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**The Truth Behind *Wuthering Heights*: The Social,
Historical and Landscaping Causes that led Emily
Brontë to Write the Novel**

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CONTENTS

0. Introduction.....	1
0.1. Introduction.....	1
0.2. Literature Review.....	3
1. Rivalry in the Brontë family.....	8
1.1. Private life.....	8
1.2. Charlotte, Anne and Branwell.....	10
1.3. Charlotte's Preface and Criticism.....	12
2. The Importance of Landscape.....	15
2.1. Belgium.....	15
2.2. Landscape in <i>Wuthering Heights</i>	17
2.3. The Moors.....	18
3. Conclusions and Further Research.....	20
Works Cited.....	23

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Abstract

Wuthering Heights is Emily Brontë's only novel and it follows the story of Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, two soulmates torn apart by different forces which they were unable to avoid. This dissertation analyses the novel so as to find instances of rivalry between the author and her siblings, and samples of Emily Brontë's private life, as well as important landscape and historical moments which may have influenced her on her work. The formulated hypothesis was that as Emily Brontë's life was filled with tragic moments even since her childhood, the process of writing a novel may have helped her find a healing and escaping scene away from her gruesome world. There was, indeed, rivalry in the family, as we have been able to observe in some secondary sources. An example would be her sister's Charlotte preface to the novel, where she presents herself as her sister's first critic. Nevertheless in this project we have not been able to find any representation of this rivalry in the novel. What we did find, instead, were instances of her personal life. This study illustrates this conflict with the appearance of Hindley's character, representing Branwell Brontë, and, also, through one of the dearest aspects in Emily's life, the moors.

Keywords: *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë, Rivalry, Sisterhood, Victorian Literature.

1. Introduction

0.1. Introduction

Emily Brontë was born in Yorkshire in 1818. Her novel is nowadays considered a classic of the English literature, nevertheless, *Wuthering Heights* has not always had a good reputation. Being written in the 19th century, it completely shocked the readers who could not understand such a crude and wild approach to the story. With time, this shock and repulsion slowly changed and became what we now know as one of the most important works of the Victorian era. In this TFG I will be explaining and talking about the social, historical and landscaping causes that led Emily Brontë to write *Wuthering Heights*.

I have chosen to write my final project on this author and her novel because from the moment I first read *Wuthering Heights* it quickly became my favourite novel. Additionally, I have always found the story of the Brontë family fascinating. There are few things that interest me and are able to hold my attention for so long as much as their family does. In my opinion, family is one of the only things that you will have and get to keep forever. They are the only ones who will support you, help you and love you no matter what. Family is something that should be treasured, and never taken for granted. Therefore, the Brontë's being a closely knitted group that not only supported each other but also shared their common passion for writing, immediately sparked my interest.

The objective of this paper is to examine the social, historical and landscaping causes that led Emily Brontë to write *Wuthering Heights*. In order to do so, I have divided the paper into two different parts: rivalry in the Brontë family, and the importance of landscape. I think rivalry is an interesting topic that has not been widely discussed, that is why I wanted to do some research about it. My initial thought was that

the Brontë's living in an era in which literature was one of people's most favourite form of entertainment, created a sense of rivalry between the siblings. This competitiveness would be fuelled by the desire to be the best writer in the family, since it is a normal quality in ambitious people to want to surpass everyone else. This makes us wonder if the relationship between Charlotte, Emily and Anne was not always as loving as we imagine.

After the introduction and the literature review, the first segment of this project starts. I wanted to provide a brief historical account on Emily Brontë and her family so as to get a better understanding of what was happening during that era and, especially, acknowledge in which regard women were being treated. Next, I discuss Emily's private life, since it is important to understand her and her family.

I wanted to place special emphasis on her relationship with her siblings. Emily's family ties with Charlotte, Branwell and Anne were very important to her since, as previously stated, they were a really close group. This will be essential because, as we will see in further detail later on, Emily was not a very social person and so her friendships were reduced to the ones she had with her siblings. Together they started writing and, because of the influence of one of them, our author met her end.

