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A Critical Analysis of the Male Protagonists in the Brontë Sisters' Novels
Kritická analýza hlavních mužských postav v románech sester Brontëových

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Declaration

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného či stejného titulu.

V Praze dne

I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

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Thesis abstract

The novels of the Brontë sisters share numerous aspects: defiant heroines, male protagonists as the source of the central conflict, 1st-person layered narrative structure, historical settings, and a redeemed morality as the solution to distortion of harmony. Notably, the authors employ the novel as a medium through which they explore not only the themes of individual ethics, but also the possibilities of female self-realization in a society dominated by patriarchy. The authors' incorporation of the Byronic hero as a principle of destruction into their narratives accentuates the typically Victorian concept of doubt and self-searching not only in their male protagonists, but also in their heroines. Therefore, the male protagonists as the representatives of male dominance are crucial in understanding the development of the Brontës' individual narratives. This thesis attempts to analyse three male protagonists of the Brontës' greatest novels: Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights*, Edward Fairfax Rochester of *Jane Eyre*, and Arthur Huntingdon of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

Heathcliff's foreign origin brings conflict into the moorland microcosm since his character's first arrival. The destruction of his union with Catherine Earnshaw drives Heathcliff to transgress the social sphere in order to unleash vengeance on his surroundings, an act which determines the rest of the narrative. However, as Heathcliff's ultimate desire is a union with his separated soul, the only resolution for his unrepentance is death. In order to establish a new moral order, the next generation must find harmony in adaptation of the natural principles. The implied supernatural elements in the novel, along with the absence of religious salvation, highlight the elemental essence of the protagonists.

The discord which Rochester creates at Thornfield Hall has its roots in patriarchal dominance, immorality, and refusal of religion. He serves not only as Jane Eyre's romantic interest; by embodying her test of faith, he also becomes an antagonist who Jane must overcome on her journey to maturity by adhering to her moral and religious code. Simultaneously, Rochester's redemption is conditioned by the necessity of his repentance. The final resolution in a secluded domestic happiness is achieved by Jane's gained independence and Rochester's religious humility.

Huntingdon's refusal of religious morality results in his gradual decline; the abuse he inflicts on his wife, son, and companions originates superficially in his alcoholism, but actually results from the destructive tendencies provided to him by his male dominance in the domestic sphere. Helen's rebellious reinvention of self as a working mother offers a combination of the male and female principle as the foundation of a new harmony. As Huntingdon is both unwilling and unable to reform, Gilbert Markham emerges as a more ideal suitor by adapting the female principle into his life.

Through the development of their male protagonists in relation not only to their heroines, but also to the concept of the Byronic hero, the Brontës explore the possibilities of new, more ideal dynamics between men and women in the historical, literary, and social context of the Victorian era; from their efforts, a more suitable environment of both the domestic and the social emerges.

Abstrakt

Romány sester Brontëových vykazují množství podobností: vzpurné hrdinky, mužské protagonisty jako zdroj hlavního konfliktu, vrstvení narativní struktury v první osobě, historické prostředí a napravení morálky jako rozřešení narušené harmonie. Sestry Brontëovy především využívají román jako prostředek ke zkoumání nejen individuální morálnosti, ale také možností ženské seberealizace ve společnosti dominované patriarchií. Autorky do svých děl zakomponovaly Byronského hrdinu jako princip destrukce, čímž vyzdvihují typicky viktoriánský koncept pochyb a sebezpytu nejen u svých mužských protagonistů, ale také u svých hrdinek. Mužští protagonisté jako zástupci mužské dominance jsou proto stěžejní pro pochopení vývoje jednotlivých narativ sester Brontëových. Tato práce se pokusí analyzovat tři mužské protagonisty nejlepších románů Brontëových: Heathcliffa z románu *Na Větrné hůrce*, Edwarda Fairfaxe Rochestera z *Jany Eyrové,* a Arthura Huntingdona z *Dvojího života Heleny Grahamové*.

Cizí původ Heathcliffa vytváří konflikt v mikrokosmu vřesovišť od chvíle, kdy se tato postava poprvé objeví. Zničení jeho spojení s Kateřinou Earnshawovou dožene Heathcliffa, aby prostoupil sociální sférou za účelem pomsty svému okolí. Tento čin určuje zbytek narativy. Jelikož je však Heathcliffovým hlavním cílem spojení se svou oddělenou duší, je jediným rozřešením jeho hříšnosti smrt. Nová generace musí najít harmonii v přizpůsobení se přirozeným principům, aby zajistila nový řád morálky. Naznačením nadpřirozených prvků a absencí náboženské spásy román vyzdvihuje elementární základ protagonistů.

Svár, který Rochester vytváří v Thornfield Hall, má původ v patriarchální dominanci, amorálním jednání, a odmítnutí náboženství. Slouží nejen jako objekt lásky Jany Eyrové, ale také se, jelikož ztělesňuje test její víry, stává antagonistou, kterého Jane musí překonat na cestě k dospělosti dodržováním svého morálního a náboženského kodexu. Rochesterovo vykoupení je zároveň podmíněno nutností pokání. Konečné rozřešení v izolovaném domácím štěstí je dosaženo Janinou dosaženou nezávislostí a Rochesterovou náboženskou pokorou.

Huntingdonovo odmítání náboženské morálky má za následek jeho postupný úpadek. Újma, kterou působí své ženě, synovi i společníkům, na první pohled vychází z jeho alkoholismu, ale ve skutečnosti je důsledkem destruktivních tendencí mužské dominance v domácí sféře. Helenino vzpurné znovunalezení sama sebe v roli pracující matky nabízí kombinaci mužských a ženských prvků jako základ pro novou harmonii. Jelikož Huntingdon se nechce a nedokáže napravit, Gilbert Markham se jeví jako lepší partner, když se přizpůsobuje ženskému prvku ve svém životě.

Skrz vývoj mužských protagonistů nejen ve vztahu ke svým hrdinkám, ale také ke konceptu Byronského hrdiny, sestry Bronteovy zkoumají možnosti nových, lepších vztahů mezi muži a ženami v historickém, literárním i sociálním kontextu Viktoriánské éry. Z jejich snahy vyvstává vhodnější prostředí jak domácí, tak sociální.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Few English families may boast of siblings as prominent in English literature as the Brontës: Charlotte, Emily, and Anne have all produced both poems and novels which are significant not only for their linguistic and structural qualities, but also because of their prominent characters, and the deviation from the traditional topics of their contemporaries in their distinctive female voice. The three selected masterpieces of the Brontë sisters – Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* – explore in various degrees the themes of freedom, female self-determination, and the dangers and effects of male dominance, which according to Juliet Barker, deviate from traditional standards of behaviour and sets of values prescribed by the early Victorian society.[1] These themes are introduced and partially embodied by the characters of Heathcliff, Edward Fairfax Rochester, and Arthur Huntingdon.

It is the characters' resemblance in temperament and their significant roles in the novels, which allow for a collective and comparative analysis of their significance in terms of their influence on the narrative. As their heroines' love interests, they are one of the main factors which drive the plot forward, but their complex personalities and questionable motives impede the easy categorisation into protagonists or heroes.[2] The deeply flawed morals of Heathcliff, Rochester, and Huntingdon often cause them to act antagonistically towards other characters, they defy the conventions of class hierarchy, and disrupt the original status quo of the novel. Simultaneously, they raise issues of morality which the heroines must overcome in order to triumph, and introduce negative aspects of masculinity in need of redemption.

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[1] Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Phoenix Giants, 1994): 90.
[2] However, due to a lack of a better denomination and the need for clarity, all three characters shall be referred to as "protagonists" in this thesis.

To each character belongs one primary determinant which influences all their subsequent actions. The revenge Heathcliff orchestrates on the Earnshaws and the Lintons originates in his failure to claim Catherine Earnshaw, which in turn is the result of his lower class status at Wuthering Heights; Arthur Huntingdon's irreverent abuse of basic pleasures and privilege necessitates his wife into a maternal rebellion against the patriarchy; Edward Rochester's catastrophic marriage to Bertha Mason causes him to transgress morality and jurisdic laws in his profane demand for real love. The manner in which both the male and the female protagonists choose to resolve their complex situations determines whether the novel ends with their redemption or doom; each author combines a different mixture of acceptance, adaptation, and destruction. The final restoration of order is achieved through catharsis on the principles of moral values – both general and Protestant, and deeply embedded in their gender and class. This thesis will therefore investigate the characters, as well as the outside influences which bring them in harmony with their settings.

The Brontë reality

The Brontë siblings grew up as the children of a clergyman on a parsonage in the remote Haworth, a small Yorkshire town surrounded by wild moorlands and whipped all year round by strong winds.[3] Despite its small size, Haworth was also a town scattered with textile mills, rapidly growing in population each decade, and equidistant from three other industrial towns.[4] In such a mixture of expansive manufacturing industry and a chill, windswept landscape, an atmosphere of two simultaneous eras existed, where the pervasive heritage of the earlier rural years had not yet completely given in to the modernization of the Victorian age. This could be said of both the Romantic legacies in the Brontë aesthetics and narrative,

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[3] Baker, 94.
[4] Baker, 92.

as of the everyday realities of Haworth, where in the year 1850, nearly half of the children died before the age of six, and the average life expectancy was 25 years of age – so that, having died over a year before at the respective ages of 31, 30, and 29, Branwell, Emily, and Anne all died at an above average age. The drastically high mortality was the result of the poor quality of the water supply and a non-existing sewerage,[5] Haworth's dark heritage of the feudal years.

As a poor clergyman's daughters living in the first half of the 19th century, the five Brontë sisters could look to the bright future of three options: marriage, tutoring, or premature death. As the two eldest, Maria and Elizabeth, went into their early graves as young children, after they have both become ill with tuberculosis during their time at Clergy Daughters' School, the remaining sisters – Charlotte, Emily, and Anne – underwent a thorough education to become governesses. Following several years of disillusionment with tutoring uncooperative children, experiencing life in an inferior and solitary position in the household, homesickness, and a failed attempt at opening a school, the sisters' eventual return to Haworth merited their first book: a collection of poetry produced by all three sisters, *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*, in 1846.

The fact that the sisters opted for masculine pseudonyms due to what Charlotte would eventually call "a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice"[6] in her *Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell,* is significant due to its evidence of an inequality between the perceptions of masculinity and femininity in the general society, which all three sisters sensed acutely. Their following novels – among them

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[5] Benjamin Herschel Babbage, *Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, and Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Hamlet of Haworth* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1850): 26.

[6] Charlotte Brontë, "Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell" to *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë (London: Collector's Library, 2003): 9.

Wuthering Heights, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* – were also published under the sisters' pen names, and only after the deaths of all her remaining siblings did Charlotte reveal the true identity of the mysterious Bells to the wide public, having no longer felt the exhilaration of a secret shared with her sisters:[7] the secret defiance of patriarchy through the means available to those oppressed by it.

The end of Branwell Brontë, on the other hand, exemplifies the failed aspirations and wasted prospects of the only son in a family of six children; unlike his sisters, Branwell had the male advantages of the law, custom, and privilege on his side, and following the failure of keeping any prospective job or becoming an admired artist, proceeded to drown them one by one in liquor. A manifestation of the destructive expectations of male success on a fragile ego, he wasted his literary talents and hopes of becoming a portraitist on drinking and making debts,[8] and died in 1848 of tuberculosis as the only one out of the four remaining siblings who did not become a published author, shortly followed by Emily and Anne who died within half a year of the same illness. However, despite his shortcomings, Branwell's persona was an important influence on the lives of the three sisters, and they projected his moral decline into their writing. Having since childhood occupied a "dominant role"[9] in their plays, Branwell's reflection may be found in both Hindley Earnshaw of *Wuthering Heights*, and Arthur Huntingdon of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; as for Charlotte Brontë, Branwell was her chief playmate during their formative years,[10] and together they have given shape to many characters which would later shape Rochester of *Jane Eyre*.

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[7] Baker, 616.
[8] Baker, 227.
[9] Baker, 152.
[10] Baker, 160.

The Brontë imagination

The shared qualities of the characters, as well as the topics introduced in each novel, may have been influenced by the environment in which Charlotte, Emily, and Anne were raised: their moorland isolation and reclusivity, their experience as both governesses and women living in a patriarchal world, and the real personas they have encountered in their lives – primarily that of Branwell, although Charlotte's broken heart of loving a married man would also come to be reflected in the character of Edward Rochester.[11] Such similarities had originally led to a speculation on the part of literary critics whether the novels might not be in fact the creation of the same author, or a cooperative attempt.[12] However, the characters of Heathcliff, Rochester, and Huntingdon, as well as the issues they carry into their respective plots, have their rawest origins in the bottomless imagination of the three sisters. Unsurprisingly, the Brontës' creative spirit had flourished since their childhood. The siblings were supplied with many literary sources for their plays: newspaper articles, books, and the monthly journal *Blackwood's Magazine*, which commented on not only the contemporary literature, but also on news and politics;[13] both fictional and external worlds must have provided much inspiration and incentive for their active imagination.

