THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY FEMALE BILDUNGSROMAN

AND THE ROMANTIC EPIC TRADITION

DISSERTATION

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By

Marguërite Lee Hefferon, B.A., M.A.

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Dissertation Committee:
Leslie Tannenbaum
Marlene Longenecker
Anne Neumann

Approved by

Adviser
Department of English
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To My Parents

Agnes and Lee Dunn
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VITA

November 19, 1953 . . . . . . Born - Yonkers, New York

1975 . . . . . . . . . . . . B.A., SUNY at Geneseo, New York


1979 . . . . . . . . . . . . M.A., Western Connecticut State College, Danbury, Connecticut

1985-Present . . . . . . . Instructor of English, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, New York

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I

The Subversion of Epic Genre

"[Epic] is the imagination’s manifesto... or else it is the dream of the will..."
(Thomas Greene, The Descent from Heaven)

Myth, as the primal structure of literature, metaphorically designs society’s vision of itself and its destiny. However, as a culture’s vision changes, its mythology must also change or be reinterpreted; as the precursor ontology becomes inadequate to support the evolving culture (especially for its prophets and seers), a new mythos struggles to find a voice for itself, a language with which it can express its new vision. In A Study of English Romanticism, Northrop Frye defines the Romantic movement as a change in the language of poetic mythology brought about by historical and cultural forces (Preface v). He further claims that Romanticism marked the beginning of the first major change in the pattern of Western mythology, which had been primarily patriarchal, as it was based on classical father-creator myths and myths of the Judeo-Christian Bible. The Romantic poetic suggests an alternate mythology which is intended to replace what
Romantics saw as the stifling Judeo-Christian and classical tradition of Western culture which keeps humans in a perpetual subject-object relationship to their universe. It is exactly this gender-based subject-object relationship which concerns feminist critics who are attempting to renegotiate male-defined genre, male-dominated literary criticism, and, essentially, male cultural mythology.

If the Romantic movement marked the first significant change in Western mythology, feminism, or specifically feminist literature, marked the second. Both Romanticism and feminism are subcultures of mainstream patriarchal society, so it is not surprising that each group would attempt to define an alternate epistemological system with which it feels comfortable. While a revolutionary epistemology is apparent in Romantic poetry, it is often hidden in women's literature behind facades of social accommodation. However, if one studies early female Bildungsromane, which record the development of the female mind, and the Romantic epic, which identifies a new poetic consciousness, many similarities become apparent, not only between their revolutionary rhetorical stances, but in the literary forms themselves. Most importantly, as literature of "outsiders" to mainstream society, each chronicles the demise of a patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition and the birth of a new and radical teleology.
Many critics including E. M. W. Tillyard believe that the formal epic as we know it ceased to be viable after Milton. T.J.B. Spencer in fact calls *Paradise Lost* an "anti-epic":

> Wherever we turn [in *Paradise Lost*] we find the traditional epic values inverted. It closed the history of this poetic genre in England. . . . the death of the epic was, in Milton's hand, a glorious and perfectly staged suicide. (98)

Following Tillyard's and Spencer's leads, some scholars feel that the epic impulse deserted poetry altogether during the nineteenth century for the novel form. But as Joan Webber and others vigorously argue, *Paradise Lost* is not only epic, it and *Paradise Regained* together mark a new phase in epic tradition which continues through the Romantic period. Although Curran claims that the epic "slumbered in venerable senility" for more than a century after Milton's death (134), not only did the epic flourish once again during the Romantic period, but there is evidence that the Romantic epic tradition was adapted into the female novel of growth or the *Bildungsroman*. There has been some work published recently which points to Romantic tendencies in some women writers, including specific examples of influence on women writers by Romantic poets. However, no published work has yet established the existence of a definite and often calculated literary tradition that connects Romantic epic--the pièce de
résistance of Romanticism which essentially defines Romantic poetics—with women’s literature, represented by the novels of female development or Bildungsromane.

The female or feminist Bildungsroman, which is closer to its German counterpart than it is to the English social Bildungsroman, shares a great deal of common ground with Romantic epic. Like the Romantic epic quest, the Bildung is an intensely personal and lyrical inner journey to a growth of consciousness, to a personal ideology, which can be transposed from individual woman/man (the quester) to become a universalized cultural ideology, a new mythos. Shelley noted in the nineteenth-century as Campbell did in this century, that the continuation of myth is in the hands of poets, seers, and visionaries. They are the transmitters, if not the creators, of myth. And, as Percy Shelley says in his Defense of Poetry, the poetic spirit inspires a new mythos for all of humanity:

[The poets] measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. (632)

As outsiders to mainstream society, both the Romantics and women writers were acutely aware of what they considered the spiritual demise of patriarchal institutions, institutions which threatened to imprison the visionary soul: Jupiter in Prometheus Unbound is metaphorically a
patriarchal psychological prison for Prometheus as much as Thornfield is a patriarchal physical prison for Jane Eyre. According to the Romantics and feminists, both prisons must be rendered powerless. The Romantics and the women writers of the century intended to revitalize what they perceived as the wasteland of the patriarchy (demonstrated, for example, in these prison metaphors) through experiments with literary form. The female Bildungsroman and Romantic epic are the results of these experiments; they are both subversive forms that overturn traditional androcentric values and attitudes and offer on the ashes of their demise a phoenix-like hope for humankind.

***

Earlier scholarship has established the revolutionary nineteenth-century Romantic epic within the historical epic tradition to which Spenser (The Faerie Queene) and Milton (Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained) belong, as well as Virgil (The Aeneid) and Homer (The Iliad, The Odyssey). Wilkie and other scholars, such as Curran and Webber, have spent considerable time revising what they perceive as the too-narrow or too-general definition of epic. In Romantic Poets and the Epic Tradition (1965), Wilkie argues that epic is not a static genre but rather a tradition: "The basic law of epic throughout its history has been growth" (Preface viii). He claims, for example, that the Neoclassic/ Formalist approach of defining epic by
conventions such as medias res, is too narrow and even beside the point (8).

In addition to epic's being evolutionary, Joan Mallory Webber argues that the epic is by its very nature a subversive form. Webber claims that if one reads Homer, Virgil and Dante in succession, one will find a portrayal of human consciousness and changes in it at crucial periods in history (Preface iii); and in chronicling those changes in human consciousness, each great epic rejects the assumptions of its predecessors. As Wilkie has noted, while epic is rooted in the past, it rejects it as well, a rejection which itself is part of epic tradition. However, as he also points out, the epics, while rejecting their predecessors, "operate through family resemblances" (14) in order to assure their place in the tradition itself. These resemblances point out a conscious competition with the past tradition. So while the epic form as Tillyard defines it has undergone change, the epic tradition survives in Romantic poetry; and it is this subversive but substantial epic impulse that women writers of the nineteenth-century often look to when composing their Bildungsromane, or as I will argue, their prose epics.

Harold Bloom claims that poets labor under an "anxiety of influence" in forming their "aboriginal" poetic selves (Anxiety of Influence 11). In writing their epics, the Romantics were clearly influenced by Milton's Paradise Lost.
and *Paradise Regained*, an influence that cannot be over-
estimated in their work; however, as Bloom argues, the
evolution of thought evident in the Romantics' epics
suggest that it is in misreading or rejecting Milton’s
teleology that the Romantics were able to create a new and
viable mythos. As the Romantics worked under this "anxiety
of influence," so, too, did the women writers of the nine-
teenth-century, specifically Mary Shelley, Charlotte and
Emily Brontë, and George Eliot, who looked back to Milton
and the Romantic epic tradition in composing their
*Bildungsromane* or prose epics. The feminist tradition
that emerges in the nineteenth-century owes homage to its
Romantic muse, but it is a beautiful and fulfilling
metamorphosis of what was too often a self-conscious poetic
stance. As Bloom speculates "... Romanticism, for all
its glories, may have been a vast visionary tragedy, the
self-baffled enterprise not of Prometheus but of blinded
Oedipus, who did not know that the Sphinx was his Muse"
(*Anxiety of Influence* 10).

To understand the essential similarities and differ-
ences between the Romantic epic and the female *Bildungs-
roman*, one must begin with the history of each genre. If
one culls earlier scholarship on all forms of epic includ-
ing Classical, Christian and Romantic epic, one will dis-
cover a list of frequently recurring epic characteristics
that looks roughly like this:
1. epic is a long narrative work;
2. it often uses technical devices such as the Homeric simile, invocation to the Muse, in medias res convention, and flashback technique;
3. it concerns crucial events in the history of its people;
4. its tone is lofty and serious and suggests mysterious and vast secrets about life;
5. it defines a heroism appropriate to its era;
6. its hero undergoes a quest, including a nekuia, or journey to the land of the dead (or descent into hell or into self), in which he is prey to temptations;
7. post-Virgilian epic tends to be etiological, "to find the seeds of the present in the past";
8. post-Virgilian epic is prophetic in that it tends to suggest an apocalyptic state.

In addition to its increased lyricism which defies traditional epic narrative structure, the Romantic epic differs from the classical epic in the nature of its quest and its redefinition of the hero and his goal, all of which we may refer to as part of a work's "inner form."

In their Theory of Literature (1949), Rene Wellek and Austin Warren draw the distinction between the inner and the outer form of any particular literary genre. The epic is usually treated in terms of its "outer" form: it is a
long, narrative poem in which a hero who represents the ethics of his community must do battle with an antagonist and reestablish community order. As Ernest Baker notes of literary history, there is a general shift in poetry throughout literary history from an emphasis on an outer life to an emphasis on an inner life; the classical form of epic with its emphasis on the "outer" life and form survives only in mock epics such as Pope's Rape of the Lock, Byron's Don Juan and in Fielding's novel, Tom Jones. Epic topoi (quests, battles)--the outer form--are merely "apparatus" for the central issue: the "delineation of [human] consciousness" (Webber Preface v). As Bloom ("The Internalization of Quest-Romance"), Frye, Vogler, and, most importantly, Joan Webber have shown, the "inner" form of the epic, with its internal, psychological quest, becomes paramount when discussing the epic tradition after Milton whose Christ "into himself descended."

While each of the Romantics attempted epic works in the tradition of Milton and Spenser (Blake, Milton, The Four Zoas, Jerusalem; Shelley, Prometheus Unbound; Keats, Hyperion and Fall of Hyperion; Wordsworth, The Prelude), the focus of the Romantic epic has shifted. In the Romantic epic, which tends to shed the traditional narrative form in favor of a more personal and lyrical mode, the action has moved from an external plane to an internal plane. Vogler describes the new epic hero's
movement as "inward and upward" to a higher consciousness (206). The new epic is an "epic of consciousness" which chronicles humanity's awakening to the "full realization of [its] creative potential" (24).

While the traditionally epic twelve-book Paradise Lost is often discussed as the model for Romantic epic, it is Milton's epic of the inner life—Paradise Regained, a "pure" form of "revolutionized epic" (Curran 135)—which is the prototype for the internalized Romantic four-book epic, including Keats' Endymion, Blake's Jerusalem, and Shelley's Prometheus Unbound (136). The Romantic epic quest has been transmuted from a quest for home to a quest for identity, a quest for reintegration with God or a sense of god-consciousness. In Paradise Regained, Christ "into himself descended," overcame temptations like any other epic hero, and ultimately found himself and, concurrently, his father; in other words, he found that his sense of godhead was located internally.\textsuperscript{17} While the epic quest literally remains the same--the individual search for godhead--the Romantic quest differs from its predecessors in that it ultimately leads to the reintegration of self, the human tabernacle suggested by Milton's "upright heart and pure." By relocating god from "out there" to an "inner" world, Milton opened the way for the Romantic epic quest whose hero realizes godhead within himself. This idea of locating god internally is a revolutionary assumption some
women writers will also suggest.

As the nature of the quest has changed with the Romantic epic, so, too, has its hero. The Romantic epic hero is no longer a god-like warrior whose divinity is defined externally by acts of physical prowess or by overcoming physical temptations, but a universalized hero who must fulfill a quest for humankind. The redefinition of the role of the hero has been slowly evolving since Milton’s narrator in *Paradise Lost* gains poetic prominence and Christ in *Paradise Regained* is drawn as a prophet (and possibly a poet). By the time the Romantics wrote their epics, the hero became a prophet/poet. Karl Kroeber draws an analogy between the Romantic tradition and Biblical prophetic tradition where the prophet (poet) places himself and God’s message in "dramatic opposition" to corrupt "beliefs and practices of the times" (*Romantic Narrative Art* 102-103). For example, in a letter to Southey (1815), Wordsworth himself said epic poetry had a "religious theme" (LMY II 633). Similarly, *The Prelude’s* narrator comments on "Poets, even as Prophets" who are able "to perceive’\ Something unseen before" (XIII 301-305). Shelley also makes this poet/prophet connection clear with his "trumpet of prophecy." It is this new hero’s function to prophesy a renovated state for humankind, to suggest a new mythos.
In mythic terms, epic intuita golden age and a fall from it; it also prophesies a better state and a quest for it. The purpose of this new epic, this Romantic quest, is to find a teleology appropriate to a society whose old mythos is no longer tenable. As Thomas Greene notes in *The Descent From Heaven*, there is a "shift from shamanistic or mythical to human interests as the epic progresses" (14). According to critics such as Frye and Webber, the loss of Eden made a Western, Judeo-Christian epic necessary so that humans could recover the self-knowledge lost in the fall. As Webber argues, epic is born of an individual’s growing apprehension about what he perceives as his isolation (11). With the loss of traditional spirituality, the epic challenge to humanity is to bypass temptation and find, rather than preserve, an ideology; as Joyce says in his *Portrait of an Artist*, an artist/prophet must "forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated consciousness of his race."

Webber refers to epic heroes as "lonely human creature[s]" who are "denied entrance into the elysium of the gods" because of their fall (11), a fall which is often interpreted as a fall into self-consciousness. Webber says:

... the whole purpose of epic might be to find the way to some new and unexpressed meaning more satisfying than that which, because it was unconscious, was forever lost before it was recognized. (12)

Redefined in Romantic terms, this fall from God is a
fragmentation of the psyche. Where classical epic heroes visited dark places on their way to a goal, the Romantic heroic goal is to confront those dark places—the unconscious (Webber 38-39). The Romantics had intuitions of an organic universe and felt that the inability to perceive this vision was due to a loss of perceptive powers they defined as the fallen state of consciousness. In the cycle of creation, the fall is seen differently by Romantics; it is a fall into "self-consciousness," or, more precisely, a subject-object orientation to nature and to people. Interestingly enough, often this fallen or fragmented state is represented by Romantic poets in sexual terms, and it is this sexual fragmentation that has important implications for the female Bildungsroman. While Romantic heroes experience "spiritual separation," they ultimately hope to find a "higher integration" as the goal to their quests, an "integration," signified by the apocalyptic marriage metaphor.

The apocalyptic marriage, a union of contraries which promises fulfillment through a new order of consciousness, is a dominant philosophic construct of Romanticism. The motif of the union of contraries—male and female, intellect and passion, selfhood and other—recurs in a number of variations throughout much Romantic literature. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake points out the importance of this Romantic dialectic: "Without Contraries
is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to human existence" (Plate 3). In the Romantic epic, the apocalyptic marriage becomes the metaphor for a unified consciousness. In order to restore man’s imaginative faculty, Los-Urthona in The Four Zoas must be reunited with Enitharmon; in Jerusalem, universal man (Albion) must embrace Jerusalem; in Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus must be reunited with Asia. This philosophical communion between contraries is necessary not only to procreation, but also to the creative imagination.

M. H. Abrams suggests the lineage of this marriage metaphor in Blake’s myth to be in the "primal man or Ur-Adam" who falls into fragmentation:

Blake’s Eden . . . is the ideal mental state of "Perfect Unity" . . . and in this original state his Universal Man, like the primal Adam of his predecessors, was sexually undivided. . . . His fall was a falling apart, a "fall into Division."  
(Natural Supernaturalism 257-258)

The "original sin" of this fall is what both Blake and Shelley call "Selfhood": "the prideful attempt of a part of the whole to be self-sufficient and to subordinate other parts to its desires and purposes" (Abrams 258). Los and Albion fall and separate from their Emanations, their female principles, and can be resurrected only by regaining their lost unity; both succeed. So, too, is Prometheus separated from Asia in his hatred and egotism manifested in his Spectre, Jupiter. Prometheus is finally reborn when he
comes to terms with Jupiter, his Spectre, and is thus able to embrace his female Emanation, Asia. However, this role of woman as "significant other" in epic is problematic.

It is well known that epic is characteristically a male form. As Webber has assiduously documented, epic has an historically anti-female stance in which women appear either as temptresses and other evil characters that the male heroes must overcome, or as stereotypical "Angel of the House" characters. In either case, these women lack characters independent of the male hero. As Stewart points out, this sex role differentiation has anthropological, sociological, and psychological roots. Traditional myth reflects man's need to assert maleness and externalize femaleness (their female selves) in monsters such as Medusa and the Sirens (184). This pattern, Stewart claims, begins to change with Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*. Webber does not see the objectification changing until later in the tradition. She suggests that although Adam, God, and Milton reject an androgynous balance of anti-types in *Paradise Lost*, there is at least an implied movement in that direction. If God is, as Webber argues, the source of all poles, then he is not just "father," but "mother" also (160). She contends that an androgynous balance is found in Christ who does not fall to Satan (chaos) precisely because he is not sexually polarized. Webber says:
The discords of the world, as male-female, day-night, rule-submission, are so integrated within him, and so fully submitted to the wholeness of his God-consciousness, that specific external things exercise no destructive pull upon him. It is his nature to be one. (208)

Interestingly, Christ returns not to his father’s house but to his mother’s house.

The growing importance of the female role in epic is significant. Wilkie underestimates the importance of the female in epic in calling the "Dido-Aeneas convention" a "minor convention," a "device which appears simply as a pattern of heroic renunciation" (13). As the Romantic epics suggest, it may be exactly this heroic renunciation of the female which keeps the epic hero from resurrection. The Romantics are at least attempting a sexually unified consciousness in utilizing the apocalyptic marriage metaphor in their epics. In their exploring the mind of man as the new epic battlefield, the Romantics felt sure that man’s imaginative powers could be recreated; and once the inner consciousness has been healed, an apocalyptic vision of the outer world can be achieved. The Romantic poets and the women writers I deal with in this dissertation are in a prophetic tradition, not because they foretell the future, but because they promise, in a marriage metaphor, to join humanity and God—the human and the Divine. However, the Romantic marriage metaphors that highlight the importance of the female and signify the
Divine consciousness are simply just that: metaphors. And it may have been precisely the Romantics' inability to overcome their subject-object gender orientation which kept their vision just that—a momentary vision.

***

In Season of Youth, Jerome Buckley points out the Romantic preoccupation (specifically Keats' and Wordsworth's) with the maturing process defined in Keats'

Preface to Endymion:

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted. . . .

Buckley claims that the concern with psychic maturation and the powers of imagination present in Endymion and The Prelude (both considered Romantic epics) foreshadows the "concern of a considerable body of Victorian and later prose fiction" (2). The body of literature to which Buckley is referring is the Bildungsroman tradition.

The traditional epic and the traditional Bildungsroman can be established as structurally similar in their outer form, specifically in their quest motifs. The traditional Bildungsroman is a long prose narrative which traces the growth of a character into adulthood. The stages of the Bildung are similar to the epic quest: there is a departure or separation from home, an initiation which involves
temptations, and a return home with a growth of vision implied.¹⁹ However, it is the revolutionary nature of the Romantic epic and of the female Bildungsroman, which is much closer to the German Bildungsroman form than it is to its English brother, that is most interesting; and what defines the differences between the Romantic and feminist stance is ultimately most intriguing. Structurally, both the Romantic epic and female Bildungsroman move from a narrative mode and become increasingly lyric, culminating, for example, in Blake’s cathartic moment of apprehension in Milton and in Bronte’s poetic inversion of traditional chronology in Wuthering Heights. More importantly, the quests of the Romantic hero and the female hero are similar. In the female Bildungsroman and the Romantic epic, the journey is transformed from the quest of the conquering hero to master his universe, a traditionally masculine epic and English Bildungsroman model, to the quest of the universalized man or woman to come to consciousness in a comprehension of, rather than mastery of, the world.¹⁷

A few studies of the Bildungsroman tradition, especially the German Bildungsroman tradition, have noted similarities between the Bildungsroman and epic form. Swales even suggests that the Bildungsroman was the literary form favored by German prose writers for an epic venture. While Hegel felt some characteristic ambivalence about the possible epic conversion from poetry to prose, he
believed that the Bildungsroman had "the ability to anchor the time-honored epic pattern in modern bourgeois reality" (Swales 21). In his Aesthetics Hegel says:

This novelistic [epic] quality is born when the knightly existence is again taken seriously. . . . They [the heroes] stand as individuals with their subjective goals of love, honor, ambition or with their ideals of improving the world, over against the existing order and prose of reality which from all sides places obstacles in their path. . . . It is their aim to punch a hole in the order of things, to change the world. . . . [However] in the last analysis he usually gets his girl and some kind of job, marries and becomes a philistine just like the others.

(557-58 as quoted in Swales 20-21)

Swales, who has done perhaps the fullest study of the German Bildungsroman, is not ambivalent about a prose epic form. He lauds it as a bridge between poetry and reality. Similarly, Karl Kroeber links the poets and the novelists of the Romantic era with what he calls their "perception of persons as historical entities, of people as living developmentally, of human-beingness as growth" ("British Romanticism" 134, emphasis added). Further, Swales' definition of Bildungsroman sounds remarkably like a definition of Romantic epic. He refers to Bildungsroman as "the quest for organic growth and personal self-realization" (4) whose goal is not as important as the quest and the implicit growth that comes of that quest (15,34).

Beddow similarly argues that the Bildungsroman genre is essentially an epic of inwardness. Mann beautifully summarizes the essential Romanticism of the Bildungsroman
The inwardness, the "Bildung" of a German implies introspectiveness; an individual cultural conscience; consideration for the careful tending, the shaping, the deepening and perfecting of one's personality or, in religious terms, for the salvation and justification of one's own life.\(^2\)

Thus the internalization so characteristic of Romantic poetry is found also in the *Bildungsroman*.\(^2\) Jerome McGann's definition of Romantic internalization is especially apt here:

"Internalization," as it has been called, is one of the chief means that the Romantics used to translate patterns of historical context into tolerable ideological forms.\(^2\) (137)

According to McGann, the conflicts of human history are projected in individual psychic terms but are intended to reach a cosmic level of importance. Blake's use of the "Spectre" and "Emanation" or Shelley's and Emily Bronte's multi-perspective narration in *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* respectively are all examples of authors using psychological forms to help define the "historical context" of human life.

Finally, Swales notes that it is "characteristic of the *Bildungsroman* genre that it embodies a skepticism about the law of linear experience... And thereby it tends... to call into question that dimension of human self-realization that is activity and actuality, a dimension that is embodied by plot in realistic novel fictions" (30).
He continues:

There can be something rarefied about the Bildungsroman, a sense that the community with which the hero is to be reconciled is not rendered mimetically; rather it is intimated through the conceptual cohesion of the novelist’s fiction, through the writer’s collusion with his artistic community of notional readers. In other words, it is the reader who is initiated into the wholeness and complexity of the Bildung.

Further, the personal growth implied in the Bildung "is enacted in the narrator’s discursive self-understanding rather than in the events which the hero experiences" (4). As in Romantic epic, it is the reader of the Bildungsroman who appreciates the complexity of the character’s growth to unity.

Critics of English Bildungsroman are not as sure in their parallels between epic and Bildungsroman. Kiely claims that the romance and the novel "were the broken halves of that great form [epic], one retaining its grandeur, the other its truth to life" (4). Qualls more pointedly connects epic and Bildungsroman in his Preface to The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction, although it is a connection that he argues the Victorians must overcome:

The [Victorian] novelists had always before them the work of the Romantics, German and English, who had stressed the prophetic visionary role of the artist; had redefined God, man, and nature; and had transmuted the spiritual autobiography into the Bildungsroman.

(ix)

However, these male critics are primarily assessing the
English masculine form of the *Bildungsroman*. This exclusionary critical practice in defining literary modes has a long tradition, a tradition against which the Romantics fought and feminist critics still struggle today.

***

In the world of male-dominated scholarship and criticism, gender was never deemed a consideration in defining literary modes. However, with Josephine Donovan and other critics searching for a theory of feminist criticism, the need for a critical re-vision to encompass female as well as male experience became obvious. As recently as 1975, Cheri Register was lamenting the lack of information regarding the female *Bildungsroman*, if indeed there was such a thing. Register echoed Annis Pratt, who, in speaking of the heroine and her *Bildung* in literature, said that critics would find it helpful to develop an "archetypal mode of new feminist criticism which will describe the psycho-mythological development of the female in literature" ("The New Feminist Criticism" 876-877). Both women voiced their suspicions that female mythic experience is different from male mythic experience. Many feminist critics, including Grace Stewart, argue that the universal hero pattern as set forth by Campbell, Rank, and Frye is indeed different for female heroes.***

Feminist critics have been reassessing and redefining literary modes according to female experience, and the
Bildungsroman is one of those modes. Some outstanding work has been done recently on the female hero and female Bildungsroman which suggests that the female Bildung is quite distinct from its traditional male counterpart. While feminist critics do not all agree on the Bildungsroman’s formal redefinition, they do agree that the Bildung differs significantly in both form and content from the male Bildung. Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, who edited the most complete study of the female Bildungsroman, find it has two forms. The first is the essentially narrative apprenticeship novel which "adapts the linear structure of the male Bildungsroman" and has a progression towards closure. They include Jane Eyre, Villette, and Mill on the Floss on their list of masculine Bildungsromane (11). The second form is the novel of awakening whose time frame for development is "unconventional" (12). Of the novel of awakening they claim "development may be compressed into epiphanic moments. Since the significant changes are internal, flashes of recognition often replace the continuous unfolding of an action" (12); in other words, like Romantic poetry, the novel of awakening is more lyric, although Abel, et. al. do not assign that name to their distinction.

In Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest, Carol Christ has made a similar distinction in identifying two female quest motifs: the
social and the spiritual quests. However, Christ suggests, and I believe rightly, that these spiritual and social quests are really two dimensions of a single struggle (8). In her work, however, Christ is more interested in woman's spiritual quest, woman's "naming a god within herself" (xv). Similarly, Crites' concern is with the "sacred experience" of women's stories:

All stories do not orient a person to the God revealed at Sinai or Golgotha, but many stories provide orientation to what Crites calls the "great powers that establish the reality of their world" (295). These powers may not be named divinities and they need not speak out of whirlwinds for their presence to be felt. They may be identified by their function of providing orientation. They are the boundaries against which life is played out, the forces against which a person must contend, or the currents in whose rhythms she must learn to swim. They sometimes provide revelation when the self is at a loss. . . . They may provide a sense of meaning and value. . . . They may ground a person in powers of being that enable her to challenge conventional values or expected roles.  226 226 226

Christ argues that women seek wholeness, "a wholeness that unites the dualisms of spirit and body, rational and irrational, nature and freedom, spiritual and social, life and death" (8). Conversely, many feminist critics note the tendency for male quests to be marked by separation rather than integration. In studying human psychology, Carol Gilligan and others agree that the male is often someone who is incapable of intimacy and lives at a "great personal distance from others" (155). 227 227 In her psychoanalytic studies of literature, Christ repeatedly finds the same
pattern. In men and women the relationship between self and other is different:

... male and female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation as it defines and empowers the self, the latter of the ongoing process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community. (156)

Because of their different orientation, women's stories are very inner-focused, or, as Christ and Crites argue, spiritual or sacred, "not so much because gods are commonly celebrated in them, but because [a woman's] sense of self and world is created through them" (Crites 295, as noted in Christ 9-10). The female Bildungsroman, then, may be seen as an attempt to define a new idea of sacred experience for women, a goal similar to the Romantics' attempt for men in their epic ventures. As the epic hero has evolved into a common man who, in his quest for "home," discovers that his individual godhead resides in his own breast, the female Bildungsheld is similarly a creator of her self-integration and thus a creator of a new consciousness for humankind. It is this realization of personal godhead which allows the individual to turn outward in a motion of embracing and revivifying love.

