

An Ecofeminist Study of Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)

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Abstract - The Victorian novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), which looks upon the movement from a certain environment by the main character, is investigated in this study. The female protagonist goes through various incidents with different female and male characters which ultimately forms her identity and way of thinking. This study argues by using ecocritical theories that nature or its absence can have a great effect on a person. Through using Lawrence Buell's five-dimensional phenomenology the significance of place is analyzed in this book. This is followed by the application of the ecofeminist dualism theory of Val Plum Wood which reveals the relation between male and female characters and its development throughout the story. The aim of combining these two theories is to examine the effect a place has on the relationship between the two genders. The result of the analysis shows that female characters are mostly attached or long for rural environments, in contrast to male characters who adapt better in urban places. It is also concluded that the male characters change their attitude to women according to their place of habitat. While nature offers them a calmer mindset and better conduct, it is analyzed that the city makes them harsher in their personality.

Keywords: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Androcentricism, Ecofeminism, Patriarchy, Wilderness

I. INTRODUCTION

Nature has always played a role in defining human identity. The impact of the environment on a human being can lead to a difference in behaviour between those living in the city and the countryside (Karimov et al., 2024). Not only can this mean a general change in attitude, but a closer look can reveal a specific change in gender behaviour towards surroundings and each other. This type of critical look, called ecofeminism, states that "it is in relationships with others, human and nonhuman, that our identity is formed" (Kostkowska, 2013). This process of identity formation has been looked upon by many researchers through a scientific lens, but it is also possible to use the same perspective on a book and to use it to portray literary reality.

This type of research is especially worthwhile for works of older periods, where it is harder to get accurate information on the lives of people. Such a novel that speaks on the life of different characters interacting with their surroundings is Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). This study focuses on the change of the female protagonist in her move to another type of environment as we follow her struggles to

cope with new habitats, and how the male characters assist, or aggravate, her journey. This will be done aided by the works of the theorists Lawrence Buell and Val Plumwood.

II. SECTION ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Sources Related to *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)

Anne Brontë has a distinctive style of writing commented on in the article "Cultural Reformation and Cultural Reproduction in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*" (Poole, 1993). Her narrative style is examined, including the way she employed the concept of gender in her work. Poole mentions that "Brontë, as a protofeminist author, writes from a traditionally male perspective, bestowing a regressive kind of attention upon her heroine". This is noteworthy for Helen, the main character, who cares about how Gilbert, the male protagonist, looks at her. Even though the three men in the story seem contrasted, they reveal "an embarrassing similarity". None of them turn out to be ideal, and they all show some signs of corruption.

Corruption is also found in the analysis of the female voice in (Carnell, 1998) article titled "Feminism and the Public Sphere in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*". Helen's role is found to be merely supportive of the men, which in turn silences her voice and can be seen as a "self-sacrifice" that many women had to make. In the same article, there is a reference to how the "'toiling, striving' city men might visit the country to engage in philosophical dialogues about beauty or moral worth". This concept is not much commented on in the article itself, but through applying the ecocritical theory in this research, one can understand how the rural countryside affects city men (Pur et al., 2018).

Helen's life is not only affected by suitors but also by her brother Frederick. O'Toole, (1999) uses this topic in her article "Siblings and Suitors in the Narrative Architecture of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*". She writes how these men can change the identity of Helen and her emotional feelings. For a more thorough discussion of the patriarchal power that both of Helen's husbands, Arthur and Gilbert, play in her life (Diederich, 2003) article "The Art of Comparison: Remarriage in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*" can be used. She compares in this article the two men and the

role they play in Helen's life and shows how in both instances they display abusive characteristics.

Different instances in which the environment has played a role in the story can be found in the thesis *Dwelling and the Woman Artist in Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Lupold, 2008). This ecocritical application of the book has proved an especially important source for this research in that it contains many arguments that are relevant to the same aim which this research attempts to achieve. Helen's relation to nature and the effect of the change in place that she goes through is commented on. It is discussed how nature has affected the characters' attitudes and finds that "Throughout the novel, Helen seems to find liberation when she is engaging in artistic pursuits in the natural environment, but she also finds solace and comfort in natural spaces as a respite from the enclosure and violence of her abusive domestic life."

1.2. Sources Related to Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a recent study that has grown in the last century, and that has been defined (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996) in the important anthology of American ecocriticism *The Ecocriticism Reader*, as being the "study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Neranjani, 2020).

