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### **The Adversities of Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff**

**Two Distinct Journeys Toward the Victorian Male Success**

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“It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now.”

— Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 1847

“Reader, I married him. A quiet wedding we had: he and I, the parson and clerk, were alone present.”

— Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 1847

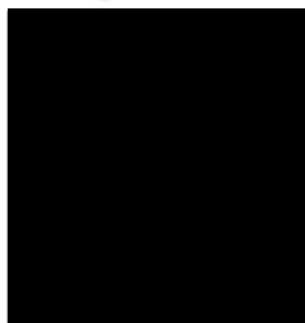


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**Abstract:** This project discusses the problematic reality underprivileged men experienced in the Victorian era through the characters of Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* and Mr. Rochester from *Jane Eyre*. In addition, this project also contains relevant information concerning the Brontë sisters as their life experiences are vital regarding the creation of the two characters. In order to discuss the underprivileged nature of Heathcliff and Mr. Rochester, this paper encompasses many issues: masculinity, inheritance laws, primogeniture, physical appearance, ethnicity, and the importance of having a surname. Furthermore, this project not only focuses on acknowledging Heathcliff's and Mr. Rochester's adversities, but also discusses their progress toward being considered gentlemen and their oppressive nature once they acquire the necessary power to oppress others. Lastly, Heathcliff and Mr. Rochester are compared and contrasted toward the end of this project to provide an example in relation to the fact that some men were more underprivileged than others.

**Keywords:** Victorianism, underprivileged men, the Brontë sisters, Heathcliff, Mr. Rochester.

**Resumen:** Este proyecto aborda la complicada realidad que sufrieron los hombres desfavorecidos en la época victoriana a través de los personajes de Heathcliff de *Cumbres Borrascosas* y el Sr. Rochester de *Jane Eyre*. Además, este proyecto también contiene información relevante sobre las hermanas Brontë debido a que sus experiencias de vida son vitales en cuanto a la creación de los dos personajes. Para discutir los problemas que Heathcliff y el Sr. Rochester sufrieron en lo que se refiere a su situación desfavorecida, este proyecto abarca ciertos temas: masculinidad, leyes de herencia, primogenitura, apariencia física, etnicidad y la importancia de tener un apellido. Asimismo, este proyecto no tiene como objetivo solo argumentar sobre las adversidades sufridas por ambos personajes, sino también discutir el progreso que los dos hicieron e incluso destacar el hecho de que tanto Heathcliff como el Sr. Rochester se acaban convirtiendo en personajes opresores después de haber adquirido el poder necesario. Por último, este proyecto también contiene una comparación de ambos personajes debido a que tal comparación es un excelente ejemplo que ilustra que algunos hombres fueron más desfavorecidos que otros.

**Palabras clave:** Victorianismo, hombres desfavorecidos, las hermanas Brontë, Heathcliff, Sr. Rochester.

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Victorian Gentlemen and the Brontë Sisters .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. Masculinity, Inheritance Laws, and Primogeniture .....	4
2.2. The Brontë Sisters' Experiences and Inspiration .....	6
<b>3. Mr. Rochester's Difficulties and Progress in <i>Jane Eyre</i> .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Heathcliff's Difficulties and Progress in <i>Wuthering Heights</i> .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5. Comparing and Contrasting Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>7. References .....</b>	<b>26</b>

# 1. Introduction

The first time I read *Wuthering Heights*, I remember being astonished at the grace with which unpleasant events could be narrated. Every single aspect of the novel is illustrated through a vast number of complex characters, gloomy landscapes, and sophisticated terminologies. Who would not be entirely enchanted by excerpts such as “If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger?” (Brontë, 1847, p. 82). The fact that just like me, people are still intrigued by Victorian narratives—specifically written by the Brontë sisters—, depicts how relevant they are nowadays. Nonetheless, before discussing the reasons behind their relevance in the twenty-first century, it is essential to acknowledge their importance during the Victorian period. Firstly, it is known that Victorianism was the epitome of clearly opposite gender roles: men were the protectors and providers, while women fulfilled their roles as wives and mothers. A marvelous example that portrays the dichotomy of gender roles is Patmore’s poem *The Angel in the House*. This poem encompasses copious topics regarding Victorianism: one of them being the stereotypical roles of Victorian women: “Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf / Of his condoled necessities / She casts her best, she flings herself” (Patmore, 1854, p. 35). Patmore’s extract portrays how women were regarded as submissive and devoted to their husbands; put differently, the primary concern of “The Angel in the House<sup>1</sup>” was to commit their energies to delight their husbands in every possible way. But why is this issue included in this discussion? Is it connected in any way to the relevance of the Brontë sisters during the nineteenth century? The answer is affirmative; quintessential Victorian women were devoted to their husbands, but the Brontë sisters were devoted to their prose. Their education and expertise gave them the opportunity to follow a different path that was not limited to fulfilling their stereotypical roles of being wives and mothers; in other words, they were relevant because they did not comply with what society had to offer, but instead, they decided to acquire what only men could dream of: becoming writers:

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<sup>1</sup> The Angel in the House—first appearing in Coventry Patmore’s poem—is a term that has been widely used to refer to stereotypical Victorian women. In other words, the perfect Victorian woman is represented by this concept. Also, this term has been satirized by many authors—one being Virginia Woolf — as it is regarded to be controversial considering its sexist implications.

The Brontë sisters were nineteenth-century role models, as they subverted social conventions by becoming writers, a typically male role at the time. Their education granted them the ability to write some of the most well-known novels of all time, and they serve as a historic example of the power of equal education. Their works emphasised the progress that was set in motion for women's education in the nineteenth century, signifying a positive evolution of education that allowed women greater autonomy (Shawn, 2022, p. 1).