In the second segment of this paper, the importance of landscape, I will first delve into the Brontë's stay in Belgium. I think it is a crucial topic to discuss since it was the first big journey Emily ever did that made her realize how attached she was to her average, quiet life in Yorkshire. Landscape in *Wuthering Heights* is also a subject I will examine by making connections between it, the characters in the novel, and the landscape Emily saw every day from Haworth Parsonage. Last but definitely not least, the final aspect to be discussed in this second part of the paper is the certain importance of the moors.

These two parts, followed by a conclusion and further research, will try to answer my provisional thesis statement which is that Emily Brontë wrote her novel as a healing and escaping process from her tragic own world. To provide an answer to my research question my methodology consists in a close reading of the selected text and a thorough analysis of critical material that explains the parts before mentioned. Thanks to all the secondary sources I have been able to read and study I have been capable of understand and enter the fascinating world of the Brontës.

0.2. Literature Review

The Brontë family was one of the most well-known families of writers. Not just the father was a writer, but the three daughters as well. In an era in which literature was very popular, three sisters who lived under the same roof were also job partners from a pretty competitive field. It is easy that a feeling of competitiveness between sisters arises as a result from the situation. That is why we are left wondering whether in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* we can perceive this sense of rivalry. We question ourselves whether the sister's relationship had always been loving or if it had been tainted by jealous competition. If that was the case, it would be another reason that brought more sadness and discomfort into Emily's life, as well as all the tragic deaths that were occurring at that moment. Writing *Wuthering Heights* could have been an escape route from all the tragedy surrounding her, since writing is something that brought peace and a sense of normalcy to Emily, something she always valued.

The three sisters were born in Yorkshire and soon after they would move to a parsonage in Haworth, what would become their home. Once there, Charlotte and Emily together with their older sisters Maria and Elizabeth, would attend Cowan Bridge School where they would learn about punishment and repression. Sadly this school

would also be the place where, a few months later, Maria and Elizabeth would die of tuberculosis.

Charlotte and Emily were brought home and were tutored by their father alongside Anne and their brother Branwell. Being home-schooled allowed the girls to grow closer together and soon they started to develop their passion for telling and writing stories about fantasy worlds they invented. During that time, Charlotte, Anne and especially Emily developed a certain fondness towards the moors they walked through and were surrounded by everyday. Emily's devotion to the moors was so strong that even when a few years later she would be sent back to school, she could not help but fall ill due to homesickness. As Rehnuma very well explains: "Whatever the psychological explanation, Emily was more self contained though she was so dependent on her beloved moors and the close knit family for emotional sustenance that the only three times in her life she was away from home, she suffered sickness or homesickness or both." (21) Even Charlotte expressed her concern about her sister's introversion: "I felt in my heart she would die, if she did not go home, and with this conviction, obtained her recall" (Brontë, cited in Rehnuma, 21).

As the eldest sister, Charlotte had to play the role of the mother to her younger siblings, which meant that she was somewhat protective of them. But at the same time, she was also the first one to publish her own novel and achieve success with it, which meant that she could also be a role model for her sisters. That is why she always gave an honest opinion about her sisters' novels. What we do not know is if these opinions were actually trying to protect them from the backlash from the readers and be encouraging or if they were just a sneaky way in order to make them lose popularity and keep her position as the greater writer of the family.

In fact, Charlotte wrote a “Preface to *Wuthering Heights*” published in 1850 in which, as Miller explains: “Instead of acknowledging Emily’s intellectual sophistication, she presented her as a simple country girl, who was not ‘learned’ and had written a shocking book as a result of naïvety rather than knowingness.” (8). With these words she is taking away Emily’s credit for writing a great novel which, in that time, the general public was already reticent about giving it to her from the beginning. As a consequence, these words would have an effect on Emily’s reputation and *Wuthering Heights* would be regarded by critics as “the flawed product of a childish mind or the mystic ramblings of a moorland sibyl.” (Miller, 9).

