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THE GOTHIC COLONIAL: A COMPARISION OF *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* AND
NATIVE SON

By

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Dedication:

For
Ummi (in memoriam)
and Baba -- I love you both.

And for my siblings,
Of whom I am terribly proud.

And finally, for Jaddah,
Who let me go away to finish college
Without crying too much!!!

Thanks all,
for your support!
=)

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ABSTRACT:

This project is a comparison of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940). The discussion begins with how these novels should be considered within the field of postcolonial studies, although they do not fit the traditional definition of its branches of postcolonialism and imperialism. An ideological leaning can be seen in a social hierarchy that casts the Lintons and the Daltons as the elite. The systematic failure of religion, law, and education also ensures the stability of this status quo. The conventions of gothic literature merge with this effort in representing the "hybridity" or "abject" natures of Heathcliff and Bigger Thomas; these protagonists are cast as gothic monsters figures that exposes the postcolonial/imperial "fantasy" of social fears, rather than their true selfhood. Ultimately the novels illustrate the colonization of identity which occurs.

Introduction

In contemporary times, no idea is as highly lauded as personal autonomy and its role in shaping identity. It is so important that history books often cite the repression of personal autonomy as one of many factors that inspire socio-political revolt. People often misinterpret this to mean that it is the most important reason for revolt. Despite the fact that simplifications like "the American Civil War was fought to end slavery" have largely been neutralized in high school textbooks, this myth remains an important and necessary part of American culture. This interpretation is valued because it affirms our current stance on cultural pluralism, more than the fact that it accurately represents any moment of that period. Notwithstanding the fact that Herodotus must be rolling in his grave, society is content to let sleeping dogs lie even though it has created stereotypes of North and South that are still present today. The only difference between these roles is in how the fixed outcome of the Civil War legitimizes one side rather than another. In this light, the question of how to recognize the correct course of action in the midst of conflict remains unanswered. Before the quaint blue and grey coats are handed out, deciding whose actions are heroic (rather than villainous) suddenly becomes quite complicated. It is precisely within this context that I would like to present the protagonists, Heathcliff and Bigger Thomas, in my comparison of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940).

Neither of these characters can be truly seen as revolutionary, as the height of their action occurs well before any social dilemma is *defined* as legitimate conflict. What the reader witnesses, from the protagonists' perspectives, is essentially a cinematic cut-to-the-fight, full of passion, violence, curses, treachery, and vengeance. For the greater

part of the novels the audience remains slightly confused about which character to cheer on. Imagining this moment stretched out ad infinitum (or 500 pages) only heightens this effect and refuses the cathartic release upon which people thrive. Being forced to watch such a film, if one truly existed with these parameters, would be simply horrifying. The audience would be ever-on-the-watch for a reason to justify the aggressor's violence or the perpetrator's demise. There would be no way to moderate the perceived natures of such characters, as their *extreme* actions inspire us to give them *extreme* labels of saint/sinner and hero/villain. Just as in this movie scenario, the crux of scholarly work on these text focuses heavily upon the application of one label for these characters (usually "villain") only to be refuted by another argument that they are *not*-villains. (Very few have tried to interpret these characters as actual "heroes.") While the discussion is very interesting, it appears that the point of the novels has ultimately gone out the window.

What few critics seem to realize is the way in which the novels are meant to trigger the reader's emotional response. Both novels portray the protagonists in an (almost) exclusively-negative light, where the reader's instinct is to disavow or feel disdain for the presented experience. It is a relevant to bear in mind that the authors of these texts could have quite easily created their protagonists to be entirely innocent and slighted by the cruel hand of fate. If Wright's goal were to create a Bigger Thomas that deserved reader-sympathy and exits the world as a saint upon a burning pyre, being found in Mary Dalton's room by Mrs. Dalton would be enough to achieve the "goal" of wrongly sending him to the electric chair. There would be no reason for the reader to witness her decapitation at all. Similarly, if Bronte was trying to gain public outrage at the abuses that poor, orphaned Heathcliff must bear, it would be sufficient for the novel

to end with his flight and Cathy's tragic reaction to it.   Both of these would be predictable, stereotypical personas that a politically disenfranchised black man and an "emotional" woman could be expected to create in order to defend their own views.

In a similar manner, if these characters are truly meant to be villains – even villains deserving pity – there is a curious amount of "extra" narrative unbundling that takes place. Why, for instance, must the reader know how sickened Bigger feels as he hacks away at the head of Mary Dalton or how lost he is (emotionally) before his execution? In the same vein, why is the plot of *Wuthering Heights* not more straight-forwardly narrated by Cathy, Edgar, Hindley, or Isabella, who have directly suffered at the hands of Heathcliff? Why does Hareton Earnshaw not relate the entire story to Lockwood, if an objective view is the goal? Instead, Nelly Dean, the household servant, narrates the story. These kinds of questions quickly emerge after reading the novels, and it becomes readily apparent that the image of these characters in society affixes a particular kind of identity upon these protagonists. This "identity" is based entirely on their abjection. The fact that they slowly come to accept this role and begin thinking in terms of this identity of Otherness, makes their existence utterly performative. Outside of the social setting their abjection is meaningless. Just before the protagonists' death they are isolated from society, and a forced to finally confront this meaninglessness and to push beyond it. What they see for the first time, is an internal void which they do not know how to negotiate.

What these novels fundamentally challenge is the positive portrayal of the "heroic" characters, which suddenly do not stand so blameless in the ensuing conflict. It quickly comes to light that the way in which society views these "paragons" is laughably

artificial. In reality has more to do with what the characters posses and the privileges of their class status, than in their sympathetic reactions to their fellow-man. The Dalton and Linton families are all characterized by seemingly virtuous qualities (and intentions) that serve to set the reader immediately at ease. The correlation between money, socio-political influence, education, and religion that is symbolized by these figures never present an overtly disturbing front to the reader; although they clearly describe a monopoly on all the factors that might (optimistically) present some relief to the down-trodden and marginalized.   Although readers are "astonished" at the brutality of Heathcliff and Bigger, there is no astonishment at the way in which the status quo prevails at the end of the novel, or how these social factors played a role in maintaining this ending. Ironically, critics have yet to register this eerie sense of déjà-vu as significant to the meaning of the novels, although they go on for pages about the "lack of fulfillment" that the protagonists experience in dying.

While both of these novels are very famous works, they are very difficult to "celebrate" as masterpieces because of the peculiar aura they cast of human existence. The individual's life in society is unsatisfying in almost every way. As traditional coming-of-age stories, the novels fail because the protagonists never manage to latch onto any greater meaning of life or community. As narratives of regression, they likewise forswear their purpose by having the characters begin asking questions when they should already be resigned to their fates. In the end the novels conclude in a stalemate that says nothing about the characters' identity, but only captures the friction that arises between a performative social identity and a vague internal sense of being unfulfilled.

  Native Son captures the life of Bigger Thomas, a young black man living in segregated Chicago in the 1930s. Ambivalent fate steps into his life one day, and finds him working for the Daltons, a rich white family living on one side of "the line" of racial segregation. Bigger's simple job of chauffeuring Mary Dalton to a rendezvous with her Communist lover, Jan Erlone, ends in Bigger carrying a drunken Mary quietly to her bedroom. The sudden entrance of Mrs. Dalton causes Bigger to panic and asphyxiate the daughter, unbeknownst to her blind mother. Bigger masters the situation for a while by playing dumb, but eventually the bones of Mary's body are found in the basement's giant furnace. Bigger escapes and ends up murdering his girlfriend, Bessie, before the police close in upon him and he is brought to "justice" in a courtroom beset by mob outrage at his alleged rape of a white woman. While his lawyer, Boris Max, tries to explain Bigger's emotional disconnect to the court, the novel ends with the glaring irony that Max and Bigger themselves never quite manage to close this distance. Just as Bigger begins to understand that there is a mutual interest in preserving the bond between man and society, he is forced to reconcile the injustice of his sentence with his former philosophy of "blotting out" everything in the world (that is personally antagonistic). Before his death, Bigger concludes that life can be meaningful, but tragically does not have enough time to realize for himself what this larger meaning *is*.

  Wuthering Heights also hinges upon the individual's rise in social class, in the English moors of Yorkshire in the 1790s. The story is unfolded by Nelly Dean, a household servant who relates the story to Mr. Lockwood, a visitor to the region. In her narrative, the Earnshaws of Wuthering Heights are beset by the entrance of an orphan, Heathcliff, who suffers the scorn of the Earnshaw children, Hindley and Cathy I.

Eventually Heathcliff and Cathy build a rapport, which is shattered only by Cathy's admiration for the stylish life of the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange. Shamed by his position of domestic servitude, Heathcliff vanishes for three years; in the meantime Edgar Linton and Cathy marry. Heathcliff's return witnesses a successive triumph over his enemies as he gains control of both estates: swindling Hindley Earnshaw out of the rights to Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff causes Hareton Earnshaw to grow up an uneducated pauper. Heathcliff also manages to convince Edgar's sister, Isabella, to elope with him. This union ends with Isabella's escape and the birth of Linton Heathcliff. Cathy I dies tragically, leaving behind her a namesake, Cathy II. Eventually Heathcliff manufactures a romance between Linton and Cathy II as a pretext to also gain control of the Grange estate. The novel ends with the death of Heathcliff and the blossoming of love between the widowed Cathy II and Hareton Earnshaw. While the relationship of Cathy II and Hareton explores the importance of cherishing human sympathy, the graves of Heathcliff, Cathy I, and Edgar stand as a testament to a lack of sympathy and connection that ends in destruction.

