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**“Time stagnates here”:
Transgenerational Trauma in Emily Brontë’s
*Wuthering Heights***

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the existence of transgenerational trauma in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Such analysis will be carried out within the framework of Trauma Studies in the expectation of offering a new perspective to this classical novel. To do so, this dissertation is divided into two parts: the first one starts by examining the impact of domestic violence on Heathcliff as well as his unsuccessful attempts to integrate the traumatic experiences in his life. It is this lack of a healthy processing of trauma that makes him turn into the perpetrator of violence in the second generation. The first part also identifies the indicators of transgenerational trauma already present in the Earnshaw family, as to prove that trauma was present even before Heathcliff's arrival. The second part focuses on the second generation and draws a comparison between Heathcliff and Hareton's similar abusive behaviors in order to explore the effects of Heathcliff's violence in Hareton. This section also explores characters like Nelly, Edgar and Catherine Linton and their decisive role in the interruption of the transgenerational repetition of trauma. In fact, it is Catherine —thanks to her healthy upbringing by Edgar and Nelly— the one who increases Hareton's chances of ceasing the cyclic repetition of violence in the Heights, resulting ultimately in a healthier notion of the family.

Key words: Trauma Studies, transgenerational trauma, domestic violence, abuse, education.

Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo de fin de grado es analizar la existencia de trauma transgeneracional en la obra *Cumbres Borrascosas* (1847) de Emily Brontë. Dicho análisis se llevará a cabo dentro del marco teórico de los Estudios de Trauma con la esperanza de ofrecer una nueva perspectiva de este clásico. Para conseguir tal fin, el trabajo está dividido en dos partes: la primera examina el impacto de la violencia doméstica en Heathcliff, así como sus intentos fallidos por integrar las experiencias traumáticas en su vida. Es esta falta de un procesamiento sano de sus traumas lo que le lleva a convertirse en el perpetrador de violencia en la segunda generación. La primera parte también identifica los indicadores de trauma transgeneracional ya existentes en la familia Earnshaw con la intención de demostrar que el trauma ya estaba presente incluso antes de que Heathcliff llegara. La segunda parte se centra en la segunda generación y realiza una comparación entre los comportamientos abusivos de Heathcliff y Hareton, que resultan ser similares, para así examinar los efectos que tiene la violencia de Heathcliff en Hareton. Esta sección también explora los personajes de Nelly, Edgar y Catherine Linton al igual que su rol decisivo en la interrupción de la repetición del trauma transgeneracional. De hecho, es Catherine, gracias a la educación positiva que le brindan Edgar y Nelly, la que aumenta las posibilidades de Hareton de romper con la repetición de violencia cíclica en la novela, lo cual tiene finalmente como resultado una concepción mucho más sana de la familia.

Palabras clave: Estudios de Trauma, trauma transgeneracional, violencia doméstica, abuso, educación.

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1- Introduction

Wuthering Heights (Emily Brontë, 1847) is one of the most famous and literary acclaimed books of all times. As Italo Calvino once said: “A classic is a book that has never exhausted all it has to say to its readers” (5) and this is precisely what happens with *Wuthering Heights*. It is one of those novels that no matter how much time passes, there is always a new way to look at it. Drawing on this premise, the aim of this dissertation is to offer a new and different point of view of such a relevant novel. It is because of its literary richness and capacity to still convey new meanings as time goes by that this work “has collected the most valid and contradictory criticism” (Everitt vii). Especially, in the case of *Wuthering Heights*, it is probably the component of extreme violence what has raised many questions, from the moment of its publication until nowadays. It is for this matter that this dissertation will look closely at the issue of domestic violence¹—a violence that is so vividly present in the novel that the reader, having got used to it after reading for a while, forgets at times about the amount of cruelty present not only among characters but even also in nature itself (Thompson 70). This constant extreme violence is not an isolated issue, but it ultimately results into traumatic experiences for the characters of the novel, with all the consequences that traumas entail in individuals.

My analysis will be framed within the field of Trauma Studies, since it will explore the psychological consequences of such violence on the novel’s characters. The concept of trauma as a psychological affection goes back to the second half of the 19th century, although its study in more depth did not start until the World War I because of the harrowing impact that it had on veterans. Trauma, then, was considered almost exclusively a military affection until the World War II when symptoms of trauma were also detected on civilians. With the impact that the Holocaust had on its victims, there was a renewed need to look closely at the consequences of trauma, although it did not

¹ As Hancock states, it is important to add that “the designation ‘domestic violence’ is a twentieth-century invention. Victorians themselves used other terminology to describe familial abuse, such as ‘wife-beating’ and ‘wife-torture’, an expression made famous by Frances Power Cobbe in her seminal article ‘Wife torture in England,’ published in 1878” (66).

develop as much as it could have because of the need of the population to forget what had happened during the World War II. It was not until the 1970s and 80s with the Vietnam War that there was a demand to acknowledge the consequences of traumatic experiences in war. It is also important to add that during that period the Women's Liberation Movement also had an important role in bringing to the fore the traumatic consequences that domestic and sexual abuse had, especially on women and children. The studies carried out showed that the symptoms produced by the domestic and sexual violence were similar to those caused by the war (Ringel, Shoshana S., and Jerrold R. Brandell 1-5).