Perhaps the greatest stimulus for the Brontës' creativity was a box of twelve wooden soldiers, which they received in June 1826 from their father. The toys quickly became the chief instruments in the siblings' plays; dubbed the Young Men, they would represent both real and fictive personas including the Duke of Wellington and Bonaparte, and become acted out and set on paper in journal entries, poems, prose, and histories scribbled down by the Brontë siblings in miniature books. The fictional worlds which rose from the siblings'

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[11] Baker, 419.
[12] E. Whipple, "North American Review, October 1848," Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*, A Casebook, ed. Miriam Allott (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1992): 51.
[13] Baker, 149.

imagination – the Glasstown Confederacy, Angria, and Gondal – would come to be peopled with the rough predecessors of the protagonists who in turn shaped the eventual novels.[14] As the land of Angria, shared by Branwell and Charlotte, produced the magnetic Zamorna and the cruel Alexander Percy, Earl of Northangerland, Anne and Emily's land of Gondal provided, among others, the brooding, mysterious Douglas;[15] dominant and distinctively masculine, these characters may be regarded as the foundations upon which the characters of of Rochester[16] and Heathcliff[17] would eventually rise, while Huntingdon's failings drew from Branwell himself.[18] Due to their shared environment, it is therefore not surprising to encounter resemblances of nature and plot structure in not only the protagonists, but in the novels themselves.

Romanticism and the Victorian era

Despite their shared qualities, each character's significance emerges primarily in his difference from the other two. Charlotte herself disagreed with the idea of similarities between Rochester and Huntingdon; in a letter to her reader and publisher William Smith Williams, dated August 14th, 1848, she declared "no likeness between the two."[19] Her chief argument was Rochester's fulfilled potential for redemption and the positive development of his character based on his accumulation of experience. Furthermore, in the preface to *Wuthering Heights* she also criticized Heathcliff as a creature neither right nor advisable to create,[20] and dubbed the subject of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* – and by extension, the

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[14] Baker, 530.
[15] Baker, 501.
[16] Baker, 509.
[17] Baker, 502.
[18] Baker, 530.
[19] Charlotte Brontë, "Letter to W. S. Williams, August 14, 1848" in Clement K. Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896). Online. *Project Gutenberg*, 8. 8. 2006. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19011/19011-h/19011-h.htm> 10. 1. 2019.
[20] Charlotte Brontë, "Preface" to *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë (London: Collector's Library, 2003): 21.

character of Arthur Huntingdon himself – "an entire mistake."[21] Her criticism partially reflected the contemporary attitudes towards the novels, whose publication caused an uproar of disgust and fascination with the novels' portrayal of temperament, cruelty, and unpunished immorality[22] – overall, the authors' rejection of the traditional Victorian respectability and self-restraint. Therefore, the projection of bigamy, adultery, violence, abuse, insanity, obsession, and alcoholism into everyday life of their heroes and heroines makes it quite problematic to claim either *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, or *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* as traditional Victorian novels. Instead, despite their respective dates of publication ranging between 1847 and 1848, the novels bridge the gap between the Romantic emphasis upon the individual's emotional search for balance and spirituality, and the Victorian tendencies of individualism dissolving into its social context.

The Brontës' choice to plant their novels into the late 18th and early 19th centuries[23] indicates their affinity for the pre-Victorian era, but the issues of their contemporary society reverberate through the narrative nevertheless. The novels move in a distinctly Romantic heritage: *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, as well as *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* have their background in the "bleak and dramatic"[24] scenery of the rural Yorkshire, and they turn to the countryside, spirituality, and the unaffected, learning human nature for an answer to the dangers of a strictly patriarchal society. The powerful influence of Romanticism is further evident in the magnitude of the male heroes; Heathcliff, Rochester, and Huntingdon are dark, magnetic individuals who reflect and subvert the Romantic legacies of the Byronic hero. However, they also challenge the traditional concepts of Victorian protagonists, as their

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[21] Charlotte Brontë, "Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell," 12.
[22] Baker, 90.
[23] Lockwood's first visit to Wuthering Heights is dated 1801, with most of the events actually preceding this date as far as into the 1770s; the clue of a recent publication of *Marmion* received by Jane sets the events of *Jane Eyre* into 1810s at the latest; Gilbert Markham sets to write his letters to Jack Halford in 1847, but the narrative takes place in the 1820s.
[24] Baker, 93.

character arcs are completed outside of the traditional norms of both Victorian and Romantic literature. In Heathcliff's rise to power in a hostile community, Helen's abandonment of her husband, and Jane's departure from Thornfield Hall, as well as in their exploration of the variations of the stereotypically submissive femininity in contrast to the dominant masculinity, the Brontë novels subvert the traditional ideals of domesticity, and channel a distinctly feminist rebellion against the rigid social structure of class hierarchy and gender roles of the first half of the 19th century.

As Herbert Sussman notes in his study of *Victorian Masculinities*, the early Victorian writers – along with the Brontës – challenged "the notion of manliness [...] in a world transformed by industrialization and by *embourgeoisement*."[25] In a new era of transition from the feudal Middle Ages to the modern, democratic era of machines, enterprise, and a new order,[26] the mental safety net of traditional thinking was deconstructed and replaced by "an age of doubt,"[27] as Walter E. Houghton writes in *The Victorian Frame of Mind*. Sussman studies masculinity as a constructed rather than innate concept which constantly evolves over time, "specific to individuals and to groups or classes of men:"[28] be it an aristocrat, a self-made man, or an artist. Viewing masculinity – or masculinities – from such angle enables an investigation of the historical basis for male dominance along with the reexamination of "what is marked as masculine;"[29] such a presumption allows for the Brontës' reimagination of this tradition of masculinities into an environment satisfying both the man and the woman.

The reflections on masculinity of the Brontë sisters therefore partially accept, but also transform the typical masculinities of the Victorian era: their novels break with the

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[25] Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 2.
[26] Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (Fredericksburg: BookCrafters, Inc. 1985): 2.
[27] Houghton, 9-10.
[28] Sussman, 12.
[29] Sussman, 9.

stereotypes of the middle-class ideal of propriety in terms of class and gender, but retain the essential essence of the Victorian fluidity of thought, plurality of masculinities, and the unshakeable belief in "the existence of ultimate truths"[30] in both religion and ethics. Their work is particularly interested in the theme of religious beliefs, or the lack of them, especially concerning the impact of male dominance on not only woman but the society in general. Their focus on religion and morality as "the proper regulation of an innate male energy"[31] brings the Brontës into contact with their male contemporaries: Carlyle, Pater, Browning, and the like, who focused on the figure of the monk as the medium through which to approach masculinity.[32] Unlike the contemporary male authors, however, the Brontës' gender and their strong awareness of their female position in society allows them to examine the issue from a feminine standpoint, especially concerning the domestic sphere and the emphasis on the possibility of female freedom in a patriarchal society.

In their novels *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the Brontë sisters oppose the limitations of the traditional conception of the masculine and the feminine ideals, and through the resolution of the conflict created by their male protagonists Heathcliff, Edward Rochester, and Arthur Huntingdon, introduce a new concept of an equal relationship which is advantageous to both sexes. The Brontë novels express many female concerns of the 1840s: they particularly take issue with the conception of woman as "a submissive wife whose whole excuse for being was to love, honor, obey – and amuse – her lord and master, and to manage his household and bring up his children,"[33] as Houghton describes the traditional female position of the Victorian era. Catherine Earnshaw, Jane Eyre, and Helen Huntingdon all revolt against such an ideal in their unique ways. In their

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[30] Houghton, 14.
[31] Sussman, 3.
[32] Sussman, 2.
[33] Houghton, 348.

exploration of sexual dynamics and the masculine psyche, the Brontë sisters use the Romantic heroic tradition of rebellion: just as the midcentury town of Haworth stood in between the historical nature and the modern age of Queen Victoria, its landscape having become refashioned by textile mills, so does the literary legacy of the male Romantic hero become utilized and adapted in Brontës' novels in the freshly formed Victorian hero.

The concept of a Byronic hero's masculinity differs from that of a Victorian protagonist's of either upper, middle, or lower class; in a similar manner to the Romantic re-portrayal of the Satan from Milton's *Paradise Lost* into the ultimately sublime and dignified heroic rebel,[34] the Brontës adapt the Romantic legacies for the problematization of their contemporary masculinities. In his study *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes*, Peter L. Thorslev finds "a distinctive heroic tradition"[35] in the Romantic Movement, with the roots of the Byronic hero in the Gothic Villain-Hero and Satan. The heroic tradition is typically credited as having originated in Aristotle's *Poetics*, the hero being a man with "greater powers, greater dignity, and a greater soul"[36] than that of an average person, characteristics which allow him to stand out among the common people. The Byronic protagonist cannot exist without "his titanic passions, his pride, and his certainty of self-identity;"[37] his powerful individualism and desire for freedom from conventions are his primary characteristics. Furthermore, according to Zhao Wei, The Byronic hero:

> "presents an idealized, but flawed character whose external attributes include: rebellion, great passion, great talent, lacking of respect for rank and privilege, an unsavory secret past, arrogance, overconfidence or lack of foresight and ultimately a self-destructive manner [...] strong love for life, the pursuit for romance, the courage to challenge the royal, the contempt to the

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[34] Peter L. Thorslev, *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* (Minnesota: University Press, 1965): 108.
[35] Thorslev, 185.
[36] Thorslev, 186.
[37] Thorslev, 187.

unfair social justice, the desire for freedom and the revenge to
the evil party that deprived the people of their liberty."[38]

Each of the heroes adopts some and rejects other of these values, as will be described further on in the text. Furthermore, according to Cristina Ceron, particularly Heathcliff shares the Byronic need to "represent a disruptive element that subverts the entire economy of the narratives;"[39] given the dominance of each of the Brontë protagonists over the text and their massive influence on the plot of their individual story, which only terminates either with their death or redemption, we may extend this trend to both Rochester and Huntingdon as well.

Structure of the thesis

The main objective of this thesis is to provide a critical and comparative analysis of the main male characters of the Brontë sisters' novels: Edward Rochester, Heathcliff, and Arthur Huntingdon, particularly regarding their function in the novel. It will therefore analyse the origins, course, and resolution of the conflict they introduce in their respective novels, particularly regarding their social and sexual dynamics with the heroine. Each character is inspected in a separate chapter; academical criticisms and other secondary sources consulted in this study are listed under Bibliography. The primary sources of this thesis are *Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre,* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. While the analysis of the individual characters will inevitably vary according to their function in the novel's structure and the novel's narration, it will follow the uniform pattern of: the analysis of the character's importance in terms of the conflict he creates in the heroine's life; his social background and the influence of it on his position; the symbolic importance of the mansion in which the

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[38] Zhao Wei, "Byronic Hero and the Comparison with Other Heroes," *Studies in Literature and Language* Vol. 10, No. 6 (2015): 30. Online. *CS Canada*, Studies in Literature and Language, 2015 <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/7123> 2. 4. 2019.
[39] Cristina Ceron, "Emily and Charlotte Brontë's Re-reading of the Byronic hero," *Revue LISA/Lisa E-journal*, March 9, 2010. <https://journals.openedition.org/lisa/3504?lang=en> 3. 4. 2019.

character resides; the relationship of the character with the heroine; and the resolution of the conflict the character introduces in the novel, both in terms of his physical presence and the possibility of a religious redemption.

This essay shall explore how from the examined novels emerges a male protagonist as understood by the Brontës; a descendant of the Byronic hero whose presence simultaneously unleashes an all-determining conflict in the narrative which results from his own wild nature, and provokes the heroine into an exploration of her own identity both in and outside of her social context. In their application of the Romantic legacies into the Victorian context of the male protagonist, the Brontë sisters not only emerge as a distinct force in the British literature, but also bridge the gap between the two literary periods, and explore male and female roles in their context.

Chapter II: Heathcliff

The primary leitmotif of Heathcliff's existence is the theme of conflict. The multilateral meaning of this motif relates to the conflict of nature and culture, to Heathcliff's enigmatic identity, to his relationship with Catherine,[40] and to the conflict his existence brings into the narrative. Heathcliff enters the Earnshaw household as an external force from the outside world, a Liverpool urchin on the margins of society, a "gypsy brat"[41] speaking "gibberish" (61); his only identity is his alien origin indicated by his dark outlook. This status of an outsider places him in conflict with the community in the Yorkshire moors, which Nelly Dean characterizes as recluse and mistrustful when she says, "We don't in general take to foreigners here, not unless they take to us first" (71). Therefore, Heathcliff's arrival at

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[40] To distinguish between the characters of Catherine from the first and Catherine from the second generation, the former shall be referred to as Catherine, while the latter as Cathy.
[41] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (London: Collector's Library, 2003): 61. All future references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

Wuthering Heights marks him as an unintentionally disruptive element in the prevailing order of the Earnshaw family. He is a foreign influence forcibly brought into the household, against the will of the other occupants so that "from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house" (63). The conflict Heathcliff creates when he replaces Hindley as Mr Earnshaw's favourite child ricochets as Hindley reduces Heathcliff into a servile position and isolates him from access to cultivation and education. Heathcliff's subsequent decision to avenge his ruined ambitions of a union with Catherine becomes the primary source of conflict in *Wuthering Heights*. Therefore, Heathcliff is a principle of conflict and destruction of the antecedent harmony throughout the novel.

