Andrey Felipe Martins

FROM DEVELOPMENTALISM TO ITS CRITIQUE: AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER, COLONIALITY, AND (NO) QUEER FUTURE IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

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[1]Quoted in Wroe, Nicholas. *High Priest of Lit Crit*. The Guardian, 2 Feb. 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/feb/02/academicexperts.highereducation, accessed 25 Jan. 2019.

interlocutor to discuss the ideas and theories I was reading, and such an exchange proved invaluable. Some say that truth is dialectically revealed, and these dialogues were essential for me to see these ideas from the other's eyes.

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> The accusation of childishness reverberates alongside many dismissals of queerness as childish, disrupting straight comportment and temporality. (José E. Muñoz 2009)

> What does the kingdom of childhood, which Heathcliff demoniacally refuses to give up, signify if not the *impossible* and ultimate death? (Georges Bataille 2012 [1957])

RESUMO

O presente estudo pretende analisar como a narrativização da aquisição de gênero é questionada em *Wuthering Heights*. A minha leitura se atenta especialmente à crise de identidade pela qual a personagem de Catherine Earnshaw passa, argumentando ser esse conflito fruto da sua resistência em seguir o curso estabelecido pelo discurso de desenvolvimento sexual em sua versão patriarcal; uma narrativa que critico especialmente através da perspectiva queer de Judith Butler (1990, 1993). Além disso, como o texto de Emily Brontë está profundamente imbricado no contexto do imperialismo britânico, o discurso de gênero é abordado como uma das hierarquias que, como formula Ramón Grosfoguel (2006), constitui e dá coerência à matriz de poder do mundo moderno/colonial; faço assim uma leitura de como gênero, sexualidade e colonialidade se entrelaçam. A crítica queer de tais narrativas de desenvolvimento sexual prossegue através de duas tentativas diferentes de conceber o conceito de "queerness" em relação à temporalidade: o pragmatismo de Lee Edelman (2004) e o utopianismo de José E. Muñoz (2009). A conceitualização feita por Edelman de que o queer é o *sinthome* que atravessa as fantasias sociais de totalidade e identidade, assim como o imperativo ético que ele associa com esse papel, torna-se um aspecto importante da minha análise de Heathcliff no segundo capítulo. No entanto, como o seu pragmatismo é considerado insuficiente em termos políticos, abordo-o tendo em mente a crítica de Muñoz. Concluo oferecendo uma meditação sobre os limites da esperança no futuro e tento avaliar o que há de relevante ainda no ceticismo.

Palavras-chave: teoria queer, decolonialidade, Wuthering Heights, Emily Brontë.

35.623 palavras.
105 páginas.

ABSTRACT

The present study intends to analyse how the narrativization of gender acquisition is troubled in *Wuthering Heights*. My reading pays special attention to the identity crisis that the character of Catherine Earnshaw experiences in the novel, arguing that it stems from a resistance to follow the path laid down by the discourse of sexual development in its patriarchal version. I assess this narrative especially through the queer outlook provided by Judith Butler (1990, 1993). Furthermore, as Emily Brontë's text is deeply implicated in the colonial context of the British Empire, the discourse of gender is approached as one of the hierarchies which, according to Ramón Grosfoguel (2006), constitute and give coherence to the power matrix of modern/colonial world; and thus I provide a coordinate reading of how gender, sexuality and coloniality intertwine in Brontë's novel. The queer critique of such normative narratives of sexual development is further carried out by means of two different attempts to conceive "queerness" in relation to temporality: the pragmatism of Lee Edelman (2004) and the utopianism of José E. Muñoz (2009). Edelman's idea that the queer is the symptom or *sinthome* which comes across the social fantasies of totality and perfect identity, as well as the ethical imperative that he associates with this role, becomes an important aspect of my analysis of Heathcliff in the second analytical chapter. However, as his pragmatism is perceived to be politically insufficient, I tend to approach him with Muñoz's critique in mind. By way of conclusion I offer a meditation on the limits of hope in the future, and try to salvage what still is relevant in skepticism.

Keywords: queer theory, decoloniality, Wuthering Heights, Emily Brontë.

35,623 words.
105 pages.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy and free" (*WH* 118), says Catherine Earnshaw, the protagonist of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, as she realizes the impossibility of reconciling her longing for the freedom she experienced as a girl and the need to submit to the role of a wife: "suppose at twelve years old, I had been wrenched from the Heights… and been converted at a stroke into Mrs. Linton, the Lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger: an exile, an outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world – You may fancy a glimpse of the abyss where I groveled!" (*WH* 118). In a sense, her story restages the transition that every girl, in the late eighteenth century as now, has to undergo in patriarchal societies, as growing up for them often means learning to become more submissive. The crisis of Brontë's novel, however, as glimpsed by Catherine's utterance, is that she resists being reduced to the role she is expected to take on. In a rather unsustainable way, she tries to keep up alive both her savage, unruly past (condensed in her attachment to Heathcliff) and her present (as a married woman). Yet, her inability to handle these struggling tendencies in her identity, as she finds herself faced with the imperative to choose one to the detriment of the other, is what leads to her decline. As John Whitley remarks in his introduction to the Wordsworth Edition of the novel, one of the reader's reaction to Catherine might be to see "[her] as a tiresome, selfish, immature girl who needs more discipline" (xii), that she simply fails to "grow up." However, this is to miss the dynamics of gender assumption in the novel, as that very transition into more "feminine" adult behaviour is used discursively to make women agree with the logic whereby they become passive objects. As I intend to explore in the course of my thesis, therefore, *Wuthering Heights* is a privileged text to analyze the process through which anyone who fails to comply with his or her "biological destiny" seems to make the narrative of "gender acquisition" come to a halt, and because of that is construed as "immature" or "selfish."

As the terms which I have used suggest, we have moved to the domain of what is called "developmentalism." Especially in classical psychoanalysis, the progress from an alleged primordial bisexuality towards the establishment of heterosexual identities was described in terms of improvement or phases; thus, for example, Freud speaks of specific drives (oral, anal and phallic) which are integrated and achieved "maturation" in a final genital phase: "these phases become integrated into a single, whole, genital drive after the resolution of the Oedipus complex" (Homer 76). Specifically in the case of women, he established a movement from a phallic, more "masculine" past, towards adult "femininity." The fixity of

this narrative and its claim to reflect a supposed "natural" development has long been questioned and discredited. Melanie Klein, for example, introduces the notion of "positions." In the present analysis, I would like to read such a narrative of sexual development specifically from the queer outlook provided by Judith Butler in *Bodies That Matter*. Furthermore, as evinced in the citation that opens this section, Catherine, interestingly, constantly resorts to colonial metaphors to speak of her past ("half *savage* and hardy and free"); therefore, I could not avoid, as the thesis evolved, touching on the issues of coloniality and race, which eventually became an essential part of the reading I offer in chapter 1.

One of the questions that arise out of the critique of developmentalism is how to conceive a different temporality from that of normative heterosexuality. As an attempt to pursue the answers proposed to this query, I approach the issue of "queer future" in chapter 2 in the manner it appears in the work of two important theorists. The first is Lee Edelman, whose response is pessimistic and pragmatic. If the queer "fails" to arrive at the destiny which the Freudian narrative prescribes, that "mature," "adult" position in which sex is finally reduced to reproduction and the ability to project oneself into the future, then, queers should perhaps accept and even support, so he argues, the fact that they have "no future" (which is the title of his book). For José Esteban Muñoz, however, Edelman's bleak pessimism and present-bound pragmatic politics is insufficient. In *Cruising Utopia*, he ventures to imagine an alternative temporality (and future) for those who exceed straight time. My intention is to analyse to which of these different answers *Wuthering Heights* comes closer in the way with which it counters a normative narrative of gender development. In the course of my reading, Edelman's formulations on "compassion compulsion" and the ethical issue which it entailed proved essential aspects of my analysis.

1.1. General Contexts

1.1.1 Poetry and Romanticism

Charlotte Brontë's discovery of Emily's poems and the "genuine quality" that she identified in them was the reason that drove the sisters to attempt careers as publishing authors. Although their first collection of poetry was met with almost absolute silence, Emily Brontë was right away recognized by the few reviewers of the book as a gifted poet. After the publication of the novels, this view has only become stronger; the critic F.R. Leavis, for instance, has famously observed that "her 'Cold in the Earth' is the finest poem in the nineteenth century part of the *Oxford Book of Nineteenth Century Verse*" (13). Moreover, as J. Hillis Miller has remarked, there cannot be actually a division between the meaning of the private world of her poetry and the meaning of her novel, as they stand in a continuum (95).

In her poems she always speaks to a vision or an angel, which ultimately is her allegory for the imagination, and in this aspect Emily Brontë follows the Romantic tradition. The imagination had a central role in early nineteenth-century poetry as the faculty through which the poet, as he shared the divine capacity for creation in the moment of inspiration, could help recreate reality.[2] Brontë seems to have held a similar view, as she addresses the imagination (her muse) as "a God of visions," and in her last complete poem, "No Coward Soul Is Mine," she describes her God as Coleridge's primary imagination (Gezari 131). Further, as a series of poems attest, although she addresses this muse in the second person, it is nonetheless descried simultaneously as a "world within", inside "her breast", and the poet and her imagination seem to assume different roles according to the circumstance. Thus, in "Plead for Me" the imagination is described as "a slave, a comrade and a King" (*Poems EB* 56). Besides, as Gezari has pointed out, "readers have remarked on the similarity of Brontë's language in the poem to Catherine's language in *Wuthering Heights*" (132). In a sense, she seemed to have transposed this central relation between poet and muse, and their fusion, to fictional form in her novel.

1.1.2. Historical Context

Brontë wrote in a period in which there were a few sparse, albeit important, attempts at reshaping the political status of women. As Beauvoir says, Diderot, one century earlier, was perhaps the first to see women in the light of rational creatures (32). By the end of the eighteenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft also published her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in which she eloquently argues that women are as capable of "understanding" and "reason" as men, and that their supposed inferiority is largely due to their different education. Indeed, all the Brontës are good examples of women that developed a critical and politically sensitive stance towards their historical context, precisely because they received an education which focused on intellectual pursuits.

Further, in order to understand the phenomenon of the Brontës, we cannot forget that in the 1840s the First Industrial Revolution had starkly changed the social and physical scenario of England. Haworth, the city in

[2] As Northrop Frye points out, William Blake was specially influenced by the idealist Irish philosopher Berkeley's idea that being is perception (22). Brontë comes from a Calvinist background, and thus she was not as radical as Blake. Her position seems rather to waver like Coleridge's or Byron's. As Rookmaaker discusses, only later in his life would Coleridge accept the idea that the imagination was divine (influenced by Continental philosophy). As far as 1878, however, his poetry "reveals that the idea of a divine imagination was as yet unacceptable for him" (95).

which they lived, had been urbanized and started to accommodate some factories.[3] In such a new historical juncture, women started to increasingly make up a considerable part of the working class, and hence began to demand more rights and a different representation. The works of the Brontë can be said, then, to reflect to some extent the ideals of that rising middle class society (as they chronicle as well the cultural tension provoked by the change from an agricultural to an industrial economy), in which women could take some positions as teachers, governesses or workers in the factories.

1.2. Specific Context

Wuthering Heights was published in December 1847 in the three-decker format which was common for fiction. As the novel could only fill in the two first volumes, the third one was occupied by Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*. The edition was poor and abounded in print errors. One wonders if the novel would ever have made its way to the print if *Jane Eyre* had not been published to great acclaim in September of the same year. Newby, the publisher, had had the manuscripts in hand for about five months, but only decided to work on them after "the immediate success of Currer Bell's novel" (Brinton 101).

From the first, when Emily Brontë's novel was not deemed a lesser work of the other famous sister, it was considered "coarse and disagreeable" (qtd. Brinton 103). The few positive assessments saw her as "a genius," but added that she needed to bring the strength of her imagination under control. The image of *Wuthering Heights* as the product of an uncouth genius, half-conscious of what she was doing, was largely fostered by Charlotte Brontë's comments, which helped to create a myth around her sister: "Having formed these beings, [Emily] did not know what she had done" (309). Thus, even though Charlotte's apologetic tone is justified as trying to account for her sister's eccentricity before a Victorian audience – she says that she wrote the preface because she felt it to be "a duty to wipe the dust off their gravestones, and leave their dear names free from soil" (307) –, much of her judgments and interpolations have been questioned recently.[4] The corrections that she made for the text in 1850, for example, the result of which was a reference to publishers for many decades, have

[3] For more on the socio-economical context of the Brontës see the Introduction in Eagleton, T. *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (London: MacMillan, 1988), 1-15.

[4] For a critique of the changes Charlotte Brontë made to publish her sister's poem, see especially the chapter "Posthumous Brontë" in Gezari, J. *Last Things: Emily Brontë's Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 126-150.

been criticized, and currently there is a consensus that the 1847 edition, in spite of its problems, is closer to how the manuscript might have looked.

1. 3. Literature Review: Gender in *Wuthering Heights*

One of the most resonant contributions to the literature on gender in *Wuthering Heights* has been Gilbert and Gubar's chapter in the seminal *The Madwoman in the Attic*. In Bloomean fashion, the authors see Emily Brontë as Milton's literary daughter, replacing his myth of masculine power with an alternative myth of female origins. In their words, she "reverse[s] the terms of Milton's Christian cosmogony for specifically feminist reasons" (255). For them, Emily Brontë depicts a Catherine who, before the contact with Thrushcross Grange, comes close of turning the Heights to a "queendom" and frustrates all expectations of gender roles. Nevertheless, as soon as she discovers the world of the Grange, Catherine falls from this primitive heaven. The story happens against a patriarchal background that it cannot ignore, and soon femininity starts to be understood in the way it was traditionally depicted, such as in works like *Paradise Lost* and *King Lear*. As they argue, in Milton's poem and Shakespeare's play, being female is a result of the exclusionary practices through which masculinity defines itself. Therefore, in spite of Edmund, Satan and Heathcliff being "masculine," all three are linked with "feminine" nature: "On a deeper associative level, Heathcliff is female – on the level where younger sons and bastards and devils unite with women in rebelling against the tyranny of heaven" (293). Brontë's point of divergence, of course, is that she ironizes these narratives in which culture overcomes nature, by having her protagonist say that she prefers her "hell" and the chaotic state of nature to the organization of heaven/culture.

What critics such as Gilbert and Gubar show is that Emily Brontë, in the unavailability of "positive" means of representing women, tries to employ subversively the very depiction she has received from tradition. This representation, however, has limitations. For Beth Newman, in a society in which subjectivity is seen mainly as a masculine prerogative, whenever a woman tries to rise from her position of otherness, she is doomed to be branded as a "Medusa," "a witch" or the "monstrous feminine" by the male gaze (1032). In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë enacts these moments in which women try to escape their passivity as the "other," but for Newman they invariably are shown as castrating figures.

Another important contribution has been made by Stevie Davies, who argues that Brontë is an "androgynous author, concerned with those aspects of human nature which cross the border of gender" (132). As Lyn Pykett says, from the 1980s onwards, critics, Davies included, have not been so much interested in exploring how patriarchy oppresses women, but in "woman's power and ability" (Pykett 133). Different from Newman, for

whom a female perspective is scarcely possible unless as masquerade, Davies holds the view that Gondal, Brontë's fictional world, is "a place of female power where patriarchy… was not admitted" (35), and *Wuthering Heights* is a "female vision of genesis" (Pykett 132).

More recently, Dana DeFalco has explored gender instability in the novel. She analyses specifically how Heathcliff destabilizes female characters' conformity to social and gender roles, even though eventually these "unnatural or 'queer' occurrences must be eradicated at the end of the novel, culminating with Heathcliff's death and a heterosexual ending" (19). As she discusses, this dissident role played by Heathcliff is meaningful, if we take into account the changes sexuality was going through in the mid-nineteenth century.

Based on Foucault's discussion of the role of confessional discourse to police sexual practices, DeFalco analyses the scene of Catherine's important confession to Nelly in chapter 9, claiming that the housekeeper works as an "interrogator" and Catherine as the person whose sexual practices did not fit into conventional categories, and needs to confess her "unnatural" desire. Similar to Newman and Gilbert and Gubar, she stresses the role of Nelly's "vigilant gaze" (Newman 1039).

Indeed, Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship has been especially subjected to a variety of interpretations. The fact that they are two siblings growing in the same household has been seen as a sign of a stage of sexuality which predates the incest taboo.[5] Gilbert and Gubar themselves point out that Heathcliff and Catherine's relation might be better understood if we see them as forming an androgynous (or rather, "gynandrous") whole. In a biographical vein, they speculate that Heathcliff is "a male figure into which a female artist projects, in disguised form, her own anxiety about her sex and its meaning in her society" (294).

The nature of this unconventional "sexual" experience in Brontë's writing has become a bone of contention among critics. Stevie Davies, for one, reads the intense experience of Brontë's mystic poems as a sublimation of repressed sexual desire. Her hypothesis that Brontë ought to have known some form of sexuality (i.e. masturbation) continues to be, to this day, the most radical, if improbable, re-interpretation of the author's *oeuvre*: "only by *self-love* (itself forbidden and transgressive) could most nineteenth-century middle-class women have come to an understanding of sexual passion" (23, emphasis added). Critics, as can be expected, have been

[5] See Christopher Heywood's Introduction to *Wuthering Heights* (Broadview: 2004), pp. 39-48. Eric Solomon also has written on the topic; in an essay named "The Incest Theme in *Wuthering Heights*," in which he traces the origins of Brontë's interest in incest back to Byron's *Manfred* and Romanticism in general.

uncomfortable with Davies' reading. In her book, Janet Gezari tacitly reminds Brontë's bolder readers the difficulties that lurk behind any analysis of the sexuality of nineteenth-century women writers, as this was almost an unthinkable topic for them, "however fervently contemporary readers may wish to grant a sexual body to women writers or rend the veil of privacy that obscures their sexuality from us" (16). If Gezari is skeptical of the attempts to "grant a sexual body to women," she nevertheless offers a desirable open-ended "solution" to the problem: "I am suggesting that the sexual metaphors in Brontë's poems will continue to resist our efforts to reduce them to familiar categories, especially the most familiar ones, which are those of heterosexual romance" (16). As Eagleton says (although he says it rather ironically), we can read the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff, at its most positive, as "prefigur[ing] a future world in which men and women might shuck off the … constraints of gender" (96). Therefore, we can take at least one thing for granted: Emily Brontë's writing clearly disrupts, or troubles, traditional female heterosexuality.

The specific form that this disruption takes, however, is bound to the elements that the critic chooses to emphasize. DeFalco and Kennard, for instance, have read a potential lesbianism through the indeterminacy of the text. Although the grounds on which we can speak of a possible lesbianism in the text will be explored with more details in the analysis, such a surmise turns chiefly around the protagonists' strong statement of identification with each other: "As … Catherine and Heathcliff profess themselves as one entity, the argument can be made that their love is homosexual in nature" (DeFalco 26). However, once we step into this type of discussion, further questions proliferate, especially as regards the definition of homosexuality and lesbianism with which these authors are working.

Jean Kennard is the critic that offers the most consistent reading of *Wuthering Heights* as a lesbian text. She disclaims from the outset that she means that Brontë actually loved other women. Instead, she suggests that Brontë's sexuality is best understood as a "sexual inversion" (a nineteenth-century term) which "is not, like homosexuality, only a question of desire, of the choice of sexual object, but implies a much wider range of cross-gender behaviour" (19). Thus, drawing from Marilyn Farwell's conceptualization of a lesbian narrative space, she analyses how the conflict between the establishment of borders in the text, and their shattering, points towards lesbian impulses. That is, whereas traditional narratives work towards stabilizing binaries (inside/outside, mind/body…), the homosexual impulse in the text tends to trouble them. Kennard is aware that this definition of homosexuality is itself to some extent dependent on heterosexual binaries (24-25), as lesbianism is understood to some extent as the love of "two same-sexed beings," but she argues that Brontë and her text are stuck within such a logic, so these terms "remain appropriate" (25). The

fact that Kennard reads lesbianism through spatial metaphors helps her elide the limitation of this definition, as she is, therefore, more preoccupied with the representations of homosexuality.

Further, the linguistic problems concerning gender and identity, which are only latent in the novel, become more clear in Brontë's poem. Krisztina Timár, for example, in her analysis of Brontë's poetry shows how she erased traces of gender when she selected poems for publication in 1845. Moreover, even in her unpublished poetry Emily Brontë "can still confuse her readers successfully by her masterful performance of completely avoiding gendered pronouns" (55). Needless to say, also, that the Brontë sisters were so preoccupied with gender that "they opted for gender-neutral pseudonyms, an 'ambiguous' choice, as Charlotte noted" (Pykett 13).

In this review of the literature, I have tried to delineate some agreements and divergences about gender in the history of the criticism of *Wuthering Heights*. I hope to have underlined the eminence of Gilbert and Gubar's contribution, for its extensive and detailed analysis. As can be seen, critics still are especially troubled by the question of female agency. For Beth Newman, as all forms of representation pass through a masculine economy of representation, the act of resistance in a woman assuming the active role, albeit a form of protest, cannot dismantle the hierarchy. Davies, on her turn, focuses more on images of female power in exactly the elements of Brontë's work that Newman neglects (the poetry and the relation between Heathcliff and Catherine). For Davies, *Wuthering Heights* is about "humanity in the person of the female" (105). She finds a potential for freedom in Brontë's placing of women in a position that would have been traditionally occupied by men. Therefore, in some regards, the persistence of Catherine's "tomboyish" past and Brontë's more "masculine" heroines are a threat to gender binaries. To use Barbara Creed's reflection on the trope of the tomboy-turned-lady: "she represents the other side of the heterosexual woman; her lost phallic past, the autonomy she surrenders" (95). At the same time, the novel becomes a perfect text to analyse the discursive underpinnings of the discourse of gender developmentalism, as Catherine finds herself under the imperative to leave behind her phallic past and assume a more passive femininity. Therefore, I intend to submit such a narrative to a queer critique (with its suspicion both of, on the one hand, accounts of gender "acquisition" and, on the other, interpretations of gender behaviour based on one's sex), and analyse Catherine's predicament in relation to that point of view.

1.4. Objectives

- To analyse whether, and if so, how the patriarchal narrative of feminine sexual development is troubled in *Wuthering Heights*, especially by reading the text in light of Judith Butler's (1990,

1993) formulations on the ideological and discursive underpinnings of the narrativization of gender acquisition.

- To analyse how the discourses of gender and coloniality intersect and achieve their coherence in the novel by constituting one another, drawing from Ramon Grosfoguel's analysis of the heterogeneous hierarchies that constitute the power matrix of the colonial/modern world.
- To examine how *Wuthering Heights* stands in relation to the Edelman-Muñoz debate on queer future.

1.5. Research Questions

- In what ways does the text of *Wuthering Heights* resist and/or recirculate the narrative of sexual development in its depiction of Catherine's attachment to her "tomboyish" past?
- Given that the discourse of gender cannot be dissociated from its implication in the colonial matrix of power, what does an intersectional analysis reveal as regards the relationship of profound identification but also domination between Catherine and Heathcliff?
- How does *Wuthering Heights* respond to the issue of the queer future as present in the work of Edelman and Muñoz? Does the text celebrate the death drive or evince a utopian tendency?

