The Master Model in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights:*
An Ecofeminist Reading[1]

El modelo del amo en *Cumbres Borrascosas* de Emily Brontë: una lectura ecofeminista

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Resumen. *Cumbres Borrascosas* (1847) de Emily Brontë, una de las obras canónicas de la literatura inglesa, ilustra la distorsión y la polarización de la naturaleza, la resistencia a las figuras patriarcales y la importancia primordial del saber y la razón en la disolución y el reclamo de identidades marginadas. Aproximándonos a la narrativa mediante la crítica (eco)feminista de Plumwood (1993/2003), este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la dimensión política de las relaciones humanas con la naturaleza y las formas dominantes de racionalidad en la estructura lógica de dualismos. Esta lente ha permitido una lectura ecofeminista de las opresiones interrelacionadas de raza, clase y género en la construcción de Catherine y Heathcliff. La posición fluctuante de estos protagonistas en la escala de alteridad revela la dinámica de poder de los centros hegemónicos en ambas familias, en Cumbres Borrascosas y en la Granja de los Tordos. En este contexto, la educación finalmente apunta a una posible reconciliación de los binarismos opuestos del modelo del amo en la segunda generación de personajes, Cathy y Hareton. Los personajes de Emily Brontë enfatizarán la compleja articulación de las fuentes de tensión y los mecanismos de opresión en funcionamiento en *Cumbres Borrascosas*.

Palabras clave: *Literatura europea; crítica literaria; feminismo; ecofeminismo; hegemonía cultural.*

Abstract. One of the canonical writings of English literature, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) illustrates the distortion and polarisation of nature, the resistance of patriarchal figures and the prime importance of knowledge and reason in dissolving and reclaiming alienated identities. Approaching the narrative through Plumwood's (1993/2003) (eco)feminist critique, this article aims to analyse the political dimension of human relations with nature and the dominant forms of rationality in the logical structure of dualisms. This lens allowed an ecofeminist reading of the interrelated oppressions of race, class, and gender in the construction of Catherine and Heathcliff. The fluctuating position of these protagonists in the scale of otherness reveals the power dynamics of the hegemonic centres in both households, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. In this context, education eventually points at a possible reconciliation of the opposing binarisms of the master's model in the second generation of characters, Cathy and Hareton. Emily Brontë's characters stress the intricate articulation of the sources of tension and the mechanisms of oppression at work in her *Wuthering Heights*.

Keywords: *Western literature; literary criticism; feminism; ecofeminism; cultural hegemony*

1. Introduction

Initially published under the pen name Ellis Bell in 1847, *Wuthering Heights* has received much attention in view of its complex narrative, which has enabled a multiplicity of interpretations. Emily Brontë's only surviving novel[2] offers an intensely controversial story; so much so that the harsh criticism it received prompted Charlotte Brontë to edit a posthumous edition of her sister's text in 1850, which included specific annotations about the female author and her story, a brief prologue, and stylistic and content modifications. To focus on the importance of nature in Emily Brontë's narrative, it is necessary to review Charlotte Brontë's (1850b/2002) critique of her sister's book, described as imbued with a "storm-heated and electrical atmosphere" (315). Her natural portraits of the landscape are inspired by the Yorkshire moors, "her native hills were far more to her than a spectacle; they were what she lived in, and by, as much as the wild birds, their tenants, or as the heather, their produce" (Brontë, 1850b/2002: 314). Charlotte's 1850 edition offer an evaluation of her sister's protagonists, Catherine and Heathcliff, of nature, and of the sites of contest and turmoil in the narrative. Nature is of paramount importance in this text, particularly, in Brontë's modelling of the protagonists, family names and houses[3]. The forces leading the development of characters accentuate the differences between Earnshaw and Linton families, and between the windy heights of Wuthering Heights and the rich lowland of Thrushcross Grange.

Charlotte Brontë's Notice emerges as one of the first and key appraisals of *Wuthering Heights.* The structural elements of the novel, its plot and its main characters spurred critical appreciation mostly due to Charlotte edition, in a timeless dispute that underwent for almost a hundred years after its publication (Watson, 1949: 243). Her edition presents Emily Brontë as the book's legitimate author. In her edition, Charlotte Brontë ascertained the author's bond with the originality of its narrative and the landscape of the English moors. The novel, in Charlotte Brontë's (1850b/2002) words, is "moorish, and wild, and knotty as a root of heath. Nor was it natural that it should be otherwise; the author being herself a native and nursling of the moors" (313-314)[4]. Emily's production is unbending, undomesticated and uncommon (Pascoe, 2017), but precise in her depiction of nature and the particularities of the Yorkshire moors (Heywood, 2001)[5]. *Wuthering Heights* is the outcome of contemplation and study, of the author's role as artisan and artist.

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[2] Although there is no evidence of a second novel written by Emily Brontë, her publisher Thomas Cautley Newby mentions its existence in a letter addressed to the author. This lost manuscript has attracted the attention of literary critics from Simpson (1929) to Chitham (1998/2001) who claims "that there is really no room for doubt about this second book" (Chitham, 1998/2001:193).

[3] In her short essay, "Le Papillon," written in French in 1842, or "The Butterfly" in English, references to nature and the natural landscape abound in Emily Brontë's philosophical and theological questioning of death, violence and existence. See: Brontë, Emily. (1948/2007). The Butterfly. In Beth Newman (Ed.). *Wuthering Heights* (pp. 316-317). Canada: Broadview Press Ltd.

[4] Heywood (2001) makes reference to *Wuthering Heights's* spatial location as a puzzle of mappings in Yorkshire, a combination of natural scenery of the moorlands: "a northern Pennine landscape from the Yorkshire Dales" in the first volume of the book, "overlaid in the second half [or volume] with a moorland of southern Pennine type" (188).

[5] In Pascoe's words (2017: 1), *Wuthering Heights* is "an oddity of the nineteenth-century literary canon, a screaming banshee of a book in the midst of well-mannered works."

