



Transforming *Wuthering Heights* and *La Madre Naturaleza* into *Abel Sánchez*: Creating the Postmodern out of Its Past

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In chapter 17 of *La Madre Naturaleza* (1887), Gabriel Pardo de la Lage rummages through the library of Los Pazos [as the priest Julián Alvarez had done in *Los Pazos de Ulloa* (1886)] and discovers copies of Andrews's *Clarissa Harlow* and Richardson's *Pamela* (1856), exemplars of the English sentimental novel. Somewhat later on, the reader begins to note provocative similarities between *La Madre* and Emily Brontë's proto-Gothic, Romantic masterpiece, *Wuthering Heights* (1847). There are headstrong sets of lovers, a strong hint of the demonic, the possibility of happiness through marriage to a more civilized man, a strong suggestion of the violation of the incest taboo, envy and revenge, the presence of multiple generations, and a narrative interrupted by massive flashbacks. Many of these characteristics also describe Unamuno's most hair-raising novel, *Abel Sánchez* (1917), which has been related to the Gothic genre so popular in nineteenth-century Britain (Franz, "Abel Sánchez" passim). The present article is a study of the process by which Unamuno created large parts of *Abel Sánchez* out of *Wuthering Heights* and *La Madre Naturaleza*. Its purpose is to show how *Abel Sánchez*, while indebted to Pardo Bazán's use in *La Madre Natrualeza* of material from *Wuthering Heights*, appropriates much more from the disconnected unconventionalities of Brontë's novel and thus is able to approach the creation of a narrative that today we might term postmodern.

A cursory glance at the opening chapters of *Wuthering Heights* reveals numerous strong similarities to both *La Madre Naturaleza* and its predecessor, *Los Pazos de Ulloa*. A more detailed look at Brontë's work, Pardo Bazán's two narratives, and Unamuno's *Abel Sánchez* will demonstrate that much of Brontë's artistic vision passes to Unamuno via the novels of Pardo Bazán, while other elements, neglected by the latter, are picked up by Unamuno directly from Brontë. But before exploring these complex lines of continuity and discontinuity, there is a biographical thread that establishes liaisons and gaps between Pardo Bazán and Unamuno.

Unamuno was a longtime friend of Pardo Bazán, beginning with his student days in Madrid, when he visited the already established novelist at her home near the university. Named, first, professor and then, rector of the University of Salamanca, he would stay at

the Pardo Bazán home on his infrequent trips to Madrid, and on one of these occasions he accompanied Doña Emilia to a performance of *Parsifal* at the Teatro Real. He attended summer concerts with her at Santander, visited her at her palatial family home in Meirás, and on one occasion he and his wife had her as a house guest at the Casa Rectoral in Salamanca (Franz, “*La Madre Naturaleza*” 30). It was a profound friendship in which the two writers felt comfortable venting their disagreements, which at times involved female psychology and at others, matters of religion. At his death, Unamuno had at least fourteen of her works in his library, most of them personally signed by the author, but, strangely, the list does not include either *Los Pazos de Ulloa* or *La Madre Naturaleza* (Valdés 183). This omission may mean little because, first, during his exile the library lost many books and, second, in his writings Unamuno quotes from three additional Pardo Bazán books that are not now present in the library (Valdés 288). In a recent study, Franz (“*La Madre Naturaleza*” 29-40) has shown how many of the youthful experiences of Ignacio Iturriondo, the literary handling of war and military science, and the incestual part of the sexual dimension in Unamuno’s *Paz en la guerra* (1897) are borrowed directly from the characterization of Gabriel Pardo in *La Madre Naturaleza*. The absence of an Unamuno reference to *Los Pazos* and *La Madre* may, like Pardo Bazán’s strange silence about Emily Brontë—who by the 1880s had been elevated to the rank of England’s finest female writer—perhaps be seen as an inexplicable anxiety of influence.

Unamuno knew some eleven languages, one of which was English. He had a vast knowledge of English literature, which has been mapped out in many studies, most notably Earle’s *Unamuno and English Literature* (1960). Among the books Unamuno had read was Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* whose protagonist, Heathcliff, he greatly admired for his pristine “*pasión trágica*,” which Unamuno felt mirrored the equally enigmatic and immutable personality of his author (Earle 134-35). Unamuno mentions Brontë’s novel with admiration in various places.¹ It is part of the Unamuno library preserved in Salamanca and is heavily annotated in Unamuno’s hand. The text of the novel that Unamuno had read (Archivo de Unamuno accession number U-1075) was that published in London by Dent in 1912 and was a reprint of the original 1907 Dent edition.² Though it would prove extremely unwieldy to discuss large numbers of Unamuno’s markings in his copy of the novel, some of these bear directly on his reading of *La Madre Naturaleza* and his subsequent composition of *Abel Sánchez*.

In chapter 9 of his copy of Brontë’s novel, he marked a passage underlying Hindley’s jealous desire to damn the soul of Heathcliff (Brontë, Dent 81), a vengeance motif that is notably prominent in both *La Madre Naturaleza* and *Abel Sánchez*. In the same chapter, he marked not only discursive passages attributable to Catherine Earnshaw and the narrator, Nelly Dean, that underline the existential need for conflict in life (86) but also Catherine’s insistence that she is the synergetic “double” of Heathcliff, a passage we shall refer to later on (86-89). In chapter 16, he marked a statement by Nelly Dean to the effect that the contemplation of death is the acknowledgement of the dying person’s passage to eternal life, words that could prefigure Joaquín Monegro’s fictional eternalizing of his rival, Abel Sánchez, through the novelizable act of murder (181). Why would Unamuno mark such a commonplace thought unless his mind could give it a more creative twist? In chapter 26, he marked Mrs. Dean’s sympathetic statement about Heathcliff and Isabella Linton’s son, Linton Heathcliff, that in him “there was less of the peevish temper of a child which frets

