

PROGRAMA DE DOCTORADO DE LENGUAS Y CULTURAS

TESIS DOCTORAL

***Wuthering Heights* in Context:
Hermeneutic Singularity in
Traditions of Narrative**

***Cumbres Borrascosas* en Contexto: Singularidad
Hermenéutica en Tradiciones Narrativas**

Autora:

María Valero Redondo

Director:

Dr. Julián Jiménez Heffernan

Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana

Mayo 2018



UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA

TITULO: *Wuthering Heights in Context: Hermeneutic Singularity in Traditions of Narrative*

AUTOR: *María Valero Redondo*

© Edita: UCOPress. 2018
Campus de Rabanales
Ctra. Nacional IV, Km. 396 A
14071 Córdoba

<https://www.uco.es/ucopress/index.php/es/>
ucopress@uco.es



TÍTULO DE LA TESIS: “*Wuthering Heights* in Context: Hermeneutic Singularity in Traditions of Narrative” (“*Cumbres Borrascosas* en Contexto: Singularidad Hermenéutica en Tradiciones Narrativas”)

DOCTORANDO/A: María Valero Redondo

INFORME RAZONADO DEL/DE LOS DIRECTOR/ES DE LA TESIS

(se hará mención a la evolución y desarrollo de la tesis, así como a trabajos y publicaciones derivados de la misma).

La presente tesis cumple con los requisitos de rigor metodológico, originalidad científica, actualización crítica y argumentación coherente que son exigibles en un trabajo de esta naturaleza. La tesis que la doctoranda pretendía demostrar queda claramente verificada: la novela de E. Brontë responde a una lógica precisa que dictan sus contextos narrativos próximos (realismo social del siglo XVIII, romance gótico, novela de tesis social, poema miltoniano épico individualista, *Bildungsroman* en la línea Dickens). Esta demostración se hace en un trabajo brillante y hermenéuticamente novedoso, pues rompe con la tradición crítica que asigna exclusividad y/o singularidad exegética a *Wuthering Heights*. El trabajo está bien organizado y exhaustivamente apoyado en la bibliografía más actualizada sobre el tema, sabiendo discriminar las contribuciones críticas más influyentes. La evolución de la redacción de la tesis ha sido fluida y continua, en un ejercicio de refuerzo argumental de una hipótesis central que los diversos capítulos no hacen sino confirmar. La actitud de responsabilidad, esfuerzo, dedicación y compromiso con su investigación de la doctoranda ha sido en todo momento intachable. Su estancia en centros de investigación extranjeros, su participación en congresos, y la publicación de artículos relacionados con el tema de su tesis son prueba de esta dedicación. La doctoranda ha leído dieciséis ponencias en congresos internacionales, y ha publicado ya algunos trabajos, que cito a continuación:

La revista, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* ha aceptado con revisiones el artículo, “*Wuthering Heights* and Kleist’s *Novellen*: Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law,” que forma parte del cuarto capítulo de la tesis doctoral.

1. *The Crux of Community in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park: Self-enclosed Communities, Masquerades and Speech Acts*. Repositorio Institucional de la Universidad de Granada. pp. 1 - 39. Universidad de Granada. Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana, 11/09/2015. Tipo de producción: Trabajo de Fin de Máster. Tipo de soporte: Documento o Informe científico-técnico.

2."Giving Voice to the Subaltern: Ideology and Socio-Historical Factors in Andrea Arnold's Adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*". *English and American Studies in Spain: New Developments and Trends*. pp. 144 - 150. Alcalá de Henares, Comunidad de Madrid (España): Universidad de Alcalá: Servicio de Publicaciones, 2015. ISBN 978-84-16599-11-0. Tipo de producción: Artículo científico Tipo de soporte: Libro, Grado de contribución: Autor/a o coautor/a de capítulo de libro.

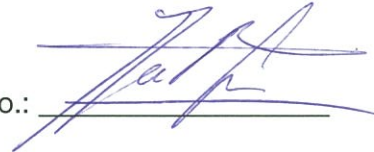
3."*Wuthering Heights* and the Mechanisms of Usurpation". *The Brontë Sisters and their Work*. 21, pp. 139 - 145. Department of Foreign Language Education, Faculty of Education, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 2015. ISBN 978-605-030-952-2. Tipo de producción: Artículo científico Tipo de soporte: Libro

Por todo ello, se autoriza la presentación de la tesis doctoral.

Córdoba, 7 de Mayo de 2018

Firma del/de los director/es

Fdo.: Julián Jiménez Heffernan Fdo.:



AGRADECIMIENTOS / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Me gustaría comenzar esta tesis expresando mi más sincero agradecimiento al Dr. Julián Jiménez Heffernan, director de esta tesis, por su apoyo académico y humano durante estos años. Sus siempre sabios consejos, su confianza en mi trabajo y su capacidad para guiar mis ideas han sido vitales no sólo para el desarrollo de esta tesis, sino también en mi formación como investigadora. Muchas gracias, Julián.

Gracias a todos los compañeros del Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana de la Universidad de Córdoba, por acogerme como un miembro más y por ofrecerme su ayuda siempre que la he necesitado.

I would like to express my immense gratitude to Dr. Aleksandar Stevic and Dr. Sara Lyons, who have kindly welcomed me to the University of Cambridge and the University of Kent, respectively, and who have generously read parts of this dissertation, providing me with valuable suggestions and insights.

A Fran, por su apoyo, su ayuda, sus consejos y su amistad durante esta travesía investigadora (y por aguantarme en mis peores momentos). Gracias de todo corazón.

A mis amigos y a mi familia, que siempre han estado ahí aunque no les haya podido prestar toda la atención y tiempo que se merecen.

A Álex, por sus palabras de ánimo, su comprensión y su gran ayuda durante esta última etapa. Te quiero.

Y a mi madre, por haberme inculcado el amor por la lectura y por su apoyo y cariño.

Por último, quedo agradecida al Programa de FPU del Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte por el apoyo financiero otorgado para la realización de este trabajo de investigación.

GRACIAS

A mi madre

RESUMEN

***Cumbres Borrascosas* en Contexto: Singularidad Hermenéutica en Tradiciones Narrativas**

A pesar de ser un clásico – o quizás por esta razón – los críticos siempre han considerado *Cumbres Borrascosas* como un texto con un significado impenetrable. El propósito de esta tesis es combatir el agotamiento hermenéutico en torno a *Cumbres Borrascosas*. Mi metodología consistirá, por tanto, en hacer un análisis temático-comparativo de la novela con otros textos del siglo dieciocho y principios del diecinueve. En *The True Story of the Novel*, Margaret Anne Doody afirma que los escritores del siglo diecinueve tenían gran contacto con los escritores del siglo dieciocho. Así, si tiramos de los hilos de una novela del diecinueve, éstos nos llevarán siempre hacia atrás. Según Margaret-Ann Doody, la herencia genética de la novela está siempre presente y toda novela tiene una cadena de relaciones literarias mayor que la indicada por las alusiones explícitas que contiene. Todo novelista (bueno o malo, mejor o peor, fantástico o realista) repite los tropos de la Novela misma (Doody 299), y es precisamente en estos tropos en los que basaré mi análisis comparativo. Por tanto, trataré de identificar las características que *Cumbres Borrascosas* comparte con *Pamela* (Samuel Richardson), los cuentos de Heinrich von Kleist, *The Monk* (Matthew Lewis), *Manfred* (Lord Byron), *Shirley* y *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte Brontë), *Barry Lyndon* (William Thackeray), y *Oliver Twist* (Charles Dickens), entre otras.

En el Capítulo 2, “An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*,” resumo los principales análisis críticos que la novela de Emily Brontë ha recibido desde su publicación en 1848 y expongo las lagunas y deficiencias de estas aproximaciones críticas. Con este propósito, organizo estas revisiones críticas en dos grupos: 1) aquellos críticos que postulan la existencia de un significado determinado recuperable que puede ser material/immanente (determinismo sociológico), o espiritual/transcendental (determinismo temático); y, 2) aquellos críticos que postulan la existencia de un significado indeterminado (deconstrucción). Quiero alinearme con los críticos que valoran sobre todo la heterogeneidad y el valor múltiple del texto, pero pretendo hacer algo que estos críticos nunca han intentado deliberadamente: enriquecer esta heterogeneidad examinando la relación dialógica con textos previos. Así, propongo un nuevo grupo crítico que plantea un determinismo intertextual de la novela. Mi objetivo es justificar la extrañeza del texto analizando los posibles precedentes de *Cumbres Borrascosas*; vencer la parálisis crítica

que rodea la novela y su lugar indeterminado dentro de la tradición narrativa inglesa; y demostrar que la novela de Emily Brontë no es *sui generis*. El crítico Edward Said resume perfectamente mi premisa: “La literatura es un orden excéntrico de repeticiones, no de originalidad” (*Beginnings* 12, mi traducción). Por tanto:

En el Capítulo 3, “*Wuthering Heights: “The Housekeeper’s Tale,”*” argumento que el aspecto más revolucionario de esta novela conecta la teoría marxista con la narratología: es una de las primeras veces en la literatura victoriana que un personaje de clase baja, Nelly Dean, cuenta la historia, violando el código social. En este sentido, la novela adquiere un pedigrí picaresco que sólo puede encontrarse en algunas novelas del siglo dieciocho: *Tom Jones*, *Moll Flanders*, *Robinson Crusoe*, y *Pamela*. En su papel de consejera en la novela, Nelly Dean adquiere una posición de subalternidad social, pero autoridad moral. La originalidad de la novela reside pues en “la representación vocal de una transgresión social” (Jiménez Heffernan 235, mi traducción). Esto conlleva unas consecuencias éticas: 1) la narración polifónica de Nelly exterioriza las perspectivas que los discursos sociales hegemónicos habían silenciado; 2) el discurso de Nelly constituye una contra-historia; 3) esto permite al lector posicionarse en posiciones ideológicas dispares, lo que acerca a la novela a la ficción moderna y postmoderna.

En el Capítulo 4, “*Wuthering Heights and Kleist’s Novellen: Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law,”*” argumento que *Cumbres Borrascosas* es bastante consistente con la tradición alemana de la *Novelle*, y, especialmente, con las narraciones de Kleist. Uno de los temas prevalentes en los cuentos de Kleist y en *Cumbres Borrascosas* es el ferviente deseo de escapar de una civilización corrupta que frustra los sentimientos más sinceros de los personajes. Con este propósito, los personajes conciben tres estrategias de sabotaje de la comunidad normativa: 1) escapar a un escenario natural que promueve la autenticidad y la confraternidad cristiana; 2) la implosión anómica y erótica de los amantes; 3) la reiteración paródica de la comunidad normativa que comporta una subversión implícita.

En el Capítulo 4, “*Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel,”*” comparo *Cumbres Borrascosas* con la novela de Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, entre otras novelas. Aquí analizo cómo *Cumbres Borrascosas* se apropia de motivos Góticos para explorar cuestiones de genealogías fragmentadas y contaminadas, expósitos, venganza, subrogación, violencia, locura, sucesos sobrenaturales, y compulsiones históricas/domésticas. Argumento que la novela de Emily Brontë muestra la inestabilidad

de la división artificial entre novelas góticas y domésticas, y que el mayor logro de E. Brontë es poner lo doméstico al servicio de lo gótico.

En el capítulo 5, “*Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem*” empleo el poema de Lord Byron, *Manfred*, como co-texto literario que ilumina tanto formal como temáticamente algunas partes de la novela. En este capítulo, intento demostrar que tanto *Manfred* como *Cumbres Borrascosas* poseen un componente épico-dramático que tiene su origen en el poema épico de Milton, *Paradise Lost*. Por ende, me centro en la cualidad poética de los discursos más fervientes y elegíacos de la novela; en la comunión de los personajes con una naturaleza salvaje; en las comunidades transcendentales de amantes; en los lutos elegíacos; en Manfred y Heathcliff, dos héroes fatales; y en cómo *Cumbres Borrascosas* explota y critica el Byronismo simultáneamente. Finalmente, afirmo que la estructura profunda de la novela es un drama épico cuyo protagonista es un personaje Satánico y Byroniano, y que la novela contiene una constelación de temas que tiene su origen en la tradición Romántica inglesa.

En el capítulo 6, “*Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel*,” trato de desafiar la afirmación de Winifred Gérin de que *Cumbres Borrascosas* “no expone cuestiones sociales” (42, mi traducción), y hago una lectura materialista de *Cumbres Borrascosas* que se centra en razones históricas contingentes. Así pues, reformulo la afirmación de Fredrich Jameson de que “Heathcliff es el locus de la Historia” y defiendo que Heathcliff es en realidad el locus de la infraestructura ya que integra cuatro tipos de alteridades infraestructurales: el proletario, el sujeto colonial, el soldado e, indirectamente, la condición de la mujer. Con este objetivo, he dividido el capítulo en cuatro secciones y he seleccionado tres novelas diferentes que me permiten leer *Cumbres Borrascosas* como una novela social que expone – o no – cuatro tipos de infraestructura. Así, utilizo la novela de Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, como el texto matricial que mejor representa la voz del proletario y “la Cuestión de la Mujer,” y que me permitirá leer *Cumbres Borrascosas* como una novela sobre la “Condición de Inglaterra;” *Jane Eyre* es el texto que me permitirá leer *Cumbres Borrascosas* como una “novela colonial;” y la novela de William Thackeray, *Barry Lyndon*, me permitirá leer la historia no contada de Heathcliff como la de un soldado reprimido por la estructura social.

En el capítulo 7, “*Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman*” leo la historia narrada – y no narrada – de Heathcliff como una potencial *Bildungsroman*, usando algunas novelas de Charles Dickens (*David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oliver Twist*, etc.) y otras

novelas del siglo diecinueve como filtro comparativo. Quizás Emily Brontë no tenía intención de escribir una *Bildungsroman*, pero la condición marginal de Heathcliff, su transición de “inocencia” a “experiencia” – o de “oprimido” a “opresor” – su posterior conversión en *parvenu*, y su autodeterminación convierten su historia en una especie de *Bildungsroman*. Es esta evolución de un estado natural (infancia e “inocencia”) a un estado social (madurez y “experiencia”) lo que me interesa aquí. He de añadir que me baso en el libro de Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World* (1987), para determinar si *Cumbres Borrascosas* encaja en el patrón de la *Bildungsroman*.

Mi argumento se funda en cuestiones históricas – Inglaterra no era un lugar tan plácido y aburrido como Moretti sugiere sino un lugar más turbulento – y en cuestiones temáticas: (a) la historia de Heathcliff es una historia de movilidad social (pero estancamiento psicológico); (b) el paradigma oposicional entre “bueno” y “malo” tan representativo de los cuentos de hadas queda cancelado en la novela, ya que Heathcliff representa ambiguamente el papel de héroe y villano; (c) la historia de ascensión social de Heathcliff muestra su gran individualidad, demostrando que él no es un personaje “común;” (d) esta movilidad social tiene lugar sin “el patrón de reconocimiento-herencia” tan común en las novelas de Dickens y a través de su taimado control de la ley; (e) el legado ideológico de *Cumbres Borrascosas* se encuentra en la literatura anterior; y, finalmente, (f) la venganza inconsciente de Heathcliff contra la ley revela sus contradicciones.

El texto desarticulado y vestigial de *Cumbres Borrascosas* es la reliquia de una historia completa. Los espacios en blanco que intervienen al principio, en medio y al final de esta historia esquelética – que es, sobre todo, la historia de Heathcliff – son vacíos; huecos que ensombrecen, penetran y perforan los sucesos principales de la historia. Así, si como afirma Hillis Miller, una novela es “un tejido complejo de repeticiones y repeticiones dentro de repeticiones” (*Fiction 2*, mi traducción), quizás la pregunta que debemos plantearnos no es cuál es el punto de partida o la fuente original de la que *Cumbres Borrascosas* proviene, sino qué elementos resurgen a través de las diferentes configuraciones de los personajes y cuáles son las imágenes a las que la novela de Emily Brontë continuamente retorna. Lo que he intentado hacer en esta tesis es forzar al texto para que *confiese*. Mi principal esfuerzo como intérprete analítica ha sido extraer el secreto del texto, forzar su lengua para que declare y confiese; buscar sus fósiles; los hilos que llevan hacia sus orígenes, ya que el texto no los revela, o al menos, “no de forma literal o vulgar” (Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw 3*, mi traducción).

Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction and Objectives	19
Chapter 2	An Overview of <i>Wuthering Heights</i> ' Critical Reception: Problems and Omissions	25
Chapter 3	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> : "The Housekeeper's Tale"	61
Chapter 4	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> and Kleist's <i>Novellen</i> : Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law	87
Chapter 5	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> : A Gothic Novel	113
Chapter 6	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> : An Epic Poem	161
Chapter 7	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> : A Social Novel	199
Chapter 8	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> : A <i>Bildungsroman</i>	245
Chapter 9	Conclusions	307
Chapter 10	Work Cited	311

“Un classico è un libro che non ha mai finito di dire quel che ha da dire.”

[“A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say”]

(Italo Calvino, *Perché Leggere i Classici* 7)

Chapter 1

Introduction and Objectives

“The genius, of course, was Emily. I have said nothing about *Wuthering Heights* because that astonishing work seems to me a kind of sport.”

(F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* 27)

In her groundbreaking study, *The True Story of the Novel* (1996), Margaret Anne Doody gives a highly minimalist definition of a novel: “a work is a novel if it is fictional, if it is in prose, and if it is of a certain length” (Doody 16). A priori, we can say that *Wuthering Heights* fits in this simple pattern: it is fictional, it is written in prose, and it has considerable length. Nevertheless, from its reception, critics have always foregrounded its elusiveness and unwieldiness to the point that it has been regarded as a singularity in the history of English literature. F.R. Leavis, in his seminal work, *The Great Tradition* (1964), describes *Wuthering Heights* as “a kind of sport” and refuses to deal with it.¹ David Cecil claims it to be a poem rather than a novel whereas Miriam Allott (1970) labels the novel a “riddle;” and Joseph Carroll (2008) regards it as “a masterpiece of an imaginative order superior to that of most novels” but “elusive to interpretation” (241). In this regard, the novel conforms better to Henry James’ definition of *War and Peace* as

¹ “I have said nothing about *Wuthering Heights* because that astonishing work seems to me a kind of sport” (Leavis, 27).

Introduction and Objectives

“a loose, baggy monster” (Preface to *The Tragic Muse* ii). In fact, *Wuthering Heights* not only refuses to be hastily integrated into historical literary discourse, but also into critical and hermeneutic discourse. As readers, we encounter moments of hermeneutic opacity and resistance: repetitions, ambiguities, devices of estrangement, silences, secrets, narrative polyphony, and semantic vacillations that resist to be resolved by our critical tools. For this reason, critics have always foregrounded the hermeneutic ineffability of the novel; they have stigmatized it as a rare production with no clear precursors in the English literary canon. Like Charlotte Brontë, who has been claimed to be the first mythographer of her sister, they have degraded the literary excellence of Emily Brontë and doomed her to be considered a literary curiosity, relegating *Wuthering Heights* to be a self-enclosed text with an impenetrable system of meaning.

And yet, despite the first critics’ reluctance to include *Wuthering Heights* in the English literary history, the novel is today read and discussed in universities all over the world. It has probably been this skeptical and unfair criticism which has helped to the novel’s survival and rise. *Wuthering Heights* has become a classic in its own right, and it is the function of us critics “to interrogate the classic” (Coetzee 19). Emily Brontë’s novel has not a great choice of explicit literary references or allusions, except for Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and the Bible. However, any novel, Doody asserts, “has a greater range of literary relationships than those indicated by its overt quotations or allusions” (Doody 299). Every writer, no matter whether he or she is good or bad, realistic or fantastic, even aware or not, repeats the tropes and conventions of the Novel itself (Doody 299). In addition, nineteenth century writers were deeply influenced by writers of the eighteenth century. According to Doody, “the Novel’s genetic inheritance has always been present even if certain characteristics have been suppressed, or seen as sources of embarrassment” (Doody 298). In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin contends that the language of the novel is “dialogic,” in the sense that it converses with a heterogeneous group of discourses as well as it parodies extra-novelistic language. But the novel is also dialogic in the sense that it maintains dialogues with the discourses of previous novels, either to reproduce or to parody them. “The roots of the novel are folkloric” (19) says Brean Hammond, and all the genres that permit parody have contributed to its development. Therefore, it is obvious that the novels that Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollet and Lawrence Sterne wrote in the eighteenth century are deeply in debt with Rabelais and Cervantes.

Introduction and Objectives

This intertextuality is less obvious in the works of Sarah Fielding, Samuel Richardson or Frances Sheridan, where the aim is more didactic than parodic and the narrator wants to convey a lesson (Hammond 19).

What justifies my return to Samuel Richardson, Matthew Lewis, Kleist, Byron, Charlotte Brontë, Thackeray and Dickens here is the fact that all literature is a patchwork of themes which are already present in the “origins” which in turn are not original themselves. I am affirming the inevitability and rightfulness of the historical process by which those which had been relegated as “hapax” in the history of English literature are asserting their position in the literary tradition. This goes in line with Italo Calvino’s statement that “what books communicate often remains unknown even to the author himself, that books often say something different from what they set out to say, that in any book there is a part that is the author’s and a part that is a collective and anonymous work” (Calvino, *The Uses of Literature* 99). My aim in this dissertation is then to disclose what most critics have overlooked and to place *Wuthering Heights* in a dialogic relationship with previous novels, novellas and poems. I attempt to do a hermeneutic anticipation of the possible works that might have had both a formal and thematic influence on the novel; this outfaces F.R. Leavis’ absurd contention that *Wuthering Heights* is “a kind of sport.” Thus, in this attempt of defamiliarization, I want to focus on the fact that the story is narrated by a member of the lower class, a servant; on the thematic similarity which the novel shares with many of Kleist’s *Novellen*; on how the novel appropriates Gothic motifs; on the lyricism of many parts of the novel; on whether the novel belongs to the genre of social realism; and on whether Heathcliff’s untold story is indeed a potential *Bildungsroman*. These themes have been mostly overlooked by critics and I want to prove that they indeed contain the threads which pull *Wuthering Heights* back to its origins. Although it might not be totally exhaustive, I think I have done a worthy attempt at exhaustiveness. In layman’s terms, I want to make a sort of X-ray of the novel and to detect the common themes that it shares with the eighteenth and early nineteenth century traditions of narrative, especially *Pamela* (Richardson), Kleist’s *Novellen*, *The Monk* (Matthew Lewis), *Manfred* (Byron), *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte Brontë), *Barry Lyndon* (William Thackeray) and *Oliver Twist* (Charles Dickens), among others. Besides, in each of these chapters, I side with a critic or theorist whose ideas throw new light on different aspects of the novel.

Introduction and Objectives

To conclude, I would like to clarify that the term “tradition” in the title of the dissertation alludes to the diachronic-historical paradigm that is usually constituted after the outburst of a master text such as *Pamela*, but that possesses a synchronic functionality of its own. In *Wuthering Heights*, several traditions are updated and they genealogically connect Emily Brontë’s novel with other previous and/or contemporary narrative texts. In Deleuze’s terms, it is a Nietzschean mode of repetition that is based on a “*disparité du fond*,” a repetition that posits a world based on difference (Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition* 6). According to Deleuze, it is a world of “simulacra” or “phantasms.” This lack of similarities in some paradigm implies that there is something “ghostly” about this kind of repetition (Hillis Miller 6). Hence the textual singularity of *Wuthering Heights* involves a distinguishing update of a pre-existing paradigm: it is the ghostly repetition – the phantasm – of at least six preceding archetypes.

In Chapter 2, “An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*’ critical reception: Problems and Omissions,” I set forth a critical revision of *Wuthering Heights*, focusing on the theoretical paradigms and critical assumptions from which these analyses have been articulated, and on the themes and concerns of Emily Brontë’s production to which critics have paid most attention. My aim here is to overcome the critical paralysis that haunts the novel and to highlight the lack of comparative studies which disclose a dialogic relation between *Wuthering Heights* and previous texts. I divide the critical revisions of the novel in three groups: a) Those critics who postulate the existence of a retrievable determinate meaning which can be either material/immanent (sociological determinism), or spiritual/transcendental (thematic determinism); b) those critics who postulate the existence of an indeterminate meaning (deconstruction); c) my critical position (inter-textual determinism): I want to enrich the heterogeneity of the novel by examining its dialogic relation with previous texts.

In Chapter 3, “*Wuthering Heights*: ‘The Housekeeper’s Tale’” I make a Marxist reading of the novel through Nelly Dean’s role as a participant narrator in *Wuthering Heights*. I also try to analyze the social subversion and the ethical implications that this reading entails. To this purpose, I use Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* as a representative of the domestic context and as a narrative which has a servant as narrator. I argue that the originality of *Wuthering Heights* lies in the fact that a socially inferior character narrates most part the story, acquiring a position of social subalternity but moral authority. This is

Introduction and Objectives

a strong social transgression. Besides, Nelly's polyphonic narration brings to the fore the perspectives that social hegemonic discourses have silenced, permitting the readers to stand in different ideological positions, a fact that brings the novel closer to modernist and postmodernist fiction.

In Chapter 4, "*Wuthering Heights* and Kleist's *Novellen*: Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law," I attempt to do an intertextual reading of Kleist's *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights* and to present a thematic comparison of Brontë's novel and Kleist's narratives in order to expose the common themes that keep resurfacing throughout both texts. I justify this uncommon pairing on the basis that both authors were acquainted with Rousseau's works. I will organize my analysis around the characters' failed attempts to escape from a corrupted society which threatens their most genuine feelings. These attempts are: a) the need to escape from society to a natural setting which promotes authenticity and Christian confraternity; b) the erotic and anomic implosion of the lovers; and c) the parodic reiteration of the normative community which involves an implicit subversion.

In Chapter 5, "*Wuthering Heights*: A Gothic Novel" I analyze how *Wuthering Heights* deconstructs the opposition between gothic and domestic novels by showing how the domestic is founded on acts of violence. I use Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), as the narrative that best epitomizes the characteristics of Gothic literature, dealing with questions of social and moral transgression. Thus, I examine the formal (proliferation of narrative frames), thematic (revenge, subrogation, violence, insanity), and ideological (social, racial and moral disruption, historical and political compulsion) motifs that are pervasive in both narratives. I base my analysis here on Ian Ducan's masterwork, *Modern Romance and Transformation of the Novel*.

In Chapter 6, "*Wuthering Heights*: An Epic Poem," I recover David Cecil's claim that *Wuthering Heights* is "pure dramatic poetry" and I employ Byron's poem, *Manfred*, as a literary-cotext which both formally and thematically casts light on some aspects of *Wuthering Heights*. My argument is that both *Manfred* and *Wuthering Heights* have epic-dramatic qualities that go back to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I also enhance this comparison with other poems that were probably known by the Brontës, especially with Keats' *Lamia*. I will focus on the poetic quality of the most passionate discourses in the novel; on the

Introduction and Objectives

communion with a coarse nature; on the spiritual communities of lovers; on the eroticization of death; and on the humanized fatal heroes.

In Chapter 7, “*Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel*,” I examine how Heathcliff represents four different types of social minorities: the proletarian, the colonial subject, the soldier and, indirectly, the woman. With this aim, I have chosen Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre*, and William Thackeray’s *Barry Lydon*. I have tried to do a materialist reading of the novel by focusing on Heathcliff’s untold story and the questions which the text leaves unanswered: where does Heathcliff come from? Why can’t Catherine marry him? How does Heathcliff obtain his fortune? What has Heathcliff done in his three-year absence? Therefore, I will analyze Heathcliff as a roguish hero characteristic of picaresque fiction. In short, I will pay attention to the silences and metaphors which haunt the novel and shed new light on social, political and ethnical issues in *Wuthering Heights*.

In Chapter 8, “*Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman*” I attempt to make a new account of Heathcliff’s story, and to read his told and untold story as a potential *Bildungsroman*, using some of Dickens’ novels (*David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Great Expectations*) and other nineteenth-century novels as core texts. I focus especially on Heathcliff’s evolution from a natural state to a social one, that is, on his initial condition as outsider, his subsequent passage from “innocence” to “experience,” his conversion into a social climber, and his self-determination. I rely on Franco Moretti’s *The Way of the World* to see if Heathcliff’s story fits the pattern of the *Bildungsroman*. The grounds of my argument are: a) historical: England was not as placid, dull and complacent as Moretti makes it sound but a more turbulent place; and b) thematic: Heathcliff’s story is one of social mobility but psychological arrest; Heathcliff simultaneously represents the figures of hero and villain; his story of upward mobility shows his great individuality, demonstrating that he is not a “common” character; this social mobility takes place without the “recognition-inheritance pattern” and via Heathcliff’s manipulative control of the law; the ideological legacy of *Wuthering Heights* might also be found in literature; and Heathcliff’s unconscious revenge against the law betrays its very contradictions.

Chapter 2

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception: Problems and Omissions

“I don't care –I will get in”

(Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 7)

2.1 Introduction

If the power of literature could be measured by the impression that it leaves on the reader, by the power and energy of its effect, *Wuthering Heights* would undoubtedly succeed as one of the most powerful and effective texts of all time, as the quantity and intensity of the echoes and critical literature that it has produced demonstrate. Few literary texts have incited so many interpretations, so many exegetic passions and controversies. My aim in this chapter is to offer an overview of the main critical analyses that Emily Brontë's novel has received since its publication in 1848 and to outline the lacunae and deficiencies that these critical approaches still entail. This critical revision responds to the need to explicate

a novel that has always been considered *sui generis* in the history of English literature.² In my analysis, I anticipate some literary and narrative intertexts that I think will illuminate different parts of *Wuthering Heights*: Richardson's *Pamela*, Kleist's *Novellen*, Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, Byron's *Manfred*, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre*, William Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon* and Charles Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Oliver Twist* among others. With this "legitimate prejudice" (Gadamer 278), I want to cast new light on aspects of the novel that have been disregarded by the critics as well as to dismiss the generic indeterminacy of the novel by suggesting that it functions as a European novel.³ In this chapter I want to see if critics have been able to identify a conjectural network of literary co-texts or, on the contrary, they have overlooked the literary dimension that overdetermines the novel. To this purpose, I will organize these critical revisions in two groups: 1) those who postulate the existence of a retrievable determinate meaning which can be either material/immanent (sociological determinism), or spiritual/transcendental (thematic determinism); and 2) those critics who postulate the existence of an indeterminate meaning (deconstruction).

2.2 First Reviews on *Wuthering Heights*: The First Deconstructionists of the Novel?

The publication of *Wuthering Heights* met with a scandalized tone from its first readers. I shall begin by compiling the first reactions that emerged after the publication of *Wuthering Heights* and that strongly contributed to the creation of the Brontë myth relegating the novel to the category of impenetrable mystery. These first critics of the novel would belong to the second group of critics, though, as opposed to deconstructionist critics, they degrade and undervalue the novel's heterogeneity and its capacity to generate multiple meanings. Charlotte Brontë was one of the first critics of the novel. She

² In his famous and much-quoted essay, "Emily Brontë and *Wuthering Heights*" in *Early Victorian Novelists: Essays in Revaluation*, David Cecil claims that Emily Brontë "stands outside the main current of nineteenth-century fiction as markedly as Blake stands outside the main current of eighteenth-century poetry" (149).

³ In *Truth and Method* (1960), Gadamer asserts that modern historical research is "the handing down of tradition" (285): "We do not see it only in terms of progress and verified results; in it we have, as it were, a new experience of history whenever the past resounds in a new voice" (Gadamer 285).

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

underscores its taxonomical indeterminacy by calling it “a rude and strange production” which has its source in her sister’s “nun-like” seclusion and in her somber imagination. Moreover, she asserted that, “having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done.” Responses were inevitable; the *Examiner* stated that, although it possesses “considerable power,” *Wuthering Heights* “is a strange book” whose characters are “savages ruder than those who lived before the days of Homer” (285).⁴

The *Britannia* review of 1848, one of the most illuminating, said that the book is “strangely original” and that it bears a resemblance “to those irregular German tales in which the writers, giving the reins to their fancy, represent personages as swayed and impelled to evil by supernatural influences” (288). This is in fact one of the first attempts to overcome the hermeneutic ineffability around the novel and to contextualize it within a literary tradition, that of the German *Novellen*.⁵ The *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* affirmed that *Wuthering Heights* “is a strange sort of book, baffling all regular criticism; yet it is impossible to begin and not to finish it, and quite as impossible to lay it aside afterwards and say nothing about it” (284). The critics strongly recommend “all our readers who love novelty to get this story, for we can promise them that they have never read anything like it before” (285).

The *Atlas* review says that the text “casts a gloom over the mind not easily to be dispelled” and that “[a] more unnatural story we do not remember to have read” (283). It finishes saying that “[t]he work of Currer Bell is a great performance; that of Ellis Bell is only a promise, but it is a colossal one.”⁶ The violence of the text can be measured by the fervent and aggressive tone of the reaction of the *New Monthly Magazine*, which states that *Wuthering Heights* “is a terrific story, associated with an equally fearful and repulsive

⁴ These reviews are taken from the *Norton Critical Edition of Wuthering Heights*. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 2003. 280-303.

⁵ I have selected this contextualization as one of the possible – and probable – influences on the writing of *Wuthering Heights*. Thus, in the chapter, “*Wuthering Heights* and Kleist’s *Novellen*: Rousseauian Nature, Implusive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law,” I make an exhaustive thematic comparison of *Wuthering Heights* and Kleist’s *Novellen* based on their common reading of Rousseau’s works.

⁶ Taken from *The Reader's Guide to Wuthering Heights*. Web 3.10. 2016. <http://www.wuthering-heights.co.uk/reviews.php>

spot" (293). "Our novel reading experiences," the critic says "does not enable us to refer to anything to be compared with the personages we are introduced to at this desolate spot – a perfect misanthropist's heaven" (293).⁷ The *Taint's Edinburgh Magazine* says that "[t]he volumes are powerfully written records of wickedness and they have a moral – they show what Satan could do with the law of Entail."⁸ The *Quarterly Review* inadvertently hints at a possible literary co-text of *Wuthering Heights* by asserting that the novel, "[w]ith all the unscrupulousness of *the French school of novels*, combines that repulsive vulgarity in the choice of its vice which supplies its own antidote" (Allott, 111, emphasis added). Although it is not the aim of the reviewer, this is another interesting attempt to contextualize the novel within the European literary tradition and, specifically, within French fiction; a contextualization which, to my mind, is quite accurate but which needs specification. I think it is not wrong to claim that the reviewer is referring to George Sand's and Balzac's novels; a claim which is supported by the fact that both Charlotte and Emily Brontë went to Brussels to improve their French.⁹

American reviews were not too long in coming either. *Paterson's Magazine* advises to read *Jane Eyre*, "but burn *Wuthering Heights*."¹⁰ The *Graham's Lady's Magazine* wonders how a writer could have written such a book without committing suicide before finishing it and asserts that "[i]t is a compound of vulgar depravity and unnatural horrors." The *Literary World* states that *Wuthering Heights* "is a dark tale darkly told," and that, despite its "disgusting coarseness [...] we cannot choose but read." In the *American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics*, G.W. Peck asserts that "[t]he book is original; it is powerful; full of suggestiveness. But it is coarse..." The critic also argues that "[i]t lifts the veil and shows boldly the dark side of our depraved nature." He repeats the famous assertion that "nothing like it has ever been written before" and finally he makes an unfortunate statement: "It will live a short and brilliant life, and then die and be forgotten."

⁷ "A perfect misanthropist's heaven" (1) is Lockwood's literal description of *Wuthering Heights*.

⁸ *The Reader's Guide to Wuthering Heights*.

⁹ In *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, Catherine Tillotson points out that "French novels were much read in England at this time by men and independent women" (Tillotson 7). She also states that the term "George-Sandism" was an accepted label at the time and that contemporary critics have drawn comparison between Charlotte Brontë and George Sand.

¹⁰ All these reviews have been taken from *The Reader's Guide to Wuthering Heights*.