It is in that context that Trauma Studies flourished and became an interdisciplinary theory that took the concept of trauma beyond the discourse of psychology and transferred it to disciplines like literature, sociology, and history, to name but a few. In the field of literature, Trauma Studies has had as its main concern the examination of the effects of traumatic experiences and how these have been reflected in different narratives. These studies have normally focused on contemporary literature, especially that related to collective traumatic experiences such as the Holocaust, the two World Wars, the Vietnam War, slavery, 9/11, and so on. This is so because the concept of trauma and its study arose with these historical traumatic events mentioned above. From then on, Trauma Studies started to flourish as a theoretical framework and, as such, it has been mainly applied to contemporary literary works rather than to classics such as *Wuthering Heights*. It is for this reason that this dissertation has as its main aim to look at this novel with new eyes and to take Trauma Studies a bit further into the realm of classics.

More specifically, the novel will be addressed from the perspective of psychology applied to literature because if psychology allows us to have a deeper insight into literature, then, it is worth analyzing it from the psychological point of view. Inside the field of psychology, my analysis will

focus on the concept of the transgenerational² repetition of trauma as a way to deeply understand the element of domestic abuse within the two main families. As Domina Petric states:

Transgenerational trauma is a theory which states that trauma can be transferred from the first generation of trauma survivors to the second and further generations of offspring of the survivors via complex post-traumatic stress disorder mechanisms. [...] Transgenerational trauma is usually present in victims of war, slavery, various types of discrimination and oppression, but it can also be present in dysfunctional families where there is a pattern of transgenerational abuse (1).

It is my contention that by applying psychological studies about the repetition of transgenerational trauma to the novel, some interesting conclusions can be drawn, mainly about the possible existence of transgenerational repetition of trauma in the families of *Wuthering Heights*. Secondly, this paradigm allows us to look at “outsider” figures to the family system of the Heights, such as Edgar Linton, Nelly and Cathy Linton—often overlooked in the long tradition of research about this work, especially Edgar. In this way, my analysis also enables the examination of their power as positive influences for the breaking of the cyclical repetition of trauma. Moreover, it will also address the fact of whether the last generation in the novel, represented by Hareton and Catherine Linton, is able to overcome such a transgenerational repetition of trauma.

In analyzing all these issues, the figure of Heathcliff serves as a pivotal point for the study of both generations in *Wuthering Heights*. Remarkably, if Heathcliff appears as a repository of violence and trauma, it is because there are events and causes that made him repeat the already existing cycle of violence in the family. And yet, Heathcliff is well-known as the main perpetrator of that cycle of violence in the next generation. Although Heathcliff plays an important role in this

² There is not a homogeneous use between the use of ‘transgenerational’ and ‘intergenerational’ trauma. While ‘intergenerational’ is included in the dictionary and ‘transgenerational’ is not, there is a wider tendency among psychological research to use the concept of ‘transgenerational’ trauma rather than ‘intergenerational’; a trend that I adhere to in this dissertation.

dissertation, my analysis will firstly focus on the indicators of precedents that may prove how the transgenerational repetition can be traced back in time, even before the apparition of the characters that partake in *Wuthering Heights*, including Heathcliff. After the analysis of the precedents and the figure of Heathcliff, there will be a study of the consequences of Heathcliff's abusive behavior upon characters of the second generation such as Hareton and Cathy. Together with this, I will address the figures of outsiders as defining characters that contribute to breaking the transgenerational repetition. To conclude, there will be a reflection on whether the cycle has been broken or not, and whether it can actually be known.

2-. Trauma at the Heights: Heathcliff and his Precedents

“Before passing the threshold” (Brontë 4), Lockwood looked up and "detected the date '1500' and the name 'Hareton Earnshaw'" (4) for the first time. In this quote there is an allusion to an element which will be recurrent in the novel; that is, the name and the date carved above the door of the Heights. It could be argued that this is one of the literary evidences that points towards the transgenerational repetition of trauma in the Earnshaw family, even previous to the story told in this novel. This is the first contact that the reader has with the name “Hareton” but it will appear again when Lockwood enters the house and encounters the character himself. As Jerome Bump asserts: “This is an example of transgenerational repetition in the same house for centuries almost beyond the imagination of readers in America, which had just been discovered in 1500” (342). Bump makes reference to the discovery of America in order to set a time frame so that the reader realizes how long this transgenerational trauma has been going on for. Similarly, the name Hareton seems to have been repeated in the family since 1500 and it so happens that the last one left of the Earnshaw family is Hareton, as if he would be the one to end the cycle, although this will be addressed in the second section of this work. This same issue is emphasized several times throughout the novel by Nelly: “Very old, sir, and Hareton is the last of them [of the Earnshaw family]” (Brontë 34); or also

when Nelly recounts the birth of Hareton: “my first bonny little nursling, and the last one of the ancient Earnshaw stock” (64). It is also interesting to remark how Hareton learns to read for the first time looking at this same inscription, as if he learnt who he was and what his identity was through his ancestors. Just like his name defines him, he is also defined by their inherited violence.