These novels can be tied together in a special way, which highlights the presence of a larger influence in the texts than is otherwise seen. The presence of colonial/imperial ideology becomes visible in the novels via the use of gothic motifs and symbolism, which portray the progression of the plot in terms of a harsh binary of good-versus-evil and black-versus-white. While this dialectic is common in other such stories of self-development, it is singular in these texts because both Bigger Thomas and Heathcliff are given socially pre-defined roles. Rather than coming to face what they are and acknowledging it, they face the role that society demands of them. In effect, the only

possible outcome of this rock-and-a-hard-place "choice" is that their identities never amount to more than a performance of their Otherness. This realization leaves their final demise hollow and unfulfilling. In this way, both characters play an integral role in their environments, which are ironically fulfilling to everyone but themselves.

Traditional classification of the novels places both works in very different categories, and interpret the texts in such a way that they proceed toward entirely different meanings. *Wuthering Heights* is traditionally seen as a Victorian novel, although many critics have note its Romantic qualities: it is filled with human emotion and supernatural elements that greatly influence the conflict and its denouement. According to John P. Farrell, the novel actually has three simultaneous endings: (1) the spectral vision of Cathy I and Heathcliff walking on the moors, (2) the budding romance of Cathy II and Hareton, (3) the conclusion of the tale between Lockwood and Nelly Dean (199). The contrasting endings make any single interpretation of the novel very hard to defend as a definitive reading of the text, although this too is indicative of the author's intent to layer several meanings within an otherwise simple plot.

The ways in which love has been interpreted in the novel range from traditional romance to innovative ideas that directly run into social taboo. Among the most revolutionary interpretations of the novel has been Eric Solomon's reading, in which he asserts Heathcliff to be an illegitimate child of Mr. Earnshaw, thereby making the Heathcliff-Cathy relationship incestuous (81). Patsy Stoneman also points out the influence of Romantic poet Percy Shelly on the novel, via the motif of the "twin souls" and the idea of "free love," which Bronte centers around a female character who claims the affection of both a husband and a lover (127). Other critics have noticed the

dichotomy in the novel between childhood and adulthood: while Irving Buchen interprets childhood as the only stage where Love is at all possible (70), Wade Thompson further concludes that because of this childhood it snuffed out mercilessly (72).

Contemporary readings of the novel emphasize the issue of slavery, citing Heathcliff's race as the primary factor for his alienation from society and his motivation for revenge (Schwartz 599). There has been significant historical scholarship by Christopher Heywood which corroborates the local history of Yorkshire slavery and the way in which Emily and Charlotte Bronte used these names of people and places to create an implicit critique of imperialism within their works (191-192). Heywood notes that "a principal feature in the widespread writing against slavery in the heyday of Abolition and Emancipation was accuracy in pinpointing the names and localities of the English families with plantation links … the Sill estate, together with fictional romanticizations, account for the main outlines and for numerous details of *Wuthering Heights*" (186-7). It is ironic that this historical influence in the novel has remained muted and secondary in interpreting the text. Heywood explains that the Bronte sisters' original reason for "concealment" of this issue was based on fear of publisher rejection as well as "the stature of the Sill estate and … the gravity of its implications for the new and professedly democratic world of the 1840s" (189). This illustrates that the emphasis of slavery in Bronte's text, just as in contemporary times, is loaded with implications which many critics prefer to gloss over as a secondary meaning. The contemporary novelist, Michelle Cliff, highlights the importance of this issue in her novel *Free Enterprise*:

> It had happened, now and then, that a blackish boy, a Heathcliffian sort …
>
> was taken up, favored, taught to recognize a fish knife, the points of the

compass, the use of the bit, the cat, the Book of Common Prayer, and even offered a place on the bridge. These were rare cases, mind you, and almost certainly the boy sprang from an officer, even a captain, and a favorite piece of cargo. Such a boy might grow into a master. Such a boy could buy himself into the trade. (110)

This interpretation of Heathcliff as a character who derives from the slavery system and eventually comes to invert his place within it, from slave to master, is an interesting spin on this character. It is also consistent contemporary psychology, where eventually the oppressed accept an oppressor's ideals and the very system by which they suffer. An interesting addendum about the portrayal of Heathcliff is evident in the film adaptations of the novel: although there have been several renditions, none have ever dared to cast Heathcliff as black or of mixed ethnicity. On the contrary, several have taken Lockwood's "gypsy" description in a literal sense, without considering the credibility of this narrator, or his lack of common sense.

Native Son is most commonly referenced as an example of African American literature that displays naturalism in an urban setting. It is often criticized for its proletarian or agitprop agenda, although as Foley argues, this is a significant part of how it becomes a novel of social protest (197). John F Bayliss notes that there is a general failure of critics to understand the universal quality of Bigger Thomas' dilemma, and that the novel is less of a racial, anti-white tirade than a psychological study (5). Many critics have attempted to explain Bigger's alienation as stemming from a difference in the protagonist's worldview, rather than a straightforward struggle for externalized power. Stephen K. George argues that Bigger brutalizes others because of the fact that he is

unable to see them as individuals (500), while Esther Merle Jackson views Bigger's dilemma from an absurdist perspective in which he attempts to impose meaning upon a world that has none (364-367).

Both novels are similar because while they do not come from the traditional gothic period of literature, they have come to be aligned with this genre in scholarly discussion. During the 1970s, Robert Hume took up the stance that *Wuthering Heights* (among other novels), can be seen as a modern extension of the traditional gothic genre (qtd. in Mishra 8). Although it sparked some controversy at that time, contemporary critics do not find this assertion to be problematic. Many comparisons have been made between Heathcliff and the character of Manfred in Walpole's *Otranto*, and have also been generally accepted.

Joseph Bodziock finds a parallel presence of gothicism within Wright's novel, in which he notices "there are odd moments in *Native Son* – moments of gothic splendor we might deem incompatible with the tenants of naturalism" (27). The influence of gothic style in African American literature did not begin to gain momentum until the 1990s, when a great deal of scholarship encompassing the entire range of texts in the genre were re-defined by the presence of gothic aesthetics and values. Critics such as Teresa A. Goddu and Justin D. Edwards have defended the historization of gothic literature in such a way that it simultaneously allows for the African American experience to be encoded within gothic tropes and still retain their traditional values. James Smethurst also draws a connection between Wright's depiction of Chicago and the gothic horror films that emerged in American popular culture of the 1940s (32). In this way, although African

American literature is a newer addition to the gothic genre, the intersection of these literatures creates sensitivities within texts that shed light on both genres.

How to define "gothic" as a genre has proven somewhat difficult to critics, who note that although it began in the 18th century it continues to evolve in the contemporary arts. Although there are commonly accepted tropes and symbols, *what it is* has yet to be completely explained. More often than not, critics instead reach toward the feelings it evokes and what it reacts against. Richard Davenport-Hines explains that the "gothic has always had the versatility to provide imagery to express the anxieties of successive historical epochs. It has provided fantasies of dystopia – invoking terror, mystery, despair, malignity, human puniness, and isolation" (1). It has often been associated with irrationalism, pessimism, anti-humanism, decay, and "the suggestion that submission is empowering" although it is paradoxically "hostile to progressive hopes" (3-4). Davenport-Hines notes that "gothic effects beg[in] with a mild theatricality … but in literature and painting gothic soon became an intense, stressful genre intended to compel a vehement response. Gothic's excess is almost operatic; its intensity, its atmosphere, its décor are all theatrical" (6). The single most important facet of the gothic form is grounded in the fact that "Goths … like carefully staged extremism, and vicarious or strictly ritualized experiences of the dreadful Other. This taste connects gothic to sado-masochism" (8). This connection is significant in novels that are infamous for their brutality and violence, because it implies that there is a greater message within the texts beyond this bent-toward-destruction. Goddu explains that "gothic stories are intimately connected to the culture that produces them" and that they are actually a "conduit for… new knowledge …. instead of as an escapist retreat from it" (2). In this way, "if the

gothic is informed by its historical context, the horrors of history are also articulated through gothic discourse" (2). This allows the reader to decode the texts' use of gothic imagery in order to gain an understanding of the social system. It allows readers to confront the Otherness of marginalized people as well as the (unsatisfactory) reasons for their marginalization. It also places the emphasis of analysis, like colonial/postcolonial studies, upon the social hierarchy and how (as well as why) it interacts with the individual. The inscription of two widely different novels such as *Wuthering Heights* and *Native Son* can be read in conjunction within the contexts of how Otherning and fear are related to the social hierarchy and how these factors sustain society in general.

I: Historical Contexts & Postcolonial Studies

The fact that Bronte and Wright are separated by great differences in period, culture, and national origin might, at first glance discourage any kind of parallel reading of the content, theme, and purpose of their novels. What after all, could the younger daughter of an impoverished English clergyman have to do with a poor "black boy" of Jim Crow America? While the answer may appear quite elusive at first, the similarity of social conflict and the authorial critique that emerges is one way in which they are comparable. These conflicts arise primarily from the residual impact of history, which creates social structures with which the protagonists must contend. The selection of setting by the authors adds further emphasis to this clash, by referencing historical moments that are noted for their systematized and repressive qualities.

Both novels are set in an earlier decade than that of their first publication. The eras they select to replace the context of their times have decidedly different atmospheres

that are more highly restrictive to the individuals in the stories. Emily Bronte's novel was published in 1847, although the narrative describes a period between the 1750s and the early 1800s in Yorkshire, England. This selection of dates places it within the period of the Romantic poets that focused upon the creative, free-spirited individual and an interaction with nature. The Romantics were very aware of the various Enclosure Acts[1] of this period; and how it impacts the rural landscape is important in Bronte's novel as well. By ignoring the context of the 1840s, Bronte turns away from the Abolition of slavery and the discourse leading up to the Married Women's Property Act.[2] These two aspects influence the novel in important ways, such as the origin of Heathcliff as black, as well as the lack of legal rights that allows Heathcliff to gain control over women and children in the novel. In this way the novel can be seen to discuss problems of Bronte's times by reverting to a near-past where there is no social relief. The setting of the narrative is selected to be exactly the right circumstance for the author's display of rebellion against the established order that offers little or no social protection to its weakest members.