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Although the Bildungsroman's similarity to the Romantic epic is certainly not sexually exclusive (i.e., that only female Bildungsromane resemble Romantic epic in
form and content), there is a distinct difference in Bildungsroman types. The first I would define as roughly feminine (lyrical, awakening to a sense of self and a re-definition or re-creation of culture as its goal, non-traditional, and/or Romantic); the second is distinctly masculine (chronological, a novel of apprenticeship with cultural assimilation as its goal, conservative and bourgeois). Some critics classify these two types of Bildungsromane without gender distinctions. The original form is the German Bildungsroman which is Romantic and uses Wilhelm Meister as its prototype; its hero’s goal is the development of a "full and harmonious" personality, a blend of "material and spiritual" (Tennyson 137-138). The second type common in the later nineteenth century, primarily in England, is a diluted version of the original which is closer to the German Entwicklungsroman in form; it emphasizes general growth into society and denounces Romanticism in favor of Carlylean realism (Howe, Qualls, Tennyson). While the English Bildungsroman form is obviously derived from the German, Howe sees a change in the English Bildungsroman’s parallels to the German after the mid-nineteenth-century with the introduction to Carlyle’s philosophy through his Sartor Resartus and his work on Wilhelm Meister.
Through Carlyle the sane and corrective power of action was the moral lesson that Wilhelm Meister taught the English readers and imitators, and Goethe's eighteenth-century Bildung, or harmonious self-development motif, became subsidiary. Our heroes [English heroes] became too busy finding something to do, to envisage life very clearly as an artistic creative process. (10)

As Howe explains, English Bildungsroman heroes pass through their Wertherism and Byronism to a Carlylean vision (10).

More recently, Barry Qualls (The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction, 1982) has defined a distinctly English Bildungsroman which is modeled more or less after Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Qualls also notes that the English Bildungsroman is only a loose form of the prototypical German Bildungsroman. The English Bildungsroman has a "far greater allegiance to plot, to actuality, to the linear growth of the hero to some kind of adult clarity, than does the German Bildungsroman (Swales 34) which in its subversive nature (according to G.H. Lewes) teaches: "Renounce all, endure all, but develop yourself to the utmost limit."

Buckley has made a revealing comment about male and/or English Bildungsroman in noting that the principal motive in the Bildungsheld's separation from home is caused by "the defection of the father" (Season of Youth 19); in other words, the quest is not self-initiated for a revolutionary cause, but is forced upon the young male. He additionally notes that while the flight from home is certainly a flight from provinciality, it has nowhere near
the "radical flavor" of the English youth's "aggressive French counterpart" (20) in the same tradition. "The novel of youth, at least in the Victorian period," is frequently a "conduct book" on "the making of a gentleman" (Buckley 20); again, it has to do with preserving traditional androcentric values. In the Bildung (and indeed Campbell has chronicled it in the mythic hero's quest), the fall or separation from home is a separation from father, or more generally from patriarchal attitudes and values:

> The loss of the father, either by death or alienation, usually symbolizes or parallels a loss of faith in the values of the hero's home and family and leads inevitably to the search for a substitute parent or creed. (J. Buckley *Season 19*)

Eventually, claims Buckley, the young English hero sees the "error of his ways and judgments" (23); in other words, he reneges on his rebelliousness. This is precisely the distinction between the English, or, as I define it, male/androcentric Bildungsroman and female/feminist Bildungsroman. While the main concern of the traditional and masculine English Bildungsroman is to preserve society (and in this sense is very like the classical epic), the female/feminist Bildung is more like the German Bildung in its concern with the individual who, in searching for a creed by which to live, comes to consciousness, after which point a viable society can be conceived. The German Bildungsroman and female Bildungsroman signify "the ideal of humanity, of the full realization of all human potential
as the goal of life" (Tennyson 136).

In the conclusion to his impressive study of the German Bildungsroman, Swales suggests a connection between female novels and the German Bildungsroman. It is worth quoting at length:

Moreover, I would argue that a number of novels concerned with women’s search for identity . . . operate with a sense of the elusiveness of the total self which recalls the [German] Bildungsroman. The difficulties attendant upon the heroine’s quest for self-knowledge and self-realization are not simply those of outward obstacles . . . The obstacles facing them have to do with the terms and parameters of human cognition. (165)

It is not surprising that a female/feminist Bildungsroman would be more like its German counterpart than its English brother. The subversive political/personal ideology found in the German Bildungsroman can be traced to the German Romantics, who clearly influenced the English Romantics and authors of the female Bildungsroman. Not only were Shelley and the Brontes influenced by their reading German philosophers and German novels, but they also absorbed German philosophy second-hand in studying the English Romantics.

This similarity in revolutionary and subversive poetics in Romantic epic and female Bildungsroman does not occur by mere chance; it is, rather, an influence that ranges from peripheral but valid (where the female writer read and/or was familiar with the Romantics’ work), to a clearly intentional restructuring of Romantic myth. This
dissertation will trace those Romantic epic strains in several early nineteenth-century female Bildungsromane: in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (which while not technically a Bildungsroman is a transition between uprooted male epic and female Bildungsroman), Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights, and Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre. Beginning with Frankenstein, we will see these three works are progressively more radically feminist as they move further away from the influence of their Romantic predecessors and further into a clearly defined female Bildungsroman tradition.

Shelley obviously intended Frankenstein, with its references to Paradise Lost and The Book of Revelations, to be considered within the epic tradition; it additionally has an epic search for an encompassing vision of human-kind’s relation to history, society, and the cosmos. Shelley uses the Prometheus figure as a metaphor for the Romantic artist in order to challenge the Romantic use of that myth. There is a tripartite narration, which consists of male narrators who each move progressively closer to achieving an epic quest; ultimately all fail in their epic journeys. However, it is Shelley’s and the readers’ vicarious Bildung, ironically lived through the three male narrators, which vaunts a distinctly feminist epistemology and that ultimately succeeds. Shelley finally suggests a feminist vision of human integrity rather than the self-
absorption represented by Frankenstein, an agonized
Romantic hero. With its ironic inversions, Frankenstein is
an implied call for and suggested movement towards a new
kind of epic with distinctly feminist values.

Emily Brontë also turns to the Romantics as well as
Milton in her two-part novel which, while it is strikingly
similar to Prometheus Unbound, recapitulates the epics
Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained epics which chronicle
a fall from a Golden Age and a return of sorts to Paradise.
By tracing both Catherines' Bildungs, we see that Brontë
chronicled the fall or fragmentation of its female heroic
presence embodied in both mother and daughter Catherine,
who both must overcome their struggle with their many names
and eventually achieve a coherent consciousness which is
universalized in the daughter's carrying the quest to
fruition. Like the Romantics, Brontë condemned what she
saw as the tyrant-slave relationship of the Judeo-Christian
religions, but she also damned narcissistic/incestuous
Romantic love as a similar tyrant/slave situation. She
offers in its place, through young Catherine and Hareton,
the idea of redemptive love as a way to the new paradise on
earth.

Of the Romantic epics, Wordsworth's Prelude is the
most like Jane Eyre. Like The Prelude, Jane Eyre is about
the development of a human consciousness which ultimately
raises the earthly to the divine. Charlotte Brontë's Jane
Eyre is the most explicitly feminist of the three novels examined here. Reminiscent of the "natural supernatural" tradition of the Romantics, Brontë undermines conventional patriarchal religions and Romantic Byronism, asserting a feminist or human-centered "religion" or human consciousness. Brontë's religious vision is revealed in Jane's Bildung or epic growth to consciousness.

Each of the Romantics in his individual epic vision hoped to surpass Milton's great epic and offer a new teleology appropriate to a society whose old mythos was no longer viable. However, for Blake and Shelley especially, the revolution in cultural politics can only be translated into apocalypse in the mind. Where the Romantics ended their epics with individual revelations of human consciousness or personal apocalypse, it is in the realistic novel form, the Bildungsroman, that women writers translate that revelation into human actuality. These female visions are, in a sense, culminations of the Romantic tradition in their ability to heal the Blakean, Shelleyan, and Jungian fragmented individual. In their prose epics, or Bildungsromane, these women writers share a visionary spirit and prophesy a new hope for humans, both individually and communally, in a spiritually bereft society.
ENDNOTES

1 E.M.W. Tillyard’s *The English Epic and Its Background* (1954) is typical of many modern critics of epic in his arguing that the epic genre is essentially a dead form. Other critics, including Vogler (*Preludes*), express surprise that, despite the epic’s shifting form, the novel is not more epic.

2 There are a number of recent studies of the Romantics’ influence on women writers. See, for example, Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word*: Nancy Armstrong, "Emily Bronte In and Out of Her Time"; Daniel Cottom, *The Romance of George Eliot’s Realism*; Richard Dunn, "The Natural Heart: Jane Eyre’s Romanticism*; Winifred Gerin, "Byron’s Influence on the Brontes."

3 Obviously, the term "feminist" does not exclusively define women, and there are certainly male *Bildungsromane* which are feminist. However, my dissertation will study only women writers in a feminist tradition.

4 On the idea of poet as prophet/seer, see Shelley’s *A Defense of Poetry*. In addition to Shelley, see Campbell’s *The Flight of the Wild Gander* 75.


6 For a Neo-classic definition of epic see Tillyard; for a revised approach to epic definition see Wilkie.

7 I use the masculine pronoun "he" purposely. To use a pronoun suggesting male or female would be inappropriate since epic is traditionally a masculine form.

8 Vogler believes that while the outer form of the epic has changed with time, the "inner" form is essentially the same (*Preludes to Vision* 5).

Critics are divided on which of the Romantic long poems deserve epic status. Karl Kroeber would deny some of the above epic status but would include Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner as Stylized Epic," 1957). Curran and Frye do not include Blake's *The Four Zoas* in their lists of epics; both see the poem as a failure to combine the historical and psychological epic (Curran 146, Frye A Study 269). On the other hand, Curran is alone in granting epic status to Europe and America which he calls historical epics. Bloom claims Milton is an epic fashioned after Paradise Regained (Blake's *Apocalypse* 146). Brian Wilkie claims that in addition to Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Revolt of Islam* undoubtedly was also intended to be epic (114). This division of opinion is inevitable since some critics emphasize formal, generic characteristics of epic rather than psychological or thematic characteristics.

In defining an evolutionary epic tradition, Webber suggests a subversive reading of Milton's epics that the Romantics shared: that Milton intimates God or paradise is "the upright heart and pure." While traditional critics see Milton as fairly conventional in his Biblical interpretation, the Romantics, led by Blake, saw Milton as "a true Poet of the Devil's party without knowing it" (Marriage of Heaven and Hell).

While some critics grant epic status to Keats' *Hyperion* poems, I believe they are more about the development of the poet and poetic vision than a universal vision for all humanity. While Wordsworth is also occupied with poetic vision, he believes that poetic vision can be transferred to the common man. As he says in his "Prospectus": "The discerning intellect of Man, / ... shall find [Paradise] / A simple produce of the common day" (52-55).

Vogler notes the poet-as-prophet idea in referring to the Romantic poets as the "holy vessels" of God's prophetic message in chapter two of *Preludes to Vision*. 
Northrop Frye has, I believe, rightly asserted that Biblical myth, with its cycle of creation through apocalypse, is the basis for epic, and that all epics have the Biblical dramatic structure of "five acts": creation, fall, exile, redemption, and restoration ("The Encyclopaedic Form of the Epic" 60).

I credit Webber with noting that according to the OED, the first use of the word "self-knowing" occurs in Milton (Webber 136).

On the externalization of women in male mythology, see Stewart, especially 17-33 and 60-87. For Webber’s discussion of sex differences and androgyny in epic see 134-150 and 186-194.

Veeder argues that there are two types of sexual bifurcation in the nineteenth century: Eros, the woman-as-goddess configuration which suggests the Romantic inability to accept mortality, and the image of the integral other—Agape (26). The best male/female image Shelley can offer his readers, claims Veeder, is a "psychological hermaphrodisim" (57), a clearly inadequate image of egalitarianism.

For a complete definition of the hero’s quest motif see Joseph Campbell, Hero With A Thousand Faces (1949) and Carl Jung, who in Man and His Symbols, calls the quest motif "the great monomyth." For a definition of the quest specific to the Bildungsroman see G. B. Tennyson, S. Howe, M. Swales, and Jerome Buckley, Seasons of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding (1974).

Pearson and Pope claim that Romantic and Transcendental heroes like Huck Finn, Coverdale and Ishmael are often ambivalent about the "macho ideal of heroism" (5); like women, they are not looking to "master" but to commune.

See Beddow, Michael, "Thomas Mann’s Felix Krull and the Traditions of the Picaresque Novel and the Bildungsroman." Diss. Cambridge University, 1975, as noted in Swales, 29.


Qualls notes the similarities between Romantic and Bildungsroman introspection but feels that the interior movement as displayed in their internal journeys and emphasis on human psychology is "morally bankrupt."
goes as far as to say that the Victorian Bildung is a journey out of the self. He agrees with Vogel in who says Paradise Lost is about the consciousness of having lost the freedom of movement in the cosmos, of being closed up within oneself" ("Postscript: on paradise and revolution," The Southern Review 7 (Jan. 1971): 39, as quoted in Qualls, 7.

Surprisingly, in studying the general pattern of the female heroic quest, Pearson and Pope claim that the journey to self discovery is the same on the archetypal level for both men and women (viii); however, the quests differ in some particulars of the journey. They claim that the female "exits the Garden" after realizing that the people she previously saw as guides (parents, husbands, religious or political authorities) are her captors; second, the female hero must demythologize romantic love and realize she possesses "male" qualities herself; the third stage involves her return to the father, but she realizes it is really a return to the mother. In this stage she frees herself from the idea of female inferiority and can fully embrace community (68).

See Elizabeth Abel, M. Hirsch, and E. Langland, eds., Introduction, The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development, 1983; Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction, 1981; Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, The Female Hero in American and British Literature, 1981; Carol Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest, 1980). Ellen Morgan is one of the few dissenters who claims that the Bildungsroman is in great part "a male affair" (184); she believes that female heroes "grew up to a point" and then "grew down" (184). While I think she is wrong, she does make a valid point in noting that the Bildungsroman is probably the form for the "future construction of images of transcendence and authenticity for women" (185).

While it is possible to have a female Bildungsroman which essentially accommodates male values (ie. the marriage plot), I strongly disagree that either of Brontë's novels is a novel of apprenticeship; both Jane Eyre and Villette are novels of awakening, as I will argue in this paper. I agree with Rosowski who does not make the deliberate distinction in female Bildungsroman types; she claims that male Bildungsroman is the apprenticeship model while the novel of awakening is the female form. See Susan J. Rosowski, "The Novel of Awakening."

Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," Journal of the American Academy of Religion
39.3 (September 1971) as quoted in Christ, 295.

See also Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, who says "The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world; the basic masculine sense of self is separate" (169). Jean Baker Miller makes the same point in Toward A New Psychology of Women. Grace Stewart seems to interpret this need for community in women as a weakness. In her study of the Kunstlerroman she says female artists repeatedly abandon their art for intimacy, making the Kunstlerroman "gasps, pleas for air" (176).

Vogler claims that the Romantic "epics" are not real epics at all but rather "preludes" to a vision the Romantics were never capable of actualizing. He includes in his list of "preludes" Keats' Fall of Hyperion, Blake's Milton, and Wordsworth's The Prelude (Preludes). See Curran also who concurs with the idea that the Romantic apocalypse occurs in the mind only (146).
II

The Transition:

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

"...above all, let me fearlessly descend into the remotest caverns of my own mind, carry the torch of self-knowledge into its dimmest recesses; but too happy if I dislodge any evil spirit or enshrine a new deity in some hitherto uninhabited nook."

Mary Shelley, *Journal*, 25 February 1822

Through the years, critics have noted Romantic strains in *Frankenstein*; it shares similarities in form and content with other Romantic novels and certainly with Romantic poetry itself. Most obviously, Shelley’s novel is Romantic in its title which echoes the Romantics’ preoccupation with the overreaching Titan, Prometheus. However, some very fine scholars have claimed that *Frankenstein* is more politically and philosophically conservative than her Romantic brothers’ work. Levine, for example, argues that while Shelley demonstrates the problem of the Romantic overreacher who must rebel against confining social and domestic ties, she is ultimately confined by her realism. Similarly, Poovey claims that Shelley "feminizes Romantic aesthetics" by being "self-effacing" and "acceptable" (32). I disagree. While *Frankenstein* is within the Romantic
tradition, it transcends the Romantic vision Shelley’s contemporaries held. I see Shelley’s retreat from Romanticism is not conservatism but a subversion of Romantic ideology and an emerging female vision of human integrity rather than the stagnant self-absorption represented by Frankenstein, an agonized Romantic hero.

Before one can discuss Frankenstein as a subversion of the Romantic epic ideal, the novel must first be defined in relation to the epic tradition to which Milton belonged, and second, in contradistinction to the Romantic epic tradition, which in great part was a reaction to and a rewriting of Milton’s epic, Paradise Lost. Frankenstein is the "Modern Prometheus," that spirit of rebellion that the Romantics adored; however, as Theodore Ziolkowski astutely notes, there are few if any references in Frankenstein to the Promethean myth while references to Paradise Lost abound.39 These allusions to Paradise Lost, the model for the Romantic epic, are integral to understanding Frankenstein’s place in the epic tradition.

Shelley was steeped in classical epic tradition during the creation of her novel. She had read The Iliad just previous to beginning Frankenstein, and both Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained several times before and during her composition of Frankenstein.40 As Tannenbaum has illustrated, Frankenstein is an ironic rendition of Paradise Lost. Shelley reinterprets the Christian myth of the Fall
as a fall into Selfhood; the world of which her "Modern Prometheus" is the symbol, is a degenerate, empirical version (or vision) of Milton’s universe (Tannenbaum 102).\textsuperscript{7} However, Tannenbaum suggests that Shelley prefers Milton’s cosmology to that of the Romantics, that she is uncomfortable with the non-traditional epistemology of Percy Shelley and Byron. While I agree that she is criticizing the "Romantic vision," I suggest that she is attempting to "correct" the vision much as the Romantics were attempting to "correct" Milton’s earlier vision.\textsuperscript{7}

With Milton’s \textit{Paradise Lost} and Wordsworth proclaiming his epic agenda in "The Prospectus" of \textit{The Recluse}, the hero as well as the arena of the epic quest was transformed; the hero was no longer a superhuman figure in the tradition of an Odysseus or an Achilles who had to fight political battles to restore order in his society. The hero had become a universal man, and the epic battle had become an internal one between good and evil forces within an individual’s psyche, with the ultimate goal of the quest to achieve an internal sense of godhead. While the epic quests literally remained the same—the individual’s search for godhead—the Romantic quest differed from Milton’s and his predecessors in that its hero—Universal Man—must quest for the re-integrated self, the human tabernacle suggested by Milton’s "upright heart and pure." \textit{Frankenstein}, however, is the story of the
Romantic quest gone awry. Instead of locating a god-consciousness internally, Shelley's characters, in their misguided pursuit of godhead, explore the heart of darkness.

Rather than a conservative return to the poetics and ideology to which Milton had subscribed, Frankenstein, primarily a communication to a woman, is a re-creation of Romantic myth, under the "anxiety of influence," into a more viable system—a feminist vision. Tannenbaum is right when he calls Frankenstein a "calculated failure" (113), for in pinpointing the failure of an empirical society to create visionaries with redemptive imaginations that are not gender-exclusive, Mary Shelley is clearing the path for a new ethos to be born. In returning to the prototypes for Romantic epic, Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, and Wordsworth's "Prospectus" and Excursion, which traces the Wordsworthian pattern of development in the biography/Bildungsroman of the Wanderer, Shelley rewrites what she perceives as a faulty Romantic vision; and it is in this rewriting that her own vision becomes apparent. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is a transition between male epic, as Milton and the Romantics wrote it, and the development of a harmonious personality and consciousness as found in German and feminist Bildungsromane. Frankenstein is not an epic but a subversion of masculine epic; nor is it precisely Bildungsroman, because the united consciousness finally
delineated does not belong to any of the characters in the novel. In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley chronicles the demise of the male epic quest through the three male narrators' tales; ultimately it is Shelley who knits together the three strands which become a synecdoche for her own *Bildung*—or a feminist epic growth to consciousness.

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For years there has been a debate about exactly where female experience is in *Frankenstein.* Interpretations have ranged from *Frankenstein* as a recollection of Shelley's own maternity (and the loss of her children) and her mother's death from childbirth complications, to the monster as a symbol of Mary, her artistry, or femaleness in general. Essentially, these critics find in *Frankenstein* an unresolved conflict about motherhood and the role of the female in society. On one level, we can look at the monster as Shelley and the monster's story as a female *Bildungsroman of sorts.* Some critics interpret Shelley as the monster begotten, then spurned, by her father, while others argue that the novel is about Percy Shelley's creation of Mary. The monster, as an outsider to androcentric society, shares many of the problems Shelley would experience as an outsider herself; it is Shelley's very femaleness which makes her an outsider to main-stream nineteenth-century society. On another biographical note, Johnson, Poovey, and Hodges all see parallels between
Frankenstein’s creating his monster and Shelley creating her novel—her monster of artistry. Poovey suggests that the creature is really a "monstrosity" of the female artist’s ego born of a life-long conflict between the artistic and domestic woman (338). Similarly, Johnson argues that in Frankenstein Shelley gives birth to herself on paper; the novel is Shelley’s "declaration of existence as a writer" (8).\(^\text{11}\)

Shelley’s vision is complex, but it is clear that it is much less physically biographical and more politically motivated than some scholars claim. Using epic tradition while chronicling the unfolding of a masculine consciousness, Frankenstein is a political manifesto about the ultimate sterility of nineteenth-century androcentric society which supports the absence of the female. As Fred Randall so elegantly phrased it, "the monster’s very monstrosity is the mark and consequence of his severance from femininity" (531). The severance from the feminine and the concurrent objectification of the female is clear in the apparent lack of a female voice in Frankenstein, which records the tales of three male characters, Frankenstein, Walton, and the creature. But the female voice and judgement is finally present—in Margaret Seville’s and Mary Shelley’s being the ultimate "narrators" of this complex vision.
The use of a multi-perspective narration, a device found in epic, is a narrative structure similar to, for example, Book I of The Excursion which is another tale of the construction of woman-as-other. There are two perspectives on Margaret’s tale—the narrator/initiate’s and the Wanderer’s. As Wordsworth’s narrator/initiate tells the Wanderer’s tale to the readers as it has been relayed to him, so, too, does Walton, via his sister Margaret Seville, tell us Frankenstein’s tale which Frankenstein has told him. Each of the three separate narrations in Frankenstein emphasizes a significant stage in the growth of an individual in terms of the three-stage quest motif found in epic and Bildungsroman. The first tale, Victor’s, chronicles the fall of the artist/scientist and the soul-sickness that results from his divided psyche. The second story, the monster’s, emphasizes the initiation stage of the individual’s growth, when he is educated and undergoes severe trials in his attempt to reunite his consciousness. The rebirth or return segment of the journey is Walton’s often confused narration. As the text suggests, the three characters are intricately connected, and rightly so. With their stories told, each passes on the self-consuming torch, so to speak, to the next quester. As the story’s apparent final narrator whose role suggests a return to order, it is Walton who should be responsible for integrating the
experiences of his forebears, his questing "brothers," whose voices suggest a supernatural tie among them.
Ultimately, however, Walton is not capable of this synthesis because he has not himself internalized the import of the tales and his experience. It is the buried female voices of Margaret Seville and Mary Shelley which have the final word, a message that echoes into this century.

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If one traces the quests of the three main characters whose tales comprise Frankenstein, each constitutes a parody of the Romantic epic quest. Additionally, Frankenstein's three-narrator structure--Walton/ Frankenstein/ Monster--and the different levels of consciousness it implies suggests to me that we should read Frankenstein not as three separate quest cycles, but rather as a contiguous quest for a united consciousness. Frankenstein's is the first, and indeed the pivotal, Romantic quest narrated in the novel. However, as Milton and the Romantics recount the heroic fall from a prelapsarian state of consciousness and an epic quest for reintegration with God, Mary Shelley narrates Frankenstein's fall in his attempt to wrest rather than come to a comprehension of a god-like power.

Frankenstein's fall from a prelapsarian state is chronicled early in the novel. Most of the emendations
Shelley made from the 1818 to the 1831 editions of 

*Frankenstein* involve chapters one through five, 

*Frankenstein’s* narration of his youth. The first major 
change is that *Frankenstein’s* childhood becomes idealized, 

I believe to make the implication of his fall more serious. 

By 1831, Shelley had internalized the concept of the 

Romantic hero to a greater extent than in her earlier 

edition. In the 1831 work, for example, *Frankenstein* has a 

closer affinity to Nature, a characteristic typical of 

Romantic heroes. In his youth, Victor experiences an 

ideal Wordsworthian childhood, a model with which Shelley 

would have been familiar after reading Wordsworth’s *The 

Excursion* in 1814. *Frankenstein* lives in the realm of his 

mother’s "tender caresses" and his father’s "smile of 

benevolent pleasure" (33). Victor *Frankenstein* is a 

classic Romantic hero as Walton’s description of him 

attests:

> Even broken in spirit as he was, no one can feel more 
deeper than he does the beauties of nature...Every 
sight...seems still to have the power of elevating 
his soul from earth...he will be like a celestial 
spirit, that has a halo around him. (29)

In addition to having Walton call *Frankenstein* a 

"celestial spirit," Shelley makes clear *Frankenstein’s* 

connection to visionary Romantic epic poets (which will 

later prove ironic) with reverberations of Coleridge’s 

*Ancient Mariner.* As Walton says:
his ful-toned voice swells in my ears; his lustrous
eyes dwell on me with all their melancholy sweetness;
I see his thin hand raised in animation, while the
lineaments of his face are irradiated by the soul
within. (31)

But Frankenstein is an ironic portrait of the poet/prophet
who with maddened eyes impresses his message on his
disciple. Similarly, there are echoes of Wordsworth’s
Excursion. Akin to Walton’s belief about Frankenstein,
Wordsworth’s boy believes the Wanderer has a "vision and
. . . faculty divine" (79). But Frankenstein falls when,
like Wordsworth’s Wanderer who has a "restless mind"
(Excursion Book I 321), he is "smitten with a thirst for
knowledge" (36). Again, in true Romantic epic style,
Frankenstein turns inward in his quest for the metaphysical
as Walton makes clear:

he may suffer misery, and be overwhelmed by disap-
pointments; yet, when he has retired into himself, he
will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo
around him. (29 my emphasis)

The description of Frankenstein’s "retiring into himself"
is striking in establishing his connection to the Romantic
epic hero, since the Romantics redefine the quest as
internal. Frankenstein becomes an empirical seeker of
knowledge and grants himself epic stature in his obsession
with learning the "principle of life":
It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or on it highest sense, the physical secrets of the world. (37)

Frankenstein shares the desire of other Romantic epic heroes. Like Wordsworth and his Wanderer, Shelley and his Prometheus, Keats and his poet, Frankenstein longs to "penetrate the secrets of nature" (39). He is distressed by the "fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature" (40). In his overweening pride, Frankenstein believes that he alone has been "reserved" to discover the secrets of life to which Nature is guardian (52). Like the "ancient teachers" of chemistry (and indeed his Romantic real-life models), Frankenstein desires to "ascend into the heavens" and acquire "new and almost unlimited powers" (47-48). Victor's fall is from the "bright visions" of childhood into the "gloomy and narrow reflections upon self" (38). What is striking here is that Shelley is obviously defining the Fall as a fall into solipsism as Wordsworth, Keats, and Coleridge had done earlier. Frankenstein's solipsism is defined, as is the Romantics' earlier, as an attempt not only to derive a moral ethos from an empirical basis, but as a separation from femaleness.