Even Heathcliff's name represents a conflict of identity. "Heathcliff," which serves for both the first and last name, signifies his status of "a nameless man" (134); despite the inclusive effort of being named after a deceased Earnshaw child, he remains a stranger within the family, neither an Earnshaw nor a Linton, a force in conflict with the established norms in the community. Furthermore, his name symbolizes his connection with nature and the moors which he and Catherine roam as children. This primal natural connection becomes a vital component of their relationship, both a determinant and a reflection of it. As outcasts in the Earnshaw family, Heathcliff and Catherine's childhood is marked by a friendship based on a shared aversion to society: the act of throwing their prayer books into the dog kennel becomes the symbolic rejection of religion and education, as they promise to "grow up as rude as savages" (71) and laugh at the rich, spoiled Linton children. Their frequent rambles on the moors represent their integration into nature, as well as their spiritual intimacy.

This conflict of culture and nature may be observed in Heathcliff's relationship to the houses of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. When Heathcliff arrives at Wuthering Heights, the house is inhabited by the Earnshaw family; fiery, wild, and tenacious, their

nature is mirrored in the location which is constantly assaulted by the powerful "north wind blowing over the edge" (24), with the house built robust enough to withstand the rough, violent weather. According to Lord David Cecil, the nature of the Earnshaw family is rooted in the elemental principles, namely that of storm; like the Earnshaws, Heathcliff is also a child of the storm.[42] Naturally Heathcliff chooses Wuthering Heights as his permanent residence in his adulthood, but he marks it with his destructive presence. When Lockwood enters the house in the opening pages of the novel, he encounters a barren place stripped to its bare necessities where he is attacked by savage dogs. Although Heathcliff resides in the house as a usurper, forming "a singular contrast to his abode and style of living" (26) due to his foreign appearance, Derek Traversi asserts that regarding Wuthering Heights, "we might, indeed, describe Heathcliff as its human incarnation […] a suitable background for the life of bare and primitive passion."[43] This is, however, not entirely accurate: the house Lockwood enters is a oppressive to both Cathy and Hareton, while the one Heathcliff enters as a child is a home, although raw and sturdy – this may be attributed to Heathcliff's toxicity induced by his childhood.

For the reason of Heathcliff's aforementioned spiritual unity with Catherine and, by extension, the moorlands which bind them as children, he immediately rejects Thrushcross Grange and its "beautiful" (73) display of crimson, gold, and silver; when young Heathcliff exclaims that he would "not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange" (74), he not only rejects the culture and luxury represented by the house, but also the spoiled, fretful nature of the soft Linton siblings. Already as a child, Heathcliff's primary motive is to be with Catherine – for when she betrays their bond

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[42] Lord David Cecil, "Emily Brontë and *Wuthering Heights*," Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*, A Casebook, ed. Miriam Allott (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1992): 121.
[43] Derek Traversi, "*Wuthering Heights* After a Hundred Years," Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*, A Casebook, ed. Miriam Allott (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1992): 147.

and returns from Thrushcross Grange as a "very dignified" (78) lady, thinking her friend "odd" (80) for remaining ungroomed, Heathcliff expresses the suddenly contradictory wish that he had "light hair and fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as [Edgar] will be" (83). Young Heathcliff's wish does not express his desire to be integrated in the society which has rejected him, but to reestablish his disrupted bond with Catherine.

However, Heathcliff's character is alien to culture represented by the Lintons; his status simultaneously hinders him from uniting himself with the family and enables him to reinvent himself completely. When his attempt at accessing Catherine's society is met with failure, he leaves to reinvent himself as a wealthy, educated gentleman. However, Nelly Dean observes that "though his exterior was altered, his mind was unchangeable, and unchanged" (134). This transformation of self is only a facade, because Heathcliff does not internally embrace society and only transcends its ranks to achieve his revenge on Hindley and the Lintons, representatives of the rigid social system which has killed his chances of union with Catherine, his true self.

Therefore, despite his rejection of social and cultural context, Heathcliff's character is greatly influenced by the community of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, as Hindley's abuse and Catherine embracing culture shapes Heathcliff's future behaviour; according to Charlotte Brontë's personal review of *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff "exemplifies the effects which a life of continued injustice and hard usage may produce on a naturally perverse, vindictive, and inexorable disposition."[44] Since the element of social realism is almost completely excluded from the novel – John Allen Stevenson asserts that

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[44] Charlotte Brontë, "Letter to W. S. Williams, August 14, 1848."

"the social context seems to be missing from *Wuthering Heights*,"[45] the English civilization is only represented in the behavioral and moral code of the community; when Catherine seeks to advance her social status through marriage with Linton, she conforms to the cultural norms of her era and rejects Heathcliff, her soulmate, in favour of prestige and luxury.

Catherine

The status of Catherine as Heathcliff's love interest is impeded by their complicated relationship: as Marianne Thormählen points out, despite their proclamations of love and likeness and its purely spiritual nature, they have "no tenderness or compassion… even for each other."[46] An example of this is when Heathcliff informs dying Catherine that she "deserve[s] this" (204) for betraying their connection when she chose Edgar Linton over himself, and on being informed of Catherine's death, crying: "May she wake in torment! [...] Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living!" (211) and calling her "a liar to the end" (211). Similarly, Catherine declares "I care nothing for your sufferings" (201) shortly before her death, and describes her lover as a "fierce, pitiless, wolfish man" (137). Neither their actions nor words evidence any reason for their devotion or likeness, only the presence of it;[47] as children, they are declared "very thick" (62) after a few days of acquaintance and without any apparent reason, for the reason cannot be justified by anything else but spiritual harmony.

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[45] John Allen Stevenson, "'Heathcliff is me!' *Wuthering Heights* and the Question of Likeness," *Nineteenth-Century Literature,* Vol. 43, No. 1 (June, 1988): 66. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3044981> 24. 12. 2018.
[46] Marianne Thormählen, "The Lunatic and The Devil's Disciple: The 'Lovers' in Wuthering Heights," *The Review of English Studies,* Vol. 48, No. 190 (May, 1997): 184. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/518669> 1. 3. 2019.
[47] Stevenson, 63.

The relationship of Heathcliff and Catherine is founded on an identity of souls who long to be united.[48] In childhood, this union is manifested in their friendship. In adolescence, the conflict arises from the fact that the natural union of Heathcliff and Catherine is prevented through extraneous circumstances. These circumstances stand in direct opposition to Heathcliff and Catherine's nature, because they are artificial and based on prestige and culture, as opposed to their natural bond which stems from affinity of their characters. For their spiritual identity they fail to find an adequate definition and therefore resort to description of likening themselves to nature and expressing their bond in existential and metaphysical terms. This identification is first declared by Catherine:

> "If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe should turn into a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it. […] I *am* Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being" (113).

According to Lord David Cecil, this natural bond of Catherine and Heathcliff forms because they are both "children of the storm," a manifestation of identical natural forces.[49] *Wuthering Heights'* typical feature is that in the microcosm of the moorland, nature and people are mutually intertwined to such an extent that nature both affects and reflects the characters' behaviour. Here, changes in weather both reflect the psychological development of the characters, as well as physically control their actions. Heathcliff's identification is reflected in the elaborate net of himself in the presence of Catherine, but this parallel identity may also be observed in the characters of Lockwood, a stranger in the land, and Hareton, whom Heathcliff grooms into an almost exact replica of himself in adolescence. Therefore,

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[48] Since childhood, their separation was to be "the greatest punishment" (67), but "they forgot everything the minute they were together again" (72).
[49] Lord David Cecil, 121.

both characters partially embody Heathcliff's persona or are placed in similar circumstances. Their similarity echoes throughout the novel; as Catherine views Heathcliff as an extension of herself, so Heathcliff views her not as his reason for existence, but as the very possibility for him to exist, calling her his "life" and "soul" on numerous occasions.

When Charlotte Brontë asserts that "some of [Heathcliff's] spirit seems breathed through […] every moor and glen, and beckons in every fir-tree of the Heights,"[50] she not only references the fundamental impact of Heathcliff's presence on the moors, but also emphasizes the strength of his relationship to nature. This connection is achieved partially through Catherine. The "element of storm" observed by Lord David Cecil manifests when the bond of Catherine and Heathcliff is placed under extraordinary circumstances. We may observe such a circumstance during the scene of Catherine's rejection of Heathcliff. As the discarded Heathcliff sneaks out from Wuthering Heights onto the moors, "the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury" (116). In splitting a tree and damaging the roof of the Heights, the storm is Heathcliff's emotional response materialized: it embodies all the shame and rage at his degradation, his desire to enact revenge on Hindley, his pain of Catherine's betrayal.

The manifestation of an emotional response in the form of natural phenomena occurs on several instances following Catherine's death. Heathcliff's prayer for Catherine to haunt him, exclaiming "Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad!" (211), is essentially an invitation for his soul to return to him. The force of Catherine's spirit then "takes the form" of storms and brutal winds to Wuthering Heights. Catherine's funeral is followed by a long period of harsh weather; on the day of her burial, her presence appears to Heathcliff, accompanied by a snowstorm, and makes him "unspeakably consoled" (348). During

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[50] Charlotte Brontë, "Letter to W. S. Williams, August 14, 1848."

Lockwood's visit, a similar snowstorm which bars him from leaving Wuthering Heights also brings him into contact with Catherine's spirit, who has finally "come home" (48) to Heathcliff. And finally, the night of Heathcliff's death is reported as "very wet" (399) – and the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff supposedly haunt the moors "on every rainy night" (401). At last reunited in death, their souls are animated by thunder, the most essential element in their nature, having achieved what they have desired ever since childhood: an eternity in the wilderness, together.

Heathcliff's revenge

As David Pinching points out in his afterword to the *Wuthering Heights,* nobody in the novel "acts without reason; they merely act beyond what most of us would consider reasonable."[51] The conduct of most characters certainly comes across as extreme, at least to the eye of a stranger such as one personified by the urbanite Lockwood. Heathcliff's merciless response to the injustice and rejection suffered at the hands of Hindley and Catherine extends into nearly two decades and well into the second generation of the moorland inhabitants. Despite coming to Wuthering Heights with nothing, Heathcliff's revenge crowns him the owner of his old home as well as of Thrushcross Grange. As he is in control of both houses, he is also in control of the children of his own enemies: Hareton Earnshaw, Linton Heathcliff, and Cathy Linton. As Thomas Vargish notes, Heathcliff "attempts to recreate"[52] the relationship and status patterns of the first generation of Cathy, Edgar, and himself, with Linton, Cathy, and Hareton, so that "likeness runs… through both generations of lovers;"[53] but this is a likeness distorted by Heathcliff's influence and opinion

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[51] David Pinching, "Afterword" to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (London: Collector's Library, 2003): 407.
[52] Thomas Vargish, "Revenge and 'Wuthering Heights,'" *Studies in the Novel,* Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1971): 10. JSTOR < https://www.jstor.org/stable/29531434> 3. 4. 2019.
[53] Stevenson, 61.

of the first generation, and absolute lack of interest in the second. Heathcliff admits that Hareton is to him "a personification of [his] youth, not a human being" (387); the forceful union of Linton and Cathy serves as a "parodic comment"[54] on the marriage of Edgar and Catherine. By robbing the original families of all their claims, Heathcliff symbolically imposes his own crushed ambitions on not only those who have wronged him, but also on their descendants, and in doing so, disrupts the domesticity of both houses into a prison for the second generation.

However, Heathcliff's revenge is ultimately an unsuccessful strategy. As the action is motivated by Heathcliff's frustration from a failed hope of a union with Catherine, it cannot achieve that union after her death, and therefore cannot bring satisfaction to its actor, as it will never fulfill his primary goal. The final result can be only destruction, not harmony, and certainly not peace for Heathcliff, who admits that Catherine's image has been disturbing him "night and day, through eighteen years, incessantly, remorselessly" (346) for the entire duration of his revenge. By wreaking havoc on the families of Lintons and Earnshaws, Heathcliff distracts himself from his failed goal of a union with Catherine and actively works against that union. Indeed, the very thought of revenge and its successful implementation prove to be Heathcliff's sustenance; in an allusion to vampyrism, Nelly Dean reports Heathcliff to be "blooming" (231) following the death of Hindley. As James B. Twitchell notes, this transmission of energy from the victim to his torturer serves not only as a metaphorical indicator of the effects of Heathcliff's revenge,[55] but also as an allusion to the hints of the supernatural in the novel. A more thorough analysis of Heathcliff's otherworldly traits is provided in the section "Nelly Dean."

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[54] Vargish, 14.

[55] James B Twitchell, *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981): 116.

