**The recurrent plot device of confinement, both physical and psychological, as a means of establishing power over others and its consequences in Wuthering Heights are explored within the nineteenth-century social framework of traditional gender roles. The primary instigators of confinement in the novel, Catherine and Heathcliff, exhibit differing gender-related patterns. Catherine primarily views herself in relation to others and her acts of confinement become self-destructive. Whereas Heathcliff, in valuing hierarchy, is destructive of others. Emily Brontë shows that as both Catherine and Heathcliff follow traditional gender roles, neither is able to achieve the communion they had as children together.**

**Even on a casual reading of *Wuthering Heights*, readers are confronted with numerous instances of confinement in the novel: Lockwood, trapped at Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff, locked in the garret as a boy, Catherine,1 who imprisons herself, and Nelly and Cathy Linton, who are held at Wuthering Heights by Heathcliff. In fact, almost the entire novel takes place indoors in the confining rooms of Wuthering Heights or Thrushcross Grange. Furthermore, characters become confined mentally and psychologically as well as literally. The effect is quite stifling.**

**Two early critics, Albert Guerard2 and Dorothy Van Ghent,3 acknowledge the**

**180 Jamie S. Crouse various image patterns throughout *Wuthering Heights*, and they have pointed out the frequent imagery of doors, windows and locks, but neither presents a sustained analysis of the topic. Marjorie Burns also considers the recurring imagery of ‘“fetters,” “chains,” and “dungeons”’ in Emily Brontë’s poetry and the enclosures, barriers, and the series of characters who are exiled or imprisoned in *Wuthering Heights*’ as they exemplify the theme of freedom and its opposite, imprisonment, in her poetry and fiction. Elizabeth Napier considers the topic further in ‘The Problem of Boundaries in *Wuthering Heights*’ in which she claims these boundaries, including walls, windows, hedges, gates, doors and property lines, act as literal reminders of emotional boundaries.**

**A few critics have begun to consider the role of confinement in terms of gender. Carole Gerster argues that the characters in *Wuthering Heights* are locked up and confined by traditional gender roles. She focuses on Lockwood but does show how Catherine Earnshaw also succumbs to expectations of femininity, especially during her imprisonment at the Grange, which becomes stifling to her. An early but important work on the subject of gender relations in *Wuthering Heights*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The* *Madwoman in the Attic*, connects the predominance of confinement, not only to *Wuthering Heights*, but as a recurring phenomenon in the works of nineteenth-century women writers in general, indicative of the woman writer’s feeling of confinement, in a literary world ruled by men.**

**The novel opens with images of confinement that display these differences and set the stage for the importance that confinement will play throughout the story. Lockwood himself is the first to become imprisoned at Wuthering Heights, ostensibly by both Heathcliff and Catherine, which establishes their role in the story as the chief instigators of confinement. Lockwood is trapped at Wuthering Heights when a severe snowstorm has blown in, and Heathcliff will allow no one to guide Lockwood home. Even without a guide, Lockwood attempts to leave on his own but is stopped by Heathcliff’s ferocious dogs. Lockwood orders them to let him out, which shows that he already feels trapped, and he falls into a fit. He writes, ‘I was sick exceedingly, and dizzy and faint; and thus compelled, perforce, to accept lodgings under his roof’ (*WH*, p. 16).22 His use of the word ‘compelled’ reveals that that he is being held there against his will. This naturally relates to Heathcliff’s control of the situation.**

**Catherine’s and Heathcliff’s tendency to exert control by confining others is developed during their childhood because they were controlled and confined by Hindley and Joseph. This can be seen in Catherine’s diary entries that Lockwood reads while in her old bed, in which her writing in the books ‘covered every morsel of blank that the printer had left’ (*WH*, p. 18). Her writing itself is confined to the margins, just as she is marginalized within her own family, a motherless girl in a home dominated by men, and she must strive to create a space for herself.**

**As Catherine and Heathcliff are both controlled as young children, they both develop a need to be in control. As children, though, before either is forced into gender roles, their methods of gaining control are similar, without the necessity of confining anyone. Heathcliff, the petted favourite of Mr Earnshaw, uses this to exert his control over Hindley. He reveals this control most particularly when he blackmails Hindley into trading horses with him by threatening, ‘You must exchange horses with me; I don’t like mine, and if you won’t I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you’ve given me this week, and show him my arm, which is black to the shoulder’ (*WH*, p. 37). Catherine, also as a child, begins to show a need to be in control. Nelly says, ‘In play, she liked, exceedingly, to act the little mistress, using her hands freely, and commanding her companions’ (*WH*, p. 40). Significantly, at this point, Catherine has control over**

**Heathcliff; he ‘would do her bidding in anything’ but only Mr Earnshaw’s ‘when it suited his own inclination’ (*WH*, p. 41). Acting together in what Gilbert and Gubar call an androgynous whole,24 the two children are able to carve out a small piece of power within the household politics.**