As established in Chapter one, the epic fall motif in Romantic poetry is a fall into fragmentation perhaps best
symbolized by Blake’s Four Zoas. In Shelley’s depiction of
the monster and the roles assigned to both Elizabeth and
Clerval in Frankenstein’s life, it is clear that Shelley is
suggesting that Frankenstein is suffering from psycholog-
ical fragmentation similar to Albion’s. Frankenstein falls
because he is psychologically unbalanced; he does not
recognize the importance of feminine and/or domestic power
in his empirical world.\(^\text{15}\) In his ultimate confusion about
the principle of life, he does not recognize the real
source of his strength, which lies not in his communion
with the dead things in the charnal houses but with the
living. Among the several people who try to restore
Frankenstein to life are those with “domestic ties”: his
father, who clearly suggests the healing powers of
domesticity, and Clerval, the “moral” and sensitive poet,
who similarly represents the value of human bonding while
suggesting the possibility of a poetic communion with the
cosmos.\(^\text{16}\)

Critics are suspicious of Shelley’s domesticity
because it is drawn so conventionally in the novel;\(^\text{17}\)
however, we must be careful in defining “domesticity” here,
because clearly, the domesticity Shelley draws in her novel
is androcentrically defined and therefore lethal to women.
Veeder believes, for example, that Shelley’s women are all
slaughtered because they are, finally, “part of that
[patriarchal] world” (211). As Ellis has demonstrated, the
DeLaceys are the only family who procreate into the next generation, and they are not, she claims, a "traditional," domestic family unit. This does not mean Shelley has no faith in the powers of family and community; her journal entries and her portrayal of the DeLaceys defies that. But she clearly recognizes it is a male-controlled social system and laments its obvious physical barrenness and tendency to support a master/slave gender structure. As opposed to the deadening "patriarchal domaticity" in which men objectify women, Shelley suggests, mainly through its absence but also through the DeLaceys, the generative power of a life-affirming and nurturing domesticity. In Frankenstein's repeated neglect of all human ties, then, Elizabeth becomes his best chance to rejoin a community of humans. It is in his relationship with Elizabeth that his fragmentation is most apparent, and it is with her that his hope for reintegration lies. In his monomaniacal quest, however, Frankenstein is "insensible to the charms of nature" (55) and, indeed, to feminine power in general. Like most classical epic heroes, Frankenstein perceives feminine and domestic ties as temptations he must resist in his single-minded, ego-centric march to masculine power.

Frankenstein yearns to unlock the secret of life; but rather than searching outside of himself for an affirmation of life, he turns inward and isolates himself from all human and natural ties. He is ironically reminiscent of
Wordsworth's Wanderer in his isolation from society and his "reasonings of mind/ Turned inward" (Excursion Book I 65-66). Frankenstein's flaw is the same as other epic heroes', both classical and Romantic: he misplaces his passion. He is "engaged, heart and soul," in the pursuit of studies which he undertakes with "unremitting ardour" (54). He is hoping to create a race of beings that will "bless him" as their creator, but he neglects all human bonds in his monomaniacal quest. As Milton drew Satan to demolish the idea of the classical epic hero, Shelley drew Frankenstein to demolish Romantic heroism.

In Frankenstein's perverse imbalance, he begins to speak of his work using language that evokes sexual intercourse and procreation. Frankenstein goes through a "painful labour" to arrive at the "summit of [his] desires" in a "gratifying consummation of [his] toils" (52). In a parallel to Satan's begetting of Sin and Death in Paradise Lost and Apollo's self creation, Frankenstein, in his "unremitting ardour" copulates with himself (or dead matter) in his sterile laboratory to give life to what ultimately will destroy him. Frankenstein is like Wordsworth's Wanderer, who also misunderstands love and sexuality as something non-human and solitary:

there He kept
In solitude and solitary thought
His mind in a just equipoise of love.

(Excursion Book I 353-55, my emphasis)
Percy Shelley’s Prometheus spawns Jupiter when he is divorced from Asia, and Albion ultimately cannot create imaginative forms without Jerusalem. The connection between the Promethean desire to usurp female power and Frankenstein’s sexual imbalance is revealing. Like the Romantic epic heroes who precede him, it is precisely Frankenstein’s denial of the female that defines his imbalance. He denies Elizabeth’s importance to his life, while at the same time he tries to arrogate her female power to his own means.

Shelley makes an interesting shift in epic tradition in defining women’s role in the quest. Traditionally, the epic female has been a temptress figure (Dido, Eve, Nature) or woman-the-projection-of-other (Asia, Jerusalem); both types are male constructs of femaleness. However, a second major change in her 1831 edition involves an increased valuation of feminine power. In an indication that Shelley is working on a gender-polarized scale of values involving the Romantic concept of “other,” the female roles, while stereotyped, become more important as sources of moral and ethical strength. Shelley signals this importance in a balanced psyche by suggesting the significance of a complementary but integral female to each of her questers. Frankenstein needs Elizabeth, the monster desires a mate with whom he can commune, and Walton needs to maintain a correspondence with, and ultimately return to, his sister.
Frankenstein cannot recover a lost innocence or god-consciousness until his fragmented psyche is re-integrated—something that will never happen, as is signaled in his denial of both Elizabeth and his creature, who Shelley clearly implies are Frankenstein’s Emanation and Spectre, respectively, especially in her 1831 edition.

The woman-as-projection is a standard psychological construct in Romantic theory. Percy Bysshe Shelley’s "On Love" outlines the human propensity for one’s Epipsyche, one’s "other": "there is something within us which from the instant that we live and move thirsts after its likeness" (473). This likeness, however, is also one’s "anti-type"; it embodies "all that we conceive or fear or hope beyond ourselves when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void" (473). In the Romantic quest for identity, the female is associated with reunification; Blake restores Jerusalem to England, and Asia is freed to reunite with Prometheus. Both "marriages" signal an apocalypse in human consciousness. Shelley further states that once the desire or drive for other is dead, "man becomes the living sepulchre of himself" (473). In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley demonstrates, rather than an apocalyptic marriage signaling a change in human consciousness, the frustrating result of an unfulfilled union: the "frozen marriage bed". Victor Frankenstein becomes a living sepulchre unable to form positive human bonds,
because he has transformed the living, breathing Elizabeth into a projected image of himself, an Emanation of his own disturbed psyche.

Early in the novel, Shelley makes clear Elizabeth’s role as Frankenstein’s "anti-type." She is "more than sister -- the beautiful and adored companion of all [his] occupations and [his] pleasures" (35). Frankenstein’s and Elizabeth’s complementary function is clear. She is life-affirming as opposed to life-negation; she is the balancing force in his life. Victor says:

She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract; I [Victor] might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness. (38)

Scholars often criticize Shelley for the weak female characters in Frankenstein, citing Elizabeth, Justine, and Caroline Beaufort as insipid forms of the later Victorian "Angel of the House." I agree that the roles are very traditional, but I don’t believe Shelley intended Elizabeth or any of these women to be perceived as a viable female; after all, these women all die. What Shelley does demonstrate is that women’s objectified, sexually-defined roles are as deadly as men’s socially-defined roles. While Elizabeth is intended to define those qualities the Romantic and excessive Frankenstein lacks, we only see Elizabeth from Frankenstein’s point of view -- merely another woman-as-
projection. Especially in the 1831 version, Elizabeth becomes a stereotyped opposite of Frankenstein. In an echo of the "descent from heaven" motif in epic, she is "heaven-sent," and "celestial," a "painted cherub--a creature who seemed to shed a radiance from her looks and whose form and motions were lighter than the chamois of the hills" (35).

In Blake's terms, Elizabeth is Frankenstein's Emanation, the female part of his psyche which becomes detached from the whole when Frankenstein falls into "Selfhood." Frankenstein is object-oriented, obviously in his relationship with his creature, but even in his human relations. In both Percy Shelley's and Blake's dialectics, an individual unable to move beyond Selfhood--his Spectre--is incapable of establishing a fruitful relationship with his beloved; the Emanation becomes for this divided soul an objectified being, merely a possession to be contemplated in solitude (Frye Fearful Symmetry 72). Elizabeth, as projection, becomes a possession to Frankenstein, a "pretty present" for him, something to which he has a right and claim, made obvious in the repetition of the words "me," "my," and "mine":

[I] looked upon Elizabeth as mine--mine to protect, love, and cherish. . . . a possession of my own . . . No word, no expression could body forth the kind of relation in which she stood to me--my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only. (36, my emphasis)

Despite his imaging of her, Elizabeth is his "best hope"
because she, like Dante's Beatrice, is the "living spirit of love" (38) in that she has the ability to move him beyond his ego to truly love her. But as Theotormon is unable to appreciate and embrace Otohoon because he cannot understand her, Frankenstein cannot think of Elizabeth as anything other than his own mind's projection.

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When reading Wordsworth's "Prospectus" and Book I of The Excursion, Shelley wrote in her journal that she thought he was a "slave." It is likely she meant that he is a "slave" to his mind in his glorifying "musing in solitude" ("Prospectus" 2); to Wordsworth, the perfect marriage is between Mind and Nature: "... the discerning intellect of Man,/ ... wedded to this goodly universe/ In love and holy passion ..." ("Prospectus" 52-54). Although she does not make this Wordsworth/Shelley connection, Poovey calls Shelley's monster the product of the unnatural coupling between nature and intellect (337), exactly what Wordsworth thought was a worthy marriage. Wordsworth, who ultimately denies real women in favor of anthropomorphizing "Nature" and "Imagination," never suggests what Shelley would perceive as a satisfactory solution to sexual polarization, nor does her husband, whose heroes merely appropriate femaleness in their often incestuous marriages of sexual poles--marriages that feminist critics see as essentially narcissistic.
Frankenstein's epic quest for godhead, which depends on his full comprehension of and love for Elizabeth, is thus, like his creation, an abortion. The Romantics loved the Promethean image, that spirit of rebelliousness that ultimately serves human society. But it is a self-aggrandising and ambitious spirit of rebelliousness that Shelley paints in her modern Prometheus. Frankenstein's Romantic striving, his epic quest, is vacuous and, indeed, perverse unless accompanied by a sense of humanity. Frankenstein never completes the ascent/descent pattern of the traditional epic quest because he lacks the ability to build a united consciousness in his continual rejection of Elizabeth and other potentially nurturing characters. The symbol of Frankenstein's diseased Romantic vision is the monster, which rises from the ashes of Frankenstein's immolating self-absorption.

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If we trace the typical epic and Bildungsroman journey previously outlined, Frankenstein's journey clearly emphasizes the first stage of a three-stage journey. His journey represents the separation stage, the removal of self from society in order to grow and learn oneself and one's relation to a greater cosmic consciousness. The second stage of the epic/ Bildung journey is the initiation. The initiation stage includes a series of trials from which the quester will gain experience which
should translate into a greater realization about life. While he certainly undergoes trials, Frankenstein’s solipsism blinds him and prevents him from integrating his experience into a greater consciousness. Similarly, his moral blindness prevents him from becoming an "initiate." However, as a living incarnation of Frankenstein’s solitude, of his Selfhood, the monster is fully "initiated," and he realizes much more from his trials than does Frankenstein.

The creature’s journey, what Gilbert and Gubar call a "miniature Bildungsroman" (238), appears to be an ironic rendition of The Prelude narrator’s and the Wanderer’s quests. The creature’s Bildung also clearly parallels Werther’s Bildung in the German Sorrows of Werther. Born basically in a Lockean “tabula rasa” state, the creature first experiences the growth of sensations through his close interaction with Nature. The feminine power of nature and the moon are his first caregivers when he feels "desolate" (103). Once his sensations become "distinct," his mind begins to develop. He believes he is living in a "paradise," when actually he has already been cast out of his father’s garden. Beauty "delights" him, he responds to music, and, most important, he wants to learn language so he can communicate with other beings. Outside of his abnormal birth and appearance, the monster, as "Natural Man," recapitulates (often ironically so) the growth and
The creature’s narrated sequence is both a Bildung and an epic quest. He begins his epic quest for identity and unification with his "god" (ironically, Frankenstein) with a characteristic "descent" (102). The monster’s physical descent echoes Virgil’s "dark journey of the soul" in The Inferno as well as other epic journeys. As described by Campbell, Buckley, and Abel, et. al., this "dark journey" is a metaphor for a psychological journey into darkness, away from the "father’s house" and social norms. In her prophetic book, Shelley has the monster act out this psychic dark journey away from the father, but more significantly away from the feminine.

Where Frankenstein’s quest initially is a quest for isolation in his Romantic narcissism, his creature’s quest is an inversion of his own: while the father journeys toward isolation, the child searches for communality. In this sense, the monster tends to follow a more traditionally feminine quest pattern, while Frankenstein’s quest is traditionally masculine, according to the patterns Abel, et. al. have established. They argue that while the quest in male Bildung is away from community, that is, an inward quest to self that remains focused on self, the female quest pattern as found in the female Bildung is a quest towards community with others once the self has been established. The monster is, at first, questing for a
reunification with his creator, his father. He recognizes the healing potential of domestic affection, of going beyond oneself and recognizing "other":

... the love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes. ... My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded. (147)

It is the creature's isolation from human affection and domesticity, combined with his "oppressive sense" (141) of the injustice of a social system based solely on empirical knowledge, that converts his quest for community into his mad quest for vengeance. It is part of the creature's dark journey of the soul during which he only comes out at night, that the monster learns of the abuses of law and government (in DeLacey's trial), of social injustice, and of patriarchal vice. The monster's introduction to culture through Volney's Ruins of Empires is significant, for it is clearly a criticism of patriarchal culture:

I heard of the slothful Asiatics; of the stupendous genius and mental activity of the early Romans--of their subsequent degenerating--of the decline of that mighty empire; of chivalry, Christianity and the kings. I heard of the discovery of the American hemisphere, and wept with Safie over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants... Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle, and at another, as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike. (119-120)
How the creature and Frankenstein each responds to Volney’s *Ruins* is revealing, for it is clear that where Frankenstein only gives lip service to his concern for society’s ruin, he actually participates in its demolition. The creature, on the other hand, is appalled at the destruction man has caused by his separating his humanity from his ambition.

Through Frankenstein’s repeated rejection of his creation and the creature’s subsequent admitted "vampirism," the being is ironically united with his "god" in that he grows into the ultimate perversion of his creator. It is when Frankenstein plans a marriage, a marriage which excludes the creature and highlights his own impossibility of marriage, that the creature makes the Satanic claim, "'Evil thenceforth became my good." The monster, like his creator, is bound to fail in his quest for identity and community, because as the incarnation of his creator’s flaw he has no identity, and thus no chance for community. He falls because he lacks an identity, he cannot be loved, and he cannot be part of a community. His quest turns from a desire to unite with "other" to a perverted desire for a vengeance which will be eternally divisive. 

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Walton’s quest, which structurally frames both Frankenstein’s and the monster’s quests, is the least dark of the three. Like Frankenstein, Walton is an overreacher.
His obsession, though, is with geographical limits. Like The Prelude’s Narrator and Keats’ Hyperion, Walton is in search of a paradise, "a point in which the soul may fix its intellectual eye," a "place of perpetual splendour" and "wondrous power" (16). As Alphonse Frankenstein and God warned their sons away from their quests, Walton’s father forbids him to continue his pursuit of human limitations. Like Frankenstein and Adam though, Walton defies his father and sets out, in true Romantic epic style, to "confer on mankind a passage to paradise" (15-16).

In what I see as a telling addition to the 1831 edition, Walton is, in his youth, yet another Wordsworthian child who "ran wild on the commons" (19). Interestingly, Walton is enamored of the poets whose "effusions entranced [his] soul" (17); he considers himself a poet but is not satisfied with the limits of a "Paradise of [his] own creation" (17). Shelley clearly draws a parallel between classical epic heroes and their quests and those of Romantic epic poet/heroes in her 1831 edition, when Walton transfers his Promethean desires from learning the "mysteries of the oceans" to poetry:

I have often attributed my attachment to, my passionate enthusiasm for, the dangerous mysteries of the ocean, to that production of the most imaginative of modern poets... besides this, there is a love for the marvellous... intertwined in all my projects, which hurries me out of the common pathways of men, even to the wild sea and unvisited regions I am about to explore. (21-22)
At the same time he claims to possess a poetic soul, Walton, like Frankenstein, reveals himself as the upstart fire-stealer, Prometheus:

... success shall crown my endeavors. Wherefore not? Thus far I have gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas: the very stars themselves being witnesses and testimonies of my triumph. Why not still proceed over the untamed yet obedient element? What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of men? (23)

He is intent on enlarging his physical boundaries, a Romantic metaphor for coming to consciousness.

Walton, initially a disciple of sorts to Frankenstein, "shares [Frankenstein's] madness" and calls him "brother of my heart" (27). This early Walton admires in Frankenstein those qualities he possesses himself or yearns to possess; in other words, in Walton's early relationship with Frankenstein, the distinction between self (Walton) and other (Frankenstein) collapses, rendering his love for Frankenstein another version of solipsism. Veeder has also pointed out the essential narcissism of Walton's idea of friendship: to Walton, friendship is acquisitive as opposed to giving (207). In an ironic rendition of the epic temptation motif, Walton is tempted by Frankenstein to "carry on the torch" for the "admirable being" and "glorious spirit," Frankenstein, whose quest is not a life-affirming quest for community, but an ultimately vacuous quest.27
Walton finally fails in regenerating Frankenstein's dark vision because he feels both awe and compassion for the creature scorned by his creator. He feels awe at the intense horror to which his own vision, incarnated in Frankenstein's vision/creation, has grown, and he, a man himself in search of a friend, at least nominally compassionates with the monstrosity of isolation:

my first impulses, which had suggested to me the duty of obeying the dying request of my friend, in destroying his enemy, were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion. (219)

In an analogy to Prometheus the creator, a function Frankenstein could not perform in his Prometheanism, Walton restores Frankenstein "to animation" near the hearth on his ship, perhaps the only feminine symbol on board. Unlike Frankenstein, Walton takes parental responsibility for his "creation," Frankenstein; he wants to nurture his "creation" (Frankenstein) and love him "as a brother" (27). Shelley makes it clear that it is precisely his need for human bonding, his need for community as opposed to separation, that distinguishes him from Frankenstein.

Ironically, it is precisely in Walton's failure to succeed Frankenstein that Walton is successful. Despite Walton's deficiencies, specifically his blind adoration of Frankenstein and his monomaniacal fixation on his quest, Walton demonstrates an understanding of his own psychological imbalance. Walton is acutely aware of his
fragmentation. He sees the absence of "other" as a "severe evil" (19). He realizes that his daydreams need "keeping," and he claims to need a friend "who would have sense enough not to despise me as a Romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavor to regulate my mind" (19). He realizes the importance of sympathy and communication with other humans; he tells his sister he will not be "rash" on the subject of other men's welfare and claims, and, in a clear reference to The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, he says that he'll "kill no albatross" (23). Despite this, however, he is eventually forced to return home by the men on his ship who threaten to mutiny, rather than making the choice himself. This is significant, because Walton's failure to make that final decision demonstrates that he has not fully comprehended the ramifications of his journey to the heart of darkness.

That Frankenstein's acolyte, Walton, can ultimately be redeemed where Frankenstein has totally lost his soul is evident in Walton's letters to his sister Margaret. Shelley clarifies the importance of Margaret's power: she is "love and kindness" (18); she is a symbol of domesticity as she represents familial ties, and a feminine sense of "otherness." Again, the entire Frankenstein is an act of communication to a woman, a point which cannot be overestimated. Significantly, however, Walton yearns to unite not with a woman, but with a man: the one "whose eyes
would reply to mine" is "a man... You may deem me romantic, my dear sister" (19). Shelley is pointing out what she obviously perceives as problematic in the Romantic dialectic; she is suspect of an affection that Walton can only share deeply with other men in his inability to conceptualize a worthy female.

Walton’s quest parodies the third stage of the epic quest and Bildung: the Return. Walton has shared Frankenstein’s overreaching and separation anxiety, but he moves beyond Frankenstein in that he recognizes (as did the creature in his initiation stage) the danger to which the overreacher is prey: solipsism. Where the creature becomes stagnant in the second stage of the journey with the vengeance born of his acute consciousness of his situation, Walton is able, finally, to return home, although it is not his personal realization that allows that final movement. Walton has come closer than Frankenstein and indeed the creature to realizing the "upright heart and pure" because he realizes the importance of psychological balance. However, his qualified compassion for the monster and the lack of responsibility he demonstrates for the lives of his men indicates that while the way to "godhead" or "consciousness" is revealed to him (i.e. human bonding) he does not realize the revelation to which he has been subject. 

Levine calls Walton a "frustrated compromise" between "domestic emptiness" and "rampant individualism" (14), and
Andrew Griffin suggests that Walton is the Shelleyan answer to the Romantic philosophical despair to which the monster is subject. But Walton’s is not the answer nor the final word in the book, and it is here that Shelley’s criticism of Romanticism is clear. Her Promethean figures are, finally, not heroic. Frankenstein may possesses the potential for heroic "greatness," but he is seriously misdirected in his self-absorption; the creature is similarly a monstrosity, and Walton remains a powerless figure in his inability to integrate his Promethean yearnings and his need for human bonding. It is clear at the conclusion of Frankenstein that Walton is "disappointed." He is returning home after having lost his dreams and being privy to Frankenstein’s and the creature’s loss too; and it is in that very return, I believe, that Shelley suggests those dreams need to be re-visioned.

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It is through her three male characters that Shelley identifies weaknesses in the Romantic vision; its heroes are unable to realize a comfortable balance between recognizing feminine and domestic affection and their dangerously narcissistic dreams. Frankenstein’s narrative structure is ultimately reminiscent of both Paradise Lost and The Prelude in that the author/poet becomes the hero. It is the author and reader who move through the three-stage epic journey Shelley’s characters could not complete;
it is Shelley and her readers who will potentially recognize and realize the full implication of Walton’s return and the reason for the aborted, ironic epic quests in the story.

As critics of epic genre have noted, external actions parallel those of the inner mind.³⁰ Most significantly, then, Frankenstein’s integrated tri-level ironic rendition of an epic quest is a synecdoche for the artist’s growth and her own poetic vision.³¹ As Barbara Johnson has noted, the idea that Frankenstein can be read as feminine autobiography at first appears ludicrous (3); and while I would not necessarily call Frankenstein autobiography, I certainly see a Bildung pattern in the novel’s three characters who suggest, in total, the growth of a single consciousness. As stated earlier, Frankenstein is certainly a narrative about the absence of the female and femaleness in Romanticism and the epic venture, but on the lyric level it is about the author’s establishing a female identity or voice in an act of communion to a female—Margaret Seville. Shelley, then, is establishing her own epistemological system through an ironic rendering of the male characters. Her use of the lyric mode substantiates her apparent subversion.

As the Romantics utilized the lyric mode as a subversive technique in reconstituting classical epic, Shelley uses lyricism to further subvert masculine epic.³²
In his discussion of lyricism in the Romantic novel, Kiely claims that the Romantic novel’s author intentionally separates his or her main character from historical time either by a physical separation of sorts (lunatic asylum, prison, monastery cell) or with the use of an "inset story," "the plot within a plot which interrupts the chronology of the main narrative and creates a new temporal dimension" (19). One can quickly deduce from Kiely’s comments that the female novels of madness and imprisonment may be less soap opera and more a subversion of the narrative mode in favor of the lyric. Shelley’s use of lyricism is subversive because lyric form undermines traditional masculine chronology. As Hodges has pointed out, Shelley "uses the resources of fiction to transgress literary structure from within" (163); she subverts patriarchal narrative conventions and masculine "language and codes" as part of her criticism of masculine culture and poetics.

The typical masculine narrative unity is further disassembled by the use of multiple narrators (157), a technique which forces the readers’ participation in the drama. The use of multiple perspectives, common in Romantic forms and epic genre, is what Schug calls "vortical structure," where no one consciousness is able to encompass the whole story or appreciate its import (64). The multiple strands of narrative embedded in one another
are important, for, as J. Hillis Miller has noted, "to read a narration within a narration makes all the world a novel and turns the reader into a fictional character" (35, in Schug 59). As in epic, then, where the reader vicariously experiences an epic movement and an epic catharsis, the reader of Frankenstein participates vicariously in Shelley's unobtrusively feminist vision.

Fred Randall has called Mary Shelley a "vindicator of the imagination of women" (517). In "Frankenstein, Feminism, and the Intertextuality of the Mountains," Randall claims that Shelley uses mountaintops, significantly the places of revelation in Romantic epic, as places to revise Romantic thought as Byron and Percy Shelley had used mountains as "weapons of political and intellectual rivalry . . . [and] revisionary battles"--essentially revising Milton's mountaintop battles (522). But where Wordsworth and Coleridge confront God on their mountaintops, she, like Byron and Percy Shelley, confronts herself and at least establishes the hope for an epic voice that is distinctly feminine. I am not suggesting that Mary Shelley offers a complete solution or an alternative to the problem of a female growth of consciousness, but she does make clear the problem with a traditionally masculine and even moderately feminist Romantic vision. Shelley ultimately insists that the main source of domestic and social ruin is male.
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in a letter to Maria Gisborne Shelley writes: "You speak of woman's intellect . . . I know that however clever I may be there is in me a vacillation, a weakness, a want of 'eagle winged' resolution" (11 June 1835). While Shelley could identify what she felt was important in life ("happiness" and "content" are found in the "exercise of affections" [Letter to Frances Wright, 12 Sept. 1827]), she was never able to resolve her mixed feelings:

Pray let the stream flow quietly and as glittering on the surface as it may . . . do not awaken the deep waters, which are full of briny bitterness--I never wish anyone to dive into the secret depths. . . . I would also guard myself from the sense of woe which I tie lead about and sink low low--out of sight or fathom line.

(Letter to Edward John Trelawny, 26 January 1837)

The contrast to her 1822 Journal entry in which she descends "fearlessly" into the "remotest caverns" of her mind is startling.346

Leaving aside this personal self-effacement which certainly plagued Shelley the older she grew, the changes she made between the 1818 and 1831 edition of Frankenstein are revealing. Although she claims in her Preface to have made principally stylistic changes, that she has not introduced new ideas or circumstances to her original, a close study of the two texts reveal significant changes in her thinking.347 While many critics see her 1831 edition as obsequiousness to conservatism, I see the edition as a
deepening of her earlier ambivalence about the nature of the Romantic overreacher and what she saw as his distorted epic quest. The 1831 edition reveals a stonger feminist voice about the values of a nurturing domesticity, not, as Levine claims, an "insipid destroyer of life," and the importance of the feminine in a modern society which spawns an artist who begets a monstrosity rather than an imagin- active creation. Shelley’s ambivalence is towards the potential solipsism to which many Romantic heroes are subject in their search for godhead divided from the feminine. It is a Prometheanism marked by solipsism that Frankenstein demonstrates, a Prometheanism lacking femaleness that is ultimately destructive to the self and, necessarily, to society. Just as Paradise Lost levels the traditional classical epic, Mary Shelley’s work topples the historically masculine epic in order to refashion it. Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus suggests that the masculine epic is not viable in modern times; it is the feminine Bildungsroman represented by the author’s epic voice buried in Frankenstein which ultimately makes sense of the men’s aborted quests. Frankenstein is radical because it demolishes some of the most potent dreams of Western culture and asserts the importance of the feminine in keeping society from self-immolation.

For example, see Peter Dale Scott who claims that Shelley surrendered her vision to the reality of Victorian life. Similarly, Knoepflmacher ("Thoughts on the Aggression of Daughters") argues the novel is merely a lesson from which Shelley learns to "domesticate the demon within and learn self-effacement" (113). See also Levine ("The Ambiguous Heritage of Frankenstein"), Rieger, and Sterrenburg. Both Poovey and Homans (Bearing the Word) are strongly critical of Shelley, especially her 1831 edition of Frankenstein. In separate essays, each argues the novel is conventional and apologetic.

While Ziolkowski claims that there are no references to the Prometheus myth in Frankenstein while references to Paradise Lost abound, Leslie Tannenbaum, among others, has noted many allusions, veiled or otherwise, to the myth of the Titan. See also James Rieger's discussion of Mary Shelley as genetrix for the Romantic Prometheus-as-creator myth.

According to her Journal (ed. Frederick Jones), Shelley read both Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained in 1815 and Paradise Lost again in November of 1816 while she was completing her novel.