Last but not least, E. Whipple, in the *North American Review*, makes a strong assertion by comparing Heathcliff with Goethe's Mephistopheles and with the Satan of Milton, establishing then two credible precedents of the novel:

He [Heathcliff] is a deformed monster whom the Mephistopheles of Goethe would have nothing to say to, whom the Satan of Milton would consider as an object of simple disgust, and to whom Dante would hesitate in awarding the honour of a place among those whom he has consigned to the burning pitch.

To sum up, the first critics highlight the strangeness and originality of the novel refusing to recognize its excellence and regarding it as morbid lowbrow fiction. The words "coarse," "vulgar" and "repulsive" are the most repeated and the "depraved nature" of both the writer and the readers of the novel is frequently stressed. Although few have been the critics who have dared to suggest possible literary inspirations of the novel – and this was far from being their intention – we have seen here the first attempts to identify some of the textual filiations of *Wuthering Heights*. Thus the characters of *Wuthering Heights* have been compared to the characters of the German *Novellen*, to Goethe's Mephistopheles, and to Milton's Satan whereas the themes of the novel have been related to the "vulgarity" of the French novels.

2.3 Determinate Meaning of *Wuthering Heights*: Material Determinism

In the second part of the twentieth century, critics have tried to overcome the critical lacuna that has always surrounded the novel and have paid attention to the role that history and economy play in *Wuthering Heights*. These critics would belong then to our first group of critics, since they powerfully argue that the meaning of the novel lies within the history in which it was produced and first published. David Wilson (1947), Arnold Kettle (1951), and Terry Eagleton (1975) focus on the historical oppositions between the two houses, Wuthering Heights, where the Earnshaws own the land which they work themselves, and Thrushcross Grange, where the genteel Lintons live off their rents. Wilson's aim in his essay, "Emily Brontë: First of the Moderns," is to set aside the mystic neverland of the moors and heath in which she has exclusively been situated and to picture her in the light of her relationship with the people of her time. Wilson sees *Wuthering Heights* as a metaphor of the social revolts of Brontë's time, with all their violence and hatred: "These social storms were far too near for the sisters to have lived the quiet

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

secluded lives that have been pictured. These events are at least as significant in their background, and as the springs of their emotions, as are the moor and the heath" (Wilson 96). The fact that it is narrated by the cultivated Lockwood and the practical Nelly Dean implies, not without irony, the compromise between this savagery and the mood of more stable times.

Heathcliff symbolizes on this account the working men of Brontë's time, who, after enduring suffering and degradation at the hands of their "superiors," turn to disobedience and revolt and to the violent movement for the People's Charter. His decision to become an educated and wealthy man finds its parallel in the reaction of the landlords to the yeomen whenever they revolt against their oppressors: "dark, uncouth, and brutal, moved by a hateful will and guided by an intelligence that seems of the Devil" (111). Wilson relates this to what the Luddites, the Chartists, and the devotees of the "Sacred Month" did in the Brontë days. Although Emily Brontë does not mitigate Heathcliff's cruelty, harshness, and hatred, the reader cannot help feeling some kind of sympathy: his repulsiveness is appealing. Not only does Emily Brontë depict Heathcliff as brutal, detestable, and merciless, she also shows how he became so. According to Wilson, Brontë must have seen the same process in the strikes and in the social disturbances of the summer of 1842 (97).

Although he makes a truly innovative contribution to the critical history of *Wuthering Heights* and his essay is one of the first attempts to contextualize the novel within the oppression of English history, Wilson disregards the literary debts that the novel incurs with previous texts. Wilson makes a passing reference to Disraeli's *Sybil* (87); a rapid comparison of "The Philosopher" with Troilus' lines in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (107); an allusion to Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* as an example of satire upon the hypocrisy of society (108);¹¹ he aligns Brontë with Blake and Browning, as poets "of the passionate love of like and the will to be" (108); and he compares Catherine's divided mind to that of Hamlet (113); but he does not explicitly mention one direct literary influence for the novel. Indeed, Wilson himself recognizes that "[i]t is not for a moment

¹¹ In fact, Wilson asserts that "[h]er novel is not a social satire, like *Vanity Fair*, nor a parable; it is a reflection of the world of social conflict coming into being. It is the completest picture we can have of the world as Emily Brontë saw it" (Wilson 110).

believed that the sketch here drawn is adequate or does her justice" (114). Indeed, it does *not* make her justice. His bold affirmation that "[a]mong the English writers of her time she seems to stand alone and apart" (94) exposes the hermeneutic poverty of his otherwise innovative reading.

In the same way that David Wilson tries to picture Emily Brontë among the lives of her people, Arnold Kettle points out that *Wuthering Heights* is about England in 1847: "The people it reveals live not in a never-never land, but in Yorkshire. Heathcliff was born, not in the pages of Byron, but in a Liverpool slum" (Kettle 130). Kettle ends the essay with the claim that the novel is

an expression in the imaginative terms of art of the stresses, tensions, and conflicts, personal and spiritual, of Nineteenth Century Capitalist society... The men and women of *Wuthering Heights* are not the prisoners of nature; they live in the world and strive to change it, sometimes successfully, always painfully, with almost infinite difficulty and error. (144)

Kettle insists that the theme of the novel is the social injustice of Brontë's time rather than the fantasies of a repressed and secluded woman. Therefore, he sees Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship as a metaphor of the oppressed that join forces in order to revolt against their tyrants. Thus, as they are oppressed by Hindley, a remnant of patriarchal authority, they end up loving each other out of their shared sufferings and they start to plan their rebellion. He bases his contention on Catherine's bold declaration in her diary that "H. and I are going to rebel – we took our initiatory step this evening." According to Kettle, there is nothing vague about *Wuthering Heights*. The power of the novel, however, does not lie in realistic description, nor in a thorough analysis of social living in the manner of Jane Austen. Brontë's approach is much closer to Dickens'. "*Wuthering Heights* is essentially the same kind of novel as *Oliver Twist*," Kettle points out (131). It is neither a romance nor a picaresque novel and it cannot be described as a moral fable. Its pattern, like that of *Oliver Twist*, cannot be abstracted in a sentence since Emily Brontë, like Dickens, works in images and symbols. Thus, we have seen that Kettle occasionally intertwines a social reading of the novel with analogies with *Oliver Twist*, enriching and giving accuracy to his thorough analysis. This comparison with *Oliver Twist* is indeed fascinating and quite correct. In the last chapter of this dissertation I will

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

recover it and analyze the character of Heathcliff as the hero of a potential *Bildungsroman*.

Terry Eagleton, in his introduction to the anniversary edition of *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (2005) argues that the Brontës' creative and utopian imagination runs into conflict with the sordid disciplines of the industrial and capitalist England (Eagleton 11). They are transitional figures writing in the overlap between an era of high Romanticism and the birth of a new industrial society. There is a microcosm of this transition in the Brontës' lives as they had to abandon their mythical childhood in order to face the harsh life of the Victorian governess (Eagleton 12). Eagleton characterizes Heathcliff as both gift and threat, and Mr. Earnshaw's first words about him support it: "See here, wife! I was never so beaten with anything in my life: but you must e'en take it as a gift of God; through it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil" (34). He asserts that Heathcliff is a "purely atomized individual" and an "internal *émigré*" within the Heights as he is free from genealogical ties and from the social constraints that limit the freedom and autonomy of the rest of the characters. This freedom is what allows Heathcliff to have a relationship of direct personal equality with Catherine, who, being the only daughter of the family, is not a direct heiress to the Earnshaw fortune.

Eagleton has suggested that what Hindley does is to parody Heathcliff's freedom by turning it into the non-freedom that neglect and abandonment entail, as he is allowed to run wild on the one hand, but oppressed by work and class status on the other. Therefore, Heathcliff achieves freedom neither *within* society nor *outside* it. According to Eagleton, this contradiction summarizes a fundamental truth about bourgeois society: freedom is nourished and distorted in the very shadow of tyranny and oppression (Eagleton 104). Thus, although Romantic freedom is locked in combat with society, this Romanticism cannot completely transcend it. Heathcliff turns from a subjugated child to a merciless capitalist landowner. His freedom from genealogical ties and social constraints makes him an isolated figure with infinite possibilities of relationship. In his adulthood, however, Heathcliff becomes a Machiavellic capitalist landlord capable of anything to achieve his ends. He acts according to his most primitive and Hobbesian instincts: as a heartless predator who does not hesitate to break conventions and moral precepts.

When Lockwood visits the house for the first time, he is unable to discern Heathcliff's social status as well as his relationship with the rest of the characters. His social relation

to both the Heights and the Grange is, in fact, ambiguous. Heathcliff represents the triumph of capitalism over the traditional yeoman economy of the Heights. In that sense, he belongs to the world of the Grange, as he tries to dispossess Hareton and, consequently, to destroy the traditional yeoman economy. And yet, he does this in order to retaliate on Edgar Linton. Indeed, he employs the very weapons (marriage, property contracts, and arranged marriages) that are so frequent in the capitalist world of the Lintons. Moreover, he does this with the coarseness and resilience proper of the Heights world. Eagleton asserts that the contradiction that Heathcliff embodies is made clear in the fact that he combines Heights violence with Grange methods in order to obtain both properties (Eagleton 115), and he decodes the antagonism between Heathcliff and the Grange as a reversed version of the ideological conflict between the ascending bourgeoisie and the stagnated gentry which Charlotte Brontë also dramatizes in her works. He also maintains that Heathcliff represents “a turbulent form of capitalist aggression which must historically be civilized” (Eagleton 115).

Thus, whereas Heathcliff symbolizes the dispossessing bourgeoisie, Linton represents the capitalist landlord, and both stand in opposition to yeoman society, represented by Hareton. Though illuminating and relevant, Eagleton overlooks that this conflict was already present in Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, in which Sir William Ashton represents this capitalist force that tries to dispossess and unseat the aristocracy of the Ravenswoods. The marriage between Hareton and Cathy can then be interpreted as a balance or fusion between the genteel world of the Lintons and the bourgeois world of Heathcliff: the drive and coarseness of the yeoman, Hareton, is refined and cultured by the landed gentry, in this case, represented by the second Cathy. Nevertheless, Eagleton realizes that the role of Hareton is ambiguous. Thus, if he is taken symbolically as a subrogate of Heathcliff, the novel's ending implies the reconciliation between capitalist bourgeoisie and squirearchy, an ending analogous to Charlotte Brontë's mythical resolutions. But, if he is taken literally, as a survivor of yeomanry, such a balance of power is incongruous (Eagleton 119). It is this tension between literal and symbolic meanings as well as Heathcliff's divided ideological role, Eagleton asserts, that makes *Wuthering Heights* the unwieldy novel that it is and far more complex than any of Charlotte Brontë's novels. Eagleton's analysis of *Wuthering Heights* is rich with comparisons with Charlotte Brontë's novels. For Eagleton, readers always know what to

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

think about a Charlotte Brontë character, however, this can hardly be said of *Wuthering Heights* (Eagleton 98). The difference between Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Eagleton argues, can be expressed in terms of the violence and bigotry which are aspects of the *narrative* of *Wuthering Heights* whereas in Charlotte Brontë's fiction these are qualities of the *narration* (Eagleton 99):

Wuthering Heights trades in spite and stiff-nakedness, but always "objectively," as the power of its tenaciously detailed realism to survive unruffled even the gustiest of emotional crises would suggest. Malice and narrowness in Charlotte's work, by contrast, so that characters and events are flushed with the novelist's ideological intentions, bear the imprint of her longings and anxieties. (Eagleton 99)

Another crucial difference lies in the fact that whereas *Wuthering Heights* achieves its coherence from an arduous confrontation of competing forces, Charlotte Brontë's coherence depends, on the contrary, on a pragmatic integration of them (98). According to Eagleton, both forms of coherence are ideological but Emily Brontë's enterprise is more penetrating, radical and authentic, and it provides the basis for a greater artistic achievement (Eagleton 98). Although his essay on *Wuthering Heights* does not include any comparison with another nineteenth-century novel, he does include this essay within a global study in which all the Brontës' novels appear; a fact which, though instinctive, suggests a symbiotic influence between the sisters. Despite this, Eagleton cannot help undermining – or at least ignoring – Charlotte's role as an influence on Emily Brontë's fiction, which is undeniable.

Feminist critics have also read the novel as historically specific. In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1984), Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of *Wuthering Heights* takes Catherine as the true protagonist of the novel. They draw on Freudian terminology and identify the wound in Catherine's foot after she is attacked by the Lintons' dogs as a symbolic castration. They also compare Catherine with Milton's Eve and justify Catherine's betrayal of Heathcliff arguing that, given the patriarchal system of the period, women must fall since they are doomed to fall. These critics examine Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Emily Dickinson. They discuss the angel/monster tropes that appear in their novels and argue that their anger was sublimated in the figure of the mad woman.

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

In their essay on *Wuthering Heights*, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë’s Bible of Hell,” Gilbert and Gubar argue that the problems of literary orphanhood in *Wuthering Heights*, like in *Frankenstein*, lead to a fascination with the question of origins. This suggests, they argue, “a similarity between the two novels which brings us back to the tension between dramatic surfaces and metaphysical depths” (380). They label Brontë’s novel as a *Bildungsroman* since it is built around a central fall, that is, a girl’s passage from “innocence” to “experience,” and that this fall has “Miltonic overtones,” they argue, “is no doubt culturally inevitable” (382). For these critics, the world of *Wuthering Heights* is one in which the most improbable opposites coexist without, apparently, any awareness on the author’s part that there is anything improbable in their coexistence. “The ghosts of Byron, Shakespeare, and Jane Austen,” Gilbert and Gubar contend, “haunt the same ground” (385). They also compare Heathcliff and Catherine’s infantile union to that of Manfred with Astarte, and they argue that in this union she becomes “a perfect androgyne” (387). This comparison is especially significant if we take into account that the Brontës were admirers of Byron and deeply acquainted with his works. Involuntarily, like Eagleton, Gilbert and Gubar have established intuitive comparisons between *Wuthering Heights*, Jane Austen’s novels, and, especially, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, as well as they have made a relevant comparison between Heathcliff and Catherine and Byron’s Manfred and Astarte, a comparison that I will fully exploit in the chapter of my dissertation, “*Wuthering Heights*: A Poem.”

In *Bearing the Word* (1989), Margaret Homans draws on Lacanian psychoanalytic criticism to argue that “*Wuthering Heights* is organized around two contrasting stories of female development, the stories of Catherine Earnshaw and of her daughter, Cathy Linton.” For Homans, in *Wuthering Heights*, women have difficulties to enter the symbolic order. Thus, literal meaning is identified with the figure of the mother, whose power must be inhibited from entering into the symbolic order. The story of the second Catherine represents the acceptance of the father’s law, “an acceptance that makes her a safer model for the author’s own practice” (82). Regina Barreca’s essay, “The Power of Excommunication: Sex and the Feminine Text in *Wuthering Heights*” (2003) also deals with women’s relationship to language. She asserts that in the novel, women can take control of language and their narration, letter-writings and readings are a “decipherable text of resistance” (235). Thus, all the texts produced by the female characters in

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

Wuthering Heights indicate “an appropriation of the power of language which women then use as an instrument of control against the dominant order” (227). In the same way that they take control of language, they also take control of sex since women “speak their desire and act on it” (237). Neither Homans nor Barreca mention any single possible influence for the novel, nor is that their purpose.

In *Emily Brontë: Heretic* (1994), Stevie Davies suggests that one of the most important sources of *Wuthering Heights* is in the genres of English literature which are related to female experience, that is, lullabies, ballads, folk-tales, nursery stories and gossip, which comes from *god sib*, good speech. She relates this to the importance of the semiotic and analyses *Wuthering Heights* as a rebellious return to the primitive, anomic and egotistic world of childhood. Characters then “teem with childhood animosities, allegiances and obsessions; they brawl, taunt, mock, manipulate, weep and play their indoor and outdoor orgiastic games” (44). In her analysis, Davies establishes a relevant comparison with Sir Walter Scott’s *Old Mortality* (1816). Exactly, she establishes a difference in the way these two writers resolve the return of an exiled hero. Thus, whereas Scott satisfies the reader’s curiosity with relevant information about Morton’s whereabouts, so that there are no suppressions left, Brontë does not give the reader any account of Heathcliff’s travels and conquests.

Although Heathcliff gives Hindley some information about this in order to get an invitation to *Wuthering Heights*, readers are excluded from that information, a fact which underlies Brontë’s “narrative avarice” (Davies 88). It is true that Davies does not try to establish *Old Mortality* as a literary precedent for *Wuthering Heights* – and probably it is not – however, this comparison is highly pertinent since the Brontës were avid readers of Walter Scott. Davies makes another relevant assertion. She argues that “[d]espite clear verbal echoes, the guilty excitement of Byron’s *Manfred* is entirely lacking in *Wuthering Heights*” and she also undermines the popular belief that Shelley’s *Epipsychidion*, with its potent “Emily,/ I love thee... I am not thine: I am part of *thee*” is a strong influence on Brontë’s mind (Davies 192). Davies claims that it is far away from the intense struggle for frankness, insight and detached judgment in *Wuthering Heights* (193).

In *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction* (1987), Joseph Allen Boone reads *Wuthering Heights* as a “counter-tradition” which breaks with the traditional marriage plot “that defined the sexes as complementary but unequal partners” (142).

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

Boone exposes the conflicts that take place after marriage and which tend to anticipate “a thoroughgoing interrogation of the sexual and social ideologies of power perpetuating wedded discord” (142). According to Boone, Brontë examines the negative consequences of male cruelty in the relationships of the novel, as well as the internal divisions of identity that these relationships entail (152). This pattern of division is reflected in the structural ruptures of the novel, that is, in its dual narrators, in its ambiguous division between the worlds of reality and ghosts, between recalled and foreseen levels of time, and between different modes of ending (152). Such an analysis connects the early innovations of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1848) and George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876), with the modernist experiments of Henry James’ *The Golden Bowl* (1904) and Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927). The unsettling strategies evolved in these novels show a truly empowering revolt against the constraints of wedlock ideology (Boone 143). These texts coincide in their effort to translate the disturbing tension of conjugal conflict into principles of narrative structure (147). Although he links the novel with subsequent novels, Boone persists in the claim that *Wuthering Heights* is “something of an anomaly in the English tradition of the novel” (151). For Boone, its difference is especially noticeable in “its unconventional attitudes toward love and marriage” (151). Thus, although he analyzes and stresses many of the innovations of the novel, it is not Boone’s intention to establish any literary influence for *Wuthering Heights*.

James Kavanagh, in *Emily Brontë* (1985), sees the family as an oppressive institution and construes Heathcliff as a representation of revolutionary libidinal desire and as a symbol of an oppressed class who takes revolt against its oppressors: “[...] Heathcliff intrudes on the novel’s original family regime not just as an agent of the father’s desire, but also as an agent of a disruptive capitalist dynamic that corrodes and transforms traditional family structures” (Kavanagh 89). Kavanagh maintains a recurrent dialogue with Gilbert and Gubar’s work but he does not hint at any possible textual filiation of the novel. Lyn Pykett, in *Women Writers: Emily Brontë* (1989), claims that the novel shows the limits of female power and explores its problematic power. Indeed, I think it necessary to stop in Pykett’s wonderful chapter in this book, “Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*: Gothic Plot and Domestic fiction.” In this chapter, Pykett anticipates my thesis and states that she aims

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

to look at *Wuthering Heights* in the context of the developing traditions of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fiction, and to suggest that the peculiar generic mix of this novel offers a number of interesting perspectives on the whole question of the relationship of the woman writer to the history and tradition of fiction. (Pykett 73)

Although her purpose is clear and innovative, I think that Pykett fails in the way she conducts her analysis. She includes the novel within the Female Gothic but she does not attempt to specify any single literary precedent for *Wuthering Heights*:

Gothic is usually taken to be the dominant genre of the first generation plot of *Wuthering Heights*, and is associated with its Romanticism, its mystical, fantastic and supernatural elements, and its portrayal of wild nature. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Gothic was a genre particularly identified with women writers, and many recent feminist critics have argued that Female Gothic may be seen as a complex genre which simultaneously represents women's fears and offers fantasies of escape from them. (Pykett 76)

She asserts that embedded within this Gothic frame, there is a second narrative, that of the second generation, which moves in the direction of Victorian Domestic Realism, but, again, she does not establish parallels with any single novel (Pykett 76). In fact, in this essay, Pykett directs her attention to the way in which "the novel's mixing of genres" is connected to issues of gender "by examining some of the ways in which specific historic genres may be related to particular historic definitions of gender" (Pykett 74), but she disregards the literary filiations of the novel. For N.M. Jacobs (2003), who analyzes the structure of *Wuthering Heights* along with Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, argues that the narrative structure of the novel approaches the female hidden self within the social world. In both novels, Jacobs contends, the external reality is male whereas the inner reality is mainly female (219). Both novels follow the same pattern of approaching an extremely violent private reality through a narrator that justifies this violence. For Jacobs, the novel focuses on the way that relationships are distorted by power structures. Most of the violence and abuse in the novel are perpetrated by the patriarch of the house, the owner of absolute power, and by the "psychic fragmentation" that this concept of patriarchal power imposes on both men and women (227). As in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the opposition between male and female worlds that is reproduced in the structure

of the novel is shown in terms of the source of the brutality depicted (227). Apart from *The Tenant*, Jacobs does not mention any possible literary influence for the novel.

In "Diaries and Displacement in *Wuthering Heights*" (2003), Rebecca Steinitz argues that the diary functions, both thematically and literally, as an object in which both the writer and the readers can project their own desires (254). Thus, both Catherine and Lockwood – the marginalized young daughter and the sophisticated gentleman – use their diaries to cope with their senses of displacement: "In the novel, then, the diary itself becomes the proverbial place of one's own, but its very status as such reveals how, psychologically, textually, and materially, one's own place can never be secured" (254). Steinitz analyzes the novel as a sequence of attempts to deal with this sense of displacement, especially the efforts of Catherine and Lockwood to do so through their diaries (257). She suggests that in her representation of the diaries, Brontë is working with the cultural connotations of the genre, especially its materiality, highlighting its ability to palliate the anxiety of place, even if she ultimately questions this ability (259). Therefore, through her diary's actual marginality, Catherine is claiming the social margins as her own (259), and Lockwood's violation of Catherine's diary marks him as one who does not respect the privileged textual materiality of the genre (260). Like Jacobs', Steinitz does not attempt to shed light on the intertextual relations of the novel.

In her groundbreaking book, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), Nancy Armstrong claims that with the Brontës, the history of the novel took a different turn. Domestic novels had only aimed at propriety and had tried to convey a moral lesson. In the hands of the Brontës, however, domestic fiction "struggles to socialize desires whose origin and vicissitudes comprised one's true identity as well as his or her possibilities for growth" (Armstrong, *Desire* 198). Indeed, the Brontës' work was a reaction against the kind of domestic fiction that writers such as Jane Austen were writing. This is clear in Charlotte Brontë's correspondence, where she accuses Austen of aesthetic frivolity: "[Jane Austen] does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well." However, Charlotte Brontë did not agree with this kind of polite writing and therefore she positions herself more in favor of a passionate writing: "What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study, but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and sentient target of death – *this* Miss Austen ignores."

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

This “what the blood rushes through” clearly stands for the restrained desires of women. Brontë concludes this critique of Austen with the famous statement that “Jane Austen was a complete and most sensible lady, but a very incomplete, and rather insensible (not senseless), woman.” This critique, Armstrong asserts, establishes forms of sexuality as the root of aesthetics of fiction (Armstrong 192). The Brontës sought to represent the so-long-repressed female desire, which was considered anomic, in order to represent a new human nature (Armstrong 192). In her second study of nineteenth-century fiction, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (2005), Armstrong argues that the Victorian novel represents women who express extreme forms of individualism as “extremely unattractive,” and chastises them so severely that what once led to satisfaction and the impression of a more just social order now produced the opposite consequences (Armstrong 79). Armstrong suggests that, where eighteenth-century heroines from Moll Flanders to Elizabeth Bennet expanded the limits of individualism and self-expression, Victorian heroines narrowed those limits and “transformed individualistic energy into forms of self-management and containment” (Armstrong 79). Most Victorian heroines pale before the atrocious behavior of their counterparts, these being Catherine Earnshaw, Bertha Mason, Edith Dombey, Lady Deadlock, Becky Sharp, Maggie Tulliver, Tess Durbeyfield, Lizzie Eustace, and the protagonists of sensationalist novels (Armstrong 80). Thus, Armstrong asserts, by embodying the radicalism of a previous individualism in female form, the Victorian novel achieves a more important purpose than venting hostility toward violent and aggressive women:

By pathologizing and criminalizing these women, Victorian fiction justified beating, drowning, burning, hanging, or exiling them for possessing qualities that the same novels would persuade us to forgive in such male characters as Heathcliff, Mr. Dombey, Rawdon Crawley, Stephen Guest, Michael Henchard, or Frank Greystock. (Armstrong 81)

According to Armstrong, Victorian fiction portrayed the appalling qualities of ruling-class masculinity as truly detestable *only* when those qualities are present in women. In *Wuthering Heights*, Armstrong claims, women disturb more than stabilize domestic relations, from the two resolute Catherines, the determined Isabella Linton and the loquacious Nelly Dean. Using the example of Lockwood’s trying to prevent the ghost of

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

the first Catherine entering her bedroom, and Heathcliff's violent reaction to thwart Cathy's attempt to leave *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë shifts the positions usually occupied by male and female and goes so far as to justify the violence that both men employ in trying to keep Catherine out of the house and Cathy in. For Armstrong,

[i]gnoring the fact that the displacement of masculine aggression from mother to daughter transforms that aggression into a distinctively modern form, those who track the first Catherine's open defiance back to the author tend to regard Brontë's negative depiction of the new men who were moving into the country as her personal rejection of modernity itself. (Armstrong 87)

These readers negate Emily Brontë's fair place at the beginning of a tradition that does not represent masculinity in positive terms: we are all too conversant with the claim that Brontë identified herself with the character of Heathcliff. Masculine identity is only asserted by subordinating and controlling femininity, creating the illusion of masculinity's social independence and economic autonomy. This changes the grounds of masculinity and makes it susceptible to new forms of social rivalry (Armstrong 87).

It goes without saying that both these Marxist and feminist critics have made a precious contribution to the critical history of *Wuthering Heights*. Thus, Wilson, Kettle and Eagleton have focused on the historical oppositions between *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange, and they have underlined the ideological conflicts of the novel as reflections of the social injustices of Brontë's time. Feminist critics have read the novels in terms of gender and have chosen Catherine as the true protagonist of the novel. Armstrong has read the novel as a reaction to Jane Austen's domestic fiction and has highlighted how women disturb more than stabilize domestic relations in the novel. In Derek Attridge's own words, a literary text is "never entirely insulated from the contingencies of the history into which it is projected and within which it is read" (59), so that "existing artistic practices can come under pressure from a number of external sources" (38). Their analysis, though groundbreaking and exhaustive, is nevertheless reductionist.

In *The Ethics of Reading* (1987), Hillis Miller argues that literature is not a simple "reflection or example of social, historical, and ideological forces at a given time and place" (8), according to which "the story of literature would then be no more than the

study of a symptom or superstructure of something else more real and more important.” What he calls “the ethical moment” in literature “cannot... be accounted for by the social and historical forces that impinge upon it. In fact the ethical moment contests these forces and is subversive of them. The ethical moment... is genuinely productive and inaugural in its effects on history” (8-9). However, this resolution of the conflict, linked to the ethical moment, is not what engages me. What I want to stress here is that these critics have overlooked the literary cotextual determinism of the novel, failing to hint at any of the possible literary precedents of the novel. Although they clearly locate the novel within the contingencies of the history through which it is produced and against which it is read, they fail to assert its position in the (English) literary tradition.

Apart from this, these critics have failed to make a connection between *Wuthering Heights* and the Condition-of-England novels, which emerged around 1830 and survived until the end of the century. The subject of these novels is the social problems which troubled the whole of society. They proposed imprecise solutions for the reform of human relations. The novel was contaminated with the generous idealism of a dying Romanticism which found a new path in political and social reformations (Cazamian 4). Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell and Kingsley were the most representative social writers of the period, but they are not the only ones: Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* could well be placed within the category of industrial novels. Indeed, in this dissertation, I aim to account for the full right of *Wuthering Heights* to belong to the group of social novels. To justify this argument, I will put the novel in relationship with *Shirley*, which has always been considered as the most “social” of Charlotte Brontë's novels.

2.4 Determinate Meaning of *Wuthering Heights*: Spiritual/Transcendental Determinism

Terry Eagleton asserts that the great contradiction of the novel is Heathcliff's conflictive identity as a metaphysical hero, spiritually disconnected from a cruel society, the class system and social conventions and totally infatuated with his love for Catherine, and a domestic intruder who craftily expropriates the capital of others (116). George Bataille (1957), the first Hillis Miller (1962), Leo Bersani (1976) Patsy Stoneman (1978), Margaret Lenta (1984), Juliet Mitchell (1984), Martha Nussbaum (1996), the first Terry

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

Eagleton, and Joseph Carroll (2008) try to leave aside the social dimension of the novel and focus on Heathcliff and Catherine's individual energies. In *La Littérature et le Mal* (1957), George Bataille claims that "the basis of sexual effusion is the negation of the isolation of the ego which only experiences ecstasy by exceeding itself, by surpassing itself in the embrace in which the being loses its solitude" (Bataille 16). The intensity of this fusion increases to the point where destruction becomes ostensible. "What we call vice," Bataille states, is based on this profound implication of death" (Bataille 17). For him, no mortal love embodies this fusional communion as much as Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff (Bataille 17).

He finishes the essay with the assertion that the world of *Wuthering Heights* is the world of an aggressive sovereignty and of expiation and that once the expiation has been accepted, life blooms (Bataille 30). Bataille's analysis does clearly postulate an erotic meaning to the novel. He is not preoccupied in establishing any literary influence of the novel and he just carelessly mentions Jacques Blondel's comparison of two passages from Sade's *Justine* and *Wuthering Heights* where the violence of one of the executioners in *Justine* is compared with Heathcliff's destructive compulsion: "How sensual is the act of destruction, I can think of nothing which excites me more deliciously. There is no ecstasy similar to that which we experience when we yield to this divine infamy" (qtd. Bataille 20-21). This is indeed quite similar to Heathcliff's strong assertion that "[h]ad I been born where laws are less strict and tastes less dainty, I should treat myself to a slow vivisection of those two, as an evening's amusement" (270).

Similarly, Hillis Miller, in his chapter on Emily Brontë in *The Disappearance of God* (1962), proclaims that in the world of *Wuthering Heights* destruction is the law of life. The loss of an earlier state of civilized limitation has resulted in the animalization of the inhabitants of the Heights (168). There, no laws stand between people. The world of *Wuthering Heights* is a world of extremes and there are only two possible solutions for an individual: the pleasure of complete and unconscious fusion with another person, and the agony of complete separation. Hillis Miller's most original contribution in this essay takes place when, at the end of the novel, the narrator tells that, although civilization has been reestablished, the church is still without a pastor, and its physical decay has made progress. He claims that Emily Brontë tries to show that society by itself grows more artificial until the churches are dilapidated and God has finally disappeared. Only the

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

recovery of God would bring a complete regeneration of civilization. This connection with the heavenly realm can only be achieved through the transgression of religious, moral, and social laws and through the encroachment into the prohibited space between man and God. To enter this space implies to bring destruction into the world and to be torn apart by it. Both Catherine and Heathcliff have overstepped this dangerous realm by trying to impose their primitive childhood impulses on society. Hillis Miller suggests that the church is still abandoned because it does no longer have a transcendental significance. God has been transformed from the transcendent deity of Protestant orthodoxy who imposes his irrevocable commandment, to an immanent God who permeates everything, like the soft wind that blows over the heath. This new God can be possessed and it makes institutional religion unnecessary: "The love of Heathcliff and Cathy has served as a new mediator between heaven and earth, and has made any other mediator for the time being superfluous" (200-211). Like Bataille's, this is an extremely innovative thematic analysis of the novel. Nevertheless, Hillis Miller's brilliant essay falls short of offering any single comparison with a previous eighteenth or nineteenth-century novel.

In his chapter in *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature* (1976), "Desire and Metamorphosis," Leo Bersani argues that *Wuthering Heights* is "a frenetic attempt to create family ties – or, to put it in another way, to tie the self up in an unbreakable family circle" (202). This frantic attempt to create family ties is explained in the absence or insignificance of parents in the novel. The turmoil of *Wuthering Heights* is caused by the arrival of Heathcliff into a family whose members know who they are and where they come from. Heathcliff breaks the family circle to penetrate it. Thus, he marries a Linton and his son marries an Earnshaw's daughter. Although at the beginning he is resented and rejected, he is soon allowed to penetrate the complete system of familial affinities in *Wuthering Heights* (Bersani 206). And yet, the last marriage in *Wuthering Heights*, that of Hareton and Cathy, expels him forever from the two families and the foreigner becomes an intruder (206). Heathcliff's otherness is so radical that he is always associated with the beastly, the devilish or the inanimate. Indeed, it is significant how Emily Brontë manages to suggest the futility of our distinctions between the human and the nonhuman without breaking the rules of realistic probability. Desire is fundamentally vampiristic in *Wuthering Heights*. Its protagonists do not focus on specific pleasures, they "want to devour being" (Bersani 213). By becoming the owner of the Heights, marrying

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

Isabella Linton and forcing Cathy to marry his son, Heathcliff occupies a central position in the family. His strategy is to betray the family's natural inclination to exclude that which is foreign or unfamiliar. Thus, the familiar enclosure becomes a prison, and the alien intruder becomes the rapacious master of both family properties (Bersani 221). Throughout this chapter, Bersani establishes several comparisons with Isidore-Lucien Ducasse's (Conte de Lautréamont) *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869). Although morbidity and cruelty are far more explicit in *Les Chants* than in *Wuthering Heights*, Bersani compares Maldoror's lack of origins with Heathcliff's. As Lautréamont's hero, Heathcliff and Catherine are "eternally restless wanderer[s]" (213).

In her paper, "The Brontës and Death: Alternatives to Revolution" (1978), Patsy Stoneman takes some images of transcendental death in the works of the Brontës and argues that these evade total assimilation to the ideological prerogatives because of certain anachronistic features since, in Gramsci's terms, the Brontës are intellectuals in a traditional manner rather than in an organic relationship to their society (Stoneman 80). She also defends that these images of transcendence are blurred by the social mediation present in the novels. For Stoneman, society allows the women who are the protagonists of these novels "neither revolutionary action through rebellious social activity, nor the gesture of total rejection in death as transcendence; the most they can achieve is Emily's impasse of confrontation, or Charlotte's creeping subversion" (Stoneman 80). Stoneman contends that it is in Emily Brontë's work where this "death-orientation" becomes most outstanding, the consequence being that a whole generation of critics – Stoneman mentions Lord David Cecil as the representative – have given metaphysical interpretations of *Wuthering Heights* (Stoneman 81). Whereas Charlotte Brontë restrains her Romanticism with models of eighteenth-century enlightenment, Emily Brontë's transcendentalism stems from a curious combination of Romanticism and early Methodism. Neither of them, however, "fits the early Victorian death-orientation of the typical evangelical protestant" (Stoneman 84). To illustrate the clash of ideologies in the novel, Stoneman uses the statement that Catherine says about herself when she is about to die. She dreams that she is a child again, "half savage and hardy, and free" (126) and wakes up in torment, feeling as if she had "been converted at a stroke into Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger: an exile, an outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world" (125). For Victorian society, Stoneman

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

argues, the fact that Catherine ceases to be Mrs. Linton implies that she becomes a fallen woman. It is quite ironic that this stigma does not apply to Heathcliff since he is allowed to retain some of his Byronic captivation in spite of moral liability (Stoneman 86).

