

Trespassing Boundaries in *Wuthering Heights* Geographical and Environmental Perspectives

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Abstract The Spatial Turn as a transdisciplinary phenomenon in the Humanities was established in the 1990s, and, especially in the last few decades, geography seems to have pervaded critical analysis and language. According to contemporary geographical and environmental perspectives, the setting in narratives is not only a background defining the place where the plot is located but a complex system that is central to the construction of literary texts. *Wuthering Heights* (1847) provides an excellent case study. Emily Brontë's novel is certainly characterized by its topography. Although different sources had been collected by the writer from a wide range of models across the country in Yorkshire, they were then reassembled to form a landscape that is both familiar and uncanny, self-consistent and reminiscent of real buildings and sceneries. Besides, the dynamics between displacement, departures and arrivals and the seeming immobility of the landscape is a crucial pattern of the novel. In *Wuthering Heights*, the natural world of the moors and its geographies are reminders of history and memory. Brontë's weaving together of emotional stories into the moorlands suggests a mutual exchange between nature and culture. The writer constructs a textured geography representing the cycles of change, family history, and passion that have created that space.

Keywords Boundaries. Emily Brontë. Literary geography. Nature. *Wuthering Heights*.

Summary 1 An Interdisciplinary Approach. – 2 Topography. – 3 Time-Space. – 4 Treading the Earth. – 5 Hybridity.



Peer review

Submitted 2021-04-12
Accepted 2021-04-21
Published 2021-07-29

Open access

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Citation Brazzelli, N. (2021). "Trespassing Boundaries in *Wuthering Heights*: Geographical and Environmental Perspectives". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 55, 229-248.

Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice.
(Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*,
1984)

1 An Interdisciplinary Approach

In contemporary critical perspectives marked by the Spatial Turn, time is no longer the main category of analysis and space has become the major paradigm. Literary cartography, literary geography, geopoetics, geocriticism and ecocriticism have their specificities but they all agree on the omnipresence of space, place and mapping in the analysis of narrative texts.¹ These recent interdisciplinary methods prioritise geographical practices in literary criticism. The common point shared by all these approaches is the cross-fertilisation of categories as different as geography, ecology, psychology, sociology and literature, their intersections, and the way they work on different and overlapping levels. In particular, literature and geography are two interconnected discourses related to space: literature is very often ‘invaded’ by geography and both are validated by their representations of space. Textual and real places interact and produce “spatial narratives” (De Certeau 1984, 115).

In human experience, places have a spiritual and emotional component in addition to a physical layout and topography (Houston 2019, xiv). Landscapes are not fixed and static pictures because they are created by subjective attitudes and perceptions;² the convergence of geographical, cultural and literary expression is crucial for understanding the ways space is conceived, perceived, and represented. The Spatial Turn as a transdisciplinary phenomenon in the Humanities was established in the 1990s as an answer to academics’ increasing interest in social sciences for space in the 1960s and 1970s. Geography seems to have pervaded philosophical and critical analysis and language, among other spheres. However, geography has never been too distant from literature and the very categories by which literary studies have been organised are often geographical or spatial: national languages and literatures imply such geographical and political constructions as nation-states, territories, borders, contact zones. Regionalism offers another environmental category to literary studies. Most importantly, the setting is a key feature of all stories, as events take place in a given scenery: this is not only a background defining the place where the plot is located

1 A concise but complete overview of the recent debate on space and on its representation is included in Tally 2012.

2 Wylie 2007 investigates the notion of landscape and the ways of seeing it implies.

but a complex system that is essential to the construction of narratives. Distinctive regions, landscapes, or other pertinent geographical features are crucial to the meaning and the effectiveness of novels. Besides, it is interesting to remark that the chronotope, literally “time-place”, denotes the intrinsic interconnection of these two dimensions, and connotes the author’s specific attitude to the passing of time and the location of events in a narrative. According to its inventor, Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), it is a formally constitutive category of literature.

Geographers such as David Harvey, Edward Soja, Derek Gregory and Nigel Thrift have demonstrated how the contemporary worldview has occasioned a reassertion of space in critical theories. In postcolonial studies, critics such as Edward Said proposed a geographical inquiry into historical practice in which great attention is paid to spatial experience. At the same time, the work of ecocritics and environmentalists has called attention to concerns over the development and management of natural and social spaces, particularly emphasising problems to do with preservation and sustainability.³ Spatial literary studies, or the Spatial Humanities more generally, offer an approach to literary and cultural texts, ranging across periods and genres, that emphasises the relations between space and writing. Geocriticism, theorised by Bertrand Westphal (2007), in particular, makes possible analytical approaches to textual geographies, conceived broadly enough to include the real and imagined spaces of literature, which in turn reflect, shape, and transform the real and imagined spaces of the world.