Emily Brontë’s only published novel from beginning to end is a story full of ghosts and spirits. An example would be when Cathy’s ghost appears in Lockwood’s dream, a relevant detail because, throughout the novel, dreams are a mean to achieve knowledge and understanding. *Wuthering Heights* is not only about the supernatural though. The novel also talks about nature and civilization, love and passion, masculinity and femininity, and revenge. It follows the story through the character of Lockwood, as he is rented a residence from mister Heathcliff, and his discovery of the intricate romances and revenge plans that took place and were plotted in the same house years before. As stated before, the novel dealt with a rough and unrefined subject. Critics said the text was unintelligible, and where intelligible, repulsive. Although despite the critics and Charlotte’s statement in her “Preface to *Wuthering Heights*” the novel did not fail to gain the attention from the critics and outgo Anne’s *Agnes Grey*, which was published at the same time.

Having analysed the novel and its contextualisation, we are able to observe how there is in fact a tint of jealousy and rivalry from Charlotte in the process of the publication of *Wuthering Heights* and dealing with the public. There is a possibility that

the author of *Jane Eyre* could have been manipulating her words in order to favour herself and looked down on Emily because she did not give her the credit for what she, Emily, created. Quite the opposite, she labelled it as mere coincidence. On the other hand, we do not find any instance of this jealousy or rivalry represented in the novel. We do find examples of Emily's private life, like how the whole novel does not engage with wider social issues of the moment. The environment of *Wuthering Heights* is completely disconnected from whatever happens outside. A clear manifest of the author's personality, as she always liked to be closed off in her own little world, surrounded by her beloved moors. Another link from the novel with Emily's private life is the character of Catherine's brother, Hindley Earnshaw, who somehow resembles Emily Brontë's own brother, Branwell Brontë.

Branwell Brontë was Emily and Anne's older brother and a year younger than Charlotte. There is very little known about him, unlike what we know about his sisters. He was good at writing and painting and even had ambitions to be as successful as his sisters, but his ambitions were never fulfilled. He found himself caught between the addictions of alcohol and opium and could never defeat them, in fact, as Carolyn Morgan describes: "The last twelve years of Branwell's life record a growing, an ever increasing inability to live without some type of stimulant." (35-36).

In the novel *Wuthering Heights*, Hindley Earnshaw has personal similarities with Branwell. They both drink, behave in an erratic and sometimes offensive way and show violent tendencies. As an example, in the novel there is a description of Hindley's death in which it implies a stroke, a cause that is usually related to alcoholism: "We broke in this morning, for we heard him sporting like a horse; and there he was, laid over the settle: flaying and scalping would not have wakened him." (Brontë, 107). This shocking

description of Hindley's death matches the description of stroke cases, which leaves no doubt about the low point in which the character found himself in from his life.

All in all, after an analysis of the novel *Wuthering Heights* and the Brontë family, we could say there was sibling rivalry in the family. We have seen instances of it through Charlotte's speech manipulation, we can interpret her actions from before and after the publication of *Wuthering Heights* as possible consequences of jealousy or threat. Another example could be Emily and Anne's decision to publish their novels at the same time, to see where each one would eventually turn out to be. Although in the novel itself we did not find examples of rivalry between the three sisters represented in any way, we did find a representation of their brother Branwell through one of the characters, and of the environment as a whole standing for one of the things Emily Brontë valued the most: her freedom and her moors.

1. Rivalry in the Brontë family

1.1. Private life

The Brontë's lived during the Victorian era. Some distinctions of this era, as Steinbach explains, are the characterization of a class-based society, a growing state and economy and Britain's status as the most powerful empire in the world. Additionally, there were stereotypes and double standards that deeply affected the way women were regarded.

Nowadays we deem "Victorian" as a prim and proper time period where it was not common to acknowledge or talk about sex. Steinbach in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* clarifies how "respectable middle-class women in particular were proud of how little they knew about their own bodies and childbirth". Moreover, it existed a double standard that stated how, on the one hand, men wanted and needed sex, while on the other hand, women only gave in to sex to please their husbands and their main concern was reproduction.

