Doktori (PhD) értekezés

Silent in the light and speaking in the dark:

Journeys of the self in Emily Brontë's poetry

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SILENT IN THE LIGHT AND SPEAKING IN THE DARK: JOURNEYS OF THE SELF IN EMILY BRONTË'S POETRY

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Én, Timár Krisztina, teljes felelősségem tudatában kijelentem, hogy a benyújtott értekezés a szerzői jog nemzetközi normáinak tiszteletben tartásával készült. Jelen értekezést korábban más intézményben nem nyújtottam be, és azt nem utasították el.

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Abstract

The purpose of the present thesis is to discuss the ways a human self can choose while coping with an initial state of solitude in Emily Brontë's poetry. The starting point of the self is always isolation; from this point, his/her journeys may lead to renunciation, the desire to escape, compassion, the repression of bereavement, death, faith in resurrection, and, in some cases, mediation. Love, death, and the possibilities of opening or closing the boundaries of the self are the central patterns of this poetry, often intertwined with each other.

In my thesis, I do not intend to cover the whole poetic oeuvre; rather, I select a handful of representative texts and present Brontë's poetic strategies by discussing them in depth. The methods I apply in the discussions are, therefore, mostly those of close reading, as deconstruction uses it; but I also compare her texts to those of her contemporaries, and continuously use (as well as debate with) secondary sources on her poetry. In several cases, Brontë's poetry is only read together with and in the shadow of her novel, although it possesses unique values of its own. By writing this thesis, I also wish to contribute to the acceptance of these poems as an oeuvre in its own right.

I separate the poems from the tradition of mysticism, to which they are often connected: close readings reveal that most of the time she only uses elements of the mystical tradition in order to contradict them and renounce the mystical union. Features of love and natural mysticism do appear throughout the oeuvre, but hardly ever taken seriously. Brontë's human beings would rather keep the human and the transcendent safely separated. The fundamental desire of human beings in these texts is *not* to leave the earth behind but to stay on the boundary in-between two realms: to be mediators. It is in mediation and a dialogic form that Brontë's most unique and powerful poetic personalities are created.

Instead of connecting them to the mystical tradition, I read the poems in the context of Romanticism. Comparing the conception of the self, the role of dreams and visions, the interpretation of nature, of fragmentation, of the sublime and the beautiful as they appear in Romanticism and Brontë's poetry, very similar results emerge. Nevertheless, I also discuss those points where the poems subvert Romantic traits, with special respect to their use of Romantic rhetoric. Analysing the linguistic features of texts is a central issue in my readings, especially considering her interesting pronoun use. Throughout the close readings of her poems, the thesis hopes to reveal Brontë's highly innovative uses of allegory, symbol, irony, and prosopopeia, as well as the significance of silence, most of the time equal to words in importance.

Absztrakt

A jelen értekezés célja az, hogy bemutassa, milyen utakat választhat a költői én Emily Brontë költészetében. Az utak kezdőpontja mindig az elszigeteltség, a magány; ezzel kell megküzdenie minden vers énjének. Utazásaik végpontja lehet a lemondás, a menekülés vágya, az együttérzésre való képesség elnyerése, az elszigeteltséget okozó veszteség elfojtása, a halál, a feltámadásban való hit, illetve több esetben a közvetítői szerep. A versek központi jelentőségű mintázatait a szerelem, a halál, illetve az én határainak megnyitása vagy lezárása adja, amelyek gyakran egymással is érintkezésbe lépnek.

Dolgozatomban nem kívántam a teljes költői életművet értelmezni. Célomat jobban szolgálta, ha kiválasztottam néhány reprezentatív szöveget, amelyeknek részletes, elmélyült elemzésével bemutathatóak Brontë költői stratégiái. Éppen ezért elsősorban a szoros olvasás módszerét alkalmazom, azon belül is a dekonstrukció által használt olvasási módokat. Ezenkívül rendszeresen összehasonlítom az elsődleges szövegeket a korabeli irodalmi-filozófiai irányzatokkal, és folyamatosan használom az életműről szóló tanulmányokat (bár vitatkozom is velük). Brontë költészetét számos esetben csak a regényével együtt, mintegy annak árnyékában olvassák, holott saját jogán is értékkel bír. Ezzel a dolgozattal is hozzá kívánok járulni ahhoz, hogy a versek elnyerhessék az őket megillető elismerést.

Az életművet gyakran olvassák a misztikus hagyományon belül; én elkülönítem attól. A szoros olvasás feltárja, hogy az esetek nagy többségében a szövegek csak azért használják a misztikus hagyomány elemeit, hogy ellentmondjanak nekik, és lemondjanak a misztikus egyesülésről. Leginkább a szerelmi és a természetmisztika vonásai jelennek meg bennük, de a legritkább esetben veszik őket komolyan a versek beszélői. Céljuk az, hogy biztonságos távolságot tartsanak emberi és transzcendens között; legfőbb vágyuk pedig, hogy ne hagyják el a földi létet, hanem a kétféle lét közötti határvonalon megállva közvetítőkké váljanak. A közvetítés és a dialogikusság hozza létre Brontë legegyedibb és legerőteljesebb alakjait.

A versek kontextusát a misztikus hagyomány helyett a romantika adja. Személyiség-felfogásában, az álomnak és a látomásnak tulajdonított szerepben, természetértelmezésében, a töredékesség, a fenséges és a szép kategóriáinak használatában Brontë költészete a romantika jellegzetes vonásait mutatja. Ezzel együtt fel is forgatják ezek a versek a romantikus hagyományt, különös tekintettel a romantika retorikájára. Központi jelentőségűek számomra a nyelvi-nyelvészeti elemzések, különösen ami Brontë érdekes névmáshasználatát illeti. A szoros olvasatok rávilágítanak arra, hogy Brontë hogyan használja és újítja meg az allegóriát, a szimbólumot, az iróniát és a prosopopeiát; de nem hagyják figyelmen kívül azt sem, hogy ebben a költészetben a csend jelentősége legalább ugyanakkora, mint a szavaké.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. István D. Rácz, at the University of Debrecen, for supporting me ever since I first thought of giving an academic treatment to Emily Brontë's poetry. He encouraged me to develop my work from a seminar paper into a paper for the Conference of Undergraduate Studies, then a dissertation, then a PhD thesis; he recommended me works to peruse, read my discussions even during the summer holidays, and called my attention to every mistake. In the meantime, he also advised me in my teaching work, invaluable for a beginner in the profession of education.

I also need to thank my other professors at the University, for helping me understand the most complex texts and issues. Also, I thank them for teaching me that philosophy was not invented for unworldly meditation but for applying it to everyday life and work, and that understanding literature and understanding my fellow-creatures are made of exactly the same material. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Tamás Bényei for always knowing how to tell me the right word in the right context, explaining everything as long as I needed it and leaving me to think alone when he knew I had better continue on my own. I thank Dr. Erzsébet Berta, Dr. György Kalmár, Dr. Pál S. Varga, Dr. Nóra Séllei, and Dr. Judit Tóth (notice the alphabetical order) for their illuminating lectures and seminars, as well as their individual help with my undergraduate and postgraduate work. I am also indebted to my two opponents, Dr. Emma Mason and Dr. Ágnes Péter (again in an alphabetical order) for perusing the first version of this thesis and helping me develop it in further directions; especially as both of them did that in a particularly difficult and trying period of their lives. My sincere gratitude to Istvánné Marton, my secondary school teacher of literature and grammar, for making me love reading even more than I had done before, and helping me explore the most various fields of literature.

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Introduction

> A frightful feeling frenzy born—
> I hurried down the dark oak stair
> I reached the door whose hinges torn
> Flung streaks of moonshine here and there
>
> I pondered not I drew the bar
> An icy glory [caught] mine eye
> From that wide heaven where every star
> Glared like a dying memory
> [. . .][1]

The speaker of Emily Brontë's poem "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," possibly just woken from the dream of an apocalyptic battle, is closed off from the outside world of the winter night, and apparently wishes to remain so. Yet, at the spur of "a frightful feeling," whose cause remains unexplained, the same speaker suddenly decides to run and meet the winter night halfway, drawing the bar to open the door – and then remains in the same position until the end: on the threshold, neither stepping out nor back in.

Quite a few speakers Emily Brontë's poems share this initial state of being separated – from the beloved, from society, from another form of existence (which may or may not be defined as transcendence), and frequently even living in prison. J. Hillis Miller, in his essay about Brontë's oeuvre,[2] subsumes all these states under a ubiquitous pattern of being in exile: suffering from the absence of another self who is needed for survival; and then he enlarges on how Brontë's speakers use their isolation for defining themselves as well as their places in the universe.

Choosing his essay as a starting-point, the purpose of the present thesis is to provide a critical investigation of the possibilities available for the isolated self in Brontë's poetry. Through detailed analyses, I wish to trace the journey of the self from pain and loss, leading to various outcomes: renunciation, the desire to escape, compassion, the repression of bereavement, death, faith in resurrection, and, in some cases, the stopping on the threshold between being isolated and leaving isolation behind, which the speaker of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" finally chooses. In each poem which I have selected for the thesis, I intend to

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[1] For the full texts of the poems discussed in the thesis, see "Appendix."
[2] J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers.* (See "Works Consulted" for the bibliographical data of this book as well as the other books mentioned in further footnotes of "Introduction.")

concentrate on the relationship of the speakers to what/whoever they define as their Other; and their searching (or refusing to search) for possible ways to transgress the boundaries of their existence and reach the Other, parallel with their struggle to understand themselves.

Choosing speakers who have (always already) lost their Other, have been torn out of the state of innocence, and are striving to find a way out of their desperation, Brontë joins the Romantics in her poetry. (Which does not keep her from subverting Romantic patterns, too, as the present thesis will hopefully show.) Lyn Pykett, who gives the most comprehensive account of the poets influencing Brontë's oeuvre, enumerates Wordsworth, the ballad tradition, Scott's poetry, the English and German Romantics published in Blackwood's Magazine (e.g. Mary Shelley and E. T. A. Hoffmann); and also adds Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a textual precedent that Brontë shares with most English Romantics (28-33). She traces the Platonic thought lurking in Brontë's whole oeuvre back to Percy Bysshe Shelley's work, and states that she "seems constantly to have been rewriting Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'" (29). The ties that bind Brontë's poetry to the German Romantics and the Gothic are shown in Margaret Allen's dissertation; which, unfortunately, mostly speaks in general terms about the network of various influences, instead of exploring them in detail.

The relationship of her novel to the Byronic tradition has already become a literary commonplace, but critics largely differ in judging the way her poems are inspired by Byron's poetry. Derek Stanford, apart from a few instances, condemns most of her poems, especially those written about the fictitious country of Gondal, which she and Anne invented, as inferior copies of Byron (141). Andrew Elfenbein reads them rather as creative re-workings, claiming that "the Brontës were not separating themselves from contemporary artistic trends, but showing how well they knew them" (130). Critics like Marianne Thormählen, Jill Dix Ghnassia, and Margaret Homans also speak of emulation rather than "copying"; the technique of that emulation best elaborated on in Homans's reading of Brontë's "A Day Dream" as a rewriting of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (Homans 143-147).

In the following part of the introduction, I intend to enlarge on the most important aspects of her poetry which define her place in British Romanticism; always paying attention in the meantime to the role of each aspect in the variations on the journey of the self.

Unfortunately, Emily Brontë's aesthetics, as well as her views of her own poetry and its connections to previous oeuvres are quite difficult to disentangle, as she left so little non-literary material behind. Apparently, this unique lack of documents that would make it easier now to make her poetry enter a dialogue with other Romantics agreed with her intentions, as

she would much rather choose to conceal her texts even from her family than expose them to strangers. The reader cannot even be sure about the books she might have read (apart from the volumes which the Brontë family possessed), as there is no evidence whatever of what she might have borrowed from the Keighley Library or got hold of in Brussels.

Everything must be derived from the primary texts themselves, and that "everything" means more parallels than certainties. Still, from her poems it appears clear that, from among the English Romantics, in diction and choice of topics she remains closest to Byron; in philosophy, particularly in aesthetics she owes to S. T. Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and to a lesser extent to William Wordsworth.[3]

William K. Wimsatt, in his essay on nature imagery in Romantic poems, asserts that, according to a "fallacy (or strategy)" specific of Romantic nature poems, the "landscape is both the occasion of reminiscence and the source of the metaphors by which reminiscence is described" (109). He presents this technique on a sonnet by Coleridge, and claims it to be a definitive feature of Wordsworth's, Coleridge's, Shelley's, and Blake's poetry (110). Later, he asserts this treatment of natural imagery as an intentional strategy rather than a fallacy; as the manifestation of the Romantic desire which deconstructs itself: the double desire "to have it and not have it too" (110), to partake in the spiritualised union of natural forces, and remain outside them as an individual observer at the same time. The same kind of landscape appears in Brontë's "High waving heather":

> High waving heather, 'neath stormy blasts bending
>
> Midnight and moonlight and bright shining stars
>
> Darkness and glory rejoicingly blending
>
> Earth rising to heaven and heaven descending
>
> Man's spirit away from its drear dungeon sending
>
> Bursting the fetters and breaking the bars. [. . .] (lines 1-8)

In the vision of the storm, even the opposites farthest from each other can melt into each other, and they make the human observer desire to enter into a spiritual *union* with them – but, precisely in order to be able to do that, the human self needs to *split* up into body and soul. Also, while one human being strives to melt into the elements, another human voice is needed to *relate* the events, which cannot belong to the one who is at the point of losing their voice together with the body. At the beginning of the poem, both human selves set out as separated from the harmony of natural forces they encounter, and both choose different ways

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[3] Unfortunately, in the present thesis there is neither enough space nor time to systematically compare Brontë's poetry to Blake's art. Such an extensive comparison would doubtlessly be fruitful, as, curiously, Brontë does show certain parallels with Blake, even though she never read his works.

to cope with that problem: the (futile) attempt to "return" to the state by definition lost by a human being–or the acceptance of the position of a mere observer.

The latter position, however, carries more possibilities than it appears to. Romantic subjects (Brontë's among them) are fully aware of the possibility of the observer and the observed exchanging places. In this respect, James Heffernan's book[4] proves helpful, which compares the significance of the observer's position in Romantic poetry and landscape painting to the positions provided in previous periods. Before Romanticism, he argues, artists made good use of the enclosure, as "the landscape of prospect affords the maximum opportunity to see and the landscape of refuge the maximum opportunity to hide. Psychologically, therefore, the most satisfying landscape is one that combines these two features by offering an unobstructed view from an enclosure" (105). Romantic authors, however (e.g. William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley), tend to give up the enclosure and try to eliminate "the distance that conventionally separates the viewer from the 'sublime' spectacle" (124). Whether they succeed or not does not concern the present thesis, only inasmuch as they provide inspiration for Brontë's subjects. The human beings in "High waving heather" refuse to find a safe vantage point to watch the landscape from, but the speaker of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," together with a few other speakers, does try to create such a clever position of being (now, intentionally) separated from the outside world. Whenever the self chooses to hide in an enclosure in Brontë's poetry, the result is always at least doubtful, though: the power relations with the outside world decide if it is the human or the non-human that can conquer the other's realm. They may even end up as equals.

Heffernan's passage, quoted above, contains the term *sublime*. Using natural imagery in accordance with the Romantic pattern, Brontë's poetry cannot fail to produce a representation of the sublime and the beautiful. As both the above quotation and the motto show, she was very much aware how to apply the first of these two aesthetical qualities; the second she made less use of, but could master it when necessary. I have no evidence if she knew Kant's theory on the sublime and the beautiful; if she did not, still there was a connection between them as both were influenced by Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of The Sublime and Beautiful* (for brevity's sake usually referred to as the *Enquiry*), a copy of which was found in the Haworth Parsonage as well. Because of the certain influence of Burke on her poetry, and also because Burke goes into minute details about what should be considered sublime or beautiful (which makes his book highly helpful in close readings), in

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[4] James A. W. Heffernan. *The Re-Creation of Landscape. A Study of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable, and Turner.*

the present thesis I will mostly refer to Burke as an authority on these qualities. If necessary, however, for comparisons, I intend to use the *Critique of Judgment* as well.

Critics of Brontë's poetry do not usually choose to enlarge on the above Romantic traits in her oeuvre in detail. One feature of her poetry, though, the use of fragments, is given an in-depth analysis in Janet Gezari's book, although even she does not include every aspect in her discussion.[5] The several different ways in which fragmentation occurs in the texts create a complex network of multiple entanglements; the texts even reflect on their fragmentedness quite frequently, or, the other way round, use it as a means to reflect the gaps and distances their speakers suffer from.

To begin with, fragmentation works as a defining factor in the Gondal poems, which always work as lyrical insertions in a vast epic flow that never gets written. Even the proper names of the Gondal characters often appear as fragmented, which makes the story even more difficult to reconstruct: few poems actually contain both family and Christian names, apart from the titles, and even there only the initials are provided.

Second, Emily Brontë did some further "maiming" to a few poems, the ones she wanted published. (Let alone the omissions and additions of Charlotte Brontë's editing work after her sister's death.) She cut everything that could refer to her private mythology, which mostly concerned the titles, but in one instance meant the removal of twenty-three stanzas out of thirty-eight, and the publication of a poem which, even in its title, admitted to be "The Prisoner (A Fragment)." Few of its readers know even today, unless they read the poem in one of the critical editions, that "The Prisoner" used to have a different title and a completely different ending. In chapter seven of the present thesis I intend to discuss all the implications of multiple fragmentations in this Gondal ballad of peculiar fate.

Third, Brontë left many fragments behind, apart from the ones mentioned previously; fragments which she took seriously and considered as parts of her oeuvre. Few of her poems survived as drafts, but rather as fair copies, carefully and consciously arranged in two separate notebooks; and these notebooks pay close attention to doing away with the dichotomy of "complete"-ness and "incomplete"-ness. Poems with an apparent beginning and end appear side by side with and treated in exactly the same way as others ending in a broken line, or even consisting of one stanza or two lines only. Gezari, the only critic who deals with this phenomenon systematically, in an obvious struggle to create a valid terminology on a very shaky basis, differentiates between what she calls "poetical fragments" and "fragmentary poems." The former term "refers to poetry that can be identified as incomplete, potentially at least a part of something larger that remained unaccomplished," while the latter "refers both

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[5] Janet Gezari, *Last Things. Emily Brontë's Poems.*

to brief lyric poems that are often described as fragments but are complete in themselves, even when they are unfinished in the sense of not having been revised, and to longer poems that are made up of poetical fragments" (81). The latter definition is especially telling of the difficulties a critic must face when dealing with fragmentation in Brontë's poetry. The present thesis does not try to propose an answer to all the questions of this problem either. I merely referred to it as a trait which both indicates Brontë's connections to the Romantic tradition and her work as an extremely conscious editor of her own poetry.

In her treatment of natural imagery, of the sublime and the beautiful, as well as that of fragmentation, Brontë's poetry testifies of its debt to Romanticism. Her visionary poems, to be discussed in chapter three, also range her among the Romantics; with a significant difference, however, which calls attention to the ways she sometimes subverts the Romantic tradition. For a poet who, similarly to Blake, created and made good use of her own private mythology, Brontë held imagination in a surprisingly low esteem. Her speakers may have visions of another form of existence they wish to attain and leave their isolated being behind; but these visions are generally not attributed to imagination; or if they are, they are not taken seriously, even though she appears very much aware of Coleridge's theories on the two faculties of the mind.

She does use the term *fancy* in contexts like "But Fancy, still, will sometimes *deem* / Her fond creation true" ("A Day Dream" [notice the title], lines 71-72, emphasis added), or "Yes, Fancy, come, my Fairy love! [. . .] And this *shall be* my *dream* tonight; / *I'll think* the heaven of glorious spheres / Is rolling on in course of light / In endless bliss [. . .]" ("How Clear She Shines," lines 5 and 21-24, emphases added). This process is indeed best described as "no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical faculty of the will, which we express by the word choice" (Coleridge, *Biographia* 144). In the following lines as well, fancy proves anything but the "essentially *vital*" power Coleridge would only identify its counterpart as (144, emphasis in the original): "And Truth may rudely trample down / The flowers of Fancy, newly-blown" (lines 23-24). Yet, surprisingly, the title of this poem is "To Imagination."

Whenever Brontë uses the two terms, she treats them as interchangeable, both of them fragile, even untrustworthy, however beloved and cherished otherwise, and both characterised by the attributes of Coleridge's "fancy." When, in turn, she does decide to use Coleridgean diction for imagination in "No coward soul is mine," she does not even chance to drop either term, and defines the source and the working of the vision quite different in quality:

> With wide-embracing love
>
> Thy spirit animates eternal years

> Pervades and broods above,
>
> Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears (lines 17-20)

Compare: "[secondary imagination] dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify" (*Biographia* 144). This is one instance where Brontë uses but also subverts Romantic rhetoric. She merges imagination with fancy, and then attributes creative and vital force to a power which, as I hope to show with the close reading of the whole text in chapter four, proves hardly an agent to "idealize and unify," nor is it expected to be.

It is much more difficult to clarify Brontë's place in the tradition of mysticism, however frequently critics connect her to it. The most obvious problem is the lack of evidence: hardly anything is known about the mystical literature she might or might not have had access to. Nathalie Sorensen has devoted a whole dissertation[6] to proving that the arrangement of her poems in the surviving fair copies consciously reflects the journey of the soul along the Mystic Way; yet even she, who finds so many parallels between the texts of various mystics and Brontë's poetry, is able to discover structural similarities rather than actual correspondences. Accordingly, she does not stick to one single line of mystical thought, but includes the most various kinds of mystical texts into her analysis, from St. John of the Cross to Pascal's *Pensées,* provided they can be of any help.

I have not been able to trace evident textual connections between the mystical tradition and Brontë's poems either;[7] indeed I have found all too many digressions from the Mystic Way to call Emily Brontë a mystic in any sense. Yet, her debt to that tradition is equally undeniable; therefore now I need to delineate her relationship to the mystical tradition – if it is indeed possible to define a relationship to a concept of such fuzzy boundaries as mysticism, which even Sorensen admits has a "loose definition" at best (2); indeed, Kevin Hart[8] is right to claim that mysticism "throughout history and across cultural boundaries [. . .] can refer to an entire spectrum of particular experiences, ranging from the prayer of quiet to the soul's union with God" (175). For the purposes of the present thesis, it appears advisable to keep to a narrower definition than that and stick to Sorensen's phrasing, who claims that mysticism is a tradition, both spiritual and literary, based on the desire to gain "immediate knowledge of another kind of existence" (13); in other words, the desire to leave the realm of absence and signification in order to directly partake in the realm of presence. During the actual

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[6] Nathalie Sorensen, "Transforming Quest. The Mystic Way in the Poems of Emily Brontë."
[7] Therefore, I can only regard Sorensen's methods as fully justified, and I intend to follow her example in trying to discuss all the parallels that the primary texts allow.
[8] Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign.*

discussions, however, one should never forget either that this desire always remains well within the boundaries of a fallen realm where dichotomies like "absence–presence" (or, for that matter, "fallen–innocent") make sense; and so does mysticism itself (cf. Hart 188).

As a literary tradition, mysticism has by definition to rely on a sign system as a means of communicating what its writers generally recognise as incommunicable. Thus, the problem of mysticism is, fundamentally, a linguistic problem: mystics treat the human world as a sign system, through which they may or may not reach the realm of an ultimate meaning, where mediation, and thus signification disappears in the union of beings. It is another question whether such a realm is possible to find or not, but by all means this is the reason why all human statements (texts) must necessarily fail to grasp the mystical experience. Language *is* mediation; as a part of the human world of mutability, it depends on public consent, artificially created; therefore, by definition, a text cannot be unmediated.

In its vain desire to speak about God more properly than theology, the mystical tradition has even created its very own system of figuration (cf. Hart 6), arranged along the branches of love (or bridal) mysticism, which tries to translate the mystical experience into the language of sexual desire; and cognitive (or essential) mysticism, which works with the more abstract opposition of "all-ness" and "nothing-ness," the latter waiting for the former to enlighten it with transcendental knowledge (cf. Pozzi 16). A third aspect is also often mentioned, not independent of the previous two: natural mysticism, the place of which varies in accordance with the judgment of nature itself. Nature may be considered as a part of the fallen world, a source of figures and a more or less valid sign system of the divine (e.g. in St. Francis's "Canticle of the Sun"); or as self-sufficient, prior to human existence, and easily substituted for God from the age of Romanticism on.[9] A very powerful and long-lasting figure for the mystic's life is the term I also use in the title of the present thesis: a journey. Identified as the Mystic Way, its stations have also been constructed throughout the centuries. It leads through five phases: awakening, purification, illumination, the dark night of the soul, and, finally, unitive life; and the mystic, as a traveller on a quest, has to put effort and struggle in the journey (Sorensen 97), as well as discipline, self-denial, renouncement and pain (126-127).

However, by always struggling to transgress the binary system they are forced to think in, and deconstruct the sign system they must use, mysticism inevitably becomes a potential threat and a source of subversion for the same systems. "[A]bove all, it is in the writings of the mystics and mystical theologians that the vocabulary and concepts of philosophy present themselves as limited and askew, at variance with themselves," Kevin Hart claims, also

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[9] These two aspects, in turn, become another dichotomy, and recall Coleridge's differentiation between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* ("On Poesy or Art" 222).

discovering a mutual support between deconstruction and "those writings which put metaphysics in question in order to speak of God" (42). Always on the periphery of religion, and always on the verge of being accused of heresy, the mystical tradition may very well have a chance to find ways leading out of the state of isolation. Also, its influence on Romantic literature is undeniable, and through them (especially the poetry of the German Romantics and Percy Shelley) it could very easily find its way into Emily Brontë's poetry, too.

To make matters more complicated, the relationship of Emily Brontë's poems to the mystical tradition is far from being even and equivocal. Her treatment of the human self as suffering from isolation and an outcast in the mortal world as good as invites mysticism into her oeuvre, as a possible way of escape; and some of her poems appear very easy to insert into the literary tradition of either love or natural mysticism. One only needs to remember the lines of "High waving heather" quoted above,

> High waving heather, 'neath stormy blasts bending
>
> Midnight and moonlight and bright shining stars
>
> Darkness and glory rejoicingly blending
>
> Earth rising to heaven and heaven descending
>
> Man's spirit away from its drear dungeon sending
>
> Bursting the fetters and breaking the bars. [. . .] (lines 1-8)

The vision of natural forces uniting, dichotomies breaking down, and all boundaries annihilated, apparently helps the human being leave mortal existence, experienced as painful captivity. The previous conclusion should also be remembered, though: the price of melting into the landscape is a split between the body and the soul. No wonder that the other poem which shows a vision of natural forces unifying in harmony will turn them into a threat instead of an inviting whole; accordingly, the speaker of "The night is darkening round me" completely refuses any contact with the outside world. The Mystic Way is not treated any better: in "The Philosopher," the text where it appears most palpably, *via mystica* gets curiously disrupted. A dialogue of the philosopher and the seer, the poem actually presents two phases of the Mystic Way embodied in two speakers, and kept hopelessly apart. The philosopher remains unredeemed in the dark night of the soul, and there is no trace in the text that would refer to the seer leading a unitive life after the encountered vision either. After systematic close readings, very few of Emily Brontë's poems actually prove mystical in any sense; still it is fruitful to reveal what use she makes of the tradition of mysticism.

The mystical tradition owes such treatment at Brontë's hands at least partly to another religious tradition, pervading the poems and diametrically opposing the aims of mysticism: the tradition of Methodism. Miller's essay, which defines Brontë's speakers as existing in a

state of absence and separation, derives their "outcast-ness" from the influence of Methodism as represented by not John Wesley but George Whitefield, an American clergyman, whose writings also found their way to the United Kingdom, and he travelled to preach in Britain, too (185). Whitefieldian Methodism is absolutely aware that, for the self to exist, another self is vitally necessary (found in transcendence, another human being, or nature), while the separation from the other always implies pain and death (171-172)–but this state of loss is exactly what Whitefield regards as the essence of humanity, condemned by God's law, after the Fall, to exile and isolation from both God and fellow-creatures (186). Thus, the desire to be united with the other is inevitable, but impossible to be fulfilled on earth, and giving in to it results in the sin of impatience. Accordingly, mystical desire is condemned as an earthly pleasure (because striving for *any* kind of earthly pleasure only increases the distance between God and the soul); as a breaker of God's law (a wish to transcend the boundaries of the earthly exile); and as idolatry (because it replaces the ultimate union with God after death by a union on earth, only *similar* to the conclusive union, which equals replacing God with God's creation) (184-185). Obeying God's law and accepting the gap between the self and God, nature, and fellow-people is no solution either, for this attitude also distances the soul from God, which will result in further isolation inside a selfish, individualistic, and profit-oriented society – the sin of laziness (186). In short, human beings inevitably end up in sin; neither are they able to play a role in their own salvation, which is only to be given by God at will (185).

Brontë's human subjects tread all these paths, always aware of the significance of their choice. Rosina, mourning for her beloved in "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida," renounces her desire to unite with him in death and accepts her place in society as a severe but inevitable judgment. The speaker of "If grief for grief can touch thee" gives in to the same desire, and consciously phrases the text to be a subversive prayer to an absent lover; idolatrous, heretic, refusing any kind of repression. The human subject of "I'll come when thou art saddest" is never allowed to speak; the desire of meeting the Other is completely absent from this poem, and fear takes its place, yet the encounter will certainly happen in the near future. Only a handful of poems are able to find a way out of the maze of dangerous self-contradictions, and attain a valid solution in their mortal lives: compassion.

Although I mostly use the rhetoric of deconstruction in discussing the texts selected for my thesis, at a few points I need to make exceptions. Reading the poems in which compassion emerges ("And like myself lone, wholly lone"; "Sympathy"; "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle"), I find Mikhail Bakhtin's theories[10] extremely helpful. Like Miller, he defines human condition as determined by separation, but draws a radically different conclusion from this

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[10] Mihail Bahtyin [Mikhail Bakhtin]. *A szerző és a hős.* [*Author and Hero.*]

18

statement. In his view, living in isolation actually *results* in a peaceful co-existence with other creatures. He uses the terms *contemplation* and *empathy* for the only way to bridge the gap between two fellow-creatures (64-65). Although he admits himself that the second concept suffers serious damage in interpersonal relationships (it is ultimately discarded as impossible, as it implies entering the position of the other and staying outside that position at the same time [64-65]), he also adds that the damage of the concept does not result in the relationships suffering a similar damage at all. Each person occupies a unique place in the world, and therefore each person exists *outside* the world of others, without any chance of a perfect elimination of differences (62). This outsidedness, however, also creates the possibility of contemplation, which, in turn, is a precondition for and (should be) the beginning of helping the other. Bakhtin admits that, strictly speaking, pure empathy can never take place, but then asserts that even if it could, it would be absolutely useless, because all one can do to actually help the other is to be done *from the outside* (66-67), in the state of isolation. Isolation and helpfulness do not exclude but postulate each other in Bakhtin's universe, which does not even count with the possibility of a union. Instead, he presents a world where separation does not necessarily result in pain.[11]

Inserting Bakhtin's views in a thesis mostly following deconstructionist theory does not come without its difficulties; but the texts themselves make it easier for the reader to find what the two theoretical systems may share. The texts, although echoing Bakhtin's system, also differ from them, most obviously in that the selves included are very rarely independent human beings; but they are always separated from each other as inhabitants of a fallen world. The emergence of compassion between them is not at all as necessary as Bakhtin proposes it to be, either. On the contrary: it is their conscious choice; the result, not the starting point, of their activity; and sometimes quite difficult to keep up for a long time.

As far as rhetoric is concerned, Brontë's poems are generally extremely easy to read in Paul de Man's terms; even if they do allow for different conclusions from those of his essays. Therefore, the rhetoric basis of my discussions mostly consists of de Man's reading of Romantic texts. Especially in the poems written within as well as subverting the tradition of mysticism, Brontë's language tends to be arranged in accordance with the opposition of allegory and symbol not as Coleridge contrasts them but as de Man makes the contrast collapse in "The Rhetoric of Temporality." Symbol appears to solve all the linguistic problems of mysticism in unifying signifier and signified, and, on a metaphysical level,

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[11] I am indebted to Dr Yana Rowland and her book (*The Treatment of the Themes of Mortality in the Poetry of the Brontë Sisters*) for calling my attention to the connection between Bakhtin's philosophy and Emily Brontë's poetry.

bridging the gap between creation and creator, being "the product of organic growth and form; in the world of the symbol, life and form are identical [. . .]. Its structure is that of the synecdoche for the symbol is always part of the totality that it represents. Consequently, in the symbolic imagination, no disjunction of the constitutive faculties takes place, since the material perception and the symbolic imagination are continuous, as the part is continuous with the whole" (191). However, this power always turns out to be illusory. Although it forgets its resemblance to allegory, symbol cannot deny being determined by tradition and included in a text; thus, always already belonging to the realm of repetition and absence (207). Allegory, on the other hand, "designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference" (207). It is always fruitful to trace how, in Brontë's poems, the symbolic language of a mystical vision breaks down and gives way to the allegorical language of renouncing the mystical union. Her poetic oeuvre applies a strict conceptual system of correspondences: the desire of union with the external self (whether God or a fellow-creature) is inseparable from the desire to utter the union – the success or (mostly) failure on one level is followed by a similar result on the other.[12]

"The Rhetoric of Temporality" is also helpful in tracing the manifestations of Romantic irony in Brontë's poetic oeuvre. In de Man's reading, the language of irony is that of self-reflection and, as a result of that, self-alienation, which splits the reflective subject into two: an empirical self, who perceives the world, and another self, who reflects on both the first self and what it perceives ("Rhetoric" 213), and who may thus be referred to as a reflective self.[13] Always having to succumb to the reflective self in the end, the perceptive self proves inauthentic and is annihilated by the other. This does not make the reflective self more authentic, though, because it "exists only in the form of a language that asserts the knowledge of this inauthenticity," while the self who can perceive the world can never speak (215) – in accordance with the Romantic experience of the gap between perception and cognition. By irony, the reflective self wants to help the perceptive self, but will annihilate it instead by proving its inauthenticity, as well as realising its own fictitious and inauthentic existence–irony leads to insanity and death (215-216).

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[12] After the present thesis, I wish to further my studies in Brontë's poetry, and I also intend to use de Man's interpretation of allegory as it appears in the chapter "Reading (Proust)" in *Allegories of Reading,* to explore the clash of incompatible meanings and the interplay of "true" and "false" interpretations, for which Brontë's poems also offer interesting possibilities. In this thesis, in the lack of space and time, I should be content with referring to the readings this aspect of allegory opens up, without giving them the explication they deserve.

[13] I am indebted to Dr Pál S. Varga and his university lectures on nineteenth-century Hungarian poetry in the fall term of the academic year 2000/2001., at the University of Debrecen, for calling my attention to the applicability of de Man's reading method in various texts; also, for the term "reflective self," which de Man leaves to the readers of his essay to name.

In the few poems by Emily Brontë which can be read as the dialogic product (though not an actual dialogue) of the self-reflective subject ("Sympathy," "Death," and, to a certain extent, "In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid"), the above pattern is to be traced; and yet, in all of these poems, what is at stake is very different from the texts de Man discusses, and thus the results are different, too. Death in Brontë's poetry (to which I intend to devote a whole chapter in this thesis), although taken seriously, never proves so fearful and maddening as in de Man's essay; some speakers will even summon it consciously. Also, it frequently appears together with the possibility of rebirth, as in the final stanzas of "Death":

> Cruel Death! The young leaves droop and languish;
> Evening's gentle air may still restore—
> No! the morning sunshine mocks my anguish—
> Time, for me, must never blossom more!
>
> Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
> Where that perished sapling used to be;
> Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish
> That from which it sprung—Eternity. (lines 25-32)

Another Romantic figure discussed by de Man, prosopopeia, also emerges frequently in Brontë's poetry, in the stanzas quoted above, for instance. "[T]he fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech" ("Autobiography" 75-76). Yet, the dangers of this figure (the structure of prosopopeia is symmetrical, that is, if the dead can behave like the living, the living may also happen to replace the dead [78]) are also lessened in her treatment of death. Although most speakers are aware of the threat inherent in prosopopeia, almost all of them are quite willing to take the risk: the speaker of "Death" consciously invites death and practically hastens to meet it half-way, provided that self-sacrifice suffices to nurture other lives.

Most readings of Brontë's poetry, if they occupy more than only a few pages, discuss the poems in a chronological order. I rejected such an arrangement, and rather chose to group together texts which revolve around the same subject or reflect on the same literary tradition. Apart from the help such arrangement provides in finding structural similarities among the poems, I had other reasons to make this decision, too. Chronological reading always contains traps, but in Emily Brontë's case in particular, the traps are more dangerous than in reading other oeuvres; discussions might even end up in ridicule if they adhere to it too much. Such an

interpretation inevitably gives in to the illusion of tracing a pattern of continual development in the oeuvre, and always risks becoming biographical; which, in Brontë's poetry, profoundly defined by role-play, inevitably fails, especially as the very few documents of the author's life can hardly supply the necessary background. Also, chronological order is difficult to define. Concealing her poetry even from her family for at least nine years, Brontë only published a handful of the poems a few years before her death, when her poetic oeuvre was almost "finished" (if indeed such a term may be used in the lifetime of an author). The poems came out undated, and all the other texts have survived in manuscripts, with or without dates; also, they might have been written years before they were transcribed into the two notebooks (cf. Peeck-O'Toole 16-17). Thus, apart from the three poems written after the publication of the three sisters' volume in 1846, very few of the other poems can actually be dated.

Another (and more radical) difference between this thesis and most Brontë criticism is closely connected to the question of canonisation; namely, that critics mostly work with the first critical edition of Emily Brontë's poetry, edited by C. W. Hatfield in 1941, while I have chosen the latest critical edition, by Janet Gezari, which came out in 1992.[14] As mentioned previously, Brontë's poems were (except for twenty-one pieces) not published in her lifetime, while the rest survived in fair copies; so what they contain or lack may very well be considered the result of conscious and selective work. Therefore, although Hatfield's edition is regarded as the most highly respected and most widely accepted source of Brontë's poetry, I decided rather to turn to Gezari's edition, which, among all critical editions I am familiar with, remains the closest to the manuscripts. Especially in punctuation does the difference between the two editions show: while Hatfield often changes the punctuation of the poems, or even adds punctuation to texts which do not contain it at all – which quite often results in changes in meaning –, Gezari keeps to what the manuscripts contain.

While discussing Brontë's texts, I often applied the interpretation methods elaborated on by critics reading texts sometimes very different from my subject matter; yet the methods worked. I can only hope that some methods of reading I have developed on these pages might prove fruitful for other readers as well, reading other oeuvres. The scope of the present study should be wider than it appears to be: the summary and close of a ten-year-long research, it also wishes to remain open and become another beginning for further research.

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[14] The volume was published by Penguin Books Ltd., in London. It might appear inappropriate to use a Penguin edition of poetry in a PhD thesis; in fact, however, this is the *only* available edition of the volume, as it has never been published by any other publisher. I have no information about the reason why.

Chapter One: On the threshold of allegory ("A sudden chasm of ghastly light")

"A sudden chasm of ghastly light" (1837), one of the earliest and most obscure texts by Emily Brontë, is determined by absence and mystery from the beginning on, and provides hardly anything for an interpretation to grasp. That may be the reason why the poem is seldom anthologised, and never given a full and detailed literary analysis. As if wishing to keep out of the reader's sight, the text seems to prefer to remain hidden – "apocryphal," in the original sense of the word. Most probably a Gondal poem, it might be telling the story of a war in the fictitious country she used as a private mythology (Ratchford, *Gondal's Queen* 93). Strangely, though, the text was not copied into Emily Brontë's Gondal notebook with other Gondal poems; only the exotic name "Tyrdarum" suggests a Gondal background, and that (although similar to the names used in Gondal texts) never occurs in any other poem. On the other hand, the same name makes it as vain an effort to find its place among non-Gondal poems, where the name does not occur either. (In fact, this is the only poem discussed in my thesis which did *not* survive in a fair copy but a hastily written draft, on which some words are even illegible.) No information is provided about the identity of the speaker, or the time and place of the events. "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" is equally distanced from both contexts; metaphorically speaking, it remains alone, condemned to the existence of a limb split off from both bodies of texts, a fragment of a narrative that may not even have existed. That may be the reason why loss plays such an important part in the poem: most of the text is about death, and special and explicit significance is given to memory, time, and language.

1. 1. Silence as the beginning of action

The first (and most enigmatic) line of the poem already reflects this being torn off from something unknown, as it seems to be the end of a narrative about a besieged city; that narrative, however, is never told. This fragmentariness is so common among Gondal poems that it might even serve as a paradoxical identity for the text as a Gondal ballad. Gondal poems, however, tend to be confessions rather than narratives, and whenever they still happen to be narratives, they always identify their characters, at least by their initials.[15] Thus, right at the point when the very *absence* of a frame story would help the reader identify the poem, even this shaky ground disappears. The first line does not break out of another narrative, but silence, and to silence it will return after the last line: the reader can never learn what happens after the break in the speaking voice at the point of the final vision. Of course, the same

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[15] Such narrative poems are, for instance, 'The Death of A. G. A.," "Douglas's Ride," or "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle."

pattern appears in every literary work; "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," emphasising the silence surrounding the words and entering the place they occupy, only dramatises the general in its specific textual universe.

Without any knowledge of the preceding events, the reader cannot even be sure what is broken by the sudden chasm in the first line. The "chasm of light" may be a break in darkness, in which case darkness had been present until the first word was spoken, and is now drowned in a gap all light. Or, it might be a gap *in* light, which implies that light had existed until the poem began, and now, after a short flash, it disappears. Right because there is silence "before" the beginning, and the narrative of the siege is absent, the reader is unable to decide on either interpretation – unable to decide whether the beginning of the poem refers to the presence or the absence of light. The two interpretations, as the following passages will show, make it possible for the reader to interpret the whole text in two ways. At one time, however, only one reading may be carried through consistently, and that reading is defined by the decision made at the first step.

The problem of poetry not always being able to accept its inseparability from language and desiring to reach beyond its own limits defined by temporality, characteristic of the tradition of mystical literature and widespread in secular poetry as well from the period of Romanticism on, is a literary commonplace. Such poetry wants to transgress its boundaries, and reach beyond language and time, to touch the transcendental – or, as an essay by George Steiner states, desires to lead out of language towards light, music, or silence (58-59). The use of the number three here can obviously fulfil a stylistic role rather than sum up each possibility (why should such a desire not end up in, for example, the fine arts or dance?); the reason I chose this particular essay to quote is because, undeniably, it helps the reader find a way in the maze of the poem.

First, this remark calls the reader's attention to the importance of the first line connecting two diametrically opposed meanings to one single signifier. Thus, the line is trying to fulfil the desire to rise above opposites and bring two opposing poles, presence and absence, inseparably together. In the realm which these words are trying to create, gaps and opposites (should) disappear. Therefore, this line must be the most obscure one and the hardest to read: the words which do not fit each other should create a disturbing confusion, and thereby refuse referentiality. Paradoxically, however, it is a gap that makes it possible for this line to remain complex and mysterious: the gap that cuts the line off from the story of the siege. Thus, the reader is unable to decide between the two meanings, and able to keep both. In turn, another gap will cut the line off from the poem itself: the *yawn* in the wall, the first word of the second line, which tears the first stanza in two. From this point on, the reader is

unable to carry on with the two interpretations at once, and must make a choice for the rest of the poem. This analysis cannot help following at least two ways either, if not at once, then "directly" one after the other.

1. 2. Interpretation I: inside darkness separated from outside light

It is easier to begin with the interpretation of light breaking darkness, for, in this case, Steiner's essay provides a great help from the beginning on. If the reader chooses to regard the space outside the text as a space of light, then light and silence turn out to be as closely connected as for Steiner; and whatever happens in their universe, there is no human way to know, in the same way as in Steiner's text. However, although in Steiner's view the universe of light and silence emerge where the text fails and finishes, here the case is the reverse: the text seems to begin where light ends, hardly letting light enter its own realm of darkness.

1. 2. 1. "Listening in the dark"

Radical changes, from one realm to another, appear to define movement in the poem. First, the text breaks out of a realm of silence and light. Second, by the yawn at the beginning of the second line, the text loses even the doubtful (uncanny) light of the first line, and shifts over to a realm of darkness. A thunder (the reader never knows if it comes from the sky or the besieging army) announces the break in the "reeling wall" as well as the *triumph* of hearing over sight: in the darkness that follows, seeing becomes impossible. From the next line on, even hearing seems to disappear in the silence which lets no (human) voice resound – no voice but the speaker's, which is far from being absent. In the first four stanzas, the poem is a confused (dream-)text, with a Gothic setting that dramatises this obscurity: a battlefield at night – a dark world, turned upside down by a war. I quote the next three stanzas in full:

> The shrieking wind shrank mute and mild,
> The smothering snow-clouds rolled away
> And cold—how cold!—wan moonlight smiled
> Where those black ruins smouldering lay
>
> 'Twas over—all the Battle's madness
> The bursting fires, the cannons' roar
> The yells, the groans the frenzied gladness
> The death the danger warmed no more.
>
> In plundered churches piled with dead

25

The heavy charger neighed for food

The wounded soldier laid his head

'Neath roofless chambers splashed with blood (lines 5-16)

In a peculiar way, the text does not show the active and triumphant side of war, but its bitter effects (Ghnassia 62); the passive and suffering side (the reverse). Thus, it thematises the loss and the break characteristic of the first stanza. Accordingly, the trope that determines the universe of these stanzas is allegory.

The description does not only correspond to de Man's definition of allegory in "The Rhetoric of Romanticism," but also a text de Man refers to, albeit only implicitly, namely, Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* which I quote now because of the details it helps me interpret. Benjamin's text establishes an especially close relationship between allegory and ruins, scattered objects, wounded bodies, and death; that is, destruction and fragmentation.[16] Accordingly, the "black ruins smouldering," the "plundered churches," the "roofless chambers splashed with blood," or "the wounded soldier," may all become parts of an allegorical imagery, as well as the "negative" description of the deathly war itself. As I have mentioned, what the poem presents is not the siege – not action, but the result of action. Thus, the central role of time, distance, and loss becomes explicit; all constitute the basis of allegory, this time in de Man's definition.[17] The only way the reader can reconstruct the siege is metonymically, on the basis of its result – that is, paradoxically (but perfectly corresponding to the temporality inherent in allegory), establishing the chain of events in a *backward* order, action and life concluded from the inaction and death that follows them. In the allegorical text of the first four stanzas, everything dead, wounded, fragmented, or in any way *absent,* will not only stand for something else, but something which is its downright opposite: alive, complete, *present.* The sinking of the wind signifies that it used to be shrieking. The departing clouds signify that it used to be snowing heavily. The "smouldering" of the ruins signifies that the buildings used to be on fire. (This image turns out to be

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[16] "Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (178). "It is perfectly clear that this fragmentation in the graphic aspects is a principle of the allegorical approach. In the baroque, especially, the allegorical personification can be seen to give way in favour of the emblems, which mostly offer themselves to view in desolate, sorrowful dispersal" (186). "[. . .] what is the significance of those scenes of cruelty and anguish in which the baroque drama revels? [. . .] the human body could be no exception to the commandment which ordered the destruction of the organic so that the true meaning, as it was written and ordained, might be picked up from its fragments. [. . .] the characters of the Trauerspiel die, because it is only thus, as corpses, that they can enter into the homeland of allegory. It is not for the sake of immortality that they meet their end, but for the sake of the corpse" (216-218).

[17] "[I]n the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive category [. . .]. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* [. . .] of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority. [. . .] Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self" (de Man 207, emphasis in the original).

especially powerful in describing a realm of absence: smouldering fire burns without flames; thus, even the image of fire, which conventionally belongs to light, turns out to represent the absence of light, suppressed by darkness. Also, the smouldering ruins add an infernal quality to the Gothic landscape.) The church, "plundered" and "piled with dead" signifies that it used to be rich and full of living people. The rooflessness of buildings signifies that they used to have a roof. The cold signifies that fire used to "burst"; it gets further emphasis in lines 11-12 ("The yells, the groans the frenzied gladness / The death the danger warmed no more") as the sign of everything that used to heat up the landscape, but are now gone. These lines are worth looking at for a second time as well: in a telling way, one single *word* of negation serves in them as a sign for the previous presence of what is now gone. Absence *means* presence: the working of language, by definition allegorical, is demonstrated in these lines, however full they are of the desire of reaching beyond themselves and uttering their opposite. Not by chance, the siege itself is not described: what language is able to grasp is loss.

A question emerges inevitably: if language is so destructive, and the speaker is aware of that, why does (s)he[18] produce the text at all? Why does (s)he insist on trying to speak, to *name,* and thereby to kill? Is it not the speaker after all who summons death, so successful in the first four stanzas? If so, then how is it possible that, after everything disappears, *death* itself (the ultimate absence) departs as well (line 12)? One possible answer is that stanzas 2-4 are already spoken from beyond death, which killed itself off by destroying everything, until there was no one to die any more.

At this point, this interpretation turns into the interpretation of an apocalypse. The text, as I have mentioned, provides hardly anything for an interpretation to grasp. It does refer to the *Book of Revelation,* and the whole textual universe reminds its reader of apocalypses, but it does not include any quotations at all. A faint reminder might be the capitalisation of the word Battle, which, thus emphasised, may recall the Battle of Armageddon in this particular context; and the disappearance of death: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev 20,14). According to this verse, there are two deaths: the first a destroyer of humankind (an "earthly" death), whose reign does not last forever, as opposed to the second one, which will not arrive before Judgement Day. Line 12 suggests a similar differentiation, by simply applying a definite article ("the death"), and turning from death in a general sense to a *specific* death – and it is this specific death that passes away. Specific and

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[18] The text, as Brontë's poems often do, fails to identify the speaker's sex and gender. In the following chapters, I will enlarge on the consequences of this unique feature of these poems. Also because of that, all through my thesis, I am bound to use *(s)he, him/her* and *his/her,* out of purely practical reasons (wherever I cannot use *they, them,* or their). I am aware of the paradox that even these pronouns are very far from being as ungendered as the speaker – on the contrary, they try to include both genders instead of neither; and they are not necessarily successful in that attempt either. However, I did not seem to have a better choice, as I did not wish in the least to de-humanise the speaker in turn, which I would have done if I had tried to refer to him/her as an "it."

general appear as transitory and eternal: the text shows the state after the end of the world, the result of an apocalypse, which, in a horrifying way, was not followed by the new Kingdom of God. This answer could also explain why the speaking voice is so impersonal. It seems to have risen above universal destruction to meditate on it tranquilly, as if it came from beyond the realm of all suffering, and belonged to the other world of transcendence – as if it were a ghost speaking from beyond the grave, or, for that matter, the voice of the destructive divinity, contemplating its work.

Such an interpretation, however, is turned impossible by the voice itself, which *speaks,* that is, uses language (human by definition). However impersonal, it cannot help being human (cf. Miller, "Mr Carmichael" 161-164): mortal in both senses of the word – able to destroy and exposed to destruction at the same time.[19] The word *death* appears burdened with two opposite meanings again: it may mean the death which is inherent in human language, and, as such, should be transitory; and it may also mean the death which belongs to the non-linguistic and non-human (inhuman) realm of silence and war, which should be eternal. The first death ceases to exist and destroy at the Last Judgment, and will itself perish in the "second death" (Revel 20:14). Here, however, the logic of apocalypses turns upside down, if only for a few moments. The death inherent in human existence remains after the realm of silence disappears at the beginning of the text, together with the death that belongs to it. Thus, what should be transitory will in fact *survive* (however paradoxical such phrasing may sound) what should be eternal. Accordingly, the latter death becomes specific in line 12 (specific, therefore transitory), while "human death", its opposite, becomes general and eternal, *because human language keeps it active.* Only the end of the text returns to apocalyptic logic, re-setting the subverted order: human language and the death inherent in it breaks at this point so that the "second death" and silence can reign.

