

The Subjection of Men:  
The Domestication and Embourgeoisement of the Gothic Villain-Hero in Three Brontë Novels

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examine the domestication of the Gothic hero-villain in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Each of these novels features a powerful Gothic figure who finds himself physically and emotionally subject to the heroine. This subjection is closely linked to the passing away of that hero-villain's Gothic masculinity and his conversion to or replacement by domestic, middle-class masculinity. I argue that the larger social shift from gentry and aristocratic authority in eighteenth-century British society to the entrenchment of domestic, middle-class ideology in the Victorian period and the accompanying shift from an elite to a bourgeois model of masculinity are largely responsible for the subjection, and conversion or supplanting, of these Gothic hero-villains.

This social-historical framework also allows me to examine these male characters from a masculinist perspective. Much recent Brontë criticism has been feminist in nature, and these analyses fail to do justice to the novels' male characters, usually examining them only in relation to the heroine or indeed casting them as feminized figures, especially when their masculinity is perceived to be unconventional. By looking at effects of the shift from elite to domestic masculinity, I offer a more nuanced analysis of these male characters and how they navigate changing expectations of masculinity.

I conclude that though these novels follow a similar pattern, which seems to reify domestic ideology, each Brontë supports this ideology to a different degree. This problematization of ideology has a long tradition in the Gothic novel, which is frequently ambivalent and can be used for either revolutionary or reactionary ends. Charlotte and Anne Brontë defeat the Gothic and gentry masculinity of their hero-villains, making way for the domestic man. Along the way, Charlotte Brontë creates a marriage that is both domestic and radically equal; Anne Brontë critiques the dictates of domestic ideology before finally reifying it. Most interestingly, Emily Brontë allows Heathcliff to die unrepentant and haunt the closing pages of *Wuthering Heights*. Of the three sisters, Emily Brontë most strongly resists domestic ideology and masculinity in her treatment of the Gothic hero-villain.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### PROBLEM MEN: SITUATING THE BRONTËS' GOTHIC HERO-VILLAINS WITHIN THEIR GENERIC, CLASS, AND GENDER CONTEXTS

“Jane, will you marry me?”

“Yes, sir.”

“A poor blind man, whom you will have to lead about by the hand?”

“Yes, sir.”

“A crippled man, twenty years older than you, whom you will have to wait on?”

“Yes, sir.” (C. Brontë 445)

This striking proposal of marriage has caused much critical perplexity over the past century. Mr. Edward Rochester, master of a sprawling Gothic manor complete with its own madwoman in the attic and possessor of a Byronic temper and secret past, ends the novel blinded and maimed. His injuries are the result of his mad wife's burning of Thornfield Hall, which also robs him of the chief sign of his status as a member of the gentry. Where once he was Jane's master, Rochester must now be dependent upon her. Rochester ends the novel a seemingly de-sexed, newly-converted shadow of his former self. Only then can he and Jane marry and provide the novel with its happy ending. Why?

Rochester's subjection to Jane at the end of *Jane Eyre* has been read in several different ways over the years. Ever since Richard Chase first suggested it in 1947, critics have argued that Rochester has been symbolically castrated (495). Nancy Armstrong is one such critic, writing,

“something obviously gets out of hand in this novel. Too many readers have seen Jane’s ascendancy in the final chapter, not as a mutually enhancing exchange, but as the symbolic castration of Rochester” (53). Terry Eagleton suggests in his Marxist study of the Brontës that Charlotte Brontë has avenged herself on the dominant Victorian social order in thus punishing Rochester (31-32). This is a more complex social-historical reading of Rochester’s punishment than Chase’s “castration” theory. However, this particular interpretation also depends on biographical criticism, which has been invoked far too often in analysis of the Brontës’ works and almost always tends to reduce readings to pat solutions lifted from the known details of these women’s lives. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that Jane certainly does not desire Rochester to be castrated, but that she only wishes to raise herself in order to be his equal (368). Gilbert and Gubar place their critical focus on the feminist aspects of Jane’s character, which is a fair reading to make. A feminist approach to *Jane Eyre*, however, cannot adequately untangle the complexities of Rochester’s punishment because it will not deal directly with Rochester himself as a male character, who acts out masculinity as it was defined (or contrary to that definition) during the Victorian period. Terry Eagleton’s reading of this moment engages with the notion of class, but does not link class with the question of Rochester’s masculinity. A social-historical reading of Rochester’s subjection to Jane, in which Victorian bourgeois notions of masculinity are considered, provides the best explanation as to why Rochester must be so radically changed.

But *Jane Eyre* is not the only Brontë novel in which a Gothic, Byronic hero-villain is made subject to the heroine. Heathcliff, though he dominates the action of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and systematically revenges himself on those who have wronged him, is always subject to Catherine because of his deep love for her. In Anne Brontë’s second novel,

*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Arthur Huntingdon's final illness leaves him physically at the mercy of his abused wife, Helen, and he fears that she has returned to him so she may revenge herself on him. The ideological shift from the eighteenth-century model of aristocratic and gentry masculinity<sup>1</sup> to the nineteenth-century exemplar of domestic middle-class manliness has had a profound impact on how these Gothic men are made subject to the women in their lives. As these are Gothic novels, however, this subjection is ambivalent and often incomplete.

In order to explain why these male characters are made subject to the heroines of these three novels, brief histories must be given of the development of the Gothic novel; its central figure, the Gothic hero-villain; and domestic, middle-class masculinity. The Gothic is an extraordinarily ambivalent tradition, whose conventions – haunted castles, ghosts, demons, lustful monks and nuns, tyrannical fathers, incest, murder, rape, and swooning heroines – can be put to either conservative or revolutionary ends; the writer of the Gothic may use the horror he or she depicts to reinscribe accepted norms or explode them (Botting 8, 2; Williams 48). With its emotional excesses and the inclusion of the supernatural and sublime, the Gothic acted as a challenge to Enlightenment values and the aesthetics of neo-Classicism (Botting 3, 14). The genre, read and often written by middle-class women, was also part of the larger ideological shift in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries away from aristocratic power to the ascendancy of middle-class morality, which may account in part for the genre's proliferation of evil aristocrats who terrorize young middle-class women (Ellis x). Early Gothic novels maintained a safe

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<sup>1</sup> When referring to a specific male character, I will identify his masculinity as middle-class, gentry, or aristocratic. Because the expectations concerning masculinity were almost identical within both the aristocracy and gentry, I will refer to the masculinity of the "landed classes" or "gentry and aristocracy," when speaking more generally. As this terminology can become cumbersome, I will often refer to one or the other class as a short-hand. In these cases, the reader may safely assume that I am referring to the masculinity of both the gentry and aristocracy. In his book, *An Open Elite?: England 1540-1880*, Lawrence Stone tries to solve the problem of there being no one term for the gentry and aristocracy by referring to the "elite" class (3). As our aims in the matter are the same, I will sometimes use his term.

temporal and geographical distance from their eighteenth-century British readers. The novels were primarily set during the Middle Ages and most often took place in Roman Catholic countries, usually Italy, Spain, or Southern France (Botting 63).

The first Gothic novel was Horace Walpole's 1764 "Gothic Story," *The Castle of Otranto*. This short novel takes place in medieval Italy and centres on Manfred, the lord of Otranto. When his son is killed by a gigantic helmet that falls from the sky, Manfred is left without an heir and decides to divorce his wife and marry his son's betrothed in an attempt to have more sons. In the process, the castle is destroyed by supernatural means and Manfred accidentally kills his daughter. While Walpole's novel was well-received critically, most of the Gothicists who followed him were panned, their works being seen as too radical, too socially transgressive (Botting 22). As well, in the eighteenth century, the novel itself had a reputation for being a morally corrupting influence, especially on young women (26).

That being said, the Gothic novel had immense popular success during the revolutionary upheaval of the 1790s. It was then that the genre clearly split into two strains: female and male Gothic (Williams 1). Female, or terror, Gothic is exemplified by the very well-received novels of Ann Radcliffe, most notably *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797).<sup>2</sup> Radcliffe's novels feature young heroines who are locked in castles and menaced by aristocratic villains. Though these heroines are presented with evidence of supernatural activity and the reader is continually left in suspense for prolonged periods of time, little horror actually manifests itself and the "supernatural" is explained away logically (Williams 101; Botting 64). The heroine escapes the villain and ends the novel in bourgeois domestic bliss with the sensitive, but rather dull, hero of the novel (Thorslev 52).

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<sup>2</sup> Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777) and Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1783-85) are earlier, but less famous, examples of the female Gothic novel.

Male, or horror, Gothic is best typified by M. G. Lewis' novel *The Monk* (1796), itself a reaction to Radcliffe's work (Hume 285). With great gusto, Lewis presents the reader with what is only suggested in Radcliffe's novels: murder, rape, incest, and real demons and ghosts (285). The protagonist of *The Monk* is the villain himself, the debauched and sadistic Ambrosio. Male Gothic almost always ends tragically. In this case, after raping and murdering his sister, Ambrosio is taken prisoner by the Spanish Inquisition and tortured. Unable to face another questioning, Ambrosio signs his soul over to a demon, in return for being rescued from the prisons of the Inquisition. The demon does just as he promised, but then drops Ambrosio from a height, so that his body is dashed upon precipices of rock; his flesh is then consumed by insects and eagles and he is finally killed by a storm. After all those tortures, he, of course, must also face an eternity in hell.

Romanticism had a great impact on the Gothic. In 1818, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* appeared.<sup>3</sup> This novel is more psychologically complex than its forbears and exhibits fewer of the conventional trappings of the earlier Gothic. Fred Botting argues that the Romantic Movement caused greater stress to be put on the question of the self and that this concern led to the internalization of the Gothic (91). This question of the self also led to the figure of the double in Romantic Gothic fiction, of which Victor Frankenstein's creature is a prime example (11). *Frankenstein* also begins to undo some of the careful displacement of the Gothic. The action is contemporary and parts of the novel take place in Scotland and Ireland. British readers

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<sup>3</sup> This was also the year the Gothic's most famous satire was released: Jane Austen's posthumously published *Northanger Abbey*, which make direct references to Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, among other Gothic novels.

could no longer believe that the corruption and violence of the Gothic were not present in Britain, in their time.<sup>4</sup>

Just as the Gothic genre transformed over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so, too, did the Gothic hero-villain transform. The eighteenth-century Gothic villain is usually identified as being a direct descendent of Milton's Satan, though the Shakespearean tragic hero is sometimes also included in the family tree (Thorslev 8, 17). The Gothic villain is tall, striking and masculine, with penetrating eyes (53). *Udolpho*'s Montoni, for instance, is first described as "a man about forty, of an uncommonly handsome person, with features manly and expressive, but whose countenance exhibit[s], upon the whole, more of the haughtiness of command, and the quickness of discernment, than of any other character" (Radcliffe 23). The Gothic villain is often a usurper and is most commonly motivated by greed or lust (Ellis xiii; Thorslev 54). The monk Schedoni in Radcliffe's *The Italian* has his brother murdered so that he may marry his widow. Montoni holds Emily St. Aubert captive in his (usurped) castle in the Apennines so that he may have the wealth she has inherited from her aunt. Ambrosio rapes and murders Antonia, after having murdered her mother, only to find out after that he has murdered his own mother and sister. All these Gothic villains are also unrepentant and, thus, while intriguing characters, do not elicit the reader's sympathy (Thorslev 8).

In the Gothic drama of the late eighteenth century, however, the Gothic villain became more sympathetic because he feels remorse and agony for his crimes (Thorslev 57). Because terror was the desired effect in Gothic drama, the villain developed into a much more powerful figure than the rather weak and insipid Gothic hero (Evans 56, 58). In time, the Gothic villain utterly eclipsed the hero and became the protagonist of Gothic drama, a Gothic villain-hero (87).

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) are also Romantic, psychological Gothic novels. Both have been seen to mark the end of the Gothic as a unified genre (Hume 282; DeLamotte 14).

At the same time, the Gothic villain began to be defined by the remorse and agony he suffers for his crimes (89). These changes were spurred in part by the lead actor's desire to play the villain (easily the role with the most dramatic interest in a Gothic play), while also eliciting sympathy from his audience (87-88). As well, censorship demanded certain standards of morality be upheld, which required the Gothic villain to suffer the pangs of conscience (88). Osmond in Matthew Lewis's 1797 play *The Castle Spectre* is a prime example of the agonized Gothic villain of the stage. This new hero-villain paved the way for the Romantic revisioning of the Gothic villain – the Byronic hero (57).

The Byronic hero is a mixture of victim, hero, and villain. He is a wanderer and outcast, punished by an unjust society (or its representative social institutions) for transgressing social convention (Botting 92; Thorslev 22). The Byronic hero's rebellion against tyranny and corruption, as typified by Satan and Prometheus, earns him the reader's sympathy (Thorslev 22; Botting 92). While the Byronic hero is passionate and sometimes violent, he is distinct from the eighteenth-century Gothic villain in that he is never cruel (Thorslev 8). The Byronic hero appears in the works of Byron, of course – *Manfred* and *Childe Harold* are two of the best examples. The Byronic hero also appears in other Romantic works, such as Shelley's *Alastor* and Goethe's *Faust*. These psychologically complex hero-villains also made their way into the Gothic novels of the early nineteenth century; Victor Frankenstein and Charles Maturin's Melmoth are two such Romantic outcasts.

The Gothic hero-villain has a great influence on how Rochester, Heathcliff, and Huntingdon are characterized, but in order to explain why they should end up so subject to women requires a brief detailing of the development of Victorian middle-class manliness and domestic ideology. Nancy Armstrong argues that an early version of middle-class domestic

ideology can be found in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (5). This epistolary novel was published in 1740, well before the Brontës and twenty years before the first Gothic novel, and depicts the sexual and class struggle between Pamela Andrews, a lady's maid, and her master, Mr. B. Mr. B. wants to make "pretty Pamela" his mistress (a perfectly conventional desire on the part of an eighteenth-century gentleman of the landed classes), but Pamela, valuing her virtue above her life, refuses. Mr. B. must then take desperate measures. He has Pamela secretly taken to his home in Lincolnshire, where she is confined under rather Gothic circumstances, complete with a spying housekeeper. Mr. B. also offers her a generous monetary settlement. Finally, he gives up all thought of enjoying his maid with her consent and engineers a bed-trick that is to end in rape, only to be spoiled by Pamela's swooning. It is when Mr. B. demands to read Pamela's letters and invades her inner self by way of her words that he gives up trying to master her body and appreciates her for her moral qualities, her expression, and her self (122). Remorseful and reformed, he asks her hand in marriage. This story of the reformed rake prefigures Mr. Rochester's experience in *Jane Eyre* and creates an exemplar of the gentleman turned moral, loving husband. Here, Mr. B. is subject to the heroine; her words make him ashamed of his attempts to ruin her and this (as well as his newfound love for her character) causes Mr. B. to give up his libertine ways and act the part of a moral man.

While Mr. B. may not fully embrace the middle-class ideology that would flourish a century later, Pamela herself exhibits traits found in the middle-class wife of the nineteenth century. Upon being told that she may have little entertaining to do when she has married Mr. B. (as the ladies of the neighbourhood are unlikely to come and pay court to a former lady's maid), Pamela launches into a list of the ways in which she will spend her days, a list that closely resembles that of a Victorian bourgeois wife: she will take over the management of the

household accounts; she will visit the poor and sick; she will assist the housekeeper in making preserves and will make fine linen; she will amuse her husband when he has the time for leisure; she will busy herself with music and writing; she will read so that she may make herself “worthier of [Mr. B.’s] Company and Conversation”; and above all else she will devote herself to God (263-264). Mr. B. then suggests that she will also eventually have children to mind (265). Richardson has sketched a woman who would become much more common in the Victorian period, one who is household manager, companion to her husband, contributor to charitable causes, and, above all else, a mother (Armstrong 19, 92; Tosh 27, 45). The middle-class woman could not be idle as her aristocratic counterpart was (Ellis 14). In this passage are evident the makings of Victorian domestic ideology, which was to develop over the next century into the dominant ideology concerning the family and gender roles.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the middle classes were made up of persons who owned property but did not belong to the landed gentry (Davidoff and Hall 20). The group was heterogeneous, coming from a great variety of occupations (from doctors and lawyers to clerks and shopkeepers) and religious and political affiliations (23). These disparate groups of property owners were brought more closely together during the upheavals of the 1790s, as the French Revolution veered wildly and violently off course, to the great anxiety of those in Britain (19). Meanwhile, a spike in bread prices caused the divide between the middle and lower classes to greatly increase, giving the middle class more definition as a whole (19). These men<sup>5</sup> had money but no power or position (73). Middle-class men could not vote until the Reform Act of 1832 and those who were Roman Catholic or non-conformist could not hold public office until

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<sup>5</sup> I will speak of men here because, for the most part, it was the master of the house who determined his family’s social status.

the 1827 Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts (19)<sup>6</sup>. By mid-century, however, the middle class was the dominant force in British society (21), having wrested moral and ideological power from the landed classes.

The middle class asserted its authority through its sense of moral superiority over the aristocracy, largely seen to be idle, licentious, avaricious, and irresponsible (21). During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Britain experienced a wave of revivalism within both the non-conformist community and the evangelical wing of the Church of England (73).

“Serious” Christians, as they were known then, believed that all people were spiritually equal and that one’s salvation, not his or her wealth, property, or social status, conferred gentility (73). This moral authority allowed the middle class to feel it could challenge the gentry and aristocracy for power in British society (30).

The middle-class man set himself against his gentry counterpart in moral terms. The gentry’s model of masculinity “was based on sport and codes of honour derived from military prowess, finding expression in hunting, riding, drinking, and ‘wenching’” (Davidoff and Hall 110). The religious middle-class man, in contrast, disdained all that was worldly and immoral (110). A Christian man should strive to be a benevolent father, in the mould of the Heavenly Father, and try to provide a religious upbringing for his children (21). Such a man thought not only of himself but also of the more vulnerable in society (25). He might even be actively involved in philanthropic activities for the relief of women, children, the insane, criminals,

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<sup>6</sup> Michael S. Smith writes that the 1832 Reform Act was most notable in that it made way for further electoral reform and further expansion of the franchise (162). After the First Reform Act, only 20% of adult men could vote, due to property requirements (160). As well, because electioneering was expensive and Members of Parliament were not paid a salary, the great majority of MPs continued to belong to the landed classes (161). The 1867 Reform act allowed approximately one third of adult men to vote, including some members of the working class (167-68). Both these acts also encouraged political activity among members of the public, both among those who had the franchise and those who did not (168). The reform acts of the 1880s widened the franchise further – more than 60% of adult males could vote in 1886 – and the majority of MPs were drawn from the professional classes in this decade (170; 168-69). This period of reform gradually shifted real political power from the aristocracy to the middle and working classes of Britain.

animals, and the poor (25). Of course, this concern often hid a desire to control these elements of society (28).

Middle-class men also held a different view of marriage than men in the upper reaches of the aristocracy at least (Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage* 392). Marriages among those of the upper classes had largely been arranged by one's parents and contracted for the sake of social, political, and economic gain in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (361).

Lawrence Stone refers to these rather mercenary unions as marriages of interest or alliance. Near the turn of the eighteenth century, "companionate" marriage began to become more popular among the more pious members of the middle class (361). Children were allowed greater freedom in the choice of their marriage partner (271). As well, personal qualities – morality, intellect, personality, appearance – became more important in a potential wife (or husband) than any social or economic advantage she might bring to her spouse and his family. Loving friendship was meant to characterize the relationship after marriage; romantic love became accepted as a motive for marrying in the nineteenth century (Jones 6). The gentry and aristocracy gradually accepted companionate marriage as the eighteenth century progressed (281). However, as Davidoff and Hall argue, domesticity (including companionate marriage) "might be a choice" for the landed classes; it was "mandatory" for and emerged in the middle class (21).

A key component in shaping male and female behaviour during the mid-nineteenth century was two spheres ideology. Under this model, men and women were seen to have quite different roles in the world, due to "natural" sexual differences (17). Men were associated with the social-political-economic world, while women had authority over the home and much of family life (13). John Tosh argues that in reality, two spheres ideology did not have as great an

impact on Victorian gender roles as modern historians have suggested (2). Women were not confined to the home but moved in the world as well (2), especially through philanthropic efforts (Davidoff and Hall 74). Tosh argues that, indeed, it was the special privilege of men to move back and forth between the domestic and economic spheres (2).