and teases on purpose in order to be soothed, and more of a confirmed invalid, repelling consolation and ready to regard the good-humored mirth of others as an insult” (286). The comment serves to crystalize well the dilemma of those who would try to lift the gloom of Joaquín Monegro. In chapter 29, Unamuno marked young Cathy Linton’s statement to the older Heathcliff, “Mr. Heathcliff, *you* have *nobody* to love you; and however miserable you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater misery” (314-15), an attitude that prefigures the sympathetic understanding with which Antonia rebuts the insults heaped upon her by her husband, Joaquín in Unamuno’s novel. In chapter 34, Unamuno noted part of Heathcliff’s instructions for his burial: “I tell you I have nearly attained *my* heaven; and that of others is altogether unvalued and uncoveted by me” (336). The passage expresses both a type of unalterable agnosticism and the equating of a satisfying vengeance via the manipulation of others with a concomitant eternalizing of one’s will, attitudes found in both Unamuno’s and Brontë’s protagonists. Inside the back cover of *Wuthering Heights*, Unamuno additionally refers to a passage in chapter 17 in which Isabella Linton decides to abandon her husband Heathcliff because he could never permit a moment of tranquility to enter their lives (188), a possible prefiguring of the existential conflicts with which Joaquín plagues his family and which ultimately force Antonia to abandon her wifely ministrations for the more satisfying care of her grandchild. Other, more significant markings by Unamuno will be discussed below, but first a word about Pardo Bazán’s knowledge of and opinions about the English novel prior to her own creation of fiction.

Before her friendship with Unamuno, Doña Emilia had, indeed, studied the eighteenth and nineteenth-century English novel. In *La cuestión palpitante* (1883) she discusses works by Defoe, Fielding, Scott, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Dickens, and Thackeray, criticizing their sentimentality, unnecessary cruelty, excessive moralization, and anti-literary attempt to please a fawning public of undereducated women (153-61). This is a volume that we know Unamuno had read, for in one of the two articles he dedicated to Pardo Bazán upon her death—“Recuerdos personales de doña Emilia (1)”, published in *Nuevo Mundo* on 27 May, 1921—he debates the need for mimesis and historical anecdote that she defends in her discussion (*OC* 10: 484, 486). In *La cuestión palpitante* (1883), Pardo Bazán quotes liberally from these authors. Clémessy (“Emilia Pardo Bazán et les littératures” 108, 117-18) alleges that Pardo Bazán had not read widely enough in English literature to justify such a sweeping criticism of these writers, but the fact remains that she was impressed by the cruelty and reinforcement of morality in many English novels, and these same tendencies mark the underlying tone of her own writing during her so-called Catholic Naturalist period. Clémessy, therefore, sees in *La Madre Naturaleza* a novel that is only *apparently* deterministic. While the narrative discourse and dialogue of the educated Gabriel Pardo at times interpret events from a Naturalist perspective, the extradiegetic narrative voice surrounds this discourse with an interpretation swathed in a philosophy that is traditionally Christian and that denies the protagonist’s (at times) deterministic apologetics that are seconded by his self-interested friends, Dr. Juncal and the *aljebrista* (Clémessy, *Emilia Pardo Bazán como novelista* 343-53, esp. 348-49).

In chapter one of Brontë’s novel, Mr. Lockwood notes in his diary that he has just paid a harrowing visit to his new landlord, Mr. Heathcliff, in his present home at Thrushcross Grange. The older Heathcliff is prematurely aged, disheveled, and bereft of culture, just

as we find Pedro Moscoso, the Marqués de Ulloa, in *La Madre Naturaleza* after his excesses in *Los Pazos de Ulloa*. Like Los Pazos in both of Pardo Bazán's narratives, the Grange is a shambles of its former self. The dogs lying about in the kitchen attempt to attack Lockwood, and he is only saved by a "lustful" kitchen maid with "tucked-up gown, bare arms, and fire-blushed cheeks" (*Wuthering* 5; ch. 1), a creature perfectly recalling the Marqués's concubine and Julián's provocateur, Sabel, in *Los Pazos*. In chapter 2, Lockwood pays another visit and is injured by the hounds, whose savagery and continual presence in the kitchen is similarly recalled in the first two chapters of *Los Pazos*. In chapter 6 of *Wuthering Heights*, it is Catherine who sustains an injury at Thrushcross Grange and must be nursed back to health by the Lintons. This scene parallels the overturning of the *diligencia* carrying the returning Gabriel in chapter 6 of *La Madre* and the necessary lodging of Manuela's wayward uncle with Dr. Juncal until his broken arm can be treated by the *algebrista*. The period of recuperation in an elevated household gives both novelists leave to provide some exposition of the prevailing social conflicts in the respective regions of their individual countries.

The same chapter presents a description of Cathy, the daughter of the deceased Catherine and Edgar. She is barely civilized and a veritable image of her mother at the same age. Juncal likewise tells Gabriel that Manuela is "El retrato de su difunta madre" (97; ch. 9). Cathy is accompanied by her current husband, Hareton Earnshaw, dressed in a "shabby upper garment" and overall exhibiting a "dress and speech that were both rude" (10). The description is a foretaste of the youthful Heathcliff, who will be introduced later on. It is also a prelude to Pardo Bazán's initial presentation of Perucho in *Los Pazos de Ulloa*, "cuyo vestido [. . .] bien podía desde lejos equivocarse con la piel bicolor de los perdigueros, con quienes parecía vivir el chiquillo [. . .]" (16-17; ch. 2). It turns out that Heathcliff's wife, Isabella, is dead, just as, in *La Madre*, Nucha, the longsuffering woman the Marqués had wed in *Los Pazos*, is long deceased. In all of these passages the primitive nature of life and the violence witnessed at the host's country estate represent a distinct threat to the newcomer's ordered world.