Nowadays, after the Spatial Turn, we are much more aware of the intersection between physical and mental places. Furthermore, it is now acknowledged that geography is not an objective discipline at all, indeed it always includes a subjective point of view and is founded on human perception and imagination. Building upon the massive work on literary geography, several scholars have adopted mapping as a conceptual framework to interpret narratives and to understand how they are constructed and how they work.⁴ In any case, it is widely recognised that geography pervades the content, practice and meaning of creative writing; it is simultaneously intrinsic to the interstices of the written word, while weaving its way into them.

3 Among the seminal texts on literature and the environment, it is essential to consider Clark 2010.

4 Literary cartographies are explored by Tally (2014).

2 Topography

Wuthering Heights (1847) provides an excellent case study. From the very first analyses of Emily Brontë's novel, the relationship between the text and the geographical context was underlined. The first anonymous reviews employed many references to this crucial question. Various reviewers criticised *Wuthering Heights* for its setting and focused on the geography in Brontë's work. On 25 December 1847, in the *Athenaeum*, for instance, an anonymous critic wrote of

those congenial and remote districts where human beings, like the trees, grow gnarled and dwarfed and distorted by the inclement climate. (Brontë [1847] 2019, 272)

Brontë's narrative is certainly profoundly characterised by its topography, including the valley, the moors, the two mansions and annexed properties. Although the sources had been meticulously collected from a wide range of models across a large area of the country in Yorkshire, they were then reassembled to form a landscape that is both familiar and uncanny, self-consistent and reminiscent of real buildings and places. Brontë's rearrangement of several details taken from different sites gives shape to a perfect microcosm. Contemporary reviewers also acknowledged the exotic foreignness of *Wuthering Heights* as the basis of its appeal: both Brontë's contemporary and later readers often spoke of the text in tones of wonder and, sometimes, of horror that such strange geography was to be found within England's borders. As the critical reception of the novel changed, it became clear that the act of reading this text, with its remote landscapes, with its characters who are as unbound and savage as the land itself, introduces the readers to strange people and weird places representing otherness.

To strangers... who are unacquainted with the locality where the scenes of the story are laid; to whom the inhabitants, the customs, the natural characteristics of the outlying hills and hamlets in the West-Riding of Yorkshire are things alien and unfamiliar... To all such *Wuthering Heights* must appear a rude and strange production. The wild moors of the north of England can for them have no interest: the language, the manners, the very dwelling and household customs of the scattered inhabitants of those districts, must be to such readers in a great measure unintelligible and - where intelligible - repulsive. (Brontë [1847] 2019, 306)

It is on this wild setting that Charlotte Brontë's preface to the 1850 edition of Emily's novel focuses: in choosing to advertise her sister's text in terms of its alien cultural and geographical nature, she

frames *Wuthering Heights* as a work that can take ordinary readers on a tour of new landscapes, people and behaviours. Lockwood, the first narrator, leaves London to find peace in Yorkshire and gradually perceives this place as exotic and terrifying (Gruber Godfrey 2011, 2). According to him, a foreigner and a traveller, it is a “beautiful country” removed from the “stir of society” and a “misanthropist’s heaven” (Brontë [1847] 2003, 3). In fact, the Brontës were at home on the moors: a desolate and inhospitable place of entrapment as well as a site of physical and imaginative freedom. The image of Emily energetically striding across the moors is very popular, along with Catherine’s and Heathcliff’s wanderings over Yorkshire land (O’Callaghan 2018, 93). Her family’s pedestrianism also finds expression in *Wuthering Heights*, especially through Mr. Earnshaw’s walk to Liverpool (where young Heathcliff is found and brought to the Heights). It is interesting to note that affective geographies consider space and place beyond their material properties while recognising that this “beyond” of “imaginary places, ideals, and real but intangible objects underpin and produce material places and social spaces”; thus relations of affect “illuminate both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers” (Berberich et al. 2013, 314-15).

The novel’s scenic background is based on Brontë’s native moors and the isolated houses of local families. *Wuthering Heights* has generally been associated with Top Withens and Thrushcross Grange with Ponden Hall. Emily was also indebted to features of the landscape around the school where she taught at Law Hill (in the area of Halifax).⁵ The action of the novel is entirely concentrated in one locality, as a distance of only four miles separates Thrushcross in the valley from *Wuthering Heights* on the hill, and the distance from the park boundary of the Grange to the edge of the moor is considerably less. From the Grange the moorland hills are clearly visible and the landmark of Penistone Crag, usually identified with Ponden Kirk, fascinates the younger Catherine, as she gazes at it from the windows of her home.⁶ Although both houses are strongly rooted in their specific terrain, local industrial activities and the role of handweavers are not mentioned, and the village of Gimmerton is fictional and does not match any real location. Instead, it is the seasonal activities of the country year which determine the routine of life at *Wuthering Heights*: for example, at the beginning of harvest, after giving orders for the work on the farm, Mr. Earnshaw makes his journey to Liverpool; on a September evening Nelly Dean is gathering apples

5 On Emily’s stay at Law Hill (1838-39) see Chitham 2018.

6 At the basis of the outcrop of gritstone there is a hole in the rock, to which Cathy refers as a “fairy cave” according to a local legend (Brontë [1847] 2003, 123).

in the garden of Thrushcross Grange when Heathcliff reappears after three years.