Society in the Victorian era was organized hierarchically. While there were other organising principles, the most important ones were class and gender. Men and women were considered to be different and that they were meant for different things. As Steinbach explains "class was both economic and cultural and encompassed income, occupation, education, family structure, sexual behaviour, politics, and leisure activities". Following this system, the Brontë family was considered to be part of the middle class.

Emily's father, Patrick Brontë, was a popular preacher who married Maria Branwell, Emily's mother, in 1812 and together they had one son and five daughters: Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Patrick Branwell, Emily Jane and Anne. They moved to Haworth's Parsonage in 1820, where Maria died from cancer in 1821. That would have

been the first death Emily had to experience, the first time she would have to deal with grieve and loss. Her aunt Elizabeth moved in after the death of her mother and took care of the children for 21 years. After the tragedy of Cowan Bridge, where Emily's sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, died, Patrick Brontë decided to take charge of his children's education. He never remarried, had no direct descendants and lived longer than all his offsprings.



Figure 1. Photograph of Haworth's Parsonage, taken by Justin Paget.

Retrieved from *Country Life*.

While Maria Branwell's death was a long agony which lasted months, Maria and Elizabeth's deaths were more sudden. As stated before, their deaths happened due to the ill-preparation of the food and the unhygienic conditions in Cowan Bridge, which resulted in the infection of tuberculosis for both of them (*The Brontë Society*). The two of them were sent home, as well as Emily and Charlotte a few days later still in good health, where Maria died first and Elizabeth followed her just a few weeks later.

After the passing of her mother and her two sisters, Emily, Charlotte, Branwell and Anne became a closely knitted group. As *The Brontë Society* explains: "They neither went to school, nor made friends, in the village. Their playgrounds were the open moors at the back of the house, and their own imaginations". This seclusion made of their world a little one, somewhere they could protect themselves and feel secure

without having to step out of their comfort zone. In her free time at the Parsonage, Emily enjoyed drawing and playing the piano, but what she really loved to do, ever since she learned how to write, was writing.

1.2. Charlotte, Anne and Branwell

Because of the tragic events in their early lives, the four siblings became very close and did everything together. Although it was their shared passion of writing that made them inseparable. While at home, the three sisters practised sewing and embroidery, and Branwell studied Latin and Greek. Once their studying time was done, Ramos explains how they used their free time to write, which allowed them to let their imaginations run free and inspired drawings and theatre displays. It was during one of these free days and with Branwell's twelve wooden soldiers' set, that the four siblings put together for the first time their writing and their playing time.



Figure 2. (L-R) Anne, Emily and Charlotte, by Branwell Brontë, 1834. Retrieved from *HistoryExtra*.

Ramos describes how together they wrote the *Brontë Juvenilia*. Charlotte and Branwell wrote jointly the texts of Angria, while Emily and Anne created the world of Gondal. Unfortunately, very little was saved and most of the writings were lost over

time. However, it is known that Emily and Anne were inspired by England, specifically Yorkshire, to create Gondal.

Charlotte and Branwell enjoyed working together, and so they continued to do so during their teenage years. It was not until Charlotte turned twenty-three that she decided to leave Angria and the supernatural elements behind. Not only did she leave Branwell behind with their childhood stories, she, alongside her sisters, also left him out of their fraternity and history. At first, it was rather unclear why they cast their only brother aside, and later Charlotte tried to explain it as a result of a moral conviction. As Ramos notes, she branded him as an “alcoholic, opiate and lustful” (29). Nevertheless, there is a better reason that explains why history forgot about him.

The publication of *Jane Eyre* was an unprecedented success. In just three months 2,500 copies had already been sold, only to be reprinted again in January and once more in April. Ramos explains how the bewilderment only increased when the independent publisher Thomas Cautley Newby published the novels *Agnes Grey*, signed by Acton Bell, and *Wuthering Heights*, by Ellis Bell. The critics judged the rudeness and indecency that filled all the novels by the Bells, but they also recognised its strength and originality. In an attempt to hold the interest of *Jane Eyre*’s readers, Newby sold the first pages of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, by Acton Bell, stating that it was a new novel by Currer Bell. Furthermore, he also declared that all the books published under the name of Bell were, in effect, work of the same author. With the purpose of differentiating the three Bell and detach herself from Newby, Charlotte said the three words that sealed Branwell’s banishment: “We are three sisters” (Charlotte Brontë cited in Ramos, 31).