By the argumentation above I hope to have shown that my reading is justified to set an opposition between the death inside and outside the poem. Language and the silence before the first line, however contrasted to each other, are both closely connected to death, as it was a war that took place in that silence (so the speaker says). The light that belongs to a different realm from that of language, that is, to *presence,* proves to be fearful and deadly. That is why it had to be hidden behind the walls of the city; and once that wall is removed, horror follows. Referring to the *Book of Revelation* again: the rapture of the apostle begins with a door opening in heaven (4,1). The aim of the besiegers was to open a direct way from one space to another, from the human to the transcendental, and they triumph in standing face to face with

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[19] Ghnassia interprets the speaker as a soldier of the victorious army, and a victim of the insane war at the same time (61). She might be mistaken at some points, as I will explain, but I agree with her on that the speaker must be human by all means, and equally taking part in causing as well as suffering from death.

the "ghastly light". Their guilty impatience, however, akin to the desire which led people to build the tower of Babel, results in the arrival of darkness. They cannot participate in the presence of light and survive. The removal of the wall truly works as a revelation in the Biblical sense – the apocalypse of a power beyond the human world: a transcendental realm, atemporal and silent, which, if revealed, will put a *sudden* end to everything. Nothing human survives the vision of transcendence – except for the speaker's voice.

The beginning of the poem was, in its own universe, the beginning of language, and therefore of *time.* The first line works as an uncanny "Let there be light": a universe of time is created, at once revealed to be a fallen universe of inevitable death. This might be a new beginning *after* an apocalypse – but another, more disturbing explanation might occur as well, relying on Northrop Frye's interpretations of the Bible. Frye claims that Creation and the Fall may easily be identified with each other: "the sense of alienation traditionally attached to the fall may be latent in the original creation, too, with its recurrent darkness and its stability menaced by the sea and other images of chaos. [. . .] [T]he Word of God creates, [. . .] [b]ut to speak is to enter the conventions of language, which are a part of human death-consciousness" (111). Creation, right *because* it is creation, is fallen: distanced from (perhaps removed from?) God. The textual universe of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" turns out to be our own (language-based) world. That is why it must be dark: the period between Creation and Judgement Day (in other words, human history) is defined by metaphors of speech and hearing. No one can see God, or if they do, they die; only God's voice is heard. "The eye was satisfied before the beginning of history [. . .], and the eye will be satisfied again in the last day, when all mysteries are revealed. But history itself is a period of listening in the dark for guidance through the ear" (Frye 117).

The power of the speaker's voice seems to lie in its apocalyptic quality. As J. Hillis Miller claims, the meaning of an apocalyptic text is not hidden inside the text, but appears as an exterior light (!), illuminating the darkness around the text, invisible, inaudible, waiting to be revealed ("Revisited" 183-184). Darkness itself, however, is never rendered visible even in the logic of apocalyptic texts: the reader only gains an "indirect knowledge that darkness is there" (186). This poem, like the negative of a photograph, inverts Miller's logic: the space outside the text is defined by light, while the text emits darkness, but their relationship is essentially the same as Miller asserts. The reader only learns that a realm of silence and light exists around the text, from its positing itself as a realm of language and darkness, as the opposite of another realm, never experienced by the reader, only through the text bearing witness: darkness is supposed to reveal light (cf. 188). This is not a failure in such texts; on the contrary, this is how they should work, for the task of an apocalyptic text is not only to

reveal, but to *hide,* too; hide a truth which would be dangerous to *know* (189). Accordingly, the speaker takes the only weapon that remains against the danger of seeing: (s)he *speaks up,* starts using language. Language cannot help *telling* a narrative of death and loss, but at the same time retains the human world (this time opposing the *Book of Revelation*) by replacing the broken wall with a new one, against the destruction resulting from meeting transcendence. (Exactly in the way Frye describes: "Man creates what he calls *history* as a screen to conceal the workings of the apocalypse from himself" [135, emphasis in the original].) Language thus works as a defence against the second death (and silence). Aware that sight and hearing exclude each other, the speaker wishes to preserve the realm of hearing by speaking up, beginning a text about darkness (which explains why it is always night all through the poem), and thus hiding the "ghastly light." The story is about destruction, but in the course of that destruction "the death, the danger, [alarms] no more". Naming kills, but at least the voice that does it may stay alive, and keep human time alive as well, by the temporality of language.

1. 2. 2. The creative work of awakening and a double apocalypse

The poem, however, is far from being over with the last line of the fourth stanza. Stanza 5 still identifies the speaker as one not involved in, but contemplating the "outward tumult," "to assuage / The inward tempest" (lines 19-20).[20] Then, however, in stanzas 6 and 7 another sudden shift takes place: the speaker remains alone "in a ruined Hall," lying on a couch, with an empty and silent minster-yard outside. The battlefield is now gone, and, as nothing refers to its existence later in the poem, it might never have even existed. Indeed what stanza 5 and stanzas 6-7 have in common is only the cold night, the need to escape from an "inward tempest" or a "flood of despair," and that the speaker is awake in a position in which one should be asleep (in stanza 5, saying explicitly so, in stanza 7, lying on a couch). No wonder that when Clement Shorter, the first editor of the poem transcribed line 21, nearly illegible on the manuscript, he "completed" the line relying on his own mind, with a concept of dreaming (cf. Gezari, "Notes" 245). Into this most fragmented line in a fragmented poem, "But … I cannot bear," to replace the illegible part, he inserted "dreams like this."[21] Indeed, in the shift stanza 6 displays, there is something very similar to waking up from a dream which helped the speaker forget despair for a while, only to feel it come back after the dream is over. Or

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[20] This is why I cannot agree with Ghnassia claiming that the speaker is a soldier of the victorious army (61), because of lines 17-18: "I could not sleep: through that wild siege / My heart had fiercely burned and bounded [. . .]." I cannot see any reason why a soldier should sleep during a siege. These lines describe a speaker who contemplates the battle to make him/herself forget something horrible on his/her mind (cf. lines 19-20).

[21] *Habent sua fata libelli.* After his edition was published in 1910, the manuscript of this specific poem simply disappeared, under unclear circumstances, to be found only almost eighty years later. Thus, his misreading was then handed down from edition to edition, including Hatfield's canonical version; and the poem entered the "Brontë canon" with his three words added to it.

rather, as the speaker admits not being able to sleep, *fiction* should be a better word here; the battle may easily prove "outward" only inasmuch as it is the *projection* of the self, invented by the speaker as a defence against the surge of despair inside. Burdened with several layers of signification (the battlefield works as the sign of the siege, which works as the sign of people committing hubris, which could probably work as a sign of further meanings), the first five stanzas practically openly admit to their being fictitious. Brontë either did or did not want to leave this conspicuous gap in this most enigmatic stanza, but it certainly calls attention to the role of silence as the disruption of speech in her poetry. Especially as in the following line silence is presented as extremely painful; the illegible words could nowhere be in such an appropriate place as in the previous line, before the words "I cannot bear." As if the fatal silence of light which took place before the first line was spoken somehow broke into the space of the text, in-between two words.

The movements within the text mostly consist of radical shifts, which bring about abrupt changes between separate realms, instead of gradual ones. That was how the first line shifted from the realm of silence into that of language; then the second line into the realm of night; and now, stanza 6 shifts from the setting of a battlefield, across a gap, into that of a secluded house, from the realm of self-delusion into that of encountering despair again. These changes resemble the Creation in the Bible, as interpreted by Frye: "the central metaphor underlying 'beginning' is not really birth at all. It is rather the moment of waking from sleep [another reason why Shorter may as well have been right in using the word "dream"]*, when one world disappears and another comes into being*" (108, emphasis added). It may seem far-fetched to interpret this waking as an act of creation, as the (linguistic) universe of the poem begins earlier than the waking in stanza 6. This Biblical context appears to provide a much better explanation for the first line breaking out of silence. (Which, on the other hand, confirms the interpretation which reads the poem as a profane re-telling of the Genesis; beginning with "Let there be light," then continuing with the Fall and its consequence, death.)

Still, the reading that considers the shift between the two realms as an awakening should not be discarded either. It even seems as if the shift between the fictional realm to keep pain away and the return of pain included a shift between two separate speakers, too. The voice in stanza 6, talking about the silence that strengthens pain, does not appear identical with the "I" that "could not sleep" throughout the "wild siege." The setting around the speaker of stanza 5 becomes discarded in stanza 6, the battlefield of "the outward tumult" being replaced by the silent minster-yard and a room in a ruined Hall. The speaker who created that setting as a self-projection may also have easily disappeared to be replaced. At the beginning of stanza 6, an alternative world is created, similar to the first one in its being human, defined by language,

and scared of silence, but in other features essentially unlike. Here does the widest gap open in the texture of the poem (even literally). Not by chance, some editions print the text broken in two at this point, and separate the parts by asterisks.

The two realms may even be in a hierarchical relationship with each other; the narrative told in the first five stanzas dreamed or imagined by the "I" appearing in stanza 6. (S)he might also have created the speaker of the first five stanzas; the apocalypse as well as the defense against it. The urge to speak, however, is anything but imaginary in stanza 6, which makes it plain that the same urge was not the second speaker's invention in the previous part either. As I have mentioned before, the second speaker is at least as afraid of silence as the first one. They resemble each other in their fears and desires, as well as their weapons; and, above all, in that they both want (and manage) to keep speech flowing on, because "silence whets the tang of pain." One should not forget either that just as the first narrative has proven fictional, the second one may just as easily become so, especially as its setting remains a place of death and ruins, however much different from the battlefield in other respects. The worlds of the two speakers do not occupy hierarchically arranged positions; they are alternatives – and the two speakers are both separate *and* independent from each other. The text fails to help the reader decide which speaker is asleep and which one is awake; which might as well imply a lack of hierarchical relationships. It does not matter if the text tells a dream or not, or whose dream it tells after all: what matters is the shift from one realm to another.

Neither speaker is invented by the other; or both of them are. By either means, both narratives are self-sufficient, and not only different but also similar to each other. They *mirror* each other, at the axle of symmetry provided by the gap between stanza 5 and stanza 6. The first narrative begins with silence and light breaking out of a closed space, then lets them disappear soon to describe the night in the open space of the battlefield, and finally ends in the lack of sleep. The second one begins with the lack of sleep again, continues with night events, now in a closed space, while transcendence is referred to as existing outside in the open, and, finally, it ends where the first narrative began: a vision which reaches out to silence.

Beginning and end, creation and apocalypse approach each other in the poem. From the doubleness mentioned above, I hope to have shown that two kinds of creation take place in the text. Now, also on the basis of Frye's reading of the Bible, the same doubleness re-inserts the poem into the body of apocalyptic texts, because Frye claims that there are two kinds of apocalypse, not excluding but rather *following* one another. "One is what we may call the panoramic apocalypse, the vision of staggering marvels placed in a near future and just before the end of time. As a panorama, we look at it passively, which means that it is objective to us" (136). It is followed (if it is indeed possible to speak about "following" in a world born at the

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termination of temporality) by the participating apocalypse: a new universe, inexpressible in human language; a universe which, "ideally, begins in the reader's mind as soon as he has finished reading" (137). The dichotomy of (divine) creator and (human) creature disappears in this new world (137), which the reader is supposed to realise and identify with (138). Still, Frye's text helps the interpretation of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" get closer to the apocalyptic tradition, and explains why the first five stanzas show destruction (the result of a judgement) to an impersonal and passive watcher (in a black-and-white universe, though, never straying away from everyday objects, and radically different from the exalted visions of *Revelation*). After stanza 6, however, this analogy does not seem to work again, or if it does, it works negatively. Here, the speaker appears to start a *debate* with the end of *Revelation,* refusing to participate in the apocalypse, and closing him/herself off from the open space of death (of the minster-yard and, concluding from the last stanzas, probably also of light).

1. 2. 3. Allegory as a construction

The following part of the poem is set in a space which is closed and allegorical in the sense "The Rhetoric of Temporality" uses the word, as space constructed by language should be. Walls (dramatising the distance between realms inherent in allegory [de Man 207], and also associated with allegorical language because they are ruined) separate this space from the outside world (which, by definition separated from the linguistic/allegorical space inside, may easily make an encounter possible with a meta-lingual and transcendent world). At the same time, right because it is allegorical, the ruined Hall cannot provide a safe refuge in the face of the outside world at all. The fragmentariness inherent in allegory has created the ruined Hall, but has also made it vulnerable: the wall opens up, because it has a window through which the speaker can see the outside world. What is more, the window is, not surprisingly, damaged: *shattered* (line 29); it can easily let the outside world in. The borderline between the inside and outside world is blurred, and precisely because the text will insist on its being allegorical. Its fragmentariness is equally able to close and to *dis*close what is beyond.

Beyond the gaps in the texture of language is silence, which "whets the tang of pain," and the openings of the text allow for a dialogue to take place, even with other works by Emily Brontë. The poem returns to the body of texts which it seemed to have been split off for good, because, at several points, the outside world refers both to Brontë's poetry and novel explicitly. Her poems connected to the mystical tradition, whether refusing or inviting mysticism, describe visions which are mostly black and white, and apply an imagery based on earth, snow, night, and wind used as symbols (cf. Stanford 155, Grove 46, and Hewish 9). The realm outside the ruined Hall – black and white and containing the images enumerated

above – evokes these poems, especially as the wind even enters the house through the "shattered glass." The "black yew-tree," whose "ghostly fingers, flecked with snow, / Rattled against an old vault's rail" (lines 33-36), reminds the reader of Lockwood's dream (cf. Ratchford, *Gondal's Queen* 93). In *Wuthering Heights,* the noise of the boughs (turning into fingers) against a window warn Lockwood that the (literally) ghostly outside world desires to enter his closed room (42-43). Due to its fragmentariness, the boundaries of allegory become permeable; thus, it is unable to keep the distance from the outside world, which will enter the Hall on every side. Fragmentation, apparently, leads to a total collapse of allegory.

What, however, makes the Hall much safer than it seems, is *symbol* itself, apparently so fatal for allegory. If allegory suffers from its own fragmentation, then symbol is even more unstable. Supposedly a sensual image referring to a meta-temporal and infinite totality beyond the senses, which is at the same time an organic part of that totality as well (de Man 188-189 and 197), it can easily be called the ideal trope for mysticism. Stanford, independently of de Man but relying on Coleridge's differentiation, which de Man also used, even calls Brontë's poetic strategy "symbolic regionalism" (155) in her treatment of nature, in that she begins her landscape poems with realistic details, and then amplifies them into cosmic dimensions, finally making everything melt into the transcendent. In "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," earth, snow, night, and wind combine into the image of a common countryside cemetery as anyone can see it on a winter night, and then grow into the vision of the last stanzas, ascending to immense heights in the "icy glory" of the "wide heaven" (lines 50-51) and descending to the "realm of buried woe" (line 56). Both glory and pain are perceived by the observer as the meaning beyond the sight of the starry sky and snow-covered earth, the former growing as if organically out of the latter. The wind, in turn, becomes a mediator which keeps up the connection between inside and outside space. Aesthetically, the landscape is that of the Romantic sublime as it appears in Burke's theory: obscure, raising fear, conveying a sense of power, vastness, and privation (with the overwhelming sense of absence in the poem), and even trying to create the image of infinity. Indeed, the poem almost seems like a text written in perfect accordance with Burke's book.[22]

The power of symbol, however, always turns out to be illusory. Although it likes to forget its resemblance to allegory, symbol cannot deny being determined by tradition and included in a text; thus, always already belonging to the realm of repetition and absence (de Man 191). As mentioned previously, the images which work as symbols in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" evoke mystical texts – which they can only do if they repeat those texts and

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[22] Kant's theory (possibly passed on to Brontë through Coleridge or the German Romantics she read) also finds its way into the poem, with the human mind being in constant movement while conceiving the idea of the sublime landscape, also involving a sudden feeling of shock at the beginning (171).

accept the possibility of being themselves repeated in the future (the poem was written well before *Wuthering Heights*). Neither could they prove to represent the Romantic sublime without consciously or unconsciously repeating Romantic aesthetics. The immediacy of the final stanzas proves illusory, too; as the vision is included in a *text,* constructed by language, it cannot help being mediated.

Another aspect is added to the failure of symbol in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" if the religious implications of de Man's definition are also taken into consideration. The illusory quality of symbol implies a serious danger, too, because if the speaker should yield to it, (s)he would yield to illusion, and commit the sin of idolatry (cf. Miller, *Disappearance* 184-185). That is why all the elements of the fearful outside world around the ruined Hall are spoken about in a symbolic language: that is how the speaker can protect him/herself. Everything perceived as dangerous is *named* as illusory and unreliable, so the speaker is not tempted to yield to their power, listen to their call, and exit the Hall. As long as speech is maintained, and used so cleverly, there is nothing that the speaker needs to fear.

Curiously, however, fear is the very emotion that determines the narrative of this closed space. The speaker does not appear to be afraid of the minster-yard outside, nor of the wind, nor even of the yew-tree, merely characterised as "sad" (line 34). But fear does emerge when the "wandering moan" (line 30) arrives through the window, from the outside. "In the midst of death and destruction, the intrusion of life comes as a shock. The sound of someone still alive penetrating the unnatural silence releases fear in the [speaker] who cannot pinpoint the reason of his anxiety" (Ghnassia 63). It is a completely unexplained, "frightful feeling frenzy born" (line 45) that makes the speaker hurry down to the door, and open it.

The moan, a voice human but *inarticulate* and therefore *hardly in touch with language* warns the speaker of the realm which is, however hidden, still *there* beyond the protective wall of language and the Hall (the ruined Hall which is built by and of allegorical language, and thus easily identified with the text of the poem itself). Everything dangerous may be removed by naming it or condemning it to the illusory fate of symbol, but silence cannot. It is language itself that gives silence the possibility to occur: silence lurks there in gaps, and gaps appear in the blank space between spoken words and between written lines, explicitly shown in a poem about fragmentation; nowhere more palpably than line 21, half legible, half illegible on the slippery borderline of two alternative worlds. Transcendence in itself is stagnant and neutral: it is the human self that gives it dynamism and draws a negative image of transcendence as *non*-human – for there is no other way for human beings to understand divine existence (cf. Radnóti 41-42). Words, in spite of themselves, truly have a summoning power in this poem; as if it was a grim parody of those mystical texts that desire to meet

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transcendence even by yielding to the illusory power of symbol and committing the sin of idolatry, and yet are unable to reach their aim. "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" wants to draw back from the direct contact with any outside power, and yet the power emerges.

Dreaming reappears in stanza 11, but this time the reader is not told what the dream is about; what is more, the speaker does not seem to be fully aware of it either, seeing it as "undefined." With this untold dream and destructive ("blighting") memory, the range of the last four stanzas begins, which together constitute by far the most mysterious part of the whole poem, worth quoting in full, stanza by stanza:

> An undefined an awful dream
> A dream of what had been before
> A memory whose blighting beam
> Was flitting o'er me evermore (lines 41-44)

In stanza 11, interpretation gets completely confused and lost: the speaker does not even seem to wish to enter any kind of communication; (s)he is merely talking to him/herself. With another sudden and unexpected shift, the text has changed to a state which recalls dreaming more powerfully than any previous part of the poem might have done. Yet the reader is unable to decide whether the speaker has fallen asleep now, and thus the remaining stanzas should be read as a dream, or the memory is a memory of a dream already dreamt, perhaps during all the stanzas before, out of which the speaker has just woken up, shuddering, thrilled, and started awake. It is not even sure if this stanza describes a state between dreaming and waking; one never knows if the speaker is referring to the memory of a dream or something else, for example the "wild siege" or the narrative of the destruction after the siege.

Stanza 11 stands still in its obscurity (there is no light in it, not even the white snow of previous stanzas), with its nominal structure, and its main clause lacking any predicate (while its subordinate clause contains only a substantive verb, too). Aware of the necessary (and destructive) temporality of language, the text associates memory with quick movement ("flitting") and pain ("blighting"). Then, even at the price of prolonging pain, the text extends this movement to an "undefined" scale by adding the adverb "evermore," which opposes its "flitting" and does not match it at all. The way signification works in this stanza is not unlike the conflict of meanings in the first line. Stanza 11, however, with its forces balanced in a dynamic equilibrium as well as its extreme obscurity produces the very opposite of what stanza 1 attempted to create. The wall created by the text looms as the most impenetrable here, in the uncertainty of the darkest night filled with speech that does not want to communicate anything, and is only there to keep silence out.

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This wall, however, for all its impenetrability, is not as solid as it should be. In fact, its texture is so delicate that it is already torn in the next stanza:

> A frightful feeling frenzy born—
> I hurried down the dark oak stair
> I reached the door whose hinges torn
> Flung streaks of moonshine here and there (lines 45-48)

Temporality prevails: after one moment of standing still, another shift takes place, which leads back to the fearful world of the "anguished agonizing start" of stanza 10. Now the same (or at least a very similar) kind of fright is chasing the speaker down to the fragmented door which *lets light into the Hall* (and the text). This time the speaker does not want to draw back from the outside world but flies to meet it half-way instead, and opens the door of the allegorical Hall, that is, with an apocalyptic gesture, produces a break in the wall:

> I pondered not I drew the bar
> An icy glory [caught] mine eye
> From that wide heaven where every star
> Glared like a dying memory
>
> And there the great cathedral rose
> Discrowned but most majestic so
> It looked down in [serene] repose
> On its own realm of buried woe (lines 49-56)

The vision of the winter night overwhelms the universe of the poem. Space is expanded to the infinite heights and depths of the sublime, soaring to the starry winter sky and the destroyed cathedral, as well as descending to the graves. Everything melts into this glorious space, the winter night itself being an interfusion of the symbol of an earthly and temporary union (the night) and that of a conclusive union (snow) in Emily Brontë's mystical texts. "The great cathedral," which, in Ghnassia's view becomes the symbol of the hope of another world (64), rises to reach the sky and metonymically connect heaven and earth. This desire explains the phrase "serene repose"; all the purity, tranquillity, cheerfulness and trust raised by the connotations of these two words. As mentioned previously, this is the point where everyday objects grow into a vision; and this is the way that, curiously and cleverly, the text lets allegory finally triumph. Precisely at the most dangerous point, when a gap opens in the wall again, the text turns to the weapon of naming symbolically, already proved illusory.

Accordingly, however much memory is shown dying (line 52), it is never shown dead; however deep the pain that belongs to language, time, and memory is buried, it must be

named to know what is buried, so it must remain within the text. That is how pain can literally have the last word ("woe") in the poem. The "serene repose" of the cathedral (an uncertain reading anyway) is only to be destroyed by the "realm of buried woe" in the next line, all the more powerfully because it is labelled as emphatically belonging to the cathedral: "its own." The cathedral proves just as much of a construction as the allegorical Hall itself (and, for that matter the figure of the "plundered churches" in the first part); as its mirror image, it is also ruined in the same way as the other building. The seriousness of its failure is signified by the fact that it is "discrowned," that is, bereaved of its highest part, which is supposed to help it reach heaven.[23]

The absence of the "I" could perhaps still connect the poem to apocalyptic (or mystical) texts. (Frye compares the apocalypse to a universe without an "I" [138]; Radnóti observes that a human being goes through an impersonation, a complete dissolution in the transcendent, in a mystical experience [10].) From the last stanza, the pronoun "I" does vanish; the only personal pronoun that remains is a neutral "it." Yet what remains of the human self is once again enough to keep up human existence: I mean the *voice,* which does not fail even at the point where memory is dying (or else the text could not get written). Should the poem end with the drawing of the bar, language would be unable to ruin the vision – but the poem does not; and the vision is destroyed. I cannot agree with Ghnassia claiming that "[t]he speaker observes destruction from within the place" (64), because, in fact, the speaker is never *shown* to exit the Hall and join the vision, and indeed (s)he could not be, as a *speaker:* (s)he stops at the threshold of the building and the text instead, in an eternal state of in-betweenness. Yet the opening of the door and the break in the wall (echoing the events of the first line) have more significance than that. However useful language is in the battle with the vision, defending the human world from the same fate that threatened it after the break in the first line, it still breaks itself, ending the text with a final cry of *woe* at the last word of line 56, and the final shift leads into the realm of a world's end silence.

"A sudden chasm of ghastly light" may be interpreted as the monologue of a human being who can see beyond the boundaries of human life, but (s)he does not wish to enter the other realm; (s)he puts every effort in keeping it outside carefully constructed walls instead. As, however, light breaks through the city walls, so, silence (and light) can break through the texture of the poem every now and then. The poem, uttering and covering truth at the same time, both hides and (unintentionally) discloses light; that is how it becomes apocalyptic (cf. Miller, "Revisited" 191-192). Yet, it is the apocalyptic tradition that does not let the reader finalise the interpretation of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light." Apocalypses are reinterpreted

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[23] And, in Ghnassia's opinion, it is to be *repeated* in the ruins of Gimmerton Chapel in *Wuthering Heights* (64).

in every age and culture, and so the statement at the beginning of this paragraph cannot close the interpretation of this poem either; especially as the discussion so far has been derived from *one* meaning of the first line. I am still obliged to provide what follows from the *other* meaning, and thus the certainty gained from the first reading is lost forever.

1. 3. Interpretation II: inside light separated from outside darkness?

What follows from the supposition that the gap at the beginning of the poem does not let light into darkness for a moment, but, on the contrary, light belongs to the wall (the building separating human beings from the outside world and silence), and the sudden chasm breaking the wall shows darkness to the besiegers? This possibility appears even more dangerous to the human (linguistic) world than the first one, as darkness continues to determine textual space, and night prevails all through the poem in the second reading, too. Thus, even if the "outer darkness" is not identical with the inner darkness, they at least mirror (reflect on) each other.

1. 3. 1. Darkness mirroring darkness

Steiner's essay helped in the first case; now, another text by Miller, on Christ's parables and secular parables, helps the reader construct the second reading. Both parables wish to reach beyond the boundaries of earthly existence ("Parable" 145). The difference is that, while listening to Christ's parables, people could not only hear but see the Word embodied, and were thus given evidence of the connection between language and the empirical world (and even a world beyond); secular parables, on the other hand, are used by purely human beings, so the connection between sign and meaning becomes absolutely uncertain. The words of secular parables "about things visible can only be thrown beside things invisible in the hope that their narratives of what can be spoken about [. . .] will magically make appear the other invisible, perhaps imaginary, line to which their realistic stories, they hope, correspond" (137). Similarly, "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" refers to another invisible world, beyond its boundaries and impossible to know, and the text can only hope that, by its own means, it will make the invisible appear in language. Or it cannot even hope so.

Hart draws up a fundamental difference between two traditions of interpretation in theology. "For Dante and the long tradition he represents, interpretation is based upon signs which in turn have their ontological basis in God. There is a fall from God's presence to representation, and the aim of interpretation is to recover that original presence. More generally, the whole of history, from creation to apocalypse, can be viewed as a passage from one moment of full presence to another, an epoch of signs and interpretation. [. . .] With

regards to scripture, for example, when the *sensus litteralis* fails to yield a definite meaning in accordance with received doctrine, the fact that the sign's ontological basis is God's presence guarantees that God has underwritten an allegorical meaning, a *sensus spiritualis.* [. . .] [However,] [t]he deconstruction of the concept 'sign' shows that conceiving the sign as a modification of a full presence (that is, conceiving it metaphysically), is neither inevitable nor rigorous. What Derrida effectively demonstrates is that the metaphysical conception of the sign is not the basis of interpretation but is an interpretation itself: the sign's 'ground' is argued to be interpretation, not God" (21-22).

These two traditions may very well be reflected in the two readings of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," even though the purpose of the text points to the opposite direction in the first case. The aim of the speaker is not to "recover that original presence" but, to make a pun with a slight modification, to "re-cover" it, to cover it again. The second reading, interpreting the realm outside the text as nothing but the reflection of the text, another sign to be interpreted, has to conclude then that silence cannot be the opposite of speech. Its existence does not precede the existence of the text, as it only makes sense to use the terms "before" and "after" when the text has begun. In Miller's view, secular parable, being fictitious, "may be a true performative, bringing something into being that exists only in the words or by means of the words" ("Parable" 148). Thus, silence might be filled by an outside power, alien to the human text; but silence might also be (and in this reading is) created by speech as a necessary supplement – and vice versa. As the first reading confirmed it, language makes it possible for silence to occur in the gaps between the words. This statement remains valid in the second reading as well, but in another way: as part of a circular reasoning, in which neither pole may exist without the other, mirroring each other in constant and tranquil tension. The boundary between outside and inside is broken, making it impossible to decide whether the speaker imagined or witnessed the siege, whether there are two selves speaking or only one, or whether the death inside the text is different from the death outside or not. The reader cannot decide what is inside and what is outside the poem; even if the speaker desired to meet the outside world, (s)he would not be able to see anything but his/her own desire in it.

Realising the impossibility of reaching beyond boundaries leads to despair, and may as well lead to the destruction in the poem: the text, mirroring itself in a Narcissistic way, is incapable of communicating with the outside world and be healed (cf. Freud 68 and 96-97). This reading also makes it possible for the poem to exist as the dramatisation of features occurring but not becoming explicit in every other text. Every text intends to mean the outside (empirical) world – to be "about something" – and fails; at the same time, every text creates its own referent which it will then wish to refer to as something outside itself. "A sudden

chasm of ghastly light" merely *shows* what every other text suffers from. As far as, however, the *desire* to mean (the desire of the outside world) is concerned, "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" has already appeared confusing, but if read as a text turning into itself, the case will be even more complicated.

Beside the pronouns in the first and third person, there are none whatever in the second person; the text is not addressed to anyone. As mentioned in the introduction, this is a hidden text – hidden from the world, in the ruined Hall built by itself. Only once does the text call to somebody; in lines 39-40, desperate with fear, the speaker cries, "O God what caused that shuddering thrill? / That anguished agonizing start?" That is, with the outer silence already proven the reflection of the text, and the speaker fully aware that outside the walls (s)he will only find the same (s)he finds within – still, the only possible way out (s)he tries is turning to God. (S)he does that logically, as divine existence is supposed to be the most different from human (linguistic) existence; thus, God could be the safest way out of turning inwards – but an "outward" divine existence has turned out to be a mere supplement of human life.

However, before judging the speaker for giving in to illusions, one should notice that *what* the speaker actually desires remains uncertain, as well as what (s)he is afraid of; as it is in fear (s)he calls to God (or rather God's *name?*) for help. In stanza 10, one thing is certain: the reason of fear is not death but life ("'twas life that still / Lingered in some deserted heart" [lines 37-38]). The sounds arriving from outside the window, as I hope to have shown in the first reading, are not *other*worldly but very much human, though inarticulate (significantly, in line 31, the moan is called "*unutter*ably drear" [emphasis added]), and that is what the cry "O God!" replies to, being half inarticulate itself, and on the borderline of language. It may be interpreted as a prayer, but also as a simple and everyday reaction to fright, a cry of woe – *mirroring* the moan from the outside. The speaker, who, in the first reading, named the threatening outside world in the language of symbol to assimilate it to his/her own realm, might now use reflection for the same purpose.

One thing the text positively enters into a dialogue with is itself. The first reading has indicated the sudden break between stanzas 5 and 6, and also enlarged on the relationship of the two sections as reflections of each other. Their motifs mirror each other, too: the reeling city wall corresponds to the ruined Hall; the wind becoming mute and mild to the air coming in through the shattered glass; the snow-clouds to the snow; the finished battle to the minster-yard; the "plundered churches" to the discrowned cathedral. As mentioned previously, the poem does not contain any quotations from other literary pieces (at least outside the oeuvre), but it does quote itself, strengthening the reading which interprets it as self-reflective and Narcissistic. To all appearances, the poem does not only accept its separation from other texts

but holds on to it as its only property to hold on to; which may also show why the speaker, aware of the resemblance between the outside and the inside world, still needs walls and feels threatened by the inarticulate sounds of life. It is not that (s)he needs defence but that (s)he insists on remaining in solitude; the walls have no other role but to emphasise that.

Here, however, the desire of the text runs into its opposite, and the second reading into the same *wall* as the first one. There, it was by the desperate rejection to a mystical union that the text made it possible for the outside world to break into it; here, total seclusion proves impossible. From the moment when the speaker begins to use language, (s)he becomes (always already) inserted into a textual tradition, which (s)he evokes whether (s)he likes it or not. Additionally, the reader can also approach him/her: however much (s)he refuses to enter into a dialogue, once his/her words have entered a text, they cannot help being addressed to somebody. The speaker conceals his/her knowledge about the events in the text, but, in order to do that, (s)he needs an audience which senses the concealment and cannot understand. Inside the text, this paradox is shown by the presence of light: if its counterpart does not exist, darkness cannot exist either. Darkness does try everything, though, to include light from the first line on. The ghastly light may well belong to the walls, but that does not change the fact that after the chasm in the first line, it disappears at once from the text (bordered by walls), and is only "present" as its own negation; the text only refers to it as something *absent* and broken together with the wall. The sources of light which occur in the rest of the poem (the moon, the snow, and the stars) only emit a faint glimmer, a semi-darkness. Not even the moon is able to light the ruins properly: in the moonshine, they still seem dark; and the fire that smoulders the ruins is suppressed under the same darkness (stanza 2).

Still, despite all, light remains the opposite of dark, and the night cannot emerge unless it lets its counterpart appear as well, which makes its power incomplete forever. (Let alone the fact that darkness is not reflected in itself; light is essential for a reflection.) In the first line, light appears and speech begins at the same time, postulating a close connection between light and voice. This connection is confirmed by what serves as a basis for the second reading to emerge: the ghastly light which belongs to the *walls* and not the realm *beyond* the walls.

1. 4. Allegory as a trope of solitude and of humility

The two readings *reflect* on the inner doubling of the text, with their choosing different ways and yet agreeing on several points. (In Frye's words, they do not contradict but follow one another.) The first reading claims that the text, however far from the outside world (the transcendent which dwells in silence), will unintentionally show the transcendent (and hide it at the same time). That is how the text chooses to become a sign: it signifies a form of

existence outside its realm, and is only able to do so because it is separated from the outside world. It can never be identical with the realm beyond, but it can create the image of that realm in its own universe. As opposed to that, the second reading shows that the text is not able to mean, only to talk *within* a tradition and *to* a reader/listener. A space beyond the text can only exist as the reflection of the text; the object of the text's desire proves to be the projection of the human world. The signifier is distanced from the signified so much that they lose (realise having always already lost) each other, and one cannot even be sure if the meaning exists at all. The text remains in its self-reflective solitude – as much as it can.

At second sight, the first paragraph of this sub-chapter provides not only a twofold interpretation of the text, but a twofold interpretation of allegory, too. On the one hand, allegory may be interpreted as a trope which admits to being "purely figural, not based on perception, less still on an experienced dialectic between nature and consciousness" (de Man 203). (This act of turning inwards does not isolate it from other texts, of course; on the contrary: it is forced to repeat them over and over again.) There is, however, at least one other interpretation of allegory in de Man's oeuvre: in "Reading (Proust)," within *Allegories of Reading.* Although not written about a Romantic text, the results of the essay are applicable here, too; all the better because it refers to medieval and Renaissance allegories as well, the strategies of which Brontë's text also recalls.

In his analysis of Proust on Giotto's *Charity,* de Man asserts that allegory refers to a meaning (mostly with the help of a tradition) using a sign which does not in the least resemble the meaning to be conveyed; additionally, the sign itself conveys another meaning, too, considered literal, which does not correspond to the meaning of the allegory at all (92). Similarities do not and *are not supposed to* work in allegory. The meanings are always incompatible with each other, and the reader needs to but is unable to decide which one is true and which false; thus, either meaning the reader chooses as true, the other one will always deconstruct it (94-95). Quite like the structure of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," with its two alternative narratives, neither of which can be put down for certain as a fiction of the speaker in the other narrative; or the necessary but impossible decision between the two meanings of the first line.

What should not be forgotten is that this clash between incompatible meanings is not necessarily a failure in the way allegory works. On the contrary: for centuries, this has been a way to show the humility of whoever was using this figure; that is why mystics so often used allegorical language. This "allegory of humility" is a servant (Radnóti 28): using it, the speaker does not understand his/her distance from the transcendent as tragic, but only humbly admits that (s)he can never reach the transcendent. Indeed (s)he does not want to reach it at all

either, only to serve it, as far as possible. Allegory, interpreted in this way, is regarded as the only possible way for the earthly to represent the transcendental – for language to mean something it does not in the least resemble. This way it might easily lose the transcendental meaning, get lost in the maze of true or false readings not to be distinguished from each other, and suffer irreparable disruption between itself and what it signifies. Yet, using allegory, the speaker might also hope to "magically make appear the other invisible, perhaps imaginary, line" (Miller, "Parable" 137). It is a matter of faith to decide between the two possibilities, and this decision is made by the reader, addressed, willingly or unwillingly, by the text.

1. 5. The breath and death of the speaker

One consequence of the curious poetic structure Brontë constructs in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" has not been dealt with yet; although the possibility was given at the beginning of this discussion. As mentioned several times in this interpretation, the text does not provide anything for interpretations to grasp, and only faint allusions help the reader, as much as they can. However convincing a religious reading may be, it does not exhaust the potentials of the text at all. The reader can never be sure that the silence surrounding the text is (or at least should be) the place of the transcendental; the silence surrounding the text may simply be necessary for the text to emerge, not as its linguistic counterpart but as the time of breathing.

In order to utter a word, one needs to take a breath, and not too many languages include articulate sounds uttered while breathing in (at least English does not). In this sense, silence cannot be the place of death, neither inside nor outside language; breathing is not only necessary for speech but for survival as well. Marina Spunta asserts that the spoken word (orality in general) is able to create a connection between body and voice, body and language, and this connection includes silence as well; not only as a precondition but also as a meaningful part: the manifestation of harmony and a tacit community of people (151-152). From this point of view, the air coming in through the broken window gains new significance in the poem as the most important mediator between human beings. The poem, in this interpretation, wants just the opposite of what the two previous readings supposed: it does not want to lock everything out; neither does it aim at meaning something; all the text wishes for is to address someone. It does not reject readers but asks them to come closer, by its very confusion and obscurity, because that is how the text lets the readers know they do not need to search for meaning, as such a search would be hopeless anyway – all they have to do is listen.

This reading has the same right to exist as the previous ones, but "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" provides as little to grasp for this one as the others. In the poem, the other

human voice does not fill the speaker with delight but anxiety; and even if the opening of the door might be read as the desire to do away with separation, that desire is never fulfilled. The speaker does not get out of the house but stops on the threshold. However much the text would like to become *spoken,* it remains *written:* it does not have a chance to defeat death. Breathing is necessary for survival; and survival is what seems very much absent from this poem. It is not only dark all the time, but cold as well. Even the light, which is able to break the darkness, appears as cold: the moonlight smiles cold in line 7, "an icy glory" catches the eye in line 50, and the stars of the winter night "stare" in lines 51-52 – let alone the ghastly light that defines the first line. The heat of the smouldering fire is unable to warm the landscape, and even that will pass away very soon, because it destroys the ruins that could feed it. If the allegorical house is necessarily the house of distance and absence (of death), then it does not look on to the minster-yard by chance. The possibility has already occurred that the speaking voice might come from beyond death, as the bodiless voice of a ghost; that might be the reason why it is so impersonal. Such a conclusion would not be surprising, especially within Brontë's oeuvre: otherworldly visitants frequently occur in her texts, most of them speaking. They blur the borderline between life and death, and make it permeable from both sides.

Now, as so many times before, the interpretation gets stuck, running into the phrase "from both sides." One can never be sure whether the speaker is dead – and *right because it is possible.* If death can enter the realm of the living, then life can also influence death: as soon as the speaker becomes a *speak*er, (s)he may as well begin to breathe.

1. 6. Threshold and borderline

As I hope to have shown, reading "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" will always fail at a certain point. Always at the moment when an interpretation seems unambiguously justified, it turns out that its opposite may be just as valid. It is not a proper Gondal poem, because it is absolutely impossible to place in the Gondal saga. It is not a personal poem either, because the name of Tyrdarum does not fit Emily Brontë's personal poetry. If interpreted as the manifestation of a desire for transcendence, it turns inwards. If seen as a text of perfect seclusion, it is able to reach beyond its boundaries. If I want to listen to it, it turns out to be written. If I regard it as dead, it turns out to be alive. The reader can find possibilities for any reading within the text (and even more in the silence outside), as well as for the opposite of any reading.

"A sudden chasm of ghastly light" exists as a borderline between contradictory spaces, spheres, and discourses; and in the dialogue (or struggle?) of opposites, it is the speaker that

carries the day (or rather the night, to create a pun). For the speaker, as opposed to the reader, knows perfectly well what is happening: in fact, by this time only the speaker is able to find his/her way through the allegorical space of the Hall, down the stairs and to the door. Only the speaker could relate the dream and the memory; only the speaker could tell the reason for the frenzy that makes him/her hurry down, or the reason why (s)he should "ponder" before drawing the bar (or, for that matter, define his/her gender). Therefore, only the speaker knows the text, and, in the end, just like the text, (s)he stops on the borderline – maybe on the *same* borderline. The text, elusive, abstract, and hard to grasp for everyone else, is, for the speaker, palpable and concrete, *because (s)he lives in it.* The ruined Hall is his/her home, the bar of which (s)he can put a hand on and draw – not in order to step outside, only to stop on the threshold, triumphantly.

Chapter Two: "All my life's bliss" – Emily Brontë's love poetry

Completely common in discussions of other oeuvres, such a title for a chapter seems quite out-of-place in this specific context. Having no love affair that literary history knows of, Emily Brontë nevertheless could and did write love poetry. Certainly, most of it is written in a Gondal context, as part of the role-play, as, for instance, "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida," the poem I chose as the first to be included in this chapter. A real masterpiece, it is one of the most famous Gondal poems, and also widely discussed and appreciated since 1846, when she published it. The second poem I chose leads on to a different field and applies the Romantic rhetoric strategies specific of Brontë's poetry in a particular way: "The Night-Wind," the love story of a human being and a personified natural force, exploits interesting potentials lying in prosopopeia. Next in the line is "And first an hour of mournful musing," a visionary poem of mysticism with Platonic overtones; the last one is a text hovering on the borderline between the most fervent love mysticism and its subversion, "If grief for grief can touch thee."

What connects the poems included in this chapter is desire, which always arises from the separation of lover and beloved – thus, ultimately, from seclusion. All of them centre on the desire of one being to be united with another, and all include erotic imagery (although some possibly use erotic images as belonging to the sign system of mystical tradition). The speakers voice, analyse, succumb to, refuse, or renounce their desire, each in their own way dealing with the distance they suffer from, as well as the (im)possibilities of eliminating that distance.

2. 1. Renouncing desire to construct a personality: "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida"

I begin this chapter with a Gondal poem: "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida," sometimes referred to as "Remembrance," the title it was published under in 1846; or "Cold in the earth," its first half-line. Among all the texts in the chapter, this poem joins the tradition of love poetry the most overtly – thus, it creates a good basis of comparison for the following poems. In addition, Emily Brontë herself ranked the text among her best by including it among the handful of poems published in her lifetime; and later critics justified her choice by placing it among the pieces most worthy of interpretations. Thus, while reading "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida," I can count on the help of other critics more than in the case of the other poems in this chapter.

As opposed to "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" (and other poems yet to be discussed in the present chapter and afterwards), the reader does not need to put any effort in trying to find out about the background of the poem. "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida" identifies the speaker

and the person addressed in the title (as Gondal poems frequently do), and their names are exceptionally easy to place in the history of Gondal. Rosina Alcona is probably another name for Gondal's queen (usually referred to as A. G. A.); and the poem is her monologue to her dead husband, Julius Brenzaida, assassinated fifteen years before (Ratchford, *Gondal's Queen* 26 and 41).[24] Typically of lovers in Emily Brontë's oeuvre, Rosina has to deal with a loss, and finds a unique solution to get over that pain.

The dichotomy in the centre of the poem, as the title of the published version suggests, is that of remembering and forgetting. Both sides of the dichotomy appear in the first lines:

> Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee,
> Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
> Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
> Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?
>
> Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
> Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
> Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
> Thy noble heart for ever, ever more? (lines 1-8)

Only asking questions as yet unanswered, these stanzas do not decide how to interpret the dichotomy mentioned above; they only introduce the problem of remembering or forgetting. They, however, contain another dichotomy as well, subverted from the beginning on. The dead beloved occupies a fixed place, defined in both space (the double confinement of earth and snow) and time (the distant past). He is literally "removed" from the speaker's world, and still desired (called "my only Love"). The mourner, as opposed to him, is free, yet ghostlike, her mind hovering over the grave (Gezari, *Last Lines* 51). In Christian thought, the case should be the reverse: the dead liberated and the living imprisoned into earthly existence. Brontë's poetry follows this line of thought in general, often referring to the body as a prison for the soul, which can only enjoy complete freedom after death. I will be discussing this aspect of her poetry in detail in the next chapter – here I only mention it as a background against which "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida" emerges as subversive.

This subversion, in fact, is based on the double meaning of the grave in Christian thought. On the one hand, it is a sign – part of the physical world, but referring to the dead who is absent (the corpse not identical with the dead person). On the other hand, it is a place

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[24] Gezari finds this identification not only exceptionally but also deceptively easy, and spots several weak points in Ratchford's argumentation ("Introduction" xxx-xxxi). In this poem, however, the question of names and the Gondal background is far less important than in other pieces (not by chance, Emily Brontë did not have to modify the poem in the least for publication, apart from changing the title); thus, here and now I do not intend to enlarge on the trying work of identifying the characters.

to be respected as the resting place of the dead (the corpse identical with the dead person). Brontë simply chooses to follow the second half of this duplicity exclusively and exploits its consequences. In this poem, the grave is imaged as a prison, the body addressed as the dead beloved, cold but not dissolving (cf. Gezari 50); frozen, and therefore unchanged (51). Rosina refuses to see her dead beloved as abject; instead, she imagines him outside time, and outside (cultural) space, too: resting in nature, with no inscription but only "heath and fern-leaves" or snow above him.

Yet, culture (and time) is repressed in, rather than disappearing from, the universe of the poem. In fact, the grave – lonely in the mountains, close to water (probably on the seashore), and covered by "heath and fern-leaves" – exists very much *inside* tradition. This is what a Romantic grave should look like, fulfilling "expectations formed by literary ideals" of "nineteenth-century anti-monumental pastoralism, which valued affective memorials rather than didactic ideal sculpture or epitaphs" (Matthews 159). Far from all inhabited places and surrounded by the emphatic presence of nature, the grave is hardly unmarked; instead, there is no tombstone above it because *no tombstone is needed.* It is the mourner's memory that marks the place, which, therefore, has little to do with timelessness.

The mourner, in turn, loses her body; in stanza 2, only her mind is important. Stanza 3 continues this line of thought: she refers to herself as a "spirit":

> Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers,
>
> From those brown hills, have melted into spring:
>
> Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
>
> After such years of change and suffering! (lines 9-12)

The two lovers appear as mirror images of each other. He is lying unchanged, but in a grave which, in fact, joins a line of repetitions. She exists inside time, counting years and going through "change and suffering," but only on a surface supposed to hide a depth of faithfulness. The poem's "concern with change and continuity does not focus on the clay that is 'cold in the dreary grave' but on 'the spirit that remembers'" (Gezari 51). The change of seasons, conventionally, is contrasted with the endurance of death, and, not quite so conventionally, with human constancy (51).

What disturbs this reading is that the first two stanzas are written as rhetorical questions and the third one as an exclamation in the third person – there is no "I" in these stanzas, and thus no evidence that the speaker is talking about herself. The first time the "I" appears, in stanza 4, it does not refer to remembering, but to forgetting: "Sweet Love of youth, forgive if I forget thee, / While the world's tide is bearing me along" (lines 13-14). Contradicting the previous stanzas, Rosina confesses to being changed as well. Forgetting her beloved

(accepting the gap between her beloved and herself), and joining "the world's tide," she joins those characters of Emily Brontë who are content with their isolated lives as members of society (cf. Miller 186). In accordance with her act of detachment, her "I," her individuality is born after the first three stanzas of selflessness. She goes on to use the newly found pronoun in order to admit that "[o]ther desires and other hopes beset me" (line 15), but then continues her monologue in a quite unexpected way:

> Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!
>
> No later light has lightened up my heaven,
> No second morn has ever shone for me;
> All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
> All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee. (lines 16-20)

Individuality remains, but she does not seem to be undergoing a process of forgetting. What she has mentioned before as the "years of change and suffering" now turns out to be the same as "the world's tide" which hides but does not harm the beloved. One should notice that she is *not* talking about his image or his *memory* in line 16; it is *the beloved* whom the world obscures but cannot wrong. He does not exist for her as a memory (a part of her past), but as himself (a part of her present). As Gezari explains, the title under which Emily Brontë had the poem published, "Remembrance," was ubiquitous in the age, raising particular associations: as opposed to "recollection," actively done, conscious and consolatory, "remembrance" was supposed to be an involuntary, passive, and unconscious process (41-42). Accordingly, Rosina does not refer to her beloved as a memory consciously raised, but as a body covered by a thin tissue, which obscures him, but is unable either to cancel his existence or to hide him from her gaze. The tissue is a *dark* mourning veil, in her metaphoric way of thinking; as she pictures her present life as constant *night* in lines 17-18. The other metaphor she uses is water: "the world's tide" washes over him, but as water is transparent, she can still see him, whether she wants to or not.

"[U]nless the id is repressed, the ego may not live and flourish" (Williams 248): individuation does not begin by forgetting but by *repression.* Her beloved is still a part of her life, coming up to her independently of her will – she only calls that "forgetting" because she cannot have read Freud.[25] In fact, she is "reinterpreting forgetting as a false appearance [. . .] [and] she describes a progress toward detachment that is always incomplete" (Gezari 45). She imagines the corpse conserved in stanza 1 because she believes that as she does not let her

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[25] Of course, Freud might have read *her,* as he used quite a few texts from the same period to form his theories; but that is no reason why Rosina should apply the same strict distinction between technical terms as he did.

beloved become a memory and be forgotten, so the dead body must remain constantly a whole as well. "[P]assion has merely been transformed" (Ghnassia 181); Rosina still retains her beloved and her desire for him.

Yet she does not deceive herself into the belief that her possession of him can ever be complete. She might be a passive object of her own unconscious processes, but as a member of society, she is very active. She resists the temptation to yield to her grief; and her reaction to her loss is not a search for consolation, but sheer endurance (Peeck-O'Toole 37-38):

> But, when the days of golden dreams had perished,
>
> And even Despair was powerless to destroy;
>
> Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
>
> Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy.
>
>
> Then did I check the tears of useless passion—
>
> Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
>
> Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
>
> Down to that tomb already more than mine. (lines 21-28)

Rosina does distance her beloved from herself, so that she can choose life; although she is aware that life can never make her happy again: "All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given, / All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee. [. . .] Then did I learn how existence could be cherished, / Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy." That is how she becomes one of the Brontë characters who accept their isolation (cf. Miller, *Disappearance* 186); and that is also how she becomes different from them. She does *not* follow their example out of idleness or a wish to give in to "the ordinary moral expediency of civilized society" (186). She accepts life as a judgement and brutal separation (Ghnassia 182) instead of a source of self-contained happiness; and she needs strict self-denial to repress her desire of transgression, when she would more willingly hasten to break the boundaries fixed by divine law. She chooses to be a member of selfish and individualistic society not only because that is her only choice apart from transgression. She also belongs to society because she has completed her psychological maturation, and has become an adult person.