Being a pioneer of ecocriticism and having written many works involving ecocriticism, Lawrence Buell counts as a valuable theorist for this research, and two of his books serve as an important source. In his earlier work *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001), he discusses the environmental writings of various American writers throughout history. In the analysis of the nineteenth century, he concludes that "Early industrial-era writers were nonetheless more likely than otherwise to take nature's part reflected uneasiness about the changing balance of power between humanity and nature" (2001). These writers believe that human beings have the capability of disrupting nature's course.

Buell's later book *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) has proven to be even more helpful in analyzing the specified novel from this environmental perspective, in that it provides guidelines for approaching literary texts environmentally, noting that "Environmental criticism arises within and against the history of human modification of planetary space, which started in remote antiquity but has greatly accelerated since the industrial revolution" (2005) (Saidov et al., 2024).

Marland, (2013) article "Ecocriticism" can be used to get a look at the roots of this theory and a clear list of different critics and their viewpoints. This is important because "we are living in a time of environmental crisis that requires us to reassess with some urgency our modes of being in the world". This crisis has been seen as being the result of human culture and its ethical system. Ecocriticism is therefore used to raise awareness among mankind and to "give emphasis on removing the ego-consciousness man" (Mishra, 2016).

1.3. Sources Related to Ecofeminism

The ecocritical theory is a broad field of study, and many different divisions grew out of it, one of them is ecofeminism. For this research, the focus will be on this specific theoretical angle, discussed in an essential source, *Ecofeminism* (Gaard, 1993). Theory and practice are linked here together in discussing human/nature dualism. More importantly, it also speaks about the androcentric premise, in which the "association of women, nature, and earth" is set against "the idea that Man is autonomous or independent from both nature and community". This idea is the key argument for which this study works.

The main source which will provide the theoretical ideology of this research is *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Plumwood, 1993). Plumwood wrote many works discussing ecofeminism, but it is in this book that her ideas are placed in a framework that is closely related to the purpose of this research. "The connection between women and nature and their mutual interiorization is by no means a thing of the past and continues to drive, for example, the denial of women's activity" (Hassan & Ehsan, 2015). One of these activities is that she is put in the background, as can be said about Helen in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). Also, the dualistic structure mentioned in the previous source is here elaborated on to show how western thought contrasts between different concepts, like culture/nature, human/nature and male/female. This contrast is found in the selected novel for this study in that there is a clear dualism between the characters and their surroundings, as well as between the men and the women they interact with (Beizae & Suzani, 2019).

An important text that has to be mentioned, and which also contributed to the research of this study, is *Ecofeminism* (Mies & Shiva, 2014). The relation between women and nature is discussed in it, noting that "Wherever women acted against ecological destruction or/and the threat of atomic annihilation, they immediately became aware of the connection between patriarchal violence against women, other people and nature". Working from this perspective, several instances throughout history are mentioned in which women suffered together with nature. Even though literary works are not explicitly mentioned, this book is helpful in its application to fictional writing and thus can be used in analyzing *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848).

III. SECTION TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1. Place

'Place' is a term that takes importance in the study of ecocriticism. A certain place could affect certain feelings in a person, and in turn, it creates a reaction in that person to this place. Buell, (2001) noticed that the "Environment is not an 'other' to us" but "part of our being". The idea of place-connectedness is related to environmental concerns and needs to be understood to be able to have a better picture of ecocriticism. This, however, has only been the case as of the

end of the twentieth century and has since been growing in interest.

The term 'place' is not easy to define, as it involves a physical site as well as an ideological meaning (Dreese, 2002). Each person could look at places in a different manner according to their points of view and circumstances. This look is also not fixed, and changes with one's changes. With each look, a person could notice new things about a certain place. Although many have difficulties in fully understanding what 'place' means, attempts are made to create a practical conception of this term.

One attempt is made by Lawrence Buell whose thoughts are one of the main theories behind this research. In his 2005 book, Buell elaborates more on the concept of 'place', and this elaboration starts with a differentiation between 'space' and 'place'. These two terms are both generally well-known and could be mixed up. Yet, their meaning can be perceived to be different. The first one has a topographical meaning and is more general, whereas the second term entails not only physical markers but also social ones. A person could be attached to a place rather than a space (Buell, 2005). In this study, 'place' is more important in the analysis of the novel and the characters' attachments to their environment.