1.6. Significance of the Research

According to Janet Gezari, Brontë has notably been neglected in recent anthologies of Victorian female writers especially because her poetry does not touch the themes usually dealt with by those women poets: "feminist critics have brought expectations of their own to the poetry of Victorian women, and these threaten to make Emily Brontë inconsiderable once again" (11). And as we saw, even Charlotte Brontë, in the Biographical Notice, feels compelled to write an apology for the fact that her sister is "unfeminine" to Victorian standards. If Brontë's writing upsets precisely what is deemed "general" in the work of women writers ("not at all like the poetry women generally write"), then a queer lenses might prove fruitful precisely because it questions the intelligibility of this common substrate that informs the category. A concept like Butler's "gender trouble" seems especially appropriate for a body of writings that questions and reshapes, by complicating the relation between natural sex and gender characteristics, what it is to be a woman. Besides, in the preface to the second edition of *The Madwoman*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar urge the need to keep the field of nineteenth-century studies alive, and this research tries to respond to that call.

At PPGI –UFSC there have been two studies that deal with my corpus. One is Mariza Tulio's "Gender and the Politics of the Gaze in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*" (2009), the main argument of which is aligned with that of Beth Newman's (1989) (I discuss Newman in the Review of Literature). Both authors deal specifically with the impact of the male gaze over the representation of the feminine. While Newman uses Todorov's concept of "focalization," Tulio employs Laura Mulvey's critique of the male gaze in traditional Hollywood movies. The other is Debora de Rocco's "The Narrator's Performance in *Wuthering Heights*" (2005), a dissertation that compares how the narrators in the novel and the filmic version adapt to the conventions of each genre.

1.7. Important Concepts

1.7.1. The Discursive Limits of "Sex"

This research relies especially on Judith Butler's theorizations about gender. As is well known, Butler formulates a thorough critique of traditional assumptions of the ontological stability of identities. She argues that under scrutiny the division between sex-nature and gender-culture can be deconstructed. For her, gender ideology effectuates the materiality of sex as if it were a non-ideological production, thus establishing it as pre-discursive (*GT* 7). By means of this operation, sex is naturalized beyond discourses as a neutral surface, on which culture, supposedly, would assign social meaning. The problem, therefore, of traditional assumptions of identity is that they rely on this pre-discursive "essence" of sex. In an attempt to conceptualize a neutral realm which is not encompassed by the discursive power of gender, it turns out that society reifies sex, and "retroactively installs [it] at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access" (*BTM* 6).

However, in order to understand better her argument about how sex is constructed, it is important to reshape our understanding of constructiveness. The materiality of sex is not constructed in a voluntary sense of the word, but is rather the result of the stabilization of reiterated practices. The common uneasiness that such argument produces, as Butler was aware, arises from the fact that it eschews our common assumptions of the role of the subject. Western culture is accustomed to frame the subject as the one who acts, while her argument claims that human subjects are produced, in a Foucauldian sense, by power relations. Bodies only come into being in Western culture through the constraints of gender, and therefore there is not a type of action that can be performed beyond the possibilities that its power has delimited. Individuals can only act within the norms that, in the first place, make their subjectivity possible. The subject's power to act is mediated and not inherent to him or her.

The problematic corollary to this fact – and which Butler points out as one of the reasons why de-naturalizing sex is important – is that these social norms exclude some types of bodies, and proscribe them to an "abject" domain. She hopes that through a re-conceptualization of sex, a mobilization of the boundaries which circumscribe bodies (and therefore exclude many) is to follow, re-evaluating their importance.

Although these regulatory norms might imply a kind of social determinism, it is important to bear in mind that power is exercised in a complex, not-hegemonic manner. The very reiteration and rituals which strengthen the effects of gender also open up "gaps and fissures," which are constitutive to it. In this immanent instability of any construction, one can find "the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms of 'sex' into a potentially productive crisis" (10).

As the materialization of sex is stabilized by a reiteration of a performance of actions, the concept of performativity is central to Butler's theory, playing both a normative and a subversive role. As she demonstrates, the notion of an interior essence of gender is an illusion fostered by discursive reasons to effect a type of integrity of the subject: "that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (*GT* 136).

Moreover, the notions of performative utterance (in speech acts theory) and Derrida's citationality (*BTM* 13) are deeply related to performativity. Individuals can only perform the acts which stabilize their identity by identifying, or citing an already-existing authority or norm, which, in turn, by being cited or repeated, is strengthened. The question that Butler pursues is to what extent this repetition and citationality can be used as a means of resignification: "What would it mean to 'cite' the law to produce it differently, to 'cite' the law in order to reiterate and co-opt its power, to expose the heterosexual matrix and to displace the effect of its necessity?" (*BTM* 15). For her, the possibility of agency is deeply intertwined with the forces at play in performativity.

This reiteration with a difference might be useful in analysing the female characters in Brontë who assume a subjective position. Although the characters are using an already existing authority (that of the subject), they seem to be using it subversively. In this regard, the theoretical formulations of authors like Beauvoir and Irigaray concerning the place traditionally assigned to women in representation, their ontological status as "inessential" and abject, and also as symbolic lack, may enrich the discussion.

1.7.2. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an analytical tool that through a multi-dimensional frame attempts to forestall the erasure of some identities created by single-

axis analyses. Although it can be traced to as far as the nineteenth century, the concept really rose to eminence within academic and social research on inequality after the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw. Indeed, "intersectionality" is taken to be one of the most important contributions made by black feminism. In a series of essays on the late 80s and early 90s, Crenshaw analysed several case studies of women of color in vulnerable situation to show the limitation of much of anti-racist and feminist politics in addressing pressing questions such as domestic violence. The trust of identity politics in universal categories as a means for substantial action, so she argues, ends up producing exclusion within those very categories: "the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference… but rather the opposite: it frequently conflates or ignores intragroupal differences" (1242) and later she adds: "although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and anti-racist practices… they relegate the identity of women of colour to a location that resists telling" (1242). Intersectionality, then, shows that as long as policies do not take into account the living experience of various groups in all of its complexity (the multiple grounds of identities), the elision of difference is doomed to continue. Whereas in single-axis analysis a determined category is taken to be the essential (such as race, gender, or class) and other marks are only additional, for intersectionality the individual is actually the coordinate in space where all of these conflicting lines overlap.

Intersectional studies often raise the question of the relevance and disadvantages of using categories for analysis, given that grouping and classifying entail the arbitrary drawing of borders and margins which creates exclusions. Crenshaw herself inhabits a middle ground. Although she criticizes the universalizing gestures of identity politics, for her we nonetheless cannot move beyond identity, because this would mean to forget that, in spite of the contingent nature of categories on philosophical grounds, races, gender as well as other discriminatory practices are experienced materially.

Leslie McCall, for instance, identifies three main positions that are usually taken in intersectional studies: the anticategorical stance, a position which is more aligned with post-structuralist feminisms, whose aim is to emphasize the changeability and inherent fractured nature of identity, and thus the importance of deconstructing classifications; the intracategorical approach, in which she includes Crenshaw, as the latter calls attention to the limitation of categories at the same time that she tries to maintain them; and the intercategorical, which *presupposes* the importance of categories in order to analyse the complexity of inequality within groups. In a rather polemical vein, McCall endorses the former, making a case for more scientific research and even a type of mitigated "rationalism." In spite of all the controversies that have afflicted the field recently, especially as regard

whether black women should remain at the center or not, it is important nonetheless to emphasize that which is most useful in intersectionality, its capacity "for exposing the operations of power dynamics in places where a single axis approach might render those operations invisible" (Cooper 401).

1.7.3. The Power Matrix of the Modern/Colonial World

With the rise of decolonial studies, some theorists have increasingly felt the necessity of foregrounding how coloniality, instead of being an additive to the capitalist system, is actually constitutive of Modernity itself. As that importance is often neglected in some strands of European thought, they make a case for giving visibility for more localized forms of knowledge. Ramón Grosfoguel, for example, in "World-System Analysis in the Context of Transmodernity," highlights that various disciplines such as globalization studies, political-economical paradigms and world-system analysis should move beyond the transcendent subject of Western knowledge and espouse a different geo- and body politics, one that accounts for the experience of coloniality from the point of view of those who were subjected to it.

From the point of view of the colonized, he claims, the imposition of modern forms of domination meant much more than simply the subjection to an economic system: "what arrived in the Americas [and by analogy in the colonies] was a broader and wider entangled power structure that an economic reductionist perspective of the world-system is unable to account for" (170). He is not, of course, detracting the centrality of the economic and exploitative character of the colonial enterprise, yet for him a framework which accounts for the complexities of how colonial power was deployed and maintained is in need. He thus offers the notion of "heterogeneous hierarchies," which consists in seeing how colonial power did not translate itself only in capitalist exploitation, but recognizing that it also entailed the institution of various other hierarchies (such as race and gender systems). The point is that these multiple hierarchies sustain one another from unraveling, and therefore cannot be said to exist separately. In their complex structural interpenetration, they mutually reproduce their power.

However, as for decolonial theorists coloniality is the dark side of modernity, race and racism hold a prominent place in the structuring of these hierarchies. In Grosfoguel's condensed definition:

> I conceptualize the coloniality of power as an entanglement of multiple and heterogeneous hierarchies of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic, and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide transversally reconfigures all other global power structures (172)

Grosfoguel's specific contribution to Aníbal Quijano's legacy is precisely, as he says, his complicating the notion that coloniality is essential to understand modernity by throwing light into the complexity by which these "heterogeneous hierarchies" are maintained. One of the advantages of this framework, which becomes important in my analysis, is that it provides a means of analysing how modernity affects gender in regard to the colonized. For as decolonial feminists such as María Lugones have pointed out, the colonial matrix of power reconfigured the understanding of gender that it met in the colony so as to make it fit to the patriarchal system that was hegemonic in Europe during the colonization.

2. THE "DARK CONTINENT" OF FEMALE SEXUALITY: DEVELOPMENTALISM, RACE, AND GENDER IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS.*

Catherine Earnshaw's resistance to be colonized into the notions of femininity that she meets at Thrushcross Grange has a central bearing on the development of the action of *Wuthering Heights*. Were it not for the tension that arises out of her famous refusal to choose between Heathcliff and Linton, between her "headstrong" past in the Heights and a proper (namely passive) feminine identity in the Grange, there would be no unfolding of the narrative at all. That the text must resort to temporal metaphors, as glimpsed from even such a brief summary, I intend to show, indicates that Catherine's encounter with the world of the Grange signals her subjection to a temporality previously unknown to her. She suddenly finds herself enmeshed in a developmental narrative that increasingly urges her to leave behind the "primitive" mode of life at the Heights. Thus, for instance, throughout the text Heathcliff and she are often called "pagans", and Catherine, especially, is considered too "headstrong" and "savage" and thus to need "taming." As can be seen, the temporality underlying the establishment of a "proper" sexual development in the novel is extremely interwoven with metaphors drawn from another important Western narrative/temporality, that of colonialism. In light of this, I intend to analyse specially how the narratives of gender and race are construed as well as resisted in the text, investigating what are the possibilities of resistance that Emily Brontë's novel offers us and how we are to interpret her conclusions.

Indeed, many feminists have drawn parallels between the oppression of women and that of colonized and racialized people. (Although, as is going to be shown, we must also consider that white women are in a more privileged position, and the occlusion of race is often disabling.) Both are marked, to use Beauvoir's insight, as the "inessential in front of the essential" (26). They are forced to accomplish the production and reproduction of material life without, however, drawing any profit from their work; instead, they are obliged to hand the results of their work to their "masters". The latter, in turn, are caught in the paradoxical situation where they depend on the other, yet need to disavow this dependence; so that, in being repressed socially, both women and the racialized start to inhabit a social "unconscious". Hélène Cixous, for instance, says that "as soon as [women] begin to speak... they can be taught that their territory is black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the

dark, you're afraid" (1976 878-878). Cixous has in mind Freud's formulation that female sexuality is "a dark continent." These terms are extremely insightful, for in trying to define the "archaic" and repressed sexuality of women, Freud resorts to spatial and geographic terms, linking female sexuality to those continents that were as unbeknownst to the metropolis as the unconscious was to the psychoanalyst (or, for that matter, to consciousness itself).

Similarly, Monique Wittig also indicates the ways in which race and gender are inter-related:

> Before the social economic reality of black slavery, the concept of race did not exist, at least not in its modern meaning, since it was applied to the lineage of families. However, now, race, exactly like sex, is taken as ... belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, which reinterprets physical features.... through the network of relationships in which they are perceived. (They are seen as black; therefore, they *are* black; they are seen as women; therefore, they *are* women. But before being seen that way, they first had to be made that way) (104)

As I intend to show, in *Wuthering Heights* we are able to see how these marks do not exist separate, as it were, in a categorical purity, but, instead, mutually constitute one another. Therefore, for example, a less feminine woman is described in terms borrowed from a colonial/racial discourse ("savage" "pagan"), and, conversely, a racialized man as Heathcliff is feminized and linked to a "demonic feminine." Furthermore, as already mentioned, both the discourse of gender/sexuality and that of coloniality materialize in the text through narratives of development and improvement, and thus I also intend to analyse both in regard to these narratives.

2.1. Orientalism and Coloniality

The Brontë sisters probably became first aware of the shared subordination of women and racialized people through Byron. The *Eastern Tales* synthesizes, perhaps better than any other work from that period, the peak of the Romantic interest in otherness and difference. Besides, as Byron's own views were deeply critical of the British Empire, often siding with the social outcasts, his narrative poems introduced the sisters to a critical position to their country's imperialism that they would come to explore with incredible sensibility in their mature work (not to mention the fictional countries of their youth which were always set in exotic lands). Further, a poem like *The Corsair*, which tells the story of a rebel female slave who murders her master, offers, in however an ambiguous fashion, an alternative to the cultural representation of women that they would have

contact with. Some residue of such female insurrection is to be found in the mind of the mature Jane Eyre, as well as in a more pronounced way in some of Emily Brontë's characters.

Although strictly speaking Emily Brontë belongs to an early Victorian period, her way of dealing with the orient is more aligned with that of previous generations. As Saree Makdisi says, a distinguishing feature of British Romanticism was its ambiguous stance towards Eastern culture: "the Romantic interest in difference and otherness - surely one of the period's dominant concerns, if not *the* overriding concern - was largely enabled by the enormous vistas of cultural difference made available by the empire" (37). However, during the 1830s, as the Empire consolidated its positivistic discourse of cultural supremacy on the basis of technological and economic power, the British attitude towards the empire underwent a shift, so that, for example, Thomas Macaulay in "A Minute on Indian Education" "scorned anyone who took seriously [William Jones's] advice to seek inspiration and gather raw materials for poetry from what he regarded as the backward and thoroughly degenerate East" (36). That is, as the nineteenth century headed into its second half, there was left scarcely any space for the Romantic flirtation with the orient and with dissidence, which we still identify in Brontë.

During the period of Romanticism in Britain, that spanned from the 1770s through the 1830s, there was an unprecedented influx of Eastern texts in Europe, as many poets started to see in that culture an alternative to a disillusioned industrialized society: "many of the period's greatest writers warned that economic progress and what was called 'improvement' came with a very heavy social, cultural, and even psychospiritual price" (38). This accounts for the romantic poets' "interest in the forms of otherness (the archaic, the residual, and the remainders of a mythic past)" (38). The interest of these poets in the East became "an exciting site of danger, sensuality, and eroticism" (44), all of which were not favourites of an increasingly rationalistic society. Thus, during the Romantic period there was a spectrum of nuanced positions concerning the status of Eastern culture, which ranged from the ones who criticized it, as Wordsworth, to those who almost "went native," as in Byron's case, owing his fame as he does to his "exotic" persona.

Emily Brontë's depiction of race and coloniality (and its underlying narrative) in *Wuthering Heights* can be best understood in the light of the interest in the exotic and odd that had marked previous generations, and as such is a specific stance towards orientalism, famously defined by Said as:

> A collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans... the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples

> and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness … Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority [of the Westerner]. (2003[1978] 7)

As I intend to analyse, the very generality of Heathcliff's background (he is conjectured to have come from virtually any of the British colonies in America and Asia) indicates that what is at stake in his role is precisely that he represents the very otherness and difference against which the Western identity came to define itself in the course of the nineteenth century. Indeed, as Makdisi shows, it turns out that the Western interest in the East had much more to do with a European attempt to negotiate and delimitate its own identity, either repressing or celebrating the otherness/difference which constituted it, than with the Eastern countries in themselves. Further, as critics such as Nancy Armstrong point out, we can see the effects of colonialism not only in the relation between England and its overseas territories, but even within the British Isles. The form with which people from the urban centres treated those in the countryside ("folks") in many senses mirrors colonialist relations. Armstrong, for example, speaks of "internal colonialism":

> *Wuthering Heights* exemplifies the double meaning I am attributing to "internal colonialism." Brontë's novel dramatizes the process by which certain textualizing procedures produced a cultural periphery within Great Britain... they... began to identify precisely the features that branded other people as peripheral with their own most irrational, primitive, and even perverse selves. (248)

However, Brontë's novel is ambiguous in its portrait of Heathcliff. Following the general Romantic trend, her novel often seems to be more on the side of "oriental backwardness" and to be deeply critical of a progress which is achieved at the expense of turning women and the colonial subject to ghosts hovering on the margins. Brontë would be one of those for whom "there would always be something appealing about the Eastern self and its lack of standardization" (Makdisi 45) even after the consolidation of the imperialistic discourse, the social dismissal of Romanticism as merely immature, and the rise of bourgeois realism.

Indeed, the awareness that *Wuthering Heights* evinces in regard to the (disavowed) centrality that the colonized other plays in the definition of European cultures, and its sensibility to the fact that there is a history that is constantly being repressed and relegated to an obscure, archaic realm, aligns the novel with the post-colonial practice of bringing "the cultural inheritance of slavery or colonialism before modernity" (246). As Homi Bhabha says, "in that double-figure which haunted the moment of the

enlightenment in its relation to the otherness of the Other, you can see the historical formation of the time-lag of modernity" (246). Brontë's novel, as I hope to show, is an important index of the social conflicts that arose out of this temporal asymmetry.

In this regard, my analysis also intends to do an operation similar to that of Said and Spivak and explore how *Wuthering Heights*, as a cultural text, reflects the larger socio-ideological context of the British Empire in which it is inserted, underscoring "the importance of the novel as a cultural object that reflects imperial attitudes"(Said 17). For, as Said remarks in *Culture and Imperialism*, it is not a fortuitous coincidence that during the nineteenth century the novel became a privileged site for the confluence of discourses, given that structuring reality through narratives is an essential ideological move for the establishment and definition of a culture. Thus, in analysing how the narrative of *Wuthering Heights* is construed, paying attention to how it endorses and criticizes the discourse of imperialistic development, we can see how politically charged issues make their way into a cultural text: "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them" (xiii). As shown, for example, in Said's reading of *Mansfield Park*, many texts from this early stage of the Empire cannot but help inscribing the determining role of the colonies within the social structure with which they are dealing. The overseas territories often appear as an uncanny presence, determining in their very remoteness: "they stand for a significance out there that frames the genuinely important action here" (93).

And as my analysis intends to explore the inter-relation between coloniality and gender, I also find Gayatri Spivak's concept of the "axiomatics of imperialism" indispensable. Although I believe that Charlotte Brontë is more ambiguous than Spivak concedes, she provides a useful framework to analyse how feminine independence is achieved through the occlusion of race in the context of colonialism. In "Three Women's Texts and the Critique of Imperialism," in a manner similar to that of Said, she remarks how literature, the current form of which is mainly a nineteenth century invention, was and is used to provide representations of a determined cultural group to themselves. Especially in the nineteenth century, the English depicted themselves as responsible for a civilizing mission (*la mission civilizatrice).* Both Said and Spivak employ many caveats to not detract from the aesthetic merit of literary works or to label artists as imperialists or colonialists, but yet they call attention to the importance of seeing how such works are implicated in the wider historical context in which they find themselves: "the challenge is to connect them not only with that pleasure and profit but also with the imperial process of which they were manifestedly and unconcealedly a part" (Said xiv).

Therefore, especially in her analysis of *Jane Eyre*, Spivak demonstrates how the narrative movement (she calls it the "narrative energy of the novel") of the protagonist is only possible through what she calls the "axiomatics of imperialism." In Brontë's novel we accompany the transition of Jane's status as a marginal figure within the families and communities in which she lives to her final integration through the happy marriage to Rochester. For Spivak, "it is the unquestioned ideology of imperialism axiomatic, then, that conditions Jane's move from the counter-family set to the set of the family-in-law" (248). But how does imperialism work to propitiate this move? Spivak, as Morton remarks, does not mention the more immediate fact that Jane's change in fortunes stems from her inheriting the wealth of her uncle in Madera (a colonized island). She focuses rather on the occlusion of the colonized woman, Bertha Mason.

In the "discursive field" of imperialism the independence and individualism of the female subject is possible at the expanse of the colonial Other: "as the female individualist ... articulates herself in shifting relationship to what is at stake, the native female as such is excluded from any share in this emerging norm" (244-245). However, as Spivak brilliantly shows, the attempt to give subjectivity and agency to the "native," as in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is bound to reproduce the same occlusion that is criticized in *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette (Bertha) is given agency at the expanse of the commodification of her servant Cristophine. In order for subjectivity to exist within the colonial/modern system it needs to establish a limit of intelligibility – there is always an Other that must be excluded so that identity might be possible in the first place:

> No perspective *critical* of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolute Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self" (253).

Another consequence of the ideology of "imperialist axiomatics", which is deeply complicitous with nineteenth-century feminist individualism, is the project of "soul making." By means of the "benevolent" image that the discourse of colonialism tries to construe of itself, which purports to bring knowledge, economical development and civilization to the colonies, this discourse veils domination under the guise of bestowing *subjectivity* or a soul to the colonized. To this project of soul making, Spivak gives the name "the terrorism of the categorical imperative," as Kant's transcendental morality could be used by political institutions to justify a violent "humanization" of the natives: "it is this violent act of making the heathen into a human through the civilizing

mission of colonialism that Spivak calls terroristic. ... [she] defines the ideology of imperialist axiomatics as the use of transcendent concepts like morality or culture to justify colonialism" (Morton 20). As Said says in a similar vein, "precisely the fervent innocence for whom the native can be educated into 'our' civilization, that turns out to produce murder, subversion and endless instability of 'primitive' societies" (xix).

Much of this colonial/orientalist strategy of construing the other as belated in time, subjecting him or her to its own version of temporality and economics, has been renewed with a new impetus, after the demise of colonialism, in the discourse of developmentalism in the so-called "Third World". Thus, for instance, the economic life of these countries is described as "primitive and stagnant" (qtd. Escobar 13). And in the same way that during the nineteenth-century "Britain's technological prowess and economic power necessarily translated into claims of cultural supremacy over other civilizations" (39), developmentalist narratives also see the "replication in the poor countries of those conditions characteristic of mature capitalist ones" as the only solution to poverty in the "Third World" (Escobar 38). Now, as then, the more powerful nations find in the narrative of ushering improvement and development a rationale to reach new markets. Although the novel refers more immediately to the imperialist tension between Britain and its colonies, in so far as the narrative of modernity continues to assume other avatars, the issues with which the text deals continue contemporary. The novel gives voice to concrete contradictions that have underlain modern societies since the nineteenth century.

For Ramón Grosfoguel the stability of the modern/colonial system is supported by the imposition of a series of hierarchies, including that of gender among others. This means that the deployment of specifically European forms of gender and sexuality has been essential for the diffusion of capitalism. The modern/colonial system would not be possible without the compulsion to reproduce the social cell (the family) according to the oedipal pattern. Indeed, we could say that in order to become a "subject" the colonial individual should submit to that transcendental signifier, the totalizing tendency of which reflects the claim to university of capitalism itself: the phallus. Gender, therefore, is in the service of the colonial discourse, and in what follows I explore the prescriptive nature of its narrative as well as present a queer critique of it.

