THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THE NUMINOUS/SUBLIME IN MODERN ROMANCE

by

MICHAEL ROBIDOUX

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INTRODUCTION

In his study of romance, Northrop Frye calls such literature "secular scripture." He does so because of the similar structural patterns he finds in the Bible and in romance narratives. Focusing on the numinous element in modern romance,* I want to explore another--and quite opposite--way in which this genre functions as "secular scripture."

In *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto associates the experience of the numinous with the Divine. Thus at the outset of his study he states the following prerequisite for understanding the nature of the numinous: "The reader is invited to direct his mind to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience . . . whoever knows no such moments in his experience, is requested to read no further" (8). What Otto does not address is how one can attain a sense of the numinous in a cultural climate in which "God is dead." Although he identifies the "sublime" as a means to the numinous, he tends to see it merely as a preliminary stage and reserves the sense of the holy for something totally beyond humanity and earthly phenomena. Nor does he at all include human love as an experience which qualifies as a "deeply-felt" religious experience, or as something which can occasion feelings associated with the sublime.

I want to argue that modern romance is fundamentally concerned with the desolation caused by the loss of faith in traditional notions of a Deity. More than that, modern romance is able to transport the reader and

* For discussion of the basic components of modern romance, see Evelyn J. Hinz's "Hierogamy versus Wedlock." In this essay, Hinz identifies a number of works which belong to this genre; she also demonstrates the way that modern romance differs from the conventional novel, particularly with respect to love and religious issues.

provide the same sense of "*mysterium tremendum*" that Otto links to an experience of the Divine. Rather than an encounter with a Supreme Being, in modern romance the relationship between lovers becomes the means by which the reader has access to the numinous/sublime. At the same time, it is the characters' inability fully to achieve their desires that enables the reader to experience the maximum sensations of the sublime. The reader paradoxically finds consolation in the characters' pain, which becomes a form of communal suffering. We realize that we are not alone in our vulnerability and mortality, and this encourages us to put an even greater emphasis on human love.

To argue my thesis I will employ the insights of a variety of disciplines--cultural anthropology, psychology, philosophy, religious studies--and use various literary theories about the nature of symbolism and the role played by reader response. More specifically, the first chapter will survey key discussions of the dynamics of the "sublime" with a view to suggesting the way that they accord with and differ from Otto's concept of the "numinous" and thereby serve to expose his particular theological bias. In the next two chapters my specific focus will be on three modern romances which are "classic" examples of the genre and each of which provides a unique treatment of spiritual crisis: Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1850), Charles Williams's *All Hallows' Eve* (1948) and Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1983).

CHAPTER ONE

An Investigation of the Numinous/Sublime

From the beginning of history, humanity has attempted to come to terms with an emotional experience that defies any rational explanation. The oldest and most common tendency is to associate such sensations with some supernatural source. In *Ancient Art and Ritual*, for example, Jane Ellen Harrison explains that many primitive civilizations regarded overwhelming sensations as a central foundation of their religion; as she sees it, their rituals were "not the outcome of intellectual illusion, not even the exercise of a 'mimetic instinct,' but simply in its ultimate analysis, an utterance, a discharge of emotion and longing" (34). It is this same desire for emotional ecstasy that Nietzsche saw in the followers of Dionysos in early Greece. In an extremely vivid description of this uninhibited cult, Nietzsche refers to Schopenhauer's account of the mental and physical state of the Dionysian:

> If we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at this collapse of the *principium individuationis*, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication. (36)

Both Harrison and Nietzsche thus locate the source of religion in a state of mind that defies rational terminology. Early peoples often used religious concepts to explain the intensity of emotion they experienced.

In *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto explains the way this phenomena operates within a Judeo-Christian context. Otto focuses on what he calls the "irrational" aspect of religious experience which has been downplayed as a result of the privileging of rationality. He feels that theology has

stripped religion of its emotional component, making it a matter of logic instead of feeling. To Otto, however, the sense of the Divine "contains a quite specific element or 'moment,' which sets it apart from 'the rational' . . . and which remains inexpressible . . . in the sense that it completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts" (5). He goes on to explain that what occasions such awe and wonder is exclusive to the Divine.

In order to express this "inexpressible" element, Otto first considers the viability of the term "holy." Although the term has acquired ethical connotations, Otto feels that this is merely "a mistranslation and unwarranted 'rationalization' or 'moralization' of the term"; as he sees it, in all religions the "holy" is "the innermost core, and without it no religion would be worthy of the name" (6). Because of its current connotations, however, Otto feels that a new term is required, one that he constructs out of the terms *Omen* and *numen* --"numinous." Having done so, however, he immediately reemphasizes that this term escapes definition: "This mental state is perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined." As something that cannot be defined, the "numinous cannot be taught: "[The individual] must be guided and led on by consideration and discussion of the matter through the ways of his own mind, until he reaches the point at which 'the numinous' in him perforce begins to stir" (7).

The question that arises in turn is what causes this stirring, and here it becomes clear that Otto retains an association of the numinous with traditional concepts of the supernatural. Thus he defines the experience of the numinous as "the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme

above all creatures" (10). It is from this emotion that Otto further defines numinosity as "creature-consciousness." The individual, in realizing his/her own insignificance, cannot but feel the existence of some exterior power that causes this feeling: "The numinous is thus felt as objective and outside the self" (11). It thus becomes understandable why Otto stresses the centrality of the Divine; if there is an outside force that is responsible for causing this feeling of insignificance, the natural assumption would be that it is a supernatural force. The Divine, then, is essential for Otto's purposes.

Having defined the numinous as an emotion that derives from an experience of something outside of the self, Otto goes on to describe the actual physical sensation produced by this phenomena:

> The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrilling vibrant and resonant . . . . It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy. (12-13)

The very different physical sensations that the numinous occasions once again suggest its ambiguous quality and the difficulty of defining the experience. It is also because these feelings defy everyday experience that we need to resort to "metaphor and symbolic expressions, to make the states of mind we are investigating ring out" (12). In order to communicate the sensations of the numinous, one must visualize them with poetic language.

Up to a point, moreover, Otto is willing to concede that great art approaches the numinous. Invoking the concept of the sublime, he argues

that a feature of great artistic works "in particular of certain decorative art, symbols and emblems, [is] that they make a 'downright magical' impression," (66). He later links the sublime directly to the numinous by saying that in "great art the point is reached at which we may no longer speak of the 'magical,' but rather are confronted with the numinous itself" (67). At the same time, however, Otto insists that in order for art truly to achieve the numinous, the content must have a particular religious component. Thus he denies that the work of Goethe reaches the numinous on the grounds that it does not deal with the Divine in proper fashion: "Indeed, it is divination that functions only at the level of the 'daemonic' which, as we saw, precedes religion proper, not at the level of the divine and the holy in the truest sense;" the effect of such art is to generate only "emotional reactions of bewilderment and bedazzlement, without giving real light or warmth to the soul" (153). Art to Otto achieves the power of the numinous only if it celebrates what he considers its ultimate source, the Divine, and if it engenders the feeling of "creature consciousness." The sublime and the numinous are comparable only when art attempts to reveal the all encompassing presence of the Divine, and presents the individual as overwhelmed by his/her insignificance before God. If, as Otto points out, these irrational sensations are exclusive to the Divine, a culture in which God is dead would be deprived of them.

What becomes extremely interesting, in turn, is that the first treatise to deal with these irrational sensations is devoid of any recourse to a religious element. In "On the Sublime," Longinus locates the source of this emotional experience in the power of language rather than associating it with the supernatural. As he defines it:

> sublimity is a certain distinction and excellence in expression, and that it is from no other source than this that the greatest poets and writers have derived their eminence and gained an immortality of renown . . . . The effect of elevated language upon an audience is not persuasion but transport. (80)

Like Otto, Longinus is describing an emotional experience that surpasses intellectual comprehension; the mind must escape the confines of reason in order for the sublime to be achieved; the physical sensations that Longinus associates with the sublime are the same as those Otto associates with the numinous. Whereas Otto argues that the presence of the Divine is necessary to achieve these overwhelming sensations, however, Longinus makes art the primary ingredient.

A similar challenge to Otto's religious bias may be found in Edmund Burke's theories of the sublime, for what is again remarkable is the extent to which they are both describing the same irrational experience. Otto captures the essence of the numinous through the term "creature consciousness," just as Burke feels that in order to experience the sublime, an individual must be confronted with a feeling of pain or terror:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of. (39)

Whereas Otto attributes these feelings to an exterior force that is supernatural, however, Burke offers a variety of every-day situations that have the potential to generate such an effect. The notions of pain and fear that Burke offers are the same feelings Otto associates with "creature consciousness"; Otto, however, has simply decided to project religious significance upon them.

For Otto, a key factor in the experience of the numinous is the realization that the cause of the overwhelming sensation is a Divine governing force, whereby the terror of one's insignificance is replaced with an awe of majesty. In a similar manner, Burke argues that the experiencing of terror must be deflected:

> So it is certain, that it is absolutely necessary my life should be out of any imminent hazard before I can take a delight in the sufferings of others . . . . nay when we do not suffer any very acute pain, nor are exposed to any imminent danger of our own lives, we can feel for others, whilst we suffer ourselves. (48)

For both Otto and Burke, therefore, the individual must be distanced somehow from the terror being experienced in order to be transported by emotion. Whether the terrible object be the idea of an all powerful Deity, "a fatal accident," or as Longinus suggests, the power of language, there must be some kind of safe-guard in order to experience the sublime; otherwise the individual will simply experience horror. When Longinus emphatically relates the potential intensity of language, he uses a horrific image of lightning striking: "Sublimity flashing forth at the right moment scatters everything before it like a thunderbolt, and at once displays the power of the orator in all its plenitude" (80). The essential component of the numinous/sublime is a devastating force that still enables the individual to respond in a positive fashion. According to Otto, it is the notion of a Supreme Being that protects the individual from simply experiencing terror; a Godless world for Otto would not allow one to feel sufficiently secure to experience any delight.

It is already becoming evident that what Otto has labelled the numinous is basically synonymous with what Longinus and Burke have called the sublime. All three are similar not only in their descriptions of

the sensations the numinous/sublime effects, but also in their tracing these sensations to something outside the self. In turn, all three assume that these exterior forces will occasion a uniform or universal response. What all three tend to neglect, therefore, is the role played by the receiving subject.