Bump suggests that “at *Wuthering Heights* names are simply repeated, as if there were little difference between the generations, as if they kept adopting the same roles and following the same script century after century” (342). In fact, as pointed out by Nelly, Heathcliff is named after a dead child of the Earnshaw family: “Heathcliff; it was the name of a son who died in childhood” (Brontë 38). This same repetition of names happens in the case of names like Catherine; Linton and Heathcliff—both as names and surnames—, as well as the name Hareton. According to Davies, the names are not only repeated, but even the letters inside them seem to be recycled: “the characters’ names contain one another: most of HARETON and the HEATH of Heathcliff is contained in CATHERINE. Two-thirds of CATHERINE is contained in the world HEATHCLIFF” (*Emily* 110). These overlappings of names may reinforce a sense of distressing likeness between characters who should remain different. As is well known, trauma works by repetition, and there is indeed an uncanny repetition in these specific names. At some point, Lockwood even says “time stagnates here” (Brontë 28), and not only when it comes to the repetition of names but also in that of domestic violence that will pass on from generation to generation (Bump 342). Furthermore, the violent act of physical abuse is not only exerted by Hindley, but also by his father Mr Earnshaw, both on to Catherine: “earning for her pains a sound blow from her father to teach her [Catherine] cleaner manners” (Brontë 37), and on to Hindley: “he seized his stick to strike him, and shook with rage that he could not do it” (41). Although domestic violence was a constant in families at that time, this does not mean that the consequences of such violence were lesser, and the constant repetition of abuse throughout the Earnshaw family in *Wuthering Heights* confirms that.

Notably, it is Heathcliff and his role as perpetrator of this transgenerational repetition of violence that most has fascinated literary critics. In this vein, Professor Bowen states: “Heathcliff is one of the greatest enigmas in all of English literature” and then he asks himself: “why, for example, is Heathcliff so appallingly vengeful to those such as Hareton Earnshaw who have done him no harm?” (n.p.). Heathcliff already arrives to the Heights with probably a number of traumatic experiences that the reader is never sure about, mainly because of the narrative nature of this novel, which never allows us to have a clear and objective perception of the facts: “[we never know] where he was born, and who were his parents” (Brontë 35). This is so because Lockwood and Nelly are both homodiegetic narrators with a limited and subjective view of the events, —thus, foregrounding their unreliability as narrators —which results into uncertainty and openness of interpretation. In fact, they often remark their lack of knowledge regarding what is happening, as this sentence of Lockwood proves: “[...] though why, was beyond my comprehension” (29). Nevertheless, from their perspective, Heathcliff represents the “other”, and he is rejected as such— he is described as a “dark-skinned gypsy” (5) and “dark almost as if it came from the devil” (36). Heathcliff is believed to be an orphan, as he was picked up by Mr Earnshaw from the streets of Liverpool, which was an important port where many immigrants from Ireland and other countries arrived. It can be inferred then that because of his dark skin and being an orphan, he probably went through a series of traumas even before arriving to the Heights. This fact contributes to a lack of safe *milieu*, a term that according to the Cambridge Dictionary, consists of “the people, physical, and social conditions and events that provide the environment in which someone acts or lives” (n.p.). To make things even worse, he is physically and verbally abused, as can be seen from Catherine’s words: “Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won’t let him sit with us, nor eat with us anymore. [...] [Hindley’s] conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious” (22, 20). He is even treated as a servant, and at his arrival, he is referred to as “it” by Nelly: “Mr. Earnshaw told me to wash it, and give it clean things, and let it sleep with the children [...] [Hindley and Cathy] entirely

refused to have it in bed with them, or even their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow” (37). Heathcliff is clearly relegated in that way to a mere animal. Moreover, when he gets older, Heathcliff listens to Catherine saying that she will marry Edgar Linton because according to her: “[i]t would degrade me to marry Heathcliff” (81), which is the event that most hurts Heathcliff’s feelings, making him leave the Heights.

Regarding the evolution of Heathcliff as an individual, it is important to take into consideration that:

For both the development and the maintaining of a healthy personality, it is absolutely indispensable to have a sufficiently safe milieu, in the family and more broadly in society. A basic prerequisite for the formation of a coherent self is that there be good-enough early relations, which are able to mirror and contain the child’s feelings and on which later relations can be built. (Bakó, Tihamér, and Katalin Zana 1)

It could be argued, then, that Heathcliff, from very early on, never has a safe environment in which to develop his identity, not even when he is adopted by the Earnshaw family. This is the main reason why he will later on become the perpetrator of the transgenerational trauma that passes on future generations. When someone is not able to process healthily or work through the traumatic experience in his or her mind, he or she is bound to repeat it over and over again, and that is what he will do to Hareton mainly, but to other characters too.

