothic literature adds to the overall fear created by Gothic realism. This section provides a brief introduction of what the Gothic is and looks at specific examples of the Gothic in *Wuthering Heights*. It examines the Gothic attributes of Wuthering Heights (the home), the harsh landscapes and weather surrounding Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, religious zealotry, as well as the fantastic elements of nightmares, necromancy\(^4\), and ghosts. Overall, the chapter describes and analyzes the specific Gothic components in *Wuthering Heights*, and chapter IV will show how these Gothic elements create fear in the reader’s mind and how this effect of fear

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\(^3\) Realist novels are not mentioned in the above claim because, while Gothic novels have always been thought of as frightening, realistic events typically do not scare the reader. In Chapter IV, one will see that while the Gothic portions of Brontë’s work can more easily achieve a frightening effect, there is a complex process that occurs when one experiences fear from reading the realistic incidents.

\(^4\) “The art of performing wonderful feats by supernatural means, with assistance from the powers of evil” (Dunn 12n5)
adds to the overall fear generated by Gothic Realism.

Chapter III, “The Realism of Wuthering Heights,” describes the horrific realistic events that are essential elements of Brontë’s novel. After one is able to recognize these elements, s/he will have a better understanding of how the realistic incidents create fear and how this realistic effect of fear enhances the fear produced by Gothic Realism. The chapter notes the widespread nature of the horrors of domestic violence and mental instability in the Victorian home, and discusses how Brontë reflects the realistic Victorian lifestyle through her depictions of these everyday horrors. The chapter addresses Brontë’s descriptions of various episodes of domestic violence and mental insanity, and provides an analysis of how the mental deterioration of both Heathcliff and Catherine causes their deaths. The purpose of this chapter is to present the various elements of realism in Brontë’s novel, and, as in chapter I, to lay a groundwork for chapter IV, in which the reader will see how these elements create the effect of fear and how this effect adds to the fear produced by Gothic Realism.

Chapter IV “The Genre of Wuthering Heights: Gothic Realism” includes a definition of Gothic Realism and shows how this new genre brings together the two kinds of fear generated by the genres discussed in the previous chapters to create a new, more powerful fear with a stronger impact on the reader than is found in either genre on its own. The chapter defines the effect of fear produced by both the Gothic and Realism; essentially, both genres create a psychological fear in the reader, but realist works add an element of physiological sympathy to the effect. In describing the fear generated by each genre, the chapter shows how Gothic Realist authors like Brontë can create more

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5 Psychological fear will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.
6 Physiological sympathy will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.
suspenseful and horrifying tales than they could achieve by pursuing either genre in its pure form because they generate the combined effect of both genres. The chapter specifically analyzes the relationship between Sigmund Freud’s essay “The ‘Uncanny’” and the effect of Gothic Realism, because his essay looks specifically at the horrors of both the unfamiliar (fantastic) and the familiar (realistic). Having described the fear produced by Gothic Realism, I then examine a specific episode of intense horror in *Wuthering Heights* in which Brontë demonstrates the full effect of Gothic Realism. The chapter ends with an investigation of why people read and find pleasure in Gothic Realist works informed specifically by Anna Letitia and John Aikin’s essay “On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror; with Sir Betrand, a Fragment.” The thesis concludes with the hypothesis that Gothic Realism is popular precisely because of the fear it provokes in its readers and that this effect can help explain why people continue to read *Wuthering Heights* in such great numbers even to this day.
II. The Gothic in *Wuthering Heights*

The content of this chapter provides the reader with an understanding of the Gothic and examples of the Gothic in *Wuthering Heights*. The section also describes the Gothic’s role in Brontë’s novel and assists in proving why the Gothic is an integral part of Gothic Realism. Additionally, since this thesis deals directly with the fear produced by Gothic Realism, one should understand how the Gothic creates fear in the reader and one can only comprehend this once s/he recognizes the Gothic elements of the novel.

The word “Gothic” first appeared as an adjective used to describe the Germanic tribes that ravaged Europe between 200 and 400 A.D. These Germanic tribes were called the Goths, Visigoths, and Ostrogoths, and, after their devastating rampage across Europe, the term Gothic came to be defined as barbaric and savage. (Melanie “The Gothic Experience”) By the mid eighteenth century, however, England had “[embraced] a kind of counterfeit medievalism” or “medieval revival,” and the savage and barbaric aspects of the Gothic’s original definition were now reflected in the “English garden design and architecture” (“Gothic and Development” 577). The popularity of the Gothic style grew during the mid-1700s and many homes and cathedrals took on the appearance of this new type of architecture. Many renovated buildings resembled the Gothic cathedrals of Europe and included traditional Gothic components such as “towers, turrets, battlements, arched doors, and [ornamented windows]” (577).

In addition to the rise of Gothic architecture, the eighteenth century expanded the

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7 Melanie explains this medieval revival: “By the eighteenth century in England, Gothic had become synonymous with the Middle Ages, a period which was in disfavor because it was perceived as chaotic, unenlightened, and superstitious. Renaissance critics erroneously believed that Gothic architecture was created by the Germanic tribes and regarded it as ugly and barbaric. This erroneous attribution continued through the eighteenth century.”
idea of the Gothic by adding a darker, more fantastic connotation to its “savage and barbaric” definition. During this time, writers used the Gothic as “a way to describe accounts of terrifying experiences in ancient castles and ruined abbeys—experiences connected with subterranean dungeons, secret passageways, flickering lamps, screams, moans, ghosts, and graveyards” (577). Horace Walpole’s 1765 publication, *The Castle of Otranto*, is considered the first example of Gothic literature (Melanie “The Gothic Experience”). Walpole’s successful venture into the Gothic genre intrigued many other eighteenth century writers because he was able to create a mesmerizing, suspenseful tale that psychologically affected and scared the reader. Walpole was able to encapsulate

> the strange *disquietude* of the Gothic spirit that is its greatness; that recklessness of the dreaming mind, that wanders hither thither among the niches, and flickers feverishly around the pinnacles, and frets and fades in the labyrinthine knots and shadows along the wall and roof; and yet is not satisfied, nor shall be satisfied. (Ruskin 184)

Ruskin explains that writers, like Walpole, were able to enter readers’ minds by using the Gothic genre, and many writers wanted to replicate the new genre used by Walpole because of its amazing effect on readers. As a result, the Gothic genre rose in popularity.

As the publication of Gothic works increased, readers began to see similarities between the many horror stories. One of these similarities is that most Gothic works have the same general premise. The traditional Gothic story bases itself: “not in the heroine (the persecuted principle of salvation) but in the villain (the persecuting principle of damnation). The villain-hero is, indeed, an invention of the gothic form, while his temptation and suffering, the beauty and terror of his bondage to evil are among its major

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8 In addition to producing the first Gothic story, Horace Walpole was also the first person to incorporate Gothic architecture into his Strawberry Hill estate. This Gothic remodeling venture began in 1750 and he ended up creating “the kind of spurious medieval architecture that survives today mainly in churches and university buildings” (“Gothic and Development” 577).
themes” (Fiedler 132). Gothic fiction must have a villain-driven plot in which the evil actions of the damned character are of more importance than resolving the victimization of the “damsel in distress.” Brontë’s novel *Wuthering Heights* demonstrates the villain-centric aspect of the Gothic genre through the depiction of the villain, Heathcliff, and his undying passion for Catherine Earnshaw. Throughout the entire novel, the reader observes the violent lengths to which Heathcliff will go to attain Catherine’s love. As Heathcliff achieves her love, Catherine becomes so entangled in his obsession for her and her reciprocated obsession that she actually comes to believe that she is Heathcliff:

“Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff—he’s always, always in my mind—not as pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but as my own being” (Brontë 64). Heathcliff continues his passionate endeavor to persuade Catherine to leave Edgar for him, and, due to his constant harassment and her constant struggle to decide which life she wants to live, the Linton life or the Heathcliff life, Catherine dies as a result of the combined turmoil. Overall, Brontë shows how the villain, Heathcliff, horribly affects the lives of the Lintons and Earnshaws, specifically Catherine; relative to this villain-focused plot, the resolution of the uniting the two crazed-lovers is secondary.