> "*The body in the mirror does not represent a body that is, as it were, before the mirror: the mirror, even as it is instigated by that unrepresentable body "before" the mirror, produces that body as its delirious effect—a delirium, by the way, which we are compelled to live."*
>
> –Judith Butler

2.2. Sexual Development from Freud to Butler

Freud's most in-depth study of women is perhaps "Female Sexuality" (1931), a text in which he sets up the main guidelines that subsequent critics would endorse or criticize. He is mainly occupied with what to him are two central changes in the development of female sexuality: first, that women "must" make a transition from clitoris to vagina, "renouncing that genital zone which was originally the principal one, namely the clitoris, in favour of a new zone, the vagina" (21); and second, the complication that arises out of the fact that the little girl's first object of love is the mother, hence homosexual (different from the little boy), and thus she must go through a more complex process in order to "achieve" heterosexuality: "how does she find her way to the father?" (21).

The fact that women have two genital organs poses a problem for Freud, and he can only conceive of a final picture in which one of these organs eventually completely substitutes the other: "The sexual life of the woman is regularly split up into two phases, the first of which is of a masculine character, whilst only the second is specifically feminine. Thus, in female development, there is a process of transition from the one phase to the other" (23). This leads him to support the narrative which is most appropriate for a patriarchal society, as the emphasis on vaginal passivity means, among other things, that a woman only achieves adulthood when she "passively awaits [for] the male member, the master of the house" (Creed 94). It is noteworthy that as often happens in Freud, he inconsistently endorses such a notion of normality in spite of his own caveat that he does not find himself in the position of "assigning [these organs] any teleological purpose" (23).

In this temporality that classical psychoanalytic discourse establishes, the little girl, given the "active" character of clitoral activity, is conceived as a little boy. As she grows up, makes the fateful discovery of castration and can finally enter into the Oedipus complex, she starts to detach herself from her "phallic" past and makes the transition into a "the true female organ". Freud goes as far as to say that "to the changes in her own sex, there must correspond a change in the sex of her object" (23). In other words, the organ which she privileges determines the gender she is to have. This view

reproduces and reaffirms a cluster of common-sense conflations, especially as regards women who do not conform to normative notions of femininity. A girl who is more active is going to be interpreted, retroactively, as having "failed" in her transition into "mature" femininity (i.e. vaginal passivity). According to this narrative, she maintains herself attached to her infantile, "primitive" phallic phase. To resist being reduced to passivity means an "unnatural" wish to be a man, and, conversely, to make the transition to vaginal passivity seems to make a woman more feminine immediately. Nevertheless, even Freud is aware that "the clitoris, with its virile character, continues to function in later female sexual life" (24). The "phallic", clitoral phase always returns, like the repressed.

Even though to construe the clitoris as masculine is a misconception of a patriarchal understanding of sexuality, we can see, as Barbara Creed says, that throughout history this developmental account has underlaid the structure of many literary narratives of a woman's transition into adulthood. Further, for a patriarchal imaginary, should the female character cling to her past and resist being reduced to "the heritage of the Freudian womb," she immediately becomes a source of anxiety, as she is attempting to assume a "masculine position". Hence the traditional image of the tomboy.

> The tomboy's journey is astonishingly similar to that of the clitoris. During the early stage, the tomboy/clitoris behaves like a 'little man' enjoying boy's games, pursuing active sports, refusing to wear dresses or engage in feminine pursuits; on crossing into womanhood the youthful adventurer relinquishes her earlier tomfoolery, gives up boyish adventures, dons feminine clothes, grows her hair long and sets out to capture a man whose job it is to 'tame' her as if she were a wild animal (Creed 95).

In short, it turns out that, as is advanced in the Freudian framework, a woman has three options as she grows up: first, to turn her back altogether on sexuality (repudiate her clitoral past); second, "to cling in obstinate self-assertion to her threatened masculinity" (24), what for Freud leads to homosexuality; and finally, the usual course of development of the straight woman, "a very circuitous path", which ends up in taking the father as love-object, and replacing the clitoris, which was tabooed at the discovery of castration, with the fantasy of having a child (the equivalent phallus).

Psychoanalysis has created such a complex debate that to reduce its views concerning female sexuality to this early seminal text would, of course, amount to a distorted representation of its findings. I dwelt on it nonetheless because from a literary point of view it has played an important role. Although such a narrative has drawn criticism that cannot be brushed upon, one of the most important breaks was made by Jacques Lacan, whose

emphasis on the linguistic constitution of the unconscious opened a path for future feminist work, at the same time that it elicited criticism. In "The Signification of the Phallus," Lacan distances himself from those positions that understand castration as the fear or the trauma of losing an anatomical object, but instead offers a theory of the phallus as a privileged linguistic signifier: "the phallus is not a fantasy… nor is it as such an object… still less is it the organ – penis or clitoris – that it symbolizes" (579). For him Freud was trying to conceptualize a much deeper reality through the concept of the phallus than can be seen at first sight.

Especially in patriarchal societies, the phallus actually is the transcendental signifier to which everything must relate in order to have meaning, and as such its privilege is not ontological but only structural. Besides, given the role of anchoring meaning that it plays, it is responsible for the sense of the stability of reality we experience (as well the sense of wholeness); though in order for meaning to pass as stable the very fact that it is informed by the phallus must be constantly suppressed or "veiled" (a recurring word in Lacan). In his theory, every child can only begin to exist as a desiring subject inside society by achieving the satisfaction of his or hers natural/biological needs through the mediation of *signifying* relations, and hence submitting him/herself to the signifier/phallus. At the same time, this entrance into language, effecting as it does the establishment of subjectivity and the desire that is its propeller creates a baffling problem at the core of every individual: although the signifier purports to answer our needs, because of its emptiness, no object (no signified) can fulfil desire. Were desire to be satisfied, subjectivity would untie itself as a knot. This finally gives us insight to the meaning that castration assumes in Lacan. As McGowan tells us, "the phallus signifies what the subject lost but never actually had. This is why it is a signifier without a signified: its signified – what the subject has sacrificed in order to be a speaking subject – doesn't exist" (7). [6]

Lacan's views about female castration are hard to pin down as they evolved throughout his career. Whereas in "Signification" he speaks of deprivation, "much later in his thought, in *Séminaire XIX:… ou pire*, [he]

[6] Lacan's insight is similar to the one that Derrida had at the same time (and the latter has even argued for his priority over Lacan), namely, that the "transcendental" signifier at the centre of a structure is empty and unharnessed to any signified, even though we have the illusion that access to it would allow us to obtain plenitude of meaning. Derrida makes a case for bringing into "play" this signifier which, in a rather sacred manner, is detached from the structure it organizes. Lacan's position nonetheless is a matter of contention. Whereas he admits that the phallus is a fraud, his attempts to control the meaning of the phallus and the contexts in which it can be used, as is going to be shown through Butler's analysis in the sequence, seems to withhold it from being "profaned."

will change his mind about the deprivation of the female and insist that symbolic castration doesn't in fact apply to the female subject, indicating that 'they are not castratable'" (8). How do we understand this statement? If castration is the process that establishes a lack at the core of the subject so that he can begin to have desire, as women do not identify with the phallus, it follows that they do not have the lack necessary to want. Some would emphasize that as desire after all creates a longing which can never be satisfied, women are actually better off in not being completely subject to it. Nevertheless, this supposed advantage becomes problematic once one realizes that to some extent it naturalizes the patriarchal narrative in which subjectivity is a masculine prerogative (however illusory its autonomy).

To what extent, even though Lacan attempts to dissociate the phallus from the penis, does he nevertheless continue to support patriarchy? Many feminists and queer critics have levelled a critique against the idea that a woman cannot speak of her desire, especially as it is anchored in what comes so close of sounding like a suspect premise, which circulates misconceptions of women as objects of speech but never as subjects of enunciation. Here, for example, we have Hélène Cixous's trenchant comment:

> What psychoanalysis points to as defining woman is that she lacks lack. She lacks lack? Curious to put it in so contradictory, so extremely paradoxical, a manner: she lacks lack. To say she lacks lack is also, after all, to say she doesn't miss lack... since she doesn't miss the lack of lack. [Man will teach her that] without him she'd remain in a state of distressing and distressed undifferentiation, unbordered, unorganized, "unpoliced" by the phallus (1981 46)

This type of feminist critique is especially important because one of its ruling assumptions is that an analysis of gender and female sexuality is inextricably intertwined with socio-economic considerations beyond the individual psyche. For instance, in the classic "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex," Gayle Rubin claims that one of the tasks of feminism is to do with the psychoanalysis of Freud and Lacan and the structuralist anthropology of Lévi-Strauss what Marx had done with the political economy of his day, namely, bring it to a crisis. These disciplines offer a useful constellation of concepts to understand how the oppression of women has happened throughout history. However, they do not go far enough, and thus the task of the feminist gaze becomes precisely to question the auto-naturalizing gestures of the narratives that inform these frameworks; as later Butler will say, it is important to show that the Symbolic is hegemonic rather than totalizing. Therefore, Rubin opts to use the concept "sex/gender system" instead of patriarchy, in order to show that

the specifically Western organization of gender is not universal. For her, "the biological raw materials of human sex and procreation are shaped by human, social intervention", so that gender is in a sense a production like the other artefacts of culture. As a consequence of the division of labour by sex, gender has historically been (re)produced in our society through an obligatory heterosexuality. Yet, for the constant affirmation of this binary, there is a whole series of other phantasmatic possibilities which are constantly repressed.

Although from a queer perspective her framework reproduces the distinction sex/gender, Rubin's analysis nonetheless is extremely important in showing the ways in which the structure of kinship is inculcated into individuals especially in childhood. As she says, "the Oedipus complex is an apparatus for the production of sexual personality… in the most general terms, the Oedipus complex is a machine which fashions the appropriate forms of sexual individuals", and later, "the crisis begins when the child comprehends the system and his or her place in it, the crisis is resolved when the child accepts that place and accedes to it" (189). It follows from this that anyone who does not accept or does not feel comfortable with his or her place in the structure already puts it into a crisis, involuntarily showing its constructedness. In fact, a feminist and queer critique demands precisely not accepting the destiny or the position preordained for one within the structure, and as such means the beginning of unravelling its traditional configuration: "feminism must call for a revolution in kinship" (199).

The most important contribution of Rubin's text regards precisely the first part of the title, her critique of the "traffic in women," which is construed in dialogue with the findings of structural anthropology. In his researches, Lévi-Strauss furthers the well known hypothesis that "the essence of kinship lies in an exchange of women between men" (171). Namely, in societies that predate political structures like the State, those that are organized by kinship relations, the exchange or transaction which is necessary to create and affirm social bonds and relations is precisely that of women, especially through the institution of marriage: "women [are] like words, which [are considered to be] misused when they are not communicated and exchanged" (201), or, as Luce Irigaray later says: "woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity. As such she remains the guardian of material substance, whose price will be established… by 'subjects'" (32). The task that feminist and queer politics pursue, then, is how to raise women to the status of subjects, which is by no means an easy issue. For, if the stability of subjectivity is achieved precisely by the traffic in women, by women reaffirming man's imposture of having the phallus, through accepting the role of uncomplaining objects, once women begin to speak as

subjects what they really effect is rather the unveiling of the phallus as an empty signifier, and thus shows the split at the core of the subject. As Julia Kristeva has said elsewhere, the limitations of Lévi-Strauss' framework can be already glimpsed in the fact that he must resort to so-called primitive societies: his work cannot make up for the dramatic changes that kinship systems have undergone in modern societies.

One of the problems of building a critique of gender oppression on structural anthropology is that it must presuppose to some extent the distinction nature/culture or sex/gender. Then, however laudable the efforts of much feminist literature to criticize patriarchy, they are anchored, to some extent, in a narrative of transition from nature to culture which leaves the *a priori* status of sex intact. As Butler points out in her reading of Rubin, some feminists often resort, as locus for empowerment, to a moment allegedly before the institution of culture in which the variety of possible sexual and gender configurations – a "primary bisexuality or unconstrained polimorphousness" (GT 74) – was not repressed yet. Butler's queer project, situated more on the context of historicism than psychoanalysis, however, changes the focus of the discussion and tries to explore rather the ways in which nature is "discursively produced": "if the very designation of sex is political, then 'sex,' that designation supposed to be most raw, proves to be always already cooked" (77-78), says she alluding to the famous distinction raw (nature)/cooked (culture) made by Lévi-Strauss.

Especially important for my analysis is Butler's deconstruction of the privilege of the phallus as a transcendental signifier. In the chapter "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary" in *Bodies That Matter*, through a brilliant coordination of texts by Freud and Lacan, she shows how, under close scrutiny, the privilege that these authors bestow on the genitals as originary sites of significance is already contested by inconsistencies in their own texts. For example, in Freud's case, he at first puts forward that erotogenicity[7] is capable of being experienced by any organ, only to forge in the sequence a narrative in which non-genital erotic experience is actually a displacement or substitution of the primacy of phallic erotogenicity. By the same token, in "The Mirror Stage" Lacan provides, at first, an account which stresses that the child's experience of totality before the mirror through the idealization of a bodily centre (the

[7] It is through erotogenicity that we have access to our body. In Butler's words: "erotogenicity is produced through the conveying of a bodily activity through an *idea*" (emphasis added, 30). Put simply, in this first "idea" of the contours of our body we come to conscience – it is the inception of meaning and significance. This entails that our perception of our body is in a sense always "an idea," an imaginary over-idealization.

penis) is fictional: "Lacan establishes the morphology of the body as a psychically invested projection, an idealization or 'fiction' of the body as a totality and locus of control" (42). Yet, later, in "Signification of the Phallus," the phallus, whose association with the penis is constantly disavowed (it is "only a signifier"), becomes a *sine qua non*, a precondition for meaning, and hence cannot be said to be imaginary.[8]

The fact that Lacan tries to deny the imaginary character of the phallus is, so Butler argues, the very performative act through which the phallus establishes itself as the structuring principle of signification. As she stresses

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[8] We can better understand the interplay between the "imaginary" and the "symbolic" in Lacan if we consider the questions: how do images become language? In other words, how does our perception, which is structured as an image (hence imaginary), is translated into significance (to symbols, to words)? The imaginary is about epistemology, and the symbolic about signification (*BTM* 46). The point is that we can only have a clear, distinct perception of things – of the contours which make the apprehension of objects possible – due to the power of language to bestow identity on things through the name. In this point Butler agrees with Lacan. She nevertheless takes issue with the idea that the phallus is the element which structures signification, for this means among other things that our knowledge is phallic (an "androcentric epistemological imperialism" (42)), and that the idea that the genitals are the centre of the body, which for her is a *contingent* product of political discourse, assumes the character of *necessity*.

Here we can understand Butler's criticism: the symbolic always already predetermines the imaginary (it creates a fragmented body which it only claims to unify through *the phallus*); it only accepts as real bodies and real desires those which comply with heterosexuality, so that other configurations or morphologies are seen as "merely" fantasy, as imaginary. But if the genitals did not hold a privileged position in language, so Butler argues, a different understanding of the body (a body with other centers) would not be considered a problem; hence the importance of "corrupting" the phallus and citing it in inappropriate contexts.

This is all possible because Butler believes that language is not as stable a system as Lacan would have: it is open to re-signification and change. Moreover, she takes issue with the transcendental dimension that castration and the Oedipus complex assume in psychoanalysis. Butler synthesizes perfectly her position in a passage from *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (Verso: 2000) which she wrote in collaboration with Slavoj Žižek and Ernesto Laclau: "As I hope to make clear, I agree with the notion that every subject emerges on the condition of foreclosure, but do not share the conviction that these foreclosures are prior to the social, or explicable through recourse to anachronistic structuralist accounts of kinship. Whereas I believe that the Lacanian view and my own would agree on the point that such foreclosures can be considered 'internal' to the social as its founding moment of exclusion or preemption, the disagreement would emerge over whether either castration or the incest taboo can or ought to operate as the name that designates these various operations" (140).

For more on the concept of "foreclosure" see footnote 19 in p. 60.

in italics: “the phallus appears as symbolic only to the extent that its construction through the transfigurative and specular mechanisms of the imaginary is denied” (47). The phallus is an idealization of the genitals which denies its status as such. Further, as the argument develops, Butler defends that a lesbian phallus can only be viable if one can prove that the phallus need not be reduced to the penis, but, on the contrary, is capable of being transferred to other parts: “to be a property of all organs is to be a property necessary to no organ, a property defined by its very plasticity, transferability, and expropriability” (32). Of course, she is well aware that, as any phallus, the power and allure of even a lesbian phallus is derived precisely from its keeping veiled (by its mystery), and hence she caveats right in the beginning of the chapter that her quest in a sense is doomed to fail.

As regards the issue of developmentalism, Butler’s deconstructive reading of Lacan is important. For, in a sense, his model rehearses Freud’s narrative of an unsexed subject who is castrated as he or she assumes her gender (in the passage from the imaginary to the symbolic). The difference is that Lacan is aware that the promise of totality and identity of the phallus is doomed to fail from the start. The aspect that Butler “unveils” is that the unsexed body waiting to be gendered has been produced by the law all along. The law is not that which gives a gender to the subject, but that which produces an “ungendered” subject doomed to want to approximate an impossible ideal:

> What constitutes the integral body is not a natural boundary or organic telos, but the law of kinship that works through the name. In this sense, the paternal law produces versions of bodily integrity; the name, which installs gender and kinship, works as a political invested and investing performative (41)

This is in line with what has been discussed about castration as a subjection to the signifier, to language. To be given a name is to begin the process of alienation through which subjectivity is established and, along with that, to receive an illusion of control over a body that is allegedly “in pieces,” surrealistic-like, before the mirror. The point that both Lacan and Butler emphasize is that, once one can never actually have the phallus (in that regard, even men would suffer from penis envy), the image of totality yielded by the mirror, though a necessary fiction that conducts the child to the future, is also something impossible of being achieved. If the phallus cannot be completely possessed then it does not make sense to speak of development because we are in a sense doomed to be a body in pieces

posing as a whole body: the mirror *stage* (note the theatrical connotation) is "less a developmental explanation than a necessary heuristic *fiction*" (47).[9]

How does the threat of castration which, in Butler's terms, is the means through which the law produces sexed subjects operate specifically in the case of women? If, as I have already discussed, the phallus is the *signifier* of castration, it follows that as women are marked by the law to signify precisely the lack of the imaginary phallus (although this is not a lack in the Real), it can be said, in a rather counter-intuitive way, that they *are* the phallus (they *signify* castration). Therefore, in a phallocentric society, women's bodies are signs that must constantly remind men of what they might become if they do not identify with the Symbolic position they were assigned at birth: they must act as if they *had* the phallus. Women, on the other hand, must act as if they do not have the phallus, and any slippage in their performance of femininity, any attempt to blur the division between being and having, is threatened with the spectre of abject identifications: "we might expect that this refusal or resistance would be figured as a punishable phallicism. This figure of excessive phallicism... is devouring and destructive, the negative fate of the phallus when attached to the feminine position" (66). Whereas men are threatened with the figure of the feminized gay, heterosexual women are threatened with the figure of the phallicized lesbian, an important aspect for discussions of lesbianism in *Wuthering Heights*.

Here, I have tried to sketch the changes that discourses on the "development" of feminine sexuality have undergone. That the inflexible narrativization of a sexual progress had become suspect already by the time of, say, Klein, shows that we have advanced a lot in regard to the

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[9] Butler's point is that the *perspective* through which the totality of the body is perceived is not an ahistorical given, which the symbolic register, in her reading, borders on being. The very choice of an image from the wall paintings of ancient Thera (in Greece) as the cover of *Bodies That Matter* seems to have been made in order to underline how societies have represented the body through different points of view during history. The modern West's fascination with depth makes us more prone to accept hyper-realism almost as natural, even though in fact the image we mentally form of the body is *the projection of a surface* (a Freudian insight that Butler accepts.) Indeed, in this regard, Butler's emphasizes on the gap between the body and its "surrealistic" mental projection has a precedent in Freud's discussion of the "cortical homunculus." I quote from a classical passage: "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface. If we wish to find an anatomical analogy for it we can best identify it with the 'cortical homunculus' of the anatomists, which stands on its head in the cortex, sticks up its heels, faces backwards and, as we know, has its speech-area on the left-hand side" (*The Ego and the Id* 20).

enfranchisement of women; even though, to the extent that phallocentrism is still a reality, bodies continue to be shaped according to its terms. In the course of my exposition, I could not avoid touching on concepts and theorizations that at first seem tangential but are essential to understand critical debates currently; for instance, I could not dwell on Butler's deconstruction of Lacan without touching on his redefinition of castration and the concept of phallus. In fact, as the reader must have noticed, both feminism and queer theory draws its impetus from being criticisms of larger narratives (psychoanalysis or structural anthropology) rather than from a full-fledged idiom of their own. If, on the one hand, it is difficult sometimes to establish to what extent the narrative under criticism is being endorsed or relinquished, on the other, I think that it is better to unveil auto-naturalizing acts as that performed by the phallus than to erect a new one.

2.3. "Half Savage, and Hardy, and Free"

In the course of this analysis, I intend to look at the ways in which the patriarchal narrative of sexual development, with its implied account of gender acquisition, is disrupted in *Wuthering Heights*. In order to accomplish that I focus on Catherine Earnshaw's resistance to acquiesce to the destiny that is preordained to her. The issue of female enfranchisement in nineteenth century, however, raises the question of colonial difference, and this leads me to explore the power dynamics that are involved in Catherine's relationship with Heathcliff. Indeed, as I hope to demonstrate through a close reading of the metaphors to which the characters constantly resort, the colonial narrative of progress and the account of sexual development do not exist separately in the text. As in Grosfoguel's formulations on the power matrix of the modern/colonial system, these two narratives maintain their coherence precisely because they interpenetrate one another. In the end, I turn back to Catherine's troubling of her symbolic position by an analysis of the scene of her delirium.

Ellen Dean's account of Heathcliff's life, the main core of the novel, begins by describing the unsettling effect that the introduction of the orphan to the household of Wuthering Heights has over the power dynamics among the Earnshaw siblings. As she remarks: "from the very beginning he bred bad feelings in the house" (34).[10] Hindley, the legitimate son, experiences a momentary "usurpation" of his father's affections and a feeling of uncertainty concerning his legal rights. Catherine, on the other hand, instantly becomes "thick" with the gipsy boy; and as their tie develops, the boy starts to "do her bidding in anything" (38). In a sense, as Gilbert and Gubar remark, this strong bond with Heathcliff seems to make up for the

[10] All references to *Wuthering Heights* are to the Bantam Dell Edition (New York: Random House, Inc., 2003).

power which she, as a female in a patriarchal society, desired (*Madwoman in the Attic* 265).

This is further stressed on the first image that the reader is given of her. Before setting off into a journey to Liverpool, old Earnshaw asks each child to choose a gift: "Hindley named a fiddle, and then he asked Miss Cathy; she was hardly six years old, but she could ride any horse in the stable, and she chose a whip" (32). Critics have called attention to the symbolism with which these two remarks are charged. With economical precision the narrative conveys Catherine Earnshaw's main character and provocatively inverts roles. The male heir, Hindley, asks for a fiddle, a wish that, in the rural world of Yorkshire, links him to more feminine "artistic and cultural pursuits". The image of Catherine that we have, on the other hand, is that of a girl more adapted to dynamic and lively, out-doors activities. The surprising preference for a whip marks her from the first as someone more prone to master, besides prefiguring the relation of domination that she is to have with Heathcliff.