Although Richard Wright's novel was published in 1940, it too depicts Chicago in the preceding decade of the 1930s. This is significant because it illustrates a consciousness on the part of the author to situate the novel closer to the Depression-era, than WWII and the economic stability that it represents to the country at large. The

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[1] The various Enclosure Acts consolidated land allotments away from the community and less wealthy farmers, and sent hundreds to the newly industrialized cities in search of work.

[2] The Married Women's Property Act allowed women in the Victorian era limited rights, such as the right to retain ownership of their property upon marriage, the ability to divorce, and right to sue for guardianship of children upon separation. Although this Act was not passed until 1882 (nearly thirty years after Bronte's novel is published), she bypasses all of the existing discourse which leads up to this law by placing it so far in the past.

allusion to folktales such as "The Flying Fool[3]" and "All God's Children Had Wings,"

illustrates the symbolic importance of flight in African American literature in general. It

is ironic for Wright to include this allusion in *Native Son*, when the WWII period

witnessed the entrance of the celebrated Tuskegee Airmen. The fact that Wright chooses

to revisit the past decade of disenfranchisement references the historical dilemma, in

which returning war veterans came home only to face the same inequality that prevailed

before the war. The implicit suggestion offered by this doubling is that the uneducated,

seasoned murderer of the 1930s and distinguished war hero of the 1940s, both have to

contend with Jim Crow laws that view them with equal antagonism. In the same vein,

both of these figures have a legitimate reason for rebellion against the social structure,

although they represent different experiences in society.

The creation of these social hierarchies in the novels, represented by the Daltons

and the Lintons, is one way in which to understand how the texts are related. The way

the protagonists challenge authoritarian figures, and how they are answered by these

figures, are instances of pure power dynamics at work. In a reflective essay, "How

'Bigger' Was Born" (1940), Wright talks about his realization

> that Bigger Thomas was not black all the time; he was white, too, and
>
> there were literally millions of him everywhere ... whenever I picked up a
>
> newspaper, I'd no longer feel that I was reading the doings of whites alone
>
> ... but of a complex struggle for life going on in my country ... I sensed,
>
> too, that the Southern scheme of oppression was but an appendage of a far

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[3] Richard Wright uses this variation of the folktale, where heaven is segregated by race and African Americans are deprived from flight. Essentially, a black man manages to sneak past St. Peter and steals a pair of angel wings. He goes for a spin around heaven, before finally being caught and expelled from heaven.

vaster and in many respects more ruthless and impersonal commodity-profit machine. (514-515)

This quote is significant for several reasons, the foremost being the author's inherent sense of ideology at work, and that he views social oppression as systematized. Although the novel centers on Black culture, a similar power dynamic can be seen in the repression of any minority group. In terms of this essay (and its focus on imperial/postcolonial analysis and gothic symbolism) the novel is not about Bigger or his cultural membership, but rather *society's impression of* Bigger; this difference is crucial because it represents the gap between a (false) perception and reality. This difference is more readily apparent in terms of the gothic symbolism of black-and-white in the novel, which describes how the terms "darkness" or "blackness" becomes loaded with more connotations than race. Finally, this quote illustrates that while Bigger Thomas cannot fathom how his personal dilemma is tied to the larger issues of community, Wright sees this connection as an absolute reality. In this way, Wright denies the idea of postcolonial/imperial "exceptionalism" and the way that it re-interprets events.

Both of these novels can be seen to have a connection to postcolonial studies. Although the terms colonial, postcolonial, and imperialism are all lumped into one field of analysis, the terms are actually quite different and not interchangeable. While imperialism is seen to focus upon the creation and sustaining of ideology, colonialism centers more upon the creation of colonies abroad and the significance of their economic value. Postcolonialism describes the process of "decolonization," which attempts to reinvent identity and culture without the prior influences of the colonizer. Although the terms appear distinct, history does not seem to respect the boundaries between these

theoretical   definitions.   There   is   a   mismatching   of   terms   whenever "colonial/postcolonial/imperial" analysis is applied to the history and literature of different world regions, which often forgets the common origin of these dynamics is (in this case) the historical connection to the British Empire.

Even within the category of "postcolonial," there is a further differentiation of countries and experiences. Generally, postcolonial refers to the actual colonies that were settled by European super powers, and traditionally do not include America, Canada, and Australia/New Zealand. It would also traditionally not include the European nations which themselves practiced colonization. In this narrow, conservative reading, the examination in this essay would generally not be allowed as exemplary of the colonial/imperial perspective. While purists would say that neither novel exactly falls into the limited definition of the genre, the contexts and conflicts of these works is hauntingly similar to the major concerns of this field.

Contemporary scholars have begun challenging the vague boundaries of this area, in such a way as to urge the inclusion of a greater variety of texts. For example, Peter Hulme also urges the broadening of postcolonial boundaries in his article, "Including America," albeit more conservatively than in this essay (119). Antonio Tillis has taken a similar analytical approach in literature, applying postcolonial theory (also in terms of the African Diaspora) in his comparison of how the protagonists in *Native Son* and *Las Estrellas Son Negras* cope with the process of decolonization (207-208). In this way, the broadening of the genre becomes necessary and eminent, as the current definition insufficiently accounts for the history of the colonial/postcolonial/imperial experience as literary representation.

While colonialist/imperialist critics might disavow the necessity for including texts from European (colonizing) countries, the ideas which they produce actually require their presence. For example, Gauri Viswanathan explains that colonial fantasy is actually an act within the colonizer's head rather than an apt description of what the colonized or native populations feel themselves (12). This implicitly requires some understanding of the colonizer in terms of their own culture, history, language, and religion, before formulating a clear idea of what role the imperial superstructure fulfills in a larger worldview. Without this understanding it becomes easy for the scholar to invert an orientalizing gaze upon the imperial nation. The scenario of colonization would be read entirely as a victimization account that would negate any of the (possibly) positive effects of colonization, such as more technological advancement and greater international trade. For this reason Emily Bronte's novel should exert a significant impact on the genre, because it was written during British colonial/imperial expansion. It captures a critical view of social values that encourage expansion, as well as what this global expansion means for the local setting. James Thompson's "Rule Britania[4]" is also disqualified from being "colonial" because it comes from the "mother" country, although it is highly evocative of the British worldview and exemplifies their national pride in empire. In this way, it is possible and necessary to include European texts into the realm of discourse, in order to objectively view colonial/imperial motivations.

The inclusion of America is a thornier issue of debate currently, although there is no denial of the historical fact of colonization. Emory University's online

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[4] "Rule, Britannia, rule the waves; / Britons never will be slaves" (line 5-6).

"Introduction to Postcolonial Studies" webpage describes the difference between these "settler countries" as opposed to "non-settler countries:"

> The United States might also be described as a postcolonial country, but it is not perceived as such because of its position of power in world politics in the present, its displacement of native American populations, and its annexation of other parts of the world in what may be seen as a form of colonization. For that matter, other settler countries such as Canada and Australia are sometimes omitted from the category "postcolonial" because of their relatively shorter struggle for independence, their loyalist tendencies toward the mother country which colonized them, and the absence of problems of racism or of the imposition of a foreign language. It could, however, be argued that the relationship between these countries to the mother country is often one of margin to center, making their experience relevant to a better understanding of colonialism. (Bahri)

The reasons mentioned above as to why these countries are not considered postcolonial are problematic for several reasons. The most fundamental reason is that all of these things only characterize the mainly Christian/Caucasian settlers who populated these colonies, who would largely not have linguistic, religious, and cultural barriers preventing them from relating back to England (in a general sense). The image of the "Virginian gentleman farmer" that characterizes the early American Presidents does not stand that far apart from his typical 18th Century European counterpart. For this reason the face of George Washington is not particularly evocative of an American postcolonial

experience, and may not be by itself a substantial reason to enlarge the definition of postcolonial.

This viewpoint forgets the ways in which Native peoples and those of the African Diaspora were not merely marginalized, but had a forced interaction with Western culture that changed both. In both cases there were ideologically-based decisions (carried out in both active and passive ways) that changed and repressed language, culture, and religion. The same sort of theories and trends that Bhabha, Spivak, and Viswanathan discuss in terms of the Indian subcontinent are apparent, in some form, in the Native and Black experiences. The fact that the confrontation with decolonization for many Americans occurs *after* the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were signed is insignificant: these documents did not apply to these groups anyway. The methodology of dealing with these groups was essentially established and carried over from the American colonial period, and for this reason should be read as such. In terms of the Black experience, colonization can be seen to emerge from the time of enslavement until emancipation at the end of the Civil War. The aftermath of this can then be read as a period of "decolonization," which may extend as far as the reforms of the Civil Rights era. For Native Americans, their westward displacement may not be interpreted directly as a colonizing experience. However, it can be taken as an example of imperialistic land-grabbing, and thus still remain pertinent to this area. They might not be interpreted as truly colonized peoples until after the Reservation system was implemented region-by-region, although this is difficult to exactly pinpoint by a specific year. In this light, a colonial/postcolonial/imperial understanding of American history is plausible, however uncomfortable it feels in its proximity to the contemporary period.