In addition to sharing the same premise, Gothic novels also share similar components, and one can see many of these facets in *Wuthering Heights.* These elements include:

- a castle, ruined or intact, haunted or not,
- ruined buildings which are sinister or which arouse a pleasing

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9 Although the actions of the villain are of more importance than saving the heroine, the resolution of saving the heroine is an important aspect of Gothic Realist fiction because the resolution is why people read these kinds of novels. The readers’ curiosities about how the tale ends force them to continue reading the horrific tale, even though the story is extremely frightening and may cause the reader physical pain. For more information on this subject, see Chapter IV.

10 I will go into greater detail regarding obsession/passion and the madness that ensues from these afflictions in Chapter III.
melancholy\textsuperscript{11},
\begin{itemize}
  \item dungeons, underground passages, crypts, and catacombs which, in modern houses, become spooky basements or attics,
  \item labyrinths, dark corridors, and winding stairs,
  \item shadows, a beam of moonlight in the blackness, a flickering candle, or the only source of light failing (a candle blown out or an electric failure),
  \item extreme landscapes, like rugged mountains, thick forests, or icy wastes, and extreme weather,
  \item omens and ancestral curses,
  \item magic, supernatural manifestations, or the suggestion of the supernatural,
  \item a passion-driven, willful villain-hero or villain,
  \item a curious heroine with a tendency to faint and a need to be rescued—frequently,
  \item a hero whose true identity is revealed by the end of the novel,
  \item horrifying (or terrifying) events or the threat of such happenings.
\end{itemize}
(Melanie “The Gothic Experience”)

Gothic novelists use both the generic villain-centered plot and various dark, mysterious events so that they can convince the reader to undergo a combination of page-turning apprehension and curiosity.\textsuperscript{12}

Brontë’s novel contains numerous Gothic elements, specifically the setting of Wuthering Heights, the description of the harsh weather on the moors, the passionate zealotry of Joseph, nightmares, Catherine’s and Cathy’s\textsuperscript{13} beliefs in necromancy, and ghosts. In the chapter “The Nature of the Gothic” in \textit{The Stones of Venice}, Victorian writer John Ruskin wrote:

…the characteristic or moral elements of Gothic are the following, placed in order of their importance:

\begin{itemize}
  \item 1. Savageness.
  \item 2. Changefulness.
  \item 3. Naturalism.
  \item 4. Grotesqueness.
  \item 5. Rigidity.\textsuperscript{14}
  \item 6. Redundance.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{11} For more information on how the Gothic creates a “pleasing melancholy” see Chapter IV.
\textsuperscript{12} For more information on how Gothic writers are able to create an effect of “page-turning apprehension and curiosity” see Chapter IV.
\textsuperscript{13} For the purposes of my paper, Catherine is Catherine Earnshaw and Cathy is Catherine Linton, Catherine Earnshaw’s daughter.
\textsuperscript{14} To my knowledge, rigidity and redundance do not appear in the description of the architecture and/or landscape of Wuthering Heights and therefore will not be included in this analysis.
These characters are here expressed as belonging to the building. (Ruskin 175)\(^{15}\)

While Ruskin is discussing these elements in terms of Gothic architecture, not Gothic literature, there is connection between his analysis and Gothic literature. Since Gothic architecture inspired the Gothic literary genre, it can be said that elements of Gothic architecture can also be present in Gothic literature. Furthermore, the elements that Ruskin describes are mostly present in the architecture of Wuthering Heights, and this home is part of Gothic work. Therefore, one can assess Brontë’s work in terms of Ruskin’s Gothic analysis.

While examining Ruskin’s description of the Gothic, the reader sees that some of the elements, specifically the naturalism, grotesqueness, and savagery, Ruskin depicts in his analysis are present in *Wuthering Heights*. For example, the reader can see these Gothic components in the description of the house Wuthering Heights:

> Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff’s dwelling. “Wuthering” being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times, ineed: one may guess the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones. (4)

In this description, the reader sees the naturalism that Ruskin describes as essential elements of Gothic architecture. Naturalism, as defined by Ruskin, is: “the love of natural objects for their own sake, and the effort to represent them frankly” (184). While the link between Ruskin’s naturalism and the description of Wuthering Heights is weaker than the links between Ruskin’s other elements and certain architectural aspects of

\(^{15}\) While Ruskin says that these characters belong to the architecture, I show how the elements of redundance and savageness also appear in Heathcliff in footnote 25.
Wuthering Heights, Ruskin does say that naturalism includes a “fondness for the forms of vegetation” and the stunted fir trees outside Wuthering Heights provide an element of naturalism to Brontë’s description of the house (185). The grotesqueness and the savageness of Gothic architecture is also apparent in Wuthering Heights, specifically in house’s threshold: “Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door, above which [were] a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little boys” (4). The reader can see the grotesqueness of the architecture through Brontë’s use of the word “grotesque” to describe the carving. Furthermore, the savagery of the carving can be seen through the images of griffins and corrupt children. By looking at Ruskin’s elements of the Gothic and where they appear in Wuthering Heights, one can see that the appearance of the home provides an example of Gothic architecture and this adds to the Gothic section of the novel.

Ruskin’s Gothic characteristic “changefulness” is apparent in the harsh weather surrounding Wuthering Heights. One example of the fickleness of the weather occurs in the beginning of the novel when Lockwood first meets Heathcliff. Lockwood approaches Wuthering Heights without any weather obstacles; however, when Lockwood begins his retreat to his new rental property, Thrushcross Grange, the weather makes his trek impossible and Lockwood must to remain at Wuthering Heights. As Lockwood attempts to leave Wuthering Heights he says: “A sorrowful sight I saw: dark night coming down prematurely, and sky and hills mingle in one bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow” (12). Lockwood conveys the idea that Wuthering Heights is a distressing place when he looks out the window to find the harsh weather has dampened his escape plans and uses
the word “sorrowful” to describe the sight outside the window. Additionally, Brontë’s describes the snow as “suffocating,” as though it actually inflicts physical pain. When Lockwood realizes that his trip to Thrushcross Grange is no longer possible, he says: “on that bleak hilltop the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb” (5). Through Lockwood’s descriptive words, the reader can almost feel the coldness and see the darkness of the environment surrounding the home. This description of the harsh weather adds to the reader’s sense of the darkness outside the home, a feeling that only intensifies once the reader enters the home and acquaints her/himself with the chaotic characters of the novel.

The dark exterior of the home adds to the Gothic appearance of the environment surrounding Wuthering Heights, but the horrifying aspects of the Gothic come from the inside the home. One of the major aspects of the Gothic terror that reader sees inside Wuthering Heights is the passionate religious zealotry of Joseph. 

Although many Gothic tales are set in a Roman Catholic abbey and the central villain is usually a two-faced Catholic clergy member, the religious fanaticism in Wuthering Heights is part of the Protestant faith as opposed to the Catholic faith. The critic Leslie Fiedler states:

the [G]othic romance is Protestant in its ethos; indeed, it is…most blatantly anti-Catholic…projecting in its fables a consistent image of the Church as the Enemy; we have already noticed how standard and expected were the character of the

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16 The passionate zealot Joseph is an example of the Gothic element of the passion-driven, willful villain as mentioned above because both are driven by their passions.

17 As stated previously, writers used the Gothic as “a way to describe accounts of terrifying experiences in ancient castles and ruined abbeys” (“Gothic and Development” 577).