Figure 3. Editor Thomas Cautley Newby.

Retrieved from *Anne Bronte*.

1.3. Charlotte's Preface and Criticism

Following the Newby fiasco, and wanting to emphasise that she did not have any part in the writing of *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte wrote a preface to her sister's novel in order to illustrate how she did not help in any way during the process of writing the novel. Thompson argues that the motives behind Charlotte's treatment of her sister's texts were completely egotistical.

Thompson declares that Charlotte wrote the "Editor's Preface" to *Wuthering Heights* out of a "paranoid desire to "distance" her own novels from the "unfeminine coarseness" of *Wuthering Heights*", she also argues that it "should be read in the context of the author's anxiety about being associated with Emily" and that "Charlotte denigrates her sister's novel out of jealousy" (Thompson, cited in Bauman, 25). By contrast, Bauman defends Charlotte by pointing out how she "deliberately uses the more feminine and ethereal poetry, not the novels, to establish her sisters' artistry, and as she does, she pleads the circumstances of their lives, personalities and gender as extenuations" (25). But, yet again, we see that even though Charlotte praises her sister

as a “solitary poetess of the moors” in order to appeal the Victorian readers, she also purposely critiques Emily’s work so as to accomplish her disentanglement.

In her “Editor’s Preface”, Charlotte concedes that Emily’s novel is a “rude and strange production” and continues to describe it as “moorish, wild and knotty”. Another aspect she criticises is that the people and the customs of the moors “must be to readers unintelligible and, when intelligible, repulsive”. She also finds fault in the language and vocabulary used, as she insinuates how some readers will “suffer with the rough and harshly manifested passions” that appear represented as a written fill-in-the-blank curse word, which she thinks is a “weak and futile proceeding which cannot correctly convey what horror it conceals”. As stated before, Charlotte tries to place the blame on her sister’s “tendency to reclusion” for the errors in *Wuthering Heights*, claiming that had she been a lady, the novel would have been more comprehensible and even original and truthful. That does not stop her from defaming Emily’s personality and characters as another aspect of the novel she criticises in her “Editor’s Preface” is how her sombre imagination could have created a character as inhumane as Heathcliff, “a man’s shape animated by demon life” whose existence Charlotte makes sure to manifest her disapproval: “I scarcely think it is right to create beings like Heathcliff” (53).

Surely, because they were sisters, she did not explicitly want to harm her in any way nor publicly diminish her sister as an author, that is why she focused on defending those pieces of Emily’s work that were more appealing to the public: her poetry. Nevertheless, in her attempt of disentangling herself from the process of writing *Wuthering Heights*, she would unequivocally assert hurtful things about Emily’s novel that would have a serious effect on her.

As a matter of fact, as Miller summarises: “instead of acknowledging Emily’s intellectual sophistication, she presented her as a simple country girl, who was not

‘learned’ and had written a shocking book as a result of naïvety rather than knowingness” (8). Charlotte infantilised her younger sister downplaying her accomplishments and stating how she had not matured because, due to her lack of social intercourse, she had not truly lived. Miller stands by how even though she had wanted to defend her sister from harsh criticism, Emily’s reputation would be damaged on account of Charlotte’s words, which would influence critics for a long time and make them regard *Wuthering Heights* as “the flawed product of a childish mind or the mystic ramblings of a moorland sibyl” (9).

The huge Newby debacle further increased Emily’s fear of the reactions that were sure to follow the publication of her novel. Finally, following the publication of *Wuthering Heights*, criticism quickly arrived, as the novel was far from a success, in opposition to Charlotte’s novel, *Jane Eyre*.