According to Stoneman, through this “outcast” image, Emily Brontë is subtly recognizing that society’s restrictions send rebels into their graves. Thus, instead of escaping into that “glorious world” which she yearns, Catherine can only escape to the “outside” world of the fallen woman, the world that Hester Prynne, the protagonist of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, encounters: “There is, in fact, only the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ defined by society; there is no glorious ‘other’ world” (Stoneman 86). Stoneman contends, however, that *Wuthering Heights* is transcendental and disconcerting enough to be detached from social realism: “It is the confrontation of this residual passion in *Wuthering Heights* with the social reality which raises it to the level of tragedy” (Stoneman 86). Stoneman concludes that the Brontës make troubling qualifications to orthodoxy and that they bring their images of transcendence into conflict with social reality. However, whereas Emily Brontë does reject society in favor of death as transcendence, Charlotte Brontë develops a modest but subversive strategy for survival. For both sisters, life has to offer them so little that death is the best possible alternative (Stoneman 93). Although Stoneman’s aim is not to find precedents for Heathcliff and Catherine, she does establish a comparison between Heathcliff and the heroes of the Romantic movement, like the exiles and travellers from Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* to Byron’s *Childe Harold*. She also associates Catherine with characters of the Gothic tradition, like Cain or the Wandering Jew.

After offering an overview of the most influential Marxist readings of the novel, Margaret Lenta, in “Capitalism or Patriarchy and Immortal Love: A Study of *Wuthering Heights*” (1984), makes a strong assertion: “I think it important at this point to insist that the novel’s main subject, from which all other events radiate, is the love between Heathcliff and Catherine” (Lenta 67). She claims that if this novel can transcend temporality it is because of the impossible union between Heathcliff and Catherine, and the meanings it might have had. She agrees with Marxist critics in the fact that Heathcliff and Catherine are rebels against patriarchy but this is because of their strong individual energies and not because of the injustice which they suffer in their childhood. For her, the love between Catherine and Heathcliff is the perfect embodiment of Romantic love. One

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

of her more relevant statements is that this passionate attraction was immensely valuable to Emily Brontë and that, after Catherine's death, she gives free range to her destructive anger with Heathcliff (Lenta 73). Although she starts the essay with an unexamined assertion: "she belonged to no school; her work stands in no single clear line of descent which might help us to understand her intentions" (64), Margaret Lenta *does* affirm that Emily Brontë was interested in the fiction of her day. Indeed, she acknowledges Byron's probable influence in her creation of Heathcliff and she even considers the possibility that the novel "is the result of the 'Gothic' reading matter available to the Brontës" (Lenta 65). Her most daring and significant assertion is that "Emily Brontë would have felt entitled to draw on her reader's experience of the great eighteenth-century fictions," and she accurately mentions Richardson's *Clarissa* and Fielding's *Tom Jones*, since both have plots "which are set in motion by the resentment of an heir who fears that he may be supplanted" (Lenta 69).

In "*Wuthering Heights: Romanticism and Rationality*," in *Women: The Longest Revolution* (1984), Juliet Mitchell argues that *Wuthering Heights* is the story of Heathcliff and, especially, "of the childhood, youth, and death of the first Catherine" (Mitchell 133). As opposed to George Eliot and Dickens, Mitchell asserts, Emily Brontë, who could experience and resist change personally, could nevertheless arrest the violence of any alteration in her novel. Thus, whereas for Dickens, writing was in some sense therapeutic: an obsession with childhood, a subsequent stage of retrospective understanding of childhood (*David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*), and a final interest in reaching maturity (*Our Mutual Friend* and *Edwin Drood*), for Brontë, there was nothing to elude, only changes to explain: "childhood being the key in the process of exploration" (Mitchell 130). For Mitchell, Brontë's Romanticism is not the pursuit of pastoral ideals that is characteristic of Dickens' novels; nor it is the strange and reintegrating construct of Blake; like all Romantics, Brontë tries to unite what is splintered but, for her, division existed in the individual: "in the novel it was a state of being complete in oneself yet, simultaneously, nothing without others" (Mitchell 141). This idea bears resemblance to Wordsworth's philosophy but it is not pantheism: whereas for Wordsworth man is man *only if* he is in unity with nature, for Brontë, people can exist in towns, but they exist more genuinely if they are in contact with nature and animals (Mitchell 142). Mitchell underscores the mysticism of the novel and states that it is framed and restricted by two

rational and pseudo-romantic narrators, Nelly and Lockwood, who limit Emily Brontë's powerful imagination (142). This is, she asserts, the greatness of *Wuthering Heights*, "the rationality of its romanticism" (143). For her, the core of the novel is the romantic affinity between two separate beings and the ontological concern with the language of soul, spirit and essence. Therefore, we have seen that, although she contrasts Brontë's delineation of childhood with that of Eliot or Dickens and aligns her with the English Romantics, Mitchell does not explicitly establish any direct influence for the novel, nor is this her purpose in this essay.

Martha Nussbaum, in "*Wuthering Heights: The Romantic Ascent*" (1996), an extremely interesting reading of the novel, situates the novel within the tradition "of writing about love and its ascent or purification" (Nussbaum 363). The most genuine expression of pure love takes place when the lovers expose themselves to pain and risk, a risk so dangerous that is close to death (Nussbaum 364). The relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff belongs to the realm of earthly passion, a passion in which "nature and the body become the essence of the loving soul" (Nussbaum 364). Nussbaum questions whether this Romantic love can find a way back to human compassion or whether its implosion is so deep that it must simply leave the world. She argues that in institutionalized Christianity, works that offer such an intimate gaze at the nakedness of the human soul inspire disgust and fear. This fear of the alien is what has caused the novel to be called "coarse and loathsome" when it was first published. For Nussbaum, Heathcliff is the most altruist character: he is the only one who sacrifices his life for another person. He refrains from doing any harm to Edgar for the benefit of Catherine and sacrifices his interests to hers. He is "the only civilized man among savages, he is in a genuine if peculiar sense, the only Christian among the Pharisees, and – with respect to the one person he loves – a sacrificial figure of Christ himself, the only one who sheds his own blood for another" (Nussbaum 374). The novel suggests then that only in this deep devotion towards the lover there is genuine sacrifice and redemption (374).

Consequently, the novel also suggests a critique of imperfect and conventional Christianity. Joseph, Nelly Dean and the Lintons preach about charity and piety but all behave egoistically and vindictively most of the time (374). Christianity only supports the social hierarchy "that excludes the poor and the strange, the dark-skinned and the nameless" (Nussbaum 375). Her analysis of the love between Catherine and Heathcliff,

like Bataille's, is deeply mystic and transcendental: "The love of Heathcliff and Cathy requires, we said, a total exposure of self to another's touch and gaze. In this way it courts a risk so total that it verges toward death. To one who loves totally, no defenses can exist. The other is in oneself and is oneself" (Nussbaum 377). For Nussbaum, the question of the novel is not why Heathcliff and Catherine cannot be together, but why Catherine is false to Heathcliff and decides to marry Edgar Linton. The reason, she argues, is that Catherine's fears are the same of Mr. Lockwood's. The extreme exposure of their love and its connection with pain and death are as unbearable to her as they were to Lockwood. She cannot bear the nakedness of her soul so she covers it with social clothes: marriage, children and social status. However, in trying to protect herself from the danger of death, she kills his soul as well as hers and forces him to hate as well as love her. These people are ashamed of giving themselves to others, which is the image of Christ. At some point, Lockwood defines himself as a snail which curls up inside his shell to avoid exposure. This is, Nussbaum, asserts the image of the nakedness and vulnerability of the body, a symbol of our helplessness and penetrability, our devotedness to others and to death (379).¹² Although her mystic reading of the novel is enormously enlightening and relevant, Nussbaum fails in giving an account of the possible – and probable – literary precedents of the Romantic community that Catherine and Heathcliff form.

Terry Eagleton, in his chapter on the Brontës in *The English Novel: An Introduction* (2005), also contends that what distinguishes *Wuthering Heights* is its refusal to negotiate its desire in the manner of Charlotte's fiction, a quite ironic statement if we take into account Charlotte Brontë's critique of Austen. The story of Catherine and Heathcliff, Eagleton asserts, "is one of absolute commitment and an absolute refusal" (Eagleton 133). The novel organizes itself in terms of conflicts between passion and society, rebellion and moral orthodoxy; "it is a tragic novel in the epoch of high realism" (Eagleton 133). He supports his argument with Catherine's dilemma between Heathcliff and Edgar Linton. Although she tries to achieve "a Charlotte-like compromise," this results in tragedy. In

¹² Lockwood's own comparison with a snail which "shrunk icily into [him]self" (4) resonates in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the only literary allusion in the novel. When Lear realizes that he has been unfair with his youngest daughter, Cordelia, the Fool jokingly tells him that a snail has a house "to put's head in; not to give it away to his / daughters, / and leave his horns without a case" (I.V.2). This is another allusion to the exposure and vulnerability of the dispossessed and naked body.

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

this novel, there is a radical absolutism of desire whose final outcome is death; a death which represents the limits of society but which is not devoid of hope, since only after death the lovers can be together (Eagleton 134). According to Eagleton, one of the novel's boldest accomplishments is to demystify the Victorian ideal of the family as a secure enclave of human value in an inhuman society (Eagleton 139). As in the novels by Dickens, family in *Wuthering Heights* is also a socio-economic order, distorted and coerced by social imperatives and less romanticized (Eagleton 139). In this global study, Eagleton offers a precise chronology of the English novel from Daniel Defoe to Virginia Woolf, coupling together writers such as Defoe and Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson, and Walter Scott and Jane Austen. Although he ventures an interesting parallel between the novels by the later Dickens and *Wuthering Heights*, Eagleton neither explains nor fully exploits this relevant comparison.

In "The Cuckoo's History: Human Nature in *Wuthering Heights*" (2008) Joseph Carroll asserts that, by uniting naturalism with mysticism, Emily Brontë grants strangeness and mystery to her symbolic figurations (246). For Carroll, the end of *Wuthering Heights* contrasts domestic reconciliation with emotional violence that reflects deep disturbances in the phases of human life history. He asserts that, although readers often feel pity for Catherine and Heathcliff, they rarely like them or find them morally attractive (251). In the mode of realism, he asserts, they are driven by romantic attraction and social ambition whereas in the mode of supernatural fantasy, they are satanic characters. Their relationship is dominated by Romantic identification with the elemental forces of nature and with a deep psychological bond between the two children. They achieve consummation not in successful sexual union but in the mingling of rotten flesh (252). For both Catherine and Heathcliff, dying implies a spiritual triumph. Thus, the transfiguration of violent passion into mysticism enables them to escape from a socially repressive world. In the alternative realm occupied by Heathcliff and Catherine, the lovers dissolve into a single individual identity which is absorbed into an animistic natural world (Carroll 253). Although the second generation is rapidly immersed in the reproductive cycle, Catherine and Heathcliff break with that cycle and they become "elegiac shadows cast by pain and grief" (Carroll 254).

Like Mitchell or Nussbaum, Carroll does not correlate the Romantic themes in the novel with any previous eighteenth or nineteenth-century novel and this is, in fact, a

mistake. Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century European literature is rich with star-crossed lovers entrapped within social contracts and moral precepts who find as their only escape a transcendental or suicidal implosion: Lucy Ashton and Edgar Ravenswood in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Astarte and Manfred in *Manfred*, Don Lorenzo and Antonia in *The Monk*, La Belle Dame sans Merci and the unidentified knight of Keats' poem, Lamia and Lycius in *Lamia*, Gustav and Toni in "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo," Sarrasine and Zambinella in *Sarrasine*, and Henry De Marsay and the girl with the golden eyes in *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*, among others. Even the neo-classical Jane Austen betrays some glimpses of what the French writer and philosopher, Maurice Blanchot, calls "a community of lovers." For instance: Marianne Dashwood and Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*, or the already married Maria Rushworth and her lover, Henry Crawford, in *Mansfield Park*.

In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, "*Wuthering Heights* and Kleist's *Novellen*: Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law," I will develop this theme among others. Returning to this group of critics, all of them highlight the eroticism and transcendence of the protagonists' love, which, quite interestingly, implies a revolt against the very social system. For all of them, the lovers' death constitutes a form of spiritual triumph against the barriers of class. Thus, George Bataille and Margaret Lenta focus on the fusional communion of Catherine and Heathcliff and in their individual energies. Hillis Miller, Bersani and Stoneman center on the religious, social and moral transgression that the transcendental love between Catherine and Heathcliff entails. Nussbaum and Carroll highlight how this love is purgative and redemptive and how it implies a spiritual triumph. To my mind, these readings, though enlightening, are nevertheless naïve. The Romantic community of Catherine and Heathcliff is in fact deeply rooted in the normative community; it is an epochal solution to escape from an oppressive society through a spiritual and transcendental inflation.

2.5 Indeterminate Meaning: Deconstruction

The generic indeterminacy and the hermeneutic tension and opacity of *Wuthering Heights* have always surpassed the expectations of readers and critics and have triggered a wide range of deconstructionist criticism which has highlighted the uncanny trapping power of Emily Brontë's novel. This forms the third group of critics. In his chapter on *Wuthering*

Heights in *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change* (1975), Frank Kermode defines a classic as the works which survive time and which “are complex and indeterminate enough to allow us our necessary pluralities” (Kermode 121). If a work of art is good, he claims, it is because of its openness, and it is in the nature of authors and readers to close them (Kermode 121). For Kermode, the confusion of generations, the multiple usurpations and the dim quality of dreams, visions and ghosts serve to disorder predictable readings, to confuse explanation and expectation and to make necessary for the reader to accept the inherent plurality of the novel (Kermode 129). One of his most significant contributions is his assertion that the chain of narrators serve to intercede between the savagery of the story and the civility of the reader, making the text a hybrid between archaic and modern. It is the reader the one who has to decide and to make the necessary adjustments: “Plurality is here not a prescription but a fact” (Kermode 129). The possibilities of interpretation increase with time but the hermeneutic gap remains and the reader’s imagination must work. *Wuthering Heights* has the quality of outrageousness, the *outré*, and this is what makes it such a modernist text. The work has what Jakobson calls “constitutive ambiguity” and this ambiguity elicits a great number of readings (Kermode 137). The classic, Kermode claims, has been secularized and this process forces us to recognize its plurality (Kermode 139). His reading is relevant and enlightening, but Kermode fails in trying to enrich the heterogeneity of the text by establishing a dialogic relation with previous texts.

In his essay in *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982), “*Wuthering Heights: Repetition and the ‘Uncanny,’*” Hillis Miller argues that the novel invites readers to grasp a secret meaning. He compares Lockwood’s situation to that of the reader, since both are confronted with confusing data and they try to make sense of it (Hillis Miller 43). Hillis Miller’s main argument is that there is not a single and clear reading of the novel. He contends that “the best readings will be the ones which best account for the heterogeneity of the text, its presentation of a definite group of possible meanings which are systematically interconnected, determined by the text, but logically incompatible” (Hillis Miller 51). The text is “over-rich” in allusions and symbols but, at the same time, it resists interpretation or, at least, resists being reduced to a single interpretation (Hillis Miller 52). The novel organizes itself in oppositions: stormy weather against tranquil weather; the violence of the Heights against the civilized restraint of the Grange; the

inside against the outside; the parents against offspring; those who read and those who scorn books; strong people like Heathcliff or feeble people like Lockwood or Linton Heathcliff (Hillis Miller 61).

One of the most unwieldy aspects of the novel is its reproductive and repetitive power: children substitute their parents, one narrator replaces another. Similarly, at the end of the novel, when he observes the triple grave of Edgar, Catherine, and Heathcliff, Lockwood prevents them from dying, prolonging them through time and granting ambiguity to the novel. Life opposes death here. Patsy Stoneman brilliantly summarizes Kermode and Hillis Miller's readings: "Crudely speaking, Leavis says, 'there is one truth;' Kermode says, 'there are many truths;' Miller says, 'there is no truth' (Stoneman, "Introduction," xxxviii). In this book, Hillis Miller also analyzes *Lord Jim*, *Henry Esmond*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Well-Beloved*, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Between the Acts*, all of them in their capacity to generate a heterogeneity of meanings through repetitions. When talking about the complexity of the narration in *Wuthering Heights*, Hillis Miller asserts that "it has its precedents in modern fictional practice from Cervantes down to novelists contemporary with Brontë" (Hillis Miller 46) but he neither specifies these contemporary novelists nor elaborates on this comparison. He does not establish any conscious comparison between *Wuthering Heights* and previous literary texts. However, he does mention two poems by Wordsworth, "The Boy of Winander," and "The Ruined Cottage," which cast light on the end of *Wuthering Heights*: the speakers of these poems are survivors who stand by a tombstone reflecting on the life and death of someone who is gone. Similarly, *Wuthering Heights* "may be thought of as a memorial narration pieced together by Lockwood from what he can learn" (Hillis Miller 58).

In the chapter on *Wuthering Heights*, "At the Threshold of Interpretation," in her book, *Uncontainable Romanticism: Shelley, Brontë, Kleist* (1989), Carol Jacobs, like Hillis Miller, parallels Lockwood's intrusions into the house of *Wuthering Heights* with the readers' attempts "to penetrate *Wuthering Heights-as-text*" (Jacobs 62). Jacobs contends that if, on the one hand, Kermode seems to close the text of *Wuthering Heights*, on the other, he foregrounds its multiplicity of meanings (Jacobs 67). For Jacobs, Lockwood's visit to *Wuthering Heights* is a parable of homelessness and exclusion since, as soon as he enters the house, Lockwood notices his exile. However, although *Wuthering Heights* denies him shelter, the obstinate intruder will force his admission repeatedly: "I don't care

–I will get in! So resolved, I grasped the latch and shook it vehemently” (Jacobs 72). *Wuthering Heights* is then “an annunciation of excommunication” (Jacobs 80). The intruder who enters the closed space of *Wuthering Heights* is permanently expelled.

Wuthering Heights, Jacobs asserts, is then about the struggle between fiction and nonfiction (Jacobs 80). In this book, Jacobs also analyzes Shelley’s “Medusa” and Kleist’s *Penthesilea*, *Prince Friedrich von Homburg*, *Michael Kohlhaas*, and “The Duel.” Although she does not make an explicit attempt to relate these texts with *Wuthering Heights*, she labels all these texts under the term “uncontainable romanticism” because of “the insistence in each text that it stages its own critical performance” (Jacobs ix). These texts challenge in theatrical ways the possibility of their own linguistic status. They play with the diffuse difference between history and fiction, with a narrator or interpreter who is as confused as the reader. Therefore, Jacobs gathers these texts because they share their hermeneutic inaccessibility and they betray their own narrative performance. Thus, whereas Kermode underlines the openness of the text and its constitutive ambiguity, Hillis Miller emphasizes that there is a secret meaning which resists interpretation. Carol Jacobs, on her part, highlights the metafictional quality of the novel as well as its hermeneutic inaccessibility. Nevertheless, neither of these critics tries to account for this heterogeneity by paying attention to the possible literary cotexts that might have an influence on the novel or, rather, to a possible process of polygenesis which would explain why the novel shares many traits with different literary genres, like Gothic or Domestic fiction, or with non-English texts, like Kleist’s *Novellen* or Balzac’s novels.

2.6 My critical position: Inter-textual Determinism

In order to arrive to a conclusion, I will make use of Nancy Armstrong’s enlightening article, “Emily Brontë: In and Out of her Time” (1982). In this article, Armstrong calls attention to the fact that Emily Brontë has a precarious relationship with a nineteenth-century intellectual tradition which endorsed humanistic values (365). She contends that there is a tendency to align Brontë either with the Romantics reactionaries who reacted against the fiction which was in vogue during the 1840s or with the utilitarian tradition that gave rise to literary realism (365). The problem of identifying the genre of *Wuthering Heights*, Armstrong asserts, has not been resolved yet. For Armstrong, the key to classify the novel “rests upon Heathcliff and how one describes his character” (366). Thus, by

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

finding the way to decode Heathcliff we can discover what nineteenth-century categories make the novel an intelligible whole. Heathcliff actually problematizes the distinction between romance and realism and it is precisely due to the breakdown of this distinction that the question of its genre arises (366). Though his rise into power dramatizes the apotheosis of the Romantic hero, Heathcliff's incursion into the capitalist world cancels out the Romantic possibilities.

According to Armstrong, by granting a particular point of origin in the slums of Liverpool to Heathcliff, rather than giving the matter more open to Romantic possibilities, Brontë makes Heathcliff more capable of acquiring any meaning related to such a potentially hostile environment. Ironically, Heathcliff can only preserve his role of hero so long as he remains helpless, the innocent object of pathos. This is clearly a departure from Romantic prototypes who try to bring general good and social reform (Armstrong 369). The fact that he can have these bestial qualities while remaining the protagonist of the novel is what differentiates him from other Victorian heroes, like Dickens' and Thackeray's characters (369). For this critic, the competitive drive rooted in the accumulation of capital is what transfers Heathcliff from the margins of society to its very center: "Once there, he displays all the vices that have accompanied political power, the Lintons' sophistication, their veneer of civility, as well as the Earnshaws' brutality" (Armstrong 370). Money is what empowers him to penetrate the enduring institutions of marriage, inheritance, and property ownership and to use these institutions to his advantage. In acquiring both the Heights and the Grange, Heathcliff initiates "a new form of tyranny that undoes all former systems of kinship and erases the boundaries between class as well as between family lines" (370). The second generation is created from the ruins of the first one and its characters are much more in line with Victorian standards and expectations; they are not unlike the characters in Dickens and Thackeray:

Conventionalized behavior rather than impulse or desire seems to be the true mark of one's character. Capitalism replaces a belated feudalism as the chief source of villainy, and competition is treated as a fact of life that converts sentient beings into objects in the marketplace (Armstrong 371).

Whereas Dickens' and Thackeray's characters operate within Victorian standards and paradigms, Brontë's characters, on the other hand, fall into the Victorian world because of the breakdown of the idealist categories of Romantic discourse. Thus, out of earlier

pieces of fiction comes then a new kind of fiction whose value resides in reconstitution of the family rather than in the claims of the individual. The outcome is that problems are posed in one set of literary conventions but cannot be answered by the other; thus, Armstrong aligns herself with the second group of critics and contends that “this is an essentially disjunctive novel” (Armstrong 371). Heathcliff triumphs over the institutions that have been oppressing him and, therefore, he becomes what Deleuze and Guattari call a “*machine désirante*” (7) whose ambition has been overvalued to the detriment of the community.¹³ Hence, desire loses its beneficial power and value is again invested in familiar and social traditions. The end of the novel is then grounded on revisionary values where love is no longer associated with natural desire (Armstrong 373). It is here, and this is what concerns me the most, where *Wuthering Heights* can be placed inside the system of Victorian literature, for it is very common for the protagonist of a novel to violate social boundaries as Heathcliff does: “What is more, the social climbers of the fiction of the thirties and forties tend to differ from their earlier counterparts in this significant respect: lacking a pedigree, they cannot penetrate the old squirarchy without destroying it” (Armstrong 373).

Thus, Armstrong asserts, Heathcliff can be compared to Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, and Thackeray's *Becky Sharp* in this respect. They are also *machines désirantes* who threaten to become usurpers, criminals, or tyrants by pursuing their ambitions, and their Satanic features must be domesticated so that the social tensions can be convincingly resolved and give way to social cohesion (Armstrong 373). I have stated that this is what especially engages me because this is one of the most explicit and powerful attempts to place the character of Heathcliff in line with his previous counterparts: *Oliver Twist*, *Jane Eyre*, *Mary Barton*, and *Becky Sharp* are not only characters who share a great number of traits with

¹³ The term “*machine désirante*” was coined by the French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their work, *L'Anti-Aedipe*. Deleuze and Guattari oppose the Freudian theory of the unconscious as a theatre and argue that the unconscious is like a factory and the body is an assembly of machines producing desire. Thus, man is a productive machine; it is inscribed in physical matter as evidenced by its actions: “*Ça respire, ça chauffe, ça mange. Ça chie, ça baise.*” Man is then described as “*une machine à manger, une machine anale, une machine à parler, une machine à respire.*” Therefore, the products of these *machine désirantes* are “*des effets de machine et non des métaphors*” (Deleuze and Guattari 348).

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

Heathcliff (foreignness, demonic desire, ambition...), they are also feasible precedents of Heathcliff. Critics tend to undermine Charlotte Brontë's influence as writer on her sister and they only focus on her role as sister and first mythographer of Emily Brontë but we cannot forget that Emily Brontë was probably the first reader of *Jane Eyre* and that it is very probably that she read *Oliver Twist*, *Mary Barton* and *Vanity Fair*, especially the last ones, since Charlotte Brontë was indeed deeply acquainted with Elizabeth Gaskell and deeply admired William Thackeray.

I think it is convenient to add here that Charlotte Brontë – the most highly-regarded of the Brontë sisters at that time as well as the one who had a documented relationship with a nineteenth-century intellectual tradition – felt a profound admiration for William Thackeray and she even dedicated *Jane Eyre* to him:

There is a man in our own days whose words are not framed to tickle delicate ears: who, to my thinking, comes before the great ones of society, much as the son of his Imlah came before the throned Kings of Judah and Israel; and who speaks truth as deep, with a power as prophet-like and as vital – a mien as dauntless and as daring. Is the satirist of "Vanity Fair" admired in high places? I cannot tell; but I think if some of those amongst who he hurls the Greek fire of his sarcasm, and over whom he flashes the levin-brand of his denunciation, were to take his warnings in time – they or their seed might yet escape a fatal Ramoth-Gilead.

Why have I alluded to this man? I have alluded to him, reader, because I think see in him an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognized; because I regard him as the first social regenerator of the day – as they very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things; because I think no commentator on his writings has yet found the comparison that suits him, the terms which rightly characterize his talent. They say he's like Fielding: they talk of his wit, humor, comic powers. He resembles Fielding as an eagle does a vultrue: Fielding could stoop on carrion, but Thackeray never does. His wit is bright, his humor attractive, but both bear the same relation, to his serious genius that the mere lambent sheet-lightning playing under the edge of the summer-cloud, does to the electric death-spark his in its womb. Finally: I have alluded to Mr. Thackeray, because to him – if he will accept the tribute of a total stranger – I have dedicated this second edition of *Jane Eyre*. (Currer Bell. 21st December, 1847)

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

What is remarkable here is how little does *Jane Eyre* resemble any of Thackeray's novels: "I have received the Scotsman, and was greatly amused to see Jane Eyre likened to Rebecca Sharp – the resemblance would hardly have occurred to me," said Charlotte Brontë in a letter to her editor (Curren Bell. 31st December 1847), and how much it resembles *Pamela* and *Oliver Twist*. This strong resemblance serves me as the perfect excuse to make an indirect link between *Wuthering Heights* and these two extraordinary novels, a connection that I will develop throughout this dissertation. Thus, what I want to expose in this dissertation is the lack of comparative studies which set lines of comparison between *Wuthering Heights* and these novels. I think that it is absolutely necessary to overcome the idea that Emily Brontë's novel is *sui generis* and to pull the threads that take us back to its most likely precedents, and this is my purpose in this present dissertation. Therefore, after this thorough examination of the most relevant critical reviews on *Wuthering Heights*, where do I place myself?

In the first chapter of *Fiction and Repetition*, Hillis Miller argues that the "specificity" and "strangeness" of literature and its capacity to surprise the reader means that

literature continually exceeds any formulas or any theory with which the critic is prepared to encompass it. The hypothesis of possible heterogeneity of form in literary works has the heuristic value of preparing the reader to confront the oddness of a given novel, the things in it that do not "fit." (5)

The "specificity" and "strangeness" of *Wuthering Heights* is especially profound. Indeed, what the philosopher Adorno wrote of Kafka could be perfectly applied to *Wuthering Heights*: "Each sentence says 'Interpret me,' and none will permit it."¹⁴ The fact that it is still today read and studied rests on the universal appeal of its themes (love, jealousy, vengeance...), and also on its presentation of enigmas without solutions.¹⁵ The different narrative presences generate confusion since the narrators are themselves puzzled by what

¹⁴ Adorno, Theodor W. "Notes on Kafka." *Prisms*. Trans. Samuel and Shirley Weber. London: Spearman. 1967. 246.

¹⁵ Virginia Woolf, writing about *Wuthering Heights*, said: "That gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel, a struggle half thwarted but of superb conviction, to say something through the mouths of characters which is not merely "I love" or "I hate" but "we, the whole human race" and "You; the eternal powers..." the sentence remains unfinished" (qtd. Kettle 145).

they recount. Emily Brontë's novel is thus typical of modernism in demanding an active reading. Thus, the reader is not requested to consume the text passively but to participate actively in the task of demystifying it, in resisting simple interpretations and in reaching, not a solution, but a complete experience of the text in the act of reading. For Hillis Miller, his main incentive in reading literature is "to devise a way to remain aware of the strangeness of the language of literature and to try to account for it" (21). I wish to fight Emily Brontë's popular image as a Rousseauian savage and to align myself with the critics who value above all the rich heterogeneity and the multiple value of the text, but I want to enrich this heterogeneity by examining its dialogic relation with previous texts. Therefore, in this dissertation I want to propose a new group of criticism on *Wuthering Heights* which posits an inter-textual overdeterminate (Althusser) meaning of the novel.¹⁶ I hope to have underlined the claim with which I began this Introduction, that I wish to account for this strangeness by looking at the possible precedents of *Wuthering Heights*, and by overcoming the critical paralysis that surrounds the novel and its indeterminate place within the (English) literary tradition.

¹⁶ For Althusser, all historical societies are constituted by an infinity of concrete determinations (political laws, religion, custom, habits, financial, commercial and economic regimes, the educational system, the arts, philosophy, etc.). All these determinations constitute an organic totality which "is reflected in a unique internal principle, which is the truth of all those concrete determinations" ("Contradiction and Overdetermination" 6).

An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception

Chapter 3

Wuthering Heights: “The Housekeeper’s Tale”

“And indeed, my dear, I know not how to forbear writing, [...]. I have now no other employment or diversion. And I must write on, altho’ I were not to send it to any-body.”

(Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, III, 221)

“To you I am neither a Man nor Woman – I come before you as an Author only – it is the sole standard by which you have a right to judge me – the sole ground on which I accept your judgement.”

(Charlotte Brontë. “To W.S. Williams, 16 August 1849.” *Selected Letters*)

3.1 Introduction

In his enlightening book, *Spirit Becomes Matter*, Henry Staten makes what I think is a groundbreaking statement: “*Wuthering Heights* is as much the story of the self-assertion of this subaltern woman [Nelly] – a woman of tremendous vigour, resiliency and aggressivity – as it is the story of Heathcliff and Catherine” (151). Similarly, in *Emily Brontë*, James Kavanagh claims that “Nelly Dean is as important a character as Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, and in a crucial sense his true and effective antagonist” (31). Nelly

is the most important narrator in the novel since she controls Lockwood’s narration and through him the reader’s diegetic experience of the text (Kavanagh 31). Indeed, Nelly’s authoritative narration rejects Spivak’s thesis that the subaltern, and more especially the subaltern woman, *cannot* speak. According to Spivak, “these women are insufficiently represented or representable in that narration. We can docket them, but we cannot grasp them at all” (21).

That the subaltern woman *can* and *does* speak is a thesis that the American critic Bruce Robbins already articulates in his outstanding book, *The Servant’s Hand: English Fiction from Below* (1986). In this study, Robbins analyzes the role – and authoritative power – of servants as narrators in both eighteenth and nineteenth century English fiction. The aim of this chapter is to read *Wuthering Heights* as “the house-keeper’s tale,” to decide whether there is still a deficiency in the Marxist approaches to this novel – which often focus on the historical revolts of Brontë’s time – and to examine the ethical implications that this reading entails. To support my arguments, I will employ Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded* as the core text which best epitomizes the domestic context and which has a housekeeper as the narrator of the novel.¹⁷ Both narratives are presented as true stories. *Pamela* is probably the first novel in the English tradition that produces a reality effect and transmits this same effect on the reader: the novel as deception, hypnotic delusion, a lie dressed up as truth. Diderot seems to have learned this lesson from

¹⁷ My choice of *Pamela* is also founded on the fact that the Brontës had surely read it, as this passage of *Jane Eyre* demonstrates:

Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting: as interesting as the tales Bessie sometimes narrated on winter evenings, when she chanced to be in good humour; and when, having brought her ironing-table to the nursery hearth, she allowed us to sit about it, and while she got up Mrs. Reed’s lace frills, and crimped her nightcap borders, fed our eager attention with passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and other ballads; or (as at a later period I discovered) from the pages of *Pamela*, and *Henry, Earl of Moreland*. (9)

In this passage, Jane remembers how Bessie used to read the children stories. It is not insignificant that Jane Eyre learns about Pamela’s adventures precisely from a servant. Apart from that, I justify my decision of choosing Richardson’s novel instead of any other eighteenth-century novel with the argument that both *Pamela* and *Nelly Dean* have been equally mistrusted and charged with accusations of unreliability, hypocrisy and self-interest and, at the same time, they have been praised for their vividness and loquacity.

Richardson and wrote another outstanding first-person novel, *La Religieuse*. As Russell Goulbourne observes, "the novel could assert its validity as a genre by presenting itself as true and moral" (Goulbourne xxii).

In *Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740*, McKeon mentions veracity as a key term in the evolution of the genre. Thus, long before the consolidation of the term "novel," the dialectic confrontation was between the terms "romance" or "true history," or between what is fictional or what is factual since, as John Nalson claimed, "History without Truth or with a mixture of Falsehood, degenerates into Romance" (qtd. McKeon 27).¹⁸ Since the end of the seventeenth century, novelists were dissatisfied with the improbabilities of earlier fiction and wanted to gain greater popular and critical acclaim by asserting that their narratives were nothing but true (Goulbourne xxii). They dressed up their fictions as journals, histories, and memoirs. A first-person narrative like a journal or memoir is much more realistic than a third-person narrative. The most well-known French narratives before *La Religieuse* are Abate Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* (1731) and Marivaux's incomplete *La Vie de Marianne* (1731-1742) (Goulbourne xxii). All these first-person narrations start with a common device: they lay claim to honesty and ingenuousness and they deny any persuasive role (Goulbourne xxii). Thus, Suzanne, the protagonist of *La Religieuse*, lays claim to plausibility when she asserts that she is "writing with neither skill nor artifice, but with the naivety of a young person of my age and with my own native honesty" (3). This insistence on her youth occurs several times in the novel and is indeed a device to stress her naivety. However, this claim to naivety and ingenuousness is a deceitful way of enticing her intended reader (the Marquis de Croismare) and us (Goulbourne xxii).