Problems have arisen with attempts to match the landscape in *Wuthering Heights* to the Haworth region, because Emily's novel portrays a single rural parish including several Yorkshire landscapes. Brontë's representation is most probably a collage of multiple places in West Yorkshire, close to Haworth. The title situates the main house and its inhabitants on the stormy English moors: the severe weather is an appropriate setting for the tumultuous relationships depicted in the novel. The savagery of such a landscape contributes to the isolation and confinement defining Brontë's narrative world, dealing with a closed group of characters living on their self-destructive passions, with no sense of a society beyond *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange (Altick 1991, 129). These fictional figures live closer to nature than to civilised society, and their connections also survive death thanks to the haunting nature of the scenery. *Wuthering Heights* takes a defensive stance against both weather and all newcomers, it is both a farm and a fortress (Duthie 1986, 224). The sky and the weather are essential to the scenes, and it is the wind and especially the storms that epitomise the spirit of the novel. The power of the north wind blowing across the ground behind the house is clearly shown by the excessive inclination of the few stunted firs.

The landscape, featuring its westward flowing stream, its manor house and its extensive parkland juxtaposed with different patterns of farming is a rearrangement of several qualities in a small area of the late eighteenth-century landscape, forming a microcosm of Yorkshire (or of England as a whole). Dominating the foreground is the earth in its dual aspect of hill and valley, but the rock foundation is underlined. Penistone Crags are bare masses of stone "with hardly enough earth in their clefts to nourish a stunted tree" (Brontë [1847] 2003, 90), but they are also golden rocks in the setting sun. Nelly Dean prefers the moorland heather to the rocks and the trees of the valley, while Catherine associates their primordial function with the depth of her love for Heathcliff:

My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. [...] My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath. (Brontë [1847] 2003, 82)

Her daughter Cathy, born at the Grange, is attracted by the distant view of Penistone Crags, and by the moors in summer, but she is not really in her element there, like the flowers she transplants to the Heights, because she belongs to the green valley.

As Christopher Heywood (1998) notes, the Yorkshire scenery in *Wuthering Heights* is hardly realistic; instead, it is a composite landscape created by Brontë, rather than an exercise in the accurate de-

fiction of real locations. Indeed, the geographer Doreen Massey asserts that space is the product of negotiations between experience and the imagination; it does not exist prior to identities and their interrelations with the land (2006, 10). Heywood further remarks that despite Charlotte's insistence that the novel was set on the wild moors of northern England, the Brontë family lived in an area that had been "a populated and industrialized community since the expansion of the woolen industry in Tudor times" (1998, 14). The transformation of the panorama by modern industry would have been apparent to Emily, even though she preferred to immerse herself in the natural environment surrounding the family home. Both sisters, however, seemed aware of the novel's potential attractiveness to readers who wanted the vicarious experience of foreign places and characters. Indeed the Yorkshire moors of northern England had long been sites of tourist literature. In this sense, it is interesting to consider the character of Lockwood and the ways he reads and, more importantly, misreads, the geographies of the moorlands he visits and their inhabitants (Gruber Godfrey 2011, 1).

According to Heywood's decisive studies, a landscape bearing the characteristics of the Yorkshire Dales appears in the first part of *Wuthering Heights*, and Brontë's descriptions portray Gimmerton as a village in a rural parish with bare uplands and a tree-lined plain. Two lofty limestone peaks surmount a valley running south-west across the coastal plain to Liverpool. The valley runs southwards for more than two miles, its beck passing close by a lonely, two-storeyed farmhouse of ample proportions. The moors appear in close-up in the second half of Brontë's story and especially where the heather and bilberries climb over the wall to reach the grave of the elder Catherine. By defining her Dales setting in general terms, and combining it with the moorland of the southern Pennines, Emily created a generalised Yorkshire setting for her story. She used a disguise of the Dales by always referring to a valley (Heywood 2001, 188).

The only substantial reference made to the world outside the Heights is to Liverpool (Brontë [1847] 2003, 50-1). Urban centres such as Leeds, Bradford and Halifax, all near Emily's home in Haworth, and all prominent components of the West Riding landscape, are excluded. It was a world in rapid motion that witnessed the striking mid-Victorian transformations of nature and work in both town and country (Bowen 2014). The fact that Liverpool is "sixty miles each way" from the Heights for the pedestrian traveller enables Emily to emphasise the physical isolation of her fictional creation by excluding modern environments from its confines. The geography of *Wuthering Heights* is purposefully abstracted and insulated, removed from any kind of macro-geographic context. The theme of otherness is fundamental to *Wuthering Heights*, yet alterity cannot be generated within the isolated primary context and is therefore reliant on the ex-

ternal world for its creation. Indeed, it is because Heathcliff comes from outside that the most significant alien force in the narrative can be established inside. Heathcliff's otherness has generally been interpreted in terms of his obscure social and racial background. The character also disappears into the outside world for three years, during which time he grows immensely rich: the source of his wealth is left unexplained, and the reader, like Lockwood and Nelly, can only speculate over its origin (Poklad 2017, 105). The text's external world is not merely the location of Heathcliff's indefinite origins, but also the place of the economic development he undergoes. Besides, Liverpool was the site of the British slave trade and Heathcliff's enslavement as a child results in his transformation into the master of *Wuthering Heights* as an adult.