Moreover, during the 19th century the belief that women were far too sensitive in the creation of their protagonists was widespread, which, as Gleyzer explains, discarded Ellis Bell from being a woman, since *Wuthering Heights* was regarded as “overwhelmingly masculine...explod[ing] the safe and idealized domestic world represented by Victorian women and portrayed in conventional domestic novels, with its story of frustrated love, violence, and death; its strength of language (its intensity and its profanity) reflects the unconventionality of the plot” (Thompson, cited in Gleyzer, 31-32).

Gleyzer defends her position by stating that some of the earliest reviews were even shocked that a male mind had come up with this novel, which began a stage of bafflement for a public that was not ready to understand this intensity (32). Another example Gleyzer uses to illustrate the shock that Emily’s novel brought to the public is the reviews from *The New Monthly Magazine* in 1848 where, such a different storyline

as the one *Wuthering Heights* has, was usually not received with a positive attitude but it produced a bigger desire to turn away from it even further. Gleyzer summarises the adjectives that crowded early reviews, including: “shocking, horrific, repulsive, and above all else, always strange” (33).

Wuthering Heights was published in 1847, and Emily Brontë lived for another year but in that year she felt “wounded not only by lack of acceptance but by the immediate onslaught of negative reviews, of which five were found in Emily Brontë’s desk after her death, striking the final blow of how close to heart she took the criticism” (Crandall, cited in Gleyzer, 28).

2. The Importance of Landscape

2.1. Belgium

John Sutherland explains how in the early 1840s, Emily and Charlotte in an attempt to avoid being governesses forever, wanted to set up a school. That is the reason why in 1842 the two sisters went to Brussels, in the Pensionnat Heger-Parent, in order to learn “the ropes in a girls’ boarding establishment”, where Emily stayed for a year.

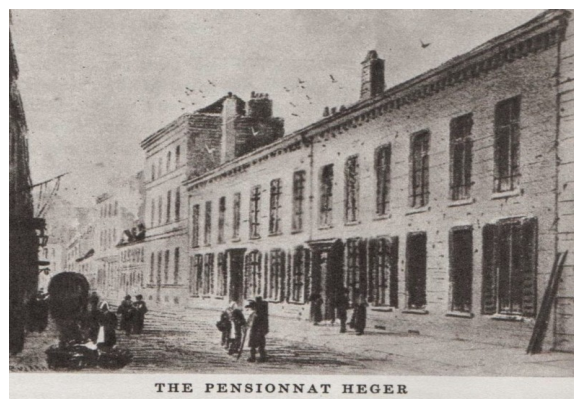


Figure 4. Photograph of the Pensionnat Heger-Parent.

Retrieved from *Anne Bronte*.

Emily's consideration of social intercourse as a waste of time and her stubborn and self-centred attitude, made her anti-social and unpopular during her stay in Brussels. However difficult Emily must have been to others due to her shyness and awkwardness, as "The Brussels Brontë Group" describe, "she, too, was suffering during her stay in Brussels" and that, despite her own suffering, she was set on proving that she could stay away from home, "however unpleasant the experience and however homesick she felt" (*The Brussels Brontë Group*).

In order to distract herself from the homesickness, she started to study music persistently and greatly improved her piano skills. Due to her rapid improvement and thirst for knowledge, both Emily and Charlotte were offered to stay six more months in Brussels to teach the pupils of the schools and to keep learning. The prospect of adding these six more months to her stay in Belgium made Emily become more "inaccessible and silent". Once again, Charlotte noticed her changing behaviour, which was similar to her previous physical decline she suffered at Roe Head, and grew worried for her:

Once more she seemed sinking, but this time she rallied through the mere force of resolution; with inward remorse and shame she looked back on her former failure, and resolved to conquer it in this second ordeal. She did conquer: but the victory cost her dear. She was never happy till she carried her hard-won knowledge back to the remote English village, the old parsonage-house, and desolate Yorkshire hills. (Brontë, cited in *The Brussels Brontë Group*)

As her sister predicted, Emily did try to persevere despite her growing sickness, but dreadful news came their way when they were told that their Aunt Branwell was very ill and she was probably going to die. Precisely the next day, they received the announcement that her Aunt was already dead. The funeral had already taken place, but it was their responsibility to return home and be next to their relatives. Emily would go back to her beloved moors once again.