Now that the relevance of the Brontë sisters in the nineteenth century has been acknowledged, it is substantial to get acquainted with why they are still relevant nowadays. To begin with, significant changes in society do not start with a blast, but with a whisper: even if the Brontë sisters were not free regarding rights and social norms, it is undeniable the fact that they were some of the first women to have the opportunity to study, therefore, they are a magnificent example when it comes to the empowerment of women. Just as other remarkable historical women writers, like for instance Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters achieved the impossible while living in a society built by and for men. Additionally, despite the limited education the Brontë sisters received: "Charlotte received two and a half years of formal education, Anne received only two years, and Emily just a year and a half" (Brown, 2017, p. 1), they still succeeded as writers and governesses because they had the opportunity to study, which is an example of how far in life can education take people; Miller argues that "The Brontës were not, as Charlotte had it, uneducated" (2014, p. 263). Put differently, in the twenty-first century the Brontë sisters are crucial because they took the first steps away from the patriarchy; they knew there was no path to their success due to them being women, so they created one themselves, thus paving the way for future generations of women. Every change must start somewhere in order for it to spread elsewhere, and the Brontë sisters contributed to the cause. Also, regarding the topic of changes, societies change throughout the years, but the narratives written by the Brontë sisters still manage to survive and thrive among the vast number of existing literary pieces. Their novels have been translated and adapted into several mediums, which represents that despite years going by, they are still relevant: "[...] the mythification of Charlotte Brontë and *Jane Eyre* is the result of more than one hundred and fifty years of a continuous presence through, for instance, translations, theatre plays, critical reviews, and teaching materials. It remains contemporary..." (Ortega, 2022, p. 91).



Furthermore, equality has been a vital subject in this introduction so far; it is a fact that the Brontë sisters had it more difficult than men to succeed in their professional life due to their gender, nonetheless, two novels written by the Brontë sisters contain male characters that also had it complicated to thrive: Mr. Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*. This project shall answer the following research questions: What were the social expectations of men in the Victorian era? What difficulties does Mr. Rochester experience in *Jane Eyre*? What adversities does Heathcliff experience in *Wuthering Heights*? Is the experience of Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff the same, or are there any significant differences concerning their privileges? Does any of them have more rights than the other? In addition, this project will explore the fact that unwealthy men who were not the first to be born had it very difficult to succeed in the Victorian era and that Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff are excellent representatives of this issue. Also, this project is organized into several sections: this introduction is the first part; the second section answers the research question regarding the social expectations of men in the Victorian era while also discussing the life experiences of the Brontë sisters and their possible inspiration; the third part is dedicated to answering the inquiry regarding Mr. Rochester's difficulties and how he manages to make progress in *Jane Eyre*; the fourth section examines the character of Heathcliff and the issues he encounters as well as the reasons behind his success in *Wuthering Heights*; the fifth part consists of a comparison between Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff in which will appear their similarities, differences, and whether any of them has more rights than the other; and lastly, the sixth part will consist of the conclusion. I want to clarify that the aim of this project is not to discredit the difficulties endured by women in the Victorian era, but to explore and bring awareness of the fact that underprivileged men also had their issues during the nineteenth century.

## 2. Victorian Gentlemen and the Brontë Sisters

### 2.1. Masculinity, Inheritance Laws, and Primogeniture

Just like women, men also had to endure the harsh rules of Victorian society, therefore, in order to understand the adversities men faced, it is substantial to acknowledge how society expected them to behave. To begin with, men were supposed to be the providers and protectors of their families, therefore, their importance was proportional to their ability to provide and protect. Also, regarding men's importance in society, Davidoff and Hall argue that the Victorian era was extremely competitive concerning manhood; if a man did not possess enough capital to compete with the other men, he was not regarded as worthy of representing masculinity (1987, p. 185).

In addition, considering that men's education consisted of teaching them the importance of being financially productive, it is essential to emphasize that this issue led to a lack of sensibility. The fact that they had to dedicate their time and energy to earning money, depicts how emotionally deprived they were as during the Victorian era love and affection were regarded as feminine traits. For example, it was considerably easier for spinsters than for bachelors to create affectionate bonds with non-family members (Nelson, 2010, p. 59). Nelson also argues that "the preeminent male virtue is not love but knowledge" (2010, p. 60), which illustrates that Victorians defined masculinity as not requiring emotional support.

Furthermore, men only being regarded as workers did not only affect them as individuals, but it also affected their relationship with their children. The pressure of being the breadwinners resulted in men not participating in their children's lives as they did not have the time to do so: "[men were] assigned by society and perhaps (writers theorized) by nature itself to the part of provider rather than caregiver, fathers seemed inevitably distanced from their children" (Nelson, 2010, p. 5).

Additionally, it was extremely common for lower-class men not to be pleased with their professions, nonetheless, that employment was what allowed them to fulfill their role as providers; put differently, men sacrificed their time and energy to represent the

masculine ideal of society, but they were still unhappy despite achieving what was expected of them:

Moreover, his role as protector comes at considerable cost, since for all his inherent egocentricity ('a thoroughly unselfish man is almost a *lulus naturae*'), he is liable to be found 'toil[ing] all his life at a trade he hates, yet which happens to be the only calling in which he can earn the family bread.' His sufferings, however, never fit him to play any role beyond that of provider (Nelson, 2010, p. 60).

In addition, the topic of inheritance and primogeniture should also be acknowledged as it is related to the issue of masculinity. As stated in the previous paragraphs, men had to fulfill their roles as providers, nonetheless, what if a man was not the first to be born? Was this an added difficulty to his life? Many pieces of research depict that during Victorianism, the issue of inheritance was a problematic subject; if there was more than one son in a family, the one who inherited the family's wealth was the eldest, leaving the younger brothers without any financial support:

The Law of Primogeniture, in its strictest form, has now determined the descent of land on intestacy in this country for more than six centuries. It has been shown that not long after the Norman Conquest the right of an eldest son to inherit his father's estate, if held by knight service, was fully recognised, and had been extended by the end of the thirteenth century to socage tenures. It has also been shown how this right has survived all recent attempts to abolish it, so that, while all personality is divided, on the death of an intestate, between his widow and children, all realty still devolves, by common law, on the eldest male descendant of the eldest line (Brodrick, 1969, p. 91).