The Brontë sisters' communication, their endorsement of and feedback on their literary compositions confirm the importance of self-reflection and knowledge of female writers, and its influence on the concoction of *Wuthering Heights.* Literary subcultures like the Brontë's sisterhood had to deal with the obstacles of authority, the anxieties of censorship and publishing barriers[6]. Their writings emerged in a difficult climate for women writers, a period overtly patriarchal and "overwhelmingly male" when theorists "assumed [that] literature had to be male" (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979/2000: 45-46, 47). Under the penname of Ellis Bell, a pseudonym possibly used by Emily Brontë for its gender ambiguity, newspaper reviews classified her novel as a man's work. Charlotte Brontë (1850a/2002: 307, 309) was not at all "surprised" that her sister's novel was "misunderstood" or that "the identity of its author was misrepresented". Charlotte endeavoured to clarify the identity of Acton's, Currer's and Ellis Bell's male pseudonyms in her posthumous volume by claiming a tradition of the Brontë's writing and supporting the brilliance of Emily's book.

Charlotte Brontë's edition contextualises the role of nature in the construction of Emily Brontë's characters, while a revision of previous literature in the cultural context of the Brontë siters' literary production draws on the scope and complexity of the novel. In section 1., a brief literature review of *Wuthering Heights,* and an overview of the Brontë sisters introduce the background and context of Emily Brontë's literary production in previous research. In section 2., the theoretical framework concentrates on preliminary notions that are relevant to the analysis of the novel. Firstly, Gilbert and Gubar's (1979/2000) feminist critique supports the debate on the roles of privilege and education, and the patriarchal system concerning Brontë's characters and their will to power and domination. The whip metaphor discussed by Gilbert and Gubar (1979/2000) implements the study of gender relations and anticipates the existence of an ample spectrum of oppressions in human domination of nature. Secondly, Plumwood's (1993/2003) conceptualisation of the dualisms of the master model provides a unitary reading of the diverse hierarchies of authority and domination. Her insights into the political dimension of nature apply to the sources of tension and instability, to the slave-body, slave-animal and slave-female relational pairs, and furthermore, to the culture/nature, male/female, mind/body, reason/emotion, civilised/primitive and human/ nature dualisms. Considering that "human relations to nature are not only ethical, but also political", Plumwood's (1993/2003: 13) (eco)feminist critique outlines the construction of master/slave relations and the integrating role of nature on other forms of domination. In section 3., Plumwood's (1993/2003) model becomes the main source of information for the ecofeminist analysis of *Wuthering Heights,* in which nature contains the excluded counterpart of dual-

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[6] In Charlotte's (1850a/2002) "Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell", the publishing barriers for the Brontë sisters are restated. She affirms that "The bringing out of our little book was hard work. [...] The great puzzle lay in the difficulty of getting answers of any kind from the publishers to whom we applied", and when they answered, further problems came forth (Brontë, 1850a/2002: 308). Charlotte's efforts to clarify the authorship of her sisters' novels unveils Thomas Newby's attempts to make profit out of *Jane Eyre* (1847), which was published under Elder Smith's approval, and not under Newby's.

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isms and dichotomies. This section is further divided into five subsections as follows: 3.1. looks into sameness and dissimilarity in Brontë's characters, master/slave dialectics, and the concept of negation in the identity of the master; furthermore, 3.2. elaborates on the reason/nature dualism, the role of patriarchal control and Heathcliff's accentuated alterity in the master/slave model; 3.3. draws on the relevance of the male figure in the master model, and its force of reversal in master/slave relations by appraising the symbolism of Catherine's whip metaphor, then, by focusing on the reclaimed identity of Heathcliff and the dissolution of Catherine's distinctive character in 3.4.; yet, the union of Cathy and Hareton is additionally discussed in 3.5. as a potential reconciliation of dualisms. Final remarks, in section 4, regard all previous theoretical and practical considerations to verify the master/slave model that reverses and immortalises the initial nature/culture dualism.

1.1. Literary Criticism on *Wuthering Heights*

A number of Brontë scholars focus on the reinterpretation of character's relations, of symbolism and metaphysics in *Wuthering Heights* (Sanger, 1926/1970; Daley, 1995; Miller, 1982). Structuralist and formalist readings have traditionally drawn on the legal and historical knowledge available to Emily Brontë and its relevance in her construction of characters (Sanger, 1926/1970; Daley, 1995). Her main characters, and specially Heathcliff, emerge as perfect connoisseurs of socio-political possibilities and the legal processes involved in property ownership and inheritance (Sanger, 1926/1970; Daley, 1995; Ward, 2012). Emily may have endowed Heathcliff with her familiarisation with legal reforms and applicable law in nineteenth-century England (Ward, 2012). The factual datum arising from these historical associations give way to interpret her narrative as a complex system of Chinese boxes, and ultimately, as a chronological set of "intertextual conversation[s]" (Ledent & Callaghan, 2017: 229). The novel is comprised of a sequence "of interpretations and of interpretations within interpretations [...] from text to text [...] each inside the other" (Miller, 1982: 45). This mirroring structure of metafictions and palimpsests parallels the convoluted relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff. Their sympathetic redemption only comes with the offspring of the second generation of characters, who will make possible the reconciliation and renunciation of evil (McKibben, 1960: 168-169). It is the rhetorical image of books in the novel that may categorise the passionate and overpowering responses of fictional characters to violence and condemnation (McKibben, 1960; Hagan, 1967), while the maturation of the first generation of characters and their choices can affect readers' identification with characters (Van de Laar, 2019). If the tragic dilemma of Catherine and Heathcliff's relation is determined by a choice between the material or the spiritual (Gilbert & Gubar, 1919/2000; Nussbaum, 1996; Haire-Sargeant, 1999; Schakenraad, 2016), or by the major authoritative modes of the "gothic and the domestic" narrative (Rena-Dozier, 2010: 757), then, a dualistic division of opposites arguably frames the reading of *Wuthering Heights.*

This paradigmatic division isolates both Catherine and Heathcliff from their com-

munity of the Heights, and renders them stratified by society and religion (Duthie, 1986; Nussbaum, 1996). The social hierarchy of institutionalised Christianity excludes Heathcliff as "the poor, strange, nameless and dark-skinned" man (Nussbaum, 1996: 375). However, this iconoclastic perspective of their romance also prompts two dimensions: 1) their "incorporeal love" (Haire-Sargeant, 1999: 181), and 2) their "cultivation of a masochistic dyad" that outlines the systematic complexity of their marriages (Jarvis, 2016: 26). The tortuous romance of Brontë's book attests to the flawed nature of the protagonists that tread on the footsteps of Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* (1667). There is not an alternative for Catherine, but to find her own means to provide for herself by marrying Edgar, and for Heathcliff to acknowledge his racialised identity at the Heights (Schakenraad, 2016: 341; Ledent and O'Callaghan, 2017: 244). The contradictions that arise from Catherine and Edgar's marriage are negotiated by the stifling social norms in Victorian bourgeois society (Eagleton, 2005).