The idea that America both began with colonial origins as a "settler country" and can be interpreted as having a *future* that reanimates the position of a colonizer for some Americans themselves, makes it only more important to include American literature within the field of discourse. Paul Spickard writes that "for reasons deriving from the persistent fantasy of American exceptionalism, many Americans (scholars included) have engaged in what Sarah Deutsch calls 'imperialism's salt-water fallacy – that is, if salt water is not crossed, aggression and domination are not imperialistic" (252). In this way, while American consciousness might find moral justification in passing off global colonialism/imperialism as a political and economic vice of the European continent, this does not change the end result. The exclusion of America from postcolonial studies allows the fallacy to continue existing, as if both the pre-revolutionary as well as the post-revolutionary periods should be "blotted out" from history as well as literature. Hulme makes an important point on this matter:

> Because "postcolonial" should not be used as a merit badge, the adjective implies nothing about a postcolonial country's behavior ... "postcolonial" is not a description that should be awarded Indonesia when it became independent from The Netherlands and taken away again when it invaded East Timor: a country can be postcolonial and colonizing at the same time. (122)

In this way the "moral high ground" surrounding colonization should really be discarded, as every instance of colonization is potentially an on-going repetitious process. The only way to really come to terms with this is to include events of colonization as they occur

and to recognize that this is not something that is unique to certain eras or parts of the world.

The issue of slavery is of particular significance in colonial/postcolonial analysis, in terms of both its own theoretical understanding of power dynamics, as well as to smaller analytical explorations like this essay. It is important to consider that the British Empire took several steps to abolish slavery, well before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation came about in America. This is a haunting sort of presence in American history, as suddenly colonizer and ex-colony are not quite so different – especially in regards to how they made use of slavery. Homi Bhabha uses the words of Derrida to explain in a similar way that

> to recognize the *différance* of the colonial presence is to realize that the colonial text occupies that space of double inscription ... hollowed – by Jacques Derrida: whenever any writing both marks and goes back over its mark with an undecidable stroke ... [this] double mark escapes the pertinence or authority of truth: it does not overturn it but rather inscribes it within its play as one of its functions or parts. This displacement ... does not take place in writing. This dis-location (is what) writes/is written. (108)

In this respect, to deny a place to settler colonies in postcolonial analysis is to leave the mimetic legacy of the (ex)colonized following-in-the-footsteps of the colonizer unexamined. It could also be mistaken as a tacit form of assent to the entire event of colonization, as a refusal to analyze the situations could be interpreted as a validation of the process.

This silence is particularly damning when faced with the body of works by Richard Wright; if there is no colonial/postcolonial presence in America, how does one quite explain the feelings and power dynamics to which his works attest? In the essay, "How Bigger Was Born," Wright explains that "there was not just one Bigger, but many of them, more than I could count and more than you can suspect ... who consistently violated the Jim Crow laws of the South and got away with it" (506-509). Throwing Bigger Thomas and America out of the realm of colonial/postcolonial analysis symbolically denies any connection with this group of experiences. Although African American literature and history have "been granted" their own canons and sub-specialties, this "ghettoization" has also served to wring out a message in terms of a global experience. For this reason, the connection to gothic literature in particular, becomes a more inspiring means of interpretation.

In historical terms, the reference to the city of Liverpool early on in *Wuthering Heights* is an entry point for the discussion of slavery, as it was a known hub for the slave trade during this period in England. Eric Solomon notices a range of "mysteries" in the novel that are explained by Heathcliff's status as an illegitimate child of Mr. Earnshaw: (1)Earnshaw's reason for going to Liverpool and adopting the child are not compelling; (2) Mrs. Earnshaw's reaction is that of a jealous, unforgiving wife; (3) Heathcliff quickly becomes Earnshaw's favorite; (4) Hindely views Heathcliff as a usurper; (5) an incestuous relationship with Cathy I ties in with the novel's tone and its use of the Romantic fascination with taboo sexuality (81-3). The fact that so many reactions are clarified by one implicit detail can hardly be glossed over as narrative minutiae, especially when considering Bronte's knack for writing concisely, as well as with great

irony. Even if Heathcliff is not Earnshaw's own child, the fact that the text constantly references his "gypsy" or "dark" complexion corroborates the idea of his mixed ethnicity. The end result is that the plausibility of viewing Heathcliff's character as a direct human consequence of the slave markets is almost undeniable, and Bronte's tacit suggestion that British society fully face up to the consequences of this practice becomes a very poignant criticism of empire.

Although the novel is distanced from the immediacy of slavery, the legacy of the slave trade is still apparent in *Native Son*. It is a commonly accepted precept that the "Black Codes" set in place after the Civil War replicated the social conventions of slavery. Wright's body of works is most indicative of how this racism shows itself in the North, where segregation also plays a distinctive role. There is no attempt on the part of the author to hide what "the line" is, or that it forcefully separates the white and black societies of Chicago. More importantly, contemporary readers are usually given this bit of historical fact directly, if they are not already aware of it (which is decidedly not the case in terms of Bronte's text).

Both texts then, exist in a political context where the objection to slavery as an unethical practice, have already been voiced in society and alleviated to some extent by the existing legal and political systems. However, it is also important to note in both cases that this does not do away with racial discord in society, nor diminish the fact that other than a few token measures society is largely apathetic to the general lack of equitable living conditions. For example, although the transport of slaves from Africa was outlawed in England in 1807, this law did not change the ability to own slaves. In a similar fashion, the failure of Southern Reconstruction only propagated a new dimension

of the old problem. In both instances there remains a level of acceptance by society of these inequalities, while the letter of the law appears to be served.

In addition to this, there are several influences of culture that are discussed by both authors in highly critical ways. In the most optimistic light these cultural influences might appear to offer measures of relief to marginalized individuals. However, in these texts the church or religion in general, literacy and education, the law and its representatives, and the idea of social mobility within the class structure, all illustrate ways in which the status quo is maintained. While one would presume that these issues vary to such an extent that they would be incomparable in transnational or transhistorical contexts, the similar way in which both authors depict them as having diminished authority and powerlessness allow such an analysis to proceed. Specifically, these aspects of culture are depicted in both texts as being under the yoke of a larger, more compelling force of ideological control. In the end, the message broadcast by Bronte and Wright, are that these linchpins of society are always subtly diverted from any pretense at achieving social uplift in the interest of preserving the existing power structure. This topic will be addressed more fully in the following section.

As a result, a certain kind of resonance can be seen to emerge between the two environments, which are conjoined in a similarity of conflict and the resulting need for authorial discourse about it. While both novels begin with a feeling of intimacy that suggests the settings are highly localized and center upon a specific group of individuals, by the end of the texts an idea is developed that these dramas that encapsulate a greater experience than the humble microcosms of society to which they attest.

II: *Colonial Fantasy and the Social Sphere*

The historical settings of the novels juxtapose the British Empire and metropolitan Chicago. In these settings a capitalistic system is set in place that aims at its own expansion and stabilization. Despite the fact that the protagonists are shown the possibility of gaining class status and economic stability, in the novels they are deprived of such an optimistic outlook. Bigger Thomas and Heathcliff are handed remarkable windfalls for individuals in their straits: as bad as situations are in the Black Belt district of Chicago, Bigger gains employment with a rich family, while Heathcliff is actually adopted by a land-owning gentleman. The fact that both characters enter into their conflicts *after* these fortuitous circumstances occur suggests that they have stepped into a realm where personal insight, luck, and even ability are no match against the larger social machine. It also suggests that their roles and the ends which they achieve are entirely foreseeable. While they ought to become more fully autonomous individuals with a clearer insight into the world, the opposite actually happens. Rather than becoming self-assured they become more and more dependent upon an outside force for their support and development. As the presence of ideological agendas insinuates itself upon these goals, any measure of relief which the protagonists might find in the traditional values of society are curtailed and disappear. In the end, they are more abandoned by society than aloof from it, although that is curiously the charge usually leveled at the protagonists' lack of social consciousness.

A fundamental concept of postcolonial studies describes how this power dynamic exists as a fantasy about the colonized, within the mind of the colonizer. Gauri Viswanathan points out that this "fantasy" does not come without cost

for if the colonial subject is a construct emanating from the colonizer's head, and therefore removed from history, … the impending "event" to which his measures are so crucially attached is real only to the extent that it provides the rational for his actions. How the native *actually* responds is so removed from the colonizer's representational system, his understanding of the meaning of events, that it enters into the realm of another history of which the latter has no comprehension or even awareness. (12)

This idea is important because it describes the natural tendency for readers to have their attention diverted onto Bigger and Heathcliff as representatives of the colonized strata, despite Viswanathan's warning about accepting this misleading assumption. What this illustrates is that the protagonists and the society they live in function on almost separate planes of "reality," which never succeed in overlapping. What becomes clear is that although these characters originate the violent *actions* that unfold in the novels, they are not in fact the origin of the central social *conflicts* that the texts examine. For this reason, a closer inspection of the social framework and the conditions it encourages in both novels is required before any conclusion is possible.

This idea of the colonizer's fantasy is corroborated by the analysis of Joseph Bodziock, who sees *Native Son* as a study of "blackness as something inside the white head" (35). Bodziock coins the phrase "the white mythos" to describe the "mythology of the white world," where Whites are "victims of the external presence of objectified evil" (34-37). In this way, *the impression of Bigger* is (illogically and automatically) equated with evil, destruction, and criminality by society. An example of this can be seen in the

mob that amasses to hunt down Bigger, and later rallies outside the jail to incite his lynching. Although he has been arrested and is unlikely to be acquitted of the murders, the mob remains outside of the jail to assuage its own fears of being overcome by what Bigger represents. It also shows a need for the mob to "blot out" what frightens them, in the same manner which Bigger uses throughout the novel. This kind of thinking is also evident in the sensational news stories that falsely attribute other crimes to Bigger. This serves to increase the sense of "evil" that already surrounds him, and again justifies the destructive need of the crowd. In this way, Bodziock's interpretation allows readers to see more than just the extreme reactions of Bigger Thomas as shocking. Instead, the reader can register the subconscious force of a white society that also over-reacts (Bodziock 32). Instead of seeing reality or these minorities as they really exist, society sees its own colonizer-fantasy in the end.

