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2009년 8월
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에밀리 브론테의 『워더링 하이
츠』에 나타난 가부장제 거부

조선대학교 대학원
영어영문학과
Jay Robert Fraser

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ABSTRACT

에밀리 브론테의 『위더링 하이츠』에 나타난 가부장제 거부

Emily Brontë's Rejection of Patriarchy in *Wuthering Heights*

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본 논문은 에밀리 브론테의 『위더링 하이츠』에 나타난 당시에 만연되었던 가부장제를 어떤 방식으로 거부하였는가를 고찰한 것이다. 먼저 작가의 배경과 폭풍의 언덕이 씌어질 당시에 가부장제 관련 법을 살펴보는 것을 시작으로 한다. 작가는 가부장을 포기하는 방법을 상세하게 기술하고 재산 양도에 대해 알아봄으로써 소설 속에서 가부장제 관련 법이 어떻게 남용되는지를 보여준다. 마지막으로 에밀리 브론테의 죽음 이후 작가의 책상에서 발견된 5편의 서평을 고찰함으로써 그 시대의 비평가와 비평가들이 작가의 가부장 포기를 이해하지 못했거나 인식하지 못했음을 보여준다.

에밀리 브론테가 살았던 시대(1818-1848)와 소설의 배경인 시대(1757-1803)에 가부장제 관련법이 영국에서 행해졌다. 실제적으로 보면 이 제도하에 여성은 법적으로 존재하지 않은 셈이다. 여성들은 스스로 어떤 법적 행위를 할 수 없었고, 모든 것이 가정의 남자 가장, 보통 아버지 혹은 남편의 소유로 되어 있었다.

에밀리 브론테는 히드클리프가 법적 계략을 통해 두 가정의 재산을 획득할 수 있는 방법을 보여줌으로써 소설 속에서 가부장제가 어떻게 남용되는지를 보여준다. 법적 계략은 합법적이거나 옳은 것은 아니지만, 그 계략이 발생한 것을 인지한 사람들이 그 일이 일어나지 못하도록 막을 수는 없다. 가부장제 관련법의

남용을 보여줌으로써, 에밀리 브론테는 가부장제를 거부한다.

이 책의 서평들은 히드클리프 손에 땅이 넘겨지는 것을 기술함에 있어서 어떤 결집도 없다고 보며 히드클리프의 행동이 도덕적으로는 옳지 않지만 가부장제를 사용한 것이 정당하다는 것을 보여주는데 있어서 비평이 충분치는 않다.

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I. Introduction

There are multitudes of ways to critically evaluate *Wuthering Heights*, but to truly understand this novel, one should look at it in numerous ways. Diane Long Hoeveler says in an essay that, “*Wuthering Heights*, like all literary classics, needs to be approached in many different ways in order to see its complexity.” (Brontë, 433) The number of ways that criticism can be classified is almost as varied as the number of critics writing.¹⁾ Patsy Stoneman writes in the introduction to the *Columbia Critical Guide of Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights*:

Debate about the meaning and value of *Wuthering Heights* began immediately after its publication. Now, a hundred and fifty years later, there is such a vast quantity of critical commentary that my task in providing a ‘critical guide’ to this material has been very challenging. (Stoneman, 10)

Stoneman starts by examining the Victorian responses, something this paper will also examine, and then she looks at criticisms dealing with the author, humanism, formalism, and deconstruction criticisms. Next she explores psychoanalytical criticisms that aim to first analyze the author, but later try to uncover the unconscious of the text, rather than the author or characters. After this, she moves on to criticisms that focus on the sources, discourses, and disseminations in an attempt to understand where the text came from. Finally, Stoneman examines the political readings of the text, such as Marxism, postcolonialism and feminism criticisms.

I will show how Emily Brontë showed how the patriarchal laws were

¹⁾*A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literatur* lists seven different critical approaches, *A Handbook to Literatur* lists ten types of criticism, and *The Oxford Companion to English Literatur* lists thirteen different schools of criticism

used, or rather abused, by Heathcliff, the main character in the novel, to gain control of the property of his enemies and get his revenge on them, and how *Wuthering Heights* condemns these laws by showing in a powerful way the consequences of these laws.

First this paper takes a brief look at Emily Brontë's background, as every author's background affects the materials they write. Next it looks at the patriarchal system of law during the mid-eighteen hundreds, when the novel was written. Then it shows at how Emily Brontë rejects this patriarchal system through her novel *Wuthering Heights*. In order to fully understand how she rejects the patriarchy, it is necessary to show exactly how the patriarchal laws were abused by Heathcliff in gaining ownership of the properties of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange in the novel. Finally, it looks at some of the reviews of the novel that were published when the novel was published. In this way we can see that despite the clear anti-patriarchal views Emily Brontë had, critics of the time did not recognize this and were bewildered or even hostile to the novel, while at the same time acknowledging that it was a powerful book.

“The rejection of patriarchy is the one point on which all feminists agree.” (Smith, 3) By showing the abuse of patriarchal laws and by rejecting these laws, Emily Brontë should be one of the first authors to be classified a feminist.

II. Emily Brontë's Background to her Writing

Emily Brontë was born on July 30, 1818, the fourth daughter of Maria Branwell and Patrick Brontë. The Brontës had two more children, but Maria passed away when Emily was three and the children were raised by their aunt and nursemaids. In 1824 the four oldest children went away to the Clergy Daughter's School. The two eldest children became sick and died a year later and Emily and her remaining older sister, Charlotte, were withdrawn from the school and returned home.

Emily Brontë went to Roe Head in 1835 to study at the school where her older sister, Charlotte, was teaching, but suffered from homesickness and illness and returned home after only three months. (Emily Jane Brontë) She was a governess for a time at Law Hill, probably in 1838 (Drabble, 138) and spent nine months, in 1842, in Brussels with Charlotte studying French, German, and music (Drabble, 138) in an attempt to gain enough knowledge to open their own school.

An analysis of Charlotte's and Emily's writing indicates that Emily was more aggressive, than her sister Charlotte. (McCurdy, 135) The same analysis indicates that although she was not as assimilated with society as Charlotte, she was happier. (McCurdy, 147) The lack of assimilation into society was partly because she avoided everyone outside the family (Emily Jane Brontë), but also because she was not accustomed to allowing others to dictate to her anything. (Thormählen, 160)

Emily was impervious to influence, she never came in contact with public opinion, and her own decision of what was right and fitting was a law for her conduct and appearance, with which she allowed no one to interfere. (Gaskell, 145)

Emily's poetry writing was an intensely personal experience and even Anne, the one closest to Emily, dared not ask her about it. (Alexander, 386) In late 1845, Charlotte found a book of Emily's poems and after some time, convinced Emily to publish her poems along with her and Anne in 1846. They published under the pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, using male sounding names to overcome the stereotyping of female writers. A number of Emily's poems are regarded as among the finest written in the 19th century. (Alexander, 386)

Wuthering Heights was completed in 1846, and after some delay, published in 1847. Charlotte's novel *Jane Eyre*, also published in 1847, was received more favorably, but an advertisement in 1848 compares to *Jane Eyre* and recommends *Wuthering Heights* to readers if they like *Jane Eyre*. (The Times) However, *Wuthering Heights* was only widely acknowledged as a masterpiece after her death. (Drabble, 138)

Her older brother Branwell, weakened by the abuse of alcohol and opium, died of tuberculosis in September of 1848. Soon after Branwell's death, it became apparent that Emily and Anne were also not well. (Family History) Emily died in December of 1848 and Anne in May the next year, leaving Charlotte as the only surviving Brontë child.

III. Patriarchy

In the 1840s, during the time that Emily Brontë wrote *Wuthering Heights*, the patriarchy was the basic structure of the family in England. Merriam-Webster's colligate ictionary defines the patriarchal system as a social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance through the male line; *broadly*: control of a disproportionately large share of power by men. (Merriam-Webster, 850) Just how disproportionate the balance of power was may be hard to imagine today.

Essentially, a married woman in the eighteenth century was legally nonexistent. She could not take even the smallest legal step on her own: she could own no property unless it had been settled on her by her father, her husband, or a male relative; she could not sue for a divorce; and, in the event that her husband left her, she could not even visit her children. The first laws to affect materially the legal position of married women were these: the Infant's Custody Act (1839), which allowed women to petition the court for custody over children under seven years old and for visiting rights over older children; the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), which, in the case of a separation, granted women possession of property they had contributed to their marriages; and the Married Woman's Property Act (1870), which finally granted reforms in educational opportunities and political rights (though not, of course, the right to vote). (Poovey, 249)

This patriarchal system kept women as one entity with their husband under that system of law. William Blackstone stated in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* in 1765 that "the husband and wife are one person in law" (Hoeveler, 6) and under the husband's protection she performs everything. (Poovey, 6).