Lockwood retires to a macabre upper room and experiences two nightmares which may be seen as the likely inspiration for the two fantasmagoric scenes—one waking, one sleeping—that the priest Julián witnesses in chapter 19 of *Los Pazos*, and presumably also for Gabriel Pardo's night of insomnia in chapter 22 of *La Madre*. In the second dream Lockwood senses the hand of Heathcliff's deceased wife Catherine clawing at his window (*Wuthering* 22-26; ch. 3). The scenes from both novels serve to hint at a cruel past that both Lockwood and Julián will need to explore. In the same chapter, Lockwood undertakes the examination of the Thrushcross Grange library and finds mildewed books with diary-like entries providing glimpses of the past relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff. The act recalls the examination of the library at Los Pazos carried out by Julián in chapters 3-4 of *Los Pazos de Ulloa*. Here the priest unearths the pagan spirit and continual financial chicanery that have brought Los Pazos to ruin. In chapter 22 of *La Madre*, Gabriel will peruse the contents of various books he finds in his room at Moscoso's estate. The volumes reveal an admixture of the paganism of the previous novel and the Christian influences later imported by the chaplain Julián. With this interest-whetting preamble, we proceed to a parallel examination of Brontë's, Pardo Bazán's, and Unamuno's novels.

Wuthering Heights: Selected Details

Heathcliff, the protagonist of *Wuthering Heights*, is a passionate, foul-tempered young man who is brought to the craggy home of the Earnshaws at Wuthering Heights as an orphan and is raised alongside the Earnshaw children, Catherine and Hindley. When discovered as a foundling, Heathcliff's complexion is so black that a bystander remarks, "it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil" (37; ch. 4). In chapter 5, the primary narrator, the servant Nelly Dean, again describes Heathcliff in terms of the devil and Satan. Catherine herself will later say to Heathcliff, "You are possessed with a devil" (169; ch. 16). This satanic association, reiterated many times, will form a major motif in the narrator's characterization of Joaquín Monegro in *Abel Sánchez*. When Earnshaw dies, the older brother, Hindley, has little interest in raising his sister—much as the Marqués will have no interest in raising Manuela once his wife Nucha dies in *Los Pazos*—and Catherine and Heathcliff spend their days in apparent innocence, exploring and inventing wild games on the moors. They come to be indistinguishable from noble savages, sharing spiritual insights but otherwise glorying in their ignorance of things religious. Eventually they fall in love and come to feel that they constitute an indissoluble couple destined to share experience throughout eternity. Earnshaw's heir, Hindley, despises Heathcliff and treats him with such violence that eventually the young man is little more than a beast, albeit a beast capable of tender feelings.

One day (ch. 6), Heathcliff and Catherine go off to the moors and disappear. Hindley fears for Catherine's virtue and his own good name. Catherine becomes injured and must spend the night under the care of a well-to-do family named Linton. The Lintons love and pamper the more amenable Catherine, dressing her in fine clothes, but spurn the bestial Heathcliff. Unknown to the Lintons, Heathcliff possesses a far greater capacity for pure love and romantic passion than either they or Catherine. Catherine eventually marries the Linton's cultured son Edgar (ch. 9). Heathcliff and Edgar develop an intense jealousy that prefigures the rift that will develop between Joaquín Monegro and Abel Sánchez over the equally fickle Helena in the 1917 novel of Unamuno. Heathcliff swears that he will be avenged. He will do this by being a spiritual father to Hindley's son, Hareton, and thereby steal his affections from the father. He will also marry Isabella, Edgar's sister, placing himself in a position to inherit all of Edgar's wealth, including Wuthering Heights, should Edgar die and he and Isabella have no male heir. Catherine becomes pregnant with Edgar's child, falling deathly ill. Heathcliff bursts in on Catherine (ch. 15), accusing her of being his spiritual murderer, while accusing Edgar of effectively seeking to murder Catherine through pregnancy. Catherine gives birth to a daughter, Cathy, and then dies. Heathcliff is so devastated by the loss of his spiritual mate that he cries out, "I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul" (177; ch. 16). He curses her soul that it may haunt and give him company forever. (It is precisely this ghost that Lockwood encounters in his horrifying dreams of chapter 3, and it is precisely this passage that Unamuno marks with a three vertical lines on pages 183-84 of the Dent edition of the novel. In *Abel Sánchez* he will subsequently have Joaquín curse Abel many times, thus raising him to the power of a demon who will lend his life the vivifying conflict that the need for existential stimulation requires.) Isabella and Heathcliff eventually separate, but soon afterward she gives birth to a son, Linton. She dies thirteen years later, thus effectively ending the story of the novel's first generation.

For another thirteen years, Edgar keeps Catherine's daughter Cathy a virtual prisoner at Thrushcross Grange. On a visit to Wuthering Heights, she becomes infatuated with Hindley's son Hareton, but rejects him for being beneath her social class. In doing so she parallels her own mother's abandonment of Heathcliff for the refined Edgar (ch. 18). Heathcliff reveals that he detests his son, Linton, but that he must cultivate his friendship in order to eventually gain Edgar's property through the son's right of inheritance via Isabella, Edgar's sister (ch. 20). Cathy has a chance meeting with Heathcliff (ch. 22) and the latter invites her to meet his son Linton, his plan being to ensure via marriage his inheritance of all the Earnshaw property. When Edgar forbids a friendship between his daughter and Linton, the headstrong daughter, heir to her mother's proclivities, develops a crush on Heathcliff and Isabella's son, Hareton. Heathcliff later locks up Linton and Cathy together and forces them to marry to avoid scandal (ch. 27). After the forced marriage with Heathcliff's son, Cathy transfers her affections to Hareton Earnshaw, paralleling Catherine's abandonment of Heathcliff for Edgar. Heathcliff grows old, and ill, and powerless against Cathy's new love of Hareton, eventually loses his zeal for revenge via the liaison with Linton. When Heathcliff dies (ch. 34), Hareton, who had been hypocritically befriended by Heathcliff, is the only one who mourns his passing.