There are several types of mechanisms that Heathcliff uses in order to cope with his traumatic experiences, although none of them result into a healthy processing of the trauma, mainly because of the lack of a safe *milieu*. One of those mechanisms is normalizing violence in order to survive to it. As Nelly states, Heathcliff “seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment” (Brontë 38). This quote proves the amount of violence he must have suffered since he was born, to a point in which he was basically used to it. This is because there is a need from part of

the individual—in this case Heathcliff—to integrate the traumatic experiences as normal in his or her world, in this case physical and psychological abuse, in order for him to survive to them. Normalizing violence is a coping mechanism so that the self is not destroyed. And so “[v]iolence and trauma are therefore not only about the set of events experienced, but are deeply ingrained in a person’s history, identity, values and traditions” (Woollett, N, and K Thomson 1069). All this obviously ends up having consequences that affect the generations to come in the Earnshaw and Linton family. The normalization of violence includes expecting everyone to be violent, from the traumatic experiences on. As Woollett, N, and K Thomson state: “people with a history of child abuse expect others to be hostile, rejecting, and unavailable, and they therefore respond to others in a way that is consistent with their expectations or they behave in a manner that elicits these [...]” (1068). This can be clearly seen when Heathcliff wrongly reads Linton’s attitude as degrading towards him:

‘They are long enough already,’ observed Master Linton, peeping from the door-way; ‘I wonder they don’t make his head ache. It’s like a colt’s mane over his eyes!’ He ventured this remark without any intention to insult; but Heathcliff’s violent nature was not prepared to endure the appearance of impertinence from one whom he seemed to hate [...]. He seized a tureen of hot apple-sauce [...]and dashed it full against the speaker’s face and neck. (Brontë 59)

In this case, Heathcliff interprets any comment as an insult because it is what he is used to and therefore what he expects from everyone—even in cases in which comments to him were not intended as an insult, like this by Edgar Linton.

Another coping mechanism of traumatized people is to create what is known as the “transgenerational atmosphere” (Bakó, Tihamér and Katalin Zana 16), that is:

This internal space – in which the trauma survivor lives out his important relationships – is safer for him than the threatening outside world. The survivor draws his environment,

family – including yet to be born children – into this atmosphere, and it is mainly within and through the atmosphere that he is able to communicate and relate to them. The transgenerational atmosphere created by the traumatized individual is thus an attempt to share the experience, to process the trauma and the mourning process, but in a more concrete, pathological form. Because there is an obstacle to intersubjective sharing, the traumatized individual extends the intrasubjective state, thus drawing his environment, the next generation, into what are predominantly undigested experiences. (16)

This is exactly what the characters of *Wuthering Heights* do, especially in the case of Heathcliff. He exerts violence and abuse not simply for the sake of revenge, but because it is his only way to cope with the previous violence he suffered, especially at hands of Hindley. Abuse is the only thing he knows and so he constructs his relationships around that type of behaviors, perpetuating in that way the transgenerational transmission of trauma.

As the Native American proverb says, “hurt people hurt people”. This statement encapsulates the concept of displaced aggression which “can occur when someone cannot aggress towards the source of incitements or provocation, and instead takes it out on something/someone else and behaves aggressively towards another individual who had nothing to do with the initial conflict” (Woollett, N, and K Thomson 1068-1069). It could be argued that the displacement of violence from Heathcliff to others is just part of that creation of the transgenerational atmosphere. Since he is not able to have relationships which don’t entail violence—the only thing he is acquainted with—, he displaces the abuse he was inflicted unto everyone else around him as a way to not be left alone in his traumatized world. This notion of displaced violence can be seen in the following quotation uttered by Heathcliff, addressing Hareton:

I can sympathise with all his feelings, having felt them myself — I know what he suffers now, for instance, exactly — it is merely a beginning of what he shall suffer, though. And he'll never be able to emerge from his bathos of coarseness, and ignorance. I've got him

faster than his scoundrel of a father secured me, and lower; for he takes a pride in his brutishness. (Brontë 219)

Another clear example of this re-enactment of violence is the moment in which Heathcliff says to Hareton at Hindley's funeral: "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" (187). Heathcliff knows he cannot make Hindley pay back for the abuse he suffered so he directs his abuse to his son, Hareton, who had nothing to do with the initial trauma created by Hindley. In this way, he tries to recover his power. When individuals that have suffered traumas feel powerless after the traumatic experience, they try to recover it by taking it away from others, "assuming responsibility for the abuse/violence [...] allowing feelings of helplessness to be replaced with an illusion of control" (Woollett, N, and K Thomson 1068). However, in this case, instead of assuming the blame, Heathcliff puts the blame on others and tries to make them pay back for what they did as a mechanism to regain control, which is really illusory. It is for this reason that Heathcliff takes Hareton's freedom and power by keeping him ignorant and used to ill-treatment, because psychologically, this means taking back his power from Hindley. He will do this throughout the whole narrative, not just to Hareton but also to Isabella, as a way to take away Edgar's power over Isabella —"he says he has married me on purpose to obtain power over him" (Brontë 151)—, and to Cathy Linton by forcing her to marry his son Linton in order to possess Edgar's previous state. Despite Heathcliff's abusive behavior, I believe it is important to highlight how he feels identified with Hareton for all the pains he endured as a child. This is evident when Heathcliff acknowledges his sympathy with Hareton's feelings and suffering, thus drawing a parallel relationship between them. Nonetheless, he cannot help inflicting the same violence he suffered as a child, in a desperate attempt to cure his mind from trauma.