Furthermore, men did have more chances than women of thriving professionally; for example, in Musgrove's piece of research, he discusses the vast majority of options upper/middle-class men had regarding employment: health professionals, businessmen, accountants, etc. (1959, p. 105). However, even if men had more opportunities in relation to work options, the fact of not inheriting any wealth made the process of finding a wife and providing for their family more complicated; marriage was a financial arrangement

as Cocks mentions (2013. p. 68), therefore, men who lacked capital experienced the complication of fulfilling their roles in society. Also, an additional difficulty for the younger sons was that if the eldest brother died after having a son, it was his son who inherited the wealth and not the eldest's younger brothers: "If *A* has an elder son *B* and a younger son *C*, and *B* dies in his father's lifetime leaving a son *BI*, and then *A* dies; *A*'s heir is *BI* and not *C*, because *BI* represents his father" (Baker, 1990, p. 227).

## 2.2. The Brontë Sisters' Experiences and Inspiration

Before discussing the difficulties and progress of Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff, it is essential to acknowledge the experiences that the Brontë sisters had concerning men as they created such complex characters based on their life stories. To begin with, their father Patrick Brontë was known to have a harsh temperament. Stoneman argues that many researchers depict Patrick Brontë as cold and severe, which could be considered to be a reason behind the ill-natured personality of the characters created by the Brontë sisters (2002, p. 218). Also, according to Robinson: "The children's father was a nervous, irritable and violent man, who endowed them with a nervous organisation easily disturbed and an indomitable force of volition [...]" (1883, p. 9).

Furthermore, the Brontë sisters did not only endure the complicated nature of their father, but also the situation of their alcoholic brother Branwell Brontë. In the case of Emily Brontë, she probably got inspired to write *Wuthering Heights* because of all the pain she experienced throughout her life; she was "silent and devoted, helping her drunken brother into bed" as Stoneman argues (2002, p. 215). Additionally, Emily and Charlotte Brontë witnessed Anne's illness, which also contributed to their anguish:

An old, blind, disillusioned father, once prone to an extraordinary violence of temper, but now grown quiet with age, showing his disappointment with life by a melancholy cynicism that was quite sincere; two sisters, both beloved, one, fired with genius and quick to sentiment, hiding her enthusiasm under the cold demeanor of the ex-governess, unsuccessful, and unrecognized; the other gentler, dearer, fairer, slowly dying, inch by inch, of the blighting neighborhood of vice; one brother, scarce less dear, of set purpose drinking himself to death out of furious thwarted passion for a mistress that he might not marry: these were the

members of Emily Brontë's household (Robinson, 1883, pp. 206-207).

Also, in the case of Charlotte Brontë, it is substantial to acknowledge her impossible love as she got inspired by Constantin Heger when creating Mr. Rochester. Charlotte Brontë fell in love with Constantin Heger, who was her professor in Brussels. However, he never reciprocated Charlotte Brontë's feelings as he was married at that time, which was a situation that resulted in her unhappiness. Additionally, just as for Emily Brontë, Branwell Brontë's alcoholism portrayed a problem in her life: "[Charlotte Brontë's] guilt about M. Heger, social mores, the revelation of vice indulged seen in the ruin of Branwell, perhaps a failure of nerve after great unhappiness, had all come together to teach her never to put her wishes first (Fraser, 1990, p. 222). In conclusion, in the case of Emily Brontë, her father and brother were the men who made a difference in her life, and in the case of Charlotte Brontë, were the same ones with the exception of Constantin Heger.

Last but not least, it is essential to acknowledge that there are more elements that potentially inspired the Brontë sisters to create their novels. To begin with, Bowen argues that Anne was sent to a specific school when she was six years old, a school that could be regarded as the inspiration for the creation of Lowood in *Jane Eyre* (2017, 02:00). Also, regarding the Brontë sisters' childhood, Bowen also argues that they spent most of their early years engaging in "creative workshops" and overall writing games where they created fictional worlds such as *Angria* and *Gondal* (2017, 02:32). Despite not having access to the stories of *Angria* and *Gondal* due to them not having survived, fortunately, Emily's poems regarding the fictional world of *Gondal* did survive and it is said to have the undertones of *Wuthering Heights* as both works are "passionate" and "intense" (Bowen, 2017, 04:00).

Furthermore, O'Brien states that the first biographer of Charlotte stated that the principal inspiration for such harsh tempers was her own father Patrick Brontë, but O'Brien disagrees with this statement by saying that there are not many evidences that support such allegations (2017, 06:20). Instead, O'Brien argues that the Brontë sisters probably got inspired from the gothic stories they consumed throughout their childhood and also from Woodsworth's poetry which was a key element in Emily's novel (2017, 07:35). The relation between Woodsworth's poetry and *Wuthering Heights* can be

perceived in the way the element of nature is employed and how the natural world itself is a representative of how earth can illustrate the paradise and the opposite of it:

[...] *Wuthering Heights* manifests the great theme of Wordsworth's "Prospectus" (the loss and rediscovery of paradise on earth), the book's complex blending of genres and perspectives may more usefully be compared to such poems as "The Thorn" or "Lucy Gray"-works dramatizing imaginative power through experiences of the "supernatural" in the commonplace (Williams, 1985, p. 106).

### 3. Mr. Rochester's Difficulties and Progress in *Jane Eyre*

In section two, I have acknowledged the difficulties men had to endure during the Victorian era, and in this section, I shall discuss Mr. Rochester's situation as he is an excellent example concerning men's complications. To begin with, Mr. Rochester was not the first-born of his family; therefore, the person who inherited the family's wealth was his older brother Rowland Rochester, thus leaving Mr. Rochester without any capital:

Jane, did you ever hear or know that I was not the eldest son of my house: that I had once a brother older than I?" [...] And did you ever hear that my father was an avaricious, grasping man? [...] it was his resolution to keep the property together; he could not bear the idea of dividing his estate and leaving me a fair portion: all, he resolved, should go to my brother, Rowland (Brontë, 1847, p. 351).