See George Levine and Isabel MacCaffrey on the secularization of Paradise Lost and the creation myth; see also Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar for an interesting study of Frankenstein as a female rendition of Paradise Lost. They claim that "Mary Shelley covertly examine[s]. . . the fearful tale of a female fall from a lost paradise of art, speech, and autonomy into a hell of sexuality, silence, and filthy materiality" (227).
In his *Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom argues that the Romantics reacted to and rewrote Milton's work; but while the Romantics wrote under an "anxiety of influence," they hoped to surpass Milton's achievements in "correcting" what they perceived as his faulty vision. Gilbert and Gubar deny that women write under what they consider Bloom's Freudian theory of artistic genesis, because its emphasis on fathers denies women accessibility to his structure (46–53). Regardless of their criticism, I believe Bloom's theory is still valid; women writers need to deal with literary history regardless of gender.

According to her *Journal*, Shelley read Wordsworth's *Excursion*, which would have included his "Prospectus" as its "portico," during September of 1814 and was "much disappointed" with it. "He is a slave," she says of Wordsworth. She reread "The Wanderer" in December of 1815 and during her final editing of *Frankenstein* in 1817. It should be additionally noted that by 1831 when she revised and reissued *Frankenstein*, she had read Keats' *Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion*, and her husband's *Prometheus Unbound*.

For years feminist critics have attempted to locate female experience in the "birth myth" of *Frankenstein*. See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar who claim the monster is female. For similar interpretations see Mary Jacobus, Ellen Moers and Marc Rubenstein. Mary Poovey is in a distinguished line of critics who define the monster as Shelley's conceptualized fear of female artistry.

Gilbert and Gubar call the monster's narration a "miniature *Bildung*" (238), a "tale of the blind rejection of women [the monster] by misogynistic, Miltonic patriarch" (243).

U.C. Knoepflmacher sees the monster/Frankenstein struggle as a struggle between Mary Shelley and William Godwin, who always favored his son over Mary ("Thoughts"). In separate studies, Christopher Small and William Veeber see Shelley as harboring a "father fixation" (Small 71, Veeber) which informs the overall movement of the text. On Percy Shelley's "creation" of Mary see Rieger and Small.

In "My Monster/My Self" Johnson argues that *Frankenstein* "can be read as the story of the experience of writing *Frankenstein*" (7). She notes that the genesis of the novel and the monster are the same, from setting details to the semantics with which Shelley describes each of the birth processes (51). Similarly, Devon Hodges sees the monster as the "deformed" patriarchal text; she argues the monster is itself "feminine textuality" (162). See
also M. Homans (Bearing the Word). Mary Poovey and others see the monster as "an indirect dramatization of the misshapen monster Shelley feared feminine metaphysics to be" (337). Interestingly, Poovey sees the monster-as-female-artist as peculiar to the 1831 edition of Frankenstein. She contends that in the earlier 1818 version, the monster was merely a product of "self-indulgent ego" (343).


13 Mary Shelley read The Rime of the Ancient Mariner in September of 1815, and there are many references and parallels to it throughout Frankenstein. Since Kroeber has effectively argued that Coleridge's work deserves epic status, Shelley's references to The Ancient Mariner further help establish her novel's connection to the Romantic epic tradition.

14 Frankenstein's initial rejection of his creature is based on solely empirical grounds; he is appalled by the sight of him. He demonstrates his real lack of vision in his decision to destroy the half-formed mate for his creature. As Tannenbaum points out (110), this is a clever echo of Adam's hill of vision experience in Paradise Lost ("I now felt as if a film had been taken from my eyes, and that I, for the first time, saw clearly" (Frankenstein 170). Ironically, Frankenstein doesn't see clearly at all, and it is his empiricism which fogs his Adamic vision. For a more full study of the importance of empiricism to Frankenstein's Romantic cosmogony, see Larry Swingle's "Frankenstein's Monster and its Romantic Relatives: Problems of Knowledge in English Romanticism."

15 While I see Shelley presenting Frankenstein as an old heroic standard to overthrow, many critics including Kiely, Griffin, and Levine define Frankenstein as heroic. Griffin says Frankenstein's quest is "sacred" (50-1); Levine calls his ambition "heroic and admirable" (10); and Kiely claims Frankenstein's fall is "the fault [of] the world's or society's, but not his" (157).

16 Clerval loves Nature with an "ardour," a word Shelley earlier applies to Frankenstein's feelings for his work. As Shelley makes especially clear in her emendations in the 1831 edition, Clerval and Frankenstein are polar opposites while at the same time they share many similarities; indeed, Frankenstein recognizes that Clerval is an "image of [his] former self" (158). Herein lies a
hint of Shelley’s ambivalence about Romantic heroes. While some critics including Bloom see Clerval as what Frankenstein could or should have been—the ideal, balanced Romantic hero (Ringers 122)—I believe Shelley is drawing Clerval in a prelapsarian state, and suggesting, in his destruction, his inability to survive in the real world.

17 See George Levine who claims Frankenstein moves the cosmic struggle of mankind to the "bourgeoisie household" (14). Levine condescendingly accuses Shelley of making the home the "new" temple.

18 Small has recognized the historical inability of the Prometheus figure to create a female, despite his desire to do so (50). Tannenbaum also illustrates Frankenstein’s lack of real creative powers in his paralleling the "blasted tree" images in Paradise Lost and Frankenstein. In Paradise Lost the "slant lightning" harbors an innate creative potential in that it introduces man to fire—a positive Prometheus image. Frankenstein’s lightning image, its blasted tree, suggests a dark and destructive power and Frankenstein’s essential inability to turn destruction into creation (107).

19 The "frozen marriage bed" refers to Othoohn’s and Theotormon’s unfulfilled marriage in Blake’s "Visions of the Daughters of Albion," (P1.7,22)

20 Ellis argues that Safie is the model for females in Shelley’s novel. Safie is taught by her mother "to aspire to higher powers of intellect, and an independence of spirit forbidden to the female followers of Mahomet" (124).


22 Earl Wasserman sees Percy Shelley’s Alastor as a critique of this Wordsworthian ideal state (16).

23 As Theodore Ziolkowski suggests, Frankenstein is not an indictment of science but of science divorced from ethics (43-44).

24 In The Divided Self, R. D. Laing also uses the term "Natural Man" to describe Frankenstein’s creature (80, as noted in Swingle 51). See also Howe who claims the "universal man" of the Renaissance as part of the Bildungsroman hero’s "complicated family tree" (5).

25 See also Christ’s and Chodorow’s work on separation as a male goal, while integration or community is a female
goal.

Homans argues that the monster is "a revision of Eve, of emanations and of the object of romantic desire as proven by its female attributes" (Bearing the Word 106). The creature is an "imagined model of the male poet's own self" (106).

Kiely is one among a number of critics who sees Frankenstein as a "hero throughout," claiming that like the Ancient Mariner, Frankenstein warns Walton away from his quest (167).

Veeder notes that "Margaret Walton Seville" shares the same initials as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (83), a connection which makes my claim of the novel as a revelation of feminine consciousness more striking.

Curran defines coming to consciousness as a two-part process: first, the hero experiences a revelation, but he will not achieve "vision" until he has realized the import of the revelation (138). Walton never reaches the second stage.

See, for example, Wilkie's work on Romantic epic. He says, "external contingencies and actions in the world are important as specific proof of the part played by the experience of external things in shaping the imagination and thought of the developing man" (76).

Mary Poovey has seen a similar relationship between the three-part narration and Mary Shelley's growth as an artist. While I find much of Poovey's analysis thought-provoking, I differ on some basic issues. Poovey, for example, claims that Shelley ties the formation of personal identity to self-denial rather than to self-assertion or self-creation. She argues that Shelley never is able to reach Wordsworth's ideal which involves "self confidence, freedom and faith in the individualistic imaginative act" (335-39). Obviously, I disagree.

For interesting studies of lyric time, see Kiely, Vogler (Preludes), and Kroebber Romantic Narrative Art.

As Hodges points out, Shelley can refuse to speak "male" language or speak her own, and, since she does not really have her own language, she communicates by deforming masculine literary structure from within (156). She argues that Shelley defines the female by what the male lacks, a "female relation to this symbolic (male) order as one characterized by lack" (156). Russ has suggested that
lyricism is the answer for women writers and indeed all outsiders to androcentric society as a way out of masculine literary structure (13-16). Ironically, some critics see the novel's lyricism as a weakness in her art. Stevick, for example, says Frankenstein is "not fully elaborated into rational, sequential art" (227) and Sherwin claims that Shelley's sentence structure is sometimes "spasmodic, juxtapositive, and repetitive" (895). These critics do not see the essential subversiveness in her demolishing masculine rhetoric.

In his discussion of lyric form in Romantic Narrative Art, Kroeber explains that experiences which are sources of poetic energy are not found in "rational organization," rather are "purely subjective and creative": "they cannot be told about; we [the readers] must be made to participate in the poet's vision" (58). Similarly, Schug's explanation of the reader as a "reliable" character/narrator in Frankenstein, makes the reader's experience through the novel sound remarkably like the experience intended in Romantic epic: Readers of the novel...make connections no individual narrator or consciousness within it can make, and thus, although the final moral experience of the novel is immeasurable, they [the readers] are granted a momentary power to glimpse, to hold in mind, the immeasurable, the unfathomable, by virtue of their role as reliable narrator. (64)

While I find much of this essay brilliant, I take exception to Randall's primitive penis-vagina metaphor for the structure of Frankenstein.

Mary Poovey studied the ambivalence Shelley felt between Romantic vision of the artist and social expectations for women and concluded that Shelley was at a psychological and philosophical impasse (332). Poovey argues that while Shelley strived for a united consciousness, she could not achieve it. However, in her third volume of The Letters of Mary Shelley, Joan Bennett claims that Shelley has a much more revolutionary character than previously thought. Bennett suggests that some of the conflicts apparent in Shelley's personality and ideas were due to the effects of the brain tumor which eventually killed her.

For an enlightening study of the changes in the 1831 edition see Mary Poovey.
III

Love and the Angel of Apocalypse:

Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*

I’ll walk, but not in old heroic traces,
And not in paths of high mortality,
And not among the half distinguished faces,
The clouded forms of long-past history.

I’ll walk where my own nature would be leading:
It vexes me to choose another guide...”
Emily Brontë

*Wuthering Heights* traditionally has been considered a problematical work. In addition to being called a "Victorian novel," it has been referred to as a "Romantic melodrama," an "epic comedy," and, according to Swinburne, a "poem in the fullest and most positive sense of the term" (27). Critics continue to study and restudy *Wuthering Heights*, offering "new approaches" to analyzing it in an effort to make the "chinese box" of a novel fit neatly into a prescribed critical "box."

Historically, there have been three approaches to *Wuthering Heights*: a metaphysical approach which focused on Catherine and Heathcliff’s relationship and its echoes throughout the novel; a sociological approach, in great
part a reaction to the aforementioned metaphysical; and a psychological approach which focused on Brontë’s maturation from a Gothic sensationalist (Gregor 8). As scores of critics have pointed out, no one approach seems to explain the work adequately. One overriding reason for this difficulty is that we are focusing too narrowly on Catherine and Heathcliff to the exclusion of other factors which inform this novel. When we look at *Wuthering Heights* as a story about Catherine and Heathcliff, then part two of the novel does indeed seem superfluous, an afterthought written by a Protestant/Methodist bred woman living on the brink of the staid “Victorian Age.” Nelly and Lockwood merely become interesting narrative conventions as readers decide how reliable or unreliable each is. The Lintons become the "light" forces, I believe wrongly so, in the dark world of *Wuthering Heights*. However, studying *Wuthering Heights* as a female *Bildungsroman* with echoes of Romantic epic makes Bronte’s epistemology clearer.

Brontë’s interest in Romantic poetics is well known; in addition, she was intrigued by Milton and the German philosophers and writers who of course had earlier influenced the Romantics. Surprisingly, some critics deny Bronte’s Romanticism; Richard Chase for example sees her myth as “domesticated,” and J. F. Goodridge, like Derek Traversi, defines Romanticism so narrowly and superficially
that Brontë doesn’t belong there. Other critics see Brontë as torn between two worlds—the Victorian and the Romantic. Nevertheless, for years critics have noted Romantic strains in Brontë’s poetry and made passing comments on Wuthering Heights’ Romanticism. It was not until recently, however, with Widdowson’s and Kiely’s fine studies of the novel’s Romanticism and J. Hillis Miller’s important study of Brontë’s poetics which claims the novel as a statement about “the Romantic view of life” (3), that the novel was treated more fully within the Romantic tradition.

Robert Kiely has called Wuthering Heights “the masterpiece of English Romantic fiction,” part of a “counter tradition . . . at its most radical and vigorous” (233). More precisely, I would suggest that Wuthering Heights is strongly reminiscent of Romantic epic. Returning to the criteria for Romantic epic established in my first chapter, we see that Wuthering Heights shares many similarities with the Romantic epic tradition. The novel’s problematical division into two parts can be seen as Brontë’s loosely reworked and integrated version of Milton’s Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, prototypes of the Romantic epic. There are also strong echoes in Wuthering Heights of Prometheus Unbound, a Romantic epic Emily Brontë was likely to have read.

A quick catalogueing of epic devices in relation to Wuthering Heights is revealing. Obviously, Wuthering
*Heights* is not a long narrative poem, yet many critics have noted its poetic quality in both its form and content. Peter Widdowson, for example, calls *Wuthering Heights* the "only fictional prose that approximates to nineteenth century English Romantic Poetry" (1-2). Structurally, *Wuthering Heights* has a strong lyrical quality reminiscent of Romantic epic; the novel’s rejection of chronological time in favor of "anti-diachronic," circular or mythic time (Vogler, "Story and History" 87), lends a mythopoeic quality to its already poetic language and suspends the usual historical/chronological time traditional to the novel." Largely responsible for this imposition of diachronic time onto a mythic structure is the "man’s woman," Nelly Dean, who throughout the novel considers herself a "Linton"; in other words she aligns herself with the patriarchy. It is Brontë’s intention to upend an androcentric socio-economic system, and offer in its place a new and encompassing vision for humankind.

The narrators of epics and *Bildungsromane* play an integral part in revealing the poet/author’s vision. Not coincidentally there are two narrators of *Wuthering Heights*: a man and a woman. Brontë utilizes this male/female pair in contradistinction to her other male/female pairs which ultimately suggest balance. Although they vicariously live the Catherine/Heathcliff and Catherine/Hareton experiences, Nelly and Lockwood never grow. Nelly
refuses to "learn" Catherine and Heathcliff even as she is privy to some of their great confidences; she is afraid of their power. On the other hand, she is delighted at the union of Catherine and Hareton but she misunderstands them. In their recognition of her lack of vision Catherine and Hareton reject her. As she tells Lockwood, "they don't care for me" (244).

Lockwood, a voyeur and misanthrope, shares Nelly's lack of vision; through all of his vicarious experience he never grows. In The Prelude, for example, the adult narrator relives his childhood wanderings. His growth in consciousness comes not on the experiential level but on the narrative level. It is the adult Wordsworth who realizes the implications of the revelation on Snowdon. Unlike the Romantic ideal, Lockwood remains self-absorbed. When Lockwood encounters Catherine and Hareton in his final return to Wuthering Heights, he spies on them, for as he says, he is uncomfortable with their paradise. Vogler has noted Lockwood's response to the wind in Wuthering Heights and counterpointed it to Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." The poet can either surrender himself to the wind "as an object for it to experience" or call upon the wind to enter him as a spirit (and vice versa). One can deny poetry in the former option of submission, or renew its mythology in the latter (Bloom Shelley's Mythmaking 84). Lockwood clearly chooses the former option in consistently denying
the elements, specifically the wind (88). He is incapable of vision or prophecy, as his inability to see or even imagine the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff further attests. Because of the inadequate vision of the novel’s local narrators, an active role is forced upon the reader to take part in the revealed vision. As in Frankenstein, vision doesn’t occur at the narrator’s level, so it is the reader’s by default.

In both classical and Romantic epic, the poet invokes a muse, a kind of "collective memory," from whom he hopes to gain poetic inspiration. Wuthering Heights has an ironic invocation to an epic muse, and Nelly Dean is that muse. Like Milton’s spirit in Paradise Lost who "from the first/ Wast present" with "mighty wings outspread/ Dovelike satst brooding on the vast Abyss" (PL I.20-21), Nelly Dean sits by the "abyss" of the Height’s patriarchal hearth with her knitting. "Instruct me, for Thou know’st,” (I.19) is essentially what Lockwood asks of Nelly, calling upon her for inspiration:

"[I] . . . desired Mrs. Dean, when she brought in supper, to sit down while I ate it, hoping sincerely she would prove a regular gossip, and either rouse me to animation, or lull me to sleep by her talk."

(36 my emphasis)

Compare Milton’s invocation in Paradise Regained:

"Thou spirit . . . inspire
As thou art wont, my prompted song, else mute. . ."

(I 8-12 my emphasis)
Without the spirit’s inspiration Milton fears he will remain mute--or poetically asleep; ironically, Lockwood half hopes that his muse will put him to sleep. Thus Lockwood’s invocation to the muse of the household is a delicious parody of both the classical invocation and the Romantic epic invocation.

In his conceiving of himself as a spirit of solitude, Lockwood is a parody of the solitary epic poet. He strikes a pose and says "[he] . . . had determined to hold [himself] independent of all social intercourse" and struggled with "low spirits and solitude" (36). Reminiscent of the epic poet in Wordsworth’s "Prospectus" who is "musing in solitude," the solitary Lockwood, a parody of the Romantic epic poet who comes to terms with his godhead, is looking to one of the keepers of the patriarchy to "rouse" him to animation--or to make him sleep through this epic quest (which he essentially does).

This invocation to the Muse is part of epic "outer form." Another technical characteristic of epic is also mocked in Brontë’s novel. As in classical epic, Brontë’s presentation of the tale is *en medias res*. Barbara Hardy disputes this analogy in saying that *Wuthering Heights* begins near the end; while it is true that it begins at the "end" of the story according to chronological time, its mythic time matches that of Romantic epic: the tale begins after the hero’s Fall and moves from there through his or
her initiation and rebirth.

Like the Romantics, Brontë deferred to "outer form" devices in order to establish her work within the epic tradition; despite this, her emphasis, like the Romantics, was on "inner form." Epic intuits a fall from a golden age and a hero’s search for a return to that desired state. However, as I have already noted, the Romantic hero’s quest is to find, rather than to preserve or simply overturn, an ideology. Brontë’s epistemology was strongly influenced by the Romantics and German thought: her pre-Freudian and pre-Jungian concept of human fragmentation, her concern with man’s tendency towards solipsism, and her radical vision of heaven and hell and a god that resides within one’s breast all inform her hero’s struggle.¹⁰

A central hero such as one would find in classical epic or Bildungsroman is conspicuously absent from Brontë’s work. What we do find typical of epic, however, is the redefined hero, a hero similar to, yet evolved from, the Romantics’ "poet as universal man." On a radical note, however, the hero of Wuthering Heights is female. For its hero is not the "Satanic" Heathcliff as some critics claim, but Catherine; and, indicative of Brontë’s complex conception of psychology, the hero is not the individual Catherine but the generic "Catherine"—both the mother and the daughter. It is Catherine’s struggle with her name that informs the quest of this novel; the repetition of Cather-
ine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, Catherine Linton is the touchstone of Brontë’s vision, and it is Catherine’s giving birth to her female heir which holds together the “seam” between part one and part two of this growth to consciousness. It has been established that the primary assumption of both Romantic epic and female Bildungsroman is the same: the evolution of a coherent consciousness. It is this evolution of consciousness—Catherine’s in this case—which informs Brontë’s novel; and, as with Romantic epic heroes, the hero’s quest for growth of the human consciousness is highly personal, yet universal. Brontë is attempting to create a collective human myth, as the Romantics did before her, through her redefinition of the hero.

If one reads Brontë’s poetry thematically rather than chronologically, one finds in it a journey, as Benvenuto so elegantly phrased it, "the soul’s ascent from captivity to liberty; from prison and the isolated self, to freedom and union in the universe" (58). Exile or imprisonment in Brontë’s poetry signifies the soul’s inability to move beyond itself. Like Blake’s Ulro and other Romantics’ conceptions of self-consciousness, Brontë’s hell is "self reduced to itself" (60). In her epistemology, she emphasizes a process similar to that of the secondary imagination described by Coleridge, where integration is preceded by dis-integration (Kiely 238). The goal of this
journey, to move from the disintegration of solipsism, through the psychic journey that leads to a prophetic reintegration so common in Romantic epic (The Prelude, Prometheus Unbound), is found also in Brontë’s Wuthering Heights. However, the male epic formula has been replaced with the Bildung of a young woman growing into adulthood (Catherine I through Catherine II) which reaches epic proportions in its emphasis on universal man/woman, a new Adam and Eve, in its Catherine/Linton/Heathcliff and Catherine/Linton/Hareton groupings. 

It is Catherine’s Bildung, her childhood, death, and rebirth through her daughter (not accidently given the same name), that reveals Brontë’s complex and often Blakean poetics. The male characters, Heathcliff and Linton, while substantial in themselves, act and react only in terms of Catherine; like Blake’s Zoas they are fragments or projections of her psyche with which she struggles to come to terms in her metamorphosis from Catherine Earnshaw to Catherine Heathcliff to Catherine Linton. It is her female heir who eventually returns her identity to her, who completes her Bildung, by what looks like a reversal of her mother’s metamorphosis back to her source: Catherine Linton/ Catherine Heathcliff/ Catherine Earnshaw. As I will demonstrate, this is not a reversal at all but a continuation which returns to self. This circularity, this return to one’s origins, is typical of female spiritual
Bildungsroman in which there is an attempt to develop an inner life, an emphasis which also parallels Romantic epic. In noting how the novel ends with an air of circularity, Thomas Vogler has quoted Coleridge on the joining of the past and the present:

"The common end of all narrative, nay, of all Poems, is to convert a series into a whole; to make those events, which in real or imagined History move in a strait Line, assume to our Understanding a circular motion—the snake with its Tail in its Mouth."

Wuthering Heights is a tale about a return to the source, a topos present in almost all epics in the Romantic tradition. In Paradise Regained, Christ returns to his mother's house; in Milton, we are, finally, "home" in Felpham; The Four Zoas and Jerusalem represent a return to the prelapsarian state; in Prometheus Unbound, we "return" to Demogorgon, the very spirit of circular process. Nelly and Lockwood, like The Prelude's narrator, Frankenstein's Walton or indeed Coleridge's Wedding Guest, become humankind's representatives who have been "chosen" to hear the prophetic myth of regeneration. As we will see, however, they hear but do not understand; the myth has been revealed, but unlike Wordsworth's narrator, they have not recognized its implications.

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Like Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and their Romantic epic successors, Wuthering Heights is a drama of
the fall of humankind and its eventual regeneration. The center of this drama, however, is not a poet as in The Prelude, Milton or "Hyperion" (an "affectation" some critics take as self-absorption), nor is its center a highly individualized male; the core of Brontë's universal vision is female: Catherine. If one traces Catherine's Bildung, her attempt to evolve into a coherent individual, what we see is essentially an epic fall, which I define as psychic fragmentation, and her eventual regeneration, and thus humanity's regeneration, through her daughter.

Catherine's psychic fragmentation is obvious in our initial introduction to her. The misanthropic Lockwood creeps into Catherine's multi-purpose bed/sanctuary/coffin to preserve himself from Heathcliff, yet ironically, it is this attempted escape from community that draws him into her Bildung. Lockwood first introduces us to Catherine as merely a name, scratched into the paint of a window sill:

> a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small—Catherine Earnshaw, here and there varied to Catherine Heathcliff, and then again to Catherine Linton.

(25)

This introduction is significant for, reminiscent of the Romantic hero's search for self, it lays the groundwork for the Bildung of a young woman trying to come to terms with her identity. She is trying out, in various hands, her potential name, typical of the female Bildungsheld who sees her identity in marriage. In an ironic inversion
of a typical heroine's quest for love and marriage to complete her identity however, it will be Linton and marriage which ruin Catherine. Catherine's books in her sanctuary are equally revealing. Her "journals" are scrawled secretly in the margins of her Bible. She has transposed the patriarchal Holy Scriptures into a personal statement of being: "Catherine Earnshaw, her book" (26).

She is a rebel, as are all the Romantics, against organized religion (she hurls her Bible into the dog kennel), and against patriarchal authority. Although she loves her father, she "provokes" and challenges his authority. When she misbehaves, Earnshaw tells her, "Nay, Cathy, I cannot love thee... Go say thy prayers, child, and ask God's pardon" (43). But in her mutiny against the patriarchy, she won't bend to its doctrines. When Earnshaw dies, Hindley takes his father's place in the "paradise upon the hearth." Hindley's cruelty and hypocrisy cause Catherine and Heathcliff to rebel further against patriarchal authority. They are set upon creating their own "paradise," one outside a traditional androcentric value system. This goal of creating a new paradise echoes the Romantic epic hero's desire in, for example, Prometheus' struggle against Jupiter and Los' against the fallen Albion and his agents in Jerusalem. Similarly, the challenge to Catherine's father is paralleled in the Romantics' challenge to their literary fathers, their
predecessors; this challenge is also the challenge of the female quester in the Bildungsroman who must separate herself from the patriarchy in order to find her true self.

The traditional male Bildungsroman or epic includes the hero’s retreat or alienation from society and/or the family; like Odysseus though, the hero eventually returns home to the father. However, the female/feminist pattern is different. Pearson and Pope have outlined the three stages of a female quest: 1. the "exit from the garden" where the hero denies parental, religious and political authorities who are her captors; 2. the "emperor’s new clothes" stage where she encounters the seducer (temptation) and must slay the idea of Romantic love and demythologize the seducer (here, Linton); 3. "the Woman is her Mother" stage, where the hero returns to her Mother (63-222). While Catherine goes through the first two stages, she never achieves the third; her daughter does that.

The first stage in both a Bildung and epic quest, the retreat from society, is demonstrated in Catherine’s denial of her father’s and brother’s Eden. As with Adam and Eve and Prometheus, that denial of father is concurrent with a fragmentation into sexual poles: Adam and Eve fall when separated; Prometheus falls when separated from Asia. The same is true of Blake’s male characters and their Emancipations. So, too, Catherine begins her fall when she is separated from Heathcliff.17 Catherine’s explanation of
her love for Heathcliff echoes Shelley’s essay, “On Love”:

“Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same. . . . there is . . . an existence of yours beyond you. . . . If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it . . . Nelly, I am Heathcliff—he’s always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure . . . but as my own being.” (72-74)

Again, there is a tie to Paradise Lost and Romantic epic in that Catherine’s fall is signalled by psychic fragmentation and her quest is motivated by a desire to regain her psychic integrity. Significantly, Hindley first removes her from Heathcliff’s bed the night their father dies. Catherine will later note that this “separation” Hindley ordered between her and Heathcliff was the start of a period of her life which she refers to as a “blank.” This period of time when she feels like “an outcast” is her night journey of the soul or, in epic terms, the descent to the underworld or descent into the self. It marks the beginning of the initiation and trials stage of her journey to consciousness through her relationship with the epic tempters: the Lintons.

One Sunday (it is no coincidence that Catherine and Heathcliff are always getting into trouble on the Christian sabbath), Catherine and Heathcliff are “banished” from the sitting room; they seek refuge out of doors, which is, again, typical for them and the Romantic hero. They wander
to Thrushcross Grange, an ostensibly civilized house, a vision of benevolent patriarchy, full of light and cheer, but what they find are dark forces at work. They see the selfishness displayed between Isabella and Linton, a selfishness Heathcliff cannot imagine between him and Catherine. They are attacked by a dog, Skulker, who is, interestingly enough, the parent of the wild brood at Wuthering Heights, further suggesting that the light and cheer at Thrushcross Grange are superficial. Catherine is held captive, first by the dog, then by the Lintons themselves.