Although several geographical explorations of the novel have been concerned with relating Emily's textual geography to a real one, such as the study by Everard Flintoff (2006) establishing real-life counterparts for the text's spaces and places, the topography of *Wuthering Heights* is actually a textual spatial configuration, which includes and mingles Gothic and Romantic imaginary environments emerging from the mythical and fantastic tales of the late eighteenth century and the otherworld of dreams, nightmares and supernatural creatures. Defined as "representations of other places - of people and landscapes, cultures and 'natures' - that articulate the desires, fantasies and fears of their authors and the grids of power between them and their 'Others'" (Gregory 2009, 282-3), imaginative geographies are much more than products, they are also aesthetically and ideologically "performative". Locations shift from the author and the ideological content of discourse to their very textuality.⁷

A direct reference to *King Lear* (Brontë [1847] 2003, 17) implies acts of violence and brutality as well as suffering projected upon wild spaces.⁸ By contextualising her narrative against a natural and sublime landscape, and by ultimately delivering that narration through Lockwood, an external character, Emily asserts the artistic dominance of primitive, historically regressive landscapes. In this construction, rural Britain as a pre-modern environment ultimately conveys its immutability (Poklad 2017, 107).

⁷ Imaginative geographies were introduced to human geography by Derek Gregory in the mid-1990s and have since been part and parcel of the discipline's conceptual apparatus.

⁸ Moorhouse Marr (2020) explores the relationship between *Wuthering Heights* and *King Lear* drawing comparisons between the two texts at different levels.

3 Time-Space

Wuthering Heights is concerned with literal spaces, such as nature and home, ideological spaces, such as the private and the public, and liminal spaces, implying the transition from life to death (Sim 2004). Brontë's representation of domestic space in the novel challenges the Victorian ideal of the home as a female domain that is harmonious, moral and safe. In the narrative homes are corrupted by economic, political and social affairs that are traditionally linked to male power. The public sphere and events belonging to the social context determine domestic structures and relations. Lockwood's opening description of the exterior of *Wuthering Heights* epitomises Gothic space because the house is located on a barren, inhospitable terrain, where the wind, with its uncontrolled natural energy, has shaped the trees and accounts for the "narrow windows" (Brontë [1847] 2003, 4) of the Heights, suggesting its concealment from the outside world and its prison-like nature for those contained in it. *Wuthering Heights* resists foreign intrusion but is also unwilling to release its occupants. The "grotesque carving" (Brontë [1847] 2003, 4) which characterises the threshold of Heathcliff's dwelling presents it as a liminal space that alters those who cross it. The interior of the house lacks all the features of the idealised Victorian home, being spartan, masculine, and old-fashioned. *Wuthering Heights* is a domestic space dominated by patriarchal values and power rather than a female domain centring on maternity and the development of the physical, moral, and spiritual life. Heathcliff's usurpation of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange can be interpreted as a kind of inverted colonisation, as the dispossessed subject reclaims the rights and property monopolised by the landed gentry. *Wuthering Heights* exploits conflicts between domestic, cultured spaces and natural, uncivilised spaces; through the character of Heathcliff the novel questions the patterns of cultural imperialism and social inequality occurring in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain.

The text's primary chronotope enunciates well-known characteristics:⁹ *Wuthering Heights*'s fictional landscape is rugged and remote, carefully configured to avoid references to modern external time-space environments. The temporal structure of this world is similarly constructed. Lockwood's observation that "time stagnates" (Brontë [1847] 2003, 28) at the Heights conveys the temporally retarded features of this place. The only threshold opening toward anything

⁹ Another concept to be juxtaposed with the chronotope is the "storyworld": the storyworld highlights the world-making power of narrative texts. Storyworld scholars argue that narrative comprehension relies upon readers interpreting textual cues to make mental models of a text's world and inhabiting those models emotionally (James 2015, 10). Clearly storyworlds are moulded by space as well as by time.

modern in the surroundings of the Heights is Thrushcross Grange, the estate occupied by the landed Linton family. In this “splendid place” the products of the modern world, in the form of “crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold”, with “a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre” (Brontë [1847] 2003, 48), serve as a material and aesthetic counterpoint to the bleak primitive environs of the Heights and the moors that surround it, thus reinforcing the social divide between the wealthy Lintons and the decaying Earnshaws. The regressive environment of the Heights fosters the profound and obsessive relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw, which is destroyed because the heroine’s life is spent at the Grange, where she is civilised and has her sincerity repressed.