Thus, the starting point of the narrative is precisely that event that for Quijano and Mignolo inaugurates Modernity, the rise of coloniality, which in the text is translated in the advent of the "alien" Heathcliff within the social dynamics of the microcosm of the Heights. Interestingly, the novel does not describe the moments prior to this event precisely because, as one could conjecture, it is the creation of the colonial subject which sets in motion the narrative of Modernity. In this sense, however involuntarily, the text evinces to be attuned to, and reflect perfectly, the rise of the colonial system and how it was felt disturbingly at "home."

Catherine's disturbance of gender norms, as we saw, is also foregrounded. The narrative brings us back to her childhood to show that passive features believed to be natural were not applicable to her: "her spirits were always at high-water mark, her tongue always going–singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody who would not do the same" (38) and "she liked exceedingly to act the little mistress, using her hands freely, and commanding her companions" (38). This lively characterization is revealing. If for Freud and Lacan what defines a woman is that "she cannot speak of her pleasure" or her desires, the simple fact that the young Catherine has her tongue always going is a challenge in itself. For as Cixous constantly reiterates, the most dangerous act a woman can carry out is simply to speak, to resist being reduced to silence: "Not to mention 'speaking': it's exactly this that she's forever deprived of" (1981 45).

The very remoteness with which Ellen speaks of this period, which does not seem so much to have happened a quarter of century prior to the immediate events but "once upon a time" has made critics like Gilbert and Gubar interpret the novel as a myth of female origins. From this perspective, what is being described is not only the life of an eighteenth-

century girl, but the type of experience that every girl living under a patriarchal system must go through. This "once upon a time" attempts to reconstruct how female existence might have been before patriarchy had set in (to use an Irigarayan image, before her lips had been closed); the type of female experience of plenitude that in the history of our civilization would have been repressed. This is akin to Luce Irigaray's formulation that "the beginnings of the sexual life of a girl child are so 'obscure,' so 'faded with time', that one would have to dig down very deep indeed to discover beneath the traces of this civilization, of this history, the vestiges… that might give some clue to woman's sexuality" (25). Of course, from a perspective that attempts to undo this nature/culture divide such a narrative of origins becomes problematic, if it means that a woman who does not want to comply with normative femininity is seen as regressing to the past or her childhood. Nonetheless, I would hold that the memory of her "tomboy" childhood is what constantly reminds Catherine of the contingency of the cultural construct of femininity. She is the tomboy that "fails" to be tamed into normative heterosexuality and as such she queers the narrative in which she is enmeshed. Rubin says that the oedipal crisis is resolved when the subject accepts and accedes to the structural role to which she is destined, and as we are going to see, resolving this crisis is precisely what Catherine withstands.

However, before advancing to the analysis of how such a traditional narrative of female sexual development is queered in the text; there is an intersectional issue in Catherine's emancipation that must be addressed. In the context of post-colonialism, one of the questions that arise, which is dealt with by Spivak in "Three Women's Texts," is at what costs this nineteenth-century female emancipation was achieved. As feminist critics have often pointed out, Catherine's "plenitude" is a direct consequence of her bond with her step-brother. The fact that he replaces the whip she had asked her father has been interpreted metaphorically as his assuming the role of the instrument of power she longed for. As the reader is told, "she was too fond of Heathcliff… the greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him" (38) and he was her "all in all" (118). Indeed, as we learn in the course of the narrative, the traumatic event to which the text keeps returning is precisely their separation. Here is Gilbert and Gubar's interpretation:

> Catherine gets her whip. She gets it figuratively – in the form of a gypsy brat – rather than literally, but nevertheless "it" (both whip and brat) functions just as she must unconsciously have hoped it would, smashing her rival-brother's fiddle and making a desirable third among the children in the family so as to insulate her from the pressure of her brother's domination… Having

> received her deeply desired whip, Catherine now achieves... an extraordinary fullness of being. (*Madwoman* 264)

This instrumental role that Heathcliff plays in Catherine's emancipation is extremely telling and to some extent vouches perfectly Spivak's "axiomatics of imperialism" hypothesis, especially when it illustrates that the feminine assumption of the position of sovereignty is anchored on the objectification of the colonized other. As already remarked in the section "Orientalism and Coloniality," Heathcliff, who is conjectured to be "an American or Spanish castaway" (46) and even oriental by Ellen: "who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen?" (52), represents the otherness and difference which constitutes English identity,[11] a sort of inscribed externality. He must literally be rendered an "it" so that Catherine can become an "I" and achieve her brother's privilege of assuming the position of subject.

Although this specific move of mid-nineteenth-century feminine emancipation becomes almost inescapable in the context of the Empire in which the text is inserted, I would nonetheless also emphasize the complexity of this issue in the novel, exploring to what extent the character resists precisely such occlusion of the racialized other. After all, Catherine's illness and decline later in the novel arises precisely from her discontent with a social structure in which she can only ascend socially at the cost of Heathcliff's exclusion. Could we say then that the female protagonist is caught up in a deadlock caused by the fact that in order to be a "subject" she must repress her "dark continent"? This is what I intend to answer in what follows.

For, in a sense, as soon as old Earnshaw dies and Hindley becomes the patriarchal figure, both Heathcliff and Catherine return to their subaltern position. Ellen tells us, for example, that "[Hindley] drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instruction of the curate, and insisted that he should work out of doors instead" (42). Catherine still enjoys some power, and she tries to counter Heathcliff's degradation by employing the means she has in order to aid him: "he bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what she learned, and worked or played with him in the fields" (42). Different from Jane Eyre, who participates in the animalization of Bertha Mason, what Catherine attempts, in this instance at any rate, is precisely not to occlude Heathcliff, by trying to preserve his humanity.

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[11]For an in-depth analysis of race in *Wuthering Heights* see, for example, Althubaiti, Turki S. "Race Discourse in *Wuthering Heights*" in *European Scientific Journal* 11. 8 (Spring: 2015), 201-225.

At least in the period prior to her five weeks at the Grange, she unites with him in his "savage" insurrection against the values of "civilization." Although she teaches him what she learns, this is different from the type of colonial condescension in which the British purported to give a soul to the racialized. Both Catherine and Heathcliff understand the pernicious effect of some books and how they reproduce an oppressive ideology. Early in the novel, for example, she narrates in her diary fragment how she revolted against the religious readings Joseph assigned her: "I could not bear the employment. I took my dingy volume by the scroop, and hurled it into the dog-kennel, vowing I hated a good book" (18). Thus, at the same time that a momentary privileged position within the household was possible at the cost of Heathcliff as her "whip," as the family dynamics change in favour of a more traditionally patriarchal configuration Catherine starts to side with the underprivileged.

Hitherto she had lived in a state of female freedom; now, she finds herself entangled in a society in which she must see herself as lacking lack and take a stance in relation to the phallus (as she cannot ignore that this society interprets her in relation to this signifier). In light of this we can understand Catherine's attachment to her early life at the Heights. The house meant to her a place where she did not have to take account of what a patriarchal society says she does not have. She innocently had not yet discovered or rather had not acutely experienced the effects of the gender system that hegemonically governed her society. As she shows later in the narrative, one of her struggles is that heaven (the quintessential society organized by the father/the phallus) means nothing to her: "If I were in heaven I would be extremely miserable" (75). Her great identity crisis stems from the fact that as she becomes an adolescent, she discovers that, in the "adult" world, women function as objects of exchange among families or clans, as, for instance, her brother "[Hindley] wished earnestly to see her bring honour to the family by an alliance with the Lintons" (83). For, as discussed in the exposition of Rubin's "The Traffic in Women," social relations in more traditional societies depend on women exchange:

> Marriages are [the] most basic form of gift exchange, in which it is women who are the most precious gift. [Lévi-Strauss] argues that the incest taboo should best be understood as a mechanism to insure that such exchanges take place between families and between groups (173).

It is unfortunate that we know so little about Emily Brontë. As a late-Romantic it is minimally expected of her to have an interest in the "primitive." It is nonetheless noteworthy how, long before structural anthropology, her text perfectly illustrates that incest (Catherine and

Heathcliff live as brother and sister) is what threatens to unravel kinship exchanges and relations. It is in Catherine's ambivalence in regard to her future status as Edgar's wife and the constant resurgence of her semi-incestuous attachment to her step-brother that we can see the disturbance of kinship.

An essential event in the novel, which signals her transition to adolescence, is Catherine's discovery of the Grange. After a failed attempt to run away, Heathcliff and she are caught by the dog of the Lintons. The former has her feet lamed (a plain symbol of castration), but when the Lintons recognize that she is their neighbour's daughter, they attempt to redress the mistake by nursing her; the latter is dismissed right away, as he is deemed "quite unfit for a decent house" (46). After this momentous scene, Catherine starts a process of being "civilized":

> Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks... The mistress visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took headily; so that, instead of a *wild*, hatless little *savage*... there lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person (47, emphases added).

This *rite de passage* is extremely meaningful in that in order to conform to received notions of femininity, to start to "become a woman," as in Beauvoir's famous statement, the "savage" girl must engage in a sort of mimicry. We must bear in mind nonetheless that mimicry, as Homi Bhabha tells us, is an ambivalent practice. The colonized's miming is never completely obedient, as, similar to every imitation, it has an ironical potential. At the same time that it is an instance of recognition of colonial power, it also is a means to disturb that very authority via a corrupting repetition: "the *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (original emphases, 20).

The double articulation characteristic of mimicry therefore throws a new light over the *splitting* of Catherine's identity which I have been emphasizing all along this chapter. For at the same time that Catherine is "converted" into a lady, the very "doubleness" of mimicry makes her difference, her unruly past at the Heights, resurface again and again in spite of herself: "to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (86).

Thus Emily Brontë reminds us that every girl must be *tamed* (or colonized) into femininity, into silence, and that this is a process which is never completely achieved, because her "wild" girlhood which has been repressed, returns. And, indeed, the great heresy that Brontë presents to the

Victorian audience is that her protagonist prefers her "savage" past, finding in it a means of resistance. Later, when she completely repents her marriage to Linton, she passionately says in a delirium:

> Oh, I'm burning! I wish I were out of doors! I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free… and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed? Why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I'm sure I should be myself, were I once again among the heather on those hills (119)

This leads us again to the question of Brontë's evocation of colonial difference as an escape from the rigors of the Victorian society. As could already be glimpsed, the language that is employed is so centered on the dichotomy between civilization and paganism that this pattern of imagery deserves further inquiry. Why does the text insist so much in describing Catherine and Heathcliff as savage, wild, and heathen? I would submit, first, as already suggested, that the interest that *Wuthering Heights* takes in the other reflects the central position (however disavowed) that the colonies came to assume in the British imaginary: "the Orient had become essential to virtually every attempt to articulate a sense of selfhood or subjectivity" (Makdisi 44). Following the Romantics with whom she identified, Emily Brontë saw in the image of the colonized other, construed as "undisciplined, irrational, emotional and unproductive" (Makdisi 45), an alternative to her austere Puritan education and the disillusioned rationality of industrialized England. To Catherine and Heathcliff, thus, to be savage and wild becomes a form of defiance: "they both promised to grow up as rude as savages... The curate might set as many chapters [presumably of the Bible] for Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forget everything the moment they were together" (42).

Brontë's fascination with "savages" can be seen especially in her poetry. In the poem titled "the Death of A.G.A.", a long ballad about the death of Gondal's queen, we are told in the beginning:

> They were clothed in savage attire:
> Their locks were dark and long
> And at each belt a weapon dire
> Like bandit-knife was hung" (104).

This description gives us a picture of how the people who inhabited Gondal (which, let be remembered, was an island in the Pacific) might have looked. This island, which was geographically close to Australia (a former British colony where social outcasts were sent to), might be said to have been transubstantiated into the house of Wuthering Heights when Brontë

decided to write a novel to an English public. To suggest that the Grange stands for England/civilization and the Heights for the colonies is not so unwarranted. Isabella Linton herself, for example, says that it is as if instead of being separated by four miles, an ocean stands between the two houses: "there might as well be the Atlantic to part us, instead of those four miles" (131).

In light of this, we can surmise that the encounter of the Grange and the Heights dramatizes, in a microcosm, the meeting of the metropolis and the colony – a point which accords with Armstrong's hypothesis of "internal colonialism." For the "civilized" people of the Grange, a world in which gender roles are less constraining, like the Heights, is seen as "pagan." And to "civilize" the Heights and its inhabitants entails to impose upon them a specific gender system, given that from the perspective of modernity, "the behaviours of the colonized and their personalities is judged as bestial and thus non-gendered" (Lugones 743). We see this, for example, when the Lintons are shocked at the young Catherine's behaviour: "What a culpable carelessness in her brother … that he lets her grow in absolute heathenism" (46). In the same way that the colonized must be persuaded that they lack civilization, so the demonically and chaotically feminine world of the Heights must believe that it lacks the "structuring" and organizing presence of a strong father figure (the law/the phallus). So much so that Old Mr. Linton rebukes Hindley, teaching him how to command a house as a *pater familias*: "Mr. Linton paid us a visit … and read the young master such a lecture on the road he guided his family, that he was stirred to look about him" (47).

Thus, modernity is inextricably linked with the imposition of specific colonial and gender forms. And if the distinguishing feature of modernity is the establishment of a "time-lag" (Bhabha's concept) in which the other is built as belated, we can understand why traces of this temporality leave a mark on the narrative of sexual development as well. This would explain why Freud must resort to the metaphor of "a dark continent" to speak of the past of female sexuality. Especially in the nineteenth century, colonial societies were believed to embody the, as it were, "infancy" of humankind. When Kant spoke of the "emancipation" brought by the lights of reason he was building it in contrast with the "minority" in which non-Europeans lived. The colony was the past of Modern Europe, and so the past of the Modern European could be seen as reminiscence of the "primitive" which is stored in everyone's unconscious. In light of this, it becomes hard to disentangle the individual development from the larger picture.

If the formation of the individual identity (Catherine) actually is a stage for the clash of social forces, it would be better to reconfigure our understanding of metaphor like the "dark continent" or "taming." A metaphor is constituted by two parts, the tenor and the vehicle. The first has

to do with the "meaning," and the second with the image through which the meaning is conveyed. Hence, when one says that Catherine is tamed into femininity it seems that one is borrowing images from another context (the colonial encounter) to explain the process of gender development. Yet, as gender and coloniality are so intertwined (mutually constitutive), it would be better not to establish a hierarchy between tenor ad vehicle, because when the novel stages the repression of the "dark continent" of female sexuality, it also is describing the temporality established by coloniality (calling our attention to the "real" dark continent).

Now, this brings us back to the tensions that increase as Catherine finds herself divided by the claims of the two aspects of her personality. The split in her identity is prompted because, in spite of the deep attachment to Heathcliff that she develops in her childhood, the social stratum to which she is destined cannot accept to treat him in terms of equality. Namely, identification with the norms of her gender and the social legitimacy she derives thereof demands that she gives up the rapport with the racialized other. Ellen tells us that "at fifteen she was the queen of the country-side; she had no peer; and she did turn out a haughty, headstrong creature" (60). At this point, in the narrator's words, Catherine starts to assume a sort of "double character," and she tries to conciliate her friendship with the Lintons with her former attachment to Heathcliff. The ambivalence can be sensed from this passage:

> She was not artful, never played the coquette, and had evidently an objection to her two friends meeting at all; for when Heathcliff expressed contempt of Linton in his presence, she could not half coincide, as she did in his absence; and when Linton evinced disgust and antipathy to Heathcliff, she dared not treat his sentiments with indifference (62).

As it follows, Catherine accepts Edgar's marriage proposal, although certain of "being wrong." Ellen often remarks that Catherine becomes increasingly ambitious at this point of the narrative, and the reasons she (Cathy) adduces to justify her acceptance confirm it: "I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood" (73). The narrator calls Catherine's attention to the hitherto unrealized fact that Heathcliff is doomed to become completely "deserted in the world" as soon as she marries. Catherine, in turn, bursts angrily:

> He quite deserted! We separate! Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff. Oh, that's not what I intend- that's not what I mean! I shouldn't be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded… Nelly, I see now, you think me a selfish wretch; but did it never strike

> you that if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars? Whereas if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise (76).

Ellen speedily retorts making plain to Catherine what her plan of helping Heathcliff amounts to in reality: "with your husband's money, Miss Catherine? You'll find him not so pliable" (76). Is Catherine only disguising a morally condemnable choice (marrying for status) as an act of benevolence (helping Heathcliff)? Such a position would fail to account for her love towards him. Thus, even though she complies with the logic of imperialism to some extent, she seems nonetheless to be genuinely naïve and believe that she can have social status without abandoning her bond with Heathcliff. She poses a question that even today is baffling: why must emancipation happen at the cost of the disenfranchisement of an/Other? Why can one not imagine a picture in which both women and the racialized other are emancipated? This is what Catherine attempts to do through the questionable means of marriage and her attempt, however well-meant, fails because, as has been seen in the discussion of Spivak, this move of occlusion is essential to the logic through which colonialism works.

Heathcliff overhears Catherine's confession until she mentions her acceptance of Linton's proposal and then leaves the room. His disappearance for three years throws Catherine into a melancholic state that is seasoned with periods of moderate happiness, but which constantly resurfaces. The incapacity to reconcile Linton with Heathcliff leads to her breakdown. As she nears the "biological destiny" which patriarchy reserves to her, giving birth, she repents her choices and resort to "desperate remedies" like trying to starve to death. The little girl who had her tongue always going, by the end of her life is reduced to silence, and dreams of the freedom of her childhood. Indeed, in her delirious mad-woman scene she imagines that she is a girl again:

> I pondered, and worried myself to discover what it could be, and, most strangely, the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank! I did not recollect that they had been at all. I was a child; my father was just buried, and my misery arose from the separation that Hindley had ordered between me and Heathcliff (118).

That she keeps coming back to her childhood signals her resistance to the narrative of gender development. In a sense, she is the "tomboy" who resists following the usual course and acceding to the expected conclusion of the narrative, and as such she poses a threat to the kinship relations that are based on women accepting their "destiny." Although the temporal gap that divide us from the nineteenth century might not let us see its subversive

aspect, one must recall that for the Victorian sensibility the rebel who prefers death than complying with an oppressive society chooses a more dignified (because tragic) path than simply the comic[12] re-integration to the community. Creed formulates insightfully the threat that the tomboy poses:

> The tomboy who refuses to travel Freud's path, who clings to her active, virile pleasures, who rejects the man and keeps her *horse* is stigmatized as the lesbian. She is a threatening figure on two counts. First, her image undermines patriarchal gender boundaries that separate the sexes. Second, she pushes to its extreme the definition of the active heterosexual woman – she represents the other side of the heterosexual woman, *her lost phallic past*, the autonomy she surrenders in order to enter the heritage of the Freudian womb (95, emphases added).

As analysed above, one of the first contacts of the reader with Catherine is as she asks her father a whip, for although "she was hardly six years old, she could ride any horse in the stable" (32). From the first she is described as headstrong and domineering, features that immediately make her more stereotypically masculine, and hence prone to be stigmatized as a lesbian. From a classical psychoanalytic point of view her regression to childhood would be strong evidence for a homosexual reading of Catherine, as neurosis is ultimately reduced to repressed "same-sex" desire for Freud. However, to construe homosexuality as regression reflects more heterosexual anxieties and a patriarchal discourse than the reality, besides reiterating a damaging clinical discourse. As I have discussed in my Review of Literature, critics like Jean Kennard have fallen into the trap of reading Catherine as a lesbian based on her strong affirmation of identity with Heathcliff, and even used that as a springboard to conjecture on the author's own identity. To criticize such a reading, nonetheless, is not to deny that this is by no means an easy question. Butler, for instance, in her more "recent" work, such as the *Psychic Life of Power* [1997], would agree that female melancholy is often a sign of the impossibility to mourn (i.e. to make conscious) an "impossible" homosexual attachment (such as the mother), and the fact that the bond between Heathcliff and Catherine has "pre-symbolic" undertones could corroborate to that. As she affirms in her many works, the true lesbian is actually the straight woman, as she goes so far as incorporating as her own the personality of the woman she could not love. At any rate, such a reading would have to remain a speculation. We must nonetheless take to account that as a threat to the stability of the gender system, the resurgence of Catherine's "incestuous" desires bespeaks

[12] I use the word here in its literary (Aristotelian) sense, in which a comedy means simply a play with a happy ending.

at least a queering of heterosexuality. For, as Butler says, the taboo against incest is always already one against homosexuality.

Catherine's descent into a state of stupor, and her delirious episode, makes her figure among the group of nineteenth-century madwomen in literature. Although this conflation between women and madness might often be detrimental, many feminists have appropriated this representation that sticks out in the history of women and tried to re-signify it. Emily Brontë was attuned to Shakespeare's insight in *Lear*: "O, matter and impertinency mixed! Reason in madness!", so that Catherine gives us precious insights into the issue of identity in her delirium:

> "Don't you see that face?" she enquired, gazing earnestly at the mirror.
>
> And say what I could, I was incapable of making her comprehend it to be her own; so I rose and covered it with a shawl.
>
> "It's behind there still!" she pursued, anxiously. "And it stirred. Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I'm afraid of being alone" (117).

Catherine's incapacity to distinguish her own image, and even the fact that she imagines to be haunted by her own self, *reflects* primarily that she does not want to recognize her present image as "the wife of a stranger." During this scene, she alternates between imagining that she is a twelve year old girl and breaking into the present in the Grange. However, at a deeper level, one is tempted to say, this passage lends itself as a perfect example to understand the specular dynamics that create the ego and our sense of identity. As we saw with Butler's reading of Lacan, it is precisely through the process of mirroring that we arrive at the perception of ourselves as whole (or, instead, have the illusion of a centre of command). However, this very sense of identity is only possible through alienation or misrecognition: one has first to identify with an image which is *completely outside* of him or herself in order to arrive at his own sense of interiority. In the image of the Other in the mirror, idealized in its totality and control, the body in parts envisions the future it is going to try to pursue. Yet, as such an image is always that of alterity, the subject is always in a sense split from his or herself: "from the moment the image of unity is posited in opposition to the experience of fragmentation, the subject is established as a rival to itself... We are at once dependent on the other as the guarantor of our own existence and a bitter rival to that same other" (Homer 26). The very identity conflicts that every subject is doomed to experience in his life springs from the fact that to have an identity means to be one's own bitterest enemy. Moreover, in terms of colonial discourse, this "failure" to find her

image is very important, for "mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind the mask" (Bhabha 88).

The aspect that I want to read, nonetheless, is the fact that Catherine does not identify or recognize her image during the delirium, which – and this is essential – is the very ideal of femininity to which she was subjected, and against which she struggles. Further, as we saw, the operation through which the illusion of wholeness is achieved is made possible through a signifier: the phallus. In other words, could we say that in failing to see her image (and not only that, the image of the adult female position that she must assume in the symbolic), Catherine is resisting the phallus and hence castration? (The latter meaning accepting the position one is assigned.) This would agree with Žižek's idea that "the subject's questioning of his symbolic *title* is what hysteria is about" (emphasis added, 2002 35), and "hysteria emerges when a subject starts to question or to feel discomfort in his or her symbolic identity" (35). I emphasized the word "title" because that is what Catherine's crisis, in a sense, amount to: the fact that she has become "Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger: an exile, an outcast… from what had been my world" (118). Moreover, early in the book the reader had become first acquainted with her, meaningfully, through her identity crisis. Before Lockwood falls asleep into his unfortunate nightmares, he tells the reader:

> The ledge… was covered with writing scratched on the paint. This writing, however, was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small – *Catherine Earnshaw*, here and there varied to *Catherine Heathcliff*, and then again to *Catherine Linton* (16).