The importance of an imperial fantasy in *Wuthering Heights* is also apparent in the aura of perpetual masquerade that exists in the novel. The Lintons and Earnshaws are set apart as foils early on in the novel, with the primary distinction centering upon fine manners and clothing. Both Cathy I and Heathcliff latch onto these visual cues in order to elevate themselves socially to the level of the Lintons at different points in the novel. Neither are barred from claiming this status, although it is clear that their personalities have not changed in the least. In this way the adage that "the clothes make the man" is rendered closer to truth than fiction.

In addition to this, the narrative itself can be seen as an act of imperial fantasy, as a less-than-credible narrator creates her own interpretation of reality. The character of Nelly Dean has become quite suspicious in contemporary readings of the novel, where

critics such as James Hafley argue that she is actually the villain in *Wuthering Heights* (199). Hafley maintains that the only parts in the novel where she falls under her own censure is when the reader is most likely to sympathize with her plight, and that her social-climbing exceeds even Heathcliff's in the end (204-06). This is visible early on in the novel, as Nelly reinforces her own connection to the Earnshaw family via her mother's past role as Hindley Earnshaw's wet-nurse. She also constantly reiterates her status as a foster-sibling to the Earnshaw children. This creates an impression of her role as a puppet-master who is influencing her narrative and is interested in how the conclusion of her re-telling resonates with Lockwood.

The way in which Nelly gives herself authority and legitimizes her own presence is indicative of this process and directly contrasts how she deminishes Heathcliff's status. In an attempt to ostensibly bolster Heathcliff's pride, Nelly creates a image that has nothing to do with the Earnshaws or Wuthering Heights. Rather than calling on the past adoption by Mr. Earnshaw that she herself witnesses, Nelly attempts to divert the legitimacy of Heathcliff's claim within the family structure, by privileging fiction over fact: "who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thruscross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England" (49).

The fact that Nelly encourages Heathcliff to view himself as the orientalized son of an exotic monarch, rather than the adopted son of a specific English gentleman, suggests a systematized attempt at creating what Homi Bhabha calls "a revisionary narrative that sustains the discipline of Commonwealth history" (105). In this respect, Heathcliff as the

outsider *remains* an outsider via the influence of language, which preserves the status quo. When it comes to claiming her own legitimacy within the narrative, Nelly grounds her argument in a hereditary, almost feudalistic sense of loyalty. It is interesting to note that the *distrust* of Nelly Dean creates the strongest similarity between the characters of Heathcliff, Edgar, and Cathy I in the second half of the novel. Paradoxically, Lockwood whole-heartedly accepts her narrative and allows it to temper his judgment of Nelly and her story. In this way, the factual accuracy of the account comes into question along with her motivations for slanting her tale.

In both novels, the presence of the written text is also used in such a way that it adheres to imperial/colonial methods of infusing and enforcing ideology in society. In Homi Bhaba's *The Location of Culture*, he explains that

> the sudden, fortuitous discovery of the English book ... is, like all myths of origin, memorable for its balance between epiphany and enunciation ... The discovery of the book is, at once, a moment of originality and authority. It is, as well, a process of displacement that, paradoxically, makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced. (102)

This illustrates how the written text is often given a greater importance than reality or actual experience, and that this response makes ideology attractive to the colonized figure. Because of this it is very easy to set individuals upon a course of action by investing these "epiphanies" with whatever serves the purposes of society. Because the written text is also an important element in gothic literature, the act of writing can also be seen as related to the creation of terror and horror. This is especially true as an

ideological framework emerges that perverts the truth-bearing quality of writing and seeks to maintain the status quo. In both novels, the protagonists come to realize that subjugating the written word can be effective in validating their own experiences and achieving the ends they seek.

This makes it very ironic, and highly symbolic, that both Bigger and Heathcliff have very negative or apathetic attitudes toward education and literacy. One of the first interactions between Bigger and Mrs. Dalton is his refusal to go to night school, even though this is (like flying) something that is denied him. Heathcliff is also disinterested in learning to read, which becomes one of the first differences to mark the growing separation between him and Cathy I. The fact that both protagonists eventually come to acknowledge the need to master the written text because of its legitimizing force, illustrates that "as a signifier of authority, the English book acquires its meaning *after* the traumatic scenario of colonial difference, cultural or racial, returns the eye of power to some prior, archaic image or identity" (Bhabha 107). In this way, only after they have been gripped by conflict are these characters able to inscribe their own meaning upon writing and texts. It is curious that for novels that deal with the plight of the impoverished and uneducated, the meaning of writing is portrayed as unstable.

The importance of the written text is seen in the constant attention that Bigger pays to newspapers, before, after, and during his flight from the law and his anxiousness and inability to act until he reads one. When the newspaper journalists flock around the Dalton home, Bigger is unsure of how to speak or act despite the fact that he has been quite successful in playing "dumb" with the Daltons and Detective Britten. He never feels entirely at ease until after he finds a newspaper lying on the basement floor. During

his flight from the law, he also depends entirely upon the newspaper headlines to escape the man hunt, rather than his own intuition. This is quite significant, especially upon considering that the reader gains an early appreciation for his "street smarts" although his philosophical understanding is somewhat muted. Even after his capture, although he has a stream of visitors, Bigger still takes the time to read the headlines. For an individual with good instincts, hearing the roaring mob outside should be enough indication of where he stands. The idea remains that while he is so cut off from his community, that he is entirely dependent upon cultural cues is highlighted by his need for newspapers. At any given point after the murders, Bigger is unable to understand his circumstances without having an external, authoritative voice influence and filter what he should be able to comprehend himself to some extent. In this way, writing becomes a clear form of (consumption and) control in the novel.

The ransom note that Bigger writes after Mary's death is also another instance of writing and terror superseding reality. In this situation the symbolic fear of Communism (represented by the *serp i molot*[5]) drowns out the hint of vernacular speech that Bigger unwittingly includes in the letter. Doyle W. Walls notices that neither the Daltons, the police, or the journalists catch on to unique phraseology of "Do what this letter say," despite Wright's own contention that "if there had been one person in the Dalton household who viewed Bigger Thomas as a human being, the crime would have been solved in half an hour" (qtd. in Walls 126-27). Walls comments that "that the white men did not know Bigger's language tells the reader that they did not know him" (127). This notion reiterates the idea of Bigger as a fantasy of the postcolonial system and "the white

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[5] The Russian name for the "hammer and sickle" symbol, which represents the Communist Party.

mythos" it represents. This is also a very important instance of mimesis: Bigger, who is a symbolic representation of exactly what the "white mythos" fears, can be seen to subvert and divert this fear to his own will. He does this by recreating terror symbolically in the *serp i molot*. Although he knows that his signature ("Red") will be enough to implicate the Communists, the addition of this sign elevates the terror to such an extent that everything else is obscured in gothic *horror*.

Heathcliff also comes to rely on the support of the written text as a way of subverting reality to his fancy. Early on in the novel he makes an appeal to Cathy I, in which he presents her with a written calendar marking the days she passes in the company of Edgar Linton and those spent with himself.

This scene is important for several reasons. First, the character of Heathcliff is grounded completely in the natural world, where he is known for slipping off without notice to wander the moors without a sense of the passage of time. Cathy I is also described as sharing this "wild" lack of self-discipline. This makes the fact that Heathcliff must depend upon a calendar (a written text) in order to validate *his feelings* of neglect *to his friend* very ironic. This idea is shocking for a text based on Romantic philosophies, and in this way only further illustrates the sense of "wrongness" that emerges in using writing to divert the will of another person.

While this act makes no impression upon Cathy I at the time, after his re-entry as a "gentleman" he is more successful at manipulating the use of words. Heathcliff gains both preeminence and control over Hindley Earnshaw by winning the deed to Wuthering Heights while gambling. Heathcliff also manufactures a romance between Linton and Cathy II via love letters that he dictates to his son. He also manages to gain control of

Thruscross Grange by maneuvering just enough so that Edgar cannot modify his will, thereby guaranteeing his daughter some measure of financial protection from her avaricious father-in-law. In this way, Heathcliff goes from the lowest social rank to the highest, simply by understanding that words and writing can be used and manipulated to undo any manner of social norms. What is more startling about this, however, is the fact that society largely accepts these actions because of the fact that writing invests each action with more authority.

Part of the reason that words and writing are so authoritative in the texts is because they manage to subvert the usual moderating forces in society of institutions that represent the law, religion, and education. Bhabha explains that "colonial domination is achieved through a process of disavowal that denies the chaos of its intervention as *Entstellung*[6], its dislocatory presence in order to preserve the authority of its identitiy in the teleological narratives of historical and political evolutionism" (111). So while these influences are usually seen to have a universal quality of uplift, within these texts these institutions are seen to be only functions of either the spoken or written word. They easily divert reality and exert their influences with the final goal of hiding the larger presence of ideology. What the texts come to illustrate is a mere ceremony of language rather than the exposition of lofty ideals like "Justice," "Truth," or "Mercy" within institutions like the courts and the church.