18 On the outside, the figure of the monk in Gothic literature is an upstanding, moral individual, but in actuality he is filled with evil thoughts and committing immoral acts. On major example of this kind character is Ambrosio from Matthew Gregory Lewis’ The Monk: In The Monk, “Ambrosio, [an] abbot of a monastery in Madrid, goes from a pinnacle of self-satisfied saintliness to become one of the most depraved villains in all fiction, both an incestuous rapist and matricidal murderer. After being seduced by Matilda, a female demon who has entered his monastery disguised as a male novice named Rosario, Ambrosio, with the help of a talisman that Matilda provides, plots the rape of one his penitents, Antonia” (“Matthew Gregory Lewis” 596).
depraved monk, the stubborn Inquisitor, the malicious abbess. Yet the [G]othic imagination feeds on what its principles abhor, the ritual and the glitter, the politics and pageantry of the Roman Church. (136)

While Fiedler suggests that the traditional Gothic style needs the excessiveness of the Roman Catholic Church to enhance its effect, Brontë proves that even though the Protestant faith lacks glitzy rituals, the excessiveness of Protestant religious fanaticism can make up for the absence of Catholicism through the extreme passion of the Puritanical fanatic. In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë presents the Protestant extremist, Joseph, and shows he can take his faith too far and enter the realm of hypocrisy and, in a more severe case, violence.

Through Joseph, Brontë shows the duplicity of the religious fanatic as well as the violent lengths to which a Protestant extremist will go to gain followers. Joseph provides an example of religious hypocrisy in the novel, which is also a major element of Gothic novels, since most show the hypocrisy of the Roman Catholic faith. Brontë describes Joseph as

\[\ldots\] the wearisomest, self-righteous pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises of himself, and fling the curses on his neighbours. By his knack of sermonizing and pious discoursing, he contrived to make a great impression on Mr. Earnshaw, and the more feeble the master became, the more influence he gained.

He was relentless in worrying him about his soul’s concerns, and about ruling his children rigidly. (33)

She presents Joseph as someone who uses the Bible for his own purposes so that he can influence those surrounding him and damn those who choose to disobey his version of God’s law. Brontë’s description of Joseph connects him with Ambrosio\(^{19}\), a hypocritical religious figure of the Matthew Gregory Lewis’ Gothic tale *The Monk*, and presents evidence that Brontë’s novel can be considered Gothic because it includes components

\[\ldots\]

\[^{19}\] See footnote 17.
that could be found in earlier Gothic works.

Furthermore, many of Joseph’s petitions to God add to his hypocritical status. When witnessing one of the many domestic disputes in Heathcliff’s home, Joseph calls upon God for assistance, saying “Oh, wicked, wicked!…may the Lord deliver us from evil!” (12). Joseph’s plea makes it seem as though he has no part in the constant bickering and general hellish atmosphere of the home, but his actions prove to be less than Christian and reveal him as a participant than an innocent bystander. For example, when Joseph complains about Cathy living in Wuthering Heights and Heathcliff makes the mistake of thinking he is talking about Nelly, the children’s nursemaid, Joseph says:

It’s noan Nelly!…Aw sudn’t shift fur Nelly—nasty, ill nowt as shoo is. Thank God! shoo cannot stale t’ sowl uh nob’dy! Shoo were niver soa handsome, bud whet a body mud look at her ‘baht winking. It’s yon flaysome, graceless quean, ut’s witched ahr lad, wi’ her bold een, un’ her forrard ways till—Nay! It fair brusts my heart! He’s forgotten all E done for him, un made on him, un’ goan un’ riven up a whole row ut t’ grandest currant trees i’ t’ garden! (243-4)

This malicious attack on Nelly, in addition to his reference to Cathy and Hareton as wicked, shows both Joseph’s hypocritical tendencies as well as his general disgust for those around him. While Christianity preaches love of one’s neighbor, Joseph goes against his church’s teachings by criticizing those around him. In addition to Joseph’s many disingenuous actions, the other characters also refer to him as a hypocrite. One specific example of this occurs when Cathy and Joseph are arguing, and Cathy says “You scandalous old hypocrite!” (12). While one only needs to see the extreme difference between Joseph’s faithful praises to God and his complete disdain for those around him to recognize his hypocrisy, the fact that the other characters refer to him as a “hypocrite” only solidifies the reader’s understanding of Joseph’s unchristian attitude. Joseph’s

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20 Capitalization is not regular in this novel and I followed the punctuation suggestions provided by Richard J. Dunn in his edition of Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights.
fanatical sermons and constant intercessions to the Lord in combination with his incessant cursing of the Earnshaw household show both his passionate zeal for God and his malicious intent and reveal him as a two-faced villain. This depiction of a religious zealot thus adds to the Gothic tone of *Wuthering Heights* by presenting the Gothic element of the driven, passionate villain. The most horrifying thing about Joseph, that his passion for God can turn him into a violent fanatic who inflicts pain on those who refuse to join his Protestant faith, shows his villainous tendencies and provides a stronger example of this Gothic element.

Joseph’s incessant preaching begins to influence those around him, but it is only when his religious fervor affects another character’s subconscious that his passionate zeal becomes truly frightening. After Lockwood meets Joseph and hears one of his many petitions to the Lord, he has a nightmare that Brontë calls “Seventy Times Seven, and the First of the Seventy-First. A Pious Discourse delivered by the Reverend Jabes Branderham, in the Chapel of Gimmerden Sough” (18). In this dream, “either Joseph, the preacher, or [Lockwood] had committed the ‘First of the Seventy-First’ sins and were to publicly exposed and excommunicated” (19). As Lockwood enters the church, he witnesses other religious zealots and their extreme dedication to the faith. More specifically, Lockwood views the congregation’s devotion to Jabes Branderham, and he claims that there is an abundance of hypocrites like Joseph surrounding him in the church. When Branderham examines every one of the four hundred and ninety-one sins, Lockwood says that “he had his private manner of interpreting the phrase 21 [from the Bible], and it seemed necessary the brother should sin on every occasion” (19). Lockwood recognizes that Branderham and his many followers are complete hypocrites.

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21 Matthew 18.21-35
because they interpret their religion to fit their own needs; this realization forces him to react against the obsessed crowd and “denounce Jabes Branderham as the sinner of the sin that no Christian need pardon” (19). After Lockwood’s act of rebellion, the religious passion of the congregation of zealots turns to a violent uproar in which

the whole assembly, exalting their pilgrim’s staves, rushed round me in a body, and I, having no weapon to raise in self-defense, commenced grappling with Joseph, my nearest and most ferocious assailant, for his. In the confluence of the multitude, several clubs crossed; blows, aimed at me, fell on other sconces. Presently the whole chapel resounded with rappings and counter-rappings. Every man’s hand was against his neighbour’ and Branderham, unwilling to remain idle, poured forth his zeal in a shower of loud taps on the boards of the pulpit, which responded so smartly that, at last, to my unspeakable relief, they woke me. (20)

The Jabes Branderham nightmare adds to the Gothic tone of the novel because it expands the Gothic idea of passionate obsession and is in the form of a nightmare, which is a dark and terrifying experience in itself. The unrestrained aspect of religious zealotry specifically adds to the Gothicism of the novel because of its frightening unpredictability; no one knows when obsession will erupt into violence.

Another Gothic element that appears in Wuthering Heights is necromancy. While Joseph centers himself in the spiritual world of Christian faith, his surroundings, specifically Wuthering Heights, contain aspects of the supernatural world. Necromancy is prevalent throughout the novel, adding to its fantastic element as well as to the general eerie feeling that results from reading about paranormal experiences. Brontë sets the stage for supernatural activity at the beginning of the novel when Lockwood witnesses Cathy proclaiming her proficiency in necromancy. After calling Joseph a hypocrite, she says:

Are you not afraid of being carried away bodily, whenever you mention the devil’s name? I warn you to refrain from provoking me, or I’ll ask your abduction as a special favour. Stop, look here, Joseph…[Cathy takes out a dark-
colored book] I’ll show you how I’ve progressed in the Black Art—I shall soon be competent to make a clear house of it. The red cow didn’t die by chance; and your rheumatism can hardly be reckoned among providential visitations. (12)

Cathy’s assertion that she can call upon the Devil and inflict pain on those around her simply by casting spells adds to the supernatural and fantastic elements of the novel. Furthermore, in viewing Cathy’s necromantic abilities, the reader can see a similarity between Cathy and her mother Catherine. In one scene, Nelly begs Catherine to refrain from using her evil abilities: “We’re dismal enough without conjuring up ghosts and visions to perplex us” (62). In both instances, Brontë employs the other characters’ fear to show the Catherines’ skills in the knowledge and execution of the dark arts. Even though the dark arts appear to be merely supernatural and fantastic elements in the text, they are more than that because the characters who practice them in the novel actually achieve results.