La Madre Naturaleza: Broader Intertextualities with Wuthering Heights

Perucho, who is, unlike Heathcliff, not the protagonist, but, with Manuela, one of the two antagonists in *La Madre Naturaleza*, is a wild and passionate young bastard sired by Pedro Moscoso, the illegitimate Marqués de Ulloa, and conceived by the kitchen wench Sabel in Pardo Bazán's previous novel, *Los Pazos de Ulloa*. He is left to roam the steamy mountains near Los Pazos along with the Marqués's legitimate eleven year-old daughter, Manuela. Neither has been given a religious or moral education, a situation bemoaned by the curate Julián and Manuela's cousin, Gabriel. Both young people are unkempt ragamuffins and true children of nature, eventually developing unconscious pre-erotic feelings for one another: "las manos, al sujetar bajo la barbilla la orla del vestido, se entretejían, se fundían como si formasen parte de un mismo cuerpo" (9; ch. 1). They profess a naïve eternal love and vow to remain united (198; ch. 20). Perucho is fearless, all male, but with the tenderest of feelings, and Manuela lionizes him for this combination of qualities. Manuela's father has reduced her to a life of impoverished obscurity, while Perucho has received good clothes and an education (ch. 30 of *Los Pazos*). When Manuela's middle-aged cousin, Gabriel Pardo, returns from a military career intent upon marrying his niece, Manuela—the daughter of the degenerate Marqués and Gabriel's deceased sister, Nucha (an obviously incestuous plan)—Manuela and Gabriel run off to a steamy forest and, unaware that they are really half brother and sister via the same father, consummate their emotional relationship on an altar-like mountaintop before the (for them) all-approving eyes of the cosmos. Catherine and Heathcliff are treated as virtual siblings by the distracted Earnshaw, like Perucho and Manuela, whom the unthinking Marqués has let grow up like a brother and sister who continually dote on one another's need for affection. Indeed, the incest motif is equally rampant in *La Madre* and *Wuthering Heights*. It is the principal justification used to bring the Heathcliff/Catherine relationship to a sudden end in the Brontë novel (Van Ghent 169). The same taboo provides the roadblock that Pardo Bazán hurls at her two young lovers.

When Gabriel arrives at Los Pazos, he instinctively hates the unbridled Perucho and treats him badly. He begins to flatter his cousin and to wish her more comely and docile than the true child of nature she is. He mentions this to the Marqués, and the next day Manuela appears attired in her best Sunday dress. Unlike Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, however, Manuela does not take even temporarily to her finery and remains rebellious. The next day she is back to wearing her old clothes. Catherine only becomes rebellious after six months of marriage to Edgar (ch. 10) and eventually makes excursions, unadorned, to Wuthering Heights to role-play at her old free existence, now in the presence of Heathcliff. Gabriel's love of Manuela, like that of Edgar for Catherine, is domesticated and boring, motivated by notions of settling down and rendering homage to his dead sister (Manuela's mother) through guaranteeing the economic and moral welfare of her daughter. Perucho's love of Manuela is desperate, truly existential, like Heathcliff's, and he offers no ideas for her economic support or eventual education.

Abel Sánchez: Intertextualities with Brontë and Pardo Bazán

The protagonist of *Abel Sánchez*, Joaquín Monegro, is passionate for fame, for power, and for a sense of his own worth. He is also passionate for love, but only as a confirmation of his desirability. Abel Sánchez, on the other hand, like Brontë's Edgar and Pardo Bazán's Gabriel, is rather cold and methodic, as is his wife Helena. Joaquín scornfully terms Abel a "scientific" painter, just as Gabriel concedes that he is an unfortunate product of the military science he learned in the academy. Abel's son Abelín later reports that Abel exhibits no warmth for his wife, his son, or his painterly art. He nevertheless is smooth and polished, like Edgar and Gabriel. Little bothers him. The first chapter makes it clear that, in seeming opposition to this poise of Abel, during Joaquín's youth, classmates considered him dour and unsocialized. Subsequent chapters show his inability to court his cousin Helena in a socially acceptable fashion. She rejects him for his lack of style, just as Catherine rejects Heathcliff for his absence of social status. Joaquín has no synergetic and seemingly indissoluble bond to a lover, as Heathcliff and Perucho do in the novels of Brontë and Pardo Bazán. This relationship is reserved for Abel Sánchez, whose imagined antagonism and effortless success are needed for Joaquín to create a monumental envy that will confer on him a conviction of his existence.

Joaquín is crude and clumsy but does not reveal savagery outside his treatment of Abel. In the case of the latter, he is tempted to kill him during a serious illness and to assist at the birth of his child Abelín, thereby affording him an opportunity to make a deliberate, fatal error. Near the conclusion of the novel, he strangles Abel Sánchez and must immediately fall ill and die owing to the synergetic nature of their relationship. This strangling does not materialize out of nowhere, for in chapter 18 of *Wuthering Heights* the dying Earnshaw cries out, speaking of Heathcliff, "Oh, if God would but give me strength to strangle him in my last agony, I'd go to hell with joy." (Unamuno marks this passage with three vertical lines inside the back cover of the edition he owned [Brontë, Dent 198]). The primary narrator of Unamuno's novel makes continual references to Joaquín's "demon" of envy and to the hellish fires that burn in his soul (Gullón 117-51).

Because Abel is more successful, has stolen away Joaquín's love object, Helena, and has produced a son, while Joaquín and Antonia can "only" manage a daughter and, to date, a moderately successful level of economic prosperity, Joaquín develops a massive plan of

revenge. He will first turn Abel's son Abelín against his father by both imputing a fatherly jealousy to Abel and by simultaneously feigning to be the boy's true friend, his real "father." He thus partially duplicates Heathcliff's scheme to befriend Hareton Earnshaw, the heir to Catherine's father's estate. Abel then asks his daughter Joaquina—who has been kept at home under virtual house arrest, much like the youthful Cathy Linton of *Wuthering Heights*—to attract and marry Abelín, alleging that the uniting of Monegro blood and Sánchez blood in their envisioned offspring will serve to cancel out the conflict of opposites that breeds his envy of Abel. In actuality, he wants to breed an heir to his own envy. This scheme duplicates Heathcliff's plan to marry his son Linton to Catherine and Edgar's daughter Cathy, thus gaining control of the Earnshaw estate and avenging Edgar's gentlemanly seduction of Catherine. It also echoes the underlying dislike that Heathcliff feels toward the son who will be the vehicle of his vengeance. Like Linton and Cathy, Abelín and Joaquina eventually marry, but not before Joaquina threatens to enter a convent in order to expiate her father's sin of envy. This decision momentarily reproduces Manuela's resolution at the end of *La Madre Naturaleza*, where her nunhood will be spent in part praying for the soul of the hapless and forelorn Perucho. Like both Brontë's Heathcliff and Pardo Bazán's Gabriel, Joaquín's vengeance appears to wane, but in the novel's final scene he calls for his grandson and plants the seeds of envy in him, in order to eternalize the envy that constitutes his very soul. For ideological and psychological reasons to be discussed below, Pardo Bazán cannot allow Gabriel to enjoy the satisfaction of any such revenge.