Her consciousness is born at Julius's death: when talking about her turning away from him she uses the verb for the separation of infant and mother ("*Weaned* my young soul from yearning after thine," emphasis added). "Only through separation from the mother does the speaking subject gain access to the Symbolic[26] and its inherent structure of substitution"

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[26] Williams uses the term in a Lacanian and Kristevan sense (and spells it consistently with a capital *S*), both in this quotation and the one in the following paragraph.

(Williams 57, quoting Kristeva and Lacan). For Rosina, Julius was not only the beloved, but also a semi-maternal figure, with whom she was living in a pre-verbal union, and from whom she has to be weaned. His absence is the reason why she has to inject meaning artificially into her life (Rowland 270-271): when he dies, she can enter an order based on substitutions. She is, however, still afraid to give in to her love and desire, and she knows she is exposed to them whenever she thinks of Julius:

> And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
>
> Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;
>
> Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
>
> How could I seek the empty world again? (lines 29-32)

Gezari finds a connection between the prosody of the poem and the refusal to terminate mourning. Among the formal features that help create the same refusal of termination in the text she enumerates "the doubling or repetition of words, phrases, and grammatical constructions; and the use of feminine endings, the sound of a voice pressing beyond a line's anticipated closing stress, in regular alternation with masculine endings" (53-54), together with a dragging effect of the complicated rhythm, which resembles that of an endless funereal march (55). In addition, the poem applies "powerful images of melting, dissolving, and flowing to prolong her remembrance and her mourning" (56). Liquids like the melting snow (line 10) and the passionate tears (line 25), or the "drinking deep of that divinest anguish" (line 31) "represent whatever can blur borders and soften categories, dissolving and melting. They are also [. . .] threatening to Symbolic order," as Williams asserts, in a different context, but applicable to Brontë's poetry (56). Images closely connected to the body, these fluids encourage Rosina to stick to her pain and transgress the borderline between the living and the dead; to give up her conscious and, if the return to the pre-verbal stage is indeed impossible now, still leave the Symbolic behind and seek another ("post-verbal") union in the grave. (Definitely not in a Christian heaven; Rosina never refers to a spiritual union, just as she never refers to Julius's body only as a corpse, emptied of the soul.) In "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida," death and the unconscious appear as synonyms, obviously because Julius's death is the birth of the conscious for Rosina, which implies the birth of the unconscious at the same time, too.

Now, however, the text turns its own imagery against itself, and the line of "remembrance and mourning" is broken. With the same imagery, Rosina can show her willed detachment, too. She uses the metaphor of a wave for time ("severing" the lovers from each other [line 4]), and the tide of the sea for society (the site of a paradoxical community of isolated individuals). In addition, dissolution might also appear as a process working against her prolonged mourning: as the dissolution of the dead beloved, both literally, in the grave,

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and figuratively, turning into a memory and a part of the past. In turn, her tears can only flow as long as she can imagine Julius's body as solid and unchanging. Thus, the flow of her tears presupposes a refusal of imagining the corpse dissolving. As soon as she accepted the dead to be completely absent, her tears would stop by themselves, and she would not have to check them. The text folds back on itself, shifting back and forth (another image of fluidity) between fluidity as prolongation and fluidity as separation; the urge to die and the duty to live.

Additionally, she knows another way to forbid herself the "remembrance" and choose renunciation. In the last stanza she voices her desire to follow her beloved extremely powerfully (these lines are conspicuously sensuous, probably due to the choice of sounds, most of them soft and liquid), but she does not "let it languish." At the most dangerous point, when she would be the most helpless against her death-wish, she suddenly stops talking. By that stop, she gets rid of another danger inherent in her monologue, not mentioned yet in my discussion.

Rosina may find it impossible to complete her work of mourning. She is, however, so perfectly aware that she can never reach Julius that de Man could as well have written his definition of prosopopeia about "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida": she chooses a "thou" who is absent, dead, and does not have a voice; and enters into a dialogue with him as if he was present and able to reply. He *is* present enough for her, too, as she refuses to consider him a memory[27], and attributes to him the ability of the living in that she even begs him to forgive her (line 13). Rosina is also fully aware of the danger inherent in the symmetrical structure of the figure ("Autobiography" 78); she knows that at the moment she addresses him, the borderline opens up between "I" and "thou," desirer and the object of desire, life and death: the dead can forgive, and the living can become a "spirit that remembers" (line 11) or enter "that grave already more than *mine*" (line 28, emphasis added).

She loves him as if he was alive, but she knows he is dead. That is why the very line in which she asks for his forgiveness, and thus considers him the most alive (in none of the other lines does she address him so directly), is the same where she confesses that she will forget him. Even if her forgetting is not "proper" forgetting but repression, which does not erase but only covers the dead, it can still hold her back from the union with him which she desires. Additionally, the power of prosopopeia lasts only as long as her monologue. She also needs all her strength to finish her monologue and renounce talking any longer to her absent beloved; so, she has to choose silence. As soon as she stops talking, she will at least have a

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[27] Although she drops the word "memory" in the last stanza, she does not refer to Julius becoming a part of her past. Just as forgetting was not "proper" forgetting before, memory cannot be "proper" memory, while she associates it with "rapturous pain," dangerous even to think of. Even now, when using this word, she is under the influence of remembrance, not recollection; that is why she is afraid.

chance to consider him dead again – just like she did before she spoke up. Her individuality is no more stable than that of any other modern (and melancholic) subject, based on the repression of pleasure and pain that can return from the unconscious any time – but it still separates her from him.

From a confession of enduring love in the face of death, through the refusal of seeing the dead as completely absent and letting him become a memory, the poem has led to a final and conscious act of renunciation. Rosina is probably the best representative of the lovers in Brontë's poetry who have to face bereavement. With all of these lovers she shares the pattern of innocence lost and never to be regained, but she is the one who analyses her loss the most thoroughly, enumerates all the consequences, draws the conclusions, and never deceives herself. She does indeed recognise her consciousness in a Romantic way "as a kind of death-in-life [carrying her dead beloved in her mind all the time], as the product of a division in the self," but does not for a moment give in to the similarly Romantic desire of being elevated to a second and more perfect union (Hartman 47). Instead, she regards her loneliness as a judgement and does her best to live together with it, remaining an individual by repressing what would make her happy.

2. 2. The desire of nature "'til death do us part": "The Night-Wind"

Before I can start discussing "The Night-Wind," I have to refer to a remarkable feature of the previous poem, which provides a good starting point for the discussion of the following ones. Even if it is difficult to identify the characters unambiguously, a reader who is familiar with Gondal poetry can at least identify "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida" as the monologue of a woman named Rosina to a dead man named Julius, probably her husband.[28] If, however, the reader does not know Gondal poetry and only reads the published version, then it is not so easy to decide on the sex and/or gender of the participants. Gezari observes that the title "Remembrance" was, in the Victorian age, usually given to poems spoken by women to the dead, because remembrance (as opposed to recollection) was considered feminine. Poems with this title "were not supposed to challenge faith or question its consolations. Such poems were meant to be read easily" (44). Brontë's "Remembrance" turns against this tradition not only by creating a mourner who does not accept any kind of consolation but creates an individual existence instead. She also subverts the tradition by erasing all traces of sex and gender from her text in the version she edited. Although the text is obviously a love poem, nothing shows whether it is a woman mourning for a man or vice versa (not to mention other

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[28] Their full names occur in other Gondal poems, as well as their relationship: for example in "Rosina" and "From a Dungeon Wall in the Southern College."

combinations), and the decision whether the speaker is feminine or masculine depends entirely on what the reader expects of representatives of the two genders.

Brontë's intentions of keeping Gondal in secret were thwarted by 20th century critical editions; today, the Gondal title is available to everyone, and it decides the fruitful dilemma inherent in her second title. In other poems, however, she can still confuse her readers successfully by her masterful performance of completely avoiding gendered pronouns. "The Night-Wind," although it does not exploit the possibilities of pronouns so skilfully as other texts in this (and especially the following) chapter, is worth examining from the point of view of pronouns, because such an examination can serve as an introduction to the analysis of emotional relationships in the poem.

Even if "The Night-Wind" is the least overtly confusing from among the texts that avoid gendered pronouns, it can still deceive even the most attentive readers such as Rosalind Miles, Margaret Homans, or Maureen Peeck-O'Toole. They all consider the night-wind masculine, wooing a feminine "I" that resists the wind (89, 125, and 81). The word "wooing" does occur in the text, as well as the resistance of the "I" ("I said, 'Go gentle singer, / Thy wooing voice is kind / But do not think its music / Has power to reach my mind— / [. . .] leave my human feelings / In their own course to flow'" [lines 17-20 and 23-24]). Later on, the speaker can feel the wind's warm kiss and soft sigh as well as hear the wind's sound as articulate speech: "O come, […] I'll win thee 'gainst thy will— / Have we not been from childhood friends? / Have I not loved thee long? / As long as thou hast loved the night / Whose silence wakes my song?" (lines 27-32). To all appearances, the wind is in love and wants to seduce the speaker ("'gainst thy will," that is, by violence). What slips the critics' attention is that the text does not once use the masculine pronoun for the wind, only the neutral one; neither does the text identify the speaker with the feminine pronoun, except if equalled with the author.

The human being and the wind are only talking as "I" and "thou"; their love and resistance is independent of their genders. Their relationship is sensuous enough (cf. Miles 89), the wind moving closer and closer to the speaker, who can first feel its touch, then its breath, and then its kiss ("The soft wind waved my hair" [line 6], "I needed not its breathing" [line 9], "Its kiss grew warmer still" [line 26]). The speaker's reply also indicates a slighter "desire to surrender" (Peeck-O'Toole 79) on the human side (the speaker calls the wind gentle and kind [lines 17-18] right at the point of resisting it); which does not change the fact that the wind is working against the speaker's will. It is all the easier for the wind to do so because it never turns out what the speaker actually wants; perhaps it is not clear for the speaker either

(cf. Sorensen 117). What the reader can know for certain about the speaker is summarised in the first lines:

> In summer's mellow midnight
> A cloudless moon shone through
> Our open parlour window
> And rosetrees wet with dew
>
> I sat in silent musing— (lines 1-5)

(S)he withdraws from nature and would rather sit in the house, "in silent musing"; reflecting on the world instead of becoming a part of it (cf. Ghnassia 87) – in short, choose the position of the Romantic subject, distanced from the world when gaining individuality. The place (s)he occupies is perfect for observing the night: it is an enclosure (cf. Heffernan 105), a parlour (closed space) with its window open (providing a chance to see the outside world without having to step out). At the same time, however, this place holds its dangers as well: the open window allows not only the speaker to peep out, but also the outside world to enter (especially at midnight, the time for transgression). Like in the case of the allegorical Hall in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," the wall that separates the human being from nature leaves an opening which lets in the wind and may very easily destroy the inside world. In "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" the speaker defends the ruined Hall by identifying the outside world with the symbol, as well as by hurrying to meet the outside world halfway but never leaving the threshold. The speaker of "The Night-Wind" is neither so clever nor so fortunate – or, perhaps, Peeck-O'Toole is right in that (s)he actually wants to surrender to the wind from the beginning on. The central trope organising this text is neither allegory nor symbol, but prosopopeia again.

The question of genders is excluded from the opposition of human speaker and wind as irrelevant – and once the text leaves this dichotomy behind, the other contrast between the wind and the "I" emerges as even more powerful and of central importance. Namely, that the lover is a natural force, the beloved is human, and the violence (rape) of the wind (or the willing surrender of the human beloved) is an act of destroying individuality by erasing the difference between humanity and nature. "The attempts to distinguish what is human from what is natural meet the inevitable frustration" (Hardy 106). "Part of the speaker's defense here is her insistence on maintaining a distinction between heaven and earth, human and natural. The wind wants to obliterate this distinction and in doing so to steal her linguistic powers, which derive from difference" (Homans 125). Love, resistance, and rape function as metaphors in this poem. The speaker (at least seems to) wish to keep nature and human life

apart: "Play with the scented flower, / The young tree's supple bough / And leave my human feelings / In their own course to flow'" (lines 21-24); whereas being seduced by the wind means the destruction of this opposition and individual identity at the same time. Endowing a part of nature with the ability of speech results in its using human language to threaten the speaker with total destruction:

> 'And when thy heart is laid at rest
>
> Beneath the church-yard stone
>
> I shall have time enough to mourn
>
> And thou to be alone'— (lines 33-36)

The speaker, while reflecting on the world in the first stanzas, feels the touch of the wind, and "confers upon it the power of speech" (de Man, "Autobiography" 76). Indeed, as Homans observes, the wind steals the speaker's "linguistic powers" (125), but the speaker is also to blame for that theft; without a human being giving it the power of speech, the wind would be the same "voiceless entity" (de Man 75) as it was before. The speaker lets the wind replace him/her in becoming another speaker and calls it a "thou"; and, as a result, (s)he can also turn into a "thou" and the wind an "I" – the human being cannot help replacing the wind, being silenced in the end. Unlike Rosina, who created a (however unstable) personality for herself, the human being in "The Night-Wind" finally disappears from the poem, and the wind, literally, has the last word in the text.

As mentioned previously, love mysticism tries to translate the mystical experience into the language of sexual desire, using erotic imagery as a figural system for the mystic's desire to dissolve in a direct union either of the "I" and transcendence. The wind in Brontë's poetry often works as a mediator between transcendence and the human world, because it seems to identify physicality and spirituality, and it does not seem to be temporal (Rowland 246-247). Thus, it is also an ideal sign for the transcendent (especially as signs are mediators and they *mean* what they mediate), and its love for the human speaker becomes a figure for the desire of the transcendent to meet the human.

In "The Night-Wind," the wind can both stand for nature (metonymically) and the transcendent (metaphorically). In both cases, it wants to lure its human beloved into leaving his/her humanity behind. At the same time, the poem profoundly subverts love mysticism. Images of erotic desire have been used for centuries to signify the desire of the soul for the transcendent, but it is subversive to the point of heresy to claim that the transcendent (or nature, if not used as a figure), first desires the human soul, and then "seduces" or "violates" it. Another subversive element is that the wind *needs* the human being to be given the power of speech. Yet another one is inherent in the last stanza: the disappearance (devouring) of the

human "I" and the union with nature last only as long as earthly life – there is no trace of a final union here.

If nature works as a trope for transcendence and the wind is a metaphor, then its desire to seduce the human soul as well as its need for the human being are, although subversive, not uncommon in mystical literature at all. On the contrary: here the text only uses a kind of subversion from *within* mystical tradition, in accordance with Romantic thought. The Romantic self defines him/herself by being isolated (just as it also happens in "The Night-Wind," lines 1-5), and what the self is isolated from includes both nature and transcendence; that is why nature can work as a valid sign system for transcendence or, in the case of some Romantics, even take the place of the transcendental in human thought, regarded as a totality prior to human existence. In both cases, however, nature/transcendence only exists negatively, as something only to be known as being the opposite of what is understood to be human, which is based on the centuries-old mystical tradition of negative theology (cf. Hart 201). Consequently, here, at its seemingly most subversive point mysticism simply remains within the scope of metaphysical theology, in the sense Hart uses the word: the human self is only able to imagine its Other in the human terms of dichotomies. The Other (whether considered as transcendence or nature, which are, strictly only in this respect, interchangeable) in itself is stagnant and neutral: it is the human self that gives it dynamism (cf. Radnóti 41-42).

Thus, if "The Night-Wind" is read as a mystical poem, then the mystical reading is not disturbed by the wind relying on the human power of speech. That reliance, however, although it weakens and removes the human being from the space of the poem, carries a danger for the wind as well: using a human voice to seduce the "I," the wind runs the risk of becoming humanised. It does not become a "thou" again, but it might; it has reversed a dialogic situation in silencing the human being, and this situation could as well be reversed again.[29] Other Brontë poems also deal with the problem of a non-human being speaking up – another version of the same situation emerges in "I'll come when thou art saddest," a poem to be discussed in the next chapter.

In the last stanza, the poem defies any interpretation that claims that the human speaker loses the power of speech and disappears for ever. Whereas the danger of prosopopeia is supposed to lie in the human subject losing individuality in the silence which *equals* death, in "The Night-Wind" the silence of the loss of individuality is *contrasted* with the silence of death. It is not physical death that the wind wants to lure the speaker into (Homans 125). Death will be an isolator rather than a unifier, and the grave only proves to be a further prison

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[29] Several critics claim that the wind actually articulates the human speaker's thoughts (Homans 126 and Peeck-O'Toole 80), and Rowland interprets the wind as the embodiment of the speaker's will (287).

(as well as a place of rest), separating "I" and "thou." The borderlines of this prison are made of "the church-yard stone" (line 34), not to be broken down by either gentleness or violence – there is no window on the grave. In other respects, though, lying in the grave is only the continuation of the "silent musing" inside the room instead of stepping outside to return nature's love. Although the wind does retain one human feature after the speaker's death (it can mourn), death appears independent of the seduction of nature. Similar to Rosina's fantasy of Julius's body lying uncorrupted under the heath, fern, or snow, the wind prophesies the integrity of its human beloved to remain intact, and addresses him/her as a "thou" in death, too. (Thereby it reverses the structure of prosopopeia: now the silenced human being gains the opportunity of regaining his/her speaking voice – at least while alive.) Thus, the dead body will be identical with the dead person – especially as the body is synecdochically represented by the heart, traditionally considered as closest to the soul and spirit. The soul does not seem to leave the body, but rather freezes into it, to create an even closer motivic relationship with Julius's body lying "cold in the earth."

Death appears in at least two versions in Brontë's oeuvre. On the one hand, it is a state which erases the difference between inanimate existence and human body: a state of dissolution, sometimes accompanied by the image of the soul melting into the transcendent in turn. (In this thesis I will discuss this aspect of death in connection with "The Philosopher," "Aye, there it is," "In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid" and "Death"). On the other hand, it is a state which stops dialogue and irreparably removes all the chances of attachment: a state of impermeability, never picturing the soul being liberated. In "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida" or "The Night-Wind" (or a poem discussed later, "The night is darkening round me") this is precisely what happens. After reading "The Night-Wind," Rosina's conviction that her dead beloved lies unchanged in the grave might not appear so illusory after all. Instead, Julius's grave may only be one of the prisons (or rather dungeons) in Brontë's poems which confine a human body and do not let it open its boundaries. In turn, "The Night-Wind" ends with the conclusion that the human speaker has at least a chance to change places with the wind, become human again, and gain his/her voice back *while (s)he lives;* but death will bereave him/her of all possibilities.

2. 3. Descent and ascent, disrupted: "And first an hour of mournful musing"

The next poem resembles "The Night-Wind" in its opening situation: it begins with reflection. Similarly to "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" (and the overwhelming majority of Emily Brontë's poems), this poem also lacks a title and is only referred to by its first line, "And first an hour of mournful musing." Considered a "fragmentary poem" in Gezari's

terminology (80-81), in its briefness, its lack of *all* punctuation, and showing practically every line "separated from the next by a void, [. . .] [while] [t]he detached observer's words spring out *ex nihilo*" (Ghnassia 67, emphasis in the original), this text is apparently constructed to represent a kind of "anti-coherence." How (un)successful that lack of coherence remains, the following discussion will hopefully show.

From the beginning on, the fragmentariness of the poem gains special emphasis. The beginning raises associations with "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" in that nothing tells the reader what happened before the first word, but it does tell that something happened there, untold. The poem begins with the conjunction "and," which suggests a connection between the text and something existing in the silence preceding it. Again, like in chapter one, the beginning dramatises a feature characteristic of texts in general: that they all break out of silence and return to it in the end. Time is deeply coded into the text (six lines out of the eight begin with a conjunction and a temporal adverb), and the end shows a vision again, recalling the starry sky above the discrowned cathedral in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light."

"And first an hour of mournful musing" also dramatises fragmentariness by putting emphasis on the break between the text and the silence around it in the first line and the last line. The lines are as isolated from each other as the whole poem from the world around, and by the same means. What connects them to each other is time (the temporal adverbials which order the lines into a temporal sequence but also cut the same sequence in pieces), and the associating work of the reader's mind: the text again openly concentrates on features inherent in all works of art. In order to demonstrate this, I will quote the text line by line and try to raise associations that may arrange them in a sequence – always keeping in mind that the emphatic openness of the text also allows for other sequences to emerge.

"And first an hour of mournful musing": Time and thought (an hour of musing) belong closely together in this line, as aspects of the human world of absence. Absence raises pain; reflection can be nothing but "mournful." "And then a gush of bitter tears": The "mournful musing" of the previous line (which signifies loss; perhaps the loss of what lies in the silence before the text) is in turn signified by a reaction of the body. Cause-and-effect metonymies join the first two lines into a sequence of signification (tears stand for sad thoughts which stand for loss). "And then a dreary calm diffusing / Its deadly mist o'er joys and cares": Line 3 ends with an enjambment that breaks a phrase in two, so these two lines keep more closely together than the others. "Joys and cares," on the basis of lines 1-2, are signs of outside events in the human soul; thus, they join the quasi-continuous sequence of previous metonymies.

If, however, in discovering such continuities the reader should forget how *dis*continuous the poem actually is, the same lines also contain a warning against such an illusion: In line 2,

the gush of tears might also appear as a simple bodily function disrupting signification instead of fitting into its cause-and-effect order, like the images of fluidity threatening the conscious in "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida." In lines 3-4, in turn, metonymies are erased by another kind of signification, namely, the metaphor of the mist. "Deadly," it can kill off human feelings, and numb both body and soul to leave them motionless as death in the "dreary calm" it signifies. Human features are blurred as the stanza directs the soul into pain and death – but human voice, notoriously, remains and flourishes. The mist, as a metaphor, after all, is linguistic again; it erases *and* continues previous tropes, being another trope. (Just like the "dreary calm," only another human emotion after all the emotions before, death*like* but not yet the calm of death.) The mist rolling over the mindscape is semi-transparent: a "diffuse" texture (fragmentary, like the poem itself) which hides but cannot smother human temper. Still, these lines do contain a threat: the modifier "deadly" *may* call up eternal silence, and the mist *may* become a sheet covering a corpse.

"In romantic poetry, the combination of infinite height and depth typically helps to define moments of sublimity, which are experienced within the mind but may be articulated by reference to natural forms or spatial relations" (Heffernan 118). Poetry arranged according to this pattern (for example the poetry of William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley) is called "the poetry of altitude," in which "descent signifies self-exploration and ascent signifies transcendence" (118-119). The first stanza of "And first an hour of mournful musing" seems to work on a horizontal rather than vertical level, but its constant references to pain and death, as well as the image of the sad thinker, make the depth of the grave appear by associations.

"And then a throb and then a lightening": Something new begins in the second stanza. The heart is beating again, as if in rebirth, and light, from above, enters the universe of the text, if only for a moment. The ascent begins. "And then a breathing from above": Height appears explicitly, in the form of an undefined outside influence. The mediator between different forms of existence is air again, like in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" or "The Night-Wind." (Air is now humanised, though, and presupposes another body approaching, instead of a quasi-immaterial being.) The erotic imagery of the previous poem returns, too (cf. Gezari 89). "And then a star from heaven brightening": Light appears again, and this time to stay – this is not the unreliable light of a lightening, which strikes and burns, but eternal and infinitely distant. The ascent has reached the sky, not by radical shifts but continuous growth: the star surpasses but also continues the lightening: "brightening" rhymes with and repeats "lightening" in a slightly modified form.

The first two lines contain cause-and-effect metonymies again, although this time not arranged in a sequence but separated from each other: the throb stands for life renewing after

the "deadly mist," and the breath stands for another entity approaching. In the latter case, however, metaphor is written over metonymy again: the breath may after all stand for the advance of an immaterial spirit, too, in Emily Brontë's poetry often connected to air and wind (for example in "Aye, there it is!" or "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle," discussed later). Breath, traditionally considered an image of mediation, mediates between metonymy and metaphor as well. As opposed to the descent of the first part, where tropes covered and almost smothered each other (as they should, in a quasi-infernal depth of pain), here they change into each other in peace, and one leads to the other until the ultimate triumph: "The star the glorious star of love." The ascent commences in the star turning out to be the final metaphor, standing at the beginning of a new sequence of tropes. The star stands for love, and love stands for the Platonic desire of the soul to reach a higher sphere waiting in the silence that follows the appearance of love. The vision leads to another realm beyond, covered but not completely hidden by the text torn into words. Before, after, and between the words, silence reigns.

That is, if silence is not interpreted as *created* by the words to be their necessary counterpart in a realm of dichotomies, like in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light." There is no need to repeat the full interpretation of words and silence that I elaborated on in chapter one. "And first an hour of mournful musing" calls attention to the dangers of reading too much into the realm of silence in a different way. As I mentioned at the beginning: coherence in this poem absolutely depends on the reader. Its interpretation as a descent into pain and a mystical ascent into a Platonic heaven (cf. Gezari 89 and Miles 87), or its insertion into the Romantic tradition is only possible if the poem is seen as a process. By applying another way of joining the pieces together, the text can allow for another kind of sequence to emerge – precisely because of the *absence* of an absolute coherence. With its fragmentariness and obscurity, the poem calls attention to the space of the unuttered around it, and it invites newer and newer interpretations, but then disrupts them all and disrupts itself, too.

If the mystical reading of "And first an hour of mournful musing" is accepted, then the text definitely holds a moment when the human being is supposed to lose his/her humanity (cf. Gezari 89) and enter a union with the transcendent. (Even though that moment is very closely connected to the process of signification, setting up a line of signs which the self can only *hope* or rather *wish* to mean transcendence [cf. Hart 22].) Whether interpreted as mystical or not, the poem is certainly related to mystical poetry in that the speaker (who does not let the reader know about his/her gender again) never refers to him/herself as an "I." Disrupting the text (his/her own voice) at the end of each line, as well as in the beginning and the end, this speaker is far from determined to retain individual existence, even if the second stanza is not interpreted as a gradual leaving of the inside world to meet the outside. Rosina or

the speaker of "The Night-Wind" wish to retain their integrity, with more or less success – the speaker of "And first an hour of mournful musing" does not. (S)he resembles the speaker of the next poem, "If grief for grief can touch thee," the most passionate love confession in Brontë's poetry, and also the prayer of a mystic.

2. 4. A subversive prayer: "If grief for grief can touch thee"

The language of love poetry has been common as a source of figuration for mysticism for such a long time it is not surprising that they should have developed a close resemblance to each other in Emily Brontë's oeuvre. So close that, in her case, the relationship between the two traditions becomes reversible: in "If grief for grief can touch thee," the mystical tradition works as a source of figuration for love poetry. The beloved and the transcendental are easily replaceable with each other: the speakers of her love poems often complain about the loss of happiness that they used to enjoy in full (cf. Miller, *Disappearance* 173-175), and the same reason for suffering often turns up in mystical poetry, too, as a specific phase of the Mystic Way, often labelled as the dark night of the soul[30]. At that stage, the mystic lives through utter despair and a complete sense of desolation; most painfully so, because it follows previous stages of happiness and hope (Sorensen 130 and 134). Those previous stages were in fact only promises, but the mystic thought it was the union itself (133-134). Now, in this period of negation (absence), a sense of abandonment takes sway of the mystic, as well as a sense of hopelessness and his/her own imperfection, sometimes even a death-wish (136-138).

In "If grief for grief can touch thee," practically nothing tells the reader unambiguously whether the beloved is human or transcendent. By this time it should not come as a surprise either that, similarly, nothing tells the reader about the speaker's sex and/or gender – the speaker and the beloved are "I" and "thou," and nothing else.

> If grief for grief can touch thee,
>
> If answering woe for woe,
>
> If any ruth can melt thee,
>
> Come to me now! (lines 1-4)

One thing is certain, even by reading the first stanza only: the speaker suffered a bad loss in an undefined past and the poem is the result of a painful absence. What is more, this loss was, at least partly, the speaker's fault: (s)he caused grief and woe to the other, and now the same grief and woe torment him/her. Unable to trust language any more, (s)he creates an uncommon kind of prayer: although the last line is an explicit request, (s)he does not expect

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[30] The expression comes from the title of a book written by a 16th century Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross. (The possible connections between his book and Emily Brontë's poetry are to be enlarged on in chapter three.) Sorensen does identify this text as a description of the dark night of the soul.

his/her words to reach the other. The phrase "Come to me now" would be a performative act of language in itself; and as the addressee is absent, also a prosopopeia; but it does *not* stand by itself. It is preceded by three subordinate clauses, which enumerate three conditions of the other's arrival. Thus, in fact, the last line is not a request but the result of the conditions: "if grief, woe, and ruth affect thee, thou wilt come to me." Words are not for communication – only for the speaker's reasoning with, as well as encouraging, him/herself.

What the speaker does trust as a way of communication instead, is emotion. Words cannot break down borderlines, as so many poems have shown, but emotions appear to be exchangeable; they can (hopefully) flow freely between the two lovers, there and back. They may replace bodily contact ("touch thee") and words ("answering"). In contrast with the main functions of "normal" communication, which focus on *giving* (information about the speaker's mind, information about the outside world, or instructions [Jakobson 235-237]), this way of communication aims at *taking*. Its result should be a mutual erasure of emotions, and also the erasure of guilt, past, and separation. Thus, erasure equals forgiveness in these lines; not only helped by the communication of emotions, but also by "ruth." Nothing helps the reader decide *who* this "ruth" is expected from, because nothing makes it obvious which meaning of the word should be chosen: if it means "pity," then the other should feel it; if it means "sorrow" or "remorse," then it occurs on the speaker's side. In this case, however, the dilemma of meaning does not make the speaker's situation either easier or more difficult. Whichever meaning is considered valid, the result is (or at least hoped to be) the same: another emotion to influence the other.

> I cannot be more lonely,
>
> More drear I cannot be!
>
> My worn heart throbs so wildly
>
> 'Twill break for thee— (lines 5-8)

Solitude and sorrow have reached a state from which they cannot grow to higher grades. This situation is defined by absolute and hopeless absence (line 5). Line 7 is the first occasion when a bodily symptom appears; this line uses "heart" in a literal/material sense, which will give way to figuration in line 8. As if the speaker first wished to apply another sign system of the body, and then suddenly remembered (s)he had to use language instead.

> And when the world despises—
>
> When heaven repels my prayer—
>
> Will not mine angel comfort?
>
> Mine idol hear? (lines 9-12)

As in Miller's argumentation, being torn from others and from *the* other are inseparable from each other. This time, however, becoming isolated and becoming a member of society do not belong together. The speaker is an outcast, probably because (s)he does *not* become isolated as a result of accepting the gap which separates an individual from others. (Also, in order to become a member of society [s]he should make it clear which sex and which gender [s]he belongs to.) On the contrary: this speaker does not seem to have any individuality at all. All his/her existence depends on the beloved, and as that beloved is absent, the speaker does not have a chance to develop a personality.

The difference between Rosina and the speaker of "If grief for grief can touch thee" is that while Rosina builds a personality on absence because she accepts it, this speaker does not accept absence but tirelessly demands the other to appear instead. Perhaps that is why society does not accept the speaker in turn. Language may have been discarded as a valid way of communication with the beloved because it has failed to work in all uses accepted by the public. It has also become inauthentic as a means of creating a connection with God. So, the speaker denies (Christian) transcendence, too, and desires an alternative religion, centred on the beloved, called an angel and an idol. (Again, like in lines 7-8, the speaker appears to be searching for newer and better expressions: "angel" may be too "Christianised," so [s]he chooses a second term, turning openly against the Second Commandment.)

> Yes by the tears I've poured,
>
> By all my hours of pain
>
> O I shall surely win thee
>
> Beloved, again! (lines 13-16)

Language is discarded as inauthentic, but emotions (this time unambiguously connected to the body) have proven reliable in defeating absence in the (perhaps quite near) future. As the text so emphatically denies the power of speech, it also turns against prosopopeia. This figure as "[t]he fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech" (de Man, "Autobiography" 75-76) cannot work in this poem properly; because, although it does address an absent beloved, it *does not expect a reply,* or at least not in words. One consequence of this "subverted" use of addressing an absent other is that the speaker is not in the least afraid of losing his/her humanity. On the contrary, his/her greatest desire is to "blur borders and soften categories, dissolving and melting" (Williams 56).

Rosina has to repress her love and never let it overwhelm her, so that her conscious can triumph and she can accept the judgment of having to live. The speaker of "If grief for grief can touch thee," in contrast with her, "obeys a logic of passion, not of the rational intellect"

(56). Speaking the language of absence and from time to time even choosing to follow the logic of substitution explicitly (for example in line 8, or in using three different words to refer to the other), (s)he actually uses every possible means to rebel against and break out of the realm of absence and substitution. (S)he is not interested in constructing a personality or gaining a place in society; (s)he is interested in giving up even the little (s)he does possess as an outcast, if that is necessary for a (re-)union with his/her beloved.

Curiously, while (s)he keeps emphasising how much (s)he depends on the beloved, (s)he still manages to create an independent rhetoric, at least independent from the poems previously discussed. It is the rhetoric of exchangeability, of emotions communicating with each other and desiring to communicate with the emotions of the beloved. The subjectivity that emerges from such a rhetoric is of permeable boundaries; willing to transgress those boundaries and/or to invite the other to transgress them. According to Miller's logic, the subject born in "If grief for grief can touch thee" is guilty of impatience from the beginning on. Indeed, the speaker is aware that (s)he exists outside (Christian) morality and (s)he openly admits that, because, in calling the beloved an idol as well as an angel, (s)he explicitly takes "an image of the only good end in place of that end itself. This is to commit the sin of idolatry" (184). (In addition, bringing the two terms, "idol" and "angel" on the same syntactic level is even more scandalous than using only the former one.) The subversive use of prosopopeia discussed above shows the power of this kind of rhetoric and the subject of permeable boundaries. Although the speaker addresses an absent entity, (s)he is not obliged to actually *talk* to that entity all the time ([s]he may as well talk only to him/herself about the beloved), and even if (s)he *is* talking to the other, (s)he does not feel the threat that should be inherent in prosopopeia, and is not afraid of losing him/herself.

It is because of the denial of individuality and the desire to meet an unnamed other that the poem gets very close to mystical tradition. Considering that the speaker of "If grief for grief can touch thee" refers to a period of happiness in the past, as well as to his/her guilt that caused pain to the other and tore them from each other, Sorensen's associations with the dark night of the soul do seem relevant here, especially if read together with the readiness to an absolute self-abandonment on the speaker's part. Another argument for a mystical reading may be the absence of naming: the speaker consistently refuses to give a name to the "angel", the "idol", the "beloved," which is, if not uncommon for a love poem, more justified in a mystical poem – transcendence is never to be named.[31] The speaker calls the other by three

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[31] Also, if the text was a love poem and nothing else, it would probably be the monologue of a Gondalian (Barker 122-123). The text is, however, in the Honresfeld manuscript, not the Gondal notebook. Although Emily Brontë did copy some Gondal poems into the Honresfeld manuscript as well, she never failed to indicate the

different names (or rather surrogate names), and that is how (s)he can keep the reader absolutely in the dark about who this other is. The names only refer to who (s)he is not: whether earthly or transcendent, (s)he has nothing to do with the Christian heaven, but arrives from a transcendent realm unknown to official creeds. "Angel" and "idol" may also refer to a spiritual visitant right because they come from the terminology of religion (although both expressions occur frequently in 18th or 19th century love poetry). However far from religious usage they appear in the text, they do not allow the reader to forget that the text is actually a prayer, even if not to God.

Moreover, there is another curiosity of the text, which is extraordinary for a love poem (although it does not necessarily contradict the interpretation of the text as love poetry), and which seems to have escaped all the interpreters of "If grief for grief can touch thee". As mentioned previously, the text does not reveal the sex and/or the gender of either the speaker or the beloved – but that does not mean they are sexless or genderless. A love poem about passionate desire, with so much emphasis on the flow of emotions and bodily processes, "If grief for grief can touch thee" cannot and does not refuse sexuality. Instead, it refuses to indicate which character is of which sex and which gender. The poem creates a subjectivity of permeable boundaries, and, as a result, the text also opens its boundaries in a way which makes it extremely easy for representatives of both sexes and genders to enter *both* the role of the lover *and* that of the beloved.

Choosing the mystical reading, "If grief for grief can touch thee" appears as a subversion of and/or an alternative to the allegorical poems in the tradition of mysticism. Confusing the reader about sexes and genders, the text allows *both* a male and a female speaker, a masculine and a feminine "I" to emerge. Thus, it follows a heretic path, deviant from the tradition of mysticism; and also makes it easier for readers of both sex and gender to enter the speaking position of the text. If read as a love poem, then "If grief for grief can touch thee" is a text that expertly works with two kinds of love poetry, a woman writing to a man and the reversal (not to mention other combinations). In "If grief for grief can touch thee," borderlines are permeable between "I" and "thou," male and female, masculine and feminine, mystical poetry and love poetry. Focusing on one or the other is only a matter of choice. Thus, the two readings do not contradict each other, but work closely together – the act of reading adds to the several ways in which "If grief for grief can touch thee" becomes a poem of (guilty) transgression.

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speaker or the addressee at least in the title, and at least by their initials. To all appearances, "If grief for grief can touch thee" is not a Gondal poem at all; therefore, Gezari identifies the addressee as imagination ("Notes," 264).

The psychological processes in the poems mentioned in the present chapter range from absolute repression to the absolute refusal to repress. Desire, whether of one human being for another, of humanity for transcendence or vice versa, follows different paths (renunciation, violence, Platonic [?] ascension, or complete self-abandonment) in Emily Brontë's poetry, and develops different rhetoric systems, from rational ordering to the exchange of emotions. Love mysticism may appear in an alternative reading or a reading to be disrupted; Brontë does not create a language exclusively for it, and her texts tend to distrust, or at least be very careful about love as a way to make the boundaries of the self disappear. A human being can only remain an individual by repressing what would make him/her happy; refusing repression and giving in to desire carries serious dangers as well as promises. Other, maybe safer paths that can break the borderlines of the human sphere are elaborated on in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: "And thou art now a spirit pouring Thy presence into all" – Mystical union desired, witnessed, rejected

The poems discussed in this chapter centre on the possibilities of the human self reaching beyond its boundaries. "High waving heather," the first poem to be discussed, belongs to the tradition of Romantic natural mysticism and, to all appearances, offers itself most easily to read within the mystical tradition. "I'm happiest when most away," using the opposite strategy, considers an absolutely empty universe as a valid scenery for a mystical experience. "The Philosopher" provides a curious (and tragic) description of the Mystic Way, with two speakers representing two phases of *via mystica,* for ever distanced from each other. Against the failures of the poetic universes in the previous poems, "Aye there it is! It wakes tonight," creating a deliberately confusing linguistic universe itself, sets a final act of faith. "I'll come when thou art saddest" ends the line with its complete absence of desire and overwhelming sense of fear instead; a "negative" mystical poem, in which the human subject apparently has no choice but succumb to the deadly power of presence.

Sometimes as speakers, sometimes occurring in texts spoken by somebody else, all human beings in these poems contemplate the chances and consequences of a movement outside mortal existence, a movement possibly leading them to encounter what they identify as presence. All the texts share the feature of the speaker appearing in a threshold-position in some form or other, and make good use of it to help their human subjects get the best that they can afford in their isolation.

3. 1. Union and split: "High waving heather"

"High waving heather" should precede all the others in the same chapter because it makes positive statements of what the poems discussed later will deny or at least question. Both space and time are perfectly set for encountering a form of existence prior to the human mind: a stormy landscape ruled by natural forces, which mingle with each other in a joyful ecstasy, and invite a human soul to join them; and midnight, the borderline between two days, and the traditional moment of transgression. At this time, in this landscape, gaps may close and opposites happily meet ("Darkness and glory rejoicingly blending, / Earth rising to heaven and heaven descending") or simply coexist with each other ("Shining and lowering and swelling and dying," "Roaring like thunder, like soft music sighing").

The human being who appears in lines 5-6 witnesses the union of natural forces, a union beyond the surface of contrasts – a profound identity of all existing forms with each other. Only these two lines ("Man's spirit away from its drear dungeon sending / Bursting the fetters

and breaking the bars") mention the individual directly, and this is also the very point where individuality ceases to exist: the soul is leaving the "drear dungeon" of the body and melts into the landscape, never again shown separated from the forces around. The human being is not even given a chance to speak; all the sounds heard in the text come from nature, so powerfully that the text does not even use the word "sound" in connection with natural forces. Instead, the wind emits a "mighty voice" when it touches the forest (lines 7-8): a phrase normally associated with articulate speech – and, for that matter, divine power.

The wind does appear as divine at this point, named as "life giving," and though it definitely needs the trees to produce the "mighty voice" ("wild forests lending / One mighty voice to the life giving wind"), that only shows that natural forces bear sway as one unified being, and it makes no sense to talk about them as individual sources of power. The wind (air) gives life; water, the other element that appears in the second stanza, destroys, growing from an earthly river into an apocalyptic flood ("Rivers their banks in the jubilee rending [. . .] Wider and deeper their waters extending / Leaving a desolate desert behind"). In the third stanza, water "breaks its fetters," like the human soul did in the first stanza:

> Shining and lowering and swelling and dying
>
> Changing for ever from midnight to noon
>
> Roaring like thunder like soft music sighing
>
> Shadows on shadows advancing and flying
>
> Lightning-bright flashes the deep gloom defying
>
> Coming as swiftly and fading as soon (lines 1-6)

The river leaves its bed and flows on as a unifier of contrasts: lowering and swelling; roaring and sighing; shadows and lightning; gloom and flashes; midnight and noon. Although there is no "living," for a counterpart of "dying" in the stanza, in the same line (line 13) there is "shining" instead, lacking a counterpart as well: death is apparently contrasted with light, the river unifying life and death, as water is animating and destructive at the same time. The wind, the forest, the earth and the sky, and water, most powerful of all – in accordance with Romantic philosophy, nature takes the place attributed to the transcendental in religion, hidden from the eyes of the uninitiated, but unveiled to the visionary.

The poem is filled with the desire of uttering the unutterable; of expressing what, by definition, lies beyond expression; to fulfil the Romantic desire for uniting perception and cognition; in short, to reach beyond language. Gezari discusses the text as absolutely successful in this respect and the perfect realisation of performativity: she does not consider the poem as a description of an experience, but as the experience itself, always incomplete and on-going (9), and offered without mediation. Or, better to say, language even reaches

beyond its performative power: it does not *perform* an action which has never taken place before but *becomes* an action which has existed prior to the utterance, and needs to be expressed.

The text encourages this interpretation with its musicality – indeed it seems rather a piece of music than a creation of language. There is not a single verbal predicate in the poem, as each verb occurs in its present participle form, and their *-ing* endings provide most of the end rhymes (sometimes even internal ones).[32] Their "on-going" repetition provides a music of extraordinary strength, especially as in the end-rhymes the verbs would produce perfect rhymes without the endings, too: "bending," "blending," "descending," "sending," "lending," "rending," "wending," and "extending." The same sound pattern is heard all through the first two stanzas, only changing in the last one: "dying," "sighing," "flying," and "defying."

The flawless dactylic rhythm is unique in Emily Brontë's poetry, and shows her virtuosity at versification even at this early age (the age of eighteen); indeed, dactyls are quite rare in English poetry in general, right because of the difficulty of producing them in the English language. But for the *b*-rhymed lines (the rhyme pattern of the stanzas is *a, b, a, a, a, b*), the text would perhaps overflow with its "on-going" music; the radically different (stressed-syllable) rhymes of every second and sixth line, however, check their continuity. They interrupt and close the stanzas, as if setting up borderlines for the rest of the lines – although even these borderlines are questioned by the lack of punctuation: nothing closes the lines or separates the words within the lines from each other. The text (especially in Gezari's interpretation) echoes Steiner's essay again: "High waving heather" also refuses to accept its inseparability from language, and desires to reach beyond the limits of temporality and language (58-59). "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" leads towards light and silence; "High waving heather" seems to turn into pure music (cf. 58).

In the representation of natural forces and the musicality of the text, the Romantic sublime emerges[33]; the dynamic sublime, if Kant's differentiation is to be followed, who connects this kind of the sublime to nature as a power (173). The most interesting aspect of

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[32] The exclusive use of present participles strengthens the reading of the poem as the expression of a perfect union, as in present participles opposing forces are united on the grammatical level as well: constant *and* dynamic, nominal *and* verbal appear in one word. Ghnassia claims that the absence of a main verb in the poem provides a constant sense of "now" and of timelessness, "catching the slippery moment that is temporarily being kept abeyant" (66).

[33] Consider the role of sounds in "High waving heather" and Burke's passage: "The proper manner of conveying the affections of the mind from one to another, is by *words;* [. . .] so far is a clearness of imagery from being absolutely necessary to an influence upon the passions, that they may be considerably operated upon, without presenting any image at all, by certain sounds adapted to that purpose; of which we have a sufficient proof in the acknowledged and powerful effects of instrumental *music*" (56, emphasis in the original removed, emphases added). Or compare the role of darkness cancelling borderlines with "To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. [. . .] Every one [sic!] will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger" (Burke 54).

comparing Brontë's poetry and Romantic theories of the sublime, however, does not lie in the similarities between them, but at points where Brontë diverts (or at least seems to divert) from the views of Romantic philosophers. Burke's *Enquiry* defines the source of the sublime as "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror" (36); but then makes a crucial reservation: "pain and danger [. . .] are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances" (47), with which Kant also agrees (173). This is why the enclosure was invented in landscape painting, to protect the spectator of a disaster by suggesting that they can watch the disaster from a safe vantage point (Heffernan 122-123). However, some Romantic authors (William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley among them) reject this view, trying to eliminate "the distance that conventionally separates the viewer from the 'sublime' spectacle" (124). In turn, this rejection leads to enlarging the power of the human mind instead of forcing it to enter the sublime scenery: the sublime is merely internalised as "[t]he human mind gives a meaning to [sublime objects], and thus demonstrates its capacity to understand the Power that governs the universe" (126).[34]

Brontë's human being appears to react to (and reject) the Burke-ian concept of the sublime in the opposite way. In the authors Heffernan discusses, "external power elicits internal power" (127). Brontë's human being could not be more immediately affected by the external power of the sublime landscape, but no internal power emerges as a result; on the contrary, individuality disappears in losing the body and entering the union of natural forces. Yet, no sense of "pain and danger" springs from direct involvement: it is presented as liberation instead. That is where the mysticism of "High waving heather" appears most palpably: in the delight instead of pain accompanying the human being losing its difference from the surrounding world ("Man's spirit away from its drear dungeon sending" [line 5]), and, at the same time, its individuality (which, here, seems to be inherent in the body).

Burke's human observers retain their humanity and remain in the human sphere; Brontë's observer melts into the outside world and happily welcomes that as a loss of a dungeon. (One should notice the difference between a prison and a dungeon: a dungeon is a prison deep beneath the earth, and therefore often associated with earthly existence as well as absolute seclusion in Emily Brontë's poetry). The roles of the observer and observed are all

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[34] By which they get closer to Kant's theory of the sublime, who asserts that, strictly speaking, it is not what the spectator *sees* that raises a sense of the sublime; it is what they find in *their own* mind when encountering the outside world (157). Nature only provides the scenery against which the human mind can feel its own sublimity (175).

too easily interchanged; the very act of watching the sublime in "High waving heather" holds the risk of losing boundaries, and that, in mysticism, works as the ultimate source of joy.

What disturbs the reading of "High waving heather" as a mystical text is that however much the text concentrates on the meeting of opposites and the closing of gaps, the only condition of the human being participating in the mystical union is a *loss,* even if it is the loss of the body. Among all the natural forces approaching each other, the human being posits a discrepancy of being *split:* one part leaving another ("Man's spirit *away* from its drear dungeon sending" [line 5, emphasis added]). "High waving heather" shows the working of Stanford's symbolic regionalism as perfectly as if it had been intended to be an illustration of his term. Beginning with the heather and ending in an apocalyptic flood, all the objects in the poem are rooted in the everyday world, and then gain cosmic dimensions, the latter growing as if organically out of the former. The "midnight and moonlight and bright shining stars" of line 2 become "darkness and glory" in line 3; the "stormy blasts" of line 1 turn into "the life giving wind" in line 8; the transformation of the river has already been referred to.

The transcendent springs from the earthly organically, and the words uttering the transcendent spring from the experience itself. At least so they should. Reading Hölderlin's poetry, de Man identifies the desire of romantic poetry to find "an authentic word that fulfils its highest function in naming being as a presence [and manage] to become present as a natural emanation of a transcendental principle" ("Structure" 3 and 5). This quotation might as well describe the technique of "High waving heather"; but, in both Brontë and Hölderlin, the desire proves vain, and the creation of a symbolic language illusory – "essentially paradoxical and condemned in advance to failure" (7). Natural forces may unite in front of the observer's eyes in "High waving heather"; the wind and the river may appear as both earthly (material) and transcendent (spiritual) beings, the two forms of existence organically connected.[35] A human being, however, is not allowed to enter the union as such. Between the earthly form (the body) and the "divine essence" (the soul) there is always a discrepancy which makes the soul leave matter behind, as a dungeon – which, in turn, damages the union of natural forces as well, because it is reflected in the "desolate desert" the river leaves behind (line 12).

The desire of the text is to reach beyond itself, which it is unable to fulfil. There is, however, a trait that has so far passed unnoticed, and yet shows another way out of the interplay of illusion and despair: the speaker, completely unidentified. Nothing helps to ascertain who this speaker actually is, only who (s)he is not: it cannot be the human

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[35] Although, unfortunately, their union takes place in language, the landscape constructed in accordance with the Romantic literary and philosophical tradition; thus, the natural forces in the poem can hardly be identified as prior to human existence.

participant in the union of natural forces, because the (s)he watches the separation of body and soul from the outside. The text really seems "the panoptic vision of an omnipresent observer" (Ghnassia 66), the speaker so often found in Brontë's poetry, and, however omnipresent, always human or humanised (it cannot help being so, using a human voice), although frequently impersonal. (As in this case, for instance: one should notice that there is no "I" in the text.) Always using (by definition) human language, this speaker proves to be the Burke-ian observer, once discarded, now returning, who retains his/her humanity and remains outside the sublime landscape (s)he witnesses – and leads out of the interpretation which has shown union as mediated by language to be illusory. For the reader should now remember that the position of such an outside observer has already appeared quite unstable.

This does not mean that the human observer is able to enter the union of natural forces after all; that is made impossible by the human being of lines 5-6, if nothing else, whose case has shown that there is no chance for human participants to mingle with the elements completely. A complete retaining of the speaker's "outsideness" has, however, similarly proved impossible. The speaker occupies a position which can best be described as "in-betweenness": like the speaker in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," neither inside not outside the vision described (and neither masculine nor feminine, for that matter). Quite a few speakers in the poetry of Emily Brontë are to follow in the "footsteps" of these speakers, in such a "threshold-position" which gives them a possibility to step both in and out of the texts.

Symbolic language, in all the oeuvre considered unreliable from this point on, never occurs in poems that attempt to describe visions again, or at least never without its criticism occurring at the same time. The previous interpretations have shown (and so will the following ones) that Emily Brontë's speakers often use the structural similarity between the romantic symbol and the mystical union, but, apparently, they are always fully aware what dangers arise from making such associations.