Buell, (2005) created a five-dimensional phenomenology of place-attachment, which can be used to understand how a certain character is related to the place s/he lives in, or used to live in:

- The first dimension is when someone has a strong emotional identification with one's place. People used to live near or in their workplace, which makes them emotionally related to it. They could have a fear of the unknown as almost their whole life was spent near their homes.
- With modernization, more and longer travel was needed. Nowadays, many people work far from home and might not return for long periods. Hence, several place attachments could appear, as one for example might be attached to both his own home and his second place farther away.
- Imagination could also create a dimension of place-attachment. Certain tales and media could create a vision of longing and loyalty in one's mind, without having ever been there. For example, one could care more about Africa or Palestine than about his homeland.
- A temporal dimension is also one of the possible place-attachments. This is particularly the case for those who have been travelling a lot since a young age. Their original home could be used as an example for all the other places they are going to live in. Every other place will thus be mentally compared with their previous place(s).

- The final dimension consists of the history of one's place for it always changes. To attach oneself fully to a certain place, it is also needed to know the full history of this place.

Place is a concept that plays a role in almost all writings, though its importance differs from work to work. It could be found to be just filling a gap in the background, but as for the novel in this study, it has a greater impact on the storyline. The female character changes her place more than once throughout the book. These changes have effects on her life, as well as on the lives of the surrounding characters

2.2. Dualism

Since ancient times, the concept 'dualism' has formed a large part of the mindset and culture of large groups of people. The elements that a dualistic structure contains have changed and evolved throughout time and continue to do so. This concept involves two terms that are put opposite of each other in contrasting pairs. Dualism is a major form of oppression of different kinds of creatures, albeit the male/female and human/nature are the most important ones in this study. Other pairs include culture/nature, reason/nature, mind/body and reason/emotion (Plumwood, 1993). The words on the left side of the opposition are usually associated with men and are given superiority over the right side which has often been connected to women and inferiority.

The Features of Dualism

Several features characterize the concept of dualism and are listed by the ecofeminist Val Plumwood in five divisions. The first feature encompasses the act of backgrounding and denying the importance and need for the other half of the binary opposition by the dominant member. Acknowledging the need for the other gender threatens the superior feeling that a man has. This can be noticed in the way women's tasks are often regarded as insignificant and natural tasks which do not require any skills. Therefore, the real essential achievements do not include a woman's traditional work such as raising children and doing the housework, but rather a male's tasks outside of the home (Plumwood, 2002).

Radical exclusion is the second feature that allows the left side of the dual pair to have reasons for his treatment of the other. It magnifies the differences that exist and, in this way, permits power to be put on only one side. In terms of gender, men are often defined as being intellectual, competitive, and active while a woman is measured as submissive, passive, and intuitive (Plumwood, 1993). These characteristics increase the distance between the two genders even more.

Not only are these differences noted, but also a special focus is given to conceive the right side as having a lack and being a negative contrast to the dominant side. This feature is the third one on Plumwood's list which she calls the feature of incorporation. A woman, for instance, is mentioned in society for all the things that she 'lacks', which are in turn successfully owned by the man. These differences are

perceived as a reason for inferiority (Plumwood, 2002), while the male's characteristics become the norm and give them a reason to dominate.

This feature is followed by the characteristic of instrumentalism through which the lower side is viewed as an instrument and object to the dominant side. Its needs and purposes are neglected, while the superior member is being served according to his wishes. A good wife and a good slave are only being mentioned as 'good' according to their usefulness to the husband or master .

The last substantial characteristic that creates a dual relationship is stereotyping. The diversity that exists inside an inferiorised group is ignored, and its members are not perceived as each having unique individual characteristics. Women, about the topic of this study, are often assumed by men to be all alike. They are all put into one stereotype, while each female being could differ completely from the other one (Plumwood, 1993) .

These five characteristics all work together to keep the image of dualism between two groups intact. To escape such a dualistic framework, the acceptance of both continuity and differences between the two groups is needed (Plumwood, 1993). One of the roles that feminists have is recognizing the existence of a dualistic separation and working towards removing it. Ecofeminists also believe that the oppression of nature is closely connected with the oppression of women. Thus, they try to give women their voice and make them have an individual image rather than having them belong to an otherized group.

IV. SECTION THREE: ANALYSIS

3.1. The Application of Buell's Five-Dimensional Phenomenology

The attachment of the characters to their current or previous residence in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) differs from person to person. Various reasons are present to explain why a certain character has a specific feeling towards his/her place, and this could be explained using the five-dimensional phenomenology of place-attachment that Lawrence Buell described comprehensively in his books .

