

THE DISCOURSE OF CONFESSION AND THE RHETORIC OF THE DEVIL:
UNNATURAL ATTRACTION AND GENDER INSTABILITY IN *WUTHERING*
HEIGHTS AND *THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE*

by

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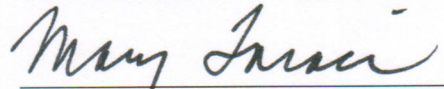
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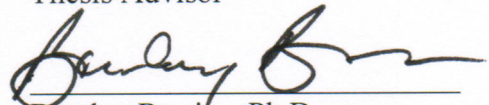
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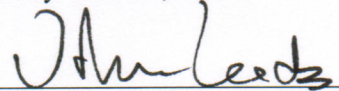
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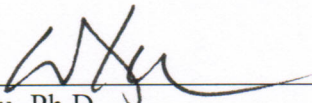
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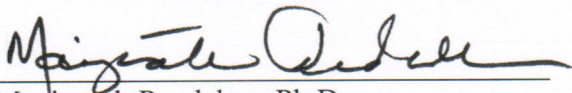
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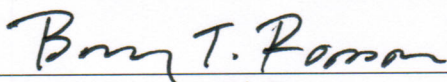
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ABSTRACT

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Often overlooked in the nineteenth century Gothic novel are the complicated social issues existing within the text. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*, the authors each create villains who represent the preoccupation with appropriate sexuality and conventional gender roles existing in Victorian England. Brontë's Heathcliff and Stevenson's James Durie embody all that is immoral and non-normative in society with their depraved behavior; however, because of the authors' craftiness with language, the authors, through their villains, manage to magnetize the other characters and subsequently emasculate those men in the text who emulate the Victorian ideal of masculinity. By focusing their novels on the plight of the Other and his disruption to the homogeneous rules regarding sexuality and gender in the nineteenth century, both authors articulate a profound understanding of the societal fears regarding these issues existing in their time.

DEDICATION

To my mother and sister, I offer you my sincerest gratitude for all of your love and support. To Chance and Coby, thank you my sweet boys for your unconditional love and affection. To my husband, Pete, I am eternally grateful for your positive presence in my life and for our beautiful family. To my son Santino: Although this thesis is a monumental academic achievement, *you* are, by far, the greatest accomplishment of my life.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Victorian era, the Gothic novel remained a fashionable genre in the realm of literature, embodying the stereotypical horror story of treachery, murder, and paranormal occurrences, “provid[ing] a useful ground upon which to safely confront very real fears and horrors” (Anolik 1). The Victorian era spanned a period of 60 years—from 1830-1901, and during this time, countless authors experimented with the Gothic novel. In this thesis, I will examine Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, an acclaimed Gothic novel written at the beginning of the Victorian period and discuss the social implications—specifically, the role of sexuality and gender—that contributed to Brontë’s design of arguably the most villainous character in literary history—Heathcliff. I will also examine Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Master of Ballantrae*, a Gothic novel not given much critical attention at the time of its publication at the end of the nineteenth century but featuring another particularly villainous character—James Durie, a man who represents the evils associated with deviating from the strict sexual and gender roles and laws newly established during the period. In *Wuthering Heights* and *The Master of Ballantrae*, the villains each possess satanic qualities—both are evil, yet they have the ability to appear charming and gentlemanly—not unlike the biblical villain. However, these villains also possess another weapon in their immoral arsenal: they embody unbridled sexuality, and due to the brilliance of Bronte and Stevenson’s narration which renders them so appealing, the villains have the uncanny ability to

attract both the male and female characters. This attraction to the villains creates a binary opposition in the characters and narrators—male and female—who begin to grapple with their own integrity which culminates into an individual questioning of sexuality, gender identity, and/or morality.

Brontë and Stevenson create villains representative of the evils present in their respective societies, and both authors utilize the discourse of confession—albeit through different methods—as a way for the characters to purge themselves of sin and restore order. In *Wuthering Heights*, the characters confess to Nelly Dean in separate speeches during times of duress, while in *The Master of Ballantrae*, the entire novel reads as a confession due to the narrator Mackellar's continuing ambivalence towards the villain. In light of these findings, it is my intention in this thesis to explore the attraction of the characters to the male villains and argue that these authors' representations of sexuality correlate directly to the belief in a definitive good/evil binary existing in nineteenth century England. This factor is clearly illustrated through the confessional aspects of the novels where the characters feel an overwhelming desire to confess their attraction to entities deemed inappropriate by societal standards. I will further argue that the overpowering sexuality and pervasive presence of the Gothic Other in these two novels has a destabilizing effect on the heterosexual identity of the Victorian male characters, creating an ambivalence towards the Other, ultimately emasculating the empowered subject through a reversal of the traditional master (empowered)/ servant (Other) paradigm.

As my analyses of the two aforementioned characters will illustrate, they are not merely appalling creatures, they are the devil, a fact reinforced by Brontë and

Stevenson's repetition throughout the works of words such as "devil" and "diabolical." Therefore, any sexual attraction to the villains signifies a sexual attraction to Satan. Heathcliff and James's satanic auras render them "Others," a distinctive component of the Gothic novel. Historically, anyone foreign was considered as a lesser human by the empowered white males, and a typical stereotype of the foreigner emerged as something uncivilized and corrupt. The villains in these novels are both described as being physically dark which further illustrates the stereotype of the foreigner as darkness personifies evil, reminiscent of Satan and symbolizing deviance.

Another absorbing facet of the Other in these novels involves the dynamic of the Other possessing an empowered role in his own household and in certain social circles, and the fact that he has a dominant position over many of the characters, which is in opposition from the traditional trope that the Other is a subservient figure. Brontë's Heathcliff rises to power through manipulation and treachery, while Stevenson's James is born to a prominent family and possesses a title. This dominance is pivotal in evaluating the ability of the Other to confine the subject both literally and figuratively. However, the Other in both novels is ultimately destroyed at the end, suggesting that although the strength of his influence perseveres throughout the story, the non-normative sexuality and gender he represents must be contained in the end in an attempt to maintain the harmonious sexual and gender constructs of the time.

The pivotal differences in narration and the influence of Brontë and Stevenson's narrators will also be examined in this thesis to comprehend the ability of narrative technique to invoke sympathy for the devil. The narrators humanize Heathcliff and James, which allows the reader to become enamored of the villains just as the characters

in the novels are. Brontë's Nelly is not the actual "narrator" of the novel—instead, she tells the tale of the Earnshaws and Lintons to another character—Mr. Lockwood—who then retells the story to the reader. Both Nelly and Lockwood, through their narratives, reveal an attractive side of Heathcliff that enables the reader to understand the attraction to Heathcliff that the characters in the novel experience. Stevenson's Mackellar similarly conveys to the reader James's redeeming qualities. However, Mackellar's narrative is more complex than Nelly and Lockwood's because he is not simply telling the story of how others are drawn to James or merely exposing positive aspects of the man's persona; Mackellar himself is completely captivated by the man.

Finally, the different ways that the authors go about creating their devils and achieving their social commentary must be acknowledged. Both authors use realistic elements to attain narrative credibility such as location and dialect; however, Brontë utilizes feminine literary devices such as the archetypes of illness and madness, symptoms mainly associated with females. Hers is a torrid love story that concludes with a happy ending involving two heterosexual characters uniting, but Brontë is able to weave the haunting location of the Yorkshire moors and the striking dialect of the region's people to achieve realism in an otherwise supernatural story. Brontë also possesses a personal association with her heroine Catherine Earnshaw since she similarly experiences the rage and frustration of a woman living in an oppressive era. This connection is clearly illustrated in Brontë's impassioned telling of Catherine's rebellious attraction to a man deemed unacceptable by societal standards. Stevenson takes a much more masculine approach in his writing. The story of two battling brothers is a biblical allusion to Cain and Abel, and Stevenson's depiction of Henry and James's

sibling rivalry is much more violent than Brontë's passionate yarn. The literary brothers engage in a duel, they battle over a woman, and there is no happy ending in the novel as the brothers meet their untimely deaths in the wilderness of 18th century America. In the preface of *The Master of Ballantrae*, the "editor" comments when defending the realistic crudeness of the narrative, "I believe there is nothing so noble as baldness, [...] and I am sure there is nothing so interesting" (8). His statement indicates the effectiveness of realism in the story, and the unnecessary need to "work up the scenery, develop the characters, and improve the style" to make *The Master of Ballantrae* more exciting. Thus, Brontë and Stevenson, through their individual realistic techniques and narration, arrive at the same conclusion regarding unnatural desires—they cannot be allowed to flourish in society.

The Discourse of Confession

The discourse of confession poignantly reveals and exposes social insecurities and limitations existing in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Master of Ballantrae*, allowing the various speakers a release. According to the *OED*, confession is "[t]he disclosing of something the knowledge of which by others is considered humiliating or prejudicial to the person confessing; a making known or acknowledging of one's fault, wrong, crime, weakness, etc." ("Confession"). The *OED* also defines confession in legal terms as the "[a]cknowledgement before the proper authority of the truth of a statement or charge; acknowledgement by a culprit of the offence charged against him, when he is asked to plead to the indictment" ("Confession"), and finally, in a religious context: "The acknowledging of sin or sinfulness; *esp.* such acknowledgement made in set form in public worship" ("Confession"). The discourse of confession originated in religion as a

way for sinners to purge their souls of guilt in order to attain forgiveness; however, by the nineteenth century, confession had become a way of policing society by turning deviant behaviors that society wished to annihilate into a discourse of sin.ⁱ In Oliver Buckton's work *Secret Selves: Confession and Same Sex Desire in Victorian Autobiography*, Buckton discusses Michel Foucault's theories regarding sexuality in the Victorian era: "The relationship between sexuality and discourse is central [...] to the way in which sexuality itself has come to signify the 'truth' of the self in modern western culture" (7). The only way for the subject to attain forgiveness for any non-normative sexuality was through confession, and as Buckton states, during the nineteenth century, "confession plays a unique role in the representation of new, transgressive forms of sexuality and subjectivity" (8). Ultimately, the confession served only to heighten the hegemonic control of the established order by bringing public awareness to the sin being confessed by emphasizing the righteousness of the "correct" behavior. In fact, the correct behavior was contingent upon the non-normative behavior. In other words, moral conduct was defined by what it was not.

During my examination of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Master of Ballantrae*, I will illustrate the characters' moral ambiguity by analyzing their confessional speeches. In *Wuthering Heights*, the pronouns and voice in the literary dialogue reveal Brontë's genius with words, as the confessional speeches made by Catherine and Isabella to Nelly Dean express their knowledge that their relationships with Heathcliff are unnatural by societal standards. Brontë communicates the passion of the characters as they attempt to air their grievances as a way to become liberated from the villains through the use of shifting pronouns and verb tenses. Instead of liberation, however,

they only succeed in perpetuating a societal standard that will not allow them to deviate from the customary modes of acceptable behavior. In *The Master of Ballantrae*, Mackellar and Henry Durie articulate confessions regarding their attraction/repulsion to James. In the novel, Stevenson brilliantly utilizes Mackellar's entire narrative as a confession, highlighting the ambiguity of Mackellar's words to expose the underlying concern with propriety and morality regarding relationships between men during the later stages of the Victorian era.