Catherine's obsessive scribbling of her possible names on the windowsill is a token of the radical identity crisis that a woman experiences as she trades names, or, more appropriately, as she receives the name of the father, *le nom du pére* – that signifier (the phallus) which holds an illusory position of privilege in a patriarchal society, and in relation to which she has to construe her image. The fact that she cannot identify her image signals her resistance to the unifying role that the phallus as a signifier exercises. Nevertheless, here these terms start to fall apart, for why does someone who resists the phallus is construed as a "body in pieces"? As Butler shows, the idea that our identity becomes negatively fragmented once we step out of the two monolithic symbolic positions is itself an effect of the phallus: the law produces a fragmented body which, then, it only purports to unify. If we can say anything is that Catherine was in need of reading some work on the "female imaginary," such as one finds in Irigaray.

Therefore, if on the one hand her questioning of her symbolic title and her identity crisis is an important instance of resistance, on the other, her decline in many ways restages the doom of those who do not follow the "normal path." In a sense, we cannot ignore that her self-inflicted death – after the delirium, she becomes increasingly more depressed, so that in her last days "her eyes no longer gave the impression of looking at the objects around her" (147) – seems to give to her the dignity of the person who prefers death to living in an oppressive reality. At the same time, she is far from altruistic, and tells us that her self-starvation is meant to hurt her husband: "If I were only sure it would kill him, I'd kill myself directly" (114).

In spite of all the problems that the complexity of her character poses for interpretation, not to take to account that all this is mediated by Ellen's biased account, I would point out that, even yet, in that brief moment in which she does not identify her image in the mirror, the text, as it were, gives us insight of the truth we would see once we reveal the fallacy of the phallus: the illusoriness of the whole, that we can achieve the symbolic ideal which from the beginning is impossible. Butler says that the body before the mirror is a delirious effect by which we are compelled to live. If that is true, we might as well say that "sane" people are actually mad for not realizing their delirium and Catherine in her delirium is actually being more lucid. In Emily Dickinson's words:

"Much madness is divinest sense."

3. "I'VE NEARLY ATTAINED *MY* HEAVEN": THE PROBLEM OF QUEER FUTURE IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

In this chapter, I continue to analyse how the discourse of developmentalism appears in *Wuthering Heights*, bringing into account different aspects. Up until now I have discussed how narratives of linear progress inform the traditional understanding of sexuality and race, seeking to show that both of them overlap. In the first chapter I focused specifically on a psychoanalytic narrative of genital development; now I turn to a debate among queer theorists which regards the possibility of imagining a queer future. As is going to be seen, their arguments are unfoldings of the same effort to think ways to counter a "straight" temporality.[13] I start by presenting Lee Edelman's argument; his analyses of how those who resist the allure of "reproductive futurism" are traditionally depicted in fiction and cinema prove essential to my analysis of *Wuthering Heights*. In the sequence I present José E. Muñoz's attempt to instil utopian hope into queer theory. Both, as I intend to show, resort to different types of "surplus" (*jouissance*) produced by straight temporality itself, whether it is the uncanny insistence of the death drive or the unfulfilled promise of the work of art. Once the debate is set, I pass to the analysis of Emily Brontë's novel.

[13] I take the term "straight time" or temporality from Muñoz, who opposes it to a queer temporality: "Straight time is a self-naturalizing temporality. Straight time's 'presentness' needs to be phenomenologically questioned, and this is the fundamental value of a queer utopian hermeneutics" (25) and "my notion of time or critique of a certain modality of time is interested in the way in which a queer utopian hermeneutic wishes to interrupt the linear temporal ordering of past, present, and future" (194).

3.1. A Theory of the Villain: Edelman's Anti-relational Approach

In what follows I present an overview of the main arguments of *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Lee Edelman's book opens with the provocative thesis that what he terms the "fascism of the baby face" is the hidden kernel of every political initiative. Having in mind the usual accusations of the conservative political right that feminists and the LGBT community "fight against life" in their pro-abortion politics, Edelman sets out to analyse our obsession with the need to prolong ourselves in time (itself a defence against the fear of death), and, as a counterpoint, espouses a paradoxical, "impossible" politics of hopelessness. If the queer is socially figured as the destructive irruption of a death drive which jettisons society's fantasies, he argues that, instead of trying to make part of the collective dream, the queer should accede to its figuration as the threat to figuration as such. In other words, within this specific definition of queer that he defends, the integration of queerness within a political sphere is an impossibility, as political discourse is always already conditioned by the logic of "reproductive futurism": "for politics, however radical the means by which [it] attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains at its core, conservative insofar as it works to affirm a structure ... which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child" (2-3). The fact that homosexual couples might raise their own children might be an advance of liberal society; however, it is not from such a normativization that queerness draws its strength.

Edelman's argument is usually placed in the context of an "anti-relational turn" within queer theory, one of the main features of which is, according to José E. Muñoz, an attempt to distance "queerness from what some theorists seem to think of as the contamination of race, gender, or other particularities that taint the purity of sexuality as a single trope of difference" (*Utopia* 11). And, indeed, in Edelman's case this can be glimpsed in the fact that his argument relies on psychoanalysis, a discourse in which sexual difference plays a central role. As he says: "sexuality refuses demystification as the Symbolic refuses the queer; for sexuality and the Symbolic become what they are in virtue of these refusals" (28).

In order to understand his argument, we have first to understand the critique that he makes of the nature of desire and the tantalizing logic that informs the terms by which its satisfaction is promised. Political action (whose organization is meant to meet our desires) offers us a way of experiencing social reality through the projection of a fantasy (an imaginary semblance of meaning, a totalization, as well as a protection against the meaninglessness of "the real"); and as the etymology of the word "project" suggests, this scheme for the realization of something that as yet exists only

ideally is always a throwing forward, a thrust into the future.[14] This entails, among other things, that politics is, in spite of itself, always concerned with the making of a better world for future children, and anyone who does not submit to this imperative becomes the enemy of such a society.

The problem is, as Edelman spells out, that, from the beginning, desire is not meant to be satisfied. How can we begin to understand that? For Lacan, social relations are structured *like* a language (that is, like a semiotic system of differential relations), and in the same way that meaning (presence) is always deferred in the signifying chain, as an effect of the interplay between signifiers, so the "promissory identity" which we are given by the symbolic order is never fulfilled. The realization of this imaginary formation is bound to fail. And society benefits from this failure, for in failing to get satisfaction in one social fantasy, the subject of desire will pass over from one to another unstoppably. The great fear of the "subject of desire" is that his longing be fulfilled. Under the guise of a promised fantasy, the castration by which we enter the symbolic order is actually interested in reproducing what sets itself in motion: "desire is desire for no object but only, instead, for its prolongation" (86). It follows from this that in our society one has constantly to sacrifice the present for the future, as the enactment of this sacrifice is the very precondition for the reproduction of the social order.[15]

According to post-structuralist theories of language, the meaning a word achieves is provisional: "meaning is scattered or dispersed along the whole chain of signifiers: it cannot be easily nailed down, it is never fully present in any one sign alone, but is rather a kind of constant flickering of presence and absence together" (Eagleton 111).[16] The signifier itself is a meaningless materiality. Social fantasies attempt to screen off the gap between signifier and signified (the concept) through a narrativization set in motion by desire; they conceive, in dialectical fashion, of a movement in

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[14] Similarly, Lacan in his work is interested in what he calls *eksistence*, as he presupposes that self-consciousness and history are only possible when we move outside ourselves ("exist" etymologically means "to stand outside").

[15] In contrast to Edelman's view, Butler, Žižek and Laclau in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (Verso: 2000) contend that this failure of identity to ever be completely realized is a condition for the open-ended nature of democratic politics, preventing totalitarianism: "It does not follow that the failure of identity to achieve complete determination undermines the social movements at issue; on the contrary, that incompleteness is essential to the project of hegemony itself" (2).

[16] For an accessible introduction see "Post-structuralism" in Eagleton, T. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. (Blackwell: 1996) pp. 110-130.

direction of perfect identification between one and the other. Edelman calls it a "poor man's teleology" in which "meaning succeeds in revealing itself – as itself – through time" (Edelman 4), recalling Hegel. However, as "the signifier preserves at heart of the signifying order the empty and arbitrary letter" (10), the signifier becomes the very stumbling block that undoes this movement. Queer politics, then, should be a politics of the "letter," always reminding society of the letter's "cadaverous materiality" beyond reference and meaning.[17]

As a counterpart to the subject of desire, Edelman then speaks of a subject of the drive (10).[18] He begins by defining the drive as stemming from a material leftover that constantly resurfaces in spite of society's best attempt to be blind to it: "as the constancy of a pressure both alien and internal to the logic of the Symbolic, as the inarticulable surplus that dismantles the subject from within, the death drive names what the queer... is called forth to *figure*" (9, emphasis added). To put in simple terms, the drive gives access to an enjoyment which is given up for the future. Edelman also underscores that the death drive arises out of the symbolic order, as the existence of such a force can only be experienced through its *effects* in language and society. As he cautions several times, he is not of course making a case for leaving the symbolic order, but is advancing the idea that queers should accept their figuration as the threat to the social fabric. As the trope for the disfiguration of figures, queerness becomes a radical form of irony.

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[17] The letter is that which *goes through the fantasy* (an important Lacanian concept), and hence spoils the imaginary rapport in which signifier is believed to reflect the signified transparently. Edelman's point is that, as what prevents us from confusing the fantasy with "the real," queerness is most strong where it effects a denaturalization of identity.

[18] There has been considerable controversy concerning the translation of the German word *Trieb*. Jon Mills, for example, says that generations of readers in the English-speaking world have been misled by the translation of Trieb by "instinct" or "pulsion" with its deterministic connotations. Nowadays the term "drive" is usually preferred. According to Sean Homer, "the drive is a concept that exists on the border between the somatic (bodily) and the mental. It consists of a quantity of energy and its psychical representative. Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire define the Freudian drive as 'a constant force of a biological nature, emanating from organic sources, that always has as its aim its own satisfaction through the elimination of the state of tension which operates at the source of the drive itself'" (75). In other words, the drive is a tendency to eliminate external tensions (unpleasure) and return to a state of calm and equilibrium (pleasure). For example, when we are hungry we feel uncomfortable and this makes us act in order to satisfy our hunger and return to the former inertia.

Therefore, whereas the subject of desire is constructed around a constitutive lack, the subject of the drive has access to the surplus of the unrepresentable matter (the "real") which cannot be completely staved off after that very materiality is employed as a symbol, or after we have attempted to screen off its "inert presence" by trying to bestow meaning on it. We can better understand it if, for example, we think that the subject of desire is interested in the signified, in that to which a word refers; while the subject of the drive is interested in the materiality of the word (for him the signifier also signifies or *matters*), like a poet that is more attuned to the sonority of a word than the stability of its meaning.

This emphasis on the material dimension of the letter can already be identified in Lacan's late work, with which Edelman is more engaged. For, as Josiane Paccaud-Huguet says, we have to distinguish between two phases in the French psychoanalyst's work: the first years of his "structuralism" and emphasis on the symbolic, and his turning to poetry, *jouissance,* and the real during the 1960s, a phase that is still being discovered. Contrary to common-sense assumptions, in his later years, during the context of post-structuralism, Lacan realized that the old symbolic pacts of patriarchal society were dwindling:

> The second Lacan will therefore concentrate on the symptom, our most intimate possession and prop against the Other when the Name of the Father has lost its cutting edge, an analytical insight which anticipated the next variation of the structure: the days of the Symbolic Other's inexistence and of the correlative return of imperative figures of enjoyment/*jouissance* (287).

Lacan seems to have been attuned to the spatialization of culture in late capitalism, and the disappearance of the necessarily temporal process (history) by which meaning appears or reveals itself; and felt the necessity to explore such a new social configuration. Thus, whereas his first works emphasized that the entrance into the symbolic (the world of language) entailed the loss of an imaginary pleasure and fullness of being experience in childhood; in his later years he focuses on how language itself can become a source of pleasure. Lacan's "turn back to the real", as Paccaud-Huguet tells us, is an attempt to offer the letter (language) as "a possible mode of social linking" in our allegedly post-patriarchal era.

As a negation of meaning, however, this "enjoyment" associated with *jouissance* differs from what we usually link with the word: it points towards "a movement beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning, and law" (Edelman 25). Thus, although the word may be translated as enjoyment, it suggests a much more complex concept, which

entails living where the defences of the self collapse. In order to bring into light that which society constantly tries to conceal from view, the subject must confront the "real" which cannot be represented, and cannot be experienced except through a terror akin to that of experiencing the loss of our fantasies.

Edelman expands further his theorization on the interrelation between homosexuality and the death drive through the concept of "*sinthom*osexuality." However, in order to understand it we must first be able to grasp the philosophical underpinnings of the notion of "symptom," which plays a central role in psychoanalysis. Žižek says, for example, that the different answers that Lacan gave to the enigma of the symptom are indexes of the stages through which his work went. At first, the symptom is understood as a meaningless trace asking to be linguistically formulated. The patient suffers precisely because his experience has not yet been symbolically integrated: "the symptom arises where the world failed, where the circuit of the symbolic communication failed" (*Sublime Object* 79). That is, our symptoms point out to that which is most claustrophobically individual in us. However, as Žižek tells us, many people continue to evince "pathological" behaviour even after their symptoms have been explained, precisely because they draw some pleasure from this formation. Thus, this *jouissance* which the individual will not give up on any account becomes the central issue of Lacan's late teachings:

> The symptom is not only a ciphered message; it is at the same time a way for the subject to organize his enjoyment - that is why, even after the completed interpretation he is not prepared to renounce his symptom. That is why 'he loves his symptom more than himself.' (*Sublime Object* 80)

Thus, what explains this strong attachment to the symptom is that it not only is a source of pleasure, but also the signifying formation around our very capacity to enjoy finds its coherence: "it operates, for Lacan, as the knot that holds the subject together, that ties or binds the subject to its constitutive libidinal career… [it is] the constitutive fixation of the subject's access to *jouissance*" (Edelman 35-36). The symptom is that without which the subject would disappear, it is our only substance, our substrate. As Žižek says, "we can even say that 'symptom' is Lacan's final answer to the eternal philosophical question 'Why is there something instead of nothing?' – This 'something' which 'is' instead of nothing is indeed the symptom" (77). As already mentioned, the problem of the symptom is that it continues to exist after it has been explained, leading Lacan to posit that there must be something which eludes representation or *figuration* in it. In other words, the symptom does not disappear because it connects us with the traumatic

experience of the "real" (that dimension of the subject which is by definition unrepresentable but at the same time a source of pleasure). This final attempt to answer the riddle of the symptom is summed up in the old French spelling "*sinthome*."

"The *sinthome*," Edelman tells us, "speaks to the singularity of the subject's existence, to the particular way each subject manages to knot together the orders of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real" (35). By choosing an archaic spelling, however, Lacan stresses the materiality of the letter; for, as we saw, the materiality of the signifier reminds us of that which impedes meaning. Therefore, at the same time that this letter gives the subject access to the world of language and social reality, inscribing its subjectivity, it nonetheless "admits no translation of its singularity" and "refuses the logic that... determines the exchange of signifiers" (36), that is, the movement of the signifying chain.[19]

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[19] The reader might well be asking how this concept, which thus defined seems extremely abstract, operates in real life. How does the *sinthome*, this signifying formation, determine the pleasure which the subject will have throughout his or her life? In order to answer it, we must understand the essential concept of *foreclosure*: "When Lacan introduced the notion of foreclosure in the 1950s, it designated a specific phenomenon of the exclusion of a certain key-signifier... from the symbolic order, triggering the psychotic process... however, in the last years of his teaching Lacan gave universal range to this function... whenever we have a symbolic structure it is structured around a certain void, it implies the foreclosure of a certain key-signifier" (77). Let's try to figure it out through some examples. It is a well known fact that knowledge destroys pleasure, as when people complain, for example, that showing the ideological underpinnings of a text (e.g. a movie) often destroys the pleasure it caused. That is, our pleasure is conditioned in a certain measure by that which *we do not know*. This element which "we do not know" is analogous to the *sinthome*, and the aim of Lacanian analysis is to make the subject identify with it, to make him conscious of the cause of his pleasure.

Another example: Žižek says that "woman is the symptom of man" and vice-versa by way of explaining Lacan's infamous statement that "woman does not exist." In other words, in the psychic structure of a "man," woman is the signifier which is foreclosed – the structural void around which all his "libidinal career" and identity are organized. This concept of "foreclose" also plays an important role in Butler's beautiful essay "Melancholy Gender/ Refused Identifications" in *The Psychic Life of Power*, in which she tries to show a new dimension of this idea that women are the symptom of men. As she argues, *a (heterosexual) man desires what he cannot be*, which has two implications: (1) that he will choose to love women with whom he would never identify, but also (2) that *what he does not know* is that he loves her so much because he cannot accept his ever desiring to be her. As Butler shows, this void around which his identity and sexuality is organized might well be *a refused identification, foreclosed from the first, which is introjected as impossible, as nothing, as inexistent.* (Hence, the insistence of queer theory (both in Butler and in Edelman) of doing what seems impossible.) This foreclosure is not a conscious or

This concept, therefore, exists on the border between the symbolic order and the real: it is a signifier permeated with the terrifying enjoyment that one experiences in trying to reach the impossible "real." Žižek, for example, defines this untranslatable nexus of subjectivity as follows: "a certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of jouis-sense, enjoyment in sense" (*Sublime Object* 81). Through the *sinthome* we have access to a "pleasure" different from that which we derive from fantasies: "the *sinthome* connects us to something Real beyond the 'discourse' of the symptom, connects us to the unsymbolizable Thing over which we constantly stumble, and in turn, to the death drive" (Edelman 38).

Therefore, whereas what Edelman calls the "discourse of the symptom" focuses on attempts to cure the subject, the *sinthome* leads us to the contrary direction, to enjoying our symptom. I have previously described the symptom as that which is most *claustro*phobically individual in us, and, indeed, the term "*sinthome*" was chosen precisely because it evokes a constellation of words such as "sin" and "Saint Thomé," which suggest the individual ecstasies of saints and monks. Edelman, in his turn, uses the concept to explore the pleasure that *hom*osexuals take in their *sin*: "a 'sin'... that can make the *sinthom*osexual into something of a s[a]in[t]" (39).

This excurse through the notion of the symptom finally leads us to the concept of *sinthom*osexuality. In the same manner that Edelman affirms that his political project is impossible because it is hopeless, he admits from the first that this is a concept without a future: "if this word without a future seeks a hearing here, it's not to play for time or... to keep at bay its all too certain doom" (33). The author uses this concept especially to signify all those social fantasies associated with homosexuality in which the latter usually appears either as a threat to our hope in the final realization of meaning, or as narcissistic self-possession (which he criticizes, as we are going to see in a moment) in which the interest of the whole society (its *reproduction*) is turn down for individual enjoyment.[20] The *jouissance* of the *sinthom*osexual is what threatens the narrative of desire which informs "reproductive futurism":

> I am calling *sinthom*osexuality, then, the site where the fantasy of futurism confronts the insistence of a *jouissance* that rends it

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voluntary process by any means; she is not saying that back in his past he wanted to be a woman and then repressed it, but that, for him, being a woman is preempted as a possibility from the first (it is something in-built in society.)

[20] If I understand correctly, we could say that the homosexual is the *trauma* of (straight) sexuality: that which is constructed as unrepresentable, as the *impossible* which, nonetheless, returns to torment the coherence of heterosexuality.

> precisely by *rendering* it in relation to that drive. *Sinthom*osexuality also speaks to the sin that continues to attach itself to "homosexuality" and materializes the threat to the subject's faith that its proper home is in meaning, a threat made Real by the homosexual's link to less reassuring "home" (38-39).

*Sinthom*osexuality, as a concept, is meant to remind us of the unrepresentable "real" which constitutes sexuality as such; an opaque kernel in the fantasy of reproductive futurism which resists symbolization and, therefore, points out towards the impossibility of the desire that moves that fantasy ever being satisfied (because of the emptiness and the materiality of the signifier).

The *sinthome* points out towards an ever-present access to *jouissance* which society fears, as it would entail the undoing of the rhetoric of sacrifice for the future. Society tries to screen out the trauma of the aimlessness of the drive by endowing it with an altruistic motive, yet the inherent partial nature of the sexual act returns through the *sinthom*osexual, which then starts to figure the domain where meaning comes undone. In a society so invested in the metaphor of reproduction, the queer, as he/she does not make sex with a symbolic motive ("to maintain the future"), is, in spite of how he or she is prone to be complicitous with such institutions as the family, the very negation of this sublime (or sublimated) motive attributed to sex, and as such, necessarily a threat to the ideology of family: "that reality's abortion" (7).

The drive then is the blind spot in an image, in a fantasy, that threatens to unravel it from within. It is perhaps analogous to a projector that burns holes in a film. But what is the drive exactly? A detour through Freud might help us better understand especially the concept of the death drive. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud's speculations lead him to conclude that the human mind is moved by something older than the wish for erotic gratification and self-preservation. He realizes that humans, in spite of the pain it might bring them, like to repeat traumatic events, and behind this "compulsion to repeat" is the wish to return to an inorganic state. To update it to the Lacanian vocabulary Edelman uses, such a trauma that we are constantly repeating and so fascinates us, and yet we cannot completely assimilate, is the horror of the Real, of an inert, putrid materiality which has stopped to make sense. The "death drive" is precisely this repetition which does not embody any altruistic, ulterior motive, but is the return of a wish to destroy meaning, to reduce things to the inorganic. The death drive is a repetition whose goal is to bring excitation to a state of extinction, like sex, straight or gay; although our society tries to shield this mindless, meaningless repetition under the guise of the child, projecting the horror it

feels towards such a truth of the nature of the sexual act into homosexuals. (No wonder sex and death often appear together in literature – death is the supreme pleasure: pleasure beyond itself.[21])

The logic of desire as it is (i.e. founded on the postponement of the fulfilment of desire, the logic of futurity) must shield itself against the drive which is constantly trying to unravel it – and this drive which is repressed returns as the *sinthome*. Therefore, contrary to common-sense, the queer is not a self-possessed narcissistic. For Edelman, the true narcissist is the average altruistic person. In the anxious way with which the subject of desire defends the fantasy of the totalization of his identity he resembles true narcissism; as he or she must suppress that his or her fantasy is precisely that, a fantasy. The *sinthom*osexual, on the other hand, experiences *jouissance* precisely in the dissolution of the subject of desire (structured around the principle of futurity, the fulfilment of identity - narcissism), even though that might lead to the meaninglessness of the Real, to death.

I have presented here the points which I consider indispensable to do justice to the complexity of Edelman's argument, and before assessing his ideas critically I pass to an overview to Muñoz's countering of his pessimism through an investment on the critical potentialities of hope.

3.2. Hope for the Damned: Muñoz's Utopia

José Esteban Muñoz begins *Cruising Utopia* with a daring claim which synthesizes his argument: "queerness is not yet here" (1). If the queer does not exist (yet), in the sense that society is blind to his or her existence, nothing more appropriate that his promised home be nowhere, οὐ τόπος.