It has been widely argued that Heathcliff wants revenge against both Hindley for his ill-treatment towards him when he was a child, and against Edgar because he stole his one true love. Nevertheless, when looked from the perspective of transgenerational trauma, it is easy to see how

this act of revenge is far more than that, as it can be addressed as a form of displaced aggression. By re-enacting his violence on those around him, he tries to make sense of his traumas and reintegrate them into his world back again (Woollett, N, and K Thomson 1068). If those who are around him suffer just the same he suffered, then his pain does not seem senseless. In fact, at some point, he states: “I’m trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. [...] Let me alone, and I’ll plan it out: while I’m thinking of that, I don’t feel pain” (Brontë 61). It is remarkable how he himself says that he only stops suffering when he plans his revenge, that is, when he tries to logically process his traumas by displacing the aggression he suffered onto others. In the same way, he also gets the sense that he is recovering his power through this displaced aggression, and that all this is just an attempt to try to process his traumatic experiences: “[these] concepts of re-enactment or repetition compulsion are implicated in the intergenerational transmission of trauma, which is the consequence of violence” (Woollett, N, and K Thomson 1068). Nevertheless, these mechanisms are entitled to perpetuate the cyclic repetition of trauma onto the next generation —and this is an aspect that can be also illustrated in the characters of Catherine Linton and Hareton Earnshaw.

3-. Healing Trauma: Hareton and Cathy Linton

Hareton is the main recipient of Heathcliff’s abuse as a way to integrate his own traumatic experiences in the several ways mentioned above. Once Heathcliff grows up “[he] turns his attentions from sibling to paternal violence” and “he becomes Hareton’s surrogate father” (Hancock 62). Therefore, “Hareton [...] and Cathy are not so much the objects of Heathcliff’s rage as they are surrogates, stand-ins for their parents, whom Heathcliff wishes to punish” (62). Nevertheless, it is not only Heathcliff the one that contributes to Hareton’s lack of a safe *milieu* for his development, but also his own father Hindley who already ill-treated him since he was a baby. This can be observed in the following passage: “[...] kiss me; what! it won’t? Kiss me, Hareton! Damn thee,

kiss me! By God, as if I would rear such a monster! As sure as I'm living, I'll break the brat's neck" (Brontë 75).

Hareton's abuse from Heathcliff is never physical, only psychological. This fact is striking and it is something that, Hancock contends, students often notice and wonder about (62). It can be concluded that this is so because Heathcliff identifies too strongly with Hareton for him to inflict physical abuse on him, since that would be like inflicting it to himself. As Heathcliff points out: "Hareton seemed a personification of my youth, not a human being - I felt to him in such a variety of ways, that it would have been impossible to have accosted him rationally" (Brontë 323). Davies argues that "there is a silent sub-plot" (*Artist* 153) in which it can be appreciated how "Heathcliff has, against his inclinations, practiced a unique fidelity and kindness in respect to Hareton—as if by predestined instinct" (153). This sub-plot can be observed at several moments in the novel, being one of them the time when Hindley let Hareton as a baby slip from his arms while being at the staircase. At this point, Nelly accounts that "Heathcliff arrived underneath just at the critical moment; by a natural impulse, he arrested his descent" (Brontë 75). Heathcliff keeps on defending Hareton from Hindley later on in the novel too, as Hareton's utterance to Nelly proves: "he [Heathcliff] pays Dad back what he gives to me — he curses Daddy for cursing me" (110). This only gives evidence of Heathcliff's identification with Hareton, which ultimately makes him protect Hareton from Hindley. Probably this is so because Hindley's abuse towards little Hareton makes Heathcliff recall his own traumatic experiences from when he was a child.