Sexuality and Gender Constraints in Victorian England

Historically, it has been widely acknowledged that Victorian society repressed sexuality, both hetero and homo. However, in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues in the nineteenth century that although it was believed that the only sexuality lawfully recognized was that of “the legitimate and procreative couple” (3), and any other heterogeneous sexual behavior “did [...] not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestations—whether in acts or in words” (4), he contends that this “repressive hypothesis” had a paradoxical effect on the rhetoric of sexuality. The Victorian era did not establish an age of repression. Instead, the discourse created during the time contributed to “a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of ‘perversions’” (37). In other words, the Victorians' rhetoric of sex, rather than repressing, exposed sexuality as a way to analyze and categorize sex. Foucault explains that the preoccupation with sex in all of its forms and the discourse created by this preoccupation was established as a way for those in power to gain further control and authority through knowledge. Thus, the discussion of sex was not forbidden—it was merely relegated to sciences such as medicine and

psychology.

Homosexuality in the nineteenth century evoked a frenzy and provoked politicians to enact laws specifically outlawing homosexuality. The original sodomy laws prohibiting homosexuality in the British Isles were passed in 1533 under the reign of Henry VIII and were punishable by death until the middle of the nineteenth century when the punishment was lessened to ten years to life imprisonment. As Michael S. Foldy states, there was no alternative to heterosexuality in the sixteenth century; it was “compelled and mandated by English Civil law” (81). This “compelling” of heterosexuality was not always closely followed prior to the eighteenth century—even with the threat of death as punishment. Socially, according to Randolph Trumbach, men could engage in sexual practices with younger males without “threatening their status as adult male” (qtd. in Foldy 82). Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall explain that this practice radically changed in the next few centuries as gender roles became more defined, especially in the middle classes where homosexuality was greeted “with outraged horror” (qtd. in Foldy 82). The middle classes subscribed to a more stringent standard of manliness than the aristocracy, and as Foldy states, the strict moral standards of sexuality and gender roles did not always apply to the upper classes as “they possessed the requisite wealth and power to command privacy, and, if necessary, to circumvent the law” (83).

Attraction to the same sex was also viewed as a medical condition, or in Jeffrey Weeks’s words, it became “the medicalization of homosexuality” (qtd. in Foldy 83). Men and women who engaged in same sex affairs were deemed insane. William Pannapacker states that after 1870, “[t]he ‘homosexual’ male, either as a result of

congenital ‘inversion’ or moral ‘perversion,’ demonstrated behaviors culturally designated as female, possibly including sexual desire for ‘normal males’” (281). The homosexual female was similarly condemned by the medical community as “hysterical” (Ehnenn 102). It was believed that women who engaged in “depraved” sexual practices, including “same-sex activity,” experienced “regression to a lower evolutionary state” and needed medical treatment (Ehnenn 102). The medicalization of homosexuality did nothing to dispel the negative stigma of same-sex desire. Instead, both Weeks and Foucault suggest that “[t]he older notions of sin were not replaced wholesale by the new scientific views, but were instead conflated with and incorporated into the new scientific conceptualization of sickness and disease” (Foldy 85). Thus, medicine only reaffirmed and strengthened the public’s distaste of homosexuality. In 1885, new laws concerning homosexuality were enacted (Weeks 48). The Labouchere Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment stipulated, according to Weeks, that “acts of gross indecency between men were as ‘misdemeanors’ made punishable by up to two years’ of hard labor, and this in effect brought within the scope of the law all forms of male homosexual activity” (48). Although the new law was decidedly less severe than both of its predecessors, the continual criminalization of homosexuality demonstrated that it was still demonized.

In addition to the constraints placed upon sexuality, in Victorian England, women and men were assigned extremely rigid gender roles. According to Jenni Calder in her book *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, women were expected to behave with a certain decorum in order to stave off the advances of undesirable men: “Etiquette, accomplishments, due regard for parents and property, obedience to those in

religious and moral authority, all these are means of protection against the male predatory instinct” (Calder 16). The Victorian woman was merely a “helpless female” (Calder 16) who was “pale, passive, reluctant to eat, and prone to faint” (Gorsky 173). Women possessed few rights, and for the majority of the “nineteenth century a wife had no right of ownership. She and everything she possessed, money or property, belonged to her husband” (Calder 16). Thus, the female in Victorian England was granted no agency; she was expected to behave as a lady in her father’s house until she became the property of her husband (Calder 20).

Men, on the other hand, were expected to adhere to the “Victorian bourgeois ideal of the gentleman” who “represented a male of enormous self-discipline who could harness his emotions and commit himself to a life of work and industry and of duty to family and country” (Dell and Losey 11). The requirement for masculinity was strength, a characteristic that commanded respect from other males, and there were “discursive constraints placed on masculine feeling, nurture, and creativity” (Dell and Losey 11). With the arrival of Darwinism and the phrase “survival of the fittest,” men begin to “interpret Darwin’s theories as an exhortation to demonstrate their fitness and hence their superiority through aggressive competition” (Kane 11). Without strength, the Victorian male was essentially feminized, “less manly, more womanly” (Kane 11).

It is clear that the sexual and gender instabilities existing in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Master of Ballantrae* are due to the established Victorian attitudes that fashioned the ideas of masculinity and heterosexuality and the complications that arise when men and women deviate from these models.

Review of Existing Criticism and Justification for Texts

The current criticism surrounding these two texts often discusses the Gothic Other dynamic, identification with the Other, and the sexual (homo and hetero) images and representation; however, no existing criticism specifically deals with the subject of attraction to the Devil as unnatural, the subsequent emasculation of the male characters because of the appeal and influence of the villains, and/or the confessional aspect existing in the novels which I assert is a fundamental component worthy of exploration in illustrating the sexual, gender, and moral identity crises prevalent in the two texts.

Wuthering Heights was written over one hundred and fifty years ago, and the novel—which generated much controversy at the time of its publication—still perpetuates criticism and debate. Much of the criticism surrounding the novel focuses on two specific areas: the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine and the obvious class conflicts existing in the novel. Recent criticism has also delved into the dynamic of the servant in the narrative, as well as the construction of feminist gender roles. Although the existing criticism does not explicitly address the argument my thesis will engage, I will expand on some of the assertions in these criticisms dealing with the identification of the self in the Other and the destabilizing effect this identification has in the construction of masculine gender roles.

In Gilbert and Gubar’s essay “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë’s Bible of Hell,” the authors explore the concept that *Wuthering Heights* is a recreation of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, “radically revising (and even reversing) the terms of his mythic narrative” (252) in order to establish her [Brontë’s] feminist ideology that the fall in *Wuthering Heights* is “a fall *from* ‘hell’ into ‘heaven,’ not a fall from grace (in the

religious sense), but a fall into grace (in the cultural sense)” (255). The essay, written over thirty years ago, is arguably the most in depth analysis of *Wuthering Heights*, and utilizing the theories that Gilbert and Gubar present—including Heathcliff as the devil—I will expand on their pioneering argument that *Wuthering Heights* recreates the fall of man.

In Daniel Cottom’s “I Think; Therefore, I am Heathcliff,” Cottom discusses the popularity of the Gothic novel in a time when utilitarianism prevailed, comparing the later Gothic works with Rene Descartes’s *Meditations*:

In the Gothic novel, [...] Descartes's malignant demon is the figure of misanthropy through which the thought of modernity must pass if it is adequately to establish and estimate itself. For Descartes, as for those who followed him, the consequence is that the question of identity is driven into the foreground of consciousness by virtue of being put into extreme jeopardy. In both cases this jeopardy does not really arise from a preexisting crisis; it is itself the heuristic positing of a crisis that provides the imaginative rationale for the demand that identity be renovated. On this basis, identity is so terrorized that individuals may not be sure whether they are dreaming, may wonder whether they have fallen into madness, and may even become so hysterical as to lose all sense of connection with their own bodies. This experience of uncertainty may go so far as seemingly to cast into doubt the fundamentals of Christian belief, and the entertainment of such doubts would threaten authors of the Gothic works under consideration here with opprobrium and

hostility, as well as fame, even as Descartes had been so threatened. [...]
in most cases, divine providence is ritually reestablished by the end of
Gothic novels. (1069-1070)

Cottom's argument goes on to demonstrate this phenomenon in *Wuthering Heights*, illustrating the identification of the other characters with Heathcliff "who incarnates its unhuman agency in every aspect of his being, from the dubious circumstances of his birth and his disruptive insertion into a family on through to his animalic, devilish, and monstrous appearance as an object of superstition to Nelly Dean, among others, when he is an adult" (1080). Cottom's essay ardently supports my point that Heathcliff must be destroyed at the end of *Wuthering Heights* in order to reestablish sexual and gender standards.

Similarly in Marilyn Hume's article "Who is Heathcliff? The Shadow Knows," Hume explains that Heathcliff's abilities to allure and imprison stem from the Otherness—or immorality—existing in the other characters in the novel:

In Heathcliff we have a man to stir our feelings, a man to enrage our senses, engage our passions and walk over our graves. He disturbs us so because he reflects our unconscious minds. He plays out our fantasies and our nightmares. Heathcliff is a man formed by the unconscious projections of the characters in the novel--the projection of all they find unacceptable in themselves. (15)

In her critique, Hume describes Jung's conception of "The Shadow," which she explains "personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly—for instance, inferior

traits of character and other incompatible tendencies” (15). In *Wuthering Heights*, Hume asserts that the characters of Nelly Dean, Lockwood, and Catherine all project their undesirable traits onto Heathcliff which is the reason for their attraction to him because “whatever most attracts or repels us in another is generated by something in ourselves: something of ourselves we see reflected back to us by the recipient of our attention. It is our unconscious shadow side that so disturbs and attracts us. It is this shadow that we find reflected back to us that so upsets our psyche” (15). Hume’s point is further illustrated in Catherine and Isabella’s confessions. The women both acknowledge Heathcliff’s Otherness, but at the same time, they find it alluring and are captivated by even the most repulsive elements of his personality.