In addition to the supernatural element of necromancy, Brontë includes numerous references to ghosts, which are key elements of the Gothic genre. While the house itself radiates a kind of ghostly ambiance, Lockwood, the outsider, also recognizes the actual presence of the supernatural in the form of ghosts. After spending an evening in Wuthering Heights and experiencing a series of unsettling nightmares, Lockwood exclaims: “[this house is] swarming with ghosts and goblins!” (22). While the appearance of ghosts may seem at first to be the projection of Lockwood’s subconscious fears, other characters also claim to recognize the presence of ghosts around Wuthering Heights and the surrounding moors. For instance, Nelly encounters a boy who sees Heathcliff’s and Catherine’s ghosts frolicking on the moors outside of Wuthering

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22 See in above quote how Cathy claims that she caused Joseph’s on-going rheumatism and the red cow’s death.
Heights. Nelly recounts the event:

I was going to the Grange one evening—a dark evening threatening thunder—and, just at the turn of the Heights, I encountered a little boy with a sheep and two lambs before him; he was crying terribly, and I supposed the lambs were skittish, and would not be guided.

“What is the matter, my little man?” I asked.

“They’s Heathcliff and a woman, yonder, under t’ Nab,” he blubbered, “un’ Aw darnut pass ‘em.”

I saw nothing; but neither the sheep nor he would go on, so I bid him take the road lower down. (257)

In this scene, Brontë introduces the idea that ghosts actually exist and they are “living” in or near Wuthering Heights. The addition of ghosts includes the elements of the supernatural and the horrifying and this enhances the Gothicism of Brontë’s novel.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë provides the reader with a dark mental image of the novel’s environment through the Gothic descriptions of Wuthering Heights and the harsh landscapes and weather of the Yorkshire moors. However, with the additions of the element of passionate religious zealotry, as well as the fantastic aspects of nightmares, necromancy, and ghosts, Brontë adds to her Gothic visual by including aspects that intensify the eerie picture forged in the reader’s mind. As we will see in the fourth chapter, however, when the reader recognizes the many realistic elements of *Wuthering Heights*, s/he can see that there is an entirely different genre working simultaneously with the Gothic, and this genre adds a new component to the reading experience.
III. The Realism in *Wuthering Heights*

This chapter provides the reader with an understanding of the realistic horrors that appear throughout *Wuthering Heights*, specifically the terror of domestic violence and mental instability. I begin with a discussion of how these real-life terrifying events of abuse may actually have occurred in the lives of many Victorian readers, and I also show the realistic chaos of love, which many readers can relate to, and its effect on the characters in the novel. In recognizing the realistic components of Brontë’s novel, one can see how Victorian realism is a genre that is evident throughout the entire work. Furthermore, in depicting the various realistic horrors that the characters endure, I will be able to show, in the subsequent chapter, how these events create fear in the reader, as well as how this effect enhances the effect produced by Gothic Realism.

Brontë generates an element of realism\(^\text{23}\) that reflects the terrible trials of her readers’ lives. Brontë specifically alludes to the lives of her Victorian readers through her descriptions of the various realistic horrors that the Earnshaws and the Lintons endure throughout *Wuthering Heights*. In this sense, the novel is work of realistic fiction. Literary critic J. Hillis Miller states that in *Wuthering Heights*:

> The reader is persuaded that the novel is an accurate picture of the material and sociological conditions of life in Yorkshire in the early nineteenth century. The novel to an unusual degree gives that pleasure appropriate to realistic fiction, the pleasure yielding to the illusion that one is entering into a real world by way of words on the page. (362)

Miller describes how Brontë convinces the reader to forget the novel’s fictitious nature because the realistic events she portrays in *Wuthering Heights* appear so real that they could actually occur in the reader’s own life. The novel contains such an accurate

\(^{23}\) For the purposes of this paper, I define realism as “the use of material that the reader can accept as existing in the ordinary world as well [as the fictional world]” (Roberts 146).
depiction of certain trials of Victorian life that Brontë “[offended her contemporary readers who thought] that fiction ‘should be satisfied with imitating the surface of life’” (Hartley in Knoepflmacher 107). Brontë’s work appalled some critics because the author went beyond “the seemingly smooth domestic [surface] to reveal criminal intent and potential violence” within the home of Wuthering Heights (Hughes 40). Brontë opened Victorian readers’ eyes to the evil surrounding them; for some people, this horror was too much for them to accept and they felt safer in deeming her work complete fiction. However, the violence Brontë describes in her novel was a part of everyday Victorian life. In *Wuthering Heights*, readers see the realistic terror of domestic abuse and the frightening effect of love when it gets out of hand, which love has a tendency to do, and actually cause someone’s death.

Brontë’s work specifically describes the violence of domestic abuse, which was a major problem in many Victorian homes:

In 1847, when *Wuthering Heights* was published, women and children were the legal property of their husbands, a law which Heathcliff exploits to wreak his revenge. By 1847, wife abuse was a daily feature of the newspapers Emily read. Brontë’s novel, like her sister Anne’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, depicts men’s abuse of women. (Berg 6)

Through many domestic abuse incidents in the novel, the reader sees certain characters, specifically Hindley and Heathcliff, inflict abuse on the weaker beings in the home. For example, when “Heathcliff lifted his hand, and [Cathy] sprang to a safer distance, obviously acquainted with its weight,” the reader understands that Heathcliff frequently abuses the woman of the house (Brontë 25). Brontë offers a complex reason for why

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24 Authors began writing about the evils under the surface of domestic life during this time, in part as a reaction to the Contagious Disease Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869. This antagonistic literature was called Sensationalist Literature. For more information on this subject, see Linda K. Hughes’ essay entitled “1870” in *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, pgs. 577-607.
men, like Heathcliff and Hindley, abuse those around them. Michael Irwin states that “the life of the…individual, at whatever social level, is bound to include some passage of ‘melodramatic’ intensity: episodes of love, or fear, or grief” (18). The men in Brontë’s novel express their ‘melodramatic intensity’ through acts of violence and as reactions to their own episodes of grief.

After Hindley endures the loss of his wife, Frances, he uses alcohol to numb his grief and becomes a violent alcoholic. During his drunken episodes, Hindley becomes extremely belligerent and the family suffers many bouts of domestic abuse as a result of his inability to express his grief in a less aggressive way. In one episode, the reader sees how the family deals with the Hindley’s drunkenness:

Hareton was impressed with a wholesome terror of encountering either his wild beast’s fondness or his madman’s rage; for in one he ran a chance of being squeezed and kissed to death, and in the other of being flung into the fire, or dashed against the wall…

“There, I’ve found it out at last!” cried Hindley, pulling [Nelly] back by the skin of the neck, like a dog. “By heaven and Hell, you’ve sworn between you to murder that child! I know how it is, now, that he is always out of my way. But, with the help of Satan, I shall make you swallow the carving knife, Nelly!”