One of the clearest distinctions between the middle-class man and the gentleman or aristocrat was that the middle-class man worked for his living, rather than living off rents collected from his property (Davidoff and Hall 20). A middle-class man was defined by his profession and held work to be a “dignified, serious and a properly masculine pursuit” (229, 111-112). His occupation also allowed him to take care of his family (17). He was a “responsible breadwinner whose manhood was legitimated through [his] ability to secure the needs of [his] dependants” (17). A man’s profession, while it (usually) took him outside the home, was tied very tightly to the domestic affections and his identity as a bourgeois male.

Though the middle-class man spent most of his day at work in the social-political-economic realm, he saw home as a refuge where “his deepest needs were met” (Tosh 6). Tosh writes that “[t]he nineteenth century was the first in which significant numbers of men of education and means experienced work as alienating: to be more precise, not so much their own work, as the polluted environment and the dehumanized personal relations which were associated with it” (6). For these reasons, home was seen as an escape, a place where the professional man could be “rehumanized,” where he could escape the amoral world of the marketplace for the moral home and be ministered to by his wife and be among his children (Tosh 6; Davidoff and Hall 74). Kate Ferguson Ellis goes so far as to say that home was an Eden, removed from the fallen world of the cash nexus (ix). The dominant ideology concerning

Victorian masculinity was one in which a man was defined by his profession, his moral qualities, and his family life.

Domesticity and masculinity were never completely reconciled, for the domestic man could so easily become effeminate, not masculine at all. John Tosh writes that “[in] most settled societies there is a tension between the qualities men need to sustain production and reproduction and the qualities they might need if their community is threatened from outside” (6). The period from the 1830s to the end of the 1860s was a period of relative peace, and it was during these years that domestic ideology was at its height (6-7). Even during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, however, there were concerns as to the amount of emotion men could show, how sensitive they could be without being “feminine” (Davidoff and Hall 110). During the revivalism of the early part of the century and the Romantic Movement, men had license to be much more emotional than in later parts of the century (111). By the 1820s, men were expected to exhibit much more control over their emotions (111). The domestic man, it seems, was constantly engaged in a balancing act. He could not be seen to neglect the home, for his masculinity was based in large part on his role as paterfamilias; conversely, he could not be too much at home, as he would then be guilty both of infringing on his wife’s domestic authority and becoming feminized himself (Tosh 63, 113). By the 1870s, domesticity was beginning to be seen as “unglamorous, unfulfilling and – ultimately – unmasculine” (Tosh 7). After 1880, a new model of masculinity began to emerge, one based on imperialism, adventure, and athleticism (7). The domestic, middle-class man was the dominant model of masculinity for much of the Victorian period, but the doctrine was so contradictory that it could not sustain itself for long.

As the Brontës wrote their novels during the height of domestic ideology in Britain, it should not be surprising to see its influence on their depiction of their Gothic hero-villains. Self-

control – of both violent and sexual urges – was central to this ideology of masculinity (SurrIDGE 46). The Gothic hero-villain is most definitely not known for his self-control and is not a benevolent, domestic paterfamilias. The ideology of domestic, moral masculinity makes itself felt when Rochester loses his hand and sight, as a providential justice for transgressing the bounds of Victorian masculinity. This model of masculinity is resisted in the person of Heathcliff, who dies unrepentant, like the villain of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel. There again, domestic ideology is reinscribed when Catherine and Hareton Earnshaw marry and move into Thrushcross Grange, leaving Wuthering Heights once and for all and replacing Heathcliff's Gothic masculinity with something new, moral, and domestic.

In order to look at the figure of the subjected Gothic hero-villain in these novels, I will approach the texts from a masculinist perspective. Feminist studies of the Gothic, such as Eugenia C. DeLamotte's *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (1990) and Anne Williams' *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995), abound. As well, there are many feminist discussions of the Brontës' work, including the very influential chapters on the Brontës in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's study, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). In these works, men who do not fit the dominant models of masculinity are considered to be feminine characters. Gilbert and Gubar make this argument about Heathcliff in their chapter on *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff is considered to be a feminine character because he is aligned with nature and is illegitimate, both inferior factors in the culture/nature and legitimate/illegitimate binaries. Being culturally "other" in these ways therefore aligns him with the feminine (293). Gilbert and Gubar also portray Heathcliff as being a "woman's man," a male character onto which a female author

projects her own anxieties about her gender identity (294). These are interesting interpretations of Heathcliff's character and gender identity but seriously flawed because so reductionist. Any male character who differs from "conventional" masculinity should not be labelled as merely culturally female. It is much more profitable to examine the different ways in which masculinity is constructed in a given period. To this end, I will discuss Heathcliff as a character whose atypical masculinity does not necessarily feminize him but rather marks him as not conforming to Victorian standards of virtuous, bourgeois manliness.

Nancy Armstrong has examined how domestic ideology is used in the Brontës' work in her 1987 book, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. I have drawn on some of Armstrong's work on domestic ideology, but leave aside much of the rest of her argument, part of which is concerned with proving that the conception of desire for an apolitical, moral, domestic woman first appeared in conduct books and only later became a reality. As well, Armstrong's work is of limited use to me, as it focuses primarily on female gender identity and subjectivity. More interesting is Kate Ferguson Ellis's book, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (1989), which discusses how domestic ideology is resisted in both male and female Gothic novels. Ellis's final chapter discusses *Wuthering Heights* as a refashioning of *Paradise Lost*, in which Heathcliff usurps *Wuthering Heights* and the younger Catherine casts him out, creating a new domestic paradise at Thrushcross Grange. Ellis's reading is fair, but does not deal with Heathcliff's masculinity directly.

Gwen Hyman's 2008 article "'An Infernal Fire in My Veins': Gentlemanly Drinking in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*" discusses Arthur Huntingdon's alcoholism from a masculinist perspective and examines how Huntingdon constructs his masculinity based on his identity as a gentleman, one who is "useless" in society (456). Hyman's article is one of the few that

discusses the Brontës' works using a masculinist approach. Her article, however, does not deal with the Gothic aspects of Huntingdon's character, and so differs from what I hope to achieve in this thesis.

My own work will fit within the much smaller but growing body of criticism on Gothic masculinity. Ellen Brinks' *Gothic Masculinity: Effeminacy and the Supernatural in English and German Romanticism* (2003) focuses primarily on Gothic masculinity in the works of Hegel, Keats, Byron, and Coleridge, while Andrew Smith's 2004 study, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity, and the Gothic at the Fin de Siècle* looks at how masculinity became associated with perversity at the end of the nineteenth century. Cyndy Hendershot's 1998 book, *The Animal Within: Masculinity and the Gothic*, discusses Mr. Rochester's masculinity from a post-colonial perspective in the chapter, "The Male Lover," but aside from this, I have come across very little that specifically discusses Gothic masculinity in the Brontës' work using a masculinist approach. For this reason, this thesis will fill a gap in the critical literature on the Brontës.

Masculinist criticism is in many ways the double of feminist criticism, as it examines the social construction of and changes in masculinities. A masculinist approach to literature allows for deeper and more accurate representations of male literary characters and the social structures under which they operate. Under this model of criticism, male characters may be evaluated based on their masculinities, rather than be seen as possible "feminine" figures or evaluated only in relation to the female protagonist of a work, as sometimes occurs in feminist readings. When examining a text from a masculinist perspective, however, care must be taken to avoid casting female characters in masculine terms, especially when they do not seem to fit within cultural norms concerning gender. Because the focus of this thesis is on the Gothic hero-villains of these three Brontë novels female characters have necessarily been given less attention, though this

deficit is corrected by the wealth of feminist readings of the Brontës' works. The Brontës' men have not received nearly as much attention.

In this thesis, I strive to identify how Gothic masculinity and social masculinities (either elite or domestic) are acted out within these three novels. In discussing *Jane Eyre*'s Mr. Rochester, I place the major events of his life in chronological order, not in the order Jane hears of them. This narrative allows the reader a better understanding of Rochester's desire to escape his gentry masculinity and taken on a more domestic, moral masculine identity. In my discussions of both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, I examine destructive homosocial relationships. Failed fatherhood creates disastrous repercussions for future generations in *Wuthering Heights*, while superficial friendships among gentlemen encourage dissipation and violence in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, "Rochester's Pilgrimage: The Search for Moral Manliness in *Jane Eyre*," I will discuss Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, focusing specifically on Mr. Rochester as a Gothic hero-villain and on his subjection to Jane at the end of the novel. Rochester begins the novel with many of the trappings of the Gothic villain: he has wealth, an old family home, a past of sexual misdeeds, power, passion, and secrets. By the end of the novel, Thornfield Hall has been destroyed by his mad wife, Bertha, and he is blind and maimed. Only in this state can he be an equal partner for Jane. Rochester's new dependence on Jane (and Providence) has destroyed his corrupting pride and his need for control. He can now depend on Jane in a way he could not before, which creates true equality in their relationship, something that could not have existed when Rochester had physical and social mastery of her. Rochester's subjection allows him to finally escape his gentry masculinity and his sordid past. He can now

become a moral, domestic man and supplant his first, disastrous marriage of interest with one based on love and equality.

Of the three characters I will discuss, it seems that Heathcliff best manages to escape the strictures governing domesticity, gender, and even the boundaries of life and death. Chapter Three, “Tyranny, Oppression, and Degradation: Gothic Fatherhood and the Struggle for Power in *Wuthering Heights*,” will focus on the negative and far-reaching effects of Gothic fatherhood in Emily Brontë’s novel. Heathcliff is indulged and degraded at Wuthering Heights by Mr. Earnshaw and Hindley, respectively, and thus learns to indulge and degrade those in his care (Hareton, Linton, Cathy). This tyranny, oppression, and degradation defines almost all the relationships in *Wuthering Heights*, even Heathcliff and Catherine’s, otherwise so striking for its assertions of radical equality and identification. As a girl child at Wuthering Heights, Catherine lacks domestic power. To gain this rare commodity, she marries Edgar Linton and in acting thus, oppresses Heathcliff by irrevocably separating herself from him. Heathcliff is subject to Catherine because he loves her too much to revenge himself on her (though he has no compunction about taking revenge on others who have wronged him and remakes himself as a gentleman in order to do so). He is always at the mercy of Catherine. When she dies, Heathcliff petitions her to haunt him, and he finally dies after starving himself in expectation of meeting her again in the next world. He never repents of his sins. His character is a curious case of rebellion against society’s repression and willing subjection to Catherine, which is not at all to be related to cultural expectations concerning masculinity. Heathcliff’s brand of passionate and violent masculinity is defeated, however, by the second generation of lovers, the thoroughly domesticated Cathy and Hareton, who make their home at Thrushcross Grange, not Wuthering

Heights, the locus of violence in the novel. While Heathcliff may have been defeated, his spirit lives on, suggesting that the novel as a whole is ambivalent about his transgressive masculinity.

In Chapter Four, “A Tale of Two Husbands: The Triumph of Domesticity in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*,” I will discuss Anne Brontë’s second novel. This novel seems the least Gothic of the three I will examine. There is no air of the supernatural whatsoever, no Romantic tendencies on display. There is, however, a Gothic villain at the novel’s heart – Arthur Huntingdon. He is a gentry male and much of the novel occurs in his country home, a home that is full of violence, that Huntingdon’s wife, Helen, cannot escape. Arthur Huntingdon’s gentry masculinity – and that of his friends – is very much defined by selfish excesses – drink, violence, lust. While most of Huntingdon’s fellows become moral, domestic men over the course of the novel and thrive because of this transformation, Huntingdon’s masculinity remains stagnant. When Helen returns to Huntingdon in his final illness, he is prostrate and fears she will use her newfound superiority to revenge herself on him. When she does not, he appeals to her to help him gain entry to heaven. Helen counsels him to repent, rather than depend on her, but Huntingdon does not. After his death, Helen is courted by Gilbert Markham, an impetuous, selfish, passionate man who in time (and with Helen’s help) becomes a properly bourgeois, domestic husband (SurrIDGE 82). At the end of the novel, Huntingdon’s immoral, gentry masculinity is eclipsed by one more acceptable to the Victorian age.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ROCHESTER'S PILGRIMAGE: THE SEARCH FOR MORAL MASCULINITY IN *JANE EYRE*

For over half a century now, a substantial proportion of *Jane Eyre*'s critics have seen Rochester's crippled and blinded state at the end of the novel as indicative of a fall from power, a punishment dictated by Jane or the author so that Jane can master her master. In Richard Chase's well-known article, "The Brontës: A Centennial Observance," he suggests that Rochester has suffered a "symbolic castration" and that the "tempo and energy of the universe," which he identifies as masculine sexual energy, has been "quelled by a patient, practical woman" (495). In this reading, Jane has somehow unmanned Rochester in order to gain ascendancy. Writing more recently, Jean Wyatt argues that Rochester is reduced to "a position of female weakness, 'humbled,' 'dependent,' 'powerless,' and cruellest parallel [to women's position in patriarchal society] confined (by blindness) to the house..." (212). Here, Rochester's maiming and blinding is seen to transform him into a feminine figure. Again, Rochester can only become Jane's equal by suffering and being drastically weakened: "Rather than equality developing through a woman's entry into the world of work and adventure, it comes about through Rochester's loss of mobility and ambition" (212). However, Rochester's fate is not nearly so sinister as such critics would have one believe. Rochester does not end the novel in a state of de-sexed subjection to Jane. Rather, he has taken on a different kind of masculinity. Rochester begins the novel as a member of the gentry and an adherent to its precepts concerning

masculinity. Rochester also plays the role of the Gothic hero-villain in the novel, which is evident in not only his tyrannical, mercurial tendencies but also his anguish and remorse for his misdeeds. By the end of the novel, Rochester has broken free from the gentry code of masculinity and the part of the Gothic hero-villain and become a moral, domestic hero.

Rochester makes this transition by means of a personal and spiritual pilgrimage. Other critics have identified Jane's story as a secular, feminist pilgrimage, most notably Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their chapter "Plain Jane's Progress: A Dialogue of Self and Soul," which appears in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. More recently, Drew Lamonica has argued that Jane's story is really a spiritual biography in which she searches for family (a crucial lack during her childhood) and God (Lamonica 68-69). Before Jane can complete her pilgrimage, she must first lay aside her self-dependence and her idolization of Rochester (84-85). Only then can she enter into a marriage of equals with Rochester. Rochester, too, must transform himself in order to enter into the marriage of true minds he so much desires.

In order for Rochester to redeem himself and become the moral man he wants to be, he must make up for his marriage of interest to Bertha Mason, and, in order to accomplish this, his gentry pride must be destroyed. Rochester first marries for lust and for money, not out of love (Gilbert and Gubar 356). Realizing this to have been an immoral act and suffering due to his wife's infidelity and, later, her madness, Rochester returns to Europe from Jamaica. Having safely ensconced Bertha in the third storey of Thornfield Hall, he travels to the Continent to find a woman with whom he could have an unlawful "marriage" of love and equality to atone for the mistake of his first, disastrous union. Unable to find that woman, Rochester turns to dissipation and traverses Europe, acquiring and casting off mistresses. Unsurprisingly, this course of action fails to satisfy Rochester, causing him to return again to England, intent on reforming. When he

meets Jane and finds in her a genuine personality, something he had *not* found in his restless wanderings, he decides to commit bigamy to be with her, believing her good influence will reform his dissipated ways. What Rochester, in his pride, does not realize, is that to truly reform, he must humble himself before God and repent of his sexual crimes. Because Rochester cannot do this himself, Providence steps in and saves Jane from Rochester's plan. Providence also engineers Rochester's blinding and maiming to rid him once and for all of his gentry pride. Having lost Jane and been punished, Rochester can finally repent. Only after Rochester has been humbled can he enter into a marriage of equals, one which eclipses his first.

For much of the novel, Rochester is defined by and rebels against his gentry masculinity, before finally becoming a domestic, moral man. As a gentleman, Rochester is bound to particular means of expressing his masculinity. Blanche Ingram, a member of the aristocracy, provides a good sense of the attributes of gentry and aristocratic masculinity when she describes what men should be: "[L]et them be solicitous to possess only strength and valour: let their motto be: – Hunt, shoot, and fight: the rest is not worth a fillip" (179). Gentry and aristocratic masculinity were defined in relation to honour and war (Davidoff and Hall 110). The elite male was also seen to be morally lax and to engage in sexual conquest, though as a woman, Blanche does not mention these aspects. Rochester hunts and rides and is described as having physical prowess. He has also kept mistresses. In many ways, Rochester typifies the gentry code of masculinity.

However, Rochester longs for a masculine identity based in morality and domesticity. He detests his first, loveless marriage and the fact of his having kept mistresses. He longs to make up for his past sins and become a moral man and loving husband. These are elements found at the core of Victorian middle-class masculinity. This brand of manliness was grounded

in serious Christianity, morality, and fatherhood (Davidoff and Hall 110, 21).<sup>7</sup> Rochester wishes to escape his immoral gentry masculinity and become a middle-class, domestic man.

As a gentleman, Rochester is in a position to marry up into the aristocracy (as he would have if he had actually intended to marry Blanche Ingram) or down into the upper middle class, as in his marriage to Bertha. Both these situations are mercenary matches because marriages between members of the elite class were often marriages of interest at this time – economic and political unions. Rochester is made to marry Bertha for money in return for his family name and “good race” (305). Blanche Ingram wants to marry Rochester because he is rich. Doubtless her family desires the match for the same reason. In return, Rochester would become connected to the aristocracy. Rochester, however, does not approve of this model of marriage. Instead, he wants a companionate marriage, a marriage for love such as the middle class practise.<sup>8</sup> Rochester pushes this ideal further even, in that he wants a marriage of radical equality.

Rochester’s masculinity is also closely tied to his generic role as a Gothic hero-villain. The villains of the eighteenth century Gothic novel were often demonized aristocrats who persecuted young middle-class heroines and owned ancient castles that housed dark secrets. Rochester does resemble this rather flat character in that Thornfield does house a mad wife, but he more closely resembles the Byronic hero. The Byronic hero is wronged by his friends (Rochester’s father and brother trick him into marrying Bertha for her money, though they know she is insane) or society (Rochester, once married, cannot by law be divorced and thus cannot marry again so long as Bertha lives). The Byronic hero wanders as Rochester wanders through Europe, vainly seeking his equal, a woman to love. The Byronic hero also suffers intense

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<sup>7</sup> Middle-class masculinity also espoused the value of work, as opposed to the aristocrat’s living off his inherited property. Rochester is never forced to work, nor does he ever seem to desire to do so.

<sup>8</sup> Marriage for love was a middle-class ideal but had been practised by members of the gentry and aristocracy during the eighteenth century (Tosh 29).

remorse for his crimes. Rochester suffers guilt for marrying Bertha though he did not love her, for keeping mistresses, and for attempting to trick Jane into a bigamous marriage. The Byronic hero often meets a tragic end, but Rochester transcends the role of Byronic hero by repenting and entering into a new life as a domestic hero.

Rochester locates the beginning of his troubles in his loveless marriage of interest to Bertha Mason of Spanish Town, Jamaica. Rochester's father, desiring that the family wealth remain whole, has left everything to his elder son, Rowland, leaving nothing for his younger son, Edward (C. Brontë 304). Allowing Rochester to be destitute, however, would erode the family credit, so young Edward Fairfax is prostituted so that a good marriage can be made for him.<sup>9</sup> Rochester is sent to Jamaica to marry Bertha Mason, who will bring him a fortune of thirty thousand pounds. Neither Rochester's family nor hers reveals the presence of madness in her family. Rochester thus finds himself indissolubly attached to a madwoman with "a pigmy intellect" and "giant propensities," who drags him "through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste" (306). This is certainly not a marriage of equality and companionship.

Rochester holds two diametrically opposed views concerning this marriage; at times, he represents himself as being manipulated into Bertha's arms, and at others, he takes responsibility for his own moral failing in marrying where he did not love. When he first meets Jane, he claims that he was as innocent and ingenuous as she during his youth: "I was your equal at eighteen – quite your equal. Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man . . ." (135). Rochester claims that his wretched marriage and subsequent career were fated, beyond his control:

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<sup>9</sup> In this way, Rochester is treated as a commodity on the marriage market in the same manner as Blanche Ingram, who attempts to attract Rochester's interest for the purpose of securing his money.

“[F]ortune has knocked me about . . . .” (132). This is all true, in that Rochester was forced on a lunatic by his father and brother for the sake of money and the family name.