Robert Louis Stevenson’s 1889 *The Master of Ballantrae* has not generated as much criticism as *Wuthering Heights*, but in the light of Oliver Buckton’s readings, Stevenson’s works have been restored. In Buckton’s “Reanimating Stevenson’s Corpus,” Buckton argues that the reanimation of a corpse is a recurring motif in Stevenson’s fiction—one that serves to renew life and aggravate conflicts in the narrative, while at the same time representing desires that are “problematic: at once secret and homoerotic in nature, such desire emerges in a context of physical intimacy between men who seek to disassociate themselves from the contaminating effects of the corpse by burying it, by passing it on [...], or treating it as a joke” (38). In *The Master of Ballantrae*, Buckton explains, the returning corpse of James Durie exists in the narrative as a way to “exacerbate an already-existing sibling rivalry” (56). James’s treatment of his brother Henry throughout the novel culminates into Henry’s “wish ‘to bury the Master’” which is a “displaced form of the desire to bury his weapon in the

Master's body, to penetrate him" (58) because Henry desires to be disconnected from the demonic body of his brother and their "prolonged and violent fraternal conflict" (57). Buckton's essay serves to reinforce the concept that homoeroticism exists in Stevenson's text, and the men in the novel are compelled to rid themselves of their "unnatural" desires through desperate means, or as I argue in this thesis, through the act of confession.

In Chapter One, I will examine Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. The novel grapples with several sexual and gender issues. The antagonist of the novel Heathcliff paradoxically attracts the other characters with his shape shifting abilities. Not only are the women in the novel besotted with him, the men in the novel are magnetized by him as well, and although Edgar Linton and Hindley Earnshaw despise Heathcliff, several of the characters—male and female—are imprisoned by him in their own way. The characters in *Wuthering Heights* submit to the all encompassing masculine figure of Heathcliff, typically to their detriment.

In Chapter Two, I will examine Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*. The villain of the novel is James Durie, a character that Stevenson himself described as "all I knew of the Devil." James—despite his Satanic demeanor—is a likable character with the ability to easily charm. He possesses redeeming qualities, and similar to Heathcliff, he attracts the men and women in the novel with ease. The main narrator in the novel—Mackellar—experiences a love/hate relationship with James. Mackellar's attraction and aversion to James illustrates Mackellar's own issues with sexuality, gender identity, and moral identity, and on several occasions, Mackellar struggles—in the syntax of his narration—with the conflicting emotions he feels for

James. James does not simply call the morality of the male characters into question—he emasculates them with his overpowering maleness—he is handsome, charismatic, and rogue like, and because of his title, he is in a position of empowered Other. He holds the other men in the novel hostage and forces them to submit to his whims.

CHAPTER ONE

‘IS MR. HEATHCLIFF A MAN?’:

STRANGE LOVE AND EMASCULATION IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

When Georges Bataille wrote in 1957, “The narrative that reveals the possibilities of life does not necessarily appeal, but it reveals a moment of rage, without which its author would be blind to its excessive possibilities. I believe it: only suffocating, impossible trial provides the author with the means of attaining the distant vision the reader is seeking, tired of the tight limitations conventions impose” (qtd. in Barthes 267), he names Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* as one of those few narratives that “reveals the possibilities of life.” For two centuries, *Wuthering Heights* has entertained and shocked readers with its tragic and disturbing story of two eighteenth century families torn apart by love, marriage, death, and bitter revenge. But the novel is more complex than the traditional Gothic horror story—it is “a very kinky book, replete with polymorphous perversity, sadomasochism, necrophilia, hints of pedophilia, and even a bent towards polyandry, as well as incest and adultery” (Polhemus 82-83). These perverse facets of the novel coalesce “in the urge to free the spirit from social conventions, the world, and the galling limitations of the body. That dispersed eroticism [...] connects with an underlying drive for the breaking of boundaries—transgression as a means to transcendence” (Polhemus 83). No one in the story emulates the aforementioned aspirations more profoundly than the famous antagonist of the novel

Heathcliff—a gypsy orphan rescued as a child from the Liverpool streets by the benevolent Mr. Earnshaw.

Earnshaw brings Heathcliff to live at the Earnshaw home Wuthering Heights—an isolated abode in the untamed Yorkshire moors. Heathcliff, from the onset, exudes a type of untamedness himself, illustrated in his appearance and unconventional behavior as a child. The novel's primary narrator Nelly Dean describes her first glimpse of the orphan boy as “a dirty, ragged, black-haired child” (36), one given to fits of tempers and rage. Heathcliff's untamed nature is further perpetuated through his familial relationships. His adopted brother Hindley's dislike of him and the love of his adopted sister Catherine and her father Mr. Earnshaw directly influence Heathcliff's adult persona and activities. When Mr. Earnshaw dies, Heathcliff's place in the family is downgraded from favorite son to despised servant at the hands of Hindley, and although Heathcliff is essentially an outsider from the beginning in the Earnshaw household, the death of his adopted father fully reveals and implements his status as the Gothic Other.

This status is further exemplified when Catherine is injured and stays with the elite Linton family at Thrushcross Grange. When Catherine returns, it is apparent that her previous demeanor—as uncultivated as Heathcliff's—has been visibly altered. At the Linton home, Catherine witnesses a world consisting of elegance and self-restraint—a world far removed from the unconventional Wuthering Heights and Heathcliff, who at this point evolves into an adolescent with a “slouching gait, and ignoble look; his naturally reserved disposition was exaggerated into an almost idiotic excess of unsociable moroseness; and he took grim pleasure, apparently, in exciting the aversion rather than the esteem of his few acquaintance” (Brontë 68). Catherine readily

admits her knowledge of Heathcliff's Otherness when she speaks with Nelly about her engagement to Edgar Linton, stating, "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff" (81). Despite this "degradation" that Catherine speaks of, Catherine is fascinated and attracted to Heathcliff throughout the novel, and this "unnatural"—by heterogeneous standards—hold that Heathcliff has over her and several other characters in the novel will be my focus in this chapter. I will elucidate the unnatural relationships established with the evil Heathcliff through the discourse of confession and illustrate how these relationships disrupt the sexual and gender norms of the time, leading the characters who succumb to an unnatural alliance with Heathcliff to experience illness, death, and personal destruction as a type of punishment inflicted for sinning against the established order. In addition, Heathcliff's powerful persona and ability to possess causes an emasculation of the men in the novel which reverses the empowered/Other paradigm in place in the era and disrupts established gender roles. Ultimately, these unnatural or "queer" occurrences must be eradicated at the end of the novel, culminating with Heathcliff's death and a heterosexual ending.

Heathcliff as the Devil

In the Victorian era, masculinity was something that embodied stability, stoicism and restraint, consisting of "a male of enormous self-discipline who could harness his emotions and commit himself to a life of work and industry and of duty to family and country" (Dell and Losey 11), traits that are not found in the character of Heathcliff. It must also be acknowledged that the archetype of Victorian maleness carried with it the presupposition of whiteness. Heathcliff, already an outsider with no viable family history, portrayed as a gypsy, and described from the first by Nelly as "a

dirty, ragged, black-haired child” (36), certainly does not embody whiteness. Therefore, because the Victorian “white” male must adhere to the physical and emotional conventions defined above, if he fails to do so, he will be viewed as different, foreign, inept, Other, evil, an entity possessing no agency in the civilized world. Eugenia DeLamotte explains that Gothic novels are “documents in the history of racial formation, documents that might give us a better sense of what the construction of whiteness involved, and in particular, of the white terrors it worked to both express and produce,” reflecting the societal ideology regarding racial difference, “and the widespread acceptance of race as a scientific given that organizes humanity hierarchally” (DeLamotte 19). This imperialist ideology of subject/Other established a good/evil binary—subject (white) equaled good, Other (dark) equaled evil. Heathcliff with his dark appearance and rather mysterious beginnings is branded as Other from the onset of the novel, but it his activities later in life that exemplify what DeLamotte describes as the “changes in characterizations of Gothic villainy” where:

representations of Gothic villainy progress from religious and national categories of otherness metonymically associated with black as a color designating evil, through a category of otherness that conflates enslaved, sexualized dark people with the damning allure of the Prince of Darkness himself, and finally toward conceptions of a dark, sexual, bestial, *racial* Other that reflect the triumph of biological racism. (19-20)

Thus, Heathcliff generates a guise befitting someone of his non entity stature—he personifies the devil in his dark appearance and his malevolent behavior as an adult.

Despite what prevailed as the norm in the nineteenth century—“Victorian society regarded women as its moral guardians” (Calder 13), and the fact that white women were supposed to desire white men who emulated good, moral principles—Heathcliff still prevails as the romantic hero in the novel. I propose that this is due to Heathcliff’s charm and magnetism—traits that closely mimic the Miltonic antagonist Satan—an entity with the ability to slyly influence others (the fallen angels and the naïve Eve) just as Heathcliff has the ability to persuade numerous characters—both male and female—in *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff is portrayed as a character of unspeakable evil and corruption, and his “character tests the boundaries between human and animal, nature and culture, and in doing so proposes a new definition of the demonic” (Gilbert and Gubar 293). Further analogous to the Miltonic fallen angel, Heathcliff has a voracious desire for revenge and possession directed at those he believes have personally wronged him, stating to Nelly, “I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral teething, and I grind with greater energy, in proportion to the increase of pain” (Brontë 151). Thus, Heathcliff’s appetite for revenge is not sated until “he steals or perverts birthrights” (Gilbert and Gubar 297) as a method for attaining legitimacy.

Contributing to Heathcliff’s magnetism are the novel’s narrators. Nelly and Lockwood’s realistic initial descriptions of Heathcliff illustrate some of his more redeeming qualities—or what they believe are redeeming qualities. When Lockwood first introduces Heathcliff, he shares his initial, and somewhat positive, impression of the man:

Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman [...] he has an erect and handsome figure—and rather morose—possibly some people might suspect him of a degree of under-bred pride—I have a sympathetic chord within that tells me it is nothing of the sort; I know by instinct his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling – to manifestations of mutual kindness. He'll love and hate, equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again. (Brontë 5)

Lockwood's description does not dehumanize Heathcliff or other him. Instead, Heathcliff's mannerisms evoke a "sympathetic chord" in Lockwood, and Lockwood's initial impression of Heathcliff expresses the idea that Heathcliff possesses a human side, able "to love and hate" (5). When Nelly begins her narration, she further enhances Heathcliff's positive qualities. Nelly's portrayal of Heathcliff brought to Wuthering Heights in Mr. Earnshaw's coat evokes compassion, and her recollection of Heathcliff's bout with the measles is heart wrenching when she tells Lockwood, "he was the quietest child that ever nurse watched over. [...] he was uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness, made him give little trouble" (Brontë 38). The image of Heathcliff as a lamb softens Heathcliff and furthers his sympathetic persona, enabling the reader to see the realistic, softer side of the man rather than the fantastic, supernatural villain of a Gothic novel.