The only resolution of the conflict can be Heathcliff's death, as in death he may finally find peace "sleeping the last sleep by that sleeper" (347), Catherine. Heathcliff's loss of interest in both life and his long-planned revenge is an act of resignation, not triumph; proclaiming that there is "a strange change approaching" (386), Heathcliff becomes haunted by the spirit of Catherine and starves to death within four days, reflecting Catherine's own fast before death. This signifies his return both to his primary objective of obtaining unity with Catherine and to the primitive world of their childhood. We may observe this trend in his ventures out on the moors in his last days, and in the death of Heathcliff in Catherine's childhood bed, drenched in rain that has come through the open window, one hand reaching out. Buried next to Catherine, walking as "phantoms" (402) on the moors, Heathcliff abandons his quest for vengeance and finally finds peace beside his "soul in the grave" (204). According to Stevenson, the end of the novel shows that "the revenge itself is inessential […] a kind of distraction from his only goal, [Catherine] herself."[56]

The effect of Heathcliff's death is the end of a long-lasting conflict he had brought to the community with his first arrival. His despotic power over the families immediately evaporates, and the Lintons and the Earnshaws may begin to return to their natural order again, with "the last of them" (59) joined through marriage, which Pinching understands as "nature righting itself;"[57] the elements of storm and calm returning to their natural order. Therefore, resolution is achieved through reassertion of the original order through death and the subsequent union of the lovers, as opposed to a religious redemption according to the Christian doctrine.[58] According to Charlotte Brontë, Heathcliff therefore "stands unredeemed;

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[56] Stevenson, 70.
[57] Pinching, 411.
[58] It is worth noting that the majority of film versions of *Wuthering Heights* choose to omit the second generation completely. This may be explained by their focus on the fascinatingly twisted romance of Catherine and Heathcliff, but evidences a misunderstanding of the central conflict in the novel: the disruption and a reconciliation of natural order.

never once swerving in his arrow-straight course to perdition."[59] However, redemption is not an applicable term here. Heathcliff rejects prayers and dies declaring to "repent of nothing" (397); in this isolated land, natural forces and individual spiritual energies overpower all moral codes, and according to Dorothy Van Ghent, "Heathcliff is no more ethically relevant than is flood or earthquake or whirlwind."[60] Pinching further asserts that "Emily Brontë contrived to describe a world without God,"[61] which is evidenced by the lack of any clerical power or resolutions done in accordance with personal religion or conventional morality of either the Victorian or pre-Victorian era; Joseph's incomprehensible preaching is rather a parody of an orthodox Calvinism than a reliable moral compass, and Catherine breaks her heart with "weeping to come back to earth" (111) in her dream of heaven. As Heathcliff's only wish is to be reunited with Catherine, and they both are forces of nature to whom the concept of heaven is both irrelevant and undesirable, he cannot but follow her into the strange supernatural afterlife where he "walks" (401) beside her on the moors in darkness and storm. Heathcliff's death is followed by a reestablishment of natural order over the element of destruction, instead of some form of an atonement before a higher power or a punishment according to the laws of society; the absolute refusal of Emily to redeem Heathcliff in the conventions of society marks him as a character who, once he takes what he needs from it, renders the outside world completely irrelevant to his agenda. The conflict ends resolved in accordance with nature and harmony, but Heathcliff's destructive tendencies are deeply individual and indifferent to anything but Catherine and her legacy.

Instead, one may observe the resolution in the character of Hareton Earnshaw: along with Cathy Linton, his character restores harmony in the aftermath of the conflict. He also

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[59] Charlotte Brontë, "Preface," 20.
[60] Dorothy Van Ghent, "Dark 'Otherness' in *Wuthering Heights*," Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*, A Casebook, ed. Miriam Allott (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1992): 153.
[61] Pinching, 409.

embodies the principle of positive development following the disruptive element. As Nelly Dean's remark that Hindley's treatment of Heathcliff "was enough to make a fiend of a saint" (94) brings to mind the question whether Heathcliff is truly "inherently savage"[62] and his true character is only gradually revealed through the incessant opportunities to destroy, or whether he is driven to cruelty by the surrounding hostility. Elsie Michie claims that in the novel, "such questions are raised but left unsolved;"[63] but a partial answer seems to lie in Hareton's development. Raised as a deliberate copy of Heathcliff, a tree "to grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it" (234), cheated of his property and independence, mimicking Heathcliff's destructive tendencies with "hanging a litter of puppies from a chair-back in the doorway" (228), he seemingly follows Heathcliff's fate of a coarse stable boy who may only dream of marrying Cathy. His "jargon" (176) with "a frightful Yorkshire pronunciation" (271) reflects Heathcliff's habit of "chipping off his pronouns and auxiliary verbs" (29).

However, the name significance betrays the difference between the characters: Heathcliff's namesake, the deceased Earnshaw child, signals a lack of progress or future for its new owner; while Hareton, the name embedded above the door to Wuthering Heights since the year 1500, symbolizes the later restoration of balance once "the lawful master and the ancient stock" (400) are vindicated. Heathcliff channels his improvement into vengeance and destruction; he "never reads" (360) except when editing the correspondence of his son in order to exact revenge, while Hareton chooses a different path in self-determination: as Melvin R. Watson claims, Hareton is "saved by the absence of hatred in his heart."[64] Hareton seeks to educate himself in hope of a union with Cathy. The nature of Heathcliff is

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[62] Elsie Michie, "From Simianized Irish to Oriental Despots: Heathcliff, Rochester and Racial Difference," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Winter, 1992): 129. JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1346001> 1. 3. 2019.

[63] Michie, 129.

[64] Melvin R. Watson, "Tempest in the Soul: The Theme and Structure of 'Wuthering Heights,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Sep., 1949): 94. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3044140> 21. 6. 2019.

destructive and stubborn; as Philip Drew remarks, "Hindley's ill-treatment of him encouraged a vindictiveness which [Heathcliff] later deliberately fostered."[65] The nature of Hareton yields to positive influence, and his bond with Cathy, represented by volumes of poetry and planting flowers around Wuthering Heights, signals a reconciliation of harmony between the elements of Earnshaws and Lintons, as well as between the feminine and the masculine, and the creation of an environment where they may thrive. The real moral values of the novel therefore do not lie in a religious ethos, but in the basic moral values of reconciliation on the basis of human acceptance.

Lockwood

The "concentric circles of narration"[66] of *Wuthering Heights* allow for at once a complete immersion in the intimate, isolated scale of natural forces and grand emotions, as well as a pair of credible, down to earth narrators who make these emotions believable: Lockwood, the outsider, and Nelly Dean, who provides the insight of a local. Apart from serving as the narrative device of a personified audience, forming a bridge between novel's secluded rural setting and the "ultra-civilised" urban reader,[67] Lockwood in many ways embodies a counterpart to Heathcliff. The first and most obvious parallel appears in their names; Lockwood is known only by his last name, Heathcliff by what is both his first and his last. However, while Heathcliff's name evokes the wild open space of the moorlands, Lockwood's suggests his detached persona; he is both incapable of and unallowed to become involved in the narrative below the shallow surface of a tenant and listener, never having

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[65] Philip Drew, "Charlotte Brontë's Insight into *Wuthering Heights*," Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*, A Casebook, ed. Miriam Allott (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1992): 204.
[66] Pinching, 407.
[67] Allan R. Brick, "Wuthering Heights: Narrators, Audience, and Message Author(s)," *College English*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Nov., 1959): 80. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/372454> 13. 6. 2019.

established the intimacy indicated by the first name. This nominal connection is the first clue to the analogical situations the characters are placed in, and their respective responses to the external stimuli.

Lockwood's position at the beginning of the narrative mirrors Heathcliff's in the sense that he arrives as an outsider to an isolated community, where his behaviour puts him at odds with the inhabitants. By the time of Lockwood's arrival, Heathcliff has been an "insider" to the moorlands for many years; we have established that the house of Wuthering Heights reflects his character as it has once reflected the nature of the Earnshaws. Although both Lockwood and Heathcliff arrive at Wuthering Heights as strangers from the city, Lockwood's character has been thoroughly shaped by his urban experience, and therefore he is unable to properly understand the scenes he encounters during his visits to the Wuthering Heights, and react adequately; furthermore, like Heathcliff, Lockwood also causes conflict at Wuthering Heights – but as Heathcliff disrupts the harmony of natural order and human relationships, Lockwood disturbs the order of supernatural powers haunting the moors when it is him, not Heathcliff, who speaks to Catherine's ghost in her old bedroom; as Zdeněk Beran asserts in his unpublished contribution to an Emily Brontë 2018 colloquium, Lockwood appears here as the illusory Heathcliff to the mistaken spirit of Catherine, and his own failed romance mirrors that of the lovers.[68]

Here, however, it is Lockwood who slits the waif Catherine's wrist in terror of what he believes to be a dream, desperately seeking to drive her out of the room, and Heathcliff who storms to the window and roars his wish for Catherine's spirit to enter and haunt him "once more" (52). Lockwood's response to horror is to flee and deny the uncanny experience as his brain's fantasy, while Heathcliff's "strong faith in ghosts" (347) and a "delight in

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[68] Zdeněk Beran, "Heathcliff, Lockwoodův doppelgänger." Unpublished manuscript.

dwelling on dark things" (387) enable him to form a connection with the supernatural; this motif of subconscious perceptions prepares the ground for his affinity to Catherine, and the identity of their souls which are bound on a spiritual level none of the other characters can understand or imitate.

Despite their outwardly similar situation, Lockwood is a complete antithesis to Heathcliff's temperament; their situation is that of a man and his *doppelganger*, "a complementary, dark, unacceptable I."[69] Through Heathcliff, Lockwood is offered a chance to know himself from a different perspective; through Lockwood, the reader is able to perceive Heathcliff from the perspective of an outlander and is not only forced to witness the exceptional depth of feeling that is unimaginable to common audience, but also constantly revise their notions of the novel.

Lockwood becomes the tenant of Thrushcross Grange at the peak of Heathcliff's revenge, when conflict reigns over both Wuthering Heights and its inhabitants, yet he mistakes this disorder for a like-minded environment. Upon the wrong assumption that their natures are similar as well, Lockwood attributes to Heathcliff a shared sense of "aversion to showy display of feelings" (26) and dubs him "a capital fellow" (1). Lockwood in fact constantly misinterprets the hostile scenery of Heathcliff's household, Heathcliff's character, Cathy Linton's presence, and even provokes the dogs into attacking him. In doing so, he highlights the contrast between the domain of the Yorkshire moors and the complete otherness of the outside world. Although he soon declares Heathcliff to have "a genuine bad nature" (34), the passive curiosity with which he listens to Nelly Dean's recount of the history of conflict between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange reveals some interest in such mentality, if not actual understanding of it. Horrified by the account of a man who once

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[69] Beran.

struck "a sympathetic chord" (26) in him, a man who holds a dark mirror to Lockwood's own endeavours, Lockwood returns to recover to his own element, society. Upon his final visit, he is presented with an image of restored harmony: Hareton and Cathy, and the graves of Catherine, Heathcliff, and Edgar.

Nelly Dean

The employment of the servant and housekeeper Nelly Dean as a narrator yields several effects; she serves not only as the intimate reporter of the history of Heathcliff, but also as a reality check on the events taking place at Wuthering Heights. A member of the lower class, she represents common sense instead of the passionate element of storm like the Earnshaws. As arguably the most normal inhabitant of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange with a strong dislike for the lovers, she keeps Heathcliff and Catherine's wild, unearthly romance anchored in the real world, displaying a fundamental lack of understanding of Heathcliff's nature and both the inability and unwillingness to share the depth of his and Catherine's emotional involvement. Simultaneously, however, Nelly Dean provides deep insight into the effect of Heathcliff's existence on their Yorkshire community and by extent, upon the morality Emily Brontë has introduced in her novel: specifically, from her narrative we may deduce that there is none. The protagonist-antagonist dies unrepentant and rewarded with reunion with his only love: the natural passion which animates their souls even after death is not a punishment, but a manifestation of their own heaven: it is Lockwood's first – albeit unknowingly – correct observation, "how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth" (403).

The history of Heathcliff is "a cuckoo's" (59), as Nelly Dean observes, and as he is given another's name, ousts Hindley from the position of a favourite son, navigates himself

through years of vengeance, and finally exits into netherworld, he constantly embodies the refusal of all moral authorities. Heathcliff's world is ruled by the heathen laws of nature, love, and hate, and Nelly Dean's attempts at rebuking him for lack of ethics or religion are met with scorn – and no penalties. The combination of the allusions to the elements of supernatural and the lack of religious answer to the conflict highlights Heathcliff's strong connection to the elemental, incorporeal nature of the individual.

Nelly Dean's opinion of Heathcliff develops through the years of their acquaintance, reflecting various angles from which to view his enigmatic identity. Her initial response to his arrival at Wuthering Heights exemplifies the typical xenophobia prevalent on the secluded Yorkshire moors, referring to Heathcliff as "it" (62) and a "stupid little thing" (63) and even attempting to turn him out of the house. It is only after he is given a name and takes on the part of a child patient that Nelly Dean warms up to him and begins to treat him as an individual being. In her subsequent attempt at reforming him into a man of civilisation, she highlights the conflict of Heathcliff's identity; while earlier at Thrushcross Grange, Heathcliff had been described as "a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway […] a wicked boy, at all events […] quite unfit for a decent house" (76), Nelly Dean ascribes him the exotic origin of "a prince in disguise" (84), a son of the Emperor of China and an Indian Queen. Because as a foreigner, Heathcliff is "differentiated from other characters on the basis of physical attributes,"[70] his appearance is constantly put into contrast with the rest of the community, emphasizing the conflict between his identity and the identity of the moorland families. Furthermore, this appearance is demonized – even Mr Earnshaw calls him "as dark almost as if [he] came from the devil" (61) – and the unceasing linkage of Heathcliff to Satan reinforces the element of supernatural in the narrative.

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[70] Michie, 129.