There are several parallel ideas that can be drawn between actions by Heathcliff and those that seem to be later repeated by Hareton, proving in that way the fact that there is transgenerational repetition of trauma, passing from Heathcliff to Hareton. For example, when eloping with Isabella, Heathcliff hangs her dog so that it will not bark and, later on in the novel, the narrator acutely observes that "Hareton, [...] was hanging a litter of puppies" (183). Moreover, just like Hindley had abused Heathcliff, the latter does the same to Hareton "relegating the former heir to the Heights to

the status of an illiterate, degraded servant, the mirror image of himself [Heathcliff] at Hareton's age after Hindley deprived him of learning and cultivation" (Hancock 62). This degradation of Hareton is perceived right from the beginning, as narrated by Lockwood when he arrives to the Heights: "I began to doubt whether he were a servant or not; his dress and speech were both rude, entirely devoid of the superiority observable in Mr and Mrs Heathcliff" (Brontë, 12). This is just one more way in which Heathcliff expands his "transgenerational atmosphere" (Bakó, Tihamér, and Katalin Zana 16) in an attempt to integrate his personal abusive history as a normal part of his life, as well as to gain back the power that he was deprived of by Hindley, by taking it away from Hareton instead. Hareton is not only rendered a brute but even treated by Heathcliff like an animal, as a guardian dog that patrols the Heights (Bump 342). This can sound familiar to the reader because Heathcliff had also been animalized when he first arrived to the Heights and he was addressed by the pronoun "it." Both Heathcliff and Hareton use similar expressions when insulting Catherine Linton. In the passage in which Hareton first meets Catherine, after being outraged by Cathy for calling him a servant, Hareton utters: "I'll see thee damned, before I be *thy* servant"[...] Damned — thou saucy witch!" (Brontë 195). Heathcliff also refers at a point to Catherine with the words: "Damnable witch!" (320). Therefore, they show parallels even in the way they talk to Cathy, although it is fair to say that Hareton never uses physical violence towards Cathy, whereas Heathcliff has a tendency for physical abuse. This is probably so because Hareton is not acquainted with physical violence since he never experienced it from part of Heathcliff during his childhood, mainly due to the identification that the latter experienced with his surrogate son. For this reason, Hareton does not repeat this type of violence, because it is not a normal behavior for him. On the contrary, Heathcliff was actually physically abused by Hindley and since he is well-acquainted with this type of violence, he does not dismiss the possibility to use it on others, like on to Cathy. Another evidence of this repetition being perpetuated is the fact that Hareton is extremely rude and unwelcoming towards everybody around him. Similarly, Heathcliff, previous to Hareton, had also

been abrasive towards people in many occasions. This may be so because, according to Woollett, N, and K Thomson, “people with a history of child abuse expect others to be hostile, rejecting, and unavailable, and they therefore respond to others in a way that is consistent with their expectations or they behave in a manner that elicits these” (1068). The issue with this type of automatic response is that it may contribute to the perpetration of this cyclic repetition of trauma throughout the different generations of a family. A passage that shows this kind of behavior from Hareton is the moment in which he attacks Nelly when he encounters her for the first time after she left the Heights in order to serve at Thrushcross Grange: “He retreated out of arm’s length, and picked up a large flint. [...] He raised his missile to hurl it; [...] The stone struck my bonnet, and then ensued, from stammering lips of the little fellow, a string of curses, which, whether he comprehended or not, were delivered with a practiced emphasis” (Brontë 109). This last scene reveals that Hareton ends up being a perpetrator of violence on those around him just like Heathcliff did to him. All these similarities between Heathcliff and Hareton clearly show how Heathcliff’s behavior and abusive habits are later on repeated by Hareton as if the latter was irrevocably caught up in the cycle of abusive repetition.

In the case of Cathy Linton, it is worth noticing that she also endorses violence once she is captive at the Heights, although as Hancock points out, “women in *Wuthering Heights* can only show violence verbally because of their female condition” (64), so Cathy’s knife is her tongue through which she curses as if she were a witch. She also becomes rude and sullen, like Heathcliff and Hareton, as this scene in which she speaks to Lockwood illustrates:

‘I don’t want your help,’ she snapped, ‘I can get them for myself.’

‘I beg your pardon,’ I [Lockwood] hastened to reply.

‘Were you asked to tea?’ she demanded [...].

‘I shall be glad to have a cup,’ I answered.

‘Were you asked?’ she repeated. (Brontë 11)

Nevertheless, her situation is different from that of Hareton because, although she also experiences Heathcliff's rage and abuse —“Heathcliff lifted his hand, and the speaker [Cathy] sprang to a safer distance, obviously acquainted with its weight” (30) —, she had a very different upbringing from that of Hareton. She grew up in Thrushcross Grange—where “Wuthering Heights and Mr Heathcliff did not exist for her” (190)—under the care of her nurse Nelly and Edgar Linton, his loving father, who “took her education entirely on himself, and made it an amusement: fortunately, curiosity, and a quick intellect urged her into an apt scholar; she learnt rapidly and eagerly, and did honor to his teaching” (189).