Thematic and Formalistic Considerations

All three of these novels deal with multiple generations. In the case of *La Madre Naturaleza*, its inseparability from *Los Pazos de Ulloa* is essential to perceiving its overall similarity of action and characterization to Brontë's novel. In *La Madre*, Gabriel spends chapter 8 recalling part of the plot of Pardo Bazán's previous novel, and in chapter 9 the doctor, Máximo Juncal, does much of the same. They recall to the reader what had happened to the first generation—the Marqués, Sabel, Nucha, Julián—in *Los Pazos* so that the acts of the second generation in *La Madre*—Manuela, Perucho, Gabriel—can be seen as consequences of earlier, incomplete resolutions. The three novels also involve two domestic settings: Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights; Los Pazos and the home of Dr. Juncal and his wife; Joaquín's home and that of Abel. All three novels also deal with clearly contrasted types: the passionate versus the rational, the generous versus the selfish, the pathological versus the normal, the natural versus the civilized, the moral versus the amoral or immoral. All have motifs of revenge, though the importance of the motif is far more significant in *Wuthering Heights* and *Abel Sánchez*, suggesting that in this respect Unamuno's novel exhibits relatively little reflection of Pardo Bazán's. The incest motif is ingeniously used to conjure up a sense of the entire gamut of the "forbidden" in all three works; that is, it presents in a pre-Freudian manner the idea that, were it not for civilization, human beings would live in a state of chaotic pleasure that ultimately would threaten their security and the survival of their culture. In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff and Cathy are only raised *like* siblings, but the association of their passion with an incestual relationship is enough to depict as sinful and unnatural a passion that transgresses all the conventions of class on which their culture is predicated. In *La Madre Naturaleza*, Manuela and Perucho actually are half siblings (Pardo Bazán could not

actually make them brother and sister without giving a totally different plot to her previous novel and without risking a great deal of moral outrage). But, more than morally deviant lust, their passion serves to show how purity of feelings risks overpowering the carefully wrought alliances (the Marqués and the de la Lage family, the Marqués and the ex-gaitero of Naya, the landed gentry and the Church) and inheritances upon which rural order rests. In *Abel Sánchez*, Abel and Joaquín are only *like* brothers, but this carefully described likeness not only permits Unamuno to introduce their conflict as part of the eternal prolongation of the Cain and Abel myth, but to present their respective children, Abelín and Joaquina as brother and sister. The “incestual” marriage of these children of envying “brothers” can only intensify the envious inclinations in their offspring. From Satan’s envy of God (the novel’s intertext with Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Byron’s *Cain*), to the satanic insertion of the same envy of God in Adam and Eve (the same intertext), to the conflict between Cain and Abel, to the fast-forwarded case of Abel and Joaquín, there is inevitably an unbroken line of original sin. There is no escape because all is traceable back to the willful sin of the first parents of all the participants.

Each of the three novels also depends on flashbacks. *Wuthering Heights* is essentially an analepsis told by the primary narrator, Nelly Dean, to the curious traveler, Mr. Lockwood, who has been forced to spend a harrowing night with the aged Heathcliff at Thrushcross Grange (chs. 1-2). After seven contemporary chapters, *La Madre* essentially repeats the entire story of *Los Pazos de Ulloa* and of Gabriel’s military life prior to continuing its own action. Beginning with its very first chapter, *Abel Sánchez* uses Joaquín’s autobiographical *Confesión* to loop backward and interpret the antecedents for the action of the outer narrative. These analepses in the three novels being considered here suggest common intertexts with the Book of Genesis, which doubles back on itself several times owing to its compilation from three distinct strands of Hebraic tradition, which scholars term “J,” “E,” and “P” (Marks 1). Like the earliest pages of Genesis, both *Wuthering Heights* and *La Madre Naturaleza* are set in a primeval world, and in each the transgressive behavior of a man and woman receives a primary focus. *Abel Sánchez*, via its intertexts with Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Byron’s *Cain* (Franz, *Parallel* 13-49) is doubly intertextual with Genesis.

None of the important narrators in the three works is reliable. Nelly Dean is not only prejudiced against Heathcliff but loads her narrative with contradictory data. Given the fact that she is a virtual “mother” to several of the characters, it can hardly surprise that she defends them against others, thus safeguarding her domestic employment, much as the very diplomatic housekeeper of Joaquín Monegro will do in chapter 18 of Unamuno’s novel. Pardo Bazán’s extradiegetic narrator is openly moralistic, in deliberate contradiction to the sincere and noble thoughts voiced mimetically by Manuela and Perucho. Abel’s *Confesión* is a bald-faced attempt to provide an alibi for his demonic behavior but, taken hermeneutically, it has great coherence and interior validity for one so obsessed.