While most people value the stabilizing force of the law that creates a sense of security that the day-to-day will continue forever and anon, in these novels there is a great void of silence: the Law is unfair, lawyers are merely rhetoricians, and "Justice" an

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[6] A disfigurement, distortion, or perversion of something.

acknowledgement of power rather than right. In Bronte's novel, when Edgar Linton hears that his daughter is held captive at Wuthering Heights, his only solution is to dispatch a group of men in a quasi-mob to bring her back; they are easily rebuffed by a few words from Heathcliff and return empty-handed. In a similar way, the only lawyer described in the narrative is paid off by Heathcliff to drag his heels when summoned to the deathbed of Edgar Linton. Finally, in terms of the guardianship of children, the very worst happens: no one objects to Heathcliff's ill treatment of Hareton, and the law appears to be on Heathcliff's side when he threatens to sue Edgar Linton for custody of Linton Heathcliff. In all of these actions, Heathcliff appears to reign supreme by virtue of "might over right." However, his supremacy is as illusory as the means by which he gained power: the very first hearth scene of *Wuthering Heights* illustrates Heathcliff's inability to command his daughter-in-law to serve tea to their guest. In addition to this, he is cautious around Nelly Dean, whom he terms a "meddler" because she influences the perception of events. In this way, while Heathcliff appears to master the social climate, it is a precarious and imperfect mastery.

In Wright's novel, no attempt is even made to hide the failure of justice and the law. Buckley uses mob fear and blatant racism in the courtroom to rouse the sentiments of the jury, in a way that symbolizes the "You Can't Win" attitude toward African Americans (13). However, what is shocking is the relationship between Bigger and his lawyer, Boris Max. Although Max takes a great deal of time to understand Bigger's motive – the only thing which the court is actually interested in hearing – there is a curious detachment between the two of them afterwards. Edward Kearns notices that "it is Jan, not Max, who first gives Bigger a clue to the meaning of his act … and in the end

Bigger echoes Jan's words" (152). While Kearns describes Jan as "the catalyst for Bigger's understanding of himself," he asserts that Max only offers "a temptation for Bigger once more to enter a world of symbols and abstract theories where words have no flesh and human beings appear to one another as ghost-like images" (152). In this way, the law is seen as only a linguistic exercise in rhetoric: it neither guarantees justice, nor encourages mutual understanding. It does little to establish truth and actually serves as an instrument that reasserts stereotypes in the end.

Religion in both novels is also quite degenerative, as the sermonizing of Preachers has either a numbing effect or is repelling to the protagonists. In *Wuthering Heights*, Joseph is seen as a sort of fire-and-brimstone preacher who is very harsh and overly-critical of nearly everyone. In addition to being of low status and having unpolished manners, he is the only character (with the exception of Nelly) who reads scripture. In addition to speaking in a thick vernacular form, Joseph also swears a great deal. A particularly interesting scene is late in the novel when Isabella narrates how Heathcliff and Hindley come to physical blows and Joseph's reaction to it:

> "And so , ye've been murthering on him?' exclaimed Joseph, lifting his hands and eyes in horror. 'If iver I seed a seeght loike this! May the Lord – "
>
> "Heathcliff gave him a push on to his knees in the middle of the blood, and flung a towel to him; but instead of proceeding to dry it up, he joined his hands and began a prayer, which excited my laughter from its odd phraseology." (153-154)

This image is important because it registers several of the characters' impressions of God/religion. The fact that Joseph is praying in a pool of blood illustrates that to him a vengeful, punishing God is more important than any other sort. Heathcliff's reaction to this prayer is utterly disrespectful, as is Isabella's. This is important because Isabella Linton is supposed to be imbued with refined qualities, and here she is pictured as amazingly harsh. It also implies that Heathcliff's baseness and Isabella's refinement are not inherent qualities and that religion does not have any role in softening the nature of individuals.

Reverend Hammond, the preacher in *Native Son*, also gives a problematic impression of the power of religion. When Bigger is imprisoned pending his trial, Reverend Hammond is asked by Mrs. Thomas to offer some comfort to her son. While the scene is not nearly as negative as that of Joseph praying in the pool of blood, the objective of helping Bigger achieve insight into the meaning of his life is never realized and Bigger's feelings quickly fade back into obscurity. The text registers Bigger's reaction:

> Bigger sat very still, listening and not listening. If someone had afterwards asked him to repeat the preacher's words, he would not have been able to do so. But he felt and sensed their meaning. As the preacher appeared before him a vast black silent void and the images of the preacher swam in that void, grew large and powerful … they sprawled before his eyes and seized his emotions in a spell of awe and wonder. (326-7)

The "awe and wonder" that Bigger experiences here is interesting, although a little suspect. While Bigger is pacified by the discussion it does not have a lasting effect, nor does it really change Bigger's worldview. What it does appear to do is numb Bigger momentarily, and creates an emotional response that serves to reiterate his fear and guilt. Here, religion is not depicted as actively negative, although it has a pacifying force that deters or stalls Bigger's consciousness. In this example, the insight of Biblical allegories like the creation story (as a commentary upon the human condition) is diminished by the metaphorical language of scripture. This use of metaphor obscures the ultimate meaning of the text to Bigger, who instead attempts to channel its emotive quality. This reaction of "awe and wonder" is precisely the same reaction of the colonized Indians in Bhabha's chapter, "Signs Taken For Wonders;" In it, the newly-converted Christians of India are unable to explain how the Bible is both a text brought by the British and sent by God, although it does not prevent them from viewing the scripture reverently (103).

In *Wuthering Heights* there is a curious silence in the text, where the role of religion can once again be examined. This scene depicts a young Heathcliff and Cathy (I) discussing a vision of heaven that is so sweet that even Nelly finds no fault with it:

> The little souls were comforting each other with better thoughts than I could have hit on: no parson in the world ever pictured heaven so beautifully as they did, in their innocent talk (38).

Rather than relating the conversation, like any other, Nelly goes no further in her explanation for what was said than this summary. A vision of heaven that is divorced from the rigidity of scripture and is steeped in imagination mirrors the Romantic view of a transcendent religion or a God that is knowable on an individual basis. The fact that

Nelly does not bother to actually explain *what this vision is*, makes it seem either banal or disingenuous on some level. This could be merely a reflection on Nelly's already questionable character as a narrator; however it also reasserts the idea that something is lacking in traditional spiritual faith that necessitates eavesdropping on the thoughts of innocent children.

Finally, the greatest imposition of religion on these protagonists appears, ironically, to be in the presence of Christian charity. Rather than being the usual image of wholesome good-will, in these novels it is described as always being rather a back-handed event (Sonstroem 52-53). While the Daltons make large monetary contributions to the NAACP, they also own the real estate company that monopolizes the black belt district and price-gouges the rent. Even Mary Dalton's solicitude in informing Bigger about trade unions is rather unkind. Putting aside the fact that she is speaking for the benefit of Mr. Dalton's ears, she embarrasses Bigger in choosing to discuss it in the midst of his "interview." In a similar fashion, although Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff home with the intention of adopting him, the reaction of Mrs. Earnshaw, Nelly, and the children are horrible: they all systematically take turns in throwing him first out of the house, and then out of their bedroom. Rather than fulfilling the ideal of filial piety and accepting Heathcliff, Hindley turns his adopted brother into a servant. Heathcliff later returns this favor when he gains guardianship over Hindley's son. In this way, the true purpose of charitable giving backfires, and is only another means for castigating others.

As already discussed, there is a hint in both novels that becoming educated is a legitimizing force in acquiring social status, although both Bigger and Heathcliff view it with distrust initially. For example, in Bronte's novel the Lintons are elevated because of

their fine manners and their ability to read, while Heathcliff, and later Hareton, are denigrated for being without fine manners and book learning. In *Native Son,* the previous chauffer for the Dalton family is highly praised by Mrs. Dalton for finishing night school and getting a government job. This is significant because the reader has already witnessed Bigger's impression of the government and its employees as presented by the billboard of D.A. Buckley in the black district. In this way, the educated characters within the novel have an air of falseness about them, which makes them untrustworthy.

As the novel progresses, rather than the characters revealing that they are mistaken and that education is in fact a key to understanding and accessing reality, there are significant indications that these protagonists are *right*. For example, Bigger is literate but not free to read communist pamphlets or learn about trade unions, even if he had desired to, because of the inherent social tensions on the subject. This censorship of ideas is a direct method of social programming, in which Bigger is forcefully limited from experiencing new ideas. The result of this internal "closing" is the state of alienation which is so daunting and insurmountable. Also, it is important to note that the man who shares Bigger's prison cell (and who is later carted off to the insane asylum) is only guilty of documenting social injustices in the black community. In this light, had Bigger been educated and remained within the bounds of the law, there is no guarantee that his fate would be any different. As long as his criticism of society remains, it quickly becomes apparent that there is no way for this character to be other than he is.

Heathcliff's attempt to become a "gentleman" by gaining education and personal wealth is much more straight-forward. First of all, it makes no pretense at saying that education in itself is important. It only re-emphasizes that education must be combined

with the influence of cash, before any metamorphosis of class is possible. Secondly, although his metamorphosis appears complete on the surface, neither Nelly or Cathy I have any doubt that his character is essentially the same and even unchangeable. In essence, here we have the exact portrait of a cleaned-up-and-polished Bigger Thomas; rather than suddenly finding social cohesion and coming to an understanding with his world, he is only more at odds with it by virtue of having more social authority at his disposal. It soon becomes apparent that neither character gains a positive view of education or those that have it. The fact that they still seek the advantage it offers only serves to reassert these characters as more abject.