Moreover, the common law of England ruled that whatever property a woman owned before marriage or might receive thereafter became automatically her husband's. Sir William Blackstone, in the chapter "Of Husband and Wife" in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, explained the ruling by maintaining that when women became one with their husbands they lost their legal identity; and he claimed that the law was designed for women's protection and benefit. (Wardle, 136)

This idea, that the law was for women's protection and benefit, might have been based on the thinking of men such as the Earl of Chesterfield. He wrote to his son that women were just large children and that he had never met one who reasoned or acted consequentially for more than a day. (Chesterfield, Letter XLIX) If women were "just large children", then it follows that they needed laws to protect them. While this view may not have been held by everyone, it was held by at least him and he was attempting to give advice to his son and thereby attempting to pass on such beliefs.

Women were legally prohibited from political and economic activity except through the agency of a legal "subject" – a man. (Poovey, IX, X) Catharine Macaulay noted in 1790 that married women have hardly a civil right to save them from the grossest injuries. (Wollstonecraft, 210) "Patriarchy presumed that there was property not only in things but in persons and that ownership lay with the heads of households. It meant that some men were owned by others, and all women and children by their husbands or fathers." (Trumbach, 119) Women were crucial pawns in the struggle for wealth, which political power and social prestige depended. (Poovey, 11) Brontë was fully aware of the legal implications of the times and includes them in her novel. Lamonica says that "Emily Brontë has been praised for her remarkable knowledge of family succession and property laws." (114) Heathcliff's revenge, the gaining of both the

Wuthering Heights property and the Thrushcross Grange property and the subsequent power that went with owning properties, succeeded because of his ability to exploit the patriarchal system of inheritance and the role of women's position as property. (Lamonica, 114)

One example where Emily Brontë shows her knowledge of the laws of inheritance is on page 185, when Heathcliff talks about his desire to have Catherine and Linton marry so that in the event of Linton's death, he would inherit Catherine's Thrushcross Grange property.

There was also a psychological prize to acquiring neighbor's property and therefore power, that was even more satisfying than just the acquisition of property. Women also sought out men who had property and power, so that by marrying these men, they also could obtain status and power. Catherine, knowing that women do not exist apart from the men who can provide them with names and status, rejects Heathcliff who can provide neither, and marries Edgar Linton who can provide both. (Hoeveler, 194) That marriage provided her with the status she desired. Heathcliff desired to acquire property to provide him with the power and position in society that he lacked, and it was also a means of revenge against Catherine and Edgar. Catherine warns Isabella that Heathcliff could not love a Linton, but that "he'd be quite capable of marrying your fortune, and expectations." (Brontë, 101)

Divorce was also not a realistic option for women of that time. During the time Emily Brontë was alive, divorces were extremely rare, about ten per year, but from 1800 to 1857 only three divorces were obtained by women. (Alexander, 168)

There were several reasons for this imbalance of divorces. When women married their property and wealth became their husbands. Without money women had no access to a divorce. For example, a secular divorce, the

only kind that allowed for remarriage, required a bill in the House of Lords and cost the petitioner £ 600-700. (Alexander ,168)

There were also double standards when it came to granting divorces. Men could divorce their wives for adultery, but women had to prove additional charges such as bigamy, extreme cruelty, or incest in order to divorce their husbands. (Alexander ,168)

This inequality was seen as a problem by not only women, but some men as well. Robert Dale Owen issued this statement on his wedding day in 1832 to Mary Jane Robinson, to protest patriarchal laws which stripped women of their property and other legal rights when they married:

Of the unjust rights which in virtue of this ceremony an iniquitous law gives me over the person and property of another, I cannot legally, but I can morally, divest myself. And I hereby distinctly and emphatically declare that I consider myself, and earnestly desire to be considered by others, as utterly divested, now and during the rest of my life, of any such rights, the barbarous relics of a feudal, despotic system. (Riegel, 94)

In 1857 the Matrimonial Causes Act was passed which allowed for divorces through the law courts rather than a private act of parliament and enhanced the rights of women.

IV. Rejection of Patriarchy

Smith states that “The rejection of patriarchy is the one point on which all feminists agree.” (Page 3) *Wuthering Heights* firmly rejects the patriarchy and in doing so becomes a feminist text. Although there are many differences in feminist theories, the rejection of the patriarchy is shared among all of them and is the distinguishing point that sets feminist theory apart from other theories. (Smith, 9) Abbie Cory describes in more detail just what systems of power and roles were criticized in the book:

Wuthering Heights...reproduces and disseminates the momentary resistances to class- and gender-based systems of power that were part of the social milieu of the era. It reflects contemporary ideas about undermining the institutions of the state and about subverting class- and gender-based hierarchies. More importantly, *Wuthering Heights* participates in the socio-political upheavals of the era. It depicts a community – the locality of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange and many of its people – that is a microcosm of rebellion, a realm in which uprisings against figures in positions of power regularly occur, where the subordinate do not remain in their places, and where dominant modes of power are disparaged. This community thus represents many of the attitudes and actions of the 1840s radical movements on a smaller, more personal scale. The novel, therefore, is revolutionary not just in its presentation of Heathcliff, as Eagleton argues, but through the characters of Lockwood and the two Cathys. *Wuthering Heights* first presents Lockwood as the common reader (he is the first ‘reader’ of Nelly’s tale) and representative of prevailing middle-class values. The novel then sets out to disrupt those values by disparaging Lockwood. In addition, *Wuthering Heights* portrays Catherine Linton and Catherine Heathcliff as insurgents against hegemonic views of gender roles and bourgeois marriage. (Cory, 6)

Hoeverler is quoted as saying “literary works are not produced in vacuums but are reflections of the author’s life, culture, and ideological beliefs.” (Cory, 7) While there were positive aspects to patriarchal law, “it

is suggested that this [Heathcliff's immoral means to acquire property] is not a reflection of the fact of abuse of positive law in Victorian society, but rather that Brontë's focus was on the *scope* of abuse that the patriarchal laws engender." (Rahman, 30)

Typical gothic novels present the heroine triumphing over patriarchy (Hoeveler, 9), but that Brontë exposes the "love and marriage" as the "happy ending" for women as a falsehood with her heroine dying and the next generation barely surviving, having learned very little from the errors of her predecessors. (Hoeveler, 191) Brontë's Catherine is upbraided for having a wayward, passionate nature, submits to a passionless marriage, and is destroyed. (Fisk, 134)

Feminists came to regard *Wuthering Heights* as a sustained form of verbal insubordination against the norms of society (Rooney, 102-103), but readers of that time were not prepared for a book in which the heroes were in open rebellion against Christian morals as well as the established order of society. (Ghnassia, 3) Emily Brontë's rejection of patriarchy was ahead of its time. The need to liberate the instincts from the cage that the previous age had imprisoned women in was the central issue in the post-Victorian age. Emily Brontë had already dealt with this issue in *Wuthering Heights* much before it became an issue later on. (Delbaere-Garant, 701)

Emily Brontë, in fact, told two stories in *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine's and Isabella's. One story is of the passionate, but wayward, woman who submits to a passionless marriage. The lack of passion is demonstrated in the following exchange between Nelly and Catherine about Edgar Linton:

"And then we shall fight to the death, shan't we, Nelly?" she returned, laughing, "No! I tell you, I have such faith in Linton's love that I believe I

might kill him, and he wouldn't wish to retaliate."

I advised her to value him the more for his affection.

"I do," she answered; "but, he needn't resort to whining for trifles [... and] melting into tears [...]" (Brontë, 98)

Compare this attitude with that of Heathcliff's, when instinct makes him catch the falling baby Hareton, when Nelly notes that his countenance

expressed, plainer than words could do, the intensest anguish at having made himself the instrument of thwarting his own revenge. Had it been dark, I dare say, he would have tried to remedy the mistake by smashing Hareton's skull on the steps (Brontë, 79)

Of all the faults that Heathcliff has, no one can ever say he lacked passion.

