

EMILY BRONTË, CHARLOTTE BRONTË, AND DAPHNE DU MAURIER:  
MOORS, PEAT, AND HAUNTING IN THREE OF THEIR NOVELS

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PÁRAMOS, TURBA Y ACECHO EN TRES DE SUS NOVELAS

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**Abstract**

This article examines the theme of haunting in three English novels: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, and *Jamaica Inn* by Daphne du Maurier. The novels analysed are regional narratives, focusing on the counties of Yorkshire and Cornwall respectively. Much of literary criticism has centred, within the Gothic genre, on the Female Gothic, the domestic space, locks and keys, and claustrophobia. However, this article proposes a different approach to the novels within the area of EcoGothic. Rather than focusing on the interior spaces, it focuses on the outside spaces within this domestic Gothic, in particular the moorlands that characterize their novels. These exterior spaces are ambivalent. On the one hand, they are sublime, and on the other hand, they represent a place of freedom. The article argues that landscape shapes the characters, in particular Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, and it highlights the importance of moorland and peatland in the landscape. Peat has preserving qualities and bodies lain to rest in this kind of soil do not decompose, leading to speculation as to their age. Are they thousands of years

**Resumen**

Este artículo examina el tema del acecho en tres novelas inglesas: *Wuthering Heights*, de Emily Brontë; *Jane Eyre*, de Charlotte Brontë, y *Jamaica Inn*, de Daphne du Maurier. Las novelas analizadas son narrativas regionales y me enfoco en los condados de Yorkshire y Cornwall, respectivamente. Mucha de la crítica literaria del género gótico se ha centrado en el gótico femenino, los espacios domésticos, candados y llaves, y la claustrofobia, pero este artículo propone un acercamiento diferente a las novelas dentro del campo del ecogótico. En lugar de sólo enfocarse en los espacios interiores, se enfoca en los espacios exteriores dentro del gótico doméstico, en particular los pantanos, los cuales caracterizan las novelas mencionadas. Estos espacios exteriores son ambivalentes: de una manera son sublimes y, de otra, representan lugares de libertad. Se argumenta que los escenarios moldean a los personajes, en particular a Heathcliff en *Wuthering Heights*, y realzan la importancia de los pantanos y la turba en el paisaje. La turba tiene cualidades de preservación de los cuerpos que han sido depositados en este tipo de suelo. No se descomponen, lo cual nos hace especular

old, or victims of a recent crime? I argue that the ghosts of the past, whether real or imaginary, rise up to destabilise notions of the known.

acerca de su edad. ¿Serán cadáveres de miles de años o víctimas de un crimen reciente? Los fantasmas del pasado, sean reales o imaginarios, se levantan para desestabilizar las nociones de lo conocido.

**Keywords:** *Emily Brontë* || *Charlotte Brontë* || *Daphne Du Maurier* || *Gothic fiction (literary genre)* || *Ghosts in literature*

**Palabras clave:** *Emily Brontë* || *Charlotte Brontë* || *Daphne Du Maurier* || *Novela gótica (Género literario)* || *Fantasmas en la literatura*

In Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the first narrator, Mr. Lockwood, who literally locks in the narrative, describes the harsh and inhospitable landscape of the North Yorkshire moors. Once he enters, uninvited, for a second time within the house *Wuthering Heights* and then gets trapped due to the extreme weather and the swirling snowstorm, the moors become a "billowy white ocean" (E. Brontë, 2003: 31).<sup>1</sup> He then has a dream, which foreshadows in part what is to come, about a special kind of earth found in the British Isles: peat. He describes a swamp that lies beside a chapel "whose peaty moisture is said to answer all the purposes of embalming on the few corpses deposited there" (E. Brontë, 2003: 23), in a peaty hollow between two hills. The second dream, which becomes reality, is of the ghost child, Cathy, who is at the window, pleading to be let in after roaming the moors for twenty years. Lockwood first thinks that they are branches knocking on the window in the storm. He sees the child's face at the window which he breaks and rubs her cold arm against the broken pane of glass, spilling blood.<sup>2</sup> It is hinted that the swampy hollow of the first dream is where Cathy's body was buried twenty years previously: "in a corner of the kirkyard, where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry plants have climbed over it from the moor; and peat mould almost buries it" (E. Brontë, 2003:

<sup>1</sup> In the novel *Frankenstein* there is also a reference to the sublime nature of ice. In the words of Captain Walton, again the narrator who locks in the narrative, his idea is to explore "the unexplored regions... 'the land of mist and snow'" (Shelley, 1992: 19).