In this excerpt, two crucial topics must be analyzed. The first one is the portrayal of masculinity: Mr. Rochester describes his father as "avaricious" and "grasping" (Brontë, 1847, p. 351), which are adjectives that could also be used to portray his brother Rowland. If Rowland had desired to make his brother's life easier, he could have tried to convince his father to divide his estate into equal parts, which is something he ended up not doing: "Mr. Rowland Rochester was not quite just to Mr. Edward; and perhaps he prejudiced his father against him" (Brontë, 1847, p. 149). This situation illustrates the education that men used to receive at home: they were enlightened about the importance of earning as much money as possible and leaving aside any notions of companionship between men, which could be a representative of why it was so difficult for men to make bonds with other men.

Furthermore, the second topic that should be acknowledged regarding Rochester's lack of capital is that he could not fulfill his role in society as a provider due to Rowland Rochester inheriting all the family's wealth, which represented a threat to Mr. Rochester's masculinity: "[...] manhood was legitimated through their ability to secure the needs of their dependants" (Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 17). Davidoff and Hall also argue that women and children were considered to be "the innocence of the natural world" and that "masculinity must support, protect - and oversee" (1987, p. 269), which illustrates men's pressure of being financially productive. Additionally, lacking wealth also meant an added difficulty regarding the competitiveness of society; Mr. Rochester's adversities

were intensified by the lack of capital due to his inability to compete against other men who were part of the community: “manliness was set [...] in the competitive arena of the marketplace where manhood marked as aggressive energy and commercial success was tested against other men. Primarily, middle-class man was judged by the criteria of entrepreneurial manhood” (Sussman, 1995, p. 81). Taking into consideration these issues, it could be argued that Mr. Rochester was not able to be a provider or compete financially against other men, thus his character is not a representative of the stereotypical privileged man in the Victorian era.

Moreover, despite Mr. Rochester’s father deciding not to divide his estate equally between his two sons, he managed to arrange a marriage in the interest of Mr. Rochester’s wealth: “Yet as little could he endure that a son of his should be a poor man. I must be provided for by a wealthy marriage” (Brontë, 1847, p. 351). It is known that in the Victorian era, women were pressured into marriage, but as it can be perceived, some men were no different regarding this issue. Indeed, at first, Mr. Rochester did not notice any discrepancies in relation to his situation: he was young, easily impressionable, and he even regarded Bertha Mason as a “fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram: tall, dark, and majestic” (Brontë, 1847, p. 352). In addition, everyone encouraged him to take that path, not to mention the vast number of competitors who also wanted to marry Bertha Mason. Nonetheless, Mr. Rochester ended up regretting marrying her as Bertha started to present neurodivergent traits; traits that both his father and brother knew about: “My father and my brother Rowland knew all this; but they thought only of the thirty thousand pounds, and joined in the plot against me” (Brontë, 1847, p. 351). This situation is a perfect example that illustrates how during Victorianism, a man’s wealth was much more important than his emotional well-being; Woodrow acknowledges this by arguing that Mr. Rochester was “forced into a catastrophic marriage by his father and his brother for the sake of securing the family fortune and Thornfield Hall, and still haunted by its aftermath” (2022, p. 19). In addition, regarding the topic of Mr. Rochester’s emotional well-being, it is essential to emphasize that if Mr. Rochester’s family had cherished him as an individual, the unfortunate marriage could have been avoided; put differently, the fact that Mr. Rochester was forced into marrying Bertha depicts that men had to illustrate strength and protectiveness. Their emotions were not taken into consideration as what gave them value in society was their wealth, family, protection, and overall physical



strength. This can be perceived in *Jane Eyre* when Miss Ingram describes the characteristics a man should portray:

Poor, puny things, not fit to stir a step beyond papa's park gates: nor to go even so far without mama's permission and guardianship! Creatures so absorbed in care about their pretty faces, and their white hands, and their small feet; as if a man had anything to do with beauty! As if loveliness were not the special prerogative of woman—her legitimate appanage and heritage! I grant an ugly woman is a blot on the fair face of creation; but as to the gentlemen, let them be solicitous to possess only strength and valour: let their motto be: —Hunt, shoot, and fight... (Brontë, 1847, p. 208).

This quotation, however, depicts some discrepancies: even if Miss Ingram states that men should not be concerned about their “pretty faces”, the reality is that even if in the Victorian era beauty was not that important concerning men, a decent appearance was still substantial to some extent. This is why Mr. Rochester focuses on his physical appearance, which can be perceived when he asks Jane: “Do you think me handsome?” (Brontë, 1847, p. 154). In other words, his lack of masculine beauty also depicts a lack of masculinity: “Mr. Rochester's focus on appearance and beauty, while simultaneously desiring confirmation of his masculine traits [...], is a contradiction proving his lack of adherence to the masculine ideals and does not correspond with being simple and masculine in manner and mind” (Woodrow, 2022, p. 21). Additionally, regarding the importance of physical strength, as Miss Ingram says that a man should “Hunt, shoot, and fight” (Brontë, 1847, p. 208), Mr. Rochester loses one hand and his sight toward the end of *Jane Eyre* due to the fire caused by Bertha. That is to say, he loses his physical strength, which is a feature regarded as masculine:

He was taken out from under the ruins, alive, but sadly hurt: a beam had fallen in such a way as to protect him partly; but one eye was knocked out, and one hand so crushed that Mr. Carter, the surgeon, had to amputate it directly. The other eye inflamed: he lost the sight of that also. He is now helpless, indeed—blind and a cripple (Brontë, 1847, p. 494).

Additionally, regarding Mr. Rochester's loss of physical abilities, it is substantial to emphasize that he also loses Thornfield Hall. As stated throughout this project, wealth was crucial as it depicted a man's masculinity and ability to provide; therefore, Mr. Rochester losing his home portrays the loss of his status. He did not lose all of his wealth in the fire, but to some extent, his position in society and masculinity disappeared along with Thornfield Hall:

Thornfield Hall is quite a ruin: it was burnt down just about harvest-time. A dreadful calamity! such an immense quantity of valuable property destroyed: hardly any of the furniture could be saved. The fire broke out at dead of night, and before the engines arrived from Millcote, the building was one mass of flame. It was a terrible spectacle (Brontë, 1847, p. 491).