Yet, despite the human traits the narrators impose upon Heathcliff, he represents the anti-male in Victorian society—the type of man that society wished to annihilate

because of his corrupting force. In her writing of his speeches, Brontë highlights Heathcliff's inability to behave as a human, even in the wake of the loss of his beloved Catherine. After her death, he curses Catherine: "'May she wake in torment!' he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his foot, and groaning in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion. 'Why, she's a liar to the end! Where is she?'" (169). In the first portion of Heathcliff's speech, he refers to Catherine as "she," speaking to Nelly of Catherine, acknowledging her lack of presence in the scene, but in the second part, Heathcliff refers to Catherine as "you," speaking directly to Catherine as if she were there. Brontë's shifting pronouns intensify the reaction of Heathcliff, strengthening the argument for the perversity of his obsessive relationship with Catherine and his inability to behave humanely. By stating with unparalleled anger, "'Oh! You said you cared nothing for my sufferings! And I pray one prayer—I repeat it till my tongue stiffens—Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living!'" (169), Brontë reveals more of Heathcliff. When he speaks to Catherine as "you," he attempts not only to illogically speak to a dead woman, he also brings himself into the conversation as "I" and "my." It is no longer about Catherine simply being a liar. It is about Heathcliff and his desire for revenge. He takes Catherine's death as a personal transgression against their love and illustrates—through Brontë's use of the shifting pronoun—his evil nature and inability to behave as a human.

However, Heathcliff perseveres in the novel because the other characters and narrators paradoxically continue to feed the monster through their "affections" towards him. Disturbing as the man may be, Heathcliff possesses an irrefutable and overpowering sexuality that he utilizes to achieve his goals, a "charismatic maleness is

at least in part a result of his understanding that he must defeat on its own terms the society that has defeated him” (Gilbert and Gubar 297). Utilizing the most powerful weapon in his arsenal—charisma (in the form of sexuality and false congeniality), Heathcliff, like Satan, believes he can conquer a force more powerful than himself—in Heathcliff’s case—society. By illustrating the sinister side of Heathcliff’s character and the undeniable attraction and at the same time repulsion that the others feel towards him, a good/evil binary is firmly established in the story—one that correlates to prevailing ideas of taboo sexuality and gender norms existing during the mid nineteenth century. It is this binary opposition that guides the plot of the novel, providing the characters with inner ethical ambiguity, and causing a questioning of their own morality and values much the same as Eve when confronted with the silver tongued Satan.

The Unnatural Love of Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw Linton

Catherine Earnshaw Linton’s now famous and impassioned cry, “*I am Heathcliff—he’s always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but, as my own being [...]*” (82) has become the mantra of *Wuthering Heights*, poignantly describing the torrid love affair between Catherine and Heathcliff. Her speech to Nelly acknowledges the extent of her feelings for him—feelings going beyond that of a brother and sister relationship, and even Nelly in her narrative remarks that Catherine “was much too fond of Heathcliff” (42), indicating a knowledge on her part that Catherine’s feelings for Heathcliff were not proper. It is their unnatural love for each other which is the foundation of the tragic story and the cause of Heathcliff’s eventual quest for revenge. The couple’s love is portrayed as unnatural in various ways in the story—first, the two are essentially raised as brother

and sister from the age of seven or thereabouts. Heathcliff's absorption into the Earnshaw family may not be accepted by the eldest Earnshaw son, but for all intents and purposes, Heathcliff originally lives as the other Earnshaw children do. In fact, he is basically acting as a replacement for a son who died prior to his arrival—a son who was named Heathcliff. These elements of plot intensify the position that Catherine and Heathcliff are siblings; therefore, Catherine's proclamations of romantic love for her adopted brother could be construed as incestuous. Instead of disregarding incest, critics point out, Brontë chooses to acknowledge and develop a storyline addressing the taboo subject, and in doing so, "holds in provocative tension the strong attraction and repulsion of the impulse to sibling incest that emerges in nineteenth-century literature, psychology, and family life" (Polhemus 100). Polhemus further states, "Her [Brontë's] conception is brilliant. It allows Heathcliff to be [...] a subversive tempter showing the dangerous appeal of incestuous transgression" (100). By exposing the topic of incest and attaching the forbidden act to Heathcliff's character, Brontë further demonizes him, and in doing so, she contributes to the conception of "the legitimate couple," and a "setting apart of the 'unnatural' as a specific dimension in the field of sexuality" (Foucault 38-39). Brontë's creation of such a disturbing relationship reflects her own personal awareness of the severe limitations placed upon women in the nineteenth century involving marriage and sexuality. Catherine's attraction to Heathcliff also supports Polhemus's assertions—she unwittingly falls prey to the new addition in her family and encounters, due to her love, extreme difficulties and tragedy in her life, demonstrating the dangers society associates with unholy unions.

The incestuous nature of Catherine and Heathcliff's love broaches another unnatural type of sexuality. Because in Catherine's emotional speech to Nelly—and in countless other scenes throughout the novel—Catherine and Heathcliff profess themselves as one entity, the argument can be made that their love is homosexual in nature. They differ biologically, yet both make the proclamation that their souls are one. Although Gilbert and Gubar argue that “Heathcliff is somehow female in his monstrosity” because of the practice of “female artists project[ing] in disguised form her own anxieties about her sex and its meaning in her society” (293-294), I propose that while Heathcliff might exhibit feminine traits, Catherine is more closely associated with a male. She is portrayed as boyish prior to her stay at Thrushcross Grange, spending her days cavorting with Heathcliff in the moors. When she injures herself at Thrushcross Grange, Mr. Linton insults her brother Hindley's parenting skills, exclaiming, “he lets her grow up in absolute heathenism” (Brontë 50). After her supposed transformation from “heathen” and “insertion into a socially sanctioned femininity” (Vine 346), Catherine still does not possess the grace or charm of the simpering Isabella Linton or her new sister-in-law. Instead, she continues to rebel in a masculine fashion, striking Edgar in the face in one memorable scene after he angers her, and refusing to give up her friendship with Heathcliff after her marriage to Edgar when he requests, “Will you give up Heathcliff hereafter, or will you give up me? It is impossible for you to be my friend and his at the same time; and I absolutely *require* to know which you choose” (Brontë 117). In Catherine, Brontë creates a heroine who, like herself and other pioneering women of the era, refuses to conform to the hegemonic

ideal of the female in society. Catherine's unnatural attraction to a man unsuitable for her demonstrates her and Brontë's nonconformist leanings and desire for autonomy.

Catherine, although her mind and body are seemingly one with Heathcliff, is consciously aware of his differences, and she expresses these concerns to Nelly prior to her marriage to Edgar. Her depiction of her relationship with Heathcliff is impassioned, and although her "I *am* Heathcliff" speech and its implications have been well researched and discussed extensively in the body of criticism written about *Wuthering Heights*, I wish to focus on the confessional aspect of her speech to Nelly which amplifies and upholds the prevailing sexual norms of the Victorian era as her confession does not merely liberate her own conscious, it illustrates society's ideals regarding marriage, gender roles, and the intolerance of foreigners.ⁱⁱ

Catherine realizes her relationship with Heathcliff does not fit within the conventional norms of society, so she agrees to marry Edgar. However, she experiences uncertainty about the marriage, hence her confession to Nelly about her unnatural feelings for Heathcliff, the purpose of which is to purge her guilty conscience. Oliver Buckton explains that in autobiography, "confession takes as its starting point the admission of sin, guilt, or some other form of error, the purpose of the narrative being to strip the self of its protective secrets, ostensibly to satisfy the demands of an external listener or reader" (9). This theory can also be applied to confession in fiction because although the speaker is a fictional character, "the external listener or reader" represents society, and "the confession is structured around an oppressive relationship with a reader or auditor [society], without whose presence the confession would not achieve legitimacy or resolution" (Buckton 9). The confessor requires an audience

larger than one person in order to experience liberation from his or her sins, and in this case, Catherine's audience consists of the dominant class Brontë lives in whose ideology determines Catherine's sins, punishment, and proper atonement. When Catherine begins her confessional speech to Nelly, she commences with the question, "Nelly, will you keep a secret for me?" (77). Her query indicates that she desires to tell Nelly something personal, a secret meant only for Nelly's ears. Catherine's position—"kneeling down [...], and lifting her winsome eyes" (77) to Nelly illustrate Catherine's role as the sinful confessor. Being on her knees signifies a type of religious penance, but it also denotes a position reserved for pleading, as if Catherine is begging to be freed from her sins. After Catherine proclaims that she has accepted Nelly's proposal, Nelly "put her through the following catechism" (78), berating Catherine with questions in rapid succession, forcing the sinner to confess.

Nelly, throughout the conversation, acts as the interrogator, and although Nelly is a servant in the novel, she possesses an authority throughout. For one, she is the primary narrator and therefore asserts an automatic position of power as she is the one relaying the sordid tale. In addition, Nelly is a constant presence in the Earnshaw family, a woman known for her pragmatism and possession of a seemingly moral character. When Catherine unleashes her anxieties to Nelly, Nelly's response is not consoling, rather, she calls Edgar Linton "hopelessly stupid" and "a venturesome fool" (78) for wanting to marry Catherine. Nelly goads Catherine into further divulging her sins by continuously striking Catherine with one question after another in interrogation fashion:

NELLY. "First and foremost, do you love Mr. Edgar?"

CATHERINE. "Who can help it? Of course I do," she answered.

Then I put her through the following catechism—for a girl of twenty-two it was not injudicious.

NELLY. "Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?"

CATHERINE. "Nonsense, I do—that's sufficient."

NELLY. "By no means; you must say why?"

CATHERINE. "Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with."

NELLY. "Bad," was my commentary.

CATHERINE. "And because he is young and cheerful."

NELLY. "Bad, still."

CATHERINE. "And, because he loves me."

NELLY. "Indifferent, coming there." (78)

Catherine attempts throughout this discourse to maintain her dignity regarding her feelings for Edgar, but Nelly eventually breaks her by stating, "'you love Edgar and Edgar loves you. All seems smooth and easy—where is the obstacle?'" (79). This seemingly naive question leads Catherine to her true confession: "'It's my secret; but if you will not mock at me, I'll explain it'" (80). Catherine is then compelled to reveal all to Nelly.

Catherine's confessional chat with Nelly begins innocently enough, but when she begins speaking of her relationship with Heathcliff, Catherine becomes almost crazed, crying out:

My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. 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. I should not seem a part of it. (82)

This speech illustrates the strength of Catherine's feelings for Heathcliff, but it also indicates the deficiencies found in their love because her proclamation signifies a more profound understanding on her part that their love is unnatural by societal standards and that a legitimate union between the two is not possible because "it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff [...]" (81). This point is shown in the shifting of pronouns in the confession. Catherine's *I* exhibits what William Covino refers to as "negotiating identification."ⁱⁱⁱ Despite her profession of love, Catherine linguistically separates herself from Heathcliff, and her references to Heathcliff as *he* grammatically "others" him. They are separate entities despite her pleas to the contrary, and her shifting pronouns prove this truth. The fervent and unstable language Brontë utilizes to express Catherine's passion indicates an authorial kinship with her heroine in regards to class and gender which materializes clearly during this famous speech.