Brontë’s story seems to simultaneously invoke and reject the nineteenth-century interest in the picturesque by including the opposition between the traveller and the native. Hence the crucial role of Lockwood as a narrative voice within the text: his difficulty in understanding the world of *Wuthering Heights* depends on the fact that he is a member of urban society, witnessing the “foreign nature of the verbal and interpersonal exchange in this microcosmic oral society” (Gruber Godfrey 2011, 5). Lockwood has travelled to this landscape to escape his everyday life, seeking solitude and isolation. His tenancy of Thrushcross Grange is essential to his narrative stance and therefore to our response as readers of his story and the other stories it frames. Lockwood’s temporary occupancy of the house marks the nature of his relationship to the locality.

Brontë creates a socially and culturally inept tourist-narrator who invites readers to capture the awkwardness, the foreignness and the unfamiliar territories within the landscape he visits. The narrative tension between native and tourist perception continues throughout the novel. Although Nelly’s story is “not exactly the kind which I should have chosen to amuse me” (Brontë [1847] 2003, 153), Lockwood listens to her until he has recovered from the fever caught upon his arrival in the north country. He believes he is superior to Heathcliff, Catherine and the others thanks to his morals, his clear judgment, and his ability for rational thought: as the quintessential tourist in the quiet rural landscape who marvels at how simple life is there, Lockwood seems to lack any understanding of the complexities or histories of that space. However, Nelly is providing him with important historical, geographical, and cultural information. As someone accustomed to the milder climate of southern England, Lockwood is inclined to notice local weather, and the more so as it affects his movements or excursions. Lockwood’s unpleasant experiences of snow and wind on the Heights and on his walk back to the Grange also mirrors Isabella’s account of the wintry conditions prevailing at the Heights during her sojourn there as a bride, as well as

her account of her snowbound return to the Grange. Lockwood's descriptions also serve as a means of anticipating Catherine's presentation as a tragic figure.

The weather has a decisive influence on the plot (Tytler 2016). Catherine is stricken with a delirious fever because she spent the night in soaked clothes and this event gives rise to a series of dramatic consequences. Minor details, too, lead to crucial outcomes, for instance, it is because of one rainy night that Nelly gets her feet wet on her walk to the Heights with Cathy the following morning, and she is ill for three weeks, leaving Cathy to pay visits to her cousin Linton. Without any doubt, the bad cold Lockwood catches as a consequence of his wintry journey back to the Grange renders this restless figure immobile enough to be disposed to hear most of "Heathcliff's history" on and off during the time he is confined to his bedroom. Emily Brontë uses weather for structural purposes: Cathy's first meeting with Hareton at the Heights happens because one July morning she appears to have been prompted by the hot weather to ride off on a forbidden excursion to Penistone Crag. But the weather is also meant to serve a symbolic function. Lockwood's detailed account of the snowstorm is intended to underline symbolically the poor conditions of the household at the Heights under Heathcliff's rigid jurisdiction. Emily makes use of weather to draw the readers' attention to significant moments in the portrayal of her characters' emotions and relationships.

4 Treading the Earth

In *Wuthering Heights*, the action is the landscape. According to David Cosgrove (1984), the landscape (as form, meaning, and representation) actively incorporates the social relations that go into its making. The landscape is both an outcome and the medium of social relations, both the result of and an input to specific relations of production and reproduction. The details of the descriptions are justified in the economy of the narration by the impressions made by particular scenes on the main narrator Nelly Dean: for her, places are landmarks in a physical as well as a spiritual sense. The focus of interest in *Wuthering Heights* is never on nature in itself, but always on its significance for the actors in the drama. The scenery is seen with the inward eye; the bond between individual and nature is so close that the impressions of the characters seem as visible and tangible as the physical reality. It is especially Catherine who is the embodiment of nature, as several episodes show, for example the longing she has in her delirium to be "among the heather on those hills" (Brontë [1847] 2003, 125-6). Catherine's fevered vision of the moors also expresses her sense of spiritual exile. When she recalls her escape from the Heights, she says:

I bounded, leaped and flew down the steep road; then, quitting its windings, short direct across the moor, rolling over banks and wading through marshes: precipitating myself, in fact, towards the beacon-light of the Grange. (Brontë [1847] 2003, 183)

The major changes in the novel are due to a character's arrival at Wuthering Heights or Thrushcross Grange, or to a character's leaving one or the other household. Besides, it is only during this relocation from one or both houses that any change occurs in that character. There are many points in the plot where a character's arrival or return creates a turn in the story, and the turn that each instance creates has a significant influence on how the narrative unfolds. Around Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, Emily Brontë has constructed a mysterious void that hovers over the Gimmerton area, often creeping onto the moors with the fog and mist by night, or blowing in with the breeze by day. This vagueness is what the characters who leave the Heights and the Grange are forced to traverse, and their experiences in this realm of mystery are what transform them (Dodworth 2012, 126).