4. 2. An empty universe: "I'm happiest when most away"

The speaker of "I'm happiest when most away," as if learning from the wrongs of "High waving heather," creates a similar position for itself, but turns the universe of the previous poem into its opposite. In "High waving heather," all forms of existence approach each other to meet in a mystical marriage, and create a sublime universe of Burke-ian magnificence[36]. Such a vision is never to include human participants in full possession of their material *and*

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[36] "*Magnificence* is likewise a source of the sublime. A great profusion of things, which are splendid or valuable in themselves, is *magnificent*. [. . .] The apparent disorder augments the grandeur, for the appearance of care is highly contrary to our idea of magnificence. [. . .] [However,] unless you can produce an appearance of infinity by your disorder, you will have disorder only without magnificence" (Burke 71-72, emphasis in the original).

spiritual existence, only if they are split before entering the union – which, in turn, damages the vision. The speaker of "I'm happiest when most away" tries to solve that problem by creating a vision *explicitly* based upon a split within the human self from the beginning on. In "High waving heather," the body is a dungeon, in "I'm happiest when most away," it is a "home of clay" (line 2). Outside this home, the dweller loses identity (identity, as in the previous poem, is defined as belonging to the body), and it does not exist any more ("when I am not" [line 5]). It may still identify itself with the forces of nature; it, however, does so by the very fact that *they* cease to exist as well ("When I am not and none beside / Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky" [lines 5-6]). What remains is "spirit" (with no definite or indefinite article; that is, in a general sense): an impersonal, universal, undivided mind, in eternal movement "through infinite immensity" (lines 7-8).

Here, the speaker does not even attempt to use symbolic regionalism. The wind or the moon only appear in their earthly form (the "worlds of light" may be a beginning of an amplification, but it is left in that initial stage and not continued), not as the starting points for the vision of transcendence. Indeed, transcendence is defined not by their growth but their disappearance: "infinite immensity," the negation of everything finite. This is even reflected in the grammatical forms. The attribute of transcendence is derived from the word "finite," with the addition of a privative modifier; and the same modifier is included in "immensity," which comes from the Latin "immensus," or, more archaically, "*in*mensus" – "not to be measured." All forms of earthly existence – the earth, the sea, or the sky – are only mentioned to be denied at the same time, and leave an absolute void. From the sources of the sublime which Burke enumerates, this text chooses privation: "[a]ll *general* privations are great, because they are all terrible; *Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude,* and *Silence*" (65, emphases in the original). In every aspect, "I'm happiest when most away" turns out to be an attempt to create the reversal of "High waving heather," and thereby perhaps to avoid the traps the previous text held for a mystical reading.[37] If language failed to grasp a vision of presence in "High waving heather," now it may at least be trusted to represent transcendence as absence – it cannot fail on its own basis of working. Yet it does.

Language is able to grasp absence, but it is not able to identify that absence with transcendence. The problem is still the same as it used to be: language cannot help being human. The "I" may disappear from the poem, but the human speaker does not, because without a speaker the poem could not even exist. Rowland, disregarding the negations in the

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[37] Even in its prosody, this poem works in the opposite way to the previous one: against its dactyls and trochees (falling feet) "I'm happiest when most away" sets (with the exception of the first line, which is quite confused prosodically) anapaests and iambs (rising feet), regularly alternating with each other. Punctuation is deliberately missing again in the fair copy (this time similarly to "High waving heather"): nothing stops the lines or separates the words from each other, apart from the blanks.

text, concentrates on this aspect of the poem, claiming that the text enlarges and modifies space and makes time more intense instead of eliminating both (239) – in her interpretation the whole universe becomes humanised. The realm of (human) space and time expands "infinitely," but still remains the realm of space and time, a mere projection of the human consciousness (echoing the internal power of the mind in the authors Heffernan discusses, and following Kant's definition of the sublime in nature). The "spirit wandering wide" (line 7) becomes the human mind, amplified and "active even beyond Death" (Rowland 239). Even otherness is retained in this apparently homogeneous universe, as the speaker is watching his/her soul from the outside: in line 2 ("I can bear my soul from its home of clay") the "I" and the soul are two separate beings, albeit only as the consequence of the self divided (cf. 239).

As long as a human voice speaks, the universe remains human and transcendence hidden. The poem even calls attention to this trap by deliberately depriving itself of the smallest chance to get rid of subjectivity. In fact, the whole poem is one single sentence; subordinated by the conjunctive "when" to the first half-line "I'm happiest" (which happens to be a positive statement, against all the negations in the subordinate clause). Thus, the "I" which begins the poem will always remain latently present in the whole course of the text.

3. 3. Search, vision, and death-wish: "The Philosopher"

Language, poor and stumbling, sets a positive statement about transcendence in "High waving heather," and that proves false; then it tries to deny that statement in "I'm happiest when most away," and that proves false, too – this hopeless desire of representing the transcendent is not unfamiliar in mystical literature. From the earliest times, it has been known as negative theology, with Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (A. D. 6th century) as its most important writer. He claimed God to be unattainable for reason: should a human being make any statement on God, every statement will necessarily be irrelevant; consequently, every statement must be denied; but God transcends negation as well (131-132 and 136-137), negation being also necessarily human. "The God of negative theology is transcendent in that He transcends being, all conceptions of being as presence, as well as the categories of gender. The negative theologian uses language under erasure; and this, I think, gives us a better account of what happens in mystical discourse than has been done under the familiar rubric of 'paradox'" (Hart 203).

Negative theologians may triumph in their erasure of language, but that provides no consolation for the philosopher, who provides the title for the poem discussed next.[38] The philosopher's life, now approaching its close, is ruined by having tried and failed in all human ways to know transcendence. Apparently, the figure of the philosopher is a reaction to the failures of the previous poems to find a way of encountering the transcendent in earthly life. As a contrast, the other speaker of the poem is named "the seer": one who claims to have received a revelation without any hard work, and, attempting to find an alternative attitude to the "infinite immensity," describes a vision unique in Brontë's poetry for its complete independence from symbolic regionalism as well as for its Biblical allusions.

The poem is a dialogue of these two cliché-like figures. The philosopher wishes to find a way to know transcendence by thinking, seeking, working, and suffering for long years, always sitting inside a "chamber drear," and never moving outside to meet the summer sun (lines 3-4). However much effort is put into the search, the philosopher remains "unenlightened" (line 3), and ends up in a death-wish instead of the fulfilment of his/her[39] desire ("Oh, let me die—that power and will / Their cruel strife may close" [lines 53-54]). As opposed to the philosopher, imprisoned in culture and thought, the seer believes in the healing power of nature, wanting to cure the philosopher's death-wish by inviting him/her to the outside world: "'Enough of thought, philosopher! / Too long hast thou been dreaming / Unenlightened, in this chamber drear, / While summer's sun is beaming!" (lines 1-4). The seer does not seek but find: as a representative of intuition, for one moment (s)he can see the spirit unifying all the forces of the universe. The two figures are so forcefully contrasted that they actually end up as two opposing halves that complement each other. They even seem interfused in one self (as if they were two voices or two masks for the same self, in an eternal debate with each other), as the structure (and especially the prosody) of the dialogue also suggests.

Emily Brontë's texts frequently use the ballad stanza, but hardly without slighter or deeper modifications. Here it is complicated by changing the traditional *x a x a* rhyming into *a b a b;* a broken foot is added to *b*-lines sometimes (e. g. lines 2 and 4); or the text may even change the stanza form right in the middle of the poem, adding couplets or longer sections of

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[38] Hatfield's edition prints the poem with the title "The Philosopher's Conclusion," and, for once, remains closer to the manuscript than Gezari's edition. The latter is based on the first published version of the poem, edited by Emily Brontë for publication. As the modifications are slight (they have no effect on my conclusions) and done by the author, and as I have chosen to follow Gezari's edition consistently, I disregard the manuscript in this reading.

[39] Both figures are generally discussed as male, but in fact there is little reference to their sex or gender. As far as the seer is concerned, nothing informs the reader about his/her sex or gender at all; the philosopher, in turn, is once called "man" (line 27). Disregarding this, Ghnassia consistently refers to "him" as a "she," implicitly considering the philosopher as a mask for the author. Such a consideration might be disputable, but, undeniably, never does the philosopher refer to him/herself as a man. Nor, for that matter, a woman.

eight iambs – only to return to the ballad form a few lines later. (The ballad form is clearly discernible even in the published version of 1846; although, as opposed to the manuscript, it is not visibly divided into four-line stanzas.) First it seems that the modified ballad form belongs to the search of the philosopher, while the seer speaks in iambic tetrameters. Lines 4-5, however, confuse the two voices. They are former words of the philosopher, quoted by the seer, but in the philosopher's stanza form. Even more emphatically, an interfusion of the two discourses appear in lines 41-52, where, for a while, even the philosopher is unable to escape the power of the vision, though unable to see it, and speaks twelve lines in the seer's form. No wonder that even the most attentive readers may sometimes fail to differentiate between the voices of the philosopher and the seer.[40]

It is prosody, the rhythm inherent in language that connects them, as it is language that both of them are struggling with. The philosopher's struggle is explicit: living in the human and linguistic world of distance and allegory, (s)he strives to reach beyond both. Appropriately, as the first four lines show, (s)he lives in absolute seclusion – *distant* and cut off from the outside world. The object of his/her desire is the same spirit that is revealed to the seer: "And even for that spirit, seer, / I've watched and sought my life-time long" (lines 41-42); "the vision that would give him a foretaste of, and therefore a belief in, a life to come" (Peeck-O'Toole 127). (S)he is a mystic in that (s)he wants "immediate [in other words: non-mediated] knowledge of another kind of existence" (Sorensen 13). Sorensen identifies the place of "The Philosopher" on the *via mystica* as the phase of the dark night (the philosopher lives "unenlightened" [line 3] according to the seer), at which stage the pains of the inner struggle make the mystic long for death, yet the stage should not end in defeat but a complete self-abandonment (166). Contrary to that, the philosopher retains the same death-wish and sense of defeat that the poem began with (179). The death the philosopher longs for has nothing to do with the desire of a mystic to enter the transcendent sphere for ever:

> "'Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
>
> Without identity,
>
> And never care how rain may steep,
>
> Or snow may cover me!
>
> No promised heaven, these wild desires,
>
> Could all, or half fulfil;
>
> No threatened hell, with quenchless fires

[40] Ernő Hárs, the Hungarian translator of the poem, who composed an otherwise exceptionally successful translation, did not even realise that the text was a dialogue, and translated both "philosopher" and "seer" with the same word (Brontë, *Versei* 117-118). Rowland, another, otherwise conscientious reader, claims the spirit to be a product of the philosopher's imagination (284). The quotation marks in both the manuscript and Hatfield's or Gezari's edition help the reader attribute the right words to the right person.

Subdue this quenchless will!'" (lines 7-14)

This death is a state of complete loss (lines 7-8), placed not in a transcendent realm but in the grave (lines 9-10); because any realm beyond human existence would be inadequate for the philosopher – at least not in the form they are "promised" and "threatened." Both heaven and hell, as they appear in the text, are prone to two interpretations, depending on whether their attributes are considered as modifiers ("*that* heaven which people promise," "*that* hell which people threaten with"; because there is a different heaven and a different hell, both of them presumably truer) or as inherent qualities (there is only one heaven and one hell, neither of which is an adequate home for the philosopher). As (s)he would choose the grave rather than either heaven or hell, the latter reading (unorthodox to the point of heresy) seems more valid than the former. The latter reading is supported by the following lines, too. They assert that the pains of the philosopher spring from difference (a distance between different forces): an internal conflict of three gods, which heaven was unable to contain, but a human being must be: "Three gods, within this little frame / Are warring night and day; / Heaven could not hold them all, and yet / They all are held in me" (lines 17-20).

Ghnassia interprets these lines as an assertion of the independence and integrity of human existence: "[s]he [the philosopher] relies on her own ability and reaffirms the supremacy of personal transcendence to the idea of heaven" (174). However, in order to draw such a conclusion, she has to ignore the philosopher's desire for losing his/her individual existence (the quotation above continues thus: "And must be mine till I forget / My present entity!" (lines 21-22). Far from reaching a state of self-affirmation, all through the poem the philosopher retains the same unstable condition which (s)he began with. The only antidote for the internal conflict appears to be death. Not the death of a mystic, which should be a final union with transcendence, because that transcendence has proven inauthentic – but death as an absolute annihilation of both body and mind: "Oh, for the time, when in my breast / Their struggles will be o'er! / Oh, for the day, when I shall rest, And never suffer more!" (lines 23-26).

Only in absolute annihilation, and not in entering transcendence can the philosopher trust in losing pain, difference and language, because only in absolute annihilation can (s)he cease to search for a "deeper truth" beyond the visible world. The grave is "a realm where the perpetuity of legibility of things would be destroyed, where there will be no more incessant call for verification of meaning" (Rowland 284). Synonyms for *death* in the poem are *oblivion* and *forgetting*: death leads into a timeless state, but not into a higher form of existence, because the philosopher does not know a mind higher than his/her own.

If, however, that is true, then what should the reader make of the mysterious spirit in the seer's vision? The seer admires him (definitely masculine this time) as some kind of a World-Soul, a unifying power; and even the philosopher claims to hold him in high esteem (lines 45-48, discussed later). The spirit is obviously an authentic representative of transcendence for both speakers – but where does he belong? This is the point where the seer's struggle with language begins, implicit, but clearly discernible: the seer, similar to the speakers of poems discussed in this chapter, does not want less than to communicate the unutterable, trying to use a strategy different from those that caused previous poems to fail in their desire. This struggle results in an unusual production of language in lines 27-40, at least unusual in Emily Brontë's poetic oeuvre: colour symbolism (or, better to say, "colour allegorism"). The philosopher's universe is defined by thinking and darkness, whereas the seer is able to participate in a universe of light and seeing, if only for a glimpse. The vision is worth quoting in full:

> 'I saw a spirit, standing, man,
>> Where thou doth stand—an hour ago,
> And round his feet three rivers ran,
>> Of equal depth, and equal flow—
> A golden stream—and one like blood;
>> And one like sapphire seemed to be;
> But, where they joined their triple flood
>> It tumbled in an inky sea.
> The spirit sent his dazzling gaze
>> Down through that ocean's gloomy night
> Then, kindling all, with sudden blaze,
>> The glad deep sparkled wide and bright—
> White as the sun, far, far more fair
>> Than its divided sources were!' (lines 27-40)

Frye's discussion of the *Book of Revelation* appears to be extremely helpful at this stage of analysis as well, especially as the seer's vision does contain allusions to Biblical visions, as opposed to the uncertain connections between "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" and *Revelation.* As mentioned previously, the problem of mystics is a linguistic problem. They want to find an ultimate (eternal and perfect) meaning beyond the human world which they treat as a sign system; they long for an "immediate knowledge of another kind of existence" (Sorensen 13), which they either find or not. If they do, they receive knowledge of a meta-linguistic and meta-temporal universe, but if they want to write it down, they need to *reveal*

that knowledge in a fundamentally different world. As mentioned previously, Frye defines the human world of language and time as the realm of hearing ("listening in the dark"), and the meta-temporal world of transcendence as a realm of seeing (117). In "The Philosopher," the former one corresponds to the philosopher's world of darkness, and the latter one, apparently, to the seer's world of sight. For the philosopher, the grave was the "realm where the perpetuity of legibility of things would be destroyed, where there will be no more incessant call for verification of meaning" (Rowland 284), but the way the quotation continues would fit the seer's world much more readily: "where harmony would be self-explanatory, homogeneous and non-verbal" (284).

Three coloured streams appear in the seer's vision, which recalls the Romantic sublime again with its magnificence: one golden, one blood-red, and one sapphire-coloured (lines 31-32). Ghnassia connects the three gods "warring" in the philosopher's mind and the three streams happily unified in the seer's vision (174). She interprets the golden stream as power ("sun, fire, aggressiveness, and excess" [174]), the blood-stream as life and vitality, whereas the sapphire stream stands for reflection and knowledge (174). Not very different from Ghnassia's views, Sorensen takes the colours for the primary colours of Jung's philosophy: red for the body, blue for the mind, gold for divinity and the sun (176). Another interpretation she establishes on Neo-Platonism and spiritual alchemy: red for sulphur and earthliness, blue for salt and intellect, gold for mercury and spirit (176). The three streams may represent a disintegration of consciousness (170), which "[tumble] in an inky sea": the philosopher's desire of oblivion in death (Ghnassia 174), or the dark night of despair (Sorensen 177).

The multiplicity of streams merges into one unity (172), but that does not yet suffice to produce a "proper" union. It is the spirit's "dazzling *gaze*" (line 35, emphasis added) – that is, his eyes (appropriate in the realm of seeing) – that can transform the black ocean (a negative synthesis) into a white ocean (a positive synthesis) for a moment (Ghnassia 174). The spirit's gaze irradiates the dark sea from above ("The spirit sent his dazzling gaze / Down through that ocean's gloomy night" [lines 35-36]), in accordance with the traditional division of mythical space, which gives the upper regions to the transcendent and perfect, and the lower ones to the human and fallible. The spirit's gaze transforms darkness into a new entity, multiplicity now truly integrated into purity, illumination, and joy (Sorensen 177): "The glad deep sparkled wide and bright— / White as the sun, far, far more fair / Than its divided sources were!" (lines 38-40). It is this part that evokes the *Book of Revelation* (although the blood-red river might in itself be an evocation of water turning into blood in 16:4), with the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the

Lamb" (22:1), also mentioned as "a sea of glass like unto crystal" in front of the throne (4:6), which is later "mingled with fire" and destroys the adversaries of God (15:2).

This triumphant vision exercises so much influence on the philosopher that, as mentioned previously, (s)he resumes talking in the seer's stanza form for twelve lines (separated from his/her usual stanza form by a dash at the beginning and the end), and confesses the spirit to be identical with the object of his/her own desire:

> 'And even for that spirit, seer,
> I've watched and sought my life-time long;
> Sought him in heaven, hell, earth, and air—
> An endless search, and always wrong!
> Had I but seen his glorious eye
> *Once* light the clouds that wilder me,
> I ne'er had raised this coward cry
> To cease to think, and cease to be;
> I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
> Nor, stretching eager hands to death,
> Implored to change for senseless rest
> The sentient soul, this living breath— (lines 41-48)

Heaven and hell appear again in the philosopher's argumentation, syntactically brought on the same level as earth and air – and thus turned into parts of the human world of "endless search" and mistakes (lines 43-44). The paradox is solved if the reader remembers the previous occurrences of the words *heaven* and *hell.* In lines 11-14 both "promised heaven" and "threatened hell" have proven inadequate places for the philosopher; and two interpretations belonged to both phrases. In the reading of lines 11-14 their attributes "promised" and "threatened" appeared as their inherent qualities. Here, after the vision has been described, the existence of a transcendence different from what people may promise or threaten with cannot be denied any more. Accordingly, the words *heaven* and *hell* switch over to the opposite meanings: they are nothing but words, and thus, as parts of language, they belong to the human world of "listening in the dark," their existence temporal and inauthentic. In this world, with human means, the spirit remains invisible. (One should notice that the seer does not *seek* to see the spirit, only passively *accepts* the privilege of catching a glimpse of him.) Sorensen discusses the vision, but she does not draw the conclusion that actually *two* phases of the mystic way appear in this poem, tragically torn from each other. The philosopher reaches the fourth phase – but the seer receives the vision.

The question remains: if the existence of another, "truer" transcendence has become evident, why does the philosopher still wish for annihilation in the grave instead of melting into the white ocean of eternal union and joy?

> Oh, let me die—that power and will
> > Their cruel strife may close;
> And conquered good, and conquering ill
> > Be lost in one repose!' (lines 53-56)

With the final return of the ballad stanza, it turns out that dichotomies will only disappear in "repose," not in a transcendent realm. There is no way to lead from the earthly phases of the mystic journey to the final phase; forever they remain apart, like the philosopher and the seer. They appear as two characters of opposing attributes, complementary to each other; never fully identified with, and never fully independent of each other. The reasons why the philosopher chooses repose instead of the final union are included in the seer's text as well. First: hard as the seer tries to introduce the realm of sight into the text, (s)he is obviously unable to reach beyond language while actually *using* it. "Because traditional theologies cannot assuage the conflicts that ravage [the philosopher], she prefers this stark descent into nothingness," as Ghnassia asserts (174). Well may she identify the vision with traditional theologies, as it applies the explicitly allegorical language of Christian tradition – how else would I have been able to connect it to the Bible? Instead of providing the ultimate truth, the seer can only reveal images that need further interpretation – signifiers which refer to further meanings. As my analysis has shown, two different critics have explained the vision in two different ways. That is only possible if meaning is as absent from the seer's speech as it is from the philosopher's search. That is why, at the beginning, I changed the term "colour symbolism" to "colour allegorism." The three colours do not work as symbols, unifying the signifier with the signified, but rather as allegories: signs distanced from what they wish to mean, signs in whose world no meaning can be considered true or false without questioning their truth or falsity at the same time (cf. de Man, *Allegories* 76-77).

Additionally, by describing an "above" and "below" as well as a "before" and an "after" (streams flowing into a sea, the black sea turning into white), the seer steals the idea of space and time back into a world supposedly outside space and time (and dichotomies). The seer as a figure is allegorical, too, just like the philosopher: both are allegories of human ways of understanding the world; that is why they agree in remaining human. No wonder the seer is ironic about his/her own text: once (s)he drops the expression most telling of illusions: "seemed to be" (line 32). No wonder either that readers will mistake the text of one speaker for those of the other. The seer's discourse proves to be the same as the philosopher's – the

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philosopher literally has the last word (cf. Ghnassia 174). There is no evidence either that the seer's speech is not a lie. In "The Philosopher," seeing is believing – the philosopher remains a sceptic, the seer a believer – and the reader may decide which way to choose. Neither way, however, leads to *unio mystica*. The seer does not succumb to the spirit's power and melt into the white ocean either. Nor does (s)he lead unitive life from the moment of seeing on. On the contrary: (s)he sees the spirit for a short while, and *remains content with that*. Like the impersonal speaker of "High waving heather," (s)he does not even try to become directly involved in the (sublime) vision, but as a true Burke-ian observer, retains his/her humanity and remains outside. Ironically, the philosopher wishes to leave the world of hearing behind, and is incapable of that; whereas the seer wishes to remain outside the vision – and cannot help retaining the possibility of entering it. As an observer, his/her position is as unstable as that of the speaker in "High waving heather," and (s)he turns out to be another speaker occupying the "threshold-position."

That is, if the vision is not a lie. There is no way to check whether (s)he has really seen the spirit or not. If the reader believes in the vision, that is the result of a deliberate act of faith in the reader's mind; a conviction "in which the categories of verification and falsification have no role to play" (Hart 101). If that act of faith does not take place, there is no choice but to be as sceptical as the philosopher, who does not believe in anything human means fail to reach (including transcendence) – and whose way leads to annihilation. The two speakers leave the reader in a situation where (s)he cannot avoid the choice between faith and scepticism. Yet, as allegorical figures relying on the reader to give them meaning, they leave a loophole, too: the possibility to enter first this, then that position, switching back and forth between the two participants of the dialogue.

From the interpretations of the poems in the previous and the present chapter it has become clear that, even in the closest readings, there is little to contradict Miller's views. Direct communion with another being, whether human or transcendent, in earthly life has proven illusory or downright impossible, and, consequently, by definition impossible to verbalise, too. In the present chapter it has turned out that speakers in Brontë's poetry are unable to associate the transcendent with anything human *and* linguistic. However, they have not exhausted all the possibilities yet.

3. 4. "I" and "thou" and nothing else: "Aye there it is!"

"Aye there it is!" is probably the most successful example in Brontë's poetry of the "*fort-da* game" in "The Philosopher." The reason for its success is the openness the text carries to extremes. The stanza form is the ballad stanza again, common and even cliché-like;

but, again, the text (surviving as a fair copy again) applies hardly any punctuation apart from dashes. Even at the end there is only a dash, not a full stop, which would give a sharply defined close to the poem.[41] On the level of meaning, a similar kind of openness emerges in the use of personal pronouns. Thus, grammatical openness parallels openness on a typographical level. The previous poems made it difficult to differentiate between male and female speakers; "Aye there it is!" goes even further along the way of eliminating certainties, as the first stanza already shows:

> Aye there it is! It wakes tonight
>
> Sweet thoughts that will not die
>
> And feeling's fires flash all as bright
>
> As in the years gone by!—

The speaker appears as unnamed and unidentified, and will remain so throughout the poem. As in the case of the previous poems, critics disagree with each other how to refer to the speaker: Ghnassia uses the masculine pronoun, Peeck-O'Toole and Rowland the feminine one. The mysterious entity that enters the speaker's world to "wake sweet thoughts," is also unidentified, and only signified by a neutral personal pronoun: "it." Pronouns receive their meaning in the situation in which they are currently used at the given time and in the given space; and here hardly anything helps the reader reconstruct the situation.

On the basis of what little information the text provides, critics agree that the text begins with a memory recalled (Ghnassia 109), the memory of "an experience *returning* after a time" (Sorensen 124, emphasis in the original). From the very beginning, the idea of repetition and time appears explicitly in the poem ("tonight," "years gone by"): the speaker does not give in to any illusion of timelessness while using language.

The experience itself, however, is never described, not to be grasped by language, which can only repeat. The speaker calls the reader's attention to the absence of the experience with the first half-line. The words "Aye there it is!" obviously resound at the end of a long time of expectance, which the participants of the poem's universe have shared with each other, but deliberately keep in secret from everyone else. There is no way to find out about that secret, and thus no way to find out what "it" might be. To both the speaker and the person who is spoken to, "it" must be familiar, or else the neutral pronoun would not suffice

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[41] This technique closely resembles the (lack of) punctuation in Emily Dickinson's poetry; apparently not by chance, as Dickinson is among the few nineteenth-century poets who read, understood, appreciated, and was influenced by Brontë's poetry. Curiously, however, in this particular case the two poets created similar techniques completely independent of each other. Dickinson could not possibly be familiar with Brontë's use of dashes, as "Aye there it is!" was edited and published by Charlotte Brontë after her sister's death. She slightly modified the diction, added five lines, and *punctuated* her sister's poem with commas, colons, semicolons, and full stops, reducing the number of dashes and changing their places. The manuscript version remained unknown in Dickinson's lifetime. See Gezari's edition of Emily Brontë's poems for the modified text (210).

for both; they must both recognise "it," but they do not give "it" a name or anything else to identify "it." (Critics usually claim "it" is the wind, but there is no actual evidence for that, as I will elaborate on it later.)

The second stanza opens and unfixes meanings in a similar way:

> And I can tell by thine altered cheek
>
> And by thy kindled gaze
>
> And by the words thou scarce dost speak,
>
> How wildly fancy plays—

The text now refers to both participants of the situation, but only by pronouns again – "I" and the archaic "thou" ("thy/thine") – and again takes good care not to include any means of closer identification. In turn, the participants do not lose their identity completely either: "I," being the speaker, certainly retains his/her voice, and "thou," although changing in both the face ("altered cheek," "kindled gaze") and the voice ("words thou scarce dost speak") at the moment of ecstasy, still retains his/her physical features (cf. Peeck-O'Toole 82).

Line 8 identifies ecstasy as springing from "fancy." Placing a clearly human (and, as mentioned previously, unreliable) force at the root of a vision, and thus confirming its awareness of the dangers of illusion, the text, strangely, goes on to apply symbolic regionalism again, and gets as close as possible to describing a mystical experience:

> Yes I could swear that glorious wind
>
> Has swept the world aside
>
> Has dashed its memory from thy mind
>
> Like foam-bells from the tide—
>
>
> And thou art now a spirit pouring
>
> Thy presence into all
>
> The essence of the Tempest's roaring
>
> And of the Tempest's fall—

Rowland elaborates on the possible meanings the wind refers to in Emily Brontë's poetry. Considering the meanings applicable in the context of this chapter, the wind does appear to be the perfect starting point for symbolic regionalism, just like in "High waving heather." "[A] power non-dependent on earthly things that are subject to the degenerative influence on Time, [the wind works as] a summon to liberty, which involves a planned *transgression of physicality* [. . .], [or even] a secret path to eternity" (246, emphasis added). Physical, yet never to be captured (246), the wind is supposed to unify two forms of existence in itself: it appears as a mediator between two realms, a "path to eternity" indeed, which takes

the human soul to a different world. In this poem, the wind, as a mediator, makes memory (time) disappear, and then loses its mediating existence by growing into a tempest. The tempest already belongs to the realm of *presence* (line 14), where stanza 4 has entered: growing out of the wind, the tempest is a sublime and immortal power. In the meantime, "thou" becomes purely a "spirit," an "essence," unified with the tempest in both its rise and fall (lines 15-16). In this realm of perfect intermingling, there is no way to decide whether the human self has become part of the wind or the outside world a projection of "thou."

The spirit unifies beings by opening their boundaries and entering them, by which it is also able to connect opposites within itself, as the essence of both the roaring and fall of the tempest. Vast and infinite, this is a sublime universe, which "the opposite extremes operate equally in favour of" (Burke 74), and the realm of *unio mystica,* as the fifth stanza confirms:

> A universal influence
>
> From Thine own influence free
>
> A principle of life intense
>
> Lost to mortality—

The influence of the spirit is expanded so that it includes the whole universe and, against the power of death, it becomes the source of unceasing life. *Presence, universal influence,* and *life intense* all become synonymous with each other in this state of constancy, which is conveyed by the nominal structure of stanzas 4-5: the only verb is a substantive verb *art.* The synonyms mentioned above and the pronouns work in opposite ways but for the same ending. The phrases open their boundaries to each other just like the entities they name: they may all refer to the same meaning; the pronouns, in turn, open their boundaries in that they may refer to several entities. For instance, "it," in line 11, gains its uncertainty from the grammatical structure which makes it possible for the pronoun to refer to both the world and the wind. The written form adds to this effect by the lack of punctuation: after the closure of a previous experience in stanza 1, the text uses dashes only, and thus can show its desire to break its textual boundaries. Language at the point of exaltation appears to become an authentic medium of a realm *beyond* language. It is this linguistic act that, projected to the level of metaphysics, opens the way for the divine and the human to mingle.

After such a perfect dissolution of separation and a defiance of death, stanza 6 comes as a surprise:

> Thus truly when that breast is cold
>
> Thy prisoned soul shall rise
>
> The dungeon mingle with the mould—
>
> The captive with the skies—

For all its open-endedness, the stanza still reasserts the isolation that the poem seemed to get rid of in the previous section, and postpones the opening of boundaries to an uncertain future *after* the death that has just been supposed to be defeated in line 20. In earthly life, boundaries are fixed and firm; the images of the dungeon and the captive emerge again to emphasise distance and isolation. Moreover, the conjunction that connects stanza 6 to the rest of the poem is "thus," which implies that stanza 6 should *follow* from the previous lines instead of *contradicting* them.

I introduced the discussion of stanzas 3-5 with that they get *as close as possible* to describing a mystical experience. Indeed they remain forever in that "almost-state." Exploiting symbolic regionalism to the highest possible extent, even beyond "High waving heather," they still cannot deny their failure in that they remain human, using language, based on repetition and absence (as well as fancy), and spoken by a human observer who remains outside the scene. Not by chance, Rosalind Miles refers to the speaker of the poem as a "distancing *persona* of an outside observer" (90, emphasis in the original). These stanzas join a tradition of allegories and repeat previous texts on the sublime. Most painfully, it is the very act of playing with meanings that reveals how language works to keep its distance from meaning. The instability of meanings that supposedly makes it possible for the referents to mingle in stanza 5 springs from the *distance* between word and meaning (word and meaning are separated, therefore any word may refer to any meaning), which, on a metaphysical level, corresponds to the gap separating the human and the divine.[42]

The text does its best to make the reader forget about the separation coded into the way language works, but in the end it must remain among the borderlines it fixes for itself, never to be transgressed; the poem has to renounce the possibility of *unio mystica*. Stanza 6 can promise the desired union to take place in an uncertain future after death; and even then, the price to be paid for entering a transcendent realm is again splitting into body and soul (although both will be able to melt into the outside world, in their own ways: "The dungeon mingle with the mould— / The captive with the skies—"). Indeed, the promise follows from the previous stanzas and does not contradict them.

It is the absolute certainty of this promise that disturbs the reading of renunciation as positively as this final stanza has disturbed the mystical reading. So far the poem has only joined the previous poems of constant failures to reach the transcendent by human means; albeit showing a speaker in a "threshold-position" again, as an observer who may easily

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[42] Other critics also voice their doubts about the authenticity of the experience described in "Aye there it is!": Rowland observes that the wind "*seems to* defy the philosophical concept of temporality" (247, emphasis added); and Peeck-O'Toole puts it as a question rather than a statement that the wind might arise because "the ecstatic self's breath merges with her spirit as it pours forth" (82).

become an observed and be turned into a visionary out of a scribe (cf. Ghnassia 110). However, if the poem ends in renunciation, then this renunciation completely lacks the melancholy it should carry. The last stanza retains the happiness of the previous stanzas, as well as their open-endedness signified by the final dash. Transgression into a meta-linguistic realm may prove illusory, but openness remains possible. Concentrating on the desire of the human to reach the transcendent, interpretations of "Aye there it is!" generally fail to notice what the text achieves on a purely human level. What makes this poem unique is that it improves and makes explicit the "threshold-position" only implied in the poems discussed before. This achievement emerges in the pronoun use, which causes a desperate confusion in the reader's mind and thus calls attention to itself.

Emily Brontë employs pronouns with such mastery to unfix meanings and confuse the reader that a whole essay could be devoted to her pronoun use alone. In "Aye there it is," the text not only leaves the reader uncertain who or what "it," "I," and "thou" might refer to (and what genders they belong to) – the entities filling these positions even change places in the course of the poem. "Thou," at first, appears as a human entity with a body and a soul; in lines 13-14, however, "thou" becomes a spirit, liberated from the human world of absence and separation. As mentioned before, this "thou" of lines 13-14 might be the same human being losing its earthly bonds – or it might be a transcendent spirit, perhaps the same as "it" refers to in the first stanza. In the space created by pronouns, the meeting of the human and the transcendent thus appears to be possible, but, in fact, it is not, as mentioned previously: such openness is inseparable from the infinite distance between sign and meaning.

Complete confusion follows in stanza 5, when the speaker claims the universal influence to be "from Thine own influence free." Now: "thou" either is the spiritual presence of stanza 4 which suddenly turns out to be independent of the universal influence in stanza 5 – this results in disunion in the state of *unio mystica,* and ruins it, if nothing else does. Or: "thou" refers to another completely different entity which has to be got rid of to lose mortality. Or: "I" and "thou" have changed roles, and it is now the former "thou" talking to the former "I." This may most easily happen in a dialogue; and without any knowledge of the situation, the reader cannot even hope to spot where the "right to speak" is passed from one to the other (especially as the lack of punctuation implies the lack of quotation marks, too). If nothing else remains of the human sphere, the system of dichotomies will always survive: the "I–thou" relationship is far from dissolving in a state supposedly beyond language. That, however, does not mean that the poem does not include a particular kind of transgression: transgression strictly *within* the boundaries of language, aware *and* making good use of its distancing nature.

Because of the infinite distance between word and meaning, the arbitrariness of meaning is revealed, which implies that virtually anything can mean anything else. Therefore, anyone may enter the positions defined by the pronouns of the text. As mentioned previously, the entities labelled as "I," "thou," and "it" not only lack a proper definition, but can even change places throughout the poem. The "distancing *persona* of an outside observer" may easily enter the role of the observed, the speaker may become an addressee and vice versa. "I," "thou," and "it" are unable to mingle; but they can and will replace each other *as finite earthy entities*. Thus, they leave the reader in suspense about who utters which passage and where "thou" and "I" change places.

"Aye, there it is!" thus chooses to seek consolation in what it possesses: the perfect (and playful) interchangeability between finite forms of existence. If borderlines are not to be broken on earth, still at least all beings may freely move *within* the strict boundaries given, and thus get in touch in a safe and non-violent way. That is why the poem does not end in a hopeless struggle or a painful desire, but in an *act of faith:* the firm promise of a radically different existence in the future.

4. 5. The absence of desire: "I'll come when thou art saddest"

"Aye there it is!" breaks out of a period kept well in secret, and ends in a promise, explicitly putting an end to a period of silence by beginning with a reply to a question the readers never hear. Another alternative to the theme of isolation, "I'll come when thou art saddest" works as a promise from beginning to end, and probably leads into the fulfilment of that promise in the silence after the last and broken line, but that the reader never knows. Every text breaks out of silence and returns to it – again, like in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," Brontë's poetry dramatises this feature of textuality by making silence as important as words. Ghnassia associates this "predominance of silence throughout her works" with the constant desire of her texts for the unutterable (67), and that may result in the central role of silence in "I'll come when thou art saddest," too, where voice fails right at the moment when the speaker appears.

A special feature of "I'll come when thou art saddest" is that the speaker is not the human self, but an undefined and bodiless being, a spiritual visitant, who never appears in the course of the poem. The human being is not given a voice and a chance to become an "I." The poem, uniquely in mystical literature, becomes the dramatic monologue of the mystical visitant, and language primarily appears in its performative role: as a means of exercising power; not used for communication. That is why readers do not usually associate mysticism with this text; Ghnassia defines its subject as a "quasi-mystical experience" (108), and

Rowland refers to the visitant as a ghost, or "a liberator with certain daemonic features" who will lead the visited one to death (276). The latter reading, considered together with the poem's setting (the visited one is alone in the dark, apparently paralysed, while night is approaching and happiness fades away) bears more traces of the Gothic than of mysticism:

> I'll come when thou art saddest
>
> Laid alone in the darkened room
>
> When the mad day's mirth has vanished
>
> And the smile of joy is banished
>
> From evening's chilly gloom (lines 1-5)

The visitant, however, in spite of being daemonic, is still a liberator, who will "bear thy [the visited one's] soul away" (line 10). In full possession of the Word of divine origin, the visitant arrives in the silence and darkness of the night ("the dark night of the soul"), and causes pain but also promises to be "an antidote to the utter spiritual desolation the sufferer has been locked in" (Rowland 276). Gothic features do not contradict the mysticism that appears in "I'll come when thou art saddest," but they do introduce a new element generally missing from mystical works: fear. Mystics do not tend to be afraid of the outside power they encounter – the visited one of this poem, though, has to be overcome by absolute terror and sorrow ("the heart's real feeling") so that the visitant may take the soul:

> I'll come when the heart's [real] feeling
>
> Has entire unbiased sway
>
> And my influence o'er thee stealing
>
> Grief deepening joy congealing
>
> Shall bear thy soul away (lines 5-10)

It is the third stanza that really establishes a mystical reading, if compared to the first two ones:

> Listen 'tis just the hour
>
> The awful time for thee
>
> Dost thou not feel upon thy soul
>
> A flood of strange sensations roll
>
> Forerunners of a sterner power
>
> Heralds of me (lines 11-16)

Darkness, loneliness, gloom, cold, and fear all now turn out to have served as a preparation for the meeting, which is already anticipated by the visited one, and which is "*awful*" (emphasis added). Considering both layers of meaning of this word (both were in use at the time when the poem was written), this meeting becomes, on the one hand, horrible and

fearful, on the other, awesome and sublime[43], which, together with the preparation of the stanzas before, covers the characteristics of the mystical experience. The description of the meeting could decide between sheer horror and sublimity, but it is absent: the last (and broken) line arrests the last moment before the meeting; then stops. This sudden silence is suggestive as well: the unutterability of the mystical experience can easily explain why voice falls and tension, after reaching its highest point, remains unsolved.

After so many failures to describe the encounter with transcendence, this text uses language in a radically different way: words are for drawing the visited one into the visitant's power, and not for making another futile attempt to describe. Additionally, *naming* the visitant would hand on its power to the visited one, or at least create a relationship of mutual dependence; that is another reason why the visitant is never described. The *absence* of the description of the meeting leaves the visitant forever undefined – and powerful.

Turning to Frye again, this point where sound fails may correspond to the point where sight triumphs and the visitant is actually seen. In the Bible, "there is never any difficulty about God's speaking"; the Son is even identified with the powerful Logos (116). The only problem that occurs in connection with God and language is that the name of God is never allowed to be spoken, as that would give the power of words to people. This central role of language ("listening in the dark") is, of course, only as durable as our world between the Fall and the Last Judgment, that is, in a way, between two worlds of atemporality, in our sad and painful world of allegory.

Time does have a central role in "I'll come when thou art saddest": being a prophecy, the easiest way it can speak is in the future tense. This way it carries the necessity of repetition as well (de Man, "Rhetoric" 207): anything the text says, will be fulfilled, that is, repeated on a higher level in the future. (The visitant itself will be the repetition [the fulfilment] of its heralds.) Temporality is also implied in the incompleteness of the text: it is called forth by the gap that opens at the end and causes the text to remain in a state of in-betweenness – temporariness as well as temporality (220). The universe of "I'll come when thou art saddest is profoundly allegorical; it emphasises its distance from the origin and from meaning, as well as the pain that results from split (207) – the pain and fear of the visited one "in the darkened room" (as opposed to the happiness of those who, in the previous poems,

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[43] The sublimity of the meeting is inherent in the role of darkness ("To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary" [Burke 54]) and that of sounds again, even more powerfully than in "High waving heather," as now the words are used for commanding: "The proper manner of conveying the *affections* of the mind from one to another, is by words" (Burke 56, emphasis in the original). The human being in "I'll come when thou art saddest," however, does not escape being "immediately affected" by "pain and danger" (47): thus, it is the reader (in a more or less safe position) who lives through both the terror and the delight of the sublime, and not the visited one. This failure to experience the sublime "properly" adds to the list of textual elements distancing the poem from the mystical tradition.

encountered the transcendent). However, the "true meaning" of the words (cf. Frye 135), whatever that means, is not to be found in the past, of which the present text would be a repetition. "True meaning," like in apocalyptic texts again, is hidden in the *future,* not as a simple repetition, but as *the* repetition – if one can say so, the *fulfilment* of the prophecy. The temporality coded into the text is thereby confused, even turned upside down.

In this future, sight will reign. The point where the visited one is forced to exit the world of hearing at the end of "I'll come when thou art saddest", is also the point where time ends and seeing begins: the threshold of an apocalypse. That is how the silence after, or better to say, *beyond* the text, becomes at least as important as the text itself: it gives the reader the possibility of stepping out of the text; it leads out of time and language. "[A]t the end [. . .] a second apocalypse [alights] that, ideally, begins in the reader's mind" when reading is "finished", and "in this second life the creator-creature, divine-human antithetical tension has ceased to exist" (Frye 137). The visited one, in fact, gains what the philosopher desperately longs for. Leaving behind the fourth phase, "the dark night of the soul," the visited one will live unitive life – not catching a glimpse of transcendence, like the seer, but fully entering it ("my influence [. . .] Shall bear thy soul away" [lines 8 and 10]). Then the question emerges: why is the visited one terrified?

There is one more aspect of the text not examined yet. A perfect union may take place in the silence after language stops – and, probably, the visited one *dies.* The last half-line leads out of the human world, and, for all the reader knows, the visited one may stay "out there" for ever: there may be no way back. Rowland claims the visited one "is expected to yield to the ghost, by which an ominous power capable of terminating life would be activated and re-union with the dead beloved would be achieved" (276). This may explain the fear and unwillingness of the visited one, who has to be *forced* to exit the human world. In the poems discussed previously, all human participants desired to leave their human existence behind, or at least enjoyed watching someone else living through that experience. In "I'll come when thou art saddest," the visited one has a good chance to get rid of earthly existence – and appears more than reluctant.

The reason for that reluctance is that the desire of human beings in Emily Brontë's poetry is *not* to leave the earth behind. Whenever they get close to that "threshold," they step back or stop. What they desire is to connect the human and the transcendent in their lives (or in themselves) – to be mediators. The speakers of "High waving heather," "I'm happiest when most away," or "Aye, there it is!," as well as the human beings they are watching, do not mind in the least that they cannot melt into transcendence and have to postpone that to the time when they die. As the second poem makes it clear, this is when they are "happiest." The

seer joins them, and so would the philosopher, if (s)he "had but seen [the spirit's] glorious eye / *Once* light the clouds" (lines 45-46, emphasis in the original). The philosopher's death-wish does not spring from his/her desire to meet the transcendent, on the contrary: his/her *inability* to do that. For the visited one in "I'll come when thou art saddest," "the smile of joy is banished" (line 4); the visitant is expected but not happily. "Only characters situated at a considerable psychological distance from their creator [. . .] imagine a happy afterlife for disembodied spirits in a place resembling a Christian paradise or heaven" (Gezari 50). One should notice that the speaker of "I'll come when thou art saddest" promises to appear very soon, probably the moment after the text is finished, so there is no "considerable psychological distance" (while, for example, "If grief for grief can touch thee" postpones the meeting of the lovers to the distant future). That is why "I'll come when thou art saddest" assimilates the traits of the mystical tradition to those of the Gothic. It works as the reversal of the love poems discussed in the previous chapter, and especially of "If grief for grief can touch thee" in its technique.

In Christian (love) mysticism, the transcendent appears as masculine and the soul feminine,[44] which usually includes a power relationship, too, already discussed in the previous chapter. A good example is the mystical oeuvre of St. John of the Cross, a 16th century Spanish mystic, already quoted. In his book *The Dark Night of the Soul,* he explains, line by line, his allegorical poem, "The Ascent of Mount Carmel," written from the point of view of a girl in love, escaping from her house in secret to meet her beloved. He explains that the girl is the soul, escaping from the house of the body, when the senses (which would draw it back) are lulled, and meeting God in spiritual union – but the centre of the interpretation is the dark night, which helps the meeting of the lovers. The dark night has several layers of meaning: it is the darkness of suffering; it is the soul's being dark and impure (89); and it is the darkness that hides the soul from temptations and lulls its natural desires (162-163). Also, it is the darkness of blindness: the light of God is so bright and pure that the soul, used to natural light, is blinded and falls into darkness until it is totally purified to be able to hold divine light (96-98).

"The darkened room" of "I'll come when thou art saddest" corresponds to John's silent house, which, once the natural desires and senses are all lulled, the soul is free to escape and meet transcendence. "When the heart's [real] feeling" comes to the surface (among the dreadful pains of the innermost core, while being spiritually purified [cf. 110-113]), then is

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[44] For the reason that it is generally identified with the Father or the Son – whereas the Holy Ghost may be and indeed is often considered feminine, because the Hebrew word for *spirit, "ruah,"* is feminine. Poetry written to the Virgin Mary is a more complex problem. Mystics generally choose scenes which show her as the perfect human being, not a representative of transcendence. In the present thesis, there is neither time nor space to discuss other possibilities, but it should certainly prove an interesting field of research.

the time that the visitant promises to come, to draw the soul gradually into its power, "grief deepening", until at last the visitant can "bear [the visited one's] soul away". The difference between Emily Brontë's poetry and *The Dark Night of the Soul* is that John defines darkness as useful and bringing joy as well as pain. In "I'll come when thou art saddest," the visitant's arrival is purely terrifying; that is why it takes place on a chilly night (John, on the other hand, speaks about purifying *fire*), in which "joy [is] congealing". Desire is completely absent from "I'll come when thou art saddest" – together with gendered pronouns. The characters in *The Dark Night of the Soul* are lovers, a woman and a man – "If grief for grief can touch thee" may be either the monologue of a woman or a man to their beloved – and "I'll come when thou art saddest" may be neither. It absolutely excludes gender from its universe; it is devoid even of allegorical sexuality, and so it remains on the level of pure spirituality, and gets absolutely rid of the body.[45] This may be the reason why desire is absent from "I'll come when thou art saddest." Desire appears to belong to the allegory *of the body;* and in a text which eliminates *this* means of distancing, desire does not work.

As I hope to have shown in chapter one, the allegorical nature of language is not only and necessarily a source of pain. The distance and seclusion inherent in allegory sometimes becomes the intention of the text, because allegory can work as a protecting wall against an outside power. Language, with the power of allegory, is not able to reveal (transcendent) truth, but it *is* able to hide it, and that may as well be its very purpose: to hide truth which is dangerous to know (cf. Miller, "Heart of Darkness" 189). As mentioned previously, such a use of allegory runs a serious risk: deliberately distancing the human world from transcendence (signifier from meaning), it may irreparably lose (or have always already lost) the meaning it wants to refer to (Miller, *Tropes* 137).

For *The Dark Night of the Soul* (as an inheritance of the pre-modern period), allegory works as an authentic figure for a mystical text – Romanticism does not trust this trope so much. "I'll come when thou art saddest" applies allegory in the name of that distrust, *in order to remain closed,* as much as it can, against the outside world of *both* mystical textuality and transcendence. By displaying elements generally missing from mystical literature (cold, grief, even fear), the poem refuses both the linguistic tradition of mystical literature *and* the melting into an unnameable power surrounding it. The text is a promise, and as such, *not* fulfilled until it is spoken; thus it can protect the visited one from the visitant, until the point where speech suddenly stops.

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[45] This way the fact that the visitant is powerful and the visited one is weak does not come from their gender either, but from one being transcendent, and the other mortal.

Such a conclusion might appear far-fetched, as the text is not spoken by the human subject. Completely silenced, (s)he does not ever receive a chance to speak. The visitant, in turn, uses language as a means of power. However, as a form of existence beyond the human world (and time), it is paradoxical that the visitant does *speak* at all (cf. de Man, "Rhetoric" 223). For the language used by the visitant is obviously *human.* However much the visitant identifies itself as a "sterner power" (line 15) whose arrival stops speech, speech is still there until being stopped – and there is a serious danger for transcendence in this relationship. Transcendence, as a trans-linguistic form of existence, would be unable to give understandable commands to the human self without the help of the human voice. Power is impossible without human language; transcendence must *inevitably* speak the human language of fragmentation and difference, using it as a mediator; which results in the divine voice, by definition unchangeable, now still becoming *modified.* By accepting the gap of language between the transcendent and the human, transcendence is lost to the human (Miller, *Disappearance* 186). It is erased by the same language that prophesied its presence.

In addition, the text leaves a kind of a "loophole" for itself, so that the visited one may perhaps return to the human world after all. In the manuscript, "I'll come when thou art saddest" does not exactly appear as a separate poem, but as the middle part of a sequence, copied very close to two other poems dated in the same month (November 1837). Gezari's edition reflects on this quasi-independence of the text by printing the three poems under the same number, as if they were one, but putting dashes between them, as if they were separate. Consequently, they do appear as a sequence, influencing each other more than other poems from the oeuvre. The poem after "I'll come when thou art saddest" is a fragment about the failure of language and the impossibility of expressing feelings:

> I would have touched the heavenly key
>
> That spoke alike of bliss and thee
>
> I would have woke [sic!] the entrancing song
>
> But its words died upon my tongue
>
> And then I knew that hallowed strain
>
> Could never speak of joy again
>
> And then I felt

Very appropriately, at this point the poem ends, as a romantic fragment should: what the speaker felt is not to be uttered. From an aesthetic point of view, these lines do not reach the level of "I'll come when thou art saddest," but they can contribute to a return to the human world by their prattle (they use language to say what they cannot say). That is, until the point where they also fade away, at the end of a half-line again.

The poems discussed in this chapter attempt to describe visions in several ways. At last, in "I'll come when thou art saddest," the attempts end up in darkness: sight becomes impossible, and a full participation in presence undesirable. Finite beings in Brontë's poetry want to retain their borderlines and remain finite, although sometimes they step on the borderline between their realm and the transcendent. When, however, they do have a chance to cross the border, they react with terror. I have discussed several ways in which mystical traits may occur in Brontë's poetry – with "I'll come when thou art saddest, a new direction appears: the rejection of mysticism. The poems to be discussed in the next chapter accept the loneliness and seclusion of the human condition rather than give in to the call of a different realm – although they may also include traits which contradict this humble acceptance.

Chapter Four: "Lone wholly lone" – Patterns of speaking in finitude

Poems in the previous two chapters concentrated on the possibilities of transgressing the boundaries of human life. With the help of natural forces, or in love, thought, sometimes even fear, human beings sought to find or avoid the non-human. What connected them to each other (and the first interpretation of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light") was desire – whether the desire of human beings for each other, or the non-human for the human or vice versa. Only in the case of the last poem did desire fail to emerge, and, accordingly, "I'll come when thou art saddest" (subverting the poems discussed previously) culminated in fear instead of joy. Some human beings occurring in these texts remained secluded from the outside world (sometimes willingly, sometimes not), but none enlarged on the consequences of, and the possibilities inherent in, their seclusion.