Catherine doesn’t initially seek to enter the Grange; she becomes its "prey." ("What prey?" asks Linton when the dog assaults Catherine.) Thrushcross Grange keeps her prisoner and is instrumental in splitting her psyche: the Lintons separate her from Heathcliff as her brother did after their father’s death. In denying her Heathcliff, patriarchal culture with its expectations and mores is causing her fall into psychic fragmentation. This topos of the captive female is typical in a female Bildungsroman as is the Romantics’ being captive to patriarchal projections such as Jupiter and Urizen. Jerusalem is imprisoned in the dungeons of Babylon in Chapter Three of Jerusalem and Prometheus is imprisoned by his hatred of Jupiter in Prometheus Unbound.
During a traditional epic hero’s quest for Paradise, he is tempted to fragment. As noted, the epic temptation is usually sexual; a male hero is tempted by a woman to fall from strict reasoning to appreciate his passionate side. Witness Aeneas’ brief “tragic” fall to Dido. Bronte subverts this sexism in Wuthering Heights. During Catherine’s convalescence at Thrushcross Grange, she falls to the temptation of the patriarchy and is transformed into a “lady,” with hands “wonderfully whitened with doing nothing” (51); she has learned to use and manipulate people to her own ends, and, most important, her narcissism is fed there. Her convalescence is highly ironic, however, in that she is recuperating from an ankle injury. Gilbert and Gubar have drawn an interesting analogy between Catherine’s bloodied foot and the crippling sexual injuries of the epic heroes, Oedipus and Achilles (273–76). For Catherine, the wound is a symbolic castration, a social castration. More pointedly, she is convalescing from what civilization sees as an illness: her attachment to Heathcliff. When Catherine returns to the Heights, she appears to be purged of Heathcliff, in other words, purged of her dangerous tendency, at least by society’s standards, towards individualism. She is as curt with Heathcliff as her brother dared hope; yet soon her separation/fragmentation gnaws at her, for she is torn between two worlds.
Catherine's problem is what Nelly calls her "double character":

. . . she was full of ambition, [which] led her to adopt a double character without exactly intending to deceive anyone. . . . she was not artful, never played the coquette, and had evidently an objection to her two friends [Linton and Heathcliff] meeting at all. (62)

Catherine is not necessarily "artful"; rather she is incredibly naive in thinking she can somehow have both Linton and Heathcliff. She desires the social power Linton offers her, and she naively thinks she can buy into the patriarchy and maintain her individuality represented by Heathcliff at the same time. However, Catherine is unable to unite the two worlds, something she tries desperately to do when Heathcliff returns from his three year's disappearance, and Catherine, in a delirium, "seizes" and "crushes" her rivals' hands into one another's. Neither Heathcliff alone nor Linton alone can fulfill Catherine's psychological needs. She desires a place in reality, and reality is, unfortunately, prescribed by Linton's patriarchal world; however, she requires the individuality and independence Heathcliff initially represents.

There is, however, no possibility for a union between Heathcliff and Linton, between Catherine's drive for individuality and personhood and a patriarchal social structure that belittles female power; Nelly claims that
Heathcliff's and Linton's aversion to one another is "human nature" (64), but for Nelly, "human nature" is socially induced. Nineteenth century society will not tolerate Heathcliff because he allows a Catherine to exist—a wildly independent woman who roams the moors and kicks the Bible into the dog kennel. What society expects is Mrs. Edgar Linton, and for those women who choose not to conform there is, as there is for Catherine, death.

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Catherine had been lured by a superficial desire to become a part of what the patriarchy demands, to be pampered and fawned on; in her desire for a place in androcentric society, she prostitutes her personal integrity. Catherine learns the empty love of society which she demonstrates to Nelly in her unrealized parody of what lovers feel towards one another:

"Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?"
"Nonsense, I do—that's sufficient."
"By no means; you must say why."
"Well, because he is handsome and pleasant to be with. . . . he is young and cheerful. . . . because he loves me. . . . And he will be rich, and I shall be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood. . . . I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says."

(70-71 my emphasis)

Besides the obvious parody on "true love," there is another very important point to be made here: the narcissism of the love and its obvious echoes of Romantic thought. Catherine loves Edgar because he loves her, for what she calls "the
satisfaction of my whims" (73). And history will repeat itself in the novel: Catherine II will love Linton II in the same superficial way that her mother loved her father.

Once Catherine is on her death-bed however, Linton can no longer control her life because, through her abnegation of her material past, she has released herself from his claims upon her. When Linton tries to keep his hold on her, she calmly tells him:

"What you touch at present, you may have; but my soul will be on that hilltop before you lay hands on me again. I don't want you, Edgar; I'm past wanting you .... all you had in me is gone." (107)

In Catherine's desire to rejoin Heathcliff and in her denial of Linton and all that he represents, she has effectively removed herself from the conventional patriarchal ideology; this explains her presence after death in another dimension beyond the powers of the fathers. However, in her renouncing androcentric society, she cannot simply recapture her lost identity. But Heathcliff has not remained "unspoiled," and Catherine is implicit in his fragmentation.

When Catherine essentially prostitutes herself to the patriarchy, her relationship with Heathcliff alters dramatically. She rationalizes that in marrying Linton she can "aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of [her] brother's power" (73). As she earlier appropriated Heathcliff's affections from her father and used him against her
father, she will do the same with the other "fathers": through Heathcliff she plans to move vicariously out of both her brother’s and her husband’s power. She will rise above or defeat the patriarchy using its own weapon; but, ironically, a Heathcliff transformed into a symbol of the decadence of patriarchal power is the "weapon."

When Heathcliff returns from his three-year journey, Catherine is "transformed." On the evening of their meeting, Catherine says:

"this evening has reconciled me to God and humanity! I had risen in angry rebellion against providence... but I’d ask pardon for provoking it... I’ll go make my peace with Edgar instantly. Goodnight--I’m an angel!"  

If Catherine is an "angel" after Heathcliff’s return, if she is reunited with her "other" and she reconciles herself to "providence" (which we can define by her comment as Linton’s world, her marriage, patriarchal culture in general), then what ultimately goes awry? It is the essential solipsism that defines their bond which prevents her from growing and thus aborts her Bildung; and it is a selfishness which transforms Heathcliff into a spectre.

Many readers forget that upon Heathcliff’s return he has no plans to stay and wreak total chaos. His Wertherian impulses have him entertaining suicide:
Heathcliff is fully prepared to leave Catherine in peace if it is really Linton she wants and needs. There are numerous indications in the novel that Heathcliff would not stand between Catherine and her happiness, even if her happiness means something other than him. It is Catherine's obvious love for and need of Heathcliff that binds him. However, in her withholding affection from him (for which the ultimate metaphor is her "marriage" to Linton), Catherine has become Heathcliff's tyrant, his Jupiter, a fact of which Heathcliff is poignantly aware when he accuses her of treating him "infernally":

"The tyrant grinds down his slaves and they don't turn on him, they crush those beneath them. You are welcome to torture me to death for your amusement, only allow me to amuse myself in the same style. . . . Having levelled my palace, don't erect a hovel and complacently admire your own charity in giving me that for a home."

Their narcissistic and cyclical tyrant/slave relationship, which is a metaphor for the cycle of the Fall, reminds us of the endless Orc cycle as well as the Jupiter/Prometheus relationship. The echoes of a tyrannical God and scorned creation are clear, and intentional.

In denying a marriage to Heathcliff because it would "debase" Catherine to marry him, and in choosing Linton and
the patriarchy, she remains fragmented. In isolating both herself and Heathcliff in the confining limits of her own existence where she thinks no one "could avoid" loving her, she effectually turns Heathcliff into an affrete, a spectre, as Frankenstein and God did to their rejected creatures, the creature and Satan, respectively. What Catherine has done to Heathcliff is what Victor Frankenstein did to his creature: each alienates the one person solely dependent on him or her for human affection and community. Catherine and Heathcliff’s union is not "autonomously androgynous" as Gilbert and Gubar claim (295); the self-other/subject-object relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff reminiscent of Prometheus and Asia or Albion and Jerusalem reminds one more of Manfred and Astarte, or Alastor and his solipsistic death-vision. It is a love often noted in Romanticism as incestuous: a supreme love of self. But where Percy Shelley ultimately celebrates this love, Brontë depicts its essential narcissism.

While she is slowly dying, Catherine has a dream vision which is an ironic rendition of an epic revelation on her "pinnacle." She hallucinates that she is in her oak-panelled bed (her Snowden, her "Hill of Vision") at Wuthering Heights, and her "heart ached with some great grief, which waking, [she] could not recollect":
"the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank!
I did not recall that they had been at all. I was a
child; my father was just buried, and my misery arose
from the separation that Hindley ordered between me
and Heathcliff. I was laid alone, for the first time.
... I had been wrenched from the Heights, and every
early association, and my all in all, as Heathcliff
was at that time, and been converted at a stroke into
Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the
wife of a stranger; an exile, an outcast thenceforth,
from what had been my world."  (107)

She "grovels" in an "abyss" of emptiness where she is
"burning" after being "wrenched" from all association.
This Hell that Bronte is describing, is a hell where in
denying Heathcliff, she has lost her identity and lost her
soul.

Catherine’s Bildung is never completed. Unable to
disintegrate any longer with her life-denying fragmentation, she
chooses death. Her death is her revenge against those
"fragments" of her psyche she in unable to integrate.
While Catherine exclaims to Heathcliff, "You and Edgar have
broken my heart... You have killed me" (132), Heath-
cliff rightly accuses her of "infernal selfishness":

"You have killed yourself... misery, degradation,
and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict
would have parted us, you, of your own free will, did
it. I have not broken your heart--you have broken it--
and in breaking it you have broken mine."  (134-135)

Like Prometheus, Catherine’s will, her gamble to beat the
patriarchy with its own weapons, betrays her humanity and
keeps Heathcliff, like Jupiter, in bondage.
Catherine has intimations of her potential deity not on Mount Snowdon or a mountain in the Caucasus (Prometheus Unbound), but on her death bed:

"... the thing that irks me the most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there; not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it, and in it."  (134)

Reminiscent of Apollo's "dying into life" and death as transcendence in The Fall of Hyperion, Catherine is yearning to be part of a "glorious world," yearning for some kind of universal communion that is simply not tangible to her on earth.

Catherine's dream has revealed to her on her pinnacle the truth of her existence in the cosmos. As Los and Jerusalem discover in the vision of Joseph and Mary and the vision of Jesus at the end of Blake's Jerusalem, Catherine's way to heaven and a full identity is through the power of redemptive love. But while this truth is revealed to Catherine and she realizes its importance, she cannot carry it to action on earth. She has to wait seventeen years after her death before Heathcliff is also free from the patriarchal bondage for which she is, in great part, responsible. And it is no mistake that it is the love of her descendents, those two children who remind Heathcliff of Catherine, which disarms Heathcliff and
allows him to die into transcendence with Catherine.

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Many critics have seen the Catherine/Hareton pair as a parallel to Catherine and Heathcliff, where the second generation rights the wrongs of the parents. Others see Part II of the novel as a reworking or alternate vision of Part I, but on a physical rather than a metaphysical level. Few critics, however, have suggested the Catherine/Hareton story as a continuation of the Catherine/Heathcliff story in Part I; Wuthering Heights is a contiguous line of growth with the second pair of lovers demonstrating a maturity beyond the first pair of lovers. Catherine II does not simply reenact her mother's quest; she brings it to fruition.

The young Catherine is every bit a Linton: she can be "cool" and arrogant, especially towards her cousin Hareton. Also, as would be expected of a dutiful daughter of the patriarchy, Catherine is strongly attached to her father. She is physically, emotionally, and intellectually dependent on him. When she meets her cousin Linton, a younger and more insipid version of the first Linton, she pets him and makes a deliberate decision to coddle him; she assigns to him the same kind of societal love Catherine I learned for Linton I. The lack of depth of both Cath-erines' love for the Lintons lies in their reasons for loving. Like her mother, Catherine loves Linton because
she believes he loves her: "he loves me and for that reason I love him." Their "love," like the first Catherine and Linton's, is narcissistic, and as such, a mockery of real love. They play at it according to the rules society has set down for the occasion. The young Catherine, then, is already fallen when we first meet her. As Catherine Linton, she reiterates the fallen state of her mother as Catherine Linton; Catherine II begins her life at the same point her mother ended her own--arrested as a patriarchal puppet. To become unfallen, then, implies that she must divide herself from the fathers who keep her fallen. Thus, Bronte is suggesting that the orthodox Eden is an already fallen universe. As opposed to a Freudian or phallocentric reading which would applaud her growth in her turning from her mother to her father's world, I am suggesting that in order to mature, Catherine must do the opposite: return to her mother.

Catherine must outgrow her immature version of love as she must overthrow her father, or, indeed, all the fathers. It is no mistake that Catherine does not mature until after her father dies. She is bound first by her father, then by her father-in-law, Heathcliff. In order to develop, she must free herself from their control, for the patriarchy threatens to consume her as it did her mother. It is when she reaches outward to another outcast of the patriarchy--Hareton--that her rebirth is signalled. If her father had
lived, he never would have allowed her a relationship with Hareton, whom he sees as coarse, uneducated, and land-poor. While a loving father, Linton is blinded by social convention; he several times mentions the hope of securing his fortune to his daughter by joining her with his heir, Linton. Catherine is initially seduced into a apparently conventional romance with Linton by her father, who however benevolent his intentions, keeps his daughter in a fallen state.

But a relationship with young Linton is barren and promises to keep her objectified in subjugation to him; it is Hareton who offers Catherine a way out of her Selfhood. While Catherine and Hareton are "likenesses" of one another (especially in their rebellious eyes) they are also anti-types. Catherine is a shallow, cultural paper-doll and Hareton is both a rebel and outcast to society. Catherine and Hareton are initially drawn to one another, exploring a "fairy cave" together; however, once back in society, a rift between them occurs, a rift caused by social attitudes. After their adventure, Catherine reassumes a societal mask, and addresses Hareton as a servant. The proud Hareton growls, "I'll see thee damned, before I be thy servant!" (160) Here it is important to note that Hareton is refusing to play servant to her tyrant. The tyrant/slave relationship supported by patriarchal attitudes apparent in their parents' relationships will not
suffice for these lovers. A more equitable balance must and will be struck between Catherine and Hareton.

In their initially tenuous relationship, Hareton calls Catherine a "saucy witch" (160). Lockwood, too, calls her a witch; when he first meets Catherine, he overhears her threaten Joseph with her "Black Arts." Joseph had just upbraided her as "a nowt" (nothing) and tells her she’ll go "raight tuh t’ divil, like yer mother afore ye!" (22). Catherine accuses Joseph of being a religious hypocrite; and in a house crumbling under the excesses of a tyrannical patriarchy, Catherine defies that crumbling dogma and power by invoking an ancient female power: witchcraft. Whether it be in the males’ perception of her as separate from them and therefore frightening, or in her perpetuation of the idea, it is in this refusal to bow to patriarchal authority that she is most like her mother as Joseph notes; but where her mother eventually becomes the patriarchy’s victim in her greed to possess its power on its own terms, Catherine attempts to define a personal power which is female and non-tyrannical. She struggles to locate power outside of the confines of the traditional androcentric social structure.

Young Catherine is stronger than her mother because she grows beyond the narcissism she initially displays in her dealings with Hareton. While she and Hareton are apparently opposites, they do share a lack of identity; and
it is precisely in their concurrent learning to name
themselves that they learn also to love. Catherine doesn’t
lose her self the way her mother does. She develops beyond
a shallow love for her cousin, which her father
intellectually favors for economic reasons. Through her
dealings first with Linton, then with Hareton, she learns
first superficially, then deeply, how to care for other
human beings and grant them respect. But she must, like
the Romantic heroes, undergo a period of isolation before
she can move on in her quest for identity.

Catherine cannot bear the solitude in which she lives
after Linton dies. Like her mother, she yearns to join
that glorious world, to become a part of it. She tries to
draw Hareton out of the shell in which she has in part
enclosed him, but he refuses at first. She finally appeals
to him:

"I’ve found out, Hareton, that I want--that I’m
glad--that I should like you to be my cousin. . . ."
(247)

The semantics here (want, glad, should like) suggest a
movement from most selfish (I want, I’m glad) to least
selfish ("I should like . . . "). If we compare this
Catherine, who while growing personally less arrogant has
grown more independent in spirit to her younger version at
home with her father, we see a remarkable change in her.
When Catherine acknowledges her respect for Hareton, when
she returns his name to him in wrapping a book and addressing it to "Mr. Hareton Earnshaw," her societal arrogance is dissolved and his "rudeness and surly harshness" deserts him. What allows her to return his name to him is that she has found her own identity, her own name; for with Hareton, she is capable of a "deep and tender" outward-reaching love. In terms of the epic quest for godhead, she is able to assume a divinity, humble though it is, of which her mother was not capable in life. In Romanticism and especially in Blake, the regained paradise implies self-annihilation, but not an annihilation of individuality but of Selfhood (Curran 155).

In their own simple way, Catherine and Hareton have assumed a divinity of which Catherine and Heathcliff were incapable on earth. Catherine and Hareton do not stand on a pinnacle in their revelation, but rather on the hearth, a feminine symbol of the redemptive love which is their salvation. In their salvation, "... the enemies were, thenceforth, sworn allies" (249). The choice of the word "allies" is significant, for it evokes the idea of a union, but a union with a purpose. Catherine and Hareton are allies against an imprisoning androcentric society, against the Bible and the banknotes Joseph lays on the table and sighs over when he discusses Catherine and Hareton’s new union. From this point on, Joseph is no longer at home in Wuthering Heights. As he says, "shoo’s taan my garden
frought me." In symbolic terms, Catherine and Hareton have inverted the patriarchal Eden and created a new garden and a new mythos, one that thrives on love and equal union, not on a tyrant/slave relationship supported by a patriarchy which dominated the earlier Catherine/Heathcliff union. Like the Romantic poets', Catherine and Hareton's is a recreation of Paradise, not a restoration of the diseased patriarchal Eden Joseph and Hindley represent.

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Wuthering Heights is not, as Q.D. Leavis claimed "immature," nor as F.R. Leavis called it, "a kind of sport." Brontë's is an intensely mature and universal vision of humanity, a Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, on a physical, not a metaphysical plane. Catherine and Hareton's New Year's Day wedding is prophetic if not apocalyptic because it signals a new hope for nineteenth-century humanity. Society has been renewed through Catherine's and Hareton's union, but it is not, as some critics have claimed, a renewal of the status-quo. Even Gilbert and Gubar, despite their radical reading of the first half of the novel, see the complete work as a "return" to "proper" roles, not growth (303). They suggest that Wuthering Heights is about dampening the Romantic revolt and returning the power to the patriarchy (in the metaphor of returning Hareton Earnshaw to his rightful place as heir and gentleman) (271).
On the contrary, *Wuthering Heights* does not weaken its political stance in devaluing the Romanticism present in Part I of the novel; for it moves beyond a Romantic poetic. It is a feminist vision, not a Romantic vision. In her female epic, Brontë has utilized some of the philosophical and poetic systems found in the Romanticism she is revising. Brontë’s emphasis on a dialectical schema, for example, has stagnated many critics, for contraries often imply that a choice must be made between two dialectical forces, between calm and storm, Thrushcross Grange and the Heights, between Linton and Heathcliff. Vogler similarly notes the Romantic “dialectical progression” of the story vs. the the chronological matrix imposed upon it by Nelly Dean (89-92). This dialectical progression, where things happen as a reaction to and in relation to what has come before, implies that Brontë, like Blake, is dealing in contraries. Brontë, however, again like Blake, is not suggesting a choice between these contraries; in declaring her Imaginative vision, she is reasserting the importance of both the “Prolific” and the “Devourer.” As Coleridge said, the “imagination . . . reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposites or discordant qualities” (*Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV).

Brontë’s novel denies the separation of self and other that patriarchal institutions support and stresses an integral balance of forces, of Prolific and Devourer, of
storm and calm, of male and female. Like Mary Shelley, Brontë is not only concerned with the female situation; it is a concern which crosses gender borders as her depiction of Hareton as a victim of the patriarchy suggests. Brontë takes pains to work through the equality of her sexual poles. The female image is no longer the consumptive woman like Frances, Mrs. Linton, or Mrs. Earnshaw, but a feisty and loving female who threatens the diseased patriarchy with her "black Arts." The male image has changed also. The ideal male is no longer the sheer power and aggression of Hindley or Heathcliff, nor is he the emotionally restrained empiricist like Linton. As the new Adam to Catherine’s new Eve, he is passionate yet reasonable.

Catherine and Hareton’s love makes "the new heaven and earth" a reality in this fallen world. Like Prometheus and Asia and Albion and Jerusalem, Catherine and Hareton have achieved a sense of divinity, a "new heaven and earth," in their redemptive love. Brontë has negated the traditionally suspect Romantic, egotistical love, redeemed its positive metaphysical qualities and distilled it into a purer form of love, a love that Percy Shelley at least suggested but could not make viable in the real world. We are privy to this re-vision of Romantic poetics in a feminized form in our own reliving of the mother’s and the daughter’s complex Bildungsroman quest to
recreate, not regain, a viable "paradise upon the hearth."

As in Romantic epic, the lack of an "I" narrative in Wuthering Heights suggests a universal myth. Brontë, however, is much more precise in including women in her cosmic vision than were the Romantics, who tended to objectify women into types. As Virginia Woolf so astutely pointed out, Emily Brontë: "looked out upon the world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt within her the power to unite it." Brontë’s vision is "not merely 'I love' or 'I hate', but 'we, the whole human race' and 'you, the eternal powers...'." But where Woolf believed that for Bronte this "sentence remains unfinished," I believe it is finished. Ultimately, young Catherine’s epic/Bildung reveals a working dialectic between her and Hareton, a human dialectic somewhere between male and female, not denying those contraries, but embracing them, as Blake’s Angel of Apocalypse embraces them: as universal Truth.
ENDNOTES

1 For a discussion of Wuthering Heights as Romantic melodrama see Derek Traversi, 154–68. Benvenuto has called Wuthering Heights "epic comedy, despite its violence, that moves from a state of division and war to union and peace" (86). Ewbank has also drawn a quick parallel between the complexity of Wuthering Heights and formal epic (113).

2 Boris Ford is one such critic who concentrates on the Catherine/Heathcliff relationship (74). Similarly, Barbara Hardy sees Heathcliff as the pivotal point of the novel ("The Lyricism of Emily Brontë"); Nancy Armstrong concurs that Heathcliff is the "key" to the novel. She likens him to Hegel's "third term" in the conflict between Romanticism and utilitarianism (243). See also Van Ghent.

3 For a discussion of the German influence on Emily Brontë's works see Mrs. Humphrey Ward, especially xviii–xxi, xxv–xxvi. Ward says that Wuthering Heights betrays the influences of the "German Romantic imagination" (xxv). Ward makes much of the difference between Emily’s German Romanticism and Charlotte’s French Romanticism (xxvii). See also Cecil Davies, "Art Within a Tradition: Wuthering Heights and the German 'Novelle',' Brontë Studies Transactions 17 (1978): 197–204. See also Kuhlmann for parallels between Bronte's works and German philosophers.

4 Numerous studies have been done on the Byron/Brontë connection. See Gerin, Evans, Livermore. For Shelley connections, see Gerin and Hewish; Wordworth connections, R. Chase (502). For a comprehensive examination of Bronte's poetry in a Romantic light see Benvenuto. See also Muriel Spark, Ernest Baker, and Q. D. Leavis.

5 In his study, Widdowson correlates stock features of Romantic poetry with Bronte's novel. Included in his list are: ambivalence towards nature, emphasis on children and the humble life, rebellion against civilized society, rebellion against religion in an attempt to "bring God back to earth," the opposition of passion and intellect, Heathcliff’s Byronism, and poetic language reminiscent of Blake and Wordsworth. While his catalogueing is admirable, I find his basic interpretation faulty; he denigrates the
novel's second part and suggests that Heathcliff is a "deity of the human soul."

"Legend has it that Brontë's father had memorized and could recite all of Paradise Lost; between this and the fact that her father was a minister, we might assume Brontë had access to Milton's works in her father's library. On the subject of Milton's work in relation to Brontë's, Buchen sees the separation of Catherine and Heathcliff as a re-enactment of "the initial exile from God and the initial state of being born" (67). Benvenuto also has noted the similarity of Wuthering Heights' two part structure to Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. He also likens Wuthering Heights to The Odyssey (86). In their feminist study of Wuthering Heights, Gilbert and Gubar claim that while Mary Shelley clarified the conventionality of Milton's Paradise Lost, Brontë radically revised it.

"Winifred Gerin has noted that it is likely that Brontë read some Shelley. In 1833 Medwin's Life of Shelley and in 1838 the Book of Gems were published; both had extracts from Shelley's poetry. These were followed in 1839 by Mary Shelley's edition of Shelley's complete works. Fraser's magazine, to which Brontë had access, also had published lengthy praiseworthy pieces about Shelley. It is also likely that Brontë read Prometheus Unbound because of her love of the Romantics and because she apparently has access to it through her sister. Charlotte had read it sometime before December of 1839 (she made reference to it in a letter) and there are lines quoted from it in Charlotte's unpublished Caroline Vernon. Gerin sees a strong connection between Prometheus Unbound and Wuthering Heights in their idea of love as redemptive (152-154).

"See Vogler for an excellent analysis of Brontë's Romanticism through her use of mythic vs. diachronic time. He claims Wuthering Heights is decidedly anti-diachronic and cites Jakes' sermon in 440 parts as the "reductio ad absurdum" of the diachronic existence in time ("Story and History" 87). See also Anderson who says Bronte's plot is a clear movement towards "lyric revelation."

"According to Vogler and Wellek and Warren, technical characteristics are called the epic's "outer form." While the Romantics also deferred to outer form, they concentrated on its "inner form." (See Chapter One) In addition to Vogler's and Wellek and Warren's work, see Ernest Baker on how poetry became increasingly "inner" rather than "outer" focused.
Most critics of Brontë's poetry choose "No coward's soul is mine" as an example of her belief that "god" potentially resides in the human breast. See Hardy ("The Lyricism of Emily Brontë" 106) and Benvenuto (71); Davies agrees and claims that Wuthering Heights is more heretical than all the Romantic poets except Shelley (121). Margaret Homans, on the other hand, reads this same poem as containing a sexual hierarchical devotion of female to male ("Women Writers" 132). According to Homans, Emily Brontë, like Dorothy Wordsworth, does not believe in poetic powers within herself; rather, they are a series of male visitants, comparable to male muses. Homans claims, however, that Brontë's using a male muse is a first step towards internalization (104-105, 111).

Although his focus is somewhat different from mine, Sagar claims that the essential story of Wuthering Heights consists of four words: Catherine, Earnshaw, Heathcliff, and Linton (137-138). See also Tony Tanner (111). In establishing Catherine as the hero central to the novel, it is also important to note that Lockwood, Wuthering Heights' narrator, is asking for and relaying Catherine's life, what he calls "her story" (36).

The importance of Catherine's childbirth has been pointed out by Davies, who calls the birth a "radius point" from which the rest of Bronte's myth is drawn in concentric circles. Conversely, Gilbert and Gubar and Homans see Catherine's childbirth as revitalizing the patriarchal order of Wuthering Heights; they suggest Catherine's giving birth is her ultimate fragmentation (286).

Gilbert and Gubar also see Wuthering Heights as a Bildungsroman of a girl's passage from innocence to experience (253-4).

See Benvenuto who also believes that young Catherine completes the cycle started by her mother and that the Catherine/Hareton marriage "contains" the earlier Catherine/Heathcliff union (118).

Similar to my reading, Moglen believes that with Catherine I and II Brontë explores the meaning of a love that can go beyond narcissism while she is describing the development of an integrated female personality from the "narcissism of childhood" to the mature acceptance of the "bittersweet compromises of womanhood ("The Double Vision" 393-405). While I totally agree that the Catherine/Heathcliff narcissistic love is simply a prelude to a more meaningful love (Catherine and Hareton), I differ in my emphasis on human development (male and female consciousness) vs. the female development that Moglen
speaks of, the "female ego in a masculine universe" (393). While I concur that the emphasis is on the females and how the males react in reference to the women, I believe the final vision Brontë presents us with is a universally human vision. For a contrasting reading see Gilbert and Gubar who suggest this cycle is a return, not growth (303). See also Miriam Allott's earlier work on parallels between the two love triangles (71).