The first arrival in the story is, of course, Lockwood's. He is a stranger as he is a native of the world outside the moors of the Heights and the Grange, the world to which the other characters in the story are quite oblivious. Arrivals and departures also take the form of escapes: this happens in the case of Heathcliff and Catherine, but also of other characters. Isabella runs away to the unnamed, unmentionable world outside and never returns in person. Instead, she comes back in the form of her sickly son Linton, who, being a foreigner to the moors, is unfit for survival in such a harsh environment. Linton's father, Heathcliff, is strong, while Linton is weak and slowly declines into a lingering demise. Cathy's trek across the mysterious realm of the moors towards the destination of Penistone Crag on her little pony is also a fateful journey, as Cathy never reaches the Crag but instead stops at Wuthering Heights along the way, never to go further. While at the Heights Cathy re-encounters her lost cousin, Linton: he has been only a few miles away since they were separated on his return to his father's country. As a result, Cathy falls into the trap that Heathcliff has set.

Exploiting and recasting picturesque ideas about the Yorkshire landscape, Emily framed her story within Lockwood's experience of a terrifying storm at the beginning and a complementary calm at the close of his narrative. Brontë constructed the moorland as a source of regeneration for a society corrupted by slavery and by its moral counterpart, enslavement to passion. For this reason, her moorland excursions prepare the younger Catherine for her role in restoring the order of the estate.

Heathcliff's arrival at the Heights is a birth scene, in that the boy's origins, apart from Mr. Earnshaw's collecting him from the streets

of Liverpool, are completely unknown. Emily Brontë seems to hint that Heathcliff is the offspring of gypsies, and he is certainly dark in features and complexion. Therefore, Heathcliff can never really belong to the moors. Terry Eagleton (1995, 1-26) sees Heathcliff as an organism that has been removed from its indigenous ecosystem and relocated to another where it has become an uncontrollable pest that thrives as a result of the lack of natural predators. But whatever Heathcliff truly was, and wherever he originated, Catherine Earnshaw falls in love with him. After she proudly states “It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now” (Brontë [1847] 2003, 73), Heathcliff leaves the moors and when he returns, he is mysteriously changed in manner. Thrushcross Grange as well as *Wuthering Heights* are brought under his control. While the evil characters are rendered more powerful by the moors, the good characters are rendered weak or sick and die.

The final occurrence of absence and return is again performed by Lockwood: he departs after hearing the conclusion of Nelly Dean’s dreary narrative up to the present, not sure whether he will ever return. But, during his absence, the disrupted history of *Wuthering Heights* is finally redressed, and when Lockwood comes back he discovers that equilibrium has been restored to the moors at the Heights and the Grange, as Heathcliff is no longer alive, and Cathy and Hareton are fond of each other and going to be married. Complete peace is suggested but Lockwood objects to the rumour that the ghosts of Heathcliff and Catherine have been seen on the moors. The novel had started with the association between nature and the supernatural, the snowstorm and the ghost of Catherine at the window and the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff reappear in the closing scene.

By representing nature as a physical space where human bodies are bound by a sense of attachment to place, where they lack or learn to retrieve a sensory communication with the environment, Emily can be conceived as a forerunner of environmentalism (Defant 2017, 38). In fact, place is created and maintained through the “fields of care” that result from people’s emotional attachment. The notions of “topophilia” and “topophobia” conceived by Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) refer to the desires and fears that individuals associate with specific places, pointing to the sensual, aesthetic and emotional dimensions of space. As both natural body and ghost, in the key scene of Lockwood’s dream Catherine can be also interpreted as representing the ecological unconscious inside Lockwood’s mind. Besides, Catherine’s desire to enter *Wuthering Heights* matters in terms of regeneration because it refers to a close encounter between the world of human substance and the world of natural elements; her desire reveals a form of material existence that, since it is embedded in nature, surpasses death. The regeneration of life invoked by Catherine is developed from a narrative point of view especially in the second part of *Wuthering*

Heights when Cathy is represented as treading the earth previously trodden by her mother. By recovering the traces of her mother's presence within nature, Cathy reveals the image of her mother as a character deeply connected with nature. The hybrid presence of Catherine as half-human and half-spirit of nature blurs the separation between human and natural, but also between male and female, domestic inside and natural outside in favour of a sense of dwelling on the moor. Catherine's ghost seems to leave an ecological message focused on the value of inhabiting nature, which is central to the novel (Defant 2017, 42).

Cathy's penchant for walking transforms nature into the site of mutual coexistence between earth and humans. Unlike Catherine, who channels her love for nature into her exclusive relationship with Heathcliff, Cathy embraces nature as a way of relating to others. Throughout the novel, characters are often infused with a sense of the healing connection with the earth. Isabella's flight from the prison-house of the Heights, across the moors, literally functions as the beginning of a new life. Even Nelly, during one of her walks to the Heights, recollects her youth when she perceives "a hole near the bottom still full of snail-shells and pebbles" which she and Hindley "were fond of storing there with more perishable things" (Brontë [1847] 2003, 108). More importantly, the heath covering the tombstones of Catherine, Heathcliff and Linton in the final image of the novel shows Lockwood the traces of a story of human lives that pervade the earth and dissolve into the universal soul, including the layers of the natural and human worlds.