The poems discussed in the present chapter are "The night is darkening round me," "And like myself lone wholly lone," "Sympathy," "Hope," and "No coward soul is mine." All of them may be read as continuations of the second reading of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light": accepting (sometimes even insisting on) the gap between themselves and the universe (and fellow creatures), the speakers of these poems are aware of both the dangers and the preserving force in their finitude.

4. 1. Speaking in the dark: "The night is darkening round me"

"The night is darkening round me" is a "companion piece" to "I'll come when thou art saddest," half belonging to the following poem and half not; preceding it in every edition as well as in the manuscript. Gezari's edition indicates the contradictory relationship between the two poems by printing them under the same number, but separating them with dashes. In the manuscript, they are copied under the same date (November 1837), but separated both by their written form[46] and a circle-and-dash sign. To all appearances, they belong together, but as separate (finite) entities – as finite as their human characters wish to remain, if they can. As Gezari asserts, the poem may be read as an individual text, but, at the same time, part of a closely knit group, too (91). The text is worth quoting in full at the beginning of the analysis:

> The night is darkening round me
> The wild winds coldly blow
> But a tyrant spell has bound me

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[46] "The night is darkening round me" is copied in the middle of the page, with "I'll come when thou art saddest" below it, in letters visibly smaller, and very close to the edge of the sheet. The third part of the sequence—the fragment mentioned at the end of the previous chapter – is copied beside "I'll come when thou art saddest," the two texts in two columns, and with an extremely long dash at the bottom of "I'll come when thou art saddest."

And I cannot cannot go

The giant trees are bending   5
Their bare boughs weighed with snow
And the storm is fast descending
And yet I cannot go

Clouds beyond clouds above me
Wastes beyond wastes below   10
But nothing drear can move me
I will not cannot go

It appears advisable to begin by focusing on what this poem and "I'll come when thou art saddest" agree on. (I will not discuss the third part of the sequence here; inferior to the other two, its significance has already been mentioned and finished with.) What catches the reader's attention even at first sight is that both texts centre on one human being against a Gothic setting (cf. Allen 32), and both settings recall *The Dark Night of the Soul* as well, showing darkness filled with pain and the growing influence of an apparently transcendent power. Also, both texts subvert St. John's dark night by turning it into a cold night instead of a darkness of purifying fire; and by excluding desire and joy (as well as gendered pronouns) from their universes. Both poems represent the transcendent as a fearful force visiting and about to possess the human being, instead of the beloved and happily expected God of mystical literature.

The night of "I'll come when thou art saddest," chilly and completely lightless, carries the possibility that "The night is darkening round me" elaborates on: the image of the winter night, similar to the second half of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light." The first difference between "I'll come when thou art saddest" and "The night is darkening round me" is that the latter one contains some light, however faint: the snow on the boughs makes the landscape black and white instead of homogeneously dark. As mentioned previously, a night scene is a perfect setting for a mystical text, blurring outlines and thus opening boundaries (especially in a poem that lacks all kinds of punctuation again). Symbol, the trope (however dangerous and suspicious) of mysticism in Brontë's poetry, also emerges here, as the poem applies symbolic regionalism again: an everyday landscape amplified into cosmic dimensions. The first two lines introduce the images of the night and the wind as anyone can meet them on a late stroll; in the second stanza, the wind grows into a storm which can bend even "the giant trees"; and, in the third stanza, night and wind meet in an apocalyptic vision of the dark sky ("clouds

beyond clouds above") and the earth, equally dark and destroyed ("wastes beyond wastes below"). Like in the universe of "High waving heather," natural forces touch each other and mingle into a sublime totality of transcendence. Additionally, the earth and snow often appear as symbols of death (in the sense of dissolution and the final union) in Brontë's poetry (cf. Hewish 9). Both emerge in this role, for example, in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light": in the minster-yard of tranquillity and vision.

Here, however, as should have been expected by this time, symbol suffers a fatal injury again, together with the mystical universe. In "High waving heather," the speaker desires to use symbol to reach beyond the boundaries of language and close the gap between the human and the transcendent. Although (s)he fails, (s)he at least manages to voice his/her desire by showing a landscape of apparent harmony. Even in this description, however, the landscape (the natural growing into the transcendent) excludes the human speaker and can only be entered by a split self. Turning to another poem, the second speaker in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" makes good use of the unreliability of symbol and the distance between the human and the transcendent. In his/her discourse, symbol turns out to be a defence against the outside world, precisely because of its illusory power. The outside world, if named in a symbolic language, illusory and unreliable, ceases to tempt the speaker to approach it; the (allegorical) human world remains protected.

Strangely, although "The night is darkening round me" wishes to use the same strategy, a sense of being protected is probably the last one that comes to the reader's mind when encountering the text. Here, the landscape does not wait for the human being to approach it. On the contrary: (s)he is gradually imprisoned from every side. The storm is descending; clouds and wastes are drawing near from above and below; and, in the last stanza, the walls surrounding the speaker turn out to be hopeless to break through, with newer and newer walls behind them: "clouds *beyond* clouds," "wastes *beyond* wastes" (lines 9-10, emphases added). At the same time, the speaker finds that (s)he is unable to defend him/herself: three times, at the end of each stanza, (s)he asserts his/her inability to move. Nature, in this Romantic vision of totality, becomes the image of presence and identical with presence at the same time, and does not in the least seem unreliable in its desire to close gaps: forcing the human being to passivity, it encloses him/her. This time nothing indicates a need of body and soul separating from each other – the human being can enter the union of natural forces as a whole. The dark space devours the unwilling speaker in this grim parody of *unio mystica*. At least it seems to.

The changes of the refrain line reflect a change in the strength of the human being as well. In the first two stanzas, the refrain only refers to an inability to move ("And I cannot cannot go" [line 4], "And yet I cannot go" [line 8]). In the third stanza, however, this inability

turns out to be inseparable from an un*willing*ness to move: "I will not cannot go" (line 12). The "cannot" of inability is preceded by the "will not" of personal will, manifest as refusal at the very moment of its birth. "[T]he incapacity to move is also a refusal to *be* moved: that is the one power left to the speaker; and it is by seizing that power and simultaneously yielding to the spell of motionlessness that impotence is transformed into a new strength of will" (Grove 46, emphasis in the original). "A disaster precipitated and imposed on the individual eternally is skilfully remodelled into a weapon against reality itself" (Rowland 230).

In an extremely complex relationship of the human "I" and transcendence, the speaker assumes the will of the surrounding space, that is, keeps fixed; this time not because of the inability, but the unwillingness to escape. That is, the human "I" *lets itself be devoured,* by identifying with the outside will. What breaks the proposed unity of the same outside power is, however, the very fact that the "I" has identified with it. At the moment of, even *because* of, bending to the outside power *intentionally,* the "I" comes to possess a private will. In other words, a mystical union does not take place because it *does* take place. "I will not" is a refusal of the mystical union – but "cannot" is still there beside, on the same level in the same phrase. That is how language reflects the speaker's gaining power at the point of being devoured: once the outside realm opens its boundaries to devour, it provides the human being with an excellent target to strike back at; borderlines become mutually penetrable.

In fact, this sudden turn is not as unexpected as it appears to be. Lines 4-5 already show a split in the apparent union of outside forces: there is at least one part of the landscape that remains on the level of the human being, and does not choose to belong to the nature that is interpreted as the symbol of transcendence. The snowy trees are suffering in the same way as the speaker, forced to bend, and imprisoned by the tyrant spell as well. Another split occurs within the image of the earth and snow. As mentioned previously, in Brontë's texts both can refer to death as the final union – but also to death as annihilation ("The Philosopher") or the closing of boundaries ("Remembrance" and "The Night-Wind"). Earth and snow lose their symbolic potential by *repeating* previous instances when they emerged as symbols of the final union; and, at the same time, also repeating other, different instances when they meant the fixing of borderlines. Additionally, the snow undermines its own mystical features by introducing the element of *cold,* which conserves the body.

Allegory replaces symbol in "The night is darkening round me": the very movement of *en*closing the human "I" leads towards a closing *up* – imprisonment turns into a confirmation of outlines. Existing in a sublime landscape, the speaker actually never becomes a part of the landscape: his/her position is that of the Burke-ian observer, gaining a view of the sublime from a place outside it. The place, which could not be more fixed, *is* outside the sublime: in

the middle of the landscape, and providing a full view of everything around, the place is still separated from the landscape on every side. An enclosure again, it is both closed, because the speaker's integrity is kept in it, and open, because the sky and the earth can be seen from it. It resembles the speaker's room in "The Night-Wind," but safer – *because here the human voice never ceases to speak.* In turn, the external threat is never allowed to have an articulate voice; not even the wind is given a sound; the winter night is completely silent.

If the universe of "I'll come when thou art saddest" is defined as "listening in the dark," then that of "The night is darkening round me" emerges as "speaking in the dark." In "I'll come when thou art saddest," the meeting of the human and the transcendent is only referred to as a future event; the (non-human) speaker never even tries to describe the outside power. Using language to draw the human being into the visitant's power, the visitant stops talking at the point where his/her words promise to be fulfilled. In "The night is darkening round me," as if in a mirror image of the poem previously discussed, *speaking about* an outside power becomes a good weapon against that power: the speaker manages to fragment the outside world simply by giving it *names.* Struggling to find the proper word, (s)he comes up with so many attempts to name the outside force (dark night, storm, clouds, and wastes) that in the end it becomes completely uncertain whether the phrases stand for the threat, constitute it, or are independent of it, and serve only as a setting. All the efforts of definition meet with success in only one respect: defining the universe outside as anything but an object of desire. At the same time, the speaker also goes through an emphatic and constant self-assertion, culminating in the last two lines. The human "I" occupies highly favoured positions: it forms a rhyme both in the first and the last stanza, and it always appears in the refrain line.

From this aspect, the last stanza suddenly appears in a new light. The impenetrable walls, with only newer and newer walls behind them, and never revealing a solid substance ("clouds *beyond* clouds," "wastes *beyond* wastes" [lines 9-10, emphases added]), turn the text into an express demonstration of how allegory works. It is not the universe around that gains strength in the last stanza; everything supposed to come from the outside is turned into an allegory in this subverted creation; *unio mystica* now turns out to be grimly parodied by the human devouring what was supposed to be transcendent. Natural forces have previously been supposed to represent transcendence, and the speaker may now turn out to rule over all of them, however amplified – *because it is the speaking voice that amplifies them.*[47] Aware that language is not able to reach beyond its borderlines, "The night is darkening round me" ends up in defiance.

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[47] As Ghnassia observes, the conflict between the outside world and the human mind ends up internalised within the human mind (76).

This defiance might end up even further than the boundaries of the universe available for human cognition. As mentioned previously, "[t]he deconstruction of the concept 'sign' shows that conceiving the sign as a modification of a full presence [. . .], is neither inevitable nor rigorous [. . .]; the metaphysical conception of the sign is not the basis of interpretation but is an interpretation itself: the sign's 'ground' is argued to be interpretation, not God" (Hart 22). The dichotomy "presence–absence" collapses all too easily, and the transcendental, if identified in any way as opposed to human existence, will turn out to be a mere reflection of the human. Turning this logic upside down, if the human self chooses not even to *try* and take a step beyond dichotomies, but draw all outside forces into the scope of language, it may easily condemn divine creation to non-existence and thus remove the danger to individuality. "Without the contribution of mystical experiences, divine creation does not exist" (Radnóti 41), and the speaker of this poem does not in the least wish to contribute.

The poem very much appears as the triumph of the human over the transcendent, just as "I'll come when thou art saddest" is the triumph of the transcendent over the human. (One should not forget, though, that the latter triumph was dimmed by the very language that made it possible.) Among all the poems of Emily Brontë, "The night is darkening round me" goes the furthest in accepting the gap between the signifier and the signified (the human and the transcendent, on the level of metaphysics). By definition distanced from its referent, the text even widens the gap between itself and the referent deliberately: the speaker isolates him/herself from the union which takes place (or rather may take place, as the reader has no means to confirm this supposition) beyond the borderlines of human existence.[48] The human "I" gains a private will right at the point of being devoured – on the level of tropes, allegory distances its referent at the moment of revealing it. In "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," I introduced the term "allegory of humility": the allegory which the speaker chooses to *serve* transcendence with, because there is no chance for allegory to *mean* transcendence, not even to resemble it (cf. de Man, *Allegories* 74). Here, another kind of allegory occurs, which I beg to call the allegory of pride. By using it, the self undertakes the risk of distancing the signified; that is, losing transcendence completely, and thus becomes fully aware of its own loneliness, not giving in to any illusion.

The self, however, pays much too high a price for such pride. The winter night, which has helped the speaker to demonstrate his/her ability to refuse the "tyrant spell" and establish his/her own will, now emerges to make him/her realise the dangers of repetition without any hope (and wish) of reaching beyond the human sphere. For, if the transcendent is lost for the

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[48] The text, in turn, isolates itself from the tradition of mystical texts. By displaying elements completely missing from mystical literature (cold, grief, and fear), the poem refuses to be inserted into mystical literature in the same way as the speaker refuses to melt into the unnameable power surrounding him/her.

speaker (which also implies that nature ceases to represent transcendence), then what remains within nature is physical death. Borderlines, which the "I" is proud enough not to desire to transgress, freeze in the cold wind; the body is condemned to immobility, and, at least partly, by the speaker's own will. Isolation may lead to independence, but not to joy. That is the price the speaker must pay for refusing the mystical happiness of melting into transcendence. The enclosure that the "I" occupies, protecting the "I" and providing a view of the outside world at the same time, may turn out to be an open grave. Its openness makes a distinction between it and the grave of the human speaker of "The Night-Wind," or Julius Brenzaida's grave – but that is the only distinction. All three graves are places of complete solitude, and the integrity of the frozen body lying inside is kept at the price of death.[49]

Still, it is worth looking at this distinction between "The night is darkening round me" and the other two poems. The poem, like a few others in Brontë's oeuvre, dramatises a feature inevitably occurring in every text: that the power of the text lasts only as long as human speech. Suggestively, self-assertion takes place in the very last line: the affirmation of the "I" is punished by the failure of language and the end of human time. As mentioned previously, the outside world in this poem is silent, and appropriately so, but that is no danger to human speech as long as speech can flow on. In the silence *after* the text (like in the previous poem) that has a chance to make atemporal space replace human space, as silence replaces speech. Peeck-O'Toole calls this poem an incantation (58) and it becomes one indeed: it evokes the silence around. The speaker might be an outside observer of the landscape, but the position of the observer, however fixed, is unstable as long as (s)he goes on observing.

The very same strategy of evocation, though, can also defend the human realm, because of its performative power. Even the silence beyond language may exist only as long as language exists: the speaker of "The night is darkening round me" ends up in a threshold-position again – always about to be devoured by the silent space around, but always humanising silence at the same time. Language, even if penetrable, is doing its best to guard the ways it can be entered. Gezari defines the "The night is darkening round me" and "I'll come when thou art saddest" as a statement and a reply – the first one posits a human speaker, and the second one a non-human one; whereas the third part of the sequence returns to the human speaker, voicing the loss of inspiration, and becoming a weak poem (91).

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[49] This death may remind one of death as the loss of name and self in Wordsworth's poetry (cf. de Man, "Time and History" 67) – but the two interpretations of death are in fact quite different. In Wordsworth's case, death appears as a "steady descent and dissolution [. . .], presented [. . .] as a loss of self, the loss of the *name* that designates the river and allows it to take on the dignity of an autonomous subject" (67, emphasis in the original). "The night is darkening round me" presents death as a refusal to dissolve, and a preservation of selfhood and autonomy, but as a refusal and preservation which causes only pain.

Whether giving in to the power of transcendence or insisting on their humanity, at one point the human beings in the two poems would inevitably enter a dialogue even if they were not brought into one, occurring in two poems mirroring and directly following each other on the manuscript leaf. They enter a dialogue because of a feature not mentioned yet – a feature which will connect most poems discussed in the following part of the chapter to "The night is darkening round me." Both human beings are *in pain.* Thus, they cannot remain in perfect solitude: other sufferers exist in the same universe. Even the trees in "The night is darkening round me" can be seen as fellow-sufferers, split off from the union of natural forces, breaking the homogeneity of darkness with the snow on their boughs, and existing on the same level as the human speaker. In both poems, the outside world (whether interpreted as transcendence or not) wants to establish a direct (metonymic) contact with the human beings, which they can resist, more or less successfully. They, however, cannot deny the similarity of their situations. Based on this similarity, metaphor will finally create an intercourse between the two sufferers, drawing them into a loose, yet apparently unbreakable community. In the poems to follow in chapter four, I will elaborate on the possibilities inherent in such a use of metaphor.

4. 2. Solitude fully shared: "And like myself lone wholly lone"

The two characters in the poem to be discussed next construct a complex relationship with both each other and the outside world. Their strategy to cope with isolation recalls the way "Aye there it is!" works in displaying a transgression strictly within the boundaries of language – which they unambiguously identify with the boundaries of mortal existence. What relates the text more closely to "The night is darkening round me" (and places it in this chapter instead of the previous one) is that, although both characters appear to desire to leave their present state behind, neither of them even attempts to break out of that state – or, for that matter, help the other break out of it. (Quite probably they join the finite beings of poems in chapter three in that they are very careful to postpone leaving for a different existence to the future and "pray for nothing further" than to be able to survive on the earth.) From the first line on, which lays special stress on their loneliness, they resign to their situation; but the first line also introduces a use of metaphor similar to the previous texts: the two characters, whoever (or whatever) they are, resemble each other in their solitude.

The most conspicuous connection between "Aye there it is!" and "And like myself lone wholly lone" is their pronoun use. By now, the reader must have grown familiar with this uncertainty in Brontë's texts: using only the pronouns "I" and "it," the poem does not contain a single trace that could identify either the speaker or "it." This time, even "thou" is missing: thus, seemingly, the poem is not addressed to anyone. In the absence of this pronoun, the

solitude of "I" and "it" becomes even more emphatic – they cannot even turn to each other and enter into a dialogue.

The first stanza, beginning in isolation, and taking care never to leave (or even forget) this state, does its best to keep the ever-repeated pain inherent in its existence emphatically in the reader's mind:

> And like myself lone wholly lone
>
> It sees the day's long sunshine glow
>
> And like myself it makes its moan
>
> In *unexhausted woe* (lines 1-4, emphasis added)

Even a first look at the poem reveals a contradiction in its logic: lacking punctuation again, it suggests openness; and it begins with the conjunctive "and," which refers back to an unuttered past, similarly to "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" or "Aye there it is!" What differentiates this text from the other two, however (and brings it closer to the fragmentariness of "And first an hour of mournful musing" instead) is that what a conjunction can connect the poem to must be something *within* the realm of language. Even if unuttered, what preceded the text must have always already (and admittedly) obeyed the rules of language.

Isolation is taken to the extreme: the speaker even has to go through a split in order to voice his/her own loneliness, and choose a "self outside the self" (cf. Miller 172) to describe his/her own state. (S)he can define this state only by comparing it to the state of the other – both share the fate which awaits creatures in a fallen world (cf. Benjamin 342), while daylight lasts, and that is a long time to wait (line 2). The next stanza provides another (although indirect) piece of evidence for identifying the day with earthly life:

> Give we the hills our equal prayer
>
> Earth's breezy hills and heaven's blue sea
>
> We ask for nothing further *here*
>
> But our own hearts and liberty (lines 5-8, emphasis added)

The speaker defines "here" as a realm on earth, among hills and under the heaven – thus, the day-time of the previous stanza must have been the "now": human existence within the bounds of time and space. Discussing the role of prayers in Emily Brontë's poetry in general, Marianne Thormählen explains that (in accordance with Protestant doctrines) "[i]t is not for mortal beings to request any changes in God's plans for them; what they need, and may pray for, is to be fit to acquiesce in God's will" (72). So, when speakers pray in Brontë's poems, they ask for faith, strength, and patience (72), and "nothing further." The wishes of the two characters praying in "And like myself lone wholly lone," though, look slightly different. First, because they are not praying to God; second, because, although apparently very modest

(cf. line 7), they actually ask for quite a lot. Their prayer also shows them even more fragmented than they appeared at the beginning: they have either lost, or are afraid to lose, their hearts – they are not identical with themselves any more. Thus, they pray for self-assertion, as well as "liberty": staying within human time and space, they still want to retain the little freedom left for mortal beings.

This "liberty," following the logic of poems previously discussed, must be the interchangeability of finite forms of existence. Beings (even non-human beings) may freely move in their earthly sphere by changing places; on the level of language, may freely enter the positions indicated by personal pronouns. Thus, on the one hand, the emptiness of pronouns opens up endless possibilities for readers substituting themselves for the "I" and getting in touch with each other through that grammatical form to create a community. On the other hand, however, this universal identification is made possible by the sign and its meaning (the fixed subject) losing (having always already lost) each other. Anyone who uses the only freedom available on earth cannot guarantee to keep their own heart and be identical with themself, because there are many others who can fulfil the same role (use the same sign for themselves). The "we" of the poem pray for what all earthly creatures may want: for keeping themselves (like the human beings in "The Night-Wind" or "The night is darkening round me") *and* for being able to create a community, entering and exiting each other's roles (like the "I" and "thou" of "Aye there it is!"). The two halves of the prayer voice two desires profoundly contradicting each other – that may well be the reason why both "I" and "it" should "moan / In unexhausted woe" (lines 3-4) in the first stanza.[50]

The one condition of such an interpretation of the first two stanzas (daylight – the span of earthly life; here – space for mortals; heart – identity; liberty – interchangeability of finite beings) is that the reader should substitute all these elements of the poem with something that resembles them in some respect. In short, any interpretation, mine as well as others, should apply the logic of metaphor. The poem itself calls attention to this logic, using metaphor as a stylistic device as well: in "heaven's blue sea" (line 6), the text lets the sky and the sea (height and depth) exchange places and enter each other's roles, because they share their colour.

In the second half of the text, the problem of the speaker's identity diminishes beside the efforts of trying to find a valid interpretation for the "it" the speaker is watching, and this act of defining makes the interpretation realise its arbitrariness, if nothing else does:

    Ah could my hand unlock its chain

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[50] The speaker of "The Old Stoic" voices a similar desire. After discarding wealth, love, and fame as worthless, the "only prayer" (and actually the only one impossible to be fulfilled) remains: "Leave the heart that now I bear, / And give me liberty!" (lines 7-8). The difference between the two poems lies in that the stoic desires both death and life to be essentially similar, as both should provide the soul with liberty and courage ("'Tis all that I implore; / In life and death, a chainless soul, / With courage to endure" [lines 9-12]).

How gladly would I watch it soar

And ne'er regret and ne'er complain

To see its shining eyes no more

But let me think that if today

It pines in cold captivity

Tomorrow both shall soar away

Eternally entirely free (lines 9-16)

One way to interpret the appearance of this fellow-creature is calling it a bird, as it is supposed to be an animal (not a person, being referred to by the neutral pronoun) able to fly.[51] Besides, the image of the bird is traditionally a trope for freedom and the human soul, which readily fits a text ending in the desire to be liberated in eternity. (In the end it becomes obvious that the text makes a distinction between two radically different kinds of freedom. One is valid here and now, while the other arrives in the future, eternal and entire.) Line 3, however, contradicts this interpretation, stating that "it" can moan, which a bird cannot; also, the "we" of line 5 presupposes that "it" is given the gift of articulate speech, being able to pray.[52] Should "it" be nothing more than a captive bird, the speaker would most probably be able to "unlock its chain" (line 9) as well.

The interpretation of this captive as the human soul seems a little more probable than others. Even though "it" obviously has an individual existence (the "I" can see its eyes from the outside in line 12), this could easily be accounted for, supposing that the text takes separation to the extreme here as well, just as it did in line 8. Then, if its chain (line 9) is interpreted metaphorically, as the force fastening the soul to the body, the weakness of the speaker to let "it" go is also explained. On the other hand, the opposite interpretation is also possible (and would explain the "shining eyes" better): that the speaker is the soul, and "it" is the body, earthbound and unable to fly. But, in either case, the question emerges: how could the speaker live on, with no regret or complaint (line 11), *after* letting the soul/body free, if it was possible? Perhaps in the state of Heathcliff, forced to live without his soul (*Wuthering* 155) – but also diverting from his state, as this speaker does not regret his/her loss? Brontë's oeuvre abounds in evidence supporting such explanations; the problem is that none of them helps the reader explain how both body and soul may possess a separate voice and heart (lines 5-8). (One should notice that "heart" appears in the plural form in line 8.) "It" may turn out to

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[51] Clement Shorter, the first editor of the poem, actually gave the poem the title "The Caged Bird" (Hatfield 162).

[52] This piece of evidence loses its proving value if "we" is interpreted as the community of the "I" and another speaker, not mentioned in the text anywhere else. Given the absolute openness of personal pronouns, such an interpretation is just as possible as any other.

be another human being after all – but in that case, why is that human being referred to with a neutral pronoun, and how is "it" supposed to soar?

None of the interpretations is more valid than the others, for all depend on the working of (allegorical) language, within which words may freely create the most absurd connections, *because* language is hopelessly closed in itself, without the authority of an authentic meaning outside. (One should again notice that even the prayer is addressed to earthly beings, not counting with the existence of any other power.) "I" and "it" are so profoundly separated from each other that both of them are "wholly lone," even though they exist side by side. Nevertheless, in stanza 2 both converge into a "we," which, functionally empty as other pronouns, brings them in touch with each other. The lack of identification does not transform into a new identity, but the emptiness and loneliness of finite beings establishes an alternative connection between them: cut off from the outside world and each other, the life of the two creatures still run parallel with each other. Not by chance, at this point they can hope to initiate a dialogue as well. Although "thou" does not occur in the text, in stanza 2 they can address the hills and heaven in the imperative. Prosopopeia emerges in "And like myself lone wholly lone," but in the same subverted way that "If grief for grief can touch thee" (another prayer) displayed: the text does not expect a reply, as the speakers are aware that they pray hopelessly, for their wish cannot be fulfilled in their earthly lives.[53] That is why neither of them is consoled by the prayer; "And like myself lone wholly lone" ends in renunciation.

What the "I" does draw consolation from is the faint hope in another form of existence in the future. A *faint* hope, as the diction of line 13 ("let me think") suggests that the speaker needs encouragement to believe in the radical change that the speaker of "Aye there it is!" expects in complete assurance. One condition of faith, at least, is provided: once participating in mutual prayer, the hope of another realm is, in its own way, *inseparable* from the need of remaining together, both in mortal existence ("let me think that if today / It pines in cold captivity" [lines 13-14]) and in the much-desired liberation ("Tomorrow both shall soar away / Eternally entirely free" [15-16]). Appearing in two halves of a conditional sentence, the today of suffering and captivity, spent together, becomes the pre-requisite of the tomorrow of mutual freedom. Their prayer cannot console the "I" and the "it," but their quasi-community turns into a source of reassurance that their loneliness is only temporary, and urges them to strengthen in their faith.

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[53] In a telling way, they do not pray to a transcendent power but as earthly beings as themselves. The unusual syntax of the second stanza in prose should run like "If we happen to give the breezy hills and heaven's blue sea our equal prayer, then we ask for" etc. In this context, obviously, "heaven" is a natural phenomenon and nothing more, occupying the same syntactic position as the hills, and also metaphorically connected to the earth, where seas can be found.

4. 3. Cherishing pain in order to survive: "Sympathy"

Living in isolation does not exclude the possibility of a peaceful co-existence with other creatures. The speaker of "And like myself lone wholly lone" cannot unlock the chain that keeps "it" a prisoner on earth; but (s)he can show compassion; the same feeling that appears in the title of the poem to be discussed next.[54] From among the consequences of isolation, the speakers of the previous poems put stress on pain and distance; that was why even the characters in "And like myself lone wholly lone" could not find true consolation in their earthly lives. As opposed to them, the speaker of "Sympathy" elaborates on the sources that finite forms of existence can draw strength from.

Again, neither the speaker nor the addressee is given a fixed identity; as usual, they are not referred to with gendered pronouns. Both share a mortal existence again; noticeably, the speaker is superior to the addressee in his/her wisdom, and does not let their relationship turn to let the other speak:

> There should be no despair for you
> > While nightly stars are burning;
> While evening pours its silent dew
> > And sunshine gilds the morning.
> There should be no despair—though tears
> > May flow down like a river:
> Are not the best beloved of years
> > Around your heart for ever? (lines 1-8)

The structure of the poem recalls de Man's definition of Romantic irony, but also subverts it in a curious way. The same split subject appears here as in the Wordsworth poem de Man analyses in order to define irony: the perceptive (empirical) self, who can sense the night, the evening, the morning, and is able to weep; and the reflective self, who addresses the other self with what is intended as good advice to help. The curious and apparently subversive element of the text is that the self which should prove inauthentic is in despair – the result of the speech should be the annihilation of despair. Pain occurs as the starting point in this poem, not as the result.

From the beginning on, the speaker wants the addressee to draw strength from the very existence that separates him/her from transcendence. (From now on, except when explicitly referring to de Man's distinctions, I will be using the terms *speaker* and *addressee* instead of *reflective self* and *perceptive self* to make my text easier to read.) The addressee experiences

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[54] Both words, *sympathy* and *compassion,* are derived from roots which mean "suffering together": *syn-patheia* (Greek) and *con-passio* (Latin). Neither refers to participating *in* the other creature's fate, only to existing and suffering *together with* the other.

the pain of isolation in the extreme, and the speaker does not wish to remove the pain at all –
only to ease it. "Tears / may flow" (lines 5-6) in mortal existence, but despair proves
inauthentic as a human emotion. At least it "should," ideally: all through the stanza, the
speaker uses the conditional and a rhetorical question; (s)he appears aware of his/her failure to
become authentic in that (s)he never talks in the affirmative.

Like in "And myself lone wholly lone," nature does not work as a figure for the
transcendental, nor does it appear as a meta-temporal totality in itself: the parts of the day
definitely belong to the same finite existence as the addressee and everyone (everything?)
(s)he loves.[55] The speaker connects the natural to the human by the power of metaphors
(verbs and adjectives): the evening can "pour" dew, which is "silent," while sunshine can
"gild" the morning (lines 3-4). Metaphors aim at making the addressee realise the similarity
between nature and his/her fate; this purpose becomes manifest in lines 5-6, when it turns out
that a simile can serve the speaker's will equally well: "tears / May flow down like a river."
Isolation lurks there even in prepositions, for example in lines 7-8: "Are not the best beloved
of years / Around your heart for ever?" The speaker could as well use a cliché here, of the
beloved living within the lover's heart – but chooses another word instead, referring to
separation even in love (and the only metonymy in the stanza): those the addressee loves exist
around their heart, not *in* it.

The resemblance of separated beings, which these tropes display, springs from the fate
nature and human beings share: changeability. (Not by chance, the speaker chooses images of
time and change: the alteration of night and day, and the movement of the river.) Isolation,
pain, and love, however, do not appear mutually exclusive at all. On the contrary: love is only
possible between isolated beings, which are around the addressee, but not identified or unified
with him/her in the least. They share their fates in the second stanza as well, but nothing else:

> They weep, you weep, it must be so;
>   Winds sigh as you are sighing,
> And Winter sheds his grief in snow
>   Where Autumn's leaves are lying:
> Yet, these revive, and from their fate
>   Your fate cannot be parted:
> Then, journey on, if not elate,
>   Still, *never* broken-hearted! (lines 9-16)

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[55] The term "the best beloved" may refer both to people and inanimate beings, especially after the natural images
of lines 2-4. In any case, their existence is temporal, being "the beloved *of years*" (emphasis added).

More forcefully than ever, lines 9-12 picture the fate of the outside world and the addressee as running parallel courses with each other, forever together, but forever separate – and forever in pain. Tears, sighs, and grief define the lives of all earthly forms of existence, finally leading to destruction in the image of snow covering dead leaves. Despair is discarded until there are other creatures in pain – or rather *because* there are other creatures in pain: as they can see each other suffer, they can bear suffering; isolation does postulate helpfulness and vice versa (cf. Bakhtin 66-67). "They weep, you weep, *it must be so*" (emphasis added): pain is inevitable, and so is the sharing of pain; the syntax makes both meanings possible at the same time. Adding the next line, "Winds sigh as you are sighing," the interdependence of creatures becomes complete. The addressee reacts with tears to the tears of others; in turn, the winds react with sighs to his/her sighing. Metaphors connect the natural to the human again: winds can sigh, and snow becomes the winter's grief; and everything is in motion again: the wind is blowing and snow is falling on leaves. The same everlasting motion appears in the poetic form as well, in feminine rhymes alternating with masculine ones. "[T]he use of feminine endings, the sound of a voice pressing beyond a line's anticipated closing stress" (Gezari 53-54, on "Remembrance"), suggests an overflow of words beyond a fixed form – a desire to exit the realm of language, but a desire which inevitably remains governed by the rules of language (prosody).

Language can only grasp loss – from the beginning on, language insists on separation, and admittedly leads towards death. Death prevails both in the experience of the perceptive self (no wonder [s]he is desperate) and the advice of the reflective self; in all the images of change, everything points to the final image of winter's snow. If ironic language necessarily makes the subject realise the discontinuity between the world and itself (de Man, "Rhetoric" 213), as well as the separation inherent in language (and its own split existence) – then the speaker of "Sympathy" goes to meet irony half-way. (S)he uses the power of reflection to make two different forms of existence, the human and the natural face and contemplate each other as both different and similar to each other (cf. Bakhtin 64-65); in short, as mirror images. That is the only way they can help each other and remove despair from their universe.

So much would be a triumph for the speaker – if not a great one, only a quiet and small, "everyday" kind of a triumph –, but (s)he wants more, and that does not necessarily result in a fortunate turn. After drawing a parallel between finite creatures in pain, the speaker hopes they can also correspond to each other in revival: "Yet, these revive, and from their fate / Your fate cannot be parted" (lines 13-14). Moreover, these two lines do not even sound like an open use of reflection, but as the closing of the gap between earthly beings ("cannot be parted"), a denial of separation which has so many times proved illusory.

At this point of giving in to illusions, the speaker calls attention to what (s)he has been doing all through the metaphors of the poem: trying to personify and thus humanise nature; trying to make nature occupy places only human beings can (cf. Bakhtin 62). (S)he appears to forget that what (s)he can offer to the addressee as consolation is not nature but only images in *language,* to the aims of which nature is subordinated (cf. de Man, "Rhetoric" 203). His/her language has been pure figuration, bereaving the addressee from even the slight ease of pain that might have taken place since the speech began. Both the addressee and the images of nature only exist within the speaker's language; along with the speaker, who also gains his/her existence only in the text (214).

If, however, the reader gives a closer look to lines 9-14, another subversive potential emerges in the image of revival: it is never made clear exactly *what* will revive. Line 13 asserts that "these revive"; in accordance with grammatical rules, the pronoun "these" should refer to whatever has been mentioned just before – and, following this logic, "these" are the sighing winds, winter snow and dead leaves in the autumn: products of figuration, and all of them images of decay. Language stops in an absurd knot: what should revive in order to give hope to the addressee is *death*.

Once again, the speaker seems very much aware of what (s)he is doing. (And, once again, Brontë defies the reader with her pronoun use.) What (s)he evokes is life-in-death or death-in-life – neither way more correct than the other. As the addressee's fate gets tied in the same knot of logic, (s)he will also belong to this double state of life and death. Connecting life and death so closely to each other does not save the addressee (or the text) from pain at all: no one draws happiness (line 15) from the recognition of the above connection. Yet, the journey can be continued (line 16), and figuration repeated over and over again (cf. de Man 220); the speaker at last proves to be right in claiming that there is no reason to *despair.*

Thus, the speaker of "Sympathy" presents a paradoxical situation of isolated beings mutually supporting each other on their journey through a figurative universe, set as an example for finite creatures to follow. The journey of all forms of existence leads through pain, and towards death, but, in a cleverly constructed (and quite fragile) dynamic balance, they can support each other by sympathy, and raise life in inevitable destruction. A strange kind of life this is: one that *follows* death instead of preceding it. Not by chance, the speaker does not call it a birth but a *re*vival.

Such an alternative solution to the problem of isolation is difficult enough to produce in one text, and especially difficult to be produced again in Emily Brontë's poetry, which always seeks different answers even to the same questions. The sensitive balance of "Sympathy" does not reappear in the oeuvre; figuration in the next poem leads to the protraction of pain.

4. 4. Imprisoned within figuration: "Hope"

In most poems discussed in this thesis, Emily Brontë's skilful pronoun use appeared conspicuously and sometimes disturbingly where sexes and/or genders were (or rather were *not*) concerned. "Hope" is, at least partly, an exception. The language of the text is admittedly allegorical from the beginning to the end, showing Hope, with a capital *H,* in a human shape, and a female one. Allegorical representation, since the antiquity, often pictures personified states of mind, virtues, vices, or institutions as women. Accordingly, Hope is referred to as a flesh-and-blood human being, with the pronoun "she." (As opposed to her, and this time as no exception to other pieces of the oeuvre, the speaker's sex and/or gender is never revealed.)

> Hope was but a timid friend;
>
> She sat without the grated den,
>
> Watching how my fate would tend [. . .] (lines 1-3)

The speaker suffers a loss of human identity: doubly an outcast from society, (s)he lives in a "grated den," which resembles both a prison and a wild animal's hole. As opposed to him/her, Hope has a separate body and position, and even individual features (she is timid). As a friend, visibly near the speaker, the reader may expect her to be truly concerned (Gezari 21), and that is what she seems to be indeed. Immersed in the Bakhtinian activity of a fellow-creature, she is contemplating the imprisoned speaker from the outside.

Here, however, her friendship ends. Defying the expectations associated with the word "friend," the final line of stanza 1 takes a radical turn: "Even as selfish-hearted men" (line 4). This turn brings her even closer to the society the speaker is excluded from (and farther from the speaker for that reason): she joins those who accept the gap between themselves and the speaker, and commit the sin of laziness (cf. Miller, *Disappearance* 186). Paradoxically, the simile in the last line blurs a distinction very much part of society, for good or bad: the gap between men and women is bridged in that both sexes can share selfishness. "Hope" shows the reverse side of the logic emerging in the previous poems: people isolated from each other may not only form a community by sharing pain, but also by collectively *causing* pain; and, for that matter, by *excluding* someone from their community.

From this line on, Hope is never referred to as a friend again; accordingly, she starts to behave as any allegorical image should, if de Man's definition in *Allegories of Reading* is taken into consideration. There is a serious disjunction between her appearance, or rather her literal meaning (a winged shape sitting outside a prison, singing, never listening, and even turning her face away), and what she should allegorically mean (a source of consolation in a desperate situation) (93). Neither of her meanings is more authentic than the other (cf. 95), but

one thing is certain: this disjunction makes Hope incapable of fulfilling her role in accordance with her allegorical meaning and ease despair. She fails to use her outside position to help the speaker; instead, she maintains and actually increases their distance all through the poem. In stanza 2, she will even deny the speaker the only contact left to them:

> She was cruel in her fear;
>
> Through the bars, one dreary day,
>
> I looked out to see her there,
>
> And she turned her face away! (line 5-8)

Apparently, as a member of society, she cannot afford any contact with an outcast, and, aware that contemplation leads to compassion, withdraws even that from him/her. There is no need to "turn her face away," as nothing could remove the bars from between her and the speaker; still, she turns away because she is afraid. Her position does not seem as fixed as it should be; as if members of society could enjoy only a fragile safety, which they might easily lose if suspected with even the desire to bridge gaps.[56] In this community, kept together by the exclusion of others instead of helping them, she can afford to gaze, but not to *be* gazed at: she only turns away when the prisoner tries to return her look. The mutual contemplation of each other does not fit in the universe of this text. Bakhtinian reading fails to work here. No wonder the speaker associates the phrase "false watch" with her, in line 9: "Like a false guard, false watch keeping." A question, however, emerges: if she is a false guard, what should she be guarding? Sitting in front of a prison, she should logically be a guard of the speaker, so that (s)he cannot escape; yet, (s)he expects her to help – is it possible that she should have to guard the speaker *from* the evils of the world? The latter sounds more logical from the speaker's point of view: she is a guard who does not fulfil her duty, refusing help and even watch, and exposing the speaker to all the strife the world can pour on him/her.

Although, contrary to all that has happened, Hope still seems to initiate a kind of communication, that soon proves equally false and more of a mockery than actual intercourse, because she always acts right in the opposite way the speaker would expect and badly need:

> Still in strife, she whispered peace;
>
> She would sing while I was weeping;
>
> If I listened, she would cease. (lines 10-12)

True communication is impossible between them, because their voices are heard at one and the same time, instead of following one another. (Also, the speaker can address the

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[56] Lockwood's refusal to let in Cathy's ghost springs from a similar source, and leads to a similar (if more spectacularly brutal) result. "Terror made me cruel," he admits, and, just like Hope, refuses to look at the spectre pleading for pity – he even piles up books on the windowsill so that he does not have to see her – because his position is literally fragile: as fragile as the windowpane which the spectre breaks (Brontë, *Wuthering* 43).

reader, but not her: [s]he can only produce inarticulate sounds in this pseudo-communication.)
In stanza 4, another, less complete personification occurs:

> False she was, and unrelenting;
>
> When my last joys strewed the ground,
>
> Even sorrow saw, repenting,
>
> Those sad relics scattered round [. . .] (lines 13-16)

"Sorrow" is not spelt with a capital *S* in the text, nor is it given personal features (or, for that matter, sex or gender), but it *is* given a separate body and soul in that it is able to see and repent. What Hope refuses, sorrow will do: contemplate the speaker and take pity on him/her. Apparently, however, sorrow is also what tortures (and perhaps has imprisoned) the speaker: it is looking at the dead joys (another allegory) with *repentance,* a sense of guilt; therefore it must have had some part in killing them off. Like the dark battlefield in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," this stanza could be a perfectly constructed example of the way allegory works. The objects scattered everywhere on the ground are corpses *and* figures of past joys: they can become figures *because* they are dead. Their absence means their bygone presence; so, very appropriately, they are called "relics": remnants of great and famous people or deeds in the past, now acting as signs for those people or deeds. They are scattered: fragmented and placed apart from each other; they are lying on the ground of a prison which has previously recalled an animal's cave for the speaker; thus, they recall the image of bones (remnants of dead bodies) in the cave (cf. Benjamin 186 and 427). (The analogy ceases here: such bones are usually from other animals killed and devoured by the owner of the "den"; here, however, sorrow killed and devoured joys, to all appearances.) Above the "scattered relics," sorrow is brooding, like Melancholia in Dürer's engraving. Sorrow appears to have more courage than Hope: aware that contemplation and pity does not change the state of the outcast if not followed by help (and it does not have the slightest intention to help), it dares to look at the speaker's suffering and has no fear.

Unfortunately, the contemplation and the sense of guilt that sorrow can provide is not what the speaker needs. Sorrow would not be able to ease his/her pain; Hope would:

> Hope, whose whisper would have given
>
> Balm to all my frenzied pain,
>
> Stretched her wings, and soared to heaven,
>
> Went, and ne'er returned again! (lines 17-20)

She would be able to ease the speaker's pain, if not cure it, in the same way that the pain of the addressee is eased in "Sympathy." Yet, she refuses to help – but this time not because she wants to remain a member of society, as the reader would expect after the previous

stanzas. The text defies expectations again: Hope turns out to resemble an angel more than a mortal, because she has wings, and she uses them to leave *both* the speaker and the earthly world behind to fly to heaven and to make the gap between herself and everyone else eternal. So far, she has seemed to be a creature with a separate body; now, she rather seems a soul, a thing of the sky instead of a thing of the earth. Following this line of associations, the speaker may become the body in turn, imprisoned in a cave – bound to the depth of the earth, and remaining there alone. Both the soul and the earth are, in the same allegorical tradition that created the figure of Hope in this poem, usually considered feminine[57] (especially as the earth appears as a cave, an image reminiscent of the female body): thus, the poem turns out to describe the life of an unsexed and ungendered subject left by one and trapped in another feminised form of existence. Such a world appears extremely painful to live in, and sentences the subject to absolute isolation, but a simile at the beginning of the text ("Even as selfish-hearted men" [line 4]) betrays that this world is neither better nor worse than what a masculine existence would imply. In addition, this simile calls attention to the fact that both masculinity and femininity are used as *parts of figures* in the text – *ruled by the one who uses language,* and who has alleged themself to be their unsexed and ungendered prisoner.

The interpretation of Hope as a human being may prove valid until the last stanza (considering even that "Hope" exists as a woman's name, too). In the last stanza, however, she reveals her spiritual character: that she does not have a body, or at least not in the earthly sense of the word. Regarding Hope as a creature with a separate body, able to watch or speak has been a mistake – Hope is not a person, Hope is a figure. Three times the speaker calls her "false," and she *is* false in being a creation of language, unable to express truth. Still, *accusing* her with falsity is unjust, as she cannot help being untrue, and she cannot heal the pain of the speaker in any way. How could she, being an allegory? First, pain belongs to her allegorical world, and second, as a figure in the text, she is created by the *the speaker.*

Gezari mentions but does not enlarge on the possibility that Hope might be the result of a split in the self (21). As the result of a human act of creation (unfathered and unmothered, sex and gender irrelevant in the case of the speaker), she cannot be anything but false, as no human being can enter another human being's position to occupy a space outside themself and contemplate themself (Bakhtin 62). Should anyone try to create such an arbitrary "other," that would produce a false and fictitious being, lacking an independent personality (73-74). This is what the speaker does in creating her and calling her Hope, after which (s)he believes

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[57] They are thus "feminised" in linguistics as well: the soul is *anima* (Medieval Latin), *psyche* (Ancient Greek), and *ruah* (Ancient Hebrew); while the earth is *terra* (both Classical and Medieval Latin) and *ghe* or *gaia* (Ancient Greek), all the nouns gendered feminine. So is, for that matter, hope: *spes* (both Classical and Medieval Latin) and *helpis* (Ancient Greek).

(s)he can expect her to help him/her as hope should; but she never promises to do so – the speaker promises him/herself to help him/herself through this creation. The entire world around (the allegorical images of Hope, sorrow, and even the cave) is a result of figuration, projected from within the speaker. One element of the speaker's universe is not false: (s)he *is* isolated from the outside world; but this isolation springs from their own work. (S)he is imprisoned within a figurative universe created by him/herself.

One question, however, emerges: how is it possible that Hope can leave this world and never return again? Is this a result of the speaker's activity (probably so, as it is still within the text), and if so, is it under his/her control or not? Is Hope willingly renounced, or unwillingly lost? Ghnassia interprets the text from the point of view of religion, and claims that the loss is intentional: "Hope is also being rejected here as one of the pillars of Christianity, as the offer of redemption through Christ," which makes people renounce all important things in life, in order to deserve another world (188). She is a torment to the speaker, and, as she belongs to heaven (already rejected), she departs there; thus, the speaker is liberated, and does not have to give in to wishful thinking any more (189). "[L]ife, lived deliberately and without hope, is worth being lived if one lives intensely and with indestructible awareness"; such a state is not hopeless, only Hope-less, and joy is still possible (189, emphasis in the original).

I cannot agree with the second half of her reasoning, because, for reasons enumerated above, I cannot see the speaker as liberated in the least, so the only valid interpretation from this point of view would be the creation gaining independence from the creator, not vice versa. The text only mentions Hope leaving, not the speaker being released from prison or pain. Rather, I argue that the irresponsible act of creating figures to populate a fictitious world around leads to the finalisation of separation in the end. Throughout the poem, the gap between the speaker and Hope is growing continually; the end only finalises it.

Such a split within the subject cannot lead to the birth of another, independent being (especially outside the realm where sexes exist); thus, it cannot lead to compassion, not even to self-pity (Hope is not sorry for the speaker), as the speaker would wish, expecting his/her "spiritual" creation to provide help. It only leads to loss: a part of the speaker disappears for ever, as a punishment for the hubris of trying to create a "timid friend" instead of turning to other fellow-sufferers for help. "The use of *again* at the end of a poem extends that poem's temporal reach beyond the scope of the present not just by remembering the past but by anticipating a repetitive future. [. . .] So long as there is consciousness, there is the possibility, and either the hope or the dread, of a repetition of what has been before"; but by ending a poem with the phrase "never again" shows a loss of consciousness (Gezari 22). "Hope" ends

in failure and unceasing pain; the task to turn isolation into triumph remains for another poem to be fulfilled.

4. 5. Temporality, love, and breath: "No coward soul is mine"

The end of the chapter I intend to devote to the poem most widely discussed by critics of Brontë's poetry. The centre of constant debates since it was published in 1850 (and, compared to her other poems, surprisingly well inserted into literary consciousness[58]), "No coward soul is mine" is usually placed at the end of treatises. Such an arrangement is undoubtedly justifiable in readings that work on a chronological basis (the text is Brontë's last completed poem), but it *is* a mistake to posit it as the culmination of a poetic and/or spiritual development, leading to a perfect self-sufficiency or a presentiment of the final union with transcendence after death. In order to do that, readings have to discard or repress the two non-completed poems that follow, or rather the two versions of one poem. "Why ask to know the date—the clime?," although fragmented in both versions, is still difficult to disregard, for the sheer length of version 1 (263 lines) if nothing else. Reading "No coward soul is mine" as a final stage of readiness for spiritual existence, even "[Brontë's] testament creed" (Dickinson 519) is especially dangerous, as she did die afterwards – but not before almost two years passed, during which she wrote and published her novel apart from writing the fragments. She certainly could not know in 1846 that she was composing her last completed poem.

In order to avoid such traps, I placed "No coward soul is mine" in a position that breaks chronological order, and I intend to read it in its thematic and rhetoric relationships to the other poems; never forgetting, however, that the text *is* one of the peaks of Brontë's poetry by all means. The reason why I put it at the end of this chapter is thematic as well: among all the poems in the chapter, "No coward soul is mine" also makes good use of isolation, but, as the only one among them, it does not include a speaker in pain. It does provide reason for pain, though, but this reason only appears in a single line, to be discarded at once:

> No coward soul is mine
>
> No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere
>
> I see Heaven's glories shine
>
> And Faith shines equal arming me from Fear (lines 1-4)

In this first and most orthodox stanza, the world (which must mean the earth, being opposed to heaven in the next line—the latter term, in turn, is obviously used with religious

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[58] Although it was published by Charlotte Brontë, modifying the manuscript in several ways which did more wrong than right to the text (Peeck-O'Toole 142-143), "No coward soul is mine" could occupy, if not the place it deserves, at least a place very close to that, in the judgement of readers even in the 19th century. It influenced other authors, too, Emily Dickinson among them (Drew 227 and Homans 164-165), and thus "broke out of" the isolation Emily Brontë's poems "suffered" in the history of literature.

connotations here) appears as a source of pain (a "storm-troubled sphere"), which scares every soul but the speaker's. To the storms of the world, the glory of heaven is set as a counterpoint; against the spiritual fear which makes souls "tremble," faith proves a good weapon. As a soldier of God, the speaker draws courage from religion – and trusts allegory in the way pre-Romantic literature did: Faith and Fear are both capitalised, and able to act like flesh-and-blood creatures, like Hope in the previous poem. This time, however, the speaker is not punished for projecting states of mind into a figurative realm around; apparently, this allegorisation goes on in the name of and with the blessing of Heaven (also capitalised).