An occult reading of Heathcliff's character is enabled by several factors. Firstly, the aforementioned imagery of a "diabolical" (273) Heathcliff suggests to the reader a creature which is not, as Nelly Dean phrases it, "of my species" (204). Shortly after their wedding, the disillusioned and battered Mrs Isabella Heathcliff wonders, "Is Mr Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?" (175). Despite her scepticism, it is through Nelly Dean's discourse that we are introduced to the superstitious theories on Heathcliff's supernatural origin: musing whether he is "a ghoul, or a vampire" (393), Nelly Dean reprises her earlier attempts at conjuring Heathcliff's original parentage of "his kin beneath" (218) by replacing the feudal with the fantastical. As at this moment in the narrative Heathcliff's ravenous mind is haunted by the visions of Catherine who beckons him to join her in afterlife, his supernatural origin is further intertwined with an apparently otherworldly conduct – the one which ends with the image of two revenants on the moors.

The unceasing linking of Heathcliff to Satan, calling him "fiend" (178), "the hellish villain" (220), and "that devil Heathcliff" (343), assertions that he is "lonely, like the devil, and envious like him" (345), and that his bliss "lies, like [Satan's], in inflicting misery" (148), connected with Heathcliff's eventual success in achieving the status of a self-made gentleman, inevitably bring to mind the literary archetype of Faust who has given his soul in exchange for a valuable boon.[71] But while the Faust "has come to typify man's eternal quest for knowledge - not only of scientific truths, but of Absolutes,"[72] Heathcliff's education is not his primary motive, merely an instrument of vengeance. While the imagery certainly draws influence from the archetype – Thormählen suggests that his mysteriously acquired riches and knowledge, combined with his dark appearance and descriptions such as a "monster" (194) and an "imp of Satan" (65), suggests the image of Heathcliff having formed "a pact

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[71] Thormählen, 192.
[72] Thorslev, 84.

with the devil" in the three years of his absence[73] – Drew asserts that if not literally, Heathcliff has done so "effectively"[74] due to his extreme wickedness stemming from the loss of Catherine, and that the imagery of Satan serves as a metaphorical explanation for the subsequent corruption of Heathcliff's character. As Vargish notes, we can trace signs of "deterioration"[75] in Heathcliff's psyche once he returns as a gentleman, characterized by acts of extreme violence, manipulation, and deceit. Heathcliff's own discourse strongly supports this reading as he asserts that "existence, after losing her, would be hell" (191); with his soul lost in the grave, the only happiness he can find is by reconciliation with Catherine after death.

If there is a different archetype which Heathcliff comes very close to, it is the Byronic hero. According to Thorslev, Heathcliff's unyielding individualism, passionate love for Cathy, disruptive nature and burning desire for revenge mark him as a great Byronic achievement.[76] But while he challenges the social status quo and disregards all moral norms as he transcends the order of class hierarchy and terrorizes his surroundings into submission, the motivation behind his behaviour differs; Heathcliff's revenge is neither a rebellion against a discriminatory system nor, as Jacques Blondel asserts, "a pose through which he can assert his will to power [...] without Byron, he could not have been conceived, but he goes further than the Byronic hero."[77] Although he finds himself influenced by the external circumstances, the vengeful rebellion is a secondary symptom of a desperation brought on by his "monomania" (388) for Catherine. Neither does his conduct correspond with the tradition of a Victorian protagonist. With the Victorian era as the age of man's choice to pursue not the life

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[73] Thormählen, 191.
[74] Drew, 204.
[75] Vargish, 12.
[76] Thorslev, 192.
[77] Jacques Blondel, "Literary Influences on *Wuthering Heights*," Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*, A Casebook, ed. Miriam Allott (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1992): 160.

he was born into but the life he chooses,[78] Heathcliff's character corresponds well with this notion of breaking the limits of the class system. However, this claim is based on superficial ground only; Heathcliff's struggle for power and wealth is not introduced by a commercial spirit, but is motivated purely by failed romantic interests. Heathcliff's reinvention of himself, the accumulation of wealth and success of a self-made man, is not a display of a progressive mind – merely an accidentally economical instrument of revenge and a demonstration of almost infinite capacity for feeling, a quality which places him in a distinctive Romantic tradition.[79]

The various contexts in which we can read the character of Heathcliff and his relationship to Catherine, as well as his revenge and its resolution, including that of his supernatural tendencies, influence our reading of the novel as a whole. The multiperspectivity of *Wuthering Heights* allows for a deep engagement with the novel's contents and criticisms in terms of the socio-cultural, historical, jural, psychological, and symbolical. The complex structure of the novel's narrative hinders an unambiguous interpretation; *Wuthering Heights* is a novel which intertwines the mimetic realism with which the material, geographical, and social world of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange is built, with the symbolic implications of nature – both that of the human soul and that of the physical and atmospheric phenomena of the Yorkshire landscape, and to consider one without the other would invite to a reading depleted of elements crucial to its deciphering. Heathcliff's lifespan serves as the imaginary bridge between the first and the second generations inhabiting the Yorkshire moorlands – it is important to exclude Nelly Dean from this connection, as her own involvement in the action or emotional connection is minimal, and she serves primarily as the narrative device – while Heathcliff's powerful presence is what brings the conflict into the

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[78] Houghton, 6.
[79] Thorslev, 188.

novel. As such, through the understanding of Heathcliff one may begin to understand *Wuthering Heights* itself: Heathcliff is both the key to the box, and the mystery inside.

Chapter III: Edward Fairfax Rochester

The story of *Jane Eyre* is not simply "the orphan Jane's search for a home,"[80] as Eric Solomon claims; had it been so, she would have submitted to the comforts and riches offered by Mr. Rochester's offer of a bigamous relationship and lived as "a slave in a fool's paradise at Marseilles,"[81] haunted by not only the living ghost of Rochester's despotic marriage, but also by "a morbid dependency in which she has no life of her own,"[82] as Bernard J. Paris explains. Instead, Jane's quest for friends and a home is hindered by her absolute refusal to trade her self-respect and independence for a chance of apparent stability; according to Sandra M. Gilbert, *Jane Eyre* is primarily "a story of enclosure and escape, a distinctively female *Bildungsroman*"[83] where Jane repeatedly rebels against everyone and everything that would limit her freedom and threaten her increasingly refined moral code.

Given the context of this presumption, we must acknowledge that the character of Edward Fairfax Rochester inhabits a much more complex role in the narrative structure than that of a mere love interest: Rochester is a test of faith manifested in a physical body, an obstacle which Jane must challenge and overcome on her pilgrimage for self-realisation, religious conscience, and personal growth. As such, he is on the same level of influence as Mrs Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, and St. John Rivers; a manifestation of the capital issues Jane

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[80] Eric Solomon, "Jane Eyre: Fire and Water," College English, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Dec., 1963): 216. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/373690> 23. 6. 2019.
[81] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Vintage Classics, 2015): 516. All future references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.
[82] Bernard J. Paris, "Jane Eyre," *Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature* (NYU Press: 1997): 167. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qffv8.12> 23. 6. 2019.
[83] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress," *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 339.

Eyre must face – a religious codex and morality too twisted to allow either compliance or identification. In the character of Edward Rochester and Jane's reaction towards him, Charlotte Brontë introduces a "protest against patriarchal authority"[84] where Rochester represents both a victim and a participator, "a part of a larger pattern of masculine dominance"[85] as Micael M. Clarke claims. Furthermore, Rochester's conduct places him in conflict not only with social conventions, but also with those "laws and principles" (454) which are derived from religion, and in turn define personal morality. When Rochester asks, "Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law – no man being injured by the breach?" (453), he expresses the utter disregard for social conventions and religious beliefs upheld not only by his surroundings, but also by the one he intends to encumber by this breach. In order for the conflict to be resolved, it is necessary for Rochester to reach an equilibrium with Jane through catharsis on the basis of moral principles.

The symbolic introduction of the conflict, as well as hints to its resolution, may be found in Rochester's relationship to Thornfield Hall. Edward Fairfax Rochester embodies the soul of the mansion; the arrival of his "animating influence" (266) breathes life into the house which had been previously "silent as a church" (167) during his absence. Described as "a home of the past: a shrine of memory" (149), the house represents the ancestry of wealth, pride, and affluence which has shaped Rochester's present situation, whereas the fact the house is "rather neglected of late years [...] suggesting cheerless ideas of space and solitude" (136-7) alludes to Rochester's conscious abandonment of his wife and the neglect of his

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[84] Jean Wyatt, "A Patriarch of One's Own: Jane Eyre and Romantic Love," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Autumn, 1985): 203. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/463696> 23. 6. 2019.
[85] Micael M. Clarke, "Brontë's 'Jane Eyre' and the Grimms' Cinderella," *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, Vol. 40, No. 4, The Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 2000): 706. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1556246> 2. 1. 2019.

morals. Furthermore, the house symbolizes not only Rochester's ties to his haunting wife; primarily, it is a symbol of both the privilege and the oppression he has inherited from his father and brother as his "social destiny"[86] resulting from the conventions of primogeniture and male dominance. As such, Thornfield Hall becomes a physical representation of the confinement which his marriage with Bertha Mason brings him along with "pain, shame, ire – impatience, disgust, detestation" (202). If Bertha is the "poor creature" (302) who "alienates [Rochester] from the house" (208), then by extension he alienates himself from himself. The nominal reference of the mansion to thorns therefore refers to the obstacles both Jane and Rochester will face on their journey to happiness.

Furthermore, the "mere dungeon" (305) stands in opposition to the nature outside the walls of Thornfield, where Rochester asserts, "all is real, sweet, and pure" (305). It is the characters' relationship to nature which stands in opposition to the artifice and deceit connected with social conventions, symbolized by the charades played by Rochester and his guests. The contrast of the external and the internal spaces may also be observed in the emotional charge of scenes which take place inside the "accursed place" (430): Bertha's "demoniac laugh" (209) echoes through the halls of Thornfield as she successively sets fire in Rochester's room, stabs her brother, rips Jane's bridal veil, and finally sets the house on fire, as opposed to the scenes which enfold in the gardens and their surroundings: Rochester and Jane's first meeting under the moonlight, the proposal which takes place on a Midsummer Night's Eve, and their final reconciliation at Ferndean manor.

It is significant that Jane does not return to Rochester back to Thornfield Hall; for Rochester, the fire which consumes Thornfield is simultaneously a symbolic release from the imprisonment of social conventions, and a chance for redemption from his moral failure.

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[86] Gilbert, 780.

Ferndean is the house with "no architectural pretensions, deep buried in a wood" (618) where no artifice of deception or social influence may apply; here, as Gilbert asserts, can Rochester first accept humility as a blind cripple, and then live with Jane as equals, "isolated from society but flourishing in a nature of their own making."[87]

The wives of Rochester

Throughout the narrative of *Jane Eyre*, the character of Edward Rochester follows a circular pattern where he repeats his previous actions in a reactory manner coloured by his experiences – first with Bertha Mason, then with his string of European mistresses, and finally with Jane Eyre herself. In doing so, Rochester not only rebels against the social context which has influenced his choices in the past, but also demonstrates a dynamic development of his consciousness and morality in relation to his social context and his personal relationship with God. Influenced and flattered by the "idiotic rivalries of society" (437), he had rushed into a marriage with Bertha Mason, a woman with a nature "wholly alien to [his] [...] her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher" (438). Rochester asserts that it is not her madness he hated, but the qualities of nature "most gross, impure, depraved" (439). According to Grudin, Bertha symbolizes "the tyranny of passion over intellect;"[88] her existence is both a real obstacle between Rochester and Jane, and a symbolic substitute for the corruption of morals of her husband, and the potential corruption of Jane herself.

Therefore, the conflict which Rochester creates in the novel has its roots in his unfortunate past; it is also the reason for Jane's intellectual equality with Rochester, or rather

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[87] Gilbert, 803.
[88] Peter Grudin, "Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in 'Jane Eyre, '" *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Tenth Anniversary Issue: II (Winter, 1977): 148. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344783> 23. 6. 2019.

Rochester's lack of superiority: as Jane asserts, "Your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience" (190); Rochester's experience following the abandonment of Bertha contains three European mistresses and a pattern of searching in vain for a "good and intelligent woman" (444) along with "sweet, fresh pleasure" (193). His agenda of deceit and bigamy is caused by what he calls the "capital error […] whose consequences must follow [himself] through life and taint all [his] existence" (308): the deceit is represented by his denial of Bertha, mock courtship of Blanche, and the gypsy episode of crossdressing. Murray G. H. Pittock asserts that Rochester's "whole policy is based on deception […] All rational identity is tied to self-interest at this stage."[89] As Rochester himself was once cheated into a tragic, loveless marriage with Bertha Mason, so he attempts to cheat himself into what he perceives as a happy, albeit unlawful union with Jane Eyre.