Although it appears that the only barrier Catherine believes prevents her from marrying Heathcliff is his social station, on closer inspection, her words further on in the conversation explicitly acknowledge that she receives no "visible delight" in her love for Heathcliff, however, her love for him is "necessary." Her powerful proclamation, "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am a pleasure to myself—but, as my own being [...]" (82) is

unnatural in its philosophy for it conjures up the image of an unhealthy, obsessive relationship, one that is damaging to its participants. Catherine's use of the *I* again is interesting in that it contradicts her statement—if she and Heathcliff are one, the pronoun *we* would prove her point more effectively. Catherine's pronouns and inability to persuasively identify with Heathcliff point to her knowledge that she and Heathcliff “are now conquered by the concerted forces of patriarchy” (Gilbert and Gubar 276) where a match between the two is deemed immoral and inappropriate. In addition, the shifting of verb tenses in Catherine's confessional speech is a provocative indicator of Catherine's desire for redemption. She speaks of her marriage to Edgar in the present tense: “if I marry Edgar,” yet when she talks of potentially marrying Heathcliff, it is in the past tense: “if Heathcliff and I married” (82). The past tense represents sin and what she can no longer have, while the present represents the possibility of a stable, moral future.

Catherine's succumbing to the temptation Heathcliff offers eventually results in her destruction, or falling ill, a type of punishment she receives for being incapable of eradicating the devil from her life. According to Susan Rubinow Gorsky:

The idealized nineteenth-century woman—pale, passive, reluctant to eat, and prone to faint—seems unhealthy to modern eyes. To her society, and especially to its literature, the delicate woman was healthy; but if, by choice or chance, she failed to live within the confines of the traditional female role, she could expect to fall ill—to suffer a breakdown of body or spirit, develop melancholia or palpitations, enter a decline, perhaps die. (173)

When Catherine makes the statement earlier in the novel, ““If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable,”” Nelly critically retorts, ““Because you are not fit to go there [...]. All sinners would be miserable in heaven”” (80). Nelly’s reference to Catherine as a sinner further substantiates that Catherine is deemed evil, a woman existing on the outskirts of society because of her immoral behavior, not only in her inability to choose between two men, but in her unnatural sexual preferences. This immorality culminates in Catherine’s self imposed mania and eventually her death because “the Satanic rebellion Heathcliff introduces into the parlors of ‘heaven’ contains the germ of a terrible dis-ease with patriarchy that causes women [...] to try to escape their imprisonment in roles and houses by running away, by starving themselves, and finally by dying” (Gilbert and Gubar 280). Despite her impassioned confession to Nelly, Catherine refuses to conform and properly atone, and she, like Adam and Eve, must accept the consequences of her indiscretions at the hands of Satan.

Heathcliff and Isabella Linton: Satan and Eve

When Isabella Linton Heathcliff poses the question to Nelly Dean in a letter soon after her marriage to Heathcliff, “Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” (136), she poignantly expresses for the first time the true, evil nature of Brontë’s Gothic monster. Prior to her marriage to Heathcliff, Isabella Linton is unaware of the man’s nature, smitten as she is with the handsome, charming, shape-shifter who “evinc[es]” from her, “a sudden and irresistible attraction,” an “attachment that rose unsolicited” (101). However, after Isabella spends one evening at Wuthering Heights preceding their marriage, she questions the humanness of Heathcliff, realizing that she has mistakenly entered into the most unholy of unions with the immoral

Other. Isabella—like Catherine—falls prey to the devil, but unlike Catherine who seems to knowingly acquiesce to Heathcliff’s wickedness, Isabella is like the biblical temptress Eve in her naivety. By falling for Heathcliff, Isabella essentially falls “from Thrushcross Grange to Wuthering Heights, from ‘heaven’ to ‘hell’” (Gilbert and Gubar 287). Similarly to Eve, Isabella’s comprehension comes too late, after she has partaken in the forbidden fruit, sealing her fate forever.

Although their affections for Heathcliff evolve in different ways, like Catherine, Isabella similarly articulates a type of confession to Nelly regarding her abusive and dysfunctional relationship with Heathcliff. After her initial letter to Nelly which relays the horrors she experiences in her married life, Isabella eventually escapes the confines of the Heights, seeking refuge at the Grange before making her permanent escape from Heathcliff. While there, she confesses to Nelly the unnatural aspects of her marriage, referring to Heathcliff as a “‘brute beast’” (172), including her own weakness in succumbing to Heathcliff and “[m]istaking appearance for reality, tall athletic Heathcliff for ‘an honourable soul’ instead of ‘a fierce, pitiless wolfish man’” (Gilbert and Gubar 288). Isabella’s faux pas again illustrates the necessity of confession as a way of purging the soul of sin. She has transgressed against the laws of nature with a soulless man—a “‘brute beast’”—obviously sexually since she bears him a child, and possibly willingly even after she realizes the depths of Heathcliff’s evil according to Pauline Nestor who writes, “Isabella, though herself a victim, is implicated in Heathcliff’s violence by her attraction to it” (xxviii). To prove this assertion, Nestor utilizes the example of Heathcliff’s recalling of how he hung up Isabella’s dog and Isabella’s reaction to the cruel act: “‘But no brutality disgusted her—I suppose she has

an innate admiration of it, if only her precious person were secure from injury!” (150). Thus, Isabella realizes she is not free from blame, she is attracted—ambivalently—to the brutal nature of her husband, and therefore, she must confess her sins to Nelly in order to achieve emancipation and escape the hellish existence she is living.

Isabella’s confession is impassioned like Catherine’s, but its passion is in the form of anger towards Heathcliff, not the love cries of the emotional Catherine. Instead, Isabella resembles a madwoman, talking incessantly to Nelly, throwing her wedding ring into the fire. Her exclamations reveal that because of Heathcliff’s treatment of her, her usually warm heart turns dark, and she confesses to Nelly, ““Catherine had an awfully perverted taste to esteem him so dearly, knowing him so well—Monster!”” (174). However, immediately before this distasteful proclamation, Isabella comments, ““I can recollect yet how I loved him; and can dimly imagine that I could still be loving him, if—No, no!”” (174). She chastises herself aloud for merely pondering the idea that she still harbors any affection for Heathcliff, but the statement proves that subconsciously Isabella too has ““awfully perverted taste”” (174). According to Oliver Buckton, in the original definition of *pervert* in the OED “the wayward woman figures prominently as one of the two kinds of pervert. [...] The other is the religious heretic” (24). Thus, Isabella’s ““perverted taste”” in Heathcliff is clearly sinful—both morally and religiously since she falls for a man lower than herself who epitomizes the devil.

The confession continues with Isabella’s tale of the scene that unfolded after Catherine’s funeral and how she desired to annihilate Heathcliff permanently and add to his misery by telling him that it was he who caused Catherine’s death. Nelly responds to Isabella’s confession with shock, chastising, ““One might suppose you had never

opened a Bible in your life” (181). The intensity of Isabella’s anger—especially in lieu of her gentle nature earlier in the novel—illustrates Heathcliff’s ability to corrupt even the purest of souls and demonstrates the punishment that one must endure for succumbing to temptation and the unnatural sexuality associated with a being “that symbolizes all that is irrational, uncontrollable and incomprehensible” (Anolik 1). After Isabella’s escape from Wuthering Heights, she lives several more years before meeting her demise, but as Gilbert and Gubar posit, “when she escapes, giggling like a madwoman, from *her* self-imprisonment, she is so effectively banished from the novel by her brother (and Brontë) that she might as well be dead” (288). Her punishment for loving Heathcliff is similar to Catherine’s punishment, and “Isabella must in some sense be killed, for her fate, like Catherine’s, illustrates the double binds with which patriarchal society inevitably crushes the feet of runaway girls” (Gilbert and Gubar 289). Because both Catherine and Isabella choose to rebel against the patriarchal order and embark in relationships with a man not socially or morally adept, they are essentially prisoners of their unconventional decisions, unable to metaphorically break free, suffering until their last breaths: “Isabella, who remains healthy while she obeys society’s rules and stays with Heathcliff, falls ill with consumption when she violates those rules, however justifiably, and leaves her abusive husband” (Gorsky 185). Thus, she is punished not only for becoming involved with Heathcliff, she is symbolically punished for doing the unthinkable and leaving him as well.

An examination of Isabella’s linguistic techniques also point to the confessional aspects of her speech. During her ravings, Isabella refers to Heathcliff by name only when she retells the story of the day’s events with Hindley and Heathcliff at Wuthering

Heights. Instead, Isabella uses the pronouns *him* and *he* when discussing Heathcliff, Othering him in her descriptions: ““He’s not a human being, [...] and he had no claim on my charity—I gave him my heart, and he took and pinched it to death”” (174). In fact, when Isabella begins her story of the events that unfolded after Catherine’s funeral, she states, ““Heathcliff—I shudder to name him”” (175). Her inability and unhappiness to name Heathcliff, and her willingness to repeatedly refer to her brother as Edgar and Hindley by his first and last name illustrate Isabella’s acknowledgement that Heathcliff is something non-human, an abject entity. The rage Isabella reveals in her speech further indicates her anger at herself for proverbially falling when she “patently chooses her own fate, refusing to listen to Catherine’s warnings against Heathcliff and carefully evading her brother’s vigilance” (Gilbert and Gubar 287). Her naivety, like Eve’s, permits her to mistakenly believe the devil, and Isabella must ultimately leave her home, or Eden, to fend for herself and unborn child in the world. Gilbert and Gubar explain, “If literary Isabella makes a man into a god or a hero, however, she must suffer—may even have to die for her mistake” (289). Hence Isabella’s use of *I* throughout her confession to Nelly. Her assertive statements such as ““I gave him my heart”” recognize that she alone is responsible for demise, and she willingly confesses her misdeeds to Nelly, attempting to purge her soul of the depraved affection she once—and possibly still feels—for the ““hellish villain”” (177).

Heathcliff, Hindley, and Edgar: The Emasculation of the Empowered Male

When Heathcliff returns after a several year absence from Wuthering Heights, his relationship with Hindley dramatically changes from what it was when he departed after hearing of Catherine’s marriage to Edgar. Heathcliff comes home a man, described

by Nelly as looking “intelligent, and retain[ing] no marks of former degradation. A half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness though too stern for grace” (96). The transition is not merely on the surface—Heathcliff while away has achieved some semblance of stature. When asked where will be staying, he replies that Mr. Earnshaw invited him to stay at Wuthering Heights. Nelly ponders his answer skeptically, believing that Heathcliff has come “into the country to work mischief under a cloak” (98). Nelly correctly assumes Heathcliff’s motives are impure when Catherine tells her that Hindley’s invitation to Heathcliff involves greed—Heathcliff can pay Hindley money which will enable Hindley to continue his destructive gambling habit. Heathcliff’s motives are evil, and his desire is to take revenge on Hindley. This he does, eventually turning Hindley into a drunken shell of a man who no longer has possession of himself, a man who confesses to Isabella that he is too cowardly to kill Heathcliff: ““Oh, if God would but give me strength to strangle him in my last agony, I’d go to hell with joy [...]”” (182). Heathcliff essentially emasculates Hindley by stripping him of his property, his money, and his dignity, treating Hindley’s son as a servant, leaving Hindley powerless and without “strength.”