In the universe of the text, apparently, only the soul matters, existing in a purely spiritual realm of "reliable" figures; it is the pronoun use that reveals the mistake in such a reading. The soul is "mine," *belonging* to the speaker instead of being *identical* with him/her (the poem contains no traces of sex and gender as usual). The "I" becomes a soldier of God in possession of both a soul *and* a body; in which case, the armament given by Faith may easily be read as *literal,* however "scandalous" such a reading might appear.[59]

Stanza 2 defies all the expectations of orthodoxy raised by stanza 1, showing the human and the divine mutually dependent on each other:

> O God within my breast
>
> Almighty ever-present Deity
>
> Life, that in me hast rest
>
> As I Undying Life, have power in thee (lines 5-8)

For once, "thou" is defined unambiguously as God, giving power to the human speaker; whereas the speaker is defined as the home of God, where God can have rest. In an absurd relationship, they mutually contain each other: the Deity abides in the speaker's body (breast), and the speaker has power *in* the Deity. (This is the first reason why I do not agree with those who consider this text a mystical poem: the human is not unified with the divine; they are separate entities in a very close relationship. Their intercourse of giving and receiving in turns could not take place if they were identical with each other.) "She provides him loving shelter, in return, she partakes of his power, energy, visions, and 'Undying Life.' Without man to imagine Him, God has no existence. [. . .] By giving God identity, Brontë turns orthodox creed into heresy. Her inner self becomes not only the creator of the world, it *is* the world" (Ghnassia 198, emphasis in the original). I cannot agree with Ghnassia's merging the speaker with the author, or with her unjustified use of gendered phrases, and I do not share her

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[59] Closely examined, line 4 can be even more scandalous: human faith becomes equal to "Heaven's glories" in that both are connected to light in the same measure (Ghnassia 197). Here, however, such an unorthodox reading does not necessarily work: in the Protestant ethics of the Brontës, faith is not human merit, but divine help to stand the "storms" of mortal life (Thormählen 72) – which storms, by the way, also come from God (Gallant 51).

optimism either; but, doubtlessly, among all the critics writing about the text, she pays the most attention to the interdependence of human and divine. The words "almighty" and "ever-present" might as well diminish the scope and significance of the human sphere. Should the text choose any other attributes of a power which turns out to be *in need of* a human breast to reside, it might easily lose its value and also make the human sphere suffer the same loss. But the choice of *these* attributes above all other possibilities will rather expand that sphere, as thus the text implies that the need of a shelter does not lessen divine power, but leaves it in its omnipotence and omnipresence; thus, the power of the human speaker also increases.[60]

So much so that even prosopopeia, inevitable in a hymn, ends up in confusion. The text states that God is present, and yet, addressed in a hymn form, God should be absent – the mere act of addressing may easily distance the addressed entity. (An address like "O God within my breast" sounds absurd enough, turning outwards and inwards at the same time.) If an entity is distanced to absence (and voicelessness), then it should carry a potential danger of death for the speaker; and yet this entity is addressed as "Undying Life." That is, if it is indeed God who receives such an address – for the grammar of line 8 allows for two readings: "Undying Life" may equally be an apposition to "thee" and "I," especially as punctuation is used in an irregular way again. It remains a question whether "No coward soul is mine" is later able to develop an authentic rhetoric to turn the destructive force of language into "Undying Life," but it can disturb the work of destruction at least.

Stanza 3 and 4 show one reason why I am discussing "No coward soul is mine" in the chapter on isolation: whether participating in God's presence or not, the speaker certainly draws a strict line between him/herself and other human beings:

> Vain are the thousand creeds
> That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,
> Worthless as withered weeds
> Or idlest froth amid the boundless main
>
> To waken doubt in one
> Holding so fast by thy infinity
> So surely anchored on
> The steadfast rock of Immortality (lines 9-16)

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[60] Therefore I cannot agree with Homans, who considers the source of power as external in this poem (132). I share Rowland's view: "[t]here is glorification of the endless capacity and potentials of the human mind, which holds a Deity of its own *within*" (288, emphasis in the original). The only phrase I would debate is "of its own," as I cannot see any reference to ownership in this respect (no possessive pronouns, for instance) in the poem.

Faith may equal "Heaven's glories," but it does not equal earthly creeds (Ghnassia 198). Most critics agree that, as the speaker clearly distinguishes his/her faith from "the thousand creeds" in stanza 3, consequently, his/her creed has little to do with Christianity. Miller refers to an immanent God, with whom the speaker is promised a fusion after death (172), Ghnassia calls the speaker's creed a belief in a personal god, with whom the speaker has an intimate and reciprocal relationship (198). Another interpretation is certainly possible, as Rowland asserts: "it remains unclear, whether Emily means *'God within my breast'* as the God of Christianity (as reflected in her self in particular), or that the soul itself has the power of a Deity" (288). Even if the God of the speaker's creed is the Christian God, though, the ways other people believe in and worship this God are discarded.

Other creeds and the speaker's creed are contrasted in figuration. The number itself, associated with other creeds, suggest a judgement: there are a thousand of them, all vain, as opposed to the one true creed of the speaker (corresponding to the "one true God" of Judeo-Christian ideology). Similes continue the line of judgements: other creeds are compared to weeds (useless and even harmful plants), which are withered (dying or completely destroyed, perhaps by the heat, perhaps by being uprooted); and to froth (a tiny and fragile thing on the *surface* of the sea, and as such, passing quickly away), which is "idlest" (useless again). What other people believe in appears on the same plane as uselessness, harm, fragility, and death, all arranged in the same line of association, and all opposed to the "boundless main": the sea which has no boundaries and threatens the "thousand creeds" with destruction. (What this work of figuration apparently fails to notice is that the sea *produces* froth as well as destroys it; thus, their relationship is closer than the speaker suspects.) In stanza 4, metaphors oppose the previous similes. In stanza 3, infinity belonged to the sea which proved lethal to others; now, it turns out to be a power which keeps "one" safe. In line 15, however, figures fold back on themselves: the sea turns into a place of danger, where a "steadfast rock" – identified as immortality – is needed for safety (cf. Sorensen 90-91).

The mere fact that the speaker's creed needs other creeds to be opposed to it and show its own merit by their "worthlessness and idleness" destroys the proposed absoluteness of the speaker's conviction. No wonder that this passage makes Gallant claim that the speaker (in her reading identified with the author) is uncertain and wishes to strengthen herself. "The tone of this poem seems so resolutely unshaken, yet again and again Brontë brings up the spectre of the world which her 'Faith' has destroyed" (51). The world enters the text *because* it has to be discarded in it; and thus, inevitably, the speaker's creed becomes only one of the thousand earthly beliefs, especially at introducing the word "one" instead of the personal pronoun. As opposed to the confirmation in the first stanzas, the confessor of the "true creed" now appears

as impersonal and generalised. Entering figuration, the "true creed" gets trapped, and ends up worse than the thousand other creeds, which at least do not suffer from self-contradictions.

In "No coward soul is mine," voluntary seclusion and pride do not lead anywhere; and, accordingly, the text is not finished with stanza 4.

> With wide-embracing love
> Thy spirit animates eternal years
> Pervades and broods above,
> Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears
>
> Though Earth and moon were gone
> And suns and universes ceased to be
> And thou wert left alone
> Every Existence would exist in thee (lines 17-24)

These stanzas follow a completely different way from the previous ones, and recant all the statements of stanzas 3-4 absolutely, at the same time continuing the logic of the first stanzas in a different way from stanzas 3-4. The rhetoric of separation constructed in stanzas 3-4 has fallen apart, and the text has not ended, but turned to another path, as if it had only wanted to show the traps that might be awaiting a text if they slipped the speaker's attention. Separation appears to have been introduced only to be discarded right away – in this text, as opposed to "The night is darkening round me" or "And like myself lone wholly lone," it does not appear as a source of value only in itself. Neither does it appear as a blind alley to deviate from; then the text would only repeat the mistake of stanzas 3-4 in including something which it wishes to refuse, and thus keeping it permanently within its scope instead of getting rid of it.

Stanzas 5-6 introduce a spirit which includes everything and everything's opposite as well. "Thou" appears as a power which can both change and sustain, both create and dissolve. Dichotomies survive and flourish in "No coward soul is mine"; therefore I cannot agree with those who interpret the poem as the peak of Emily Brontë's mysticism (for instance Drew 519-20, Dobson 170, or Sorensen 196-199). "Thou" *pervades* everything instead of trying to unify them: beings are not melted together into homogeneity, but are left in their separated existences *and* connected to each other by and within the power of "thou." The term "every existence" necessarily includes the "thousand creeds" as well as the speaker of the poem. "Thou" takes on the role of a mediator, and mediation only makes sense between finite forms of existence. The power "thou" uses to include all beings is *love:* it opens boundaries but it

also needs those boundaries to do its connecting work.[61] Accordingly, love does not unify beings in the text but *embraces* them: an embrace diminishes the distance of self and other as well as confirms their closed existence (Bakhtin 87).

Also, the text does not even try to deny its inherent temporality (aware that such an act would be self-deceptive and vain anyway), but chooses to transform it. In the phrase "eternal years," language mediates between time and eternity: change and permanence appear in one grammatical structure, creating a connection even between the withering and froth of stanza 3 as well as the infinity and immortality in stanza 4. The means of such mediation is love again. Once time is announced to be animated by love, and space by embrace, all the activity of "thou" is presented emphatically within time and space, "within certain dimensions [. . .] out of which it could not be perceived or described" (Rowland 291). The spirit of "thou" "[p]ervades and broods above, / Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears" (lines 19-20). Spatially, "thou" is defined as existing *above* (implying the existence of a "below" as well); and, temporally, its activity emerges as *change* – the opening and closing of borderlines in a constant creation and uncreation (cf. Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 17-18). Line 20 actually constructs a full sequence of life ("sustains"), death ("dissolves"), revival ("creates"), and a new growth ("rears"), all of them only possible in time (introduced by the verb "changes"). Even if the world perished in an apocalyptic catastrophe (lines 21-22), such a power would certainly live on, able to recreate everything within (lines 23-24). Opposites are reconciled, as Sorensen claims, but not because they are transcended in a vision of heaven as she also supposes (199) – stanzas 5-6 do not even attempt to construct an "otherworldly" discourse; they show human language that makes full use of its own possibilities.

I omitted every definition of the entity referred to as "thou" from the above passages on purpose. The radical change of discourses between stanza 4 and 5 results from the realisation of one discourse losing relevance; but this change may as well overlap with another change: that of speakers. After stanza 2, "I" seems to submerge (line 13 will even replace it with the more general "one"), and "thou" to take over all textual space; but as both pronouns receive their meaning in the situation in which they are currently used, the entities uttering them may easily change places during the text, and nowhere better than between stanza 4 and 5. "I" and "thou" have been seen as interdependent; now they may just as easily prove interchangeable,

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[61] Self-love is actually impossible in the sense that the lover and the beloved can never be the same even within a single subject; the subject needs to go through a split in order to be able to love themself. Narcissus needs the surface of the pond to love his mirror image (a projection of himself into the outside world); if the surface (the borderline) is broken, the beloved image disappears.

too; separated and yet connected in a dialogue, which also creates a closer bond between the two discourses following each other.[62] The dangers of prosopopeia disappear.

These stanzas are the culmination of the debate the text enters into, with representative texts of Romantic tradition. "No coward soul is mine" (similarly to "Aye there it is!") rewrites Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," mostly concentrating on "thou" as an almighty and ever-present "destroyer and preserver." Shelley's text keeps up a hierarchical and irreversible relationship between the speaker and the wind (as well as between adulthood and childhood), and desires a perfect union between the human being and nature, which bears divine features ("Be thou me, impetuous one!" [line 62]). The promise of revival only remains a question, leaving the text open: "O Wind, / If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (lines 69-70). Brontë's text chooses the same starting point as Shelley's, but a different path afterwards: rejecting a hierarchy between the human and the divine and renouncing the desire of a union, it introduces the possibility of an interchangeability (reversibility of relationships) between different forms of existence. From this possibility, it leads to the result that rebirth can be spoken about in the affirmative (which means that the text also deviates from the paths other Emily Brontë-poems follow). Her vocabulary also echoes that of Coleridge's secondary imagination, which can "dissolve," "diffuse," "dissipate" and "recreate" (144). Yet she does not once use the term "imagination," identified with fancy and proven unreliable as well as fragile in her poetry; she does not only use but also question Coleridge's theory. No matter where the power of "thou" might spring from, nothing connects it to imagination.

After the triumph of the previous stanzas and the insertion of even death into the scope of "thou," stanza 7 comes as a surprise:

> There is not room for Death
>
> Nor atom that his might could render void
>
> Since thou art Being and Breath
>
> And what thou art may never be destroyed (lines 25-28)

Line 25 appears to commit the mistake of trying (in vain) to exclude death from a realm of time and space, and from the scope of an entity who is both able to sustain and dissolve. Line 26, however, solves the problem: the death which cannot take place is destruction which renders an entity "void": the death that annihilates and leads to nothingness, as opposed to the dissolution of stanza 6, which makes resurrection possible. In the same way as "thou" stands in opposition to the void after a potential destruction of the universe, here death as annihilation opposes death as dissolution. Also, death as annihilation is unambiguously

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gendered (line 26); as opposed to "thou," which is not, and thus reconciles the dichotomy of genders (and sexes) in itself.

A power which reconciles dichotomies cannot be afraid of one more dichotomy: itself opposed to another way of existence (or rather a way of destroying existence). Not by chance, *death* rhymes with *breath.* Breath thus enters into a dialogue with annihilation; and it also serves as a metaphor for "thou," pointing to the close connection between body and soul in the power of "thou" (and providing further evidence that the body is not left behind in this state but implied in the interdependence of opposites). Breath is the instrument of connecting finite entities in more than one ways: first, literally, emerging from one body and potentially touching other bodies in a natural interaction; second, as an instinct which does not need any kind of consciousness to take place, is shared with all nature, even plants in Brontë's poetry – and comes from the breast, the place of the "God within" (Gezari 131); and third, because it serves as a necessary part of an act very much based on consciousness, namely, speech.

Apart from the constant references to breathing, the form of the poem also calls special attention to the importance of breath in reading "No coward soul is mine." The other poems in relation to which I enlarged on the significance of breathing, "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" and "And first an hour of mournful musing" were written in the frequently occurring iambic tetrameters – "No coward soul is mine" chooses a unique form both in Brontë's oeuvre and British literature. First, even lines are longer than odd ones. Second, the reader would expect iambic trimeters to alternate with tetrameters – consequently, the pentameters that appear instead seem to force the reader to prolong his/her attention (and breath) beyond the common measure. Additionally, most of the even lines are especially long, containing more consonants than usual, quite a few of which are exceptionally difficult to pronounce together. (Plosives, fricatives, sibilants, liquids and affricates, in, for instance, lines 2, 6, 11-12, 20, and 27-28, build up sequences which direct attention to themselves before the reader can even think of searching for meaning.) Anyone who tries to read out the poem will experience how much air the even lines actually need, and how careful one must be how to save breath to be able to utter every sound properly and not lose rhythm at the same time. Even while reading the poem silently, these difficulties emerge so forcefully that the reader cannot shake off their influence completely, and has to concentrate on how to "keep breathing."

Language has more to do with – or at least calls more attention to its being dependent on – breath in this poem than in previous cases in this thesis, and more than in poetry in general. Therefore, the role of silence also changes, compared to poems previously discussed, where it carried the possibility of an encounter with the meta-lingual, potentially threatening and even lethal. Even if silence *is* interpreted as a place of death, it will only join the sequence

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of life, death, and rebirth, because it can also be considered as a necessary pause for taking breath – a precondition for uttering words (and for remaining alive). Additionally, silence in this role also confirms the contact between body and language (cf. Spunta 151-152).

"No coward soul is mine" *is* a triumph in Emily Brontë's poetry, and the manifestation of a unique rhetoric, but hardly a grand closure to the poetic oeuvre. Even after such a success, she did not stop going on and trying new possibilities at all. Her last poems (the two fragments mentioned previously) follow completely different paths from those of "No coward soul is mine." They concentrate on "the conviction that a wholesome existence is one geared towards 'serving' another human being. [However,] [t]he lyrical speaker ignores Life's summon towards Co-Being [. . .]. What remains a goal only in this poem is the act of pardon, which, as Julia Kristeva argues, could truly interrupt the continuity of cause and effect, punishments and crimes: pardon does overcome Time and actions, whilst it opens a new space [. . .]" (Rowland 279).

The poems discussed in chapter four have elaborated on several possibilities of isolation, dangers and values alike. Finite beings discussed in the previous chapter did not wish to leave their sphere (but to be mediators between spheres if possible); their companions appearing in this chapter also take the consequences of remaining finite into consideration. They discover that the closing of boundaries leads to the conservation of pain, and results in either getting rid of illusions – or giving in to them and losing the chance to receive help. Pain, paradoxically, becomes the precondition of surviving as well as preserving an unbroken heart (and mind); the source of helpfulness, faith, and a community, if a human being does not refuse to share it with others. Love also emerges in such a world, but only possible between separated forms of existence, within the boundaries of time and space, which love (and faith) animates and renews. In "No coward soul is mine," even pain is left behind, possible but unnecessary in a realm of constant death and rebirth. Separation on earth can thus lead to various results; one aspect of it, however, has not yet been enlarged on, although mentioned several times in different contexts. The separation of the dead and the survivor is still left to be discussed as an individual theme. The task of the next chapter is to analyse poems which choose death, the widest possible gap that can take place between human beings, as their theme, and keep it in full view from beginning to end.

Chapter Five: "How fast the hours flew by" – The (in)accessibility of death

The role of death in Emily Brontë's poetry has occurred several times in the previous chapters, more or less different in practically every poem referring to it. It has appeared as the absolute annihilation of body and mind (rejected in "No coward soul is mine," welcome in "The Philosopher"). It has appeared as a prison which conserves identity (imagined in "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida," prophesied in "The Night-Wind"); or an enclosure in which the body lies paralysed, but identity is retained ("The night is darkening round me"). It has appeared as dissolution, too: the loss of human identity in a union with nature and/or transcendence (either may happen in "No coward soul is mine," and both are prophesied in "Aye there it is!," one for the body and the other for the soul). Not independent of the previous representation, it has appeared as eternal freedom ("And like myself lone wholly lone"); or simply as the world outside language (a realm of silence rejected in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," threatening in "I'll come when thou art saddest"). Yet, it has never received attention in itself, only as one of the ways separation works.

Being a very specific kind of isolation and occurring especially frequently in Brontë's oeuvre, it is indeed difficult to discuss death independently of other themes, but as some poems do choose it and elaborate on it as their central theme, I decided to select three representative examples and devote a whole chapter to them. The first one, "In the earth, the earth thou shalt be laid," becomes unique as a dialogue between a dying person, exactly on the borderline between life and death, and a survivor, who might just as easily get into the same position. The second one, "A Farewell to Alexandria," is an ingenious account of a murderer's mind trying to repress her deed of bringing death wilfully on her child. The third one, "Death," a masterpiece of Brontë's, is worth special attention as a poetic universe which reflects on death not as a consequence of linguistic acts but as a power never to be conceptualised in language; and goes as far as trying to find a remedy against it.

5. 1. The living and the dying: "In the earth, the earth thou shalt be laid"

This dialogue of two unidentified speakers is in fact a Gondal poem, but within the text nothing indicates who the people are, or which period of Gondal's history they live and die in. In Gezari's opinion, the dying person is probably Lord Alfred S., abandoned by A. G. A., but he might be another abandoned lover as well ("Notes" 272). Barker's edition refers to the dying speaker as a "she" (127), and so does Ghnassia and Rowland (179). Therefore, I will choose the apparently safest "(s)he" again. The dialogue goes on between the dying one and the survivor, and thus their discussion is hardly a speculation on a distant problem. It is near

and actual, even for the survivor: whenever death appears as witnessed by a second person in Emily Brontë's poetry, "the onlooker is almost invited to merge with the dead person and to visit the world beyond" (Rowland 28). No wonder the survivor speaks with little feeling, and emphasises all the time that they are to part for ever: (s)he is reminded of his/her own mortality, and may as well be afraid that the act of witnessing death can turn him/her from an observer into an observed, pulled into the grave. Ghnassia is right in claiming that, when the survivor brings up internal and external bodily impressions associated with a burial in the first stanza, (s)he apparently wishes to frighten the dying one (178):

> In the earth, the earth thou shalt be laid
>
> A grey stone standing over thee;
>
> Black mould beneath thee spread
>
> And black mould to cover thee— (lines 1-4)

The grave is a prison again, and death has nothing to do with a Christian heaven. Cold, damp, and claustrophobic (Ghnassia 178), as well as dark, the grave will still keep the dying one a "thou": an integral personality, who is able to feel the horror of his/her situation. Yet, this stanza seems to voice the survivor's fears rather than the dying one's, who calls the grave a place of rest (line 5). Especially stanzas 3-4 show that the survivor hates to think of death more than the one who is nearing it:

> But cold, cold is that resting place
>
> Shut out from Joy and Liberty
>
> And all who loved thy living face
>
> Will shrink from its gloom and thee
>
> 'Not so, *here* the world is chill
>
> And sworn friends fall from me
>
> But *there,* they'll own me still
>
> And prize my memory' (lines 9-16)

Although the two speakers make different choices "between the ways of looking at death" (Ghnassia 178), both agree that death is a place of isolation. The survivor sees it as a cold prison, separated by a strict borderline from the life which (s)he depicts as a world of joy, liberty, and love. The dying one disagrees and identifies human existence as more secluded than death can ever be. (S)he values death higher than life, because both imply isolation, but in death it is easier to bear. In the realm of the dead, (s)he associates isolation with memory, and (s)he is right in expecting them to belong to each other: memory results from separation, as one can remember only someone distant in time or space. (Rosina does not remember or

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forget Julius but represses him, and he remains present for her.) In the realm of the living, associating isolation with friendship is something (s)he would have never expected, and therefore rejects. In life, (s)he seems to have given in to illusions, believing that people can become and remain close to each other, while (s)he has always identified death with isolation. Now, disappointed in life, and following a strange but understandable logic, (s)he finds death closer to his/her expectations, more familiar, and therefore less fearful than life.

Also, both speakers agree that the dead will remain identical with their former selves, so the dying one does not even need to dread a loss of self. (S)he confirms this when referring to "The *time* when my sunny hair / Shall with grass roots twined be" (lines 7-8, emphasis added). The body will not dissolve in the earth and unify with it; the corpse's hair will mingle with grass roots, but remain human hair; and time will still exist for the dead, too. In turn, the survivor asserts that the corpse will change in the grave, but not radically; it will still remain "thou," however frightening: "And all who loved thy living face / Will shrink from its gloom and *thee*" (emphasis added). Whether they are right or only giving in to another illusion is irrelevant from the dying one's point of view: for him/her, being remembered is the most important, and in the grave (s)he will be remembered more than in life (Rowland 250 and Ghnassia 179).

From the grave, (s)he will be able to restore the friendships (s)he has lost on earth – (s)he will have a fuller life there (Rowland 250). In his/her view, a community of finite beings is even possible to be created from death. As (s)he considers death only one among several kinds of isolation, the same rules may apply to it as to all the others: the gap between the living and the dead can be bridged, as people can also love a memory. They even seem to love a memory better than a living person, probably because they do not need to help the dead any more. Or rather their duties transform into the duty of cherishing a memory (cf. Rowland 6).

The voices and views of the speakers are kept apart throughout the whole poem: their dialogue could be a "copybook specimen" of separation in life. To the dying one's voicing his/her trust in memory keeping up a community, the survivor replies with a warning of ultimate parting:

> Farewell, then, all that love
> All that deep sympathy;
> Sleep on, heaven laughs above—
> Earth never misses thee— (lines 17-20)

Their voices are forever diverting from each other, and neither can convince the other. With a "farewell," the survivor dismisses the love and sympathy which the dying one (or now, better to say, the dead) wished to retain, and announces that the community (s)he desired

will be impossible: the universe accepts his/her death indifferently (Ghnassia 179), especially the hoped-for friends on the earth. (Here, *earth* refers metonymically to those who survive, and not literally to the ground below; *earth* in a literal sense will be the resting place of the dead, cold, damp, and dark, as the survivor has already claimed.) Lines 19-20 confirm that the dead has no place in heaven, and the following lines also refer to death as a final parting, as well as a physical place instead of a way to enter transcendence (cf. Homans 152): "Turf-sod and tombstone drear / Part human company" (lines 21-22). Even though (s)he admits that there was someone who "was worthy" the dead among the living, (s)he also adds that the heart of that someone is now broken: the only true friend may as well be dead, too (lines 23-24). In his/her view, death becomes radically different from all other kinds of separation: nothing can bridge the gap between the living and the dead, neither is revival possible; if the dying one has refused the possibility of dissolution in the earth, nothing but the horror of eternal solitude remains. Only a faint possibility is left in the end of the text, as if out of an unexpected surge of pity: if the breaking of the one worthy heart does not happen to mean death but grief, then memory will still live on and create the community the dying one desired. This interpretation, however, is grossly contradicted by the previous judgement: "Earth never misses thee."

Just because the survivor has the last word, (s)he does not necessarily have to be right; the profound irony of the text is that a survivor does not need to be right to have an advantage on the other. This survivor uses his/her advantage cruelly indeed, returning to his/her earlier definition of death as a claustrophobic and lonely experience; and whether right or wrong, (s)he is able to utter such a harsh judgement on the dead simply because (s)he is able to speak on, and the other is forced into eternal silence. Whatever the survivor says is impossible to be refuted, especially as (s)he always insists on valuing the literal (considered as factual) above the figurative (considered as illusory). What (s)he accepts from any interpretation of death is the coldness and dampness of the earth, as well as the turf and the headstone – tangible and fixed, as opposed to the imaginary community based on memory.

De Man's romantic irony emerges in a modified form: two speakers reflect on what one of them will experience soon. In the case of the dying speaker, the temporal relations between the perceptive self and the reflective self are reversed if compared to de Man's text: (s)he is reflecting on a state which is yet to come, and tries to encourage him/herself that it will be bearable (cf. "Rhetoric" 213). His/her situation is also special because (s)he does not risk anything: if such a discourse leads to the discovery of the fictitiousness of his/her own existence, that is, death (218), (s)he can certainly afford to use it on the edge of the grave. The survivor's situation is much more dangerous: *after* the other is silenced by going through the

experience of death, (s)he posits the dead as the perceptive self (who, by definition, cannot speak [213]) and him/herself as an "absolute" reflective self, wishing to retroactively define the other's words as inauthentic. (S)he hardly wants to help the other by that; (s)he merely wishes to keep up his/her superiority – and that is where (s)he commits fatal mistakes.

First, although (s)he will really have the last word, she forgets that the dead cannot succumb to the power of the living, and even if they could, (s)he would not be able to afford that, firmly insisting on that the living and the dead are absolutely and irreversibly separated. When (s)he wants to demonstrate his/her superiority after the death of the other, (s)he in fact poses as superior to a non-entity – hardly an authentic way of comparison. Second, (s)he deceives him/herself into believing that if (s)he uses words in a literal sense, (s)he will create authentic speech. (In fact, [s]he cannot manage even that: [s]he uses figures quite well, for example referring to death as sleep and heaven as laughing in line 19.) (S)he, however, cannot deny that (s)he only exists in language, too, and that (s)he, in fact, uses language for the same purpose as the other speaker did: in order to distance the horror of death from him/herself. (S)he represses the fact that (s)he will also have to face the same experience, sooner or later. The dying speaker used his/her voice to cover the horror of what cannot be conceptualised in language (cf. Derrida) in trying to prepare for his/her death as much as possible – and turned out to be inauthentic, but at least cannot feel that any more. When the survivor deliberately widens the gap between the living and the dead, (s)he simply wants to cover another horror: that the gap is, actually, *not so wide at all.* (S)he only speaks in terms of absolute separation because (s)he is afraid of death, and wants to distance that fear by first trying to frighten another, and then posing as superior to the other. Both speakers try to find an authentic language to face death, and both fail.

So does the text, in fact: probably the most awkward composition Brontë ever wrote. With its irregular rhythm (the number of syllables do not follow any fixed pattern, nor does the stressing of the syllables) and as many oblique rhymes as exact ones (e. g. "prophecy" – "twined be," "fall from me" – "memory"), I can hardly call it a "proper" poem at all.[63] The text reminds me more of prose, especially among all the other poems of the oeuvre. Ever so careful about prosody and rhymes, such a virtuoso of even patterns most uncommon and difficult to produce in English, writing this poem Brontë seems to have been "nodding" like Homer. In turn, however, the intention of the text might also be to call attention to the inauthenticity of both discourses used in it; when language tries to cover the horror of death,

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[63] That is, if I *repress* what William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley warn their readers to keep in mind; namely, that the opposite of prose is not poetry but metre ("Preface" 228 and "Defence" 1029).

no wonder it starts stumbling and stuttering, and rejects musicality. The task to demonstrate that horror and beauty do not necessarily exclude each other remains for another text to fulfil.

5. 2. Attempts to repress murder: "A Farewell to Alexandria"

A Gondal poem again, the characters in "A Farewell to Alexandria" are a little easier to identify than those of the previous poem. The speaker is most probably A. G. A., Gondal's queen. As Rowland explains, A. G. A. occupies a special position in Emily Brontë's poetry, particularly in the representations of death, because, apparently, the queen can cross the borderline between life and death very easily (30). As the Gondal poems were not written in a chronological order, her death is recurrent, occurring in more than one poem, with other texts about events of her life in-between; and, also, she causes quite a few people to die (30). In the poems discussed previously, separation between human beings appeared as an inevitable part of mortal life, even if some speakers deliberately widened the gap between themselves and others – but none of them presented the widest gap: death, induced on purpose. In short, murder has not occurred in this thesis yet.

Choosing a text about A. G. A.'s deeds is probably the best choice to discuss separation inchoated at will in Emily Brontë's poetry. Apart from causing deaths (both by murder and by making people commit suicide), A. G. A. seduces and abandons several men, sends people to exile or prison; not to mention the cases when she does not cause such events in person, but persuades people to commit deeds which will make them end up in prison, exile, or death.[64] As a queen, however, she is successful and liked by her vassals in spite of her crimes. When she dies a violent death herself ("The Death of A. G. A."), her people honestly mourn her.

The poem to be discussed now pictures death as her work and guilt, in probably the most revolting version: infanticide. Murder (and indeed any kind of separation) in the family, especially if inflicted by a parent and suffered by an infant child, is probably the murder that, normally, people least expect and are most outraged about, however frequently they know it has happened in human history. Tragically, not even family ties exclude separation – not even the ties of mutual love. (A. G. A. loves all the men in her life, but that does not stop her from abandoning them all the same.) In chapter four, beings were able to bridge the gap between themselves by love. Poems about A. G. A.'s crimes, including "A Farewell to Alexandria,"

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[64] Examples abound in Brontë's poetry: an abandoned lover suffers in prison in "Written in the Gaaldine Prison Caves to A. G. A." and then commits suicide in "F. de Samarra to A. G. A."; a woman named Angelica remembers the destruction of her whole family in "Written in Aspin Castle" and "The Death of A. G. A."; A. G. A. admits to the sins she has committed against her husband, Lord Alfred S. when taking leave of him (and probably sending him to exile or death) in "A. G. A. to A. S." Even more poems might join this line, more or less unambiguously identified by Ratchford as parts of the A. G. A. story ("Epic of Gondal" 17-19).

approach the case from the reverse side, leading to a much gloomier result: just because two people love each other, they cannot help being isolated.

It is another question that this dilemma does not make A. G. A. less responsible for her daughter's death. All through the poem she is trying to persuade herself that she does not kill the child (indeed she does not perform the act with her own hands); it is separation, inevitable and independent of human will, that causes her death. "The moral responsibility the adult carries seems to dissolve in her conviction that she is helpless to defend her child anyway" (Rowland 253).[65] She can, however, only repress but not deny that she widens the gap between herself and Alexandria deliberately; in other words, her guilt of abandoning her daughter where she knows the child will soon die.

The poem is a subverted mourning song; subverted because the mother is "mourning the death of her child [. . .] in advance, whilst the child may still be alive, as if to speed up its death" (Rowland 253). The poem is indeed a song, in every sense: sung as a lullaby, by a mother to a child, and written in an extremely musical form, with exact rhymes, in a faultless rhythm, and also making full use of the expressivity of sounds. The text begins with the description of a landscape, beautiful in the Burke-ian sense:[66]

> I've seen this dell in July's shine
> As lovely as an angel's dream;
> Above, heaven's depth of blue divine;
> Around, the evening's golden beam—
>
> I've seen the purple heather-bell
> Look out by many a storm-worn stone
> And oh, I've known such music swell,
> Such wild notes wake these passes lone—
>
> So soft, yet so intensely felt,
> So low, yet so distinctly heard,
> My breath would pause, my eyes would melt

[65] The first published version of the text half confirms the speaker's conviction: in 1860, in the *Cornhill Magazine,* it was given the title "The Outcast Mother" (Gezari, "Notes" 258), suggesting that the mother is unable to take care of her child as an outcast and a sufferer herself. Ratchford also seems to exonerate A. G. A., arguing that the text is set a time of mortal danger, and if she did not leave the child behind, they both would die (*Gondal's Queen* 123). As there is no direct evidence for her argumentation either within the text or in other poems, I intend to treat the text on its own, without its possible background in the history of Gondal.

[66] Kant would probably call this passage a manifestation of the agreeable, not the beautiful (115-117). In the discussion of the poem, however, I intend to subordinate aesthetic exactness to the analysis of the mother's self-deception. As her aims are equally served by a beautiful or an agreeable place, and Burke's text is of much more help in a close reading than Kant's, I chose to follow Burke's lead exclusively.

And my tears dew the green heath-sward—

I'd linger here a summer day
Nor care how fast the hours flew by
Nor mark the sun's departing ray
Smile sadly glorious from the sky— (lines 1-16)

Following Burke's definition, this passage concentrates on what is small and pleasing: it is set in a dell, in summertime, full of light, colour and music – but always takes care to keep the light soft and the music low (cf. 105-106 and 112). In stanza 4, the evening is described as a slow process, time passing unnoticed, and parts of the day melting into each other: "you are presented with no sudden protuberance through the whole, and yet the whole is continually changing" (104). Even when mentioning the wide sky, its various and soft colours (golden and blue) are emphasised, rather than its greatness (cf. 106). Although Burke probably would not like the image of the rugged stone (105), it is adjusted to the landscape harmoniously. The conscious use of this technique is shown by the reference to the heather-bell, delicate, feeble, and mildly coloured (cf. 105-106); the same effect could hardly be produced by referring to the whole plant, which is anything but feeble and delicate, however fine it looks in full bloom. Also, particular attention is paid to the sounding. Even the consonants are chosen to create a musical effect: words that contain mostly semi-vowels, liquids, and nasals dominate the diction of the first four stanzas, not to mention the consonant clusters which also suggest liquidity, for example in "golden," "purple," "swell," or "intensely." Such soft sounding, together with the images mentioned above, make the text "As lovely as an angel's dream," until stanza 5 reveals the purpose of all this beauty:

Then, then I might have laid thee down
And deemed thy sleep would gentle be
I might have left thee, darling one
And thought thy God was guarding thee! (lines 17-20)

The softness of the four stanzas is only to cover the horror of the mother's deed from her own eyes (as the infant cannot yet understand her fate). She pretends to use words in their literal sense, telling the child that in such a landscape she would not die – only sleep, guarded by a divine power. The significance of the sunset that passes unnoticed in stanza 4 is revealed now: what is at stake is experiencing *time* passing unnoticed, together with mortality (and her parental responsibility, only too easily shifted on to God). It is mortality she does not want to think of when she rejects the figurative meaning of her words (connecting mortality and figuration as both make absence explicit): namely, that sleep is a conventional metaphor for

death. So is the setting of the sun, in fact, especially if the description of the evening is read together with her imagined reaction to beauty: stopped breath and tears ("My breath would pause, my eyes would melt" [line 11]). Lines 15-16, with "the sun's departing ray / [smiling] sadly glorious from the sky" convey the idea of death particularly powerfully, as there is nothing sad in the "departing" of the sun without human eyes regarding it as a metaphor for the departing of the soul. Death is prefigured in, and profoundly encoded into, the beauty of the landscape; and this figuration triumphs. Beauty and loveliness do not mean that the child would not have to die in such a landscape, amidst soft light and low music, all the same as anywhere else. The literal sense of her words, which should be the closest to truth (whatever that may be) now prove a false layer – especially as they are not spoken in the affirmative but the conditional mood – covering something completely different.

Or only seemingly so. In fact, her song is composed cleverly enough to defend herself from having to face her deed. If the sleep is interpreted as death (and the description of the sunset also joins in as an appropriate parallel to sleep), then she apparently manages to make her daughter's death as smooth and unnoticed, and therefore as painless, as daylight turning into evening and evening into night. The child's death becomes *beautiful,* and beauty excludes pain (cf. Burke 113). If death is identified with a sunset, it is inserted into the flow of time instead of breaking it. In addition, if the text can make the child's body an organic part of nature (identified as God's creation, which God takes good care of), as lovable as the rest of the landscape, then her death will be integrated into the natural cycles.

As if afraid of what might happen if she was unable to convince herself that the child was not dying but falling asleep, the speaker comes up with a second solution, constructing a beautiful landscape for the child to die under the guarding eye of God – to die *safely,* if that is imaginable at all. Beyond the first layer, a second one lies, only seemingly different – its aim is to make the murder bearable for the mother, who tries to deceive herself into believing that her child's death is as inevitable as night replacing daylight.

Yet her diction betrays that she is quite aware of the illusion she is creating; the second layer proves inauthentic even more easily than the first one. Her song is doubly illusory: first, because she constructs the landscape on the basis of a memory – the landscape does not look the same any more; and second, because she admits that even if it did, she would only "deem" and "think" that she could leave her daughter safely behind. She wishes but does not manage to convince herself that death would be a pleasure for the child in such a landscape; and even if she did manage to reach her aim, the landscape is not present to support her:

> But now, there is no wandering glow
>
> No gleam to say that God is nigh:

> And coldly spreads thy couch of snow
> And harshly sounds thy lullaby.
>
> Forests of heather dark and long
> Wave their brown branching arms above
> And they must soothe thee with their song
> And they must shield my child of love!
>
> Alas the flakes are heavily falling
> They cover fast each guardian crest;
> And chilly white their shroud is palling
> Thy frozen limbs and freezing breast (lines 21-32)

Every element previously used to create a landscape of beauty now turns into its opposite. The blue of the sky disappears behind the snow-clouds from which "the flakes are heavily falling"; the green grass becomes a "couch of snow"; and the heather-bells are gone, leaving the bare "brown branching arms" behind, hardly delicate and feeble any more. Even the illusion that the mother could shift responsibility over to God is impossible now: not only God but the "gleam" which might be interpreted as the sign of God's help is absent from this world. Curiously, however, the sounding does not change: the winter landscape retains all the softness the summer landscape was associated with. (Even the consonants giving a musical effect are proportioned similarly; for example, in the first description there were twenty-six *l* sounds and twelve *th*s, either voiced or voiceless; in the second one, there are twenty-two *l*s and sixteen *th*s. I did not count the specimens not to be pronounced.)

In fact, the mother is going on deceiving herself. The elements of the summer landscape appear as inverted in the winter scene; and, right because of that, they *remain there,* inherent parts of the winter as they were in the summer. They are not annihilated, only changed, and thus the mother can try to convince herself that the winter landscape can provide the same protection for her daughter as she has previously imagined the summer scene could do. Calling the snow a couch, the harsh sound of the wind a lullaby, and the stones guards, as well as warning the heathers that they must soothe and shield the child, she, in fact, is constructing another figurative (and presumably safe) landscape. As de Man explains (albeit in a different context), "[s]ince [the experience] is a fiction, it can only exist in the form of a language, since it is by means of language that the fiction can be objectified and made to act [. . .]" ("Time and History" 63). Both landscapes are fictitious, only existing in language, and neither can possibly help the child survive. The illusion that in a winter landscape her child

could escape death lasts for an even shorter time than the previous illusion: only until the snow starts falling and covering up the child, "palling" her with a "chilly white shroud." The image of death is called up doubly, both in the verb and the noun phrase – the mother seems to face the consequence of her deed at last.

Strangely, this moment of revelation, following the removal of every layer from "truth," is signified by the double appearance of another cover – the cover which is used for sparing the mourner the *sight* of the dead. In fact, the shroud is only a further figure: first, a metaphor for snow, and second, a metonymy for death, *which has not arrived yet.* The limbs of the child are already "frozen," but her breast is still only "freezing": she is still alive. The first moment when the mother openly refers to death is the only moment when death is most certainly absent, and she could perhaps even save her daughter. This is when she actually kills the child – practically evoking death to come and take her – , because she tells herself that her daughter is under a shroud, *already dead,* and therefore she cannot possibly be expected to help her any more. In a maddening way, language is not able to maintain life for a single moment in this text, but it *is* able to call forth destruction.

The mother fails to face death all through the poem, until the very last word:

> Wakes up the storm more madly wild
>
> The mountain drifts are tossed on high—
>
> Farewell unblessed, unfriended child,
>
> *I cannot bear to watch thee die!* (lines 33-36, emphasis added)

In the last lines, at least, she is as honest as she can be: so far she has called her daughter a "darling one" (line 19) and "my child of love" (line 28); now, "unblessed, unfriended." Also, she admits that all the while her song was to cover two things: the dying of the child and her own inability or refusal to take the responsibility for the child's death. All the time she has been trying to interpret the separation between herself and her child in ways favourable for herself: as leaving the child in good care or as an inevitability; now she owns that separation will literally equal death and she has caused that separation deliberately.

The fact that separation is inherent in human existence does not justify the mother's refusal of responsibility. First, because in "A Farewell to Alexandria," helping the other and creating a community of finite creatures is not a possibility but a duty: "The Duty to accomplish a wholesome harmonious selfhood through an active and responsible relation to *someone Other than You,* who is at all times both an antecedent and a successor to *Your Being,* which is thus only qualified as *Co-Being*" (Rowland 8-9, emphases in the original). Second, and even more significantly, because however much she wishes to consider the child as a separate personality, Alexandria, in fact, is not yet one. In a very special situation, she is

not a part of the mother's body any more, but not an individual either: she is an infant, on the borderline of gaining independence from her mother. The logic of two finite creatures being inevitably separated from each other does not apply to the daughter yet. It is a further illusion created by the mother that she always addresses her as an adult who can understand rational argumentation, and therefore can survive alone.

If the poem is read together with other Gondal poems, it turns out that the infant's case is only the extreme version and the archetype of all kinds of separation induced by A. G. A. All the Gondals in exile, prison, or simply abandoned by someone who should be very close to them, would badly need the other to live a complete life – in some cases simply to survive (cf. Miller, *Disappearance* 171-172). The speaker of "O mother I am not regretting" dies because her foster-brother and/or beloved has sailed away and died; the speaker of "F. de Samarra to A. G. A." commits suicide because A. G. A. has loved, then tortured and left him. Helping the other in a community of isolated beings becomes a duty indeed, and the only way "to accomplish a wholesome harmonious selfhood" (Rowland 8). A. G. A. in "A Farewell to Alexandria" owns this duty and knows she should fulfil it, because she clearly has a profound sense of guilt. When she tries to cover her deed in every way, she wishes to convince herself that she is not committing a sin, and when she uses terms of endearment, she wishes to make herself believe that she is a good mother after all, performing her duty. Finally, however, when she confesses what she has done, she adds cowardice to her guilt and escapes.

The fact that she is not able to face death simply comes from her humanity. She would not be able to *dis*cover and understand death in full anyway, as indeed no one is, because "it lies truly beyond the reach of reflection" (de Man, "Time and History" 63). Access to dying is possible through language only, because death is itself a cultural construction (Rowland 31); on the other hand, however, lying "beyond the reach of reflection," it can*not* be culturally constructed and accessed, always remaining different, incomprehensible, terrifying; and never available, only in its interpretations (figures, "covers").

No wonder that whenever the mother has to remove a layer that covers her child's death, she is already busy constructing another one, and when she has to encounter death at last, she distances herself from it forever. In fact, however, what she is deeply afraid to face is not death but *murder*. People cannot help creating newer and newer interpretations for death (many mothers would follow her example of "weaving covers" if they saw their children dying) – but what *she* is doing is creating interpretations for her *causing* her child to die.

That is how A. G. A. always behaves: distancing the consequences of her crimes from herself as far as possible, into exile, prison, or the grave. She is working hard all through the poem to separate herself both from her child (literally) and her deed of separating herself from

her child (figuratively); the latter being infinitely more difficult. The consequence of murder is double isolation, but always a painfully imperfect one: the deed and the sense of guilt are covered but still exist, as repressed material, able to come back any time. If the murderer was able to distance the deed from herself completely, she would not need to escape from the sight of her dead child.

The literal and the figurative are entangled in a curious way in the poem. While constructing protective landscapes for her daughter, the speaker is constantly trying to evoke the metaphor of nature as a nurturing mother: a benevolent power that keeps the infant safe. Language appears to fail (however much expected to help, nature kills the infant), but, in fact, it does not; on the contrary: language triumphs. What the mother wishes to do *figuratively* (turn nature into a surrogate mother) happens *literally* – and this surrogate mother does what the speaker actually wants to do: *kills* the daughter. The winter landscape accepts and devours the child, "a fragile entity perilously nurtured by the vast and terrifying Mother Nature," as Williams writes in a different context (152). Nature is very frequently associated with death in Brontë's poetry; so radically that "[e]ven life in nature is life in death" (Homans 141). Like the speaker of "The night is darkening round me," Alexandria is left in the middle of a Gothic setting, where it becomes clear that "[d]eath is Mother Nature's most terrible manifestation," a state of *mater*iality and silence (Williams 63). The infant will never learn to speak, but forever remain in the pre-Oedipal state.

Also, the idea of a union with nature returns, but radically different from, for example, "High waving heather." The child melts into the union of the natural forces around, but in a bodily sense, which in the text equals literal sense: the snow covers her up and thus erases the difference between her and the landscape.[67] From this aspect, annihilating death appearing as masculine in "No coward soul is mine" gains a different significance and the horror of Mother Nature is softened a little. In the feminised space of "A Farewell to Alexandria," the daughter (!) dies in a way apparently interpreted as "feminine," and she does not enter nothingness (nor a spiritual realm, for that matter) but changes into another, material form of existence. For once, cold and snow do not represent the conservation of identity but dissolution and the end of pain. (This change of associations may as well result from cold merely being a means nature chooses to kill her by; she would die in the summer, too, only in a different way.)

One should also notice that cold and snow could not conserve her identity, even if the text wanted to make such use of them. Her death, hardly "a pantheistic unity with nature,"

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[67] Different from "High waving heather," but very similar to Wordsworth's "A slumber did my spirit seal," in which the dead girl becomes literally identified with nature: "[s]he now has become a *thing* in the full sense of the word, [. . .] and, indeed, she exists beyond the touch of earthly years. But the light-hearted compliment has turned into a grim awareness of the de-mystifying power of death, which makes all the past appear as a flight into the inauthenticity of a forgetting" (de Man, "Rhetoric" 224, emphasis in the original).

cannot be seen as "a loss of self" either (cf. de Man "Time and History" 67), as she can hardly be said to have an individual self. The child begins constructing an individual consciousness at the first (pre-Oedipal) separation from the mother (cf. Williams 152). For Alexandria, this moment might become a gain of self instead of a loss, but, partly because it takes the form of violence (and comes too early), it coincides with the ultimate separation: her death. So far she has seemed to be killed by separation – in the end it becomes clear that it is an ultimate *union* with the mother that results in infanticide. She is not even given a chance to separate from the mother, for, although one mother abandons her, she leaves her with another one.

In "A Farewell to Alexandria," conventionally, the mother is associated with nature and materiality, as opposed to the father, associated with culture and spirit (Williams 161) – and conspicuously absent from the text. According to every theory on who Alexandria's father is, he must be dead by the time these events happen (Gezari, "Notes" 258); thus, the infant is not able to go on developing a consciousness in accordance with the Freudian discourse by turning to the father after the mother leaves her. The presence of God (another possible father figure, who should transform nature into a "good mother" and guard the child), is illusory in the summer landscape and completely absent from the winter one. Not by chance, the mother calls the child "unblessed," which used to be a synonym for "unbaptised": the infant is still a non-entity from a religious point of view.

Previously, I mentioned that the mother, while constructing figurative spaces for the child, wishes to evoke a benevolent power that keeps the infant safe. Now, however, her awareness of what she is doing should also be noticed. The figurative turning into the literal, nature turning into the Terrible Mother (cf. Williams 123) might well be what she desires after all: instead of creating a safe place for the child, persuading nature to perform the murder she is afraid to do (or even face) herself. The consequences of the infanticide in the mother's life are not included in the text, but the last lines provide food for thought: with her final deed of turning her back on the child while she is still alive, she seems to choose the easiest way, but actually she probably takes the bigger share of the suffering inflicted in the text. Refusing to look at the result of her deed shows that she represses the murder instead of forgetting it, and thus takes on herself all the dangers repressed material carries. Also, by leaving her dying instead of dead, her daughter will always exist for her in that liminal position (and also from another point of view: on the borderline of infancy and conscious existence) of death-in-life or life-in-death.

Such a state had the power of easing pain in "Sympathy," but becomes a conserver of pain for the murderer in "A Farewell to Alexandria" (for her, snow will not signify dissolution but unceasing pain). For the daughter, the mother becomes a source of horror, pain, and death

– in the future, the deed will be repaid by the daughter becoming a source of remorse, fear, and equal horror for the mother. She might not have another chance but to abandon the child – if Ratchford is right, she is fleeing from murderers herself, after the assassination of her husband the king (*Gondal's Queen* 123), and she has to choose between dying together with the child or letting the child die and stand her chance alone. Such a situation might or might not serve as exoneration in the eyes of others, but her own mind will punish her all the same. She does not give the child a chance to separate from the mother, gain an independent personality, and survive – now she will have to carry her in her mind like in a metaphorical womb, never to be separated from her daughter either. (Pain is shared freely as ever in Brontë's poetry, but this time sharing does not have a redeeming power.) At the same time, they can never fully regain each other either. Another result of abandoning the child is that the daughter will exist as a repressed image, as life-in-death; and there will be no one "fully" alive to continue the mother's existence (another reason why the child and the parent must belong to the same sex). There will be no one to replace her – which, in turn, is not only fearful but relieving, too.

The fear of the old to be ultimately destroyed and replaced by the young is accepted as a more than probable reason for the murder by both Miller and Rowland (207 and 253). Indeed, surviving someone whose death (or, in this case, dying) one witnesses, does not only imply the danger of being reminded of one's own finality (like in "In the earth, the earth thou shalt be laid"), but also the evidence of one's being alive (Rowland 21). Rowland, however, also mentions that, against the background of Gondal's history, "if the child is eliminated, one has eliminated the possibility of a future where [. . .] (A. G. A.) would multiply and cause Death to happen again" (255). It is not only the daughter that falls out of time by the mother's deed; it is also the mother, from now on isolated in history. What she commits she has proven to commit against herself just as much as against her child. Now, the murder, which has appeared as the refusal of responsibility, may also show that she does have a sense of responsibility, only different from what is expected of her. A. G. A. never commits crimes without being fully aware that she is causing pain and doing wrong. Killing her child, she also makes it impossible for her life to continue, by which she might very well break a continuity of crimes.

5. 3. Figuration as a trap: "Death"

A chain of allegories joined one after the other, "Death" is one of the best (if not *the* best) specimens of figurative language in Emily Brontë's poetry; also a "Brontëan version" of Romantic irony extended into a whole poem, structurally similar to Wordsworth's "A slumber

did my spirit seal." Allegories appear in an (at least) three-layered construction of dualities. On the level of images, the poem pictures the branch of a tree, bearing leaves and flowers, and fed by its root ("Leaves, upon Time's branch, were growing brightly" [line 5]; "Daily round its flowers the wild bees flew" [line 8]; "within its parent's kindly bosom, / Flowed for ever Life's restoring tide" [lines 11-12]). On a metaphysical level, the branch means Time (as the quotation of line 5 above also shows) and the root Eternity ("the fresh root of Eternity" [line 4]). From this level on, meanings can abound and multiply, according to which textual tradition the reader chooses to insert the poem into; most frequently, critics choose to associate the branch with a person (either the speaker or someone the speaker loves), and the root with the life force from which the person is cut off from (Rowland 291, Pykett 69, Gezari 119, Barker 130, Ratchford "Epic of Gondal" 18).