At other times, however, Rochester is aware that he is deluding himself and is fully cognizant of the role he played in his union to Bertha. Later in the same conversation with Jane, Rochester states: “I started, or rather (for like other defaulters, I like to lay half the blame on ill fortune and adverse circumstances) was thrust on to the wrong tack at the age of one and twenty, and have never recovered the right course since . . . .” (135). Here Rochester is very self-conscious about the responsibility he bears for marrying Bertha and his own tendency to place the blame for this act on external forces. Rochester knows that he has brought the horror of his marriage down on himself. Rochester did not know he was being married off to Bertha for the sake of her money, but it must have been obvious to him that her family was wealthy. As well, when Rochester says to Jane, “Most things free-born will submit to anything for a salary; therefore keep to yourself and don’t venture on generalities of which you are intensely ignorant,” he indicates that he has married Bertha, at least in part, for her money and is deeply ashamed of it (134). What most angers Rochester about his marriage is that he entered into it out of lust and not out of love: “I was dazzled, stimulated; my senses were excited; and being ignorant, raw, and inexperienced, I thought I loved her” (305). Though Rochester is a member of the gentry, he feels trapped by its codes concerning masculinity. He does not want a marriage of interest but rather one of equality and love. Only such a marriage as that can be good, true, and moral. When Rochester admits that he did not marry for these reasons, he berates himself most vociferously:

Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act! – an agony of inward contempt masters me. I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her. I

was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature: I had marked neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candour, nor refinement in her mind or manners – and, I married her: gross, grovelling, mole-eyed blockhead that I was! (305)

Rochester feels strongly that marriage should occur only for the sake of love, and offers a critique of the marriage of interest in which companionship, virtue, and equality matter not at all, and in which children can effectively be prostituted for the material gains of their parents.

Tormented by Bertha's madness and immorality and his own madness in marrying her, Rochester begins to see Jamaica as "hell" (308). He contemplates suicide, but is recalled to hope by a "wind fresh from Europe" (308). This comparison of the West Indies and Europe has long acted as support for post-colonial readings of *Jane Eyre*, such as Cyndy Hendershot's interpretation of Mr. Rochester as being Easternized by his contact with Bertha, leading to his eroticization by Jane. Jamaica does have hellish attributes ascribed to it (the air is sulphurous, the moon has a "bloody glance") and, due to its representations of Bertha, it is associated with madness, sexuality, and violence (C. Brontë 307). Europe, and England especially, will then culturally be associated with reason, temperance, and virtue. However, it is important to see that Rochester's categorization of Jamaica as hell grafts these ideas not onto the West Indies themselves but onto the institution of the marriage of interest practised by the elite classes, for which, admittedly, Jamaica provides a staging ground.

In any case, the aforementioned "sweet wind from Europe" (308) inspires Rochester first to take Bertha back to England with him, where no one knows of his disastrous marriage, and second, to "seek and find a good and intelligent woman, whom [he] could love" (310). Rochester shuts Bertha up in the third storey of Thornfield in an act which, at first, seems to paint him most clearly as a Gothic villain. There is a long tradition of incarcerated women in

Gothic fiction. One thinks of Montoni's imprisonment of Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or the Bluebeard story, which is directly referred to in *Jane Eyre* (107). However, Rochester safely installs Bertha at Thornfield so that she can be "cared for as her condition demands," not for the purpose of villainy (309). He explicitly states that he would not have kept her at his other residence, Ferndean, because its setting is not healthful and he has no desire to effect an "indirect assassination" (300). Rochester finds Grace Poole from Grimbsy Retreat – a fictional lunatic asylum – to take care of her (309). From all this, one sees that Rochester does all he could for Bertha at this period in history. Her incarceration in Thornfield Hall may seem barbaric today, but it could not have been worse than shutting her up in an asylum. Barbara Hill Rigney has cited patriarchal marriage as the source of Bertha's madness and suggests that Jane is threatened with the same fate (17). Rochester has treated Bertha as humanely as he could in her madness. What evidence then is there to suggest that he was a controlling or oppressive husband when she was sane? It is possible Rochester is lying, but because he is so aware of his own faults and sins and, after Bertha's existence is revealed (an important caveat), so very honest with Jane about his past, it seems the reader can trust his word here. As well, patriarchal marriage cannot be blamed for the madness of Bertha's younger brother (305), which indicates that Bertha's madness is literal and hereditary, not merely symbolic of the oppression of women in patriarchal society.

The second thing Rochester does once returned to England is turn Byronic wanderer in his search for a woman he can love, to enter into a true "marriage" which will make up for his earlier error in entering into a mercenary union. Rochester believes that, because Bertha has committed adultery, is mad, and has no affinity to him, their marriage is not valid (309). Therefore, he is right to seek a new marriage to replace the old. He would be perfectly frank and open about the existence of his mad wife. Believing it "so obviously rational that [he] should be

considered free to love and be loved,” he is sure he will find a woman who will live with him despite the existence of a Mrs. Rochester (310). Rochester’s pride leads him to believe he has the right to contravene the dictates of God and society to become a bigamist.

Rochester fails to find the woman who will be his equal, and so falls into a vice common to men of the elite: he keeps mistresses. “Disappointment made me reckless,” Rochester tells Jane: “I tried dissipation – never debauchery” (311). Rochester explicitly links his sexual misdeeds to those of the rich: “I am a trite commonplace sinner, hackneyed in all the poor petty dissipations with which the rich and worthless try to put on life” (135). Licentiousness was a sin seen as particular to the men of the landed classes during this time (Davidoff and Hall 110). He begins with Céline Varens in Paris, “another of those steps which makes a man spurn himself when he recalls them” (C. Brontë 311). When this mistress betrays him, he moves on to Italian and German mistresses.<sup>10</sup> These women, too, are not suited to Rochester, and he leaves them, hating the time he passed in their company (312).

It is on his return to England that Rochester first meets Jane Eyre. All Jane knows of Rochester up to this point has been gleaned from the housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax, who identifies him by his class status: “[H]e has a gentleman’s tastes and habits” (104). Rochester continues to look the part of the gentleman as he enters on horseback, preceded by his dog. Here are represented two of the key activities Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall identify as being expressions of gentry masculinity: “hunting, riding, drinking, and ‘wenching’” (110). Rochester’s sexual misdeeds have already been discussed. Rochester is also given a Gothic shading in this scene and is connected to the supernatural when Jane at first imagines that a Gytrash is approaching her (C. Brontë 112) His gentry manliness and Gothic aura are soon

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<sup>10</sup> Rochester’s manner of dealing with his rival for Céline’s affections is typically aristocratic: he challenges him to a duel (144). The Victorian middle class abhorred the custom of duelling (Davidoff and Hall 21).

undercut, however, when his horse slips on a patch of ice and falls (Gilbert and Gubar 352). Rochester injures himself in the process, so Jane asks if she can help him. Rochester refuses to accept this offer of help until he is forced to, as he cannot get himself to his horse without aid. His pride balks at the idea of depending directly on his ward's governess. He first asks if Jane has an umbrella he can use as a crutch. Then he asks her to fetch his horse for him. When that proves impossible, he finally makes Jane his crutch, though he does not like doing so. Jane must act as Rochester's crutch throughout the novel (when she saves him from his burning bed, when Mason is attacked by Bertha), but Rochester cannot freely accept Jane's help until the end of the novel (353).

In Jane, Rochester soon finds the "good and intelligent woman" for which he had scoured Europe and seeks to begin a relationship with her on terms of equality (310). From the first, Rochester knows Jane is not like Bertha or his European mistresses: "An unusual – to me – a perfectly new character I suspected was yours" (313). Jane does not posture and preen as Bertha and Blanche Ingram do; she is genuine, independent, virtuous. In order to enter into a discourse between equals, Rochester seeks to strip away social conventions that would reinforce his position as master and Jane's as dependant. He asks Jane if she will be willing to "dispense with a great many conventional forms and phrases, without thinking that the omission arises from insolence" (134). Rochester wants to sound Jane's soul to see if it is like his, and this cannot be done with petty conventionalities standing between them. Rochester goes on to tell Jane of his past sins (with some important exceptions, of course), which would otherwise be highly inappropriate. He asks her point-blank whether she thinks he is handsome, and respects her when she answers truthfully (130). Through their exchanges, Rochester creates a relationship in which he can determine if he and Jane are suited to each other and which, he hopes, will act as a

precursor to a marriage of equals, following the model of the middle-class companionate marriage.

Even in the very early days of Rochester and Jane's relationship, Rochester expresses his desire to reform himself, but he attempts to make up for his past sins in all the wrong ways. Rochester tells Jane of his sincere and agonizing remorse for his sexual misdeeds, and Jane provides the answer: "Repentance is said to be its cure, sir," to which Rochester replies: "It is not its cure" (136). Rochester cannot bear to repent because that would mean surrendering his pride and humbling himself before God in order to admit his wrongs. Instead, Rochester tries every other means to redeem himself. He believes reformation will answer, and this idea is directly linked to Rochester's belief that Jane's influence and their marriage will help him in this matter. Rochester puts this more explicitly to Jane when he asks her, "Is the wandering and sinful but now rest-seeking and repentant man, justified in daring the world's opinion, in order to attach to him forever, this gentle, gracious, genial stranger: thereby securing his own peace of mind and regeneration of life?" (218-219). Jane sees this for what it is – an unhealthy surrendering of moral responsibility: "Sir, . . . a Wanderer's repose or a Sinner's reformation should never depend on a fellow-creature" (219). She tells Rochester that this scheme will not solve his moral troubles, that he must do the work of cleansing his soul himself. Rochester continues to insist that Jane will be the means of his redemption: "But the instrument – the instrument! God, who does the work, ordains the instrument" (219). This is one example of Rochester's tendency to elevate and romanticize Jane, which goes counter to Rochester's desire to maintain a relationship of equality.

As Kathleen Vejvoda argues in her article, "Idolatry in *Jane Eyre*," Rochester also attempts to save himself by works, rather than repent in good Protestant fashion. Rochester has

taken Adèle in as his ward “on the Roman Catholic principle of expiating numerous sins, great or small, by one good work” (Vejvoda 146; C. Brontë 140). As well, when Jane agrees to become his wife, Rochester believes his proposed act of bigamy is justified by all the good he has done and will do for Jane: “It will atone – it will atone. Have I not found her friendless, and cold, and comfortless? Will I not guard, and cherish, and solace her? Is there not love in my heart, and constancy in my resolves? It will expiate at God’s tribunal. I know my Maker sanctions what I do” (256). Rochester believes his love for Jane will make up for the sin of bigamy and that of deceiving Jane into it. He even goes so far as to state that God is on his side, so to speak, though later events prove this assertion to be false.

Rochester’s pride leads him to believe he is right to marry Jane, despite the dictates of law and religion, as in the previous example. Early on, Rochester states that in order to secure his happiness, he will “pass a law, unalterable as that of the Medes and Persians, that both [his aim and motives] are right” (137). Jane, as she so often does, challenges Rochester’s reasoning: “They cannot be, sir, if they require a new statute to legalize them” (137). Rochester replies that “unheard-of combinations of circumstances demand unheard-of rules” (137). Rochester believes that his desire to make Jane his wife is just and lawful because he judges the circumstances to be so unnatural that normal strictures do not apply. The consequences of such prideful assertions prove that in *Jane Eyre*, at least, bigamy is not a morally defensible option. Rochester’s inability to humble himself before God and his insistence that his own law is right and good are indicative of a serious fault. His pride, his Gothic desire to master and control, makes him unable to enter into a truly equal union with Jane.

Rochester’s damaging pride and need for control are brought to the fore by the deceptions he uses to make Jane love him. Rochester pretends to woo Blanche Ingram, a woman for whom

he has no respect and in whom he finds some of his more despicable qualities, in order to make Jane fall in love with him: “I knew jealousy would be the best ally I could call in for the furtherance of that end” (262). Rochester manipulates Miss Ingram, and in fact, his entire party of guests, in order to win Jane’s heart by making her jealous, causing her much grief and suffering in the process. Rochester also plays the part of an old gypsy woman in order to manipulate Jane’s emotions and force a confession of love from her. The gypsy Rochester tells Jane that she is “very near happiness; yes; within reach of it,” suggesting that Jane need only tell Rochester of her love in order to be happy (197). Jane, however, refuses to take the bait. Rochester then goads her by questioning her about himself and Blanche Ingram and their supposedly imminent marriage. Still Jane withholds her true feelings, and Rochester leaves off, promising to carry out his plans regarding Jane. Rochester tries once more to force Jane out in the open, this time by lying to her about his marriage to Miss Ingram. Rochester tells Jane she will have to leave Thornfield due to his upcoming nuptials and take a position across the sea in Ireland. Jane finally cannot bear the torment of separation from Rochester and declares her love for him.

Jane’s declaration of love is also a declaration of equality, one which Rochester, finally eschewing disguise and deception (at least for the moment), shares. Pushed past endurance, Jane speaks:

Do you think I am an automaton? – a machine without feelings? . . . . Do you think because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? – You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, - and full as much heart! . . . . I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor

even of mortal flesh: – it is my spirit that addresses your spirit: just as if both had passed through the grave and we stood at God’s feet, equal – as we are! (253)

Rochester echoes Jane’s language of equality, replying: “As we are!” (253). He truly does want a relationship of equality, though his pride and desire to control overshadow this aim for large stretches of the narrative. After Jane’s declaration of love and radical equality, Rochester precedes his proposal of marriage with this statement: “My bride is here . . . because my equal is here and my likeness” (254). Again, Rochester indicates that he desires a marriage of equals. Jane is his bride because they are equal and akin to one another. By these criteria, Bertha cannot possibly be Rochester’s wife.

Rochester’s rhetoric of equality on the night of his engagement stands in marked contrast to his behaviour after it. During the month preceding his and Jane’s marriage, Rochester tries to remake Jane as a lady and demonstrates a disturbing proprietary tendency concerning her. Gilbert and Gubar argue that this sudden inequality in Jane and Rochester’s relationship has come about because of sexual inequality, as Rochester is aware that he has knowledge that Jane does not (353). This may perhaps be a factor in Rochester’s behaviour, but it seems more likely that Rochester desires to change and master Jane due to his gentry prejudices and his pride. Though Rochester has tried to create a relationship of equality between them, Jane is still aware that class divides them. In the garden scene, Jane thinks of the sea that will separate her from Rochester when she is in Ireland and of “the wider ocean – wealth, caste, custom [that] intervened between me and what I naturally and inevitably loved” (251).

On the very first day of their engagement, Rochester begins his scheme of turning Jane into a lady. He has sent away for the family jewels because he wishes to give her “every privilege, every attention . . . that [he] would accord a peer’s daughter, if about to marry her,” by

which Rochester means he intends to treat Jane as he would have treated Blanche Ingram, had he married her. (258). When Jane protests, he says, “I will myself put the diamond chain round your neck . . . and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings” (259). Rochester sounds very much as if he were going to chain and shackle Jane by means of these family heirlooms, and so he is, in his way. He attempts to chain Jane to an elite identity so that outwardly she will appear to be his equal. Again, Jane will have none of this and reminds Rochester that she is no beauty: “I am your plain, Quakerish governess” (259).

Rochester replies: “You are a beauty in my eyes . . . . I will make the world acknowledge you a beauty, too” (259). This rhetoric rightly makes Jane nervous because Rochester must either be “deluding himself, or trying to delude [her]” (259). Despite Rochester’s disdain for society and the members of his own class, he is attempting to dress Jane up like a lady so that his peers will accept his decision to marry his governess. Rochester is deep in denial concerning this matter.

In *Pamela*, when Mr. B. intends to marry Pamela, he is very forthright with her and explains that none of the ladies of his circle will pay her any attention because she was his maid (Richardson 261-262). Rochester attempts in vain to deny the truth of this matter by attempting to costume Jane in a manner befitting her station as his wife. In doing this, Rochester is also attempting to change Jane’s very identity, and Jane realizes this: “[Y]ou won’t know me, sir; and I shall not be your Jane Eyre any longer, but an ape in a harlequin’s jacket” (259). Jane fears for her identity in this exchange because Rochester feels he has the right to change her.

Rochester not only tries to change Jane’s class identity, but also believes she belongs to him. Their relationship becomes proprietary after their engagement. This is evidenced by the famous passage in which Jane sees Rochester as an Eastern emir: “He smiled and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and

gems had enriched . . . .” (269). Rochester sees Jane as a possession, a slave, a harem girl and believes he can purchase her by means of jewels and silks.

The Eastern parallels continue when Rochester says her prefers Jane to “the grand Turk’s whole seraglio” (269). Jane refuses to be cast in the role of slave and replies that if Rochester had a harem, she would act as missionary and stir up rebellion amongst the women. That done, she would make Rochester sign a charter guaranteeing their liberty. Jane is of course referring to her own position as Rochester’s future wife and fighting tenaciously to keep her independence from the newly imperious and controlling Rochester. Rochester is aware of this, too, replying: “Why, Jane, what would you have? I fear you will compel me to go through a private marriage ceremony, besides that performed at the altar. You will stipulate, I see, for peculiar terms . . . .” (269). Jane is willing to contend directly with Rochester in order to secure her independence from him. Later, Rochester, perhaps piqued by her refusals to submit, threatens Jane: “[I]t is your time now, little tyrant, but it will be mine presently; and when once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I’ll just – figuratively speaking – attach you to a chain like this (touching his watch-guard). Yes, bonny wee thing, I’ll wear you in my bosom, lest my jewel I should tyne” (270).<sup>11</sup> Again, the notion of ownership, and in this case, absolute control, enters into Rochester’s discourse concerning their future married life. Rochester will keep Jane on a short leash, so to speak.

The reason for Rochester’s attempts to purchase and control Jane soon becomes clear: now that he is sure of her feelings, he has reverted to his previous treatment of women. Rochester’s gentry upbringing, though he rebels against it, here makes itself felt. In a marriage of interest, women are traded for their dowries and sold to the highest bidder. In this case,

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara Hill Rigney very astutely points out that at the end of the novel, Rochester hands over his watch and chain to Jane, in a reversal of this threat of ownership (31).

marriage acts first and foremost as an economic and political exchange. In Rochester's marriage to Bertha, he traded his name for her wealth and was given dominion over her. Also, as he did with his European mistresses, Rochester believes he must buy and keep Jane. Knowing that Rochester hated himself for keeping mistresses, Jane refuses to be his "English Céline Varens" (270). She states that she will continue to receive a salary from Rochester and act as Adèle's governess until they are married. She also writes to her uncle in Madeira, hoping for money of her own so that she might be financially independent of Rochester. Jane successfully fends Rochester off during their engagement, knowing that though Rochester thinks he wants submission from her, what he truly longs for is a relationship of equals and, to that end, Jane must not give up her independent spirit.

Though Rochester has been set on marrying Jane almost since the beginning of their relationship and justified committing bigamy to himself several times, part of him knows that it is not right and knows, too, that Jane would not think it so and would leave him – thus, he continues to deceive her. Rochester must control what Jane knows, for fear of losing her irrevocably. When Mason appears at Thornfield, Rochester is mortally afraid that his secret will be revealed and Jane will abandon him. He quizzes her in the library to see if she would leave him if he was spurned by society: "[Y]ou could dare censure for my sake?" (205). Jane, of course, would happily dare censure for Rochester, but only for a good cause, and Rochester knows this. When Jane tells Rochester she is happy to serve and obey him "in all that is right," he replies:

[I]f I bid you to do what you thought was wrong, there would be no light-footed running, no neat-handed alacrity, no lively glance and animated complexion. My friend would then turn to me, quiet and pale, and would say, 'No, sir; that is

impossible: I cannot do it, because it is wrong,' and would become immutable as a fixed star. Well, you too have power over me, and may injure me: yet I dare not show you where I am vulnerable, lest, faithful and friendly as you are, you should transfix me at once. (217)

Rochester knows that Jane would not marry him if he told her about Bertha and would leave him because of it. He cannot allow this, so despite his earlier resolve to tell the truth to the woman he wished to live out his days with, Rochester continues to deceive Jane. It would hurt him too much to be torn from her. Rochester's one nod toward honesty occurs when, on the night before their wedding, he promises to tell Jane the truth about Grace Poole (which means telling her the truth about Bertha) in a year and a day (285). He hopes that Jane would not leave him after a year of marriage. He believes she will realize that the fact that their marriage is not lawful does not change that marriage in essentials.

When Mrs. Rochester is revealed to the world on the day of Rochester and Jane's wedding, Rochester persists in his plans to be with Jane despite the revelation. He plans to take her to a villa on the Mediterranean, to flee back to Europe where no one knows his horrid secret, there to make Jane "Mrs. Rochester – both virtually and nominally" (303). He continues to claim he is not married, and promises that he would not try to make Jane his mistress. Jane, however, knows him too well to believe that. Rochester feels he must be with Jane, that their relationship will ensure his regeneration, and refuses to give up this scheme even when his deception has been found out.