With a view to suggesting the need to see subjectivity as an important factor in the dynamics of the numinous, it is helpful to consider the concepts that William James advances in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* Although James's focus is upon the religious, he is very conscious of the fact that it is not the "Divine" itself that causes the emotion; rather, he uses the term religious feeling for any human interaction with an element that constitutes overwhelming sensations. "Religious experience" is used by James as means to describe the impact certain experiences have upon the individual:

> There is religious fear, religious love, religious awe, religious joy, and so forth. But religious love is only man's natural emotion of love directed to a religious object; religious fear is only the ordinary fear of commerce, so to speak, the common quaking of the human breast, in so far as the divine retribution may arouse it . . . . (28)

James is acutely aware of the feeling of "creature consciousness" and is also aware of the safeguard a Divine entity provides: "What he craves is to be consoled in his very powerlessness, to feel that the spirit of the universe recognizes and secures him, all decaying and failing as he is" (47). As James points out, however, projections of the Divine are human constructions that rely on natural emotion. The vital ingredient of the sublime, then, is the power of the individual to feel, not a Divine presence.

If it can be agreed that a notion such as the Divine is a construction of the human psyche to help conceptualize the sublime, it can be argued in

turn that what causes the sublime experience comes from within the self, not outside of it. Immanuel Kant in *The Critique of Judgement* presents this notion of the sublime being a product of the mind rather than solely the result of an exterior force: "This makes it evident that true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the judging Subject, and not in the Object of nature that occasions this attitude by the estimate formed of it" (104). According to Kant, it is not the exterior force that produces a sublime response, but the particular state of mind of the individual. He thus describes what Otto perceives as "creature consciousness" from an entirely different perspective. He acknowledges the feeling of insignificance, but does not attribute it to what Otto believes is God's grandeur. Kant locates this feeling within the mind itself:

> The feeling of the sublime is, therefore, at once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason, and simultaneously awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgement of the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense being in accord with ideas of reason . . . . (106)

The feeling of "creature consciousness" is not necessarily the individual realizing his/her insignificance before a Divine presence; rather, "*The sublime is that, the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense*" (98). The exterior object is still a vital ingredient for the sublime, but it is the limit of human reason that effects the ultimate sensation.

As much as he emphasizes the subjective element, however, Kant falls into the same trap as Longinus, Burke and Otto. Although he argues that the individual is ultimately responsible in acknowledging the sublime, Kant goes on to identify exterior elements that provoke a sublime response. Specifically, he limits these sites to nature; he believes that

nothing but nature can provide the sensations necessary to overwhelm the mind. In doing so, he contradicts his original argument that the sublime arises within, for this would make it impossible to limit the exterior forces that have the potential to instill a sublime response. Similarly, he limits the range by seeing his subjective response as something universal and as the only legitimate kind.

Moreover, one significant exterior force that Kant seems to exclude is art. By failing to consider art's ability to induce a sublime response, Kant is not allowing for the subject to be the ultimate judge of the sensation. In arguing that sublimity can be realized only through nature, however, Kant does stress that one must view nature with the perception of an artist: "we must be able to see sublimity in the ocean, regarding it, as the poets do" (122). In turn, one might argue that the very essence of what Kant feels to be sublime is often the subject matter of an artist; it is not the natural object itself, but the overwhelming response of the individual. If the best possible means of articulating the sublime is through metaphor and symbol, then the artist would seem to be most equipped to do so. The artist has the ability to evoke the sublime by focusing upon feelings that cannot be rationally articulated. Whatever the exterior force may be--whether it is Burke's notion of darkness, Otto's conception of the Divine, or Kant's mountain ranges--the artist reveals these conditions or objects in a fashion that triggers an emotional response within the subject; it is the artist who has best access to triggering these very emotions.

Recently, the power of art has been emphasized by Iris Murdoch in her essay "The Sublime and the Beautiful," where she criticizes Kant for neglecting the fact that art is extremely capable of achieving the sublime.

Murdoch is convinced that tragedy evokes the same sensations that Kant limits to natural phenomena:

> Kant creates the error and suggests the cure; for the theory of the sublime can be transformed into a theory of art. "The sublime" is an enjoyment and renewal of spiritual power arising from an apprehension of the vast formless strength of the natural world. How close this is indeed to being a theory of tragedy, if we think of the spectator as gazing not at the Alps, but at the spectacle of human life. (267)

Murdoch's assessment of the sublime is extremely useful because she illustrates that the artist is not limited by the exterior forces that the previous theorists have suggested. Although she too associates the sublime with something bigger than the individual and emphasizes the notion of "creature consciousness," she locates the cause in the terror and pain of the human condition and the world in which we live, rather than attributing it to some single supernatural presence: "It is indeed the realization of a vast and varied reality outside ourselves which brings about a sense initially of terror, and when properly understood of exhilaration and spiritual power" (268). Her words "properly understood" are purposely left ambiguous to allow each individual to deal with "creature consciousness" on his/her own terms. What is also significant here is that it is not a Divine presence that causes the feeling of terror or awe; nor is it necessarily a Divine power that alters terror to exhilaration. What causes the terror is the artistic expression, which in turn is also the means whereby terror becomes exhilaration. The artistic presentation of suffering enables us to "feel for others, whilst we suffer ourselves" (Burke 48).

In this context, Friedrich Nietzsche also makes an important contribution to an understanding of the sublime. For Nietzsche, the art

form most able to evoke the sublime is tragedy, and it does so by conjoining the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The union of these Deities in artistic form provides the proper mix of illusion and intoxication that is necessary to capture the essence of the human condition. For Nietzsche, existence is often an extremely horrific experience that is often overwhelming for the individual, and it is the rebirth of Dionysos that "provides us with all the elements of a profound and pessimistic view of the world, together with the *mystery doctrine of tragedy*: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness" (74). The pain and terror represented through art generates a feeling of insignificance and fear within the audience; the distance present between art and its audience is sufficient for the terror to be displaced, thereby turning the feeling of "creature consciousness" into a sense of the sublime.

For Nietzsche the power of art lies in the artist's ability to unite humanity with the primordial. These primordial instincts are the essence of emotion and a direct link to nature, and thus the notion of "creature consciousness" is revealed as deriving from the conjunction of the human and natural world. Such a union is not the kind that has been romanticized: "we should note that this harmony which is contemplated with such longing by modern man, in fact, this oneness of man with nature is by no means a simple condition that comes into being naturally . . ." (43). Through the union of the individual with nature, one is forced to reconcile the self with the turbulent forces of the natural world. Instead of the notion of a blissful union with nature, Nietzsche emphasizes the suffering

that is entailed: "Contradiction, the bliss born of pain, spoke out from the very heart of nature" (47). Through the allusion to the birthing process, one is immediately made aware of the volatile and often terrible circumstances that the natural elements presents to the individual. At the same time, these circumstances are capable of giving birth to the joy and bliss of life. This paradoxical situation is for Nietzsche the essence of the emotion generated by tragedy:

> With his sublime gestures, [the artist] shows us how necessary is the entire world of suffering, that by means of it the individual may be impelled to realize the redeeming vision, and then, sunk in contemplation of it, sit quietly in his tossing bark, amid the waves. (46)

The essence of "creature consciousness", and thus, the sublime, lies in this unique relationship of terror and joy, of the Dionysian and the Apollonian.

Because of his use of figurative language, the artist is best able to express the paradoxical aspect of the sublime. Thus, in his discussion of "The Language of Paradox," Cleanth Brooks could be describing the sublime:

> it is *that* kind of calm and *that* kind of excitement, and the two states may occur together. But the poet has no one term. Even if he had a polysyllabic term, the term would not provide the solution for his problem. He must work by contradiction and qualification. (36)

The poet, through paradox, is able to articulate the irrational sensations the sublime produces. But what then stimulates the poet to produce these feelings and how does he/she communicate them? How can an artist, as Nietzsche suggests, unite humanity with the primordial world? How can art have the same effect upon its audience as the overwhelming sensation of a Divine presence?

In his analysis of the power that art has upon the reader, Jung provides some possible answers to these questions. He, like Nietzsche, locates the power of art in its ability to reveal primordial images, which in turn, brings the reader closer to his/her pre-rational consciousness. The essence of the numinous or the sublime resides in the emotional response generated from within the individual, and it is this kind of response that Jung feels is also present in the experiencing of art. For Jung, the artist is overcome by primordial images from the collective unconscious which force their way into the consciousness: "These works positively force themselves upon the author; his hand seized, his pen writes things that his mind contemplates with amazement" (73). The artist tries to relay these images to an audience, but can do so only through symbol. It is the reader's confrontation with these symbols which effects the sensation of the sublime: "That probably explains why a symbolic work is so stimulating, why it grips us so intensely, but also why it seldom affords us a purely aesthetic enjoyment" (77). For Jung, myths are an excellent medium for the evocation of the primordial: "The moment when this mythological situation reappears [in literature] is always characterized by a peculiar emotional intensity; it is as though chords in us were struck that had never resounded before . . ." (81). For Jung, therefore, art is more than simply an aesthetic device (as Kant perceives it). By re-aquainting us with the primordial conscious, art is capable of putting us in touch with our deepest emotions, thereby creating a state that is conducive to the experiencing of the sublime.

Yet Jung's theories also prove problematic insofar as his conception of the numinous seems to retain a religious cast. As Jung defines it: "The *numinosum* is either a quality belonging to a visible object or the

influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness" (qtd. by Maduro from *CW* 11). Commenting on this definition, Renaldo Maduro and Joseph B. Wheelright have argued that: "Jung felt that belief, conscious or unconscious--that is, a prior readiness to trust a transcendent power--was a prerequisite for experiencing the *numinosum*" (191). Similarly, David Morris in *The Religious Sublime* states that although the Divine is not absolutely necessary for the sublime, the ability to generate it is greater if religion is the poet's subject matter: "Sublime poetry, of course, did not have to be religious. But it frequently was" (46).

Although positing a Divine force has long been the essential means of explaining the irrational sensations people experience, whether they be called numinous or sublime, I wish to argue that numinosity can be equally realized, and even more so at times, without the presence of any supernatural Being or the belief in a transcendent power. Imagine the extreme horror and the resulting "creature consciousness" of an individual who is suddenly deprived of faith, and must face existence without belief in a God or the safety-net religion provided. Over the past century religious faith has suffered immensely, making the experience of "creature consciousness" much more intense than the conditions Otto envisioned. Nietzsche's notion of the individual being tossed in the middle of the sea, forced to contemplate his/her existence in what often feels to be an overwhelming world, is likely more applicable today than it has ever been, just as more than ever we require literature to transform the terror of the human condition into a feeling of sublimity. According to Wayne Shumaker, the "efforts of literary critics to demonstrate that in the future we must look to poetry as a substitute for religion . . . have won

few converts" (4). Although this may be true of an institutionalized conception of religion, it could also be argued that in providing solace from the terror and pain of life, literature does offer some form of spiritual renewal, and therefore creates a sense of security perhaps even more immediate and profound than traditional religious faith and practice.