Hirsch has also noted that most examples of "spiritual Bildungsroman" (for which she cites Goethe's Beautiful Soul and Antigone as paradigms) follow a progressive withdrawal which ends in the heroine's death (28). While this is true of Catherine, it is not true of her daughter.

This Coleridge passage is from a letter to Joseph Cottle, March 7, 1815, in Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, IV (Oxford, 1959), 545, as quoted in Vogler Preludes to Vision 96.

On love and marriage as a goal for the female quester, see Rosowski. See also Brownstein and Russ on the "marriage plot" as a way of validating female identity in the nineteenth century.

On another note, the fact that Catherine entertains the idea of becoming Catherine Heathcliff should suggest that her relationship with Heathcliff is not as asexual as some critics, including Van Ghent (158-9), claim. Also, Catherine later speaks of marrying Heathcliff in the same conversation in which she is "trying on" Linton for a husband. It is doubtful that Catherine does not perceive both men as possible mates.

For a discussion of Brontë's conception of the tyranny of man (the patriarchy), see J. Hillis Miller, 164-168; he cites her essays especially as indicative of her attitudes.

While I intend to trace Catherine's Bildung as similar to a Romantic epic quest, I must include a reference to Heathcliff because whether it be in Romantic or psychological terms, he is her "other." It is in fact through their almost symbiotic relationship that Catherine learns herself; ironically, however, it is through this same relationship that her quest for paradise is aborted. See Otto Rank on the origins of the "double." See also Moglen on Heathcliff and Catherine as doubles ("The Double Vision" 391-392); Moglen notes their relationship in regard to the German idea of the "doppelganger." Buchen has also noted the Romantic nature of their love in seeking
"otherness" (68).

In an interesting study of Gothic heroines, Conger says Catherine externalizes, through Heathcliff and Linton, her internal conflicts; that is, Heathcliff and Linton are projections of her mind (100). Conger calls Catherine the first "fully introspective Gothic heroine" (101) who can acknowledge the dark side of her soul and recognize that the demonic "springs from her own imagination" (102). Phillippa Tristram also highlights Brontë’s need to reunite "divided sources" of the psyche.

See also Phillippa Tristram on Linton’s predator image (194). Peter Widdowson, too, sees Linton and civilization as representing "shallowness, cowardice, cruelty and self-deception" (5). Conversely, many critics focus on Linton’s beneficent qualities. See, for example, Moglen who sees Linton as a "fair, feminized, moral intelligence" ("The Double Vision" 39). Benvenuto also sees Linton as feminine while he assigns to Catherine male characteristics (90).

See Moglen who quotes Freud’s "On Narcissism" in her discussion of Catherine and Heathcliff’s relationship ("Double Vision" 393-405). Spacks (Female Imagination) and Oates also concur on the essential narcissism of Catherine and Heathcliff’s bond (440). Oates also sees Catherine and Heathcliff not so much as a "dramatic relationship of opposites" of Romanticism, but as narcissistic (440); however, she sees this less as a criticism of Romanticism than as a trend towards realism, an exorcising of the old demons (438). Likewise, Vincent Buckley sees Catherine and Heathcliff’s relationship as "mutual parasitism" (90). Homans also suggests that Catherine’s and Heathcliff’s relationship is a regressive one (Bearing the Word 154). See also Benvenuto, 118 and Tanner, 114-115. While I basically disagree with his analysis, Eric Solomon reads Catherine and Heathcliff’s relationship as incestuous.

Helene Moglen notes this same parallel between Frankenstein and Wuthering Heights ("Double Vision" 396). See also Gilbert and Gubar who see Heathcliff as an "abortive being" much like Frankenstein’s creature. It is very likely that Brontë read all or part of Shelley’s Frankenstein since it was serialized in Blackwoods which Bronte read avidly (Gerin 215).

Nancy K. Miller has noted that heroine plots can take two shapes: euphoric, where the hero quests for social integrity, or dysphoric where the hero ends up alienated.
While the first Catherine clearly follows the latter pattern, her daughter's quest suggests the former, more positive, result.

J. H. Miller also sees Catherine's death as narcissistic isolation reminiscent of Brontë's Augusta Almeida (194). See also Helene Moglen who has called Catherine's death "the ultimate narcissism" ("The Double Vision" 397).

I owe this interpretation of the function of will to Curran, 156.

Les Tannenbaum has pointed out that the word "glorious" is part of epic rhetoric. It is usually associated with the glory of war and is translated into God's glory by Milton. The Romantics later utilized the word in association with nature.

That Catherine is able to glimpse a "larger existence" is evident through the heavy use of window imagery in the novel. We have many references to her wanting windows thrown open and her inability to get out of those confining windows or doors. In her near-death delirium, she asks Nelly to open the windows wide; but Nelly refuses, saying it will kill Catherine. Catherine responds: "You won't give me a chance of life, you mean" (108).

On the subject of the second generation righting the wrongs of the first, see, for example, Allott 27-49. See also Armstrong, for example, who claims that the second half of the novel dismantles Romanticism, as it is illustrated in part one of the novel, in favor of a Victorian realism (252). In opposition to my interpretation which overturns the reigning patriarchy in favor of a more balanced life, Armstrong sees the Catherine/Hareton union as a combination of Earnshaw and Linton, a union in which all the necessary features of a "benevolent patriarchy" reside (249). I don't believe Brontë believed there was such a thing as a "benevolent patriarchy."

See also Apter on Catherine II as a more mature, less vengeful version of the mother (220).

See John Howard's Blake's Milton: A Study in Selfhood for the most complete development of this idea.

Richard Chase chides readers who find "rebellion" in Wuthering Heights; he sees it as essentially a Victorian novel, as does Stone who claims that "Promethean Byronic energies... frightened Brontë into the eventual
abandonment of her creative gifts (The Romantic Impulse 45). See also Inga Stina-Ewbank, 127.

35a See also Armstrong who has argued that the second half of the novel "dismantles" the Romanticism of the first half (252). She claims that in the novel "value no longer resides in the claims of the individual but rather in the reconstitution of the family" (253).

35b The principles of "calm" and "storm" were noted as spiritual forces in Brontë's cosmos by Lord David Cecil. These are not conflicting forces, but are ultimately harmonious. Cecil claimed, rightly so, that Wuthering Heights is about the destruction and reestablishment of "cosmic harmony" (119-120). Moglen has also noted Wuthering Heights' dialectical pattern and calls it a part of normal development [398]. I also must credit Vogler here with first noting that the lesson over which we see a revitalized Catherine and Hareton poring is a lesson on the word "contrary."

35c Davies believes that Emily Brontë does not bother with "revolutionary feminist protests" but with "those aspects of human nature which cross the border of gender and are the groundwork of our humanity." In her study of how Brontë uses gender, Davies does, however, see that Brontë uses traditional images of masculine and feminine to set up poles of experience which are not strictly sexual (137).

35d See also J. Hillis Miller who has noted the echoes of a new heaven and earth on Catherine's and Hareton's marriage (211).
IV

The Bible of Hell:

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre

"I have . . . The Bible of Hell, which the world shall have whether they will or no."
(The Marriage of Heaven and Hell p1.24)

"There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity . . .
. . . a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power . . .
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them; in a world of life they live . . .
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine."
(The Prelude XIV 70-118, my emphasis)

". . . imagination is a strong, restless faculty,
which claims to be heard and exercised; are we to be quite deaf to her cry, and insensate to her struggles?" (Letter to G. H. Lewes, 6 Nov., 1847)

Charlotte Brontë was acutely aware of the power of imagination that the Romantics had earlier demonstrated in their epics; as the above excerpt from the letter to G. H. Lewes makes clear, she believed in the revitalization of power that imagination offers to those who listen to its
call. As earlier Romantic epics had concentrated on the imaginative power of the individual and suggested a new and encompassing vision of mankind, Brontë, too, attempted to reconstitute a teleology appropriate to nineteenth-century woman as well as man. Unlike most of the Romantics, however, Brontë, like Wordsworth, lived in the "common day" world. It is in and through "common day" experiences—for example, by focusing in *Jane Eyre* on the development of a governess—that Charlotte Brontë will succeed in her vision. As Wordsworth asserted in his conclusion to the *Prelude* (quoted above), the way to imaginative power is by the poets' seeking the "consciousness of Whom they are," a consciousness which elevates earthly experience to the divine. This is what Charlotte Brontë does in *Jane Eyre*: elevate earthly experience to the divine.

*Jane Eyre*’s spiritual politics have long been the subject of critical debate. Some critics such as Robert Martin and Barbara Hardy find *Jane Eyre* conventional.¹ Others, including Elizabeth Rigby (1848) who insisted on *Jane Eyre*’s irreligious and rebellious qualities (449), recognize some degree of subversion in the novel. Within this latter group of critics, some applaud Brontë’'s rebelliousness while others, including Rigby, find it cheap.² Particularly germane to this issue of *Jane Eyre*’s conventionality versus its Romantic rebellion are critics’ readings of the conclusion of *Jane Eyre*, a conclusion which
ends not with a defiant Jane and Rochester "hand in hand" in their paradise regained but with references to St. John Rivers and his particular brand of religion. The fact that Bronte makes numerous references to religion and concludes her novel on a religious note indicates to the reader her religious intent. However, unlike Rigby's dismayed assessment of Bronte's lack of morality, I see Brontë very calculatingly in the "natural supernatural" tradition that undermines a conventional patriarchal religion and asserts a feminist or human-centered "religion" or human consciousness. In Natural Supernaturalism, M. H. Abrams has noted the close tie between Romanticism and "supra-rational mysteries of the Christian story"; the Romantics, he rightly asserts, do not devalue the "cardinal values" of their religious heritage, rather "reconstitute" them to make them intellectually acceptable and pertinent to nineteenth-century society (66). This, too, is what Brontë does but with a feminist hand. As she says in her 1847 Preface, "To pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee, is not to lift an impious hand to the Crown of Thorns."

In her 1847 Preface, Brontë clearly places herself in a prophetic tradition, markedly similar to the Romantic epic tradition whose poets claim a sense of vision. Brontë likens herself to the biblical Micaiah and the son of Imlah — both prophets, in a sense, for social action. She also implies a connection between herself and William Thackeray,
to whom she dedicates her second edition of *Jane Eyre*, and whom she calls "a social regenerator of the day . . . who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things" (Preface). Her allusion to Revelation at the end of her novel additionally forces the reader to ponder the prophetic significance of the story Brontë has just presented us. Thomas Langford is one of few critics who finds in *Jane Eyre* "a quality of imagination and insight which borders on the visionary and prophetic" (228). "

While I concur with him in this generalization, Langford concentrates on "presentiments, sympathies, and signs" as a source of "visionary" unity (29). To Langford and others, vision or prophecy is merely prediction; to the Romantics, Blake especially, prophecy is vision. I believe that Brontë's visionary ontology is similar to that found in Romantic poetics; however, it is reconstituted in a feminist light. Brontë's distinctly feminist "vision" in *Jane Eyre* provides an epistemological coherence that reveals her radical theodicy, her "Bible of Hell," for humankind.

Critics have taken two general approaches towards *Jane Eyre*’s Romanticism. One is to note isolated Romantic conventions as Heilman does in "Charlotte Brontë’s New Gothic"; the second is to find a deeper Romantic structure to the novel, a novel which Kiely, in *The Romantic Novel in England*, ironically sees as Victorian in its stress on
morality and education (viii). Dunn, however, is very close to the mark when he says, "It is more the search after vision than in any realized vision that Jane Eyre derives its power as a Romantic statement" (197). Critics of Romantic epic poetry have made distinctions between what Vogler has called "preludes" to vision, where the reader is merely brought to the edge of "resurrection," and those epics which actually reveal the poet's vision. While I agree with Dunn that Jane Eyre is searching for "vision," unlike Dunn, I believe she does finally realize that vision and is able to translate its importance to her life.

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The path into Brontë's radical social and religious vision may be found by tracing Jane's Bildung, or epic growth to consciousness. Many critics have already studied Jane Eyre's growth to adulthood. Moglen and Fulton, for example, have stressed Jane's developing a "female consciousness" as part of a "feminist myth," while Beaty says Jane learns only the "limits of self and the nature of reality" (185), and Karen Chase sees "distinct lack of development" in Jane from the beginning of her story to the end of it. In studying Jane's development, one must take into consideration the presence of the two Janes: the child who, like Wordsworth's child, experiences, and the adult narrator who reveals her vision through retelling the tale and is able to realize the import of the narrated
experiences. These two Janes are analogous to the "two consciousnesses" of which Wordsworth speaks in Book II of The Prelude:

... often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being. (31-33)

Blake used a similar double narration or split persona in Milton where he is both the poet-narrator and a character in the poem. The technique works the same for both Bronte and Wordsworth: the use of the "two consciousnesses" highlights the movement of the action from the external plane (in Brontë's case the tale of a young girl growing up) to an internal plane (the growth implied in the adult narrator as she is able to vocalize and thus realize her growth to consciousness). This internal journey in which the hero descends into him or herself as part of the quest for consciousness is typical of Romantic epic as demonstrated, for example, in Milton's journey in Milton and Asia's journey to Demogorgon in Prometheus Unbound.

While Fulton has noted similarities between Jane's story and that of spiritual autobiographies of the nineteenth-century (specifically Carlyle's Sartor Resartus) (432), she fails to explore the nineteenth-century connection between Romantic epic and spiritual autobiography that Abrams has assiduously documented. Jane Eyre's Bildung—her growth to consciousness—is strikingly similar to
Wordsworth's *Prelude* narrator's epic growth to consciousness and to growth patterns in German *Bildungsromane*. Indeed, M. H. Abrams has called *The Prelude* the "psychic equivalent" of a *Bildungsroman* or a *Künstlerroman* (74). Like the epic growth to consciousness evident in *The Prelude* and signalled in Wordsworth's "Prospectus" to *The Prelude*, the growth implied in Jane's story chronicles the maturing of her consciousness. As each of the Romantic poets is in search of his poetic consciousness in his epic, Brontë (like Jane) is in search of her imaginative faculties through Jane's search for her story. As Rosemary Bodenheimer suggests, Jane's "How shall I learn to tell the story of my life?" and "What kind of story is it?" suggests that her struggle for a voice is a struggle for an individual consciousness which demonstrates a strong imaginative faculty (387-388). (Los' struggle with language in *Jerusalem* makes a similar point.) As I have already mentioned, Curran claims that the Romantic epic is an epic about the mastery of self which leads to a restoration of Paradise (136); Paradise is a sense of an individual godhead that Prometheus, Milton, Albion, and the poet-narrator of *The Fall of Hyperion* recognize in achieving consciousness. Jane's self-mastery will similarly lead to a restoration of paradise--but a paradise on earth.

Much of Jane's quest for self-mastery stresses the importance of love to her maturation process. Bronte's
emphasis on the redemptive powers of love and on love as eternal truth echoes Shelley, Keats, Blake, and more superficially, Wordsworth. However, whereas Shelley and Blake proffers an androgynous balance of male and female which they can only imagine, Brontë realizes a reenacted Revelation on earth not between Christ and his bride Jerusalem, nor between the Titan Prometheus and his Epipsyche, Asia, but between two human beings.¹⁰

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Jane’s opening, "There was no possibility of taking a walk that day," recalls Wordsworth’s reflective walk to Grasmere that opens his Prelude. The child Jane, however, is not intellectually able to take that walk, while her adult alter ego certainly is, as her "journey" through her story illustrates. In the first phase of Jane’s journey, which includes Gateshead and Lowood, she must realize her individuality and reintegrate her fragmented psyche.¹¹ This phase of her epic quest/journey is analogous to a stage to which Curran has referred as the "revelation" of potentiality in the major Romantic epics— for example, Prometheus’ revelation that he is his own tyrant and Wordsworth’s revelation on Mt. Snowdon. The second phase of the Romantic epic quest is what Curran calls the "realization," the understanding and embrace of the poetic vision implied by the poet’s carrying his revelation into fruition (138). Jane’s journey will have
an analogous phase.

As Vogler notes in *Preludes to Vision*, epic intuits a golden age and fall from it. *Jane Eyre* does the same. In addition to prophesying a better state to come (I will use the term apocalyptic), Jane chronicles her fallen state. When we meet her, the young Jane is already cast out of "paradise"; but she has lost the paradise of Mr. Reed, ostensibly the benevolent patriarch, and is left with the questionable paradise of the Reed's drawing room. Jane will not accept this paradise and the obvious subjugation it implies for her. She admits she is a "rebel." Jane "resisted" in "a moment's mutiny" being a "slave" to the Reeds and all they imply; and all they imply is clear in her analogy between John Reed, a tyrant over the entire female Reed household, and the patriarchal abuses of power Nero and Caligula demonstrate. Jane's mother had similarly defied patriarchal power (ie. Jane's grandfather) in marrying Jane's father, an offense for which she dies within the year. Similarly, Jane bluntly refuses to submit to her tyrannical cousin John. Jane is acutely aware that her identity is threatened by what she calls "the reproach of [her] dependence" on the Reeds, or dependence on the patriarchy. This is a dependence similar to that to which she is later subject with Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John. Depressed by her powerlessness, Jane considers, briefly, becoming a victim; while in the Red Room, a
metaphor for her epic descent to Hell or dark journey of the soul where she first faces herself, Jane considers starving herself to death to escape her despair. It is also significant that it is in the Red Room—a Hell and patriarchal prison—where she fears she will encounter her Uncle Reed. However, she asserts herself as best as she can considering that she does not yet know herself, as is demonstrated by her gazing into the Red Room mirror at a face she cannot recognize as her own. Jane’s journey will entail a systematic denial of patriarchal demands that she accomplishes by learning that face in the mirror, that self, so that she no longer feels, as she did in her fragmented youth "out of herself" (9).

Her fragmentation is also demonstrated in a scene that evokes remembrances of Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*. The outspoken Jane desires to exact vengeance on Mrs. Reed because of the hatred she is feeling. Like Prometheus, who is responsible for calling Jupiter’s tyranny upon himself, Jane will learn there is little value in divisive hate. After berating Mrs. Reed for her injustices, Jane realizes the "dreariness of [her] hatred":

Something of vengeance I had tasted for the first time; as aromatic wine it seemed, on swallowing, warm and racy: its after-flavour, metallic and corroding, gave me a sensation as if I had been poisoned. (32)

When Jane returns to Gateshead years later and forgives Mrs. Reed, she is able to do so because she has better
control of herself—not only of her passions but of her character; she is no longer her own tyrant.

One yardstick by which to gauge Jane’s growth, also true of the narrator of The Prelude, is the measure of her sympathy with nature. Nature functions three ways in Jane Eyre: it reflects Jane’s state of mind; it reflects her sense of organic unity between the human and the natural; and it reflects her spiritual growth (Linder 38). As Jane matures, nature becomes for her an objective correlative to her consciousness as well as a guide to herself.¹⁵

Jane’s early fragmentation from nature is a startling parallel to the young Wordsworth’s. Browbeaten and feeling “out of herself” at the Reed house, Jane speaks of Nature’s "sublimity": the "bleak shores" and "forlorn regions of dreary space—that reservoir of frost and snow (6)"

Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children’s brains, but strangely impressive. The words . . . gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking. (6)

The adult Jane is not so mystified nor terrified by these pictures in Bewick’s History of British Birds as is the young Jane who, she tells us, has an "undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings" (6)—an understanding, we must assume, undeveloped in comparison to that of the mature narrator. Particularly noteworthy is young Jane’s
fear of the moon which later will serve as a maternal guide and female conscience. Like Wordsworth’s Book I of The Prelude, Jane’s early lack of sympathy with or fear of nature defines the child’s fragmented psyche, and the child’s eventual embrace of nature marks her coming to consciousness.

Jane’s psychological fragmentation, as demonstrated by her split with nature, has its roots in her religious skepticism. This skepticism is first betrayed at Gateshead where she questions her benefactress’ religious morality and subsequently, religion in general. The day after Jane’s Red Room experience, Bessie tries to console the child with a ballad about the plight of orphans:

God, in his mercy, protection is showing,
   Comfort and hope to the poor orphan child.

There is a thought that for strength should avail me,
   Though both of shelter and kindred despoiled;
   Heaven is a home, and rest will not fail me;
   God is a friend to the poor orphan child.  (18)

Jane’s response to this song is to cry because, young as she is, she cannot recognize any truth in it for herself. The young Jane realizes she is unhappy, but as the adult narrator tells us:

Children can feel, but they cannot analyse their feelings; and if the analysis is partially effected in thought, they know not how to express the result of the process in words.  (19)

It is the mature Jane, the adult narrator, who suggests the
spiritual problem Jane is encountering. However, it is not until much later that Jane (or Bronte) suggests a connection between God and nature that helps heal the schism in her mind.

After her psychic split from nature and religion and her concomitant unwillingness to "purchase liberty at the price of caste" (i.e. to become free of an oppressive patriarchal society by seeking poorer relations), Jane begins her journey, her "entrance into a new life" (21). She calls this change "an entire separation from Gateshead," but this is not true. Lowood is, in a sense, an extension of Gateshead in its patriarchal value system which subjugates and degrades nature and youthful female spirit through its Urizenic religious values. Brocklehurst's revealing code, "We are not to conform to nature," rather teach the girls "self denial," obviously implies a denial of Nature and self--specifically the female self. Brocklehurst, the "black pillar" of a man, is clearly one of the novel's several male devourers as Bronte's tongue-in-cheek "big bad wolf" analogy makes clear. When Jane first meets Brocklehurst, she thinks to herself,

What a great nose! and what a large mouth! and what prominent teeth! (27)

Young Jane's mind is "educated" in a environment which seeks to starve the imaginative soul as well as the body;
this clearly parallels Wordworth's sterile education in The Prelude's Cambridge sequences where "Imagination slept" (III 257).

Lowood school is where Brontë more fully explores traditional religious values and her attitudes towards them via the hypocritical Brocklehurst and the self-effacing Helen Burns. Jane knows she deplores Brocklehurst's religious reality, but assessing Helen's spirituality is more problematic. While Jane loves Helen and for that reason finds her a source of strength, she refuses to endure the spiritual and physical degradation to which Helen Burns is subject; Jane "could not comprehend this doctrine of endurance" (48) by which Helen lives (or rather, dies). Helen's religious values allow her to endure anything, because she does not, like Jane, look to this earth for solace. Not atypical of nineteenth-century self-effacing females, Helen's happiness and the secret to her complacence is in death:

"... with this creed revenge never worries my heart, degradation never too deeply disgusts me, injustice never crushes me too low: I live in calm, looking to the end."

Helen sees death as a "certain entrance to happiness---to glory" (61). Conversely, Jane is more pragmatic; she looks to stay "in good health and not die" (27) as a way of averting Brocklehurst's fire and brimstone. As Jane frankly tells Brocklehurst, she does not like the Psalms,
which are essentially lessons in subjugation to a tyrannical Old Testament God. Jane, significantly, prefers Revelations and the Book of Daniel, both apocalyptic and prophetic books of the Bible. Her preference suggests the tone of both her journey and the novel’s structure: she wants to know about a God of power, not a God of meekness who leads to victimization.

The Lowood section of Jane’s journey closes on two significant notes. First, Helen Burns dies, a death which causes Jane to ask not only "Where is God? What is God?", but also "Where is love? What is love?" (71) significantly connecting the two. While Helen seems to have answers with which she is at peace, Jane is obviously still grappling with the questions. Second, Jane has experienced "epiphanies" or "Spots of Time" at Lowood similar in structure and purpose to such revelations in Romantic epic. In all Romantic epics, there is a moment of revelation; this epiphany or "Spot of Time" as Wordsworth called it, is described by Abrams as "the end product of sustained intercourse between mind and nature" (11). These "Spots of Time" the poet experiences on his epic journey are in the tradition of the larger revelation scene in Milton’s Paradise Regained where Christ stands on a pinnacle and, after his various temptations from Satan, realizes his godhead. There are similar scenes at Lowood. While standing on her first "pinnacle"—the stool upon
which Brocklehurst has placed her--Jane, like Wordsworth, recognizes the beautiful and sublime in humans. She realizes the human fallibility, and likewise, the godliness in all humans. This revelation at least temporarily transforms her from a brow-beaten, angry child to a young girl who possesses the power of a pride in herself.

A second epiphany that helps shape her psyche comes at the end of her term at Lowood, at the close of the eight years subsequent to Helen's death which help "transform" Jane into a more self-directed individual. She attributes much of the responsibility for her awakening to her loving mentor, Miss Temple, who is herself a radical of sorts in her smirking at Brocklehurst and his warped value system. However, it is when Miss Temple leaves the institution that Jane is forced into a new phase of her journey. Jane's sympathy with nature is acute again as her introspection at losing the serenity she shared with Miss Temple reveals:

My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks: it was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits. I traced the white road winding down the base of one mountain, and vanishing in a gorge between two: how I longed to follow it further! . . . for liberty I gasped. (74)

Jane's yearning for a change, for a more active life has, in each instance, a direct correlation with her rising appreciation of and community with women, nature, and ultimately her imagination. The difference between Brontë's and Wordsworth's use of nature is significant.
After a similar dialogue with nature in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth says his "mind/ Hath been revived" to continue his journey (*Prelude* I 636-7). As Abrams has accurately noted, "the account of the growth of the poet's mind" is a "direct transaction between that mind and nature" (92). Bronte, the female prophet/poet for a new vision of humanity, will continue Jane's "transaction" as she grows into womanhood. But where Wordsworth needs Nature, part of his objectified female vision, to love others, Jane first loves others, then appreciates Nature. Jane does not need Nature as a nurturing woman because she has real women to love. She is able to move beyond that objectification of nature-as-woman unlike Wordsworth, for whom nature is a substitute for real women. After losing Miss Temple and being revitalized by Nature, Jane recognizes she has "undergone a transforming process" (73), and she begins to feel the "stirring of old emotions" (75). She is ready to continue her quest: the "road lies plain" before her (*Prelude* I 640).

***

At Thornfield we once again see that important correlation between nature and Jane's imagination. Jane is becoming increasingly aware of her powers of "imagination":

... having reached the leads, [I] looked out afar over sequestered field and hill, and along dim skyline... then I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit. (95)
She admits a "restlessness" in her nature and claims the need to allow her "mind’s eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it," to "open [her] inward ear" to "a tale [her] imagination created" (95-96). This scene is reminiscent of much Romantic lyric poetry in its form: the meditation upon nature feeds the bright images of the imagination and allows the poet, or here the novelist/narrator, to achieve some realization about the human condition. The Romantics transferred the lyric moment to longer works so that their epics themselves become "inspired visions"; Brontë, too, attempts to translate that lyric moment into an extended vision. Several critics have noted Jane Eyre’s movement away from traditional chronological narration. Bodenheimer cites Jane’s dismissal of conventional narrative modes in her search for her story (394-6), and Fulton sees a non-linear progression in the novel’s narration. She calls it "spatial" narration and says it "circles back" on itself (444), a technique strikingly similar to the lyric mode prevalent in Romantic poetry. Similarly, Russ has suggested that despite its apparent structural chronology, Jane Eyre is lyric: "it grows out of experiences—events, fantasies, wishes, fears, daydreams, images of self—entirely foreign to [male critics]" (14). However, the difference between Bronte and the Romantics is that Jane’s lyrical vision is, significantly, feminist. Jane meditates:
millions are in silent revolt against their lot... Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation. (96)

The symbiotic relationship between developing one's imagination and coming to consciousness or self-awareness is evident: it is in these reflective moods that Jane "not unfrequently" hears Bertha Mason's laugh—a warning to Jane of what she could become if she loses her "bright visions" or her individuality to the temptation Rochester poses.¹⁸

Jane is developing a strong sense of self while her sense of sympathy with nature and the cosmos is likewise growing. However, Jane is isolated in her quest, and her isolation makes her prey to what Harold Bloom refers to as "Romantic egoism" (6). Solitude of the self is incredibly dangerous as both Romantic poetry and Rochester's character illustrate. To avert the trap of solipsism that completion of only the first half of the Romantic quest implies, Jane now needs to embark on the second phase of her Bildung which will culminate in the realization of her imaginative powers. She begins to search for that sense of "other," a love described in Shelley's "On Love," which completes while it complements; she will eventually find it in a relationship with Rochester but only after both she and Rochester exorcise the unhealthy, solipsistic Byronism (a
rebellious stance which is still patriarchal) which tyrannizes over both of them.