Edgar and Nelly are outsiders to the violence of the Heights since for them the perpetuated abuse is not something normal. There are several instances in the novel that prove this; one of them being the moment in which Edgar first witnesses Catherine Earnshaw's abusive attitudes when she pinches Nelly, and the narrator describes his reaction: “Linton greatly shocked at the double fault of falsehood, and violence which his idol had committed. [...] ‘Can I stay after you have struck me?’ asked Linton” (71). Here, Edgar shows how this type of violence is completely unnatural to him and how he will not permit it. Similarly, Nelly does not allow this type of behavior towards her: “I would not bear slapping, and ordering; so I let her [Catherine] know” (42). Nelly even highlights the differences between the Earnshaws and the Lintons and she positions herself with the latter: “Hareton is the last of them, as our Miss Cathy is of us — I mean, of the Linton” (34). She also ponders over the similarities and the differences between Hindley —an insider to the violence of the Heights— and Edgar, an outsider to it: “I used to draw a comparison between him, and Hindley Earnshaw, and perplex myself to explain satisfactorily, why their conduct was so opposite in similar circumstances. They had both been fond husbands, and were both attached to their children; and I could not see how they shouldn't both have taken the same road, for good or evil” (185). In this case, Edgar, as an outsider to this cyclic violence, probably chooses the ‘road of good’ because he is not used to violence and, therefore, does not endorse it in his household. Cathy's education and

milieu is consequently completely different from that of Hareton. She never experienced domestic abuse when growing up, which provided her with the knowledge and ability to draw the line between acceptable and non-acceptable behaviors. In fact, when she first meets Hareton, after mistaking him for a servant and him cursing her, she is outraged at such language being addressed to her. As Nelly states: “the language he had held to her rankled her heart; she who was always ‘love,’ and ‘darling,’ and ‘queen,’ and ‘angel,’ with everybody at the Grange; to be insulted so shockingly by a stranger! She did not comprehend it” (198). Thus, Cathy knows that what Heathcliff does is unacceptable, just like his father Edgar and Nelly thought that Catherine’s violence was unacceptable too. This does not apply to Hareton since he did grow up fully under Heathcliff’s tyranny. In fact, Nelly recalls this same fact at some point in the novel in an interaction with Cathy: “had you been brought up in his circumstances, would you be less rude? He was as quick and as intelligent a child as ever you were, and I’m hurt he should be despised now, because that base Heathcliff has treated him so unjustly” (250).

In spite of living with Heathcliff and his violent behavior, Cathy Linton still manages to keep what may be defined as humanness and kindness, which is probably due to the fact that her personality was formed while being at Thrushcross Grange. Such a kindness can be seen when Lockwood observes that ““a man’s life is of more consequence than one evening’s neglect of the horses; somebody must go,’ murmured Mrs Heathcliff, more kindly than I expected” (17). She also keeps habits like reading, which she acquired at her childhood home: “Mrs. Heathcliff, kneeling on the hearth, reading a book by the aid of the blaze” (30). In fact, reading will be a crucial element in the rupture of the transgenerational repetition of trauma.

Accordingly, one must highlight the positive influence that outsiders to the cycle of violence such as Nelly and Edgar Linton exert, especially for Cathy who, afterwards, becomes a positive influence herself on Hareton, and who ultimately contributes to the breaking of the cycle of

violence that was being repeated across generations at the Heights. As Bakó, Tihamér, and Katalin Zana have noted:

If, however, the social mirror is blind, insensitive, or if society itself is the perpetrator, then the traumatized individual or group is left alone with the experience. If the social processing of the trauma, the mourning process, fails to happen later too, there is a high chance the trauma will become transgenerational, and affect not only the victims, but the whole of society, for generations. (10)

It could be argued, then, that Hareton does not continue reproducing the transgenerational repetition because Cathy's influence will serve as his 'social mirror'. As Bump states, there is "change usually only in response to their [the family's] almost complete disintegration and/or to intervention from the outside" (343), and in this case it is the intervention of Cathy which will prompt that change. Cathy helps Hareton to improve himself at first indirectly, thanks to Hareton's interest in her. He responds negatively when she thinks he is a servant; nonetheless, he is able to quickly overcome that and return to his kindness towards her: "Hareton, recovering from his disgust at being taken for a servant, seemed moved by her distress" (Brontë 196). At the beginning of the novel, Nelly's narration foregrounds that Heathcliff "had by that time, lost the benefit of his early education: continual hard work, begun soon and concluded late, had extinguished any curiosity he once possessed in pursuit of knowledge, and any love for books or learning" (68).

Nevertheless, Hareton seems to do the reverse path in relation to his curiosity for books and learning, as his origins were tainted with illiteracy and brutality. Aided by Cathy's perseverance and belief in him, Hareton's interest in reading is a key proof of his shift from ignorance towards a healthier personality, which will later on help him to reject the repetition of violence and to stand up together with Cathy against Heathcliff's violence. He will even end up taking an active role in defending Cathy against Heathcliff at one point in which he grabs her by the hair: "He [Heathcliff] had his hand in her hair; Hareton attempted to release the locks, entreating him not to hurt her that

once” (320). Therefore, it can be argued that “Hareton is depicted as a character whose attitude towards domestic violence evolves” (Hancock, 66). It is Cathy who “educates and humanizes [him], by drawing forth the tender and liberal child-spirit and cultivating it. Finally, she restores his own lands to him, and joins her own with them” (Davies, *Artist* 169), —which proves once more the positive influence of outsiders as a way to end transgenerational trauma.