In the previous paragraphs, Mr. Rochester's situation is discussed: he was not the first-born son, which resulted in not inheriting any wealth; this made the fulfillment of his roles more complicated as he lacked the means in order to do so. Also, the lack of capital implied the impossibility of competing against other men. In addition, due to his lack of capital, Mr. Rochester's family forced him to marry Bertha Mason in support of his financial future, which ended up in a disastrous marriage. Last but not least, Mr. Rochester lacked physical attractiveness and toward the end of the novel, he loses his physical strength due to the fire caused by his wife, not to mention the loss of an important part of his wealth as well: Thornfield Hall. Taking into consideration these difficulties, Mr. Rochester could be defined as a man who suffered these complications due to his underprivileged situation. Nonetheless, it is substantial to acknowledge that he still managed to thrive in life despite the previously mentioned adversities. To begin with, even if Mr. Rochester's marriage was not exemplary, he still managed to get married because of how respected his family was: "[...] the family have always been respected here. Almost all the land in this neighbourhood, as far as you can see, has belonged to the Rochesters time out of mind" (Brontë, 1847, p. 124). If Mr. Rochester did not have a privileged surname, his story would have been totally different as even if he was not the first-born, he was still a Rochester. Also, despite his father and brother only focusing on Bertha Mason's wealth, they somewhat supported him; even if Mr. Rochester's family did not have the best intentions regarding his emotional well-being, they still managed to give him a wealthy future, which in the end, is what was essential during the Victorian

era. In addition, Mr. Rochester was able to progress economically not only due to his marriage to Bertha Mason, but also because after the death of his father and brother, he was the family member who inherited the family's wealth and Thornfield Hall. Furthermore, even if Mr. Rochester does not represent the stereotypical man regarding physicality, he is still regarded as masculine due to his Eurocentric physical traits. Also, even if he ends up losing his physical strength, that loss is what ends up making possible the marriage between Jane and Mr. Rochester as after the fire, both characters are on equal terms. And, of course, Jane still marries him after the unfortunate event because she still regards him as a masculine man, regardless of his physical imperfections:

His form was of the same strong and stalwart contour as ever: his port was still erect, his hair was still raven black; nor were his features altered or sunk: not in one year's space, by any sorrow, could his athletic strength be quelled or his vigorous prime blighted (Brontë, 1847, p. 497).

Finally, now that it has been acknowledged Mr. Rochester's adversities and progress, it is essential to discuss that he was an oppressive character at some point in his life; when he acquired his privileged position, he used that power to oppress Bertha Mason. Throughout the novel he justifies his actions by stating that Bertha was mad: "Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations!" (Brontë, 1847, p. 337). Nonetheless, it is impossible to know whether Mr. Rochester's statements are true as it is impossible to access Bertha's perspective about what happened, but the fact that he uses words such as "idiots" and "maniacs" to describe Bertha's family depicts his hatred toward her, thus showing that he is not regretful of any past actions regarding her forced isolation.

## 4. Heathcliff's Difficulties and Progress in *Wuthering Heights*

After getting acquainted with Mr. Rochester's adversities, it is essential to highlight Heathcliff's situation as he is an excellent example of an underprivileged man troubled by Victorian standards. Before anything else, it must be mentioned that Victorians regarded being a gentleman as substantial. In other words, masculinity during the Victorian era was portrayed by the crucial subject of being a chivalrous and elegant man: "the idea of the gentleman can be seen for what I believe it was: one of the most important and far-reaching of Victorian preoccupations" (Gilmour, 1981. p. 12). This is essential to be acknowledged as Heathcliff at the beginning of *Wuthering Heights* does not depict the characteristics of a masculine and genteel man. To begin with, Heathcliff is an orphan, which means that he does not benefit from the privileges of enjoying a family's surname. Heathcliff's lack of a surname encompasses a vast number of issues, one being not having the right to inherit any wealth. Nonetheless, a substantial element in the novel that should be considered is that Heathcliff is adopted<sup>2</sup> by Mr. Earnshaw, who comes from an affluent family:

The master tried to explain the matter; but he was really half dead with fatigue, and all that I could make out, amongst her scolding, was a tale of his seeing it starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb, in the streets of Liverpool, where he picked it up and inquired for its owner. Not a soul knew to whom it belonged, he said; and his money and time being both limited, he thought it better to take it home with him at once, than run into vain expenses there: because he was determined he would not leave it as he found it (Brontë, 1847, p. 37).

This event could be regarded as the opposite of being underprivileged as he is given a place in the family. However, Heathcliff does not represent a legitimate child, thus he does not have the right to inherit any capital. The fact that Heathcliff is not considered an Earnshaw depicts a threat to his masculinity as he does not enjoy the privilege of possessing the family's properties. Also, throughout Emily Brontë's diegesis, Heathcliff

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<sup>2</sup> Adopted as in being "taken care of". Not as in "legally" adopted. Heathcliff never had the surname "Earnshaw" attached to his name, therefore, the word "adopted" as in "legally adopted" does not illustrate his situation in the novel.

externalizes his frustration regarding his poverty and even becomes envious of Edgar Linton, who illustrates the perfect example of a gentleman in Victorian society: “I wish [...] I had a chance of being as rich as he will be!” (Brontë, 1847, p. 57). Furthermore, his economic scarcity is not the only element that drives him away from being a gentleman, but also his lack of manners. Arnold has an intriguing vision regarding the definition of the word “gentleman” as he argues: “We see few here whose looks and manners are what we should call those of a thorough gentleman [...] A thorough English gentleman — Christian, manly and enlightened” (1845, p. 110). Nonetheless, Heathcliff is not regarded as one of those “few” whose “looks and manners are what we should call of a thorough gentleman” (1845, p. 110). This is perceived when Catherine intends to warn Isabella about Heathcliff’s true destructive and harsh nature:

Tell her what Heathcliff is: an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone. I’d as soon put that little canary into the park on a winter’s day, as recommend you to bestow your heart on him! It is deplorable ignorance of his character, child, and nothing else, which makes that dream enter your head. Pray, don’t imagine that he conceals depths of benevolence and affection beneath a stern exterior! He’s not a rough diamond - a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he’s a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man (Brontë, 1847, pp. 102-103).