All three of these works are enigmatic and resist a synthetic reading. Heathcliff and Catherine seem almost crazy. Heathcliff is alternately tender and cruel, imploring and vengeful. Catherine at first pledges eternal love and allegiance to Heathcliff but rapidly becomes enamored of the luxury and social position of the Lintons. Then she tires of the

bookish existence of her husband, takes back her love, and tries to rededicate it to Heathcliff, who, hurt by her past rejection, refuses to accept it. When she dies, he claims an inability to go on living but in the same breath curses her soul, contradictorily adding that he wishes it to haunt him forever, lending him company. Perucho and Manuela love each other with a sincerity and a naturalness that excludes the possibility of guilt, despite being half siblings. Gabriel, by contrast, tries to assuage Oedipal feelings for his deceased sister, Manuela's mother, by foisting himself on an eleven year-old niece thirty-five years his junior. Notwithstanding the wide ethical disparity in the worldviews of the lovers and Gabriel, the residually Catholic orientation of the would-be determinist Gabriel triumphs. Though he does not marry his niece, her entry into a convent, under the guidance of unworldly Julián, a guidance that Gabriel himself had foolishly authorized, puts an end to the consummation of her natural love of Perucho and provides only semi-closure to the novel, here upon a discordant note of the difficult but dogmatic necessity of maintaining traditional mores. Joaquín, on the other hand, pathetically envies an Abel who is much his moral and emotional inferior. Through a willful nurturing and exaggeration of his unjust suffering and actual superiority, he captures the sympathies of the reader until the mounting up of ruined lives and his murder of Abel bring home the social horror and untenability of his inner justification.

One has the sense that, despite their disciplined control of formal structure (circular framing, telescoping of narratives), none of these novelists really knows where his or her narrative is going in the matters of plot and inter-character relationships, but it really does not matter that the sum of individual acts is difficult to naturalize. To naturalize them would be to demythologize all of their subliminal hold on us. This is the sum total of Unamuno's justification of his so-called "viviparous" characters and writing style, as laid out in the 1904 article "A lo que salga." Van Ghent has said of Brontë's characters that they "arise on and erect their drama on some ground of the psychic life where ethical ideas are not at home" (153), going on to say that Brontë's novel presents strange "figures almost naked of the web of civilized habits, ways of thinking, forms of intercourse that provides the familiar action of other fiction" (154). This is also apparent in the two violent rural novels of Pardo Bazán, but what of Unamuno? His doctor and painter are urban characters, yet little of their urbanity or urban setting appears. Joaquín and Abel visit each other's homes as if they were traipsing across a moor and had stored up old grievances to expound. Like the residents at Wuthering Heights, Antonia and Joaquina have no social life. When Antonia rescues Joaquín from abject loneliness, he rushes to erect a wall between them. Joaquín believes that taking possession of his daughter and son-in-law is more important than their happiness. Abel refuses to pass on his painterly art to his son. Joaquín insists, and the outer narrator implies, that these strange actions can be explained by mutual envy or a mutual perception of envy, but they cannot. It is not reasonable, as the narrator claims, that Joaquín's sexual transports should remain uncommunicated to Antonia because of envying Abel. It is absurd that Abel should not encourage his son to study art, even at the risk of producing competition. Antonia's willingness to mother Joaquín despite his unremitting pessimism and verbal abuse is another incomprehensible act. The narrator's explanation that Antonia was "all mother" is an expected tongue-in-cheek comment from a provocative Unamuno—who half believed, like Schopenhauer, that women were best suited for motherhood, and only secondarily endowed for other functions—but not an adequate description of a woman so

able to dispense advice about her husband's career or to detect the sinister motivation behind Joaquín's banquet speech about Abel's painting of Cain. If we accept all of these largely inexplicable situations, it is because Unamuno enthralls and mystifies us in his creation of a strange world that energizes and amazes with its distance from our world and this world's routine expectations. Like Heathcliff, Joaquín is an "anthropomorphized primitive energy" that is "terrible in effect" (Van Ghent 154) despite the absence of any attempt at psychological or environmental explanation.

All of this strange unpredictability instantly reminds us of Víctor Goti's description, in chapter 17 of *Niebla*, Unamuno's most famous novel, of the *nivola* Víctor is engaged in writing, a narrative that is *Niebla* itself: "Ello irá saliendo. Yo me dejo llevar. [. . .] Aunque, por supuesto, todo lo que digan mis personajes lo digo yo . . ." (91-92). When Augusto objects that such a work will not constitute a novel, Víctor confidently responds, "No, será . . . será . . . *nivola*" and adds: Así nadie tendrá derecho a decir que deroga las leyes de su género . . . Invento el género, e inventar un género no es más que darle un nombre nuevo, y le doy las leyes que me place" (92). To solidify this suggestive parallel between the *nivola* and these particular novels of Brontë and Pardo Bazán, we need to add Víctor's statement that the dialogue of his characters will express, not only their own enigmatic internal logic, but also their author's "yo satánico" that voices through them (92). As Vauthier says of Unamuno's strange narratives, "por estar entretajadas de hilos irónicos, las obras narrativas de Unamuno no revelarán realmente sus secretos mientras las leamos literal y linealmente" (205). That is, we need to enter their strange world and let ourselves be drawn wherever their dialogical un-logic takes us. In Summerhill's recent words, these are works whose "external action tends to be replaced by an intense concentration on a passionate main character whose struggle points to a kind of ancient or primitive experience laden with poetry and myth" (227). Summerhill states that these Unamunian characters possess an orientation toward their own "freedom" and sense of the "sublime." Do not the primeval fixations of Heathcliff and Catherine, Perucho and Manuela point them toward the same quest for uniqueness and transcendent sublimity that seem so unachievable in the modern world? Would not a willful Unamuno in search of a Romantic exhilaration and existential transcendence at least want to read them this way and take encouragement from such a reading?

Differences and Conclusions

Despite many parallels, there are significant differences in the handling of these homologous anecdotes and similar groups of characters. While Brontë's Catherine and Pardo Bazán's Manuela are refreshingly spontaneous, Unamuno's Helena is overly sophisticated. Although the atmosphere of Unamuno's novel, as we said, often seems almost as rural and isolated as those of his two predecessors, the sophistication of Helena is a decidedly urban touch, imported across the milenia from that other urban sophisticate, Helen of Troy. Unamuno's novel is the only one of the three that has no Cervantine "scrutiny of the library" scene, probably because modern, middle-class homes have no archive or library. Neither does *Abel Sánchez* have a setting on a ruined estate, both because the *arribista* status of the characters rules out such a setting and because Unamuno's existentialist narrative is largely alien to traditional Romantic or Naturalist devices despite an occasional echo of the Gothic romance. Another difference is that,

while *Wuthering Heights* and *Abel Sánchez* lay great stress on signs of Satan or indicators of the demonic, *La Madre Naturaleza* does not. If Pardo Bazán had included such language, it would have prejudiced the anti-Naturalist, “Catholic” message of Julián and the outer narrator. On the other hand, Brontë and Unamuno are writing allegorical treatments of primordial evil and envy, and the establishment of a relationship with the satanic appropriately serves to anchor the allegories in a mythic world before time.