The other is the opposite story, a socially approved situation of a young, wealthy woman who marries the man she loves. Isabella confesses her feeling about Heathcliff to Catherine; "I love him more than ever you loved Edgar; and he might love me, if you would let him!" (Brontë, 101) This love did not last long. After running away from Thrushcross Grange and marrying Heathcliff she writes, "...my heart returned to Thrushcross Grange in twenty-four hours after I left it..." (Brontë 126) and ends her letter with "I do hate him – I am wretched – I have been a fool!" (Brontë, 133)

Neither marriage worked. Isabella's love for Heathcliff is soon lost as she realizes that he only married her for her property, and the passionate Catherine is destroyed by the passionless marriage. (Fisk, 134)

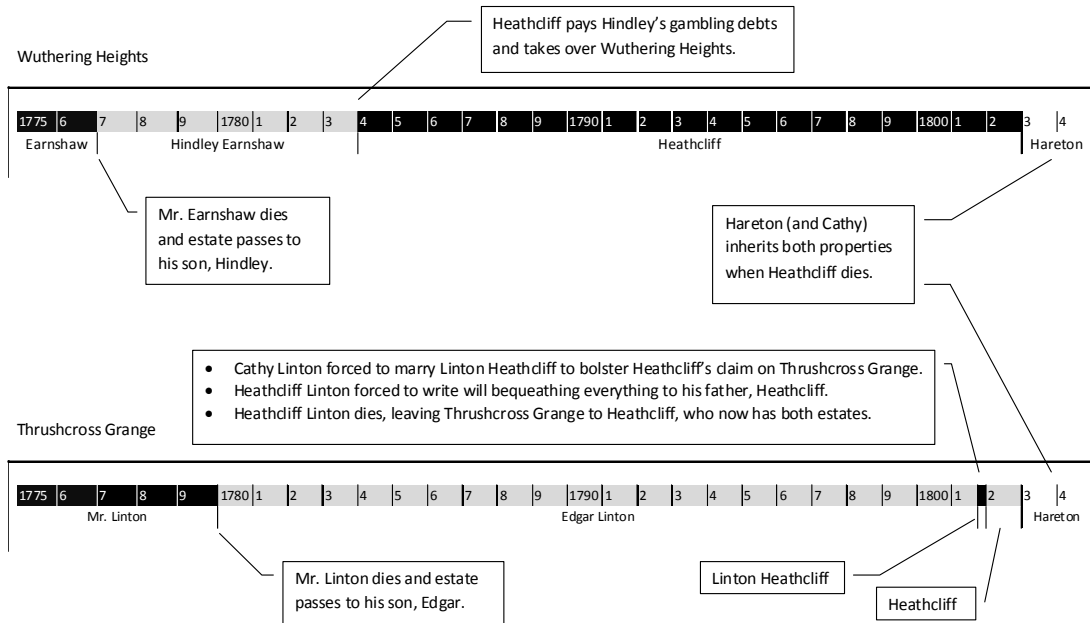
However, given the times, Catherine could do nothing to change her situation. She was held to the standards of the time and had to marry Edgar because there was no one else suitable for her to marry, and a lady

must marry. (Gilbert & Gubar, 277) Left without options due to the attitudes and circumstances of the time, Catherine's passionless marriage is destroyed.

Emily Brontë was one of the first to show the reality of the situation of women in that era. Male writers of her era often had their heroines overcoming the odds through the use of their wits and living happy lives, but Emily Brontë showed those situations to be contrived and false.

V. Ownership of Wuthering Heights

Ownership of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange



A. Mr. Earnshaw → Hindley Earnshaw

Wuthering Heights is owned by Mr. Earnshaw at the beginning of the novel. When he passes away in 1777, the ownership of Wuthering Heights passes to his son, Hindley Earnshaw. This was in accordance with the laws of the time. Mrs. Earnshaw had passed away earlier, in 1773, so she played no factor in the inheritance of the property. Catherine Earnshaw also played no role or had no claim on the property for two reasons: one, she was a woman, and the inheritance passed to the son under the patriarchy laws at that time, and two, she was younger. Typically the

eldest son received the entire inheritance. A younger child would receive only a small inheritance, maybe of money, but the land and buildings would be given to the eldest son. By designating this responsibility to the oldest son, this ensured the land would remain intact and large enough to sustain the family and their workers. Had the land been divided among the children, after just one or two generations the plot size would be so small that none of the individual plots would be able to sustain a family, let alone any workers that the family might want to hire.

B. Hindley Earnshaw → Heathcliff

After the mysteriously now wealthy Heathcliff returns to the area, Catherine notes that, “He means to offer liberal payment for permission to lodge at the Heights; and doubtless my brother’s covetousness will prompt him to accept the terms; he was always greedy, though what he grasps with one hand, he flings away with the other.” (Brontë, 98), Catherine already has some knowledge about Heathcliff’s willingness to take advantage of her brother’s greed. She explains to Nelly about Heathcliff’s reasons for returning to the area when he first arrives back at Wuthering Heights:

“He explained it,” she replied. “I wondered as much as you – He said he called to gather information concerning me, from you, supposing you resided there still; and Joseph told Hindley, who came out, and fell to questioning him of what he had been doing, and how he had been living: and finally, desired him to walk in – There were some persons sitting at cards – Heathcliff joined them; my brother lost some money to him; and, finding him plentifully supplied, he requested that he would come again in the evening, to which he consented. Hindley is too reckless to select his acquaintance prudently; he

doesn't trouble himself to reflect on the causes he might have for mistrusting on whom he has basely injured. (Brontë, 98)

Catherine had every right to worry about her brother, as revenge against Hindley Earnshaw was exactly what Heathcliff had in mind. Heathcliff had been treated badly by Hindley, and even the maid Nelly, when he was young; “we plagued and went on with him shamefully”. (Brontë, 52) Heathcliff was successful in his revenge and Hindley loses Wuthering Heights through gambling debts and is later almost desperate enough to kill Heathcliff. Isabella discovers this at Wuthering Heights later and has this conversation with Hindley Earnshaw while asking about where to sleep:

“Joseph will show you Heathcliff's chamber,” said he; “open that door – he's in there.”

I was going to obey, but he suddenly arrested me, and added in the strangest tone:

“Be so good as to turn your lock, and draw your bolt – don't omit it!”

“Well!” I said. “But why, Mr Earnshaw?” I did not relish the notion of deliberately fastening myself in with Heathcliff.

“Look here!” he replied, pulling from his waistcoat a curiously constructed pistol, having a double-edged spring knife attached to the barrel. “That's a great tempter to a desperate man, is it not? I cannot resist going up with this every night, and trying his door. If once I find it open he's done for! I do it invariably, even though the minute before I have been recalling a hundred reasons that should make me refrain: it is some devil that urges me to thwart my own schemes by killing him. You fight against that devil for love as long as you may; when the time comes, not all the angels in heaven shall save him!”

I surveyed the weapon inquisitively. A hideous notion struck me: how powerful I should be possessing such an instrument! I took it from his hand, and touched the blade. He looked astonished at the expression my face assumed during a brief second: it was not horror, it was covetousness. He snatched the pistol back, jealously; shut the knife, and returned it to its

concealment.

“I don't care if you tell him,” said he. “Put him on his guard, and watch for him. You know the terms we are on, I see; his danger does not shock you.”

“What has Heathcliff done to you?” I asked. “In what has he wronged you, to warrant this appalling hatred? Wouldn't it be wiser to bid him quit the house?”

“No!” thundered Earnshaw, “should he offer to leave me, he's a dead man, persuade him to attempt it, and you are a murderess! Am I to lose all, without a chance of retrieval? Is Hareton to be a beggar? Oh, damnation! I will have it back; and I'll have *his* gold too; and then his blood; and hell shall have his soul!” (Brontë, 128-129)

Earnshaw has lost his property and is ready to murder Heathcliff. The fact that he has lost his property is reinforced by Joseph addressing Heathcliff as master: “Oh! it's Maister *Hathecliff's* yah're wenting!”. (Brontë, 131) But Hindley's going into debt and losing the property to Heathcliff is not known yet.

When Hindley Earnshaw dies at just the age of twenty-seven, the maid Ellen is informed by the doctor, Mr. Kenneth. She wonders about the circumstances of the property, but Mr. Kenneth directs her to speak to Hindley Earnshaw's lawyer. The lawyer tells Ellen that [Hindley Earnshaw] “died in debt,” he said; “the whole property is mortgaged, and the sole chance for the natural heir is to allow him an opportunity of creating some interest in the creditor's heart, that he may be inclined to deal leniently towards him.” (Brontë, 163)

The creditor is none other than Heathcliff and he now has total control of Wuthering Heights.

The guest was now the master of Wuthering Heights: he held firm possession, and proved to the attorney, who, in his turn, proved it to Mr. Linton, that Earnshaw had mortgaged every yard of land he owned, for cash to supply his mania for gaming; and he, Heathcliff, was the mortgagee.

In that manner Hareton, who should now be the first gentleman in the neighbourhood, was reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy; and lives in his own house as a servant, deprived of the advantage of wages, and quite unable to right himself, because of his friendlessness, and his ignorance that he has been wronged. (Brontë, 165)

VI. Ownership of Thrushcross Grange

A. Mr. Linton → Edgar Linton

When Mr. and Mrs. Linton catch a fever and pass away, their son Edgar Linton inherits Thrushcross Grange. Though he does have a sister, Isabella, she does not factor into the inheritance line, for the same reasons Catherine didn't factor into the inheritance of *Wuthering Heights*: she is a woman, and she is younger. Both of these reasons prevent her from inheriting Thrushcross Grange.

It was common knowledge that Edgar Linton would inherit Thrushcross Grange. Ellen is asking Catherine why she claims to love Edgar. Catherine responds with "he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband." (Brontë, 82) Catherine knows that though he is not rich now, he "will be rich" in the future, due to his expected inheritance. As in the passage of *Wuthering Heights* from Mr. Earnshaw to his son Hindley Earnshaw, the passage of Thrushcross Grange from Mr. Linton to his son Edgar Linton followed the normal, expected inheritance rules of the time.