Pamela employs the same resource as Suzanne: "She came to me: and I said, *I am a poor unhappy young Body*, that want your Advice and Assistance; and you seem to be a

¹⁸ In the later sixteenth century, printed "news" first flourished in the form of printed ballads. In the seventeenth century, these ballads are sold by wandering chapmen and the claim to historicity has now become more intricately developed, exploiting the techniques of verification by first-hand and documentary witness that have developed during the late medieval and early modern periods. The old formula that story is "strange but true" becomes a claim to veracity (McKeon 47). Therefore, throughout the critical period of the origins of the English novel, "the claim to historicity is dominant" (McKeon 53).

good sort of a Gentlewoman, that would assist *an oppressed innocent Person*” (107, emphasis added). In fact, she resorts to her youthfulness and innocence to persuade her intended listener and us readers: “Well, thought I, here are strange Pains taken to ruin *a poor innocent, helpless, and even worthless young Body*” (108, emphasis added). Likewise, Nelly is not the “cool spectator” (159) that she claims to be. She expresses her affections and hostilities in a direct and blunt manner and, in a modest way, she frequently takes part in the power struggles and hostile actions of the two families (Staten 167). Nelly is at the same time distanced from and involved in her narrative and this is precisely what makes Emily Brontë’s novel so sophisticated. Her strategy to persuade her listener and us readers is slightly different than Suzanne’s or Pamela’s. She does not resort to youth or innocence but to wisdom and culture: “I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body [...] I have undergone sharp discipline, which has taught me wisdom; and then, I have read more than you would fancy, Mr. Lockwood” (61). In selecting a housekeeper as the narrator of their novels, both Richardson and Brontë are making a social critique which has ethical implications since, as Robert Scholes has argued, the political enters in language through questions of representation: “who is represented, who does the representing, who is object, who is subject – and how do these representations connect to the values of groups, communities, classes, tribes, sects, and nations?” (Scholes 153).¹⁹

3.2 Delimitation of the Context: The Domestic Novel

In this first approach to the novel, I will frame *Wuthering Heights* within the context of domestic fiction inaugurated by Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*. In *Making the Novel: Fiction and Society in Britain, 1660-1789*, Brean Hammond and Shaun Regan argue that

¹⁹ In fact, what was inherently new in Richardson’s strategy to make a fictional heroine consider her virtue as something of supreme importance was that he attributed such motives to a servant-girl. Whereas romance had usually ennobled feminine chastity, the other forms of fiction which included characters of low social class usually took a different view of feminine psychology (Watt *The Rise* 188). It is precisely this historical and literary perspective which makes *Pamela* so groundbreaking: Richardson’s novel represents the first convergence of two opposed traditions in fiction. “It combines ‘high’ and ‘low’ motives, and even more important, it portrays the conflict between the two” (Watt 188). This is precisely what Fielding considered to be the moral defect of the story, as he made his Shamela remark: “I thought once of making a little fortune by my person. I now intend to make a great one by my virtue” (Letter XI 29).

in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth, writers were exploring new forms of narrativity, favoring the telling of domestic and contemporary stories. Thus, in theatre, the plots of comedies and tragedies change into a tragicomic blend which becomes more domestic and bourgeois. In poetry, writers such as Alexander Pope parody epic through the use of mock-epic. In *The Rape of the Lock*, the setting is completely domestic and the plot is that of courtship and rejection. The growing popularity of mock-epic poetry implies the reading public’s lack of interest in classical literature. This new mode of writing poetry degrades Virgilian and Homeric poetry. According to Hammond and Regan, “*The Rape of the Lock* is a prime example of the process of “novelization” that we are outlining; of the gradual domestication of the literary agenda” (24). Card-playing, prostitution, dueling, master and servant etiquette, love marriages as opposed to marriages of convenience would become the subject matter of the amatory novel from the 1720s and sexual innuendoes would pullulate behind these topics (Hammond and Regan 24).

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong asserts that the rise of the novel must be understood in terms of gender. She contends that the core of the novel is characterized by *female* structures of feeling. Thus, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries conduct and educational treatises and domestic novels created an idealized image of femininity based on emotional growth which substituted aristocratic values based on rank and fortune (Hammond and Regan 12). She argues that women’s domestic experience regarding love, sexual desire, courtship and marriage both promoted and was promoted by the novel. The prototypical desirable woman was then what Elaine Showalter called “the angel of the house,” a submissive woman, learned in the intricate world of feelings and with a maternal instinct which permits her to impart values on her children. For Armstrong, the novel both contributed and reflected this emergent cultural change (Hammond and Regan 12). Armstrong claims that Richardson was the inaugurator of the imaginary proposition that a wealthy man’s greatest ambition was to marry a woman who embodied domestic virtue (Armstrong 135). By Austen’s time, Armstrong asserts, “this proposition had acquired the status of truth.” Indeed, Armstrong’s claim finds its echo in *Pride and Prejudice*: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man, in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” (5). Richardson, Fanny

Burney, Jane Austen, and William Thackeray’s heroines challenged the restrictions of family and social status by successfully committing *mésalliance*.

Margaret Anne Doody, in her groundbreaking *The True Story of the Novel*, disagrees with Armstrong’s contention that the domestication of the realistic novel is a matter only of gender and claims that class and race are also connected with this domestication (292). For Doody, one of the most remarkable aspects of the domestic realistic novel was “its ability to *exclude*” (292) since it does not care about ethnic diversity and immigration and emigration are almost absent. She asserts that the reason why the novel becomes fully domestic is because it shuts out aliens. As an exception, she mentions George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876), which includes Jewish characters, and points out that Eliot was irritated enough with realism to sacrifice some of its conventions. In *Lettres Persanes* (1721), Montesquieu also experimented with conventions and created Muslim narrations who, however, had Western attitudes (Doody 293). In his introduction to the fifteenth anniversary edition to *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, Michael McKeon claims that the domestic novel emerges out of the status inconsistency that started to prevail in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England (27): “[w]omen and men still tend to see themselves in terms of their social, political, and legal status more than in terms of their sexual being” (27).

McKeon asserts that Fielding’s indignation at *Pamela* has to do with the social disarray that miscegenation entails and not with gender issues. Thus, in *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding cleverly changes the sex of the protagonist in order not to imply that the case of women entails some kind of inconsistency (McKeon 27). Feminism is only emergent at this time and it is social status what gives ideological flavor to the early novel. Before the 1740s, the question of virtue is addressed in social rather than sexual terms because English culture still tended to incorporate the sexual within the social (McKeon 29). For his part, John Richetti, in *The English Novel in History, 1700-1789*, contends that the realist novel is characterized by socio-historical determinism. He states that Richardson’s characters are deliberately ingrained in local socio-historical and economic conditions rather than derived from some mysterious and extra-historical essence (8). According to Richetti, “novelistic specificity focuses on social relationships that promote self-awareness in characters balanced (or torn) between individualism and communal identity” (8). Characters are then both socially determined and individually defined.

3.3 Formal Questions

“The great man is no longer the one who creates truth; he is the one who knows how best to reconcile falsehood with truth”

(Dennis Diderot, *Salon* of 1767)

In *Pamela in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland* (2005), Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor remark that “the publication of *Pamela* not only established a compelling prototype for the domestic, epistolary and psychological fiction of the decades to come” (4). The third edition of the novel sold 3,000 copies within two months and turned the novel into “one of the century’s best sellers” (qtd. Keymer 5). Richardson’s aim in *Pamela* was to “introduce a new species of writing,” what he would later call “writing to the moment,” a present-time immediacy which he also employs in *Clarissa*, which Fielding would later ridicule in *Shamela*, and which Charlotte Brontë would also include in *Jane Eyre*, which is structurally very similar to *Pamela* (Carroll *Selected Letters* 41).²⁰ Richardson’s story of social mobility and transgressive marriage provoked a strain of criticism about gender and class (Keymer and Sabor 5).

By locating virtue in a servant, avowing the spiritual equality of servants and aristocracy, and “inserting this servant into the social elite as an agent of reformation,” Richardson’s novel disrupted hierarchical assumptions and became “an instinctive touchstone for decades when any question of marital misalliance came up (Keymer and Sabor 6). Indeed, what really bothered Fielding was Richardson’s subversive decision to eschew classical literary decorum in making a low and supposedly ungrammatical female

²⁰ There are several instances of “writing to the moment” in *Jane Eyre*. One of the clearest and most significant takes place in the garden, before Mr. Rochester asks Jane to marry him:

Sweet-briar and southernwood, jasmine, pink, and rose have long been yielding their evening sacrifice of incense: this new scent is neither of shrub nor flower; it is—I know it well—it is Mr. Rochester’s cigar. I look round and I listen. I see trees laden with ripening fruit. I hear a nightingale warbling in a wood half a mile off; no moving form is visible, no coming step audible; but that perfume increases: I must flee. I make for the wicket leading to the shrubbery, and I see Mr. Rochester entering. I step aside into the ivy recess; he will not stay long: he will soon return whence he came, and if I sit still he will never see me. (248)

the heroine and narrator of the novel. Fielding’s *Shamela* was *Pamela*’s most popular counter-fiction, belonging to the class of books that “borrow from, comment on and pay homage to, but also parody and subvert their fictional precursor” (Keymer and Sabor 83). As Margaret Ann Doody puts it, “*Shamela* shows what a revolutionary book *Pamela* could seem” (Doody 74).²¹ *Pamela* became then “a site of contestation,” in which some of the most pressing conflicts and concerns of its time can now be perceived (Keymer and Sabor 10). Through his epistolary technique, Richardson ventriloquized a rich variety of characters, most of them belonging to the upper strata of eighteenth-century social scale, although he also ventures to give voice to members of the lower strata.

The letter is “as old as the art of writing” and, as Jacques Derrida has suggested, “the essence of literature itself” (qtd. Rudnik-Smalbraak 18). What is distinctive in Richardson’s novels is his capacity to convey the universal problems of love. Since Ovid’s *Heroides*, the representation of women has always been associated to suffering. In a state of intense suffering, the lonely woman finds as her only confidant the piece of paper: her sorrow has earned her the right to speak (Rudnik-Smaalbraak 18). In *Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist*, Mark Kinkead-Weekes goes so far as to claim that “Richardson is the pioneer of ‘point of view’ fiction” (397). Thus, the author formally banishes himself and becomes each of his characters but the reader finds it difficult to identify him with any of them. In order to get an overall understanding of the characters, Kinkead-Weekes asserts, we readers have to enter the points of view of all them. However, no single point of view is reliable and we need to read between the lines to discover their genuine intentions (397).

For Richetti, Richardson’s remarkable novelty lies in his extraordinary capacity “to immerse this large cast of characters in a minutely rendered, densely articulated world of social and economic circumstances” (100). *Pamela* has a lot of what Rousseau would later call *amour de soi-même*, an instinctive self-esteem which allows her to refuse Mr. B.’s vexations and, consequently, to overlook the realities of social rank and gender identities

²¹ *Shamela* exerted great influence on later counter-fictions of *Pamela*, like Eliza Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela* or James Parry’s *The True Anti-Pamela*, both published in 1741. Both authors borrowed Fielding’s idea that *Pamela*’s obsessive concern for her virtue was indeed a devious plot to exploit it and ascend socially through marital misalliance (Keymer and Sabor 83).

with the conviction that she is being faithful to her inner self, an idea that Rousseau would later express in the *Discourse on Inequality*: “I entreat you all to look into the depths of your hearts, and to heed the secret voice of conscience” (8). For Richetti, *Pamela*’s originality lies in its protagonist’s rejection of “sociohistorical inevitability” and restrictive gender categories and in her self-conscious portrayal of moral and social roles. *Pamela* thus offers the expression of an individual within a rigid social realm; hence, the social and the individual spheres are interrelated and animate one another (Richetti 87).

Despite her more traditional omniscient narrators, Jane Austen, through recurrent free-indirect-discourse, also selects a rich variety of characters as focalizers of the action. Although in most of her novels she frequently favours the voice of polite country people, Austen does enact a social transgression in *Mansfield Park* (1814) by allowing Fanny Price, who has an unsafe social position in the family, to become the best critic of the social theatricals which, both literarily and symbolically, take place in the organic communities around her: “[...] but I am more sorry to see you drawn in to do what you had resolved against, and what you are known to think will be disagreeable to my uncle. It will be such a triumph to others!” (122). Although Fanny Price does not have a predisposition towards alterity, like Pamela and Nelly, she *does* constitute an alterity figure. In fact, Fanny, like Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, somehow threatens and destabilizes the organic communities of blood, birth, social status and genealogy of the Bertram family. Like Heathcliff, Fanny embodies status inconsistency since she is charitably admitted in the house as a kind of handy servant who is always ready to help – we cannot forget that both Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Bertram “found her very handy and quick in carrying messages, and fetching what she wanted” (20).

Although Fanny Price is one of the weakest and most helpless of Jane Austen’s heroines, she is the only character in the novel who shows enough independence of mind and who dares to contest the authority of the master of the house. Thus, Fanny is responsible for the three greatest speech acts of refusal in the novel: she absolutely refuses to take part in *Lovers’ Vows*; she resolutely says “NO” to Henry’s marriage proposals, and she repeats her negation in front of the “chief guardian,” Sir Thomas (Tanner *Jane Austen* 151). In this sense, Fanny can be equated to one of Austen’s most self-determining heroines, Lizzy Bennet, and to Pamela and Jane Eyre.

Wuthering Heights: “The Housekeeper’s Tale”

In *Vanity Fair*, published in the same year that *Wuthering Heights*, 1848, William Thackeray chooses a heroine with self-determination and autonomy, what Leslie Fiedler calls “the lady with the whip.” Rebecca Sharp is a cunning woman who “never was known to have done a good action in behalf of anybody” (15). Becky is not the narrator of the novel; the novel is indeed characterized by having a quite intrusive narrator who also plays the role of commentator. Despite this, it is clear in several passages that the sympathy of the narrator *is* with Becky, as we can see in this passage where the narrator condescends Becky because, despite her cunning, she is still an inexperienced girl:

But we must remember that she is but nineteen as yet, unused to the art of deceiving, poor innocent creature! and making her own experience in her own person. The meaning of the above series of queries, as translated in the heart of this ingenious young woman, was simply this: “If Mr. Joseph Sedley is rich and unmarried, why should I not marry him? I have only a fortnight, to be sure, but there is no harm in trying.” And she determined within herself to make this laudable attempt. (23 *VF*)

Becky is indeed an updated Shamela who resorts to a Pamela-like subterfuge of innocence and naivety to rise socially. Being alone in the world, Becky tries to secure her future by seducing Jos Sedley but her attempts fail. However, she does not surrender and she gets a place as a governess in the house of a decadent aristocratic family. There, she marries one of the sons of the family, Rawdon Crawley. Becky is the perfect example of what Robbins calls “a social climber” (“A Portrait” 409). “I must be my own mamma” (105), she says at the beginning of the novel. Unlike Pamela – who always resort to ingenuousness – Becky discloses her genuine intentions and motivations; she has never been innocent but she has always been “sharp”.

Thus, although Becky, unlike Pamela or Nelly, is not the narrator of the novel, we can see several times in the novel how Thackeray’s voice stands behind hers and how her perspective pervades the narration. Nelly’s voice is also the governing one in *Wuthering Heights*. Her role as participant narrator in the novel is probably one of the most complex and fascinating issues in *Wuthering Heights*, as we can see when Nelly narrates Heathcliff’s entrance into the house:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping that it might be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr.

Wuthering Heights: “The Housekeeper’s Tale”

Earnshaw’s door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (35-6, emphasis added)

This incident perfectly exemplifies Nelly Dean’s part of responsibility in some of the most crucial events in the novel. Nelly admits here her complicity in the abuse that Heathcliff receives upon his arrival at the house, but she does so in such a tacit manner that she seems less responsible for the affair than Hindley and Catherine. Her contempt is somehow logical and understandable. Nelly certainly values her privileged position in the Earnshaw family. She is distrustful about this newcomer who intrudes in the house, and acts with significant independence and craftiness to protect her position (Kavanagh 34). Later on in the novel, when Edgar Linton rebukes Nelly for not having informed him of Catherine’s pitiable condition – another significant incident – Catherine voices what is probably the most direct indictment of treachery and deceitfulness against Nelly: “Ah! Nelly has played the traitor. [...] Nelly is my hidden enemy – you witch! So you do seek self-bolts to hurt us!” (129). Her narrative control is devious and diffident: “an invisible hand to whose manipulations Lockwood, and by extension the reader, must, and are usually pleased to, submit” (Kavanagh 35). Whereas Heathcliff catalyzes his anarchic social and libidinal violence, Nelly Dean imposes on the discourse “an implacable sadism of control” (35).

Nelly’s role as both narrator and participant has attracted wide critical attention in the second half of the twentieth century. In one of the earliest and most influential essays dedicated to her persona, “The Villain in *Wuthering Heights*,” Hafley crowns Nelly as “one of the consummate villains in English literature” (Hafley 199) and compares her to Shakespeare’s Iago. However, I would like to suggest that Nelly functions as a *Geheimnisträger*, a secret-bearer who extracts everybody’s confessions, and it is through her focalized narration that we can listen to many other voices. Her narrative, like that of Pamela, is polyphonic, since it includes a diversity of points of view. Lyn Pykett goes so far as to claim that, despite her sympathy of attention and her inclusiveness of detail and perspective, Nelly has a “self-confessed lack of sympathy” (108).

I cannot totally agree with this severe contention since, even if she censures the words or behavior of most of the characters at some point in the novel, Nelly also shows understanding and compassion at other moments. In fact, she shows sympathy with

Wuthering Heights: "The Housekeeper's Tale"

Heathcliff several times in the novel – a sympathy based in part on their common position as servants:

“A good heart will help you to a bonny face, my lad, [...] And now that we've done washing, and combing, and sulking - tell me whether you don't think yourself rather handsome? I'll tell you, I do. You're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!” (56)

Nelly also demonstrates compassion when she has to communicate Catherine's death to Heathcliff: “I was weeping as much for him as her: we do sometimes pity creatures that have none of the feeling either for themselves or others” (166). In mythological terms, Nelly would be the Ariadne who begins to sew the moment she starts to narrate her story. Her conventionality and unobtrusiveness make her the perfect narrator. As Pykett puts it, her modest and other-directed narrative is partly a function of gender and partly a function of her social position, that of a servant. She is for the most part a “passive spectator who witnesses the active lives of others” (Pykett 101). Like Pamela's or Suzanne's voice in *La Religieuse*, Nelly's voice is both naïve and well-informed, a character in whom there is a disconcerting and ironic combination of seeming innocence and satirical insight (Goulbourne XXVIII).

This satirical insight is especially flagrant in her conversations with Catherine, as when the latter asks her whether she should marry Edgar Linton and Nelly replies in such a bold and ironic manner: “To be sure, considering the exhibition you performed in his presence this afternoon, I might say it would be wise to refuse him: since he asked you after that, he must be either hopelessly stupid or a venturesome fool” (77). Her satirical stance is sometimes concealed behind apparent candour as when she admits to Lockwood that “[w]e don't in general take to foreigners here, Mr. Lockwood, unless they take to us first” (43). Although she is not referring to Heathcliff – she is talking here about Frances, Hindley's foreign wife – the remark echoes the way the family – and herself – have

(un)welcomed Heathcliff in the house as well as betrays her pride in belonging to the Earnshaw family.

Contemporary criticism has tended to distrust what Wayne Booth has called an “unambiguous bestowal of authority” (18) upon a narrator, and this suspicion has reached Nelly Dean. Debates about the veracity of her narration and the sincerity of her motivations are in vogue in twentieth-century discussions of *Wuthering Heights*. Social inequality always entails a structural deception: “you get truth habitually from equals only,” says Thackeray in *The Roundabout Papers* (149). There is a significant passage in which Nelly betrays her scheming and manipulative control of the narration. When she accompanies Cathy to see her cousin, Linton Heathcliff, Nelly refrains from informing her master, Edgar Linton, about this excursion: “My master requested an account of our ongoings. His nephew’s offering of thanks was duly delivered, Miss Cathy gently touching on the rest: I also threw little light on his inquires, for I hardly knew what to hide and what to reveal” (264). After that, she displays her patronizing attitude by concealing information from her master:

He had a fixed idea, I guessed by several observations he let fall, that, as his nephew resembled him in person, he would resemble him in mind; for Linton’s letters bore few or no indications of his defective character. *And I, through pardonable weakness, refrained from correcting the error*; asking myself what good there would be in disturbing his last moments with information that he had neither power nor opportunity to turn to account. (265, emphasis added)

“Where we see that a man has the power,” says Maria Edgeworth, “we may naturally suspect that he has the will to deceive us” (*Castle Rackrent* 2). It is not farfetched to think that if Nelly conceals, reveals or refrains from informing her master about her ongoings, she might also conceal, reveal or refrain from informing her main listener, Lockwood, or us, the readers. We are “still haunted with the shadow of something she had not told [us]” (*The Turn of the Screw* 27). Through first person narration, the maidservant-narrator is a holder of power, and not only is she narrator, but also an instigator of the action.

Similarly, although Richardson presents Pamela as a paragon of virtue, readers have only to read behind the lines in order to ascertain Pamela’s hypocrisy and self-interest. According to Jens Brockmeier, “narrative empowers individuals because it affords them the possibility to control their identity by choosing strategically what gets recounted (and

who, and to whom) in the stories about themselves” (1219). Thus, individuals can actively shape their narrative identity in “the social circulation of representations of themselves” (1219). Pamela knows this and by trying to represent herself as an honest, modest and naïf servant who tries to avoid his master’s sexual advances, she ironically discloses that she is actually an *arriviste*. However, as David Daiches says, “[t]he fact that she irritates readers, that they disagree about her, that one can accuse her of hypocrisy is a sure sign of life” (qtd. Duncan and Kimpel 103). Suzanne, the protagonist of Diderot’s *La Religieuse* (1796), which was deeply influenced by Richardson’s epistolary novels, also masters the arts of rhetoric and persuasion. Her narrative encourages us to empathize with her sufferings and to be persuaded by her case. Although she claims to be innocent and naïve, she sometimes demonstrates self-awareness: “I have a touching appearance; the intense pain I had experienced had altered it but had not robbed it of any of its character. The sound of my voice also touches people, and they feel that when I speak, I am telling the truth” (112). She even goes further than Pamela and recognizes an element of dishonesty in her self-presentation:

I have realized that, though it was utterly unintentional, I had in each line shown myself to be as unhappy as I really was, but also much nicer than I really am. Could it be that we believe men to be less sensitive to the depiction of our suffering than to the image of our charms, and do we hope that it is much easier to seduce them than it is to touch their hearts? (152)

Through the devices of first-person narrative, both Suzanne and Pamela present themselves as inexperienced young girls but the effect is that of studied manipulation and seduction. Neither Richardson nor Diderot resolve this contradiction. Nelly, on her part, does not have recourse to inexperience but to literacy and wisdom –“I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body” (61).²² I think that we can apply both to *Pamela*

²² As Henry Staten has put it, Nelly is in fact

a skillful storyteller, so spellbinding in her way of imagining the world of erotic love that she herself can never enter that for a century and a half her way of imagining it, rather than the world itself, as EB makes it evident beneath Nelly’s imaginative overlays, has compelled the imaginations of readers, as a consequence of which these readers have relegated her to a marginal role (Staten 133).

and *Wuthering Heights* what Goulbourne says of Diderot in his introduction to *La Religieuse*, that his aesthetic effect relies on the illusion of reality being devotedly created and then dramatically dismantled (Goulbourne xxxiii). They have demonstrated, in a Sternian manner, how easily readers can be fooled by the maneuvers of the work of fiction (Goulbourne xxxiii). Indeed, one of the reasons that the rogue always resorts to first-person narration is to generate more intimacy with the reader. As the narrator of Diderot’s *The Two Friends from Bourbonne* states at the end of his tale, the narrator of the historical tale must satisfy “two apparently contradictory demands:” “to be one and the same time a historian and a poet, a truth-teller and a liar” (qtd. Goulbourne xxxiii). I think that it is precisely this structural ambivalence between narrator and deceiver that makes them so fascinating and challenging. The confrontation with these unreliable narrators has also ethical implications since they may cause that the readers question their own values and principles. Even if they are not always impartial and have their limitations, the fact that they can engage our sympathy makes them difficult to condemn.

Both the diaristic style of *Wuthering Heights* and the epistolary style of *Pamela* or *La Religieuse* cancel the authorial voice of the omniscient narrator, which for Eagleton means that there is no metanarrative, no Austenesque narrator to guide our reading and to explain or apologize (Eagleton, *The English* 71). Instead, we have a never-ending exchange of letters which almost acquire a fetishistic life of their own in *Pamela* (Eagleton 71) or a sequence of transmissions in a patchwork of embedded stories, letters, and diaries within diaries in *Wuthering Heights*. It is a sequence of transmissions which goes from genetic sources to putative substitutes and from oral narratives to written ones. These letters and diaries are revenants from the past, “frozen in permanent resurrection” (Hillis Miller *Literature as Conduct* 274). All this polyphony and this patchwork of material signs are framed by Pamela and Nelly Dean, respectively, two maidservants who belong to the outskirts of society. However, neither of them speaks as an actual maidservant would speak. Mathison tries to justify this incongruence through the assertion that Nelly is showing off her sophistication in order to impress Lockwood (Mathison 116). Nevertheless, the truth is that, contrary to what she did with Joseph, Brontë did not know how to differentiate Nelly Dean from the rest of the lower class characters and she tried to supply this deficiency by gentrifying Nelly. Thus, whereas

Pamela employs a polite and formal language assorted with witty colloquial expressions, Lockwood says of Nelly that

[e]xcepting a few provincialisms of slight consequence, you have no marks of the manners that I am habituated to consider as peculiar to your class. I am sure you have thought a great deal more than the generality of servants think. You have been compelled to cultivate your reflective faculties, for want of occasions for frittering your life away in silly trifles. (61)

Brontë’s strategy to compensate for Nelly’s cultivated speech is probably to make her a voracious reader: “I have read more than you would fancy, Mr. Lockwood. You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into, and got something out of also” (61). According to Regina Barreca, in *Wuthering Heights*, the power to write and speak is an indicator of women’s power. Thus, the female characters are not the objects of the discourse but the subject: “They challenge the male characters by creating texts that exist in opposition to the prevailing ideology” (229).

In the preface to Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800), an external narrator discharges the “measure prose” of heroic romance, and supports a narrative that registers the irregular speeches of real characters:

We cannot judge either of the feelings of the characters of men with perfect accuracy from their action or their appearances in public; it is from their careless conversations, their half-finished sentences, that we may hope with the greatest probability of success to discover their real characters (*Castle I*).

According to Jiménez Heffernan, for Edgeworth, social realism demanded fidelity to speech such as imperfect dialogue, and broken conversations (235). This was one of the most important innovations in prose fiction since it conveyed a sense of immediacy that had only been exclusive of drama.

Thus, whereas Edgeworth makes her characters speak according to their social class, Brontë, in the case of Nelly, favored a domestication of her voice, however strongly she invested in the phonetic subversion of Joseph.²³ Nelly’s focalized narration and her *gusto*

²³ Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford argue that Joseph expresses himself more realistically than any of the other more complex characters and that, despite his satirical function, in Joseph’s monologues and

in superstitions, however, gives her tale a popular flavor which favors the ethos of romance transmitted by oral tradition.²⁴ Pamela, like Nelly, is equally fond of reading since her Lady has acted as a benefactor – a similar role to that which Cathy II plays with Hareton – and has introduced her to the world of literature. Indeed, reading books creates an atmosphere of intimacy between Pamela and Mrs. Jervis: “[...] She takes Delight to hear me read to her; and all she loves to hear read, is good Books, which we read whenever we are alone” (17). As Nancy Armstrong argues, “[i]t is literacy alone that transforms [Pamela] from an object [Mr. B] can forcibly possess into a self-possessed subject” (43). Therefore, whereas Nelly remains in her position of social subalternity, Pamela ascends into the gentry, becoming a submissive housewife whose language “sinks beneath Richardson’s own” (Eagleton, *The English* 75). But in both cases, reading, writing, and speaking are forms of “engendered” communication that challenge the sacredness of the social and domestic order. Women’s narratives in these texts are concerned with control and with the determination to raise their voice or to possess the page, two acts that represent power.²⁵

As I said in the Overview, David Wilson (1947), Arnold Kettle (1951), and Terry Eagleton (1975) focus on the historical oppositions between the two houses, *Wuthering Heights*, where the Earnshaws own the land which they work themselves, and Thrushcross Grange, where the genteel Lintons live off their rents. However, what all the materialist readings of the novel have failed to notice is that, in such a conservative novel as this one – conservative in as much as the only possible solution which the author allows for Catherine and Heathcliff is death – the most revolutionary aspect connects Marxism with narratology: it is rare and fairly uncommon that a character of the lower class is

statements, Emily Brontë certainly achieved one of the most authentic uses of country speech in English fiction (qtd. Bloom 40).

²⁴ As Regina Barreca asserts, Nelly possesses “the unwritten, contraband history of folk-lore, songs and ballads” (230) which she uses “as an instrument of control against the dominant order” (227).

²⁵ The structure of Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* is also close to authentic rogue biography. As Ian Watt asserts, “Defoe’s high regard for genuine biography is reflected in the way his own novels always pass themselves off as authentic autobiography” (Watt *The Rise* 120).

permitted to *tell* the story in Victorian literature, and it is the first time that a servant-girl does it.²⁶

In my view, Brontë’s decision to tell the story through the voice of Nelly implies a Christian confraternity which has its own performative efficacy, since not only does Nelly listen, talk and give voice to all the characters in the novel, she also advises, rebukes, and consoles them. Hence, episodes like Catherine’s and Nelly’s famous conversation about love acquire new light: “[...] I must let it out! I want to know what I should do. To-day, Edgar Linton has asked me to marry him, and I’ve given him an answer. Now, before I tell you whether it was a consent or denial, you tell me which it ought to have been” (77). It is one of the first times in Victorian literature that we find such a violation of the social device.²⁷ Her intimacy with Catherine as a result of having been raised together results in the partial obliteration of the formal boundaries between master and servant and, while Nelly usually obeys Catherine, she also scolds her with a familiarity that an ordinary servant could not (Staten 152). The servant-narrator has acquired authority. In this sense, the novel acquires a picaresque pedigree which can only be found in many eighteenth century novels (*Moll Flanders*, *Tom Jones*, *Caleb Williams*, *Castle Rackrent...*), *Pamela*

²⁶ Thady Quirk, the subaltern narrator of Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800), is the faithful steward of four generations of Rackrent heirs. Redmond Barry, the protagonist of William Thackeray’s *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844), would be another rare instance of a semi-picaresque and subaltern narrator, an Anglo-Irish rake and fortune-hunter who tries to become a member of the English aristocracy. Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1848), published the same year as *Wuthering Heights*, has a governess as first-person narrator. Afterwards, Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1850), would also follow the same pattern of a first-person narration of the ups and down of the young and adult David. As David says: “this narrative is my written memory” (796). Similarly, Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* (1868) has Gabriel Betteredge, the Verinders’ head servant, as the one of the three narrators of the novel. All these narrators form a forceful but subordinate tradition.

²⁷ Another instance would take place in *Jane Eyre* (1847), when Mr. Rochester’s housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax, puts Jane on her guard about Mr. Rochester’s intentions: “I hope all will be right in the end [...], but believe me, you cannot be too careful. Try and keep Mr. Rochester at a distance: distrust yourself as well as him. Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses” (265). We should also remember that Lizzy Bennet’s misjudgment of Mr. Darcy’s character changes in part due to the account she receives from his housekeeper at Pemberley: “He is the best landlord and the best master [...] that ever lived; not like the wild young men nowadays, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but will give him a good name” (204).

being the most significant. In her role of counselor and advisor of both Catherine and Heathcliff – or using Vladimir Propp’s terminology in *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), in her role of *helper* – Nelly Dean, like Pamela and Fanny Price, occupies both a position of social subalternity and spiritual authority.

According to what Lawrence Sterne has called “the companionate marriage,” the woman gives up political control to the male in order to obtain exclusive authority over domestic life, morality, emotions and taste (Armstrong 41). Only this authority, which is spiritual, has the power of really reforming the conduct (Jiménez Heffernan 35). This accounts for Pamela’s more submissive conduct in the second part of the novel. In the case of Nelly, although she never marries – at least during the action of the novel – she does relegate political power to her masters while she always maintains moral authority. Like Pamela and Fanny, she has an unclear political position in the Earnshaw’s house. She is not biologically or legally related to anyone in the house but she is indeed a “‘relative creature,’ defined by her position within a system of family relationships as daughter, sister, wife or mother” (Pykett 104).

Nelly occupies most of these positions simultaneously, representing the situation of many real Victorian families, including Emily Brontë’s, in which daughters and sisters were required to replace dead mothers (Pykett 104). She is allowed to sit with the family and she develops a kind of kinship with the children. This becomes evident when Nelly receives the news of Hindley’s death: “ancient associations lingered round my heart; I sat down in the porch and wept as for a blood relation” (184). After that, she calls Hindley his “foster brother.” Similarly, at the end of *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas reflects that Fanny “was indeed the daughter that he wanted” (371) since she had steady principles and a sober temper. Indeed, Fanny Price becomes the “spiritual mistress of Mansfield Park” (Said, *Culture* 101), the best judge of parental mismanagement and the most judicious critic of the social theatricals that develop around her.

Like Nelly, Pamela also has a position of social subalternity but spiritual authority after her Lady’s death (Jiménez Heffernan 39) and it is precisely this position of spiritual authority – which she displays in her letters – what permits her to reform Mr. B.:

He put the Papers in his Pocket, when he had read my Reflections, and Thanks for escaping from *myself*; and said, taking me about the Waist, O my dear Girl! You

Wuthering Heights: "The Housekeeper's Tale"

have touched me sensibly with your mournful Relation, and your sweet Reflections upon it. I should truly have been very miserable had it taken Effect. I see you have been used too roughly; and it is a Mercy you stood Proof in that fatal Moment. (241)

On her part, Nelly's moral authority is never more blatant than when Catherine asks her if she should marry Edgar Linton: "[...] I want to know what I should do. To-day, Edgar Linton has asked me to marry him, and I've given him an answer. Now, before I tell you whether it was a consent or denial, you tell me which it ought to have been" (77). Like Lizzy Bennet, Catherine knows for sure that "the authority of a servant... was not to be hastily rejected" (*Pride and Prejudice* 215). Nelly warns her that Heathcliff will be extremely miserable: "[...] and if you are his choice, he'll be the most unfortunate creature that ever was born! As soon as you become Mrs. Linton, he loses friend, and love, and all! Have you considered how you'll bear the separation, and how he'll bear to be quite deserted in the world?" (81). When Catherine replies that she plans to help Heathcliff with Edgar's money, Nelly rebukes her harshly: "If I can make any sense of your nonsense, Miss [...] it only goes to convince me that you are ignorant of the duties you undertake in marrying; or else that you are a wicked, unprincipled girl. But trouble me with no more secrets: I'll not promise to keep them" (82). The originality of both novels lies then in "the vocal enactment of a social transgression" (Jiménez Heffernan 235) since the subaltern can speak and indeed does speak. This phonetic rebellion suggests a social subversion and an act of political assertion. "If God does not exist," says Dostoevsky, "everything is permitted." In the world of the nineteenth century, where "the great disembedding" takes place, status inconsistency reigns, and the middle class raises triumphant, the novel is a revolutionary genre and its only rule is not to have rules (Eagleton, *The English 2*).

3.4 Ethical Implications

“Ideally, we lose ourselves in what we read, only to return to ourselves, transformed and part of a more expansive world. In short, we become more critical and more capacious in our thinking and our acting”

(Judith Butler, “What value do the humanities have?”)²⁸

There is of course no intrinsic connection between narrative techniques and ethical implications, but we can agree that this connection is not totally unintentional: different perspectives are always made by using specific techniques. Thus, we should ask ourselves why a given narrative uses the strategies it uses rather than different ones. This violation of the social device in both *Pamela* and *Wuthering Heights* has its own ethical implications. Fredric Jameson, in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, asserts that form is “immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right” (141):

What must now be stressed is that at this level “form” is apprehended as content. The study of ideology of form is no doubt grounded on a technical and formalistic analysis in the narrowest sense, even though, unlike much traditional formal analysis, it seeks to reveal the active presence within the text of a number of discontinuous and heterogeneous formal processes. But at the level of analysis in question here, a dialectical reversal has taken place in which it has become possible to grasp such formal processes as sedimented content in their own right, as carrying ideological messages of their own, distinct from the ostensible or manifest content of the works. (Jameson 99)

This groundbreaking narrative device will definitely shape the sociological ethics of the novel. These dialogic narratives bring to the fore their performative quality since they help to shape notions of identity and alterity or otherness: “Through narrative, the strange and the familiar achieve a working relationship” (Shore 58).

²⁸ Butler, Judith. “What Value do the Humanities Have?” McGill University. 30 May 2013. McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Web. 9 March 2018.