All these improvements from Hareton’s part stand as evidence of the breaking of the cycle of transgenerational abuse. A symbol of this renewal in the second generation is the fact that Cathy and Hareton transplant some flowers from the Grange to the Heights, which work “as emblems not so much of domestication as of the fertility of the future” (Davies, *Artist* 168). But the ultimate proof of this cycle of violence and trauma takes place at the very end of the novel, just when Lockwood comes back to the Heights and is able to appreciate all the changes that Cathy and Hareton have brought about. It is particularly impressive the scene in which “Hareton cheerfully tolerates the ‘smart slap on the cheek’ (307) Cathy dispenses after he becomes distracted during their reading lesson” (Hancock 66). It is once again the element of reading and the fact that finally a “violent gesture communicates affection instead of aggression” (66) what points towards the healthier state of the last generation. As Lockwood makes it clear, the characters of *Wuthering Heights* themselves account for this change: “I had neither to climb the gate, nor to knock — it yielded to my hand. That is an improvement! I thought. And I noticed another, by the aid of my nostrils; a fragrance of stocks and wall flowers, wafter on the air, from amongst the homely fruit trees. Both doors and lattices were open. [...] All his [Hareton’s] rudeness, and all his surly harshness had deserted him” (Brontë 307, 314).

As can be observed, such a transformation points to the disintegration of the transgenerational repetition of trauma, which Hareton is finally able to overcome, or at least that is what the novel seems to suggest at the end. However, we could never know it for sure because the family generation comes to an end with Cathy and Hareton. On the other hand, it is fair to add that

the elements of the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff may suggest the opposite, making the reader believe that the transgenerational repetition of trauma is not over with Hareton and Cathy, since the ghosts of Heathcliff and Catherine will remain to haunt the following generations. Nevertheless, as Cristina González Díaz asserts: “ghosts are linked to individuals’ pasts and memories, and thus, that these reminders of the supernatural can forward the connection with, or can be manifestations of, unresolved traumatic experiences” (23). Therefore, it could be concluded that Catherine and Heathcliff’s traumas are unresolved, but this does not mean that Hareton and Cathy’s traumatic experiences at the Heights will not be overcome. In fact, at the end of the novel, they move to Thrushcross Grange and leave behind all their lives at the Heights, starting a new one with the future generation in a new home. Nelly also states that she believes that “the dead are at peace” and that “*They* [Hareton and Cathy] are afraid of nothing” and “together they would brave Satan and all his legions” (Brontë 337), thus reinforcing the sense of tranquility and comfort that the Grange was endowed with originally.

4.- Conclusion

While it is undeniable that the ghosts of Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff at the very end of the novel may posit an interpretative ambivalence, I have attempted to demonstrate that the transgenerational repetition of trauma is overcome by Cathy and Hareton. The analysis of other characters in the novel such as Linton, who is also a victim of Heathcliff’s wrath, or Isabella could also be an interesting continuation of this analysis. Yet, for reasons of scope and length, I have mainly concentrated on those characters who have been more revealing for my purposes. Thus, by drawing from Heathcliff’s original trauma, I have been able to explore the consequences of psychic and physical violence exerted on him and how such harrowing effects affect the next generations. The main conclusions that I have reached are that this repetition of trauma seems to be existent already in the precedent generations to that of the characters of *Wuthering Heights*. As the title of

this dissertation highlights, time in the Heights seems to stagnate, as if they were stuck in trauma and bound to repeat the same behaviors once and again throughout the different generations. Moreover, this repetition of abuse is also later on reinforced by Heathcliff, due to Hindley's violence and his traumas previous to Heathcliff's arrival to the Heights. The lack of a safe *milieu* in Heathcliff's case makes him turn into the perpetrator of the violence he had experienced his whole life —thus, expanding the transgenerational atmosphere in an attempt to process and reintegrate his own traumatic experiences. His endeavor turns out to be unsuccessful since the creation of the transgenerational atmosphere is an unhealthy way to cope with his traumas. All this ultimately results in the ill-treatment of Hareton and other characters too, who are inevitably caught in the cyclic repetition of violence. It is only with the positive influence of outside forces like that of Edgar Linton and Nelly on Cathy, and likewise that of Cathy on Hareton, that the characters grow towards a more functional behavior than that of the previous generations. In this respect, Hancock has observed how domestic violence becomes, then, “the primary vehicle through which characters are developed in Emily Brontë's novel” (66).

By analyzing this novel through the lenses of Trauma Studies, I have come to the conclusion that Emily Brontë's command of her quill is unbelievably accurate. When it comes to describing human nature, even its darkest side, her mastery is astonishing. She constructs characters that are imprisoned in the repetition of violence throughout different generations, and she describes their traumas with a high accuracy, one that could be expected of a post-Freudian writer, but not before (Marsh 70). Interestingly, Emily Brontë managed to represent the traumatic experiences and psychological evolution of some characters, creating a net of psychological causes and consequences as complex as her renowned way of intertwining narrative voices and knowledge of the human psyche.

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