Literary criticism on *Wuthering Heights* is prolific and diverse, and recent research carried out by historicists and comparatists give attention to the similarities between Brontë's book and her Gondal poetry[7], and between two Shakespearean tragedies, *King Lear* (1606), and *Romero and Juliet* (1597) (Heywood, 2013; Moorhouse Marr, 2020; Colvin, 2021). The familiarisation of Heathcliff with violence and revenge, and the "brutalized" nature surrounding the narrative echo the revenge plot of *King Lear* (Moorhouse Marr, 2020: 111). Additionally, the exhumation of Catherine's corpse links Heathcliff with Romeo when he enters the Capulet's monument in the churchyard (Colvin, 2021: 382). Like for Shakespeare's Juliet, Catherine's "grave is like to be [her/] my wedding-bed" (1597: 35). Heathcliff's identity has been compared with the heroes of Greek mythology, and his and Catherine's errors, the moral errors and judgements of ancient tragedy (Panagiotopoulou, 2020). He "hides and mirrors something from Oedipus, Hippolytus, Deianeira, Medea, Orestes, and Electra" (Panagiotopoulou, 2020: 257). He and Catherine incur in operations that delineate conceptual boundaries, aspects and conventions, and have led to a growing body of feminist criticism (Homans, 1978, 2015; Gilbert & Gubar, 1919; Auerbach, 1982; Evans & Evans, 1985; Yaeger, 1988, Barreca, 1990; Steinitz, 2011), and of film studies criticism (Haire-Sargeant, 1999; Thornham, 2016; Lawrence, 2016; Oroskhan, 2020) of cinema adaptations of *Wuthering Heights.* Criticism on the novel continues to add more nuances to the layered socio-cultural anxieties and concerns brought forward by most well-known researchers on the field of Brontë studies.

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[7] For the transcript and images of the Gondal manuscript, see: *Manuscript of Emily Brontë's Gondal poetry.* The British Library. https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/manuscript-of-emily-bronts-gondal-poetry

2. Critical Approach to Master Model Dualisms: from Gilbert and Gubar's Feminism to Plumwood's (Eco)Feminism

Firstly, Gilbert and Gubar's (1979) whip metaphor reasserts Catherine's insurrections to male politics, which are however restricted by patriarchal order; secondly, this metaphor provides the starting point of a unitary ecofeminist reading of hierarchies of authority and domination. These implications draw on the axis of domination and subjugation in *Wuthering Heights,* that is politically encoded in nature. The geographical setting of the Heights, namely, the Yorkshire moors, and its association with nature and brutality are strongly relevant to those who inhabit its wilderness (D'Albertis, 2017). *Wuthering Heights'* nature mirrors the violence and irrationality in which the moors permeate the souls of characters. The notion of violence is contagious and infectious to characters as "wilderness can reclaim civilized places and people" (D'Albertis, 2017: 134). Heathcliff personifies "this dying world," and wilderness, "self-destruction or self-murder" appear as "endemic" of the inhabitants of the Heights (D'Albertis, 2017: 137, 138). Involved in the organising principles at work in Brontë's novel, characters are intermingled in the hostile gulf of nature. This emphasis on nature in *Wuthering Heights* meets with how humans' relation with nature is both painful and paradisiacal, as it is Catherine and Heathcliff's relation materialised.

Feminist criticism linked to Gilbert and Gubar's (1979) whip metaphor serves to analyse the bracketing structure of power relations in *Wuthering Heights.* Their metaphor anticipates the ample spectrum of oppressions in gender relations and the human domination of nature. The whip metaphor facilitates the critical debate about the role of privilege and education, and the patriarchal system concerning Brontë's characters and their will to power and domination. As a potential source to destabilise official narratives of male dominance, Catherine Earnshaw's desire for a whip is transfigured into a metaphor of mastery. She gets her gift in the form of an orphan child of uncertain racial origins, who functions as Catherine's instrument to rebel: "smashing her rival-brother's fiddle and making a desirable third among the children in the family so as to insulate her from the pressure of her brother's domination" (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979/2000: 264). Heathcliff becomes both the direct and indirect executor of active and passive brutality, and of destruction and punishment under Catherine's command. He assumes the form of a micro-system that takes control of the macro-system of the Heights for young Catherine, without appealing to marriage. In this context, Catherine can rearrange her position in the family and shatter the power dynamics of household politics. She demands that Heathcliff embodies an alternative self who "fleshes out all her lacks the way a bandage might staunch a wound" (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979/2000: 265). Her rebellious energy, reinforced by Heathcliff, metamorphoses into that of a satanic figure of might and disobedience by rebelling against patriarchal discipline. Hence, Heathcliff is transformed into Catherine's weapon, ointment and protector in a "feminist dream of wholeness" and affinity, that is both painful and idyllic (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979/2000: 266).