Furthermore, Heathcliff as an orphan did not only have to endure the adversity of lacking capital, but he also had to face the trouble of being part of an ethnic minority. The fact that Mr. Earnshaw found Heathcliff in Liverpool, which was “the English city with the most spirited commerce in slaves” (von Sneidern, 1995, p. 171), depicts Heathcliff’s otherness. Nonetheless, despite Heathcliff’s evident non-Eurocentric appearance, it is substantial to emphasize that his origins are not certain. In *Wuthering Heights*, there are many references regarding his ethnicity, but none of them are concrete affirmations: “You’re fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen” (Brontë, 1847, p. 58). In addition, another speculation regarding his lineage is Heathcliff being a Gypsy, which again, is just one of many possibilities:

We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy's head I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; [...] and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up, asking how he could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed and fend for? (Brontë, 1847, pp. 36-37).

This topic is essential to be discussed because even if in *Wuthering Heights* Heathcliff is not regarded as a slave, his situation illustrates the inhumane life enslaved people had during the British Empire. It is widely known that some of them were servants in rich people's houses and that generally, those people had darker complexions. This is mentioned by many researchers; for example, Williams in his paper discusses the faithful nature of Black servants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "we take the following from the Liverpool newspaper: 'On Saturday, February 26th, 1780, died in the 79th year of his age, Thomas Crowder, [...]; and on Tuesday died his faithful black servant, who had served him upwards of twenty years'" (1897, p. 554). Therefore, it could be said that at the beginning of the novel, Heathcliff depicts the enslaved servant while Hindley depicts the master:

Hindley forces Heathcliff into the role of a servant - probably an unpaid one, to judge from Heathcliff's later recreation of his own situation in Hareton [...] Forced to labor in the fields, deprived of literacy, and beaten by his 'master' (one who certainly, despite their upbringing, never treats him as 'a man and a brother'), Heathcliff is little better off than if he had remained on a Liverpool slave ship (Meyer, 1996, p. 108).

Put differently, at the beginning of *Wuthering Heights*, the character created by Emily Brontë is depicted as lacking a surname, wealth, and a conventional Victorian physique. The desired Victorian physical appearance was essentially having a Eurocentric complexion, meaning that citizens who did not fit within those standards were not accepted in society: "Heathcliff, then, is a true literary mulatto character because Emily paints him as a man who, because of his 'otherness' and marginality, can never fit into a decent, white society" (Watson, 2001, p. 469). Considering the discrimination toward non-white inhabitants depicts Heathcliff's desire of being white: "I wish I had light hair and a fair skin" (Brontë, 1847, p. 57). Additionally, Heathcliff's otherness portrayed an additional struggle not only due to inhabitants like him not having their place in society, but also because he was mistreated because of it: "Heathcliff is marginalized because of

his appearance and suspected 'otherness.' He is constantly reminded that he has no place in civilized society" (Watson, 2001, p. 458). Also, Hindley's terrible behavior is what reminds Heathcliff about his disadvantaged situation: "I wish my father were back again. Hindley is a detestable substitute - his conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious [...]" (Brontë, 1847, p. 20). The fact that Heathcliff is marginalized and also exploited by Hindley causes him to desire to take revenge, which is one of the main reasons behind his harsh personality: [...] because of this isolation, he strikes out in actions that are either directly or indirectly linked to the destruction of Hindley, his tormentor, and other characters in the work (Watson, 2001, p. 458).

Moreover, due to Heathcliff's otherness and lack of capital, Catherine decides to marry Edgar Linton in order to avoid poverty: "She yields, however, to her fear of degradation and marries Edgar, for whom she cultivates a somewhat literary affection" (Vargish, 1971, p. 89). It is crucial to emphasize the fact that Catherine could not inherit her family's wealth because she was a woman, which depicts how similar Heathcliff and Catherine are regarding economic difficulties: "The novel reveals the constraining economic situation of women, while demonstrating that the economic situation of the colonized peoples who are made into a servant class for England is even worse" (Meyer, 1996, p. 108). Furthermore, regarding the issue of marriage, Catherine thought it would be inappropriate to marry Heathcliff despite her love for him because Heathcliff, at that time in the novel, was not considered a gentleman capable of providing for a family: "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am" (Brontë, 1847, p. 81). This situation implies the importance of marriage for both men and women and how men were pressured into being providers.

Furthermore, even if Heathcliff endures many difficulties throughout his life due to his otherness, lack of wealth, and lack of manners, he still manages to thrive in the end by getting acquainted with what is necessary to be accepted by the society he is living in. He disappears for three years and after his return, he is described as having the behavior of a gentleman despite his dark skin tone: "He is a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure" (Brontë, 1847, p. 5). The consequences of the change in Heathcliff's

description are that he manages to get wealthy, get married, and make himself respected in society. Put differently, Heathcliff starts being portrayed as a gentleman because in those three years, he got acquainted with what Victorian society regarded as masculine and achieved the necessary traits in order to be considered a gentleman:

[...] Heathcliff acquires culture as a weapon. He amasses a certain amount of cultural capital in his two years' absence in order to shackle others more effectively, buying up the expensive commodity of gentility in order punitively to re-enter the society from which he was punitively expelled" (Eagleton, 1988, p. 122).

Nonetheless, even if he is considered to be a gentleman because of having acquired the imposed requirements by society, he could also be regarded as representing madness and psychopathy due to his violent behavior toward his wife Isabella and everyone around him. For example, Heathcliff's oppressive nature can be perceived when he attacks Hindley:

He then took a stone, struck down the division between two windows, and sprang in. His adversary had fallen senseless with excessive pain and the flow of blood, that gushed from an artery or a large vein. The ruffian kicked and trampled on him, and dashed his head repeatedly against the flags, holding me with one hand, meantime, to prevent me summoning Joseph (Brontë, 1847, p. 179).