<sup>2</sup> The window of the panelled room appears on various occasions. It is also important to emphasize that Lockwood found Cathy's/Catherine's possible names (Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, Catherine Linton) inscribed on the windowsill, on the threshold between the domestic and the wild moors. I will refer to her as Cathy (although this is also the name of her daughter) because she appears as a phantom child.

170). Later, we find out that her body has not decomposed. She haunts the present and the desires of the enigmatic Heathcliff. The “billowy white ocean” echoes the “blankness” (E. Brontë, 2003: 2) that Andrew Smith and William Hughes (2013) mention in their seminal work on the ecological in *Ecogothic*. Lockwood does not understand the dangers of the moors, nor the special qualities of the peaty soil. Smith and Hughes argue that nature is ambivalent. On the one hand, it can represent danger, but on the other, it offers solace and freedom from society.

What is peat? It is a soil type found in Canada and northern Europe, including Denmark, Scandinavia, the British Isles, and Ireland. One of peat’s properties is preservation, due to a lack of oxygen in the water and its tannic and humic acid content. These biological qualities mean that bodies, buried thousands of years ago, have been dug up, almost intact. These sometimes-gruesome discoveries have been brought to life in P.V. Glob’s archaeological and detective-like investigation: *The Bog People: Iron-Age Man Preserved* (1965). In this investigation Glob (1969) describes with detail the well-preserved bodies discovered by peat cutters in Denmark. What is interesting in this academic work is how he combines and intertwines the past and present. In the introduction to Glob’s research, Barber and Barber (2004) explain the following: “For ages, peasants in search of fuel have cut blocks of peat from the depressions, to dry and later burn for warmth and cooking” (ix). Van Gogh’s 1883 painting *Women on the Peat Moor* captures the essence of peat cutting. The depressions recall Lockwood’s dream of the “peaty hollow” between two hills.

Peat can be described as a mixture between wood and coal in its very long process of decomposition, which takes thousands of years. In the 1960s in the British Isles, it started to be used in commercial horticulture; however, due to its being a non-renewable source, its use has become controversial (Rieley, 2012). It is a staple fuel for many rural communities in the British Isles, as shown by Detective Inspector Fin Macleod’s memories in the Lewis trilogy of its distinctive smell: “That rich, toasty, unmistakable smell of peat smoke” (May, 2011: 101). However, recently it has been affected by the new rules on global warming and climate change in general, and the UK Government is trying to phase out its use in commercial horticulture by 2030 (Rieley, 2012). In reference to environmental damage, Smith and Hughes (2013) highlight how “the Gothic seems to be the form which is well placed to capture these anxieties” (5).

Within the controversy on peat, Jack Rieley (2012) argues in his paper at the 14th International Peat Congress that peat used for domestic use does not affect biodiversity. The Lewis trilogy was written by Peter May, who was born and brought up on the isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland. He is a native Gaelic speaker and the author of detective fiction in which the past haunts the present. In the trilogy, the protagonist, Detective Inspector Fin Macleod, describes growing up with the smell of peat smoke and cooking over peat fires. He recalls the process of peat cutting in his childhood as

hard, back-breaking work slicing down into the soft peat with a special spade, and then stacking the turfs in groups of five along the top of the trench to dry in the warm spring winds. You had to go back later and turn them, and then when they were properly dried, you [...] took them back to the croft to build your great, humpbacked peat stack, herringboned for drainage. Once properly dried, the peats became impervious to the rain, and would fuel your fire through-out the long winter. (May, 2011: 175)<sup>3</sup>

However, as mentioned, peat has preserving qualities, which is perhaps why Lockwood has his disturbing dream about Cathy as a ghost-child, buried beside the moor. The first properly documented account of a bog body comes from County Down in Ireland in 1781 (Glob, 1969: 103). Glob's research is centred in Denmark, but he also gives the data on how many bog bodies have been found in the United Kingdom: "England and Wales with 41, Scotland with 15, and Ireland with 19" (1969: 101). Many of the bodies have been confused with recent murder victims, and it is only through carbon dating that the actual age of the bodies can be assessed. However, many of Glob's conclusions are that the bog, men and women, were ritually murdered and sacrificed to Mother Earth and to other fertility gods.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This quotation from *The Black House* (2011) highlights the uncanny side of peat and has thus become a motive in contemporary detective fiction due to the lack of decay associated with it and the discovery of "bog people," or maybe recent murder victims.