Because Rochester loves Jane and because he clings so desperately to this plan of marrying her, he turns to cheap manipulation in an attempt to keep his hold over her. When Jane insists she must leave him because he is married, Rochester says that if she abandons him, she

will be “fling[ing him] back on lust for a passion – vice for an occupation” (316). He knows that Jane wants the best for him and is sincerely concerned about the state of his soul, but this threat fails to have the desired impact. Then, Rochester seizes on the fact that Jane has no relations; therefore, no one would be hurt or offended by Jane’s living with Rochester (317). Jane is canny enough to know *she* would be hurt by this arrangement. She knows that if she becomes Rochester’s mistress, “he would one day regard [her] with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their [his previous mistresses’] memory” (312). He would hate her, and hate himself for ever living with her in an unequal relationship. Apart from considerations of this sort, Jane still cares for the integrity of her self – “*I care for myself*” – and asserts this in finally leaving Rochester (317).

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Leslie Stephen famously asked: “What would Jane Eyre have done . . . had she found that Mrs. Rochester had not been burnt in the fire at Thornfield?” (qtd. in Yeazell 127). Ruth Bernard Yeazell argues that Jane would have stayed with Rochester as his mistress and that the telepathic communication between her and Rochester was due to an impulse from within Jane, rather than any external force:

[T]he impulse which sends Jane back to her lover is not merely a lucky presentiment that the external hindrances to her marriage have disappeared. The transformation of the outer world reflects a transformation in Jane herself.

She is ready now, as she has not been before, to respond to love’s call, and the mysterious summons is an outward sign of that inner readiness. (129).

Yeazell rightly interprets Jane’s ability to love and to enter into a marriage of equality in this passage. Jane has abandoned her idolization of Rochester, found family, managed a school, and

become independent – financially (by means of her uncle’s inheritance) and otherwise. Most importantly, the mysterious summons occurs when Jane is on the point of accepting or refusing St. John Rivers’ proposal of marriage. Rivers offers her a life of service and virtue, where Rochester had promised sensual languor (Gilbert and Gubar 365). Like Rochester, however, Rivers desires to control Jane in his own way (366). He would use her as a tool in his missionary efforts, while denying her passionate nature and subsuming her identity within his own massive ego. Jane knows that to marry him would be “to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose [her] own” (418). Rochester’s call intercedes and saves Jane from the temptation offered by St. John Rivers. She returns to Rochester, having reasserted her independence. Now she is indeed in a position to love and be loved.

The rest of Yeazell’s reading of the situation at the end of the novel is fundamentally flawed, however. If Jane had returned to Rochester only to find Bertha Mason still alive, she would have been forced to leave him again. Jane would not consent to be Rochester’s mistress on any grounds. Apart from Jane’s principles, there still remains the fact that Rochester himself would not have changed sufficiently for him to be a good marriage partner for Jane. He would still have his pride, would still wish to control Jane, and would attempt to erode her identity by transfiguring her into a lady. As well, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, their telepathic communication, in which Jane’s and Rochester’s souls address each other, as Jane wanted to address Rochester in the garden, cannot be possible until they are equal (367). As Rochester is not humbled until after Bertha’s death, due to his maiming and blindness, this mysterious summons could not occur if Bertha were still alive.

Rochester does begin to change his ways even before the fire at Thornfield but his transformation is not complete until after he has been humbled by his injuries. After Jane leaves

him, Rochester does not return to the Continent to resume his immoral diversions as he had threatened and Jane fears. He remains at Thornfield and, what is more, he breaks with the local gentry, a move which indicates his dissatisfaction with their ideology and possibly their code of masculinity.

Rochester cannot truly reform himself until after the fire, however. After attempting to save Bertha from destruction of her own making, Rochester is crushed when part of Thornfield crashes down upon him. He loses an eye and a hand, the biblical punishment for adultery, in this case both achieved and attempted (Tayler 171). The fire acts as a necessary cleansing for Rochester, for he is humbled by his blinding and maiming, which he later identifies as an act of Providence (C. Brontë 446). Stripped of his pride, Rochester no longer seeks to master and control. He becomes aware of his sin in attempting to make Jane his mistress and can finally humble himself before God in order to repent and seek forgiveness:

He [God] sees not as man sees, but far clearer: judges not as man judges, but far more wisely. I did wrong: I would have sullied my innocent flower – breathed guilt on its purity: the omnipotent snatched it from me. I, in my stiff-necked rebellion, almost cursed the dispensation: instead of bending to the decree, I defied it. Divine justice pursued its course; disasters came thick on me: I was forced to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. *His* chastisements are mighty; and one smote me which has humbled me for ever. You know I was proud of my strength: but what is it now, when I must give it over to foreign guidance . . . ? Of late . . . I began to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom. I began to experience remorse, repentance; the wish for reconciliation

to my Maker. I began sometimes to pray: very brief prayers they were, but very sincere. (446)

Rochester identifies God as the maker of his woe and his redemption. He now admits he would have done wrong to commit bigamy and that by revealing his secret and taking Jane away from him, God saved him much harm and guilt. Rochester knows that he suffered in the fire for a purpose – to rid him of his poisonous pride, to bring him closer to God and into a new and better life. He has achieved redemption himself, not through Jane or good works but honest prayer and repentance. Rochester is now finally the moral, Christian man he has always longed to be.

The mysterious summons then is made possible because Jane and Rochester are spiritual equals at last. It is a direct intervention by Providence, done to save Jane from the tyranny of St. John Rivers and Rochester from his despair at losing Jane so that they may be together once more (Lamonica 92). Both Jane and Rochester have reached the end of their own personal pilgrimages, pilgrimages which parallel each other in several ways. Jerome Beaty argues that Rochester's journey "has been in its way similar to that which Jane has tread, from rebellion to humility, from self-reliance to acknowledgement of Providence" (qtd. in Lamonica 92). In this way, Jane and Rochester are now able to have a relationship built on equality and mutual dependence (Lamonica 93). This spiritual equality finally makes their telepathic communication possible (Gilbert and Gubar 367).

Many critics have been disappointed by Rochester's state at the end of *Jane Eyre*. Richard Chase's and Jean Wyatt's comments on his supposed de-sexed, weak state were discussed at the beginning of this chapter. To these can be added Barbara Hill Rigney's comment that Jane will be a mother only to Rochester (a comment echoed by Irene Tayler in saying their relationship is finally that of a father and daughter) (Rigney 32; Tayler 173).

However, other critics have very perceptively noted that Rochester is still powerful, still sexual (Kucich 931; Maynard 141). When Jane first sees Rochester at Ferndean, she comments that “[h]is form was of the same strong and stalwart contour as ever: his port was still erect . . . ; nor were his features altered or sunk: not in one year’s space, by any sorrow, could his athletic strength be quelled, or his vigorous prime blighted” (431). As well, John Maynard argues that Jane and Rochester’s relationship must have more physicality now that Rochester has lost his sight (142).

Rochester has changed, however, but only in ways that make him a more suitable mate for Jane. He can now accept her help without disdaining it: “Hitherto I have hated to be helped – to be led: henceforth, I feel, I shall hate it no more . . . . Jane’s soft ministry will be a perpetual joy” (445). Finally, Rochester is willing to accept Jane for herself, without trying to change her: “Never mind fine clothes and jewels, now: all that is not worth a fillip” (446). Jane and Rochester can now enter not only into a marriage of middle-class companionship, but a radically egalitarian manifestation of such an ideal: “No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,” Jane records in the closing pages of the novel (450).

In the final chapter of the novel, Jane also tells the reader that the sight in Rochester’s remaining eye partially returns so that “[w]hen his first-born was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were – large, brilliant, and black” (451). This passage is significant in two ways. First, it confirms Rochester in his new, domestic masculine identity, for he is now a father. This passage also proves that Rochester’s maiming and blinding is not so much a divine punishment but a means to humble him so he may be a

better man. Now that Rochester is no longer in any danger of returning to his dangerous, prideful ways, he is rewarded with the restoration of his sight.

Because Rochester has been humbled and has repented, he is now the moral, domestic man he has long desired to be and can now enter into a marriage of radical equality, one which utterly eclipses his first marriage of interest. Rochester's gentry masculinity led him to marry for money and lust rather than love. In trying to replace this marriage with a bigamous one, Rochester sinks further into immorality by keeping mistresses. When he meets Jane, he wishes to be with her and to use her as a means of redeeming himself. In his pride, he tries to control her and make her his mistress. When his secret comes out, Jane leaves him. In the burning of Thornfield Hall, Rochester is dealt a providential punishment which is really a gift, for it allows him to live humbly and to finally shake off his damaging gentry masculinity. In this state, he can repent his sins and enter into a moral life. Only then can he be a suitable husband for Jane and make up for his first, disastrous marriage.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TYRANNY, OPPRESSION, AND DEGRADATION GOTHIC FATHERHOOD AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Under Victorian middle-class domestic ideology, the father was head of the household, breadwinner, religious teacher, and moral exemplar (Davidoff and Hall 17, 21). In addition to this, such a father would be loving and kind to his wife and children. However, fatherhood can easily take on a Gothic taint, whereby patriarchal power is perverted into violence or neglect and the domestic sphere becomes a prison. Both domestic and Gothic father-figures appear in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. M. St. Aubert is a kind and benevolent domestic figure who dotes on his daughter Emily until his untimely death. Signor Montoni, as the husband of Emily's aunt, soon becomes her new guardian and abuses a father's privileges. He keeps her as a prisoner in his castle, allows her aunt to starve to death, attempts to trick Emily out of her inheritance, and tries to marry Emily to one of his cronies.

Perverse, Gothic fatherhood is endemic to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Where the ideal father should be just, kind, and loving, the various fathers and father-figures of the Heights are tyrannical, oppressive, and degrading. Mr. Earnshaw is but the first of many perverse patriarchs, introducing a mysterious child into his home and favouring it above his own children, to their detriment and the orphan child's. Hindley, as Earnshaw's heir, is especially hurt by this transference of affection and domestic clout. When Old Earnshaw dies, Hindley becomes the new patriarch of Wuthering Heights and uses his authority to strip Heathcliff of his family

privileges and education and sets about degrading him into a brute. These are but the first acts in the constant struggle for power over others enacted at Wuthering Heights. Gothic villainy is born of failed fatherhood.

Heathcliff's degradation at the hands of Hindley, coupled with the loss of Catherine Earnshaw,<sup>12</sup> drives him, in true Byronic fashion, to seek revenge against all those who have wronged him, using all the weapons of gentry and patriarchal power to meet his own twisted ends (Hagan 306). As Heathcliff is most clearly identifiable as *Wuthering Heights*' Gothic villain and precipitates most of the action of the novel, his masculinities will receive the most attention; however, given the preponderance of doubles and reflections in the novel<sup>13</sup> and the pervasive influence of perverted domestic authority, it is necessary to examine other male characters as well, especially Mr. Earnshaw, Hindley, Hareton, Linton, Joseph, and, as a contrast, Edgar Linton.<sup>14</sup>

As there is a contrast in fathers in the novel, so, too, is there a marked contrast between the masculinities acted out at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. These masculinities will become important as this discussion progresses and so will be briefly sketched here. Wuthering Heights in general stands as a symbol of nature, chaos, and violence; Thrushcross Grange, however, stands for culture, order, and domesticity. The Earnshaws are gentleman farmers, with a family and house of some antiquity: the year 1500 appears over the door of Wuthering Heights. The Lintons are on a higher rung of the social ladder and are more

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<sup>12</sup> Catherine Earnshaw of the first generation will be referred to as Catherine through this chapter. Her daughter, Catherine Linton/Heathcliff/Earnshaw will be referred to as Cathy, for the sake of avoiding confusion.

<sup>13</sup> There are of course, two Catherines and two Haretons (Hindley's son and the Hareton referenced on the lintel of the entrance to Wuthering Heights); Catherine and Heathcliff can be seen as two complementary halves of the same identity; Heathcliff himself was named for an Earnshaw son who died in infancy.

<sup>14</sup> Conspicuously missing from this list is, of course, Mr. Lockwood. Lockwood serves an important function in explaining the saga of the Earnshaws and Lintons to the reader, who, like him, is an outsider. Lockwood's early identification with Heathcliff and his status as a gentleman make his masculinity potentially interesting to study but will not be discussed in this chapter because Lockwood stands outside the complex web of paternal and marital relations in the novel.

obviously gentry – when Heathcliff is invited to take tea at Thrushcross Grange after his reappearance, Catherine tells Nelly to set one table for Edgar and Isabella, “being gentry; the other for Heathcliff and [her]self, being of the lower orders” (143). However, the families are the two best in the neighbourhood and sufficiently close in rank to allow for intermarriage between them.

Despite this affinity in class, the Earnshaw and Linton men hold to quite different codes of masculinity. At *Wuthering Heights*, masculinity is defined by the physicality of gentry masculinity and often expresses itself through violence (Davidoff and Hall 110). Hindley beats Heathcliff as a child and adolescent; Heathcliff repays him as an adult on the night of Catherine’s burial. Hareton hits Cathy (Brontë 268) and spends his days shooting. Hindley also engages in the traditional vices of the gentry, that is, drinking and gambling (Davidoff and Hall 110). In this way, he bears a resemblance to Charlotte Brontë’s Mr. Rochester and Anne Brontë’s Arthur Huntingdon. Earnshaw masculinity is also generally stern and unemotional, and is in this way more traditionally masculine than what one finds in the Linton men.

The masculinity of Thrushcross Grange is rooted in domestic ideology. While I have previously identified domestic ideology as being primarily a Victorian, middle-class ideology, it was practised by some members of the landed classes in the eighteenth century (Tosh 29; Davidoff and Hall 21). So, though Edgar is a member of the gentry, he acts out a domestic, moral masculinity that was the ideal and expectation for the middle-class man of the mid-nineteenth century (when Brontë wrote the novel). This brand of masculinity does not express itself physically. When Heathcliff pours hot applesauce on a young Edgar Linton, his reaction is not to fight back, as Hindley counsels him to do “next time” (52), but rather to break into tears. This emotionalism is one reason why domestic masculinity was sometimes considered

emasculating, especially as the century progressed. Edgar's nephew Linton is explicitly identified as being "effeminate" (177). Rather than use violence, Edgar instead exercises his authority through the law – he follows his father as magistrate – and delegating to servants when a crisis arises, which is what he does when he at last banishes Heathcliff from his house (Gilbert and Gubar 281). Edgar Linton is also more bookish and has more refined manners than the Earnshaw men. His domestic life also appears to be much more conventional and loving than that of *Wuthering Heights*, though he later keeps his daughter Cathy under virtual house arrest, recalling the confining fathers of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel. The masculinities practised at *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange* both exercise patriarchal power but do so in vastly different ways.

Though Catherine Earnshaw is not a male character, she, too, is infected by the oppression and need to oppress found at *Wuthering Heights*. As a girl child, she has little power, in the home or otherwise. Desire to escape from domestic powerlessness drives her into a marriage of alliance with Edgar Linton. Catherine deliberately separates herself from Heathcliff because marriage to Linton will allow her the social power she cannot wield at home, while marriage to Heathcliff would reduce them both to "beggars" (72). This rupture between Catherine and Heathcliff causes severe self-alienation in Catherine, which she ultimately cannot survive, and forces Heathcliff to bring systematic revenge down upon those who have wronged him, which in turn dominates the action of the latter half of the novel.

Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is in some ways most notable for its assertions of radical equality and unity. It is therefore curious that tyranny and oppression operate in this relationship and that Catherine herself introduces these damaging inequalities. Examination of this relationship will also help to explain why Heathcliff, though he is the dominant figure in the

novel, is subject to Catherine throughout *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff's subjection to Catherine, however, is very different from Rochester's subjection to Jane at the end of *Jane Eyre*. Rochester's subjection is indicative of the death of his pride, his gentry masculinity, and his Gothic character. Jane helps Rochester to become a domestic husband; Heathcliff is never tamed and domesticated, nor would Catherine desire him to be so. Heathcliff's subjection lies in his deep love for Catherine. Even though she has betrayed him and separated herself from him, Heathcliff cannot bring himself to revenge himself upon her. Catherine, then, has agency, while Heathcliff must patiently wait for her to realize what she has done to him and to herself. Even in death, Heathcliff is oppressed by Catherine's ghost and finally forced to surrender his life in order to be reunited with her in death.

*Wuthering Heights* has a thoroughly ambivalent ending, especially where masculinity is concerned. While *Jane Eyre* ends with the triumph of domesticity over gentry pride, middle-class, moral, domestic masculinity only seems to defeat the physical and Gothic masculinity of the gentry in *Wuthering Heights*. For while the newly domesticated and educated Hareton marries Cathy and their household is moved from Wuthering Heights to Thrushcross Grange, that bastion of culture, order, and domesticity, Heathcliff dies unrepentant like the villains of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel and wanders the moors with Catherine as a ghost. Domestic masculinity has supplanted the perverse, tyrannical, and Gothic patriarchy of Wuthering Heights in the real, social world of the novel, but that same Gothic masculinity survives death to haunt the closing pages of the novel.

Though it is undeniable that Heathcliff's arrival creates dangerous tensions within the Earnshaw family, there is evidence that power was jealously coveted and protected even before

his arrival.<sup>15</sup> Nelly states that Mr. Earnshaw “had a kind heart, though he was rather severe, sometimes” (30-31) and says that he “did not understand jokes from his children; he had always been strict and grave with them” (36). This textual evidence suggests that Mr. Earnshaw was a domineering patriarch, fond of his own authority, even before he brings Heathcliff home. As well, when Old Earnshaw asks the children what gifts they would like from Liverpool, young Catherine, who “could ride any horse in the stable” (30), asks for a whip. From her daring and her desire for a whip, it seems Catherine already desires domestic power. She is attempting to gain domestic power by emulating the physical masculinity of gentry masculinity (which is indeed closely linked to riding) (Gilbert and Gubar 264; Davidoff and Hall 110). Catherine does not realize, of course, that patriarchal power is not to be held by a woman.

Heathcliff’s arrival is unnatural and serves to rewrite the power structures contained within Wuthering Heights. He is “born” of Mr. Earnshaw, appearing from underneath his coat, “as dark as if [he] came from the devil” (E. Brontë 31; Gilbert and Gubar 266). Heathcliff’s unnatural birth and the hints of supernatural origin mark him off as a foreign other imposed on the Earnshaw family (Eagleton 102). Heathcliff causes the fiddle Hindley has asked for from Liverpool to be broken, thus symbolically supplanting him in Mr. Earnshaw’s affections (Gilbert and Gubar 264). This incident is the beginning of the lifelong antipathy that exists between Hindley, the legitimate heir to Wuthering Heights, and Heathcliff, the nameless usurper of his right: “So, from the very beginning, he [Heathcliff] bred bad feeling in the house; and [by the time Mrs. Earnshaw died, two years later,] the young master had learnt to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent’s affection and is privileges, and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries” (32-33). Heathcliff acts as a

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<sup>15</sup> William A. Madden argues that Wuthering Heights did not become a violent domestic space until Heathcliff’s arrival and attributes this perversity to Joseph’s increased influence on Mr. Earnshaw (134-135).

usurping Gothic villain in this description, robbing Hindley of his domestic power and his father's favour (Ellis 209). In this Gothic scenario played out by children, Hindley then becomes the wronged Gothic-Byronic hero. The other important part of this quotation is the reference to Mr. Earnshaw as a domestic "oppressor" or tyrant, rather than the fond friend and advocate a father should be. This failed father-figure is repeated throughout *Wuthering Heights*, especially by Hindley himself.

Hindley, as the wronged Byronic hero in this situation, then takes matters into his own hands by seeking revenge against the interloper who has robbed him of his place. He beats Heathcliff, but these bruises are used against him. When Heathcliff's colt is lamed, he wishes to exchange his for Hindley's, but Hindley, understandably upset at the idea of giving over to Heathcliff any more of what is rightfully his, refuses. Heathcliff then threatens to use his body as a witness,<sup>16</sup> to show Mr. Earnshaw what Hindley has done to his favourite: "[I]f I speak of these blows, you'll get them again with interest" (33). Heathcliff also says he will tell Earnshaw that Hindley plans to eject him from the household when he becomes master of *Wuthering Heights*. The contest thus becomes a matter of who has the most influence over the head of the household. Hindley quails under these threats and allows Heathcliff to take his horse, but not before hitting him with an iron weight and allowing the colt to trample him (32-33). Heathcliff, having gotten his way, does not tell Mr. Earnshaw what Hindley has done. Hindley's revenge, even at this early stage, engenders implacable hatred and vengeance in its object. A struggle for dominance, each over the other, becomes the basis of their perverse fraternal relationship.