In conceptualising the political dimension of nature in the literary text, it is, however, the model of critical ecofeminism which sets the criteria of the following analysis. Ecofeminism is pluralistic, but united by its response to the subordination of women and nature to patriarchal structures. The focus here will be on what Puleo (2015) denominates "ecofeminismos críticos" rather than attempting to address the totality of ecofeminism, that is, of 1) essentialist, 2) spiritual, or 3) degrowth ecofeminism and myths of catching-up development. Puleo (2015: 398) makes reference to all ramifications of ecofeminism that reject any essentialist positioning that vindicates and celebrates as biologically determined any special connection between women and other-than-human nature. This critical theorisation of ecofeminism is advanced by Plumwood's (1993/2003) view of politics and nature, and of dualisms as a singular criterion to investigate patriarchal domination and subordination. To this end, Plumwood's (1993/2003) conceptualisation of master model dualisms and the logic of colonisation are used to examine the sources of tension and instability in *Wuthering Heights*. Western culture has based the logic of dualisms on the relation of neediness and subservience with the marked other, the colonised. Thus, the resolution of binaries and dualisms in gender must imply other dualisms, because, as she affirms, "linking feminism to other forms of oppression has a powerful subversive potential" (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 66). To define the colonised in terms of the master or within the dominant voice of culture, the minor voice needs to be assimilated into the discourse of institutionalisation. Yet, negation remains at the core of differentiation in the arranged power structures behind dualisms and masters' anxieties. These dualisms are interrelated and relevant to the "domination and accumulation" that demarcates the "inferior and alien realm" and the ruler of the superior and legitimate one (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 42).

Plumwood's (1993/2003) dualisms are not dichotomies, but complex enmeshed stores of maps, postulates and contrasting pairs that include class, gender, nature and race oppressions. Plumwood elaborates on the key elements of a set of these contrasting pairs in Western though throughout history: on "culture/nature," "reason/nature," "male/female," "mind/body," "master/slave," "reason/matter," "rationality/animality," "reason/emotion," "mind, spirit/nature," "freedom/necessity," "universal/particular," "human/nature," "civilised/primitive," "production/reproduction," "public/private," "subject/object," "self/other" dualisms (43). On the left side, pairs are commonly attributed to humans in general, and to men specifically, while those on the right have been traditionally associated with women. This dividing framework allocates the human part to the dominant position, and the right-side other, to the contrasted counterpart that escapes the centralised norm. Dualisms are entitled as cultural expressions of hierarchies that disregard equality and favour the hierarchical milieu. Dualisms coexist with specific features of appropriation: a) backgrounding or denial from the irreconcilable position of the master-slave relation, in which the master takes advantage of his dominant position and the slave's service to neglect their dependency, b) radical exclusion and "hyperseparation" from the master, who tries to exaggerate their existing differences to as-

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sure dissimilarity, c) incorporation of the desires of the other to assimilate them into the master's own ambition and aspirations, d) instrumentalism of the other to disregard his/her intrinsic value as an instrument to the master's ends, and, e) homogenisation or stereotyping to deny master-slave individuality (Plumwood, 1993/ 2003: 48, 49, 52, 53). To the following reading of nature and Emily Brontë's characters, Plumwood's (1993/2003) theorisation will serve as a unifying approach to re-read emotion, gender, nature, passion and violence in *Wuthering Heights.*

3. An Ecofeminist Lens to Read Wuthering Heights

Master/slave dialectics and the identity of the master are inexorably merged in the logic of colonisation, and, thus, in the operational logic of dualisms in *Wuthering Heights*: "'You forget you have a master here', says the tyrant" (Brontë, 1947/2012: 22). The identity of the master is embedded on the concepts of negation and otherness, and it appears in connection with "the logic of instrumental reason," in other words, with the "dominant logic of the market and the public sphere" (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 58). This logic legitimises standardised practices and social conventions by defining the salient qualities of the master and the missing ones of the slave. The master occupies a privileged position in the scale of supremacy, and, as regards gender politics, he embodies the summit of power structures above the mistress, who ultimately occupies an intermediate position between master and slave. Her position is however, superior to that of the slave.

The master/slave dialectics generate a multiple system of exclusion, marginalisation and opposition. These dialectics devise a set of dualisms that discriminate culture, mind, rationality, freedom, human, civilised and production from nature, and male from female, reason from matter, universal from particular, public from private, subject from object and self from other (Plumwood, 1993/2003). However, the fixity of the model as formula does not consider the fluctuating movement of its members. When Heathcliff evolves into the master, he ultimately accomplishes his ambition to make his fortune and to become a landowner three years after his departure from the Heights, and shortly thereafter "of his having been in the army" (Brontë, 1947/2012: 103). His subservient cooperation boils up to an overpowering force of vengeance, at the same time that Catherine Earnshaw Linton repeatedly tried to access the domineering role. By performing the role of the master, she effectively subjugates Heathcliff at first, and apparently subdues her husband, Edgar Linton. Heathcliff lively aims to execute his revenge on each family by dispossessing it of their birthright, "particularly its female members, to be completely dependent on him" (Evans & Evans, 1985: 304)[8]. If there is any chance of reversal for Catherine, where structures of male mastery are established or challenged, the contrasting pair male/female finds resistance to be defeated.

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[8] Evans and Evans (1985) consider Hindley's degradation to a drunken gambler by pointing to Heathcliff's reasoning of disturbance and discerning the saliency of the racial component; "the narrative is certainly not the record of pure-white victims being persecuted by an out-and-out villain – though a terribly rough justice" appears to influence the behaviour of characters (305).

3.1. Reason/nature Dualism and the Logic of Colonisation

Wuthering Heights is the site of patriarchal control, of concocted violence and class and gender distinctions. Fathers as heads of families and masters of their households arrange the pyramidal structure of power that situate themselves at the zenith of domestic economy, duty, judgement and responsibilities. Masters become the subjects of domination by framing otherness and the logic of colonisation in which the other cannot be identified from the master independently (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 56). The male sphere in possession of the culture-reason divide adheres to counsel and instruction, and defines the female counterpart as lacking it, while it also associates women in their reproductive role to nurturance, and to the body-nature relational pair in the mind/body dualism. As well as men, however, women in Brontë's novel are able to rebel and to exercise violence; women are not necessarily "empathic, nurturant and co-operative" (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 9). Women engage in the dialectics of the masters to be contenders of patriarchal conflict and, furthermore, to be allies of the master/slave dichotomy that associates men with reason and women with nature. This logic of colonisation abides gender notions to run parallel with reason and violence, and tyranny with domination and subjugation.