Like Catherine and Isabella who fall prey to the devil, Hindley also falls. His fall, although not sexual in nature, reveals an unmistakable attraction and desire for Heathcliff. Hindley needs Heathcliff for money and is desperate for him to stay on at Wuthering Heights, stating, ““should he offer to leave me, he’s a dead man [...]”” (140). This is a direct contrast to the earlier situation in the novel where Hindley is the empowered after his father’s death and emasculates Heathcliff by ceasing his education

and treating him as a servant. Heathcliff, now, seemingly reverses the subject/Other paradigm, understanding “that in order to subvert legitimacy he must first impersonate it; that is, to kill patriarchy, he must first pretend to be a patriarch” (Gilbert and Gubar 297). Thus, *he* takes power in *Wuthering Heights*, acting as the master or patriarch. Hindley is reduced to nothing, feminized, Othered, and allowed no agency much the same as Heathcliff was several years before. This causes Hindley to experience a feminine dependency upon Heathcliff which upsets the Victorian ideology of gender where “a demonstration of superior fitness was a demonstration of superior ‘manliness’” (Kane 11). Hindley’s dependence causes him to become a victim at the hands of Heathcliff, abused like a woman on several occasions. Isabella explains to Nelly that in one instance, Heathcliff “kicked and trampled on him [Hindley], and dashed his head repeatedly against the flags [...]” (178-179). Heathcliff’s actions during the fight illustrate his power—he is atop Hindley, “on him,” and he is literally and figuratively above him. This type of defeat illustrates the ultimate humiliation for a Victorian male, especially a formerly empowered one: “Those defeated in the struggle for the survival of the fittest and superiority had therefore been shown to be not only less fit but also less manly, more womanly, and thus quite evidently inferior” (Kane 11). Hindley’s victimization continues until his untimely death from alcohol when it is revealed that he mortgaged the property to Heathcliff to pay his debts: “[T]he guest was now the master of *Wuthering Heights* [...]” (188). Heathcliff successfully reverses the role of subject/Other. He is now the empowered in the home he was once the subordinate in.

Just as Hindley is stripped of his masculinity by Heathcliff, so too is Edgar Linton brought to his knees by the devil. Edgar does not become dependent upon Heathcliff like Hindley, nor does he willingly submit to him like his sister and wife; however, Edgar's emasculation occurs because Heathcliff attacks Edgar repeatedly and feminizes him by exposing his weaknesses—the women in Edgar's life. Although Edgar acknowledges Heathcliff's power and attempts—to no avail—"to expel Heathcliff entirely from his house because he fears the effects of this demonic intruder," Heathcliff prevails, "caus[ing] women like Catherine and Isabella to try to escape their imprisonment [within the patriarchy] in roles and houses by running away, by starving themselves, and finally by dying" (Gilbert and Gubar 280). Heathcliff represents an unnatural force, a "man" who causes women to stray from their societal roles as good wives, sisters, and daughters, and it is through his ability to magnetize the women that enables Heathcliff to seize Edgar's loved ones and eventually his masculinity.

Physically, it appears that Edgar is easy prey for Heathcliff and cannot escape the branding of being effeminate since he "is often described as 'soft,' 'weak,' slim, fair-haired, even effeminate-looking" (Gilbert and Gubar 280). Nelly contributes to his weakened persona after Heathcliff admits his jealousy towards Edgar. She insults Edgar's manliness, telling Heathcliff he shouldn't envy Edgar who "'cried for mamma, at every turn [...], and trembled if a country lad heaved his fist against you, and sat at home all day for a shower of rain'" (57). Despite his physical shortcomings, Edgar does attempt to emulate the strong Victorian male and stands up for himself in the face of Heathcliff's degradation in front of Catherine. After Heathcliff calls Edgar "'a milk-blooded coward'" and rants to Catherine, "I compliment you on your taste: and that is

the slaving, shivering thing you preferred to me” (115), Edgar punches him in the throat. However, Edgar is no match for the calculating devil who is intent on revenge: “I shall murder him [Edgar] some time [...]” (115), Heathcliff threatens after the physical altercation.

Heathcliff may not literally kill Edgar, but he does so figuratively, swooping into Edgar’s home, corrupting his sister, bewitching his wife, and tricking his young daughter into marrying his son Linton. Again, Heathcliff manages to reverse the subject/Other paradigm and upsets gender roles by emasculating a man who embodies the epitome of Victorian maleness—Edgar is successful, handsome, and maintains his dignity in a variety of anger producing situations, one of “those ‘at the top’, those (men) in power, [...] destined to be so as a result of their innate superiority” (Kane 12). Despite Edgar’s destiny for superiority and Heathcliff’s lack of any credible family history, Heathcliff succeeds in his quest, demoralizing Edgar, who eventually dies. According to Gorsky, “Edgar reveals his weakness and his effeminate nature by contracting a wasting disease [...]” (185), since “the normative definition of health was male [...]” (175), while the female was weak and fragile. Ultimately, Heathcliff—because of Cathy Linton’s marriage to his son—retains custody of Thrushcross Grange, Edgar’s daughter, and Edgar’s masculinity. The empowered male topples in a feminine manner and the Other is victorious.

The Annihilation of Evil and the Restoration of Normalcy

Because the institutions of Victorian society concentrated on an established idea of masculinity and propriety, Heathcliff cannot be allowed to triumph in *Wuthering Heights*. His antics, although temporarily successful, do not last, and he too falls ill.

Therefore, it appears that the annihilation of the Other is inevitable because if it was not, then the fear that the Other could become the empowered would be a reality which went against the natural order. As Kane explains: “Those ‘at the bottom’ of [...] society, the ‘lower orders’ were by nature inferior, less evolved on the path of human perfection than those ‘at the top’” (12). Brontë—living within the confines of the nineteenth century—is aware of the fear of reverse colonization, thus, Heathcliff is erased, and a heterosexual or “normal” ending is established. Although Heathcliff wreaks havoc on the Earnshaw and Linton families for years—corrupting the women and emasculating the men—ultimately, the Other, the evil foreigner, must be sent back to Hell where he belongs.

Brontë accomplishes her heterosexual ending through the union of two legitimate characters. As Gorsky explains, “Brontë seems to suggest that the root of psychological illness, beyond what is inborn, is the failure to love (one's self and others) and to be loved—not in the wild and untrammelled passion of a Heathcliff and a Catherine, but within the bounds of society” (187). Therefore, Brontë acknowledges textually that “Catherine Linton can unite with Hareton Earnshaw because their relationship fulfills the obligations of social codes and because they are two separate individuals” (Gorsky 188). They do not experience an unnatural relationship based on codependency like Catherine and Heathcliff's, nor do they go beyond societal boundaries such as Heathcliff's marriage to Isabella. Their union also stabilizes the gender norms upset by Heathcliff—man/woman, as Cathy Linton is decidedly female, and in Hareton, “Catherine finds her rightful mate [...], as unquestionably masculine as Heathcliff, but psychologically healthy and capable of being integrated into society”

(Gorsky 188). Thus, the ending of *Wuthering Heights* illustrates an attempt at the restoration of sexual and gender norms and “with patriarchal history redefined, renovated, restored, the nineteenth century can truly begin, complete with tea-parties, ministering angels, governesses, and parsonages” (Gilbert and Gubar 302).

CHAPTER TWO

‘I HAD NEVER SEEN THE MAN SO BEAUTIFUL’:

MALE LOVE AND HATE IN *THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE*

The idea of a duality in man and his desire to behave in ways conflicting with society’s rules and his own personal moral code is a recurring theme in Robert Louis Stevenson’s body of work. Explains Jenni Calder in *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Life Study*, “The reality of evil, its ambivalence, its attractions, had always possessed Louis” (126). Because of his enduring fascination with evil, Stevenson continually explores the concept of good and evil residing together in the same body, focusing many of his works on the individual’s battle to suppress the evil tendencies that threaten to overpower him, or “[t]he Calvinist view that man must maintain a constant struggle with evil, that the slightest lapse in vigilance will allow the Devil to triumph” (Calder 126). The most famous work Stevenson pens on the subject of duality—*Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, grapples extensively with man’s inability to contain his evil tendencies, but in Stevenson’s earlier works and later works as well, the theme of duality is a prominent fixture, and is especially visible in the portrayal of his villainous characters. Recently, a revisiting of Stevenson’s works by Stevenson scholars such as Oliver Buckton has generated new life into the author’s profound impact on the literary world, proving that his novels are more than merely page turners. Instead, Stevenson’s works demonstrate a genius with words and narrative.

Stevenson's novel *The Master of Ballantrae* is one such novel that tackles the subject of duality, since, as Joseph J. Egan asserts in "From History to Myth: A Symbolic Reading of *The Master of Ballantrae*," "The pervading theme" of the text is "of the ambiguous nature of good and evil" (706). Published in 1889 but set during the Jacobite Rebellion in the eighteenth century, the novel tells the story of the Duries—a dysfunctional Scottish family. James Durie—also known as the Master of Ballantrae—disastrously decides to join the cause of the Jacobites after winning a coin toss, leaving his younger brother Henry to support the king. After the Jacobite's defeat, James loses his inheritance and his future wife Alison to Henry, and he spends the rest of the novel seeking revenge against Henry, maliciously intending to destroy his brother at every turn. Despite the evil tendencies James continually demonstrates throughout the novel, he, like Heathcliff, is a character with the ability to easily charm others through his comely appearance and shrewd ability with language. Early in the book, the steward of the house and main narrator Mackellar, notably displays James's attractiveness, describing James as a popular young man "who had made a figure in the country beyond his time of life" (Stevenson 11). Mackellar reveals James's duality as well—explaining that although James's reputation has not always been spotless, the other characters in the novel are magnetically drawn to his charisma and rogue-like behavior. In this Chapter, I will argue that similar to the speeches of the sinners in *Wuthering Heights* who utilize the discourse of confession to purge themselves of their sins, Mackellar utilizes his entire narrative as a confession in an attempt to admit and remedy his attraction to the evil James. Through an analysis of two pivotal events in the novel—the duel and the journey on the ship to New York—I will illustrate Mackellar's

ambivalence towards James and his inability—despite his confessions—to rid himself of his feelings for the man. In addition, I will discuss James’s ability, like Heathcliff, to emasculate the other men in the novel—namely his brother—which destabilizes late nineteenth century gender roles. And finally, similar to *Wuthering Heights*, James must also be eradicated at the end of the novel, proving again that any type of unnatural attraction—whether heterosexual or homosexual in nature— and a disturbance to recognized gender roles, is corruptive and must be destroyed permanently in order to restore the established order of Victorian society.

James: The Master or the Monster?