“But I don’t like the carving knife, Mr. Hindley” [she] answered; “it has been cutting red herrings. I’d rather be shot if you please.”…

“Oh!” said he, releasing me, “I see that hideous little villain is not Hareton…Now, don’t you think the lad would be handsomer cropped? It makes a dog fiercer, and I love something fierce—get me a scissors…Hush, child, hush! well, then, it is my darling! wisht, dry thy eyes—there’s a joy; kiss me; what! it won’t? kiss me, Hareton! Damn thee, kiss me! By God, as if I would rear such a monster! As sure as I’m living, I’ll break the brat’s neck.” (Brontë 58)

This scene shows the effect that Hindley’s alcoholism has on in those around him, as well as the frequency with which the family must deal with Hindley’s drunken rage. Nelly’s apathetic reaction to the threat of the carving knife and Hareton’s trepidation about providing his father with affection reveal both characters’ familiarity with Hindley’s abuse and the mechanisms they use to endure it. Brontë’s depiction of Hindley’s
alcoholic rage demonstrates the horrifying abuse that could have occurred in Victorian homes; the scene suggests the idea that abuse such as this is a recurring event in many domestic environments and the family is in a constant state of trepidation when the man is at home.

Brontë also presents domestic abuse as a kind of emotional release for the abuser, and this could be her way of trying to understand why some men abused the weaker beings in their households. The abuser, in this case Heathcliff, uses violence and physical force to release his anguish when it becomes too unbearable. Almost immediately after Catherine’s death, Heathcliff returns back to Wuthering Heights from Thrushcross Grange and engages in a domestic dispute with Hindley. Although Hindley incites the violence because he feels that Heathcliff has stolen his inherited property, Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff takes advantage of this argument as a way to release his anger over losing Catherine:

…[Heathcliff] flung himself on Earnshaw’s weapon and wrenched it from his grasp.

The charge exploded, and the knife, in springing back, closed into its owner’s wrist. Heathcliff pulled it away by main force, slitting up the flesh as it passed on, and thrust it dripping into his pocket…His adversary had fallen senseless with excessive pain and the flow of blood that gushed from an artery, or a large vein.

The ruffian kicked and trampled on him, and dashed his head repeatedly against the flags, holding me with one hand, meanwhile, to prevent me summoning Joseph.

He exerted preter-human self-denial in abstaining from finishing him completely; but getting out of breath, he finally desisted, and dragged the apparently inanimate body onto the settle.

There he tore off the sleeve of Earnshaw’s coat, and bound up the wound with brutal roughness, spitting and cursing during the operation, as energetically as he had kicked before. (138)25

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25 While this scene may seem a bit over the top, this scenario still depicts an episode of violence that could happen in an extremely volatile domestic environment.
In this violent scene, one can see the extreme aggression with which Heathcliff strikes Hindley, although Heathcliff switches from the aggressor to the caretaker in the matter of an instant. This shift suggests that Heathcliff finds the dispute a sort of physical release where he can dispel his grief, and as soon as he feels that he can endure his grief, he ends the battle with Hindley and begins to help him. However, when Heathcliff finds his suffering too unbearable, he loses control and begins the harsh violent cycle again.

In another instance, Heathcliff’s grief-driven hostility reappears when he meets Catherine’s daughter, Cathy “…whom he detests and loves because [she looks] so much like the first Catherine” (Miller 374). Due to his undying love for Catherine and Cathy’s physical resemblance to her, Heathcliff becomes angered by her physical resemblance because it reminds him of his loss. Despite his anger toward her, Heathcliff wants Cathy and Nelly (now Cathy’s caretaker) to remain permanently at Wuthering Heights and uses physical force to keep them confined to the residence. Cathy engages in a dispute with Heathcliff and attempts to escape the house, which results in another episode of domestic abuse. Nelly describes the incident between Cathy and Heathcliff:

“Give me that key—I will have it!” she said. “I wouldn’t eat or drink here, if I were starving.”

Heathcliff had the key in his hand that remained on the table. He looked up, seized with a sort of surprise at her boldness, or, possibly, reminded by her voice and glance, of the person from whom she inherited it.

She snatched at the instrument, and half succeeded in getting it out of his loosened fingers; but her action recalled him to the present; he recovered it speedily.

“Now, Catherine Linton,” he said, “stand off, or I shall knock you down; and that will make Mrs. Dean mad.”

Regardless of this warning, she captured his closed hand and its contents again.

“We will go!” she repeated, exerting her utmost efforts to cause the iron muscles to relax; and finding that her nails made no impression, she applied her teeth pretty sharply.

Heathcliff glanced at me a glance that kept me from interfering a moment.
Catherine was too intent on his fingers to notice his face. He opened them suddenly, and resigned the object of dispute; but, ere she had well secured it, he seized her with the liberated hand, and, pulling her on his knee, administered with the other a shower of terrific slaps on both sides of the head, each sufficient to have fulfilled his threat, had she been able to fall. (206-7)

In this scene, the reader can see exactly how Heathcliff demands the submission of the “weaker beings” inside his home, specifically in the way Nelly knows not to interfere because she has experienced his violent wrath. Through Heathcliff and Hindley, Brontë show examples of abusive men and presents realistic portrayals of what happens during an incident of domestic abuse.

In addition to the realistic incidents of domestic violence, Brontë also includes realistic portrayals of passionate love that result in mental deterioration and death. In reality, many people have experienced the pain of love, and so readers could relate to the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff. However, the truly horrifying reality of their affair is that they love each other too much and, because they could never be together, they go insane and eventually die. While realistic cases of passionate love rarely end in death, Brontë presents how love can cause terrifying results through the relationship of Heathcliff and Catherine. The author specifically analyzes how Heathcliff’s and Catherine’s love turns into an obsession that keeps both of them from living their lives without one another. In the beginning of the novel, Brontë describes their childhood friendship and how their constant interaction generates adolescent love. When Catherine leaves Wuthering Heights in pursuit of a more conventional life at Thrushcross Grange, her separation from Heathcliff transforms their simple, childish love to a love filled with passion-driven obsession. The reader sees the difference between their adolescent love and their new, madness-driven love in a scene where Catherine and
Heathcliff argue over their relationship and Catherine’s decision to marry Edgar Linton.

Catherine says:

I wish I could hold you…till we were both dead! I shouldn’t care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn’t you suffer? I do! Will you forget me—will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, ‘That’s the grave of Catherine Earnshaw. I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it was the past.’ (124)

Heathcliff responds:

Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally, after you have left me? You know you lie to say I have killed you; and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell? (124)

Catherine’s and Heathcliff’s undying passion for one another is evident in their references to death and to being together past the limits of mortality, however this kind of eternal love also shows their irrationality. Catherine and Heathcliff have a relationship based on passionate obsession instead of logical reason and this causes their affair to be very tumultuous. Their love is manic, meaning it can be blissful one minute and bitter the next; they dispute over who has tormented whom more and then, almost immediately, claim that they never harm each other. After Heathcliff claims that Catherine will torment him after they die. She says:

I’m not wishing you greater torment that I have, Heathcliff! I only wish us never to be parted—and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me! Come here and kneel down again! You never harmed me in your life. Nay, if you nurse anger, that will be worse to remember than my harsh words! (125)

Brontë depicts the two characters’ love for one another as strictly emotion-driven and beyond the rules of reason. Furthermore, as they grow older, their relationship becomes more and more consuming, thus turning their innocent love into a mental obsession that
ultimately results mental deterioration.

Literary critic Michael Irwin states that “in the Victorian novel unbearable stress of feeling is often translated into sickness” and, through the characters of Heathcliff and Catherine, Brontë presents how the stress of passionate love leads to both mental deterioration and death. Brontë shows that the love of Catherine and Heathcliff is so uncontrollable that they actually go insane because of its intensity. Heathcliff’s obsession-inclined insanity becomes clear after Catherine dies, whereas Catherine’s death actually occurs as a direct result of her madness. Catherine’s madness stems from her inability to live the life she wants with Heathcliff, because, according to Catherine, she can only live the conventional life she wants with Edgar Linton. Catherine’s internal turmoil occurs because of her inability to choose between Heathcliff and her new life with Edgar, and her indecisiveness essentially causes her death. Catherine cannot physically or mentally endure the pain of constantly having to make a choice between reveling in her passion for Heathcliff or living a conservative life at Thrushcross Grange; she goes insane due to her indecisiveness, and dies as a result of this insanity.