During one of her private reveries with nature, listening to "the murmurs of life (97), "a rude noise" interrupts Jane's meditation; it is Rochester. Rochester is often dismissed simply as a heinous example of a Romantic hero which Brontë, whom Stone called a "most fervid worshipper of Byron," (197) must exorcise from herself as much as from her characters.47 But most critics in their attack bypass the positive qualities of Romanticism--those characteristics which are both attractive and necessary to Jane. Most importantly, Rochester approves and supports this outspoken governess whom most other characters have considered unimportant. As Richard Dunn has astutely noted, Rochester is more "natural" than most other characters in the novel not only in approving Jane, but also "because he opposes the right things; he criticizes the cramping morality ofLowood, and in his fortune-telling game, turns upsidedown artificial class consciousness" (201). Rochester's rebellious spirit, his Romanticism, is laudable; it is his Byronic egoism, the dark side of Romanticism, to which Brontë takes exception, a trait which manifests itself in his selfish rationalizations and need to dominate. Stone is right in claiming that Brontë rejects Byronism in her maturity and tries to "bring her Romantic dreams and ideals within the compass of reality"
(100). However, Stone sees reality as purgative where there is a "domestication of two of the rebellious individuals who people the earth" (120); this conventional patronism strikes me as not far from Richard Chase's demeaning conception of "domesticity." What needs to be reevaluated is the importance of the Romantic spirit—or in Jane's case female spirit—that both Rochester and Jane demonstrate.

In terms of Romantic poetics, Jane and Rochester are Romantic "doubles." Jane is attracted to Rochester's Romantic independence; she claims to need him because she needs to "communicate" with what is "bright and energetic, and high" (222). Rochester is likewise drawn to her but for what he sees as her incredible innocence. Rochester also identifies with Jane in her solitude; he sees in her character the "melancholy resulting from loneliness" (176). As her fortune teller, Rochester reveals Jane to herself:

"You are cold because you are alone; no contact strikes the fire from you that is in you. You are sick: because the best of feelings, the highest and the sweetest given to man, keeps far away from you. You are silly, because, suffer as you may, you will not beckon it to approach; nor will you stir one step to meet it where it waits you." (173)

Jane speaks of a "natural sympathy" (133) between them and tells Rochester, "... my spirit addresses your spirit; just as if we both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,--as we are!" (222). While Jane stresses equality, Rochester calls her his "second self" (223), a term which denies equality in its egoism.
Despite his Romantic rhetoric which promises a non-tyrannical love, his language is full of master-slave images. Rochester does not initially comprehend the equality or union for which Jane is searching. Rochester's conception of their relationship is neither ideally Romantic nor feminist, but more specifically Dark Romantic or Byronic: he is not looking for an equal, rather he hopes to find in Jane refuge from his sins—the sins of an excessive Byronic hero.

When we meet Rochester, he has been thrown from his horse. His fall is both literal and figurative: there are numerous references to Rochester as the "fallen seraph of the abyss" (120), and some of his rhetoric, significantly, echoes Milton's Satan. Rochester sees Jane as "stainless," with "peace of mind" and a "clear conscience" (119), an "angel" who will redeem past sins. But Rochester misconstrues Jane's peace. As we have established, Jane is already fallen but is continuing her upward spiralling journey to a higher plane of consciousness. Rochester is hoping to revert, through Jane, to a primitive state of innocence that Jane has already bypassed; while Jane is moving towards a postlapsarian Blakean conception of Eden, Rochester is still obsessed with a prelapsarian Eden.

Despite Jane's appearance of ascendency over Rochester, however, he is dangerous to her newly acquired
selfhood. Because she fears the "stagnation" selfhood implies (as best exemplified in Blake's Ulro and suggested to her by Rochester's fortune-telling), Jane will be prey to Rochester's corrupt love. In true epic fashion, Jane will undergo a serious temptation during which she must preserve her individuality against the potential devourer, Rochester. Like Christ in *Paradise Regained* (again, the prototype for the Romantic epic temptation), Jane gains her integrity but then must preserve that integrity from further fragmentation. In Christ's case Satan is the tempter, in Jane's case, Rochester.

Once Jane has accepted his Rochester's marriage proposal, he begins to devour "Jane Eyre" and transform her into "Jane Rochester" with gowns and jewels—what she refers to as "slave purchases" (237). Homans is right in her claim that Jane fears that Rochester "objectifies" her (*Bearing the Word* 85); that is clearly his intent. Rochester begins to usurp her individuality as soon as her attachment to him is established. As Jane admits, "My future husband was becoming to me my whole world" (241). As Catherine did with Linton and Heathcliff, Jane is tempted to acquire male power from Rochester; but her search is misguided. In marrying a Byronic figure, she cannot absorb his power; she can only become the object of his ego. Jane initially submits to his puppeteering, then realizes that the life that lies before her is his life;
she has "half lost the sense of power over him" she previously demonstrated (246). The root of that power was the individuality she had asserted just previous to his proposal to her. However, the strength of her claim, "I am a free human being with an independent will" (223) is quickly waning.

Jane is aware of the danger Rochester poses to her individuality, yet she has trouble defending herself against him:

Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly. (114)

Rochester holds her with a "convulsive grip" (179), and, like Heathcliff's wish for himself and Catherine, Rochester wants to kidnap Jane, and "leave earth and make [their] heaven yonder" (235) where she can "share [his] solitude" (465). In an image that cannot help but recall Blake's Angel of the Apocalypse in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Rochester claims his and Jane's kinship:

... a solemn passion ... wraps my existence about you--and, kindling in a pure, powerful flame, fuses you and me in one. (277)

But Rochester's fusion is not a fusion of contraries born of a generative dialectic; his is an eradication of other so that Jane can be absorbed into him. Rochester himself is another victim to one of the dangers of the Romantic quest: an acute preoccupation with self--solipsism (Bloom,
RC 6). Rather than a union which allows equal partners to
transcend their limits, Rochester, in true Byronic style,
desires a union "realized through a pattern of domination
in which the ego masters and absorbs 'the other'" (Moglen,
Self Conceived 29-30). Surrendering to his tyranny would
destroy Jane, would lead her into "miry wilds" and "devour
the life that feeds [her love] (141). As Jane admits,
Rochester is becoming to her

more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He
stood between me and every thought of religion. . . .
I could not. . . . see God for his creature: of whom I
had made an idol. (241)

Her fear of losing her identity is evident also in the
dreams which haunt her in which she eventually loses a
child (her self) that she has been struggling to bring to
birth.

Still, when their marriage is aborted, Jane falls into
a "self-abandoned" despair in which she pictures herself
lying, with no desire to live, in a river bed waiting for
the floods to drown her. What is particularly significant
about this passage is the connection between the loss of
self and the loss of God. While she has a "remembrance of
God," and knows she can avert the flood waters from
consuming her through that remembrance, her loss of a sense
of self, a loss of what she calls her "consciousness,"
prevents her from acting.
The Rochester to whom Jane eventually will return is a chastened Rochester. He has not totally lost his Romantic spirit, a point Bronte clearly makes in Jane's describing him in a final chapter as a "caged eagle" (379) with a "vigorous spirit" (386) and in his claim that his "very soul demands" Jane as his mate (383). However, in Bronte's feminizing of Romanticism, Rochester has lost his destructive solipsism. His "courage" and "kindness" are cited in his attempt to save everyone in Thornfield from the fire. Many critics read Rochester's blindness and crippling as his emasculation, but he actually loses his sight and his hand in perhaps his first demonstration of human sympathy, a quality necessary to love. The blindness is significant for one other reason: Bronte has made it clear that the eye is the "interpreter for the soul" (279). Rochester has been morally and imaginatively blind in his objectification of others as well as soul-sick in his egoism. It is significant that he regains his sight once his soul is healed, but the adulterous hand is forever lost.

Eventually Jane and Rochester will find peace in an apocalyptic marriage which echoes Prometheus and Asia's and Albion and Jerusalem's marriages, but first Rochester must learn who Jane really is. She is not a "sprite" or "elf" from another world but a living, breathing, independent woman who has fought to gain her independence from the male
socio-economic structure. Their initial attempt at a marriage is abortive because Jane threatens to become another Bertha, a wife "sold" into marriage and identity loss, and Rochester is not yet able to realize a marriage of "equal partners"—despite his rhetoric which suggests otherwise. Brontë rebels against this perverted union as the image of the split chestnut tree attests; for Bronte, the paradise of self and other implies equality—and is on earth, not in a "heaven yonder" (235). Initially, though, Jane leaves Thornfield in a scene that clearly echoes Milton's Paradise Lost: Jane "walked along [her] solitary way" (283). But Jane is not defeated; despite her disappointments, she realizes she has escaped with her identity intact. She boldly continues her journey through life:

I fell: I lay on the ground some minutes, pressing my face to the wet turf. I had some fear—or hope—that here I should die: but I was soon up; crawling forwards on my hands and knees, and then again raised to my feet—as eager and as determined as ever to reach the road. (283)

After Jane leaves Thornfield, she again feels destitute. Once more she turns to Nature for solace. She laments,

I have no relative but the universal mother, Nature: I will seek her breast and ask repose... Nature seemed to me benign and good; I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I, who from man could anticipate only mistrust, rejection, insult, clung to her with filial fondness. (284-5)

It is nestled here that she reflects also on the "might and
strength” of God, connecting, yet again, her conception of both God and Nature. However, like the Romantics, specifically Shelley and Blake, Brontë realizes that Nature cannot usurp the individual imagination. Jane purposefully "turns" from the bosom of nature and is "recalled" to "human life and human labor" (286). Jane tries again to establish her identity in looking for work and human contact, but she is consistently turned away from jobs because they are "men’s work" (287) and away from homes because, ironically, she has no home. It is precisely because she is destitute and female that she is forced once again into solitude. Her rhetoric is similar to that of Frankenstein’s monster when she cries, "Alas, this isolation---this banishment from my kind!" (295)

Jane is revived by contact with her female cousins with whom she shares "mental serenity," "inward content," and delight in Nature (309), feelings significantly different from St. John’s "bitterness" and "disappointment." Jane astutely notes that, despite his religion, St. John "had not yet found that peace of God which passeth understanding" (310):

he had no more found it, I thought, than had I; with my concealed and racking regrets for my broken idol and lost elysium... which possessed me and tyrannised over me ruthlessly. (310)

Unlike Wordsworth’s Wanderer whose austere religious training is eventually tempered by his love of Nature and
other people, St. John is unmoveable. He sees it as a fault that "human affections and sympathies have a most powerful hold" on Jane (313), while she tells him he needs to be more of an "ordinary mortal" (340). Although she is nurtured by her communion of sentiments with Diana and Mary, she begins to be crippled by St. John's strident religiosity and his "empirical eye." Like Rochester, St. John threatens to consume her hard-sought-after identity. Both Rochester and St. John are, ironically, devouring Jane in the name of love. Rochester's solipsistic love almost drowns her, and she is equally smothered by St. John's calling her to serve him in the name of God; St. John "claims" Jane in the name of his "Sovereign's service" (354). She offers St. John her "energies" as a missionary but, she says, "not myself" (357):

"If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now. . . . God did not give me my life to throw away; and to do as you [St. John] wish me would, I begin to think, be almost equivalent to committing suicide."

(363-4)

As in traditional epic where the hero undergoes temptations to divert him from his mission or holy calling, St. John represents another temptation for Jane to fall into psychic fragmentation—to lose control of her identity, here in the name of the traditional, patriarchal God. As she says,
he [St. John] acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind . . . I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent. (350-351)

He spiritually drugs her so that she begins to crumble; she feels his "influence in [her] marrow -- his hold on [her] limbs" (357). Because of his religious vampirism, Jane begins to grow physically feeble; her cousins notice she "looks ill." Although she almost loses herself to him, it is ultimately through her dealings with St. John that she can reject that soul-less religion that excludes nature and other people and therefore is too sterile to nurture her. After she acquires the fortune which allows for her economic independence, she grows secure enough to scorn his "insinuation of helplessness" (341) as she will later scorn his idea of love.

The denouement of Jane’s journey occurs when, after St. John reads the passage from Revelation about the "new heaven and earth," she is almost hypnotized into submission:

I stood motionless under my hierophant’s touch. My refusals were forgotten--my fears overcome--my wrestlings paralysed. (368)

These apocalyptic images are especially important in Romantic epic poetry. In Natural Supernaturalism, M.H. Abrams discusses the use of Biblical apocalypse in Romantic poetry and cites the two key images of apocalypse in
Revelations. The first is the image of the marriage between Christ and his bride, and the second is the vision of the "new heaven and earth" that comes of this apocalyptic marriage (42-47). Jane is actively searching for this new "heaven and earth" so she is particularly susceptible to St. John's false images. In a sense he is a sex-reversal of the false bride or the whore of Babylon: he is the false groom. Jane is saved, however, from her potential whoredom, her "sleep of death," by another suggestion of a new heaven and earth—the call from Rochester.

Jane initially assigns responsibility to the "work of nature" for being recalled from her "dimness of vision" in almost marrying St. John. However, the adult narrator realizes that it was actually her own vision—an "inward sensation" born of her maturing into womanhood—not Nature, which saved her. The connection between individual imaginative power and Nature is also made in Wordsworth's *Prelude*:

\[
\text{The power... which Nature thus}
\]
\[
\text{To bodily sense exhibits, is the express}
\]
\[
\text{Resemblance of that glorious faculty}
\]
\[
\text{That higher minds bear with them as their own.}
\]

*Prelude* XIV 86-90

Between Jane's two major temptations—that of the unreformed Rochester and St. John—Jane gains strength from nature. Almost totally depleted by Rochester, she is able to leave him by drawing upon an "inward power" (266)
which is fired by her interaction with nature and other women. In an often-cited scene, an anthropomorphized moon whispers to Jane, "My daughter, flee temptation!" Jane responds, "Mother, I will" (281). As Adrienne Rich and others have noted, this image is reminiscent of the "Great Mother" (106). When Rochester finally repents and supplicates God, he also, significantly, distills the maleness from God even while using a male pronoun to describe God:

He [God] sees not as a man sees, but far clearer;
judges not as man judges, but far more wisely.  
(my emphasis, 393)

That Jane’s moon is female is not surprising; Wordsworth himself used the idea of female nature as a source of comfort in times of stress. What is particularly interesting is the potential connection suggested in both scenes between this obvious female power and a providential God.

In assessing the economics of *Jane Eyre*, Nancy Pell has rightly claimed that Brontë is articulating an alternate religious system: she is replacing God the father with "the universal mother, Nature" (402). Pell claims that Brontë’s numerous uses of biblical echoes "point toward a matriarchal appropriation of traditionally patriarchal religious language" (402). In an interesting study, Bjork also concludes that Bronte is demonstrating
this ideological reorientation (76) born of the nineteenth-century church’s waning power over women. Moglen similarly sees a transfer from male power to female authority and, further, sees this female power as a "sympathetic extension . . . of the personality" (Self Conceived 131):

The authority which Jane has sought is female: the moon, maternal nature, the mother within herself—a cosmic principle or order and control. (131)

When Jane is "saved" from St. John for example, she prays in gratitude for her salvation, not to God but to a "Mighty Spirit" (370).

Jerome Beaty has said that Jane progresses in her story from "hubristic self-reliance to humble recognition of her dependence on God’s mercy, guidance, and Providence" (168). I couldn’t disagree more. While some may think it is too radical to suggest that, like Shelley and Blake, Brontë intentionally located "God" internally, Jane’s transition from "God" to "Mighty Spirit" and her locating its power as an "inward sensation" makes the Nature-Imagination-God link even more striking. She does not have to wrest power from the patriarchy; the power is already hers. Jane’s god is a creative spirit of the universe; this is not only a radically different concept of God than that to which patriarchal religions adhere, but it also implies that the power of imagination and God are indeed one power, which is female and located internally and discovered through the
generative powers of love. Jane thus becomes the prophet of a new religion/vision, a feminist vision.

The Romantics had long connected love and imaginative power. The final visions of Jerusalem and Prometheus Unbound suggest a preternatural and perfect love of complements, an apocalyptic marriage which signals a new imaginative vision for humanity. Even Wordsworth describes imagination and love as symbiotic:

This spiritual Love acts nor can exist
Without Imagination. . .
Imagination has been our theme,
So also hath intellectual love,
For they are each in each, and cannot stand
Dividually. (Prelude, XIV 188-209)

Wordsworth's intellectual love, however, is quite different from Bronte's earthly love. In "The Prospectus" of The Recluse, Wordsworth had announced a great marriage metaphor; for Wordsworth, however, the marriage is between his mind and nature. He cannot move past an image of a mother-child union to a "conjugal image of a reciprocal union" between male and female (Vogler, Preludes to Vision 68). Wordsworth has intimations of a union from his childhood, but he cannot find a sustaining image for it in maturity. His great "spousal verse" is ironically barren.

On the other hand, Bronte's Ferndean paradise is certainly more human—and explicitly feminist. What we end with in Jane Eyre is a final allusion to Paradise Lost: not Adam and Eve in a spoiled Eden, but Rochester and
Jane in "perfect concord" "wending homeward." It is an image of a new heaven and earth—a paradise regained on earth. As critics have noted, Brontë's new heaven and earth is not perfect. While Brontë attempts to move heaven to earth, the divine to the earthly, Jane and Rochester are not part of the real, conventional world; still, the potential for earthly apocalypse is there, and that is what prophecy is all about. It is a vision. It is suggesting what could be and what will be at a future date.

Brontë's vision includes an attempted reconciliation between the secular and the sacred in her novel; as Moglen has noted, *Jane Eyre* is an attempt to find "spiritual meaning in human experience" (139). *Jane Eyre* is not the "domesticated myth" Richard Chase patronizingly labels it; *Jane Eyre* offers a vision of a new cosmic and social reality born of the development of a female consciousness. A new vision, after all, must be conceived before a new and revived society can be brought to birth. This revitalizing of society is what the Romantics were attempting to accomplish in their epics. As epic, itself a fluid form, implies a repudiation of its predecessors and evolution beyond them, *Jane Eyre* is itself a rewriting of Romantic myth into a nineteenth-century feminist myth. Bronte chooses as the vehicle for her myth a new literary form, the novel, and while embracing some of the ideals of her Romantic predecessors, she builds from them, enhancing and
refining their teleology.

The Romantic epic chronicles the fallen human state and a quest for a Paradise of a united consciousness. Similarly, Bronte’s Bildung is a quest for an identity and a Paradise which reveals itself in a united consciousness. But Brontë’s quest for identity is discovered through a female voice, and her Paradise is more earthly and less personally exclusive than is the Romantic’s. Brontë re-envisions a spiritual theodicy which embraces the earthly as divine, a common divination available to those who accept the redemptive power of a human and egalitarian love. Wordsworth suggests this Paradise in his "Prospectus":

Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields -- like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main, why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.
("Prospectus" 47-55)

However, the Romantics are generally unable to make that outward motion towards community, or at best, experience community in only esthetic terms; women remain objectified as "other" to the central Romantic consciousness. Jane Eyre heals her fragmented psyche by dividing herself from the patriarchal power of the Reeds, Brocklehurst, the immature Rochester, and St. John Rivers, all of whom demand
subjugation and ego identity with an androcentric social structure. Brontë has, at last, defined the female hero not simply as "heroine," an androcentric term which suggests an objectified state in relation to the male hero who acts upon the heroine. In Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë is seeking a theodicy of the female and indeed of all humankind. What appears to be her radical Bible of Hell is really a Bible of Earth, for in it she offers a prospectus for living for those mortal and earthbound.
ENDNOTES

1 Robert Martin calls Jane Eyre "at bottom... a religious novel" (81) in which the main character demonstrates traditional moral precepts; the feminist critics Pearson and Pope take a similar stance (165). Barbara Hardy diverges somewhat from these interpretations in claiming that while the novel is traditionally religious, Jane is saved by Divine intervention rather than her own faith in God ("Dogmatic Form" 67-68).

2 Elizabeth Rigby called Jane Eyre an "anti-Christian composition" (Quarterly Review 84 [1848]: 173). More recently M.A. Blom has said Jane rebels against traditional religion out of purely selfish reasons. Blom notes and concurs with G. Armour Craig in saying "God has been removed from his throne and Jane reigns supreme" (363).

3 Commenting on Brontë's "Natural Supernaturalism," Qualls says Brontë blends religion and Romanticism as did Carlyle in Sartor Resartus in combining a Calvinistic "loathing of the world" with a Romantic "paradise within" (59). Qualls, however, suggests Brontë’s theodicy is much more traditionally patriarchal than I accept when he calls Jane Eyre a "Calvinized Bildungsroman" (43). More radically, Moglen believes that Brontë is reconstituting traditional patriarchal religion, but she denies any connection to Romanticism (Charlotte Brontë: The Self Conceived).

4 Langford has studied the three pictures Jane presents to Rochester in Chapter 13 and claims they are indications of the novel’s prophetic vision. They reflect "the entire scope of the novel," a "symbolic summary of the narrative including both past and future events" (229); each represents a major stage in Jane’s development.

5 In his valuable but limited study, Heilman claims that Romanticism is the literary expression of the supernatural. Ruth B. Yeazell has defined Jane Eyre as a Romantic novel whose vision "dialectically unites independence and love and creates a world whose outward design mirrors the internal progress of the psyche" (129). Again, her study is precise but not thorough; she
concentrates on the supernatural summons Jane receives.

While Vogler calls many Romantic poems mere "preludes" to vision, Wilkie successfully argues that Romantic epic is simply realization of the vision. I claim that writers of female Bildungsromane go beyond realization in transferring vision to an earthly plane.

Fulton emphasizes the spiritual and social quest of Jane’s pilgrimage and argues that the development of Jane’s consciousness signals a "new cosmic and social reality" (434). Like Fulton, Moglen claims that the way to Jane’s development is through her confrontation with patriarchal power (Self Conceived 113). See also Gilbert and Gubar who cite four facets of patriarchal society "Everywoman" must overcome in her pilgrimage: oppression (Gateshead), starvation (Lowood), madness (Thornfield), and coldness (Marsh End) [339].

Bodenheimer has also noted Brontë’s "artfulness" in setting up a dialectic between Jane’s "internal" progress as a narrator and her "external" narration (392). See also Karen Chase (52) on the issue of internal vs. external action.

See M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism 71-140.

In her enlightening study, Fulton similarly has suggested that Brontë offers a new vision for humanity based on a union of male and female principles; she adds that in so doing Brontë is in good company with the Romantics (434).

While I disagree with Horne’s reading that Jane needs to return to the "innocence of childhood" from the "prison of experience" (213), she at least suggests the generative dialectic between childhood imagination and experience (reminiscent of Blake’s Marriage of Heaven and Hell) which is necessary to Jane’s growth.

Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, ed. Richard J. Dunn, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971) B. All subsequent references to this work will be contained within the text.

Nancy Pell has demonstrated that Jane’s struggle is not merely individual, but has broader social and economic implications as suggested by Brontë’s references to actual rebellions in English history (the overthrow of Charles I and the Guy Fawkes Rebellion) (405-6).

See, for example, Gilbert and Gubar on suicide as a
female political act.

15 While I disagree with Linder's interpretation of Jane's art work, I find her discussion of Brontë's use of objective correlates paralleling Jane's growth to her growing sense of sympathy with nature astute (31-67).

16 For a discussion of Helen as a typical "Angel of the House" figure see Gilbert and Gubar (22-29). See also Francoise Basch (3-15) and Walter Houghton (341-343) who connect the Angel of the House figure and death.

17 As discussed earlier, this inadequate conception of woman is a problem underlying Romantic poetics. In Romans' study of the Romantic problem of objectifying the female, she claims that Emily and Charlotte Brontë recognize this objectification but still defer to it: "Both Emily and Charlotte Bronte see that a woman, a mother, has been buried in the landscape of romanticism, and both know they have been complicitous in placing her there again" (Bearing the Word 99).

18 For more on Bertha as a threat of self-loss see Barbara Rigney, and Nancy Piel, 419. While agreeing that Bertha represents a "loss of consciousness," Moglen more specifically notes Bertha is the "monstrous embodiment of psychosexual conflicts which are intrinsic to the Romantic predicament" (Self Conceived 124). See also Gilbert and Gubar on Jane and Bertha as doubles (359-62), and Showalter on the Bertha-Jane-Helen triad as a reenactment of the psychic battle between the "Angel of the House" and the "devil in the flesh" (A Literature of Their Own 113). For a discussion of Bertha as Jane's alter-ego and liberator, see Fulton, 439-440.

19 Moglen, for example, is adamant about using the term Byronism as a synonym for Romanticism (Self Conceived 142-143). Moglen asserts that Romantic myth is a politically oppressive movement to women; she sees Romanticism and feminism at odds: "We continue to reenact our roles in the Romantic mythology which embodies and validates that pervasive [patriarchal] power" (14). Moglen says that Romantic poets desire to obliterate the lines between the "I" and "not-I," "self" and "other," is "channeled by a culturally formed and supported sexism" (31), part of what she calls "patriarchal neuroticism" (31). It is in our interpretation of "Romanticism" and all it implies that she and I diverge. Obviously I disagree.

20 See also Vineta Colby who claims that nineteenth-century women writers transmuted Romantic into Victorian
ideals. Jane Millgate also suggests that Romanticism needs to be tempered. In studying Jane’s development through her art work, Millgate sees Jane Eyre as struggling between common sense and Romantic sensibility which leads to a "final integration of all of Jane’s personality" ("Narrative Distance" 319); she sees Jane Eyre as a "moral fable" patterned after Pilgrim’s Progress ("Jane Eyre’s Progress" 22).

Fulton says that three temptations determine Jane’s journey: John Reed, Rochester, and St. John Rivers (434 passim). I see two major temptations, that by Rochester and that by St. John Rivers. Jane’s early trials at the Reeds’ house and Lowood represent the phase of her journey towards self-integration; the second phase is for Jane to resist temptations to once again fragment, and if her resistance is successful, she can join in an "apocalyptic union" with her "other" — Rochester. In his study of Jane’s art, Langford also cites the two temptations to which I refer.

For a sexist reading of how Jane emasculates Rochester, see, for example, Blom and Richard Chase. Actually, Rochester’s blinding and crippling is the Old Testament punishment for adultery, the moral crime with which Rochester threatens Jane. See Matthew 5:27-30.

Thomas Langford and Alan Bacon have both drawn analogies between Paradise Lost and Jane Eyre by studying Jane’s artwork which they claim mimics images found in Paradise Lost. Langford suggests that the first of the three pictures in chapter 13 represents the "forces of evil that will seek the downfall of Jane through temptation" (233) (the cormorant with the jewels). The second and third illustrate Jane’s temptations: the second is the illicit love of the Evening Star (she anc Rochester), the third the temptation to "ascetic austerity" represented by St. John Rivers, who in the picture wears a "double duty" saintly halo and crown of Death (232-233).

In her thoughtful study, Moglen claims that St. John’s "Grecian appearance" identifies him with the "classical virtues of reason and control so admired in Rasselas" (Self Conceived 136).

The supernatural "calls" or omens Jane receives can be considered epic devices. Wilkie calls omens "textual reminders of the epic tradition." He says it is fitting that the poet/author look to Nature for guidance "since it has much the same relationship him as the gods in epic have to their favorites, as well as the same relation that
the Muse has to poets" (100).

As numerous critics have demonstrated, Brontë herself was torn in her life between tradition and rebellion. Moglen, for example, cites Brontë's aversion to a woman’s becoming property in marriage, while she herself was self-effacing in her relationships with her father and, finally, her husband. Moglen claims Brontë was a masochist (Self Conceived 49-50).

Brontë's interest in exploring the internal powers of humanity is evident in her criticism of Jane Austen. Of Austen, Brontë says, she "does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well... but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentient target of death--this Miss Austen ignores." (Quoted in Q. D. Leavis' Introduction to Jane Eyre [1978], 10-11). Obviously, she feels she can do what Austen cannot.
V

Conclusion

"I am an artist by my birth --
By the same warrant that I am a woman."
George Eliot, "Armgart" II.379-380

"Call the world if you please, 'The vale of Soul-making'." Then you will find out the use of the world . . . . I think it a grander system of salvation than the Christian religion."