James Durie’s troubles commence from the first pages of *The Master of Ballantrae*. His unfortunate coin toss loss spirals into a lifetime of deception and revenge, but James’s unsavory persona appears well developed even before he leaves home to fight in the Jacobite Rebellion. Mackellar explains that even as a youth, James “was merely popular and wild: he sat late at wine, later at the cards; had the name in the country of ‘an unco man for the lasses [...]’” (Stevenson 10). However, James evades the stigma of indecency because of his ability to escape negative situations unscathed, a facet of his personality that is perpetuated by “the rest of the country” who “enhanced his reputation; so that great things were looked for in his future, when he should have gained more gravity” (10). Thus, unlike Heathcliff in Brontë’s work who is the object of forbidden desire, much of James’s behavior is overlooked by others because of Stevenson’s creation of a world of gamesmanship in which James is adept at playing. When James is believed to be killed during the Rebellion, his popularity continues. The townspeople, the family servants, and even Lord Durrisdeer (his father) and Alison take

up the cause of James as the hero, despite the fact that as James Egan points out, “From the outset we are aware of James’s recklessness and underhanded trading on his popularity with the family” (4). This “underhandedness” appears to have no effect on the positive image ingrained in the minds of James’s faithful followers. Although they are well aware of his shortcomings, they excuse his behavior and continually glorify him and belittle the character of Henry who Mackellar describes insipidly as “neither very bad nor yet very able [...]” (11), the type of man who does not command much respect or affection. The townspeople ridicule Henry and blame him for James’s death, and Henry’s father and wife keep a nightly vigil by the fire, fondly remembering James “by an exchange of tearful looks [...]” (27), further exposing the type of power that the dominant James wields even in death.

Though his roguish reputation precedes him, James’s most influential device lies within his proclivity for conversation and his ability to manipulate words with ease like the silver tongued Satan. According to Adrian Poole in his introduction to the novel, “He [James] acts of course, in both senses of the word, but he also talks, and on a couple of critical occasions, he sings. He is above all the performer” (xix). Like Satan, James knows how and when to utilize his gift of gab, especially when it comes to charming others for personal gain. When a comrade of James’s—Chevalier de Burke—reveals to the family that James is alive and living in France, he recants the tale of James’s exploits at sea, and how James turns a ship of pirates against their captain, who in turn name James their leader. Several years later when James returns home to Scotland, he utilizes his power of persuasion with Lord Durrissdeer and Alison— showering them with compliments and affection during their first dinner where “[n]ever

a harsh word fell from him, never a sneer showed upon his lip. He had laid aside even his cutting English accent, and spoke with the kindly Scots tongue, that set a value on affectionate words. [...] All that he did throughout the meal, [...] all he did was so becoming, and himself so handsome [...]” (75-76), he immediately wins the table over because he is “a brilliant talker and teller of tales” (Poole xx), and his audience cannot help but be drawn to him.

James’s behavior towards Henry, however, is not so gracious, and it is through James’s bitter speeches to his brother that the extent of James’s evil nature and dual personality is fully unveiled. Mackellar witnesses James’s abhorrent treatment of Henry, overhearing James provoking Henry with his malicious words. Mackellar describes James’s treacherous conduct as a “diabolical contrivance: so perfidious, so simple, so impossible to combat” (78)—a fiend to Henry, a perfect gentleman with the rest of the family. Similar to Heathcliff, James too possesses the uncanny ability to attract both males and females. He states with pride at one point, “I never yet failed to charm a person when I wanted [...]” (169), and this assertion is proven when he charms Alison and also Henry and Alison’s daughter Katherine, prompting Mackellar to call him an “insidious devil” and his behavior “diabolical” (84). Most notably, Mackellar, the faithful servant and friend to Henry, is also unwillingly attracted to James.

Although James is not the archetypal “Other” like Heathcliff, James’s role as the monster in *The Master of Ballantrae* is firmly established in his obvious Byronic persona. Steven Jay Schneider describes the Byronic male in his essay as “the anti-hero,” who “besides being moody, reflective, and tortured by inner demons, was

undeniably superior in passion and power to the common man, reminiscent of Milton's Satan" (Schneider 72), all attributes found within the character of James. Despite the fact that Mackellar describes the Duries in the beginning of his narrative as "all black men" (Stevenson 19), James is not foreign or nameless, however, his Other status derives from his resemblance to the devil. He is often described as having "black" or "dark" qualities, words that denote a foreign or evil presence, and as Mackellar astutely observes, "He had all of the gravity and something of the splendour of Satan in the *Paradise Lost*" (Stevenson 139). James is able to shape shift to further his revenge and coerce others to join his cause. He possesses, like Satan, the tools in his charming arsenal to be whatever he needs to be to influence the opinions of others. Further enhancing his evil persona, James returns from the dead on several occasions, lending a supernatural element to his character commonly found in the Gothic Other. Therefore, James's seeming inability to die is vampiric in nature, aligning him with depraved bloodsuckers who historically represent "a voraciously sexual woman, a hyper-sexual African, a hypnotic Jewish invader," and "an effeminate or homosexual man" (Williamson 1). James's escape into eastern mysticism also promotes his foreignness and evil nature, and as Stevenson himself stated, James Durie is "all I know of the Devil"—a character evil to the core and powerful as well.

Mackellar's Narrative: Confession and Confusion

The character of Mackellar appears—on the surface—to be the most grounded and moral of the novel's characters, and it is this morality that Stevenson brilliantly exploits in order to illustrate the pervasive power of his "devil" James. Mackellar, because he is the primary narrator of the novel, possesses an empowered position in the

novel despite the fact that he is a servant in the Durie household. His narration not only establishes James's attractiveness from the beginning, but it also reveals to the reader why he and others are drawn to James. Stevenson attempts to prove the legitimacy of Mackellar's narration countless times in the novel when Mackellar addresses his audience. In Chapter Two, Mackellar explains,—after confessing that he edited Chevalier de Burke's memoirs, only "giving certain parts of it in full,"—"my readers will have a detailed, and, I believe, a very genuine account of some essential matters [...]" (32). Mackellar's admission heightens his credibility. His deletion of nonessential information attempts to prove his dedication to the truth and the "genuine" story. In addition, the device of speaking directly to "my readers" makes Mackellar and the entire story more realistic and believable, as if he is taking a personal interest in each and every reader of the novel and their ability to obtain the real story from him. Another place in the novel where Mackellar addresses the reader is in Chapter Four when describing James's misdeeds towards Henry. He uses parentheses mid-sentence to interject the statement, "you will soon hear why" (79). By breaking into the story with the narrator's casual comments and addressing readers as "you," Stevenson allows readers to feel as if they are having a conversation with Mackellar and that they can trust his testimony because he discloses information about future events in the story. Through these techniques, Stevenson cleverly brings the reader into the novel and James's dastardly deeds and Mackellar's reliability become more pronounced.

Making the reader believe Mackellar's story is crucial, because Mackellar, despite his loyalty to Henry, cannot help but to be awed by James and his magnetism just as Lord Durrissdeer and Alison are as "it is the art and grace of his [James's]

presence that Mackellar so envies, readily hates, reluctantly admires, and perhaps secretly loves” (Poole xix). Although Mackellar asserts at the beginning of the novel that his telling of the Durie’s tale is “the full truth of this odd matter” and that “the truth is a debt I owe my lord’s memory” (Stevenson 9), he, as Adrian Poole states, “betrays his partialities at every twist and turn [...]” (xix), and although he claims his loyalties lie with Henry, Mackellar’s obvious admiration for James strengthens the argument of Mackellar as unreliable because of his ambivalent feelings for James. The reader could potentially doubt the credibility of Mackellar’s narrative and whether James is really as evil as Mackellar paints him.

Mackellar’s confusion regarding his relationship with James reflects the principles upheld in the nineteenth century concerning unnatural relationships between men and the good/evil binary existing in society where the prevailing viewpoint was that “the slightest lapse in vigilance will allow the Devil to triumph” (Calder 126). There was no middle ground when it came to sinful behavior; one was either a sinner or not: “His [Mackellar’s] feelings about the Master are so violently mixed. He is attracted by the Master’s charisma and repelled by his own attraction” (Poole xix). Thus, Mackellar is continually at odds with his own morality.

Just as the characters of *Wuthering Heights* experience mortification in their relationships with Heathcliff and utilize confession as a way to purge themselves, so too does Mackellar in *The Master of Ballantrae*. However, rather than confessing in one or two different scenes to a particular character, Mackellar’s confession can be located throughout his entire narrative. As Poole states, “The story he tells is at least partly the confession and self-justification of a man who succumbs to temptation” (xix), thus, the

story Mackellar relates is due to his ambivalence—on one hand he is disgusted by his feelings for James, and on the other, he wants those hearing the story to understand why he is so enamored with the evil man. Mackellar struggles with the conflicting emotions he feels for James throughout the novel, and as Egan asserts, “Mackellar comes to believe that his responding to the Master would mean betrayal of the side of righteousness; consequently he is at continual cross purposes with himself” (705). Therefore, the entire novel is merely the confession of a man who cannot come to terms with his inability to eradicate his love for a sinful entity and conform to his own moral expectations.

There are several occasions in the novel where Mackellar’s feelings for James are clearly displayed in a confessional way. Although he knows of James’s unsavory disposition prior to the man’s return to Scotland, when Mackellar is first confronted with the image of James, he writes, “I was now near enough to see him, a very handsome figure and countenance, swarthy, lean, long, with a quick, alert, black look, as of one who was a fighter, and accustomed to command [...]” (Stevenson 72). Mackellar’s words express an ardent admiration of James, not the description one would expect from a man who is privy to all of James’s wrongdoing. Thus it immediately appears that Mackellar, like the others who worship James, is duped by James’s outward appearance and demeanor. Although Mackellar does describe James as having a “black look,” interestingly, these words do not damage the positive illustration Mackellar paints of James, since he follows these words by explaining that James’s “black look” is due to his being “a fighter, and accustomed to command” (Stevenson 72), not because James is simply inherently evil. Through his explanation of how

alluring James is, Mackellar is essentially confessing how and why he himself is ultimately taken in by him.

When James and Henry engage in a duel after another of James's scornful remarks, Mackellar is again struck by the imposing presence of James and passionately writes, "The Master sprang to his feet like one transfigured; I had never seen the man so beautiful" (Stevenson 94). Here, Mackellar confesses to the reader that not only does he find James attractive, he has found him to be beautiful in the past, and he is now more beautiful at that moment than he has ever been. The moment Mackellar so poignantly describes is not a moment of tranquility that one would associate with beauty, it is a moment of violence depicting a disturbing episode between two brothers.