<sup>4</sup> Glob's research, in particular the findings of The Tollund Man in 1950 and The Grauballe Man in 1952 in Danish peat bogs became an inspiration for Seamus Heaney (1939-2013). He used these mummified bodies, with signs of ritual sacrifice, as a way of exploring Irish national identity, the Gaelic past, memory, and violence.

In Glob’s research, bodies have been found in peat bogs, almost intact, after thousands of years, with pieces of their clothing, dating back to the Bronze Age. Local communities are disturbed by the uncanny effect of what seems to be a recently murdered victim and call the police to then find out through archaeologists that the body has in fact lain in the bog for about two thousand years. They associated these bodies with missing people and unsolved murders. The strange brown colouring of their skin caused more disconcertion and questions. Carole Johnstone (2023), a contemporary Scottish author, describes the bog people in her novel *The Black House* in the following terms: “Bodies buried in peat bogs keep their internal organs and skin for tens of *thousands* of years. You can see their wrinkles, the fucking expression on their faces. Which can be pretty freaky considering plenty were sacrificed” (118). Thus, there is an intermingling between the “real” and the unknown. The past comes to haunt the present creating a sensation of uncertainty, of the uncanny. To quote Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle (1999), it is “making things *uncertain*: it has to do with the sense that things are not as they have come to appear through habit and familiarity, that they may now challenge all rationality and logic” (37).

This article proposes examining three English novels written by female writers: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë, and *Jamaica Inn* (1936) by Daphne du Maurier. The first two have attracted much critical analysis—the latter not so much. The analysis will focus on “the mingling of character and landscape” (Ackroyd, 2004: 345), in particular the moorlands of Yorkshire and Cornwall. Although they are written in different centuries, the 19th and the 20th, they have many similarities. One of the various aspects that unite these three authors is the fondness for the setting, in particular the regions that share the landscape of the sublime moorlands of Yorkshire and Cornwall, respectively. Gothic landscapes are generally desolated, isolated, and threatening, but they can also be sublime. In *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Edmund Burke (2005) argues that “Greatness of dimension is a powerful cause of the sublime” (147) and it is found in nature, but also in rambling old castles or mansions. In these novels the vast and infinite wilderness creates a sense of awe, fear, and terror; however, it also creates a sense of freedom.

In her biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Elizabeth Gaskell (1997) describes the “background of dun and purple moors” (12). There is a link which the Brontës

share with Du Maurier: Cornwall. The Brontë sisters' mother came from Cornwall (and lost all her belongings in a shipwreck), and it has been argued that Daphne du Maurier shifts the Yorkshire moors of the nineteenth century to her beloved adopted county in the Southwest of England. The moors are described as wild, but sublime: "hills crowned with wild, bleak moors—grand, from the ideas of solitude and loneliness which they suggest" (Gaskell, 1997: 13). On the one hand, all deal with either domestic violence or prohibition, claustrophobia, boundaries, locked rooms, secrets, and revenge. On the other, ghosts, whether imaginary or real, haunt all three novels. The moors, sometimes personified, are fundamental in creating a sense of space, of the sublime, of freedom, but also of danger and ghostly presences. At the end of *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly says "the country people would swear on their Bible that he *walks*" (E. Brontë, 2003: 336), in reference to Heathcliff. He is not alone in his wanderings in his afterlife. A young boy with his sheep says: "They's Heathcliff and a woman yonder, under t' Nab" (2003: 336). This article will focus on haunting, on the moors, the weather, and the peatlands.<sup>5</sup>