Mr. Earnshaw's preference for Heathcliff breeds hatred within the household and actually has a negative impact on Heathcliff's character. When Earnshaw's health begins to fail, he becomes fiercely protective of Heathcliff, but his perverted fathering creates a distorted

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<sup>16</sup> Bodily hurt or illness is used several times in the novel as a method of exercising domestic power.

character. Nelly reports, “It was a disadvantage to the lad for the kinder among us did not wish to fret the master, so we humoured his partiality, and that humouring was rich nourishment to the child’s pride and black tempers” (35). Earnshaw spoils and indulges Heathcliff, bears with his caprices, and allows his faults to continue unchecked. This kind of indulgent neglect foreshadows Heathcliff’s irresponsible treatment of his own son Linton later in the novel. In some ways, Mr. Earnshaw’s fathering creates a deep impression on Heathcliff: his pride, his temper, his vengefulness and need for power, his neglectful parenting.

There is, of course, also a girl child at Wuthering Heights: Catherine Earnshaw. She is not affected as negatively by Heathcliff’s arrival as Hindley because, as a girl, she has no domestic power or position to be usurped by his coming (Eagleton 103). On the night of Heathcliff’s arrival, Catherine, like Hindley, evinces a hatred of this strange addition to the family, but just a few days later, Nelly finds them “very thick” (Brontë 32). Catherine and Heathcliff have created a powerful bond (one that will last a lifetime and conquer the boundary between life and death) out of their shared state as outsiders, who do not have a legitimate right to patriarchal authority: he as an illegitimate “son” and she as a female child (Eagleton 103). In a sense, all they have is each other, and this forms an intense relationship between them. Nelly explains that “she [Catherine] was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him” (36). Nelly speaks more truth here than she perhaps realizes. From the time Catherine separates herself from Heathcliff by marrying Edgar Linton until after her death, both Catherine and Heathcliff live in heterodox and highly personal versions of hell because they cannot be together.

Catherine, disempowered as she is, does not fail to notice that Heathcliff has become her father’s new favourite, nor does she fail to use this to her advantage in her attempts to win her

father's favour and try to gain some standing within their domestic circle. It is Heathcliff who caused her whip from Liverpool to be lost on the road, so now he acts as her metaphorical whip within the home (Gilbert and Gubar 264). Catherine attempts to prove her power in the domestic sphere by illustrating the authority she has over Heathcliff: "[S]he was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she . . . doing just what her father hated most, showing how her pretended insolence, which he thought real, had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness: how the boy would do *her* bidding in anything, and *his* only when it suited his own inclination" (36). By acting masterly and defiant, Catherine plays at the patriarchal power and privilege Mr. Earnshaw has at Wuthering Heights. She hopes to show him that she can do just as well as he can and thus prove herself worthy of his affection and notice, as Heathcliff is. What Catherine does not realize, however, is that her father, rather than being impressed by these shows of power, feels threatened by them, as they challenge his own. She also does not yet comprehend that women are not supposed to wield domestic power in the same way as the paterfamilias. Her attempts to gain domestic power through her bond with Heathcliff fail miserably.

Just as Catherine and Heathcliff reach puberty, Mr. Earnshaw goes into steep physical decline. Nelly speculates that the family upheaval has played a part in the ensuing irritation of spirit – "I fancied the discontent of age and disease arose from his family disagreements, as he would have it that it did" – but concludes that "it was in his sinking frame" (35). Given the nature of Earnshaw's complaints, it seems that as he loses his physical prowess, family problems, namely fear that his authority is lapsing along with his health, cause him the most grief. Nelly reports, "A nothing vexed him, and suspected slights of his authority nearly threw him into fits" (35). Old Earnshaw is seriously concerned that his authority may be challenged,

even usurped by other members of the household. His ire is particularly raised when Hindley – or anyone else – crosses Heathcliff, his favourite, a proxy for himself and his authority in the house. This in turn has the effect of cementing his authority, as no one dares touch Heathcliff for fear of provoking Earnshaw. As a threat, Hindley is eventually taken out of the equation, by being sent off to college. Earnshaw’s fear of his diminishing domestic power proves how central it is at Wuthering Heights and to the novel as a whole.

When Old Earnshaw dies, Hindley returns from college with a wife and becomes the new patriarch of Wuthering Heights. Hindley is protective of his wife in much the same way that Earnshaw was protective of Heathcliff; therefore, when Frances expresses a dislike for Heathcliff, Hindley becomes “tyrannical,” hating the boy with renewed vigour (40). Hindley, now the head of the household, has the power to exact his revenge upon Heathcliff. He ejects him from the family circle, forces him to do physical, outdoor labour, and refuses him his education (40). In these ways, Hindley degrades him and in doing so, seeks revenge for his father’s favouritism towards Heathcliff and Heathcliff’s usurpation of Hindley’s place. Through all this, Catherine stands by Heathcliff. She tries to help him keep up with his studies and runs off with him to adventure on the moors, regardless of what punishment may lie in store for her.

It is one of these rambles on the moors that introduces inequality into Heathcliff and Catherine’s relationship and leads to Catherine’s “fall.” For, on the night Heathcliff and Catherine go to Thrushcross Grange, Catherine chooses domestic and social power over love. One night when Hindley and Joseph are especially tyrannical, Catherine and Heathcliff escape to “heavenly” Thrushcross Grange, where everything is beautiful, grand, and civilized (Gilbert and Gubar 273). They look in the drawing room window and there see two very petty and selfish children, Isabella and Edgar Linton, fighting over a lapdog. When Catherine and Heathcliff are

seen, they try to escape, but Catherine is caught by a bull-dog, another symbol of the civilized Lintons' delegation of physical power and control. She is carried inside and thus introduced into her future home. Heathcliff is sent back to Wuthering Heights but he stays to watch Catherine, ready to rescue her if she wants her freedom. Catherine, however, is quite at peace at Thrushcross Grange, with so many people to pay her court, basking in a fond attention which has never been hers at Wuthering Heights:

[T]he woman servant brought a basin of warm water, and washed her feet; and Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of negus, and Isabella emptied a plateful of cake into her lap, and Edgar stood gaping at a distance. Afterwards, they dried and combed her beautiful hair, and gave her a pair of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire, and I left her, as merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog and Skulker, whose nose she pinched as he ate; and kindling a spark of spirit in the vacant blue eyes of the Lintons – a dim reflection of her own enchanting face – I saw they were full of stupid admiration . . . (44).

Catherine, it seems, can be civilized if it is in her self-interest. She goes along with their petting and spoiling because it suits her to have power over others, power she has never before had the chance of wielding. When Catherine returns to Wuthering Heights five weeks later, she has better manners and clothes, and hands “wonderfully whitened with doing nothing, and staying in doors” (47).

When Heathcliff sees the new, ladylike Catherine, he feels ashamed of his degradation and begins to fear that he will lose her to Edgar. Heathcliff can see very well what makes Edgar appealing to Catherine and that he himself does not have these attractions. Edgar may be a weak, effeminate boy, but Heathcliff knows his physical strength will not help him win

Catherine: “[I]f I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn’t make him less handsome, or me more so. I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!” (50). Heathcliff does not really covet these qualities in themselves, but wants them so he that can win Catherine’s heart. He knows that he needs wealth, gentility, and social power in order to successfully woo Catherine. He must be able to give her the power she does not have at Wuthering Heights.

After Frances dies, Hindley is left to act as father to his own son, Hareton, as well as Catherine and Heathcliff. He proves himself violent, neglectful, and mercenary by turns. Following the death of his wife, Hindley falls into a life of gentry vice, which does not improve his parenting (57). Often drunk, he threatens to hurt Hareton one minute and fix him in a smothering embrace the next (65). Nelly takes to hiding the child in cupboards. To Heathcliff, Hindley bends all his malice in an attempt to work out his grief and frustration. Nelly reports, “His treatment of [Heathcliff] was enough to make a fiend of a saint. And, truly, it appeared as if the lad *were* possessed of something diabolical at that period. He delighted to witness Hindley degrading himself past redemption” (58). Despite the manner in which he is treated, Heathcliff is pleased because Hindley’s drunkenness and gambling are tools with which Heathcliff can work his destruction. Hindley, as Catherine’s elder brother, also acts as a father-figure to her. He proves himself to have mercenary motivations in this regard. He wants to make the most of her charms to forge a connection between the Earnshaws and the Lintons. After Catherine’s illness following the disappearance of Heathcliff, Nelly reports that “[Hindley] was rather *too* indulgent in humouring her caprices; not from affection, but from pride; he wished earnestly to see her bring honour to the family by an alliance with the Lintons . . .” (78). Here again a father-figure exhibits the curse of over-indulgence. Hindley only encourages Catherine by

allowing her to have her own way. In Hindley's relations with all three of his charges, he proves himself to be yet another failed father-figure.

The decline that begins with Catherine's five-week stay at Thrushcross Grange culminates when she finally rejects Heathcliff in favour of marrying Edgar Linton in order to gain social and domestic power. Catherine states that she has agreed to marry Edgar Linton because he is handsome, young, cheerful, and loves her and because "he will be rich, and [she] shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and [she] shall be proud of having such a husband" (69). This, then, is clearly a marriage of alliance. Edgar is pleasing and indulgent, and he will allow Catherine to have power in his house and the neighbourhood. This match does make sense in terms of class and economics. As Nelly says, "Your brother will be pleased . . . . The old lady and gentleman will not object, I think – you will escape from a disorderly, comfortless home into a wealthy respectable one; and you love Edgar, and Edgar loves you" (70).

However meet this match looks on the surface, Catherine knows that in essentials it is deeply wrong. She knows she should marry for love rather than wealth, that she should not betray Heathcliff, or her self. Catherine explains this by recounting a dream she had in which she dies and ascends to heaven, but feels she does not belong there. She mourns her home so much that the angels throw her out, and she wakes on the moors surrounding Wuthering Heights. Just as she does not belong in heaven, neither does she belong with Edgar (71). Catherine explains that she would never have agreed to marry Edgar if Hindley had not so declassified Heathcliff: "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now" (71). Despite being unwilling to marry Heathcliff, Catherine expresses her love for him in terms of radical identification: "[H]e's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's

is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire” (71) Catherine therefore does not belong with Edgar because their very souls are not suited to one another.

Catherine tries to deny that separating herself from Heathcliff in this way will cause Heathcliff any pain, though she is clearly rationalizing and knows she is wrong. It is possible, however, that she does not realize the severity of the breach she is creating between them. She admits she has an “uncomfortable conscience” but claims that she is not effecting a real separation from Heathcliff: “I shouldn’t be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded!” (72). She naively states that she has enough power over Edgar to make him tolerate Heathcliff (Kelly 26). Also, she claims that her marrying Edgar will actually benefit Heathcliff because she will use her husband’s money to help him escape from Hindley.<sup>17</sup> As Terry Eagleton argues, Catherine also uses her radical identification with Heathcliff into an excuse for marrying Edgar; if Catherine is Heathcliff, logically, she can never be apart from him: “Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff – . . . so, don’t talk of our separation again – it is impracticable . . .” (Eagleton 101-102; E. Brontë 73). This is at once a powerful statement of love and identification, a denial of the inherent wrongness in Catherine’s promising herself to Edgar, and a fundamental misunderstanding of her relationship with Heathcliff. Yes, they do love each other in a way that transcends normal boundaries: the self, the division between life and death – the rest of the novel bears this out. Catherine, however, also uses this metaphysical connection to posit that physical and legal separation from Heathcliff cannot possibly be a betrayal of her love: “If Catherine is Heathcliff – if identity rather than relationship is in question – then their estrangement is inconceivable, and Catherine can then turn to others without violating the timeless metaphysical idea Heathcliff embodies”

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<sup>17</sup> Daniela Garofalo and Patsy Stoneman argue that Catherine is not, in fact, being childish here but is rather embracing a communistic ideology of “free love,” in the mode of Shelley’s “Epipsychidion,” which Heathcliff and Edgar cannot comprehend (Garofalo 833; Stoneman 525-526). In this interpretation, Catherine’s madness is caused by the men’s repression of her plan (Stoneman 531). Catherine, however, does not truly love Edgar. If she did, she would have haunted him and pressed him to join her in death as she does Heathcliff.

(Eagleton 101-102). Again, she attempts to rationalize her decision to marry Edgar. But what Catherine does not realize is that by creating a rupture between herself and Heathcliff, she is doing terrible damage to their identities, and placing herself in a hell of her own making.<sup>18</sup>

Heathcliff's disappearance following this confession of love causes Catherine to experience a severe psychic shock, which results in a serious illness that teaches her for the first time the power inherent in a diseased female body. As the female body has value in patriarchal society for the purposes of marital trade and the production of children, that body must be preserved from harm. In this case, Dr. Kenneth believes that Catherine should not be challenged, because it would put her in danger of relapsing. Thus, "it [is] nothing less than murder in her eyes, for any one to presume to stand up and contradict her" (78). Catherine learns that because her household is afraid to cross her, for fear of damaging her physically, she can, for the first time at Wuthering Heights, wield domestic power and oppress others as she has been oppressed. Catherine continues to use the threat of illness to control the inhabitants of Thrushcross Grange, after her marriage to Edgar. Her greatest ability to control is intimately linked with illness, just

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<sup>18</sup> Gilbert and Gubar argue that Catherine's decision to marry Edgar, her fall, is predetermined by the patriarchal society in which she lives: "Given the patriarchal nature of culture, women must fall – that is, they are already fallen because doomed to fall" (277). Catherine's fatal, tragic choice, they argue, is a direct result of the patriarchal schooling she receives during her five-week stay at Thrushcross Grange (277). On the contrary, Catherine's fall is the more tragic because, like the choice made in the Garden of Eden, her choice is made freely and is not predetermined. Catherine betrays Heathcliff and herself, as Heathcliff makes clear shortly before her death: "Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy?" (142). Despite this piece of textual evidence, Gilbert and Gubar argue that one should not lay the blame on Catherine in this case: "To talk of morality in connection with Catherine's fall – and specifically in connection with her self-deceptive decision to marry Edgar – seems pointless, however, for morality only becomes a relevant term where there are meaningful choices" (277). They argue that Catherine, having been indoctrinated into being a lady at Thrushcross Grange, now believes she has only one "meaningful" choice – marriage to Edgar (277). Gilbert and Gubar assume Catherine's stay at Thrushcross Grange has left a much deeper impression on her than it actually has. Catherine is not intrinsically changed by her stay with the Lintons. She merely plays the part of the lady for the sake of domestic power at Thrushcross Grange, while reverting to her natural behaviour at Wuthering Heights. Even Catherine knows she is doing wrong in marrying Edgar and must "cheat [her] uncomfortable conscience" (Brontë 72). By ascribing moral culpability to Catherine, one also grants her agency. This does far more justice to her strong-willed character than attributing her fall to a monolithic, all-corrupting patriarchy.

as it was for her father in his decline. Bodily weakness becomes disturbingly equated with woman's power (Torgerson 114).

Heathcliff returns after a three-year absence, having transfigured himself into a gentleman. He has remade himself as a rival for Catherine's hand – as he tells her upon their reunion: “I struggled only for you!” – and so that he can take revenge on Hindley and Edgar for separating him from Catherine (85). Nelly describes the new Heathcliff as having “grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man . . . [with an] upright carriage . . . [His face] looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation . . . [H]is manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness though too stern for grace” (84-85). Heathcliff returns with a gentleman's look and a gentleman's wealth, though no one knows how he came into possession of either (80).<sup>19</sup> Terry Eagleton identifies Heathcliff as the bourgeois figure of the self-made man because of this transformation (115). However, Heathcliff fashions himself for the purpose of transforming himself into a gentleman: “Just as Hindley withdraws culture from Heathcliff as a mode of domination, so Heathcliff acquires culture as a weapon. He amasses a certain amount of cultural capital in his two years' absence in order to shackle others more effectively, buying up the expensive commodity of gentility in order punitively to enter the society from which he was punitively expelled” (104). Heathcliff knows that physical prowess of the sort valued at Wuthering Heights will not be enough to win Catherine. He needs wealth, class, and gentility in order to be attractive to Catherine and to oppress Hindley and Edgar as he has been oppressed.

Heathcliff challenges Catherine's oppression of him in choosing to marry Edgar rather than him. Though Heathcliff loves Catherine, he knows that she has wronged him and can critique her, try to draw her out of her denial: “I want you to be aware that I *know* you have

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<sup>19</sup> Marianne Thormählen suggests that some kind of demonic exchange has taken place, though it seems more likely that Brontë means to throw a veil over Heathcliff's three years abroad, just as she refuses to answer the question of his origins (191).

treated me infernally – infernally! Do you hear? And, if you flatter yourself that I don't perceive it you are a fool – and if you think I can be consoled by sweet words you are an idiot – and if you fancy I'll suffer unrevenged, I'll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while!"

(99). Catherine, of course, denies this, though Heathcliff is correct in this circumstance.

However, Heathcliff loves Catherine too much to exact revenge on her: "The tyrant grinds down his slaves and they don't turn against him, they crush those beneath them – You are welcome to torture me to death for your amusement, only, allow me to amuse myself a little in the same style . . . ." (100). This speech indicates that Heathcliff could not direct his revenge towards

Catherine, but it also provides a pretty good illustration of how power relations operate

throughout *Wuthering Heights*, except in the case of Heathcliff and Hindley. Old Earnshaw

oppresses young Hindley, who then tyrannizes Heathcliff and Catherine, as well as his own son.

Catherine, denied power and affection by her father, then attempts to act as mistress to Nelly and eventually discovers that she can dominate others most effectively by acting as tyrant over her

own body (Torgerson 114). However, Heathcliff breaks this pattern by arming himself with the

arsenal of patriarchal gentility – wealth, status, and inheritance and marriage law – in order to

oppress his former oppressors (Hagan 306; Eagleton 112). More simply, Heathcliff reveals in

this speech that he will work out his frustrations concerning Catherine by revenging himself –

carefully and completely – on Hindley and Edgar. He encourages Hindley's gambling and

drinking, slowly stealing *Wuthering Heights* from the last of the Earnshaws; he seduces Isabella

in order to acquire the Linton property and wealth and to hurt Edgar more immediately; and he

ingratiates himself at Thrushcross Grange to be with Catherine, knowing full well how it wounds

Edgar.

When Edgar banishes Heathcliff from Thrushcross Grange, Catherine realizes she does not have as much power over her husband as she had thought. She threatens to be ill in an attempt at reasserting her power over Edgar: “Nelly, say to Edgar, if you see him again to-night, that I’m in danger of being seriously ill – I wish it may prove true. He has startled and distressed me shockingly! I want to frighten him” (103). If Edgar will not be frightened, then Catherine has other, more serious means she can use to make Edgar obey her and tolerate Heathcliff again: “I’ll try to break their hearts by breaking my own” (104). If Catherine finds herself powerless over the men in her life, she will still have power over her own body – including the power to do herself harm. Beth Torgerson writes, “Catherine’s illness is a distorted strategy for power, for it is based on the illusion that through illness, she can control others through controlling herself” (114). This strategy of self-oppression is effective in some circumstances, but proves entirely self-destructive here. Catherine is willing to annihilate herself in order to strike back at Edgar for banishing Heathcliff and Heathcliff for abusing Edgar. It is at this moment in the novel when she grasps at domestic power most desperately and threatens to use self-destructive means to achieve it.

While Catherine threatens to use illness, her greatest source of power, for her own ends, she does truly fall ill, precipitating a sharp decline in bodily and psychological health. This physical prostration forces her to admit what she has done to herself and to Heathcliff in marrying Edgar and allows her to seek equality and unity with Heathcliff once more. Heathcliff has left her again, causing her severe psychic distress and exacerbating the fatal self-alienation brought about by her decision to marry Edgar and betray Heathcliff. Catherine believes she is back in her childhood room at Wuthering Heights rather than in the house of her husband. Catherine sees her face in the “black press,” really the mirror, but does not recognize it: “[I]t

stirred. Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I'm afraid of being alone!" (109). Catherine is horrified to learn she is being haunted by herself. Catherine is so alienated from herself, that she cannot identify her own face. She sees a vision of the selfsame ghost-child who visits Mr. Lockwood at the beginning of the novel, who has willingly twisted and divided herself in order to become Mrs. Linton at the tender age of twelve. In madness, she is confronted by this repressed truth (Lamonica 108; Kelly 27).