Chapter II

"Sacred" Presence in "Secular" Mythology

Over the past century Western society has had to contend with the severe decline of religious faith. The immense absence that results forces the individual to seek other means of spiritual fulfillment. In *The Myth of the Eternal Return* Mircea Eliade discusses how, throughout time, civilizations have tried to abolish the sensation of chaos that results from a loss of spiritual values. The primary means, he argues, is the invocation and ritual enactment of creation myths: "the act of the Creation realizes the passage from the nonmanifest to the manifest or, to speak cosmologically, from chaos to cosmos" (18). In modern Western society, however, the decline of religious faith means that the original Judeo-Christian creation myth no longer has the power to effect cosmos. In order for spiritual renewal to be achieved, then, a new mythology is necessary.

Northrop Frye in *The Secular Scripture* also emphasizes the power of myth, and distinguishes between "sacred" and "secular" forms. Although the two types have identical structural forms, these myths have traditionally played different roles in society. Sacred myth has been privileged over the secular because of the "truth" that has been associated with Judeo-Christian concepts of the Divine:

> In European literature, down to the last couple of centuries, the myths of the Bible have formed a special category, as a body of stories with a distinctive authority. Poets who attach themselves to this central mythical area, like Dante or Milton, have been thought of as possessing a special kind of seriousness conferred on them by their subject matter. (7)

The religious truth thought to be contained in biblical stories is the ultimate reason they were (are) considered to have a greater significance than secular myth. As Frye points out, however, science in the last two centuries has become accepted as truth whereas "the mythological universe" is seen to be "more obviously a construct" (15). At the same time, the need for myth has not diminished; although myths have no empirical basis, they articulate truths that are as psychologically true as any scientific fact. For Frye, therefore, the question becomes: "Is it possible, then, to look at secular stories as a whole, and as forming a single integrated vision of the world, parallel to the Christian and Biblical vision?" (15). The answer is undoubtedly yes, and modern romance is one literary genre that is capable of providing a mythology that offers the same potential for renewal that Eliade felt was present in ancient creation myths.

Moreover, to Frye myth provides a recognition of "the human condition" and religion, art and science are the "constructs" that "man throws up because he finds the recognition intolerable." Literature therefore reflects "the human compulsion to create in the face of chaos" (30-31). In this way, myth can be seen as the articulation of "creature consciousness", and literature becomes the means of transforming the terror associated with such experience, a terror compounded by the loss of faith in traditional religion. As Evelyn J. Hinz has noted, romance, in particular, is concerned with such spiritual chaos, and an examination of *Wuthering Heights*, *All Hallows' Eve*, and *The Bone People* also supports Hinz's contention that romance posits a fundamental quarrel with Judeo-Christianity (905).

In *Wuthering Heights* Emily Brontë depicts a love affair between Catherine and Heathcliff that matches the intensity that Otto feels is present in the experience of the Divine. The same irrational sensations that Otto associates with an individual's relationship to God are found in human love in *Wuthering Heights.* In an essay entitled "From Religious Ecstasy to Romantic Fulfillment: John Wesley's Journal and the Death of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*" Katherine Sorensen argues that this romance is directly associated with Methodism, which she sees as a religion primarily founded on the irrational: "Wesley had to trust feeling over intellect; his was a faith based not on rationality, but on the individual's experience of God's presence and power" (3). Although Sorensen is perceptive in saying that the intensity of Catherine's and Heathcliff's love is equal to Wesley's love toward God, however, what she overlooks is the extent to which their love is deliberately portrayed to be non-Christian. Even as children they exhibit a self-sufficient form of love. Thus when Catherine's father dies and Nelly is about to comfort them with concepts of heaven, she concludes: "but they were calmer, and did not need me to console them. The little souls were comforting each other with better thoughts than I could have hit on . . ." (44). Their love has a spiritual element that is truly religious, but devoid of any Christian associations.

As their relationship grows, it becomes even more clear that Catherine and Heathcliff's love is to be realized as a replacement for Christianity. There are numerous examples where they articulate their love for one another in a tone that implies religious fulfillment without the presence of the Divine. For example when Catherine tells Nelly of her

dream of dying and going to heaven, she emphasizes that the joy she experiences comes from being cast out:

> "This is nothing," cried she; "I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy." (72)

Thus Catherine's love for Heathcliff obviously surpasses what has been traditionally considered the greatest love all, God; without Heathcliff, heaven is nothing and through him she can experience the joys that are traditionally associated with the Divine.

Heathcliff's passion for Catherine is equally intense and blasphemous, as suggested by Nelly's description of him as "praying like a Methodist; only the deity he implored is senseless dust and ashes" (144). The term "only" has great significance here, because Heathcliff, unlike a Methodist, is not praying to God, but to Catherine's buried and rotting body. As Nelly notes furthermore, "and God, when addressed, was curiously confounded with his own black father!" (144). The phrase his "own black father" is open to interpretation, but definitely some kind of Satanic aspect is implied. Satan is theoretically the arch enemy of Christianity, and by associating himself with the Devil, Heathcliff completely distances himself from God. Sorensen implies that the *only* difference between Heathcliff's and Catherine's love and Methodism is that no Deity is involved: "Doctrine, to Brontë, is not necessary for the reality of Methodism. Even God is not necessary . . ." (4). The absence of God, however, implies more than a lack of doctrinal sanction; the result is an entire rejection of Christian ideology. The Demonic nature of Heathcliff

makes it clear that the love between him and Catherine is completely at odds with Christianity, regardless of denomination.

Brontë has inserted only one voice that is consumed with religious doctrine--Joseph--and his voice is also the only one that is completely unintelligible to the reader. The reader becomes utterly confused and frustrated by the religious jargon that he continually spews forth. His words often consist of judgmental phrases primarily referring to damnation:

> 'Maister, coom hither! Miss Cathy's riven th' back off "Th' Helmet uh Salvation," un' Heathcliff's pawsed his fit intuh t' first part uh "T' Brooad Way to destruction!" It's fair flaysome ut yah let 'em goa on this gait. Ech! th' owd man ud uh laced 'em properly--bud he's goan!' (27)

Moreover, if Joseph's language is not enough in itself to convince the reader that Brontë is parodying the impotent Christian voice, Nelly's laughter should. In a scene where Earnshaw lies on the floor, bleeding profusely and obviously in need of help, Joseph's response is to pray:

> Heathcliff gave him [Joseph] a push onto his knees in the middle of the blood, and flung a towel to him; but instead of proceeding to dry it up, he joined his hands, and began a prayer which excited my laughter from its odd phraseology. (147)

The ridiculous manner in which Joseph is portrayed clearly illustrates the defunct nature of Christianity.

In response to the way that biblical myth is no longer able to provide a satisfactory view of how humanity perceives itself, Brontë offers a new mythology. Although Sorensen overlooks the parodic element when she argues that the love affair of Heathcliff and Catherine is a form of Methodism, she is accurate in stating that their love is religious. The term religious here does not imply the Divine or theology, but rather a

spiritual element that satisfies the soul. According to Sorensen, for "Heathcliff and Catherine, spiritual reality is not located in another realm, like that distant and alien heaven out of which the angry angels throw Catherine in her dream. Rather, spiritual reality is located in the world around us properly and passionately felt" (4). It is this spiritual awareness that Brontë offers a society undergoing much spiritual decline. She manages to instill the notion of earthly salvation by creating the mythical love affair of Heathcliff and Catherine.

The genesis of the myth embodied within *Wuthering Heights* stems primarily from Heathcliff, a creature of archetypal proportions who acts in a framework that is consistent with what Frye believes to be the mythic core of romance:

> In the Greek romances we find stories of mysterious birth, oracular prophecies about the future contortions of the plot, foster parents, adventures which involve capture by pirates, narrow escapes from death, recognition of the true identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine. (4)

Wuthering Heights contains all of the above characteristics (with the exception of pirates and a non-conventional form of marriage). Within this mythical framework Heathcliff is the Dionysiac figure.

Heathcliff's character is governed by passion and emotion which are the essential qualities of this Dionysian spirituality, one which is at odds with the ethical and moral values of Christianity. Dorothy Van Ghent in an essay entitled "Dark 'Otherness' in *Wuthering Heights*" carefully examines why Heathcliff is beyond ethics or morality:

> Heathcliff is no more ethically relevant than is flood or earthquake or whirlwind. It is as impossible to speak of him in terms of "sin" and "guilt" as it is to speak in this way of the natural elements or the creatures in the animal world . . . . that world which is "other"

> than and "outside of" the consciously developed human--*appears* to act with an energy similar to the energies of the soul. . . . (156)

Van Ghent is describing Heathcliff in the same manner that Jung describes the primordial. It is through the primordial figure of Heathcliff that Brontë breaks with Christianity, allowing for spirituality to be awakened once again and satisfaction of the soul to be achieved.

Heathcliff is attributed bestial qualities by his actions and the commentary of both Nelly and Lockwood, and his primordial nature is apparent throughout the romance--"growled Mr. Heathcliff" (16) or "He's not a human being" (143). It is his completely uninhibited passion, however, that evidences his primordial nature most persuasively. Heathcliff's ferocious energy makes it possible to believe in the unconditional love he has for Catherine and eventually becomes the source for the religious element. One scene in particular that vibrates with passion occurs when Heathcliff must confront Catherine's death: "He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears" (139). It is at this point in the text where, to return to Eliade, a new creation myth is developed in order to create a sacred prototype necessary for cosmos to be manifested. Christianity's notion of salvation has already been vehemently rejected, giving way to Heathcliff's and Catherine's earthly salvation. Loss of faith in the Divine is answered with Heathcliff's plea to Catherine:

> You said I killed you--haunt me, then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers, I believe. I know the ghosts have wandered on earth. Be with me always--take any form--drive me mad! Only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my soul. (139).

The religious intonation here is found in his love for Catherine; only through their union can salvation be achieved. All is chaos as long as they are without one another, and cosmos is achieved when they are finally reunited.