The ubiquity of these paterfamilias dominates the narrative structure by displacing the motherly figure outside the story soon after childbirth. Fathers were in charge of production, whereas society entrusted women with reproduction in the context of the Industrial Revolution, which was a period that transformed manufacturing processes and the whole socio-economic situation of England. As Plumwood (1993/2003: 3) argues, "it is the father who takes credit for and possession of this misbegotten child," by guiding his/her development and denying "the maternal role." Mr Earnshaw similarly assumes the role of Heathcliff's carer as later Heathcliff becomes Hareton's mentor when he returns to the Heights, and of his own son Linton several years later. At the Grange, Edgar raises Catherine Linton "entirely on himself," who grew into "an apt scholar" of "quick intellect," a loving infant who "learnt rapidly and eagerly, and did honour to his teaching" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 203). This model still does not always turn into a good example, as it is the case of Heathcliff's wards, Hareton and Linton. The latter Linton Heathcliff is reduced to a means of excuse to prepare his father's vengeance and to appease his ambition; he is portrayed as an unhealthy son uncared for in his illness, and finally ignored at his impending death. Hareton, on his part, being halfway between a resource to carry out Heathcliff's personal act of revenge, and a potential mirror image of his younger self is degraded to the rank of a farmer: "we'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!" (Brontë, 1947/2012: 201). Despite the fact that cycles of violence are not discredited, this situation will not last after Heathcliff is erased from the story, because Hareton has the superiority of the Earnshaw name, of the Earnshaw "seed," which will free him from eternal subjugation (McKibben, 1960: 165).

Although male dominance is evident in the dynamics of the narrative, female figures adhere to functions conventionally associated to the male sphere. Mothers, such as

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Catherine Earnshaw Linton or Isabella, stand in the foreground of the story, while Cathy Linton and Nelly reconfigure the previous education of male characters, almost in motherly roles[9]. Initially, Nelly is characterised as a maternal figure for Heathcliff that leads him to acknowledge the relevance of reason and of a smart appearance, to cast aside his origins and, instead, to sustain "dignity to support the oppressions of a farmer!" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 61). In volume II, in order to replace the solicitude of Linton Heathcliff's absent mother, Cathy Linton complacently attends to his calls, complaints and demands: "Sit on the settle and let me lean on your knee – That's as mama used to do" (Brontë, 1947/2012: 258). Cathy behaves as the meek daughter his grandfather wanted to have, and when she is emotionally blackmailed, she falls into the trap of her mother's constrictions, of the absolutism of the Heights. She holds a resemblance with her mother, and in one of her visits to the Heights, her jovial character resolves to subdue the patriarchal sphere, firstly, by making a pet of her cousin Linton, and, secondly, by actively entering the logic of colonisation and displacing Hareton to a lower-class position, to the culture/nature binarism. Cathy Linton metaphorically tames Hareton as if he were a wild animal: "I gave him a cut with my whip" (Brontë, 1947/2012: 269). But there is a change of attitude and of domestic alliances in her commitments once she becomes a widow. By relying on reason, Cathy reconciles the values of the Grange and of the Heights, as well as those struggling oppressions beyond the boundaries of the English moors.

3.2. Culture/nature Dualism: Heathcliff's Oppressions and the Master/Slave Dialectics

Heathcliff is constructed as an ambivalent figure, a symbolic ill-fated hero and a sympathetic villain. He is both an object of contempt and a disrupting figure of oppressive dualisms. He is referred to as a vagabond, a poor "gypsy brat" with "cannibal teeth," who utters "inarticulate" sounds, only "gibberish that nobody could understand" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 32, 39, 190). Poor and dispossessed, Heathcliff is associated with gipsies, the stigmatized population of nomads emigrating from India centuries ago. On the basis of this correlation, he is identified with a set of stereotypes, from homelessness or social disorder to vagrancy. He is ridiculed for being in possession of a prejudiced language that was not understood beyond its community of native speakers before scholarly research at the end of the nineteenth century[10]. Heathcliff is pushed to the margins, to "the confrontation with an inferior past, an inferior non-western other and the associated notion of indigenous cultures as 'backward', earlier stages of our own exemplary civilisation" (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 16), that is, the Eurocentric one. The civilised/primitive

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[9] Homans (2015) points to Nelly as the "only durable maternal figure," and suggests her iconic motherly role in both the first and second generation of characters. Nelly represents "Cathy's [Earnshaw Linton] fearful image of motherhood, both her neglected maternal origins and the maternal presence buried in nature"; she reawakens Catherine's childhood memories, and then, the "maddening" image of an aged Catherine, "a ghostly face in the mirror" (Homans, 2015: 157) as a prelude of her approaching motherhood–unfulfilled and ghostly as an ill omen of death.

[10] Research on gypsies' lore and language came after George Borrow's publication of *The Romany Rye* in 1857.

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binarism and its association with the primitive-nature pair become part of Heathcliff's historical baggage as member of the Romani population.

Objectivised as an item of collection and contemplation, Heathcliff is moved to the realm of imagination and to the subject/object autocracy. He enters the discourse of the master to be an exotic property imported from foreign regions. Heathcliff is the Earnshaws' "strange acquisition," a "little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 54). He is perforce homogenised and stereotyped as a gipsy, "exactly like the son of the fortune-teller, that stole [Linton's] my tame pheasant," a "Frightful thing!" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 53)[11]. For Edgar, he is called "a villain" as a small boy, a child who misbehaves: "He'll be craving his fingers in the tarts, and stealing the fruit" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 62). Marked by young Linton as an object, Heathcliff is condemned to the authority that masters epitomise, and in due course to the sacred/profane dualism. As a result, dualisms are originated in sequence by systematically predicting the other and slave to be segregated in an undervalued sphere, that of Heathcliff's blackness.

All these features of Heathcliff's identity add to the acquisition of conceptual inflections of reason/matter and sacred/profane of the slave. He is racialised, pictured as an evil being "as dark almost as if it came from the devil," an "imp of Satan," an "incarnate goblin," a "monster" with "basilisk eyes," a "ghoul or a vampire" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 39, 42, 185, 186, 193, 352). Heathcliff's blackness is abhorred; it is read as an omen of violence and an index of lower social status[12]. He seems to be cursed from birth and from his arrival at the moors. In order to eliminate similarities and to establish an absolute contrast, the image of black needs to be compared with a brighter colour, which is precisely the white skin of the masters. This separation may be settled by denial or minimisation of coinciding qualities and practices (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 49). By textual repetition, Heathcliff's skin eventually becomes a symbol of discontinuity and isolation of two social classes, the dominating and the dominated.