Blanche Ingram not only serves as an instrument of deception; as the olive-skinned, raven-haired "belle of the evening" (224), her physical likeness transforms her into a "tall, dark, and majestic" (437) Bertha Mason who Rochester has the power to repudiate. Therefore, in rejecting Blanche Ingram, Rochester denounces those social conventions which have once made his life "hell" (441): the advancement and affirmation of social status and financial situation, along with the perceived shallowness of the superficial upper-class life based on appearances, embodied in Blanche's "inferior" (364) nature. As opposed to Blanche, the "disconnected, poor, and plain" (227) governess Jane Eyre is Rochester's equal neither in position nor monetary situation. Instead, as Stevenson finds, their love is "almost founded on verbal intimacy:"[90] Rochester declares their conversations "as if [he] were writing [his] thoughts in a diary" (193), while Jane considers Rochester's voice "familiar [...] as the speech

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[89] Murray G. H. Pittock, "John Wilmot and Mr. Rochester," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Mar., 1987): 465. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3045228> 3. 1. 2019.
[90] Stevenson, 65.

of my own tongue" (285). This intimacy illustrates what Jacqueline Simpson calls their "spiritual affinity and the sense each has of the other's difference from the common run of mankind."[91]

The affinity is further represented in their shared belief in the supernatural, which symbolizes their mental equality; with Rochester comparing himself to "an ogre, or a ghoul" (387) as he repeatedly dubs Jane a "'malicious elf,' 'sprite,' 'changeling,' &c" (393), Jane is able to consider them "akin" (247), while Rochester declares Jane "my equal [...] and my likeness" (365). The bond between Jane and Rochester is based on "physical and psychological similarities:"[92] both the "hideous" (631) Rochester and the "small and plain" (365) Jane lack conventional attractivity and may be separated by an "ocean of wealth, caste, and custom" (361); however, their equality of spirit transgresses the boundaries of wealth and social expectations placed on the traditional marriage between two socially equal individuals; furthermore, their personal interaction deconstructs the stereotypes of gender and class surrounding them.

Although employed as a governess in Edward Rochester's services, Jane's position oscillates between covert dominance and overt submission: according to F. A. C. Wilson, their ties

> "are founded on a willingness on the heroine's part
> to conform outwardly [...] to the roles prescribed for men
> and women, while secretly she enacts her belief that the
> roles are very much more flexible."[93]

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[91] Jacqueline Simpson, "The Function of Folklore in 'Jane Eyre' and 'Wuthering Heights,'" *Folklore*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Spring, 1974): 49. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1260281> 2. 1. 2019.
[92] Nancy Pell, "Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Mar., 1977): 408. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2933083> 3. 1. 2019.
[93] F. A. C. Wilson, "The Primrose Wreath: The Heroes of the Brontë Novels," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Jun., 1974): 44. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2933405> 3. 1. 2019.

In doing so, the relationship largely stands on a subversion of the roles of the master and the servant. Not only does their first meeting involve Rochester leaning on Jane for support, repeated following the arrival of Mr. Mason and temporarily reversed by Jane leaning on Rochester in front of the chapel, all these foreshadowing their marriage at Ferndean where Jane willingly becomes the living equivalent of Rochester's white cane; much of their courtship involves Jane "vexing and soothing him by turns" (222) and being in control of the situation while pretending to be inferior. In doing so, Jane both entertains Rochester and deflects his romantic advances. Furthermore, Rochester's cross-dressing episode in which he pretends to be a female fortuneteller in order to repudiate Blanche and attract Jane, again subverts the notion of strict boundaries between men and women. According to Philip C. Rule, "Jane and Rochester act out the recurring archetypal conflict between male and female;" and like their similarities are represented by the imagery of the supernatural, their differences are represented by mythological and religious allusions to the Old and New Testaments, as well as to fairytales.[94]

The comparison of Thornfield Hall to Bluebeard's mansion symbolically represents Rochester's dark marital secret in the form of Bertha Mason; Jane postponing the rest of her tale at Ferndean to tomorrow refers to Scheherazade and the sheikh, subverting the role of now weak and sightless Rochester who has no power – either physical or social – over Jane. The allusion to "Hercules and Samson with their charmers" (374) evokes not only the destructive role of Delilah, which Jane twists into a healer who combs the blind Rochester's hair instead of cutting it, and the "Eden-like" (356) Thornfield garden, where Jane and

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[94] Philip C. Rule, "The Function of Allusion in 'Jane Eyre,'" *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Fifteenth Anniversary Issue (Autumn, 1985): 166. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3194660> 2. 1. 2019.

Rochester's engagement takes place, symbolizes Adam and Eve in a symbolic foresight of Jane's flight from temptation and departure from Rochester's paradise.[95]

Despite the affinity of spirit of Rochester and Jane, the marital fulfillment of their spiritual union is initially prevented by two factors: primarily, Rochester's moral failings and Jane's refusal to comply with them, and secondarily, Jane's own dissatisfaction with the terms of their marriage. The relationship cannot be consummated neither judicially nor physically until their status is balanced by Jane's maturity and wealth, and Rochester's humility, repentance, and a "wish for reconcilement to [his] Maker" (642). While outwardly it is Bertha who stands between Rochester and Jane, beyond her lies what Nancy Pell calls a "social and economic critique of bourgeois patriarchal authority;"[96] the financial and moral abyss between Rochester and Jane is bridged by her own gained monetary independence which allows the lovers to reunite: Jane declares that with her wealth, she has become her "own mistress" (626) and chooses to live with Rochester so that, according to Gilbert, "being equals, he and Jane can afford to depend upon each other with no fear of one exploiting the other."[97]

Resolving the conflict

Like Mrs Reed and Mr Brocklehurst, Rochester's conduct towards Jane displays hypocrisy; along with St. John Rivers, he attempts to force Jane into a position which clashes with her religious and moral principles. Despite his immoral conduct and the issue of Bertha, Jane's decision to leave is not entirely Rochester's doing. With her cheeks burning "with a sense of annoyance and degradation" (302) for receiving riches and rewards she does not

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[95] Rule, 168.
[96] Pell, 399.
[97] Gilbert, 803.

consider deserved, Jane also admits to perceiving her fiance as "an idol" (393) who, through eclipsing her religion, could also destroy the foundation of her sense of morality. Therefore, Rochester's conduct simultaneously puts him into the position of an agent of corruption in his attempted bigamy, as well as a stimulus through which Jane could potentially corrupt herself by idolatry; Jane's departure then becomes not only a device through which she fights oppression, but also an act of liberty from temptation. As Clarke claims, the issue "is not so much Rochester's deception, nor the moral question concerning his still-living wife, as it is a question of male power versus female integrity."[98] Therefore, Jane's departure symbolizes a spiritual reawakening of her morality, and the opportunity to reconcile the sacral and the secular. The alluded supernatural bond between Jane and Rochester manifests when Jane prays to God to know whether or not to follow St. John as his wife and a missionary to India, but instead of God, she hears Rochester's voice calling out to her; Rochester himself later asserts he had prayed "in anguish and humility" (643) to be relieved of his pain. Through this simultaneously religious and secular connection, Jane is able to "find some balance between St. John Rivers's god and the idolatrous love she bore for Rochester."[99] Jane's return to Rochester therefore symbolizes the newfound equilibrium between love and religion for both Jane and Rochester: however, it must first be preceded by a profound change in both characters.

Throughout her journey Jane shows progressive maturity in dealing with her antagonists. The primary influence on Jane is the character of Helen Burns, whose Christian "doctrine of endurance" (76), as Wilson claims, "moderates"[100] Jane's defiance and provides the moral compass and inspiration for Jane's decisions. As opposed to the Lowood Institution

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[98] Clarke, 705.
[99] Lara Freeburg Kees, "'Sympathy' in *Jane Eyre*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 45, No. 4, The Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 2005): 890.<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3844619> 3. 1. 2019.
[100] Wilson, 43.

where Jane gets a thorough education, along with a sense of "duty and order" (118), and the means of both making a living and of self-expression, it is Helen Burns who tempers Jane's anger and implants into her mind the seeds of spiritual maturity: forgiveness, self-discipline, foresight, and the consideration of her actions in terms of the law of God, as well as the tranquil pursuit of her chosen destiny. As Helen Burns stood "composed, though grave" (70) facing shame and ridicule, so is Jane able to "master the rising hysteria" (92) and withstand her punishment from Mr. Brocklehurst – and years later, Helen's words "it is weak and silly to say you *cannot bear* what it is your fate to be required to bear" (76) echo distinctly in Jane's admission of doubt: "I wanted to be weak that I might avoid the awful passage of further suffering I saw laid out for me" (426), which she ultimately defeats and endures the temptations of Rochester's morally unacceptable offer, and chooses the fate which liberates and empowers her. The influence of Helen Burns is the catalyst in the development of Jane's self-respect: while the child Jane declares she would "rather die than live" unloved and alone (92), the adult Jane declares,

> "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God, sanctioned by man" (454).

However, the inspiration Jane draws from her childhood role model is curbed by her own judgement of priorities. While Helen Burns looks toward heaven and the final judgement to be crowned "with a full reward" (96), Jane cannot identify with this creed of post-mortem justice, and turns to life on Earth instead. Her journey for happiness in life leads her to embrace marital life with Rochester once the circumstances make their union possible both morally and legally; her choice is enabled through Helen's belief in a benevolent God. Therefore, although Jane obtains from Helen lessons in patience and restraint, she is also able

to retain her passion and determination, and according to Solomon, forms "two opposing methods of fighting injustice [...] strong submissiveness [and] quiet aggressiveness,"[101] which she implements in overcoming first Rochester's apparent indifference, and afterwards not only his erotic advances, but also the conflict Rochester creates, through her indomitable spirit and "a remembrance of God" (425).

Rochester's own development of religious belief throughout the narrative is what Pittock dubs "a tale of conversion;"[102] although his attempt to deceive Jane into marriage and avoid both laws and principles is a selfish pursuit of pleasure, Rochester early on declares, "I will break obstacles to happiness, to goodness [...]; I wish to be a better man than I have been; than I am" (202), and is restored to Jane as a man whose heart "swells with gratitude to the beneficent God" (642), humbled and repentant of his past choices. Rochester's reformation rests only partially on Jane; the act of her departure becomes the flintstone of his redemption, but as Rose Lovell-Smith claims, "Bertha's punishment of Rochester by burning his house and causing his injuries is the necessary precondition for his repentance and reform."[103] Rochester's repentance may be observed in the symbolism of his disabilities.

In tradition with the metaphorical use of blindness,[104] Rochester's loss of eyesight becomes a physical manifestation of his earlier loss of morals; the disability – along with his crippled arm – then humbles him "for ever" (642) into a dependent position as he is deprived of his physical power, and provides him with "a higher form of insight"[105] through which he is able to perceive his immoral behaviour and repent. Furthermore, the necessity of Rochester to lean on Jane, his "prop and guide" (645) in his disability, alludes to their first meeting and

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[101] Solomon, 215.
[102] Pittock, 469.
[103] Rose Lovell-Smith, "Anti-Housewives and Ogres' Housekeepers: The Roles of Bluebeard's Female Helper," *Folklore*, Vol. 113, No. 2 (Oct., 2002): 202. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1260676> 23. 6. 2019.
[104] Naomi Schor," Blindness as Metaphor," *A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Volume 11, Number 2, Summer 1999: 78 (Article) Online. 3. 7. 2019.
[105] Schor, 102.

contrasts with Rochester's physical robustness which has come to define one of the traits of his masculinity and become the source of his pride.[106] As Rochester relies on Jane as his sight and hand, he is chastised into "reconcilement" (642) with religion, and the subversion of male dominance is complete. While Richard Chase perceives the blindness as "a symbolic castration,"[107] Wilson interprets it rather as a "state of slightly dependent masculinity"[108] through which the lines between the master and servant are blurred, with Jane enacting both the part of the help and the leader. The equality of Jane and Rochester, and their contentment with their new roles in their marriage, is clear: "He felt I loved him so fondly, that to yield that attendance was to indulge my sweetest wishes," (650) says Jane of their companionship. Rochester's regained eyesight is then interpreted as a "judgement [tempered] with mercy" (650), and the evidence of a benevolent God like that of Jane's.

According to Ceron, Rochester's repentance of his attempted bigamy and regained faith in God are Charlotte Brontë's "mature and critical" answer to the Byronic hero archetype,[109] but according to Thorslev, also make him "a descendant of the Gothic Villain-Hero."[110] Rochester's unrepentant defiance of conventional life and pursuit of a life outside of the structures of the average society is short-lived and finally declared amoral by his submission "to the judgments not only of their consciences, but also of traditional morality and of orthodox religion."[111] Therefore when Rochester repents of his sins and is finally deemed worthy of Jane's hand in marriage, he no longer rebels against the laws and moral values of society, but finds happiness in his devotion to them. The order is restored through trust in God and adhering to the Protestant values proclaimed by Jane Eyre. The

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[106] "You know I was proud of my strength." (642)

[107] Richard Chase, "The Brontës, or, Myth Domesticated," *Forms of Modern Fiction*, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1948): 108-109.

[108] Wilson, 45.

[109] Ceron.

[110] Thorslev, 192.

[111] Thorslev, 61.

danger of her female idolatry for a man here transforms into a pure, altruistic love of her Christian neighbour, regardless of any social context or sexual dynamics; this change is conditioned by Jane's newly gained status as her lover's equal in both intellect and status, and by Rochester's religious reawakening. Simultaneously, as Grudin asserts, Rochester's development in *Jane Eyre* shows that "romantic passion cannot be allowed to usurp the prerogatives of divine law."[112] Therefore, Rochester becomes an example of a resolution of the conflict of class and gender in accordance with morality and religion.