A puzzling difference between the three often similar works is that in both *Wuthering Heights* and *Los Pazos* the synergetic male/female pairs are often seen at spontaneous, passionate play, while in *Abel Sánchez* the only synergetic pair, Joaquín and Abel, never plays. For contrast, we might recall that in *Niebla* the pairings Augusto and Víctor or “Unamuno” and Augusto often engage in word games, cards, and chess. The particular nature of the play is secondary; the important concept is that of chance or opportunity. By playing at being a couple, Brontë’s and Pardo Bazán’s pairs are actually role-playing and thus risking a try at the taboo union they seek. They are working the magic of stepping outside their actual societal role. In Unamuno’s novel, however, the synergetic pair simply does not dare step outside their role because to do so would destroy their existential synergy. Most readers readily accept an adherence to such an inerradicable bonding on the part of Joaquín, but Abel is guilty also. For example, whenever he paints or draws someone—Helena (twice), the biblical Cain, his naked models, his grandson—it is invariably a person calculated to pique violent opposition on the part of his rival.

A key moment occurs in both *Wuthering Heights* and *La Madre* when the pair of lovers absconds, leaving family members to fret about the absent pairs’ unseen but almost certain immorality. None of the heterosexual pairs in Unamuno’s novel does this, neither Joaquín and Helena, nor Helena and Abel, nor Joaquina and Abelín. Their middle-class standards do not permit them the luxury of behaving publicly in such outlandish ways. On the other hand, outcasts like Heathcliff and Perucho or gentry like Catherine and Manuela have license to flout the norms, especially with so few onlookers to object. It is again a matter of social setting, which is not often mentioned but is always felt in Unamuno’s novel. A related point involves the attempt to alter Catherine and Manuela’s rebelliousness by dressing them in fine clothes. Helena has the same problem with the pregnant and extremely dowdy Joaquina, who will not heed her mother-in-law’s scruples about house etiquette or parading her distended form. Helena, however, *cannot* take any physical step to bridle her daughter-in-law. The pair’s era, class and implied urban setting will not permit it.

A most provocative division between the three works involves *La Madre*’s and *Abel Sánchez*’s references to Cain. In Unamuno’s novel, the references are ubiquitous because Joaquín, after initially lamenting the injustice of his role, actually *wills* himself to be Cain and because the work’s intertextual references to *Paradise Lost* and Byron’s *Cain* devolve from works that Joaquín reads or recalls because he wants to see himself playing a literaturized, archetypal role. In Pardo Bazán’s work, there is only one reference of this sort. In chapter 8, Gabriel recalls that as a child he let a cat eat his sister Nucha’s canary and that “como Caín después de matar a su hermano” he ran to hide in ignominy (71). Gabriel is not only subconsciously remembering what the Marqués had done to Nucha but also foreseeing the probable terrible effects of his own pursuit of Manuela. The scene

is calculated to show how close Gabriel is to recognizing his motive and counteracting it, which he ultimately does at the very close of the novel. In *Wuthering Heights* there is no explicit reference to Cain, despite the tremendous envy between Heathcliff and Edgar, because Brontë wishes to show the inexplicable, enigmatic nature of her characters. They are as they are, not because they enact a timeless role but because, generously endowed with Romantic chaos, they are bound to channel their passions into something.

Two final differences develop around the novels' motifs of revenge and their disparate manner of naturalizing contradictions. The texts of *Wuthering Heights* and *Abel Sánchez* drip with reprisals and revenge, while in *La Madre* Gabriel only considers the possibility of punishing Perucho. Given his Catholic raising by his *mamita* Nucha, his subservience to the priest Julián, and Pardo Bazán's desire to demonstrate the needed civilizing role of religion, Gabriel would both contradict his desire to fulfill the wishes of his sister and destroy the novel's final tension between societal order and chaotic nature should he exact revenge. The other two novels, however, can freely authorize revenge because they have no covert apologetics. Finally, when *Wuthering Heights* needs to explain the startling, inconsistent behavior of its central characters, it does so both by recourse to the neglect and cruelty they have experienced and by implying that bizarre behavior happens to be their nature. *La Madre* naturalizes swings of behavior via a dual appeal to cruelty and neglect, and to a natural dichotomy in which life always confronts an instinctual search for pleasure with a need for moral and social order. *Abel Sánchez*, however, implies that people are the way they are and that the reader will have to accept them without an author's explanation. Clearly, Pardo Bazán makes the greatest appeal to environmental factors and to the notion that religion often elevates and orders life, ideas emanating from nineteenth-century sociology and Christian ontology. Brontë is both proto-sociological and wedded to the notion of classical masks. Unamuno, more classical still, simply says that his characters are archetypes that cannot be fathomed. Mariás, adopting an Orteguian stance, is dissatisfied with Unamuno's refusal to admit that environmental factors condition personality (156), but Jurkevich (106-33) finds true modernity in the presentation of Joaquín's inexplicably enfeebled ego that is unable to come to grips with the equally inexplicable destructive side of his personality. It goes without saying that, if one accepts this summary, Unamuno turns out to be the most radically innovative of the novelists and Pardo Bazán the most tied to an admixture of realism and dogma.