The three novels start in late Autumn and the settings are harsh, inhospitable, and isolated. Weather defines the mood from the very beginning and foreshadows what is to come. Both *Jane Eyre* and *Jamaica Inn* start on a dark, wet November afternoon. The title of *Wuthering Heights* shows just how nature shapes the house itself, standing high on the moor: "'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adverb, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather" (E. Brontë, 2003: 4). However, more importantly, it moulds the inhabitants of the strongly built house. They are rough and with strange sounding names: Hindley, Hareton, and Heathcliff. Heathcliff is the most enigmatic character in the novel. He spans the two different generations, acquires both dwellings which are the focus of the novel (*Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*), and shifts in between reality and an unworldly existence, "lost in the land of ghosts" (Punter & Byron, 2004: 213). In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar (2000) argue that "Heathcliff's character tests the boundaries between human and animal, nature and culture, and in doing so proposes a new definition of the demonic" (293). Heathcliff's origins are

<sup>5</sup> This, I think, is a new approach to the Brontë sisters and Daphne du Maurier. There is no mention of peat, nor to moorland, for example, in *The Oxford Companion to the Brontës* (Alexander & Smith, 2018).



obscure. He was brought home to Wuthering Heights as an orphan child, picked up off the streets of Liverpool by old Mr. Earnshaw. He is the only character without a surname, something that becomes blatantly obvious after his burial beside Cathy next to the moor, where his headstone lies. This lack of surname also ties in with the notion of identity which he has to forge for himself. His name comes from the land itself, from the heath, a low lying infertile and acidic shrubland. He is at one with nature and his passion cannot be contained by social constraints. He is free on the moors, just like Emily Brontë herself, who suffered homesickness when she was away from her beloved moors. Elizabeth Gaskell (1997) quotes from a letter written by Charlotte Brontë: “My sister Emily loved the moors [...] She found in the bleak solitude many and dear delights; and not the least and best-loved was—liberty. Liberty was the breath of Emily’s nostrils; without it she perished” (104). Charlotte Brontë’s own words used to describe Emily seem to be a mirror of Heathcliff’s own character: Emily is “that free, wild, untameable spirit, never happy nor well but on the sweeping moors that gathered around her house” (Gaskell, 1997: 111).

Heathcliff is an in-between and is described in contemptuous and supernatural terms—among others, a gypsy brat, a devil, a mad dog, a ghoul, and a vampire. When he first arrives at the house he is left on the landing on the stairways, emphasising his in-betweenness from the very beginning, and Nelly, the second narrator, can only call him *it*, thus dehumanizing him. Likewise, Jane Eyre sees herself as an “it” when she looks at herself in the mirror when she is shut into the red-room. Heathcliff, in his otherworldly state, senses that Cathy is with him, both physically and spiritually. As Punter and Byron (2004) argue, the novel constantly “questions, transgresses or attempts to dissolve boundaries, boundaries between self and other, nature and society, barbaric and civilized, natural and supernatural” (213). These boundaries surpass the limits between life and death. Heathcliff feels that Cathy must be in Wuthering Heights. He recalls, in the words of Nelly, “when I slept in her chamber [...] I closed my eyes, she was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room” (E. Brontë, 2003: 290), which parallels Lockwood’s second dream, mentioned in the first paragraph. She drifts off the moors, on a cold snowy night, to ask to be let in as Catherine Linton.

In *Jane Eyre*, the protagonist travels in search of her own identity, which I will discuss in the following paragraphs. Although there is no explicit mention of peat,

the moors are where she changes, where she decides to try and survive on the local berries. As mentioned, the narrative starts on the dark November afternoon. It starts with a series of negatives, where Jane is sitting in a window corner-seat, hidden behind a red curtain. She is at a threshold, between enclosure and freedom—an in-between, a dependant. After being bullied by her cousin, who throws the book that she is reading, which talks about the “death-white realms” (C. Brontë, 1999: 4) of the Arctic, and which cuts her forehead, she is locked up in the red-room where her uncle had died. It is in this room that she believes that she senses her uncle’s ghost, something that haunts her for the rest of her life at times of crisis. When glancing at the mirror, in which she had already seen herself as a phantom “it”, she remembers tales that she had been told: “I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed” (C. Brontë, 1999: 11). She then senses that she feels the ghost of her deceased uncle and screams. The theme of doubles becomes apparent, and the boundaries between reality and unreality are dissolved through mirrors and windows. The mirror reflects Jane Eyre’s lack of identity. Does she really see herself? Windows represent a threshold between the inner and outer spaces. In *Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood grasps Cathy’s ghostly arm and rubs it on the broken windowpane, in the panelled room. It is in this same room where Heathcliff finally dies and where the divide between the inside and the outside, between dream and reality, and between life and death breaks down.