In this interpretation, the poem captures the moment when death becomes reality out of an impossibility (Gezari 119). Whatever the number of meanings, all of them are broken by the sudden, savage, and violent (122) arrival of death. The poem is given a framed structure: stanzas 2-6 about life, stanza 1 and stanzas 7-8 about destruction and desired rebirth ("Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish / Where that perished sapling used to be" [29-30]). Like in "Sympathy," the speaker is split into a perceptive self (this time not identified with the addressee) and a reflective self (cf. de Man, "Rhetoric" 213). The former one belongs to the past, giving in to the illusion that nothing can harm "Time's branch": "I was most confiding / In my certain faith of joy to be" (lines 1-2); and the latter one to the present, already aware of the power of death and thus ironic about past convictions: "Time, for me, must never blossom more" (line 28). The perceptive self proves inauthentic and succumbs to the reflective self, which does not make the reflective self more authentic, itself existing "only in the form of a language that asserts the knowledge of this inauthenticity" ("Rhetoric" 214).

The relationship between the two selves is temporal (the perceptive self can only go on believing in its convictions until the reflective self speaks up), but "not organic, in that it relates to its source only in terms of distance and difference [. . .]. Irony divides the flow of temporal experience into a past that is pure mystification and a future that remains harassed forever by a relapse within the inauthentic" (222). Accordingly, in Brontë's text, death breaks experience in two; after it strikes, the universe can never be the same again, and, together with "Time's branch," the perceptive self, who believed in the continuous growth of the branch, is also destroyed. The reflective self still hopes for an authentic future, which, however, remains a desire.

So far, the poem only seems an extended version of "A slumber did my spirit seal," not necessarily improved aesthetically by detailing both the illusory past and the disillusioned but

inauthentic present and future, and thus losing the conciseness of Wordsworth's text. On the other hand, "Death" also seems to differ from the earlier text; most conspicuously, in its inviting death to strike again (lines 3 and 29). If irony leads to death ("Rhetoric" 218), then the speaker of "Death" (like that of "Sympathy") goes to meet it halfway, and even tries to create a basis of hope out of dying: "Strike it down [. . .]; / Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish / That from which it sprung—Eternity" (lines 29 and 31-32).

Similarly to the speaker of "The night is darkening round me," the speaker of "Death" strengthens the power of human will by willing what is inevitable. "Given the inevitability of death in time, the only way Brontë's human speaker can assert her[68] own sovereign agency and refuse the role of hapless victim is to take control: she orders Death to strike her down. No imagination of future rewards or punishments enters into this transaction. The speaker has only the consolation of self-sacrifice and the relief of firm despair. Her death makes way for other lives" (Gezari 122). Pykett goes so far as to associate the end of the poem with "a myth of return, a return to nature, to the harmony from which the self has been exiled, and to the integrity of death" (69). I disagree with such optimistic readings, but the end certainly disturbs the de-Manian reading a little. Even if regarded as a new illusion the speaker succumbs to, the end directs attention to the differences between Wordsworth's text and Brontë's.

First and foremost, the reflective self is aware of its existing in a fictitious universe, and so does the perceptive self, from the beginning on. Quoting stanza 1 in full provides evidence of this knowledge:

> Death! that struck when I was most confiding
>
> In my certain faith of joy to be—
>
> Strike again, Time's withered branch dividing
>
> From the fresh root of Eternity! (lines 1-4)

Strangely, Time and Death are not connected (from now on, I follow Brontë's spelling): Time and Eternity are, organically. Their connection becomes even more emphatic in what Gezari notices: "the branch is not divided from the tree but from 'the fresh root of Eternity'; that is, 'Time's withered branch' is the tree" ("Notes" 237) – or, better to say, the organic contact is between the branch and the roots, without a trunk to mediate. Structuring the image this way makes the connection of Time and Eternity absolutely direct – as well as unnatural.

By its deviations from what the reader expects, stanza 1 establishes the fictitiousness of the whole construction. Time and Eternity are profoundly different from each other in human experience, belonging to different forms and states of existence, one to the human sphere and

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[68] Again, there is actually no evidence in the text that would refer to the sex and/or gender of the speaker. This time Death, although capitalised, also appears as ungendered.

the other (if it exists at all) to the transcendent. Temporal constructions may serve as signs for eternal forms, but, being signs, such constructions cannot deny that they stand for what is absent from and unknowable in the realm of Time. Yet, in "Death" they exist in an organic connection; what is more, the connection occurs where no organic connection should take place – outside nature. Also, Death, expected to follow from the idea of temporality, becomes independent of it; thus, the familiar order of concepts is subverted.[69]

The speaker forever remains in a fictitious universe of allegories, and nature is "reduced simply to a figure for whatever human subject is in the foreground" (Homans 139-140):

> Leaves, upon Time's branch, were growing brightly,
>
> Full of sap, and full of silver dew;
>
> Birds beneath its shelter gathered nightly;
>
> Daily round its flowers the wild bees flew.
>
>
> Sorrow passed, and plucked the golden blossom;
>
> Guilt stripped off the foliage in its pride;
>
> But, within its parent's kindly bosom,
>
> Flowed for ever Life's restoring tide.
>
>
> Little mourned I for the parted gladness,
>
> For the vacant nest and silent song—
>
> Hope was there, and laughed me out of sadness;
>
> Whispering, "Winter will not linger long!"
>
>
> And, behold! with tenfold increase blessing,
>
> Spring adorned the beauty-burdened spray;
>
> Wind and rain and fervent heat, caressing,
>
> Lavished glory on that second May! (lines 5-20)

Allegory is as closely associated with passing time as possible. Time itself appears in an allegory: a branch growing from Eternity and nurturing life around. Associated with light which enwraps the branch, makes the dew silver, the leaves bright, and the blossom golden (lines 5, 6, and 9), Time accepts and reflects the radiation coming from the outside, but its primary source of survival is the tide of Life within, coming from its root (lines 11-12). The

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[69] The familiar order might be, but de Man's reading is not, at least not as a whole. The *admittedly* fictitious universe and the organic connection between Time and Eternity contradict de Man's conclusions; but his reading of Wordsworth's poem also shows death as a force that cuts the present radically off from the past, bereaving them of the possibility of an organic relationship ("Rhetoric" 222).

universe defined by Time is by no means closed; on the contrary, it is based on giving and taking, helping others and being helped – the branch shelters birds and feeds bees (lines 7-8), and, next spring, it receives the blessings of the wind, rain and heat (lines 19-20). The outside world, however, would not be enough in itself to maintain the existence of "Time's branch," as later stanzas will show.

Allegories in the text do not appear to convey the sense of mortality generally inherent in the trope: the speaker trusts them absolutely; not because they have suddenly become an authentic way of speaking, but because what matters is no longer truth or falsity. What now matters is that allegories, for good or bad, belong to a familiar universe, and Death does not. In this text, Death arrives as an unexpected shock, independent of Time and alien to earthly experience, unknown and unknowable: a break in Time, not the work of Time, like in "A Farewell to Alexandria." Obviously, winter has nothing to do with Death: in the winter, the nest is vacant, but still there, waiting for other birds to arrive; and the song is silent, but still included in the text, waiting for its modifier to be changed. Winter is associated with Sorrow and Guilt instead: they bereave the tree of its blossom and foliage, and the result of their work is what Hope suggests will pass away at the end of the winter. Thus, although both take something away violently, neither is able to destroy the harmony of the universe. Winter is only a part of Time; therefore, in the winter, Time must still be alive, with Life merely hiding (line 12), not destroyed. On a metaphysical level, Guilt and Sorrow are only states of the human mind making the integrity of the mind invisible but leaving it intact.

A well-elaborated order of analogies emerges in the text. The seasons are identified with states of mind: sorrow, guilt, and hope (this time the counterbalance of the other two) with the winter, mutual helpfulness and love with the spring. Time and Eternity correspond to the branch and the sap that lets the branch survive, which pair, in turn, may easily correspond to the body (temporal) and the soul or mind (immortal). That is why critics often identify the branch of Time as a person. The analogy might as well belong to Christian thought, but it results in heresy: according to the logic of the text, the soul exists in an inactive state while the body suffers from sorrow and guilt, which thus cannot harm the soul. All states of mind are accepted into the harmony of body and soul, just as all seasons belong to Time.

Here, however, a curious gap appears in the arrangement of allegories. All seasons *seem* to be accepted into the flow of Time, but, in fact, the duality inherent in the line of analogies discussed above makes only two seasons necessary: spring and winter. Summer and autumn are absent: the flowers are nowhere shown to develop into fruit. This absence serves as further proof that the universe of the text, however familiar, is familiar in its artificiality, and defies natural order. On the other hand, the same absence calls attention to another analogy in the

text, and another meaning which the allegories may refer to: as the branch is never seen to bear fruit, only blossom, so the body is kept in constant infancy, never allowed to enter adulthood, and always dependent on the mother. Indeed, as Gezari observes, the relationship between the branch and the root (Time and Eternity, body and soul) is spoken about in maternal imagery: what helps the branch to survive is a constant and direct connection with "its parent's kindly bosom" (line 11), from where it receives the milk-like sap which keeps it alive. The infinitely prolonged union between mother and child in "A Farewell to Alexandria" is called to mind, from which not even guilt and sorrow can remove the infant (although these states of mind should not even appear here, as they belong to adult individuality).

As opposed to the poem previously discussed, however, here the union does not kill the infant but lets it (this time ungendered) live on, even grow:

> High it rose—no winged grief could sweep it;
>
> Sin was scared to distance with its shine;
>
> Love, and its own life, had power to keep it
>
> From all wrong—from every blight but thine! (lines 21-24)

Now, in the second spring, neither Sin nor grief (corresponding to Guilt and Sorrow in stanza 3) can harm the branch – it appears stronger, defended by both love (apparently independent of "its own life," and probably springing from the free giving and taking between its surroundings and the branch) and the life coming from its root. What neither can defend the branch from is independent of both Time and, in a heretic reading again, of Sin and grief:

> Cruel Death! The young leaves droop and languish;
>
> Evening's gentle air may still restore—
>
> No! the morning sunshine mocks my anguish—
>
> Time, for me, must never blossom more!
>
> Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
>
> Where that perished sapling used to be;
>
> Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish
>
> That from which it sprung—Eternity. (lines 25-32)

The text never stops puzzling the reader. From the first stanza on, Death has appeared as independent of Time and Eternity, and it does remain so, until the very end. What comes as a surprise is that when Death strikes the branch, it does not fall but remains there, as a mockery of its previous life. The speaker even hopes that the outside world might help to restore it, in a continuation of mutual helpfulness, but those hopes are frustrated in the morning: the outside world, without the connection to the root, now clearly proves to be insufficient for the branch

to survive. To all appearances, the branch perishes because Death cuts its connection with its root, separating Time from Eternity, body from soul – logically, the body remains in the realm of temporality as a "mouldering corpse," and the soul probably returns to its source, perhaps to enter other bodies later. (As to the analogy of root and branch with mother and child: once again, the first separation of infant from mother corresponds with the death of the infant; with no surrogate mother or union to occur now.) This time, however, the "mouldering corpse" will nourish Eternity: their relationship is reversed, and the branch, in a grotesque way, is able to give back in death what it received in its life. Now Eternity needs Time; that is why Gezari calls it a "devourer," which needs corpses to survive (*Last Things* 123); it also appears as the Gothic image of the Terrible Mother who feeds on the corpses of her children (cf. Williams 123).

Rebirth is possible, but not for the branch – the same branch will "never blossom more." Again, the text is distanced from nature, as Rowland observes (not in connection with "Death" specifically but Brontë's late poetry in general), "[u]nlike the cyclical revival in Nature, every *disappearance of a human being,* largely referred to as dying, is irrevocable to the world. [. . .] there could be no gaps in Nature as every form of being is transformed into another form, the *next* form" (226). The organic connection between old life and new life remains, but the two lives are different (Gezari 120). Even more disturbing is the conclusion that if Death needs to strike once to kill but twice to make the branch a corpse, then what is in-between the two? To all appearances, rebirth does follow from death, but not necessarily. Death in the poem can also produce the death-in-life of the branch, unable to bear healthy leaves and flowers, but still occupying its former place.

The text has much closer connections with cultural tradition than it could ever have with nature. In "Death," Brontë's language echoes Burke's definition of beauty again, in images, diction, and sounding. Like in "A Farewell to Alexandria," the text focuses on what is small and pleasing, also fragile and delicate: the leaves, the birds, the flowers, the bees; at one point, the branch even turns into a spray (line 18), much smaller and gentler than it appeared before (cf. Burke 107). Sounds are low (birdsong and the humming of bees), and colours light and soft (cf. 106 and 111-112). If possible, even more careful attention is paid to musicality than in "A Farewell to Alexandria": most words raise favourable associations both with their meaning and sounding. "Shelter," "blossom," "foliage," "restoring," "fervent," or "lavish," for example, show the stylistic strategies of the text in using mostly semi-vowels, liquids, and nasals again, as well as consonant clusters which suggest liquidity. Gezari calls attention to the regularly alternating feminine and masculine endings (123); and the former appears even more as a sign of virtuosity if the reader considers the number of different ways feminine

rhymes are produced: gerunds, adverbs ending in *-ly,* nouns ending in *-ness,* verb phrases ending in *it,* and even bare root words. Additionally, all these words would rhyme even without the final syllables that make them feminine endings.

"Death" is pure fiction, constructed in accordance with aesthetic and metaphysical rules, and, although subverting most rules the text includes, it still remains within the borderlines they mark out. This is the difference between "A slumber did my spirit seal" and "Death": in the latter, fictionality is not the conclusion but the starting point, of which the speaker is (both selves are) aware from the beginning on. There is only one entity (if indeed it can be named as an entity at all) which does not fit in this fictionality, and that entity is the very reason why the poem comes into being: namely, Death. Strangely, although it gives the title of the poem and is continuously evoked throughout the text, Death actually never *enters* the text: its *result* does. As a completely alien force, unimaginable, and also despairingly real, it remains forever outside the realm of time, allegory, and fiction – the realm of language. That is why the intention of the text is to *invite* Death inside its construction.

Very bravely, the speaker addresses Death as a "thou," and keeps talking to it all the time; (s)he makes full use of prosopopeia. Consciously using "the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech" (de Man, "Autobiography" 75-76), (s)he uses language as an incantation; what has been implied in previous poems is now done openly. The borders of the fictional universe stand open for Death to enter – and become fictional itself. The opposite may also happen (the living may enter the realm of the dead [78]), but that solution is, to all appearances, also more than welcome on the speaker's side, who is ready for a self-sacrifice. ([S]he wishes Death to kill the branch, which may easily be interpreted as him/her, as, in line 28, [s]he drops the phrase "Time, for *me,* must never blossom more!" [emphasis added].) If Death arrives and strikes again, it will apparently do just what the speaker wishes: become a mere part of the dichotomic system constructed in the text, and help new life be born. With its maze of allegories arranged into a complex and cleverly arranged pattern, the poem is like a game (a puzzle), with a very high (and completely serious) stake – or like an elaborate trap for Death to fall into. If it does not succeed in its desire, that will not be the speaker's fault.

Death, in Emily Brontë's poetry, does not necessarily appear as separation – what is more, it proves more horrifying if it does not. It is the speakers who wish to remain separated from the experience of death, because they repress either the knowledge that they will have to go through the same experience sooner or later, like in "In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be

laid," or the knowledge that they have inflicted death on the other, like in "A Farewell to Alexandria." The two kinds of knowledge are not necessarily different: another reason for Alexandria's mother fleeing the sight of her daughter's death might well be that she wants to forget about her own mortality, too. Separation within the human world is shown from a different point of view in these poems: it may be not only inevitable but helpful, and as necessary for survival as the community of living creatures. Death may emerge as similar to earthly separation (a community with the dead is hoped to be still possible through memory), but other poems also count with its difference in quality from everything earthly: in "Death," it appears as the only real and the only unimaginable experience. Neither interpretation of death may be valid: all the poems swarm with illusions, sometimes perhaps not even tracked down by the most attentive readers. Not by chance, death causes the most illusions to be created by speakers and readers alike, both in these texts and in others; being one of the experiences (if not *the* experience) most painful, frightening, and sometimes unbearable to face.

Chapter Six:

Separation, mystical desire, love, and death in "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle"

Both literal and figurative seclusion as well as the desire to break the borderlines of the self; the love of finite beings and the need to help the other; death as a threat or as a saviour which leads the self to the final union with presence—most problems that previous chapters dealt with, now emerge in this lengthy narrative poem which I have chosen as a close. As a summary of all the questions before and applying several rhetoric strategies previously discussed, "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle" is not simply a coda for Brontë's poetry (especially not if chronology is taken into consideration) but comes up with different, unique solutions of earlier problems as well.

6. 1. Fragmentation and its consequences

The first problem that emerges at the very moment of starting to read the text is that of wholeness vs. fragmentariness. Even in its manuscript form, the poem cannot help being anything but a fragment separated from a whole (which may not even exist). First, because it is a Gondal poem – part of a story never written –; second, because its characters never appear anywhere else in Brontë's poetry, which makes the text difficult to insert into the Gondal saga.[70] Thus, at the moment of joining the Gondal context, the text is already separated from it; albeit not so forcefully as "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," because this text is included in the *Gondal Notebook.* Fragmentation is multiplied when the publication of and the criticism on "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle" is considered. Among all the poems published in the author's lifetime, this text "suffered" the most severe losses at her hands: to conceal everything that could refer to Gondal, she had to omit twenty-three stanzas of the thirty-eight, slightly modify the remaining fifteen, and add a final stanza, which completely changes the original ending. That is how she created "The Prisoner (A Fragment)," usually placed among her best and most mature work, well known, frequently anthologized, virtually impossible to evade by anyone who studies her poetry – and hardly ever taken seriously in its being part of a longer narrative.

Critics, even if aware that "The Prisoner" belongs to a narrative sequence, generally discard or simply ignore the Gondal plot. Most readings neglect even the remaining plot, and concentrate on the monologue that occupies the largest part of the poem. Thus, implicitly or

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[70] The protagonists are identified as members of noble Gondal families, once friends, but now parted from each other by the civil wars between Royalists and Republicans. Julian M. has become the jailor of his childhood friend A. G. Rochelle (the initials are not explained). She addresses a monologue to him and an unnamed prison guard, which results in Julian falling in love with her and a doubtful rescue from her prison.

explicitly, they claim to finish what Brontë began, and separate the most "valuable" part from the rest, a completely inadequate "framework at this stage of her intellectual life" (Hewish 11). The monologue offers itself to be interpreted as the description of a mystical experience and several critics cite it as ultimate evidence (together with "No coward soul is mine") that Emily Brontë was a mystic. Cutting the stanzas which contain the Gondal plot (from now on referred to as "the Gondal stanzas"), they claim the monologue to be one of the highest achievements in Brontë's mystical poetry (Miles 92, Pykett 55-57, Hardy 99-100, Dickinson 518-519, Drew 229, Dobson 173-174). Sorensen even gives this part a separate title, "The Captive" (48), and values it definitely more than the rest of the poem (albeit not nearly as high as other critics [194]).

Although to Peeck-O'Toole the poem is only "a patchwork of various fragments" (110), with faults in rhythm and banality in diction (105-106), and although Ghnassia regards it as three poems instead of one, both critics take the Gondal plot seriously; so do Rowland, Gezari, and Homans. I can only agree with them in regarding the Gondal stanzas of "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle" as vital. None of these readings can hope to safely insert the text into an "organic" whole and put an end to its fragmentation, but they show that taking the Gondal plot into consideration produces equally authentic and supportable interpretations, very different from the readings that do not pay attention to the manuscript version. (The modified ending confirms this view if nothing else does: in "The Prisoner," the desire of the female protagonist for a transcendent realm is to be fulfilled, and she triumphs over her jailors, while the uncut version shows her rescued but also silenced and bereaved of her vision.) Also, if the Gondal plot is neglected, the first three stanzas are inevitably dropped as well, although they deserve the reader's attention both as an aesthetic achievement and a curious textual twist: they resist being read in a Gondal context, and do not seem to be a part of the narrative at all, yet they prove essential for the understanding of the whole poem. They look as if they were two fragments placed beside each other; at first sight, only one thing connects them, but it does very forcefully indeed: prosody. The first three stanzas and the following thirty-five share a rhythm of iambic hexameters (sometimes varied by broken feet and caesuras but never turning into pentameters) that occurs nowhere else in Brontë's poetry.

Both the first three stanzas (spoken by a lonely and unnamed watcher waiting for a mysterious Wanderer) and Rochelle's monologue appear to choose impatience from between the two possible (and equally guilty) responses to earthly life being "an exile imposed by God" (Miller 183). Both the watcher and Rochelle disobey God's law in desiring to transgress the boundaries assigned for human beings. Rochelle, however, differs from other human beings in Brontë's poetry in that she does not stop at the desire of connecting the earthly and

the divine. Instead, she positively wishes to die: to gain "for short life, eternal liberty" (line 68). Both speakers are bereaved of the chance of finding a solution: the meeting of the watcher and the Wanderer is left suspended, and Rochelle's death is postponed into the future. The fulfilment of their desire is deferred to some obscure and unknown realm beyond the boundaries of the poem,[71] if such a realm exists at all – or, phrased in religious diction: if they are allowed to reach a state of salvation at all.

As the monologue appears to belong to the tradition of mysticism, Miller's theory on the necessity of separation in Brontë's oeuvre comes first to the reader's aid.[72] This theory does explain why Rochelle must remain inside the walls of Julian's house, changing her cold and damp cell to a sickroom, but still closed off from the outside world; or why the watcher is never seen to exit the house either. What it does not explain, however, is the joy in the text, which makes the poem unique in the oeuvre. This joy is to be traced in Rochelle's expecting the messenger of Hope, who, after all, should be "a false and damnable image of communion" (Miller 185-186), but his arrival is accompanied by a sense of peace and harmony instead. In the first three stanzas, in turn, the watcher lives in a safe, warm, and cheerful room, devoid of violence or fear. Against the Methodist strictness doubtlessly representing an overwhelming power in Brontë's poetry, the happiness of these characters may lead to an alternative way of understanding her poems, and even to discovering alternative ways of defying separation.

6. 2. Rochelle's monologue: Methodist separation and mystical union

In order to trace the possibilities inherent in the lack of loss and violence in Rochelle's speech (as opposed to the violence surrounding her as a character in a Gondal story), I intend to begin my interpretation by devoting a close reading to her monologue (stanzas 14-23). (Another reason for such a choice is that it is here I can make the best use of the help other interpretations provide.) I do not wish to claim that Rochelle does not suffer loss; undeniably, as far as social relationships are concerned, she experiences nothing but that. Her parents have been killed, she imprisoned, and now her jailors are insulting her as a pastime. All Rochelle receives from society is abuse – but she does not (or does not let herself) sense her position as that of loss. In fact, she wants to confirm that nothing can harm her. Her prison is not strong enough to break her and hold her: "these are little worth, your bolts and irons strong / And were they forged in steel they could not hold me long" (lines 31-32). For the contempt of a

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[71] Here, the manuscript version appears as less different from "The Prisoner" than it has seemed at first sight: the unnamed girl in "The Prisoner" does not die within the text either; her death is also postponed into a future. Only, this future seems nearer than Rochelle's, because the unnamed girl is left alone in her prison – but nothing guarantees that she will die sooner than Rochelle.
[72] In fact, he writes precious little about "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle" in particular – he only refers to a few stanzas, as examples of his argumentation (183-184 and 200-201) –, but the method he applies to other texts proves fruitful in reading this poem as well.

jailor whom she recognises as a childhood friend, she is even grateful: "insult and contempt I lightly brook from you, / Since those, who vowed away their souls to win my love / Around this living grave like utter strangers move" (lines 58-60). Julian's insults are better than indifference, for he will at least pay attention to her, and thus she gains the opportunity to confirm her triumph over those who have caused her pain.

Subverting the discourse of pain, she claims she would "weep and sue" if her parents were restored to life, but not before (line 44), and also that she is suffering from one loss only: that of a quick death. That is the greatest paradox in her speech: bereaved of the chance to die quickly, what she actually lacks and desires is the most severe loss:

'Nor has one voice been raised to plead that I might die

Not buried under earth but in the open sky

By ball or speedy knife or headsman's skilful blow—

A quick and welcome pang instead of lingering woe! (lines 61-64)

Her desire is explained in her description of her prison, which she also calls a place of death, but without salvation: her cell is a "living grave" (line 60), "buried under earth" instead of "in the open sky" (line 62). In fact, she differentiates between two kinds of death, and hers is the crueller one. To be buried "in the open sky" means the "lawful" opening of boundaries sanctified by the transcendent, whose culturally defined place is the sky, while the death she is sentenced to perpetuates isolation instead of dissolving it. At this point, her monologue corresponds to those Brontë poems which interpret the grave as a prison. Her identity is conserved in a closed place similar to the grave of Julius Brenzaida or the grave foretold to the human speaker of "The Night-Wind"; and that place also causes her pain by weighing her down (in chains) and freezing her, like in the case of the speaker in "The night is darkening round me," or the dying speaker in "In the earth, the earth thou shalt be laid." She retains the logic of these poems but also gives it a twist: instead of interpreting death as imprisonment, she interprets imprisonment as death. (The conclusion of "Sympathy" is not repeated here. Rochelle's death-in-life becomes a source of suffering, not relief, because it includes all troubles inherent in life and death, and dooms her to be stuck in a painful in-betweenness.) She does not choose to set dissolution in nature and/or transcendence as a contrast to her situation, because her desire of transgression is different. The death she desires is not a slow disintegration in the outside world, but "a quick and welcome pang," and even in her mystical vision she pictures the movement from one realm to another as a leap: "Measuring the gulf [her soul] stoops and dares the final bound" (line 84).

She is also different from previously mentioned speakers in that, to all appearances, she gives in to the desire of mystical transgression that the others denounce. She does not stop at

becoming a mediator between the earthly and the transcendent: she longs for death, and regards mystical experience (as well as her suffering) as a preparation she enjoys.

> 'Yet, tell them, Julian, all, I am not doomed to wear
>
> Year after year in gloom and desolate despair;
>
> A messenger of Hope comes every night to me
>
> And offers, for short life, eternal liberty. (lines 65-68)

So far, she only applies the centuries-old discourse of Christian religion, by which she is able to turn her situation upside down, claiming her pains to be a straight road to an immense future happiness, which none of her powerful enemies could even dream of. In this stanza, she hardly says anything guilty of impatience; the "messenger" might as well be interpreted as an allegorical embodiment of a human emotion, which teaches the soul to wait for an uncertain future when God may choose to accept it. Ghnassia claims the following vision to be "of little consequence; its only importance to Rochelle is that it is a harbinger of death" (167). Although I am convinced that the following stanzas are to be taken more seriously than that, her reading still affirms that if Rochelle stopped speaking at this point, so much would suffice absolutely for a triumph over her enemies in a spiritual sphere, and to reverse the situation of jailor and prisoner, without the risk of impatience. As Peeck-O'Toole asserts, from this point on, Julian (together with the warder) is revealed to be a prisoner in a spiritual sense, and he needs a spiritual liberation, which only Rochelle can help him to receive (108). As opposed to their relative freedom, she claims she will participate in "eternal liberty."

Her speech, however, does not stop at this point, nor does she let the "messenger of Hope" remain a pure projection of her emotions. In the next stanza, the messenger receives mediating power between the human and the transcendent (opening the boundaries between realms separated by divine law), and also receives a gender:

> 'He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
>
> With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars;
>
> Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire
>
> And visions rise and change which kill me with desire— (lines 69-73)

The consequence of the messenger receiving a gender is, as Homans's discussion of the poem asserts, that Rochelle adjusts her narrative to the logic of love mysticism. Although she does not appear to be in love with the messenger, she defines him as masculine, and at the same time endows him with power, whereas she pictures herself as passively receiving the visions he brings. (Also, later, she sets up a metonymical sequence of her soul, her body, and her prison [line 88], which implies an identification of her soul as her "true" self within the prison of her body, and feminine, as the tradition of mystical literature dictates.) Connecting

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activity with masculinity and passivity with femininity, she risks losing the visions, which the messenger, "being external, [. . .] can withdraw [. . .] at will" (Homans 110). Setting up such a system of dichotomies, Rochelle forgets that it is her own discourse that gives human features to the messenger, who needs her activity very much (cf. Radnóti 41). He is not even given a voice: *she* is the one who speaks, even if she speaks about her own passivity. In addition, she does not even take any risk by humanising the messenger ("an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity" [de Man, "Autobiography" 75-76]), which, even though he never receives "the power of speech" (76), should still carry the danger of dying (78). She does not take a risk because death is precisely what she wants. What she does risk is, curiously, two extremes at the same time: covering the presence she desires, by applying the strictest rules of a literary tradition, and constructing borderlines as hard to transgress as the walls of her prison cell—and the judgement she will receive after her death, because she very much appears to commit the sin of impatience by the sheer desire to partake in another form of existence.

The latter danger apparently does not trouble her and the former one she dismisses only too easily by claiming that however strong the walls around her are, the "messenger of Hope" is able to break through them to lead her to a place where she feels no pain. There everything is the opposite of earthly violence ("Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire" [line 71]), "[a]nd visions rise and change which kill [her] with desire" (line 72). She claims to depart from earthly life by using the imagery of killing, which she has just called the means of quick death opening a path to the sky. What she longs for differs profoundly from what she desired in previous periods of her life:

> 'Desire for nothing known in my maturer years
>
> When joy grew mad with awe at counting future tears;
>
> When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,
>
> I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm [. . .] (lines 73-76)

When she lived in joy, she was unable to differentiate between sunshine and lightning, which filled her "spirit's sky." She was not separated from the sky; and light, the traditional image of divine existence, was homogeneous in this idyllic past. The grammatical structure of "my spirit's sky" allows two interpretations (it is left undecided if there used to be a special sky for her spirit or her spirit claimed to possess the sky in a general sense); and she refuses to give a clue as to which the reader should choose, which implies that the difference is not relevant – because there was no difference between the general and the individual. She shares her idyllic past with other Brontë characters, whose "eyes are fixed backward in retrospective fascination on some past moment of sovereign joy. Only in that moment were they really alive, really themselves" (Miller 171). In this thesis, such a character was Rosina Alcona, who

used to live happily while united with her husband; or the speaker of "If grief for grief can touch thee," who refers to past periods of happiness with his/her beloved. Yet, even here, Rochelle deviates from the speakers mentioned: her past was definitely not a period of innocence, as she refers to this time as her "maturer years" (line 73); and, perhaps because of that, she does not feel the slightest nostalgia.

In times of joy, she could hardly believe how much suffering she could expect (at least this is one of the possible interpretations of the rather obscure line 74) in later years, so radically cut off from her past, her friends, the sky, and light itself, in the isolation of a dark and cold dungeon. (Once more, the dungeon, as a prison under the earth, is associated with earthly existence and absolute seclusion in Brontë's poetry, just like it was in "High waving heather.") At the same time, however, she was also completely ignorant of the bliss she might reach *after* entering the state of isolation. In that, Rochelle becomes atypical in the oeuvre, as she does *not* yearn for her lost past, and does not react with violence to her loss either (cf. Miller 171). She aims at finding another, presumably higher kind of happiness. So far her rhetorical strategy has been to use the sign system of mysticism, and to unravel meanings of signs arranged in a line: the feminine soul within the body, which keeps it imprisoned; the body, in turn, suffering in a dungeon resembling a living grave; the masculine visitant leading her out to different realms, first to nature, then, when even nature only turns out to be another sign system, to encounter visions of a realm even beyond that. As opposed to the speaker of "The night is darkening round me," whose situation became more desperate when finding out that the walls around are multiplied, Rochelle breaks through each layer of signification with profound trust and faith in that at one point signification will end and she will encounter presence. Surprisingly, she proves right. From line 77 on, Methodist condemnation of mysticism completely neglected, she starts to picture a mystical experience proper (albeit still using language, which may raise doubts in the reader, but apparently not in her).

"But first a hush of peace, a soundless calm descends" (line 77). Mystical experience arrives in silence (cf. Radnóti 24) and, as her spatial metaphor of descending suggests, from the traditional place of transcendence: the sky, filled with homogeneous light in Rochelle's past and now hidden by the dungeon walls. Only the messenger of Hope is able to show her the sky again, clear, *open,* cloudless (uncovered), and full of stars; and bring her the silent peace that prefigures the death she longs for. She disrupts the discourse of Methodism in the following line: in her peace "The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends" (line 78). She disconnects mysticism and impatience by making sure that struggle and impatience should belong to the world of isolation, which she leaves behind, apparently together with the discourse of Methodism, to enter the realm of silence and tranquillity. Silence is emphasized

again: "Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony" (line 79), and, in the next line, she goes as far as stating to have already left earthly existence ("earth was lost to me"), while she is obviously still alive. At this complete fusion of earthly and transcendent, Rochelle has proceeded far enough in the realm of mysticism to reach the object of her desire.

> 'Then dawns the Invisible, the Unseen its truth reveals;
>
> My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels—
>
> Its wings are almost free, its home, its harbour found;
>
> Measuring the gulf it stoops and dares the final bound! (lines 81-84)

She loses all sense of the body, and beholds truth, but, at that point, disrupts her own text, too. The experience is never described. Rochelle refuses to give a name to the power she meets, and speaks negatively: "the Invisible," "the Unseen."[73] Even Sorensen, who does not value the monologue too highly (194), refers to Rochelle's paradoxical vision (paradoxical, because, apparently, she cannot *see* it) as "a touchstone of mysticism" (71), whatever she means by that. Knowing that she is unable to find words for transcendence, Rochelle does not even try; as opposed to the transgressive power of line 80, blurring the boundaries between the human and the transcendent, now the same boundaries grow to be confirmed again. Although the negative description of line 81, however ambiguous, may still be considered an act of transgression, separation returns in the following lines.

Seemingly, in lines 83-84, Rochelle joins a mystical discourse again, by using the language of homecoming. In accordance with the discourse of Neo-Platonism (and practically reciting Plotinus's ideology), she assumes that her "inward essence" is only temporarily cast into the depths of earthly life to live in the painful dungeon of the body, for it actually originated in the realm of the transcendent, where it longs to get back (cf. Sorensen 75-81). Her desire, however, is unfulfilled: transcendence is *almost* found, which means that it is *not* reached after all. The Unseen may well reveal its truth, but definitely not in order to allow the human subject to participate in it. Not by chance, the moment of revelation, which, in the tradition of mysticism, should lead to the silencing or at least reduction of human expression (Radnóti 19), produces the very opposite of reduction: prattle.

As mentioned previously, Rochelle uses several metaphoric systems and seems to positively accumulate words instead of getting rid of them, which, looking back from the failure in line 84, gains a special significance. She launches by finding two words for transcendence in line 81. Then, in lines 82-84, she uses the most various metaphors for both transcendence and the human soul. First, she calls the soul her "inward essence"; then, in

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[73] By which, of course, she does create names; negative theology affirms that denials are also products of human signification, and therefore have no more chance to express the transcendental than positive statements.

rapid succession, she identifies it with a bird, a person returning home, and a ship reaching its harbour, while transcendence is identified with the home and the harbour respectively. (All images are taken from mystical tradition [cf. Sorensen 77-78], but if she only wished to join that tradition, she would not need all the metaphors; one would suffice. To all appearances, she wants to use the discourse of mysticism for a much different purpose.) Finally, the soul becomes another person, who wishes to leap over a gulf to a place beyond, which is in turn identified with transcendence. None of these phrases are able or allowed to fit their referents, but left behind at the moment of uttering them; they become interchangeable, and none of them proves to be authentic; word and meaning, the level of (human) language and the level of transcendence are shown to be forced apart. Even the ingenious pun of "the final bound" in line 84, which appears to be transgression itself in both referring to the boundary and the act of bounding that crosses it – even this would not be possible without the gap between word and meaning, which makes it possible for several meanings being connected to the same word, instead of a safe identification.

After all the gaps and uncertainty revealed in a realm which should be absolutely free of both, the following lines make separation explicit by depicting the intense pains of waking in the prison cell:

> 'Oh, dreadful is the check—intense the agony
> When the ear begins to hear and the eye begins to see;
> When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again,
> The soul to feel the flesh and the flesh to feel the chain! (lines 85-89)

She perceives her body bound together with her pain: the moment when her senses start functioning coincides with the recognition of dread, misery, and confinement. And yet, at that very moment, she can switch back to mysticism again. Associating the body so closely with pain and imprisonment, she rejoins the tradition of mystical literature, which interprets the body as the dungeon of the soul.[74] As, according to this tradition, the soul is able to escape the body, so the prisoner is able to escape the prison, and vice versa – the two halves of the analogy mutually fortify each other. Also, she apparently denies her body by identifying it with her dungeon and, in turn, identifies herself with her soul. As here she returns to the image of imprisonment, and, at the same time, isolation, she is also able to find a connection between mysticism and Methodism:

> 'Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
> The more that anguish racks the earlier it will bless;

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[74] And as she followed the signification of ascension, leading her from within her imprisonment to presence in the previous stanzas, now she uses the same logic backwards, descending: first, the soul feels its prison of the body again, then the body feels its literal prison around.

And robed in fires of Hell, or bright with heavenly shine,

If it but herald Death, the vision is divine'— (lines 89-92)

Her previous transgressions between the two conceptual systems lead to a reconciliation, at least for the moment: she admits to being painfully separated from transcendence, and assures her audience (her jailors) that she does not mind her pain, which they caused her. This is the point where she defies the power of her jailors most perfectly, by claiming that they can cause her no harm; everything the jailors do will only help her get what she wants. Suffering (both of the body and soul), in mysticism, is only a necessary preparation for melting into the transcendent, and therefore welcome (cf. János 110-113); in Methodism, it is a means of destroying mortal existence and gain a chance of salvation in death (Miller 198). Different kinds of light (in fact, diametrical opposites) are connected again in line 91: the vision appears either "in fires of hell" or "heavenly shine," but this time their connection does not involve the earlier homogeneity. In the realm of language and interchangeability, such experience of unification is impossible, which is also shown by the fact that light does not appear as an integral part of the vision. "[R]obed in fires of Hell, or bright with heavenly shine": in both cases, light is only an envelope or even a mask. Without doubt, neither heaven nor hell can appear as presence on earth, which is only confirmed by the fact that what is called their light works as a screen separating the vision from the human seer.

Within the realm of separation, both heaven and hell necessarily turn into allegories: linguistic constructions which are supposed to hide the realm of meaning that they stand for. They agree only in one feature: as allegories, they imply death. Both have a lethal power, and, through death, both have a chance to lead to transcendence. Salvation is given by God at will (Miller 185), and thus, from the aspect of salvation, it is all the same how a human being acts on earth; the act which brings death closer is best. Longing for death, and having all the means to reach it, Rochelle may well refuse to be broken by pain and be happy, having left behind the most basic human fear. She does not need to be violent either; all the violence she needs is done to her and accelerates the process of her dying. She is fully justified to call the vision "divine," whether wrapped in the light of an allegorical heaven or hell. Still, her identification of the vision with divine existence proves deceptive, for, at the moment of this identification, she has, in fact, already made sure that the vision in her text should be separated from transcendence. In the same line, she has turned it into a potential *herald* of death, and thus made it an earthly image (a mediator) preceding the final union.

Rochelle suffers from the necessary split between language and transcendence, but she accepts the pain without any complaint. At the end of her monologue, she confines all the images she uses to where they belong: the realm of language, strictly and admittedly separated

from the spiritual realm; and, thereby, she justifies her own confinement as well. The tradition (or rather traditions) of mysticism cannot deny that, by definition, they belong to the realm of language, and this universe of temporality and mediation is unable to reach the realm of timelessness and immediacy. The prattle of language produces humble words, repeated and substituted for each other, connected only to each other, and definitely not to transcendence. Closely identifying the linguistic with the human and the unutterable with the transcendent, from line 81 on, she creates a strict hierarchical system of the two levels, with borderlines so impermeable as if she wanted to make the task of transgression she has assigned for herself deliberately hard. Insisting on keeping the gap wide between the earthly and the transcendent, she makes it exceedingly difficult for her soul to "dare the final bound" over the gulf (line 84), as she risks a complete loss of the referent of her words.

6. 3. The frame story: allegory as a servant and death without salvation

The dilemma that Rochelle has to face throughout her monologue turns out to be essentially linguistic; but in a peculiar way, for her language is closely connected to faith and morality as well. In order to convince her jailors about the validity (and superior power) of her existence, she should be explicit and definite in asserting that she has access to a realm beyond and prior to language, which they are bereaved of. At the same time, communicating her experience implies associating it with the human *and* linguistic, which is both impossible and forbidden. Religious texts in general, mystical and Methodist texts in particular, have always been intensely aware of the distance between word and meaning.

As mentioned previously, the starting point of every mystical text is that the experience they wish to utter is completely alien from human experience and language (Radnóti 10 and Sorensen 2). Mystical texts thus openly reflect on the problems every literary work has to cope with. They cannot help exploring the possibilities and limits of poetic expression, and the first that they reveal in the operation of language is its allegorical nature (Radnóti 28). Rochelle's monologue joins the pre-Romantic tradition in that she trusts the allegories she creates but does not pretend that her text is able to convey meaning in an authentic way. She uses the allegory of humility, already seen in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light"; admitting that she is unable to bridge the gap between sign and meaning (corresponding to the distance between divine perfection and human peccability on the level of metaphysics). The only aim of such an allegory is to obey and serve the transcendence it hopes to represent, which involves an act of faith in a realm prior to itself, a conviction "in which the categories of verification and falsification have no role to play" (Hart 101). On the other hand, the concept of allegory used in Methodist writing involves a moral judgement: the sanctified prohibition

of connecting (human) language to transcendence. God has abandoned the created world (fallen and inevitably guilty), and allegory demonstrates the basic dilemma of human existence: whether trying to reach beyond its boundaries or closing in itself, allegory suffers in an isolation burdened by being associated with evil.

Rochelle does not lack the faith that her words may mean transcendence, but she cannot possibly be sure about that, and she is also aware that if she draws her words too close to transcendence, she commits a sin that will thrust her even further from the realm she yearns for. Inverting her situation, she wants to show that her prison (and, through that, her jailors) is absolutely insignificant, but she only arrives at an expansion of her existence as a prisoner, instead of breaking out of it. Her monologue is not left to stand in itself, experimenting with possibilities of escaping isolation; paradoxically, the fact that the monologue is *not* isolated but part of a narrative, revokes its results. Her speech does not make Julian leave her and let her die but fall in love with her and take her out of the dungeon. That, at first sight, looks like an ingeniously effective alternative to Rochelle's slow and painful strife for breaking out of imprisonment. Soon, however, it turns out that if Julian should want to invent such an alternative solution at all, he could not make a bigger mistake, for his castle, in fact, turns out to be just a larger prison. He breaks Rochelle's chains only to go on to call his castle a cage:

> And I was over-blest—aye, more than I could dream
>
> When, faint, she turned aside from noon's unwonted beam;
>
> When though the cage was wide—the heaven around it lay—
>
> Its pinion would not waft my wounded dove away— (lines 129-132)

Evidently, if Julian has ever believed he could free Rochelle at all, at this moment he is only too conscious that his breaking of the chains was a mere delusion of freedom. He even uses the bird imagery (connected to the desire of spiritual liberty in Rochelle's monologue) in tropes of new imprisonment; namely, the metaphor in the stanza above and the simile quoted below:

> Then like a tender child whose hand did just enfold
>
> Safe in its eager grasp, a bird it wept to hold
>
> When pierced with one wild glance from the troubled hazel eye
>
> It gushes into tears and lets its treasure fly
>
> [. . .]
>
> If I should break the chain, I felt my bird would go (lines 113-116 and 119)

Yet, for some reason, Rochelle does not use the opportunity to escape. From this point of view, in lines 129-132, quoted above, Julian speaks in an especially suspicious way. To all appearances, he gives her all she has desired: a wide heaven and a sky full of light; an open

space where she could soar; and yet, as he tells us, she stays inside. Homans explains her behaviour with her illness (119), and she must indeed be very ill if she needs thirteen weeks of nursing (line 133). Considering, however, how much she wanted to die "in the open sky," it is even more unaccountable why she does not leave the castle, precisely because she is so seriously ill, and meet her death below the heaven that lies around. That is what might raise suspicion in the reader that Julian might be lying about making it possible for her to escape. In this case, the reader's task is over, as, in the case of a deliberate lie, there is no way to create a valid interpretation of the text. There is, however, another possibility, also worth considering: that Rochelle remains in Julian's castle *out of her own will.* This apparent inconsistence in Rochelle's behaviour is the reason for several critics to discard the Gondal stanzas and accept the version that ends with the girl expecting death as more convincing. Hardy considers her return to earthly life as practically a betrayal of her visions (100). Ghnassia asserts that her monologue simply voices her desire to be released from prison, "which at that moment could come only through death" (169), but as soon as she gains another chance which does not imply death, she is eager to choose the other alternative (167). In Rowland's and Peeck-O'Toole's view she is positively asking for help, and only pretends to desire death because she wants to move her jailors to compassion (263 and 108). It is Homans that observes an important detail which slips the attention of other critics: that it is *not* Rochelle who tells the reader about the change in her desires.

> I took the proffered charge; the captive's drooping lid
>
> Beneath its shady lash a sudden lightning hid
>
> Earth's hope was not so dead heaven's home was not so dear
>
> I read it in that flash of longing quelled by fear (lines 109-112)

"Rochelle seems delighted when the jailor's departure makes it possible for Julian to free her, but for this knowledge we are dependent on Julian's own untrustworthy reading of her expression, because *she never speaks again* after finishing her inspired description of the vision of death" (Homans 119, emphasis added). She only appears as "the object of his self-serving sacrifice and the ground for his self-praise" (118), when he stays at home at times of war to nurse her back to life, and is therefore scorned by his kinsmen (lines 137-148).

Homans's argumentation, however convincing in other respects, does not explain why Rochelle does not leave Julian's house, which would equal suicide in her state of health. The text could easily provide a reason, if it continued with Rochelle suddenly returning Julian's love – the "warm unasked embrace" and "the smile of grateful joy" might even suggest that (lines 127-128), although they are, again, related by Julian only. In line 152, however, even he cannot deny that Rochelle's gratefulness only changes into love after thirteen weeks. Her

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reason for staying in thus remains obscure. If Julian does not deceive the reader by saying that he made it possible for her to escape, the only answer remains that she wants to stay within. This renouncement of what she desired above all may not necessarily be a self-contradiction, even less a self-betrayal. On the contrary: her choice to close herself off (if, indeed, it *is* a choice) may as well spring from her realisation that the distance between her and heaven will only grow, however hard she wants to bridge it, and however transgressive she proves in blending mystical and Methodist discourses. So, she resigns herself to the inevitable, and commits the sin of laziness (cf. Miller 184). Now she (together with Julian) chooses to widen the gap which she used to wish to close, and separates herself deliberately from transcendence by locking herself up in the allegorical space of the castle.

This behaviour, however, apart from leading to perdition, carries serious dangers for life on earth, too. Word and meaning cannot touch each other by any means, but if they are also forced apart deliberately, then Brontë's poems conclude with isolation and paralysis. This is the danger of confirming separation in her poetry: borderlines, if the subject does not desire to transgress them, tend to freeze. By extending her prison, her situation (and Julian's) will equal physical death: the death that does not lead to salvation; the grave that does not let the body dissolve but keeps it conserved. In fact, she remains in the state of death-in-life, closed in a space which displays strength to the outside world but is a place of pain inside. During the following weeks (in fact, the rest of the text from line 133 to the very end) she is confined to a sick-room, and the pains of the illness she suffers from are now futile, for she is distanced from salvation instead of approaching it. Julian remains a jailor, guarding her jealously from the death that could remove her ("I guarded her by day and guarded her by night / While [. . .] Death gazed greedily" [lines 134-135]), and keeps her silenced, like a corpse. "Life with Julian is to be mute" (Homans 119); not only because he silences her, but also because they cannot possibly enter a dialogue, being hopelessly separated from each other. (Not by chance, the poem lets both characters speak, but both in *monologues;* never expecting answers.) The reader does not learn whether she regains her health or not; the last line of the poem only confirms that she returns Julian's love but there is not a word about the ceasing of her pain. Paradoxically, while she stayed in the subterranean space of her "living grave," she had at least a chance to be saved to gain "eternal liberty," but after her release she gets caught in a grave that conserves her misery even more hopelessly.

The only difference between other Brontë characters in the same state and Rochelle is that she is not left alone. Julian, although he should go to war (and, suggestively, fight for "Freedom" [line 146]), confines himself, too, to Rochelle's bedside, out of his own will again. His death is postponed together with hers (cf. line 140), and their chances to reach the outside

world are lost in every sense. On a metaphysical level, they cut themselves off from transcendence. On the level of the plot, they lock themselves in, detached from other people. On a textual level, this abandonment divides them from the Gondal context: as Julian does not go with his kinsmen, the reader does not receive any information either on the war or, for that matter, Julian's family. The reader never knows when the war takes place, what it has to do with the main events of the Gondal saga, and what role Julian's family plays in the history of Gondal (except that, fighting for freedom, they must be Republicans). Within the text, in fact, there is no undeniable evidence that the poem is connected to Gondal at all. Only the war (which is not told) counts as a connection, and the author's special wish to cut the poem radically (which she only did to Gondal poems). So, paradoxically, it is two acts of violence committed *outside* the text that help readers resettle the poem, however imperfectly, in the context of Gondal.

By choosing to remain in the allegorical castle, Julian and Rochelle lose the chance to gain a fixed identity and an existence within historical time. They get caught in the poem named after them. They belong only to each other and nobody else – they only appear in the text bearing their names in its title and nowhere else. There is, however, a peculiar feature of their isolation: it can be *shared.* As fellow-sufferers isolated among the same walls (where there are other "lives wasting away," too), they join the earthly creatures sharing their solitude in "And like myself lone wholly lone" and "Sympathy." Whether Rochelle asks for help or not, Julian provides it, and provides it in the only way finite beings are able to do. First, he only contemplates her, then rescues her from the prison that would kill her, but makes sure both he and she remain in isolation, and thus saves her life.

He is not in the least a faultless character; I completely agree with Homans in that he is self-centred, keeps her in a prison, only a bit more comfortable than her previous cell, and silences her (118-119). On the other hand, he inserts Rochelle's monologue in the middle of his own – without him quoting her, the reader would never learn about her words. He only takes care to keep their voices apart, if not by the most justifiable means. Rowland affirms that he opens his mind to listen to her (263), and he also opens his text to let her speak, if only for a few stanzas. His "righteous and victorious lifestyle" changes at her influence (260) and he needs Rochelle as much as she needs him to survive; that is why he guards and nurses her. He never asks her if she wants help or not, and his unselfishness is at least questionable when he saves her and claims to expect no love in return, as he later defines himself as her anxious and jealous guard (lines 133-134) – yet, by keeping their voices apart, he also maintains her otherness (cf. 263). Thus, in the end of the poem, Julian and Rochelle turn into a community of hopelessly finite beings, unable to enter into a dialogue, but still living side by side.

Accordingly, their sense of belonging together has nothing to do with the faith in a future union with transcendence any more – in that, their universe is different from that of "And like myself lone wholly lone" or "Aye there it is!" Their world is defined by a shared solitude of earthly creatures, living in pain and perhaps (but only perhaps) able to help each other.