2.2. Landscape in *Wuthering Heights*

Nature is an important part in *Wuthering Heights* as it serves as a parallel for the characters and the plot of the novel. Elizabeth Price says that “there is nothing more telling about the role of descriptive language in this book than the language.” (*Pegasus*). *Wuthering Heights* is the name of the mansion, but the area surrounding it could also be called like that. Price explains how “‘wuthering’ is used as an element of the provincial language to describe the atmospheric tumult to which the heights are exposed in stormy weather.” (*Pegasus*). That brings readers to understand that the novel is going to talk about something dark, or mysterious, bordering the line between life and death, and having a role in the novel just as important as its characters.

Harsh and wintry are some of the adjectives John Bowen uses to describe the landscape around Haworth that inspired Emily Brontë to write in her novel. He develops the idea of nature being connected with the characters of the novel stating how Heathcliff is constantly compared to the landscape, he is “harsh and stony, not something in which anything can grow”. So, part of his destructiveness is related to the “coldness” or “difficulty” of the landscape. (*British Library*)

When considering landscape in *Wuthering Heights*, we should not just see it as a novel that simply belongs to the moors. The Brontës had a deep connection with nature, Bowen describes how it concerned both “an essential human ‘nature’ and an absolute freedom that goes beyond any particular place or time” (*British Library*). This theory can be exemplified with the last chapter of the novel, when a little boy tells Nelly how “They’s Heathcliff and a woman, yonder, under t’ Nab” (Brontë, 336) and Nelly immediately connects it to their ghosts wandering through the moors: “He probably raised the phantoms from thinking, as he traversed the moors alone” (Brontë, 336). This exchange confirms how the characters remain “deeply identified with the landscape and

sinister and alien presences within it” (*British Library*). Bowen summarises it with the explanation that “their own deep sense of belonging to the moors is a source of terror and estrangement for others. Belonging is the way not to belong”. (*British Library*)

2.3. The Moors

All through this essay we have discussed the importance the moors had for Emily Brontë, as well as how she was very fond of them, and how they were one of the main sources of entertainment for her. Not only were they an important part of Emily’s life, but they are a really important part of her novel as well. Our writer captured her love and affection for the moors and completely filled it with symbolism that helps the readers understand the depth of the characters, the fine line that exists between life and death, and also between good and evil.

The moors are defined as “an open area of hills covered with rough grass” (Cambridge Dictionary). They are wide, almost deserted expanses, and their soil is pretty soggy, which makes them infertile. They cannot be cultivated and the uniformity of its land makes walking difficult.



Figure 5. Photograph of Top Withens, taken by Fay Godwin in the 20th C.

Retrieved from the *British Library*.

In the novel, Catherine and Heathcliff seem to have a special attachment to the moors. They spend most of their free time when they are younger playing outside in them, which exemplifies their wild nature. Both characters are also buried in the moors by the end of the novel, because of their fondness for them and the wilderness they represent. This most certainly establishes an unbreakable link between the moors and the wilderness that is always present and acknowledged.

Nevertheless, throughout the novel we observe that the moors are rarely mentioned by their name, as the author purposely chooses to refer to them in an indirect and metaphorical way. Soya explains Homans' theory about how Emily intentionally avoided the direct mention of the landscape out of respect for nature: "It is in the naming that things lose their significance, and this is the case for Emily vis-à-vis nature. In order to preserve the priority of something, it is essential that the thing must not be named." (3).

While it is true that we can find references to the moors repeatedly throughout the novel, we are able to appreciate Emily's attachment and fondness for them in each mention nonetheless. As reflected in chapter six: "But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day" (Brontë, 46) Emily's deep attachment was present from a very early age and, as Elizabeth Gaskell explains, it was shared with all her siblings: "the six little creatures used to walk out, hand in hand, towards the glorious wild moors, which in after days they loved so passionately; the elder ones taking thoughtful care for the toddling wee things." (*The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 29, cited in Brontë).