After the episode in the red room, Bessie, the family’s nanny, sings her a ballad which can be seen as an allegory of Jane’s own life.<sup>6</sup> It is supposed to be a comfort to Jane, but it describes the allegorical journey that Jane will take to find her own identity, as Jane Eyre. Each stanza repeats the line “the poor orphan child” (C. Brontë, 1999: 16), which I understand to be Jane herself. She is the poor orphan, the in-between who later travels from Gateshead to Lowood school, to Thornfield, to Marsh End – Moor House, via the moors where she “seek[s] her breast and asks repose” (1999: 285) from Mother Nature, and finally to Fearnside, where she finds Mr. Rochester, now

<sup>6</sup> Bessie is a character apparently based on Tabby, the Brontë’s nursemaid who told them stories by the fire, based on oral tradition from Northern England, including imps, fairies, and the gytrash, which is a shapeshifter and is part of Yorkshire folklore. Jane Eyre thought that she saw one on her first encounter with Mr. Rochester but realises that it is a horse.



blinded.<sup>7</sup> However, she is no longer a dependent, but Jane Eyre; she has found herself and can now accept Mr. Rochester on her own terms, not as a façade. In the ballad’s fourth stanza Bessie sings: “Ev’n should I fall o’er the broken bridge passing, / Or stray in the marshes, by false lights beguiled” (16). This forewarns Jane of her future on her road never travelled, where the roads “stretch out east, west, north and south—white, broad, lonely; they are cut in the moor, and the heather grows deep and wild to their very verge” (C. Brontë, 1999: 285).

In *Jane Eyre*, the false lights are her saviour. After spending a couple of nights roaming the wilds of a certain ----shire, she sees lights which guide her to safety to Marsh End. However, she has her doubts whether the lights are “*ignis fatuus*” (C. Brontë: 1999: 292) or the will o’ the wisps, ignited by the peatbogs through which she is travelling. Peat is associated with the supernatural. The oily nature of peat (and thus so useful for heating) means that it can catch light very easily. Will o’ the wisps, elves, fairies, and trolls lurk in the depth of the marshes, luring unaware travellers into the peat bog. Glob (1969) cites the case of a female bog body, found in Huldre Fen in Denmark. *Huldre*, in Danish, is both a fairy and a troll. On the one hand, very beautiful, alluring and enticing, but on the other hand, hollow and dangerous, bewitching and spell-binding travellers (Glob, 1969: 79). However, in her journey towards self-discovery, the lights are fortunately those of Moor House, offering salvation and food. Nevertheless, beforehand nature and the boglands are her home, a place where she can come to terms with her own identity as a social outcast. She becomes one with Mother Nature: “Nature seemed to me benign and dry and warm, good; I thought that she loved me, outcast that I was” (C. Brontë, 1999: 285-286).

Finally, I move from Yorkshire to Daphne du Maurier’s Cornish Gothic. *Jamaica Inn* tells the story of Mary Yellan, who, after the death of her mother, travels from the coast to a hostile and unknown land for her to be with her Aunt Patience. The novel takes place around the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1815). After a long carriage ride that metaphorically foresees what is to come, she arrives at Jamaica Inn, an Inn

<sup>7</sup> The names of the houses through which she passes are relevant. I think that they reflect her destiny. She starts imprisoned in Gateshead and then literally in the red room. The first place is Gateshead, a place of man-made enclosure. However, the final four places are associated with nature. Thornfield foreshadows what is to come: the thorns that are to be her pleasure and then pain. The end of her pilgrimage is at the end of the marsh, beckoned by the lights of Moor House