Their love is a far cry from what "remembrance" brings back to Rosina, or what the speaker of "If grief for grief can touch thee" so fervently prays for. It is anything but perfect union, even in a social sense: Gezari points out that, instead of ending in marriage, their life remains "outside domestic comforts, private yet open and ongoing, and lacking an end or a consummation" (76). I am not sure what she means by claiming that their shared life is "open"; as they most certainly live on in a closed space, I could only associate openness with the lack of "an end or a consummation." Even this openness, however, raises further questions and uncertainties in the previous line of interpretation: in this respect, indeed, the narrative is far from being closed; especially as, precisely because of their isolation, their story can still join a context within the oeuvre. Their parallel monologues never become a dialogue, but they do manage to establish connections with several other pieces of Brontë's poetry; as well as another literary context which accepts the poem much more easily, if the plot is taken in a different consideration.

6. 4. The frame story: Gothic-grotesque transgressions

The relationship of the poem with the Gondal saga remains obscure, leaving the poem isolated. On the other hand, its isolation hardly stops the poem from being inserted into the Gothic tradition. The narrative of a beautiful, young, and abused heroine, whom the villain closes in an underground cell for the hero (in this case identical with the villain, miraculously transformed) to rescue, is a Gothic story. The dungeon is the *par excellence* Gothic space of suffering, displaying darkly grotesque features. The very image of her living death "in the dungeon crypts" (line 13), whose air freezes the blood (line 102), and whose floor is made of dank flagstones (line 95), recalls Bakhtin's definition of the grotesque. The aesthetic category classified as belonging to the disruption of order, to the transgression of borderlines, to time, change, and imperfection (*Rabelais* 17-18), to materiality and the changing body (27), and, above all, laughter – in short, the grotesque, is centred on fear and satiric (diabolic) humour when it occurs in the Gothic (47-48).[75] Accordingly, in the first part of the poem, Rochelle has to endure the evil mockery of Julian and the warder:

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[75] Mikhail Bakhtin usually mentions this "dark grotesque" only as a counterpoint to the medieval and Renaissance grotesque that he deals with in his books, but Wolfgang Kayser devoted a whole book to the grotesque since the second half of the 18th century. He puts emphasis on the ridiculous and the horrifying as the

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim 'Shall I be won to hear

Dost think fond, dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy prayer?

Or, better still, wilt melt my master's heart with groans?

Ah sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones!—

'My master's voice is low, his aspect bland and kind

But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind:

And I am rough and rude, yet, not more rough to see

Than is the hidden ghost which has its home in me!' (lines 33-40)

The two men turn into grotesque figures, transgressing the borderlines between human forms and stones (lines 35-38). The warder even reflects on the infernal side of the grotesque: "Dost think fond, dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy prayer?" (line 34). Mocking God's role in a subterranean world, he turns into a parodiser of God's work: a devil.

Curiously, however, the grotesque does not appear to affect Rochelle. She remains practically ethereal: her face is "as soft and mild / As sculptured marble saint or slumbering, unweaned child" (lines 25-26), her hair is a "floating golden cloud" (line 48), and no other part of her body is mentioned, except for her hands. Her airiness defies her jailors in their reified bodies. Her faith, inseparable from her denial of the body, helps her to make a breach in her Gothic prison, if not to ruin it completely. Faith cancels fear, "death and darkness enable the apprehension of a transcendent and immanent brilliance" (Botting 33-34). The language she constructs makes the human, the linguistic, and the allegorical interchangeable and strictly distinguished from transcendence; and all the mysticism in her monologue is unable to break the division she sets for herself. Nevertheless, mysticism is still *there* in her monologue, as a transgressive potential. It is through repeating mystical diction that she can enter the community of past mystics and, right by the repetition of well-known forms, ensure their tacit understanding (cf. Radnóti 43). Should she take mysticism absolutely seriously and believe in a union of her soul and transcendence here on earth, she could even ruin the Gothic discourse of disintegration, all so suddenly transformed into the plot of continuity that mystics seek to establish. She, however, although her text owes much to mysticism, does not believe in continuity at all, and she even uses the very same linguistic strategies of separation that her dungeon is constructed of. The only weapon she can turn powerfully against the Gothic is that in the middle of a Gothic story, she, the Gothic heroine, has no *fear*. The mystical experience fills her with wonder, the restraints of Methodism warn her to take care, but neither can raise

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basic components of the grotesque (31), together with fear, alienation (51), insecurity (52), pain (54), and meaninglessness (61).

fear in her. Now, facing a Gothic threat, she is still able to refuse to participate in this most basic Gothic emotion, which proves almost fatal for the Gothic plot, and absolutely fatal for the character of the warder. Stone-like and diabolic before her monologue, he suddenly turns out to be childishly ridiculous after her testimony of faith and lack of fear: he starts shivering, swearing, *peevishly* complaining of cold and moisture (lines 100-103), and is all too easily eluded a few stanzas later.

At a closer look, however, Rochelle proves to be closer to the Gothic tradition than she seems to be, right because of the grotesque failing to touch her. The first reason is her airiness, which Julian takes good care to emphasise in his description, and which would turn her into a Gothic heroine if nothing else did. She reminds him of a sleeping infant, a marble statue, or a cloud of gold (lines 25-28 and 48); she is pictured as innocent, soft, mild, airy – and, above all, passive: in short, bearing all the features "of the persecuted Gothic maiden" (McMillen Conger 93). If it was only Julian that provided such a description, she could defy him by speaking up (as opposed to Gothic heroines, she does have an individual voice), but, in fact, she also pictures herself as submissive and (physically) never even trying to resist the violence that surrounds and threatens her. Instead, she concentrates her strength in her mind, and gains such a spiritual and intellectual independence as could never characterise Gothic heroines, who are not allowed to reach a proper and independent adulthood (cf. 94).

Syndy McMillen Conger, in a comparative study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic novels, interprets the elder Catherine of *Wuthering Heights* as a subversive heroine, complex and even bearing features of the heroine's opposite: the femme fatale. Rochelle does not grow into such a powerfully drawn character, but she does become a complex personality as soon as she is given a voice. Retaining all her airiness and physical submissiveness, she claims to have access (if only an indirect and paradoxical one) to a different realm of "eternal liberty," which she is promised to gain soon. In the shortened and published version of the poem, her monologue proves strong enough to defeat the Gothic plot: in "The Prisoner," no one thinks of turning her back into a Gothic heroine by rescuing her.

On the other hand, the Gothic plot of "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle" does connect very different, even uncanny associations to Rochelle (as well as her monologue); both Julian and herself contribute to elaborating on this other aspect of her character. Julian does his share in referring to her childhood. Thus, he opposes the Gothic tradition not only because it is uncommon for a heroine to appear "not as a marriageable young woman but a child" (McMillen Conger 92), but also, and mostly, because she is also pictured as anything but disciplined and obedient. Instead, she becomes a "[t]oo blithe, too loving Child, too warmly, wildly gay" (line 51): full of exaggerations, overflowing with emotion instead of harnessing it

(and quite like Catherine as a child). Rochelle questions her perfect innocence not by adding something from outside the Gothic tradition, but by referring to something very much part of that tradition, but hardly belonging to the Gothic heroine. The first, very faint trace of such subversion occurs when she voices her desire of a quick death. I have already quoted the following stanza, but have not yet focused on the ways of death she enumerates:

> 'Nor has one voice been raised to plead that I might die
>
> Not buried under earth but in the open sky
>
> By ball or speedy knife or headsman's skilful blow—
>
> A quick and welcome pang instead of lingering woe! (lines 61-64)

Stabbed with a knife, beheaded, or shot with a (silver) bullet: this is how, according to Gothic tradition, a vampire can be killed. I do not in the least wish to turn Rochelle into a vampire; I would not be able to, even if I wanted to, as nothing else in the text raises the same possibility again. I only intend to use this passage to support a reading which interprets her as different from a Gothic heroine and shows her "nocturnal" side to be always there, lurking in the background. She lives in the dark, which may be another reason why she does not escape: accustomed to darkness, she has to turn "aside from noon's unwonted beam" (line 130). Even her monologue gains uncanny overtones in such a context: precisely as she never defines the realm she desires to enter, the reader can never be sure if it is the Kingdom of God at all. Every night she has a visitor; a masculine one, however spiritualised; and, if the holiness of the realm he arrives from is so doubtful, he can easily be identified with the daemon lover of Gothic stories.[76] Also, as he is a messenger not only of hope but also of approaching death, he is associated with the Death gazing "greedily" in line 135: another daemon lover, who wants to snatch Rochelle from Julian. (Hope, in turn, is separated from daemons in the same stanza: as the only faithful friend of Julian, it helps him in his fight against death and society [line 136].) To all appearances, Rochelle prefers these daemon lovers to Julian for quite a long time (cf. McMillen Conger 98), and only after thirteen weeks does she decide to choose human love. These "nocturnal" features almost turn her into a femme fatale; yet, even in this potentially transgressive role she only experiences the limitations belonging to the role: the inability to face daylight, and the separation from both the messenger and death.

In the context of the Gothic, both characters gain complexity; which does not discard the previous interpretations at all, only questions them. Neither Julian nor Rochelle can be seen one-sidedly: they are not merely a selfish tyrant and an oppressed but strong-minded

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[76] Even if the messenger of Hope *is* interpreted as belonging to the mystical tradition instead of the Gothic, the monologue, indirectly, becomes associated with the Gothic plot. It is Rochelle's *faith,* voiced in her speech, that makes Julian fall in love with her, and thus it serves as an instrument to draw her into the Gothic tradition of romance and rescue.

prisoner, as critics generally consider them. Nor can I fully agree with Rowland, who regards Rochelle as daemonic (262), because she admits to a "ghostly and uncontrollable yearning for freedom and [. . .] an unholy union with her visitant – the wind" (262) every night; and Julian as a self-denying altruist who "demonstrates true care" in a "spontaneous act of benevolence" (264). Both characters carry a conservative and a subversive potential, adapting to traditions and giving them constant twists. The ease with which they can switch back and forth between different roles is demonstrated in the change in Julian's mind when he takes Rochelle out of prison. Beside her sick-bed, he renounces the role he should play (the soldier's role, one of the roles regarded as absolutely masculine) and takes on the feminine role of a nurse.

They never transgress the borderlines which materialise as the walls of Julian's house (and the text of the poem). Within those borderlines they can move with the relative freedom of mortal beings (as relative as the freedom of Rochelle, when she leaves her cell); although their cleverly performed transgressive strategies provide them with more freedom than other Brontë characters enjoy. Still, as human beings, they are incapable of escaping the prison of allegory into "eternal liberty." A different potential, however, might still be lurking in the text; there is one path left that I have not tried yet: the first three stanzas, which have remained to be examined as the conclusion to this chapter.

6. 5. The beginning: the possibility of a subversive intimacy

The first three stanzas, although they should serve as an introduction to the narrative, do not seem to have anything to do with the poem at all; they bear similar features to Rochelle's monologue, but there is nothing to connect them to the frame story. Possibly because of that, they received more critical attention than the frame story, but just because they do not seem to belong to the poem, they have frequently been simply forgotten in discussions. Quite a few editions, sometimes even critical editions, do not even print them together with the rest of the poem, but keep them separate or omit them altogether. Yet I argue that they are indispensable in understanding the text, and, paradoxically, they are so important right because they do not seem to belong. That is why I chose to quote them in full here:

> Silent is the House—all are laid asleep;
> One, alone, looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep;
> Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
> That whirls the wildering drifts and bends the groaning trees—
>
> Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor
> Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door

> The little lamp burns straight; its rays shoot strong and far
>
> I trim it well to be the Wanderer's guiding-star—
>
> Frown, my haughty sire; chide, my angry Dame;
>
> Set your slaves to spy, threaten me with shame;
>
> But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know
>
> What angel nightly tracks that waste of winter snow—

The "I" of these stanzas, if not identified with the author, is regarded as Julian expecting the arrival of Rochelle in Brontë criticism. Thus, these stanzas provide a frame for the main narrative, in which Julian tells the story of their love retrospectively. That is why Peeck-O'Toole can assert that in these stanzas Julian and Rochelle "each play the other's roles and so become each other's equivalents" (117). Rochelle (also taking on the messenger of Hope's role) arrives from the outside world to Julian, enclosed in a room with hostile forces around (116). Gezari agrees with Peeck-O'Toole, and also identifies the Wanderer as the free spirit Rochelle longed to become, entering Julian's room "more like a dream than like an earthly lover" (77). On the other hand, in Homans's analysis, the speaker becomes the female poet (the author) and the Wanderer a male figure, a source of imaginative experience (122).

In short, the speaker, like so many Brontë speakers, appears as both masculine and feminine, male or female – or neither. Not by chance, the only time the speaker should be referred to in the third person, the text refuses to use a gendered pronoun, but uses the neutral "one" instead (line 2). The stanzas *are* connected to the rest of the poem, but not by the continuity of the speaking voice, as Peeck-O'Toole's or Gezari's interpretation suggests. On the contrary: the two parts of the text meet in the *dis*continuity that most readings mention but none seems to take seriously. They are connected by *reflection,* which implies radical separation as well as similarity, and the strict boundary of the mirror; thus, *any* kind of continuity between the parts is out of question.

First of all, these stanzas allow an exchange of roles similar to (but not identical with) what goes on in Julian's narrative, in that the impersonality of the speaker lets anyone enter its position. Second, this part lets itself be inserted in the tradition of mystical literature in much the same way as Rochelle's monologue. The section is set in a silent House (with a capital H, which draws attention to a possible allegorical meaning), where everybody is asleep, and only "one" is awake to wait for the "angel" or "Wanderer," who is to arrive from the winter night (the image of death in Homans's view [120]). The scene allows the reader to compose an almost flawless mystical reading, even recalling the imagery of St. John of the Cross: the body, whose carnal desires, so watchful during the day to pull the soul back (that is, guarding

the House), are asleep at the night of mystical trysts that hides the lovers, and the soul can escape freely to meet the heavenly (angelic!) beloved. All the silent houses, rooms, and halls in Brontë's poems are repeated now, with the unsexed/ungendered impersonality of the speakers; as well as the visitant (always approaching but never arriving), and the image of the winter night. While recalling other texts in the oeuvre, a mirror image of Rochelle's dungeon is also drawn here, with the mystical visitant expected to help the soul escape its prison. Their encounter is never described (it might take place in the *silence* between line 12 and line 13), just as Rochelle never reaches the realm she desires; or, for that matter, the couple is never seen to be married and live happily ever after.

The flaw in the discourse of mysticism – and the radical difference which represents the exchange of sides in the mirror – occurs in the absolute *absence* of the desire to leave the room. The "one" does not in the least want to escape – (s)he is waiting for the angel to *enter* instead. The description of the room makes that clear enough: subverting the image of the cold, dark, and damp cell that Rochelle lives in, this room is warm and friendly, well closed to keep out the cold (and the *wind,* so much expected by Rochelle in her prison), and well lit to serve as a guiding-light for the Wanderer, who will arrive as a guest. Consequently, the visited one must be at *home.* At home on earth, and not in the realm where the Wanderer probably comes from. The Wanderer might even get lost without the lamp in the window (cf. Homans 120), and thus, although far from being passive, (s)he also requires the activity of the visited one (cf. Peeck-O'Toole 119).

That is how the first three stanzas turn out to be a mirror image of the rest of the poem. They *reflect* on the uses of poetic strategies, but they also demonstrate the fragility of those strategies by never hesitating to modify them at basic points. Also, that is how "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle" repeats and reflects the strategy of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light": in both poems, the only way of defying borderlines turns out to be *including* them. Both texts draw a boundary *within* their textual space, and keep it well defined, so that no reader can possibly fail to notice it – and then create every possible way for both the reader and the speakers to switch back and forth between separate (textual) realms. Remaining within the boundaries of language, both texts find the way to include their opposite – silence – in their universes, and make it meaningful. Thus, they face the immense risk of letting death in their spaces. In "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle," the mirror that displays a subversive image is in fact the gap separating the first stanzas from the rest of the poem; the gap which made it possible for Emily Brontë to cut the poem at that point for publication in 1846, and for Charlotte Brontë to publish the first three stanzas as a separate poem (together with two other stanzas that she wrote, in a paradoxical and failed attempt to make the stanzas *complete* in themselves) in

1850. This emphatic silence is not only a subversive potential; it also warns the reader of the fatal power of necessary fragmentation, especially as the gap is bordered by "winter snow" (line 12) on one side, and "the dungeon crypts" (line 13) on the other: the text chooses two images of death to lead into and out of silence.

With a sudden turn, however, the very same images, touching each other in their shared fragmentation, may also be interpreted as an unstable bridge over the silence in the middle of the text. The movement of interpretation, switching back and forth between bridging and separating, turns into death-in-life; and, once more, this liminal state becomes a source of consolation – or, what is even more: a source of happiness. The second speaker of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" triumphed by stopping on the threshold; the "one" of the first three stanzas here triumphs by subverting isolation into more than a community of lonely people. The room, tightly shut (and closed off from the rest of the poem), but warm, cheerful, and shining, becomes the space of intimacy, and one of the very few instances of true joy in Brontë's poetry. For both speakers, the text provides home – for other characters, however, it remains a space of unceasing wandering between freedom and seclusion, unable to decide, and unable to break through the flow of words without being drawn back at once. The reader, inevitably, shares the latter state of existence, and can only yearn for the former one.

Conclusion

> "Whosoever shall seek to save his life
> shall lose it;
> and whosoever shall lose his life
> shall preserve it."
> (Luke 17.33)

The scope of the present thesis does not allow me to devote to every poem in Emily Brontë's oeuvre the time and space it deserves. By discussing a select handful of her poetry, though, I hope to have given her poetic achievement what it deserves. Consciously using and sometimes subverting Romantic imagery and rhetoric, elements of the mystical tradition, and Methodist ideology, she created a unique poetic oeuvre, in each poem appointing a different path for the self to tread; hardly a mere shadow of her novel but an oeuvre to be appreciated in its own right.

In her poetry, the journeys of the self have been seen to lead along several distinct lines, which are also frequently intertwined. In the beginning, I accepted Miller's statement as a starting point: that, in Brontë's poems, the self always suffers from the absence of the Other, who/which is needed for survival, and whose absence inevitably results in pain and death (*Disappearance* 171-172). The two readings of "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" – one defined by the belief in a realm profoundly different from the universe familiar to the self, in short, the belief in presence; the other regarding the outside world as a reflection (or supplement) of the realm constructed by the speaking voice – set up two main tendencies of dealing with the absence of the Other in further poems. In addition, as early as that, Miller's statement turned out to be problematic. Secluded as the self is in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" (and even split up into a double self, mirrored by the line between stanza 5 and 6), the Other is not always a guarantee of survival, not even if the union is believed in and possible. Both speakers are absolutely positive about keeping inside language, and use their voices to create two elaborate linguistic constructions to protect themselves. The outside world, whether silent or emitting inarticulate sounds, is a source of fear for them; their own universe, although painful, is the only place where they can stay alive.

Death or survival appears very much at stake in all poems and on all journeys discussed here, but not necessarily as a source of fear. At the beginning of her volume of poetry, if she had ever decided to publish it, Emily Brontë might well have written the above Biblical quotation as a motto. For the survival and triumph of the second speaker in "A sudden chasm

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of ghastly light," (s)he needs to open a door on the wall which separates him/her from the lethal realm of the winter night. For Rosina Alcona, love, death, and the question of opening or closing boundaries all appear interfused; and she gains a life (or rather accepts it as a judgment) by renouncing what really matters to her, because what matters to her is to die. Her personality is constructed by renunciation; but giving in to desire may also serve as the source for another personality of permeable boundaries in "If grief for grief can touch thee." "A Farewell to Alexandria" heads the opposite way: the mother's love does not stop her from obliterating the chance of the child to gain an individual existence, and the loss of individuality is not ended but confirmed by death that blurs the boundaries between the human body and nature. The mother probably seeks to save her own life by that, but will only gain life-in-death and a constant horror of remorse to carry with her.

In Brontë's poetry (as in her novel), death does not necessarily erase human individuality. The most outstanding example of that is "The Night-Wind," where nature cancels individual existence, which death will reaffirm. In a few poems, death can even be remedied: in "No coward soul is mine," love becomes a transforming force in human space and time, and brings forth rebirth; also, in "Sympathy," death does not follow but precede life. Poems that show death as masculine ("No coward soul is mine," "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle") or feminine ("A Farewell to Alexandria") make it explicit that all interpretations of death are, in fact, cultural constructions to create images of the unimaginable. The same tendency is revealed in "A sudden chasm of ghastly light," introducing two interpretations of death: one, the part of human language, and the other, the end of human language (and human existence). Such results of the figurative work might or might not help the speaker in "Death," where the very power and horror of death lies in its difference from human language.

Solitude and pain can turn into sources of a new strength as well, for example in "And myself lone wholly lone" or "Sympathy." In both cases, solitude and living in exile are pre-requisites for beings (both human and natural) helping each other and draw strength from their shared pain. Should they be identified with each other, they would only be able to notice pain, not to support each other from the outside – thus, in these poems, the borderlines of the self do not open up, and real help is not based on contact but resemblance (metaphor). If, on the other hand, the self tries to draw strength from him/herself, (s)he inevitably fails, as in the alternative world constructed from figures in "Hope," which will not provide consolation for the self but deepen his/her solitude.

As far as the opening of boundaries is concerned, I hope to have shown how little Brontë can be regarded as a mystical poet, and even less a mystic. The close readings of the dissertation reveal how she diverts from the mystical tradition at least as many times as she

joins it. Indeed, most of the time she only uses elements of the mystical tradition in order to contradict them and renounce the mystical union. The self might end up in a desire for the transcendental or a complete rejection of the mystical union, but never in unitive life. Features of love and natural mysticism do appear throughout the oeuvre, but only "High waving heather" will take them seriously, and even this poem ends with the human self either remaining outside the unity of natural forces or melts into the landscape but for that has to pay the price of becoming fragmented. A curious version of mysticism occurs in Rochelle's monologue. Her narrative of a mystical experience is the fullest and closest to mysticism as a literary tradition in Brontë's poetry; but it goes through a double distancing process: first, spoken by a voice emphatically *not* belonging to the author (not even pretended to do so), and second, inserted in a second narrative which postpones the final union into an uncertain future. Brontë's human beings would rather keep the human and the transcendent safely separated; even if thus they have to perpetuate isolation. When the self actually receives a chance to leave human existence behind, (s)he actually has to be forced ("I'll come when thou art saddest"), because the fundamental desire of human beings in Emily Brontë's poetry is *not* to leave the earth behind.

On all journeys of the self, struggling with the problem of death or survival, the use of voice proves crucial in Brontë's poetry. The human self is not always a speaker. Probably the most conspicuous difference between poetic selves is whether they speak or not – and whether the addressee can understand them or not. There is only one poem among the ones discussed in the present thesis in which the human self is never allowed to speak, "I'll come when thou art saddest"; the result is paralysing fear and a complete lack of desire for the Other, whose arrival does not carry survival but probably death. There are a few other instances when the self begins as a speaker but is silenced. In "The Night-Wind," once the human speaker gives a voice to a natural phenomenon, (s)he loses the faculty of speech completely. In "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle," Rochelle is never allowed to raise her voice after finishing her monologue, and what follows is precisely the opposite that she has claimed to wish for. On the journey of the self, being able to speak up is an essential prerequisite for gaining any chance to receive what the self needs, and no speaker in Brontë's poetry gives up the ability of speech out of their own will. The most serious risk a speaker can run emerges in "I'll come when thou art saddest." There, however, as in a negative image of the other poems, the failure of speech would save a human life instead of losing it, for it is the transcendental speaker who has to use human language in order to draw the silenced addressee into its power; and the very use of language might easily break the spell.

Inseparable from the problem of voices, the possibility of a dialogue emerges in most texts. In this respect, isolation actually becomes a source of strength, because it invokes the possibility of mediation, which can only connect separate entities. An important consequence of understanding isolation as helpful is the unique interpretation of community in Brontë's poetry. Living in a community does not infer a common origin or purpose, not even mutual understanding – but if two or more beings, willingly or unwillingly, share each other's fate, they already make up a community. This sharing may imply helping the other, but it does not imply getting any closer to the other. From among the texts mentioned above, in "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle," the two speakers fail to produce a dialogue, neither is it their intention to make up for that failure; in spite of that, they manage to set up a community, albeit remaining separated from each other and imprisoned in Julian's castle. In "The Philosopher," the case is the opposite: the two speakers very much intend to address each other and make the other understand; nevertheless, the seer's attempts to help the philosopher are futile, because the philosopher goes on desiring something else: knowledge (appearing in the form of sight) instead of a community based on accepting what is spoken (language heard). A community can also be created against the intentions of the self, for example in "In the earth, the earth thou shalt be laid." The first speaker would do anything to emphasise his/her separation from the other one, and neither of the speakers manages to convince the other about their right, because one of them leaves the situation by dying; yet precisely by that, (s)he warns the other of what they very much have in common: mortality. Here, the other self is not needed for survival, on the contrary: as a reminder that survival will not last very long.

Another kind of a dialogic form occurs in poems addressed by one self to another but without expecting a reply; all of them apply a slightly different strategy. The addressee of "Sympathy" is not, strictly speaking, an independent self, but born as a result of the splitting effect of irony. Three different uses of prosopopeia emerge in "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida" (a survivor talking to the dead, consciously renouncing an encounter), in "If grief for grief can touch thee" (an abandoned lover praying to a beloved, relying on the exchange of emotions rather than words), and in "Death" (a bereaved speaker inviting a non-linguistic power into a trap). Although the rhetoric they choose is very dangerous to follow in each case, all of these dialogues can be called successful, because none of the speakers is afraid of the encounter with the Other, even if that meant death. With the fear of death dropped out of the dialogues, irony in "Sympathy" may ease the despair of the self by ending in a dynamic balance and the possibility of a rebirth. Prosopopeia in "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida," although not feared as a risk, is consciously renounced in order to create an individual personality able to live in society, which is accepted as judgment rather than desired. The same strategy, both in "If

grief for grief can touch thee" and "Death," will lead to the growth of courage and trust, as well as the readiness for self-sacrifice.

Less successful (not as a text but as a remedy for the speaker's pain) is "A Farewell to Alexandria," in which the speaker plays a complex game of pretending she is addressing a conscious entity when she is not, and, parallel with that, of pretending that her daughter can survive without her when she cannot. *She* is very much afraid not only to die but to witness death as well. She ends up in prosopopeia, but does not admit doing so, and wishes to deny that even to herself – and, because of her fear and self-deception, she will get trapped in the symmetrical structure of this figure; in a state of death-in-life which does not help her but will torture her for her remaining years.

For her, being a mediator between life and death proves a source of horror. Generally, however, what Brontë's speakers most fervently desire is turning into mediators: a powerful form of dialogic existence. Mediation becomes most successful in master-dialogues created either by a specular structure of texts or by Brontë's ingenious pronoun use. In "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle," a third speaker, the one who speaks up in the first stanzas, manages to turn a poem defined by monologic voices into dialogic in the same way as "A sudden chasm of ghastly light" proves to be so. In both cases, the two parts of the text keep referring and replying to each other by repeating each other's motifs with different overtones. In a thoroughly different way, but equally successfully, dialogue takes place in "Aye there it is!," determined by finite entities freely shifting back and forth between grammatically empty roles. Within well-defined limits, roles are freely exchanged, even at the price of losing a fixed identity (the uncertainty of gender roles is very much part of this game); but whenever human beings reach the boundaries of their selves, they never choose to transgress them. The highest of their desire is to step on the boundary and stay there, in-between two realms. It is in mediation and a dialogic form that Brontë's most unique and powerful poetic personalities are created: speakers in a threshold-position, connecting different realms and forms of existence, and preserving their human self at the same time.

Brontë owes the most to Romanticism in her poetry; notwithstanding the changes and even subversions which her texts display (and which could probably be found in most other Romantic oeuvres, too), I still consider her a Romantic poet, who uses the conception of the self, the role of dreams and visions, the interpretation of nature, of fragmentation, of the sublime and the beautiful as they appear in Romantic thought, and also applies the rhetoric of Romanticism, inseparable from the previous aspects.

The most powerful and frequent of the rhetoric strategies consistently appearing throughout Brontë's oeuvre, and especially in her treatment of the mystical desire and/or experience is the counterpointing of allegory and symbol. Apart from "High waving heather," which makes an unsuccessful attempt to take the unifying power of symbol seriously, no other poem even tries to confirm the authenticity of symbolic language. It always appears as a language to be renounced (e. g. in "Aye there it is!" or "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle") or positively rejected (e. g. in "The night is darkening round me"). Used for defining the outside world (either as nature/transcendence or as the textual realm of mystical tradition) as illusory and unreliable, symbol is applied to remove the temptation of approaching that world and protect human beings from breaking their boundaries. In turn, the self uses allegory to define his/her own familiar space, based on renunciation, fragmentation, and humility or pride; most of the time stronger than symbol. "Death" constructs probably the most complex allegorical universe in the oeuvre: a whole fictional world to entrap what is not fictitious in the least. As symbol belongs to the desire to express transcendence in a human universe (idolatrous and illusory), and allegory to the necessary isolation of human beings (associated with both renouncement and egotism). Metaphor, the third trope typically appearing in Brontë's poetry, leaves entities independent *and* interdependent, thus creating a community of distinct entities.

She uses prosopopeia and irony in an extremely innovative way, precisely because of the unique system of interpretations of death as it appears in her poems. The danger of prosopopeia lies in its symmetrical structure: as the speaker addresses and thus gives voice to beings absent or even dead, the situation of speaker and addressee may very easily be reversed. In this oeuvre, however, it is comparatively rare for death to appear as a source of fear; thus, the fear of death is removed from prosopopeia, opening special possibilities, as for the speaker of "Death," who, by becoming ready for self-sacrifice, might even defeat death. Irony, in turn, doubles the self and leads to pain, madness, and death; if, however, the self begins in despair and loses the fear of death because of that, like in "Sympathy," then, irony may turn out to be a source of rebirth.

Finally, let me *voice* my hope that when I constructed methods for reading Brontë's poetry, I also opened further paths to read other pieces of her poetic oeuvre, too. A systematic comparison between her oeuvre and that of William Blake is probably the greatest challenge that this thesis had to leave undiscussed, and a subject for further studies. Also, the methods of reading presented in the previous chapters might serve as the basis for interpreting other oeuvres, in the same way as I used Miller's text reading Joseph Conrad or de Man's text reading Friedrich Hölderlin. The borderlines of her poetry are to open up and get in contact

with other bodies of writing and beyond, possibly with the realm where language fails. The reader can never be quite sure if the silence that commences then belongs to a radically different realm or remains still under the rule of words. In either case, silence in Emily Brontë's poetry plays as important a role as her words do, and it must now finish the present discussion of her poetry, too.

Appendix
(The poems analysed in the thesis, in their order of occurrence,
from the volume edited by Janet Gezari,
Emily Jane Brontë: The Complete Poems [1992])

A sudden chasm of ghastly light
Yawned in the city's reeling wall
And a long thundering through the night
Proclaimed our triumph—Tyrdarum's fall—

The shrieking wind shrank mute and mild,   5
The smothering snow-clouds rolled away
And cold—how cold!—wan moonlight smiled
Where those black ruins smouldering lay

'Twas over—all the Battle's madness
The bursting fires, the cannons' roar   10
The yells, the groans the frenzied gladness
The death the danger warmed no more.

In plundered churches piled with dead
The heavy charger neighed for food
The wounded soldier laid his head   15
'Neath roofless chambers splashed with blood

I could not sleep through that wild siege
My heart had fiercely burned and bounded
The outward tumult seemed to assuage
The inward tempest it surrounded   20

But … I cannot bear
And silence whets the tang of pain
I felt the full flood of despair
Returning to my breast again

My couch lay in a ruined Hall   25
Whose windows looked on the minster-yard
Where chill chill whiteness covered all
Both stone and urn and withered sward

The shattered glass let in the air
And with it came a wandering moan   30
A sound unutterably drear
That made me shrink to be alone

One black yew-tree grew just below
I thought its boughs so sad might wail
Their ghostly fingers flecked with snow   35
Rattled against an old vault's rail

I listened—no 'twas life that still
Lingered in some deserted heart

O God what caused that shuddering thrill?
That anguished agonizing start?   40

An undefined an awful dream
A dream of what had been before
A memory whose blighting beam
Was flitting o'er me evermore

A frightful feeling frenzy born—   45
I hurried down the dark oak stair
I reached the door whose hinges torn
Flung streaks of moonshine here and there

I pondered not I drew the bar
An icy glory [caught] mine eye   50
From that wide heaven where every star
Glared like a dying memory

And there the great cathedral rose
Discrowned but most majestic so
It looked down in [serene] repose   55
On its own realm of buried woe

                    ~~~~~~~~~~

"R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida" ("Remembrance")

Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee,
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover   5
Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers,
From those brown hills, have melted into spring: 10
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive if I forget thee,
While the world's tide is bearing me along;
Other desires and other hopes beset me,   15
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.   20

But, when the days of golden dreams had perished,
And even Despair was powerless to destroy;
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion—   25
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;   30
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

~~~~~~~~~

"The Night-Wind"

In summer's mellow midnight
A cloudless moon shone through
Our open parlour window
And rosetrees wet with dew

I sat in silent musing—   5
The soft wind waved my hair
It told me Heaven was glorious
And sleeping Earth was fair—

I needed not its breathing
To bring such thoughts to me   10
But still it whispered lowly
'How dark the woods will be!—

'The thick leaves in my murmur
Are rustling like a dream,
And all their myriad voices   15
Instinct with spirit seem'

I said, 'Go gentle singer,
Thy wooing voice is kind
But do not think its music
Has power to reach my mind—   20

'Play with the scented flower,
The young tree's supple bough—
And leave my human feelings
In their own course to flow'

The Wanderer would not leave me   25
Its kiss grew warmer still—
'O come,' it sighed so sweetly

'I'll win thee 'gainst thy will—

'Have we not been from childhood friends?
Have I not loved thee long?   30
As long as thou hast loved the night
Whose silence wakes my song?

'And when thy heart is laid at rest
Beneath the church-yard stone
I shall have time enough to mourn   35
And thou to be alone'—

~~~~~~~~~~~

And first an hour of mournful musing
And then a gush of bitter tears
And then a dreary calm diffusing
Its deadly mist o'er joys and cares

And then a throb and then a lightening   5
And then a breathing from above
And then a star from heaven brightening
The star the glorious star of love

~~~~~~~~~~~

If grief for grief can touch thee,
If answering woe for woe,
If any ruth can melt thee,
Come to me now!

I cannot be more lonely,   5
More drear I cannot be!
My worn heart throbs so wildly
'Twill break for thee—

And when the world despises—
When heaven repels my prayer—   10
Will not mine angel comfort?
Mine idol hear?

Yes by the tears I've poured,
By all my hours of pain
O I shall surely win thee   15
Beloved, again!

~~~~~~~~~~~

High waving heather, 'neath stormy blasts bending
Midnight and moonlight and bright shining stars
Darkness and glory rejoicingly blending
Earth rising to heaven and heaven descending

Man's spirit away from its drear dungeon sending   5
Bursting the fetters and breaking the bars.

All down the mountain sides, wild forests lending
One mighty voice to the life giving wind
Rivers their banks in the jubilee rending
Fast through the valleys a reckless course wending   10
Wider and deeper their waters extending
Leaving a desolate desert behind

Shining and lowering and swelling and dying
Changing for ever from midnight to noon
Roaring like thunder like soft music sighing   15
Shadows on shadows advancing and flying
Lightning-bright flashes the deep gloom defying
Coming as swiftly and fading as soon

~~~~~~~~~

I'm happiest when most away
I can bear my soul from its home of clay
On a windy night when the moon is bright
And my eye can wander through worlds of light

When I am not and none beside   5
Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky
And only spirit wandering wide
In infinite immensity

~~~~~~~~~

"The Philosopher"

'Enough of thought, philosopher!
    Too long hast thou been dreaming
Unenlightened, in this chamber drear,
    While summer's sun is beaming!
Space-sweeping soul, what sad refrain   5
Concludes thy musings once again?

    "'Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
    Without identity,
    And never care how rain may steep,
    Or snow may cover me!   10
    No promised heaven, these wild desires,
    Could all, or half fulfil;
    No threatened hell, with quenchless fires
    Subdue this quenchless will!'"

'So said I, and still say the same;   15
    Still, to my death, will say—
Three gods, within this little frame,

Are warring night and day;
Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
    They all are held in me;   20
And must be mine till I forget
    My present entity!
Oh, for the time, when in my breast
    Their struggles will be o'er!
Oh, for the day, when I shall rest,   25
    And never suffer more!'

'I saw a spirit, standing, man,
    Where thou doth stand—an hour ago,
And round his feet three rivers ran,
    Of equal depth, and equal flow—   30
A golden stream—and one like blood;
    And one like sapphire seemed to be;
But, where they joined their triple flood
    It tumbled in an inky sea.
The spirit sent his dazzling gaze   35
    Down through that ocean's gloomy night
Then, kindling all, with sudden blaze,
    The glad deep sparkled wide and bright—
White as the sun, far, far more fair
    Than its divided sources were!'   40

'And even for that spirit, seer,
    I've watched and sought my life-time long;
Sought him in heaven, hell, earth, and air—
    An endless search, and always wrong!
Had I but seen his glorious eye   45
    Once light the clouds that wilder me,
I ne'er had raised this coward cry
    To cease to think, and cease to be;
I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
    Nor, stretching eager hands to death,   50
Implored to change for senseless rest
    The sentient soul, this living breath—
Oh, let me die—that power and will
    Their cruel strife may close;
And conquered good, and conquering ill   55
    Be lost in one repose!

~~~~~~~~~~

Aye there it is! It wakes tonight
Sweet thoughts that will not die
And feeling's fires flash all as bright
As in the years gone by!—

And I can tell by thine altered cheek   5
And by thy kindled gaze
And by the words thou scarce dost speak,

How wildly fancy plays—

Yes I could swear that glorious wind
Has swept the world aside   10
Has dashed its memory from thy mind
Like foam-bells from the tide—

And thou art now a spirit pouring
Thy presence into all
The essence of the Tempest's roaring   15
And of the Tempest's fall—

A universal influence
From Thine own influence free
A principle of life intense
Lost to mortality—   20

Thus truly when that breast is cold
Thy prisoned soul shall rise
The dungeon mingle with the mould—
The captive with the skies—

~~~~~~~~~~

I'll come when thou art saddest
Laid alone in the darkened room
When the mad day's mirth has vanished
And the smile of joy is banished
From evening's chilly gloom   5

I'll come when the heart's [real] feeling
Has entire unbiased sway
And my influence o'er thee stealing
Grief deepening joy congealing
Shall bear thy soul away   10

Listen 'tis just the hour
The awful time for thee
Dost thou not feel upon thy soul
A flood of strange sensations roll
Forerunners of a sterner power   15
Heralds of me

~~~~~~~~~~

The night is darkening round me
The wild winds coldly blow
But a tyrant spell has bound me
And I cannot cannot go

The giant trees are bending   5
Their bare boughs weighed with snow

And the storm is fast descending
And yet I cannot go

Clouds beyond clouds above me
Wastes beyond wastes below   10
But nothing drear can move me
I will not cannot go

~~~~~~~~~~

And like myself lone wholly lone
It sees the day's long sunshine glow
And like myself it makes its moan
In unexhausted woe

Give we the hills our equal prayer   5
Earth's breezy hills and heaven's blue sea
We ask for nothing further here
But our own hearts and liberty

Ah could my hand unlock its chain
How gladly would I watch it soar   10
And ne'er regret and ne'er complain
To see its shining eyes no more

But let me think that if today
It pines in cold captivity
Tomorrow both shall soar away   15
Eternally entirely free

~~~~~~~~~~

"Sympathy"

There should be no despair for you
    While nightly stars are burning;
While evening pours its silent dew
    And sunshine gilds the morning.
There should be no despair—though tears   5
    May flow down like a river:
Are not the best beloved of years
    Around your heart for ever?

They weep, you weep, it must be so;
    Winds sigh as you are sighing,   10
And Winter sheds his grief in snow
    Where Autumn's leaves are lying:
Yet, these revive, and from their fate
    Your fate cannot be parted:
Then, journey on, if not elate,   15
    Still, *never* broken-hearted!

~~~~~~~~~

"Hope"

Hope was but a timid friend;
    She sat without the grated den,
Watching how my fate would tend,
    Even as selfish-hearted men.

She was cruel in her fear;   5
    Through the bars, one dreary day,
I looked out to see her there,
    And she turned her face away!

Like a false guard, false watch keeping,
    Still in strife, she whispered peace;   10
She would sing while I was weeping;
    If I listened, she would cease.

False she was, and unrelenting;
    When my last joys strewed the ground,
Even sorrow saw, repenting,   15
    Those sad relics scattered round;

Hope, whose whisper would have given
    Balm to all my frenzied pain,
Stretched her wings, and soared to heaven,
    Went, and ne'er returned again!   20

~~~~~~~~~

No coward soul is mine
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere
I see Heaven's glories shine
And Faith shines equal arming me from Fear

O God within my breast   5
Almighty ever-present Deity
Life, that in me hast rest
As I Undying Life, have power in thee

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,   10
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thy infinity
So surely anchored on   15
The steadfast rock of Immortality

With wide-embracing love

Thy spirit animates eternal years
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears   20

Though Earth and moon were gone
And suns and universes ceased to be
And thou wert left alone
Every Existence would exist in thee

There is not room for Death   25
Nor atom that his might could render void
Since thou art Being and Breath
And what thou art may never be destroyed

~~~~~~~~~~

In the earth, the earth thou shalt be laid
A grey stone standing over thee;
Black mould beneath thee spread
And black mould to cover thee—

'Well, there is rest there   5
So fast come thy prophecy—
The time when my sunny hair
Shall with grass roots twined be'

But cold, cold is that resting place
Shut out from Joy and Liberty   10
And all who loved thy living face
Will shrink from its gloom and thee

'Not so, *here* the world is chill
And sworn friends fall from me
But *there,* they'll own me still   15
And prize my memory'

Farewell, then, all that love
All that deep sympathy;
Sleep on, heaven laughs above—
Earth never misses thee—   20

Turf-sod and tombstone drear
Part human company
One heart broke, only, there
That heart was worthy thee!—

~~~~~~~~~~

"A Farewell to Alexandria"

I've seen this dell in July's shine
As lovely as an angel's dream;

Above, heaven's depth of blue divine;
Around, the evening's golden beam—

I've seen the purple heather-bell   5
Look out by many a storm-worn stone
And oh, I've known such music swell,
Such wild notes wake these passes lone—

So soft, yet so intensely felt,
So low, yet so distinctly heard,   10
My breath would pause, my eyes would melt
And my tears dew the green heath-sward—

I'd linger here a summer day
Nor care how fast the hours flew by
Nor mark the sun's departing ray   15
Smile sadly glorious from the sky—

Then, then I might have laid thee down
And deemed thy sleep would gentle be
I might have left thee, darling one
And thought thy God was guarding thee!   20

But now, there is no wandering glow
No gleam to say that God is nigh:
And coldly spreads thy couch of snow
And harshly sounds thy lullaby.

Forests of heather dark and long   25
Wave their brown branching arms above
And they must soothe thee with their song
And they must shield my child of love!

Alas the flakes are heavily falling
They cover fast each guardian crest;   30
And chilly white their shroud is palling
Thy frozen limbs and freezing breast

Wakes up the storm more madly wild
The mountain drifts are tossed on high—
Farewell unblessed, unfriended child,   35
I cannot bear to watch thee die!

       ~~~~~~~~~~

"Death"

Death! that struck when I was most confiding
In my certain faith of joy to be—
Strike again, Time's withered branch dividing
From the fresh root of Eternity!

Leaves, upon Time's branch, were growing brightly,   5
Full of sap, and full of silver dew;
Birds beneath its shelter gathered nightly;
Daily round its flowers the wild bees flew.

Sorrow passed, and plucked the golden blossom;
Guilt stripped off the foliage in its pride;   10
But, within its parent's kindly bosom,
Flowed for ever Life's restoring tide.

Little mourned I for the parted gladness,
For the vacant nest and silent song—
Hope was there, and laughed me out of sadness;   15
Whispering, "Winter will not linger long!"

And, behold! with tenfold increase blessing,
Spring adorned the beauty-burdened spray;
Wind and rain and fervent heat, caressing,
Lavished glory on that second May!   20

High it rose—no winged grief could sweep it;
Sin was scared to distance with its shine;
Love, and its own life, had power to keep it
From all wrong—from every blight but thine!

Cruel Death! The young leaves droop and languish;   25
Evening's gentle air may still restore—
No! the morning sunshine mocks my anguish—
Time, for me, must never blossom more!

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
Where that perished sapling used to be;   30
Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish
That from which it sprung—Eternity.

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"Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle"

Silent is the House—all are laid asleep;
One, alone, looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep;
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the wildering drifts and bends the groaning trees—

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor   5
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door
The little lamp burns straight; its rays shoot strong and far
I trim it well to be the Wanderer's guiding-star—

Frown, my haughty sire; chide, my angry Dame;
Set your slaves to spy, threaten me with shame;   10
But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know

What angel nightly tracks that waste of winter snow—

In the dungeon crypts idly did I stray
Reckless of the lives wasting there away;
'Draw the ponderous bars, open Warder stern!'   15
He dare not say me nay—the hinges harshly turn—

'Our guests are darkly lodged' I whispered gazing through
The vault whose grated eye showed heaven more grey than blue;
(This was when glad spring laughed in awaking pride.)
'Aye, darkly lodged enough!' returned my sullen guide—   20

Then, God forgive my youth, forgive my careless tongue!
I scoffed as the chill chains on the damp flagstones rung;
'Confined in triple walls, art thou so much to fear,
That we must bind thee down and clench thy fetters here?'

The captive raised her face; it was as soft and mild   25
As sculptured marble saint or slumbering, unweaned child
It was so soft and mild, it was so sweet and fair
Pain could not trace a line nor grief a shadow there!

The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow
'I have been struck,' she said, 'and I am suffering now   30
Yet these are little worth, your bolts and irons strong
And were they forged in steel they could not hold me long'—

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim 'Shall I be won to hear
Dost think fond, dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy prayer?
Or, better still, wilt melt my master's heart with groans?   35
Ah sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones!—

'My master's voice is low, his aspect bland and kind
But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind:
And I am rough and rude, yet, not more rough to see
Than is the hidden ghost which has its home in me!'   40

About her lips there played a smile of almost scorn
'My friend,' she gently said, 'you have not heard me mourn
When you my parents' lives—*my* lost life, can restore
Then may I weep and sue, but, *never,* Friend, before!'

Her head sank on her hands, its fair curls swept the ground   45
The dungeon seemed to swim in strange confusion round—
'Is she so near to death?' I murmured, half aloud
And kneeling, parted back the floating golden cloud—

Alas, how former days upon my heart were borne
How memory mirrored then the prisoner's joyous morn   50
Too blithe, too loving Child, too warmly, wildly gay!
Was that the wintry close of thy celestial May?

She knew me and she sighed "Lord Julian, can it be,
Of all my playmates, you, alone, remember me?
Nay start not at my words, unless you deem it shame   55
To own from conquered foe, a once familiar name—

'I cannot wonder now at ought the world will do
And insult and contempt I lightly brook from you,
Since those, who vowed away their souls to win my love
Around this living grave like utter strangers move!   60

'Nor has one voice been raised to plead that I might die
Not buried under earth but in the open sky
By ball or speedy knife or headsman's skilful blow—
A quick and welcome pang instead of lingering woe!

'Yet, tell them, Julian, all, I am not doomed to wear   65
Year after year in gloom and desolate despair;
A messenger of Hope comes every night to me
And offers, for short life, eternal liberty.

'He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars;   70
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire
And visions rise and change which kill me with desire—

'Desire for nothing known in my maturer years
When joy grew mad with awe at counting future tears;
When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,   75
I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm;

'But first a hush of peace, a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony
That I could never dream till earth was lost to me.   80

'Then dawns the Invisible, the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels—
Its wings are almost free, its home, its harbour found;
Measuring the gulf it stoops and dares the final bound!

'Oh, dreadful is the check—intense the agony   85
When the ear begins to hear and the eye begins to see;
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again,
The soul to feel the flesh and the flesh to feel the chain!

'Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks the earlier it will bless;   90
And robed in fires of Hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald Death, the vision is divine'—

She ceased to speak, and I, unanswering watched her there
Not daring now to touch one lock of silken hair—

As I had knelt in scorn, on the dank floor I knelt still—   95
My fingers in the links of that iron hard and chill—

I heard and yet heard not the surly keeper growl;
I saw, yet did not see, the flagstone damp and foul;
The keeper, to and fro, paced by the bolted door
And shivered as he walked and as he shivered, swore—   100

While my cheek glowed in flame, I marked that he did rave
Of air that froze his blood, and moisture like the grave—
'We have been two hours good!' he muttered peevishly,
Then, loosing off his belt the rusty dungeon key,

He said, 'You may be pleased, Lord Julian, still to stay   105
But duty will not let me linger here all day;
If I might go, I'd leave this badge of mine with you
Not doubting that you'd prove a jailer stern and true"

I took the proffered charge; the captive's drooping lid
Beneath its shady lash a sudden lightning hid   110
Earth's hope was not so dead heaven's home was not so dear
I read it in that flash of longing quelled by fear

Then like a tender child whose hand did just enfold
Safe in its eager grasp, a bird it wept to hold
When pierced with one wild glance from the troubled hazel eye   115
It gushes into tears and lets its treasure fly

Thus ruth and selfish love together striving tore
The heart all newly taught to pity and adore;
If I should break the chain, I felt my bird would go
Yet I must break the chain or seal the prisoner's woe—   120

Short strife, what rest could soothe—what peace could visit me
While she lay pining there for Death to set her free?
'Rochelle, the dungeons teem with foes to gorge our hate—
Thou art too young to die by such a bitter fate!'

With hurried blow on blow, I struck the fetters through   125
Regardless how that deed my after hours might rue
Oh, I was over-blest by the warm unasked embrace
By the smile of grateful joy that lit her angel face!

And I was over-blest—aye, more than I could dream
When, faint, she turned aside from noon's unwonted beam;   130
When though the cage was wide—the heaven around it lay—
Its pinion would not waft my wounded dove away—

Through thirteen anxious weeks of terror-blent delight
I guarded her by day and guarded her by night
While foes were prowling near and Death gazed greedily   135
And only Hope remained a faithful friend to me—

Then oft with taunting smile, I heard my kindred tell
'How Julian loved his hearth and sheltering roof-tree well;
How the trumpet's voice might call, the battle-standard wave
But Julian had no heart to fill a patriot's grave.'   140

And I, who am so quick to answer sneer with sneer;
So ready to condemn, to scorn, a coward's fear
I held my peace like one whose conscience keeps him dumb
And saw my kinsmen go—and lingered still at home.

Another hand than mine, my rightful banner held   145
And gathered my renown on Freedom's crimson field
Yet I had no desire the glorious prize to gain—
It needed braver nerve to face the world's disdain—

And by the patient strength that could that world defy;
By suffering with calm mind, contempt and calumny;   150
By never-doubting love, unswerving constancy,
Rochelle, I earned at last an equal love from thee!

The version published in 1846 ("The Prisoner [A Fragment]") contains stanzas 4-18, with certain modifications (Gondal material removed) and one more stanza added to close the fragment "properly":

She ceased to speak, and we, unanswering, turned to go—
We had no further power to work the captive woe:
Her cheek, her gleaming eye, declared that man had given
A sentence, unapproved, and overruled by Heaven.

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