In the final scene of *Wuthering Heights* Nelly recounts meeting a frightened youth upon the grange: " 'They's Heathcliff and a woman, yonder, under t' Nab,' he blubbered, 'un' Aw darnut pass 'em' " (265). The youth's confrontation occurs after Heathcliff's and Catherine's death, implying that as ghosts Catherine and Heathcliff have finally formed a sacred union, or what Evelyn J. Hinz calls a "hierogamy." As Hinz explains in her discussion of the different marriage plots in the novel and romance: "marriage for archaic man is the hierogamy, the sacred marriage, and the prototype for this sacred marriage is the union of earth and sky" (905). The mythical dimensions of Heathcliff's and Catherine's union suggests that their love surpasses the limits of earthly existence. Their love has proved to be eternal: not even death can end it, for their love overcomes the barrier death presents when they seek one another out in the afterlife. The union of Catherine and Heathcliff, which has taken on mythical proportions, has finally been realized and the progress from chaos to cosmos has similarly been achieved. The religious void that has occasioned the chaos is abolished by the spiritual fulfillment evident in Catherine's and Heathcliff's love and eventual sacred union.

Charles Williams similarly provides access into the sacred world of love in his romance *All Hallows' Eve*. The romance occurs in war-torn London shortly after the second World War, in a period of emotional and spiritual deprivation. Along with the spiritual decay is chaos, and what is needed is a new vision for humanity. To provide this new mythology

Williams offers a tale which illustrates the demise of traditional Christianity, thereby allowing for a more personal spirituality to be conceived that is reminiscent of the earthly spirituality Brontë offers.

To emphasize the decay of religious values and the need of a new saviour, Williams introduces a false prophet, Simon LeClerc. This new "saviour" who has been getting recognition around the world is actually a perversion of the Trinity: "The Foreign Office has been taking a mild concern in all these new prophets, including this one. Then there's the Russian one and the Chinese. You get them at times like these" (29). The three prophets referred to are really only a magician who has divided and multiplied his image. His method involves offering solace where traditional religion has failed; he attempts to persuade people that he has the power to cure the ills of the human condition. The greatest of these is dying, and at one point he suggests to Richard that he has the power to bring Richard's wife back from the dead:

> "Is she dead?"
> The harsh word did not break the calm. Richard said "Yes." The god's voice continued. "Well we shall see. Most things are possible. If I send for her, she may come." (105)

Simon uses the power to heal (even necromancy) to attract a following and assert himself as their god. His mission is proclaimed to be one of love, but ironically it is love that proves to be the source of power that defeats him.

Simon is a severely perverted Christ figure and, therefore, makes a comment on the shape of Christianity today. He constantly proclaims to be preaching love and peace, yet the reader quickly realizes that his words are empty. The impotence of Simon's words reflects the emptiness of scripture and prayer in society, and at the same time suggests the need

for revitalizing the "word." The weakness of Simon is detected earliest when his empty incantation comes in contact with the words of Betty and Lester: "The sweat was on his forehead as he continued with the spell. He could just utter his own word as he willed, but he could not banish from it the other song" (165). This other song that defeats him comes from Betty, whose words are overflowing with meaning and emotion:

> "Lester!" As the word left her lips, it was changed. It became--hardly the Name, but at least a tender mortal approximation to the Name. And when it had left her lips, it hung in the air, singing itself, prolonging and repeating itself. (162)

Just as the "word" of the Bible was once sacred, the words of Betty and Lester now command that same reverence. Betty's words acquire a significance that surpasses their immediate denotation: the word is made flesh through Betty, while Simon's words remain empty signifiers. The incarnation of Simon's words is finally attempted when he makes a body for Evelyn and Lester, but, like his words, this body degenerates into ashes.

The source of meaning, however, is essentially located in the word, and if we investigate the "word" of the text, we discover that Williams, like Brontë, abandons the traditional Christian word or mythology and presents a new gospel of truth. As in *Wuthering Heights*, the new spirituality of *All Hallows' Eve* is found through loving human relationships. In her study of religion and fantasy in Williams's fiction, Gunnar Urang locates the spiritual center of *All Hallows' Eve* in human relationships rather than in a separate exterior force that Simon represents: "the locus of power shifts from the human individual and the magical object to human relationships, which in turn participate in the power of being itself" (51). The saving "word" in this romance is the love

that constantly grows and develops until it becomes a form of heaven on earth. Such a view derives from Williams's belief, as T. S. Eliot tells us in the introduction, that "there was no frontier between the material and the spiritual world" (xiii). Salvation for Williams is not a distant and elusive experience one can only hope to achieve, but an immediate joy experienced through human love.

Urang describes *All Hallows' Eve* as an eschatological work because it concerns itself with immediate salvation (76). The romance does not, however, adhere to the apocalyptic doctrine of the Bible, as Urang would like to believe. The romance illustrates a new beginning in which life and spirituality are one; there is not a progression to an end, but to a beginning of life. It is the progression from chaos to cosmos once again, and, like Brontë, Williams offers cosmos through love.

Love in *All Hallows' Eve*, however, is not portrayed as the innate experience that Brontë depicts in *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff and Catherine are consumed by a love that they are subject to from childhood, whereas the characters in *All Hallows' Eve* undergo a series of incidents that eventually cause them to realize the intensity of the love that they had previously not acknowledged. The relief from chaos and spiritual decay was before them all the time, yet they remained oblivious to it. Lester articulates the spiritual fulfillment provided by what seemed at the time to be an insignificant gesture:

> Richard had brought her a glass of water and saved her getting up . . . for it was not water that they were bringing but their own joy, or perhaps it was water and joy at once; and everything was altered, for no one had to be unselfish any more, so free they all were now from the receding death-light of the earth. (163)

The bliss Lester feels is then described in a fashion that is reminiscent of Catherine's dream: "the fact that he was bringing her his own joy to present joy . . . was a deed of such excelling merit on his part that all the choirs of heaven and birds of earth could never properly sing its praise" (163). Like Catherine, Lester experiences a love that heaven is incapable of offering. It is love itself that is now acknowledged as a vehicle of faith that is capable of healing spiritual ills. The relationship of lovers offers the spiritual fulfillment once restricted to relations to the Divine.

The saving grace of love is later realized by Richard who becomes reborn by the love of his dead wife. The Christian notion of salvation through Baptism is rewritten: Lester's love becomes the pool in which Richard is given birth: "He had tasted the new life in Jonathan's flat; he had drunk of it in his wife's eyes" (170). Thus the mythology that Williams presents reflects Christian ideology, but in a completely secular fashion. Just as the love of Heathcliff and Catherine is "Methodism without the Deity," as Sorenson puts it, so Williams offers salvation without any Divine presence. In a more literal scene of baptism, Betty is baptized in an unorthodox fashion in a lake as a child. The incident also secularizes the sacred act by having her nurse perform the service. The narrator points out that the true significance of the act lies in the love for the child, not in the doctrine that it satisfies:

> The natural affection of this woman and her granddaughter had in fact dispelled the shadows of giant schemes. And this then was what that strange Rite called baptism was--a state of being of which water was the material identity, a life rippling and translucent with joy. (208)

Here the role of supernatural intervention is deliberately removed from the act; spirituality is seen to lie not beyond, but to be inherent in the

natural realm. It is also significant that in rewriting baptism, Williams has a secular *woman* and servant perform the service; in an era much more conservative than our own, this doubly emphasizes the doctrinally subversive and human quality of the act.

The new beginning effected through love can be understood as the existence of spirituality on earth "as it is in Heaven." According to Gunnar Urang, what Williams presents is "this world glorified, revealed as an immensely complex harmony of flesh and spirit, past and present, natural and supernatural" (78). The utopian aspect, however, is tempered by the final scene of the romance, where the full implications of love are revealed. Like the other Christian themes that Williams adopts for his own mythology, he also advances unorthodox notions of how and where an individual can experience heaven. He not only stresses that heaven is attainable to the living along with the dead, but he rewrites what the state of paradise entails. Although romance stresses love as the new salvation, this salvation is not the blissful paradise of Christianity. In addition to all the joy and happiness present in love, there is also pain and terror. Williams's conception of heavenly existence is a paradox, and all the characters are forced to come to terms with it.

One of the most revealing scenes depicting this new paradise occurs when Lester is about to enter into what Williams calls the "city." The city is synonymous with heavenly existence, but in entering it, Lester is overcome with a feeling of pain and sorrow:

> The light was like dawn, except that it had in it a tinge redder than dawn, and the same was in the the river and the rain, exquisite and blood-roseal, delicate and enriching. Only she felt again the awful sense of separation. It was like a sharp pain in a great joy. (256)

All the joy that the after life has to offer does not compensate for the pain of leaving Richard, and she must eventually try to put him out of her mind in order to feel any of the joy: "Of any future union, if any were to be, she could not even begin to think; had she, the sense of separation would have been incomplete, and the deadly keenness of the rain unenjoyed" (257). The heavenly paradise put forth in the romance is consistent with that from which it derives; the sensation of love, to which Heathcliff and Catherine also attest, consists of pain and joy equally, and the spiritual salvation it offers is equally paradoxical.

After Lester departs from her husband's company, Richard is forced to face the pain that exists in the new paradise into which he has been born by realizing his love for his wife. All the joys and return of faith Richard has received have been made possible by Lester, and now this joy seems to have been lost through Lester's absence. The paradoxical sensations experienced here are consistent with Williams's theory of love; Urang states that works such as *All Hallows' Eve* "emphasize the terror which is inseparable from the love that is ultimate, the evil out of which good must often come" (63). The ultimate love that Richard discovers is the new spirituality Lester has bestowed upon him, and it is not without pain that he says to Jonathan who is now in danger of losing Betty, "I shouldn't worry. You won't have her if you keep her; when she wants to go she ought to go" (260). Richard's paradise is suddenly a hell he must overcome, and it is Betty who is now becoming the source of love from which both Richard and Jonathan must draw.

The suffering individuals at the end of the text are analogous to the spiritually wounded for whom Williams is writing. Like the followers of Simon who have been abandoned by their saviour, the reader can relate to

the absence Christianity has left. It is Betty who finally offers healing through love which is the new salvation and the new paradise: "As the high heavenly power in her was poured into those tormented beings, so the power, and still more quickly the joy of the power, passed from her" (272). Williams offers us this romance, just as Betty offers her healing kisses, to establish once again cosmos out of the chaos into which the reader and the suffering individuals have been thrown. By having the characters in *All Hallows' Eve* eventually become aware of the spirituality inherent in human love, Williams manages to articulate what is basically an irrational experience.

The representation of the mythical transition from chaos to cosmos is perfected by *The Bone People* in which, like Brontë and Williams, Keri Hulme depicts a people who have been deprived of their cultural and spiritual identity and are in need of a new mythology. Hulme's method is not only to rewrite previous creation myths, but to conflate two traditional mythologies that have lost their power. Being of both European and Maori ancestry, Hulme uses both Judeo-Christian and Maori themes to suggest that rebirth is possible to those who "achieve communion through the power of love and friendship and finally integration with others" (Talmor 93). Hulme not only writes of integration, but also dramatizes this theme through the narrative techniques she uses.