The characters who possess an understanding of the cultural geography of the moors cannot separate their human stories from the landscape. Approaching his death, Heathcliff, haunted by the ghost of Catherine, expresses an insight into the complexities of the place's geography, giving a clear sense of the impossible divide between history and terrain:

For what is not connected with her to me? And what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree - filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object, by day I am surrounded with her image. The most ordinary faces of men and women - my own features - mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her! (Brontë [1847] 2003, 323-4)

While Catherine's haunting of the landscape is an emblem of Gothic fiction, then, it is also the embodiment of cultural geography: the human stories that once occurred on these moors still live in its landscape, and determine Heathcliff's torment and death. At the very

end of *Wuthering Heights*, a little shepherd boy who is “crying terribly” (Brontë [1847] 2003, 336) tells Nelly that he has seen the dead Heathcliff and Cathy walking on the moors. It confirms how they remain deeply identified both with the landscape and with the sinister and alien presences within it. Their deep sense of belonging to the moors is a source of terror and estrangement for the locals and for readers. Bounded places are fundamental in providing a feeling of community for those who live in them: the perspectives offered by humanistic geography especially investigate the relationships between the character of specific places and the cultural identities of those who inhabit them.¹⁰

The story of *Wuthering Heights* develops its meaning through the wanderings of the main characters in the natural world. Finally, it seems that Lockwood, the urban man, becomes familiar with the natural world and Hareton, the rural man, can acknowledge who he is because he can read the name of his family carved over the front of *Wuthering Heights*. The heath covering the tombstones of Catherine, Heathcliff, and Linton bears the traces of a story of human lives that pervade the surrounding world. For Catherine, expulsion from heaven is no degradation at all, because to be thrown back to the earth is to come home. Compounding the spiritual with the natural, Catherine’s language endorses happiness as a physical condition, on the earth and on the heath, that is, with Heathcliff (Small 2019, 147-8).

What *Wuthering Heights* adds most to the original pastoral subtext is its deepening of human intimacy with non-human nature through “the eternal rocks” and its extension of human commitment beyond Lockwood’s temporary tenancy, and even beyond mortal existence itself (Spencer 1998, 52). The sense of the natural world, in Brontë’s text, is never simply just nature. The natural world of the moors and its geographies is instead a space that seems immobile but is transformed, by being altered and filled with reminders of history, culture, and memory. Brontë’s weaving of the emotional, human stories into the geography of the moors suggests a mutual alteration between nature and culture. She constructs a textured geography in the narrative, a careful combination of the cultural context and the natural elements of topography, and a suggestive depiction of the cycles of change, family history, and emotion that have created that space.

10 Adams et al. (2001) provide one remarkable collection of essays on place in humanist geography. Place, as a topic of investigation, highlights the weaving together of social relations and human-environment interactions. Since Yi-Fu Tuan’s seminal work on the nature of space and place, a groundswell of interest has energised geographical inquiry on these concepts.

5 Hybridity

The strong presence of nature in the novel is a consequence of Brontë's refusal to demarcate non-human nature from human beings and experience. Through the characters of Heathcliff and Catherine, the boundaries between human and non-human nature are presented as permeable. As nature affects human experience or functions as a metaphor for human character, similarly human beings and emotions are frequently portrayed as being part of nature. The storms that descend upon the Heights evoke intense human responses in the tradition of eighteenth-century theories of the sublime. Following her death, Catherine becomes a sublime object for Heathcliff. He sees her image permeating the landscape that surrounds the Heights and within the house and she becomes a pervasive presence. For him, her spectral image is a source of Edmund Burke's delightful horror producing a mixture of pain and delight. *Wuthering Heights* seeks to call into question the distinctions between the sublime, the beautiful and picturesque that were central to eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse. In the context of the prevailing aesthetic theories in Britain, Brontë's moors fell outside of the three categories, because they were deemed to be a barren, ugly, and inhospitable landscape that was therefore incapable of evoking valuable moral feelings. For Lockwood, the moors elicit feelings of gloom and pose a threat to existence. As a city dweller, at first Lockwood cannot decipher the landscape that renders him incapable of appreciating and understanding that space (Sim 2004).

Brontë suggests that landscapes are perceived in different ways by the characters, depending upon their personal experience and what that space means emotionally, historically, and economically to the viewer. This approach mirrors the individual perceptions of space in the phenomenological perspective which involves, according to John Wylie (2019, 135), lived experience and subjective impressions. While phenomenology is connected to romantic traditions of thinking it does not necessary presume or idealise any romantic sense of belonging or any sense of stable and given selfhood. In contrast to Lockwood who sees the moors as barren and a threat to his livelihood, for Catherine the moors are a source of life. They signify a life-giving space in contrast to the enclosed, cultivated parks of Thrushcross Grange. The moors encourage Catherine's and Heathcliff's politics of resistance against cultural conventions. For these children, the moors, not the home, represent a place of safety and sustenance. In maturity, Catherine continues to view the moors as a life-source, a world from which she feels she is an exile and an outcast when at the Grange.