Written as a response to what Muñoz identifies as the general pragmatic character of contemporary queer politics, the book purports to be a call to imagine a collective queer future. In face of the "straight temporality" to

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[21] In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom says that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is Freud's manifesto and, indeed, this text is often considered to be a turning point in his career. As the title anticipates, his theory implies that the development of the human ego (and society) is predicated on the tolerance of a measure of unpleasure, as an organism in a state of complete pleasure (stasis) does not have consciousness of itself. At the same time, he recognizes that the *end* of life is death, and thus under our every social act is hidden a repressed longing for pleasure (for no excitation, death). Of course, Freud's point is that we must strive to live even if this contradicts our most essential longing. Before returning to the inanimate, we must, as he famously put it, go through many circuitous paths: "it must be an old state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads... 'The aim of all life is death'" (*Beyond the PP* 32).

which we are subjected, and in which there scarcely seems to be a space outside the totalizing claims of the present, Muñoz argues that queerness can only be experienced as an intimation of what is to come. Indeed, for him the queer *is* the future, and as such it does not make sense for us to attempt to congeal him/her into ontological certitude. As a potentiality latent in the present and the past, queerness manifests itself only as a "warm illumination" which is best accessed through the aesthetic.

His polemic is specially directed to the "anti-relation turn" in queer theory, a recent anti-social and pessimistic trend within the field exemplified especially by Bersani and Edelman. Although the author admits the "seductive sway of the anti-relational" (11), *Cruising Utopia* can be read as an attempt to find a middle ground in which both the individual and the community are taken into account, so that, in contrast to the apparent withdrawal from politics of recent criticism, one is able to re-imagine and safeguard the importance of a sort of communal coordinate action. In place of the "purity of sexuality as a single trope of difference" and "romances of the negative", it is of extreme importance, so the book argues, that we take into account other identity marks, as race, and resituate queer theory within a complex web of social relations. Muñoz tries to offer a solution to the impasse between singularity and community by subscribing to a definition of queerness as "being singular plural": "thus, if one attempts to render the ontological signature of queerness through Nancy's critical apparatus, it needs to be grasped as both anti-relational and relational" (11).

Underlying Muñoz's project is the theorization of German philosopher Ernst Bloch on the significance of hope. Such a choice is deeply charged with meaning, as Bloch himself attempted to insert a degree of metaphysical hope into the historical materialism of his time. He "believed that Marxism was insufficiently utopian and that it was not bold enough in anticipating a world that was inherently possible, although not immediately so" (Kołakowski 423).[22] Muñoz, similarly, takes the "bold" step of theorizing hope in a field increasingly dominated by the pragmatic worship of facts.

At the centre of Bloch's thought is the idea that in being future-oriented Marxism is a "concrete utopia." Although we can identify a utopian tendency throughout the history of mankind, manifested in several forms (the first that comes to mind is that of fairy-tales), these were always predicated on the idea that this "essence" had already been realized in a pristine past and our work was to restore this perfection. Marxism, in contrast, "recognizes the past only in so far as it is still alive and is therefore part of the future" (Kołakowski 427), as Muñoz says: "a backward glance

[22] See the chapter on Ernst Bloch in Kołakowski, Leszek. *Main Currents of Marxism Volume 3: The Breakdown*. (Oxford: 1985) pp. 421–449.

that enacts a future vision" (4). Different from a nostalgic contemplation, the type of utopia that Bloch proposes is above all an action; it reflects a perfect state that humanity can bring about through its own agency. In light of this, it can be said that the philosopher is intent in assuring a metaphysical dimension to hope, analysing it as a pivotal category of being.

In order to secure a place for the open-ended character of the future, Bloch creates the concept of "not-yet-conscious." This concept can be understood to be especially a critique of the corresponding psychoanalytic notion of unconscious, founded as it is in the premise that everything is completely sealed off in the past (all that is meaningful already happened).[23] So, although Muñoz never signals it explicitly, in his use of the "not-yet-conscious" we can say that he is providing an alternative to the psychoanalytic framework that informs Edelman's book. In this line of thought, utopia is already present within our experience and, more importantly, what is most promising about things is not what they actually are but, paradoxically, what they are not yet. Bloch is not, thus, interested in the empirical world but in the latent potentiality secured by hope, which, as Muñoz will posit, is both an affect and a methodology, which means that we make our way into a better world through hope.

Utopia is already contained in objects and in the present as "a certain mode of non-being that is eminent, a thing that is present but not" (9). The prefiguration of a different reality which looms in the horizon, "not-yet-conscious," can only be experienced on the here and now as an aesthetic illumination. Indeed, the "aura"[24] which surrounds the object of art can be said to be precisely this very anticipation of the future structure which is latent in the present, and which demands the eye of the critic to be actualized. In other words, objects of art amaze and mystify us, in such a

[23] This was a common prejudice that Marxists had against psychoanalysis in the beginning of the twentieth century, which stems from the different readings that Freud's texts make possible. Bloom, for example, says in "Freud and Beyond," in *Ruin the Sacred Truths*, that for Freud "there is sense in everything, because everything already is in the past" (152). In contrast, Lacan emphasizes in *Seminar I* that what is important for Freud is not the real event in the past, but how the patient is able to reconstruct it in the present; for him psychoanalysis is a re-writing of history. According to Kołakowski, Ernst Bloch certainly agreed with the Marxists of his time in believing that psychoanalysis tries to make life in the present more endurable because the "bourgeoisie" (those who can pay for it) is a class with *no future*.

[24] Muñoz does not use the term "aura," but this is a well-known term from Walter Benjamin through which I think we may understand more palpably the potentiality of the work of art.

way that they acquire a "sacred" character and its correlative in our secularized society, because in experiencing them we momentarily are able to transcend time, to meet a "queer temporality." The aura *is* the manifestation of the promise being fulfilled and hence a glimpse of the future.

Muñoz links this anticipatory illumination of art with a "surplus of affect and meaning within the aesthetic" (3) which leads him to describe the experience of this access to another temporality as *jouissance*. Time is momentarily transcended through an ecstatic state made possible by an excess unperceived in some objects. Yet, different from the type of *jouissance* defended by Edelman, which is a complete undoing of any meaning, for Muñoz this "mode of exhilaration" is an anticipation of the future, the advent of a new social configuration, not its complete eschatological purgation. In light of this, then, a great deal of *Cruising Utopia* analyzes artistic production on the vicinity of the Stonewall rebellions (the pop art of Andy Warhol, the poetry of the so-called New York school), as the author tries to bring into the fore glimpses of the emergent gay community deposited in these cultural artefacts. In his look into the past, he hopes to unearth possible configurations for a future community.

Although Muñoz agrees, to some extent, with the critique of reproductive futurism, he nonetheless "refuses to give up on concepts such as politics, hope, and a future that is not kid stuff" (92). It might be true that, especially in the "straight temporality" in which we are immersed, the future often becomes phantasmatic through the endless deferral of the fulfilment of desire. However, the author shows how some queer performative acts disrupt this "stultifying heterosexual present" (49). These queers who attempt to step out of the dominant logic are examples of a latent future contained in the present. Therefore, even though society attempts to naturalize straight temporality, the excess which is built into its structure – "something that is extra to the everyday transaction of heteronormative capitalism" (23) – prefigures the disruption of the here and now. Muñoz urges us to imagine a different space, a "there and then."

Muñoz finishes his argument asking us to have "ecstasy" with him. He makes a case for a collective transcendence of straight time, to which he opposes the solitary *jouissance* of Christian mysticism, of the *sinthom*osexual: "that means going beyond the singular shattering that a version of *jouissance* suggests or the transports of Christian rapture" (186). Essential to conceptualize such a temporality is Heidegger's philosophy of time. As Muñoz says:

> By the time we get to phenomenology... we encounter a version of being outside oneself in time... Knowing ecstasy is having a

> sense of timeliness' motion, comprehending a temporal unity which includes the past (have-been), the future (the not-yet), and the present (the making-present) This temporally calibrated idea of ecstasy contains the potential to help us encounter a queer temporality, a thing that is not the linearity that many of us have been calling straight time (186).

To sum up, we can say that Muñoz employs theoretical contributions from a plethora of different authors, especially those associated with Marxism, but not limited to that (we have just seen that he is influenced by Heidegger), in order to conceptualize a specific queer type of temporality and hope. As he himself states in the beginning, he is not using Bloch as orthodoxy, once his aim is to make an opening within queer theory. This is important because, for instance, a brief look at Bloch shows that his concept of hope is messianic in nature. For Kołakowski, his vision of the end of things amounts to a "Hegelian consummation of history" (428) in which absolute perfection is achieved through the elimination of all that is negative. Muñoz, nevertheless, acknowledges that "utopia is destined to fail" (173) and therefore does not seem to completely endorse the philosopher in this point.

The interrelation between queerness and negativity is indeed another issue that the book shows to be central for queer theory. Even though Muñoz demonstrates little patience with "romances of the negative", he nevertheless affirms that he "does not want to dismiss the negative *tout court*", but is interested in it insofar as it becomes a "resource for a certain mode of queer utopianism" (12-13). In other words, he is interested in negation insofar as it is one of the moments in the dialectical operation of determined negation (when the negative, i.e. destruction, yields something positive or constructive.) The question that arises, however, is whether queerness does not lose its subversive character when it is turned into something positive.

As might have become clear, both Edelman and Muñoz are struggling with the same problem and there certainly are a lot of intersections between their arguments. Unfortunately, a more precise assessment of their polemic would demand a harmonization of their different theoretical backgrounds, as often one employs a concept which seems to mean something quite different to the other. For instance, while for Edelman heterosexual desire dwells, as it were, solely in the future, the queer representing a renunciation of postponement for a fulfilment in the present; for Muñoz what actually does not exist yet *is the queer*, heterosexual desire being the province of the present. Perhaps the best answer to this dilemma might be that in their definition of queerness as an access to the surplus of *jouissance*, both

theories see the queer experience as a rupture of an imaginary social temporality. For Muñoz, however, this is an eruption which signals a new configuration which was already latent in that society's structure. As an illumination, as something which society still does not understand and is *not yet* capable of symbolizing or translating, queerness is a symptom of sorts. Yet given that, as Slavoj Žižek tells us, the symptom is an index of what is going to be integrated within society, it actually indicates us the way to the future. For the utopian theorist, queerness is something liable of being socially integrated. Edelman, in turn, elevates the queer to the status of the untranslatable, the *sinthome*, and thus his theory purchases not translating queer difference at the high price of anti-relationality.

Instead of choosing either of these theories and treating them as mutually exclusive, we would perhaps be better off in approaching them as different trends within queer theory.[25] For Edelman, the social burden of representing the threat to identity, and thus to the coherence of the social fabric, falls onto queers/*sinthom*osexuals. He is not so much making a claim about the "truth" of homosexuality as dealing instead with its figuration. He is not stating that homosexuality *is* the death drive, but that, whatever we do, given the structure of our society, queers will end up being figured as making up a culture of death. It is in the finality with which he asserts this representational burden that one might diverge from him.

His argument becomes more problematic, however, when we consider that his strident pragmatism covers only the experience of a privileged social stratum. As Muñoz keenly criticizes:

> He rightly predicts that some identitarian critics ... would dismiss his polemic by saying it is determined by his middle-class white gay male positionality. This attempt to inoculate himself from those who engage his polemics does not do the job... white gay male crypto-identity politics (the restaging of whiteness as universal norm via the imaginary negation of all other identities that position themselves as not white) is beside the point, the point indeed is political (95)

Now, I am particularly suspicious of over-idealizing any identity, so that the positive aspect of his argument for me is precisely his emphasis on the impossibility of ever achieving the object of our fantasy. My interest in psychoanalysis makes me keener in exploring, how we are *determined* by that which we exclude in order to give coherence to our identity, by the

[25] We can get the gist of both arguments through the type of works of art that they analyse. Edelman focuses on narratives with solitary cruel villains (Scrooge, Leonard), whereas Muñoz makes a kaleidoscopic voyage through performances on queer bars/spaces.

moments when we doubt and confront our symptom – the workings of the unconscious. Muñoz nevertheless has a point. Edelman's critique of every narrativization as such makes it difficult to distinguish him from the master, in Hegel's master-slave dialectic, who does not change (i.e. makes any *progress*) and lives a life of idle enjoyment because he has completely transcended determined being. He has become *absolute* negativity[26] – which is a way of rephrasing that he "restages whiteness as universal norm." To use an old-fashioned term, Edelman's queer is dangerously close of being a *bourgeois* queer (his surplus-enjoyment being a consequence of the surplus-value that labour creates – if we accept this premise from classical economics that labour creates value –, which is exploited by the capitalist.) The advantage of Muñoz's critique of his pragmatism, then, is that it reminds us that a great many gays are poor. [27]

This, of course, is not to demonize pleasure, the affirmation of which in some contexts, although not all, can assume truly subversive dimensions.

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[26] Absolute means "unconditional, unfettered, set free" in Latin. For Hegel, History ends with the achievement of a universal, absolute, free self-consciousness which is not bound or *slaved* to any determined being.

[27] It is extremely meaningful that the first character that Edelman analyzes is the greed miser of *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge. Here again, nonetheless, we must not take him at face value. As he does throughout his book, he is trying to appropriate a demeaning stereotype attached to the queer; for as already quoted, "*sinthom*osexuality speaks to the sin that continues to attach itself to homosexuality" (38). In this specific case Edelman is aiming at the supposition (formulated by Freud) that men who are obsessed with money are fixated in the anal phase, i.e. have a homosexual tendency (for the compliments that, as babies, we receive in expelling the feces is our most primitive form of *transaction*.) The whole set of questions that Edelman's book creates boils down to the following: *whether affirming a negative representation of queers is justified or not*.

I particularly think that nowadays, in our post-modern culture, where increasingly everyone can be the hero (i.e. be portrayed positively), the truly disturbing thing to do might be to accept the role of the villain. We cannot be blind to the fact that the cultural industry, for its own profit, exploits and manipulates people's desire by offering new imaginary identifications. In this regard, I think that Edelman's idea of queerness as that which the cultural industry would not dare to portray positively because it would destroy its very coherence, the queer as the limit of representation, is subversive indeed.

At the same time, I am aware that we cannot homogenize the variety of social contexts. In some privileged contexts, the consciousness of the importance of different representations might have become doxa to the point of saturation; but in others, where structural homophobia has never even been questioned, a negative portrayal might only recirculate prejudices, besides being detrimental to people who do not have access to a better social image of who they are.

Indeed, Edelman's text perhaps reveals other meanings when we take to account that his point is not so much that homosexuals are decadent idlers who live for pleasure while others work their way into a better future, but rather that they suffer from anti-Semitism. The discourse of anti-Semitism consists in saying that there is an/other, our common enemy, who *steals our pleasure*, and this is precisely how homosexuals are often portrayed. In this light, Edelman's argument is a provocative appropriation of a stereotype.

By way of conclusion, then, we can say with Muñoz that white reproductive futurism is only one type of futurity. Racialized children, for example often do not grow up to be adults, and we should be able to conceive a future for them: "imagining a queer subject who is abstracted from the sensuous *intersectionalities* that mark our experience is an ineffectual way out. Such an escape via singularity is a ticket whose price most cannot afford" (my emphasis, 96).

3.3. Heathcliff's "moral teething"

In this analysis, I intend to explore reproductive futurism and its critique as reflected on the discourse of compassion, once the failure to comply with the appeal of the child is often translated, in fiction, as mercilessness and cruelty. The compulsion to take reproduction for granted is so pervasive and naturalized, that those who disrupt the fantasy associated with it are depicted as unnatural and inhuman: it is impossible that people might not want to have children! Speaking of Leonard in Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, Edelman says: "Leonard brings to a head, as it were, Hitchcock's concern throughout the film with the characteristically 'human' traits that conduce to sociality, traits to which, as *sinthom*osexual, Leonard stands opposed: compassion, identification, love of one's neighbour as oneself" (70). In the same way that society seems to concentrate its meaning and propagation in the image of the child, the social "hangs on compassion's logic" (68). Whoever does not experience the allure of the child and the family is seen as merciless and deprived of empathy; although, in fact, this discourse of love and compassion actually covers the violence that is done in its behalf – compassion hides "duty's iron-fist."

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is a fruitful text to analyse the complexities of such a figuration of the queer. Indeed, as I intend to show, at the same time that the novel accedes to the representation of Heathcliff as uncompassionate, it avoids naturalizing this trait by narrating how such a cruelty is the underside of a hypocritical interpretation of the Christian command to love one's neighbour. In that sense, like the Edelmanian *sinthom*osexual who radicalizes this command, the uncanny effect of Brontë's novel is also a consequence of fathoming the depths of the discourse of compassion.

Right in the beginning, for instance, we come across this theme in Lockwood's dreams. In one of his nightmares in the haunted chamber at the Heights, he dreams of attending an insupportably long sermon at a chapel, until he eventually revolts and accuses the priest of committing the crime which no Christian should pardon. The text plays with the disastrous consequences of reading literally the command to pardon "not seven but seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22), which metaphorically means that one should forgive unconditionally. This dream, which precedes the main bulk of the narrative, prepares the reader to one of the novel's main ethical concerns: when the discourse of love and compassion turns into its obverse. The fact that Lockwood, in his dream, thinks that he can resort to violence after he has waited patiently for seventy times seven makes the scene end in chaotic violence: "presently the whole chapel resounded with rappings and counter-rappings: every man's hand was against his neighbour" (21).

This is important because, as seen in chapter 1, as children, Catherine and Heathcliff are victims of institutional religion. Representatives of countryside evangelism like Joseph feel justified in punishing their "pagan" behaviour in the name of love. Indeed, what precipitates Catherine and Heathcliff's plan of running away, leading to the former's fateful period at the Grange, is the unendurable character that the demands of religion assume to them. Catherine contrasts how her life was before her father's death, and how it is now: "on Sunday evenings we were permitted to play, if we did not make much noise; now a mere titter is sufficient to send us into corners!" (18); the young girl remembers affectionately that, formerly, their life was more undisciplined. Now, they have to attend three-hour long homilies on Sundays.

We can say that the novel contrasts the different meanings that religion (and consequently, we could say, the discourse of compassion) achieves in the hands of Old Earnshaw and in the hands of Hindley and Joseph. As long as the family patriarch lived, Heathcliff was the favourite and was treated equally with the other children. However, when Hindley returns from college at the occasion of his father's death, he finds himself free to unleash all the old hatred for his step-brother:

> He drove him [Heathcliff] from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instruction of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead; compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm. He bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Catherine taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields. (42)

Ellen's narrative focuses, then, on Heathcliff's degradation. Treated inferiorly both socially and racially, he quits attempting to integrate the

society that surrounds him and caring about his self-image, finding instead a perverse pleasure in becoming a threat to the others, which is aggravated by an anti-social tendency that is part of his character since his childhood: "He acquired a slouching gait, and ignoble look; his naturally reserved disposition was exaggerated into an almost idiotic excess of unsociable moroseness, and he took a grim pleasure, apparently, in exciting the aversion rather than the esteem of his few acquaintance" (63).

When Catherine returns from the five weeks at the Grange, the text emphasizes the social gap that has divided them by contrasting the neatness of their presentation. While Catherine has learnt to dress as a genteel lady, Heathcliff is described in terms that stress his unkempt and slovenly appearance. As Ellen says, "nobody but I even did him the kindness to call him a dirty boy, and not to mention his clothes, which had seen three months' service in mire in dust, and his thick uncombed hair, the surface of his face and hands was dismally beclouded" (48). After Catherine greets her brother and sister-in-law, she enters the house and searches for her former friend. When they meet, she touches him carefully; for fear that he might stain her clothes: "she gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own, and also at her dress" (49).

The boy's anti-social disposition had only increased during Catherine's absence, and, as we saw, he started to find pleasure in causing aversion. Once he realizes that Hindley has created an occasion to make him feel inferior before Catherine and her genteel friends, he accedes to his role as a threat to the healthiness of the social body and responds: "I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty" (49). The more Heathcliff is excluded from society, or rather the more he is *excreted* from society, the more he is seen as a dangerous site of infection and pollution. Lacan speaks of the "rock of the real" in his writings, that inorganic materiality which the symbolic and the imaginary shield us from, and it is precisely this rock that Heath-CLIFF starts to figure (or rather, he starts to figure the disfiguration of social fantasies).

Nevertheless, his exclusion is not final. He oscillates between trying to make part of the social and succumbing to his anti-sociality, what gives his role in the novel a complexity that enriches the analysis. For one thing, his situation is not so hopeless at first especially because Catherine attempts to maintain their equality, although even this fails with time: "he struggled long to keep up equality with Catherine in her studies, and yielded with poignant though silent regret" (63). This tension builds up to a crisis that bursts open in the Christmas party at the Heights.

Christmas, as Edelman tells us, is the quintessential festivity for the celebration of the Child as trope for our trust in the future. As an annual ritual, it re-stages the myth of the re-born sun (son)/year which conquers the death associated with winter. Especially in our society, the renewal linked

with this date is translated in terms of the ability to feel compassion. Several tales, which go back to Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* narrate again and again the story of a cold-hearted person who poses a threat to the future, metonymically contained in the Child, and must eventually be converted (or cured) into compassion – must reintegrate the society which, in their steadfast dismissal of the Child, the Scrooges of literature and life threaten to destroy.

Yet Heathcliff was not at first quite so irremediably cold-hearted. At Ellen Dean's attempts to make him take part in the celebrations, he says: "Nelly, make me decent, I'm going to be good" (51). Ellen helps him in his bath and tries to raise his self-esteem: "and now that we've done washing, and combing, and sulking – tell me whether you don't think yourself rather handsome?" (52). She, of course, shows a true spirit of solidarity, acting in behalf of those who are excluded: "there would be more sense in endeavouring to repair some of [Heathcliff's] wrongs then shedding tears over them" (50). However, there is always the chance of such compassion turning into its contrary. When Hindley sees that Heathcliff is clean and in good spirits, the former has an attack of anger:

> I urged my companion to hasten now and show his amiable humour, and he willingly obeyed; but ill-luck would have it that, as he opened the door leading from the kitchen on one side, Hindley opened it on the other. They met and the master, irritated at seeing him clean and cheerful.... shoved him back with a sudden thrust, and angrily bade Joseph 'keep the fellow out of the room – send him into the garret till dinner is over. He'll be cramming his fingers in the tarts and stealing the fruit.' (53)

Ellen tries to speak in behalf of Heathcliff, but after the latter reacts violently to an insulting remark by Edgar Linton, Hindley locks him in a room, where he is flogged and compelled to spend the rest of the day. This is a crucial event because, first, it shows that in spite of Heathcliff's best attempt to be "decent" and "good," the structural role that he plays for that society invariably projects onto him a negative image (this is the second time that he is compared to a thief), simply because every society needs this internal externality. His mimicry of "decentness" is met with scorn, and Mrs. Linton only lets her children spend the Christmas Eve at the Heights at the condition that Hindley should "keep her darlings carefully apart from that 'naughty swearing boy'" (50). For the "civilized" world of the Grange, Heathcliff continues to be a threat to "good children." The violent way with which he is excluded from the celebration shows that if on the one hand society is eager for the "cold-hearted" person to be converted by the

merciful child, on the other, it nonetheless is anxious not to lose the enemy whose sacrifice and exclusion is a constitutive necessity of its existence.

This scene triggers off the revenge plot that will drive the narrative, and also works as a reminder that however cruel Heathcliff turns out to be, such cold-heartedness springs, in the first place, from the cruelty with which he was treated.[28] In his analysis of *North by Northwest*, Edelman deals with the fact that films often underscore the acts of mercilessness of the villain, but turn a blind eye on similar acts when committed by people that are supposedly morally good. In the crucial scene of the film, two people are literally suspended on a cliff, asking for help, and are pushed off by the antagonist, in a literal rendition of the concept of "suspense" and the author's formulation that the social "hangs" on compassion. The spectator is led to believe that Leonard is cruel by not offering his hand, yet as the author observes, a similar act of cruelty is rationalized and justified in a different occasion previously: "the callousness the Professor so lightly shrugged off now attaches to Leonard with a vengeance" (72). Similarly, in the prospective narrative of *Wuthering Heights*, the reader tends to condemn Heathcliff as the merciless *sinthom*osexual who does not offer his hand, yet he or she forgets that in the Christmas scene when *he* was suspended asking to be saved, Hindley without second thoughts pushed him off, in what we could ironically call a *coup de grâce*, a mercy stroke. And, indeed, as Edelman's argument shows, it turns out that perhaps this cruel act of mercy, liberation from hope, is better than being saved from falling.