Early in the romance, Hulme begins the rewriting of the Judeo-Christian myth that has been instilled in the Maoris as a result of European invasion of New Zealand. The opening line of each of the initial pages is "**IN THE BEGINNING**" followed by separate definitions of the chaos present at this point in time: "it was darkness, and more fear, and a howling wind across the sea"; "it was a tension, an element of strain that

grew and crept like a thin worm through the harmony of their embrace" (5-6). The diction suggests the chaos depicted in Genesis, but instead of a biblical story of the fall and return to grace, Hulme makes loss of faith in Judeo-Christianity the site of chaos. The spiritual crisis of the characters is poignantly expressed in the words of the old Kahutea who Joe encounters in the depths of his own suicidal despair: "I have no faith in the old ways and no hope in the new" (35). Equally evocative of spiritual loss is the way Kerewin is described as "frowning at the silent crucifix," (65) and the way she explains affinities with Simon: "*Who else do I know who listens to the silence of God on lonely beaches?*" (96). Instead of the characters being awed into silence by the presence of the Divine, here silence is used to suggest the total absence of any supernatural force.

Like the dying faith in the Judeo-Christian myths, belief in Maori myth is declining in a culture heavily influenced by European ideology, and so Hulme incorporates Maori archetypes into the romance in the same manner that she utilizes Christian mythology. In "The Bone People After *Te Kaihu*" Susan Ash illustrates Hulme's knowledge of Maori myths and how they may be interpreted in *The Bone People.* One myth in particular employed by Hulme captures the essence of the union of Kerewin, Joe and Simon:

> The significance of the symbolism may be found in a proverb from Tane . . . . ("There are two, the sun, the moon," from which came the perfection of light.) According to some legends, this union resulted in the birth of Nga Whetu, the stars. Another legend has Te Ra, Te Marama and Nga Whetu all children of Rangi and Papa, three different, but necessary forms of light. Both legends are reflected in the novel as the presence of Joe and Simon leads to Kerewin's rebirth . . . . (127).

The power of Hulme's romance lies in the way its mythology can be understood from both Maori and Christian perspectives (although neither perspective is actually necessary to grasp the spiritual essence of the romance). The characters in *The Bone People* are a blend of ethnic backgrounds, and the means of accessing salvation are equally diverse. In "A Kiwi Tale of Love and Violence" Sorenson refers to Hulme's statement concerning her intention to create a new mythology since "there are not many New Zealand myths which are potent" (93). Thus the union of the triad depicted in Maori legend could equally be discussed in terms of the Trinity. As Talmor accurately points out, "He [Simon] is the god that must be sacrificed so the others may be reborn" (97). Through the conflation of archetypes from a wide range of mythologies, Hulme is able to produce a myth that shares their implications, but is at the same time unique.

In this new myth, the power of love is shown to be the source of salvation and the rebirth of the characters, but like Williams--and to an even greater extent--Hulme emphasizes that love also entails pain and terror. Contemplating what life may entail after her reunion with Joe and Simon, Kerewin is able to say with confidence, "He endures all the hate. We can endure anything. We are toughened, different, an annealed steal, triple-forged. But if I were alone . . . " (444). Kerewin is aware of the gift that has been bestowed upon her through love, but she remains acute to the ever-present threat of its absence, leaving her in a rare moment of speechlessness. The unusual love triad of Kerewin, Joe and Simon illustrates the horrible pain that is as much a part of love as the happiness they experience.

A profoundly moving scene that illustrates the paradox inherent in love occurs when Simon, an extremely sensitive child, comes across a

seagull that has been wounded beyond repair. Simon is immediately overcome with grief and after much anguished wondering about what to do, he decides he must perform a brutal act to save the bird from its misery: "He drops to his knees beside the bird, closes his eyes, the stone tight in his hand, and hits until he can hear nothing, feel nothing moving anymore" (235). Because of the love Simon has for the bird, he must kill the bird and suffer the immense pain that naturally arises as result of his action: "Simon puts his head on his drawnup knees. There is a singing in his head, and a bitter constriction in his throat. He tries to swallow and his gorge rises. He dry-retches repeatedly" (235). Simon's violent killing of a creature he loves offers insight into the greatest violence of the romance.

Violence in *The Bone People* is frequent and horrific, but nothing can compare to the vicious beatings Joe inflicts upon Simon. What is most disturbing, however, is that Joe loves Simon immensely and is devastated with every beating he delivers: each beating Joe gives reflects the love he has for his son. This paradox of love and pain is the same kind evidenced in the scene in which Simon kills the suffering bird. Joe fears that the eccentric characteristics of his child will cause trouble and seriously jeopardize Simon's well-being. Unable to cope with the danger of losing his son, or even worse, having his child mistreated by others, Joe must beat him, in the same way that Simon beats the seagull to put it out of its misery. After the first beating, Joe reveals the pain to himself that his blows have caused:

> "Look tama, that was for your own good." . . . "Otherwise, otherwise," he looks blearily into the child's darkened tearclouded eyes, "you could get really badly hurt, And I don't want you hurt, tama."

Sweet Christ, don't look at me like that. (136)

Joe is unable to come to terms with his brutal actions, and his grief is magnified by the passive child's figure standing before him. Although it might seem to the reader that Simon's greatest danger is his father, his father is simultaneously the loving force that is essential for Simon's happiness.

The notion of redemption through love is primarily dramatized through the character of Kerewin who at first resists love because of the pain that it entails. Early in her relationship with Simon she recognizes the paradox of love when contemplating the nature of her response to him:

> It's almost a feeling of protection I have . . . because he's leaving himself so wide open? I could sneer or scold, or stomp on it, or him . . . but he seems to have decided I'll do none of these things. So that's him trusting me, and this, this *peculiar* sensation that tightens my chest and throat is the spinoff. (127)

Although Kerewin is becoming aware of the immense power of love, it is not until she is willing to accept the terrible aspect that she is able to experience the spiritual regeneration it entails.

Joe's final assault on Simon nearly ends Simon's life, and also causes the near death experiences of both Joe and Kerewin. But it is through the near loss of Simon that Kerewin and Joe are able to realize that it is human love that is the means to salvation. Both make symbolic journeys into the wilderness, and both are rescued by ancient mythical Maori figures that offer life through love. The loving gestures of these healing figures not only enlighten Joe and Kerewin about spiritual healing, but also bestow upon them the gift of second chance, and thus the opportunity of rebirth. Through this rebirth they are able to achieve a concrete kind of salvation, through one another, enabling Kerewin finally

to say: "We're chance we three, we're the beginning free" (424). This new freedom and joy of life is "the moral discovery that Kerewin makes after a long time of isolation from others: and by making this discovery she achieves at last that freedom that is so dear to her, the freedom to be herself and to create, but a freedom within a community, not outside it" (Talmor 95). From out of the depths of despair, the characters are able to overcome the pain and terror existing in love, and to experience salvation through their harmonious union.

The spiritual love that is fulfilled in the conclusion of the romance is not limited to the relationship between Joe, Kerewin and Simon. Just as previous myths have been rewritten to illustrate the new salvation, so Kerewin expands on the Christian conception of the Trinity: "*So we'll make that seven new directions for my life--Deity might as well delight in yet another odd number*" (436). The communion that Kerewin achieves through Simon and Joe initiates her loving embrace of life and all its diverse elements. The "Deity" she evokes is her integration into community which she had previously feared and shunned. It is out of pain that the three characters are able finally to unite and to form a bond of love that results in their eventual rebirth.

In *Wuthering Heights*, *All Hallows' Eve* and *The Bone People*, the characters are all questing for a form of salvation that can be achieved only through love. All must undergo some form of descent in order to overcome the loss of faith and to experience a spiritual rebirth. Thus in describing what Hulme provides in *The Bone People*, Sascha Talmor equally captures the import of Brontë's and Williams's works:

> She gives us new insights into people living in complete isolation, who achieve communion through the power of love and friendship and

> finally integration with others. The novel gives us a modern version of the age-old myth of the quest, death, and rebirth. (93)

Each romance produces a form of "secular scripture" that is necessary for the shaping of a new human vision. The lack of faith in a traditional transcendent Deity is replaced by a vision of spiritual fulfillment through the physical and emotional reality of love. What now must be addressed is whether modern romance is also capable of evoking all of the other irrational sensations that Otto believes are exclusive to the Divine.

Chapter III

Entering the "Arena" of Modern Romance

Much emphasis thus far has been placed on the presence of spirituality within romance, but it is also important to examine how the reading experience itself can be linked to the numinous/sublime. In "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," Wolfgang Iser examines the relationship between the reader and the text that is essential for the reading process to achieve its maximum potential. The power of Iser's argument lies in the way that it challenges the notion that the reader is passive. The reading process is more like entering "an arena in which the reader and author participate in a game of the imagination" (275). The reader is no longer just the spectator, but an active participant who is essential for the success of the work. The text consists of "component parts" that provide a base upon which the reader imposes meaning. Iser employs the term "component parts" to suggest the way a text expands beyond its verbal framework. He explains that "sentences are 'component parts' insofar as they make statements, claims, or observations, or convey information, and so establish various perspectives in the text. But they remain 'component parts'--they are not the sum total of the text itself" (277). The sentences, then, demand to be interpreted, whereby the reader ultimately becomes responsible for the response that is generated.

In order for the interaction between the reader and the work to occur, there must be a certain degree of indeterminacy in the text. The indeterminacy enables the reader to inscribe his/her own meaning upon what is written; the act of reading, then, becomes as creative as the writing process. As Iser explains: "literary texts transform reading into a

creative process that is far above mere perception of what is written" (279). By participating in the creative process, the reader experiences an immediacy that resembles real sensations. The reader feels that the fiction he/she is encountering is much closer to reality than it truly is: "This is why the reader often feels involved in events which, at the time of reading, seem real to him, even though in fact they are very far from his own reality" (278-79). In Iser's conception of reading, the reader experiences sensations that approximate reality, which would then explain how a text can evoke an intensity of emotion that achieves the sublime.