Catherine's madness further forces her to address her self-alienation and betrayal of Heathcliff in the vision she has upon waking from her fit on the night of Heathcliff's banishment. She describes her sensations in this way: "[S]upposing at twelve years old I had been wrenched from the Heights, and every early association, and my all in all, as Heathcliff was at that time, and been converted at a stroke into Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger; an exile, and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world . . . ." (111). Catherine here recounts, almost exactly, if one accounts for dream sense, what she has done to herself. At twelve, she willingly wrenched herself from Wuthering Heights in order to take advantage of the domestic power available to her at Thrushcross Grange. In embracing this power, she betrayed both the love she and Heathcliff shared and her self, a self intimately connected to Heathcliff's identity. It was in this original stay at Thrushcross Grange that the groundwork was laid for her future marriage to Edgar, in which she married a stranger, a man whose soul bore no resemblance to her own, and in doing so, separated herself permanently from Heathcliff and thus became an "outcast" from her world – Heathcliff, herself. In some way more true than reality, Catherine did indeed become Mrs. Linton at age twelve, precipitating a grave betrayal and radical state of self-alienation, one that will be Catherine's undoing (Kelly 27).

Having realized how she has betrayed Heathcliff, she begins to consider how they can be united and whole again and determines that they can only be together in death: "I'll not lie there by myself; they may bury me twelve feet deep, and throw the church down over me, but I won't rest till you are with me . . . I never will! . . . He's considering . . . he'd rather I'd come to him! Find a way, then! not through that Kirkyard . . . You are slow! Be content, you always followed me!" (111-112). Catherine's ultimate goal is to return to Wuthering Heights, so that she may recover the self of her childhood and the pre-lapsarian unity that was found in the box bed at Wuthering Heights. In order for this to occur, both Catherine and Heathcliff must die (111). Catherine states that she will not rest until they are together again, which indicates that death is not going to be a great escape from reality for her. Rather, without Heathcliff, it will torment equal to anything she has suffered in life. Catherine then indicates that Heathcliff wants her to come to him, which refers to Heathcliff's begging Catherine's spirit to haunt him on the morning after her death. She challenges him to find a way to work this alternative. When she says, "not through that Kirkyard!", she is referring to the very material Kirkyard, the resting place of her mortal remains, where Heathcliff, in an attempt to be near her, exhumes her not once, but twice (112). She tells him that any kind of physical reunion will not answer. She seems to press him to understand that he must die for them to be together and accuses him of being "slow" – either in realizing what he must do or in actually following her to the other side (112). Finally, Catherine reminds Heathcliff that she has always been the actor in their relationship, and he has always been subject to her; he should not try to change this state of affairs now: "Be content, you always followed me!" (112).

On the morning following Catherine's death, Heathcliff begs her to haunt him: "I pray one prayer – I repeat it till my tongue stiffens – Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as

I am living! You said I killed you – haunt me, then! . . . Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!” (147-148). Here, as Heathcliff is so often in *Wuthering Heights*, he is subject to Catherine. He places himself at her mercy, in order to merely feel her presence, to cling to his lost love. He does this out of love, but he is also subject to Catherine throughout the novel because she is the one who acts – she decides to leave him for Edgar and the domestic power he promises her – and thus Heathcliff must forever be the one to react in their relationship.

On the night of Catherine’s funeral, Heathcliff tries to dig up her body in order to hold her once more. Instead, he is haunted by Catherine’s spirit. (256). Her ghost remains with him as he refills the grave and returns home. He returns to *Wuthering Heights* because he believes there he will be able to see her again. However, Hindley intervenes, having locked Heathcliff out of the house. In his rage at being kept from sight of Catherine, Heathcliff viciously beats Hindley. When Heathcliff finally reaches Catherine’s old room, he cannot see her. It is possible, as suggested by Isabella’s words – “It’s well people don’t *really* rise from their grave, or, last night, [Catherine] might have witnessed a repulsive scene!” – that Catherine does not appear to him because she is sickened by what Heathcliff has done to Hindley (E. Brontë 159; Kelly 28). It is also possible that what Heathcliff longs for is full communion with Catherine’s soul and that is possible only in death. Heathcliff is joyful to feel Catherine’s presence but agonized because he can never truly be with her. This separation is, of course, a function of the boundary between life and death.

Heathcliff, however, believes Catherine is responsible for the torment he suffers: “She showed herself, as she often was in life, a devil to me! And, since then, sometimes more, and sometimes less, I’ve been the sport of that intolerable torture!” (257). He feels that Catherine is

tyrannizing him from beyond the grave. Heathcliff experiences her haunting in this way because he has betrayed their love in his own way, by despairing of reunion with Catherine and focussing instead on wreaking revenge on the Earnshaws and Lintons (Kelly 27). Patsy Stoneman writes that Catherine's "apparent restlessness may be only an effect of his own implacable obsession with revenge, which effectively shuts her out of his consciousness, even though she seems to be its motivation" (532). Focussed entirely on his revenge, Heathcliff has a twisted perception of Catherine's visitations. He thinks she means to torment him, while all she wants is for him to come to her. Heathcliff desires communion on earth and is frustrated when it does not occur, blaming Catherine. Heathcliff misconstrues the situation and thus prolongs his hellish existence, not realizing that he must lay down the distraction of revenge and die in order to experience spiritual communion with Catherine (Kelly 25). Heathcliff must willingly submit to her will.

Heathcliff achieves his grandly conceived revenge upon the Earnshaws and Lintons, for the most part. He uses Hindley's self-destructive habits of gambling and drink first to steal Wuthering Heights out from under him and his son, Hareton and, second, to put an end to Hindley himself. He becomes the usurper Hindley had seen him to be when they were children. As Edgar Linton has hurt Heathcliff by taking Catherine away from him, so Heathcliff strikes back by taking Isabella away from Edgar by means of marriage. In this way, Heathcliff also attempts to dispossess the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange, because Edgar does not have a son to inherit. Heathcliff accomplishes all this with no small effort. In acting out his revenge, however, Heathcliff turns his attention from Catherine and abandons her to hell in the afterlife.

Heathcliff's revenge, however, also involves punishing the "representatives" of Hindley and Edgar, which causes him to taken on the role of Gothic father to his "children" (287).

Before looking at Heathcliff's fatherhood, it will be useful to briefly examine Edgar Linton's parenting. Unlike Hindley, who becomes an alcoholic and a gambler after the death of his beloved wife, Edgar merely becomes a "complete hermit" (162), keeping to his house and grounds. Where Hindley neglects Hareton, Edgar lives for his daughter Cathy, though Nelly states that "his attachment spring[s] from the relation to [Catherine], far more than from its being his own" (162). Edgar sees his daughter as a replacement for her mother. In raising Cathy, Edgar shows himself to be a very domestic, and somewhat motherly, father. He teaches Cathy himself, a role a mother would often take in middle-class families. Edgar also indulges Cathy. Nelly reports that her faults are "[a] propensity to be saucy . . . and a perverse will that indulged children invariably acquire, whether they be good tempered or cross" (167). Edgar creates a life for Cathy that is as solitary and withdrawn as his own: "Till she reached thirteen, she had not once been beyond the range of the park by herself . . . Gimmerton was an unsubstantial name in her ears; the chapel the only building she approached or entered, except her own home; Wuthering Heights and Mr. Heathcliff did not exist for her; she was a perfect recluse" (167). This kind of domestic enclosure seems in itself to have Gothic characteristics. There is more than a hint of control and imprisonment in the way Cathy is brought up. This method of parenting is also inherently neglectful, as Cathy is kept from any knowledge of Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights due to her father's deep hatred of them. This reflects the ignorance of the outside world commonly visited upon the daughters of the middle and upper classes during the nineteenth century. Therefore, when Cathy finally meets Heathcliff and is thrown into the hellish, Gothic world of the Heights, she is entirely unprepared for what she meets.

When Hindley dies, his gambling debts are such that Heathcliff takes possession of Wuthering Heights and custody of Hareton Earnshaw. Merely driving Hindley to ruin is not

revenge enough for Heathcliff, so he sets about brutalizing Hareton as Hindley did him: “Now, my bonny lad, you are *mine*! And we’ll see if one tree won’t grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!” (165). Heathcliff does not physically abuse Hareton as Hindley beat him, but as Edgar keeps Cathy from knowledge of the world, so Heathcliff keeps Hareton ignorant of culture in its entirety: “[Heathcliff] appeared to have bent his malevolence on making him a brute: he was never taught to read or write . . . .” (174). Heathcliff also neglects to educate Hareton in morality, just as Mr. Earnshaw had allowed him too much of his own way as a child: “[Hareton was] never rebuked for any bad habit which did not annoy his keeper; never led a single step towards virtue, or guarded by a single precept against vice . . . .” (174). Heathcliff’s twinned neglect and indulgence, both destructive in their own ways, mirror almost exactly the flawed “parenting” he received as a child and adolescent from Mr. Earnshaw and Hindley, respectively. In this case, Heathcliff is also aided and abetted in his degradation of Hareton by Joseph, who “contribute[s] much to his deterioration by a narrow-minded partiality which prompted him to flatter and pet him, as a boy, because he was the head of an old family” (174). To Heathcliff’s neglect and indulgence then is added the inculcation of a stubborn pride. Hareton is allowed to grow into an ignorant, prideful, ill-mannered young man whose masculinity is defined only by the physical.

After Isabella’s death, Heathcliff acquires his own son, Linton, who in time represents the negative qualities associated with both his names. When the reader first meets him, he is wrapped in furs, though the day is warm and is described as “[a] pale, delicate, effeminate boy, who might have been take as [Edgar Linton’s] younger brother, so strong was a resemblance, but there was a sickly peevishness in his aspect that Edgar Linton never had” (177). Linton is marked as following in the effeminate mould of Linton masculinity, accompanied by a worse

temper than Edgar possesses. By his subsequent behaviour, he proves himself to have been overly indulged by his mother, making him selfish and cross.

Heathcliff promises to educate and care for Linton as he has not done for Hareton but merely wishes to use him to complete his revenge on Edgar, as Linton is the heir to Thrushcross Grange:

Yes, Nell, . . . my son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till I was certain of being his successor. Besides, he's *mine*, and I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendants fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children, to till their fathers' lands for wages . . . I've arranged every thing with a view to preserve the superior and gentleman in him, above his associates . . . (184)

Heathcliff wishes to extend his revenge beyond merely his principal enemies to encompass their children, and their children's children as well. To that end, Linton must be kept alive. Heathcliff also wants him to be a gentleman, in order to assert his superiority over everyone else, perhaps as a proxy for Heathcliff himself. Linton, however, does not benefit from Heathcliff's care and attention. Like Hareton and Heathcliff before him, his pride is encouraged and his faults are not corrected. Additionally, because Heathcliff allows him his own way in everything, he is hated by the rest of the household.

Because Linton's health is so poor, Heathcliff is seriously concerned that he will die before Edgar, making it impossible for Heathcliff to secure Thrushcross Grange for himself.<sup>20</sup> In order to ensure that his revenge is not destroyed by his son's early death, Heathcliff manipulates Cathy Linton into marrying his son. Heathcliff forces Linton to entertain Cathy, even when

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<sup>20</sup> For a detailed account of the inheritance laws at play in this situation, see p. 116 of Lamonica's chapter "Wuthering Heights: The Boundless Passion of Catherine Earnshaw" in "We Are Three Sisters": *Self and Family in the Writing of the Brontës*.

deathly ill. Nelly is shocked when she discovers what Heathcliff has done: “I could not picture a father treating a dying child a tyrannically and wickedly as I afterwards learnt Heathcliff had treated him . . . .” (229). Heathcliff threatens Linton with bodily harm if he will not do as Heathcliff says and uses these threats to convince him to trap Cathy at Wuthering Heights. Cathy is held there on the understanding that she will be freed if she agrees to marry Linton, which she does, in part because she wants to save her father any unnecessary distress, especially as his health is also frail. Heathcliff, however, does want to distress Edgar and refuses to let her return to Thrushcross Grange: “Miss Linton, I shall enjoy myself remarkably in thinking your father will be miserable; I shall not sleep for satisfaction” (242). After Linton’s death, Heathcliff continues to keep Catherine on at Wuthering Heights as one of his “children.”

While he lives, Linton learns to be a domestic tyrant, principally to Cathy, who will briefly be his wife. In the early days of their courtship, he uses his illness as a means of wielding domestic power, just as Catherine did. He uses his illness to manipulate Cathy into coming to see him and indulge him. On one of Cathy’s early visits to Linton at Wuthering Heights, he provokes her into giving him a retaliatory push by telling her that her mother hated her father and loved Heathcliff (which is not far off the mark, though Cathy knows none of this). This brings on a dangerous fit of coughing which is likely real but is then continued for the purpose of making Cathy feel guilty for what she had done: “He sighed and moaned like one under great suffering; and kept it up for a quarter of an hour, on purpose to distress his cousin, apparently, for whenever he caught a stifled sob from her, he put renewed pain and pathos into the inflexions of his voice” (211). Nelly sees what he is doing and thinks they had better leave him to it. As they leave, Linton slips from his chair and “[lies] writhing in the mere perversion of an indulged plague of a child, determined to be as grievous and harassing as it can” (212). Cathy, afraid for

Linton, then proceeds to do anything she can for his comfort, which is exactly what he had in mind. She then continues to visit Linton behind Nelly's back out of mingled guilt and fondness. Linton is truly dying, but he also makes use of his illness in order to have his own way.

As a husband, Linton is a tyrant, though he has been tutored into it by Heathcliff. When Catherine understandably wishes to return home to her father to see him before he dies, Linton at first refuses to help her escape. When Nelly asks him why, he repeats the very skewed analysis of the situation that Heathcliff has fed him: "*He says* I'm not to be soft with Catherine – she's my wife, and it's shameful that she should wish to leave me! *He says*, she hates me, and wants me to die, that she may have my money, but she shan't have it; and she shan't go home! She never shall! She may cry, and be sick as much as she pleases!" (247; my emphasis). Linton, at Heathcliff's urging, also becomes avaricious like his father as his uncle's death approaches: "I'm glad, for I shall master of the Grange after him – and Catherine always spoke of it as *her* house. It isn't hers! It's mine – papa says everything she has is mine!" (248). Linton is pleased that he can wrest ownership of the Grange from his wife and keep it all for his own, as is his right because of the inheritance and marriage laws in place at the time.

After Linton's death, Cathy gradually falls in love with Hareton Earnshaw and effects his transformation from brute to domestic gentleman, all by means of books. Hareton has never learned to read and Heathcliff has "taught him to scorn everything extra-animal as silly and weak" (193). When Cathy Linton wanders into his life, Hareton finally has a reason to regret his ignorance. When he reveals that he cannot read the name and the date over the door to Wuthering Heights, he is mocked mercilessly by Cathy and Linton (who holds the same class position in relation to Hareton as Hindley did to Heathcliff) (194). Hareton teaches himself to read, and this is his first step towards domestic masculinity. After much misunderstanding on

Cathy's part concerning Hareton's intentions towards her and his attempts at reading, she finally apologizes and offers to teach him how to read properly. When Nelly looks over shortly after, she sees this scene: "I perceived two such radiant countenances bent over the page of the accepted book, that I did not doubt the treaty had been ratified on both sides, and the enemies were, thenceforth, sworn allies" (280). The domestication of Hareton does not occur instantaneously, however: "Earnshaw was not to be civilized with a wish . . ." (280) – but under Cathy's tutelage, as a mother indeed might teach her young son to read – Hareton makes great strides and they enter into a loving and companionate relationship based on domestic virtues, culminating in the garden they create together at Wuthering Heights. Hareton's desire to read allows him to enter the civilized, domestic masculinity of the Lintons and win Cathy's heart.

Heathcliff, on perceiving that Catherine and Hareton are in love with each other and seeing their resemblance to Catherine and the love of his youth, finds he cannot see his carefully planned revenge through to the end (Madden 147). Heathcliff simply no longer desires revenge: "I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing" (287). There are several reasons why Heathcliff chooses to give up his revenge at this point. For one, Heathcliff recognizes that both Cathy and Hareton have Catherine's eyes. Francis Fike argues that Heathcliff cannot bear to destroy a living remnant of Catherine (142). As well, he recognizes in Hareton the hopes, fears, and love of his own youth and feels a kinship with him (E. Brontë 288). Heathcliff's revenge is hollow from the beginning because he uses the very weapons of gentility and patriarchy which oppressed him in order to revenge himself on his oppressors (Eagleton 112-113; Gilbert and Gubar 297). This, then, makes him no better than the tyrants he hates and originally set himself against. It is telling that shortly before Heathcliff confesses his inability to complete his revenge, he threatens Catherine and Hareton using words

that echo Hindley very closely. To Cathy, he says, “Your love will make him [Hareton] an outcast, and a beggar . . . .” (285; Fike 143). Heathcliff has realized the futility and destructiveness of a revenge that has transformed him into a new Hindley, yet another Gothic patriarch. As well, Heathcliff has realized that revenge is useless – it will not assuage the pain of losing Catherine. These are all contributing factors in Heathcliff’s sudden lack of interest in pursuing his revenge. The surrendering of his revenge is a crucial step towards reunion with Catherine (Kelly 29).

Just as Heathcliff gives up his long-desired revenge, he begins the agonizing journey that will take him out of life, to Catherine at last. Heathcliff enters a state in which he grows ever closer to Catherine, until the desire to be with her finally kills him. Just after Heathcliff tells Nelly he has laid down his revenge, he says, “Nelly, there is a strange change approaching – I’m in its shadow at present – I take so little interest in my daily life, that I hardly remember to eat and drink . . . .” (287). The change Heathcliff alludes to is his spiritual reunion with Catherine and, necessarily, his death. Heathcliff’s desire to be with Catherine will kill him, and he knows it: “I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I’m convinced it *will* be reached – and *soon* – because it has devoured my existence . . . .” (289). Given Heathcliff’s state of exhaustion, it is not surprising he should have no energy left for so trifling a matter as mere revenge. Heathcliff’s state may also be influenced by the exertions of Catherine herself, in her desire to be with him once more. Before her death, she did say she would not rest until Heathcliff was with her again. Heathcliff seems to indicate this too, when he exclaims, “By God! she’s relentless” (297). He is subject to her once more, yearning to be with her, tormented by her simultaneous nearness and infinite distance. Nelly finds Heathcliff dead upon Catherine’s bed – now a strange

marriage bed, the scene of their spiritual consummation. The window is open; Catherine has finally found her way back to Wuthering Heights, and Heathcliff to her. He is no longer subject to her. In death, they are equal and united.

*Wuthering Heights* has an ambiguous ending in terms of which masculinities – gentry or middle-class, physical or moral, Gothic or domestic – triumph and thrive. Cathy domesticates Hareton Earnshaw, elevating him from brutish, physical Earnshaw masculinity to the domestic, middle-class masculinity earlier practised by her father. Fittingly, she does this by means of books. Cathy and Hareton are to be married and will move their household to Thrushcross Grange, which will result in the shutting up of Wuthering Heights. But the end of the novel is shadowed by the ghostly presence of Heathcliff and Catherine, who walk abroad on stormy nights. Heathcliff and Catherine's rebellious, transgressive love is not annihilated, nor is Heathcliff's Gothic masculinity destroyed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A TALE OF TWO HUSBANDS: THE TRIUMPH OF DOMESTIC MASCULINITY IN *THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL*

At first glance, Anne Brontë's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, may seem an odd choice to include in a discussion of the Gothic hero-villain in the Brontës' novels, as it is not obviously a Gothic novel. *Tenant* contains no hint of the preternatural so deeply enmeshed in *Wuthering Heights* and so important in bringing Jane and Rochester together at the end of *Jane Eyre*. However, *Tenant* does treat of the same domestic entrapment and violence found in *Wuthering Heights*, or even Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, but does so in a realist manner through the use of the epistolary method. This in turn recalls the device of the found manuscript common to many eighteenth-century Gothic novels, including Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. The title of Anne Brontë's novel is a reference to a Gothic pile, just as *Wuthering Heights* is, though Wildfell Hall is a place of refuge rather than a site of domestic violence. Grassdale Manor, while outwardly pleasing, resembles *Wuthering Heights* in the violence that is acted out within its walls. Drunken orgies and marital violence occur here as they do at the *Wuthering Heights* of Hindley and Heathcliff. The novel's protagonist begins the novel playing the part of a widow, only to reveal that she, like Mr. Rochester, has her own "madman in the attic," so to speak. In this case, she hides the existence of her abusive, alcoholic husband, Arthur Huntingdon.