Before Catherine dies, the reader sees how her internal struggle becomes physically manifested through her crazed actions. After Heathcliff elopes with Isabella, Linton’s sister, Catherine becomes crazed with jealously. Brontë, through the narrator of Nelly, describes her insane actions:

There she lay dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, so that you might fancy she would crash them to splinters!

Mr. Linton stood looking at her in sudden compunction and fear. He told

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26 Heathcliff also ultimately dies because of his madness but his insanity only occurs after Catherine’s death. Therefore, unlike Catherine whose intense love for Heathcliff is actually what causes her sickness and demise, Heathcliff’s death is not a result of the intensity of their love while they were both alive but of his inability to live without her in his life. She could not live with Heathcliff in her life. This point is discussed later in the chapter.
me to fetch some water. She had no breath for speaking. I brought a glass full; and, she would not drink, I sprinkled it on her face. In a few seconds she stretched herself out stiff, and turn up her eyes, while her cheeks, at once blanched and livid, assumed the aspect of death. (93)

In this scene, not only does the reader see the physical manifestation of Catherine’s insanity, but one also sees that Brontë employs the melodramatic action of fainting. Critic Irwin states: “The novelist who invokes [the effect of a nervous collapse] is in a sense…confessing failure; his art cannot record the emotional or moral turmoil that his story has generated” (18). However, in the case of Wuthering Heights, the fact that Catherine faints is not a matter of Brontë’s inability to depict emotion, but instead suggests that she “intends the whole story to be seen as a transcription of a mental or spiritual conflict…the extravagances of the action are a means towards dramatizing the conflict” (Irwin 19). According to Irwin, Brontë’s novel is about the internal struggle of Catherine and Heathcliff and how their obsession for one another results in their own insanity, and Catherine’s fainting is key to the reader’s understanding that passion is the driving force behind the characters’ insanity and at the heart of their mental turmoil. Brontë’s dramatization of both Catherine’s and Heathcliff’s internal turmoil occurs in a climactic death scene, in which Brontë depicts their animalistic passion for one another:

In her eagerness she rose and supported herself on the arm of the chair. At that earnest appeal, he turned to her, looking absolutely desperate. His eyes wide, and wet at last, flashed fiercely on her; his breast heaved convulsively. An instant they held asunder; and then how they met I hardly saw, but Catherine made a spring, and he caught her, and they were locked in an embrace from which I thought my mistress would never be released alive…on my approaching hurriedly to ascertain if she had fainted, he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog, and gathered her to him with greedy jealousy. I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species; it appeared that he would not understand. (Brontë 125)

This scene allows the reader to see the culmination of Catherine’s internal anguish, the
beginning of Heathcliff’s insanity and the onset of his madness. Catherine’s final fainting spell and her inability to control her emotional turmoil results in her death, whereas Heathcliff’s true passion only becomes uncontrollable once the object of his passion is no longer alive.

Brontë depicts Heathcliff’s insanity through demonstrating peculiar interactions with an invisible being, which he believes to be the ghost of Catherine. Nelly acknowledges the first physical signs of Heathcliff’s insanity:

Then personal appearance sympathized with mental deterioration; he acquired a slouching gait, and ignoble look; his naturally reserved disposition was exaggerated into an almost idiotic excess of unsociable moroseness; and he took a grim pleasure, apparently, in exciting the aversion rather than the esteem of his few acquaintances. (53)27

Brontë portrays Heathcliff’s physical deterioration as a result of his emotional distress over the death of Catherine. However, his physical appearance only hint at his madness, while his actions fully express it. While Catherine’s lack of control over her emotions results in her fainting, Heathcliff’s unrestrained passion leads him to irrationally believe that he can interact with a ghost,28 despite the fact that this ghost is invisible to all rational beings that surround him.

Brontë presents the realism of Heathcliff’s insanity realistically by using others to describe his mental deterioration. In seeing an outsider’s objective view, the reader can make the connection that insanity can occur to anyone that has lost her/his loved one. The reader sees can see this connection through the depiction of Heathcliff’s insanity because it is a result of his undying passion for Catherine. In one scene, Brontë shows

27 The phrase “unsociable moroseness” connects Brontë’s description of Heathcliff to Ruskin’s Gothic element of savagery. This description of Heathcliff shows that not only can Gothic components appear in architecture, but also in people.

28 The reader assumes that this ghost is the deceased Catherine because of his combined angered/pleased reaction, angered because he is upset that she left him alone, pleased because he sees her again.
how Catherine’s ghost mesmerizes Heathcliff. While others, like Nelly, know that he sees something, and understand that it must have to do with Catherine, they do not see the object themselves: “…it seemed exactly that he gazed at something within two yards distance. And, whatever it was, it communicated, apparently, both pleasure and pain, in exquisite extremes; at least, the anguished, yet raptured expression of his countenance suggested that idea (253). Through her description, Nelly reveals Heathcliff as a mentally unstable human being who sees physical manifestations of his imagination. After Heathcliff sees Catherine’s ghost, his insanity reaches its peak when he becomes silent and constantly goes out into the moors. The result of Heathcliff’s passion-driven insanity is death: shortly after Nelly sees Heathcliff’s entranced state (as stated in the above passage), she finds him dead in the upstairs bedroom that was Catherine’s childhood bedroom. Through the realistic narrative of Nelly, Brontë shows the insanity of Catherine’s and Heathcliff’s love for each other and the fatality of this love. Nelly is the rational being among the emotion-crazed individuals. Through her rational, realistic narrative Brontë presents the idea that psychological issues can cause physical sickness.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the realistic events of domestic violence and insanity reflect the trials of a typical Victorian home, and, since Brontë produces such life-like accounts of these incidences, the reader can see how these realistic events could occur in real-life. In showing the examples of domestic violence that occur in the Wuthering Heights household, Brontë tries to present why these men beat their families. Through showing the relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff, Brontë presents the idea that love can lead to obsession and insanity. The realistic depictions of the characters passionate love causes reader to see how this could happen to anyone who has lost her/his loved one.
While the realistic events depicted in *Wuthering Heights* may be slightly exaggerated, the fact is that similar events really occurred during the Victorian period, or could occur today in peoples’ relationships. While many readers could relate to these realistic aspects of Brontë’s tale, readers failed to connect with the fantastic elements of the Gothic portion of her novel. However, while readers can only empathize with one portion of the novel, both genres still exist in *Wuthering Heights* and the reader needs to recognize both in order to experience the full effect of the novel.
IV. “The Genre of *Wuthering Heights*: Gothic Realism”

This chapter acts as a conclusion that ties the two previous chapters together. It discusses how, in combining the effects produced by the Gothic and the Realistic, Gothic Realism produces a mesmerizing effect on the reader and this effect is why people continue to read Brontë’s novel today. The chapter provides the reader with an understanding of what Gothic Realism is and shows an analysis of how Freud’s essay “The Uncanny” assists in defining Gothic Realism and how this new genre creates the effect of fear in readers’ minds. It also specifically discusses how the elements described in the previous chapters create fear in the reader so one can understand how each genre separately generates fear. In understanding how each genre produces fear, one can then see that the effect generated by Gothic Realism is the result of combining the Gothic and Realistic effects. The chapter also provides a specific example in Brontë’s novel where the reader can see the effect of Gothic Realism. The chapter concludes with an analysis of why people read Gothic Realist novels and the hypothesis that its Gothic Realist effect may be one reason why people continue to read *Wuthering Heights*.