Modern romance is a genre that maintains the indeterminacy that Iser feels is essential to generate the maximum reading response. Part of the indeterminacy in romance is produced through the use of symbol. The symbols maintain a suitable level of indeterminacy because, as D. H. Lawrence says, "Symbols are organic units of consciousness with a life of their own, and you can never explain them away, because their value is dynamic, emotional, belonging to the sense-consciousness of the body and soul, and not simply mental" (295). To emphasize the profundity of symbols, Lawrence makes the distinction between myth/symbol and allegory:

> Allegory is narrative description using, as a rule, images to express certain definite qualities. Each image means something, and is a term in the argument and nearly always for a moral or didactic purpose . . . . Myth likewise is descriptive narrative using images. But myth is never an argument, it never has a didactic nor moral purpose, you can draw no conclusion from it. (295-96)

He further illustrates how symbols are never fully saturated of meaning, and in turn their cumulative emotional effect by discussing the Chronos myth: "The myth of Chronos lives on beyond explanation, for it describes a

profound experience of the human body and soul, an experience which is never exhausted and never will be exhausted, for it is being felt and suffered now, and it will be felt and suffered while man remains man" (296). Symbols cloud the border between subject (reader) and object (text) while engaging the reader's emotions to the point where the illusion of reality is present. When effectively employed, symbols provide the bases upon which the reader inscribes meaning, thus allowing the numinous/sublime to be actively experienced.

The way that the symbol generates its impact is also clarified in the work of Jung and James Baird. For both of them symbols evoke humanity's primordial nature. In this way, symbols unite the individual to his/her own deepest and most intense emotions. In *Psyche and Symbol,* Jung locates the source of symbol in the unconscious, which accounts for its profound and diverse effects. From within the unconscious, archetypes are made apparent to the conscious in the form of symbols. For Jung, the unconscious has two distinct forms: the "personal unconscious" and the "collective unconscious": "Whereas the contents of the *personal unconscious* are acquired during the individual's lifetime, the contents of the *collective unconscious* are invariably archetypes that were present from the beginning" (6). The archetypes that derive from the collective unconscious are most effective because the conscious "is fascinated by [them], held captive, as if hypnotized" (15). These archetypes, however, cannot truly be apprehended by the intellect, which accounts for their vitality:

> they are the foundation stones of the psychic structure, which in its totality exceeds the limits of consciousness and therefore can never become the object of direct cognition. The effects of anima and animus can indeed be made conscious, but they themselves are

> factors transcending consciousness and beyond the reach of perception and volition. (19)

The unconscious, whether at the personal or collective level, constantly forces its way into consciousness, yet the conscious mind can never fully articulate the content that the unconscious generates.

Although Jung astutely points out that the archetypes manifested remain indeterminate, he is equally aware of the enlightenment achieved through them. He explains this paradox by differentiating between cognitive and physical realization. The most compelling knowledge the individual is capable of incorporating comes not from theoretical logic, but when the information is felt: "It is through the 'affect' that the subject becomes involved and so comes to feel the whole weight of reality. . . . Hence a purely intellectual insight is not enough, because one knows only the words and not the substance of the thing from inside" (32). It is precisely this kind of enlightenment that symbol is capable of providing, and which moves the reader to such a large degree. Thus, Jung sees the symbol as the means whereby the artist verbalizes the base of human emotion: "By giving it [the archetypal image] shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking" (*The Spirit in Man* 82). It is also in the power of the symbol to evoke the primordial that the "religious" significance of art can be seen to reside.

Baird similarly recognizes the social and spiritual need for symbols and the healing process they can effect. In *Ishmael: A Study of the Symbolic Mode of Primitivism*, he describes the true primitivist artist as

"the maker of life-symbols," as a person who "has grasped the implications of cultural failure and has acquired an autotype of personal experience sufficient to create a symbolic compensation for this failure" (36). His theory of "life-making symbols" echoes Jung's notion of the evocation of primordial archetypes, but at a more conscious level. In defining the autotype, Baird states: "This autotype is selected by the artist from his remembered experience and employed in his act of making an artistic abstraction in answer to the demands of feeling. The autotype is fused with some archetypal emblem from atavistic reversion and thus determines the primary elements of a symbol" (18). Whereas Jung feels that the archetypal images erupt spontaneously from the unconscious, Baird assesses the process as being deliberate. In utilizing the term "autotype," Baird emphasizes the artist's ability to make universal meaning out of personal experience. For Baird, "art wills to cast from all the materials of one individual's existence a meaning of life in deliberately chosen forms of expression" (36).

The role of symbol, however, is identical for both Baird and Jung, in that it serves as compensation for the cultural failure that the individual experiences. For Baird cultural failure is the social condition that results from the loss of a vibrant religious symbolism. In particular, he feels that modern culture is in a state of collapse as the result of the decline of belief in Judeo-Christian religion and the artist needs to engage in the "act of making new symbols to replace the 'lost' symbols of Protestant Christianity" (xv). Since these institutionalized symbols have failed us, Baird suggests that new symbols need to be created from within the individual artist, just as the the role of the reader is to personalize these symbols by reading them in the light of one's own experience. What links

the artist and the reader, therefore, is the archetypes from the collective unconscious, on the one hand, and the autotypes involved in the creative reading process, on the other hand.

In the light of these theories about symbolism we can now appreciate the role of both artistic technique and reader response in generating the experience of the numinous in modern romance. In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë provides a work that thrives on the reader's interaction, and this interaction is evident in the opening pages where the reader is immediately placed in a most intimidating environment. At the beginning of the romance Lockwood describes the physical setting into which he has accidentally stumbled. Even before he becomes aware of the horrific landlord and the history of Wuthering Heights, Lockwood discovers a landscape that forecasts its occupants:

> Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. "Wuthering" being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. . . . . Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished over the front. . . among a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little boys. . . . (14)

The harsh and disturbing landscape in which the characters are engulfed is also the psychological environment the reader is experiencing while reading the text. Within this chaos, however, there is the presence of stability; speaking of the building itself, Lockwood observes: "Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong" (14). Like the architect who designed Wuthering Heights, Brontë also constructs the stability of Heathcliff's and Catherine's love in the midst of cultural decadence. The chaotic landscape immediately unsettles the reader and encourages him/her to participate in the struggle for stability symbolized by the desire of Catherine and Heathcliff to be reunited.

Reader response is also activated by the limited imagination of Lockwood and the often unreliable narration of Nelly. Both are narrators whose interpretations the reader needs to resist. The reader is skeptical of what Lockwood offers because of his inability to understand his own condition, let alone that of anyone outside his life. His decision to leave the city and live at the Grange stems from his desire to escape the presence and demands of society. He perceives the Grange to be a "perfect misanthropist's heaven," yet his first impulse is to socialize with the ultimate misanthropist, Heathcliff (13). He narrowly escapes being mutilated by Heathcliff's dogs and without even an attempt at apology by his host; yet he shows up at the Heights the following day as though oblivious to his previous encounter. At the end of the romance, after hearing one of the most frightening tales, Lockwood is still able to imagine a happy ending: "I lingered around them. . . and wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth" (266). Whether we label Lockwood a fool or simply naive, it is obvious that the reader is responsible for inscribing meaning whenever Lockwood speaks.

While Lockwood has a stilted imagination, Nelly Dean's subjective relationship with the characters makes one question her objectivity and authority. In contrast to Lockwood who remains completely unmoved by the events, Nelly is consumed by the scenario she is eager to relate. She is emotionally involved with the characters and events she describes, and consequently her narration is also influenced by her own emotional bias. As John K. Mathison points out, she imposes her own subjectivity upon the events: "She is a minute interpreter. She tells us what events mean, what is right or wrong, what is praiseworthy or despicable or unforgivable

behavior" (334). Brontë thus deliberately sets up the narration in a fashion that excludes an authoritative voice. Instead of being a passive recipient, the reader must interpret; he/she must contend with both Lockwood's and Nelly's readings. It is this kind of indeterminacy that Iser sees as imperative to the reading process: "one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way" (280). Through Brontë's narrative technique, the reader must fill in the gaps left by both Nelly and Lockwood to compose a reading that accords with his/her own sensibilities.

Because the reader must actively participate in a relationship with imaginative reality, and because he/she has a role to fulfill while reading the text, the subject/object relationship is diminished. In turn, because the events take on a sense of reality, they have a much greater effect upon the reader. And ultimately it is this feeling of immediacy between reader and text that enables the successful incorporation of symbols and the related generation of an intense emotional response. As mentioned earlier, both Baird and Eliade feel that Christian symbols no longer evoke the archetypes necessary for social and psychic healing. As Baird also observes, however: "There is no end to the possibility of new prophets and new messiahs; nor is there any limit to be placed upon the importation and extension of old symbols into new and unaccustomed parts of the world" (4). Brontë, through *Wuthering Heights,* fulfills the role of a new prophet by incorporating symbols that have the power to elicit a religious response. In doing so she fulfills what Baird feels is the ultimate role of an artist:

> He alone is the artist who dares to make new symbols to describe his relationship of man to his God. His symbols are made to fortify him against ruin; for even as he works, the great fissures of his culture widen into abysses for some men and thrust up, with unknown vulcanism, the saving island of others. (50)

Although Baird employs Christian terminology whereas Brontë rejects Christian doctrine, a new spiritual relationship that she offers in effect achieves the same "fortification against ruin."

Symbolism in *Wuthering Heights* is not merely a decorative device, but a means for both expressing and awakening dormant sensations whose intensity cannot be conveyed in any other fashion. As Jung points out: "That probably explains why a symbolic work is so stimulating, why it grips us so intensely, but also why it seldom affords us a purely aesthetic enjoyment" (*The Spirit in Man* 77). One of the major symbols that Brontë employs is fire. The flame which provides warmth from the tumultuous weather--"it glowed delightfully in the radiance of an immense fire"--also burns with frightening intensity (18). There is the fire of rage that Heathcliff relentlessly inflicts upon the residents at the Heights. It is during Nelly's return visit to Wuthering Heights that Isabella informs her of the torment she is undergoing through Heathcliff, and Nelly notices that there "was a great fire, and that was all the light in the huge apartment" (117). The roar of the fire can be seen as Heathcliff's tormented soul that is sworn to revenge anyone or thing that is connected with his separation from Catherine. Isabella is trapped in the fire of Heathcliff's burning desire for revenge, as is Earnshaw, who reveals the desperate straits into which he and the residents of the Heights have fallen. Earnshaw, completely devastated by the hellish existence he is currently undergoing,

reveals to Nelly his only hope of saving himself and his son from Heathcliff's grasp:

> I cannot resist going up with this [a pistol], every night, and trying his door. If once I find it open, he's done for! I do it invariably, even though the minute before I have been recalling a hundred reasons that should make me refrain: it is some devil that urges me to thwart my own schemes by killing him. You fight against that devil, for love, as long as you may; when the time comes, not all the angels in heaven shall save him. (119)

The point here is not so much that Heathcliff's rage deserves to be punished with hell fire but that it is demonic in its superhuman intensity.