However, before Heathcliff's "fall" is complete, there is an extremely meaningful scene which complicates any final judgement. Although in theory he is intent on wreaking revenge on his oppressor, the novel shows that in practice, at least at his stage, he fails to accomplish it. In one of his fits of rage, Hindley (who is drunk) throws his own son, Hareton, off the second-floor banister:

> There was scarcely time to experience a thrill of horror before we saw that the little wretch (Hareton) was safe. Heathcliff arrived underneath just at the critical moment; *by a natural impulse*, he arrested his descent, and setting him on his feet, looked up to discover the author of the accident... Had it been dark, I dare say, he would have tried to remedy by smashing Hareton's skull on the steps (emphasis added, 69-70).

A "natural impulse" thwarts Heathcliff's plan, and he saves the child in spite of himself. How should we interpret this short scene in light of what

[28] I'm indebted for the insight to the centrality of the Christmas scene to Buckler, William E. "Chapter VII of Wuthering Heights: A Key to Interpretation." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (U of California Press: 1952), pp. 51-55.

we have been discussing concerning the supposed enmity between the *sinthom*osexual and children? It would seem that even though the *sinthom*osexual is socially figured as a threat to life, this scene reveals that in fact the villain or anti-hero is not so cruel and inhuman (again, at this stage) as society or even himself thinks he is. Avoiding a naturalization of the "*sinthom*osexual" as always already cruel, the novel presents the complexities of the process of dehumanization.

As the narrative develops, Heathcliff nevertheless becomes more hard-hearted and merciless, and his acts of cruelty are directed precisely against children. His plan is to disinherit the younger generation of their land and rights, and make them completely dependent on him. If he saves Hareton from death, it is only to make the boy go through the same type of degradation that he experienced. At Hindley's funeral, Ellen tells us that Heathcliff "lifted the unfortunate child on to the table and muttered, with peculiar gusto: 'now, my bonny lad, you are *mine*! And we'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it'" (176). He deprives Hareton of education, and reduces him to a servant: "In that manner Hareton, who should now be the first gentleman in the neighbourhood, was reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy; and lives in his own house as a servant, deprived of the advantages of wages, and quite unable to right himself" (177).

This new phase of Heathcliff's character can be seen especially in his marriage to Isabella Linton. At this point, he has already taken the first steps in his revenge plot, and feels the need to act relentlessly, not letting any compassion interfere. In a sense, he has become an Edelmanian *sinthom*osexual who sees mercilessness as the true injunction behind Christian love, elevating it to a moral imperative. Edelman's argument is that when we demonstrate mercy towards others, we are actually gratifying their narcissism. In other words, by "saving" someone from falling away from society, we are actually deluding him or her into believing that their fantasy/narcissism/identity is going to be realized, what is impossible because a fantasy can never be real. The true act of mercy (*coup de grâce*) is destroying the faith in any fantasy, even if it means falling into the abyss of the real.

This is what is perfectly illustrated in chapter 14, in which the reader learns about the shattering of Isabella's illusion concerning Heathcliff's reasons for marrying her: "I dare say she would rather I had seemed all tenderness before you [Ellen]: it wounds her vanity to have the truth exposes. But I don't care who knows that the passion was wholly on one side; and I never told her a lie about it. She cannot accuse me of showing a bit of deceitful softness" (143). This speech shows that the undoing of fantasy is a wound to vanity (a word that itself means "emptiness"): it destroys the narcissism and the fantasies which keep the ego and the

identity from falling apart. In spite of that, it is more sincere because it reveals the truth, however harsh it is. Thus, in this Edelmanian queer ethics, an act of mercilessness become ethically superior than fondling the ego. This is the very view that Heathcliff holds as he says:

> "I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush their entrails! It is a moral teething, and I grind with greater energy, in proportion to the increase of pain"
> "Do you understand what the word pity means? I said, hastening to resume my bonnet, "did you ever feel a touch of it in your life?" (144)

Here, again, the sadistic image of inflicting a wound as it becomes more painful signals that Heathcliff is already beyond the reality principle, and has discovered the terrible "*jouissance*" behind the discourse of compassion that transcend any form of altruism. "Here, in this access to *jouissance*, paradoxical though it may seem, psychoanalysis encounters the innermost meaning of the commandment to 'love one's neighbour,' which, as Lacan is quick to remind us, 'may be the cruellest of choices'" (Edelman 85). [29]

[29] Here some words are due on the theme of *jouissance* and morality. As Jacques-Allain Miller says in his discussion of the *écrit* "Kant with Sade" in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, Lacan collapses the differences between the writers who are often perceived to be the antipodal opposites of the enlightenment: "Kant [who] could be viewed as the purest mind that ever lived, and Sade [as] the basest person ever to live" (213). His provocative argument is that Sade actually only continued an "ethical revolution" which Kant had began. In other words, the "neutrality" (or indifference) of enlightenment to moral issues paves the way for the emergence of a distinctly modern phenomenon: since the nineteenth century immorality has been championed, especially in literature and art, as a higher form of morality (which, as we saw, is the case with Edelman.)

Although Kant's categorical imperative (to do what is morally good in all possible contexts) seems admirable at first, it nonetheless hides the operation which gives the law and ideologies their consistency: obey the law for no reason but its own sake! Lacan shows, therefore, that Sade is the truth of Kant, as he identifies an obscene *pleasure* in the latter's moral imperative. The morally good person that obeys the law for *no reason* actually experiences a perverse *jouissance*. (For *jouissance* is that which is an end in itself.) In this regard, his insight is akin to Georges Bataille's statement that "evil is not only the dream of the wicked: it is to some extent the dream of the Good" (18).

Georges Bataille, who is more on the side of artists than philosophers, endorses such a immorality out of principle (as Žižek calls it), for it becomes for him the only means of experiencing the sacred in our society. As Miller himself says: "To want evil for evil's sake. Not evil for the sake of money, pleasure, etc. (just as you might want good for its own sake.) That would be the position of a saintly devil" (215) and

After the ill-fated few months of her married live, Isabella runs away from the Heights, gives birth to a child and lives the rest of her life in London. At her death, Edgar Linton makes a journey to bring his nephew to live with him, but when Heathcliff discovers that his son is in the neighbourhood, he demands to have the boy, even though he hates children and knows that the boy does not resemble him. His plan is to make Linton Heathcliff marry Edgar's daughter, so that at his enemy's death, the whole property of the Grange would be Catherine Linton's husband's property, and hence, Heathcliff's. Whereas in the first half of the narrative, the reader had some glimpses of acts of compassion that might redeem Heathcliff, by the half of the novel, he has become thoroughly inflexible in his plan of destroying his enemies and accomplishes acts unheard-of in Victorian fiction. That the author herself felt the shock that the Heathcliff of the second generation might cause can be seen in the fact that the text shifts focus from the Heights to the Grange. As Georges Batailles says, when the reader is able to have a brief look of the life at the Heights, he or she comes across images worthy of Marquis de Sade: "Had I been born where laws are less strict, and tastes less dainty, I should treat myself to a slow vivisection of those two [Catherine II and his son], as an evening's amusement" (253), says Heathcliff.

One of the most important events of this half of the narrative is Catherine II's captivity. She holds clandestine meetings with her cousin, against her father's orders, and Heathcliff takes advantage of this trespass to imprison her in his house in one of her excursions to the moors. His plan is to hasten her marriage with Linton, as the boy's health becomes increasingly feeble and his death is imminent. Significantly, Ellen observes that this happened in August. Besides being an instance of the sensibility of the text to the passage of the seasons and the rhythms of the earth - for example, "the harvest was late that year, and few of our fields were still uncleared" (215) -, such a comment signal that this transition in Catherine's life happens at the same time that summer is approaching autumn, implying that her captivity happens simultaneously to those seasons which are less fecund. As is well known, for example, in Greek mythology, Proserpina, the embodiment of the fecundity of the earth, spent half of the year on the

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"happiness in evil means taking pleasure in pain. This formulation is the literary precursor of the death drive" (Miller 220). The affinity of this idea with Romanticism in general is plain; it recalls, for example, the "moral superiority" that Shelley identified in Milton's Satan for preferring perpetual torture and evil out of principle, and Žižek himself refers several times to the Byronic Don Giovanni as the prototype of the "immoral out of principle." I pursue more detailedly the implications of this complex issue in the conclusion.

underground (Hades). Similarly, Catherine becomes Heathcliff's dependent precisely during autumn and winter. In the narrative, we can also see this transition from the happiness of summer to the sterility of winter through the deaths/illnesses that loom in the text during this period: Both her father and Linton Heathcliff die.

As we saw from Edelman's analysis of a *Christmas Carol*, the *sinthom*osexual represents the death associated with winter (and hence sterility). Tiny Tim's touch, which is capable of thawing the hardness of Scrooge's heart, is like the first bloom of spring in the snow. In chapter 27, we have a scene with a similar Victorian sentimental appeal contained in the image of Tiny Tim trying to warm Scrooge's heart:

> "Mr. Heathcliff, you're a cruel man, but you're not a fiend; and you won't, from *mere* malice, destroy irrevocably all my happiness...I'm going to kneel here at your knee... I don't hate you. I'm not angry that you struck me. Have you never loved anybody, in all your life, uncle? *Never*? Ah! You must look once – I'm so wretched – you can't help being sorry and pitying me."
>
> "Keep your eft's fingers off; and move, or I'll kick you!" cried Heathcliff, brutally repulsing her. "I'd rather be hugged by a snake. How the devil can you dream of fawning on me? I *detest* you." (original emphases, 258-259)

Catherine attempts to inspire Heathcliff's compassion by humiliating herself, and offering the other face after he has just struck her. Her strategy is to show that she knows that he was not always a cruel sadist. The question "have you never loved anybody" with its dramatic reiteration "never?" is meant to pierce through Heathcliff's hardness, reminding him and the reader of the impossible "love" which was the propeller of the narrative. Their relative position on the scene is also meaningful. Catherine is vulnerably kneeling before his erect figure, asking for help almost like, we could say, Eve hanging on the cliff, while Thornhill stretches his hand and asks Leonard's help in *North by Northwest*. However, her act of touching Heathcliff has a double meaning: at the same time that she is asking for his help, she is also offering human compassion for him. She is the Child who offers a compassionate hand to Heathcliff. The latter, who now has become a thoroughly merciless *sinthom*osexual, repulses her, and threatens to kick her – to metaphorically push her off the precipice. The mention to her "eft's [newt's] fingers" is a brilliant stroke, as it foregrounds the role of the compassionate hand. Heathcliff's complete dehumanization is further underscored when he lets his son die without seeing a doctor. When he comes to Linton's chamber to check if he is really dead, he sadistically asks Catherine "How do you feel, Catherine?" and, having hit

the nadir of her life, she answers: "you have left me so long to struggle against death, alone, that I feel and see only death! I feel like death!" (276).

In a sense, Emily Brontë poses a problem for her reader in regard to how he or she should react towards her anti-hero at this point. For Heathcliff to accept the mercy that he is offered would be a spurious conclusion, because he is hopeless precisely because of the discourse of compassion. There is a sense in which to attempt to justify his descent into cruelty, and say that he became so because he lacked love, misses the point. There is a conflict at the centre of the text which Brontë left unresolved because (I would risk saying) it was precisely its driving force. Whereas, on the one hand, as a Christian, she was making a critique of hypocritical (literal) readings of the Bible, and trying to recuperate the true meaning of compassion and love; on the other, she went too deep, to use Bataille words on his essay on her, into the depths of evil.[30] There she discovered characters that adhered doggedly into their hopelessness; character who did not want to be saved. As we saw, Catherine says that she would be miserable if she were in heaven, and in the last moments of the novel, Heathcliff reiterates her words: "I tell you, I have nearly attained *my* heaven; and that of others is altogether unvalued and uncoveted by me!" (313).

As a consequence of the complex web of narrative voices, the reader receives often irreconcilable points of view. In my analysis of the events as narrated by Ellen, I have shown that the Christmas scene is a turning point: from then on Heathcliff started to become hopeless. This might lead us to conclude that the reason of his cruelty is that he did not have the right opportunity to integrate the community, but then we cannot forget the tragic tendencies of *Wuthering Heights*. Once Heathcliff has become merciless

[30] George Batailles' classic essay on Emily Brontë is probably the first work to have analysed *WH* in light of the concept of death drive (although he does not mention Freud's concept directly), and also foreshadows some answers to the problem of a queer future: "in the education of children preference for the present moment is the common definition of Evil... But condemnation of the present moment for the sake of the future is an aberration" (13) and later he says, anticipating Edelman: "Good is based on common interest which entails consideration of the future" (13). The realm of the political is based on interest, while the realm of the sacred is the realm of disinterested action, action that is done for its own sake (and then, paradoxically, the realm of pure Evil). Bataille also addresses the apparent discrepancies between Brontë's Christianity and her characters: "The mere invention of a character so totally devoted to Evil by a moral and inexperienced girl would be a paradox… Emily Brontë had emancipated herself from orthodoxy: she had moved away from Christian simplicity and innocence, but she participated in the religious spirit of her family to the extent in which Christianity is strict fidelity to Good based on reason" (12, 14).

and has delved into the depths of evil, the text discovers the terrible *jouissance* of destroying every social fantasy. From *that* point of view, the true act of mercy is the cruellest choice: "the neighbourly love sufficient to break him open with *jouissance* and launch him into the void around and against which the subject congeals" (Edelman 85). Thus, when Heathcliff says that he has achieved *his* heaven, he means the union with Catherine in nature that only death can bring him. Although Edelman claims that queers do not have a future, this statement must be qualified. He means that they do not have a future in the sense of the social collectivity moved by desire which Muñoz proposes, because every utopia or heaven (an ideal society) must rest on an unsymbolizable ground. Nevertheless, as Edelman himself says, the "death drive is precisely the ultimate Freudian name for the dimension traditional metaphysics designates as immortality" (48). The death drive names what continues alive even after death, although it does not bear human form any more: the monster which is neither alive nor dead (the *un*dead). Let's remember that Ellen herself conjectures Heathcliff to be a vampire (310), and the novel finishes suggesting that Catherine and Heathcliff continue to be restless even after death: "[I] wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth" (317). This is the uncanny "immortality" that they achieve. From the point of view of society, some readers might have wished that instead of this stubborn anti-sociality, they could have had a social future – and after all, the happy ending of the second generation is made to answer this desire. But then, Heathcliff himself would answer our compassion, the very compassion of the writer, and friendly hand with the words that he says to Ellen at the occasion of Catherine's death: "damn you all! She wants none of your tears!" (157).

4. CONCLUSION: RAPTUROUS PAIN[31]

ON THE CRITIQUE OF BIG NARRATIVES

Derrida starts his seminal lecture at Johns Hopkins, "Structure, Sign and Play," announcing the occurrence of an event in the understanding of structures which he finds difficult to conceptualize and which he counsels us to be heedful in our approach to. Our time, so he argues, has brought about the conditions to question the contradictory character of the centers of structures, which are at once internal and external to them. Derrida then offers a critique of the "metaphysics of presence" (which, as he remarks, has its precedent in Nietzsche), an argument to which we are so accustomed nowadays that it has become almost uncanny. As he shows, the history of human thought since Greek philosophy has been the record of a "series of substitutions of center for center" (225). For example, whereas in the Middle Ages God was that element which at once underlain and transcended the universe, in modernity, after Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, such a role was transferred to man's consciousness. Deconstruction indeed signaled a rupture with the previous understanding of structures (as self-contained systems), but Derrida's warning also draws our attention that such an event, the discovery that our conscience is actually determined by the linguistic and symbolic relations in which we are immersed, might become the new centre: "this moment was that in which language invaded the universal problematic; that in which, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse... a system where the central signified... is never absolutely present outside a system of difference" (225). He realizes and constantly reiterates throughout his text that to show the gaps in a structure is still to be under its influence; hence his comment that "there is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to attack metaphysics" (226).

I emphasize Derrida's warning because there is a lot of controversy and misunderstanding in regard to what he is saying and to the project of post-structuralism and its criticism of hegemonic narratives in general, in such a way that some of its main exponents have even rejected association with it. There is no question that what Žižek would term *spaghetti* post-structuralism[32] has perhaps fostered the cultural climate that Jameson so

[31] From the last stanza of Emily Brontë's poem "Remembrance": "And even yet I dare not let it languish / I don't indulge in memory's rapturous pain / Drinking deep of that divinest anguish / How could I seek the empty world again?" (130).

[32] As in "*spaghetti* western" (second-hand westerns filmed in Italy).

trenchantly criticizes in "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"; namely, that the proclamation of the end of big narratives has ironically become a new big narrative, as Derrida's text seems to caution us that not-having-a-center might become the new center. What these writers warn us to is that in renouncing any organization we risk relapsing into an atemporal and ahistorical present, which is the danger of, for example, Edelman's pragmatism. At the same time, much (shallow) criticism of post-structuralism often sounds like what Freud would call a mechanism of defense: people hold desperately to illusions of stability as they feel their sacred truths collapsing.

Narratives are not always bad. Indeed, mankind has been telling stories ever since it first gained conscience and attempted to make sense of the environment around it. T. W. Adorno, for instance, tells us that myth arises as the cry of horror that man utters in his fear of nature: "myth… springs from human fear, the expression of which becomes its explanation" (10). This is interesting, because the very word "myth" originally simply meant "narrative," which suggests that, like the talking-cure, myth is a narrative ordering of experience as a response to trauma. In this regard we cannot do without myth, and occluding this necessity might have dangerous consequences. The late nineteenth-century prideful proclamation that science had finally overcome myth led us to fascism. The whole point of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is that myth is most pernicious when we think we have triumphed over it; hence the dangers of speaking of the so-called "end of history." This of course does not mean that there should not be attempts to de-naturalize some oppressive narratives, like the oedipal pattern of many households nowadays, which has been so detrimental to women and anyone who does not fit in it. After all, insofar as myths are narratives of humanity overcoming nature (the source of fear), in which that very nature is gendered feminine, feminism and even queer theory seem bound to resist such narratives in which women and queers become foils.

Derrida's paper is often taken to be a thorough attack on Lévi-Strauss, and, while he indeed deplores the latter's nostalgic tendencies, that which nonetheless is often forgotten is that he is aware that the anthropologist himself realized the shortcomings of his method. His "scientific" account of myths was actually one more myth. Lévi-Strauss knows the limitation of his concepts, yet he uses them because they are methodologically useful:"conserving in the field of empirical discovery all these old concepts, while at the same time exposing here and there their limits, treating them as tools which can still be of use" (230). To this practice of borrowing concepts whose "truth-value" is questionable to bring them into a crisis, he gives the name *bricolage*. Derrida says: "if one calls *bricolage* the necessity of borrowing one's concept from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is *bricoleur*" (231).

In a sense, what I have shown in this thesis were several forms of *bricolage*, whether in Rubin's borrowing of anthropology or in Butler's working with Lacan's terms to show their limitation, and I think that this is an extremely fruitful practice.

Even though I have criticized narratives, I tried to do so in order to show their damaging aspect, and not to make a case for debunking all and every myth, organization or project. I am aware that a superficial criticism of narratives might be politically inconsequent and contextually de-situated. Edelman, of course, poses a problem due to his celebration of the present. Yet, we must remember that his provocative argument is performative in nature. After all, in a society in which queers constantly receive the message that they do not have a future, that they are hopeless, to accept such a figuration, valuing it positively, is akin to the re-signification of historically derogatory terms. If I should turn Edelman into the foil against whose opinion I were to build my own in this research, I would be simply doing what his theory already expects of us.

In short, in order to assess what are the gains of criticizing big narratives and structures we must rediscover the potentialities of post-structuralism and the critique of modernity, ridding ourselves of the notion that this "post-" means that we have left behind a type of thought which is "overcome," for it is in this operation that a critique of all and every narrative becomes itself a new myth.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

In these last pages, I would like to return to the main questions that this research purported to answer, retracing the most significant aspects of my analysis and expanding on the conclusions previously anticipated.

The first analytical chapter consisted mainly in a scrutiny of the formulation "the dark continent of female sexuality." Through an analysis attuned to the implication of gender in the modern/colonial system, I tried to unfurl what ideological premises underlay the description of the "past" of the heterosexual woman by means of metaphors derived from a colonial discursive constellation; in which the colonized subject is often taken to be "ungendered" (to follow Lugones) as he or she is more "savage." However, as I have attempted to show, in the context of the specifically Romantic stance towards orientalism in which one can say Brontë to be inserted, this "savageness" is taken up as a means of resistance and defiance against the strictures to which especially women were subjected.

Wuthering Heights, as demonstration in Armstrong's article, reflects a common mid-nineteenth century practice of "internal colonialism," the consequence of which is that those communities where traditional forms of life still remained, especially in the countryside, were treated with a form of nostalgia. In the same way that the orientalist interest in the exotic and

primitive gave rise to orientalism as a discipline (namely, a means of controlling the other as an object of study), so the Romantic interest in "folks" gave rise to various forms of disciplinarization in which the metropolitan, urban subject attempted to control the "countryside." The invariable result of treating traditional societies as "primitive and obsolete" is the reiteration of the narrative of modernity, in which everything that does not conform to industrial capitalism is seen as backward. As Armstrong observed, Emily Brontë shifts the scales in favor of Catherine and Heathcliff, and her text mocks precisely the urban Lockwood; yet, in the same way that her novel reaffirms to some extent orientalist stereotypes (the racialized other is more irrational, only that being irrational is a good thing), it also cannot counter the narrative through which the countryside is built as primitive.

One of the thorniest issues that have arisen in the course of my analysis regards the question of nineteenth-century feminist emancipation. Through coordination with Spivak's reading of *Jane Eyre*, I have explored how Charlotte Brontë's sister's text cannot elude as well the problem of the "axiomatics of imperialism." Indeed, the great crisis of the female protagonist of *Wuthering Heights* is precipitated because she must give up her relationship the racialized other in order to achieve a status as a legitimate woman in her society. Yet, whereas, say, in *Jane Eyre* the occlusion of the racialized woman (Bertha Mason) at least effects Jane's enfranchisement and individualization, in Catherine's case things are more complex. In her childhood, it is through the objectification of Heathcliff that she achieves a "plenitude of being." Yet, later, in her married life, she achieves anything but independence, as she falters under the failure to conform to normative femininity. Would then the fact that Catherine identifies with Heathcliff "redeem" her? Well, not for Spivak, for as she says in "Three Women's Texts" the most dangerous act we can do in trying to enfranchise the colonized is to act as if we were in Caliban's shoes. Even if Catherine identifies with Heathcliff, this very identification tries to put under erasure her "privilege" as a white woman.

In the mid-80s when "Three Women Texts" was published, Spivak's text played an important performative role in bringing the occluded racialized into the light, showing the limitations of a white middle class sort of feminism, and since then, especially with the development of important work on intersectionality, it has become obvious the importance of taking into account other identity marks in analyses of gender. However, I believe we need not debunk feminism neither the women heroines of nineteenth-century novels in order to pay attention to the racialized, otherwise we run the risk of losing track of what is really important, the critique of imperialist discourse. Gilbert and Gubar claim in a recent preface to *The Madwoman in the Attic* that in the course of the years they have been accused of various

"crimes" which they could not know in hindsight, simply because they focused on "nineteenth-century women writers," and it is this type of superficial understanding in which the white woman becomes the villain that I think one should be wary of. (Spivak, of course, has an extremely nuanced position and is not intent in reviling *Jane Eyre*, but distorted simplifications often lead to that.) Shortly, I think that the true critical task is not to *condemn* anyone, but to criticize a regime like imperialism in which the enfranchisement of a determined group is bought at the cost of the exclusion of another. It is too easy to forget that *Jane Eyre* received criticism as the following at its publication: "the tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home, is the same which has also written *Jane Eyre*" (qtd. Gilbert 779).