<https://speakola.com/grad/judith-butler-humanities-mcgill-university-2013>

Wuthering Heights: “The Housekeeper’s Tale”

My contention is that both Richardson and Brontë bring to the fore the perspectives that social hegemonic discourses have silenced and which have a subterranean existence in society: the discourse of those “others” which lurk in the kitchen and also inhabit the home; those whom John Ruskin called the “unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world.”²⁹ Richardson and Brontë insurrect what Foucault calls *subjugated knowledges*. These subjugated knowledges are not only a mass of historical knowledges that were masked but

a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity. And it is thanks to the reappearance of these knowledges from below, of these unqualified or even disqualified knowledges, it is thanks to the reappearance of these knowledges: the knowledge of the psychiatrized, the patient, the nurse, the doctor, that is parallel to, marginal to, medical knowledge, the knowledge of the delinquent, what I would call, if you like, what people know (and this is by no means the same thing as common knowledge or common sense but, on the contrary, a particular knowledge, a knowledge that is local, regional, or differential, incapable of unanimity and which derives its power solely from the fact that it is different from all the knowledges that surround it), it is the reappearance of what people know at a local level, of these disqualified knowledges, that made the critique possible. (Foucault, *Lectures* 7-8)

These *subjugated knowledges* are insurrected through female subaltern speech, which “is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak *Can the Subaltern* 41). These knowledges lack social pedigree and are hierarchically inferior since they suffer a pervasive social exclusion. They are “knowledges from below” (Foucault, *Lectures* 7). The discourses of both Pamela and Nelly Dean constitute a counter-history, that is, the dark histories of those peoples who speak “from the side that is in darkness, from within the shadows” (Foucault, *Lectures* 70) and they are guided by what Foucault calls “the principle of heterogeneity,” and which has the following effect: “It will be learned that one man’s

²⁹ Ruskin, John. *Of Queen’s Gardens* (1865). *The Victorian Age: Topics*. Norton and Company. Web. 15 Nov. 2017.

https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/topic_2/ruskin.htm

victory is another man’s defeat. [...] What looks like right, law, or obligation from the point of view of power looks like the abuse of power, violence, and exaction when it is seen from the viewpoint of the new discourse” (Foucault, *Lectures* 69-70).

Apart from this, the heterogeneity of points of view is reflected in the polyphony of voices and material signs like letters or diaries that are entrenched in both novels, giving us readers the benefit of listening to different, and sometimes contradicting, perspectives that interact with mainstream ones. But, although they lodge a plurality of letters and discourses, both *Wuthering Heights* and *Pamela* contain a *dominant* voice; that of Nelly Dean and Pamela, respectively. They are privileged voices in which other discourses find their liberation. Therefore, their enormous sympathy of attention implies that no single participant can control entirely the course of the story, “and multiple voices vie for the right to formulate its point” (Norrick 128). This multiplicity of voices allows for the entrance of the other. As Derrida puts it, “*l’autre appelle à venir et cela n’arrive qu’à plusieurs voix*” [“the other calls something to come and that does not happen except in multiple voices”] (qtd. Hillis Miller *Others* 1). If we think of these narrative voices from the perspective of the characters, it is as if they were spied; as if they were haunted by a ghost. They ignore this invisible presence while it is present in their most private conversations and steals their most secret feelings and thoughts. This presence makes those privacies public by verbalizing them so that any reader can know and judge them... or not (Hillis Miller *Literature as Conduct* 273). Contrary to most Victorian novels that followed the maxim of the “just distribution of sympathy,” that is, heroes being presented in a favorable light whereas villains are presented as being totally unsympathetic (Nünning 49), *Wuthering Heights* puts readers in an uncomfortable situation when they find themselves sympathizing with Heathcliff and not being able to assign the label of hero or villain unequivocally. This is probably what disconcerted the first readers of the novel.

It is in fact Nelly’s sympathy of attention that allows us to understand Heathcliff’s inhuman behavior and his necessity of revenge. Indeed, she is the one who recognizes that Hindley’s ill-treatment of Heathcliff “was enough to make a fiend of a saint” (65). She is able to heighten the interest of the reader and to engage him or her through “situational empathy,” which consists in presenting a character – in this case, Heathcliff

– in a precarious position (Hogan 140).³⁰ Both Richardson and Brontë’s dramatic technique assumes then a projection of the reader’s imagination beyond the limits of any single point of view to an interaction of multiple visions which allow for a more detached comprehension (Kinhead-Weekes 46). It goes without saying that confronting different perspectives and dealing with heterogeneous points of view rather than a single one has ethical consequences for the readers. They actively interfere in the narrative by trying to make sense of the data. According to Hillis Miller, “reading is intervention” and this intervention “makes me responsible for what happens in reading. It makes me not just a passive and detached witness but also a protagonist. I become a responsible agent who can be held accountable” (Hillis Miller *Literature as Conduct* 256). Knowledge implies responsibility and such putting together of data is not a constative act but a performative one (Hillis Miller 257). As it happens in Henry James’ *The Golden Bowl*, *Wuthering Heights* “has raised ghosts through the naked power of language and has made the reader believe in people and actions that have absolutely no reality outside that conferred on them by the narrative voice” (Hillis Miller 265).

30 This is not the first time that a housekeeper changes our perception of a character. In Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Reynolds, Darcy’s loyal housekeeper, gives a highly favorable account of Darcy’s past. The Gardiners, who are already prejudiced against Darcy by Wickham’s malicious version of the past, are decidedly skeptical of this account and dismiss it as “family prejudice” (188). However, Mrs. Reynolds’ sympathetic version causes a different impression on us as well as on Lizzy. Through Lizzy, we have already had access to Darcy’s letter and, consequently, Mrs. Reynolds’ account strikes us as very reliable:

The commendation bestowed on him by Mrs. Reynolds was of no trifling nature. What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant? As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how many people’s happiness were in his guardianship! –how much of pleasure or pain was it in his power to bestow! –how much of good or evil must be done by him! Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character, and as she stood before the canvas on which he was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembers its warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression. (189, emphasis added)

Thus, although *Pride and Prejudice*, like *Mansfield Park* or *Vanity Fair*, is a third-person novel, we find the interference of many first-person voices and also the succeeding description and transformation of our feelings and those of the characters who listen to them or read the same letter (Stafford xxvi).

Wuthering Heights: "The Housekeeper's Tale"

Like the witness-narrators, the readers are condemned to a sense of doubt and frustration that is like that of the characters, who have to rely on an indirect and doubtful access to the minds and feelings of other characters: "They too must believe rather than know" (Hillis Miller 272). Thus, Nelly can only speculate about Heathcliff's origin – "Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen?" (56); about his whereabouts in his three-year-absence – "His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army" (95); or about Heathcliff and Catherine's resurrection as wandering ghosts – "But the country folks, if you ask them, would swear on the Bible that he *walks*: there are those who speak to having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house (336). Of course, we can only know what the narrator chooses to tell us. The novel is a kind of testimony. It bears witness. The reader, like Nelly, will never be sure about the veracity of these conjectures, but the novel Emily Brontë wrote depends on leaving these questions unanswered. We are left with a sense of unappeased curiosity but, as Hillis Miller asserts, "literature keeps its secrets" (*On Literature* 40).

Emily Brontë makes a narratological subversion which brings the novel closer to the eighteenth century novel, especially to *Pamela*, and which allows us readers to stand in different, and sometimes contradicting, ideological positions through our reading process, a fact that brings the novel closer to modernist and postmodernist fiction. Its heterogeneity and ambiguity requires openness and acceptance of difficulty on the part of the readers and tacitly raises the question of whether there are absolute ethical values. It raises awareness about well-established ethical positions and makes readers reappraise their hierarchy of values. Indeed, Emily Brontë's method could anticipate the presentation of what we now refer to as interior monologue and stream of consciousness. To conclude, I borrow Lovelace's words in *Clarissa* to assert that Emily Brontë brilliantly traces human nature "thro' its most secret recesses" (*Clarissa* V, 230).

3.5 Conclusion

To sum up, I have chosen *Pamela* as the subtext that best epitomizes the narrative quality that I wanted to highlight in *Wuthering Heights*: it is a rare and uncommon instance that a maidservant acquires narrative authority in Victorian literature. In this sense, the novel can be placed in the picaresque lineage of many eighteenth-century novels (*Moll Flanders*, *Tom Jones*, *Castle Rackrent*...). Therefore, Richardson and Brontë’s subversive decision of granting Pamela and Nelly with narrative authority and eschewing classical literary decorum implies a violation of the rigid social device. Thus, despite their social inferiority, they occupy a position of moral authority. Through Nelly and Pamela’s focalized narrations, we can listen to many other voices in the novels. Their narrative is polyphonic since it includes different, and sometimes contradicting, points of view. Apart from this, the fact that there is no God-like narrator to monitor our reading or to make comments in the manner of Thackeray, we readers have to decide whether the narrators are totally reliable and, in case we decide they are not, we have to confront their supposed unreliability; to overcome our prejudices and to put into question our previous ethics and assumptions.

The witness-narrators represent then the concealed, silenced, (ir)responsibility of the author. As substitutive narrators, they do not just narrate but also interpret. Like readers, they must take responsibility for what they read (Hillis Miller 257). The novel is therefore a clash of challenging responsibilities, each amending or canceling the previous ones (260). Through these embedded narrators, both Richardson and Brontë raise what Foucault calls “subjugated knowledges” which have been silenced by social hegemonic discourses. Thus, although they are socially subaltern, they reach spiritual authority and acquire the role of moral counselors. This confrontation with such heterogeneous points of view raises the readers’ ethical awareness while it confronts us with the question of whether there are absolute principles. Apart from this, these narrative voices summon speech acts, persons and events that have taken place at some point in the past (Hillis Miller *Literature as Conduct* 273). Like the country folks in *Wuthering Heights*, these narrators raise ghosts; ghosts which remain in what Blanchot calls *l’espace littéraire*, and they are “ready to be invoked again by the narrative voice or by any reader of the novel” (Hillis Miller 273). Their ghostly apparitions haunt our feelings, as Catherine’s ghost haunts Heathcliff and just as Heathcliff haunts the imagination of Emily Brontë’s readers.

Chapter 4

Wuthering Heights and Kleist's *Novellen*: Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law

“Je vais vous éclairer, moi, la position dans laquelle vous êtes; mais je vais le faire avec la supériorité d'un homme qui, après avoir examiné les choses d'ici-bas, a vu qu'il n'y avait que deux partis à prendre: ou une stupide obéissance ou la révolte.”

(Honoré de Balzac, *Le Père Goriot*, 107)

4.1 Introduction

In *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels*, J. Hillis Miller has claimed that “one of the most obvious characteristics of works of literature is their manifest strangeness” (Hillis Miller 18). He does not hesitate to include *Wuthering Heights* among the selected seven novels as one of these strange works of literature. Indeed, as I had already argued,

Wuthering Heights has always been analyzed as a “hapax” or isolated singularity in the history of English literature, and the same has happened with Kleist's *Novellen* in the history of German literature. The first reactions following their publication have relegated both Brontë's novel and Kleist's *Novellen* to the category of impenetrable mystery. Thus, a reviewer in the *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* described *Wuthering Heights* as “a strange sort of book, baffling all regular criticism; yet it is impossible to begin and not to finish it, and quite as impossible to lay it aside afterwards and say nothing about it.” The critics strongly recommend “readers who love novelty to get this story, for we can promise them that they have never read anything like it before” (Dunn 175).

Similarly, Kleist's *Novellen* and his dramatic works have also posed the problem of indeterminacy for the literary world. Thus, the poet and editor Christoph Martin Wieland was elated when hearing a reading of *Robert Guiskard*; Goethe, whose support and appreciation Kleist was very eager to obtain, was indifferent to *Amphitryon* and reacted with aversion to *Penthesilea*. In a review of Tieck's *Dramaturgische Blätter* from 1826, Goethe would later express that Kleist provoked him “*Schauer*” [“Shiver”] and “*Abscheu*” [“Disgust”]. The fact that only three of Kleist's seven completed dramas were performed on stage suggests that these works did not conform to the dominant aesthetic and ethical modes to be considered appropriate for performance. Of these three, only one, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn*, received some kind of popular acclaim. Recent scholarship has indeed revived Kleist's importance as an Enlightenment figure and has placed his literary oeuvre with the *Aufklärung* in general, and Kant in particular (Howe 1).

These critical reactions suggest that these baffling texts have surpassed the horizon of expectations of both critics and readers since, apparently, there is not a hermeneutic frame that would allow them to classify these texts within a specific literary genre. It is precisely this generic indeterminacy and opacity that especially engages me. Thus, my purpose here is to throw new light on *Wuthering Heights* by using Kleist's *Novellen* as intertexts. I think that Kleist's and Brontë's indisputable readings of the works by Rousseau justify this seemingly uncommon pairing while it serves too as a contextual support. Kleist had read Rousseau in French when he was sent to Berlin after the death of his father, in 1788, and the Rousseauian ideal of communion with nature as the only escape from a decadent feudalism and an incipient capitalism caused a great impact on his thought. Indeed, when

he was living in Switzerland, he entertained the Rousseauian idea of going back to nature, where he decided to become a peasant and to work the land (Reeves 10).

It is also unquestionable that the Brontës were deeply acquainted with the works by Rousseau. In her biography on Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell asserts that the ideas of Rousseau and Mr. Day on education were widely spread in England and that Mr. Brontë must have formed some of his opinions on the children from these two theories (Gaskell 50). In fact, we find direct evidence that the Brontës read Rousseau in *Shirley*, where the Swiss author is the subject of a discussion between Shirley and Caroline – “And what I say of Cowper, I should say of Rousseau. Was Rousseau ever loved? He loved passionately; but was his passion ever returned? I am certain, never. And if there were any female Cowpers and Rousseaus, I should assert the same of them” (191). In her study of *Shirley*'s debt to *Julie*, Elizabeth Gargano points out that Louis's “fervid language” shifts “the battlefield for the characters' erotic combat” from “the social domain of the drawing room” to “a wild realm of undifferentiated Rousseauian nature” (Gargano 798).

4.2 Delimitation of the Context:

Despite the general lack of comparative studies on Kleist and Brontë, they have very recently and selectively begun to come up as a remarkable match. Indeed, the *Britannia* review of 1848 is one of the earliest attempts in print to relate the novel to German romantic tales. The reviewer asserts that the book is “strangely original” and that it bears a resemblance “to those irregular German tales in which the writers, giving the reins to their fancy, represent personages as swayed and impelled to evil by supernatural influences.” The reviewer goes on to say that the characters are “so new, so grotesque, so entirely without art, that they strike us as proceeding from a mind of limited experience but original energy and of a singular and distinctive cast” and finishes saying that “there is singular power in his portraiture of strong passion” (Dunn 288). Their reputation as social outcasts who disregard contemporary currents has shaped the critical reactions which emphasize the elusiveness in interpretation of Kleist's *Novellen* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.

In *The Struggle with the Daemon: Hölderlin, Kleist and Nietzsche* (1925), the famous Austrian novelist and biographer, Stefan Zweig, makes a highly impressionistic and

novelized portrayal of Kleist, foregrounding the aloofness of his character and attributing it to “the daemon” within himself. The novelist also highlights his isolation and makes an assertion which echoes the one which Madame de Staël made in *Réflexions sur Le Suicide* (1812)³¹: “no one would have noticed his departure [from the world] had he not died in so melodramatic a form” (Zweig 161). We find much of this impressionistic exposé in approaches to Emily Brontë. Her sister Charlotte was indeed her first mythographer since she strongly emphasized her secluded life and antisocial character: “My sister’s disposition was not naturally gregarious; circumstances favoured and fostered her tendency to seclusion; except to go to church or take a walk on the hills, she rarely crossed the threshold of home” (Dunn 314). Following journals and reviews also fostered this idea. The journal *The Living Age* (1857) said of Emily that she was “altogether an enigma. We perceive a power about her which could not find reasonable vent or utterance, so shut in was it by her repulsive and unsocial qualities.”³²

The hermeneutic tension and opacity of both texts have made them an easy target of postmodern and deconstructionist criticism. To name just a few critics, Steven Howe, in his work *Heinrich von Kleist and Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Violence, Identity, Nation* (2012), picks up the most relevant critical responses that Kleist’s *Novellen* have received, paying special attention to Georg Lukács, Klaus Müller-Salget, and Bernhard Greiner’s reviews. In a groundbreaking essay from 1936, Lukács argued that Kleist’s alienation led him to focus on the isolation of human passions. In the 1970s, Kleist is regarded as the “*Dichter ohne Gesellschaft*” [“poet without society”] (Howe 1). In an essay on the motif of “Doppeldeutigkeit,” Klaus Müller-Salget asserts that “*das Hauptthema dieser Dichtungen*” [“the principal motif of this poet”] is “*prinzipielle Mehrdeutigkeit des Menschen und der ‘Welt’*” [“the principal ambiguity of people and the world”] (Howe 2). More recently, Bernhard Greiner has stated that “*das Paradoxon ist offenbar die zentrale Figur des Denkens, des künstlerischen Schaffens wie der Lebenserfahrung dieses Autors*”

³¹ Madame de Staël does not include Kleist in her pioneering book, *De l’Allemagne* (1810), in which she tries to spread the ideas of German Romanticism to France. However, although she does not even mention Kleist in this book, in her subsequent work, *Réflexions sur Le Suicide* (*Reflections on Suicide*), written in 1812, she does not hesitate to state the following: “Has not this man the air of an author without genius, ambitious to produce by a real catastrophe, those tragic effects to which he proved unequal in poetry?”

³² *The Living Age* (1857), Volume 55, p. 409

[“paradox is seemingly Kleist’s central figure of thought, his artistic creation as life-experience”] (Howe 2). In 1974, John Ellis highlights “the sometimes extraordinary degree of disagreement among Kleist scholars as to the meaning of a particular work” (qtd. Allan 5). Ellis suggests that this difficulty stems from the readers’ identification with one character so that they miss the central point in his works:

Kleist’s works are about the process of coming to terms with the world; and in his stories his narrator is, in a sense always the central figure... The situations he chooses and the people who live in them are various, but what always remains... is a focus on the fact that those situations can be grasped in various competing ways and that understanding any aspect of them can be complicated by many levels of judgment. (qtd. Alan 5)

According to Allan, such multiplicity of interpretations have encouraged critics to see Kleist as a precursor of modernist and postmodernist aesthetics (Allan 6).

Similarly, as I have already highlighted in the first chapter of this dissertation, “An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*’ critical reception: Problems and Omissions,” *Wuthering Heights* has been prey to deconstructionist criticism. To recuperate just some of this criticism, I would like to mention Frank Kermode’s (1975) statement that the works we call classic are those which “are complex and indeterminate enough to allow us our necessary pluralities” (Kermode 121). For Kermode, plurality in *Wuthering Heights* is not “a prescription but a fact” (Kermode 129). J. Hillis Miller, in *Fiction and Repetition* (1982), describes it as a postmodern text that betrays its own unreadability. The secret truth about *Wuthering Heights*, Hillis Miller asserts, “is that there is no secret truth which criticism might formulate in this way” (51). There is always “a remnant of opacity” which keeps the reader frustrated, the novel still open and the process of interpretation unfinished (51-2). There are always some significant details which cannot be elucidated: “The text is over-rich” says Hillis Miller (52). This is Brontë’s greatest triumph. For Carol Jacobs, *Wuthering Heights* is “an annunciation of excommunication, both a fabrication in language of the real world – of that which is outside language (excommunication) – and then again an expulsion of the heretic from its own textuality” (391).

Therefore, in this chapter, I would like to continue with the line of argument already broached by David Cecil (1978), Carol Jacobs (1989), Andrea Kirchknopf (2004) and

Maggie Allen (2005), and to disclose the undeniable similarities between Kleist's *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights*. In *Art Within Tradition: Wuthering Heights and the German Novelle*, Cecil Davies argues that Emily Brontë was acquainted with the German tradition of the *Novellen* and that *Wuthering Heights* lies *within* this tradition. Among the possible influences on Emily Brontë, Davies mentions Ludwig Tieck, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Achim von Arnim, Joseph von Eichendorff, Adalbert von Chamisso and Heinrich von Kleist. He also analyzes how some of the themes in *Wuthering Heights* are rooted in the German *Novelle*, such as the fateful love of Catherine and Heathcliff; Catherine's high pride; her evocation of "the fate of Nilo;" her sense of belonging to a spiritual aristocracy; her passionate love outside the marriage-bond; and the ambiguously ghostly figures of Catherine and Heathcliff. Besides, Emily Brontë's techniques of providing symbolic meanings to external objects, of enclosing one story within another [*Rahmenerzählung*], and of leaving the story to speak for itself are also common among the German *Novellen*.

In her book, *Uncontainable Romanticism: Shelley, Brontë, Kleist*, Carol Jacobs also anticipates this context, although no attempt is made in her book to relate the texts and their authors. Jacobs perceives the hermeneutic ambiguity and estrangement as traits that are present in both Kleist's narratives and *Wuthering Heights*. Andrea Kirchknopf, in "Character Constitution in Heinrich von Kleist's 'Der Findling' and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*," analyzes the resemblances of character constitution in "The Foundling" and in Emily Brontë's novel. She especially focuses on the foundling characters, the recurring substitution of family members and names and the repetitive deaths. Thus, Kirchknopf centers on the similarities between Nicolo and Heathcliff and how these two foundlings are characterized as belonging to animal realms. Like Heathcliff, Nicolo is ambiguously described as the son of God and the devil of folklore traditions of superstition. Both enter the house with status indeterminacy and both stand as subrogates for a dead son. Kirchknopf also compares Heathcliff and Catherine's fervent relationship with the love-hate relationship portrayed between Elvira and Nicolo. For her, both relationships constitute an attempt to find their identities. Finally, Kirchknopf draws a parallelism between Catherine and Elvira's disposition to illness and their hysteric nature and she links it to a possible trauma in their childhood.

Maggie Allen, in "Emily Brontë and the Influence of the German Romantic Poets," focuses on Emily Brontë's facet as poet and highlights the influence that the poetry of

Goethe, Schiller, and Novalis had on her poems. Gothic elements, mystic quality, isolation of the poet, the presence of nature and the musical rhythm are common traits in both the German poets and Emily Brontë. She supports her argument by quoting Mrs. Gaskell famous remark in her biography of Charlotte Brontë that “anyone passing by the kitchen door might have seen [Emily] studying German out of an open book” (127). Allen also mentions Emily Brontë's stay at Brussels as a turning point in the writer's life and she quotes Robert K. Wallace's contention that Emily discovered “a world of cathedrals and pictures [and] learned to read the masters of French and German literature, all of which led her to producing some of the best work of her life” (165).

Although they do not explicitly aim to examine the origins of *Wuthering Heights*, all these critics offer a fresh reading of Emily Brontë's novel, hinting at some possible literary precedents of the novel. Therefore, in the present chapter, I will follow in these critics' footsteps and I will argue that *Wuthering Heights*, though fairly dissimilar from what had been written in the English literary tradition, was quite consistent with the German tradition of the *Novelle*, and, especially, with Kleist's narratives. The present chapter seeks thus to offer a detailed thematic comparison of Brontë's novel and Kleist's narratives in order to identify the common elements that keep resurfacing throughout both texts; elements that have their origin in a shared subtext, that of Rousseau's works. Specifically, I will cite *Julie, or, the New Heloise* as the novel which best epitomizes the escape from society to a natural setting where lovers find a catalytic relief and a spiritual drive to yield to Eros. Apart from this, I will also refer to Rousseau, the theorist, to enlighten some of the ideas that I am going to discuss. As regards the theoretical framework, I have chosen to follow theorists and critics such as Joseph Hillis Miller, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler since they offer a critical deconstructionist perspective cut off from impressionistic and humanistic models and centered on the subjects of hospitality and the legal question.

I will also base my analysis and my conclusions on the post-phenomenological philosophy on the notion of community theorized by Jean Luc Nancy and Maurice Blanchot. One of the most prevalent themes that appear in both Kleist's *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights* is a strong desire to escape from a corrupted civilization which thwarts the characters' more genuine feelings. To this end, these characters devise three strategies to sabotage the normative community. The first strategy is the escape from the *nomos* to

a natural setting which promotes authenticity and a kind of Christian confraternity since, as Rousseau agreed, everything that comes from nature is true (Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* 18). Another frequent strategy is the erotic and anomic implosion which a community of lovers entails. The third and last strategy is the parodic reiteration of the normative community which carries with it an implicit subversion. These strategies, as I have argued, are the last recourse to escape from the oppression of institutions, religion, moral precepts, or the condemnation of society.

4.3 Rousseauian Nature

“The Earthquake in Chile” brilliantly emblemizes the conflict between sexual instincts and social, civil and ecclesiastical law. In this story, Kleist depicts the situation of two victims of an inhuman society, Jerónimo and Josefa, who find their salvation in an idyllic nature, after an earthquake has pulled down the city, paradoxically preventing Josefa’s execution for sacrilege and Jerónimo’s attempt at suicide after having been imprisoned. Ironically, the lovers go back to hell when they decide to go to the only church which the earthquake has spared. Hillis Miller points out that the very laws that have been interrupted by the earthquake, return with more strength in the church, instigated by a Judgment Day sermon (84). This ending remembers the finale of *Manon Lescaut*: it is when Des Grieux and Manon, trying to redeem their sins, decide to reveal to the Governor that they are actually not married and ask him permission to be married by the Church that their greatest misfortunes start. We find much of this Christian confraternity in the passage where the surviving citizens reunite and share the few possessions that the earthquake has left them:

And indeed, in the midst of this horrifying time in which all the earthly possessions of men were perishing and all nature was in danger of being engulfed, the human spirit itself seemed to unfold like the fairest of flowers. In the fields, as far as the eye could see, men and women of every social station could be seen lying side by side, princes and beggars, ladies and peasant women, government officials and day labourers, friars and nuns: pitying one another, helping one another, gladly sharing anything they had saved to keep themselves alive, as if the general disaster had united all its survivors into a single family. (60)

Kleist describes this scene as “the Garden of Eden” [“*das Tal von Eden*”] (57) and the night as “a night such as only a poet might dream of” [“*die schönste Nacht..., wie nur ein Dichter davon träumen mag*”] (57). Nature acts here as an advocate for democracy, creating status inconsistency and placing all the social classes at the same level, princes and beggars, ladies and peasant women, officials and labourers, friars and nuns, “two dishes, but to one table.”³³ To a sharp reader, this plot will bring to mind Rousseau's *Julie, or, The New Heloise*, in which the purity of the love between the protagonists was of a piece with the idyllic nature of the Swiss landscape:

In the midst of these grand and superb objects, the little spot where we were standing displayed the charms of a cheerful and rural site; several brooks filtered through the rocks, and ran down the greenery in crystal trickles. Several wild fruit trees bent their heads over us; the damp and cool earth was covered with grass and flowers. Comparing so pleasant a retreat with the surrounding objects, *it seemed that this deserted place was meant to be the sanctuary of two lovers who alone had escaped nature's cataclysm.* (*Julie*, 425, emphasis added)

What is remarkable here is that Saint-Preux, the lover, compares an idyllic place in nature with a sanctuary for two lovers who, like Jerónimo and Josefa, have survived a natural disaster. This rural community constitutes then a utopian and mystified community whose discursive articulation lies in the ideological trope of the *collective* (the people, the *Volk*) for it is not only based on a transcendental communion with nature but on a spiritual union with the other. It is precisely this ideological mysticism that makes this chimerical rural community succumb under the yoke of one of the most oppressive institutions, the Church.³⁴ And yet, the moral of this tale seems to refute the general idea that Man is inherently evil and to portray the potential for human assistance and sympathy that is unleashed (Allan 123).

In “The Marquise of O,” nature plays a slightly different role, that of reliever, a catalytic agent that promotes moral relief and a sense of confidence. In this narrative,

³³ *Hamlet*, iv.iii. 27

³⁴ In *Manon Lescaut*, Prévost also makes an apology of love felt in communion with nature. After all their misfortunes in Paris, it is only when the two lovers are taken to New Orleans that they can enjoy an uncontaminated love. Paradoxically when they decide to validate their love, their greatest misfortune starts.

Kleist makes use of the Cervantine motif of the fainted woman who is raped and gets pregnant. It makes an ironic allusion to the Christian dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. When her aristocratic family learns the Marquise's condition *intéressante*, she loses the support of her parents, of whom she is financially dependent, and is tyrannically banished from the house. The Marquise's only yearning is to prevent her child, whom she considers to be the most divine of all human beings, to suffer the social stigmatization to which she is condemned. It is when she moves to her country house with her two daughters, leading a life of "perpetual cloistered seclusion" (93) and cut off from an oppressive and despotic society, when she recovers her self-confidence and assumes a Christological persona: "Her reason was strong enough to withstand her strange situation without giving way, and she submitted herself wholly to the great, sacred and inexplicable order of the world" (93). In placing the advertisement of her pregnancy in order to find the father of the child, the Marquise jeopardises her excellent relationship with her parents and expose her children to social scandal, demonstrating her moral superiority. She values her honesty and integrity more than social respectability and does not doubt to expose herself to social scorn by announcing that she does not know the father of her child (Allan 182). The Marquise assumes then the Rousseauian psychology of *laissez-moi faire*, which is experienced in natural scenery and which avoids the hollowness of conventional social opinions and values, giving reign to an instinctive self-esteem of the natural self (Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* 176).

Although nature does not play an essential role in "The Duel," the polarity between reality and appearance allows us to pair this novella together with "The Marquise of O." The main plot is that of an apparently pure woman, Littergarde, who, like the Marquise, is accused of unchastity on the basis of seemingly evidence. The dramatic point takes place when Count Rotbart, Littergarde's supposed lover, and Friedrich von Trota agree that it will be Divine Law the one which will determine Littergarde's innocence and they settle a duel as the perfect verdict. In this duel, Trota receives an apparently mortal wound whereas Rotbart dies an agonizing death due to a slight scratch, which has turned gangrenous. Appearances prove to be misleading a second time in this story when Rotbart is informed of the maid Rosalie's malicious deception of him, since she is actually the one who slept with Rotbart. Like the Marquise of O, Littergarde has to assume a Rousseauian *amour de soi*, clinging to her inner intuitive feelings that she is innocent,

notwithstanding all the indications to the contrary, external opinion and even the seemingly contrary divine verdict.

In "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo," nature is also the place where lovers seek genuine sentiment and natural values which are yet uncorrupted by a normative community. In this narrative, Kleist dramatizes the conflict between Haitian black people and their former white oppressors. The story underscores the powerful drives of love, hatred and fear when they encounter something that threatens their image of themselves. The dichotomy between society and nature is here epitomized in the infatuation between Toni, the daughter of a mulatto woman, and a white man, Gustav von der Ried, a young Swiss officer who seeks refuge in her house. Their emotional idyll constitutes the only attempt to escape from a rigid and racist community. Both lovers flirt with the idea of marrying and escaping to Switzerland, where Gustav paints an idyllic future in the banks of the Aar, surrounded by fields, gardens, meadows and vineyards (247). This idyllic description echoes Rousseau's description of a sanctuary where lovers can share conjugal felicity in *Julie, or, The New Heloise*:

Come, unique model of true lovers; come, endearing and faithful couple, and take possession of a place made to serve as sanctuary to love and innocence. Come and confirm there, before Heaven and man, the sweet bond that unites you. Come honor with the example of your virtues a land where they will be worshipped, and simple folk disposed to imitate them. May you in this peaceful place forever enjoy in the sentiments that unite you the happiness of pure souls; may Heaven there bless your chaste flame with children who are like you; may you there prolong your lives in an honorable old age, and end them finally in your children's arms; may our posterity, surveying this monument of conjugal felicity with an inner enchantment, be stirred some day to utter: This was the sanctuary of innocence; this was the abode of the two lovers. (*Julie* 163)

In "The Betrothal," this Rousseauian landscape suggests that human nature under the influence of nature can transcend the extremes of prejudice and racism.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the inhabitants of the house strongly sympathize with a wild nature. Thus, Heathcliff and Catherine construct a mystic vision of their love that cannot be identified with the Christian Heaven but the wild and free nature of *Wuthering Heights*, as it can be seen in Catherine's dream, when she claims that she prefers wandering in the

moors rather than going to Heaven. Thus, Heaven is identified with the savage nature of *Wuthering Heights*:

I dreamt, once, that I was there [...] Heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of *Wuthering Heights*; where I woke sobbing for joy (91).

When Catherine is sick she asserts that she feels like an outcast and an exile in a world where she does not belong and, in her delirium, she yearns for her savage and free childhood in the hills of *Wuthering Heights*:

Oh, I'm burning! I wish I were out of doors – I wish I were a girl again, half savage, and hardy, and free... and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed? Why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills... Open the window again wide, fasten it open! [...] (126)

Toward the end of the novel, Heathcliff sees Catherine's spirit replacing the landscape: "I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree – filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day, I am surrounded with her image!" (324). After Heathcliff's death, a boy sees "Heathcliff and a woman, yonder, under t' Nab" (336). The presence of ghosts in nature indicates the text's tendency to render nature symbolic: "Heathcliff and Cathy may be dead, but in dying they become transformed into a symbolic meaning that, projected onto nature, renders nature itself ghostly" (Homans 71).

But never is nature more present in *Wuthering Heights* than in the story of the second generation. Cathy's energy seems to decline when she is not in contact with nature, and she always urges Nelly to accompany her outside. The passage in the novel where Cathy and Linton dispute about the best way to spend a hot July day is highly relevant here. Cathy does not like Linton's idea of "lying from morning to evening on a bank of heath in the middle of the moors" (248). On the contrary, her idea of a perfect summer day is much more vigorous and energetic since she prefers to rock in "a rustling green tree, with a west wind blowing." Whereas Linton only wants "to lie in an ecstasy of peace," Cathy

needs "to sparkle and dance in a glorious jubilee" (248). Linton's idea of happiness is indeed quite close to Werther's enjoyment of nature:

When, while the lovely valley teems with vapour around me, and the meridian sun strikes the upper surface of the impenetrable foliage of my trees, and but a few stray gleams steal into the inner sanctuary, I throw myself down among the tall grass by the trickling stream; and, as I lie close to the earth, a thousand unknown plants are noticed by me. (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 2003:3)

Hence, nature, for Cathy, and even for Linton, is similar to the one that Jerónimo and Josefa enjoy after the earthquake, much closer to Rousseau's nature than the savage landscape for which her mother yearned. In *Julie, or, the New Heloise*, nature is the safest place where the lovers can relish in their love with spontaneity:

I have broken off my Letter to go for a walk in the woods that are close by our house. O my sweet friend! I took you along with me, or rather I bore you in my breast. I picked out the spots where we should wander about together; I noted the sanctuaries worthy of a pause; our hearts overflowed in advance in those delightful retreats, they added to the pleasure we tasted in being together, they in turn received a new value as the haven of two true lovers, and I marveled that I had not discovered alone the beauties that I found there with you. (*Julie*, 1997:50)

4.4 The Erotic Community

"I say the unique and supreme pleasure of love lies in the certainty of doing evil. And men and women know from birth that all pleasure is to be found in evil."

(Charles Baudelaire, *Fusées III*)

Critics had already identified a relationship between *Wuthering Heights* and *Julie*. In her essay in the book, *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* (2002), April Alliston claims that *Wuthering Heights* is a forceful rewriting of the French tradition of utopian sympathetic communities stretching back to *Julie* through *Indiana* and *Paul et Virginie* (140). Alliston goes even further by stating that Brontë revisits the same spot on the map where Julie and Saint-Preux imagine "a heterosexual utopia of sympathetic community" (141). For this critic, Brontë envisages the Yorkshire state as a

false alternative to Rousseau's patriarchal nation and places her child-lovers on Rousseau's utopian sympathetic community (141).

In *The True Story of the Novel*, Margaret Anne Doody asserts that "Eros is *lawless*" (360). In fact, all of Kleist's lovers confront law in one way or another in order to be together. Thus, Josefa never renounces her lover and she even becomes pregnant by him whereas Toni betrays her mother and her people and falls in love with the white man in whose murder she is supposed to be assisting, trying to save the stranger and to elope with him in order to marry him in Europe. Catherine, in turn, imagines a "strange *ménage à trois*" in which her relation to Edgar will supply her social self whereas her relation to Heathcliff will bring her inner joy. In other words, Catherine tries to reconcile her social duties with her inner desires (Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance* 191). Hence, although it can be argued that their love is based on a romanticized and Arcadian vision of love, we find here the intimation of alternative communities which destabilize the more normative communities which conform society.