located in the middle of Bodmin moor. The journey takes place on a grey day in late November, where the cold rain lashes against the horse-driven carriage.<sup>8</sup> Silence reigns when she tells her fellow passengers and the driver her destination. There are hints that she should not go to the Inn, just like the warnings that Jonathan Harker receives on his journey to Transylvania.<sup>9</sup> On her journey into the unknown the pouring rain mirrors her own personal emotions and tears after the loss of her mother. The weather sets the scene for what is to come. Mary reflects upon the landscape. The trees are bent by the wind, and she believes that landscape shapes the peoples' characters. They must also be twisted, like the trees: "Their minds would be twisted, too, their thoughts evil, dwelling as they must amidst marshland and granite, harsh heather" (Du Maurier, 1962: 17).<sup>10</sup> She soon finds out that landscape does indeed shape character. On arrival at Jamaica Inn, she is let in by her unknown Uncle, Joss Merlyn. He leers at her like the wolf in Charles Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood". She is introduced into a world of domestic violence, and into the world of peat: "The kitchen was heavy with peat-smoke. It crept up to the ceiling and into its corners, and hung about the air like a thin blue cloud. It stung Mary's eyes, and explored her nostrils, and lay upon her tongue" (Du Maurier, 1962: 22). She later tastes the natural water that has seeped through peat land and is surprised by the freshness of the water that she draws from the rustic water-trough: "it was unlike any water she had drunk before, better, queer, with a lingering peat taste like the smoke from the turf fire in the kitchen" (1962: 34). Nonetheless, that same peat is perhaps where her uncle's brother drowned and lies buried, lost in the marshes.

Jamaica Inn is isolated and sits in the middle of Bodmin moor, a boggy area, but also with high slabs of granite, called tors in Cornwall. In the novel the tors are personified. They represent the ancient Celtic past, and they await sacrifice to be given to the Old Gods. However, between the tors is the sublime moor which

<sup>8</sup> The setting recalls Jane Eyre sitting at the window-seat in the Reed's drawing-room, at the beginning of Charlotte Brontë's novel of the same name, on a November day when "the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating" (C. Brontë, 1999: 3). Likewise, it is a novel of self-discovery and learning for the female protagonist.

<sup>9</sup> Victor Sage (1988) states that the "paradigm of the horror-plot is the journey from the capital to the provinces" (8).

<sup>10</sup> Heather is a very distinctive plant, with a purple hue, which flowers in July-September, generally, and grows on peat moors. Its purple hue gives a very distinctive view to hills and is home to special birds, including plover, pheasant, and grouse.

stretches out towards the sea and where the divide between sea and sky is blurred. It is treacherous, with deceiving bog islands that lie between the solid land and the “little patches of slate-coloured water” (Du Maurier, 1962: 102). To navigate these moors local knowledge is needed. Even the cattle tread “the firm ground, and with inborn knowledge they avoided the tufted, tempting grass that was not grass at all, but soggy marsh that sighed and whispered” (1962: 40). An analogy is created between the moors and the sea. In the novel, they seem to intertwine in the sublimity of the setting: “the dark moor stretched out on either side, lapping the road like a desert” (1962: 212). This refers to Bodmin moor, isolated from the local towns by the high road that snakes through the moor. The geographical location sets the scene for the action, between moor and the coast.

*Jamaica Inn* tells the disturbing history of Cornwall’s violent past of smugglers and wreckers. They used the rough coastal scenery of the Southwest coast of England to commit their crimes, which in the novel includes murder, robbery, domestic violence, and almost rape. It works almost as a detective story in which Mary uncovers the mystery of Jamaica Inn and its owner: her Uncle Joss. At first, she thinks that it is just smuggling, but later finds out that the group of men who meet at Jamaica Inn are wreckers. The wreckers used a “false light” (Du Maurier, 1962: 129) to beckon lost ships to land. The ships, who are personified in the novel, believed that they were finding a safe harbour, but they were smashed to smithereens below the coastal cliffs. These are very different lights to those seen by Jane Eyre. Mary herself has her own memories of shipwrecks from her childhood: “she saw a great white ship like a bird rolling helplessly in the trough of the sea” (Du Maurier, 1962: 120) and later heard that it had sunk with all on board.<sup>11</sup> The horror haunts her but then crawls its way into her present. Joss himself, when drunk, recalls the trauma of what he had done: “I have dreams, nightmares [...] I’ve killed men with my own hands, trampled them underwater, beaten them with rocks and stones” (1962: 118). These ships and their crew lie in the depths of the sea as skeletons, preserved, rather like the bodies that lie

<sup>11</sup> Although this article does not focus on bird imagery, it is a common theme between *Jamaica Inn*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Wuthering Heights*, whether it be to denote a character’s personality, freedom, or enclosure, or the variety of birds inhabiting peat lands. Jane Eyre starts with the protagonist reading Berwick’s *History of British Birds* and describes the “death-white realms” (C. Brontë, 1999: 4) of the North Pole which she finds in the vignettes and resonates with Lockwood’s journey in the snow.

in peatland. Joss's brother lies in Bodmin Moor; Cathy, Heathcliff, and Edward lie in the Yorkshire moors. Jane Eyre sleeps on the moor, finding peace from society.