The same demonic fire that possesses Heathcliff and drives him to seek revenge, however, is also the source of his passionate love for Catherine. The fires that roar throughout the romance are symbolic representations of his and Catherine's love for one another. After Edgar's and Heathcliff's final major confrontation, Catherine retreats to her room where she is tormented by her solitude and consumed with grief. It is during her lapse into fever and delirium that she cries out, "Oh, I'm burning!" (107). This same fiery passion is present in Heathcliff's and Catherine's final encounter and is perceived by Nelly in Heathcliff's eyes: "And now he stared at her so earnestly that I thought the very intensity of his gaze would bring tears into his eyes; but they burned with anguish, they did not melt" (132). The fire symbolism suggests the overwhelming emotions of Heathcliff and Catherine in a manner that exceeds the limits of language; in turn, it functions as the archetypal image of loss and suffering and also generates an overwhelming emotional response in the reader.

Thus it is through a paradoxical combination of the evocation of an archetype and the active participation of the reader that romance evokes

the sensation of the sublime and also ultimately those feelings that Otto associates with the numinous. In attempting to suggest the non-rational effect of an encounter with the numinous, Otto asks the reader "to direct his mind to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience" (8); to him, what generates this emotion is God; romance, I would argue, produces the same experience but with love rather than God as the cause. Similarly, by reason of reader's participation, the religious experience of romance is internalized and thereby creates sensations that surpass those that are generated by an external force. It is also by reason of the reader's participation in the pain of the characters' separation that the full effect of the numinous is realized.

Wuthering Heights can be perceived as a series of episodes that eventually lead to Heathcliff's rebirth through his love for Catherine. Along this journey, Heathcliff suffers from the agony of Catherine's absence and experiences a form of hell on earth as a result. Amidst his physical and emotional torment, he is finally able to hold Catherine in his arms once again only to realize that soon they will be parted through her death:

> He neither spoke nor loosed his hold, for some five minutes, during which period he bestowed more kisses than ever he gave in his life before, I dare say; but then my mistress had kissed him first, and I plainly saw that he could hardly bear, for downright agony, to look into her face! The same conviction had stricken him as me, from that instant he beheld her. . . she was fated, sure to die.

Through their embrace Heathcliff is finally able to escape his hellish existence, only to find his torment doubled by this temporary respite. The intensity of emotion caused by the sudden contrast of joy and pain in their embrace captures the essence of the numinous/sublime. Heathcliff's hellish situation enables the reader to be transported by his pain, while

still maintaining the distance which prevents one from being overwhelmed: "when we do not suffer any very acute pain, nor are exposed to any imminent danger of our lives, we can feel for others, whilst we suffer ourselves" (Burke 48). Heathcliff's pain is not our own, which enables the reader to experience the sense of creature consciousness, yet not be overburdened by the reality of it.

At this point in the text, however, the deeply religious experience is denied the reader. It is only Heathcliff's determination to achieve a union with Catherine that permits spirituality to be reawakened. After Heathcliff's sublime lament to Catherine's corpse--"Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul"--the possible supernatural union is foreshadowed (139). It is eventually Heathcliff's steadfast faith in his love for Catherine that rekindles faith in the reader. This moment of revelation occurs when, after many nights of walking along the moors, Heathcliff returns with an unusually content disposition: "Last night, I was on the threshold of hell. To-day, I am within sight of my heaven. I have my eyes on it--hardly three feet to sever me" (259). It has already been made clear that Catherine is Heathcliff's heaven, thus implying that their love has surpassed the barrier of death. It is Heathcliff's death that assures the reader that his quest is concluded; in a rewriting of Christian mythology, Heathcliff is presented as achieving life through death. In the scene where Nelly encounters Heathcliff's corpse, she is made to believe that he is alive by his facial expression which suggests life rather than death: "His eyes met mine so keen and fierce, I started; and then he seemed to smile. . . . no blood trickled from the broken skin, and when I put my fingers to it, I could doubt no more--he was dead and stark" (264). It is

not surprising that this is the most riveting scene of the romance; Heathcliff is able to escape the human condition and to achieve salvation through his union with Catherine. The reader is uplifted by Heathcliff's death, feeling immense relief from the turmoil to which he/she has been subjected. The journey for salvation has been violent and painful, making this ambiguous ending as much the reader's creation as the narrator's. The possibility of "unquiet slumbers" is implied, not stated, thereby encouraging the reader to fill in the gaps left by this possible supernatural conclusion; it is this interaction with the text that allows for the numinous/sublime content to be experienced with maximum force.

In *All Hallows' Eve*, the reader has an even greater role to play in constructing any kind of certainty from the component parts that Williams offers. The romance immediately asks a great deal from the reader, for the opening chapter is narrated from the perspective of a dead woman. Like the reader in *Wuthering Heights* who must face the intimidating landscape that Lockwood describes, the reader in the first chapter of *All Hallows' Eve* is drawn into a world of the afterlife. In the first twenty pages the reader is struggling to make sense of the constant hints that Lester and Evelyn are not of this world, but it is the last line of the chapter that establishes the paradoxical *reality* of the situation: "The two dead girls went together slowly out of the park" (22). The very indeterminacy of the setting demands a great deal from the imagination.

As in *Wuthering Heights*, Williams also relies on symbols to "express something for which no verbal concept yet exists" (Jung, *The Spirit in Man* 70). One of the more prevalent symbolic images presented in the text is light, which is first introduced when Jonathan reveals his portrait of London to Richard. If we keep in mind that the "city" is a term Williams

uses to signify what Christian doctrine would call heaven, the source of the light in Jonathan's painting becomes a central means of destabilizing orthodox notions:

> The spectator became convinced that the source of that light was not only in that hidden sun; as, localized, it certainly was. . . . It was everywhere in the painting--concealed in houses and in their projected shadows, lying in ambush in the cathedral, opening in the rubble, vivid in the vividness of the sky. It would everywhere have burst through, had it not chosen rather to be shaped into forms, and to restrain and change its greatness in the colors of those lesser limits. It was universal, and lived. (28)

The power of the symbol is its multiple signification, just as light here is ubiquitous. If we also remember that to Williams salvation is not an unearthly experience, but something that is attainable in this world, then both the archetypal and metafictional aspects of Williams's use of light symbolism becomes clear.

The light of the "city" is discovered by the characters and the reader simultaneously via the scene in which Lester and Betty, through their love for one another, defeat the darkness embodied in Simon. During the course of Simon's attempt to work his magic over Betty, Lester's love for her friend intervenes, and as a result, Betty's body begins to emit "runnels of roseal light which Lester now saw, as if the blood itself were changed and richly glowing through the weary flesh" (153). Betty's and Lester's rebirth is signified by the light that, as in the painting, must take concrete form. Richard is exposed to the light in the painting, and through Lester, he begins to sense its impact: "Richard could not bear the glow. It bore in upon him even more than it did on Jonathan . . . partly because he was already, despite himself, by his sight of Lester, some way initiated into the spiritual world" (147). In approaching Betty's house, he becomes

"certain of Lester--not for himself, but in herself; she lived newly in the light" (148).

Because light symbolizes the redeeming quality of love, Simon is unable to appreciate it, at the same time he is unable not to respond. Thus when Simon is exposed to Jonathan's portrait of the "city" he immediately is taken back, and quickly says, "No, no; it's too bright. I can't see it properly. Move it" (60). Simon's sorcery is a perversion of love, and it in turn offers a perverted source of light. In contrast to the radiance of Betty's and Lester's love, Simon produces a pale reflection of what the light entails: "Lester saw a kind of small pale light ooze out everywhere between his [Simon's] hand and Betty and flow over the forehead" (157). Simon's mental power is futile against the "deeply-felt" bond between Betty and Lester. The artificial nature of Simon's power is finally highlighted when Lester seems to succumb to darkness:

> When recollection came to her again, she was standing by the side of the bed, but all the pale light had faded, and on the bed Betty lay asleep, flushed with her proper beauty and breathing in her proper content. (164-65)

Williams's use of the contrast between the diferent shades of light permits a deeper understanding of where true spirituality lies in the romance. The universal light of the city in Jonathan's painting lives within the individual, thus implying that the source of the numinous comes from human relationships, not from the external God which Simon claims to be.

Another central symbol in *All Hallows' Eve* is water, which Williams uses both to suggest the degeneration of the Christian signature and its enduring value. Thus one of the most emotionally powerful scenes involves Lester recalling her husband performing what at the time seemed

glass of water, and only after Lester is dead does she realize how, at that moment, she was reborn through the mutuality of their love. After she recounts the physical gesture of Richard returning to her with the water she is able to realize "she could be gay with Richard now among all those things that either knew and the other not; and both of them could *drink* that word in a great peace" (164; emphasis mine). Evoked here is the Christian motif of "the last supper," which Williams also makes implicit when he adds that the "word" was both "water and wine" (164). Williams's purpose, however, is not to identify the blood of Christ as the saving element, but rather the sacred union achieved through their love. It is this sacred drink that enables Lester to realize what drinking from the cup implies: "it was marvelously spring-livened; spring of the world, spring of the heart; joy of spring-water, joy. Oblivion took her" (164). A new deeply-felt religious experience is achieved by the rewriting of religious symbol, which once again depends upon enlisting the participation of the reader.

Williams is also able to generate an immense emotional response by presenting Lester's and Richard's reunion in one of the most joyful yet painful scenarios imaginable. This powerfully dramatic scene occurs when Richard and Jonathan have stormed into Betty's room to rescue her from Simon's incantation and Richard encounters his dead wife standing with Betty:

> Lester saw him. She felt, as he came, all her old self lifting in her; bodiless, she seemed to recall her body in the joy they exchanged. . . . she said "I'll wait for you a million years." She felt a stir within her, as if life quickened; and she remembered with new joy that the deathly tide had never reached, even in appearance, to the physical house of life. (169)

The reunion of the two lovers once separated by death is a situation that exceeds rational comprehension. The inexpressible joy evident in such a situation moves the reader, but it is the pain of their inability to remain together that instills an even greater sensation. The conflict of emotion confuses and heightens human sensations, effecting a truly irrational response during the reading process.