Assessed through the logic of the master model, the male divide performs the dominant role of Heathcliff's unrestrained identification with blackness and nature, and later of his radical exclusion from the homosocial group. This male divide thrusts Heathcliff into the mind/body and freedom/necessity contrasting pairs. Losing the benefit of education, Hindley "drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors" and feed "the beasts" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 49, 59). Hindley conceals him, locks him up, and ultimately denies any intellectual, moral or religious teaching to the newly-made servant. Heathcliff is transformed into the ploughboy of the Heights. The mind/body opposition coerces

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[11] Meyer (1996) proposes a new criterion for the symbolism of gypsies in nineteenth century women's writing. In George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, Meyer (1996) theorises gypsies are providers of an "apt metaphor for an English girl who feels alien within her society" (134).

[12] In Burke's (1757/1998) terms blackness and darkness caused terror and were linked to the lack of reason, and to nature and passion. Passion "is lust only," and is "evident in brutes," in uncivilised individuals who cannot perceive the complexity of mixed purposes and can only observe a sole distinction "to their mates," "that of sex" (Burke, 1757/1998: 39).

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Heathcliff to labour on the fields, to tend the horses and to perform any task guaranteeing him to remain dirty. In line with polarisation, his displacement to what Plumwood (1993/2003) calls "the 'animal-like' slaves" enforces the trait of "filthiness" (50). This corporeal identification with nature is a trait that justifies and reasserts Heathcliff's condition as slave and his familiarity with the animal realm. His ascription to dualisms and to nature relentlessly create a network of further oppressions.

Dualisms and masters' dialectics map the origin of the culture/nature contrast and draw on other derived dualisms that assign Heathcliff to a final category: the animal. His portrayal is reinforced by Nelly's imagery, and represented as a "savage beast," not a creature of the human species (Brontë, 1847/2012: 181). He resembles a dangerous animal that growls and emits other animal sounds: "He doesn't talk, but rather 'girns,' or snarls, like a mastiff" (D'Albertis, 2017: 134). Heathcliff embodies the animal-nature divide and the slave-nature union that presents him as the master's—or mistress's—animal, the master's guard dog. It is at the risk of Catherine's fainting that he approached her protectively, gnashed and "foamed like a mad dog" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 175). Starting from his animalisation, Heathcliff is bound to exhibit the attributes of the natural divide and the natural landscape. The earth's roughness and blackness of the frost bear a resemblance to his own image, which befits numerous allusions to darkness and natural violent forces. In his nexus with nature, he is neither inactive, nor useless[13]. He is "a natural force frustrated of its natural outlet, so that he inevitably becomes destructive" (Cecil, 1934: 165)[14]. Heathcliff's changes of master/slave dialectics will draw havoc and moral errors in both households of Emily Brontë's novel, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange.

3.3. Male/female Dualism and the Master/slave Reversal. Catherine's Mastery Metaphor

Catherine Earnshaw's ambition and domineering disposition disclose an intricate labyrinth of affective bonds and hierarchies. She initiates a rhetoric of digression, rebellion and concealment that dissolves by the prospect of harmonious marriage in the second generation of characters, Cathy and Hareton. In the autocratic patriarchal macro-system of the household in the Heights, Catherine recruits Heathcliff in order to rebel against the tyranny of her father, Mr Earnshaw, and against the restrictive policies of her brother, Hindley. Catherine is described as an adorable "wild, wick slip"; she is "headstrong and domineering," and closely attached to nature, passion and emotion as subdivisions of the nature binarism (Brontë, 1847/ 2012: 44, 137). She was small—and dispossessed—but unbending in her inclination to command, and, as Nelly narrates, "she lined, exceedingly to act the little mistress; using her hands freely, and commanding her companions," giving orders and exerting force if necessary (Brontë, 1847/2012: 44). Eager to

[13] Van Ghent (1961) describes Heathcliff as a demon, who in mythological terms is "no more ethically relevant than is flood or earthquake or whirlwind" (164).

[14] Cecil (1934: 165) posits the example of a mountain torrent, which diverts from its own channel by dispersing sediments and razing whatever stands in its way; however, this torrent will not stop until these obstacles diverting it from the main "natural" channel disappear.

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tame horses in the stable, Catherine's desired whip mirrors her passionate temperament and her predisposition to mastery while Hindley wishes to possess a fiddle. Mr Earnshaw still arrived with neither a proper fiddle, nor a whip, but "a boy of fourteen" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 39). The child's connection with both gifts unleashes the whip metaphor in the form of "a dirty, ragged, black-haired child," with no name, "starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 39). Heathcliff is compelled to dwell on the unprivileged space, ostracised from aristocratic noble origins, and willing to be of use to Catherine's prerogatives, to the dialectics of master/slave relations. Like Catherine, women may also be colonisers, particularly in relation to the other, to "other races and cultures, classes and species" (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 67). By using Heathcliff as her apparatus of destabilising patriarchal narratives, Catherine appropriates the colonising discourse to promote a new hierarchy of household dynamics.

3.4. Catherine and Heathcliff: Dissolving and Reclaiming Identities

The male/female dualism imposes itself on Emily Brontë's characters. Catherine's efforts to shatter the master dynamics will have its "painful as well as paradisal" consequences (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979/2000: 266)[15]. After her acquaintance with the Lintons, she is indoctrinated "with fine clothes and flattery" in the maximising of the female divide (Brontë, 1847/2012: 56). Her perfect curls adorning her face, and her newly acquired beauty according to Frances's remarks point to her conformity with the ideal of beauty,–"a finished human beauty"–and of women as obedient and objects of contemplation–"of such gentle and amiable qualities, as correspond with the softness, smoothness, and delicacy of the outward form"–(Burke, 1757/1998: 107). Catherine comes back completely changed in dressing and manners, so that "instead of a wild, hatless little savage," a beautiful "dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a[n exaggeratedly] long cloth habit which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in it" emerges from the Grange (Brontë, 1847/2012: 56). Finally, she enters the Heights by abandoning her metaphorical whip and enhancing the female-object association.