In this way, these protagonists are not supported by any positive influences of community and culture, which have clear goals of maintaining status quo ideals above all. The consequence of this is that these protagonists are given no means by which to access their own identities or assuage their needs and desires. Although the void that is created within them does not conclusively deny their individual autonomy, it removes the part of consciousness within the individual that can imagine why it should refrain from doing harm. In the end, this erosion of morality takes its toll, and it is only a matter of time before the characters cross the line between what is merely taboo into what is actually criminal or tyrannous. What society becomes responsible for is the enduring quality of its apathy toward Otherness. When this is coupled with the gothic symbolism within the novels, the eventuality of the "monster" figure (represented by these protagonists) propagating more grotesque actions is only to be expected. In this way, the choice of society has far-reaching and long enduring effects, just as the choice of the individual can be said to directly influence their own fate. While the characters might be

able to camouflage their immoral (or amoral) attitudes in a veil of ignorance, society cannot. Society's complicity in subjugating the Other soon becomes apparent upon the realization that the only alternative the protagonists have is to accept situations as they are. In this way, their need to invert this system upon society is comprehensible, despite the fact that it is still unsatisfying.

III: The Gothic as an Orientalizing Force

The novels of Wright and Bronte can also be connected, despite the wide historical gap discussed in the last section, in terms of their co-existence with the appearance and reappearance of gothic art. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* is generally regarded as the great progenitor of the gothic's literary form, and features the typical motifs of gothic horror: locked doors, hidden secrets, sexuality and the fear of incest, an anxiety over the purity of bloodlines, curses and prophecies, a high level of intertextuality, the visual starkness of black-versus-white imagery, and an overall atmosphere pervaded by sin. Walpole's short novel was first published in 1764, setting it curiously within the same narrative timeline of the action in *Wuthering Heights*; critics have not failed to connect the similarity of characters, such as Manfred and Heathcliff, as well as a plot that centers upon the importance of maintaining patriarchal lineage and social order. Because of this, contemporary readings have largely come to accept this novel as a more modern addendum to the gothic genre, although the suggestion initially caused great debate in the 1970s.

The connection between the gothic form and *Native Son* draws heavily from the tradition of American film during the 1930s. Several critics have noted the importance of

horror films in the public mind at this time; in general they have commented upon how this influenced Wright's use of symbolism and imagery in the text, and quote Wright's famous saying: "if Poe were alive, he would not have to invent horror; horror would invent him" ("How" 540). James Smethurst particularly likens *Native Son* to the now-famous 1931 version of *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale, in which he notes the chase scenes are remarkably evocative of each other and end with the same traumatic caging-in of the protagonists by police atop buildings surrounded by light (32).

Sexuality is among the foremost taboos in the gothic form, which inspire a great amount of terror for characters because of the fact that they disrupt the social order. This is particularly true when sexual terror evolves into the horror of incestuous longings or miscegenation. In *Native Son*, all of Bigger's relationships with younger women register some degree of terror for the reader, and escalates as the novel progresses. At the very beginning, Vera accuses Bigger of watching her as she dresses. It is a very interesting moment because the reader is forced to suspend their judgment of Bigger, on the basis that he is completely unaware of Vera's presence in both instances. However, the disruptive nature of sexuality becomes more apparent when Bigger is caught masturbating in a movie theater. It causes a White woman to flee in disgust and this scene describes sexuality as socially disruptive, a cause of juvenile delinquency, and a generally repulsive act. This trend continues until it reaches the point where sexuality meets unremitted violence: Bigger enjoys fondling Mary before accidentally smothering her with a pillow;[7] later, after having intercourse with his girlfriend, Bigger

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[7] It is significant that the terror of miscegenation never really develops within the reader's mind, as the scene in Mary's bedroom is not portrayed as unusually "dirty" or "disgusting." Rather, this terror of racial intermixing is left for the white mob to reflect upon and react to.

premeditatedly uses a brick to kill Bessie. In this way the linking of sexuality and horror/terror[8], is readily apparent in how the novel functions within a gothic atmosphere.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the terror of sexuality is still present although the acts appear more muted. Many critics have commented upon the problematic portrayal of love in the text, and how it is fully realized only at the childhood stage rather than in a mature, adult form (Buchen 69). Wade Thompson actually asserts the "mystic bond" between Cathy I and Heathcliff in the novel is "frequently conveyed in suggestions of incest and child sexuality" (71). Thompson goes on to describe how Cathy's marriage to Edgar is "essentially an escape from the demands of adult sexuality," and that Heathcliff extacts revenge for her inability to reciprocate his adult love "by imposing adult sexuality on children, her child and his" (71-72). In this case, the terror of love and sexuality are characterized in how they are misappropriated in the novel. Instead of solidifying family relationships and social ties, they also serve only to further destabilize the community.

Following as a direct consequence of this fear of sexuality, is the fear of impure bloodlines. In the British gothic tradition, this fear is linked with the need for an heir to continue the patriarchal line. For this reason, the image of a "mixed blood" figure simultaneously becomes the symbol of both a monstrosity and a usurper of power. In this light, Solomon's idea of Heathcliff being an illegitimate child of old Earnshaw fits this role perfectly. As Solomn points out, "Heathcliff, as Earnshaw's real son, would have an increased motivation for his bitter insistence that Wuthering Heights must belong to him" (83). If there was no blood connection it would be safe to say that this reaction would not

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[8] The terms "Horror" and "Terror" have specific meanings in Gothic literature. As defined by the *Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Restoration and The Eighteenth Century*, "Terror is the anticipation of some vague, uncertain, dreaded occurrence … Horror, on the other hand, was the physical realization of a dreaded terror…Terror, unlike horror, was a source of the sublime" (624).

occur: when Lockwood is also turned away from the Heights, instead of being enraged like Heathcliff, he merely retreats to the Grange to hear Nelly's narrative. Even though Lockwood's guest-status might place an obligation upon Heathcliff as a host, there is no sense of usurpation even as all cordiality is violated. In this way, an expectation of acknowledgement is evident in Heathcliff's mind, even if the narrative re-affirms his "outsider" status.

The purity of bloodlines motif works in an inverted sense in *Native Son*. Rather than eliciting horror because of mixed-blood, Bigger's presence is horrifying because he represents the *purity of abjection*. Upon being questioned by Jan Erlone about his father's death, Bigger explains that "he got killed in a riot when I was a kid – in the South" (85). This information is significant because it characterizes the father along the same lines as the son: Black and violently rebellious. This also draws out an important distinction of the gothic, and how the term "darkness" is used in American literature. Leslie Fiedler explains that "the gothic's superficial, dark spectacles are transformed into the more meaningful symbolism of psychological and moral blackness" (qtd in Goddu 7). In this way, the quintessence of Bigger's "blackness" is transformed from a mere racial signifier. Instead it "becomes associated with depth rather than surface, a psychological and metaphysical symbolism rather than cheap tricks"(Goddu 7)[9]. In this way, the gothic interpretation of Bigger Thomas completes and complicates the image of horror Bigger represents in White society as more than race, while simultaneously not refuting the "racial gaze" that is described in African American literature.

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[9] This translation of "black" into more than a racial signifier is not meant to obliterate the meaning of race, but to supplement it. Goddu concludes that "the American gothic is haunted by race: resurrecting the term *gothic* reasserts the racial roots of the romance's blackness (7).

The gothic contrast of black and white imagery in both novels is quite important, as it is the primary way in which a distinction is made between the authoritative figures and those whom they dominate. What the reader sees is the typical colonial/imperial representation of a small subset of society representing the whole (Perrot qtd. in Bhabha 111). In this case, "white" also represents everything that describes the Dalton and the Linton families in the novels: wealth, education/literacy, fine manners, Caucasian ethnicity, and a complete nuclear family structure. They are also closely associated with having a "master mentality," and are always described within doors or within the boundaries of their estates.

To directly contrast with this view of authority, the Other is cast in opposition to all of these qualities, and propagates itself in an image of the grotesque and abject. Bhabha describes this as "a strategy of disavowal" where

> the reference of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of the subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid. (111)

In this way, the "darkness" or "blackness" in the texts is linked to poverty, being poorly educated or illiterate, having rough manners, non-Caucasian ethnicity, and an incomplete or broken family structure. These characters have a "slave mentality," and are primarily pictured out of doors, where they find more comfort in vagrancy than within closed spaces. These "dark" characters obviously describe Heathcliff and Bigger.[10]

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[10] This could also apply to Cathy I and Hareton.

This Otherness serves to distance the protagonists from the remaining characters as well as to physically isolate them. This is also evident in the physicality of opposites in the narrative landscapes: the Grange and the Heights are located at opposite ends across the moors, just as the racially-segregated parts of Chicago are separated by "the line." In a similar fashion, although the reader never "meet" the fathers of Bigger and Heathcliff, while the Dalton, Earnshaw, and Linton parents are all accounted for at the beginning of their respective novels (even if they die later). In this way, it is obvious that these characters represent different ideas of social acceptability and are meant to stand apart from one another.

The opposition or division in society that is rooted in hybridity is represented by the black-versus-white color contrast. Here, multiple qualities are collapsed to describe a character who is either acceptable (coded "white") or unacceptable (coded "black") to society. This is evident in *Native Son* by the very first presentation of Mary Dalton on the newsreels at the movie theater: she is seen as a flirtatious, wealthy debutante. The voice-over captures the idea of her social prominence, the influence of the Dalton family, and a provocative, sexualized image of Mary enclosed in her boyfriend's arms:

> *Here are the daughters of the rich taking sunbaths in the sands of Florida! This little collection debutantes represents over four billion dollars of America's wealth and over fifty of America's leading families ... Mary Dalton, daughter of Chicago's Henry Dalton, 4605 Drexel Boulevard, shocks society by spurning the boys of La Salle street and the Gold Coast and accepting the attentions of a well-known radical while on her recent winter vacation in Florida...*The close-up

showed the smiling girl kissing the man, who lifted her up and swung

her round from the camera ... *Ha! He's after her! There! He's got her!*

Oh, boy, don't you wish you were down here in Florida? ... Ah, the

naughty rich! (34-35).