The past echoes in the present. In *Jamaica Inn* nature is personified: "There was a wind here that whispered in the stones and stirred the heather; there was a breath [...] that blew upon the surface of the altar slabs" (Du Maurier, 1962: 253). The altar slabs are the tors awaiting a sacrifice from the druid times. The heath is what inspires the characters to embrace nature and transgress boundaries. They give a feeling of freedom, away from the restraints of society, a place where taboos are broken, where the sense of being encaged or imprisoned is broken free.<sup>12</sup> Even though in *Jane Eyre* the focus is on the different houses where she lives, she longs for freedom. After her spell-binding encounter with the "Gytrash" and Mr. Rochester, she writes, "I did not like re-entering Thornfield. To pass its threshold was to return to stagnation" (C. Brontë, 1999: 101), a theme which unites all these novels is the geographical remoteness of the setting, but also a lack of understanding.<sup>13</sup> Mary does not understand the warnings that she is given on her journey to Jamaica Inn. Approaching the moor, she finds herself in a different world: "As she peered through the misty window of the coach she looked out upon a different world from the one she had known only a day's journey back" (Du Maurier, 1962: 8)

Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights* is an outsider. He is from a city and does not understand the customs of rural Yorkshire. He does not understand the dangers of the moors, of the peat bogs, of the inclement weather. On his first visit to Wuthering Heights, he confuses everything: for example, he confuses a sack of dead rabbits with some live cats, and he believes that Heathcliff is his soul mate. On the return from his second visit to the Heights, he could have easily lost himself on the moor in the four miles between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, exacerbated by his lack of local knowledge of the geography and to the snowstorm. He remarks that he recalls "a line of upright stones [...] daubed with lime on purpose to serve as guides in the dark [...] all traces of their existence had vanished" (E. Brontë, 2003: 31) in the snow.

<sup>12</sup> There is a constant reference to birds in the above novels. Heathcliff and Cathy roam the wilderness of the Yorkshire moors, and, in the second generation, Cathy finds birds eggs. In *Jane Eyre* there are constant references of being in a cage, such as her declaration for freedom from Mr. Rochester.

<sup>13</sup> Another theme that unites these three novels is that of orphanhood. *Jane Eyre*'s main premise is her identity; in *Wuthering Heights*, it is Heathcliff who is described as an "it" and as a "gypsy brat". In *Jamaica Inn*, Mary has lost both of her parents and is at the mercy of her Aunt and Uncle.

Glob (1969: 148) in fact documents a fatal accident that happened in England in 1675: a girl and a peasant were drowned in a bog during a snowstorm. They were discovered and then buried again in the same year, but in the bog. The two bodies were unearthed twenty-nine years later, quite fresh.<sup>14</sup> It is rather similar to Heathcliff’s petition to the sexton to unearth Cathy’s grave at the edge of the moor where he sees her face after eighteen years: “I saw her face again— it is hers yet” (E. Brontë, 2003: 288). After her death he cries at Nelly: “May she wake in torment! [...] Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! [...] haunt me [...] I know that ghosts *have* wandered the earth” (2003: 169).

The almost necrophiliac relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff is transgressive and blurs the boundaries between life and death. As mentioned previously, they are seen wandering the moors after their death. It could be argued that their bodies do not decompose due to the peaty soil in which they lie beside each other. However, their haunting goes beyond that, but maybe they have found peace at last in their torturous relationship.

To conclude, all three novels share a search for identity which is defined by nature. The peaty moors shape individual identities. Despite her sadness, Jane Eyre feels at one with Mother Earth in her journey towards Moor House. In *Jamaica Inn*, Bodmin Moor offers a place of solace and freedom and represents a connection with Cornwall’s Celtic past. In *Wuthering Heights*, the moors are the resting place for Cathy and Heathcliff, and it is there where they can wander in their afterlife. These novels emphasize the importance of crossroads, whether they be between life and death, physical or metaphorical. None of the protagonists take the man-made road when they want freedom; they look toward the natural and sublime landscape where they can find their identity.

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<sup>14</sup> The couple’s bodies were then displayed at the annual fair until 1716.

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