In the first chapter of the novel, there is a minor character, Gilbert Markham's father, who belongs to the first dimension of the place attachment theory. This dimension refers to the connection of a character to only one place without the need or wish to move or be attached to another place. This is due to his fear of the unknown which makes him prefer to stay in the same place (Buell, 2005). Gilbert is forced to work on his parental farm, as his father does not like him to travel. He disliked his son's ambitions and thought that change was "another word for destruction" (Brontë, 1993). Being a farmer in the same place where he and his father have been working is a job that should be continued with the next

generation. Although the role of Gilbert's father in the story ends here owing to his death, it can still fit into Buell's theory.

In moving to the second dimension, it is found that the characteristics of this dimension are spotted in the character of Mr. Arthur Huntingdon. While the second dimension includes the connection of a person to several places, it might also mean that the attachment does lessen to each of these places (Buell, 2005). This is not always the case, but with Huntingdon, it is perceived that his attachment is not necessarily strong with any of the places he resides in. Together with his wife, he resides most of the year in the rural Grassdale which serves as the place where he can always return and find his mental rest. However, London also plays an important role in his life. In that city, he lives his social life by meeting his friends and doing the things he enjoys most in life, such as drinking alcohol and attending parties.

He usually stays in London for a few months a year, and while his physical and mental health does not stay the same, it is still a place where he likes to be. His wife, Helen, notes that he likes to stay in London more than in his own house. She thinks it is due to his friends whose "tastes and occupations are similar to him" (Brontë, 1993). Nevertheless, towards the end of the book, he decides to stay in Grassdale where he eventually dies. Thus, both Grassdale and London serve as two important places in his life and he feels attached to both of them.

The third dimension, which uses the power of imagination in attaching a character to a place, is not found in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). This novel does not contain a personage that, according to the third dimension, would be yearning to be in a certain environment (Buell, 2001).

Then, the fourth dimension of Buell's theory can be applied to Helen. A place could sometimes only be experienced as a significant place about previous places one has lived. This is usually the case for those who have travelled a lot; these people's sense of familiarity differs from the ones who have only lived in one environment during their entire life (Buell, 2005) .

Helen fits this description, as she has resided in many places during the story. Starting with the rural home of her aunt and uncle in Staningley, she moves to Grassdale Manor with her husband. Meanwhile, she often goes to London and for part of her life, she gets to reside in her childhood home of Wildfell Hall. Although in each place, she is content with her environment, particularly the rural places, she may dislike certain things due to the bad experiences she has been through with her alcoholic husband. However, after her whole story is known by Gilbert, Stanley is the first place where she feels most at ease. She lived there a long time before her marriage and all the problems that came with it; therefore, she has less painful memories in Stanley. The writer attributes her return to this home to her aunt who is living there and with whom she has a close relationship. This

move is requested by Helen (Brontë, 1993), but also by the aunt herself as she mentions that "Helen is attached to the place and me" (Brontë, 1993) .

Though the final dimension is significant and consists of being attached to a place because of its history and the changes it has been in (Buell, 2005), it is not found in this particular novel.

3.2. Patriarchal Features in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)

Brontë's novel was analyzed in the previous sections through an ecocritical lens, which examined the different characters and their attachment to their environment. Before delving deeper into the analysis and applying the ecofeminist approach to it, patriarchal features in the story are first to be analyzed. Patriarchy is seen to be "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1991).

It does not only involve childrearing, though it is a great part of it, rather it is the control of the man over all of the women's labour. Patriarchal social relations can be found everywhere, at schools, churches, clubs, offices, health centres, and the media (Murray, 1995). This androcentric thought, which favours men above all women, was greatly present during Victorian times. Victorian marriage was a sort of patriarchal relation in which a woman was supposed to make her husband comfortable all the time. Self-denial and self-sacrifice were typical features that Victorian women had to possess (Bauer & Ritt, 1979) .

These features were presented in the book through Milicent as a minor female character. While her husband, Ralph, hurts his wife endlessly, she stays an obedient and gentle person. Milicent herself tells Ralph "You don't think it necessary to love your wife: you are satisfied if she can keep your house and take care of your child. But I'm not cross" (Brontë, 1993). She accepts the suffering that she goes through, as long as her husband is comfortable and happy. Earlier in the book a fight erupted between these two characters with the presence of Milicent's brother who kept silent about Ralph's bad behaviour until he was told by Helen to protect his sister. This issue shows how violence was perceived as a normal action between husband and wife, and which no help is needed from someone else .