In Chapter 1, I also analysed how the narrative of a "normal" female sexual development is queered or destabilized in the novel. As my research "evolved," this was one of the directions which my advisor and I felt the inquiry was more and more pushed towards, especially because Catherine's narrative fitted so perfectly to Creed's parallels between the "journeys" which both the tomboy and the clitoris must make. In order to ground my analysis, I sketched a genealogical account of what had been said about "female sexuality," starting with Freud, whose text on the topic is the classical locus in which this narrative appears in its patriarchal version; in the sequence, I offered a brief excursion through Jacques Lacan, as he was the first to point out that the phallus reveals the fallacy of its claims to power once it is unveiled. However, the most accomplished destabilization of these narratives are performed by feminist and queer critics; therefore, I discussed Rubin's enlightening presentation of how the privilege of the phallus as symbolizing the penis serves to reaffirm kinship relations that maintain patriarchy; and last, I presented Butler's deconstructive/ (post-)Lacanian readings of "The Mirror Stage" and "Signification," the sewing thread being the ways women must respond to the threat of castration of the law throughout.

In Catherine's particular case, as has been analysed, the abject identification with her "phallic" past, in which she was more masculine, is what constantly resurfaces in spite of the attempts to perform femininity, so much so that in the end of her life she completely "regresses" to childhood and dreams of being a girl again. What a queer lens would caution is that this resurfacing of an abject desire appears as a "regression" precisely because it is caught in a developmental narrative. Yet, as I have tried to show, if we can speak of a resistance, it is precisely in the fact that Catherine's body is not so obedient and disciplined and her tabooed identification constantly returns.

As has been shown through Butler, every subject must identify with a symbolic position which he or she nevertheless is doomed to never achieve.

The "normal" individual is the one who believes that he indeed occupies that position: the man that thinks he really has the phallus and the woman who things she is the phallus. Anyone who resists that is caught in the grip of an existential crisis, and that is precisely what happens to Catherine as she troubles "being and having." In the scene of her delirium, she does not identify her image in the mirror, which is that of a "castrated" woman (a woman that *is* the phallus). The fact that her resistance to castration (to the "title" she is assigned by the father) paves her way into madness evinces the limitation of the nineteenth-century imagination, for which it s easier to imagine a woman dying because of her dissidence than having an alternative life. However, I have tried to show that we can spot a "reason in madness" in Catherine's case. The resistance to the phallus (the universal, transcendental signifier) and castration, essential aspects of the deployment of a patriarchal discourse, is necessarily a resistance to the modern/colonial system.

In chapter 2, I dealt with the recent debate in queer theory between Edelman and Muñoz in regard to the possibilities of alternative queer temporalities. Edelman in *No Future* is pessimistic; for him, queers represent that which resists identity or the satisfaction of the promise of the signifier, and as such they become something like a structural principle of negativity, akin to the villain whose role is not to let the story have a happy ending; for s*inthom*osexuals resist the sacrifice of the present for the future which puts narrative progress in motion. The resistance of the queer to the future is translated especially in his threat to children, and as such, Edelman's theory fitted perfectly to Heathcliff, the sadistic anti-hero that terrorizes the young offspring of his enemies.

It is not difficult to imagine that Edelman's theory does not translate the lived experience of many LGBT people and how they would like to be represented; especially, if in anything, in the fact that it presupposes that this special queer that he is describing cannot love and idealize other people. Being able to love other people is the effect of our narcissism (as we search for our whole being in the other), and Edelman's deconstruction of the stereotype of queers as narcissistic is purchased at a high price: if they are not narcissistic in any way, they cannot love as well (as Lacan would have it: "our desire is always the Other's desire," we can only desire insofar as we exist *in the Other*). In the idealized wholeness of the person with whom we fall in love is also contained the idealized totality of a future community. To give up love (and hope) is to give up the possibility of coordinate social action which, as Muñoz reminds us, is essential for those who are in oppressive conditions. Thus, the latter's utopian tendency tempers Edelman's pessimism.

THE LIMITS OF HOPE AND SKEPTICISM

I would like to conclude exploring the ways in which the Edelman-Munõz debate restages an important distinction made recently by Eve Sedgwick. In "*Paranoid* Reading and *Reparative Reading*," the author draws a distinction between two reading habits, classifying them in regard to the type of affect that each evinces. The first, a negative "hermeneutics of suspicion" which she calls "paranoid reading," reflects the interpretative practices that have become hegemonic nowadays. As she argues, we tend to consider an exegesis or a theory strong to the extent that it is able to forestall future criticisms by spotting beforehand the gaps in its own argument. In a rather anxious manner, critics concentrate so much in anticipating possible shortcomings that sometimes unmasking anything that smacks of "illusion" becomes the whole point of their practice. Like the Freudian organism of the death drive, which wants to die on its own terms, the paranoid critic rehearses the death of the ideas he could oftentimes defend before someone else kills it. This paranoid habit, as Sedgwick says, has delegitimized reading habits which evince more "positive affects" and to it she counterpoises what she calls "reparative reading," deriving it from Melanie Klein:[33]

> By contrast, the depressive position is an anxiety-mitigating achievement that the infant or adult only sometimes, and often only briefly, succeeds in inhabiting: this is the position from which it is possible in turn to use one's own resources to assemble or "repair" the murderous part-objects into something like a whole—though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*. (Original emphasis, 128)

Her article, then, is intent in questioning why the ability to unveil any semblance of stable meaning has become good *per se*. The true challenge, so she argues, might be to vindicate theory which is not so "strong" but whose reparative aims, given the intellectual climate, is precisely that which is in need of being recuperated. This is exactly the impression that one has

[33] Klein in "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" lays down the classic division between "paranoid" and "reparative positions." According to her, in the first year of life, the baby experiences a "persecutory fear" which awakens in her sadistic responses as a mechanism of defense (such as biting the mother's breast). During this period, she establishes this ambivalent relation with many objects. As she grows, nonetheless, such a paranoia and fear subsides and the little child experiences feelings of guilt and sadness (hence "depressive position") that leads her to try to repair the (internalized) objects which she tried to destroy. Sedgwick uses, interestingly, Butler's *Gender Trouble* as one of her "paranoid" examples.

in passing from *No Future* to *Cruising Utopia*. Edelman's book is "paranoid" in its repudiation of every social fantasy and its reliance on the power of the death drive. Muñoz, in turn, is conscious that to defend utopia and hope today might be considered naïve and delusional, and yet this is the onerous task he sets out to accomplish.

This controversy between paranoid and reparative reading reflects, in a sense, a more overarching ethical discussion about the nature and importance of belief. The problem of the paranoid reader is that his capacity to experience genuine belief has been atrophied in his (ironical) devotion to give the lie to every "illusion." If for a moment we leave the domain of literature, and come closer to real life, we can have a glimpse of the paradoxical dimensions that this issue sometimes achieves. In the chapter "The Perverse Subject of Politics" in *How to Read Lacan*, Žižek tries to show that the true danger to genuine belief turns out to be the religious fundamentalist who affirms blindly the unquestioned existence of God. There is no point in believing in what we are certain of existing: its reality is undeniable. In a similar vein, then, one could say that the whole point of trying to construe a social reality through "reparative" practices is that, even though this assemblage or reconstitution is conventional and "imaginary," these limitations should not be deterrents for trying it out. Such is the true stuff of belief and hope. "This is what we can learn from Lacan about the rise of religious fundamentalism: its true danger does not reside in its threat to secular knowledge, but in its threat to authentic belief itself" (2002 118). As he says, the aspect that the "pervert" misses is "the truth of the lie itself, the truth that is delivered in and through the very act of lying... the pervert's falsity resides in his very unconditional attachment to truth" (111).

Although my admiration for Žižek cannot be stressed enough, my engagement with queer theory during the MA, nonetheless, has made me more acutely aware to some problematic implications of his terms. His targeting of "perversion" cannot help but evoking the issue of homosexuality. As Sedgwick reminds the reader, in classical psychoanalysis, it was something of an accepted axiom that "paranoia reflected the repression of same-sex desire" (126), and the very paranoia of which Klein speaks entails a sadistic, aggressive tendency. It was only with the course of time that critics started to realize that instead of being a privileged site to understand homosexuality, paranoia actually was a perfect means to analyze homophobic discourse itself; to such an extent that "paranoid" reading habits have become pervasive among queer theorists: "it may have been structurally inevitable that the reading practices that became most available and fruitful in antihomophobic work would often in turn have been paranoid ones" (127). Paranoia has become "less a diagnosis than a prescription" (125), and we should be careful not to turn it into a diagnosis again.

Žižek directs his attacks against what he calls the "structure of perversion" of fundamentalism. He, nonetheless, includes in the latter the very "cynic" or skeptical reader we have been discussing, claiming that his fundamentalism is precisely that he does not believe in anything. He tries to forestall any imputation of prejudice by claiming that the perversion he is talking about has nothing to do with its content ("weird sexual practices"). However, in spite of the fact that both Žižek and Edelman share a Lacanian practical anti-humanism, I wonder to what extent the former's offensive against perversion and its often correlative immoralism is not bound to be an attack on a specific, if marginal, type of queer experience. This can be glimpsed in the fact that one of the figures that he includes among "perverts" is Foucault: "No wonder Michel Foucault was fascinated by Islamic political martyrdom. In it, he discerned the contours of a 'regime of truth' different from the West's, a regime in which the ultimate indicators of truth... is the readiness to die" (110).[34] In the sequence, as might be expected, his text engages in a critique of "cultures of death." It is interesting that a specific attack against "perversion" should have a homophobic undertone in spite of itself. The questions that it immediately suggests are: through what operation does he go from Foucault and sadomasochism to fundamentalism and terrorism so quickly? What is the place of sadism and perversion within queer theory?[35]

The best path I could find to start formulating an answer to these by no means simple questions was through Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of Sade in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which affords us a more sophisticated stance than simply endorsing "immoralism" or dismissing it wholesale. In the chapter entitled "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality," the authors affirm that the mercilessness and cruelty characteristic of Sade's work, far

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[34] In *Bodies That Matter* [1993], Butler had taken issue with Žižek's critique in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* [1989] of Foucault's "fascination with sadomasochism." The chapter of his that I am discussing is from 2002, which shows that he dismisses Butler's argument or rather offers a counter-argument: the structure of sadomasochism ("perversion") is the same as that of religious fundamentalism.

[35] Whereas Žižek tries to not attack homosexuality in itself, Jacques-Allain Miller, for example, uses perversion virtually as a synonym for homosexuality in one of his lectures in *Reading Seminar I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud* (State University of New York Press: 1996). The standard definition of perversion is "the inversion of a fantasy." In other words, whereas heterosexual men want to have their enjoyment, i.e. their fantasy, satisfied by means of an object (the famous *objet petit a*), the pervert believes that *he* is the very object that is meant to satisfy the desire of the Other. He is, in a sense, an instrument of the Other's *jouissance*: "In perversion, on the contrary, you need to make the Other exist to be the instrument of its *jouissance*" (318).

from being the antithesis, is what modern rationality necessarily leads to. They explore specially the implications that Kant's concept of reason has had on morality from the eighteenth century onwards; as one of the problems that are foreshadowed in his work is that the enlightened understanding of reason is indifferent to ethical issues. Even though morality is still an important social concern, the very structure of rationality which underlies social relations and through which domination operates is formalistically cruel. (In this regard, they anticipate Lacan.)

As is well known, the enlightenment started as an attempt to dispel mystification and illusions; however, once radicalized, it jettisoned every form of belief, save the trust in the autonomy of reason: "in the glare of enlightened reason any devotion which believed itself objective, grounded in the matter at hand was dispelled as mythological" (73). Besides, in order to maintain its self-sufficiency, reason should constantly exclude what threatens to destabilize its organization, namely, the very materiality it purports to perceive, and with it any content: "pure reason became unreason, a procedure as immune to errors as it was devoid of content" (71); "it became a purposiveness without purpose, which for that very reason could be harnessed to any end" (69). Enlightenment becomes the eulogy of form (law) in itself, and does not have space for *pity* anymore.

Kant realized that the modern reason might lead to immorality, and attempted, rather ineffectually, to elevate some moral values to the status of transcendent facts (obey first of all!), an operation that in itself tried to conceal the gap between rationality and morality. This brings us to the argument we already met in Edelman that the discourse of compassion hides duty's iron fist: it tries to screen off the essential cruelty through which reason (which for Adorno is dominance) maintains its authority. Thus, for example, in the nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie adhered *pro forma* to Christian values precisely as a means to ease their conscience in regard to their participation in capitalist exploitation (which is precisely what Spivak feared in the "categorical imperative"). In the unmasking of this bourgeois false morality we have a glimpse of the "virtue" of Sade's otherwise immoral writings: "Juliette draws the conclusion the bourgeoisie sought to avoid: she demonizes Catholicism as the latest mythology and with it civilization as a whole. The energies previously focused on the sacrament are now devoted, perversely, to sacrilege" (74). Juliette, Sade's libertine character, shows to enlightenment its true face. The fascination of the early nineteenth century with sadism and evil, then, as their brilliant analysis implies, is none other than the effect of the transition from a metaphysical to a scientific world in which that very trust in reason becomes something of a religion: that is the reason why the manner with which perversion is described in these texts so often lapse into the register of the sacred: "Juliette... still emulates the *ancien régime*. She deifies sin.

Her libertinism is in thrall to Catholicism as the nun's ecstasy is to paganism" (83).

The point is not to justify evil, which would amount to trying to show that evil is good. But then perhaps that is the true "virtue" of sadism, that it carries us beyond morality. Why literature and art which reflect on the nature of evil do tend to be more appealing and, conversely, we turn with disgust from didacticism? The Adornian answer would be: in everyday life we try to cover the true cruelty of rationality through an attachment to contingent moral values, which is laid bare in artistic production: "Imagination seeks as horror to withstand horror" (89).

In its unbearable sincerity, sadism, as we saw with Edelman, seems strangely to acquire the status of a more dignified ethical act. As Adorno says, "the writers of the bourgeoisie, unlike its apologists, did not seek to avert the consequences of the Enlightenment with harmonistic doctrines. They did not pretend that formalistic reason had a closer affinity to morality than to immorality" (92). This is why sentimental pity and love might turn out to be the true danger: in trying to mitigate the cruel consequences of enlightened rationality through compassion, they turn out to be apologists of the system unwittingly. As Horkheimer and Adorno point out, the problem of pity is that it always works as an exception to the iron rule which it helps to maintain intact: "it is not the softness but the restrictive nature of pity which makes it questionable – it is always too little" and "by limiting the abolition of injustice to fortuitous love of one's neighbour, pity accepts as unalterable the law of universal estrangement which it would like to alleviate" (80).

They are not, however, defending the perverse, self-destructive pleasure of reason taken to its extreme. In this regard, their position is much more nuanced. Like Muñoz, they realize that in the eruption of the drive something is lost as well. In the following lines written in the 1940s they set down the problem of the Edelman-Muñoz debate perfectly: "In its abandonment to nature pleasure renounces the possible, just as pity renounces the transformation of the whole" (83). In other words, treating these positions as mutually exclusive entails losses in both sides. Edelman refuses teleology and planning, and hence "the possible." On the other hand, to relapse to pity and "reformation" means to give up a different form of rationality, and involuntarily take part in the constitutive cruelty of modern reason.

In this conclusion, I have proceeded through several texts, trying to make justice to the view of each author, even though my own irresolution has made me keener in pointing out what is lost once a position is defended. I cannot, however, dislocate my own voice from the context from which I write. As Žižek already said in the 1980s, to believe that skepticism and immorality are challenges in themselves to the system is to live

anachronistically, and elude the ways in which late capitalism re-circulates those very moral stances for its own benefit. They have become part of the game. At the same time, he is an outspoken defender of taking up again the project of Enlightenment, which from a post- and de-colonial point of view becomes, in the least, suspect (although to give up reason, which is coherence, completely is to fall into incoherence and irrationality; this is the aporetic situation in which most post-modern discourses are caught in: insofar as they claim to be coherent and valid they are often appealing unawares to the very reason they criticize.) I think that the depiction of sadism in art is so shocking and crushing an experience, that it actually opens our eyes. This is the *reason*, I suppose, why Horkheimer and Adorno dedicate a whole chapter to Sade in their work: his work *enlightens* us precisely because it is so unbearably dark – and the same can be said of Emily Brontë.

As we saw in Freud, people try to master their problems by repeating them, which might have dangerous consequences in everyday life; yet, by displacing such a need to face the constitutive terror of our very rationality into art, we are able to face our demons without relapsing into barbarism. In this regard, the works of art which have dealt with the nature of evil (Baudelaire, Sade, Brontë, in the nineteenth century, or even Pasolini in the twentieth) are privileged texts to fathom the depths of who we are. Imagination "seeks as horror to withstand horror" precisely because in such a repetition there is a sort of magic in which fear is mastered. Even though Adorno's equation between reason and dominance has been put in question since Habermas, I think that his pessimism is still relevant because it asks the impossible of us: it demands constantly the masochist exercise of seeing how our most banal actions are implicated in the cruelty that pervades our world. Even though Adorno would not agree with Edelman's ethical imperative (the villain should *enjoy* his evil actions), their pessimism intersect in many aspects.

This conclusive meditation was driven in many ways by a baffling problem, which has bothered me since I first read Edelman: to what extent his ethical injunction is justified or not. Žižek's distaste for "Nietzschean immoralism" leads him to refuse sadism wholesale, but I tend rather to agree with Horkheimer and Adorno, for whom it has at least one virtue, even if it is the rather depressing one that the sadist at least does not delude his victim (with which Lacan would agree, by the way; as sadomasochistic relation externalize what we experience as an internal phenomenon: we are all terrorized by our super-ego, the laws which control our behaviour.) Apropos of Nietzsche and Sade, Horkheimer and Adorno say: "in proclaiming the identity of power and reason, their pitiless doctrines are more compassionate than those of the moral lackeys of the bourgeoisie" (93), and I tend to consider this insight extremely valuable.

That, however, is not to say that we must abandon pity, but that we must strive for a type of compassion and positive affect that does not turn out to be crueler than naked cruelty.[36]

CODA: MY LIFE'S BLISS

J. Hillis Miller says that reading is like falling in love, and indeed ten years ago I fell in love with Emily Brontë. Back then, I could not imagine the effects that her life and *oeuvre* would have over me; how in an attempt not to lose her, I would try to become her. *And so, realising that the universe contained innumerable elements which my feeble senses would be powerless to discern did she not bring them within my reach, I longed to have some opinion, some metaphor of hers, upon everything in the world... Convinced that my thoughts would have been pure foolishness to that perfect spirit, I had so completely obliterated them all that, if I happened to find in one of her books something which had already occurred to my own mind, my heart would swell as though some deity had restored it[a personal thought] to me... My feverish and unsatisfactory attempts were themselves a token of love, a love which brought me no pleasure but was nonetheless profound.* [37]

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[36] Post-scriptum: The reader may have sensed that in this conclusion I was dealing with an issue the answer to which I could not completely envision, and whose terms I did not allow myself to formulate in plain language. Unfortunately, when I wrote it I had not read Žižek and Gunjević's *God in Pain*, where the former's views become clearer. To drive it home, what bothered me was his equation of a strong religious commitment (the irrational aspect of faith) with post-modern skepticism. Thus, in this last meditation I found myself in the strange position of defending the cynic, not because I endorse a post-modern hedonism (which I abhor), but because, through a dialectical reversal, Žižek equated it to a Kierkegaardean religious suspension of the ethical. Boris Gunjević, in this regard, may be of help in understanding where both (skeptic and religious revolutionary) are similar and where they differ. For example, he claims that without "virtue" every revolution is doomed, and he adds: "no wonder 'profession revolutionaries' resemble frustrated hedonistic nihilists." Perhaps the keyword here is *responsibility*. Žižek's point is that we have to account for the possibility that God (the Other) does not exist and that therefore we are responsible for our actions, which I consider fair enough. However, the problem then is that this contradicts the absurd nature of true faith in the Kierkegaardean sense. As the reader can imagine, I am only laying down a problem which affects me deeply, for I do not have the answer.

[37] See Proust, Marcel. *Swann's Way* (Du côté de chez Swann) (Random House: 1982), pp. 102-103. In this excerpt, the narrator looking back to his childhood remembers his love for the fictional writer Bergotte. With unmatched beauty and sensibility, he describes the process whereby his personality fuses with that of his beloved writer. I have changed here the pronoun "his" for "her."

Brontë was a paradigm of strength to those around her. Charlotte tells us that she worked "like horse" from early morning until 11pm when they studied in Brussels. Her teacher said that she should have been a man, which in the nineteenth century was supposed to be a compliment. When her sister discovered her book of poems, she stopped writing poetry right way. She was so afraid that people might know what was going on in her mind that she wrote a novel with so many narrative layers that the reader would not be able to know what its author was thinking. She lived in silence, avoided people altogether, and when asked about her religion she said it was nobody's business. As a critic has said, hers was a life hidden from history, and that is the reason perhaps why we want to know about her so much. One of her few drawings is that of a pillar-saint, a reference to the "stylites," medieval monks that spent sometimes thirty years on the top of a long pillar, preaching and fasting. I had been a deeply religious child and now, looking back, it was Brontë's breathtaking abnegation and asceticism that made me cling so much to her then.

Brontë also describes some mystic experiences in her poems, although their genuine character is a matter of dispute. For Protestantism, however, any such direct-dial contact with the divinity was considered a heresy, and she knew it. Her ecstasies are sinful transgressions, failed attempts to achieve an inexistent deity. It is precisely in this aspect that her *jouissance* resembles that of the *sinthom*osexual; both are experienced as "perversions," they are manifestations of evil, of acts that are ends in themselves. *She deifies sin. Her libertinism is in thrall to Catholicism as the nun's ecstasy is to paganism*. Here is her description of coming back to consciousness after an ecstasy:

> Oh dreadful is the check – intense the agony –
> When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;
> When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;
> The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain. (139)

This is the testimonial of someone for whom life was a prison. Her lifelong sin was impatience. At twenty-nine years old, when she acquired tuberculosis, she resisted any of the attempts of her sisters to make her see a doctor, and died four months later. Brontë spent her life longing for death – what does not mean that she was always sad, some passages of her diary papers are surprisingly optimistic – and she flew into it in the first opportunity that appeared.

I have fallen in love with many other authors since then, and fortunately some of them are more sociable and life-affirming. Yet, the sense of rigorousness which I admired in her is still with me as something of an impossible ideal. Although the aspect with which I struggle the most

in reading Butler is that she asks a melancholic what is more painful than the void he or she carries everywhere: to learn how to lose and forget, Brontë herself acknowledged the importance of mourning some losses and trying to live a moderately happy life, to be guided by "hope." Time will change us, and in spite of ourselves we will forget those whom we loved one day, even if guiltily:

> Sweet love of youth, forgive if I forget thee
> While the world's tide is bearing along
> Another desires and darker hopes beset me
> Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong
>
> No other sun has lightened upon my heaven,
> No other star has ever shone for me
> All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given
> All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.
> ("Remembrance" 130)

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