For Brontë and Unamuno there is both fascination and a conviction of verisimilitude in a surface portrayal of primordial inconsistency (As a passage in one book in Unamuno's library states, "Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is a book by itself—hardly a novel" [Craik 348; U-1033]). The characters' inconsistency and their play are their natural means of escaping the rigidity of author-given roles intuited from the social circumstance the author has internalized at the moment of writing. For Brontë this circumstance is stratified. For Unamuno it is progressively standardized and flat. For Brontë the circumstance is to be reproduced, though left unanalyzed. In Unamuno, following the Symbolists, it is reduced to an essence by inducing the reader to imagine circumstances where none are visible. It is the reader's creation of circumstances that gives depth to these archetypes of unfathomability. The combination of enigmatic verisimilitude and intense reader participation is what makes an otherwise highly intellectual and formalistic work like *Abel Sánchez* a "good read" for both intellectuals and thrill seekers.

What all of this means is that Unamuno's novel, while dependent on many of the concepts associated with existentialism—the “other,” commitment to an idea, the need to “earn” selfhood, the validation of thought through lived experience—depends even more on its ability to entertain. It does this through Joaquín's bizarre attempt to escape his merely perceived inferiority, through his refusal to be limited by the “facts” of his mundane life, via its hints that the ancient concept of the demonic may still retain validity, by its sympathies with the motives of a manipulator and murderer, and by its complication of an otherwise simple plot—one of the novel's most obvious parallels to Brontë's narrative—in order to enlist (and ultimately frustrate) the ordering proclivities of the reader. In other words, Unamuno's narrative, while giving its due to experiential concerns that are conceptualized through an ontologizing intellect, actually holds its reader's attention through a much more facile appeal to the mysterious, the forbidden, the unpredictable, and the unanswerable. Although the carefully conceived metafictional/philosophical dimension and formal complications of the novel are easily perceivable as reflections of Modernity, its preference for surprise, indeterminacy, unreconciled sensations of gloom and epiphany, and unresolvable diegetic riddles suggests more than a timid anticipation of the type of writing that future commentators will call the Postmodern.

Postmodern fiction, according to Baldick (174-75), is characterized by the fragmentary, by alternative and almost disposable visions, by disorienting techniques, alienation, and “abandonment of [Modernism's] determined quest for artistic coherence in a fragmented world.” Jameson (558) highlights the central role of the Gothic tale—omnipresent in *Abel Sánchez*—in many a Postmodern narrative. Rorty (573-86) points out that Postmodern thinking is highly idiosyncratic and relativistic, a point recently made about the novelized “philosophy” of Unamuno (Pérez Lopez 63-89). Cahoone (14-15) reduces these and other descriptors of Postmodernism to four axioms of the cultural, literary, and philosophic syndrome: (I) The Postmodern privileges representation over actual presence; (II) It exhibits an absence of origins; (III) It highlights an exaggerated, even infinite interrelatedness among all things; (IV) It broadcasts a seeming lack of transcendence. Let us conclude by examining the previous discussion of *La Madre Naturaleza*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Abel Sánchez* in the light of these four criteria. I have inverted in advance the chronological order of Brontë's and Pardo Bazán's novels in order to adjust my conclusions to the evidence provided in the previous discussion of this complex, triple intertext.

Criterion I: In *La Madre Naturaleza* the outer narrator presents the envy and vengeful acts of Gabriel and Perucho as documentable “presences.” The only “representation” is the vague recollection of the vengefulness and evil, analeptically recalled from *Los Pazos de Ulloa* in the chapter 8 memories of the diegetic Gabriel. In *Wuthering Heights* envy and revenge are ever present, but they are “present” only through the twice distanced accounts the outer narrator, who has received most of the information from Mrs. Dean. The revenge and envy of *Abel Sánchez* are present entirely in “texts”: Joaquín's interpretive *Confesión*, his *Memorias de un médico viejo* (which may be the source of the novel's foregrounded details), and the entire combination of documents assembled by the unreliable compiler who has issued the introductory note.

Criterion II: *La Madre Naturaleza* finds the origins of evil in the primitive life of rural Galicia, a primitiveness that, in turn, has its source in the decline of all of Spain. In *Wuthering Heights* evil (Heathcliff, Hindley) is an inexplicable presence. “Cruel Nature” is merely a reflection of the “pathetic fallacy” whereby the cosmos mirrors human emotion. The evil present in *Abel Sánchez* can be traced back to the biblical Cain and Abel and, via the additional biblical intertexts with Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Byron’s *Cain*, even further “back” to timeless myth, which once more proleptically foregrounds evil in the eternal present of the characters.

Criterion III: In *La Madre Naturaleza* each character is in control (free will) and is, despite the cruelty and sensuality of the surroundings, morally responsible for his or her own acts. The actions of *Wuthering Heights*, however, transpire due to the mysterious and unfathomable dictates of given “personalities” and therefore appear interrelated in ways too complex to be synthesized. On the other hand, Joaquín and Abel are synergetically bonded, and their conflictive bonding echoes the ongoing existential antagonism that bonds all parts of the universe.

Criterion IV: *La Madre*’s Julián saves the souls of Gabriel and Manuela, while Gabriel, in turn, saves the reputation and future life of Perucho. God’s law, Christian civilization, and “ultimate wisdom” triumph, thus “transcending” the strictures of materiality and the inclinations of the flesh. In *Wuthering Heights* the law of the jungle and the rules of civilization produce a dialectic in which each of these influences transforms the other, both losing and winning some of its momentary demands. In *Abel Sánchez*—to conclude—evil reigns eternal, but no one except the totally desperate, unbelieving and unreliable Joaquín can posit this evil’s “divine” origins. This divinity is a myth, and, lamentably, there is no transcendence.

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Notes

- ¹ For example, in the article “Reciprocidad hispanoamericana,” published in *El Mercantil Valenciano* on 29 October, 1919, Unamuno makes the following statement in the review of the novel *Valle negro* by the Argentine Hugo Wast: “Lo que más recuerda es esa estupenda novela inglesa de Emily Bronte [sic] que se llama *Wuthering Heights*” (OC 6: 882).
- ² Hereafter, references to this edition will be designated “Brontë, Dent” to distinguish them from references to the more modern edition used to make textual comparisons in this study.

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