This image contrasts Bigger's life to the most minute detail. While Mary is worth

millions, Bigger has to barrow quarters from his mother and sister even to afford cab fare,

and while Bigger is stuck living with his family in cramped apartment, Mary is on

vacation with a social rebel. In this way, the characters are perfect foils of each other,

which is upheld by the way the contrast of black and white denote hybridity. In a similar

fashion, after Cathy I returns from her convalescence at the Grange, she is described as

being more "white," and it amuses Hindley to have Heathcliff brought out so that he

appears more dirty, dark, and rough than before. A similar contrast occurs when Cathy II

and Linton are in the presence of Hareton Earnshaw, whom they deride for his ignorance,

poverty, and unrefined manners. Once again, Hareton and Heathcliff are associated with

the outdoors, while their counterparts are associated with the indoor drawing-room

lifestyles. In this way, the binary color-symbolism of hybridity is extended to describe an

entire range of properties and a set of characters.

Although the social binaries represented by "black" and "white" are established

early on in the novels, it is important to understand that they are dynamic labels. Rather

than adhering to the way they are established in the beginning of the texts, the characters

of Bigger and Heathcliff are instrumental in showing how this binary is disrupted by

them, particularly in the instance of race. Carine Mardorossian asserts that in *Wuthering*

Heights

class and gender dynamics in the narrative are inextricably articulated with

racial meanings throughout (race itself inversely acquires its meaning

through its articulation with the other categories of social identity), and ...

racial identity as a social category of belonging is no more stable and

coherent then class and gender are. (44)

In addition to this, Mardorossian contends that characters are "blackened" or "whitened"

in the text as their class and gender membership changes (45). What this indicates then,

is that despite the fact that Heathcliff *could* be a racially mixed-blood figure, his abjection

is not based solely upon race. When Lockwood describes him as "gypsy," this might be

understood at first to be a racial categorization. However, it also serves as a description

of Heathcliff as a social outcast or "nobody." An example of Heathcliff's "darkening" in

the text is the fact that he goes from being called a "gypsy" by Lockwood to spawn of the

devil by Cathy. In this way, the status of light and dark in the novel come to be

manipulated by the subsequent interpretations of others, and are not in fact traits that are

inherited or selected by the protagonists.

For this reason an inversion of black and white can also be seen in the novel,

which creates a horrifying sense of doubling in the texts. Many scholars have already

commented upon the traditional black cat of gothic horror being inverted into Mrs.

Dalton's white cat, which perches upon Bigger's shoulder. In this way, the recurring

image of Bigger enmeshed between images coded in the gothic black and white, creates a

world where there is no alternative identity for him to choose. Both are imbued with

almost equal amounts of terror, which only heightens his fears when the two are in

contact with each other. When Bigger is sitting between Jan and Mary in the car he feels "more black" than before:

> They made him feel his black skin by just standing there looking at him ...
> He felt he had no physical existence at all right then; he was something he
> hated, the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin ...
> There were white people to either side of him; he was sitting between two
> fast white looming walls. (76-77)

This can be corroborated by another important scene in the novel, when Bigger jumps out the window, into the darkness and lands in a snow bank upon the discovery of Mary's bones in the furnace. Robert Butler interprets this scene as evidence of Bigger being physically overpowered by the symbolic motifs of darkness and cold (123-4). On the other hand, Mary F. Sisney contends that in the rooftop flight scene, "although he is captured at night, the scene is dominated by whiteness" (87). Both of these interpretations seem to be oversimplifications. In both cases, the visual image of the dark of night is offset by white snow and white lights that vie for domination. In this scene, there are no "shades of grey" in the panorama. It is significant, then, that Bigger's reaction to being placed within this dilemma is an absolute loss of power; after landing in the snow bank Bigger wets himself. This loss of power seems to be the effect of being caught in between the black and the white images in the novel. In the rooftop chase scene Bigger is running in the dark of night that is penetrated by search lights, which creates an environment where this color binary presents itself. It ends with Bigger's ultimate loss of autonomy, as he is captured by police and dragged away. In this way, all

attempts to negotiate a category that is neither black nor white is refused a place within society.

The terror of whiteness is also present in both novels, in the way it replicates a haunted house of freakish inmates. Bodziock notes that "while the Dalton house is a shrine to materialism, the family itself seems not quite of this world" (31). Mrs. Dalton is associated with "the white blur" that wonderfully describes an instance of sublime terror for Bigger. Bodziock also notes that Mary is described in the novel "not as the vibrant young girl she is supposed to be but in terms that mark her as a re-animated corpse" (31). The intensity of the furnace also makes the basement creepy and adds to the terror of the home in general. In this way, the haunted house image becomes redefined by the quality of lightness rather than the traditional darkness.

The home of the Lintons can also be described in this manner. The Linton children also display the same artificially pleasing facade, and are further described as being overly petted and unable to sustain themselves. This is evident in the way Edgar cannot manage to stand up to Heathcliff's bullying, to the point that even Cathy looses her patience with him: "Well, don't cry," replied Catherine contemptuously, "you're not killed. Don't make more mischief; my brother is coming: be quiet! Give over, Isabella" (50-51). This illustrates the difference between the stalwart and hale Earnshaws, who are able to cope with the "normal" bullying of childhood. Even Hindley must encourage the future magistrate to show some pluck: "next time, Master Edgar, take the law into your own fists – it will give you an appetite" (51). This foreshadows how unable Edgar really is to cope with his own troubles, let alone represent an entire community. The fact that the Linton parents die soon after Cathy goes to the Grange, and that Linton Heathcliff is

born a sickly child who dies young, further illustrates how the Lintons also come to represent a sense of physical deterioration and wasting-away.

The residences of the Daltons and Lintons are also described as coruscating with lights, while being completely barred off by either a fence or a large hedge. Bigger feels only terror at approaching the Dalton home. In direct contrast to this, the children (Cathy and Heathcliff) are lured in by the luxuriousness of the residence in a way that is reminiscent of the "Hansel and Gretel" folktale. In both novels, entering the house means an alienation from their worlds and a sharp departure from the way their lives are ordered.

While one might expect that these characters would attempt to negotiate a more neutral "shade of grey," the remainder of the novels illustrate how society does not allow this to occur. Although the legal system allows for the occurrence of "accidental deaths," the courtroom in *Native Son* cannot entertain this possibility. This worldview is so set-in-stone, that Bigger himself does not realize the implications of Mary's murder until Bessie explains that Mary's death will be interpreted as the aftermath of rape. The court officials as well as the mob interpret this incident in the same way. This illustrates that a very significant part of Bigger's alienation has to do with the fact that he knows things are not clearly delineated by these simple categories. The fact that he is unable to express this perspective and that none of the other characters accept this view illustrates the dependency upon a static social system.

In a similar way, Cathy and Heathcliff are expected to be either "savages" or part of the gentry, and are offered no means of creating an identity that is "in between." This in-between is *almost* realized by the figure of Hareton, who encapsulates the best parts of

humanity. However, before he is allowed to emerge as a heroic figure, all of his predecessors must die bitterly. In this way, the suggestion is made that the social hierarchy demands a rigidity which does not allow for anything outside of its own binary system. Anything which refuses to adhere to the parameters of "blackness" and "whiteness," which are equally horrifying labels, must be eliminated. Furthermore, the only way in which this system can be bypassed is via the horrifying destruction of the entire community.

Conclusion

In this way, the traditional definitions can be seen as insufficient in capturing the colonial/imperial experience as a *lived* experience. Because of this, a definition which is too narrowly defined can never capture the larger, complete picture or full effects of conquest. Although the terminology with which this field of analysis classifies the historical presence of empire, it does not change the fact that the British empire existed in multiple capacities and that this influence ties together differing experiences. While a too-liberal expansion of these boundary does create significant problems, there are also significant gains to be made. One of these gains can be seen in way it challenges critics to evaluate the classification of traditional literary genres. Another is the fruitful discussion that arises from comparing seemingly different literatures, and recognizing that they document different pieces of the same postcolonial puzzle. The entrance of the gothic genre into this discussion is also useful in accommodating the political discourse and the presence of the Other in society, by its frank recognition of the fears with which these things are associated. The way in which it has been adapted by modern writers is

particularly meaningful, as the genre now encapsulates deeper social commentary and criticism. At the same time, it does not ignore the significant role of the individual, as their presence becomes the basis of sublime terror and actualized horror.

In *Native Son* and *Wuthering Heights*, these connections are pivotal in understanding how the novels address larger audiences, with a broader range of social implications. What can be indicted directly is the fixity of the social environments which are brought about in equal measure through the individual's faults and the community's failures. In light of the superficial nature of the social hierarchies represented in the texts, an absurdity emerges in attempting to describe a solution. So much of the conflict centers on the decision to remain apathetic and aloof, that just "deciding" to be pro-active sounds ludicrous. However, in both texts it suddenly allows things to change ever-so-slightly: Cathy's action of teaching Hareton to read, and Bigger's first contemplation of others on their own terms, represent a lifting of a veil. While Bigger's execution does not allow for him to understand the implication of his new thought, it represents something which resonates in his own mind as important.

In direct contrast, Heathcliff spends his last days in a hazy, pre-occupied or delusional manner. He dies alone in a locked room, where his terrifying smile and extended hand reaches for nothingness. In his case, the act of death, and the spectral return of childhood, is favored over the act of free-thinking. This is exemplified by the fact that his return in the narrative only describes how he molds himself into an image of the same colonizer; his goal of conquering and claiming land rights, as well as his domineering control of the social identity of others illustrate this. In this way it is easier for Heathcliff to invert the same system by which he suffered, than to break from it and

discover a better way to interact with society. The fact that both of these characters die

after coming into contact with this social structure is telling, and is indicative of the

consuming nature to the incompatibility of social ideology and self-identity.

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