The passage of Thrushcross Grange to Heathcliff is much more complicated than any other passage of land in the book. The control of Thrushcross Grange passes from Edgar Linton, to his nephew Linton Heathcliff, and finally to Heathcliff. This was Heathcliff's plan all along and he strove to make this happen.

B. Edgar Linton → Linton Heathcliff

The law at the time meant that property passed from the owner to the

closest male relative. The closest male relative to Edgar Linton was his nephew, his sister's and Heathcliff's son, Linton Heathcliff.

Heathcliff married Edgar's sister, Isabella, as a part of a plan to gain Thrushcross Grange. When Heathcliff finds out about Isabella's love interest in him, he claims to have no interest in her. Catherine warns Heathcliff that she likes Isabella too much to allow him to have her, as she believes that he would destroy her.

"I like her too well, my dear Heathcliff, to let you absolutely seize and devour her up."

"And I like her too ill to attempt it, said he" (Brontë 104)

Shortly after this he has the thought:

"She's her brother's heir, is she not?" he asked, after a brief silence.

"I should be sorry to think so," returned his companion. "Half a dozen nephews shall erase her title, please Heaven! Abstract your mind from the subject, at present – you are too prone to covet your neighbour's goods: remember *this* neighbour's goods are mine."

"If they were *mine*, they would be none the less that," said Heathcliff; "but though Isabella Linton may be silly, she is scarcely mad; and – in short, we'll dismiss the matter as you advise."

From their tongues they did dismiss it; and Catherine, probably, from her thoughts. The other, I felt certain, recalled it often in the course of the evening. I saw him smile to himself – grin rather – and lapse into ominous musing whenever Mrs. Linton had occasion to be absent from the apartment. (Brontë, 104)

Catherine is exactly correct; if she and Edgar have children, they will be Heathcliff's nephews if he marries Isabella, and those male children would be first in line to receive the property. However, if the Catherine - Edgar union produces no male children, and if Heathcliff marries Isabella and

they have male children, then the children of Heathcliff and Isabella would be first in line to claim the Thrushcross Grange property. This is the reason Heathcliff grins to himself whenever Catherine was out of the room.

With the inheritance of Thrushcross Grange on his mind, Heathcliff sets about to win Isabella's heart, though knowing others will see his true intentions, he attempts to hide the courting of Isabella from others, though the maid Ellen witnesses part of this:

Heathcliff had not the habit of bestowing a single unnecessary civility on Miss Linton, I knew. Now, as soon as he beheld her, his first precaution was to take a sweeping survey of the household. ... supposing himself unseen, the scoundrel had the impudence to embrace her. (Brontë 107)

When Ellen speaks to herself, "Judas! Traitor!", Catherine overhears and asks who Ellen is talking about. Ellen explains that she is talking about Heathcliff and says, "I wonder will he have the art to find a plausible excuse, for making love to Miss, when he told you he hated her?" (Brontë, 107)

Ellen Dean learned that Isabella and Heathcliff might run off together from the doctor, Mr. Kenneth, who tells her that someone had told him that:

"she and Heathcliff were walking in the plantation at the back of your house, above two hours; and he pressed her not to go in again, but just mount his horse and away with him! My informant said she could only put him off by pledging her word of honour to be prepared on their first meeting after that." (Brontë, 122)

Although Edgar Linton was worried about his sister, he was caught by

surprise when Isabella runs away with Heathcliff. The maid discovers this and informs Edgar:

“She’s gone, she’s gone! Yon’ Heathcliff’s run off wi’ her!” gasped the girl.

“That is not true!” exclaimed Linton, rising in agitation. “It cannot be – how has the idea entered your head? Ellen Dean, go and seek her – it is incredible – it cannot be.” (Brontë, 123)

Heathcliff has now completed the first part of his plan to gain the property of Thrushcross Grange. Although this part of the plan succeeded, he would need some luck for the next part of his plan to succeed. There were only a few ways he could gain Thrushcross Grange through inheritance, even though he married Edgar’s sister, currently next in line to receive the property.

One way was if Catherine and Edgar die before having children. Another way would be for him to have a son and Catherine and Edgar have no sons. Edgar’s nephew, Heathcliff’s son, would then be the next in line to receive the property by way of being the closest male relative.

This second possibility is exactly what happened. Catherine gives birth to a daughter prematurely and passes away two hours later. Edgar names his daughter Catherine (referred to as Cathy hereafter) after his wife, though “he never called it the name in full as he had never called the first Catherine short…The little one was always Cathy”. (Brontë, 162)

Heathcliff had a son, though he did not know it right away, as Isabella, tired of living with Heathcliff, escaped to a place “near London; there she had a son born, a few months subsequent to her escape. He was christened Linton, and, from the first, she reported him to be an ailing, peevish creature.” (Brontë, 161) Heathcliff “discovered…both her place of residence, and the existence of the child.”

He often asked about the infant, when he saw me; and on hearing its name, smiled grimly, and observed:

"They wish me to hate it too, do they?"

"I don't think they wish you to know anything about it," I answered.

"But I'll have it," he said, "when I want it. They may reckon on that!"

Fortunately its mother died before the time arrived, some thirteen years after the decease of Catherine, when Linton was twelve, or a little more. (Brontë, 161)

The desire to “have it”, to have Linton his son back, was not out of love, but a desire to use his son in his attempt to gain control of Thrushcross Grange.

Heathcliff has now done as much as he can at this time to secure Thrushcross Grange. Nothing more can happen until Edgar Linton dies and the passage of ownership of the land becomes an issue again. As the situation stands with Edgar Linton alive, but with no wife, and after the birth of Cathy Linton and Linton Heathcliff, Linton Heathcliff is next in line to inherit Thrushcross Grange.

Linton Heathcliff returns to Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights when his mother dies, at about the age of twelve. Ellen notes that he is “A pale, delicate, effeminate boy, who might have been taken for my master’s younger brother, so strong was the resemblance, but there was a sickly peevishness in his aspect, that Edgar Linton never had.” (Brontë, 174)

Heathcliff, although “disappointed with the whey-faced whining wretch!” (Brontë 181 realizes that "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 descendant fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children to till their father's lands for wages.” (Brontë, 180)

Linton Heathcliff had been living at Thrushcross Grange, but Heathcliff demands Linton be returned to him to live with him at Wuthering Heights. Edgar Linton hides this fact from Cathy, just telling her that Linton has departed, without giving an explanation why or to where and they live apart until Cathy is sixteen and Linton Heathcliff is fifteen.

Heathcliff wants his son Linton and Cathy to see each other, though Ellen is sure Heathcliff has “a bad design in encouraging” (Brontë, 185) Cathy to meet with Linton Heathcliff. Heathcliff responds to this criticism and answers truthfully:

"My design is as honest as possible. I'll inform you of its whole scope," he said. "That the two cousins may fall in love, and get married. I'm acting generously to your master; his young chit has no expectations, and should she second my wishes, she'll be provided for, at once as joint successor with Linton."

"If Linton died," I answered, "and his life is quite uncertain, Catherine would be the heir."

"No, she would not," he said. "There is no clause in the will to secure it so; his property would go to me; but to prevent disputes I desire their union, and am resolved to bring it about." (Brontë, 185)

After Cathy discovers Linton is living nearby, her father, Edgar, tells her why he concealed that Linton near her.

Mr. Heathcliff dislikes me; and is a most diabolical man, delighting to wrong and ruin those he hates, if they give him the slightest opportunity. I knew that you could not keep up an acquaintance with your cousin without being brought into contact with him; and I knew he would detest you, on my account; so, for your own good, and nothing else, I took precautions that you should not see Linton again... (Brontë, 191)

Edgar Linton forbids Cathy to go to Wuthering Heights and to meet

Linton Heathcliff again. Cathy and Linton circumvent this restriction by writing each other notes, but they are discovered by Ellen. Ellen confronts Cathy, burns the notes, and threatens to tell her father unless she completely cuts all contact with Linton. The contact remains broken for several months until Ellen and Cathy meet Heathcliff by chance while on a walk in the moors. Heathcliff informs Cathy that Linton is dying and the grief and disappointment of not seeing Cathy is hastening his death. (Brontë, 199) Cathy goes to visit, despite Ellen's reservations, but after visiting, Ellen tells Cathy that "If you attempt going to Wuthering Heights again, with, or without me, I shall inform Mr. Linton, and unless he allow it, the intimacy with your cousin must not be revived." (Brontë, 206) Despite Edgar Linton's reservations about a marriage between Cathy and Linton, as his health declines he worries about Cathy's financial situation.