Huntingdon very neatly fills the role of Gothic villain in *Tenant*.<sup>21</sup> He seeks to control and constrain his wife, acting on the potential for possessiveness shown by Mr. Rochester during his engagement to Jane. Huntingdon abuses Helen psychologically and keeps her from escaping him. In these ways, Huntingdon and Helen's marriage is an echo of Heathcliff and Isabella's, though it lacks the physical violence found in that ghastly marriage. Like Rochester and Heathcliff, Huntingdon also finds himself subject, physically and emotionally, to the novel's female protagonist. This subjection makes it a matter of interest to study Huntingdon alongside the Gothic hero-villains of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*.

Huntingdon is not alone in his life of vice and his poor treatment of his wife in *Tenant*. He is but one of a party of boon companions who represent the gentry and aristocratic masculinity of the 1820s. Juliet McMaster and Lisa SurrIDGE have argued that by framing a narrative concerning marriage and masculinity in the 1820s within a correspondence taking place in 1847, Anne Brontë is facilitating a comparison of the wayward Regency years and the rule of George IV with a more moral and domestic Victorian age (McMaster 352-353; SurrIDGE 73). As McMaster writes, "The Victorians were fond of defining themselves by contrasting their values with those of the Regency and George IV" (352-353). In this way, Brontë can show the reader how masculinity has developed in the previous quarter century (SurrIDGE 73). Her chief means of illustrating this transformation lies in contrasting Arthur Huntingdon (and his rascally fellows) with Helen's second husband, Gilbert Markham, who matures into the domestic, bourgeois, and Victorian ideal of manliness.

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<sup>21</sup> In *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, the roles of Gothic hero and villain are played by the same conflicted, Byronic character. In *Tenant*, Huntingdon is clearly the villain, while Gilbert Markham is the hero of the novel. Because of this split, the novel in some ways resembles early Gothic drama, before the hero and villain were combined (Evans 56). Like the villain of early Gothic drama, Huntingdon is commonly seen as being of more dramatic interest than Gilbert (Craik 231).

Huntingdon and his crew represent the immoral gentry masculinity of the eighteenth century and Regency, but crucially, this masculinity is in transition, reflecting the historical transformation in masculine ideals that occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century (SurrIDGE 73). Huntingdon spends much of his time with his friends in London, where they drink to excess, gamble, and seduce women. In the country, their pursuits are comprised primarily of drinking after dinner and hunting, a typical pastime of the landed classes and one that hints at the violence latent in gentry masculinity (SurrIDGE 80). Huntingdon and Hattersley both neglect and abuse their wives by turns and neither is a good father. As SurrIDGE writes, “Brontë represents the masculine ethos of the pre-Victorian period as having produced very bad husbands, whose behaviour was both unmanly and dangerous – morally dangerous to men and physically dangerous to women” (75). In their vices and their treatment of their wives and children, Huntingdon and Hattersley exemplify the dangerous gentry masculinity detested by the Victorians.

In three crucial cases, however, gentry masculinity is shown to be fluid. Huntingdon’s neighbour, Walter Hargrave, does not quite fit the pattern of gentry masculinity in that he acts out gentry masculinity at least in part to keep up appearances (A. Brontë 195). Huntingdon’s friend Lord Lowborough has an addictive personality which is only encouraged by the vices practised so assiduously by his friends. To escape, he seeks the domestic and morally ameliorating union of marriage and utterly abstains from drink. Mr. Hattersley, who is actually physically violent towards his wife, is convinced by Helen to be gentler towards her and ends the novel a sober, loving father and husband. The novel shows gentry masculinity to be falling away, converting itself (with the help of the domestic woman) into something moral, temperate,

and gentle. Those whose masculinity remains stagnant – Huntingdon and Mr. Grimsby – are killed by the violence and excesses of their particular brand of masculinity.

Gilbert Markham's masculinity, too, transforms over the course of *Tenant*. He is not a fit partner for Helen at the beginning of the novel. Helen is, perhaps anachronistically, a thoroughly Victorian woman (McMaster 357), nurtured by hard experience, while at the start of the novel, Gilbert is selfish, impulsive, and violent (when provoked). Through Helen's tutelage and her narrative of her first marriage, Gilbert learns to balance necessary self-control and true emotion, becoming an ideal husband for Helen in the process. He ends the novel a domesticated, moral, and Victorian man.

The male characters who transform into figures of domestic, bourgeois manliness (whether actually middle-class or no) lead happy, useful lives, safe in the homes presided over by their respective wives. Because Huntingdon and Grimsby will not or cannot move away from their uncontrolled and destructive gentry masculinity, they are killed by it: Huntingdon's final illness is fatally exacerbated by his alcoholism; Grimsby is killed in a drunken brawl by a man he had cheated at cards. Brontë may critique the marriage laws that trap women like Helen in marriages with men like Huntingdon and the gentry masculinity which necessarily makes bad husbands, but in the end she reifies domestic ideology and masculinity in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

Helen marries Arthur Huntingdon for two reasons: she believes she loves him and she thinks she can save him from his vices and the corrupting influence of his friends (Lamonica 140). Helen has heard rumours of his faults – his drinking and liaisons with women – but refuses to believe them (A. Brontë 127). She admits, however, that he lacks principle and is

thoughtless, but blames these faults on the poor parenting he received at the hands of his selfish, restrictive father and over-indulgent mother (126, 149). Helen believes that as his wife she can save him from these errors and vows that “his wife shall undo what his mother did!” (149). In this way, Helen falls prey to the idea (supported by domestic ideology) that a wife can act as a powerful moral influence on her husband. Brontë critiques domestic ideology in showing this principle to be both fallible and damaging, though Helen does act as a successful moral influence on men other than her husband (Joshi 915).

Huntingdon, on the other hand, marries her for precisely the mercenary reasons that Helen’s aunt warns her about at the beginning of her first season: her looks, her family, and – especially – her “pretty considerable fortune” (A. Brontë 111). Huntingdon claims this is not so during their courtship, explaining that he already has enough money to support his wife in comfort, as much of his property is entailed (146). He also claims he does not care about her financial prospects: “He protested he had never given it a thought, and begged I would not disturb his present enjoyment by the mention of such uninteresting subjects” (148). After her marriage, however, Helen discovers that Huntingdon has grossly misrepresented his financial situation and reports that “by my own desire, nearly the whole of the income of my fortune is devoted, for years to come, to the paying off of his debts . . .” (208-209). This is precisely what Arthur wanted when he married her, making this a marriage of interest, just as Rochester’s marriage to Bertha was.

Like Rochester, Huntingdon desires to possess and control his wife. He cuts short their honeymoon tour of Europe so that Helen will remain as “single-minded, as naïve, and piquante” as she was before he married her, so that she will be more tractable and pliant (172). Huntingdon is jealous of Helen’s love for God because it means she has interests and loves outside of him

(173). Because of this possessiveness, Huntingdon does not allow Helen to attend her father's funeral (a restriction which echoes Heathcliff's refusal to allow young Cathy to see her dying father) (227) When Helen piques Huntingdon for any reason, he forces her back in line by threatening to withdraw his affections from her, knowing this would hurt her most. When Helen burns the miniature portrait of Huntingdon, which he had greedily seized, he threatens to give his attentions to Annabella Wilmot instead; when Helen says she will stop writing to him in London (as he seldom replies), he says she might lose his love by doing so (137, 186). He also hurts Helen by boasting of his former seductions, thinking to make her jealous and, again, more willing to do as he wishes (176). In these ways, Huntingdon's manipulation amounts to psychological and emotional abuse.

Notably, Huntingdon is not physically violent towards his wife, though the suggestion of such violence permeates the text. In one particular instance, Lisa Surrige argues that physical violence comes quite close to the surface of Huntingdon and Helen's marriage. One evening near the beginning of the marriage, Huntingdon's spaniel Dash escapes his torments to take refuge with Helen (179). In retribution, Huntingdon throws a book at the dog and misses, hitting Helen's hand instead. Surrige argues that "[t]he scene positions Helen and Dash as joint recipients of Huntingdon's abuse. Violence is transferred from one to the other: while the man throws objects at the *dog*, the *woman* is injured" (77). Surrige further points out that the Victorian reader would associate spaniels with women and so would quite readily identify the abused dog with the abused woman (77). This incident is a physical manifestation of the

emotional and psychological abuse Helen suffers at Huntingdon's hands and illustrates the potential for physical violence within their marriage.<sup>22</sup>

Quite apart from the issue of abuse, Huntingdon and Helen have a very unsteady foundation to build a marriage upon, since it is merely a marriage of interest on his side. Huntingdon has married Helen for her money and so that he may possess and control her. To begin with, they have very different views of what marriage entails and what a wife's duties are. Helen believes that a husband and wife should be companions. Huntingdon feels rather differently:

Judging from appearances, his idea of a wife, is a thing to love one devotedly and to stay at home – to wait upon her husband, and amuse him and minister to his comfort in every possible way, while he chooses to stay with her; and, when he is absent, to attend to his interests, domestic or otherwise, and patiently wait his return; no matter how he may be occupied in the meantime. (206)

Huntingdon believes Helen should live only for his pleasure and not bother him about his neglect of her, his lack of effort for her happiness, or the vices he indulges in when he is from home. Helen finds this system intolerable.

A middle-class companionate marriage is not possible, however, because Helen and Huntingdon have no common interests that might allow for real friendship to develop between them. Much of the blame for this lies with Huntingdon because, having very little substance to begin with, there is not much left of him if he cannot be with his friends or be engaged in outdoor pursuits (Hyman 455). On rainy days, he is bored because he cannot be hunting, and Helen tries in vain to engage him in conversation: "I do all I can to amuse him, but it is

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<sup>22</sup> Surridge takes this argument one step further and argues that physical violence is not merely potential here but "*already occurring*" (77). This seems unlikely, as Helen would have recorded such acts in her diary, had they occurred.

impossible to get him to feel interested in what I most like to talk about; while, on the other hand, he likes to talk about things that cannot interest me – or even that annoy me . . . .” (176). Huntingdon is incapable of making an intellectual connection with Helen, and she suffers because of it.

Helen wishes Huntingdon would act more like a bourgeois man and do something domestic or productive (Hyman 454). Helen writes:

I wish he had something to do, some useful trade, or profession, or employment – anything to occupy his head or his hands for a few hours a day, and give him something beside his own pleasure to think about. If he would play the country gentleman, and attend to the farm . . . , or if he would take up some literary study, or learn to draw or to play . . . : he has no more idea of exerting himself to overcome obstacles than he has of restraining his natural appetites; and these two things are the ruin of him. (191)

In this passage, Brontë seems to indicate that there is something inherently flawed in gentry masculinity. The landed classes are defined by the fact that they do no work, but this in itself breeds selfishness, intemperance, indolence, immorality, and a sense of entitlement which is incredibly harmful. In Huntingdon’s case, he is fatally unable to exert himself either to improve or develop, or to restrain himself. The middle-class man, in contrast, is productive, useful, moral, and much more substantial than his gentry counterpart, and Helen praises this type because of it. She wishes Arthur had these qualities, because he would be a much better man (and a much better husband) if he had something to take him out of himself.

Gwen Hyman argues that Huntingdon’s uselessness and resultant boredom are directly related to his drinking, in that this gives him something to do and ends the tedium of his days

(459). In order to combat boredom, Huntingdon also escapes from the country and his wife to go to London where he can be in the company of his similarly-minded friends. Helen is thus left alone a great deal of the time, totally neglected by her husband. Worse than this neglect is Huntingdon's forcing Helen to act as hostess to his friends when they come to Grassdale to hunt almost every year. Huntingdon's friends bring riot and violence to the domestic enclosure and make Huntingdon's drinking and abuse of his wife worse.

Huntingdon also uses these hunting parties to enter into an affair with Lord Lowborough's wife, Annabella. When Helen discovers Arthur's adultery, she attempts to bargain with him. She first asks to be allowed to leave him with their child and the remains of her money (A. Brontë 260). Huntingdon refuses to let her leave under any circumstances for fear of gossip and scandal. Helen then retaliates by refusing Huntingdon his conjugal rights, something which she has no legal right to do in this time period (SurrIDGE 91). At a later period, when Helen does actually plan to leave him, Huntingdon steals her money, jewels, and her painting supplies (her means of earning money), making her "a slave, a prisoner" in her own home (312). In all these ways, Huntingdon shows himself to be a domestic villain, one who subscribes to the dangerous precepts of gentry masculinity.

Among Huntingdon's boon companions, different gradations of gentry masculinity are discernable. The masculinities of these male characters also transform in different ways. Mr. Hattersley, being the son of a banker, is not actually a member of the gentry but he is upwardly mobile and conforms to the gentry's expectations concerning masculinity. Like Huntingdon, Hattersley makes a marriage of interest. In marrying Milicent Hargrave, he marries into the gentry. As well, rather than marry for love and companionship, Hattersley's primary objective in

marrying is to find a woman who will turn a blind eye to his debauches and let him go on as he pleases.

Hattersley is the only truly physically violent husband in the novel. While at one of Huntingdon's hunting parties, Hattersley distresses his wife with his drunken behaviour, especially as he tries to physically force Lord Lowborough, a teetotaler, to drink. Milicent, ashamed by his behaviour in front of the company, breaks into tears. Hattersley asks her why and does violence to her: "[H]e attempted to extort the confession by shaking her and remorselessly crushing her slight arms in the gripe of his powerful fingers" (236). Milicent pleads with him to "remember [they] are not at home," which suggests that physical violence may to some extent be accepted as the norm in private (236). When Milicent's brother attempts to interfere on his sister's behalf, Hattersley hits him. Hattersley throws Milicent to the floor when she finally admits she is ashamed of his behaviour. His violence continues when he throws things at Huntingdon because he cannot rouse himself from his drunken idiocy. Hattersley embodies the violence found within gentry masculinity and expresses it not only through hunting but also through spousal abuse.

Hattersley, however, has a wife and children, which sets him apart from Mr. Grimsby, who as a bachelor, is not domestic at all. Grimsby is a very flat character, who exists only to embody the ethos of gentry masculinity (he drinks and gambles) while having no softening features, for he is also coarse and stupid.

Lord Lowborough is the only actual aristocrat in *Tenant* but subscribes to the same brand of masculinity as Huntingdon and his friends. Lowborough does not merely engage in gentry and aristocratic pursuits for the sake of amusement but because he has an inherently addictive personality. Anne Brontë seems to realize this, though alcoholism was not generally recognized

as a medical condition during this period (Hyman 452). Lowborough first digs himself deeply into debt by gambling at cards. He then drowns his sorrows by drinking, before finally becoming addicted to laudanum. As gambling and drinking are standard pastimes of the gentry, Lowborough is encouraged all the while by Huntingdon and his other friends, in part because Lowborough has a depressing effect on the party when he abstains.

Lowborough finally decides to leave his friends and their destructive pursuits. He determines that he will marry, intending that his marriage will take him away from the temptation of his friends and believing that the moral influence of his wife will help him to remain sober (166). What Lowborough is looking for is a woman like Helen, one who will save and reform him (Lamonica 140). On some level, Lowborough is also looking for a woman who can answer his gambling debts, making this marriage a marriage of interest as well. However, Lowborough does love the woman he ultimately chooses to marry: “[Her fortune] was the first attraction certainly; but now he has quite lost sight of it: it never enters his calculations, except merely as an essential without which, for the lady’s own sake, he could not think of marry her. No; he’s fairly in love” (A. Brontë 158). In the end, Lowborough is concerned about his wife’s wealth only because it ensures he will be able to take care of her. Lowborough’s two motives for marrying are indicative of his conflicted masculinity. He is a member of the aristocracy but cannot act out that masculinity, for the sake of his mental and bodily health. However, embracing a more domestic masculinity involves abandoning his friends (Torgerson 30).

As it happens, Lowborough chooses the worst possible wife for himself. Annabella is in many ways a female version of Huntingdon, who sets little store by her wedding vows and is no moral influence at all. Annabella does not marry Lowborough for love but rather for his title and her consequent ascent into the aristocracy. She derides Lowborough for his abstinence from

alcohol and for failing to accord to gentry and aristocratic masculinity. For instance, Annabella is peeved that Lowborough joins the women in the drawing room so soon after dinner and seems to suggest that he is feminized by it: “Well, but you might stay with them [the men] a little: it looks so silly to be always dangling after the women” (Brontë 229). Annabella also hints that he lacks “a warm heart and a bold, manly spirit” (229). As mentioned previously, Annabella also betrays Lowborough’s trust in committing adultery with Huntingdon.

The last of Huntingdon’s friends is perhaps the most interesting, in that he, apart from Lord Lowborough, is in some ways the most moderate member of the merry band. Walter Hargrave is more temperate than Huntingdon and his fellows but engages in a certain amount of reckless behaviour in order to maintain his status as a gentleman: “No reckless spendthrift, and no abandoned sensualist, but one who likes to have ‘everything handsome about him,’ and to go to a certain length in youthful indulgence – not so much to gratify his own tastes as to maintain his reputation as a man of fashion in the world, and a respectable fellow among his own lawless companions . . . .” (195). Despite the fact Hargrave is better behaved in terms of drinking and gambling, and is merely playing a part, rather than inhabiting the identity of the gentleman as Huntingdon does, he has serious faults too. The first of these is that by keeping up the appearance of a gentleman, he selfishly neglects his mother and sisters’ comfort: “[H]e is too selfish to consider how many comforts might be obtained for his fond mother and sisters with the money he thus wastes upon himself: as long as they can continue to make a respectable appearance once a year when they come to town, he gives himself little concern about the private stintings and struggles at home” (195). Hargrave also exhibits a decided lack of domestic feeling in attempting to convince his younger sister Esther to marry so that she will not become a burden on the family.

Walter Hargrave's most central role in *Tenant* is as Helen's would-be seducer. He declares an interest in Helen early on and, twice – first, after Helen discovers Arthur's first adulterous liaison, and second, after Huntingdon offers Helen up to his friends – tries to convince her to run away with him. Helen finds his proposals deeply insulting and refuses. After each rejection, Hargrave pretends only friendship for a time, but always ends in making immoral proposals to Helen, only put off for good when Helen states, “[I]f I were divorced from my husband – or if he were dead, I would not marry you” (303). While Hargrave's persistent suggestions of adultery show him to be morally lacking, his interest in Helen does result in his trying to moderate Huntingdon's excesses and amuse him, a service none of his other friends will provide (221).

Anne Brontë went against the grain in writing a novel in which a woman leaves her husband and takes her son with her. Helen finally does this not for her own sake but for her son's. Huntingdon shows himself to be a non-domestic figure in his early lack of interest in his son and is even jealous of his son's claims on his wife's affections (203-204). As little Arthur grows into a boy, however, Huntingdon takes more interest in him and spoils him. He and his friends try to “make a man of him” and a man according to the dictates of gentry masculinity: “So the little fellow came down every evening . . . and learnt to tipple wine like papa, to swear like Mr. Hattersley, and to have his own way like a man, and send mamma to the devil when she tried to prevent him” (296). Helen fears that Huntingdon will turn her son against him and cause him to live a life of vice and immorality as his father has. Helen is finally convinced she must leave her husband when she discovers that he has installed his mistress as her son's governess.

Though Brontë subverts domestic ideology in giving her readers a picture of a failed and abusive marriage, a marriage in which the wife's strong moral principles in no way ameliorate

her husband's faults, a revised, more realistic domestic ideology and masculinity is entrenched once again in the novel. The male characters who embrace domestic masculinity prosper, while those who do not are destroyed by their antiquated masculinity, with one curious exception – Walter Hargrave. Hattersley, while physically violent and initially desirous of a passive wife, begins to tire of Milicent's constant yielding. As he says to Helen, "[S]he almost melts in one's hands. I positively think I ill-use her sometimes when I've taken too much – but I can't help it, for she never complains, either at the time or after. I suppose she doesn't mind it" (245).

Hattersley would like to do right by his wife, but finds it difficult to determine how to do so because she is "always equally kind" (247). If Milicent had protested his behaviour, Hattersley believes he would have been able to modify his actions accordingly. Helen informs him that Milicent does indeed mind her treatment and his drinking and, having learned this, Hattersley is a better husband and father, except when under the influence of his "friends" (245, 300). At a later date, Helen convinces him to give up his rakish ways altogether. Hattersley already begins to think he might do better to leave Huntingdon entirely, as his behaviour sickens him (320).