Catherine's compliance to the master model becomes a turning point of the narrative. She initially attempts to enter the spheres of reason and of the public, but she fails to achieve supremacy in the end. Her aspiration "to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood" drives Catherine to accept the dialectics of patriarchy, and thus, to "be proud of having [Edgar for] such a [rich] husband" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 84)[16]. She is incorporated into the male/female confrontation, into pre-existing differences and hierar-

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[15] Catherine's fall is marked by the symbolism of a male ferocious dog (Gilbert & Gubar 1979/2000: 272). Even though it appears apparently accidental, "It is significant, then, that her problem begins–violently enough–when she literally falls down and is bitten by a male bulldog, a sort of guard/god from Thrushcross Grange," that leads her into adult female sexuality and castration (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979/2000: 271).

[16] Catherine's motivation for marrying Edgar is based on the love of society, of a different society from her familiar Wuthering Heights. As Kinkead-Weekes (1970) affirms, "it is love in a society too, where income and status also have a place in the quality of life" (86).

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chies in the logic of dualisms, while Edgar stands in complete possession of the master's establishment. Catherine's wish to belong to the society of the Grange as the setting of a privileged and strategic geographical location–that is described almost as a castle ruling over all Gimmerton and the Heights–prompts her separation from the domineering centre. Her arrangement of the scale of class hierarchies in the Grange parallels the material division of furniture at Heathcliff's sudden arrival: "one [table] for your master and Miss Isabella, being gentry; the other for Heathcliff and myself, being of the lower orders" (Brontë, 1947/2012: 102). Dictated by class-centred male hegemony, Catherine is led to an inferior and polarised condition that culminates in madness[17]. Her downfall takes place the moment she welcomes Heathcliff–"the runaway servant" received as "a brother"– into the master/slave dynamics of the Grange (Brontë, 1947/2012: 102). Yet, Heathcliff returns to the moors as a stranger, a respectable man in appearance and bearing no signs of degradation.

The moment Heathcliff reclaims his male identity, he aligns with culture and reason, and reverts his prior rank as slave[18]. His subservient role is distinctively reversed in the course of action by leaving nature as "intimately domestic" to Catherine (Evans & Evans, 1985: 22). His choice is grounded in supporting reason. Heathcliff comes back changed in appearance, a "tall man dressed in dark clothes, with dark face and hair," and in manners, "intelligent" and "dignified" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 99, 103). Although he denies acknowledging the privileges of the masters in his childhood, his adult version centralises the features of the male/female and reason/nature dualisms. The colonised builds his identity in connection with the inferior group by adhering to the culture of the coloniser (Plumwood, 1993/2003). Heathcliff has to internalise his inferiorisation and to cooperate in honouring the masters' central values. He sticks to these institutionalising values and, by recognising his own decentralisation, understands the dialectics of the master and those elements that lead to the pinnacle of colonisation. Heathcliff is able to identify the axis of comparison, and envisions his own ambition toward a more dignified status.

Finally, Heathcliff grounds the reversal of his homogenised identity on affirmation, on the dialectics of patriarchy. Affirmation is decisive to counter the inferiorisation of women and other colonised identities that are defined as peripheral subjects (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 63). It is the tyranny of the master/slave model that forces Heathcliff to acknowledge his subjugation, firstly, under Hindley's regime, and, secondly, under Catherine's command. By reasoning with eloquence, Heathcliff addresses Catherine:

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[17] Hagan (1967) elaborates on Catherine's dissolution of identity into madness and paranoia as a by-product of her perverse conduct when Heathcliff's returns. The decline of Catherine's spirited personality is marked by her tearing of the pillow apart, which pictures her transformation into "a histrionic, vindictive harridan – an egomaniac and a paranoiac on the verge of insanity," confined to her bedchamber (Hagan, 1967: 309).

[18] For Drew (1964) Heathcliff reverses the class-centred hegemony of the Yorkshire moors. He "converted himself from an ignorant penniless servant to a man with money and black whiskers," in other words, to a man with profit and respectable appearance (Drew, 1964: 377).

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'And, as to you, Catherine, I have a mind to speak a few words, now, while we are at it – I want you to be aware that I know you have treated me infernally – infernally!' [...] 'I seek no revenge on you', replied Heathcliff less vehemently. 'That's not the plan – 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 – And refrain from insult, as much as you are able.' (Brontë, 1847/2012: 120-121)

Heathcliff articulates the logic of colonisation; he reveals the hyperseparation of master, mistress and slave in the scale of otherness. He is aware of the inner workings of master/slave dialectics in which the patriarchal master, as a tyrant, tears down his slaves. And thus, the others below, as female mistresses are, injure subordinate others. The affirmation of women—and of Catherine—as oppressors and oppressed discloses the authority of the male/female binarism, and of Heathcliff's reversal.

The master's avowals show Heathcliff how to imitate the monolithic dialectics of his mistreated childhood. He is "not free to proceed independently," but accepts the mechanisms of colonisation the master has imposed upon him (Plumwood, 1993/2003: 61). When Heathcliff returns to the Earnshaw lands, cruelty remains the mere tool for power and control[19]. He has learned how to enact violence from the standpoint of Catherine and Hindley, and seen how to respond to the liminal framework of social class and inheritance from Edgar. Heathcliff is made a perfect connoisseur of law; he resolves to rely on the investment of a man's misfortune by being Hindley's mortgagee and marrying Isabella Linton, in case no male heir is granted to Catherine and Edgar. In this light, the reclaimed identity of Heathcliff entitles him to be owner of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange[20].

Violence is Heathcliff's imperious centralising mechanism of mastery, that of a former mistreated orphan that goes against the public standing of the Linton name[21]. He reassures the male/female opposition by degrading Isabella to the animal-nonhuman and the irrational-nature categories. Indeed, he sees Isabella as a "strange repulsive animal, a centipede," and "can hardly regard her in the light of a rational creature" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 113, 160). In his foundations of difference, he allocates himself on the male-reason oneness, and he justifies physical abuse in the safety of legality. Heathcliff uses those patriarchal strategies within his reach and, once again, he becomes an unstoppable force of production and destruction. But Isabella also realises at the sight of a hidden gun in Hindley's room that violence is power: "a hideous notion struck me. How

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[19] According to Hagan (1967: 312), the need for cruelty in Catherine and Heathcliff's adulthood is not innate in their dispositions but the consequence of their profuse miseries.