Chapter IV: Arthur Huntingdon

The narrative function of Arthur Huntingdon's character is multiple: most visibly, he is a thorough illustration of the vices of alcoholism, the story of an irredeemable sinner's downfall, and a cautionary tale for the "wilfully blind"[113] who would believe themselves capable of reforming anyone who is not willing to be reformed. Helen's assumption that Huntingdon's "worst and and only vice is thoughtlessness" (209) is met with a quick recognition of her naiveté; wizened by years, she is able to recognize that a necessary condition for one's reformation is "the sense to desire it, and the strength to execute [one's] purpose" (446). Thormählen writes that in this manner, the novel shows how "each individual is responsible, and accountable, for his or her own fate."[114] The distinguishably didactic intent of the author may be perceived in Anne Brontë's preface to *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which includes the notion that while Huntingdon's and his companions' case:

> "is an extreme one [...] if I have warned one rash
> youth from following in their steps, or prevented one

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[112] Grudin, 145.

[113] Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (London: Vintage Classics, 2016): 241. All future references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

[114] Marianne Thormählen, "'Horror and disgust': Reading *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*," *Brontë Studies*, Vol. 44, Issue 1 (2018): 8. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1080/14748932.2019.1525872> 9. 7. 2019.

> thoughtless girl from falling into the very natural error of
> my heroine, the book has not been written in vain."[115]

The most upfront purpose of Huntingdon is therefore the exposition of the effects of alcohol and excessive self-indulgence both on a mind "deficient in both sense and principle" (175), and a warning against an unfounded authority on another's salvation. However, as shall be analysed further in the chapter, Huntingdon is also a powerful symbol of gender inequality in marriage, a representative of patriarchal dominance, and the instrument through which the development of further generations is possible. The element of subversion of the domestic, along with criticism of the stereotypical masculinity and focus on the means of female self-realization, may be traced in Helen's escape from her husband.

The influence of Branwell Brontë on his sister's novel has been widely discussed,[116] but it would be derogatory to claim that *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is a simple reproduction of the account of Branwell's life. By the time of the novel's publication, Branwell was "often drunk or hung over [...] suffering from fainting fits and *delirium tremens* [...] these illnesses masked the symptoms of tuberculosis,"[117] but his death was still months away, and the restoration of harmony through reformation of masculinity and pursuit of abstinence is entirely Anne's invention.[118] While her brother's decline from an aspiring author into a drunken disgrace may have served as a partial inspiration, one could rather speculate on Anne's approach to one of the significant causes of Branwell's misery: his dismissal from a tutoring position which was secured for him by Anne.[119] Branwell's deterioration is therefore

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[115] Anne Brontë, Preface to the second edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.
[116] Nicole A. Diederich, "The Art of Comparison: Remarriage in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (2003): 25. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1348391> 9. 7. 2019.
[117] Barker, 564.
[118] Priti Joshi, "Masculinity and Gossip in Anne Brontë's 'Tenant,' *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, Vol. 49, No. 4, The Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 2009): 917. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40467510> 24. 12. 2018.
[119] Barker, 409.

instead projected into the novel as Anne's confrontation of her own guilty conscience and the means of establishing a clear resolution for the impact of a corrupting familial influence.

Therefore, the gradual decline of Huntingdon ranges beyond a mere didactic prop regarding the decline of mental and physical health resulting from substance abuse. Helen's psychology is largely determined by his figure. The methods used by Helen on her son to create an artificial distaste for liquor reflect the psychological damage Huntingdon has inflicted on his wife; the damage is also present in her uncompromising support of abstinence, as well as hardening of a previously spontaneous, romantic nature "wholly crushed and withered away" (379) into a woman with hollow cheeks and "firmly compressed" (9) lips, with her past years one "painful recollection" (103) after another. Having once discarded her aunt's advice to "first study; then approve; then love" (155) and "beware" (159), her courtship with Gilbert Markham is littered with obstacles she sets up herself in order to protect not only herself, but her son also.

The somber tenaciousness with which she provides sustenance for her son as a painter is only a fragment of the impact of Huntingdon's behaviour. Huntingdon's influence stretches from himself to his friends and family, and from them the influence echoes in the lives around them all the way to Markham's farm and the surrounding houses. As W. A. Craik argues, Arthur Huntingdon's conduct "decrees the rest of the characters and events"[120] of the novel, and by extension, his influence stretches to both the domestic and the social life. His alcoholism determines Helen's stay at Wildfell Hall; Helen's presence at Wildfell Hall determines the fate of Gilbert Markham and becomes the whole content of his narrative to his brother-in-law, Jack Halford. However, Huntingdon's influence is only as viable as himself, and it wanes with his death; another generation reaches adulthood untainted by his presence.

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[120] W. A. Craik, *The Brontë Novels* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 230.

Because of such temporary, Thormählen declares him an ineffectual agent of evil;[121] this assertion, however, fails to fully explain Huntingdon's presence in the novel.

Hidden behind his self-indulgent persona is another aspect of Huntingdon's existence, for the character of Arthur Huntingdon is a physical representation of the suppression of an individual female voice in the household, an embodiment of the masculine dominance in the social sphere of the early 19th century. Lacking any mental formidability or potency for anything but drinking, Huntingdon instead exercises his legal and social privileges over Helen to bind her to his domestic hell. From a testament of the influence of alcoholism, the central argument of Anne's novel emerges: the expression of the author's dissatisfaction with the harmful culture of double standards applied to the education of both sexes, the hypocrisy of sheltering girls into passive housekeepers while encouraging boys into transgressing boundaries of the limits of freedom in the expansion of their own dominance. Huntingdon's character therefore further emerges as a protest against a patriarchal society where a little boy is spoiled by a "harsh yet careless father and his madly indulgent mother" (270) into a man encouraged into traditional displays of Victorian masculinity at the expense of his wife. Huntingdon eventually becomes the symbol of both Helen's imprisonment in social conventions, and of her will to live outside them if necessary.

Huntingdon's venomous influence is particularly visibly phrased in terms of spatial symbolism of the two significant mansions in the novel. Grassdale Manor, the home into which Huntingdon brings his new bride, soon proves to be a mockery of the ideal of the domestic; the drunken parties Huntingdon hosts for his friends from which he staggers "no longer laughing, but sick and stupid" (328), as well as the mistress whom he masks as a

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[121] Marianne Thormählen, "The Villain of 'Wildfell Hall:' Aspects and Prospects of Arthur Huntingdon," *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (Oct., 1993): 840. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3734417> 7. 3. 2019.

governess, reflect the character of its owner: a deceitful "man without self-restraint or lofty aspirations" (287) who perceives himself in complete control of the household to the point of holding his wife hostage in her own home.

As Huntingdon shatters Helen's means of escape by destroying her paintings and tools, the mansion comes to symbolize a prison for Helen: she complains of being "a slave, a prisoner [...] forbidden to save [her] son from ruin" (434). The masculine dominance of Helen's world is further asserted when Helen's escape to Wildfell Hall, a decrepit, "cold and gloomy" (16) mansion separated from society by its location on the top of a hill, and a distance of two miles, is only enabled by the generosity of her brother. The sharp contrast between the desolate mansion and what Zuzanna Jakubowski calls the "domestic bliss"[122] of Markham's hometown, affirms the symbolism of Wildfell Hall as denoting "Helen's isolation, unhappiness, and individualism,"[123] as Monika Hope Lee writes; Helen's contact with society has rendered her a loner, and Wildfell Hall becomes to her a haven for an abuse survivor; despite its hostility, Helen views it as an "asylum" (56) she is thankful for. However, although both mansions therefore come to represent male power, the absence of Huntingdon's influence at Wildfell Hall is significant, as Helen is able to realize her individuality through art and financial independence.

Meanwhile, Huntingdon's own domain oscillates between London and his house. The urban life seems to represent a source of temptation, a diversion from human nature; even the resolute Helen admits, in her teenage years, to have felt a "distaste for country life" (152) following her return from the city. The influence of the excess of alehouses, gambling, and mindless dissipation burdens not only Huntingdon's body in drastic measures, as each time

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[122] Zuzanna Jakubowski, *Moors, Mansions, and Museums: Transgressing Gendered Spaces in Novels of the Brontë Sisters* (Frankfurt am Main: Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2010): 72.
[123] Monika Hope Lee, "A Mother Outlaw Vindicated: Social Critique in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, Issue 4.3. (Winter 2008). Online.

his coach arrives from London he returns increasingly "flushed and feverish, listless and languid, his beauty strangely diminished, his vigour and vivacity quite departed" (268); it corrupts not only his mind, but the mind of his companions as well. The effects of the urban life therefore contrast starkly with the natural world of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the positive and tranquil episodes relate to the nature: Markham and Helen's interactions by the sea as Helen paints the view; Helen's act of presenting the rose to Markham; their almost completed kiss outside of Linden-Car.

Helen Graham

Therefore, while Arthur Huntingdon represents the negative influence of excessive self-indulgence on one's surroundings and the mistaken impression which good looks and charisma may have on others, the importance of Huntingdon's social status presents the true core of the novel, as he is the physical manifestation of the oppressive realities of the patriarchal society of the early 19th century, and a perversion of the domestic ideal. As Carol A. Senf notes, "[Huntingdon's] power over [Helen] is sanctioned by both law and custom;"[124] despite the force of Helen's personality, her authority over Huntingdon fades with each year until she is virtually powerless in her marriage, proclaimed "not fit to teach children or be with them" (452), and about to be separated from her son.

This moment in Helen's narrative becomes the climax. Helen is now empowered by not only a strong, defined religious codex, but also by a maternal concern, and therefore her decision to save her son from his father "provides the impetus for the plot,"[125] as Elisabeth

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[124] Carol A. Senf, "*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: Narrative Silences and Questions of Gender," *College English*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Women and Writing (Apr., 1990): 451. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/377662> 9. 7. 2019.

[125] Elisabeth Rose Gruner, "Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Autumn, 1997): 310. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/464364> 9. 7. 2019.

Rose Gruner declares. Although Helen is willing to tolerate abusive conditions for herself and live as a wife "only in the name" (360), she refuses to be replaced as a mother, and her narrative metamorphoses from passive endurance into a rebellion against those marital conventions which have become threatening to her maternity. Since all Helen's property is rightfully Huntingdon's, however, Lee observes that "ironically, it is Helen's attempts to support, care for and protect her son which are illegal, whereas her husband's abuse of her and his son is legally sanctioned."[126] In abandoning her alcoholic, adulterous husband and raising her child as a single mother, Helen simultaneously subverts and upholds the domestic ideal as she actively chooses little Arthur's psychological welfare over loyalty to her husband, becoming an outlaw in the process. Helen's extraordinary choice therefore leads her to assert, as Senf further writes, "her maternal autonomy heroically in the face of legal, social and economic restraint."[127]

As Helen becomes empowered by her motherhood and acts when her status as a mother is endangered, she represents a character whose maternity precedes her individuality; Nicole A. Diederich claims that in Helen, Anne Brontë depicts marriage "as a practice that excludes other forms of expression,"[128] notably Helen's joy of painting, and replaces personal interests with the chores of running the household and childcare. This dilemma is symbolized by Arthur Huntingdon's name – the pun refers to the conflicting "arts" in Helen's life.[129] However, through Helen's love for her son, her individuality is gradually restored by the income received for her paintings: Helen declares her happiness in knowledge that "I am paying my way honestly, and that what little I possess is legitimately all my own" (466). Following her escape to protect her child, Helen is able to channel her joy and the means of

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[126] Monika Hope Lee.
[127] Monika Hope Lee.
[128] Diederich, 27.
[129] Furthermore, his chase of pleasures and game is reflected in his last name, Huntingdon.

self-expression into a mature career as an artist through which she is not only able to assert her independence, but also find her voice and express, or conceal, the truth:[130] by dubbing Wildfell Hall a false name on her painting of the house, she masks her location so that she can "live in peace and never see him again" (439). As Helen positions herself in a fictional setting through her art, she evidences a kind of power over her husband she could never exert in her marriage. Therefore Helen re-discovers her individuality and control over her surroundings through a defiance of conventionality. Through her developing attitude to Huntingdon, marriage, motherhood, and independence, Helen represents what Gruner calls "an ongoing reevaluation of female identity."[131]

Despite the gradual renouncement of her marital duties, beginning with the refusal of her body by locking herself "till the morning" (251), through reducing herself to "your child's mother, and your housekeeper, nothing more" (360), as Helen announces to Huntingdon, following his affair with Annabella Lowborough, and ending with her desertion of Grassdale Manor, Helen never forsakes "that poor trembling soul" (539) of her husband's. Through Helen, the Protestant values echo distinctly in the novel. Two major episodes of religious discourse between Huntingdon and Helen may be observed in the text: the first occurs on the second Sunday following their arrival at Grassdale Manor, the other on Huntingdon's deathbed. Both display Huntingdon's half-hearted opinions regarding the spiritual life, which serve as the basis for his immorality; in a streak of predestination, Huntingdon declares himself unfit for piety and argues with phrenology and cherry-picked parts of the Bible that since he has not been endowed by God with "a proper organ of veneration" (245), he is not required to strive for virtue. Helen's counter argument, "Of him to whom less is given, less will be required, but our utmost exertions are required of us all"

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[130] Diederich, 26.
[131] Gruner, 304.