According to Blanchot, the two beings in a community of lovers represent, without joy and without happiness, the hope of singularity which they can share with no one else because they are enclosed in their common indifference and in the death which one reveals to the other. Their union takes place precisely by not taking place and it is because of that that they form a community. The sovereignty of death characterizes this community, a death of which one does not die, a death without power effect, or achievement (Blanchot 49). The forbidden relationships between Jerónimo and Josefa, Gustav and Toni, and Heathcliff and Catherine are certainly casted under the shadow of death. Thus, Josefa, who is forced into a convent for refusing to renounce her lover, is condemned to death for fornication and sacrilege and she is going to be executed in a ceremonious way. Jerónimo is imprisoned and plans to commit suicide. Catherine is not exposed to a physical death if she marries Heathcliff but to a *social* one, as she confesses to Nelly in one of the most famous conversations in the novel that it would "degrade" her to marry Heathcliff (80). However, precisely because she yields to social constraints and sacrifices her genuine feelings by marrying Edgar, Catherine is less transgressive than Josefa and Toni, whose rebelliousness and insubordination to social institutions make them proto-anarchists and anomic characters; characters who threaten the established social order.

All these lovers' communities are what Blanchot calls "*a communauté inavouable*," i.e. an unavowable community. Society does not allow this community to utter publicly, in an institutionally sanctioned way, the vows that would seal their loves. They are even forbidden to avow in public the liaisons that could be the foundation, for them, of genuine promissory speech acts, of sincere lovers' vows (Hillis Miller *The Conflagration* 141). Therefore, the communities which take place in these two novellas are unavowable in the double sense that Blanchot elucidates. First, the unworked communities that take place in "The Earthquake in Chile" and "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo" remain secret, unable to be publicly avowed since they challenge social and moral laws. Secrecy and silence, then, surround everything which is connected with these communities. Second, these unavowable communities are not institutionally protected by any public laws or institutions. The renewal and continuation of the normative community is then blocked in the case of Josefa-Jeronimo and Gustav-Toni since, at least in their own countries, their union cannot be institutionally sanctioned and their community is not renewed through marriage and motherhood. The community is "unworked" rather than workable (Hillis Miller *The Conflagration* 145). This goes hand in hand with Doody's statement that Eros is the perpetual enemy of socioeconomic arrangements. Hence, although Eros reflects civilization, it "must always be the enemy of what is called 'civilization' or 'respectability' at any particular point" (373).

But what is that brings Heathcliff and Catherine's community closer to a subversive one? I would suggest that the answer to this question is the intimation of a potential incestuous relationship; the transcendental dimension that Catherine grants to their love; and Heathcliff's heretic profanation of Catherine's tomb. One of the most threatening aspects of the novel is the unleashed energy that surrounds the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff and that appears to take an ambiguous sexual character. The implicit eroticism that surrounds Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is indeed "a complete upheaval" (Bataille *Erotism* 219). Heathcliff's profanation of Catherine's tomb is one of his most transgressive deeds. In Christianity, profanation means being in contact with something impure but, paradoxically, it also means having access to something sacred, having access to the forbidden world. However, for the Church, this latent sacredness was simultaneously sacrilegious and diabolic (122). This is indeed a Christian paradox: "access to the sacred is Evil; simultaneously, Evil is profane" (116). But to be

in Evil and be free (since the profane world does not have the same constraints of the sacred world) is “not only the condemnation but also the reward of the guilty” (126). Thus, Heathcliff's is a transgression condemned. His strategy to bribe the sexton to pull away one side of Catherine's coffin and one side of his so that nobody will “know which is which” (288) implies a deliberate loss of self and a desire of fusion; and fusion is indeed the final aim of eroticism (129).

Heathcliff and Catherine's pseudo-incestuous relationship is a Romantic – and Byronic – legacy which situates the novel within the Gothic tradition that explores and intimates perverse sexual relations among siblings. In *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818*, Ruth Perry argues that the early relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine hints at a primitive pseudo-marriage, a Platonic union of soul mates who, although they do not engage in a sexual relationship, think themselves as an androgynous union (192). For these lovers, death is their only conceivable return to childhood and the natural freedom they had experienced in a realm of infantile sexuality. Their death functions as the inevitable catalyst which will return them to the spiritual realm that both embody.

Thus, these lovers conceive death as the final consummation of their love because “the urge towards love, pushed to its limits, is an urge toward death” (Bataille, *Erotism* 42). Whereas her love for Linton changes sexuality into tenderness, her passionate love for Heathcliff disturbs this tenderness. In that relationship death is near, “and death is the symbol of all sensuality” (Bataille *Erotism* 242). According to Diane Long Hoeveler, Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is one between equals and, by this free alliance with a nameless and illegitimate man, Catherine finds a way to escape from patriarchal values since they are beyond social norms and conventions (Hoeveler 194). Catherine and Heathcliff, who reject the Lintons' gentility and cannot find consolation in the teachings of Christianity, believe that their love can transcend death.

The erotic dimension and the emotional idyll of the lovers in the *Novellen* and in *Wuthering Heights* confer to these narratives a quasi-religious dimension since, as Bataille puts it, “all eroticism has a sacramental character” (*Erotism* 15-6). This is symbolically manifested at the end of the stories and the novel. Thus, whereas Heathcliff and Catherine are said to have acquired a spectral existence, Mr. Strömli literarily

monumentalizes Gustav and Toni by erecting two statues representing them in his garden, and Jerónimo and Josefa's transcendental love finds its sacralization in their son, Felipe, who miraculously escapes from Master Pedrillo's violent massacre and is adopted as subrogate son by Don Fernando and Doña Elvira. Both Kleist and Brontë make a ceremonial work out of the death of their protagonists and seek ritual in what Nancy calls "operative immortality" (3)³⁵. If the authority of the novelist does not account for the multiple ambiguities of the novel – as it happens in *Wuthering Heights* – then death will establish its own truth: "By erasing the author's signature, death establishes the truth of the work, which is enigma" (Barthes 30). To my mind, behind these transcendental inflations, there is a subversive energy that timidly hints at an alternative, more authentic community because, as Blanchot put it, a community of lovers is that "antisocial society or association," which, no matter whether the lovers want it or not, "has as its ultimate goal the destruction of society" (Blanchot *The Unavowable* 48).

4.5 Performative Subversion of the Law

Discussing Kleist's *Novellen* in *Topographies* (1995), Hillis Miller poses the question whether a work of literature can in fact inaugurate or establish law (83). This is a difficult question to answer but what is definitely true is that throughout their literary oeuvre, both Kleist and Brontë examine the systemic flaws of the law while they also problematize the idea of personal responsibility in a way that makes it difficult to posit judgments. The *Novellen* take place during times of extreme political or social upheaval or in the middle of natural disasters that put the characters in situations where they have to make thrilling decisions. Thus, "The Earthquake in Chile" is set during the earthquake of 1647; "The Marquise of O" takes place during war time; "St. Cecilia or The Power of Music" takes place in Aachen during the iconoclastic aftermath of the Reformation; "The Betrothal in Santo Domingo" is set during the Haitian slave revolution; and "The Foundling" starts its

³⁵ According to Nancy, community does not suppose a superior or immortal life between subjects but it is calibrated on the death of its members. However, community does not make a work out of death: "The death upon which community is calibrated does not *operate* the dead being's passage into some communal intimacy, nor does community, for its part, *operate* the transfiguration of its dead into some substance or subject – be these homeland, native soil or blood, nation [...], family, or mystical body" (Nancy, 2008:14-15).

narration with the pestilence. Why does Kleist remain concerned with social and political problems in his *Novellen*? It is arguably because after the failure of the other two strategies to achieve political escapism – the attempt of going back to an idyllic nature and the Romantic communion of lovers – he realizes that there is no way back to paradise and that the best way to subvert *nomos* is to parody it.

Kleist's work centers on the question of the law, no matter whether it is moral, civil, religious, or the law of hospitality. In "The Earthquake in Chile," the legal system is fundamentally distorted by the intervention of an omnipotent and capricious fate which is so distinctive of Greek tragedies. According to Gailus, "no author of novellas and stories has endowed chance, accident, and coincidence with as much power as has Heinrich von Kleist" (762). Thus, in this story, chance not only spoils the imposition of civil law, it also parodies it since the earthquake prevents Josefa's execution and it liberates Jerónimo from his imprisonment. It is quite significant here that the earthquake does not respect any of the institutions of the city: "The Viceroy's palace had collapsed, the law court in which sentence had been passed on her was in flames, and in the place where her father's house had stood there was now a seething lake from which reddish vapours were rising" (56). In "The Marquise of O," it is the moral law that is parodied by self-interest, sexual lust and moral hypocrisy. In this story, one of the main paradoxes results from the fact that the Marquise is raped precisely by the very man who saved her from being raped by a group of soldiers and who takes advantage of her unconscious and defenseless state to commit his outrageous crime. Moral and civic law is in this case reverted and satirized in an almost comic way.

For Hillis Miller, no story by Kleist is more dominated by legal questions than "Michael Kohlhaas" (*Topographies* 85). "Michael Kohlhaas" is Kleist's best known story as well as the longest one. The story bears strong similarities with William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) which also exposes the tyranny of government and the inherent contradictions of the law.³⁶ Kohlhaas is a wealthy and honorable man with a strong sense of justice [*Rechtgefühl*] that will turn him "into a rubber and a murderer" (114) and make

³⁶ Both Kohlhaas and Caleb Williams try to amend a wrong of justice through a useless appeal to law: "He said that this was only one fresh instance of the tyranny and perfidiousness exercised by the powerful members of the community against those who were less privileged than themselves" (220).

him “one of the most honourable as well as one of the most terrible men of his age” [“*einer der rechtschaffensten zugleich und entsetzlichsten Menschen seiner Zeit*”] (114). After having his two horses unlawfully detained and ill-treated in his journey to Dresden, he tries to present legal action: “[...] it was now his duty to the world at large to exert all his powers in securing redress for the wrongs already perpetrated and protection for his fellow citizens against such wrongs in the future” (121). This was “only one fresh instance of the tyranny and perfidiousness exercised by the powerful members of the community against those who were less privileged than themselves” (*Caleb Williams* 220). Nevertheless, legal action fails because of corruption in the administration, what Hamlet wisely called “the insolence of office.”³⁷ It is at her wife's deathbed, when we truly discern Kohlhaas' anger. Ignoring her appeal to grant forgiveness and forget about his revenge, he coldly exclaims: “May God never forgive me as I forgive the Junker” [“*so möge mir Gott nie vergeben, wie ich dem Junker vergebe!*”] (137). Thus, Kohlhaas decides to take the law into his own hands and he hires an armed band and pursues Junker von Tronka, burns down his castle and part of Wittenberg. During his interview with Martin Luther, Kohlhaas defends himself stating: “I call that man an outcast [*verstoßen*] [...] who is denied the protection of the law! [...] Whoever withholds it from me drives me out into the wilderness among savages [*den Wilden der Einöde*]” (152). Caleb Williams voices the same frustration: “Pursued by a train of ill fortune, I could no longer consider myself as a member of society. I was a solitary being cut off from the expectation of sympathy, kindness and the good will of mankind” (247). Kleist's greatest achievement in this story consists indeed in presenting Kohlhaas as a complex man driven by complex causes: his desire for justice and his lust for vengeance (Allan 58).

Kohlhaas here is claiming “that he has been put back into a state of nature” and, therefore he is justified in originating a new social contract (Hillis Miller, *Topographies* 89). For Kohlhaas, as for Kleist, imperfection is “inherent in the fragile order of the world” [*die gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt*] so he resorts to the creation of a new world order. He declares himself the leader of a revolutionary new government with its own laws and institutions. However, Hillis Miller argues, this revolutionary attempt constitutes an infelicitous performative since the context and the circumstances are not

³⁷ *Hamlet*, III.i. 74.

the appropriate ones and his proclamation is not approved by a new contract and a new constitution (92). "Michael Kohlhaas" proves then the failure of the law since an affront to the law is repaired by an affront to justice (103). Hence, as opposed to the rationalist idea that human happiness can only be achieved through the development of the laws, Kleist paradoxically shows that these very laws separate us from our natural and primitive state: "[...] of what use are talents and sentiments in the corrupt wilderness of human society?" (*Caleb Williams* 325). This novella establishes then the unavailability and the failure of law since, quite ironically, an affront to the law tries to be repaired by violent and numerous affronts to justice. Kleist brilliantly suggests here that the operation of the legal system is undermined by the power interest and the selfishness of those who bestow justice. This is what Caleb Williams calls "the remorseless fangs of the law" (273). Both Kleist and Godwin inspect the intrinsic flaws of bureaucratic law, problematizing the idea of personal responsibility in a way that makes it difficult to blame someone unequivocally. Therefore, it is not surprising that critics have found it impossible to pass judgement on Kohlhaas (Allan 55).

"St. Cecilia or The Power of Music" is structurally underpinned by an uncanny event. In this *Novelle*, four brothers, "inflamed by misguided enthusiasm" (217), decide to carry out an iconoclastic riot in the convent of St. Cecilia. But, as soon as the music began, the brothers "with inexpressibly deep and ever greater emotion" (222-3), start to preach fanatically in a state of religious madness. While the crowd is barely moved by the music, the four brothers are so enthused that, even when the building is empty, they remain "still lying, with folded hands, kissing the ground with their breasts and brows, prostrated in ardent adoration before the altar, as if they had been turned to stone!" (223). The brothers forget about the practical world of business and commerce which concerns the citizens of Aachen and are engrossed in a world of spiritual contemplation. When the administrator of the convent asks them to leave, they ignore him and they have to be carried away by their mates "as if in trace" [*auf träumerische Weise*] (224). They are consigned to a lunatic asylum where they remain for the rest of their lives. The ironic twist in this story lies in the fact that the four brothers' affront to religious law turns them into religious fanatics, automatons who repeat the same chant every night at twelve o'clock. But there is further irony in this novella since, in their insanity, the brothers live a peaceful existence of religious contemplation and repetitive intonation. Nevertheless, on the other side,

insanity, whether it is provoked by the power of music or by St. Cecilia herself, thwarts the brothers of all capacity of agency and free will. The fact that the performance of sublime music continues even after the Church has been secularized suggests that music has power to inspire and enthrall human beings to the point that it offers a glimpse of the Divine (Allan 214).

Thematically, no narrative is more violent and more analogous to *Wuthering Heights* than "The Foundling." This filial tale starts its narration where "The Earthquake in Chile" finishes it: with a father who, after the death of his son, adopts another one in his place. Like Mr. Earnshaw, Piachi finds an orphan, Nicolo, in a business journey. Both Nicolo and Heathcliff have an ambiguous nature as both fiends and angels. Thus, when Piachi asks the doctors if he was allowed to take Nicolo, they answer that he is "the son of God" and that nobody would miss him. Just after that, Piachi's legitimate son, Paolo, dies due to his contracting Nicolo's illness. Nicolo, like Heathcliff, is described as having a dark physiognomy and a "depraved" heart [*verwildert*]. He is also depicted as cracking and eating nuts, a characteristic associated with the devil in folklore traditions of superstitions (Kirchknopf 36). Like Heathcliff again, Nicolo, who has an interloper status, usurps the place of the legitimate son in the family – we cannot forget that Heathcliff is named after a dead brother of Catherine – and he pollutes the well-ordered and happy existence of the wealthy Roman Piachi. We can see that Nicolo, like Heathcliff, tries to accommodate to the normative community by complying with a socially accepted marriage and leaving behind his illicit relationship with Xaviera Tartini, the bishop's concubine. Besides, he is introduced in the familiar business, and, subsequently, he becomes the legal heir of all of Piachi's possessions. His marriage with Elvira's niece, his incorporation into the labour market and the inheritance of Piachi's possessions are performative acts within the judicial and legal frame. The first one turns him into husband, the second into a worker and the third into a legal heir, titles that sustain the family and the two basic pillars upon which the traditional community maintains itself, patrimony and matrimony.

In both narratives, there is a daring transgression of the laws of hospitality and legal inheritance. Both Nicolo and Heathcliff constitute two alterity figures which threaten and destabilize the organic community of blood, birth, social status and genealogy of the family. They are the encroaching satellites of the family system, the domestic intruders who "shake up the threatening dogmatism of the paternal logos: the being that is, and the

non-being that is not" (Derrida *Of Hospitality* 5). Nicolo is charitably admitted at the house as a subrogate son but, like Heathcliff, he ends up as a legitimate owner, usurping not only Piachi's property but also his wife, the virtuous Elvira, "a deed of unutterable vileness" (283) ["*die abscheulichste Tat, die je verübt worden ist*"]. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida argues that it is the master of the house, the chief guardian, the one who lays down the laws of hospitality (Derrida 149). Absolute hospitality requires then that the master of the house opens up his home and gives place to the outsider, to the foreigner or to the absolute other without asking anything from them (Derrida 25).

According to Derrida, what distinguishes a guest from a parasite is the law. For a newcomer to be received as a guest, he has to be submitted to a limiting authority. Therefore, both Nicolo and Heathcliff have been welcomed as absolute and unknown others who have acquired the rights of guests. Their obligations are the entrance into the business market in the case of Nicolo, their respective marriages with Xaviera and Isabella, and the obedience to the rules of legal inheritance. However, these two guests cannot help their satanic nature and they end up biting the hand that feeds them, which is one of the greatest transgressions of hospitality. Both guests have encroached on their host's authority and, consequently, they have become hostile subjects whereas the hosts, both Hindley and Piachi, have become their hostages (Derrida *Of Hospitality* 53). They prove to exert an exceptional mastery of the law of inheritance. Thus, the government issues a decree giving Piachi's property to his foster son and Nicolo knows how to take advantage from this: "he suddenly stood up and declared that it was for Piachi to leave the house, for he, Nicolo, was now its owner by deed of gift and he would defend his title to it against all comers" (285). Similarly, Heathcliff tries to perpetuate both his genealogy and his landed property by marrying Isabella Linton, having a son with her and arranging the marriage of this son to Catherine Linton, so that the whole property of the two families is controlled by him:

[...] my son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till I was certain of being his successor. Besides, he's *mine*, and I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendant fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children to till their fathers' lands for wages" (208).

We are facing what Judith Butler calls a "performative subversion" of decisive speech acts for the traditional community (Butler *Gender* 128). Ironically, the destruction of this

traditional, operative community is performed through the parodic usurpation of the normative conventions that govern it.

Both Nicolo and Heathcliff are two *abjects* in Kristeva's terminology; that "which does not respect borders, positions, rules," that which "disturbs identity, system, order" (Kristeva 4). They destabilize the operative normative community, not standing out as completely different but challenging it from within, performing what Judith Butler (borrowing from Gayatri Spivak), would call "an enabling violation" since acts of disobedience must always take place *within* law because, although subjects are always implicated in these relationships of power they are also enabled by them, not merely subordinated to the law (Butler *Bodies* 79). In "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Fredric Jameson claims that the imitation that mocks the idea of an original is typical of pastiche rather than parody:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic. Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost it humor.³⁸

Therefore, what Nicolo and Heathcliff are doing is a parody of the social contracts which sustain society, but the result is neither humoristic nor satirical, it is subversive and disruptive. They would be then the faultlines which throw into disarray the family system and prove the inauthenticity of the three fundamental pillars that sustain the endurance of the traditional community: matrimony, patrimony and genealogy, reminding the social classes of their own usurpatory origin and representing the ethnic otherness which perturbs the purity of lineage and stresses the porosity between the different social classes, readjusting the social system.³⁹ Both Kleist and Brontë portray the strenghts and flaws of

³⁸ Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." Web. 10 March 2018.

http://art.ucsc.edu/sites/default/files/Jameson_Postmodernism_and_Consumer_Society.pdf

³⁹ In his *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (1820), Hegel already establishes the relation between family and society and delineates the transition from one state to the other:

those characters with whom we tend to sympathize. Thus, Koholhaas, who at the beginning fights for justice, ends up seeking retaliation and even Luther cannot absolve him.

The law of hospitality is also strongly violated in "The Beggarwoman of Locarno." This is perhaps the most dissimilar of Kleist's *Novellen*. In this story, the beggarwoman is dead: to begin with.⁴⁰ The entire narrative is fabricated upon the patterns of a Gothic novel since it includes an ancient castle in Northern Italy – like "The Marquise of O" –, a nobleman, and, of course, a ghost. Reeves and Luke argue that this ghost-story is "a manipulative masterpiece of the uncanny genre" (32). The story is indeed quite simple: a Marquis coarsely orders an old beggarwoman to cross the room to lie down again behind the stove. The beggarwoman slips and falls down, subsequently dying. Years later, in the Marquis' old castle, something "invisible to the eye" [*das dem Blick unsichtbar gewesen*] (214) seems to reproduce the noise of the old woman's walk in the room. The daily repetition of this event causes the Marquis' insanity and his death when he tries to burn down the whole castle. This uncanny repetition of the noise turns the characters, especially the Marquis, into a manic with a Freudian compulsion to repeat [*"Wiederholungszwang"*]. The Marquis' free will is indeed totally restrained by a remorseless obsession which directs all his actions and ends up causing his own immolation.

Discussing hospitality to death, Derrida asserts that ghosts return to where they have been expelled from (Derrida *Of Hospitality* 152). For the critic, there is no hospitality without memory since "a memory which does not recall the dead person and mortality would be no memory" (144). Both the beggarwoman and Catherine are foreigners who have died in a foreign place. The former has been buried without a visible grave, whereas the second has not been buried at home so she cannot be mourned by her relatives in

The expansion of the family, as its transition into a new principle, is in existence [*Existenz*] sometimes its peaceful expansion until it becomes a people, i.e. a nation, which thus has a common natural origin, or sometimes the coming together of scattered groups of families under the influence of an overlord's power or as a result of a voluntary association produced by the tie of needs and the reciprocity of their satisfaction. (180)

⁴⁰ This is a hint at Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, which starts with the ambiguous words, "Marley was dead: to begin with."

mourning, especially by Heathcliff. The ghosts of both Catherine and the anonymous beggarwoman are unwelcomed as guests to their former homes, which is a strong violation of hospitality. Lockwood – a guest himself who has not been received according to the rules of hospitality – violently prohibits the ghost of Catherine to enter her own bedroom, whereas the Marquis sets the castle on fire in order to get rid of this uncomfortable revenant. These phantoms are “often rebuked, yet always back returning,” not letting their *hostis* forget them since a ghost never dies, it remains in what the French philosopher, Maurice Blanchot, calls *l'espace littéraire*, a silent space that cannot be accessible by hermeneutics. The inhabitants of *Wuthering Heights* and Kleist's Marquis are well aware of this, and the theme of haunting *haunts* the characters consciousness throughout the novel.

4.6 Conclusion

After this analysis, I would like to go back to Hillis Miller's question whether literature can or cannot be law-making. That is a challenging question to answer but what we can definitely assert is that literature can in fact bring insights into the law that do more than reflect a legal situation. Kleist's *Novellen* and Brontë's novel have proved how literature can subvert the legal system as well as the law of hospitality and disclose their own inherent contradictions. Entrapped in a callous reality, the characters in Kleist's *Novellen* and in *Wuthering Heights* undertake a losing battle against society, resorting to three strategies to escape from the normative community: a Rousseauian communion with nature like the one which Julie and Saint-Preux form in *Julie*; an erotic and suicidal implosion; and a parodic reiteration of legal, moral, and religious law in order to reveal its intrinsic flaws. Their struggle is doomed from the beginning but in spite of that – or maybe because of that – we sympathize with them. Although they might not succeed in overcoming society, we cannot deny the fact there is heroic dignity and self-respect in their struggle. To sum up, in both Kleist's *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights*, the systems of power and authority are so complex and intertwined that we find it difficult to posit guilt or responsibility. Although – as opposed to Kleist – Brontë did not aim to expose the flaws of the system, she does inevitably portray what occurs when the status quo is reverted.

Chapter 5

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

“I can tell myself that repugnance and horror are the mainsprings of my desire, that such desire is only aroused as long as its object causes a chasm no less deep than death to yawn with me, and that this desire originates in its opposite, horror.”

(Gerges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, 59)

5.1 Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to analyze how *Wuthering Heights* appropriates Gothic motifs to explore questions of fragmented and contaminated genealogies, foundlings, revenge, subrogation, violence, insanity, the supernatural and historical/domestic compulsions. To this purpose, I will use the novel by Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (1796), as a core text. *The Monk* was indeed a highly popular Gothic text since its publication, and it epitomizes the characteristics of Gothic literature, focusing on questions of identity and the transgression of social and moral taboos. Indeed, like *Wuthering Heights*, *The Monk* was also accused of being morally unacceptable. Thus, in *The Criminal Review* of February 1797, Coleridge says that “[t]he temptations of Ambrosio are described with a libidinous

minuteness... The shameful harlotry of Matilda, and the trembling innocence of Antonia, are seized with equal avidity, as vehicles of the most voluptuous images.” He proscribes the novel from young and corruptible people since it is a “poison for youth and a provocative for the debauchee.”

Coleridge even asserts that if a parent saw the novel in “the hands of a son or daughter, he might reasonably turn pale” and concludes that *The Monk* “certainly possesses much real merit, in addition to its meretricious attractions. Nor it must be forgotten that the author is a man of rank and fortune. – Yes! The author of the Monk signs himself a LEGISLATOR! – We stare and tremble” (qtd. Ellis 91). Other critics also agreed with Coleridge in the fact that the novel was inappropriate for young readers. In September 1796, an Irish review, *The Flapper*, asserted that the novel contained passages which were “plainly and unequivocally immoral” and which produced “scenes of the most wanton and immodest nature, described in terms scarcely decent.” In August 1797, *The Monthly Review* determined that obscenity “pervades and deforms the whole organization of this novel, which must ever blast, in a moral view, the *fair* fame that, in point of ability, it would have gained for the author; and which renders the work totally unfit for general circulation” (qtd. Ellis 109).

5.2 Delimitation of the Context

The Marquis de Sade was right in placing *The Monk* within the context of the French Revolution:

Let us concur that this kind of fiction, whatever one may think of it, is assuredly not without merit: 'twas the inevitable result of the revolutionary shocks which all Europe has suffered... [T]o compose works of interest, one had to call upon the aid of hell itself, and to find in the world of make-believe things wherewith one was fully familiar merely by delving into man's daily life in this age of iron.⁴¹

Lewis had been in Paris in 1791, at a time when revolutionary protesters were using images of extreme sexual violence to rebel against the nobility and the Church.

⁴¹ Marquis de Sade, “Reflections on the Novel” (“Idée sur les romans”), in *The 120 Days of Sodom*. Trans. Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver. London: Arrow. 1999. 86-116.

Prostitution, orgies, sodomy, pederasty, and rape were considered the everyday debauches of those in power and therefore became part of the rhetoric of revolt (Groom VIII). The horror of *The Monk* dramatizes then the hostility between the old order and the revolution. Earlier Gothic novels such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) or Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* were deeply concerned with legality, inheritance, and the restoration of stability.

In the 1790s, this stability was challenged by the crash of state institutions and final regicide in France (Groom VIII). In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), the conservative Edmund Burke urged his countrymen to value their heritage as if it were a rich old mansion: "It has a pedigree and illustrating ancestors. It has its bearings and its ensigns armorial. It has its gallery of portraits; its monumental inscriptions; its records, evidences, and titles" (Burke 30) and he warned them that "Rage and phrenzy will pull down more in half an hour, than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in a hundred years" (Burke 147). Burke's fears of the Revolution were in fact grounded on the threat of a new form of tyranny, that of an infuriated democracy, fuelled by a new sense of infallibility (Claeys 13). Burke's opinion of human nature was in fact skeptical and pessimistic. For him, the passions developed from weakness to vice and individual moral corruption finally turned into social unhappiness (Claeys 20). In *The Monk*, revolutionary forces are embodied in the characters of Ambrosio and Matilda; in the violent mob that throws itself against the Prioress; in the pornographic violence which pervades the novel; and in the polyphony of voices that appear in the novel. Lewis' novel is indeed very much an heir of Burke's controversy.

In his groundbreaking *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel*, Ian Duncan contends that the greatest achievement of British prose fiction was not "the novel," but "the romance" (Duncan 3). This explains the strong persistence of oral and popular forms in British literature. In fact, it was the ambition to have a national literature that motivated the revival of the romance, which was the major aesthetic initiative of the cultural movement that took place between 1750 and 1830, concluding in what has been called "the invention of tradition" (Duncan 4). The nineteenth-century British novel of Scott, Dickens, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy has traces of fairy-tales or allegories, especially if it is compared with Flaubert, Stendhal or Turgenev. This is not, however, a

sign of archaism, but “its living tissue of ethical, spiritual and ideological contention: the distinctive garment of its modernity” (Duncan 5).

In the first half of the eighteenth century, romance meant any prose fiction which was written in the vernacular language and the French *romans héroïques* or *romans à longue haleine* full of dilemmas of love and honour (Duncan 10). In his dictionary, Johnson defined romance as “a military fable of the middle ages; a tale of wild adventure in war and love;” but also “a lie; a fiction” (qtd. Duncan 10). In his “Essay on Romance,” Scott describes romance as “a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvelous and uncommon incidents” (qtd. Duncan 10). According to Duncan, “the rise of the novel” in eighteenth-century England was an attempt to overthrow an archaic fiction called “romance” (Duncan 11). In discussions of eighteenth-century fiction, the term “Gothic romance” is more used than “Gothic novel” since it stresses “the link between medieval romances, the romantic narratives of love, chivalry and adventure, that were imported from France from the late seventeenth century onwards, and the tales that in the later eighteenth century were classified as ‘Gothic’” (Botting 24).

In the eighteenth century, neo-classical criticism deplored romances – and novels – on the account that they were “examples of childish fancy, trivial and incredible tales of ignorance and superstition (Botting 27). The insistence on the distinction between romances and novels responds to the need of teaching readers proper moral and rational understanding (28). In *The Progress of Romance* (1785), Clara Reeve, a writer of Gothic romances, outlined the definition of romance and novel:

The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things. – The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened or is likely to happen. – The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves; and the perfection of it, is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until we are affected by the joys or distresses, of the persons in the story, as if they were our own. (Reeve 111)

Fiction becomes then distinctly ideological. Able to represent persuasively real events and characters, “all narratives were acknowledged, if only at times tacitly, to possess the

capacity to order or subvert manners, morals and perceptions” (Botting 30). Therefore, in the 1790s, the Gothic romance becomes the dominant literary genre; a genre that is completely alienated from “real life and manners, and the time in which it is written” (30). Thus, to many early critics, Gothic novels “were the unlicensed indulgence of an amoral imagination that was a socially subversive force” (Kilgour 7). Their transgressive rebellion against the social order made it more than threatening. Hence, at the conclusion of Charlotte Lennox’s novel, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*, romances are considered dangerous and improper because “they encourage women away from a proper (benevolent and decorous) femininity” (Hammond and Regan 152). By indentifying themselves with romance heroines, female readers learn the vices and follies of these romance heroines: “The re-feminization of Arabella herself by the Doctor’s arguments, the now undeceived heroine is successfully returned to the social and epistemological fold of marriage and real life” (Hammond and Regan 152). According to McKeon, from Dante on, there is an increasing fear that women’s morals are corrupted by improper romances, and this fact is an evidence “less of the rise of the reading public than of the persistence of anxiety about women” (McKeon 52).

The words “Gothic” and “romance” suggested a past that was alien: “a post-classical but pre-modern European culture, problematically discontinuous with the post-revolutionary epoch of British modernity” (Duncan 21). The Gothic suggests a nostalgia for idealized medieval world; a world of organic wholeness in which individuals were part of the “body politic” and essentially bound by symbolic ties, like the family, society and the world around them. This view of the past contrasts with a modern bourgeois society which is made up of “atomistic possessive individuals, who have no essential relation to each other” (Kilgour 11). It designates a fragmented historical origin, a cultural heritage which has become threateningly bizarre. Eighteenth-century Gothic romances have an obsession with “fragmented and contaminated genealogies,” usurped patrimonies, incest, disappearances, psychological repressions, decayed settings such as castles and monasteries, in the aesthetic effects of the sublime and the *unheimlich* (Duncan 23). The fragmentation and estrangement of the Gothic represents a modern and alienated world made up of isolated individuals and suggests “the hope of recovering a lost organic community” (Kilgour 15). The Gothic novel describes then “the malign equation

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

between an origin we have lost and an alien force that invades our borders, haunts our mansions, possesses our souls” (Duncan 23).

In these novels, aristocratic power turns despotic and tends to provoke popular violence, as declarations of individual passions. However, this rebellion is also transported to the domestic setting. The historical myth is translated onto the field of private relations in these novels. The hidden site of outlaw political forces is released from historical pressure, where they take the form of private passions. Incest, for instance, suggests an anomalous desire (a violation of natural familial ties) that opposes and subverts all social norms (Kilgour 12). The Gothic is in fact a reaction against the political, social, scientific, industrial, and epistemological changes and revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which caused the rise of the middle class (Kilgour 11). The political characters that we find in Gothic novels are above all sexual, “figures of a family romance, of a demonology of private life” (Duncan 25). Gothic fiction raises then historical contingency “in order to dramatize its reduction under persistent forms of sexual and familial identity” (26). Political relations are then the result of this psychosexual formation, rather than the consequence of external forces. Thus, politics, religion, economic and social relations might occur in Gothic novels but they are the local effects of a perverted sexuality (27).

The second part of the eighteenth-century is characterized by the development of the feminine subjectivity present in romance. This growth takes place through the *Bildungsroman* which appeared after Richardson and whose main exponent is Burney. At the end of the century, the romance consolidates itself with Ann Radcliffe. This is in fact the first English prose fiction which is called “romance” with a certain generic purpose, distinguishing itself from the more mimetic novel (Duncan 13). Thus, Radcliffe bestows sensibility upon the romance. For Duncan,

The Gothic setting of Radcliffe’s fiction makes “history” visible, but as an alien dimension of power and terror, enclosing and threatening private life *at the same time as it is produced by it* in a dualistic structure of sexual identities that transcends historical occasion. (Duncan 13)

The romance then tends to reiterate its status as a form which is totally alienated from historicity, in the *topos* of the domestic arcadia. In the Waverley novels, however, Scott

represents the historical development of the modern nation in correlation with the sentimental development of the individual: there is a metaphoric equivalence between both processes (Duncan 15). Whereas Scott had historicized romance reproducing the difference from modern life, Dickens would get rid of this historical burden in order to make it ontological and individual. Dickens learnt from Scott the narrative techniques of a polyphonic representation of a social reality, involving a dialogical interaction of genres and styles and mingling the real world with its romance transfiguration (Duncan 15). The reason why it is so difficult to draw a distinction between Gothic fiction and historical fiction is that “Gothic itself seems to have *been* a mode of history, a way of perceiving an obscure past and interpreting it” (Punter 52). Thus, at the end of the eighteenth century, several kinds of new fiction challenged the realist tradition, but what they all had in common was “a drive to come to terms with the barbaric, with those realms excluded from the Augustan synthesis, and the primary focus of that drive was the past itself” (Punter 52).

In *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction*, Joseph Andriano claims that Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* is

one of the most notorious minor novels in English literature: notorious for its lurid scenes of rape, necrophilia, and torture; minor for its melodramatics, histrionics, bombastics, its inconsistencies, in character and its awkward double plot. The novel is more important historically than artistically – more an extravagant curiosity than a literary masterpiece. (Andriano 31)

I cannot agree with this unfair contention since *The Monk*, together with *Melmoth the Wanderer*, represents the indisputable epitome of Gothic literature. Lord Byron, who was captivated by the character of Matilda, wrote to Thomas Medwin that he considered it as one of the best novels in any language, not excepting the German: “It only wanted one thing, as I told Lewis, to have rendered it perfect. He should have made the daemon really in love with Ambrosio: this would have given it a human interest” (qtd. Groom 30). Frank asserted that “Lewis advanced the psychological excitement inherent in Gothic villainy and exposed the reader to the torn mind and soul of this strange and terrible creature” (Frank 32). In 1797, Coleridge says of *The Monk* that it was “the offspring of no common genius” and of Matilda that she was “the author’s masterpiece.” For him, the novel “discovers an imagination rich, powerful, and fervid” although there were also serious

“errors and defects” such as the explicit descriptions of sexual luxury. The Marquis de Sade in 1800 stated that Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* was “superior in all respects to the strange flights of Mrs. Radcliffe’s brilliant imagination.”