June found him still declining; and, though he had set aside, yearly, a portion of his income for my young lady's fortune, he had a natural desire that she might retain, or, at least return, in a short time, to the house of her ancestors; and he considered her only prospect of doing that was by a union with his heir. (Brontë, 217)

What Edgar doesn't know is that Linton Heathcliff's health is declining almost as fast as his. Edgar is well aware that a marriage between Cathy and Linton will cement Heathcliff's claim on Thrushcross Grange and he has absolutely no wish for that to happen. Heathcliff knows this as well and told Linton, who in turn tells Cathy "Papa wants us to be married," he continued..."And he knows your papa wouldn't let us marry now; and he's afraid of my dying, if we wait...". (Brontë, 227) So Heathcliff comes up with the plan to forcibly detain Cathy at Wuthering Heights and have her marry Linton. Cathy begs Heathcliff to let her go back to see her dying

father promising to come back and marry Linton, but Heathcliff refuses, “As to your promise to marry Linton; I’ll take care you shall keep it, for you shall not quit the place till it is fulfilled.” (Brontë, 228)

Heathcliff does exactly this, locking Ellen up in a room so she will not interfere, then having Cathy and Linton marry, and finally locking Cathy up to prevent her leaving to see her dying father.

Linton’s position in line to inherit Thrushcross Grange is now firmly cemented. Though he is a nephew, he is the closest male relative, and he is married to Edgar’s only daughter. He will be the next master of Thrushcross Grange when Edgar Linton dies. Linton, informed by Heathcliff, knows this:

[...] uncle is dying, truly, at last – I’m glad, for I shall be 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. All her nice books are mine – she offered to give me them, and her pretty birds, and her pony Minny, if I would get the key of our room, and let her out: but I told her she had nothing to give, – they were all, all mine. And then she cried, and took a little picture from her neck, and said I should have that – two pictures in a gold case – on one side her mother, and on the other, uncle, when they were young. That was yesterday. I said *they* were mine too, and tried to get them from her. (Brontë, 233)

This is a perfect example of how husbands *owned* their wives. Women really were under complete ownership and control of their husbands.

Edgar Linton, while on his deathbed, “divined that one of his enemy’s purposes was to secure the personal property as well as the estate to his son”. (Brontë, 234)

[...] he felt that his will had better be altered – instead of leaving Catherine’s fortune at her own disposal, he determined to put it in the hands of trustees,

for her use during life; and for her children, if she had any, after her. By that means, it could not fall to Mr. Heathcliff, should Linton die. (Brontë, 234)

Heathcliff has the lawyer delayed and the will does not get changed before Edgar dies. Ownership of the property of Thrushcross Grange transfers to Linton Heathcliff.

C. Linton Heathcliff → Heathcliff

Linton Heathcliff is now in control of Thrushcross Grange, but his health is not good, and he dies shortly after Edgar Linton. Before he dies he writes a will bequeathing everything to his father, Heathcliff.

Heathcliff went up once, to show her Linton's will. He had bequeathed the whole of his, and what had been her movable property to his father. The poor creature was threatened or coaxed into that act during her week's absence, when his uncle died. The lands, being a minor he could not meddle with. However, Mr. Heathcliff has claimed, and kept them in his wife's right, and his also – I suppose legally, at any rate Catherine, destitute of cash and friends, cannot disturb his possession. (Brontë, 243)

Heathcliff now has control of both properties, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Though his hold on Thrushcross Grange may not be entirely firm, Cathy, having no money and no friends, does not have the means to hire a lawyer to challenge Heathcliff's claim. She has not forgotten that the lands were taken from her, as evidenced by an exchange in an argument with Heathcliff over the unauthorized planting of some flowers:

“You shouldn't grudge a few yards of earth, for me to ornament, when you have taken all my land!”

“Your land, insolent slut? You never had any!” said Heathcliff.
“And my money,” she continued, returning his angry glare, and meantime, biting a piece of crust, the remnant of her breakfast.
“Silence!” he exclaimed. “Get done, and begone!”
“And Hareton’s land, and his money,” pursued the reckless thing. (Brontë, 263)

D. Heathcliff → Hareton

The final transfer of property is from Heathcliff to Hareton Earnshaw, his nephew and closest male relative. Cathy Linton is actually a closer relative, being his wife’s brother’s daughter, but the laws of inheritance stated that without a will, the inheritance goes to the nearest male relative. Hareton is the only male relative of Heathcliff’s alive and so will inherit both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Not long before Heathcliff dies, he talks about sending for the lawyer because “I have not written my will yet, and how to leave my property…” (Brontë, 272) After Heathcliff’s death, Joseph “fell on his knees, and raised his hands, and returned thanks that the lawful master and the ancient stock were restored to their rights.” (Brontë, 274) The “lawful master” Joseph refers to is Hareton Earnshaw, who would have inherited Wuthering Heights had not his father gambled it away. Hareton will also receive the property of Thrushcross Grange. Cathy and Hareton plan to marry “on New Year’s day” (Brontë, 275) and both parties will then have their respective lands back.

Though the transfers of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange are complicated, they are completely accurate according to the laws of the times. Emily Brontë has been praised for her knowledge of the property laws.

John Hewish points out that Emily's 'occult knowledge of property law in *Wuthering Heights*' could have been derived from Ponden House law books, written for laymen, such as Runnington's *Ejectment* and Lovelass's *The Laws Disposing of a Person's Estate* (*Emily Brontë: A Critical and Biographical study* (1969), 35) (Alexander, 385)

It is this accurate knowledge of property law that the entire plot of the novel depends. Had the transfer of property in the novel been inaccurate, the entire story would have been dismissed as an unrealistic fantasy. It is precisely the accuracy of the transfers that makes the novel and the revenge of Heathcliff so powerful. These things could have happened, and the rage that Hinton and Cathy feel towards Heathcliff about the injustices done by him is felt by the reader as well.

VII. Anti-Patriarchal Views not Recognized in Critical Reviews

Emily Brontë had five reviews of *Wuthering Heights* in her desk when she died, so we know she read at least those five. None of them acknowledge, or talk about, the faults of the patriarchal system of law that enable the action of the novel to take place. Believing the author to be a male writer due to the name Ellis Bell, the reviews use the pronoun ‘he’ when talking about the author.

A. Atlas

This review, written on January 22, 1848, also talks about the “rugged power” of the novel but doesn’t use this power to the best advantage. It says “We know nothing in the whole range of our fictitious literature which presents such shocking pictures of the worst forms of humanity.” The scenes are so realistic, that the reviewer has to take time after putting the book down to remember that it is a work of fiction and not real life. “The reality of unreality has never been so aptly illustrated as in the scenes of almost savage life which Ellis Bell has brought so vividly before us.”

"A more natural story we do not remember to have read" though the reviewer thinks that, "There is not ... a single character which is not utterly hateful or thoroughly contemptible."

There is no criticism of the manner which Heathcliff comes to control

the properties of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange. In contrast, there is some criticism of Catherine the elder who "sacrifices herself and her lover to the pitiful ambition of becoming the wife of a gentleman."

This review ends by saying *Wuthering Heights* is not something to be forgotten, and that the work of Ellis Bell has colossal promise.

B. Britannia

This review, from January 15, 1848, was a mixed review, showing admiration for its "passionate ferocity", but criticizing it for being "very unskillfully constructed" in parts. The reviewer compares the novel with scenes in paintings by Salvator Rosa. Rosa was an Italian painter whose paintings were often dark landscapes, with streaming clouds and rays of light. The review continues the painting imagery by saying that there are some "gleams of sunshine...to cast a grateful light on the dreary path we have traveled" by the end of the novel.

The reviewer isn't sure if the "author writes with any purpose", but thinks there are two effects brought forth from the novel; "the brutalizing influence of unchecked passion" and "that temper is often spoiled in the years of childhood." The review concludes that "we are reluctant to pronounce an opinion" on the novel and that the future will tell if the author "will remain a rough hewer of marble or become a great and noble sculptor."

C. Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper

The review, written on January 15, 1848, says that *Wuthering Heights* is a powerful, but perplexing book, filling the mind of the reader with ideas

of “brutal cruelty, and semi-savage love.” “There seems to us great power in this book but a purposeless power…”

This review also looked for a meaning or moral to the story, but could not find one. “What may be the moral which the author wishes the reader to deduce from his work, it is difficult to say; and we refrain from assigning any, because to speak honestly, we have discovered none but mere glimpses of hidden morals or secondary meanings.”

The review finishes with a recommendation and wish they had more space to analyze it further. “We strongly recommend all our readers who love novelty to get this story, for we can promise them they never read anything like it before.”

D. Examiner

The *Examiner* review from January 1848 is a generally positive review, but notes that “It is not easy to disentangle the incidents and set them forth in chronological order.” The reviewer thought that Heathcliff is not an entirely believable character, despite “some good dashes at character”, and that the artist should not portray all that he discovers about a character, even if true. The reviewer also states that “We are not disposed to ascribe any particular intention to the author in drawing the character of Heathcliff, nor can we perceive any very obvious moral in the story.”