Only after another female, Helen urged him to handle the situation, did he try to say something to Ralph. As a reply, he was told not to interfere between "me and mine" (Brontë, 1993). The use of these pronouns refers to the sense of possession Ralph feels towards his wife, and how she is not seen as an independent individual, but rather a possessed object that has no rights for herself. Victorian feminists attempted to protest against such a patriarchal power that usually existed in the family, and supported the image of a spousal friendship. They believed that it is both necessary and

possible to have male-female equality in the family as well as in the larger society (Shanley, 1993) .

The relationship between Gilbert and Helen is such a relationship. Even though it is not known how their married life would be, Gilbert's opinion of a good marriage is described to the readers. Through his character, an effort is made to show how a good and healthy relationship can exist, far from the forced rules that were set upon them (O'Toole, 1999). In an early scene, he tells his mother how he believes that in a marriage a man would be happy when his wife is so too, and that he would rather "give than receive" (Brontë, 1993). However, his mother is strongly against this view and believes that the wife's task is to please the husband. She was seen to be a good wife only because of the good dinners she cooked for her husband. Her happiness was to see her husband enjoy the food she offered him, and "that's as much as any woman can expect of a man" (Brontë, 1993).

One of the important roles of a wife was accepting all that her husband did, whether good or bad. She was not allowed to disagree or to have independence. All her property was officially not hers (Diederich, 2003) and until 1870 a wife's earned wages were even thought to be legally her husband's (Murray, 1995). This way she would not be able to possess anything herself. Helen used to own a small amount of money and some painting utensils, with which she hoped to earn money. During an angry act, these were all confiscated by her husband (Brontë, 1993). She was left with only a little money, barely enough to keep her and her son living during her husband's absence .

During the Victorian age, it was not usually accepted that a woman would have a strong opinion, especially not towards strangers (Ellis, 1843). This can be seen in a quotation by Gilbert when he was asked to describe his view on Helen early in the story "A woman liable to take strong prejudices, I should fancy, and stick to them through thick and thin, twisting everything into conformity with her own preconceived opinions – too hard, too sharp, too bitter for my taste" (Brontë, 1993). Despite acting and thinking about women differently, he also believes that a woman should not be too strong in discussing her viewpoints freely regarding some specific topics.

3.3. The Application of Val Plumwood's Dualism Theory

Plumwood's dualism theory, in which the binary opposition between male and female/nature is studied, is the focus of this research. In the previous section, it was seen how through the existence of patriarchal relations, the male characters would regard themselves as superior to the female characters. This can be observed as a form of oppression. However, similar to women, nature could be oppressed as well. This issue creates a dualistic relation. As stated already, dualism can include pairs such as mind/body, reason/nature, male/female and human/nature. Plumwood divided the features of dualism into five divisions .

The first characteristic is the backgrounding of the right side of a dualistic opposition by the left side. Men would always deny their need for women or nature, and disregard their efforts in serving him (Plumwood, 1993). This backgrounding does not only take place by the man, but the wife herself could also act this way and offer her services naturally to her spouse. Helen used to be such a wife, especially during the first period of her marriage. She wished to give all of herself to him, even if he was not decently treating her. She endured her sufferings silently and “attended carefully to his wants and amusements”, as well as her infant’s needs (Brontë, 1993). This act was greatly encouraged by her husband who wanted to get all of Helen’s attendance. Earlier in the book, he is described as a man who wants his wife to wait for him at home, attend to all his needs, minister to his comforts, and even in his absence attend to his interests and wait for his return (Brontë, 1993).

Like women, nature was also not liberated from the feature of backgrounding either. In the novel, the character of Huntingdon enjoys going on shooting trips. During one of these trips, it is mentioned that he would be able to occupy himself with pursuing and destructing partridges and pheasants (Brontë, 1993). The word “destruction” emphasizes how much harm he does to them. Care for the well-being of animals is not to be found in his character. The animals’ feelings are neglected and completely brought to the background by Huntingdon. The most important thing for him is his amusement. It is also mentioned that Huntingdon is not able to occupy himself with shooting before the trip, and instead, he just lies under a tree and pulls his dog’s ears (Brontë, 1993), signifying another act of indifference to animals.