Also, regarding Heathcliff's oppressive and violent behavior, Sutherland defines him as a "gentleman psychopath", which marvelously illustrates Heathcliff's conduct: "When he returns to Wuthering Heights after his mysterious three-year period of exile Heathcliff has become someone very cruel. [...] He returns a gentleman psychopath" (1996, p. 53). Therefore, it could be said that Heathcliff managed to be considered a gentleman despite his underprivileged situation, and instead of ending the vicious cycle of inflicting pain on others, he became like the people who hurt him in the past:

And in order to understand Heathcliff's exploitation of the young we must look briefly at his passion for Catherine as expressed in his own childhood and youth. He will later attempt to reproduce past emotional conditions in those who fall into



his hands, to recreate the patterns of his own love and its betrayal and loss (Vargish, 1971, p. 7).

This situation can be perceived in many instances throughout the narrative, and an excellent example is Heathcliff's behavior after Edgar Linton's death as he acts unbothered by it. His behavior depicts that he believes he always deserved the privilege of being the master of Edgar Linton's home, which showcases his lack of remorse and empathy:

He made no ceremony of knocking or announcing his name: he was master, and availed himself of the master's privilege to walk straight in, without saying a word...It was the same room into which he had been ushered as a guest, eighteen years before...There was the same man: his dark face sallow and more composed, his frame a stone or two heavier, perhaps, but no other difference (Brontë, 1847, p. 286).

## 5. Comparing and Contrasting Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff

Now that Mr. Rochester's and Heathcliff's difficulties, progress, and oppressive nature have been acknowledged, it is essential to address their similarities and differences. To begin with, in relation to their lack of wealth, their situations could be regarded as analogical as both characters experienced not having in their possession any capital. Nonetheless, it is substantial to mention that the circumstances they encountered were radically different; for example, Mr. Rochester did not possess any wealth in the past because he was the second-born son, while Heathcliff lacked capital because he was an orphan. In addition, even if Mr. Rochester could not inherit his family's wealth because he was not the first heir to the family's capital, his privileged surname allowed him to marry Bertha Mason, who was a woman coming from an affluent family, thus ending up being in possession of a significant amount of money after the marriage. Additionally, when Mr. Rochester's father and brother died, he was the only family member who could inherit the family's capital along with Thornfield Hall, which also represented a significant change regarding his economic power. Put differently, Mr. Rochester endured the difficulty of not being the first-born son, however, his affluent family made it possible for him to succeed economically by marrying him to a wealthy woman and he also ended up inheriting his family's wealth after the death of his father and brother. Heathcliff, on the contrary, did not experience the privileges that Mr. Rochester enjoyed. For example, Heathcliff did not have a family, therefore, he did not have Mr. Rochester's privilege of enjoying a surname. Also, Heathcliff was taken care of by Mr. Earnshaw, but he never represented a legitimate child legally, thus he never had the right to inherit the capital in possession of the Earnshaw family. In addition, it should be mentioned that in *Wuthering Heights* Heathcliff disappears for three years and then returns a wealthy gentleman, nevertheless, it is unknown how he managed to acquire that much amount of capital. This situation showcases that while Mr. Rochester had his family's support in order to succeed financially, Heathcliff was forced by the circumstances of his underprivileged situation to find his own way to succeed at being economically prosperous.

Furthermore, another similarity that Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff portray is the fact that neither of the two characters depicts the specific masculine Victorian beauty standards. Nonetheless, even if Mr. Rochester is not regarded as a representative of the Victorian desired physicality, he is still regarded as being "of a good race" (Brontë, 1847,

p. 352), which implies that he is a European man. Additionally, despite Mr. Rochester not being described as an attractive man and also losing his physical strength toward the end of the novel, the woman he loves, Jane, still decides to marry him. Heathcliff's situation, however, is more complicated as he is not a representative of the Victorian beauty standards due to being a dark-skinned man. This situation represents a massive discrepancy between the two characters as it portrays a significant adversity in the case of Heathcliff due to the discrimination he suffered in the past because of his dark complexion. Furthermore, the contrast is more apparent after acknowledging that Mr. Rochester did not experience any social issues due to not being regarded as handsome, while Heathcliff suffered the exclusion of society, the mistreatment of Hindley, and also, the rejection of Catherine as she believed it would be inappropriate for her to marry him. Ultimately, even if Heathcliff is not a slave in *Wuthering Heights*, the adversities he experiences could be regarded as representatives of the severe life enslaved people had during the Victorian era, which is something that should also be taken into consideration as it illustrates a significant subject when racial issues are analyzed in the context of Heathcliff's lack of privileges.

Moreover, another crucial aspect that should be mentioned is the oppressive nature of Mr. Rochester and Heathcliff. To begin with, they are similar characters as the two of them oppress others after acquiring the necessary power in order to do so. For example, in the case of Mr. Rochester, he represses Bertha Mason by isolating her from the world and he justifies his actions by arguing that she is not a neurotypical individual. However, Heathcliff's situation is different as his harsh behavior originates in the desire for revenge; he becomes an oppressive character toward the people around him to make others suffer what he suffered in the past. In other words, instead of being benevolent and using his socio-economic power to break the vicious cycle of hostility, he becomes like the people who hurt him years ago. Therefore, despite the oppressive actions of both characters, it could be argued that Heathcliff's nature is much more destructive than Mr. Rochester's as he decides to inflict pain on others to take revenge for his own past sufferings.

## 6. Conclusion

I have discussed many subjects in this project, and I shall dedicate this section to conclude every single one. I want to clarify that I decided to focus on certain topics because I believe that all of them are vital in order to understand Heathcliff's and Mr. Rochester's characterization. For example, I decided to dedicate a section to the Brontë sisters' life experiences and possible inspiration because as writers they were a product of their environment. In other words, it is impossible to grasp the true nature of Heathcliff and Mr. Rochester without first getting acquainted with the historical context in which they were created.