Like Emily Brontë, Matthew Gregory Lewis was also outside social and literary circles. He was acquainted with Byron and Scott who, although they admired him, found Lewis peculiar and tedious. Indeed, Byron, in his characteristic frank style, said of him: “Lewis was a good man, a clever man, but a bore, a damned bore” (qtd. Kiely 99). The publication of *The Monk* in 1796 resulted in such an uproar that Monk Lewis, as he was subsequently called, was very much astonished. Kiely says of him that “[o]ne has the impression from his letters that wherever he was and whatever he was doing, he felt an outsider and would have preferred to be somewhere else, doing something different” (99). Lewis’ familiarity with German literature made a strong influence on *The Monk*, which came to be associated with “Germanness” (Gamer 77). Indeed, Lewis was a skillful translator of German and he read the works of Goethe, Schiller, and C.M. Wieland, and was acquainted with the terror-fiction which became really famous in Germany in the 1790s (Punter 74)⁴². But not only was Lewis influenced by German fiction, *The Monk*’s influence can also be found in some works by German authors such as Charlotte Dacre’s novels; E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Die Elixiere des Deufels* [*The Devil’s Elixir*] (1815-16); and G.W.M. Reynolds and T.P. Prest’s novels (Punter 64).

However, Punter asserts that, although *The Monk* is undoubtedly influenced by German literature in terms of the detailed descriptions of violence and lust, it lacks the radical content of the German terror-novel (66). These detailed descriptions made *The Monk* a troubling book which was continuously censored since the time it was written. It leaves on the reader an unnerving sense of repulsion and, at the same time, a sense of fascination. Like the German novels, *The Monk* is extremely transgressive: it does include descriptions of sexual activity, lust and violence which violate social rules and regulations (Punter 141). In fact, Lewis brilliantly portrays a character in extreme circumstances, an

⁴² Indeed, this is not a superfluous remark. Lewis’ acquaintance with German literature justifies my choice of Kleist’s *Novellen* as core texts for *Wuthering Heights*. Although, as I stated in the chapter on Kleist, there is no evidence that Emily Brontë read Kleist’s works, there is a genealogical connection between both authors; a connection which is sustained by Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* as an intermediary text.

institutional and exemplary man who suddenly finds himself at war with laws and conventions. The end of the eighteenth century was a period politically unstable and chaotic in which fears of invasion from abroad generated domestic unrest. Thus, fiction started to disengage itself from domestic and quotidian life in favour of geographically and historically foreign locations and actions (Punter 61). Leslie Fiedler defines the Gothic as “an attempt to redeem ‘the improbable and marvelous’” (135), the imaginative detours which Richardson had banished from his fiction: “[i]t was in short, an antirealist protest, a rebellion of the imagination against confining fiction to an analysis of contemporary manners and modes” (Fiedler 135). Lewis, like Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe, was an anti-realist writer who rejected verisimilitude in favor of the “improbable possible.” In fact, the poetic power of his narrations and the recurrent metafictional comments produce a literary style which is quite extricated from realist and domestic fiction but which, nevertheless, bears a strong symbolic relation to it. In an age when “everything seemed to have been done,” Lewis’ secret target was *épater le bourgeois*, that is, to shock the bourgeois (Fiedler 135); and he, like Emily Brontë, really achieved this end.

As I have stated before, nineteenth-century historians agreed on the fact that the Gothic was the most infamous genre. In his *Novels and Novelists*, J. Cordy Jeaffreson, claims that the novel in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century “was perhaps in a more unhealthy state that it had ever been since it had ceased to offend with obscenity” (qtd. Rena-Dozier 759). Cross, in *The Development of the English Novel*, claims that the novel “became in the closing years of the eighteenth century the literature of crime, insanity, and the nightmare” (qtd. Rena-Dozier 759). These critics also agree that domestic fiction saved the novel from this “unhealthy state.” I would like to stress that the distinction between domestic and Gothic novels is rather superfluous and unnatural. In *The True Story of the Novel*, Doody asserts that one way of looking at prose fiction is to assume that before the eighteenth century it was masculine and heroic whereas in the nineteenth century it was domestic and feminine, and she refers to “the Feminization of the Novel.” However, it was Nancy Armstrong, in her groundbreaking, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: a Political History of the Novel*, the scholar who gave consensus to this term.

Critics have extrapolated this idea to the distinction between “Gothic” and “domestic” fiction and they have analyzed the Gothic as marked by a proliferation of narrative frames

and polyphony of voices, whereas the domestic is marked by an omniscient narrator and is related to civilization, culture, and the feminine (Rena-Dozier 758). This distinction, Rena-Dozier asserts, has been quite useful to the teleology of the novel in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, *Wuthering Heights* carefully deconstructs this opposition between domestic and Gothic novels by demonstrating how the domestic is predicated on acts of violence (Rena-Dozier 760). As Rena-Dozier puts it, *Wuthering Heights* “is acutely critical of literary history, in that it embodies the instability of nineteenth-century literary history’s division between Gothic and domestic novels” (Rena-Dozier 760). For this critic, the reason why *Wuthering Heights* constitutes a frustration for critics is that “it poses a significant threat to the triumphalist teleology of the nineteenth-century history of the novel” (Rena-Dozier 760). In Brontë’s novel there is confusion between Gothic and domestic; a confusion that critics find disturbing and which leaves them with an alarming sense of disorientation. Emily Brontë’s main accomplishment is then to put the domestic at the service of the Gothic.

Nonetheless, Emily Brontë is not a pioneer in the deconstruction of this artificial distinction. In both *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, the domesticity of the house is frequently menaced by acts of violence; violence of the patron upon his maid-servant, of a maid-servant upon another maid-servant, of a father upon his daughter; of a suitor upon his beloved, etc. Similarly, in Dickens’ works, which have been considered as exemplars of realist fiction, elements of the Gothic persist, even if Dickens wishes to distance himself from this genre.⁴³ The Gothic is indeed palpating in these seemingly “domestic novels.” The artificiality of this dichotomy is also exposed in one of the most representative Gothic novels of the nineteenth-century, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Maturin uses domestic realism as the source of Gothic horror. In this novel, the pressure of trivial domestic circumstances is more influential than any devil and constitutes a better temptation to crime (Baldick xviii). Indeed, the most horrid Gothic episodes take place in a “realist” setting, like that of the lovers whose starvation drives them to cannibalism, or the family in the “Tale of Guzman’s Family,” in which it is a family inheritance what ruins the novel’s main characters: Stanton, Monçada, Immalae, and Elinor, who, like Richardson’s

⁴³ Think for example of the ghostly Miss Havisham, whom Dickens describes as “the witch of the place,” always in her wedding dress and carrying out her revenge upon men through her niece, Stella.

heroine, Clarissa, are imprisoned by their mercenary relatives. Thus, the inheritance plot so common in the so-called “realist” fiction is put at the service of the Gothic here.

Actually, the status of the novel at this time was uncertain. In his *Eulogy of Richardson* (*Éloge de Richardson*) in 1792, Diderot argues that novels have been dismissed as frivolous and immoral, relegated to the bottom of the literary hierarchy and dismissed. However, Richardson’s novels offer a portrayal of the real world, a vision of human experience, and a source of knowledge and moral improvement (Goulbourne X):

*Par un roman, on a entendu jusqu’à ce jour un tissu d’événements chimériques et frivoles, dont la lecture était dangereuse pour le goût et pour les mœurs. Je voudrais bien qu’on trouvât un autre nom pour les ouvrages de Richardson, qui élèvent l’esprit, qui touchent l’âme, qui respirent partout l’amour du bien, et qu’on appelle aussi des romans.*⁴⁴

In *Fraser’s* (1832), Carlyle had said that “in place of the wholly dead modern Epic,” we have “the partially living modern Novel.”⁴⁵ As Tillotson puts it in *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, “[i]t was difficult for critics to keep pace, and it is not surprising that they did not get very far in establishing critical standards; they had very little tradition to guide them” (Tillotson 16). A century after Carlyle, in 1927, Virginia Woolf wrote:

If fiction is [...] in difficulties, it may be because nobody grasps her firmly and defines her severely. She has had no rules drawn up for her, very little thinking done on her behalf. And though rules may be wrong and must be broken, they have this advantage—they confer dignity and order upon their subject; they admit her to a place in civilized society; they prove that she is worthy of consideration. (qtd. Tillotson 16-7).

Therefore, I think it necessary to point out that my use of the term “Gothic” is not a rigid and prescriptive conception but a flexible and dynamic one. In fact, I am using the term “Gothic” in this chapter as a tentative and generic category which includes texts, such as Sir Walter Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor*, William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*

⁴⁴ *Éloge de Richardson*, Diderot, 1762. Web. 22 January 2018.

<http://www.maremurex.net/ElogeRicha.html>

⁴⁵ “Biography,” in *Fraser’s* (1832), collected 1839.

or Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, which have *not* been conventionally called "Gothic" by critics, but which have been influenced by the Gothic – with their fascination for Otherness, transgression, decay, crime.⁴⁶ Thus, I will use the term Gothic as an open and inclusive "dialectical articulation" (Adorno) of particular formal, thematic or ideological motifs of the conventional Gothic articulation. As Cannon Schmitt puts it,

the Gothic continues to provide one of the means to represent in fiction not only new elements of the social and political world but also what were conceived of as previously hidden or inaccessible realities, chief among them psychological interiority, sexual deviance, and scientific discoveries (Schmitt 305).

Finally, I will also refer several times to Diderot's *La Religieuse*, which was published in the same year as *The Monk*.⁴⁷ Although a highly sentimental novel, *La Religieuse* has been considered as "a forerunner of the Gothic novel with its depictions of hideous suffering," and to Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, which is probably the epitome of Gothic literature (Goulbourne xxviii).

5.3 Formal Motifs

5.3.1 The Story-within-the-Story: Proliferation of Narrative Frames

One of the most salient Gothic conventionalisms that appears in both *The Monk* and *Wuthering Heights* is that of the proliferation of narrative frames and the repetition of

⁴⁶ David Punter and Glennis Byron *do* include *Caleb Williams* together with *St Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799) within their compendium, *The Gothic* (2004). They highlight its ominous atmosphere of religious terror and the pervasiveness of guilt and persecution as examples of Gothic psychology (Punter and Byron 120). These critics also point out that, despite his reputation as a realist writer, Scott's interest in the feudal past, family history, and inheritance, and his tendency to romanticize the past necessarily places him into the field of the Gothic, which was highly popular at the time that he wrote (Punter and Byron 164).

⁴⁷ Like *The Monk* and *Wuthering Heights*, *La Religieuse* also met with opposition and it was condemned as sacrilegious, obscene, and morally corrupting when it was first published. Reviewers gravely recommended mothers not to leave a copy in the hands of their daughters (Goulbourne xiv). Like *The Monk*, Diderot's novel was banned twice, first in 1824 and then in 1826 because it was judged to be offensive (Goulbourne xiv).

stories and characters. In *The Monk*, as in *Wuthering Heights*, there are inserted songs, ballads, and confusing stories-within-stories, the legend of the Bleeding Nun, the Agnes subplot, and the main plot of Ambrosio. Within Raymond's narration, Agnes narrates the story of the Bleeding Nun, "in a tone of burlesqued gravity" (109). After that, the Wandering Jew, whose purpose is to exorcize her, narrates again the story of the Bleeding Nun; and, additionally, the Nun herself gives a brief version of her trouble, which is essentially the same as the Provençal tale in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Finally, Agnes manages to finish her own story, and in one of Lewis' displays of metanarrativity, a servant called Theodore is made to spend some hours terrifying the nuns of the convent with absurd tales and songs. According to Ellis, *The Monk* borrows the Gothic "*mise en scène*" from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Ellis 83). The medieval castle of Radcliff's novel and its secret chambers are in fact transformed into a cloister and a dungeon in Lewis' novel.

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe distorts the boundaries between reality and fantasy. Lewis goes a step further and constructs an anti-realist Gothic world of "mutually self-validating fiction which are textually more 'real' than reality itself" (Punter and Byron 195). All these narratives frequently cross and interrupt each other, disconcerting the reader in a very Cervantine manner and disclosing the artificiality of the novel. In *The Monk*, this crisscrossing of plots causes the "suspension of disbelief" in the reader, who notices the theatricality of the narration and becomes himself a spectator. Indeed, "[t]he world of *The Monk* is theatrical, a world of performances and spectators, because every word and act is a work of art, and every work of art a pretense" (Kiely 108). With Raymond's first person narration at the beginning of the novel, Lewis, anticipating Poe but also Emily Brontë, gives to the text a psychological sophistication which had only been present in the novel by William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* (1794), and which, obviously, anticipates the intricate narrative system of *Wuthering Heights*. Chris Baldick, in his introduction to *Melmoth the Wanderer*, says of the novel that it is "much about transmission as it is about transgression" (Baldick xii) and I think that this statement is perfectly applicable to both *The Monk* and *Wuthering Heights*.

In Brontë's novel, Lockwood frames Nelly Dean's story and within this story we find a patchwork of embedded stories, letters, and diaries within diaries. Both authors take pleasure in the complication of their narratives and in the compulsive repetition of stories

and characters, which disclose the self-conscious narrative of both novels. In *The Monk*, the story of the Bleeding Nun finds its alter ego in the story of Agnes (converted into a nun), gives birth in the vaults of the convent and Antonia is rapidly replaced by Virginia in Lorenzo's affection. In *Wuthering Heights*, this replacement and substitution is present since the moment when Lockwood describes the entrance of Wuthering Heights and mentions the engraving of "Hareton Earnshaw" in the main door. In Gothic literature, family constitutes a horrible space which illustrates how each of its members is replaceable by a younger and idealized version of oneself. Thus, Heathcliff replaces the departed son of the Earnshaws while he also substitutes Hindley in Mr. Earnshaw's affections; Catherine is also replaced by her daughter, Cathy; and, finally, Heathcliff is replaced by Hindley's son, also Hareton.

The second part of *Wuthering Heights* is devoted to Heathcliff's manic attempts to restore the name of "Catherine Earnshaw" (Davies *Heretic* 206). He can only achieve this through the manipulation of property-laws to obtain both the Earnshaw and the Linton property, and through the manipulation of the marriage laws so that the second Cathy can "marry back into source," becoming "Catherine Earnshaw" again, reverting to the original text (Davies *Heretic* 206). Both Lewis and Brontë challenge their readers, upsetting their security, and making them doubt about whether they may not themselves be involved in the complicated faults attributed to the characters. In *The Monk* and in *Wuthering Heights* nothing is what it appears. Where Richardson or Austen are careful to provide precise indications by which we may judge a character, Lewis, Brontë and even Radcliffe propose a kind of fiction in which we have to suspect the narrator and therefore to reconstruct the text from the hints, dialogues and the letters that are inserted in the main narration (Punter 96).

When the narrator describes the mental processes and emotional responses of characters, we balance these descriptions against what we have been told of external reality and make judgments on this basis. Thus, when the narrator suggests that a character's grasp on reality is deluded or shaky, we are forced to become a kind of detective since our interpretative role becomes superior and more ambiguous. In this sense, the Gothic novel is a deconstruction of reality but not an escape from it (Punter 96-97). The discursive issues intrinsic in the Gothic are therefore obvious in both texts, but the proliferation of narrative strategies, from novel to romance, and, in the case of *The*

Monk, from travesty to satire, puzzle the readers. There is not a single and clear thematic path through the text, only turnings, textual ambushes and sudden changes in the narrative level (Punter 161).

5.4 Thematic Motifs

5.4.1 “An Insatiable and Restless Appetite for Revenge”

The superposition of the historical conflict in the domestic realm – already present in Greek tragedies – is pervasive in both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Monk*. However, the rebellious fervor of some of the characters in these novels is not always rationally grounded on the oppression that they suffer from the family, institutions or masters; it is also the outcome of their isolated and misguided minds. They are the victims of their own unrestrained passions. One of these untrammelled passions is that of revenge, which seems to trigger most of the characters’ actions in Gothic fiction, and which is always accompanied by a speech act of commitment, that is, a vow.⁴⁸ Revenge contaminates many of the characters in *Caleb Williams*. The despotic Mr. Tyrrel says of himself: “It has been my character, when I had once conceived a scheme of vengeance, never to forego it; and I will not change that character” (77). Mr. Faulkland is also driven by “an insatiable and restless appetite for revenge” all along the novel. Thus, the Monk is described as “proud, vain, ambitious, and disdainful: He was jealous of his Equals, and despised all merit but his own: He was implacable when offended, and cruel in his revenge” (182-3). His lustfulness and boundless ambition make of him a tyrannical, despotic, and sadistic man: “[...] *He vowed vengeance against her; He swore, that cost what it would, He still would possess Antonia*” (204, emphasis added).

He is described by the narrator as being “under the influence of this storm of passions” (204). After Hindley’s degradation of him, Heathcliff discloses to Nelly his thirst for vengeance: “I’m trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don’t care how long I wait, if I can only do it, at last. I hope he will not die before I do!” (60). These lines

⁴⁸ Satan, in Book 2 of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, also plots revenge and destruction, trying to confuse and destroy humanity: “Thither full fraught with mischievous revenge, / Accurst, and in a cursed hour, he hies” (II. 1054-5).

resonate as well in Mr. Tyrrel's avowal that he will take retribution on Mr. Faulkland: "I should be glad to see him torn with tender-hooks, and to grind his heart-strings with my teeth. I shall know no joy, till I see him ruined (31) and in Edgar Ravenswood's powerful avowal that "I am an armed man – I am a desperate man – and I will not die without ample vengeance. This is my resolution, take it as you may" (323). Once he comes back from his three-year-absence as an adult, Heathcliff repeats his speech act of commitment to Catherine:

[...] and if you think I can be consoled by sweet words you are an idiot – and if you fancy I'll suffer unrevenged, I'll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while! Meantime, thank you for telling me your sister-in-law's secret – I swear I'll make the most of it – and stand you aside!" (112).

Like Heathcliff and Ambrosio, Edgar Ravenswood is equally guided by his fatal passions. Thus, when the narrator gives us an account of the Ravenswood family and their misfortunes and how Edgar Ravenswood witnessed his father's "dying agonies, and heard the curses which he breathed against his adversary, as if they had conveyed to him a legacy of vengeance. Other circumstances happened to exasperate a passion, which was, and had long been, a prevalent vice in the Scottish disposition" (31). A little later, a peasant's account of the "fatal night" when Edgar died suggests his gloomy nature: "Alas! What fiend can suggest more dangerous counsels, than those adopted under the guidance of our own violent and unresisted passions?" (35).

5.4.2 Replacement and Subrogation

Just like in *Oliver Twist* – which critics such as Schmitt have analyzed as a Gothic novel – the characters in *The Monk* and *Wuthering Heights* cannot escape their parentage. The theme of subrogation and how the sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the following generations is also a conventional theme in Gothic fiction. This theme is not only highly present in *Wuthering Heights*, but also in *The Monk*. In Lewis' novel, the case of Elvira and Antonia is quite significant. When she was very young, Elvira married a young nobleman in secret because his family did not approve of her. The couple escapes to the Indies, leaving her two-year-old son – who is later revealed to be Ambrosio himself – in Spain. After some years, her husband dies and she returns to Murcia with her daughter, Antonia. Don Lorenzo de Medina is infatuated with her since the first time he

sees her in the church and is resolved to marry her. Elvira's sin in the novel is that of miscegenation, the transgression of social boundaries, and error potentially reproduced in the story of her daughter. Antonia is the product of a transgression of class division, and, consequently, Elvira thinks that she is doomed from the beginning. Don Lorenzo asks for permission to court Antonia but Elvira fears that her daughter might be disapproved by Lorenzo's family, just as she was rejected by the Cisternas.

Despite Lorenzo's persistence, Elvira advises Antonia to forget Lorenzo. Her greatest fear is the potential menace that her daughter might repeat her story. Lewis also proves to be very ingenious with the stories of Agnes and the Bleeding Nun, as it is patent in the mix-up of their identities. When Agnes dresses as the Bleeding Nun in order to elope with Raymond at night, he later learns that it was the Bleeding Nun herself the one who was with him in the carriage. When the nuns imprison her in the dungeon for being pregnant, Agnes tries to survive in pitiable conditions and, in one of the most despondent episodes in the novel, she gives premature birth to her child, who soon dies, but Agnes keeps her corpse with her as if he were alive. The story of a bleeding Agnes, dressed as a nun, with the corpse of her baby in her hands, brings us back to the story of the Bleeding Nun, creating a vicious circle and confusing reality with the supernatural.

Similarly, repetitions are pervasive in *Wuthering Heights*. Indeed, *Wuthering Heights* is made up of "repetitions of the same in the other which permanently resist rational reduction to some satisfying principle of explanation" (Hillis Miller, *Repetition* 52). This pervasiveness of repetitions is patent from the very beginning of the novel, when Lockwood reads the name of "Hareton Earnshaw" and the date 1500 carved in stone at the front door of the Heights. Two other characters in the novel will later bear the name of "Hareton" in the novel. A little later, when Lockwood is inspecting Catherine's bedroom and reads "a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small – *Catherine Earnshaw*, here and there varied to *Catherine Heathcliff*, and then again to *Catherine Linton*" (17). The novel begins and ends with Catherine Earnshaw. According to Pykett, "although the names circulate through the text they create a pattern of asymmetrical repetition rather than of circularity" (Pykett 87). In fact, Cathy's story sometimes reverses rather than repeats her mother's. Thus, whereas Catherine's adolescence is marked by the rite of passage from the Heights to the Grange and from disobedient childhood to genteel youth, Cathy's rite of passage is the reverse. Cathy's first contact with the Heights is

similar to her mother's first acquaintance with the Grange; it is an act of revolt and curiosity which has backfired (Pykett 94). The similarities and differences between the two Catherines constitute a central component in the elaborated system of repetitions and differences which conforms the structure of the novel (Pykett 87).

Two of the most important subrogations are those of Heathcliff taking the name of a dead son in the family and then trying to occupy Hindley's place in the family. But the theme of subrogation and repetition is never more present than in the second generation, which is a weakened substitution of the previous one. Hareton and Cathy are two ghostly *alter egos* of both Heathcliff and Catherine themselves. Thus, Heathcliff uses Hareton, who closely resembles his aunt Catherine, as a scape-goat and he retaliates on Hareton for Hindley's mistreatment of him: "He appeared to have bent his malevolence on making him a brute: he was never taught to read or write; never rebuked for any bad habit which did not annoy his keeper; never led a single step towards virtue, or guarded by a single precept against vice" (196). Although he lacks his libidinal energy and socially dissident insurgence, Hareton is not just a pale imitation of Heathcliff. Hareton is indeed a socialized and humanized Heathcliff and henceforth a Heathcliff "whose energies become enabling and operative, rather than repressive and restrictive" (Pykett 119). Cathy, who has dark Earnshaw eyes but the "fair skin and small features and yellow curling hair" (188) of the Lintons, is, on the other hand, an amended version of her mother. In fact, Cathy's marriage to Linton Heathcliff may symbolize a way to expiate her mother's sin of having rejected Heathcliff and having married Edgar Linton. She thus finally becomes Catherine Heathcliff. However, it is her second marriage to Hareton and her conversion into Catherine Earnshaw what actually substitutes the marriage which never took place between Catherine and Heathcliff.

The marriage between Cathy and Hareton does not only achieve a social balance between the genteel world of the Lintons and the bourgeois world of Heathcliff but also a (con)fusion between the Gothic and the domestic (Eagleton 119). Rena-Dozier understands it as a domestication of the Gothic forces of the novel and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that by the end of the novel, "The Heights – hell – has been converted into the Grange – heaven –; and with patriarchal history redefined, renovated, restored, the nineteenth century can truly begin" (Gilbert and Gubar 302). But perhaps the right question to ask is not whether the Gothic is defeated by the domestic at the end of

Wuthering Heights but how the text plays with the diffuse difference between “Gothic” and “domestic” fiction. As the theory of the hermeneutic circle [*hermeneutischer Zirkel*] suggests, neither the whole text nor any individual part can be understood without reference to one another; the whole and the parts are mutually interconnected.⁴⁹ Thus, the ending of *Wuthering Heights* can never determine the meaning of the whole text. Besides, I would suggest that the Gothic is never totally absent in this novel since, even when the old order seems finally restored, some dark energy pierces Nelly Dean’s last words to Lockwood:

But the country folks, if you asked them, would swear on their Bible that he *walks*. There are those who speak to having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house – Idle tales, you’ll say, and so say I. Yet that old man by the kitchen fire affirms he has seen two on ’em, looking out of his chamber window, on every rainy night since his death [...]. (336)

The Gothic then persists in the power of Catherine and Heathcliff which is never totally absent and which remains in the background, always palpitating. In addition, the Gothic persists in the character of Heathcliff who is present for almost the whole novel. In fact, “his necrophilia and otherworldliness become more pronounced as the Domestic plot reaches its resolution” (Pykett 83). As it happens with Edgar Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, the characters engage in a lost struggle against an inescapable past and a prearranged future. Although young people seem to replace their parents, it is young people who are indeed dominated and supplanted by their parents, forced to re-enact past vendettas and faults. In these novels, the young inheritors are deprived of independence and autonomy, imprisoned in distorted forms of repetition, immaturity and inactivity.

⁴⁹ Gadamer takes this idea of the “hermeneutic circle” from Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1927). A person trying to understand a text is always projecting his ideas. He projects his particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Understanding is then to work out this fore-projection, which is constantly modified in terms of what emerges as he comprehends the meaning (Gadamer 269). This is the hermeneutic circle.

5.4.3 Extreme Violence and Incarceration

In *The Monk* and *Wuthering Heights* we find a rich orchestration of violence, insanity, and the supernatural. For Emily Brontë, the human race is governed by the Hobbesian idea of the survival of the fittest for their lives depend on the death of others and, consequently, human beings relate to each other destructively. This is clearly visible in her essay, “The Butterfly,” where Emily Brontë reflects on the “principle of destruction in nature:”

All creation is equally insane. There are those flies playing above the stream, swallows and fish diminishing their number each minute: these will become in their turn, the prey of some tyrant of air or water; and man for his amusement or for his needs will kill their murderers. Nature is an inexplicable puzzle, life exists on a principle of destruction; every creature must be the relentless instrument of death to the others, or himself cease to live. [...] Sad image of the earth and its inhabitants!” I exclaimed. “This worm lives only to injure the plant that protects it. Why was it created, and why was man created? He torments, he kills, he devours; he suffers, dies, is devoured – there you have his whole story.”⁵⁰

This principle of destruction is especially present in an extremely violent episode in *The Monk*: when St. Ursula reveals the crimes of the Prioress, accusing her of having murdered Agnes and calling her “a Tyrant, a Barbarian, and a Hypocrite” (273-4), and the rage and indignation of the mob so heightened that they seek for revenge.

They forced a passage through the Guards who protected their destined Victim, dragged her from her shelter, and proceeded to take upon her a most summary and cruel vengeance. Wild with terror, and scarcely knowing what She said, the wretched Woman shrieked for a moment’s mercy: She protested that She was innocent of the death of Agnes, and could clear herself from the suspicion beyond the power of doubt. *The Rioters heeded nothing but the gratification of their barbarous vengeance.* They refused to listen to her: They showed her every sort of insult, loaded her with mud and filth, and called her by the most opprobrious appellations. *They tore her one from another, and each new Tormentor was more savage than the former.* They stifled with howls and execrations her shrill cries for mercy; and

⁵⁰ Taken from The Norton Critical Edition of *Wuthering Heights*. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. P. 265-6.

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

dragged her through the Streets, spurning her, trampling her, and treating her with every species of cruelty which hate or vindictive fury could invent. At length a Flint, aimed by some well-directing hand, struck her full upon the temple. She sank upon the ground bathed in blood, and in a few minutes terminated her miserable existence. Yet though She no longer felt their insults, the Rioters still exercised their impotent rage upon her lifeless body. They beat it, trod upon it, and ill-used it, till it became no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless, and disgusting. (274-5, emphasis added)

Let us recall here Burke's assertion that "[t]he tyranny of a multitude is a multiplied tyranny."⁵¹ It is not farfetched to think that Lewis has in mind the anti-Catholic riots of London in 1780, in which the prisons had been opened, a vast amount of property sacked, and over 450 people were killed (Claeys 13). Goulbourne depicts *La Religieuse* as "the most sustained, most graphic, and most far-reaching literary satire of enforced seclusion in the eighteenth century" (Goulbourne xvii). However, reading *The Monk*, one cannot be sure whether Agnes' enforced seclusion and posterior incarceration by the Prioress is not even more graphic and gory. Indeed, Agnes' deplorable and inhuman condition in the dungeons of the abbey is described in great detail:

As I raised myself with this design, my hand rested upon something soft: I grasped it, and advanced it towards the light. Almighty God! What was my disgust, my consternation! *In spite of its pudrity, and the worms which preyed upon it, I perceived a corrupted human head, and recognized the features of a Nun who had died some months before!* I threw it from me, and sank almost lifeless upon my Bier. When my strength returned, this circumstance, and the consciousness of being surrounded by the loathsome and mouldering Bodies of my Companions, increased my desire to escape from my fearful prison (309-310, emphasis added).

In a letter about *La Religieuse*, Diderot states in a self-congratulatory manner: "I do not think a more terrifying satire of convents has ever been written." It is quite improbable that Diderot could have read *The Monk* since both *La Religieuse* and Lewis' novel were published in the same year, but reading the above passage of *The Monk* and the cruelty of the Prioress towards Agnes, one doubts whether Lewis' sadistic description does not

⁵¹ The Correspondence of Edmund Burke, vol. 3, p. 455.

exceed Diderot's horrid atmosphere. Both *The Monk* and *La Religieuse* are an attack on the Church, the state and the family as silencing institutions and means of social control. Lewis and Diderot denounce the harassment and subjugation of the individual who is forced to enter religious life (Goulbourne xvii) since, "for centuries, the religious orders had been the masters of discipline" (Foucault *Discipline* 150). Here is an example of the harassment to which Suzanne is subjected in *La Religieuse*:

On the fourth day there was a ploy which revealed the Mother Superior's peculiar character. At the end of the office I was made to lie down in a coffin in the middle of the choir, with candlesticks and a stoup of holy water placed beside me. I was covered with a shroud and they recited the office for the dead, after which each nun, as she left, sprinkled me with holy water and said *Requiescat in pace*. You have to understand the language of convents in order to understand the particular kind of threat that was implicit in those words. Two nuns removed the shroud, blew out the candles and left me there soaked to the skin with the water that they had maliciously thrown on me. My clothes dried on me as I had nothing to change into. This mortification was followed by another. (55-6)

Lewis, Diderot and, subsequently, Maturin, characterize Catholicism as a religion of suffering. These remarkably numerous instances of ostensibly gratuitous violence and grotesque images echo Kleist's conflagrations and physical assaults described in gory detail in "The Earthquake in Chile," "Michael Kohlhaas," "The Foundling," and "The Beggarwoman of Locarno." The stress is placed here upon the victims, who are incapable of acting and are reduced to the status of objects, whereas the perpetrators of this violence are however depicted as unidentified and impersonal (Huff 160).

Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights*, there are passages of extreme violence. We can find the same inhuman cruelty towards a child in Hindley's merciless treatment of his son, Hareton:

'kiss; 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.' [...] Poor Hareton was squalling and kicking in his father's arms with all his might, and redoubled his yells when he carried him upstairs and lifted him over the banister. (WH, 74)

Heathcliff's brutal beating of Hindley, his putative brother is also of strong intensity and it is somehow an echo of Kleist's "The Foundling," where Nicolo is atrociously murdered by his father, who "squashed his brains against the wall" (285):

The ruffian kicked and trampled on him, and dashed his head repeatedly against the flags; holding me with one hand, meantime, to prevent me summoning Joseph. He exerted preter-human self-denial in abstaining from finishing him completely; but getting out of breath, he finally desisted, and dragged the apparently inanimate body onto the settle. There he tore off the sleeve of Earnshaw's coat, and bound up the wound with brutal roughness, spitting and cursing during the operation, as energetically as he had kicked before. (*WH*, 177, emphasis added)

Similarly, this sadistic episode also echoes an extremely violent passage in *The Monk*, when Ambrosio kills Elvira, who turns out to be his own mother:

Ambrosio struggled in vain to disengage himself. Elvira quitted not her hold, but redoubled her cries for succour. The Friar's danger grew more urgent. He expected every moment to hear people assembling at her voice; and worked up to madness by the approach of ruin, He adopted a resolution equally desperate and savage. Turning round suddenly with one hand He grasped Elvira's throat so as to prevent her continuing her clamour, and with the other, dashing her violently upon the ground, He dragged her towards the Bed. Confused by this unexpected attack, She scarcely had power to strive at forcing herself from his grasp: while the Monk, snatching the pillow from beneath her Daughter's head, covering with it Elvira's face, and pressing his knee upon her stomach with all his strength, endeavored to put an end to her existence. He succeeded but too well. Her natural strength increased by the excess of anguish, long did the Sufferer struggle to disengage herself, but in vain. *The Monk continued to kneel upon her breast, witnessed without mercy the convulsive trembling of her limbs beneath him, and sustained with inhuman firmness the spectacle of her agonies, when soul and body were on the point of separating.* Those agonies at length were over. She ceased to struggle for life. The Monk took off the pillow, and gazed upon her. Her face was covered with a frightful blackness: Her limbs moved no more; The blood was chilled in her veins; Her heart had forgotten to beat, and her hands were stiff and frozen. (234, emphasis added)

Both Heathcliff's "preter-human self-denial" and Ambrosio's "inhuman firmness," emphasize the cold-heartedness and the dubious human nature of both characters.

5.4.4 Insanity

Insanity is also pervasive in both novels. Indeed, Ambrosio recognizes to Matilda that “[i]f I resisted them, the impetuosity of my wishes unsatisfied would drive me to madness” (55), and this is exactly what happens later: Ambrosio yields to insanity when he cannot satisfy his desires for Antonia, and he ends up murdering her mother – who is also his own mother – and raping and killing Antonia:

Ambrosio hastened to his Cell. He closed the door after him, and threw himself upon the bed in despair. The impulse of desire, the stings of disappointment, the shame of detection, and the fear of being publicly unmasked, rendered his bosom a scene of the most horrible confusion. He knew not what course to pursue. Debarred the presence of Antonia, He had no hopes of satisfying that passion which was now become a part of his existence. He reflected that this secret was in a woman’s power: He trembled with apprehension when He beheld the precipice before him, and with rage, when He thought that had it not been for Elvira, He should now have possessed the object of his desires. With the direct imprecations He vowed vengeance against her; He swore that, cost what it would, He still would possess Antonia. Starting from the Bed, He paced the chamber with disordered steps, howled with impotent fury, *dashed himself violently against the walls, and indulged all the transports of rage and madness.* (204, emphasis added)

To the alert reader, this passage foreshadows Heathcliff’s insane reaction when he learns about Catherine’s death from Nelly: “*He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears*” (167, emphasis added). In *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, Bataille argues that in Feudalism, sexual intercourse in marriage or outside it had the nature of a criminal act, mostly where a virgin was concerned.⁵² The stranger had a power of transgression that a man living in the same community did not have. Since this implies the violation of the taboo making copulation with a virgin a disgraceful thing, this operation would be delegated to men who, unlike the bridegroom, had the power to

⁵² Bataille considers marriage a permitted transgression since the laws that allow an infringement and consider it legal are paradoxical. Thus, in the same way that killing is simultaneously prohibited and performed in sacrificial ritual, the initial sexual intercourse in marriage is a “permitted violation” (109).

transgress. This stranger must have an authority that protected him from this taboo. The priest would be the most obvious choice, but in the Christian community, to have recourse to God's ministers was unthinkable, "and the custom of entrusting the defloration to the local lord grew up" (Bataille 110). The first sexual intercourse was considered forbidden and dangerous, "but the lord of the priest had the power to touch sacred things without too great a risk" (110). Since the weight of history is heavy, Ambrosio might have unconsciously justified his outrageous violation of Antonia by considering that he has lawful authority to commit such a sinful act.