Contrastingly, Soya herself states how Emily purposely put the moors a sort of void, by not mentioning them directly, so that her moors become "the result of the imagination of the poet" (7). This would empower them even more, as they become

“something intense and unique because the meaning of the moors of Emily Brontë, as Barthes points out, “always vacillates,” and is filled with “interpretive action,” as Gaylin notes. More than anything else, it occupies the strongest position, such as in the mind of the reader.” (7-8).

3. Conclusions and Further Research

The purpose of this paper is to try to understand the reasons why Emily Brontë decided to write *Wuthering Heights* and thereby learn about the author’s private life, the historical period she lived in, and the matters that had the most relevance in her life. Some questions were raised at the starting point of the project. I wondered about Emily’s upbringing, her relationship with her family, the influence her sister had on her, and lastly, I also wondered if the process of writing her novel had been an escaping mechanism from all the tragedy she had to endure from an early age. These questions have been answered through a thorough analysis of both the primary text and the secondary sources.

In the first part of this paper Emily’s private life and, especially, about her relationship with her siblings was discussed. Our author had an upbringing relatively normal for someone from the middle class during the Victorian era. What was shocking about her personal life was the big amount of deaths she had to experience from her inner circle. When she was only three years old, she and her siblings lost their mother due to cancer in 1821. It was just four years after that tragedy that Emily’s eldest sister Maria died from tuberculosis, and just a few weeks later, the second eldest from the family, Elizabeth, also died from the same illness.

These tragedies brought Patrick, the head of the family, to start home-schooling the rest of his family. For this reason, neither going to school nor making friends,

Charlotte, Emily, Branwell, and Anne became very close. Their entire world became tiny because of this seclusion, in which they found comfort and sought protection from the outside world. As little kids from the ages of ten to six, they did not want to experience more sadness or disasters. Their lives in solitude made them appreciate even further the little things from life they were offered, such as the moors, which quickly became their playground.

In the second part of the paper, the importance landscape had on Emily was closely examined. The significance of her stay in Belgium has, also, been discussed, since it was a serious moment in her life. As she was a woman who abhorred social intercourse, she found herself being lonely and missing more than ever her beloved Yorkshire and moors. Such was her loneliness that even her sister thought Emily would die of homesickness. A year after she arrived back home, our author would begin writing *Wuthering Heights*, a novel filled with elements from her private life, to finish and publish it a year later. As we have seen, the harsh critics, even from her own sister, would take a toll on her. In 1845 Emily Brontë died in her chambers with some critics spread open on her bedroom's desk.

With this paper I have learned to contrast information from critical sources, and I have been able to investigate the social and historical context, as well as the significance of the landscape and relationships, of the Brontë family. But it is true that this research has encountered time and scope limitations. There is still further research I wanted to address, such as the symbolism of the two houses mentioned in *Wuthering Heights*, in which Wuthering Heights comes to represent the wilderness of its inhabitants, and Thrushcross Grange represents culture and refinement, two characteristics habitual for the Linton family. Moreover, another engaging area for further research is the presence of supernatural elements that appear in the novel, where

we can sense from subtle hints hidden in the writing, to straight ghost appearances to characters such as Lockwood or Heathcliff.

Finally, I have come to the conclusion that it is true that Emily Brontë suffered a lot of tragedies during her lifetime, but that does not mean we can affirm that her only method to deal with them was writing her novel. She did not simply use writing as a coping mechanism. We have discovered that from an early age she already thoroughly enjoyed writing and creating imaginary scenarios and stories so as to connect and play with her siblings, and also have fun during her free time in the parsonage. Therefore, we can assert that writing *Wuthering Heights* might have helped Emily Brontë during her grieving process, but at the same time, she could have been just looking to have some fun and entertainment while writing her story, such as we look for the same thing when we nowadays read her novel.

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