Edmund Burke stresses that pain is a necessary ingredient of the sublime, since it causes the strongest emotion humanity is capable of feeling (39). *All Hallows' Eve* relies on the pain experienced by the characters to generate the intense emotional response experienced by the reader. All the joy Lester and Richard achieve in their supernatural encounter is contrasted with the devastation of Richard when he ultimately realizes that their encounter is only temporary. In an unusual telephone conversation, Richard hears his wife's voice, and she expresses the most sorrowful lines of the romance:

> "That's all right," the voice said. It added, "Once more. Before I go, before I give you up. Oh my sweet!"
> The voice was so full of serene grief that Richard went cold. He said, "Nothing shall make me give you up. I've only just begun to find you." (228)

Despite Richard's protestations, he is aware that he is helpless in trying to overcome the mysteries of life and death. The sense of creature consciousness could not be illustrated more clearly, and now Richard must deal with the pain and suffering of his impending loss. Richard has been motioned to the "light" of salvation and suddenly, through losing his wife once again, the light seems to be eluding him.

The eventual departure of Lester, however, is the very thing that reveals the all-encompassing nature of their love. Because they have

realized the enormous potential of their love, they are later able to understand its stability and permanence. Although physically they parted, their love remains the constant force that goes beyond, and is larger than physical contact. Lester is the first to discover that it is their love that is absolute, not limited like that of the physical world: "If Richard or she went now, it would not much matter; their fulfillment was irrevocably promised them, in what manner so-ever they knew or were to know it" (169). It is this revelation that redeems the romance from the total despair that irretrievable loss would signify. Lester's departure provides the necessary amount of terror and tension, which is turned into a cause for rejoicing in the perception of salvation as a paradox of both pain and pleasure. The reader is overcome by both sensations; the pain of their separation induces the ultimate sensations of the sublime in the reader, while the joy evidenced in their almighty love enables the reader to withstand the burden of creature consciousness.

As in *Wuthering Heights* and *All Hallows' Eve*, in *The Bone People* enlisting reader response is a major component in evoking sensations of the sublime. In Hulme's romance, however, the reader is made an active participant in a unique way. The work employs a stream-of-consciousness format and is constructed in the same manner that we feel and think. As Jane Alexander states:

> Keri Hulme's skill lies in her ability to flow with the incessant rhythm of life: tears following on smiles; one phase of life ending, another taking its place--endless disintegration and synthesis. Her language is entirely her own, poetic, dialectic, sometimes phonetic, always challenging. The novel demands total absorption and leaves you breathless at the end. . . . (qtd. in Talmor 97)

The reader is immediately caught up in the natural rhythm of Hulme's writing, which creates the illusion that one is participating in the

dialogue of the romance. The sense of reality that Iser believes to exist in the reading process is fully mastered in *The Bone People*, to the extent that the work literally "leaves you breathless in the end."

Like Bronte and Williams, Hulme also takes full advantage of the power of symbol and incorporates poetic passages that exceed the limits of prose. Once again paradox is abundantly present in her depicting three characters who undergo brutal transgressions and unlimited joy. At the outset for example, Hulme provides three poems that encapsulate the complex and emotionally demanding characters of Kerewin, Joe and Simon. These three poetic passages also share a theme of togetherness that ultimately calls forth the "deeply-felt religious experience":

> They open their hands like flowers, shyly.
>
> He holds out his hand, and it is gently taken.
>
> And she sings as she takes their hands. (3)

The image of the three characters walking, hands clasped, evokes the archetype of a sacred union, just as the simple gesture of holding hands directly enlists the reader's sensations. The passage humanizes the characters, allowing the reader to share the warmth and fears they undergo for the duration of the tale.

It is by presenting Kerewin, Joe and Simon in all their vulnerability that Hulme immediately endears the reader to them, making the tragic events that follow such an intense experience. Once again, the numinous/sublime is achieved through the pain of the characters, but in this romance, the love the reader develops for the characters makes the feelings at times almost too much to bear. The violence experienced by Simon, Joe and Kerewin, also extends to the reader. The text masterfully

elicits a range of emotions, which are also difficult to sort out. For example, the reader is filled with a melancholic joy in the scene where Simon recalls a loving gesture between Joe and Kerewin: "The elation was still at home in him. It had come to climax last night when her hand and Joe's touched, with him aching and unsteady and overwhelmed with joy in the center" (73). The warmth of such a scene is short-lived as we quickly learn that Simon is caught in a seriously abusive environment. The pain the reader feels when he/she first learns of Joe's brutal assaults is horrific, but it is Simon's pitiful rationalization of the beatings that totally devastates the reader. When Joe nervously asks Simon why he does not tell Kerewin of the way he has been brutalized, the child replies: "Because she'll know I'm bad, he says it again and again, gulping miserably through the silent words, She'll know I'm bad" (139). Otto believes that creature consciousness is an integral component of numinosity, and this image of Simon is the ultimate manifestation of the condition. The reader, already absorbed in Simon's character, is forced to view him standing before Joe with tears rolling down his cheeks, mouthing self-inflicted abuse. Any violence that occurs within the tale does not surpass the agony the reader must endure in reading passages such as this.

The progression of violence escalates to the point that Simon undergoes the beating that nearly takes his life. In following this course of events, the reader not only feels completely helpless, but also by virtue of reading on, he/she feels somehow guilty. The penitential journeys that Kerewin and Joe embark on are thus as much for the reader as they are for the characters: both characters and reader need healing from the tragedy they have gone through. Before Joe decides to take his *leap of faith* down the ravine, he is confronted by a voice that could as well be that of the

reader as that of the ghosts that haunt him. The reader needs Joe to make this leap and feel the pain that he has caused for the major portion of the romance:

> A three note saw, a whining vicious singing: Jump Nga Kau.
> He pounded on his head. His fist made a dull sound but didn't hurt. Beat your brains out, Ngakau, beat your sense back in. Because you know what you're doing. . . o yes. All those nights in the dark alone, and his face came before you as you split his lips, and bruised and cut and broke his face. (341)

Hulme is very aware of the reader's pain and seems to try to appease this pain by having Joe break his own body at the bottom of the bluff. When Joe jumps from the cliff, the reader experiences a bizarre sensation of displaced atonement, and through his survival, the reader is somehow assured that the wounds are beginning to heal.

The chapter following Joe's eventual spiritual optimism returns the reader to the pathetic plight of Simon lying alone and terrified in the hospital. The wounds that Joe's pain has begun to heal are suddenly reopened for the reader, thus placing greater emphasis on Kerewin as the means whereby we may finally be relieved from the suffering of this long journey. The opening lines of the chapter reveal Kerewin's despair while reinforcing the emotional state of the reader:

> And I'm not a traveller at heart, just a casual gypsy wandering out from my base and back. No more, because no base . . . and nowhere to go, no-one to trust. No marae for beginning or ending. No family to help and salve and save. No-one no-one no-one at all. (411)

In her despair, Kerewin engages in a horrific ritual of self-inflicted abuse that leaves her on the brink of death. Just when she feels that she cannot deal with her pain any longer, however, a mythical voice poses a question in which the answer serves as the source of her salvation: "What do you

love?" (423). This voice can once again be read as the reader pleading with her to discover the "base" she has previously rejected. Through Kerewin's recognition of the love she has been unable to either give or take, she is finally able to reply:

> *Life is lonely.*
> *Foe we all are,*
> *one apart from the other.* (424)

It is Kerewin finally discovering that through the love of Joe and Simon she will be redeemed from the hell in which she is engulfed. She must be reconciled with the force that she has denied throughout the text: "Art and family by love . . . regaining any one was worth this fiery journey to the heart of the sun" (428). The overwhelming sense of creature consciousness is relieved by her sudden desire for community. Only through the solace of otherness can the unbearable burdens of life be tolerated and indeed welcomed

The "fiery journey into the heart of the sun" has been extremely demanding upon the reader's emotions, thus creating a long awaited desire for the final reconciliation of loved ones and life itself. The emotional response that is effected by the dramatic reunion is truly awesome and leaves the reader in a state of reverence. In the final passage she writes in her journal, Kerewin herself vividly encapsulates the progression from the emotional hell to eventual rebirth that is responsible for the numinous/sublime response:

> *I have faced death. I have been caught in the wild weed tangles of Her hair, seen the gleam of Her jade eyes. I will go when it is time--no choice!--but now I want life.* (436-37)

The overwhelming despair to which the reader has been subjected allows for an equal participation in the immense joy of the characters. The

reader is not pacified by some illusion of unfettered existence, void of the endless burdens of life; rather, the reader is made to feel, like Simon, that through the pain and fears of the human condition, there will be someone to "gather him up, gather him in, arms tight full, and spin round and round in a giddy dance of ecstasy, aching with love to give, smothered by love in return" (443). Hulme's depiction of human love provides the needed assurance for the reader finally to put the book down and believe in Simon, Joe and Kerewin's newly found salvation.

CONCLUSION

For Rudolf Otto, the numinous is an experience of the Divine, while the sublime is primarily a secular experience. Yet the sensations that Otto associates with the numinous are the same as those that others have located in the sublime. Against this background, I have attempted to demonstrate that modern romance is also able to evoke a sense of the numinous. My method has been to focus on the essential component of Otto's argument: namely, the irrational sensations the individual experiences in the presence of the Divine. Otto asks the reader temporarily to abandon theological rationalization and acknowledge the overwhelming feelings that a religious experience entails. It is my contention that modern romance not only succeeds in revealing to the reader the emotional quality of a religious experience, but surpasses Otto's conception of the effect of the Divine by evoking the numinous in a manner that is sublime in itself.

The power of modern romance not only lies in the overwhelming emotions that it depicts, but also in the means whereby it achieves such an effect. In reading romance, the reader experiences the numinous in two very distinct ways: one is through the spiritual yearnings present in the content of the text: the other is through the artist's ability to utilize narrative technique to instill a maximum response. By examining romance through Wolfgang Iser's phenomenological approach to literature it is possible to perceive how these two dimensions conjoin. The text activates the readers imagination, making reading a dialogical process; through the reader's interaction with the text, he/she experiences the numinous/sublime, in an immediate and personal way. Through the union of content and form, modern romance also unites the individual with the

experiences that Otto believes to be outside the self. Although the numinous in modern romance is clearly different from Otto's Christian sense of the Divine, the "deeply-felt religious experience" that he feels is the mark of numinosity does occur during the reading process. . Otto acknowledges art as a means to depicting numinosity, but in actuality certain art forms in themselves provide a numinous experience.

By way of conclusion, therefore, I would like to reword Otto's directive for understanding the numinous: "The reader is invited to direct his mind to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience . . . whoever knows no such moments in his experience is requested *to read a modern romance*--in particular, works like *Wuthering Heights*, *All Hallows' Eve* and *The Bone People*.

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