(245), contains according to Thormählen "a message with important bearings on the issue of Arthur Huntingdon's ultimate fate."[132] Even on his own deathbed, Huntingdon is unable to repent, only lamenting at "how different it would have been" (534) had he chosen to be saved by Helen. However, even Huntingdon's unrepentant demise is not an entirely dismal expression of doom, as Helen formulates her personal belief that an absolute perdition does not exist, and even in purgatory, Huntingdon may reform though it is "too late" (534) in life.

The reformed men

The scene of Huntingdon's demise is an illustration of what Priti Joshi calls a kind of masculinity "impervious to the softening or 'superior' influence of women;"[133] Huntingdon and his companions refuse to alter their conduct unless the incentive comes from their own mind as opposed to that of their wife's, or they remain static and brutish characters to the end, a negative image of the Victorian example of self-restrictive and abstemious masculinity thwarted by their indulgence. Helen defies and lectures her husband with no positive result; Milicent Hattersley offers no resistance at all, but as Thormählen further points out, "all that such submissiveness is seen to do is to encourage male oppression."[134] Ralph Hattersley's own reformation may well be supported by Helen and the letters written by his wife, but is only initiated by himself being "predisposed to amendment" (450). His redemption, along with Lord Lowborough's denouncement of gambling and substance abuse, contrasts with Huntingdon's unwillingness to discard pleasure in favour of religion and morality.

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[132] Thormählen, "The Villain of Wildfell Hall," 835.
[133] Joshi, 915.
[134] Thormählen, "Horror and disgust," 7.

While according to Gwen Hyman, Huntingdon represents the negative impact of one's "revelling in the body and refusing the tyranny of rational control,"[135] his company of drinking associates – for the term "friend" is inadequate – represent the "wide range of masculine response to these conditions."[136] Huntingdon's anxiety about the potential loss of his status as "the very life and prop of the community" (217) with marriage proves unfounded, as he absolutely refuses to compromise his freedom until it leads him onto his deathbed; instead, as Craik claims, "from seeming one a group of roisterers (by whom he may seem to be influenced) he comes to be seen as the leader, and himself the main source of corruption."[137] Huntingdon's Byronic heritage is therefore rather a streak of selfish pursuit of pleasure by conforming to his masculinity, instead of an intellectual rebellion against the oppression of gender and class restrictions. However, Lowborough's and Hattersley's fates suggest the possibility of a truly positive change, following a period of moral transgressions which were supported by their primarily male company, if one wills.

Huntingdon's unmalleable rigidity contrasts mainly with Arthur Junior and Gilbert Markham, whose characters develop in close contact with women, particularly their family. Helen's influence on her son is that of a loving relationship which seeks to obliterate any potential propensity for alcoholism from the child's mind, but it is disputed as a threat which will "spoil his spirit, and make a mere Miss Nancy of him" (28) by Markham's mother and, by extension, by society. Mrs Markham's words echo the desire of Huntingdon "to 'make a man'" (411) of his son, and distinctly set the boundary between an undesirable, feminine behaviour in the little boy which results from his mother's attention, and the perception of a

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[135] Gwen Hyman, "'An Infernal Fire In My Veins:' Gentlemanly Drinking in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*," *Victorian Literature and Culture* Vol. 36, No. 2 (2008): 457. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40347199> 11. 7. 2019.
[136] Senf, 450.
[137] Craik, 246.

positive masculinity among Huntingdon's company, where women are assigned to the position of homemakers, while men swear, drink, and hunt. Despite the overt disapproval of the Linden-Car community, Helen's education of her son is eventually vindicated as Markham reports Arthur Junior to be a "very amiable, intelligent, and entertaining little fellow" (52) who grows up to become "a fine young man" (587). Arthur Junior's eventual residence at Grassdale Manor with his wife, Helen Hattersley, is a signal of a restoration of harmony diverted by Huntingdon. The development of little Arthur demonstrates Anne Brontë's conclusion that "masculinity and femininity are taught and can be played, revised, changed,"[138] as Gruner asserts, and subverts the negative perception of a feminized man.

This notion establishes ground for comparison of Markham and Huntingdon, as some obvious parallels appear in the text which render Markham a more acceptable husband, albeit one who still needs to be corrected of some of his errors before he and Helen can be properly united. The primary difference of Markham is that of respect: Thormählen suggests that Huntingdon's downfall is escalated by his disastrous marriage to Helen and his failure to subjugate her; while "his idea of a wife is to love one devotedly and to stay at home" (287), Helen's refusal to submit herself to this dominance has possibly intensified the "restlessness that drives him to drink and dissipation."[139] Such a concept evidences the tragic effect of an ineffective, albeit powerful, male dominance. It is also reflected in the question of religion, a pervasive aspect of the novel. According to Huntingdon, a woman's religion should not "lessen her devotion to her earthly lord" (244) and his behaviour at church (holding the Bible upside down, ignoring his prayers) evidences the irreverent streak of his character which, according to the novel's belief, mostly likely lands him in the infernal fire; because Markham

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[138] Gruner, 312.
[139] Thormählen, "The Villain of Wildfell Hall," 837.

desires no such subjugation and instead seeks to court Helen as his equal, their marriage is founded on mutual respect.

Still, Markham's behaviour occasionally mirrors Huntingdon's, and his similar conduct at church, though he realizes it "very improper [...] for a place of worship" (9) initially induces Helen to dislike him due to an outward resemblance. Despite this hinderance, Markham's approach of Helen through Arthur Junior as "excellent friends" (52), his respect of Helen's boundaries both physical and in terms of privacy, and life spent alongside his mother, his sister, and other female company, discerns him a more suitable partner for Helen. Furthermore, though Graham laments "the undeniable difference between Helen's rank and [his]" (570), her superiority in fortune and rank is equaled by Markham's superiority in the face of law and custom, and therefore a more balanced union than that with Huntingdon may occur. The marriage must be preceded by Markham's enlightenment of Helen's struggles by receiving her diary, which accelerates his penitence for his jealousy of Frederick Lawrence, and the denouncement of Huntingdon's conduct in favour of Helen's education.

Another difference between the characters is that of their masculinity. The ideal of bourgeois industrial manhood, the transmutation of the sexual energy into labor,[140] may be seen in Markham's work as a farmer. According to Hyman, Gilbert Markham embodies "productivity and abstemious behaviour"[141] resulting from his middle class origin, and becomes a projection of what Huntingdon could never be due to his upper class position, yet could aspire to be in his morality. Huntingdon, a representative of aristocratic idleness who does not channel his masculine energy into any productive occupation, attempts to keep Helen as the keeper of the domestic, and in the end becomes consumed by his own

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[140] Sussman, 4.
[141] Hyman, 454.

inadequacy. In her marriage with Huntingdon, Helen therefore subverts the idea of the male "breadwinner"[142] when she begins to provide for her son through her art, and comes to embody both the Victorian masculine and the feminine principle by being a working mother. This breaking with the Victorian tradition empowers her, and she comes to oppose the distribution of the domestic roles. Her requirement of Markham's acceptance of the feminine principle is necessary in order to establish a new, equal order in their marriage. As Joshi claims, in Markham and Arthur Junior emerges "a reformed masculinity [...] by emulating feminine ways;"[143] in Anne Brontë's work, those qualities amount to respect for the domestic life, life alongside women, and the religious values of humility, restraint, and devotion. Such a masculinity stands in direct opposition to that of Huntingdon's, who upon the slightest provocation declares he "won't be dictated by a woman, though she be [his] wife" (281).

The final key to equilibrium in the novel is sparked by Helen's abandonment of her husband, and her decision to raise her son contrary to the codified standards of child education and the role of the homemaker in the first half of the 19th century. In doing so, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* contrasts starkly with *Wuthering Heights*, where the main characters stand outside any morality, as well as with *Jane Eyre*, where the protagonist finds happiness in segregation from society, because Helen Huntingdon's trespassing of law and custom offers a new, rebellious alternative to what is perceived as a morally damaging tradition, but never abandons the society altogether. Some other comparisons may be observed between the novels: particularly those of Anne and Emily.

Both Heathcliff and Huntingdon's perversion of the domestic ideal and their negative impact on not only the heroine, but also the society around them, ends with their death. Their death is preceded by a refusal of redemption, but with Huntingdon, the possibility of an

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[142] Sussman, 5.
[143] Joshi, 908.

afterlife salvation is offered; Heathcliff is both unwilling to repent and uninterested in any concept of afterlife where Catherine is not present. The hope of the restoration of order is offered in the next generation: Cathy and Hareton, and Helen's children: both Arthur Junior and those fathered by Markham. The complex narrative of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* – Markham's epistolary narrative serving as a framing device to Helen's diary narrative – resembles that of *Wuthering Heights*: a male outsider's safe reality stands in opposition with the cruelty revealed in the female narrative. However, while Lockwood's persona remains, though distressed by the account, largely unaffected by the narrative of Nelly Dean, Markham becomes directly involved in the heroine's life and becomes a part of the resolution of the conflict.

According to Senf, Anne Brontë "manipulates narrative and narrative silences to focus the reader's attention on questions of gender."[144] The framing device serves simultaneously two purposes. Firstly, it acts as a means of the gradual revelation of the horrors of Helen's marriage, the alcoholism and abuse inflicted by her husband, and the gradual transformation of her psychology, without focusing too much on the macabre or diverting from the focal points of Helen's history; those being her experiences with Arthur Huntingdon. Since Markham relates the contents of Helen's diary some twenty years after it was written and excludes the irrelevant information, he acts as a critical authority on Helen's diary, and in doing so, "diminishes the novel's Gothic elements"[145] in favour of realism. Secondarily, the structural positioning of Helen's narrative inside Markham's letter serves as a literal "framing" to Helen's picture of a dysfunctional domestic life. This lends the novel a structural symbolism, as well as optimism about the future generations of marriage and a

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[144] Senf, 447.
[145] Senf, 449

hope of equality, which becomes balanced by the sober account of the risks of alcoholism and selfishness.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The analysis of *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* has revealed a distinct voice in each author, but also yielded several shared aspects of the novels which prove not only a shared familial background and the emphasis on female individuality and preference for a more secluded, rural society, but also several shared moral convictions of the authors: a turn from the stereotypical masculine and feminine division of society to a more inclusive partnership of two equal forces. In order to do so, the male love interests must show both willingness and the willpower to redeem their error – although in both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, neither Heathcliff nor Huntingdon can achieve such salvation on account of their irredeemable characters, and are replaced with a masculine force not only willing to adapt, but also capable of doing so: Heathcliff with Hareton Earnshaw, and Huntingdon with Gilbert Markham.

In all three novels, it is an error of judgement which inflames the potential source of conflict into an open disharmony: Catherine's choice of social prestige and financial comfort over her own nature, Rochester's disastrous marriage to Bertha Mason, and Helen's belief in her ability to reform an unrepentant sinner. These mistakes lead to a negative influence on the main heroine who then in some way becomes separated from her love interest, which in turn inflicts psychological damage on the male protagonist. However, though following particular interaction with their heroine causes Heathcliff, Rochester, and Huntingdon to spiral into a pattern of self-destructive behaviour, it is their specific form of masculinity which sets the

foundation: be it a larger-than-life revenge, attempt at bigamy, or abuse of privilege and alcohol.

Each novel also poses a question of moral redemption of the male protagonist which bases itself on religion. In the world of *Wuthering Heights*, religious morality is virtually non-existent unless it is satirized in the character of Joseph, and therefore Christian redemption is a non-applicable term to creatures like Heathcliff and Catherine; Heathcliff dies unrepentant, because he does not consider himself accountable for any transgressions. Meanwhile, the condition for Rochester's reconciliation with Jane and himself is his atonement through a restored relationship to God, which is enabled by a catharsis following Jane's departure and Bertha's death. And though Huntingdon dies powerless to repent, Helen expresses hope for his eventual salvation from the purgatory on the basis of forever achievable redemption. Furthermore, the hope for redemption is expressed in the following generation of both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: in the former, it may be Hareton and Cathy who restore the harmony at the moors following the death of the destructive principle; in the latter, Helen's maternal methods prove effective despite the disapproval of the general public, and Hattersley's own repentance enables Arthur Junior and Helen Hattersley to enter a happy marriage.

In the relationship between the male protagonist and his heroine, all three authors introduce the concept of likeness as both a principle with the potential for destruction and a principle of reconciliation. It is not the similarities between the souls of Catherine and Heathcliff that are the source of conflict; it is the failure to unite these similarities. This failure then becomes thwarted into a destructive tendency which only ends once Heathcliff, the destroyer, dies and is reconciled with his likeness. The novel then closes with the last members of the Earnshaws and Lintons each embracing some features of the opposite family

in order to harmonize their shared existence. The same idea is introduced in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: Huntingdon's doom is his absolute refusal to accept his wife's religious conduct and reform, while Markham's love for Helen transforms his faults and through emulating her image, he becomes a suitable candidate for marriage. The loss of Rochester's mansion, arm, and eyesight in fire is not only a symbolic punishment for his offense against morality, but also a means to lower him in status, while Jane simultaneously rises with her inheritance. As Rochester acknowledges his guilt and reforms, he is also reconciled with Jane - his likeness in spirit - and God, and the conflict is resolved. Therefore, by formulating the mixture of the feminine and the masculine as an ideal for the future generations, with both principles being distinct but equal, the Brontë sisters voice a feminist demand for the equal treatment of both women and men.

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