This reviewer felt that the book was difficult to believe and that if the author writes a second novel he should not exaggerate incidents and write things that would benefit the public more.

E. Unidentified Review

The review was found as a cutting in Emily Brontë's desk, but has never been traced.

The review is a good review, calling *Wuthering Heights* a work of "great ability... which talent of no common order has contributed." The reviewer feels that the writing is so good that if any one of the readers were placed in a situation similar to any of the characters in the book, our conduct would be exactly the same as the characters in the book.

The review concludes that "It is not every day that so good a novel makes its appearance..." and that "May [the reader] derive from it the delight we have ourselves experienced, and be equally grateful to its author for the genuine pleasure he has afforded him."

The common theme through these reviews is one of power. The reviewers also didn't understand what the author wanted to say. In most novels of the time, the author was very present, i.e. the author spoke to the reader, or was using the novel as a way of giving a lesson or moral. That did not happen in *Wuthering Heights* and the reviewers were not sure what to make of a novel in which the author was absent.

Despite the obvious ways the characters in the novel abused the laws of inheritance, there was no condemnation or acknowledgement of that in the reviews. While some reviewers felt the novel was unrealistic in its portrayal of Heathcliff, none of them condemn the novel for being unrealistic in the way the storyline, in particular, the way Heathcliff gained the property. If there was no condemnation of that storyline, then it must have been entirely believable to the reviewers. It is my belief that by showing the end results of the abuse of the laws of inheritance; Emily Brontë was in fact, condemning the rule of patriarchy.

VIII. Conclusion

I have looked at *Wuthering Heights* in a basically detailed way, especially on how Emily Brontë showed how the patriarchy laws of that era could be abused by males to gain property and power. *Wuthering Heights* explodes the safe and idealized domestic world represented by Victorian women and portrayed in conventional domestic novels. (Thompson, 344) This explosion of the worlds portrayed in conventional novels mystified reviewers. While most reviews acknowledged the book's power, they felt that the book should have had a "moral" message. What they failed to realize was that the moral message was right there before their eyes; a rejection of patriarchy.

Showalter suggests that the hero of books authored by women were "the projection of women's fantasies about how they would act and feel if they were men" and that women wished "they were men, with the greater freedom and range masculinity confers". (Showalter, 136) I do not believe that Emily Brontë's hero, Heathcliff, was a fantasy of how she would act were she a man, nor do I believe that she wished to be a man. I do think that she wished to show what an unscrupulous man could do given the laws at the time. Heathcliff was able to come into the family as a complete stranger and was able to gain two estates through his abuse of power and patriarchal laws before he died.

C.P. Sanger wrote in 1926 that *Wuthering Heights* was "remarkable" in its use of legal references and that "Emily Brontë clearly had a considerable knowledge of the law." (Sanger) Without this accurate knowledge of the law, the premise that Emily Brontë was rejecting

patriarchal law breaks down. However, it is precisely the accuracy of the legal aspects of the law that enable her to condemn patriarchal law.

The fact that reviewers never mentioned the rejection of patriarchal law might just be another indication of how the story is accurate in its description of the law. Something accepted by everyone is not generally commented on. We do not make comments that “the sky is blue” because everyone knows this and accepts it. Likewise, the reviewers did not comment on the way Heathcliff inherited the properties of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange because they were perfectly legal transactions.

Emily Brontë did write and show how unjust the laws were at that time, and the results of the manipulation of these unjust laws. She was one of the first authors to condemn the patriarchal system of law and that rejection shows her to be one of the first feminist authors.

Appendix

Full Text of Critical Reviews Found in Emily Brontë's Desk

Atlas, 22 January 1848, 59

About two years ago a small volume of poems by 'Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell' was given to the world. The poems were of varying excellence ; those by Currer Bell, for the most part, exhibiting the highest order of merit; but, as a whole, the little work produced little or no sensation, and was speedily forgotten. Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell have now all come before us as novelists, and all with so much success as to make their future career a matter of interesting speculation in the literary world.

Whether, as there is little reason to believe, the names which we have written are the genuine names of actual personages – whether they are, on the other hand, mere publishing names, as is our own private conviction – whether they represent three distinct individuals, or whether a single personage is the actual representative of the 'three gentlemen at once' of the title-pages – whether authorship of the poems and the novels is to be assigned to one gentleman or to one lady, to three gentlemen or three ladies, or to a mixed male and female triad of authors are questions over which the curious may puzzle themselves, but are matters really of little account. One thing is certain; as in the poems, so in the novels, the signature of 'Currer Bell' is attached to pre-eminently the best performance. We were the first to welcome the author of *Jane Eyre* as a new writer of no ordinary power. A new edition of that singular work has been called for, and we do not doubt that its success has done much to ensure a favourable reception for the volumes which are now before us.

Wuthering Heights is a strange, inartistic story. There are evidences in every chapter of a sort of rugged power an unconscious strength – which the possessor seems never to think of turning to the best advantage. The general effect is inexpressibly painful. We know nothing in the whole range of our fictitious literature which presents such shocking pictures of the worst forms of humanity.

Jane Eyre is a book which affects the reader to tears; it touches the most hidden sources of emotion. *Wuthering Heights* casts a gloom over the mind not easily to be dispelled. It does not soften; it harasses, it extenterates. There are passages in it which remind us of the *Nowlans* of the late John Banim but of all pre-existent works the one which it most recalls to our memory is the *History of Mathew Wald*. It has not, however, the unity and concentration of that fiction; but is a *sprawling* story, carrying us, with no mitigation of anguish, through two generations of sufferers though one presiding evil genius sheds a grim shadow over the whole, and imparts a singleness of malignity to the somewhat disjointed tale. A more natural story we do not remember to have read. Inconceivable as are the combinations of human degradation which are here to be found moving within the circle of a few miles, the *vraisemblance* is so admirably preserved; there is so much truth in what we may call the *costumery* (not applying the word in its narrow acceptation) the general mounting of the entire piece – that we readily identify the scenes and personages of the fiction; and when we lay aside the book it is some time before we can persuade ourselves that we have held nothing more than imaginary intercourse with the ideal creations of the brain. The reality of unreality has never been so aptly illustrated as in the scenes of almost savage life which Ellis Bell has brought so vividly before us.

The book sadly wants relief. A few glimpses of sunshine would have increased the reality of the picture and given strength rather than weakness to the whole. There is not in the entire *dramatis persona* a single character which is not utterly hateful or thoroughly contemptible. If you do not detest the person, you despise him; and if you do not despise him, you detest him with your whole heart. Hindley, the brutal, degraded sot, strong in the desire to work all mischief, but impotent in his degradation; Linton Heathcliff the miserable, driveling coward, in whom we see selfishness in its most abject form; and Heathcliff himself, the presiding evil genius of the piece, the tyrant father of an imbecile son, a creature in whom every evil passion seems to have reached a gigantic excess – form a group of deformities such as we have rarely seen gathered together on the same canvas. The author seems to have designed to throw some redeeming touches into the character of

the brutal Heathcliff by portraying him as one faithful to the ‘idol of his boyhood’ – loving to the very last long, long after death had divided them, the unhappy girl who had cheered and brightened up the early days of his wretched life. Here is the touch of nature which makes the whole world kin – but it fails of the intended effect. There is a selfishness – a ferocity in the love of Heathcliff, which scarcely suffer it, in spite of its rugged constancy, to relieve the darker parts of his nature. Even the female characters excite something of loathing and much of contempt. Beautiful and loveable in their childhood, they all, to use a vulgar expression, ‘turn out badly.’ Catherine the elder – wayward, impatient, impulsive – sacrifices herself and her lover to the pitiful ambition of becoming the wife of a gentleman of station. Hence her own misery – her early death – and something of the brutal wickedness of Heathcliff’s character and conduct; though we cannot persuade ourselves that even a happy love would have tamed down the natural ferocity of the tiger. Catherine the younger is more sinned against than sinning, and in spite of her grave moral defects, we have some hope of her at the last.

Wuthering Heights is not a book the character of which it is very easy to set forth in extract; but the following scene in which Catherine and Heathcliff – the lovers of early days each wedded to another – are the actors, will afford a glimpse of Ellis Bell’s power.

[quotes from chapter 15 the last meeting of Heathcliff and Catherine]

This is at least forcible writing; but, to estimate it aright, the reader . . . must not fancy himself in a London mansion; but in an old north-country manor-house, situated on ‘the dreary, dreary moorland,’ far from the haunts of civilised men. There is, at all events, keeping in the book – the groups of figures and the scenery are in harmony with each other. There is a touch of Salvator-Rosa in all. *Agnes Grey* is a story of very different stamp. It is a tale of every day life, and though not wholly free from exaggeration (there are some detestable young ladies in it), does not offend by any startling improbabilities. It is more level and more sunny. Perhaps we shall best describe it as a somewhat coarse imitation of one of Miss

Austin's [sic] charming stories. Like *Jane Eyre*, it sets forth some passages in the life of a governess; but the incidents, wound up with the heroine's marriage to a country clergy-man, are such as might happen to anyone in that situation of life, and, doubtless, have happened to many. There is a want of distinctness in the character of Agnes, which prevents the reader from taking much interest in her fate — but the story, though lacking the power and originality of *Wuthering Heights*, is infinitely more agreeable. It leaves no painful impression on the mind — some may think it leaves no impression at all. We are not quite sure that the next new novel will not efface it, but *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are not things to be forgotten. The work of Currer Bell is a great performance; that of Ellis Bell is only a promise, but it is a colossal one.