Again, Helen acts for Milicent, this time by showing Hattersley two of her letters to assure him that his dissipated behaviour is harmful to his wife (322). In this way, she allows Milicent to reprove her husband indirectly, since she will not oppose him to his face. Hattersley determines to give up his friends and become a reformed, domestic man. Both partners must work at a marriage, however. Helen hopes that Milicent will now stand up more for herself: "Henceforth, . . . she will doubtless be somewhat less timid and reserved, and he more kind and thoughtful" (323). Just as gentry masculinity makes bad husbands, so does the ideal of the passive wife make poor wives.

Obviously, Hattersley remains part of the gentry as far as his class standing is concerned, but he does cease his excesses and stays in the country with his wife in family. He acts the country gentleman, as Helen had hoped Arthur would:

[H]e continued to pass his life in the country immersed in the usual pursuits of a hearty, active country gentleman; his occupations being those of farming, and breeding horses and cattle, diversified with a little hunting and shooting, and influenced by the occasional companionship of his friends . . . , and the society of his happy little wife . . . and his fine family of stalwart sons and blooming daughters. (390)

Hattersley makes himself useful and domestic as Huntingdon cannot. In his marriage of outdoor, physical pursuits and his role as a father and husband, Hattersley has successfully fused gentry and domestic masculinity. His masculinity adapts to the changing times; it does not remain stagnant like Huntingdon's.

Lord Lowborough discovers his wife's adultery two years after Helen does. Unlike Helen, Lowborough is able to separate from his spouse and take custody of his children, because he is a man (Lamonica 143). Annabella continues her gay life in town and country, not hurt at all by the loss of her children. Annabella's lack of interest in her children clearly shows that she, like Huntingdon, is not a domestic figure: "That mother never loved children, and had so little natural affection for her own that I question whether she will not regard it as a relief to be thus entirely separated from them, and delivered from the trouble and responsibility of their charge" (295). Through Brontë's depiction of Annabella, it seems gentry women are being called to task for their lack of feeling for their children and impoverished moral standards. Gentry masculinity is not the only problem in Helen's world – the entire elite ethos is destructive.

Annabella runs away to the Continent with a lover, after which Lowborough finally divorces her (389). Annabella never becomes domestic but rather dies in debt and misery (again, acting as a female counterpart for Huntingdon). In order to keep himself from his old sources of temptation, Lowborough marries again, but more wisely than before. He weds an older woman, neither beautiful nor wealthy, nor “accomplished.” Instead, she is a woman of great sense, integrity, and piety and is a good wife to Lowborough and mother to his children. This second marriage is far more successful than the first, for Lowborough’s new wife is domestic and much better suited to him.

Unlike Hattersley, Walter Hargrave does not appear to have benefited from Helen’s moral influence. He marries for money after Helen leaves Huntingdon and does not treat his wife well: “They say she begins already to see ’at he isn’t not altogether that nice, generous, perlite, delightful gentleman ’at she thought him afore marriage – he begins a being careless, and masterful already” (399). The disillusionment of the new Mrs. Hargrave seems to echo Helen’s disillusionment in her marriage to Huntingdon, also a marriage entered into on mercenary grounds. Hargrave never leaves his gentry masculinity behind and seems to prosper in it, though, perhaps like his fellows Grimsby and Huntingdon, he will not end well either.

Mr. Grimsby and Huntingdon do not convert and become moral, domestic men, as Lowborough and Hattersley do, and both die. Grimsby dies in a drunken brawl after cheating a man at cards. Huntingdon’s death comes about as a result of an injury he sustains in falling from his horse, one which would have been “but trifling to a man of temperate habits” (360). As Huntingdon has been abandoned by his mistress and his “friends,” Helen returns to Grassdale Manor to nurse him in his last illness.

When Helen first comes to see Huntingdon in his physically prostrate state, he is delirious and does not recognize her. When he does realize she is his wife, he is afraid of her. Physically subject to the woman he had terrorized, he now fears that Helen has returned to revenge herself on him. He is also afraid because he knows what he has done to Helen and is finally ashamed of his past actions. Later, Huntingdon's weakness forces him to be dependent on Helen's nursing, and he becomes afraid of displeasing her because he needs her care. Helen makes use of Huntingdon's powerlessness by having him sign a written agreement, allowing her the freedom to leave him and act as guardian to their son (363). Ian Ward reminds the contemporary reader that while this may be a moral victory for Helen against her former oppressor, such an agreement would be in no way legal and binding during this time period (162; Surridge 100).

Huntingdon's recovery from his illness is dependent on his restraining his appetite for liquor, something he ultimately cannot do, at the cost of his ensuing death. Faced with the afterlife, Huntingdon finally expresses remorse for his abusive treatment of Helen: "I'm sorry to have wronged you Nell, because you're so good to me" (A. Brontë 380). Huntingdon, however, cannot repent to God, for fear of hell and judgement: "If there really be life beyond the tomb, and judgment after death, how can I face it?" (379). He tries to brush off fear of hell by taking an atheistic stance, but fails in this too and finally is dependent on Helen to save him: "I wish to God I could take you with me now! . . . you should plead for me" (380, 386). Huntingdon dies without repenting, as far as anyone can tell, but his remorse marks him as a nearer relation to the Gothic villain-hero of Gothic drama than the unrepentant, unswervingly evil villain of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel. Huntingdon's gentry masculinity destroys itself in destroying

him. His death represents the triumph of middle-class domesticity over the landed classes, of morality over immorality, and of temperance over excess.

The question of whether or not Gilbert Markham is a suitable second husband for Helen has been much discussed in the critical literature on *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Priti Joshi sees Gilbert as a problematic hero: “Although Markham is unlike Huntingdon in crucial ways – he does not drink, gamble, or abandon his wife – he is, nevertheless, a disturbing hero and lover for our much abused heroine” (914). In support of this interpretation, Joshi cites Gilbert’s hitting Helen’s brother, Frederick Lawrence, on the head with the handle of his whip (an act Gilbert commits when he suspects Helen and Lawrence of having an affair), and his slandering Jane Wilson (he in fact tells the truth, though not in the most tactful way). Nicole A. Diederich and Tess O’Toole point out that the reader never hears what Helen has to say about her second marriage; this silence, they argue, hides a second oppressive marriage, a marriage in which Helen is married to another violent man (Diederich 36-37; O’Toole 728). Joshi argues as well that Gilbert betrays Helen’s trust in sending his brother-in-law Halford the contents of her diary (914). If Gilbert has done this without Helen’s express permission, then, yes, this would be a gross breach of trust on Gilbert’s part, but there is nothing in Gilbert’s character to suggest he would not have received Helen’s sanction for opening her diary to his brother-in-law. Indeed, when Helen leaves the neighbourhood to nurse Huntingdon, Gilbert asks her if he may enlighten his mother and sister as to her circumstances (and thus dispel the rumours circulating in the community that she is an adulteress). Only when Helen gives him permission does he do so.

Joshi allows that Gilbert possibly reaches toward a more mature and domestic masculinity in the frame narrative by seeking a closer friendship with Halford (917-918).

Russell Poole agrees that Gilbert improves himself, but only after his marriage, not as a precondition of it (863). It is safe to assume that Gilbert has continued to mature and embody domestic masculinity after his marriage to Helen and his becoming stepfather to little Arthur, but Gilbert's maturation absolutely is a precondition of his marrying Helen. Helen has already learned that the notion of improving a man after marriage is hopelessly flawed. She would not walk willingly into that trap again. As well, since Helen ends the novel the mistress of great wealth and property (having inherited her uncle's holdings and acting as guardian of her late husband's until Arthur comes of age), she has no material or social reasons for marrying again and surrendering her newfound – and very rare – independence. Helen marries Gilbert because she loves him and believes he is a suitable marriage partner and father for her young son. Juliet McMaster and Lisa SurrIDGE take the view that Gilbert has already been successfully domesticated by the time of his marriage to Helen, and, SurrIDGE writes: “[b]y 1847, Gilbert exemplifies Victorian manliness and self-control” (73). Gilbert's masculinity shifts from that of a selfish, impulsive young man who loosely holds to the principles of gentry masculinity to that of middle-class, domestic manliness. In this way, domestic ideology is not finally subverted, as Joshi, Diederich, and O'Toole argue in seeing Helen as entering into a second Gothic marriage, but tested and finally reified in Gilbert's maturation and marriage to Helen.

Gilbert is a gentleman farmer, a more productive member of society than the indolent gentry male (SurrIDGE 81). He is part of a tight-knit domestic circle, comprised of his mother, brother, and sister. While his mother might warn Helen of the dangers of turning her son into a milksop (27), she has spoiled Gilbert, though, to his credit, he realizes this (32, 49). Gilbert has domestic ideas about his future life: “[W]hen I marry, I shall expect to find more pleasure in making my wife happy and comfortable, than in being made so by her: I would rather give than

receive” (50). This more companionate view of marriage is opposed by his mother’s older view: “[I]t’s your business to please yourself, and her to please you” (50). Gilbert does not gamble, wench, or drink to excess as Huntingdon and his friends do. However, he does hold somewhat aristocratic views on drink and the education of boys. He disagrees with how Helen is raising her son at first because he of course does not know the whole story. Gilbert laughs when he learns of Helen’s labours to make Arthur hate alcohol (27). He argues that by keeping Arthur deliberately free from vice, Helen will not make him virtuous: men must learn from experience (27). Gilbert and his mother see Helen’s more protective, proactive methods as possibly feminizing. In general, then, Gilbert embodies aspects of both gentry and domestic masculinity.

This is not to say that the Gilbert of 1827 is without serious faults, however. He is spoiled and touchy, which he admits in retrospect (32). When Helen first rejects him, he is hurt and “stimulated to seek revenge” (62). Gilbert is also impulsive and has the especially bad habit of jumping to conclusions too quickly. When he thinks that Lawrence likes Helen, he immediately finds him “detestable” and refuses to speak to him or shake his hand (74). He decides he wants revenge on him, too (76). Gilbert is also passionate, not in itself a negative quality, except for the fact that he does not restrain it well. It is in Gilbert’s lack of control, most crucially, that he deviates from the expectations of middle-class masculinity, which is centred on control. When Gilbert “discovers” that Helen and Lawrence are having an affair, the Gilbert of 1847 reports that “like a passionate child, I dashed myself on the ground and lay there in a paroxysm of anger and despair . . . .” (91). Young Gilbert has all the self-control of a child, but this comparison also provides some hope that he will be able to mature out of his youthful faults.

During this period, Gilbert commits the most graphic act of violence in the entire novel (SurrIDGE 82). Still angry and jealous of Lawrence, Gilbert strikes him on the head with the

handle of his whip and leaves him on the roadside, which act results in both injury and illness: “He said no more; for, impelled by some fiend at my elbow, I had seized my whip by the small end, and – swift and sudden as a flash of lightning – brought the other down upon his head. It was not without a feeling of savage satisfaction that I beheld the instant, deadly pallor that overspread his face, and the few red drops that trickled down his forehead . . .” (98). This is a shocking act of violence, especially since the receiver of it is innocent. Gilbert refuses to help the man back onto his horse at first, but then attempts to do so, impelled by his guilty conscience. Lawrence quite understandably wants nothing to do with him, so Gilbert leaves him again and does not look back.

This key event in the novel is Gilbert’s worst moment, as he exhibits a great capacity for violence. Gilbert’s retrospective narration of this attack, however, shows how he has matured since. He writes, “I left him to live or die as he could, well satisfied that I had done my duty in attempting to save him – but forgetting how I had erred in bringing him into such a condition, and how insultingly my after-services had been offered . . .” (100). The Gilbert of 1847 now knows he should have helped Lawrence or, better yet, not attacked him at all.

Gilbert greatly matures through his relationship with Helen. Because Gilbert cannot openly woo Helen, he helps to create a deep friendship between them, one that will serve as a strong foundation for their eventual marriage. When Helen expresses a dislike of Gilbert’s character (she suspects him of being shallow like Huntingdon), he strives to improve himself for her sake: “When she angered me by . . . her uncharitable conclusions respecting me, it only made me the more dissatisfied with myself for having so unfavourably impressed her, and the more desirous to vindicate my character and disposition in her eyes, and if possible, to win her esteem” (56). When Gilbert attempts to court her, as Hargrave did before him, Helen rejects his

advances and insists they remain only friends. Unlike Hargrave, Gilbert carefully restrains his passion and instead focuses his energy on cultivating a friendship with Helen, one that will act as the basis for their eventual marriage. They talk of “painting, poetry, and music, theology, geology, and philosophy,” lend books to one another, and take walks together (63). Here already they are establishing a relationship based on common interests and intellectual pursuits, something Helen never had in her marriage to Arthur Huntingdon.

Gilbert is also influenced by Helen through her diary, which illustrates all the ghastly details of her first marriage. Immediately upon finishing Helen’s narrative, Gilbert goes to Lawrence to apologize and try to initiate a friendship between them (SurrIDGE 82). This friendship with Lawrence also acts as a training ground for Gilbert to learn restraint (again, something Huntingdon never manages) (82). After Gilbert reads the diary, he and Helen declare their love for each other but know they cannot act on it because Helen will only be released from her marriage by Huntingdon’s death. Helen counsels Gilbert to keep away from her but allows him to write her in six months’ time. After Helen’s departure, Gilbert must rely on Lawrence for news of her and, controlling his passion for her, refrains from sending any message by him.

Gilbert, in correcting his lack of self-control, over-corrects this fault. Upon discovering that Helen has inherited her uncle’s wealth and holds Huntingdon’s in trust for her son, he decides that there is too great a class difference between them for him to hope to marry her and does not write to her as promised. When Helen and Gilbert meet again, Gilbert is overly restrained and only confuses her. She thinks him proud or indifferent, when truly Gilbert is merely afraid of making the wrong move and frightening her off forever (412). This forces Helen to, in effect, propose to Gilbert by offering him a Christmas rose as an emblem of her heart (411). Russell Poole argues that Gilbert’s experience indicates that a domestic man should

practise self-control but should not hesitate to express true feeling, even when confronted with social barriers (865). As Helen says, in defence of the equalizing effect of love, “the greatest worldly distinctions and discrepancies of rank, birth, and fortune are as dust in the balance compared with the unity of accordant thoughts and feeling, and truly loving, sympathizing hearts and souls” (413). Helen and Gilbert marry and live happily ever after, if we trust Gilbert’s account of the matter. Arthur Huntingdon, Jr. and Helen Hattersley marry and set up house at Grassdale, a second chance, a domestic triumph, like Cathy and Hareton’s moving to Thrushcross Grange at the end of *Wuthering Heights* (Thormählen 840). In the end, the men who initially subscribe to gentry masculinity but whose masculinities evolve into something more closely resembling Victorian, middle-class masculinity – Lowborough, Hattersley, Gilbert Markham – prosper in their new masculine identities. Those who cannot change – Grimsby and Huntingdon – are swept away by the tides of change and are destroyed by their own excesses.

## CONCLUSION

The three novels discussed in this thesis – Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* – each feature a Gothic hero-villain who is made subject to the novel's heroine; each novel ends with the Gothic masculinity of the that hero-villain being somehow defeated and often transformed into middle-class, domestic masculinity. In broad outlines, these are common features to all three novels and this fact perhaps points to a familial relationship among these novels, just as their authors were sisters. Though striking similarities exist among these novels in their portrayals of Gothic masculinity, what is most interesting about them is how the handling of this element differs in each one. Each Brontë introduces varying degrees of ambiguity into her depiction of the defeat of gentry masculinity by domestic ideology.

In *Jane Eyre*, the novel's Gothic hero-villain has made a grave error in marrying without love, though in this case he is also a victim of circumstance. Mr. Rochester is convinced that he can only undo his past mistake by entering into a mutually loving relationship, though his pride and sense of entitlement lead him into further error. On the continent, Rochester lives a life of vice, gambling and keeping mistresses. His pride dogs him even when he falls in love with small, plain Jane Eyre. When she promises herself to him, he takes advantage of his patriarchal power and class standing to dress her up like a doll and control her, as he had done in his relationships with his mistresses, whom he likened to slaves. Even before Jane learns that

Rochester still has a wife living, she chafes under his controlling grip. When she find out that she can only hope to be another of Rochester's mistresses, she leaves him.

Rochester's corrupting pride is finally destroyed by Providence in the fire Bertha sets at Thornfield Hall. He is maimed and blinded and forced for the first time to rely on others, to seek help from God. Rochester is freed from his pride (and his mad wife), finally fit to be a marriage partner for Jane. He finally enters into the domestic, companionate marriage he has longed for. In this way, Charlotte Brontë depicts a Gothic hero-villain who is a victim and who is ashamed of his past wrongs, and who longs to marry for love in true domestic fashion. Through love and hardship, she transforms him into a bourgeois, moral man, physically dependent on his wife, but also engaged with her in a marriage of mutual love, support, and respect.

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* has a much less sympathetic Gothic hero-villain and a much more ambiguous ending in terms of which masculinity triumphs. Brontë's Heathcliff is a much more problematic hero than Rochester. He, too, is victimized in his youth, first indulged by Mr. Earnshaw, then degraded and declassed by Hindley, and finally robbed of his beloved by her own desire for domestic power. These losses and sufferings lead Heathcliff to commit terrible crimes: he drives Hindley hard down the road to ruin; he then transforms his son Hareton into a brute; he marries and abuses Isabella Linton to revenge himself on Edgar for his marrying Catherine; he forces his dying son to trap Cathy into marrying him so that Heathcliff will be able to inherit Edgar's land; he keeps Cathy prisoner in an attempt to prevent her from seeing her dying father. Heathcliff never repents of any of these crimes.

What makes Heathcliff so interesting is that despite these many and serious faults, he *loves*. He is subject to Catherine, but this does not indicate any domestication on his part, as in

*Jane Eyre*, but rather his intense love for her. He loves Catherine Earnshaw so much that he is driven to these crimes out of the pain of losing her, first to an earthly rival, then to death.

Heathcliff's masculinity is also considerably more complex than Rochester's. Heathcliff begins his career as a boy of unknown extraction, but is raised in the family of a gentleman farmer, whose physical masculinity he emulates. He then transfigures himself into a gentlemen, in order to win Catherine and oppress his oppressors using their own means, the power granted by gentility. Heathcliff's sudden and mysterious rise up the social ladder, however, also marks him in some ways as a bourgeois, self-made man.

In the end, Heathcliff dies, and the next – domestic – generation inherits his property. Cathy and Hareton are about to move their household to Thrushcross Grange at the end of the novel, ready to shut up *Wuthering Heights*, the home of Gothic fatherhood, domestic imprisonment, and gentry violence. In the social world of the novel, Hareton's newfound domestic masculinity certainly seems to triumph over Heathcliff's Gothic masculinity. However, Heathcliff has not been annihilated, for he and Catherine walk the moors as ghosts. The triumph of domesticity and the defeat of Gothic masculinity is far more ambivalent in *Wuthering Heights* than in *Jane Eyre*.

Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is different yet again in that the Gothic villain and hero are acted by two different characters. Arthur Huntingdon is the Gothic villain proper, without a single redeeming quality. He is a paragon of gentry masculinity, who drinks, gambles, and wenches as Rochester did in his time on the continent. Huntingdon seeks control of his wife for the sake of his vanity and tries to twist his son into a baby caricature of himself.

Unlike many of his friends, Huntingdon is not to be domesticated. His vices ultimately cause him fatal illness, which brings Helen, his fugitive wife, back to nurse him. In this section

of the novel, Huntingdon is physically subject to Helen due to his illness and, finally cognizant of his abuse of her, he fears that she has come to take her revenge. Later, he depends on her for entry into heaven. However, he dies unrepentant, never having been domesticated.

Gilbert Markham, Helen's second husband, plays the role of the Gothic hero, but he, too, is a problematic character. He begins the novel rather spoiled, selfish, and impatient, not a good match for a woman just escaped from a Gothic marriage. By means of Helen's love, however, Gilbert, like Rochester and Hareton, becomes a model of virtuous, middle-class masculinity. Though Huntingdon dies unrepentant, Helen's marriage to Gilbert is symbolic of the triumph of domestic masculinity over Gothic, gentry masculinity.

In the end, Charlotte and Anne Brontë more or less overturn Gothic masculinity and replace it with domestic masculinity (either in the person of a single man or the story of two different husbands), while Emily Brontë lets the matter stand unsettled, ambiguous. Her Gothic hero-villain is not fully supplanted or destroyed. Because resistance to domestic ideology and masculinity is most pronounced in *Wuthering Heights*, it seems that Emily Brontë pushes back against the dominant ideologies of her class and time in ways that her sisters do not attempt. This level of rebellion may suggest that Emily Brontë's literary project differs in fundamental ways from those of her sisters and perhaps opens up ground for further investigation of the Brontës as writers, sisters, and social critics.

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