The second feature of Plumwood’s theory is the feature of radical exclusion. Women and nature are considered to be naturally passive and weak, while men are always full of activity and born with intellectuality (Plumwood, 2002). Milicent and Ralph represent a couple in which the female is completely submissive to her husband. She was chosen as a wife for this reason. She states that she loves him “as a wife should do” (Brontë, 1993), regardless of his bad behaviour. Ralph enjoys hurting her when he sees how weak she is, and how she “lies down like a spaniel” at his feet (Brontë, 1993).

This comparison between his wife and an animal refers to the closeness between nature and women, and how a man likens them to each other. Both are regarded to be weak creatures that deserve to suffer under the strong and capable male hands. This suffering is seen even after Milicent sheds her tears for Ralph, as she cries out of shame for his bad behaviour. This issue leads to a violent outburst, for he is unable to regard himself as a shameful person. Thus, he reacts by violently attacking her (Brontë, 1993).

The third feature, called incorporation, focuses on the ‘lacks’ that the right side of a dualistic opposition has in comparison to the left one. This refers to the absence of certain characteristics in the female characters or nature, which in

turn is present in the male characters. This should not necessarily put the right side in a low position, but due to the dualistic thought the man does see himself as being dominant over the other because of this lack. An example of this characteristic is in a quote by Gilbert, in which he states that he was “burying his talent in the earth” (Brontë, 1993). This statement reflects how the earth’s role is hiding the good things from him. The earth, which represents nature, keeps the talent from his sight and thus would make him less strong in his life. Huntingdon also shows the signs of this feature in his treatment towards Helen. Although he finds out how hearing his love stories with his previous girlfriends makes her jealous, he does not stop. Her anger delights him, for he would feel dominant over her. This act is his favourite amusement with which he would spend his days (Brontë, 1993). Helen herself has to endure these pains, for she cannot, as a good wife, react to her husband.

To continue with analyzing the dualism theory, it is noticed that often a certain thought would take a strong place in the mind of men in that they have the right to be superior over all other creatures (Poole, 1993). Nature and women similarly should be there for the service of a man (Plumwood, 2002). This forms “instrumentalism” as the fourth characteristic that Plumwood wrote about, which further explains how binary oppositions work. In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), both animals and women as the members of the right side in a binary opposition are assumed in certain scenes to be serving the men. The young Gilbert goes on a day hunting in the fields and states that he “had succeeded in killing a hawk and two crows” (Brontë, 1993). These animals were killed without a reason, and just for his pleasure. Here the word “succeeded” refers to an accomplishment that he felt was done with this killing.

Another part of the book in which a man feels superior to an animal is when Huntingdon throws a book at his dog, just because the dog refused to come to him. The dog cries piteously and is let out of the room by Helen. She is also the one with whom the dog sought protection just a few lines earlier (Brontë, 1993). The dog realizes how the female member of the house is more merciful towards him, in contrast to his male boss.

The application of the fourth feature can also be found between male and female characters. Not only does the man apply this feature, but a woman could also have a hand in that. Helen gives her happiness up for the pleasure of her husband (Lupold, 2008), and writes in her diary, “I can easily forgive him for loving himself: he likes to be pleased, and it is my delight to please him” (Brontë, 1993). Here, she states herself as an object ready to serve the man whenever he likes.

The fifth and final feature in the binary theory of Plumwood is “stereotyping”, meaning that women and nature could be stereotyped by men and are all seen to be like each other (Plumwood, 1993). Even though Helen differs from other women, and keeps decently treating her husband regardless of his bad behaviour, he still compares her to a bad woman

by calling her a “confounded slut” (Brontë, 1993). After all that she has done for him, and though she is always faithful, regardless she is still being called an unchaste woman, indicating that his view on women is stereotyped in his thought that all women act sexually in an improper way.

Another stereotyping idea he has about women is mentioned in his discussion with Helen. After she utters her dislike about a certain character, he calls it a “mere woman’s antipathy” (Brontë, 1993). Here, Huntingdon also believes that all women think alike. Milicent is also stereotyped in her relationship with Ralph, and called by Huntingdon to be “a pattern to her sex” (Brontë, 1993) because she never complains, and has no will for herself. Her only happiness is felt when her husband is happy .