[20] Eagleton (2005) describes Heathcliff as a distorted image, "an extreme parody of capitalist activity," and as a result, "an untypical deviation from its norms" (114). Heathcliff's struggle in the social class-hierarchy reflects the "conflict between bourgeoisie and landed gentry" in Victorian England (Eagleton, 2005: 115).

[21] Hagan (1967: 319-323) elaborates on Emily Brontë's technique to weigh readers' emotional response and to control their response to Heathcliff's "emotional reversal."

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powerful I should be possessing such an instrument! I took it from his hand, and touched the blade" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 150)[22]. She contemplates the weapon with aversion at the same time that she hints at the "hideous" and tempting potential of this instrument to mastery (Brontë, 1847/2012: 150). In view of these revelations, the dialectics of enslavement call for male/female physical violence and abuse in just this way for a constant reminder of superiority. Heathcliff "violate[s] his unhappy spouse throughout their marriage" (D'Albertis, 2017: 134). By alienating Isabella from her humanity, Heathcliff abuses her as a thing, a nameless object (D'Albertis, 2017). He appropriates and instrumentalises Isabella's body as a commodity, and sees her as "a thorough little slattern," "a mere slut" and "an abject thing" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 157, 160, 161). Willing to degrade her to take revenge against his enemies, he reconfigures dualisms in the male/female contrast by positioning oppressed pairs in the female category and destabilising the status of women in Emily Brontë's narrative.

3.5. Cathy and Hareton: Reconciling the Master/slave Dualism

Despite the turbulence and violence that permeates the story before Heathcliff's death, Cathy and Hareton will be the redeemers of the first generation of characters, Catherine and Heathcliff. Like a doppelgänger of Heathcliff, Hareton shares features of the conceptualisation of the slave: 1) emphasis on the body and on nature as strong farmer and peasant worker, and 2) a mapping of the primitive-nature category as an uneducated and illiterate man. Cathy once claimed that Hareton is "just like a dog" or "a cart-horse," because, "he does his work, eats his food, and sleeps, eternally!" (Brontë 1847/2012: 332). It is at the end when Cathy teaches Hareton to read and write, and thus, to transcend the logic of brute force in favour of rhetoric and sophisticated reason. Reason brightens Hareton's mind and features by maximising the noble aspect of the couple. On the side of reason-civilisation, Cathy's mentoring will befit Hareton's surname and his gentleman-farmer status. Hareton's "honest, warm, and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance and degradation in which it had been bred; and Catherine's sincere commendations acted as a spur to his industry" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 343). Their union dissolves the binarisms after Heathcliff's master/slave tyrannical regime. Reason and nature will restore peace in a new association of the reason-nature relational pair, in which Earnshaws and Lintons reclaim their lost identities and lands.

Notwithstanding the expenses of absent motherhood, Nelly and Cathy harmonise to some extent the relation between education and motherly roles, the reason/reproduction divide. Nelly sees the prosperity of the approaching wedding-day and deems Cathy and Hareton's mutual alliance as a source of equality; nonetheless if not biologically, "they both appeared in a measure my children: I had long been proud of one, and now,

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[22] D'Albertis (2017) comments upon Isabella and Edgar Linton's fascination with wilderness and their desire to control nature, which eroticises the untamed side of Catherine and Heathcliff. D'Albertis (2017) concludes that Isabella and Edgar's desire is "synonymous with predation," because "love means holding tight to the object of desire until both are dead" (134).

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I was sure, the other would be a source of equal satisfaction" (Brontë, 1847/2012: 343). Regarding Nelly's narrative, the fate of both families will be determined by the reconciliation of differences and by Heathcliff's abandonment of revenge. Cathy and Hareton will construct the joints of civilisation, hard work and nature, philosophy and emotion in the prospect of marriage beyond the pages of *Wuthering Heights*.

4. Conclusions

The resultant assumption from close examination illustrates the resistance of male mastery and pervasiveness of the patriarchal figure in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Masters ascribe mistresses and slaves to the body-nature category, circumscribe the female-nature relation that displaces the slave to a peripheral state, while they additionally show the colonised the workings of the master/slave dependence. In fact, the culture/nature dualism strengthens the mind/body, rationality/physicality and production/reproduction oppositions in the educational role of fathers and reproductive role of mothers.

The master/slave exemplar teaches Catherine and Heathcliff to use violence as means to protesting against household dynamics. Even though Catherine initially uses Heathcliff as an instrument to resist male authority, her marriage with Edgar entraps her in two ways: 1) through the logic of the paterfamilias, and 2) through the confined physical space of her bedchamber. But Heathcliff's access to reason and eloquence erases the stereotyped and radical exclusions that were imposed on him, which eventually allow him to perpetuate the male/female binarism. Heathcliff avails himself of the master's mechanisms to destabilise the constrictions of social status; and thus, he decentralises Hindley and takes advantage of the white-centred logic that validates colonisation. His learning defies convention by challenging characters' motivations and reinterpreting his own alterity. Eventually, Heathcliff's use of the master dialectics draws on the multiple exclusions of the nature-slave postulates.

Although the master model at work in *Wuthering Heights* affects the second generation of characters, the importance of knowledge in Cathy Linton's education and the prospect of her marriage to Hareton restore Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange to peaceful harmony with nature. This union reconciles the formerly antagonistic nature/reason, female/reason and reproduction/reason relations by defying acculturated linking postulates that map women and nature as opposed to reason. Cathy and Hareton will somewhat put an end to the master model represented by Emily Brontë's characters, in which distortion and polarisation operate in the construction of master/slave relations.

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[23] Chase (1947: 505) suggests that Cathy and Hareton's marriage is predestined to be "a happy one," because Hareton "has little of Heathcliff's force" though he resembles Heathcliff in many aspects.

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