To begin with, regarding masculinity in the Victorian era, it is essential to emphasize that men's importance in society was proportional to their financial productivity and ability to protect. Additionally, the Victorian era was highly competitive, which illustrated an additional difficulty regarding the compliance of men's social roles as they were required to be in constant social conflict with other men. Also, men had to represent masculinity not only concerning wealth, but also regarding emotional strength, thus enduring the adversity of being emotionally deprived due to love and affection being recognized as feminine traits.

Furthermore, in my research concerning inheritance laws and primogeniture, I have found many documents that argued that men who were not first-born sons had to endure the adversity of not inheriting any wealth. The reason behind this issue was that the family member who was the heir to the family's capital was the eldest son, thus the younger brothers not enjoying the opportunity to inherit any wealth regardless of them being legitimate children. Also, another essential piece of information that I managed to find is that if the heir to the family's capital had a son, that particular son was the new heir to the family's wealth, which meant that in case the principal heir died, it was his son who had the right to inherit everything and not the eldest's younger brothers, which of course, also depicted an additional difficulty to the second-born sons.

Moreover, in this project I have discussed the Brontë sisters' experiences concerning men and other significant material from which they probably got inspired to create their novels. To begin with, a substantial figure in the life of the Brontë sisters was their father Patrick Brontë who in many pieces of research is depicted as having a harsh

temperament. However, they did not only endure the severe nature of their father, but they also experienced the unfortunate situation of their brother Branwell Brontë who was an alcoholic. Also, regarding the issue of experiencing disastrous events, Charlotte and Emily endured the adversity of being witnesses to Anne's illness. Moreover, in the case of Charlotte Brontë, she fell in love with her teacher Constantin Heger who did not reciprocate her love for him, which resulted in Charlotte Brontë's heartbreak. In relation to Constantin Heger, it is substantial to highlight that he was older and even married when Charlotte met him, which depicts a tremendous similarity between Mr. Rochester and Constantin Heger. Last but not least, Bragg, O'Brien, Bowen, and Lewis had as the main discussion topic the Brontë sister's possible inspiration concerning their novels. I got acquainted with the fact that Emily was sent to a specific school when she was six years old and that the origin of Lowood in *Jane Eyre* was that institution. In addition, the Brontë sisters spent their childhood engaging in many creative activities, which included creating stories. However, the fantastic tales called *Angria* and *Gondal* did not survive, but Emily's poems did. Emily's poems are substantial because they have the same passionate tone as *Wuthering Heights*, which depicts the inspiration for this novel. Also, other possible inspirations are the gothic stories the Brontë sisters consumed in their childhood and Woodsworth's poetry.

In addition, in my research regarding Mr. Rochester's difficulties and progress, I got acquainted with the fact that, to some extent, he depicts underprivileged Victorian men. To begin with, he was the second-born son in his family, which implies that he did not have the privilege to inherit his family's wealth, as the only heir was his brother Rowland. His inability to inherit any capital threatened his masculinity as he could not provide for a family, which was the most substantial role men had to fulfill in Victorian society. Furthermore, his family did not cherish him as an individual and pressured him into marrying Bertha Mason; this illustrates that Mr. Rochester represents an emotionally neglected character. And lastly, he was not regarded as physically attractive, and also, toward the end of *Jane Eyre*, he loses his physical strength, which depicts the loss of masculinity. However, despite these adversities, Mr. Rochester still thrives socially and economically; even if he is not the first-born son, he still has a privileged surname that allows him to marry a wealthy woman, thus inheriting a significant amount of wealth. Also, after his father's and brother's death, he inherits the family's

wealth as he is the only heir left capable of doing so. Additionally, in spite of Mr. Rochester lacking physical attractiveness and losing his strength, he still manages to marry Jane due to both characters being on equal terms after Mr. Rochester's loss of vitality. Last but not least, it is essential to emphasize on Mr. Rochester's oppressive nature as after becoming wealthy, he employs his influence and power to imprison Bertha.

In relation to my research regarding Heathcliff's difficulties and progress, I realized that he endured many more adversities than Mr. Rochester. To begin with, Heathcliff is an orphan, which illustrates his inability to enjoy the privilege of having a surname. The fact that he does not have a legitimate family depicts the lack of support and the impossibility of inheriting a family's wealth. In addition, even if Mr. Earnshaw decides to take care of Heathcliff by bringing him into his home, Heathcliff does not represent a legitimate child, thus he cannot inherit Mr. Earnshaw's capital. Moreover, while Mr. Rochester does not endure the complication of being part of an ethnic minority, Heathcliff does; he is excluded from society and mistreated by Hindley due to his dark complexion. Also, the fact that Heathcliff is not considered a gentleman due to his dark skin tone and lack of wealth resulted in Catherine not marrying him, which is also an unfortunate experience that Mr. Rochester did not suffer. However, despite these adversities, Heathcliff disappears and returns after three years with a significant amount of capital in his possession; even if it is unknown how he managed to acquire such wealth, the reality is that while Mr. Rochester's family supported him, Heathcliff had to find his own way in order to become an affluent gentleman. Last but not least, due to Heathcliff suffering such harsh experiences, he ended up becoming an oppressive character, nonetheless, his behavior is entirely distinct in comparison to Mr. Rochester's as Heathcliff's oppressive behavior emerged from his desire to get revenge. In conclusion, Heathcliff suffered more than Mr. Rochester, and due to those unfortunate events, his temperament became more violent than Mr. Rochester's.

Finally, I have mentioned previously that Mr. Rochester ended up marrying Jane, while Heathcliff did not succeed in marrying Catherine. I believe that the reason behind the difference between the two characters is related to how Victorian society was in relation to racial issues. In the case of Mr. Rochester, he is rewarded in *Jane Eyre* because he is a European man, which means that his character represents the Victorian privileged white man. Nonetheless, Heathcliff's situation is entirely different as he is a dark-skinned

man. My hypothesis in relation to Heathcliff's punishment is that his character is a metaphor for the reality that people from outside Europe suffered during the British Empire. Dark-skinned people were punished with the lack of rights because of their skin tone, and Heathcliff is punished in *Wuthering Heights* because of the same reason.

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