Critic Maggie Bergs argues that *Wuthering Heights* assimilates the elements of Gothic—violence, revenge, omens, ghosts, and even necrophilia—into a realistic story of the lives of two Yorkshire families” (6). While critics have commented on both the Gothic and the realist elements of *Wuthering Heights*, there is no criticism on Brontë’s incorporation of both genres simultaneously²⁹, perhaps because there is no genre that encapsulates the both the Gothic and realism. As one can see from the previous two

²⁹ As stated previously, Berg claims that Brontë’s work is a “borderline” or threshold work. Miller also states that “the error lies in the assumption that the [effect of the novel] is going to be a single, unified, and logically coherent” because there is a genre duality in her work (368).
chapters of this thesis, Brontë includes elements of both the Gothic and Victorian realism in her novel. Because *Wuthering Heights* combines these two genres, a new genre emerges in this work that is neither Gothic or Realist but a mixture of the two. For the purposes of this thesis, I will call this new genre Gothic Realism.

Freud shows the result of connecting the unfamiliar, or “uncanny” (fantastic elements of the Gothic), with the familiar. According to Freud, the ‘uncanny’ is a term that “belongs to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror; it is equally certain, too, that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with whatever excites dread” (930). Freud’s definition of the uncanny directly relates to the fantastic elements of the Gothic portrayed in Brontë’s novel, like ghosts and necromancy, and therefore suggests a connection between the Gothic and Freud’s uncanny. Freud states that the German word *unheimlich*, which means “uncanny” in English and literally translates to “unhomely,” is the direct opposite of *heimlich*, *heimisch*, which means “familiar,” “native,” “belonging to the home” (931). In his analysis of these terms, Freud claims that “we are tempted to conclude that what is ‘uncanny’ is frightening precisely because it is *not* known or familiar” (931). However, as Freud points out, the logic of fear does not always follow this pattern. Freud argues that the familiar can be as frightening as the unfamiliar, or imaginary, and claims that the term *heimlich*

belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight...[and the fact that something out of sight can also contain] the notion of something hidden and dangerous...is still further developed, so that ‘heimlich’ comes to have the meaning usually ascribed to ‘unheimlich.’ (933-34)

Freud states that the familiar can be as frightening as the uncanny and Brontë shows
familiarity through the many accounts of realistic violence and insanity in her novel. However, Freud also claims that the meaning of *heimlich* is similar to meaning of *unheimlich* because both can have a dark, frightening connotation. Brontë takes Freud’s argument one step further and shows that, when these elements of the familiar and the unfamiliar unite, they can generate a greater, more horrifying impact on the reader than either the familiar or the unfamiliar ever could. The combination of these elements produces the effect of Gothic Realism.

Before one can understand the Gothic Realist effect, one must first understand how works of Gothic and Realistic literature produce fear in their readers. In the Gothic portion of *Wuthering Heights*, the fantastic elements, such as ghosts and necromancy, join with the traditional elements of Gothic architecture to create fear in the reader’s mind. Initially, Brontë provides the reader with a dark, eerie mental image of a decrepit old gray house, surrounded by moors, and this allows her to set a visual background for a horrifying reading experience. Brontë adds the fantastic elements of ghosts, necromancy, and passionate religious zealots, to enhance the overall effect of fear produced by the Gothic elements of the novel. The fantastic elements of ghosts and necromancy cause fear in the readers because we lose all sense of reality when reading these events and experience an effect of fear that is similar to the effect that occurs when reading a typical ghost story. Miller explains the kind of effect that these fantastic elements have on the reader: “[The Gothic] exerts great power over its readers in its…presentation of striking psychological…detail. It absorbs the reader, making him enwrapped or enrapt by the story” (362). While we, as readers, understand that these plot elements are implausible, they still scare us because, as Miller says, we are too wrapped up in the suspense of the
story to not feel fear from these far-fetched events.

Joseph’s religious obsession also creates an effect of fear in Brontë’s readers, but this is a different kind of fear than that produced by all of the other Gothic elements. Joseph’s religious passion can create fear in the reader because, as we see in Lockwood’s “First of the Seventy-First” nightmare, his obsession can cause him to become violent when people do not accept his faith. The possibility of fanaticism turning violent creates an effect of fear that is not like the other effect produced by the Gothic, but more like a plausible fear that comes from reading horrifying events that are depicted in a realistic way.

The realism of Brontë’s novel also creates a psychological effect of fear in the reader’s mind, but these realistic horrors add another aspect to the overall effect of fear in the novel. When one reads these realistic episodes, s/he feels not only a psychological affect but also an element of physiological sympathy. Physiological sympathy occurs in two steps. First, readers connect the horrifying fictional occurrence with an event in their own lives. Then, they use their understanding of the pain they felt during their personal experiences to connect with the pain that characters are described as enduring during the horrific incident described in the novel. Physiological sympathy is what separates the Gothic from the Victorian realism. While in both genres, the author enters the reader’s mind and creates a psychological impact, the realism of the novel also allows the reader to sympathize with the character, thus adding an element of compassion to the genre.

In looking at the realistic horror of domestic abuse as it is depicted in *Wuthering Heights*, one recognizes that these events also create an effect of psychological fear. Readers can experience this effect because they may connect the realistic horror of
domestic violence with a similar incident of abuse in their own lives, their memories acting as a link between the fictional episode and the real world. Additionally, the memories of the pain that they endure during their own domestic abuse incidents may allow them to feel a kind of physiological sympathy for the victimized character because they think that their pain is similar to what the character may be feeling during the fictional event.

However, the realistic element of insanity in the realistic events of *Wuthering Heights* evolves an entirely different kind of fear from that produced by the Gothic elements. While witnessing an insane character die from her/his mental deterioration would cause sympathy in the reader, the reader also can see extreme circumstances with which the character dies. The unstable psychological mindsets of the insane characters actually affect them to the point that their mental instability results in their deaths. The reason why this is so frightening is because it connects with the realistic emotion of love. In relationships, one can see how love can get out of control and Brontë depicts a scenario in which the love is so uncontrollable that people actually die.

The effect on readers produced by Gothic Realism is similar to the physiological reaction that occurs to the insane character when he/she begins to mentally worsen. The insane character has a bodily reaction as a result of her/his own mental deterioration; it is as though her/his brain cannot handle the psychological stress and that stress begins to affect her/his physical condition. The impact of Gothic Realism, where the terror of the fantastic elements generated by the Gothic intertwines with the realism of the fictional situation, creates a psychological effect that is so intense that it actually causes a physiological response in the reader. While the reader does not die from reading Gothic
realism, s/he does experience a physical reaction just from reading the words on the page. The reader becomes so involved with what is going on in the story that s/he turns into a bystander in the home of Wuthering Heights. When a Gothic Realist event\(^{30}\) occurs, the reader may be so wrapped up in the apparent realism of the story that s/he has a physical reaction, like the “shivers”, a gasp, a scream, or another unintentional vocal outburst. This type of physical reaction results can be illustrated with reference to a particular nightmare scene in Brontë’s novel. This example is memorable because it causes such an intense reaction.\(^{31}\) Lockwood relates the nightmare to the reader:

This time, I remembered I was lying in the oak closet, and I heard distinctly the gusty wind, and the driving snow; I heard, also, the fir-bough repeat its teasing sound, and ascribed it to the right cause; but it annoyed me so much, that I resolved to silence it, if possible; and, I thought, I rose and endeavored to unhasp the casement. The hook was soldered into the staple, a circumstance observed by me when awake, but forgotten.

“I must stop it, nevertheless!” I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch: instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!

The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed—

“Let me in—Let me in!”

“Who are you?” I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

“Catherine Linton,” it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of Linton? I had read Earnshaw twenty times for Linton). “I’m come home, I’d lost my way on the moor!”

As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window. Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes: still it wailed, “Let me in!” and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear.

“How can I?” I said at length. “Let me go, if you want me to let you in!”

The fingers relaxed, I snatched mine through the hole, hurriedly piled the books up in a pyramid against it, and stopped my ears to exclude the lamentable prayer.

I seemed to keep them closed above a quarter of an hour, yet, the instant I listened again, there was the doleful cry moaning on!