John Keats, April 1819
Letter to George and Georgiana Keats

A discussion of nineteenth-century Bildungsromane would not be complete without reference to George Eliot and at least her Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch, each of which chronicles a young girl’s growth to maturity. While critics generally agree that these two novels fit within a Bildungsroman tradition, they are split on the issue of whether Eliot is a realistic, self-effacing Victorian who chastens her young women into patriarchal bondage, or whether she follows in a radical tradition and offers a feminist vision of human integrity.¹ The earlier women writers of the century who adapted epic form to the female novel of growth made a conscious attempt to integrate the
Romantic moment of vision into a philosophical system which was less abstract and which could be realized on earth. As Spivey so astutely noted, "the vision of the poets was not enough; what was needed also was the translation of vision into philosophy to feed the conscious mind" (12). Following the lead of her female predecessors, George Eliot also redefines epic form, epic heroism, and epic consciousness for nineteenth-century society. For Eliot, as for Shelley and the Brontës, fiction became the new medium for establishing a revisioned spiritual and social theodicy just as poetry had served a similar purpose for the Romantics.

Recently there have been some comprehensive and ground-breaking studies of George Eliot’s mythmaking which place her in this Romantic/feminist subversive tradition that I have been tracing in this dissertation. In his chronological study of Eliot’s work which he says traces a world that grows from youth to maturity, Wiesenfarth argues that Eliot rewrites traditional myth; he finds a secularized pattern of biblical Genesis in Eliot’s work and claims that she "inherited vestiges of the Natural Supernaturalism of German and English Romanticism" (9). Like the Romantics and her female predecessors, she images a new myth for a new age, a myth which incorporates Hebrew, Christian, and pagan myths (9). Hers is a "canon" offering a communal mythology which "exhibits phases of creation,
destruction, redemption, and longing for Paradise." (9). Similarly, like Knoepflmacher and others, Wiesenfarth calls Eliot a poet of "secular humanism" (35) and notes her ties to Feuerbach, who connects love and feeling with religion and claims the way to consciousness is through love:

Love is the middle term [between] the divine and the human. Love is God himself, and apart from it there is no God. . . . Love is the true unity of God and man, of spirit and nature.

The Essence of Christianity 46-47

As Newton says of Eliot, "For her, the moral order to which the self must submit must first be discovered within the self as feeling" (34). Not only does this philosophy echo Romantic epistemology, but it also recalls Frankenstein, Wuthering Heights, and Jane Eyre in its assumption that morality can not be legislated empirically; it has less to do with human reason that it does with human feeling and sense of community.

In addition to the influence of Feuerbach, Eliot’s work also demonstrates the influence of Strauss, who believed, like Eliot and the Brontës (as well as the Romantics), that humanity is divinity. Wiesenfarth notes Eliot’s transition from an Evangelical fundamentalist who saw her imagination as "an enemy that must be cast down" (Letters 1: 65) to an artist whose idea of the "merely earthly" becomes more important than what she earlier considered "heavenly." He argues that for Eliot, "Nature
replaces Scripture, [and] reason replaces faith (29):^6 like
the Romantics, Eliot defied traditional patriarchal
religion in establishing a non-Urizenic (or non-objective)
spirituality in her work. While some critics lament an
absence of God in Eliot’s work, Eliot insists, again like
the Romantics and her female predecessors, that the path
to the Divine is human, that the Divine is a metaphor for
the human, not vice versa.^7 Eliot wrote,

"the fellowship between man and man which has been the
principle of development, social and moral, is not
dependent on conceptions of what is not man: and that
the idea of God . . . is the ideal of a goodness
etirely human . . ."
Letter to Mrs. H. F. Ponsonby, 10 December, 1874

Like the Romantics and like Charlotte Bronte, Eliot
located God internally; however, like the women writers
before her, Eliot despised the egoism she saw in
Romanticism.\(^8\) She notes in The Impressions of Theophrastus
Such the danger "of being more or less transiently and in
varying degrees so absorbed in ideal vision as to lose the
consciousness of surrounding objects or occurrences" (203).
What leads Eliot’s characters to salvation is their opening
themselves to the motions of grace born of their new-found
human community." As Eliot says, "truth of feeling [is]
the only universal bond of union" (Letters 1: 128). It is
ture for Dorothea, and it is true for Maggie.

There has been speculation over the years that Eliot
was working within an epic tradition in the creation of
some of her novels. As early as 1954 Tillyard claimed epic status for *Middlemarch.* Similarly, Hardy and Stump have suggested that *Mill on the Floss* is vaguely reminiscent of epic in both its form and content. When read as an epic/Bildungsroman, in which the narrator and reader become characters who undergo growth and change, *Mill on the Floss* is clarified. In her study of Eliot’s Novels, Stump has alluded to *Mill’s* Romantic connections; but more importantly, those characteristics she highlights are a part of the Romantic epic tradition. Stump first defines *Mill* as a parody of Milton’s *Paradise Lost,* the Romantics’ epic model; she then notes other topoi peculiar to epic and specifically Romantic epic: the traditional heroic search for and journey home; the temptations Maggie undergoes on her journey; the revelations to which she is privy and the growth of vision they imply; and the lasting effect Maggie has on others’ consciousnesses as a result of her experience. As Newton notes, Maggie’s “decision is to be true to her whole self, which is not merely the person she is at the moment, but the continuing self that has developed since childhood” (117). Like Jane Eyre, Maggie has to be true to that “still, small voice within.”

The *Mill on the Floss*’s lyricism is another reminder of Romantic epic tradition. Critics have studied the characteristically epic destruction of historical time in favor of the mythic, lyrical form in *Mill,* and while I
disagree with his final analysis of the novel, Reigelman astutely notes that the mythic time of the novel and the "double narrative" allows for prophecy (11). In the narrator's opening meditation on the scene of the Mill, place is given a "muse-like" function (Adam 129) which ultimately helps the narrator come to consciousness. Freeman has similarly noted St. Ogg's "relative freedom from "historic time"; it is, he claims, full of "cyclical change" (35). He further establishes Eliot as a lyrical writer in calling her prose "great poetry" (28).

Also like Romantic epic, Mill on the Floss is prophetic. The narrator infers that Maggie brings Bob Jakin, Phillip Wakem, and her brother Tom to a new and "vivid consciousness" (244-245). Maggie is Bob's "directing Madonna (229), and Philip makes clear that Maggie is his Beatrice: "You have been to my affections what light, what colour is to my eyes--what music is to the inward ear; you have raised a dim unrest into a vivid consciousness" (244-45). Similarly, Tom experiences a brief moment of revelation before he is consumed by the flood waters, a drowning that Knoepflmacher calls both "apocalyptic" and "imaginative" ("On Exile" 119). As Maggie leads others to vision before her death, she also brings revelation to the narrator who is privy to the story. Despite her death, Maggie lives on. She lives in Bob Jakins' child, Maggie, in Stephen and Lucy's love, and
in the narrator, who, like Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, will tell her tale to those of us who need to hear it.

That Eliot’s epic is one of common heroism is evident in her use of epic topoi. Knoepflmacher, for example, has pointed out that in the Victorian novel there is a movement from mountaintops to rivers as places of revelation. Following the Romantic epic tendency to have revelation occur on mountaintops to signify a more human than divine ontology,

rivers, like human feeling, bring people together. As Romantic poetry tended to invoke the most obviously separate and humanly diminishing landscapes to reassert meaningfulness and connectedness, so the Victorian novel, reflecting a Carlylean disenchantment with the sublime, tended to find meaning and connection in the more human landscape of the lowlands and rivers. . . .

("Ruskin and the Novelists" 142-143)

In a direct reference to Wordsworth and Mary Shelley, Knoepflmacher says, "[in the novel] the extremes of experience are shifted from the Alps to the heart; there is the peril of the sublime, and there its idealization" ("Ruskin" 145). The prophecy of the common life is evident in Eliot’s hope that "the onward tendency of human things have risen above the mental level of the generation before" (143); that is, that the generation to follow will learn from the mistakes of the former generation, and in its adaptation generate a more egalitarian society in which artists can survive the flood. A number of critics believe
that Maggie’s drowning is a cathartic experience for Eliot which allows her to achieve personal transcendence.\textsuperscript{155} Stump says, "[While] the current carries [Maggie] to death it also carries her toward that intense spiritual life which is possible only at the moment of vision" (129). This transcendent moment of vision is also Wordsworth’s and Blake’s and Shelley’s and Keat’s. But just as the Romantics could not translate that moment to earth, nor could Eliot in \textit{Mill}. \textit{Middlemarch} is her attempt to bring to earth that divine but fleeting experience.

Wiesenfarth has called \textit{Middlemarch} an epic of the "common hero" (209). As her predecessors do in the epic tradition, Eliot redefines heroism in her Dorothea. An indication of the nature of Dorothea’s heroism is found in her transformation of Ladislaw, who develops from an "egotistic Romantic" to a more "organic" Romantic; Dorothea teaches Ladislaw how to give his Romantic ardour "social expression" (Newton 136).\textsuperscript{16} Like the Brontës, Eliot is undermining Romantic ideals, specifically the Romantic tendency to egotism, and offering in its place a feminist vision. As Dorothea says to Ladislaw, "When we were in Rome, I thought you only cared for poetry and art... But now I know you think about the rest of the world" (374–375).\textsuperscript{17} In \textit{Middlemarch}, Dorothea herself is in search of "The Key to All Mythologies." What Dorothea is searching for is, like St. Theresa— but more pointedly like Eliot’s
female predecessors—a re-visioned meaning to the spirit-
ual and social wasteland of which she is a part. With 
humanity "fallen," Dorothea seeks a coherent social faith 
and order that will reunify that fragmentation.¹⁸ 

Dorothea intuitively realizes that in order to build a 
new social order, humans must learn to live by vision and 
love rather than egoism (Spivey 12). She attempts to 
live her vision in her "little, nameless, unremembered, 
acts / Of kindness and of love" (Wordsworth "Tintern 
Abbey"). This modest heroism, while denigrated by some 
critics, is still heroic. As Wiesenfarth explains: 

Middlemarch is a novel about heroism. The Prelude 
proclaims it as such. [However] . . . the end of an 
epos has passed and . . . heroism on a grand scale is 
not longer possible. But that does not mean that no 
heroism of any kind is any longer possible. One must 
learn the new kind—the kind that history opens to 
men and women who can grasp it. This is the heroism 
of a Caleb Garth, a Will Ladislaw, and a Dorothea 
Brooke. A heroism characterized by personal 
integrity, fellow-feeling, and a sense of one’s place 
in history. (209) 

While feminist critics historically have had a negative 
response to what they perceive as Dorothea’s social 
accommodation,¹⁹ when assessed in epic tradition (which 
Eliot clearly intended with her allusions to The Prelude 
for example), Dorothea is not such a pale character. She 
becomes not an individual whose ego is totally absorbed by 
a "marriage plot" but a universalized character who 
strives for a more communally conscious and egalitarian
society. Ultimately, Eliot concludes her career "not with [individuals] accepted and assimilated into [their] community or rejected from it, but with [individuals] questing for new values and modes of existence" (Wiesenfarth 235).\textsuperscript{80} Eliot's opus ends, he says, with "epical dimension" (235); and despite my reservations about Dorothea's humility, a humility which I believe will burden women in the twentieth century, I tend to agree.

***

As is evident in their respective works, Shelley, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot did not disregard the Romantic epic impulse in their art. As women, they probably felt an affinity with the Romantic anti-patriarchal stance which included the female in its epistemological scope. The Romantics offered a radical message to a complacent patriarchal society: that the individual possesses divinity and that the relationship between self and other must be bridged to heal a spiritually fragmented social consciousness. These women authors of the Nineteenth-Century, however, take that Romantic poetic even further. They insist on the value of the female as a person, not as a set of abstract values which the Romantic male (subject) wants to possess, as the Romantics' frequent use of the incest motif suggests. Like the Romantics, Shelley and the Brontës suggest that the patriarchal, Urizenic God is an unhealthy abstraction that
keeps humans in earthly bondage. But where the Romantic answer remains an ideal that they cannot transfer to the world, Shelley and the Brontës insist on an egalitarian society which appreciates the feminine as the only way to move those Romantic principles, "the Bible of Hell," to earth. What many critics descry as conservatism in the women writers of the Nineteenth-Century is often a carefully couched sedition against an oppressive patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition and Western social mores.

Shelley, Emily Brontë, and Charlotte Brontë each revised the Judeo-Christian myth of the Fall, as did the Romantics, as a fall into Selfhood; but the women writers more readily identified Selfhood as something particularly masculine, and as something that not only the female characters in the novels had to reject but the male characters had to overcome. The suggestion that "selfhood" or egotism is a predominantly male characteristic is a radically feminist concept for the Nineteenth-Century. However, twentieth-century studies of both men and women have borne out the fact that men are psychologically more ego-oriented than are women. Whether this is socially or biologically induced is a moot point, but as Abel and others in this century have established, the dominant male Bildung pattern and nineteenth-century epic pattern is an inward quest that remains focused on self, while the female pattern includes
a quest towards community with others once the self has
been established. What is important is that these
nineteenth-century women authors began to identify that
which the Romantics bypassed in their ontology even though
their philosophy argued that men have the tendency to
polarize their worlds in terms of subject/object: that
men’s subject/object orientation spills into their gender
identifications, relegating, by default, women to a status
of "other" and "lesser." Christ accurately summarizes this
androcentric hierarchy:

Men have organized dualisms hierarchically and
have associated themselves with the positive sides of
the dualities--spirit, freedom, reason, and soul--
while relegating women to the negative sides of the
dualities--nature, emotion, irrationality, and the
body. (25)

Because they lack a sense of psychic balance in their
adhering to this hierarchy, Frankenstein, Walton,
Heathcliff and Rochester are all destructive characters.
So, too, are Tom Tulliver and Casaubon.

As did the Romantics in their epics, Shelley, the
Brontes, and Eliot attempted to redefine heroism in their
Bildungsromane. Each woman identified her conception of
"the heroic" less as a specific physical and often super-
human "act" which infers masculinity and dominance but, in
the tradition of Christ in Paradise Regained, more as a way
of thinking or perceiving life, heroism as "little, name-
less, unremembered acts of kindness and love" in the quest
for identity and a new consciousness. Feminist critics have trouble accepting this communal ideology for fear that it supports a life of renunciation for women. However, this fear is as invalid as Maggie’s first reading of Thomas ‘a Kempis from whom she wrongly learns renunciation, as Phillip points out to her. Maggie eventually finds a heroism, a female sense of power; however, her life ends as she realizes that power. Charlotte Brontë was ahead of her contemporaries and anticipating twentieth-century women writers in identifying, or at least suggesting, that god is not only internalized but a female power located through the generative power of love. Similarly, Emily Brontë implies this possibility in having her young Catherine acquire power by practicing the "black arts," but Charlotte was much more specific. They both offer a more radical interpretation of god than George Eliot, whose life demonstrates a more feminist stance than does her literature.

The women writers of the Nineteenth-Century chose a new genre for their epic visions; each worked within the epic tradition and translated its lyric power and universal ontology to the novel. It is not surprising that these women would adapt epic to a prose form since, as noted earlier, epic form is traditionally male and vaunts masculine values, while the novel, at its genesis at least, was a female form with feminine values. The women writers of the century needed a new vehicle for their message, and
they re-visioned epic into a prose narrative--a Bildungs-
roman. One reason that critics have always separated
Bildungsromane from epic is that the former is supposed to
demonstrate individual values where the latter reflects a
culture’s values. However, as we have seen, the female
Bildungsromane not only reflect individual women’s
experience, but, like Romantic epic, they are intended to
represent universalized experience. However, where the
Romantic experience really could not—or did not--speak to
women, the female Bildungsromane incorporates both female
and male experience in a feminist vision.

In his turn from Classical and Christian epic, Blake
first created what Vogler has called an "epic of
consciousness," which he defines as a human’s awakening to
a "full realization of his or her creative personality"
(24). This realization is similar to that of heroes of
feminine Bildungsromane. Where Pip and Marlowe and, more
recently, Updike’s Rabbit are humbled in their lives’
journeys, the female figure in the Bildungsroman becomes
aware of her positive creative potential. In their full
study of English and American female heroes, Pearson and
Pope note that contemporary male heroes, including the
anti-hero, tend to be hopeless characters who perceive
themselves as victims and who struggle in a meaningless
world (13). Conversely, female characters are more
hopeful; where twentieth-century men feel powerless to
transcend society, many women are discovering that they do have the power. In *A New Mythos*, her study of the modern female *Künstlerroman* (a novel of growth which emphasizes the specific artistic development of its central character), Stewart offers a dark vision: she claims the birth of the female artist has been a monstrosity as Shelley’s early *Frankenstein* had suggested. Stewart argues that women are still unable to create a viable mythos because they are not yet divorced from a patriarchal perspective which will allow such creativity. While her critical stance is extreme, I fear it may be generally true, for although Lessing’s *Four Gated City* "powerfully articulates" women’s spiritual quest and search for language (Ch. xii), many of the modern works, by white women especially, such as The *Bell Jar* or *The Awakening*, are not apparently transcendent or are only transcendent in death, which is, at best, a qualified transcendence. However, novels of awakening in the *Bildungsroman* tradition by contemporary black women are suggesting a female prophetic vision that these nineteenth-century women earlier conceived.

While I would consider Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as a modern female *Bildungsroman* of epic proportions in its scope and characterization, Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* is perhaps the best example of a modern female *Bildungsroman/epic*. Because she is black and
female and thus in bondage, Celie's quest is primarily internal. As epic heroes need to learn and then articulate a new language of prophecy, the uneducated Celie must teach herself a language that allows communication with her absent sister, that allows for a patriarchal God whom she eventually dethrones in empowering herself, and that allows her to ultimately name herself. Her ordeal by love revolves around a typical female temptress figure, Shug Avery, but, in a wonderful inversion, it is the female temptress who teaches Celie the language of love—self-love and love of others; the Whore of Babylon who knows better than the entire male-based community becomes the epic guide figure for the displaced hero, Celie. In her rejection of the patriarchal god, Celie assumes a personal divinity (similar to Charlotte Brontë's but more overt) in realizing that her god is female and located internally. In the "Wasteland" of the spiritual patriarchy, women need to "weave the threads" of women's visions into a new theory of human nature (Christ 130). Celie is a weaver, a weaver who creates "pants" for all her family; she is an individual whose independence is further defined by her ability to weave independence for others, as her original "creations" demonstrate.

In Celie's transcendence, she brings vision to those who surround her, including Mister and the already feminine but defiantly male Harpo. And, in an interesting twist on
the epic and Bildungsroman return-home motif, Celie returns to her real parents' home, and it is there that her family is returned to her. The ability to transform oneself and others has been noted by Pearson and Pope in their optimistic assessment of female heroes:

The hero's reward for violating sex-role taboos of her society is the miracle of combining inner wholeness with outward community. Such a shift in consciousness cannot be taught; it can only be achieved. Therefore the kingdom can be transformed only when others join the hero in her quest. (15)

Celie has transformed "the kingdom" because she is not, as the Romantics often are, in isolation. She is surrounded by her entire family and community who approve her egalitarian conception of life and the importance of the generative power of love.

Auerbach has defined "a new Romantic consciousness" as one that attempts "to dissolve the prison of gender by showing men and women sharing a common consciousness within a common culture (xiv)." Significantly, this is precisely what the Romantics did not do; women were not a part of their theodicy. The Romantics did make strides in imaging a more psychologically balanced individual, but their progress was at best an androgynous vision. In general, their males fall and their females are relegated to the status of "lost principles" such as Asia and Jerusalem; despite their rhetoric, the Romantics did not offer a feminist vision that admits full subjectivity to the female
as Froula’s reading of Eve’s subjugation to Adam in Paradise Lost implies (328). It took the women writers of the Nineteenth-Century to break down the gender barriers that Shelley makes so evident in Frankenstein, so that Catherine and Hareton, Jane and Rochester, and Dorothea and Will can share a "common consciousness" as can Celie and Mister and Sophia and Harpo in the Twentieth-Century. Heroes can no longer bypass human relationships on their way to Rome or the Celestial City or even the New Jerusalem, because it is in those communal relationships that one will achieve the transcendence which will privilege the vision of a spiritual and social egalitarianism.
ENDNOTES

1 For conservative readings of George Eliot, see Knoepflmacher and Bedient who argue that Eliot is a traditional moralist. For feminist readings of George Eliot see, for example, R. Colby, Heilbrun (who sees Eliot's work as a "middle-march" between male and female), Millett, McGuinn (who calls hers a "tempered radicalism"), and especially Spacks.

2 According to Wiesenfarth, Adam Bede chronicles the creation of man, Mill on the Floss retells the story of the old world destroyed by a flood, and Silas Marner suggests the new Eden; Eliot's later four books repeat the cyclical pattern (237). Eliot adopted Karl Muller's concept of the origin and development of myth, a theory also used by Strauss to demythologize the Gospels. See Karl Otfried Muller, Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie, Gottingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1825.

3 Eliot herself said that her novels represent "successive mental phases" (George Eliot Letters: III: 383), each which charts a "civil war within the soul" (Middlemarch, chapter 67 epigraph). As her works chronicle the shifting patterns of imaginative experience in the human lifetime, her novels are also organized into patterns of "esthetic experience." According to Wiesenfarth, "Eliot moves from tragicomedy (Adam Bede) through comedy (Silas and Felix) and tragedy (Mill and Romola) to epic (Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda) [235]. While Wiesenfarth studies the overall movement of her myth throughout the succession of her works, he calls Daniel Deronda her triumph over a dead Victorian world. Deronda chronicles Eliot's religious growth and vision including her ties to Romanticism (29).

"Knoepflmacher calls Middlemarch an "intricate allegory" of religious concerns (Romantic Humanism 71). He argues that George Eliot is a prophet who recasts religion in a humanist light replacing Biblical revelation with "the prophecies of art" (Religious Humanism 5-22).
Newton unfortunately finally assesses Dorothea in a sexist light, saying it "is possible for them [women] to use their power of domestic feelings to influence men to devote their energies to the social good" (138).

Wiesenfarth and others claim that Eliot’s reading of Charles Christian Hennell’s *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838) and *Christian Theism* (1839) converted her to Humanism from her fundamentalist Christian views. For traditional readings of Eliot’s religious sensibility, see, for example, C. B. Cox, Svanglic, and Qualls, who sees close parallels between *Middlemarch* and *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

In an early interpretation of Eliot’s spirituality, Abbé Brémont suggested that the humanism Eliot ultimately espoused was an expression of her "womanly nature" ("La religion de George Eliot," *Revue des deux mondes* 36 (1906), 787–822, as noted in Wiesenfarth 29). While that may strike a contemporary reader as a sexist comment, I think it is worth noting that Brémont saw a connection between humanism and what might today be called feminism.

Argyle and Newton also studied Eliot’s Romanticism, but unlike Cotton, who claims Eliot’s characters must purge themselves of Romanticism, Argyle and Newton find Romanticism a powerful motivator in Eliot’s characters’ behavior. Gerard argues that in Eliot’s work "[female] powerlessness and displacement recapitulate the experience of the romantic idealist." For other studies of Eliot’s Romantic tendencies see Lerner, J. Buckley ("Double Life"), Stump, Freeman, Newton, R. Colby, Spivey, Adam, Roazen.

Interestingly, Waxman argues that the novel is in the same form as *Wilhelm Meister* as established by Suzanne Howe—a German, “female” type Bildung vs. an English male Bildung (61). Eliot read *Wilhelm Meister* in 1854 and again in 1870. On Eliot’s German influences, see also Gisela Argyle who argues that Eliot’s conception of art as “the nearest thing to life” is derived from German philosophy (51).

In 1958 Tillyard reneged on his claim that *Middlemarch* is epic in stating that Eliot does not expect anything of epic scope for her central female character: Dorothea is an individual, not a universal character, who is "tolerably resigned" to Victorian restrictions (1975 Repr. 168). Wiesenfarth, Knoepflmacher ("Fusing Fact and Myth"), Spivey, and Marotta also all suggest on different levels that *Middlemarch* is epic, as do Kermode and Schorer who see epic apocalypse in the novel (30–31).
Interestingly, Knoepflmacher connects *Mill on the Floss* to Keats' epics but without suggesting that Eliot might purposely be working within the same tradition. There are other epic trappings evident. In *Mill*, as in Romantic epic, there is an "adult intelligence," a narrator who must bestir herself into motion ("On Exile" 111); the adult has "dozed off" and been "dreaming" (pp. 8, 9). Also, like traditional epic heroes, Maggie undergoes temptations. Stephen Guest is a tempter, as is the entire patriarchal St. Ogg's community. Other critics have noted echoes of Wordsworth in *Mill*. Qualls notes the book titles of *Mill* to be Wordsworthian ("Boy and Girl," "School Time," etc.), while Knoepflmacher has called Eliot a "conformed Wordsworthian" and has catalogued Wordsworthian allusions in Eliot's *Mill* ("Ruskin and the Novelists" 417). Ian Adam also notes the novel's Wordsworthian strains, most important its use of *The Prelude*’s "spots of time" which Buckley has identified as characteristic of epic (129-30).

For a discussion of these epic characteristics in *Mill*, see Reva Stump, pp. 67-135, especially pp. 100-125. Hardy has also interpreted the end of the novel as offering a visionary experience (Chapter Three in *Particularities*). See also Newton on *Mill*’s temptation motif.

For a discussion of Eliot’s use of mythic time and her lyricism, see Reigelman and Freeman.

All references to *Mill on the Floss* are taken from the Airmont edition of the novel, ed. David G. Pitt.

On the issue of Maggie's death as transcendence, see Knoepflmacher (11), Stump (132), and Buckley who claims that, like Wordsworth in his *Prelude*, Eliot confronts herself in her novel ("Double Life" 112-114). I would also like to note that the idea of death as transcendence is a Romantic metaphor especially used by Keats.

See, for example K. M. Newton on Dorothea’s Romanticism (123-143). Newton also chronicles Dorothea’s temptations, the most serious of which he calls her idealism (125). Critics even more strikingly note Ladislaw’s Romanticism. See, for example, "George Eliot on Imagination," in which Barbara Hardy calls Will "the imaginative artist" of *Middlemarch* (The Novels 198).


Newton nicely traces Dorothea's fragmentation—what
she calls her "disorientation"—in the various stages of Dorothea’s search for a religious meaning in life (130 passim). Knoepflmacher says that Middlemarch, which is "embedded in Shellyean allusions," goes even further than Mill in having Dorothea and Will clasping hands, looking out on tremendous thunder and lightening storm. This reading is ultimately narrow, however, in that Knoepflmacher claims Eliot’s internal integration depends on a male "other" who replaced her parents, brothers and tutors (119).

For negative interpretations of Dorothea see, for example, Christ, who discusses Eliot’s "repression"; in separate works Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar claim Eliot was personally at odds with her characters whom she sacrifices to society.

Wiesenfarth’s original reads "man" rather than "human." To preserve the context of my argument, I have made the change.

A typical feminist reading of The Awakening interprets Edna’s transcendence as marked by her union with the great power of the sea (Christ 119); similarly, the protagonist in Surfacing is transcendent in rejecting her social self and transforming herself into nature itself, or herself, as the case may be. However, the idea of death or isolation as transcendence or as the fullest experience of life is a Romantic notion I reject in this paper because it removes from common experience the potential of apocalypse on earth.

The similarity between English female Bildungsromane and twentieth-century black women’s novels of development was first suggested to me by one of my students, Carmen Lyon, in a 1987 seminar on women in literature.

Christ has noted that Ntozake Shange’s "Woman in Red" in for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf also names a god within herself (xv).

Eve must surrender herself not to her narcissism, as gazing into the pool of water implies, but to Adam, to repay his gesture in "creating" her (328). As Froula says of Eve, and indeed it would apply to many women, "her imagination is so successfully colonized by patriarchal authority that she literally becomes its voice" (329).
WORKS CITED