Britannia, 15 January 1848, 42-3

There are scenes of savage wildness in nature which, though they inspire no pleasurable sensation, we are yet well satisfied to have seen. In the rugged rock, the gnarled roots which cling to it, the dark screen of overhanging vegetation, the dank, moist ground and tangled network of weeds and bushes, – even in the harsh cry of solitary birds, the cries of wild animals, and the startling motion of the snake as it springs away scared by the intruder's foot, – there is an image of primeval rudeness which has much to fascinate, though nothing to charm, the mind. The elements of beauty are found in the midst of gloom and danger, and some forms are the more picturesque from their distorted growth amid so many obstacles. A tree clinging to the side of a precipice may more attract the eye than the pride of a plantation.

The principle may, to some extent, be applied to life. The uncultured freedom of native character presents more rugged aspects than we meet with in educated society. Its manners are not only more rough but its passions are more violent. It knows nothing of those breakwaters to the fury of tempest which civilized training establishes to subdue the harsher workings of the soul. Its wrath is unrestrained by reflection; the lips curse and the hand strikes with the first impulse of anger. It is more subject to brutal instinct than to divine reason.

It is humanity in this wild state that the author of *Wuthering Heights* essays to depict. His work is strangely original. It bears a resemblance to some of those irregular German tales in which the writers, giving the reins to their fancy, represent personages as swayed and impelled to evil by supernatural influences. But they give spiritual identity to evil impulses, while Mr. Bell more naturally shows them as the natural offspring of the unregulated heart. He displays a considerable power in his creations. They have all the angularity of misshapen growth and form in this respect a striking contrast to those regular forms we are accustomed to meet with in English fiction. They exhibit nothing of the composite character. There is in them no trace of ideal models. They are so new, so wildly grotesque, so entirely without art, that they strike us as proceeding from a mind of

limited experience, but of original energy, and of a singular and distinctive cast.

In saying this we indicate both the merits and faults of the tale. It is in parts very unskilfully constructed: many passages in it display neither the grace of art nor the truth of nature, but only the vigour of one positive idea, — that of passionate ferocity. It blazes forth in the most unsuitable circumstances, and from persons the least likely to be animated by it. The author is a Salvator Rosa²⁾ with his pen. He delineates forms of savage grandeur when he wishes to represent sylvan beauty. His Griseldas are furies, and his swains Polyphemi. For this reason his narrative leaves an unpleasant effect on the mind. There are no green spots in it on which the mind can linger with satisfaction. The story rushes onwards with impetuous force, but it is the force of a dark and sullen torrent, flowing between high and rugged rocks.

It is permitted to painting to seize one single aspect of nature, and, as the pleasure arising from its contemplation proceeds partly from love of imitation, objects unattractive in themselves may be made interesting on canvass. But in fiction this kind of isolation is not allowed. The exhibition of one quality or passion is not sufficient for it. So far as the design extends it must present a true image of life, and if it takes in many characters it must show them animated by many motives. There may be a predominant influence of one strong emotion, perhaps that is necessary to unity of effect, but it should be relieved by contrasts, and set off by accessories. *Wuthering Heights* would have been a far better romance if Heathcliff alone had been a being of stormy passions, instead of all the other characters being nearly as violent and destructive as himself. In fiction, too, as the imitation of nature can never be so vivid and exact as in painting, that imitation is insufficient of itself to afford pleasure, and when it deals with brutal subjects it becomes positively disgusting. It is of course impossible to prescribe rules for either the admission or the rejection of what is shocking and dreadful. It is nothing to say that reality is faithfully followed. The aim of fiction is to afford some sensation of delight. We admit we cannot rejoice in the triumph of goodness — that

2) Salvator Rosa (1615-73) was admired in England for the energy and picturesque grandeur of his landscapes

triumph which consists in the superiority of spirit to body – with but knowing its trials and sufferings. But the end of fictitious writings should always be kept in view: and that end is not merely mental excitement, for a very bad book may be very exciting. Generally we are satisfied there is some radical defect in those fictions which leave behind them an impression of pain and horror. It would not be difficult to show why this is, and must be, the case, but it would lead us into deeper considerations than are appropriate to this article.

Mr. Ellis Bell's romance is illuminated by some gleams of sunshine towards the end which serve to cast a grateful light on the dreary path we have travelled. Flowers rise over the grave of buried horrors. The violent passions of two generations are closed in death, yet in the vision of peace with which the tale closes we almost fear their revival in the warped nature of the young survivors.

Heathcliff is the central character of the piece. He is a gipsy foundling, and has been adopted from a feeling of benevolence – though of a rough and eccentric kind by a country gentleman. At the time the book opens, this Heathcliff, then past the middle of life, has the estate of his benefactor, together with a neighbouring property.

[Outlines the story]

It is difficult to pronounce any decisive judgment on a work in which there is so much rude ability displayed, yet in which there is so much matter for blame. The scenes of brutality are unnecessarily long and unnecessarily frequent; and as an imaginative writer the author has to learn the first principles of his art. But there is singular power in his portraiture of strong passion. He exhibits it as convulsing the whole frame of nature, distracting the intellect to madness, and snapping the heart-strings. The anguish of Heathcliff on the death of Catherine approaches to sublimity.

We do not know whether the author writes with any purpose; but we can speak of one effect of his production. It strongly shows the brutalizing influence of unchecked passion. His characters are a commentary on the truth that there is no

tyranny in the world like that which thoughts of evil exercise in the daring and reckless breast.

Another reflection springing from the narrative is that temper is often spoiled in the years of childhood. 'The child is father of the man.' The pains and crosses of its youthful years are engrafted in its blood, and form a sullen and a violent disposition. Grooms know how often the tempers of horses are irremediably spoiled in training. But some parents are less wise regarding their children. The intellect in its growth has the faculty of accommodating itself to adverse circumstances. To violence it sometimes opposes violence, sometimes dogged obstinacy. The consequence in either case is fatal to the tranquillity of life. Young Catherine Linton is represented as a naturally sensitive, high-spirited amiable girl; subjected to the cruel usage of her brutal stepfather, she is roused to resistance, and answers his curses with taunts, and his stripes with threatenings. Released from his tyranny, a more gracious spirit comes over her, and she is gentle and peaceful.

There are some fine passages scattered through the pages. Here is a thought on the tranquillity of death.

[Nelly Dean's reflections on death, chapter 16]

Of Joseph, the old sullen servant of Heathcliff, it is quaintly said, that he was 'the sourest-hearted pharisee that ever searched a Bible to rake all the blessings to himself and fling all the curses to his neighbours.'

The third volume of the book is made up of a separate tale relating the fortunes of a governess. Some characters and scenes are nicely sketched in it, but it has nothing to call for special notice. The Volumes abound in provincialisms. In many respects they remind us of the recent novel of *Jane Eyre*. We presume they proceed from one family, if not from one pen.

The tale to which we have more particularly alluded is but a fragment, yet of colossal proportion, and bearing evidence of some great design. With all its power and originality, it is so rude, so unfinished, and so careless, that we are perplexed

to pronounce an opinion on it, or to hazard a conjecture on the future career of the author. As yet it belongs to the future to decide whether he will remain a rough hewer of marble or become a great and noble sculptor.

Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper, 15 January 1848, 77

Two of these volumes contain a tale by Mr. Ellis Bell, called *Wuthering Heights*, and the third volume is devoted to another story, told in an autobiographical form, by Mr. Acton Bell, and is entitled *Agnes Grey*.

Dissimilar as they are in many respects, there is a distinct family likeness between these two tales; and, our organ of comparison be not out of order, we are not far wrong in asserting that they are not so much like each other, as they are both like a novel recently published under the editorship of Mr. Currer Bell viz., *Jane Eyre*. We do not mean to say that either of the tales now before us is equal in merit to that novel, but they have somewhat of the same fresh, original, and unconventional spirit; while the style of composition is, undoubtedly, of the same north-country, Doric school; it is simple, energetic, and apparently disdainful of prettinesses and verbal display.