3.4. *The City vs. the Countryside*

The novel contains several places, the most important ones being London, Grassdale, and Wildfell Hall. Grassdale and Wildfell Hall both represent the countryside. Helen lives in all of these places, and her viewpoint towards them differs according to her experiences. The early part of Helen’s life is spent between her aunt’s home in Stanley and London. The first place is not very important in this study; on the contrary, London plays a central role. This is the place Helen and the other young women in the story go to find a suitable husband. Even though Helen initially enjoys going there, she soon starts to miss home and its freshness due to the city’s constant turbulence and constraint (Brontë, 1993) .

London is the place where she meets Huntingdon. It is also the city that would later often be visited by her husband, and where he is distanced from his wife and nature (Mies & Shiva, 2014). His attitude changes completely when he visits it because of his bad friends and their indulgence in alcohol. In contrast to London, their life in Grassdale is a bit calmer, except when his friends visit them. When he is alone in Grassdale, he gets tired of his idle life and the lack of amusement. (Brontë, 1993). Thus, he often travels to London and stays there for long periods. He does realize what an effect the city can have on a human, and tells his wife his wish for her not to stay there for too long because he does not want her to be “Londonized” or lose the freshness that the countryside offers her (Brontë, 1993) .

The nature that surrounds their house in Grassdale gives comfort to Helen, and she likes it even more than London. Helen regrets knowing that her husband stays in a city full of dust and smoke (Brontë, 1993). So, it is just through coming back home that he will be able to rest his mind. She even allows him to go on a shooting trip, knowing that it won’t be done in a city but in the wild Scotland (Brontë, 1993). However, the best place she lives in is Wildfell Hall which used to be her childhood home, and after all these years, she still longs for it (Dreese, 2002) .

Wildfell Hall lies in the wilderness and is far from other neighbours. Here, Helen can create art in safety and

tranquillity (Lupold, 2008), and without having to be afraid of her husband or be worried about his treatment of her son. For Helen, art is a resolve away from her daily problems, which she can freely do in this new house (Diederich, 2003). Here she both enjoys the nature surrounding her and works in peace. Wildfell Hall is a highly calm place; yet Helen and her neighbours go on an excursion to the sea for an even calmer mind (Brontë, 1993). This shows how much nature is sought after and how beneficial it can be for human beings (Lupold, 2008) .

The role played by nature in the lives of Helen and Gilbert as her neighbour is so big that the symbol of love between them is a rose. She offers it to him, trying to pass with it her warm feelings towards him (Brontë, 1993). With her first husband, such a symbol did not exist. On the contrary, he used to flee from nature and seek the crowded city. Their relationship did not work out well, while the relationship with Gilbert had greater promises .

It is also important to mention the last sentence of the book, which summarizes all of the above-stated points. Gilbert asks his friend to visit him and Helen and thereby leave their “dusty, smoky, noisy, toiling striving city for a season of invigorating relaxation” (Brontë, 1993).

V. CONCLUSION

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848) was analyzed in this research using both the ecocritical and ecofeminist methodologies. The degree of attachment that the characters have towards their environment was analyzed, followed by examining men’s relationship with females and nature. With this information in mind, the analysis ended with comparing the city and the countryside . Having noted the above-mentioned points, it can be concluded that there is indeed a connection between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women in this novel.

It was found that the female protagonist longs for her old life in the calm countryside after having been in the city, and eventually resides far from such a place as Helen moves to the wilderness of Wildfell Hall as her old childhood home. The male characters have opposite thoughts, for Huntingdon keeps travelling back and forth to London, knowing its bad consequences on him. He shows androcentric features in his treatment towards the woman in his life, and towards the environment.

It is also seen that the impact of London on the characters in this novel is completely in contrast with the impact of the rural Grassdale and Wildfell Hall. This influence is analyzed through the use of Buell’s five-dimensional phenomenology of place attachment (2005, 2001). Despite moving between different places, Helen as the protagonist of the novel is mostly attached to the rural environments. The city gives her much pain in the form of her alcoholic husband, while in nature she finds peace. Wildfell Hall becomes her workplace and a safe area to raise her son, which was earlier impossible

with the influence that London and her husband's friends from this city had on her spouse.

Huntingdon is also found to be highly connected to several places at once. In the third section, it is discussed how he applies the second dimension of Buell's theory, and how he is attached to both city and countryside during his life. London is the place where he could spend time doing the things that he enjoys the most, while Grassdale is the place where he could achieve mental rest. In other words, the physical consequences of his choices in London are slowly healed in the natural environment of Grassdale.

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