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\(^{30}\) A Gothic Realist event is an incident that is horrifying and includes both Gothic and Realistic elements.

\(^{31}\) The description is a lengthy one, but a full quotation is necessary in order to convey the effect of Gothic Realism.
“Begone!” I shouted, “I’ll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years!”

“It’s twenty years,” mourned the voice, “twenty years, I’ve been a waif for twenty years!”

Thereat began a feeble scratching outside, and the pile of books moved as if thrust forward.

I tried to jump up, but could not stir a limb; and so yelled aloud, in a frenzy of fright. (Brontë 20-21)

In this example, we see realist elements of Brontë’s novel clearly. Lockwood describes the setting for the scene rationally. He understands that he is in the same upstairs bedroom that he was in when he first went to sleep, and he tells the reader that he tries to open the window and realizes that it is permanently shut, a feature that he discovered while awake but forgot in his dream. Lockwood takes special attention in the beginning of the passage to tell us about the horrible weather of the moors, and we can almost hear the sounds of a branch hitting the window because of harsh windows.

One also sees the fantastic element of this nightmare, however, in the appearance of the ghost of Catherine. While the reader comprehends that the ghost is not real, but rather a product of Lockwood’s imagination, the coldness that Lockwood feels when her hand grabs his arm and the visceral act of ripping the ghost’s intangible arm across the broken glass, can cause a physical reaction in the reader. The interaction between the ghost and Lockwood causes a physical reaction because the suspense of the nightmare comes to a horrifying climax when Lockwood tries to escape from Catherine’s grasp. The horror that has been built up in the reader’s mind overflows at this climactic moment and the psychological effect becomes so great that the only way the reader’s mind can handle this stress is by having the reader experience a physical response, like the “shivers,” a gasp, or slight jump.

The combined psychological/physical effect results from the combination of the
psychological effect of the Gothic and the physiological sympathy of realism. We as readers become so enthralled by the suspense of the novel that we forget the fictionality of the novel and immerse ourselves in the Gothic experience. However, as a result of Brontë’s inclusion of such realistically described physical acts in the midst of other Gothic passages of the novel, we almost feel that these actions are occurring to us instead of the fictional character. Therefore, when these actions happen in the middle of a suspenseful scene, the reader has a physical reaction, such as getting “the shivers” when Lockwood touches the “ice-cold hand” or impulsively grabbing her/his own wrist when Lockwood violently rips Catherine’s wrist against the glass. Brontë’s novel includes both traditional Gothic elements and realistic horrors that produce psychological responses, but the combined effect of the fear produced by Gothic Realism, may include both a psychological and a physical response.

Gothic Realism causes a reaction in most readers, but for some, this physical reaction can be painful as a result of the novel being so suspenseful. Nevertheless, even though these novels produce pain, people still read these horrific works. John and Anna Letitia Aikin provide an answer to the question “Why do people who listen to ghost stories around the campfire, or read Gothic novels, or watch monster movies find such frightening experiences pleasing?” in their essay, “On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror; with Sir Bertrand, a Fragment” (“Aikin and Aikin” 582). Their essay provides an analysis of what drives people to continue reading Gothic Realist novels in spite of the genre’s painful effects. They begin with the question of why people view or read things that makes them afraid: “…the apparent delight with which we dwell upon objects of pure terror, where our moral feelings are not in the least concerned, and no passion seems
to be excited but the depressing one of fear, is a paradox of the heart” (Aikin and Aikin 583). Through the Aikins’ paradoxical claim, one could suggest that in reading Gothic realism, a genre that provokes comprehensive fear in the reader, people are going against their need for a “happy” story so that they can indulge in their secret obsession with the dark and frightening. In addition to explaining why people read horror novels, the Aikins also explain how the terrifying aspects of such tales keep people reading, even though the fear may be so intense that readers cause themselves physical pain. They write:

The pain of suspense, and the irresistible desire of satisfying curiosity, when once raised, will account for our eagerness to go quite through an adventure, though we suffer actual pain during the whole of it. We rather [choose] to suffer the smart pang of a violent emotion than the uneasy craving of an unsatisfied desire. (584)

From the Aikins’ assertion, one may infer that people read Gothic Realist works, like Brontë’s novel, and subject themselves to experience the physical pain of reading the frightening experiences because the suspense of the novel drives them to continue reading so that they can “go quite through an adventure” and see a resolution to the plot’s suspense, like the resolution provided by a vision of Catherine and Heathcliff together in the afterlife. A combination of apprehension and curiosity drives people to finish a novel like *Wuthering Heights*; they read it in spite of the fear that it provokes in their minds, because they want to see how the story ends and also reassure themselves that it does indeed end. The Aikins provide a metaphorical example of how this kind of curiosity drives readers:

When children, therefore, listen with pale and mute attention to the frightful stories of apparitions, we are not, perhaps, to imagine that they are in a state of enjoyment, any more than the poor bird which is dropping into the mouth of the rattlesnake—they are chained by the ears, and fascinated by curiosity. (584)

While the Aikins say that one should not look at reading/hearing horror stories as
enjoyment because of its painful aspects, the pure pleasure one feels from actually acquiring the resolution of the tale makes the pain worth it.

In the Aikins’ essay, they describe why people read Gothic Realist novels and how curiosity drives readers to endure the suspense of such works so that they can see a resolution. Furthermore, as one can see in media today, people’s desire to be frightened by various representations, whether in books, film, or video games, is still alive and well:

One has only to look, in post-Romantic literature, at the fiction of the Brontës or Poe, or, in our not-so-modern culture, at movies or video games, to realize that the pleasures of regression the late-eighteenth-century Gothic revival provided die hard. Readers continue to seek out opportunities to feel haunted by pasts that will not let themselves be exorcised. (“Gothic and Development” 577)

The popular demand for new horror novels proves how Gothic Realism is a very large part of people’s entertainment. People like being scared, especially when they become so frightened that they actually have a physical reaction. The physical reaction is what keeps people reading Gothic Realist novels and this is why people continue to read Brontë’s work. *Wuthering Heights* is still largely popular today because Brontë creates a horrifying reading experience that completely mesmerizes the reader and causes a physical reaction. Patsy Stoneman attests to the popularity of *Wuthering Heights*:

> It is a staple for school study…it also attracts a vast general readership. In British public libraries in 1991-2 it was the third most borrowed book, and in 1994 it was available in the UK in 27 different editions. It has been translated into 26 languages and has generated at least 36 sets of illustrations, 23 stage plays, 14 musical settings, including full-scale ballet and opera, 11 radio and 5 television adaptations, 8 films, and 12 later novels at least partly based on *Wuthering Heights*. (viv)

As these statistic show, readers continue to read Brontë’s horrific novel in great numbers even 150 years after its publication. The popularity of *Wuthering Heights* continues to
grow everyday and the effect of Gothic Realism, that physical reaction, maybe one reason why people keep reading Brontë’s one and only masterpiece.
V. Works Cited


I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch; instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! The intense horror of nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and an almost melancholy voice sobbed, 'Let me in--let me in!' "Who are you?" I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself. Emily Brontë had published Wuthering Heights (1847) one year before Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friederich Engels (1820-1895) declared the historical 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' (1848). Our study of the early Victorian period reveals that the proximity of time between the... discover the world's research. 17+ million members. 135+ million publications. 700k+ research projects. Join for free. If you ever have laid hands on a copy of Wuthering Heights, you would know the brilliance of Emily Bronte. A powerfully talented writer, novelist and poet, Bronte was a well-known English poet who gave English literature the classic novel, Wuthering Heights. Born to a clergyman father, Emily was the third of the four children born to Senior Bronte. Much like her sisters, Emily enjoyed writing poetry and novels. She often wrote under the pseudonym Ellis Bell. Much of Emily's earliest works revolve around the fictional world, Gondal, an imaginary place and inhabitants that she created in her...