For all the time he spends in Nelly Dean's presence throughout the novel, listening to her stories, Lockwood cannot understand the way that humans, their lives, and their mistakes interact with the physi-

cal world. Lockwood's last words at the end of the novel, as he passes by the churchyard to look at the graves of Catherine, Heathcliff and Edgar, mark his final reading of the landscape Brontë has created:

I sought, and soon discovered, the three head-stones on the slope next to the moor - the middle one, grey, and half-buried in heath - Edgar Linton's only harmonized by the turf, and moss creeping up its foot - Heathcliff's still bare.

I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath, and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers, for the sleepers in that quiet earth. (Brontë [1847] 2003, 337)

However, this conclusion may also include the opposite interpretation. Understanding this physical place, the small church, the quiet graveyard at the edge of the wild moors, the surrounding isolated landscape, involves much more than seeing its scenic, rustic qualities, vegetation or weather or topography. To understand this space, both the human and the natural elements must be woven together: cultural geography involves a kinetic, dynamic presentation of place, and it marks the antithesis of a tourist's interest in scenes that are picturesque and unchanging. At the end of the novel, readers are struck by the contrast between this quiet scene and the desperate, doomed passions that joined these characters. Nelly herself has just reported that locals "would swear on the Bible" (Brontë [1847] 2003, 337) that Heathcliff and Catherine still walk the moors at night. Lockwood has been told the entire family history of these three people, knows who loved whom, knows who died young, knows who betrayed whom, and is acquainted with the strange, awful love between Catherine and Heathcliff.

Throughout the novel, pursuing desire is intimately connected to the crossing of thresholds. This includes literal thresholds, such as Lockwood's desire to get into the Heights through the door in chapter two, and the ghost-child Catherine's desire for the same thing through the bedroom window in chapter three, and the crossing of ontological thresholds, such as Heathcliff's desire to leave his living hell and be united with the spirit of Catherine. The primary desire explored in the novel through the characters of Catherine and Heathcliff is their craving for transcendence, which occupies a liminal space mid-way between traditional dichotomies of life and death, the material and spiritual, and the immanent and the divine. Catherine's passage to death following her fever and Heathcliff's transformation at the end of the novel represent their respective experiences in a liminal space between life and death. She expresses a sense of entrapment within her body and a desire to escape its earthly limits:

The thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there. (Brontë [1847] 2003, 161-2)

The road to salvation that Brontë explores through the union of Catherine and Heathcliff further suggests the importance of liminal spaces. On the moors, Catherine and Heathcliff transcend the limits of their separate physical bodies yet reaffirm the ultimate value of human, not metaphysical or divine, love. Similarly, their transcendence and salvation can only exist within nature, essentially through reliving the freedom they experienced as children on the moors. Rejecting the Christian version of heaven and transcendence, Brontë points to a secular idea of salvation that adopts liminal spaces between the material and the spiritual, the immanent and the divine, and situates human love as the most powerful and divine force. Brontë's preoccupation with space is integrally linked to her preoccupation with human freedom in the political and metaphysical sense. *Wuthering Heights* explores how ideologies, social, cultural, religious and aesthetic, can function to compromise the subject's freedom.

In the novel, the fundamental experience of place is displacement (Steinitz 2000). The cry of Catherine's ghost at the window "Let me in - Let me in!" articulate place-related anxiety. "I'm come home!", she says (Brontë [1847] 2003, 25). The home she seeks is a space for herself. It seems that almost everyone from Catherine to Hindley to Hareton to Heathcliff claims *Wuthering Heights* for their own. For strangers like Lockwood, it is the frightening and unfamiliar world in which one has no safety. Hindley calls Heathcliff a vagabond, refuses him the familiar spaces of *Wuthering Heights*. Lockwood's displacement renders him inadequate. In the epilogue, the quest for place finishes: Catherine's body rests in the churchyard, poised between the two men in her life, as her spirit roams the moors with Heathcliff. Lockwood continues his restless travels, Cathy and Hareton leave the house behind.

Having established the location of the landscape of the novel within the geography of England, and having meticulously and plausibly built up a detailed picture of the names and speech patterns and landscape patterns to be expected in such an area, the novelist then refuses to link the two together. This may suggest that geography is of little importance. However, the narrative is located firmly in one part of England and many features of the general area are rendered in concrete detail which in its historical context was extraordinary. *Wuthering Heights* emerges as an evocation of the history and society contained in the landscape as a whole rather than a portrayal of Haworth moorland in isolation. The author herself attached great importance both to placing the geography into the appropriate location and to making it separate from the real world. The blurring of the geography at the edges implies that we are not quite certain where the

novel is set and, on the other hand, emphasises the startling clarity at the very heart of the work's topography. Re-reading the novel in the light of geographical and environmental critical approaches develops several important points for re-interpreting the central issues of the text. Brontë has one thought-provoking answer to offer to the crucial question concerning the interaction of the physical and the imaginary. In her poem "To imagination" (September 1844) Emily wrote: "So hopeless is the world without/The world within I doubly prize" (Brontë [1847] 2019, 351).

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