Of *Agnes Grey*, much need not be said, further than this, that it is the autobiography of a young lady during the time she was a governess in two different families; neither of which is a favourable specimen of the advantages of home education. We do not actually assert that the author must have been a governess himself, to describe as he does the minute torments and incessant tediums of her life, but he must have bribed some governess very largely, either with love or money, to reveal to him the secrets of her prison-house, or, he must have devoted extraordinary powers of observation and discovery to the elucidation of the subject. In either case, *Agnes Grey* is a tale well worth the writing and the reading. The heroine is a sort of younger sister to *Jane Eyre*; but inferior to her in every way. The following is, we imagine, a truthful picture of an interior.

[quotes from chapter 3 , 'However, by dint of great labour... Remember that, Mrs Bloomfield !']

Wuthering Heights is a strange sort of book, baffling all regular criticism; yet, it is impossible to begin and not finish it; and quite as impossible to lay it aside

afterwards and say nothing about it. In the midst of the reader's perplexity the ideas predominant in his mind concerning this book are likely to be – brutal cruelty, and semi-savage love. What may be the moral which the author wishes the reader to deduce from his work, it is difficult to say; and we refrain from assigning any, because to speak honestly, we have discovered none but mere glimpses of hidden morals or secondary meanings. There seems to us great power in this book but a purposeless power which we feel a great desire to see turned to better account. We are quite confident that the writer of *Wuthering Heights* wants but the practised skill to make a great artist; perhaps, a great dramatic artist. His qualities are, at present, excessive; a far more promising fault, let it be remembered, than if they were deficient. He may tone down, whereas the weak and inefficient writer, however carefully he may write by rule and line, will never work up his productions to the point of beauty in art. In *Wuthering Heights* the reader is shocked, disgusted, almost sickened by details of cruelty, inhumanity, and the most diabolical hate and vengeance, and anon come passages of powerful testimony to the supreme power of love – even over demons in the human form. The women in the book are of a strange fiendish-angelic nature, tantalizing, and terrible, and the men are indescribable out of the book itself. Yet, towards the close of the story occurs the following pretty, soft picture, which comes like the rainbow after a storm.

[quotes from chapter 32, 'Both doors and lattices were open. . . refuge in the kitchen']

We strongly recommend all our readers who love novelty to get this story, for we can promise them that they never have read anything like before. It is very puzzling and very interesting, and if we had space we would willingly devote a little more time to the analysis of this remarkable story, but we must leave it to our readers to decide what sort of book it is.

Examiner, January 1848, 21-2

This is a strange book. It is not without evidences of considerable power: but, as a whole, it is wild, confused, disjointed, and improbable; and the people who make up the drams, which is tragic enough in its consequences, are savages ruder than those who lived before the days of Homer. With the exception of Heathcliff, the story is confined to the family of Earnshaw, who intermarry with the Lintons; and the scene of their exploits is a rude old-fashioned house, at the top of one of the high moors or fells in the north of England. Whoever has traversed the bleak heights of Hartside or Cross Fell, on his road from Westmoreland to the dales of Yorkshire, and has been welcomed there by the winds and rain on a 'gusty day,' will know how to estimate the comforts of Wuthering Heights in wintry weather.

[Quotes the opening of paragraphs of the novel]

Heathcliff may be considered as the hero of the book, if a hero there be. He is an incarnation of evil qualities; implacable hate, ingratitude, cruelty, falsehood, selfishness, and revenge. He exhibits, moreover, a certain stoical endurance in early life, which enables him to 'bide his time,' and nurse up his wrath till it becomes mature and terrible; and there is one portion of his nature, one only, wherein he appears to approximate to humanity. Like the Corsair, and other such melodramatic heroes, his is

Linked to on virtue and a thousand crimes;³

and it is with difficulty that we can prevail upon ourselves to believe in the appearance of such a phenomenon, so near our own dwellings as the summit of a Lancashire or Yorkshire moor.

It is not easy to disentangle the incidents and set them forth in chronological

3) Bryon's *The Corsair* (1814) iii, 864: "Linked with one virtue, and a thousand crimes..."

order. The tale is confused, as we have said, notwithstanding that the whole drama takes place in the house that we have described, and that the sole actors are the children of Earnshaw, by birth or adoption, and their servants.

[outlines the story]

We are not disposed to ascribe any particular intention to the author in drawing the character of Heathcliff, nor can we perceive any very obvious moral in the story. There are certain good rough dashes at character; some of the incidents look like real events; and the book has the merit, which must not be undervalued, of avoiding common-place and affection. The language, however, is not always appropriate and we entertain great doubts as to the truth, or rather the *vraisemblance* of the main character. The hardness, selfishness, and cruelty of Heathcliff are in our opinion inconsistent with the romantic love that he is stated to have felt for Catherine Earnshaw. As Nelly Dean says, 'he is as hard as a whinstone.' He has no gratitude, no affection, no liking for anything human except for one person, and that liking is thoroughly selfish and ferocious. He hates the son of Hindley, which is intelligible enough; but he also hates and tyrannizes over his own son and the daughter of his beloved Catherine, and this we cannot understand.

We have said that there are some good dashes at character.

[quotes from chapter 5 descriptions of Cathy's appearance and behavior]

From what we have said, the reader will imagine that the book is full of grim pictures. Here is one.

[quotes from chapter 29 Heathcliff's account of opening Catherine Linton's coffin eighteen years after her death]

If this book be, as we apprehend it is, the first work of the author, we hope that

he will produce a second, – giving himself more time in its composition than in the present case, developing his incidents more carefully, eschewing exaggeration and obscurity, and looking steadily at human life, under all its moods, for those pictures of the passions that he may desire to sketch for our public benefit. It may be well also to be sparing of certain oaths and phrases, which do not materially contribute to any character, and are by no means to be reckoned among the evidences of a writer's genius. We detest the affectation and effeminate frippery which is but too frequent in the modern novel, and willingly trust ourselves with an author who goes at once fearlessly into the moors and desolate places, for his heroes; but we must at the same time stipulate with him that he shall not drag into light all that he discovers, of coarse and loathsome, in his wanderings, but simply so much good and ill as he may find necessary to elucidate his history – so much only as may be interwoven inextricably with the persons whom he professes to paint. It is the province of an artist to modify and in some cases refine what he beholds in the ordinary world. There never was a man whose daily life (that is to say, *all* his deeds and sayings, entire and without exception) constituted fit materials for a book of fiction. Even the figures of the Greeks (which are

In marbles ever beautiful)⁴

were without doubt selected from the victors in the ancient games, and others, by Phidias and his scholars, and their forms and countenances made perfect before they were thought worthy to adorn the temple of the wise Athena.

The only book which occurs to us as resembling *Wuthering Heights* is a novel of the late Mr Hooton's,⁵ a work of very great talent, in which the hero is a tramp or beggar, and the *dramatis personae* all derived from humble and middle life; but which, notwithstanding its defects, we remember thinking better in its peculiar kind than anything that had been produced since the days of Fielding.

4) Keats's *Endymion* (1818) I, 31

5) Charles Hooton's novels include *Adventures of Bilberry Hurland* (1836), *Colin Clink* (1841) and *Launcelot Wedge* (1849)

Unidentified Review, c.1847

This is a work of great ability, and contains many chapters, to the production of which talent of no common order has contributed. At the same time, the materials which the author has placed at his own disposal have been but few. In the resources of his own mind, and in his own manifestly vivid perceptions of the peculiarities of character — in short, in his knowledge of human nature — has he found them all. An antiquated farm-house, a neighbouring residence of a somewhat more pretending description, together with their respective inmates, amounting to some half a dozen souls in each, constitute the material and the personal components of one of the most interesting stories we have read for many a long day. The comfortable cheerfulness of the one abode, and the cheerless discomfort of the other the latter being less the result of a cold and bleak situation, old and damp rooms and (if we may use the term) of a sort of ‘haunted house’ appearance, than of the strange and mysterious character of its inhabitants — the loves and marriages, separations and hatreds, hopes and disappointments, of two or three generations of the gentle occupants of the one establishment, and the ruder tenants of the other, are brought before us at a moment with a tenderness, at another with a fearfulness, which appeals to our sympathies with the truest tones of the voice of nature; and it is quite impossible to read the book — and this is no slight testimony to the merits of a work of the kind — without feeling that, if placed in the same position as any one of the characters in any page of it, the chances would be twenty to one in favour our conduct in that position being precisely such as the author has assigned to the personages he has introduced into his domestic drama. But we must at once impose upon ourselves a task — and we confess it is a hard one — we must abstain (from a regard to the space at our disposal) from yielding to the temptation by which we are beset to enter into that minute description of the plot of this very dramatic production to which such a work has an undoubted claim. It is not every day that so good a novel makes its appearance; and to give its contents

in detail would be depriving many a reader of half the delight he would experience from the perusal of the work itself. To its pages we must refer him, then; there will he have ample opportunity of sympathising, — if he has one touch of nature that ‘makes the whole world kin’ — with the feelings of childhood, youth, manhood, and age, and all the emotions and passions which agitate the restless bosom of humanity. May he derive from it the delight we have ourselves experienced, and be equally grateful to its author for the genuine pleasure he has afforded him.

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