Mackellar's attraction and aversion to James illustrate Mackellar's own inner duality, and on several occasions, Mackellar outwardly struggles with the conflicting emotions he feels for James. When Mackellar travels to New York with James, he is further captivated by the man and his magnetism, feeling that James possesses redeeming qualities even though he is fully aware of James's ability to manipulate. The scene on the ship is particularly interesting because it is the pivotal point in the novel when an actual relationship appears to exist between the two men while they are alone together and Mackellar is at his most vulnerable to James. Mackellar confesses that during this time he experiences "what I must call my intimacy with the Master" (149). The two men essentially bond, and as Mackellar explains:

I had moments when I thought of him as a man of pasteboard—as though, if one should strike smartly through the buckram of his countenance, there would be found a mere vacuity within. This horror

(not merely fanciful, I think) vastly increased my detestation of his neighbourhood; I began to feel something shiver within me on his drawing near; I had at times a longing to cry out; there were days when I thought I could have struck him. This frame of mind was doubtless helped by shame, because I had dropped during our last days at Durrisdeer into a certain toleration of the man; and if any one of them told me I should drop into again, I must have laughed in his face. (156)

Mackellar's confession in this passage proves that he is disgusted by himself. He feels "shame" for allowing James to penetrate his psyche, and the language he utilizes to describe this shame confirms how horrified he is. He "shivered" when James "drew near," and he "had at times a longing to cry out" (156). His emotional response to James is cowardly, almost like a victim in an abusive relationship. Mackellar feels helpless and powerless in the presence of the evil James. Moreover, Mackellar always refers to James as the Master, further indicating the domination James has over him. Although Henry holds the title of Master of Ballantrae and is the employer of Mackellar, James commands the reverence.

James himself admits that he possesses a dual nature with the ability to attract and repulse when the two men part ways in New York. He states with pride, "I never yet failed to charm a person when I wanted [...] you have now a very different portrait of me in your memory, and one that you will never quite forget" (169). James's words reflect what Mackellar and others in the story futilely grapple with—James is contagious, and once under his evil spell, his powerful allure overshadows his wickedness. The men in the novel—especially Mackellar—desire him because he is so

engaging, but they also desire to be him. He is masculine, possesses strength, and is a dynamic personality. These characteristics are appealing to Mackellar because “the irony of Mackellar's situation is that [...] he too needs certain of the Master's qualities-wit, grace, and vitality-to bring him out of his narrowness and complete his nature” (Egan 705). Mackellar’s personality lacks the raw masculinity and overall appeal that James enjoys, however, society will not allow men to desire men, and at the time of the novel’s writing, “[u]ndesirable desires had to be beaten down; the self had to punish the self – and this out of what one might term a masochistic desire to serve [...] the bourgeois male’s ‘superego’, those ideals of respectability he had adopted from society, and in particular from the father, as his own” (Kane 20). Hence, Mackellar’s ambivalence towards James is not merely a reaction to James’s charms, it is also a direct result of the stringent gender and sexual rules imposed during the time when Stevenson penned the novel.

Who Is the Master?: Henry’s Emasculation

Henry Durie, from the onset of the novel, is described as a lesser man than his brother James. Although he wins the coin toss and eventually attains the title and woman intended for his older, more admired brother, Henry is virtually castrated by James throughout the remainder of the novel because of the power James wields over him. Henry gives James money when he is blackmailed by him, and when James returns for the first time, Henry is abused by James who calls him names and charms the rest of the family. According to Egan, “the cause of James's hatred of Henry lies in his realization that there is a basic goodness in his brother's life (at least at the beginning) which is lacking in his own” (702). Aware that Henry is good hearted man, something

that James knows he will never be—no matter how popular he is—James makes it his sole mission to break Henry of his redeeming qualities—the qualities that make Henry the epitome of a man. On the night of Henry and James’s infamous duel, James insults Henry’s character and then insinuates that Henry’s wife prefers him over her own husband when he states:

my dear brother, is as we might say a bumpkin, a clown, a clodpole, a fellow without grace, lightness, quickness; any gift of pleasing, any natural brilliancy: such a one as you shall see, when you desire, by looking in the mirror. [...] For instance, with all those solid qualities which I delight to recognise in you, I never knew a woman who did not prefer me - nor, I think [...] who did not continue to prefer me. (93-94)

James’s scathing words emasculate Henry—if his wife prefers his brother over him, it denotes a lack of prowess and masculinity in Henry. As Poole explains, “In the presence of the Master, other men find themselves wondering what it is to be a ‘man’” (xvii). Henry is not the man his brother is, and this fact is proven through Alison’s affection towards James.

Henry “kills” James in the duel that follows James’s offensive statement, but once it is discovered that James is not dead, Henry realizes that he cannot even properly destroy the man, if, in fact, James is a man. When Mackellar reveals to Henry that James might be alive, Henry, “in a kind of screaming whisper,” says, “Mackellar [...] nothing can kill that man. He is not mortal. He is bound upon my back to all eternity [...]” (Stevenson 118). Henry’s reflection on James’s supposed immortality and his inability to be rid of James illustrates James’s empowerment. Oliver Buckton explains

in “Reanimating Stevenson’s Corpus,” Henry, when he discovers James is not dead, “reveals a frustrated wish that he had, in fact, achieved this complete removal of his brother’s demonic body and, thus, the termination of the story it dominates. But the wish to ‘bury the master’ is at the same time a return in displaced form of the desire to bury his weapon in the master’s body, to penetrate him” (Buckton 58). Henry, during the duel, attempts to emasculate James by “penetrating” him; however, he is unable to fully “remove” James. Henry might be “lord and master. But the one thing that Henry Durie will never be is the Master” (Poole xviii). Mackellar’s references to James as “the Master” and Henry as “my master,” confirm Poole’s assertion.

James’s return to Scotland subsequently causes Henry to abandon his home and travel to New York to flee the evil presence of James. But prior to James’s return, Henry’s psyche begins to deteriorate, as he becomes motivated by revenge similar to James. After years of abuse, Henry’s normally pious soul weakens and he becomes as vindictive as his older brother:

Henry Durie begins as a strong and charitable figure who is misrepresented not only by the community in which he can expect to enjoy the benefits of status, but also by his father, brother and wife. The point from which his decline is measured is the conclusion of the moonlit duel when he believes he has killed the Master; from this moment forward he is propelled on a complex and convoluted descent into obsessive behavior which leads him to insanity. His *hamartia*, his fatal flaw, is shown in his acceptance of false allegations; he allows himself to be blackmailed by what he knows to be untrue. In short, evil triumphs

because good refuses to assert itself. James is elevated from the status of charlatan and sponge on the family's diminishing assets to the status of devil only if Henry believes that to be an accurate estimation of his evil potential. (Massie 171)

Therefore, although Henry eventually fights back, it is at the cost of his sanity and his soul. James strips him of what is an essential facet of his character—his kind nature. Although it appears that Henry's newfound antagonism towards James denotes strength, it actually indicates the opposite. James's relentless evil behavior causes Henry to fall from grace, an emasculating effect that eventually leads to Henry's death.

Henry's death is also overshadowed by his brother. When James's corpse is unburied in the wilderness, his Indian servant Secundra explains that to escape murderers, he taught James a trick to survive under the ground and he buried James. However, when James's body is discovered, he appears to be dead. Secundra attempts to resuscitate him, and Mackellar shockingly reports that he "beheld his [James's] eyelids flutter; the next they rose entirely, and the week-old corpse looked me for a moment in the face" (Stevenson 218). It is at that moment that "Lord Durrisdeer [Henry] fell to the ground, and when I raised him up he was a corpse" (218). Mackellar erects a memorial in the spot where the brothers died; however, even Mackellar's epitaph reveals the usurping of James, and his words indicate "a perhaps unconscious preference for the Master over his less animated brother" (Buckton 59):

J.D.
HEIR TO A SCOTTISH TITLE,
A MASTER OF THE ARTS AND GRACES,
ADMIRE IN EUROPE, ASIA, AMERICA,
IN WAR AND PEACE,
IN THE TENTS OF SAVAGE HUNTERS AND THE
CITADELS OF KINGS, AFTER SO MUCH
ACQUIRED, ACCOMPLISHED, AND
ENDURED, LIES HERE FOR-
GOTTEN. (Stevenson 219)

Henry's epitaph is similar to Mackellar's first description of Henry: "neither very bad nor yet very able" (Stevenson 11):

H.D.
HIS BROTHER,
AFTER A LIFE OF UNMERITED DISTRESS,
BRAVELY SUPPORTED,
DIED ALMOST IN THE SAME HOUR,
AND SLEEPS IN THE SAME GRAVE
WITH HIS FRATERNAL ENEMY. (Stevenson 219)

The epitaph reinforces Henry's subservience to James as James is described as "admired" and "accomplished," while Henry is merely described as "his brother." Poole states, "The most shocking aspect of his last piece of writing is simply the difference between the two inscriptions, the magniloquence of the one and pinched understatement

of the other” (xxiv). Even in death, James is able to emasculate Henry, overshadowing Henry’s good deeds with his own dastardly ones.

James’s Return to Hell

Like Heathcliff, James must be eradicated. A “man” such as James cannot be allowed to exist and potentially prosper. Therefore, the text exorcises James at the end of the novel. James’s homoerotic and emasculating effect on other men goes against the hegemonic order in Victorian England, and thus, James must die. Although James is not killed, he is buried alive by his mystical servant in the hopes of making yet another return from the dead. However, this last attempt at immortality fails, and James dies before his body is unburied, proving once again that a force capable of upsetting the natural order will eventually be sent back to hell, no longer able to wreak havoc on the earth.

CONCLUSION

The Victorian era was rife with social and political upheaval regarding gender and sexuality. The criminalization of homosexuality and strictly imposed gender roles provided ample opportunity for writers to address these subjects within literature. Emily Brontë and Robert Louis Stevenson produced works that not only offered readers entertainment, but delved into serious social issues of the day with the creation of their heinous villains and their subsequent effect on the moral population in their novels.

As is illustrated in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Master of Ballantrae*, the Gothic novel was not simply a “page turner,” but an important literary genre that utilized the storyline of the Other to address society’s rampant fears regarding reverse colonization, homosexuality, and a straying of humans from the side of righteousness. The characters of Heathcliff and James Durie symbolize these fears, proving that the evil Other is capable of corrupting seemingly ethical “victims” with ease. In both novels, the authors acknowledge the concerns of society, and in the process, expose the rhetoric of sexuality with their discussions of incest and homosexuality. Eventually, the Other’s reign of terror seemingly ends with death. However, the Other never completely dies. Instead, he haunts the pages of literature forever, invoking fear and loathing in the reader.

ENDNOTES

¹ Michel Foucault discusses the idea of confession—that any sex not procreative in nature was absorbed into a discourse. He cites the fact that homosexuality was not given a title until the Victorian era. This led to a purging of sexuality often in a confessional way.

² Catherine’s speech closely correlates to Foucault’s assertions that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a movement arose that caused unnatural sexual practices to be examined and subsequently exposed. This focus on behavior not resembling “heterosexual monogamy” resulted in the demand and compulsion to confess any deviant sexual behavior, as “it was time for all these figures, scarcely noticed in the past, to step forward and speak, to make the difficult confession of what they were” (Foucault 38-39).

³ William Covino uses the example of President Bill Clinton’s political speeches to illustrate his term. By utilizing words such as “we” and “us,” a political candidate “attempt[s] to identify himself as part of a larger group or population,” while using “the word *you* [...] indicates a group from which the president wants to detach himself” (154).

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