On his part, when the Prioress informs Don Raymond of Agnes' supposed death, "amounted to Madness:"

He would not be convinced that Agnes was really dead, and continued to insist that the Walls of St. Clare still confined her. No arguments could make him abandon his hopes of regaining her: Every day some fresh scheme was invented for procuring intelligence of her, and all of them were attended with the same success (171).

Agnes' desperate condition in the vaults also drives her to madness and she ends up nurturing her dead child:

By my grief was unavailing. My infant was no more; nor could all my sighs impart to its little tender frame the breath of a moment. I rent my winding-sheet, and wrapped in it my lovely Child. I placed it on my bosom, its soft arm folded round my neck, and its pale cold cheek resting upon mine. *Thus did its lifeless limbs repose, while I covered it with kisses, talked to it, wept, and moaned over it without remission, day or night.* Camilla entered my prison regularly once every twenty-four hours, to bring me food. In spite of her flinty nature, She could not behold this spectacle unmoved. *She feared that grief so excessive would at length turn my brain, and in truth I was not always in my proper senses.* From a principle of compassion she urged me to permit the Corpse to be buried: But to this I never would consent. I vowed not to part with it while I had life: Its presence was my only comfort, and no persuasion could induce me to give it up. It soon became a mass of putridity, and to every eye was a loathsome and disgusting object; To every eye but a Mother's. In vain did human feelings bid me recoil from this emblem of mortality with repugnance. I withstood, and vanquished that repugnance. *I persisted in holding my Infant to my bosom, in lamenting it, loving it, adoring it! Hour after hour have I passed upon my sorry Couch, contemplating what had once been my Child: I*

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

endeavoured to retrace its features through the livid corruption, with which they were overspread: During my confinement this sad occupation was my only delight; and at that time Worlds should not have bribed me to give it up. Even when released from my prison, I brought away my Child in my arms. [...] However, reason at length prevailed; I suffered it to be taken from me, and it now reposes in consecrated ground. (317, emphasis added)

Similarly, as it happens with the Mother Superior of the third convent in *La Religieuse*, Agnes' withdrawal from society distorts her faculties. Unlike Rousseau, Diderot, through Suzanne, highlights the importance of "man in society:" "Such is the effect of cutting oneself off from society. Man is born to live in society. Separate him, isolate him, and his way of thinking will become incoherent, his character will change" (104). For Diderot, when women are barred from social contact, they become hysterical and alienated (Goulbourne xviii). Indeed, all the Mothers Superior in *La Religieuse* constitute instances of the pathologically estranged and hysterical women (Goulbourne xviii).

Agnes' anguish resonates in Lady Ashton's "wild paroxysm of insanity" (337) in the same day of her wedding, after having stabbed her very recent husband:

Here they found the unfortunate girl, seated, or rather couched like a hare upon its form – her head-gear disheveled; her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood, – *her eyes glazed, and her features convulsed into a wild paroxysm of insanity.* When she saw herself discovered, she gibbered, made mouths, and pointed at them with her bloody fingers, with the frantic gestures of an exulting demoniac. (338, emphasis added)

As we have already seen in a previous section, Catherine is driven to insanity after Heathcliff and Linton's quarrel. Their repressed passions drive these characters to madness since "the possibility of madness is [...] implicit in the very phenomenon of passion" (Foucault *Madness* 88). According to Michel Foucault,

[...] the constitution of madness as a mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, affords the evidence of a broken dialogue, posits the separation as already effected, and thrusts into oblivion all those stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax in which the exchange between madness and reason was made. (Foucault xii)

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

Thus whereas the Renaissance had allowed the forms of unreason to come out and public outrage gave the madman the possibility of redemption, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, “unreason was hidden in the silence of the houses of confinement” or within the walls of a dungeon or a chamber (Foucault *Madness* 69). Catherine is quite a different character from Antonia, Agnes or Lucy Ashton, who incarnate the archetypal heroine of eighteenth-century romances: beautiful, dependent, and predisposed by character and education to promote harmony and reconciliation. However, Catherine, Agnes and Lucy’s episodes of insanity may be read as a triumphant escape from the oppressions of a despotic society, as well as a punitive sacrifice. According to Elaine Showalter, in her outstanding study *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, the disturbing and confusing nature of female insanity was articulated and perpetuated by the three major Romantic archetypes of the madwoman: the suicidal Ophelia, the sentimental Crazy Jane, and the vehement Lucia.

For Showalter, all these three women established female sexuality as the origin of female insanity, but each of them represented a different understanding of woman’s madness and man’s relation to it (Showalter 10). What Catherine, Agnes and Lucy Ashton have in common is that they are prevented from marrying the men they love. Thus, Lucy is forced into a more socially acceptable alliance; Catherine is a victim of her own social conscience and decides to renounce the man he loves for a more socially acceptable one; and Agnes is chastised by her family, confined in a convent after having become pregnant of Don Raymond, and imprisoned in the vaults of the convent. They represent female sexuality as insanity and they are consequently dehumanized and brutalized. The comparison here with Bertha Mason, Rochester’s brutalized wife in *Jane Eyre*, is inevitable. When Rochester takes Jane to see his mad wife, she is indeed depicted as an insane animal:

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. *What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.* (293, emphasis added)

One cannot help noticing that these lines, “[w]hat it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell,” bear a strong resemblance with Isabella’s question, “[i]s

Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?" (136). This lexicon and syntax, which portrays inner life as irrational and unrestrained, is mainly indebted to the Gothic. Indeed, nothing but the Gothic is capable of articulating so powerfully the preternatural strength of these characters. Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* betray a Gothic demonization of the foreign (Schmitt 309).

5.4.5 The Supernatural

According to Botting, the general rule of the Gothic is that the supernatural does not arise with the violation of the laws of nature but with the violation of the laws of the nation, which have always constructed myths of origin. However, in the mid-eighteenth century, the rigid connection between nationalism and ideology started to get diffuse. Gothic fiction had a prevalent interest in dramatizing the illogic nature of abjection and this is indeed a sign of its commitment to exploring the incipient and questioned borders of the nation (Botting 69). In *Wuthering Heights*, this abjection is obviously represented by Heathcliff, whose unknown origin and ethical markedness were sources of anxiety from the moment he "is born" from Mr. Earnshaw's coat:

We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy's head I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk: indeed, its face looked older than Catherine's; yet when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, *and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand*. I was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up, *asking how he could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house*, when they had their own bairns to feed and fend for? What he meant to do with it, and whether he were mad? The master tried to explain the matter; but he was really half dead with fatigue, and all that I could make out, amongst her scolding, was a tale of his seeing it starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb, in the streets of Liverpool, where he picked it up and inquired for its owner. *Not a soul knew to whom it belonged*, he said; and his money and time being both limited, he thought it better to take it home with him at once, than run into vain expenses there: because he was determined he would not leave it as he found it. (35, emphasis added)

To cheer him up after Hindley's humiliations, Nelly starts to speculate about Heathcliff's possible origins:

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

“A good heart will help you to a bonny face, my lad,” I continued, “*if you were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something worse than ugly.* And now that we’ve done washing, and combing, and sulking - tell me whether you don’t think yourself rather handsome? I’ll tell you, I do. You’re fit for a prince in disguise. *Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen,* each of them able to buy up, with one week’s income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!” (56, emphasis added)

In fact, Heathcliff’s mysterious origins are never explained in the novel, constituting one of the major omissions – the other one being Heathcliff’s unknown pursuits in his three-year-absence – in the novel, and this constitutes an important difference with Ambrosio’s enigmatic origin, which, as in Shakespeare’s plays, is explained at the end of the novel. Heathcliff’s unidentified origins and questionable ethnicity is highly analogous to the Wandering Jew, who shares many traits with Heathcliff:

By his accent He is supposed to be a Foreigner, but of what Country nobody can tell. He seemed to have no acquaintance in the Town, spoke very seldom, and never was seen to smile. He had neither servants or Baggage; But his Purse seemed well-furnished, and He did much good in the Town. *Some suppose him to be an Arabian Astrologer, Others to be a Travelling Mountebank, and many declared that He was Doctor Faustus, whom the Devil had sent back to Germany.* The Landlord, however told me, that He had the best reasons to believe him to be the Great Mogul incognito. (129-130, emphasis added)

Like Heathcliff, the Wandering Jew speaks with a foreign accent from an unknown country; he speaks very little and never smiles; his ethical markedness is noticeable; and is somehow related to the Devil.

Another unexplained phenomenon in *Wuthering Heights* is the ambiguous nature of Catherine’s ghost: is it a dream or did it actually happen? At the beginning, Lockwood himself attributes it to a nightmare: “The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed:

‘Let me in – let me in!’” (23). This passage bears great resemblance with the Bleeding Nun’s appearance to Don Raymond, which also has an uncertain nature:

Suddenly I heard slow and heavy steps ascending the stair-case. By an involuntary movement I started up in my bed, and drew back the curtain: A single rush-light, which glimmered upon the hearth shed a faint gleam through the apartment, which was hung with tapestry. The door was thrown open with violence. A figure entered, and drew near my Bed with solemn measured steps. With trembling apprehension I examined this midnight Visitor. God Almighty! It was the Bleeding Nun! It was my lost Companion! Her face was still veiled, but she no longer held her Lamp and dagger. She lifted up her veil slowly. What a sight presented itself to my startled eyes! I beheld before me an animated Corse. Her countenance was long and haggard; Her cheeks and lips were bloodless; The paleness of death was spread over her features, and her eye-balls fixed stedfastly upon me were lusterless and hollow. I gazed upon the Spectre with horror too great to be described. My blood was frozen in my veins. I would have called for aid, but the sound expired, ere it could pass my lips. My nerves were bound up in impotence, and I remained in the same attitude inanimate as a Statue. (124)

Like Catherine’s ghost, the Bleeding Nun “grasped with icy fingers” Raymond’s hand, “which hung lifeless upon the Coverture, and pressing her cold lips to mine, again repeated, ‘Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine! Raymond! Raymond! I am thine!’” (125). As Derrida says, “giving or asking for a hand usually symbolizes help or marriage” (Derrida *Of Hospitality* 146). In both these cases, it is the hand of death which is asking for help. Derrida associates help, marriage and death and poses the question of hospitality under the threat of finitude and love because “death carries off what it touches, it precisely does not ‘visit’” (Derrida *Of Hospitality* 148). Thus, the hospitality it offers is conclusive and cannot be reciprocated. It is Orpheus looking for Eurydice and wanting to take her back from death just to be himself the one who will be carried off; and it is Heathcliff imploring Catherine’s ghost to come back to Wuthering Heights (“Come in! Come in! Cathy, do come. Oh, do – *once* more!”) when it is only after his death that they can be reunited. As Derrida puts it: “It is the logic of the returned invitation, of restitution, giving back, that the logic of the enclave is inscribed” (Derrida 150). Ghosts haunt places which exist without them; they go back to where they have been left out (Derrida 152). The Bleeding Nun and Catherine are thus two Antigones, two foreign weeping women,

foreigners because they have died in a foreign land, far away from their home, foreigners in that they cannot be properly mourned by their relatives in grief (Derrida 115).

5.5 Ideological Motifs

5.5.1 Ambrosio and Heathcliff: Two Foundlings and Two Disruptive Forces

Matthew Lewis and Emily Brontë resort to the Gothic to portray the tortuous and unfathomable alleys of the minds of both Ambrosio and Heathcliff. Indeed, the lexicon and syntax used to depict them are principally indebted to the Gothic. In *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness*, Khair suggests that Gothic fiction is “a writing of Otherness,” since it is concerned with various versions of the Other, as the Devil, as foundlings, as ghosts, as upstarts, as usurpers, or as sexual reprobates (Khair 6). The Other is indeed at the center of Gothic action and it is when the Other enters – as Satan, foundling, foreigner, ghost or sexually dangerous women – that the action of Gothic narratives really starts. And they end with the eruption or repression of this Otherness (Khair 6). The history of Ambrosio and Heathcliff is that of two foundlings and outsiders who pollute two traditional institutions, the family, in both cases, and the Church, in the case of Ambrosio.

According to Duncan, the Gothic novel dramatizes the complicity between “an origin we have lost and an alien force that invades our borders, haunts our mansions and possesses our souls” (Duncan 23). *The Monk* and *Wuthering Heights* are tales about two foundlings. Like Nicolo, the protagonist of Kleist’s “The Foundling,” or Tom Jones, Fielding’s hero, Heathcliff and Ambrosio are two outsiders who have been charitably admitted in a family and, in addition, a dead silence surrounds their origins and identity. Indeed, their introduction in these families is accompanied by taxonomical indeterminacy since they are dangerously out of place, and familiar categories are unclear and confounded (Coleman 135). Thus, Heathcliff loses his human identity when he is introduced into *Wuthering Heights* under the pronoun, “it:” “when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand” (35). Besides, he is ambiguously described by Mr. Earnshaw as “a gift of God, though it’s as dark almost as if it came from the devil” (34). Tabish Khair, in *The*

Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere, argues that the devil is “the most common image of “negative” Otherness available to Christian peoples, the “terror-ist” *par excellence*” (Khair 42). For this critic, the figure of the devil always overlaps with “racial” and “colonial” Otherness (43). See, for instance, the description of Lucifer at the end of *The Monk*:

Lucifer stood before him a second time. But He came not as when at Matilda’s summons He borrowed the Seraph’s form to deceive Ambrosio. *He appeared in all that ugliness which since his fall from heaven had been his portion: His blasted limbs still bore marks of the Almighty’s thunder: A swarthy darkness spread itself over his gigantic form: His hands and feet were armed with long Talons: Fury glared in his eyes, which might have struck the braves heart with terror: Over his huge shoulders waved two enormous sable wings; and his hair was supplied by living snakes, which twined themselves round his brows with frightful hissing. In one hand, He held a roll of parchment, and in the other an iron pen. Still the lightning flashed around him, and the Thunder with repeated bursts, seemed to announce the dissolution of nature.* (332, emphasis added)

Similarly, in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the character of the Wanderer also depends on a conception as the Devil as Other (Khair 49) and this is evident from the beginning when the Devil is intimated as “one whom we dare not mention to ears polite” (11). Carmilla, the vampire of Le Fanu’s novel, is also accompanied by marks of racial Otherness, depicted as a “hideous black woman with a sort of coloured turban on her head, who was gazing all the time from the carriage window, nodding and grinning derisively towards ladies, with gleaming eyes and large white eye-balls, and her teeth set as if in fury.” Near the end of *Wuthering Heights*, after the shock of Heathcliff’s death, Nelly wonders

“But where did he come from, the little dark thing, harboured by a good man to his bane?” muttered superstition, as I dozed into unconsciousness. And I began, half dreaming, to weary myself with imaging some fit parentage for him; and repeating my waking meditations, I tracked his existence over again, with grim variations. (330)

Similarly, the origin of Ambrosio, who was found by the Superior of the Capuchins at the abbey-door when he was an infant and educated as a monk by the abbots – for “is not the Church the mother of orphans?” says the narrator of *La Fille aux Yeux d’Or* – is also

surrounded by mystery until the end of the novel, when his genealogy is finally restored. Although he is not as dehumanized as Heathcliff, Ambrosio's mysterious origin is also attributed to religious miracles:

No one has ever appeared to claim him, or clear up the mystery which conceals his birth; and the Monks, who find their account in the favour which is shewn to their establishment from respect to him, have not hesitated, to publish, that He is a present to them from the Virgin. (14)

After that, Antonia explains to her mother, Elvira, what she has heard about Ambrosio's origins: "Stay, Stay! Now I recollect how it was. He was put into the Abbey quite as a Child; The Common People say, that He fell from heaven, and was sent as a present to the Capuchins by the Virgin" (193).

The tale of a foundling is a recurrent motif in nineteenth-century Gothic literature. In the novel by William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* (1794), the protagonist, although not a foundling in the strictest sense of the word, is a youngster who has lost his parents very early in his infancy and who has also been charitably admitted into Mr. Faulkland's mansion as his secretary: "I felt highly flattered by the proposal, and was warm in the expression of my acknowledgements. [...] I had not a relation in the world, upon whose kindness and interposition I had any direct claim" (5). After he breaks with the laws of hospitality tacitly established by his host, Caleb is persecuted all around the country by a merciless Mr. Faulkland and he becomes himself an outcast: "Pursued by a train of ill fortune, I could no longer consider myself as a member of society. I was a solitary being cut off from the expectation of sympathy, kindness and the good will of mankind" (247). Tired of having to hide himself in every city and of being eventually discovered, he makes a quite pathetic and pessimistic declaration: "I cursed the whole system of human existence. I said, Here I am an outcast, destined to perish with hunger and cold. All men desert me. All men hate me" (251). In Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, one of Scott's best novels, Edgar Ravenswood, the main protagonist of the novel, though not a foundling, is an orphan of history, since he is trapped between feudalism and an emerging social class.

Hospitality requires a clear demarcation of thresholds between the familial and the non-familial; between what is mine and what is yours; between the private and the public,

etc. (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 49). Nevertheless, whenever a home is threatened, Dufourmantelle argues, there is “a privatizing and even familialist reaction” by widening, in this case, the homofilial and communal circle (53). Thus, the first reaction of the Earnshaw family when they saw the potential threat that Heathcliff might cause in the house was that of rejection and inhospitality. Mrs. Earnshaw “was ready to fling it out of doors” (35); Catherine “showed her humour by grinning and spitting at the stupid little thing,” and Nelly “put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow” (35). It is only Mr. Earnshaw the one who out of charity and generosity accepts him kindly. The case of Ambrosio is slightly different. He arrives at a religious institution and his reception is welcomed as a present from the Virgin, enhancing the Monks’ self-complacency. The reason why he is so welcomed in the abbey is because he does not represent a threat for the rest of the monks since he showed from the very beginning an inclination to become a monk himself: “He early showed a strong inclination for study and retirement, and as soon as He was of a proper age, He pronounced his vows” (14). Similarly, when Caleb’s suspicion of Mr. Falkland is visible, the latter threatens Caleb with his own death.

In *The Way of the World*, Franco Moretti argues that, whereas the continental narrative tradition is characterized by a dialectic tension between subjective unrest (the individual) and the social order (*nomos*), the Victorian English tradition is subjugated by social and political stability, institutions, ideological conformity and pliable, common, ordinary and unsubstantial characters who easily succumb to social pressures. In *Modern Romance*, Ian Duncan describes, in a quite ironic manner, the extravagance of Moretti’s hypothesis:

Franco Moretti has issued the most recent complaint of a primitive, childish, puritanical storytelling, in paradoxical coincidence with the post-Revolutionary maturity of British legal institutions. The high achievement of British prose fiction was, in short, one of ‘romance’ rather than ‘the novel’. The novel, authentic, open form of the subject in history, thrives across the English Channel under the title of roman, while the native kind, calling itself by the new name, is all the time that other form from which it had striven to distinguish itself. For a historical explanation Moretti appeals to Perry Anderson’s argument that, because it did not coincide with an Enlightenment culture, the British revolution failed to achieve an adequate theoretical totalization, and so it could not perpetuate itself in an effective legacy of revolutionary ideology, such as a written Constitution. With all of its Hellenistic bias,

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

such a hypothesis usefully illuminates the strong persistence of 'primitive', oral and popular, forms in British literature. It seems then that instead of a Constitution we have romance: not just the tales and ballads of the folk, urban and rural, but the English Bible, and Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare, Milton and Bunyan and the novelists. (Duncan 3-4)

In Duncan's contrary view, although the English narrative *romance* undoubtedly represented a counter-revolutionary deviation of energies of confrontation and protest, at the same time, it did contain and express these energies and helped to transmit them (Duncan 5). This dialectic makes nineteenth-century fiction distinctive since it generates effects of pure narrative generousness, sporadic fluidity, metonymic density and metaphoric intricacy (Duncan 5). Thus, the failure lamented by Moretti is rather a strong point rather than a weakness (Duncan 6).

Ambrosio and Heathcliff are two characters who confront Moretti's argument that Anglo-German fiction is characterized by passive and unsubstantial characters who easily succumb before social pressures. Indeed, they are anomic characters in different ways. At the beginning of the novel, Ambrosio appears as the very paragon of virtue and propriety, "[o]ccupying the extreme wing of the virgin-innocent-chastity faction" (Ellis 85), like one of Radcliffe's virtuous heroines. However, later on we discover that he is not so faultless. He is in fact delighted to see the "enthusiasm" which his sermon has aroused" and the narrator tells us how he gives "free loose to the indulgence of his vanity" (32). Indeed, he regards himself as "the sole uncorrupted Pillar of the Church!" (32). Nevertheless, we see that he is not as uncorrupted as he would like to be. Thus, when the mysterious young novice of the monastery, Rosario, reveals his love for Ambrosio and confesses that "I am a Woman!" (46), Ambrosio falls prey to Matilda's (Rosario's real name) sensuality and starts to give free rein to his powerful sexual desire.

According to Ellis, "Lewis makes the scene turn on a double perversity of homosexuality and transvestism" (Ellis 86). Ambrosio's desire for Matilda is obviously subversive since it takes place in a supposedly virtuous and chaste setting and expresses itself in uncontrolled and illicit sexuality (Ellis 86). At this point, Ambrosio acquires the role of the fallen heroines of eighteenth-century fiction, such as Moll Flanders or Matilda, the heroine in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Matilda induces Ambrosio to commit outrageous crimes: he allows her to remain in the abbey; he fornicates with her against

the celibacy vows; he commits matricide and then rapes and murders his own sister, Antonia; and finally, he signs a pact with the devil. His remorse increases after each crime, but he, exactly like Heathcliff, neither repents nor returns to virtue. Although each crime is worse than the previous one, none of them satisfies him and this dissatisfaction stimulates him to commit a still greater sin (Ellis 88).

Heathcliff's role as the most subversive force in *Wuthering Heights* is unquestionable and few critics have failed to notice it. George Bataille expressed it brilliantly:

There is no character in romantic literature who comes across more convincingly or more simply than Heathcliff, although he represents a very basic state – that of the child in revolt against the world of Good, against the adult world, and committed, in his revolt, to the side of Evil. (Bataille 20)

And the *North American Review* was also very convincing: Heathcliff was a savage “whom the Mephistopheles of Goethe would have nothing to say to, whom the Satan of Milton would consider an object of singular disgust.” Isabella also summarizes brilliantly the devilish nature of Heathcliff: “Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” (136). Later in the novel, Nelly asks herself a similar question: “Is he a ghoul, or a vampire?” (330). The description of Mr. Tyrrel, one of the villains in *Caleb Williams*, as a “devil incarnate, and not a man” (84), and as “the most diabolical wretch that had ever dishonoured the human form” (85) could be easily applied to him. Heathcliff is a nameless parasite, a “poor, fatherless child” (36) who, like Edgar Ravenswood, the hero of Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, exists on the margins of the novel's social world.⁵³ Together with Manfred and Melmoth the Wanderer, Heathcliff is the emblem of high Romantic misery and damnation; a Promethean figure of revolt. All these three heroes are the emblems of “the eternal outcast, of his grandiose self-hatred, and of his withering scorn for heaven and earth” (Baldick vii).

Heathcliff is indeed one of the main challenges of the novel and critics frequently do not know what to make of him. Pykett claims that he is “less a character than a question or series of questions” (Pykett 112). Graham Holderness asserts that “Heathcliff is really the central problem of *Wuthering Heights*: our valuation of him determines our sense of

⁵³ Although Edgar Ravenswood does have social identity, he cannot avow it.

what the novel is about” (Holderness 13). Eagleton also puts Heathcliff at the core of the novel with his hard assertion that “No mere critical hair-splitting can account for the protracted debate over whether Heathcliff is hero or demon” (Eagleton 113). Heathcliff enters the Earnshaw family as a “*déclassé* outsider” (Pykett 113) and disrupts the harmony and stability of the family, replacing a dead son. In the same way that Caleb Williams violates the rules of hospitality by interfering in his master’s private affairs and his most inner secrets and by delving into his private documents and letters, Heathcliff violates the hospitality with which he has been received by usurping Hindley in Mr. Earnshaw’s affections and by positioning himself as the favored successor of Mr. Earnshaw in the farm, that is, as a potential heir of Wuthering Heights.

Hindley’s efforts “to reduce him to his right place” (20) by depriving him of education, keeping him apart from Catherine, and degrading him as a servant makes explicit the cruelty and oppression of the dominant social order. During his three-year-absence from the Heights, Heathcliff strangely acquires both culture and capital and when he returns to the Heights and the Grange “the oppressed has become the oppressor” (Pykett 114). Heathcliff disturbs the marriage of Edgar Linton and Catherine; he seduces, abducts and marries Isabella in order to take revenge on Linton; he scorns and mistreats his own wife, driving her to despair. Then, he sadistically projects his vengeance to Hindley’s son, who is his subrogate and to Cathy, forcing the latter to marry his deceased son, Linton Heathcliff, in order to inherit the two properties, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange: “I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendant fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children to till their fathers’ lands for wages” (234). Like Henri de Marsay, the protagonist of Balzac’s *La Fille aux Yeux d’Or*, Heathcliff has “the courage of a lion and the cunning of a monkey” (*La Fille* 85). Linton Heathcliff also arrives to disrupt his mother’s family at the Grange and, then, his father’s “putative family” at Wuthering Heights. According to Pykett, although the nineteenth-century family is controlled by men, ideologically, it is a feminine sphere, “a private, inner space devoted to emotional and moral values, peace and harmony, and is hence liable to disruption by incursions from the ideologically masculine public world of struggle, acquisition, and competition” (Pykett 111). What complicates the despicable nature of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* is Brontë’s ironic combination of the figures of victim and executioner into one single character, exactly as it happens with Lucy Ashton in *The Bride of Lammermoor*. His

demonic energy does not only threaten the social and economic order but also the sexual, familial and cultural system.

These novels' allegiances are extremely divided between the need of integrating and containing the disruptive force embodied in these fatherless children who are free from genealogical ties, and a desire, both subversive and reactionary, for the revitalization of the old order. Thus, in *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff the child, taken out of charity by Mr. Earnshaw in the streets of Liverpool, is the truest representation of outside society in the novel. Heathcliff is a spin-off of industrialism, the negative face of an emerging capitalist society. Heathcliff the adult, however, has learnt what his origins are, and he embodies perfectly the figure of the atomized capitalist to whom relational bonds are nothing.⁵⁴ Eagleton argues that *Wuthering Heights* cannot achieve the ideological integration which characterizes the ending of Charlotte Brontë's novels (119). Hence, the ending of *Jane Eyre* symbolically represents a reformed society in which the character who represented subversion against the social order, Bertha Mason, has died by burning.⁵⁵ However, *Wuthering Heights*, Susan Meyer argues, makes no similar attempt to represent a reformed social order. On the contrary, this novel persists in its transgression of British social structures (Meyer 103). In this sense, *Wuthering Heights* also betrays the way in which traditional fictional closures act to restrain energies of social resistance (Meyer 103).

Hareton Earnshaw is the only survivor of the world of the Heights. For Eagleton, his marriage to Cathy acquires a symbolic significance. Thus, if Hareton is thought of as a subrogate of Heathcliff, the ending of the novel implies the reconciliation between gentry and the capitalist class, an ending similar to Charlotte's mythical resolutions. However, if he is taken literally, as the only survivor of yeomanry, then there is no such historical reconciliation (Eagleton 119). Literally, Hareton's social class is absorbed by the hegemony of the Grange, but, symbolically, Hareton represents a sturdiness with which the Grange must come to terms. According to Eagleton, "[i]t is precisely this tension between literal and symbolic meanings which makes the ending of *Wuthering Heights* considerably more complex than the conclusion of any Charlotte Brontë novel" (Eagleton

⁵⁴ I will develop this idea in the chapter, "*Wuthering Heights: A Condition-of-England Novel?*"

⁵⁵ Note the symbolic use of fire to purge the novel from such a subversive force.

120). Similarly, *The Bride* is also shaped by contradictory political motives: a desire for the restoration of the old order, and the imperative of sanctioning the property relations which prevent the fulfillment of that desire. Scott presents Ravenswood as a residual locus of aristocracy and pedigree.

As opposed to Heathcliff, Ravenswood represents what the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, calls “premodern social imaginaries,” which were structured by various modes of hierarchical organization (11). Scott foresaw that revolution might eventually lead to the disintegration of this premodern social organization in his own time; a world in which social membership loses its relevance, becoming an abstraction, and in which status inconsistency reigns. This is the reason why Edgar cannot survive: Scott could only dignify his struggle by assimilating it to the condition of tragedy (Farrell 127-8). In Scott’s novel, the revolution creates then a threatening aftermath since it is conceived as a mechanism that has dispossessed the old nobility of its power and given it to the ingratiating upstarts (Farrell 127). Heathcliff, on the other hand, belongs to the modern idealization of order, which is characterized by a functional differentiation instead of an ontic one. This new understanding of the individual results in a new understanding of society, the society of mutual benefit, whose functional differentiations are contingent and whose members are fundamentally equal (Taylor *Modern* 18).

5.5.2 Catherine and Matilda: Images of Female Power

Many critics will argue that the true anomic force in *The Monk*, the most powerful – and subversive – character, is not really Ambrosio but Matilda. Matilda is indeed one of the most powerful and articulated female characters of romantic fiction in the eighteenth century, and it is precisely her power and self-confidence that enlists the sympathy of the reader. Although at the end of the novel we learn that she is a kind of demon, a disciple of the devil, as a “woman,” she differs radically from the sentimental feminine woman so typical in Radcliffe’s novels. When she appears for the first time disguised as Rosario, a familiar motif in Shakespeare’s plays, she seems delicate, modest and a highly effeminate novice. However, this also evidences “her otherness, liminality and sorcery” (Groom xxviii).

The sudden revelation of her sex suggests the beginning of a breakdown of the orthodox construction of gender, subverting the opposition between a patriarchal masculinity and a domestic and passive femininity (Ellis 86-7). Her subversive potential is in fact disclosed from the moment she enters the monastery, which is a homosocial world, to achieve her erotic desires for Ambrosio, an abbot. This reveals her strong personal initiative, a rare quality in the female characters of sentimental fiction. When she appears “in all the pomp of beauty, warm, tender and luxurious” (66), Matilda arises in Ambrosio “lust-exciting visions” (66). Popular medieval literature had always portrayed monks and nuns as depraved individuals. In the eighteenth century, the prevalent thought was that it was unnatural to lock women away because it led to “unnatural” sexual practices (Goulbourne xix).⁵⁶ As Ellis has argued, Matilda surpasses the artificial construction of femininity which she obeyed when she was Rosario, as if her purpose was to expose the artificiality of gender identity (Ellis 87):

But a few days had past, since She appeared the mildest and softest of her sex, devoted to his will, and looking up to him as to a superior Being. Now She assumed a sort of courage and manliness in her manners and discourse but ill calculated to please him. She spoke no longer to insinuate, but to command. (178)

In the case of Catherine, her subversive potential is highlighted in her pseudo-marriage with Heathcliff, which constitutes a negation of the traditional patriarchal family. However, this subversion is somehow frustrated when she decides to marry Edgar Linton and enters the social game. Catherine reconciles her sexual desire for Heathcliff towards a more appropriate prototype, that of Edgar Linton, a civilized man who belongs to the upper social class. In the Gothic convention, however, the heroine frequently insists in marrying the man she loves, no matter his social or economic status, as it is the case with Agnes and Don Raymond. Catherine’s reconciliation of desires hinders two of the

⁵⁶ There is indeed a long tradition of quasi-pornographic novels set in convents, which are supposed to be places of celibacy and self-denial, but which are charged with sexual and erotic fantasies. This tradition includes Jean Barrin’s *Venus dans le Cloître, ou la Religieuse en Chemise*, published in 1719, which advocates for sexual libertinism, sacrilege and lust; Gervais de La Touche’s *Le Portier des Chartreux* (1745), which is the story of the sexual initiation of a young nun by a more experienced one; and Diderot’s *La Religieuse*, in which the young and inexperienced Suzanne is forced to take vows and ends up in a convent whose Mother Superior tries to have lesbian encounters with her.

greatest transgressions of the Gothic novel: miscegenation, that is, the anti-natural mixture of opposites which should be kept apart; and, of course, incest, the also anti-natural mixture of that which is the same.

In her book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler theorizes the concept of performativity. According to Butler, there is not a coherent and stable gender identity. On the contrary, gender is “a stylized repetition of acts [...] which are internally discontinuous” so that “the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief” (179). Hence, to say that gender is performative is to argue that gender is “real only to the extent that it is performed.” Butler then sees gender as a play that has to be rehearsed, and we, the actors, make the play a reality through repetition. Matilda has fully grasped the performative nature of gender and she plays with it whimsically, assuming “a sort of courage and manliness in her manners and discourse” to seduce Ambrosio.

The American poet, Anne Sexton, expresses very clearly this idea of performativity in her poem, “Self in 1958.” In this poem she dramatizes “a fracturing of identity into performative self and a wry skeptical observation of that performance” (Morris *Literature* 154). This is also related to Kristeva’s notion of identity as essentially imitative, learning to perform a role, to parody, and to adopt a mask. I think we can apply to the powerful character of Matilda and even to Catherine what Morris says about the writings of Sexton and Plath, that they seem to operate “across the boundary site where a self constructs self as a voice or performance,” and yet it retains a “comic cynicism” towards that construction of identity (154). Indeed, Catherine, like Matilda, after her five weeks stay at Thrushcross Grange, has learned how to perform the role of the feminine coquette:

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks: till Christmas. By that time her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily; so that, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there 'lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in. Hindley

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

lifted her from her horse, exclaiming delightedly, “Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely have known you: you look like a lady now. Isabella Linton is not to be compared with her, is she, Frances?” (51)

Although she has truly mastered how to wear the mask of lady and mistress, her true nature sparkles in her eyes:

I removed the habit, and there shone forth beneath a grand plaid silk frock, white trousers, and burnished shoes; and, *while her eyes sparkled joyfully when the dogs came bounding up to welcome her, she dared hardly touch them lest they should fawn upon her splendid garments.* She kissed me gently: I was all flour making the Christmas cake, and it would not have done to give me a hug; and then she looked round for Heathcliff. (51)

For the theatrical Matilda and Catherine, gender and identity is then foregrounded as a carnival process of masking and acting. When Matilda – disguised as Rosario – reveals her true sexuality to Ambrosio, she uses language (“I am a Woman!”) and, when Ambrosio refuses to conceal her secret and to allow her to remain in the abbey, Matilda threatens to stab herself: “The Friar’s eyes followed with dread the course of the dagger. She had torn open her habit, and her bosom was half exposed” (51). Matilda employs then not only language but also her breast, which is “only one of many powerful and eloquent female breasts in the novel” (Ellis 87). This relates to Kristeva’s argument that signification requires both the semiotic and symbolic, as there is no signification without some combination of both. Catherine is equally conscious of her transmutation into “Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger” (125). She confesses to Nelly that in this this role she feels as “an exile, and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world” (125). This condition is reflected in her debilitated state and in her hectic desire to recover her savage childhood with Heathcliff:

Oh, I’m burning! I wish I were out of doors! I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free; and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed? Why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I’m sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills. (126)

Catherine even rejects to enter into the symbolic stage since she no longer recognize her own reflection in the mirror; she does not identify herself as that “Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange:”

“Don’t *you* see that face?” she inquired, gazing earnestly at the mirror. And say what I could, I was incapable of making her comprehend it to be her own; so I rose and covered it with a shawl. “It’s behind there still!” she pursued, anxiously. “And it stirred. Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I’m afraid of being alone!” (123)

Emily Dickinson’s poem, “One need not be a chamber to be haunted,” is especially accurate here since Catherine is being haunted by her past self. Her marriage to Edgar Linton confines her within the genteel and domestic space, and the ending of her particular Gothic plot involves her imprisonment in increasingly restricted spaces: the house, her room, and finally her body or “this shattered prison” from which she desires to escape (Pykett 77).

Kristeva calls the combination between symbolic and semiotic modalities of language intertextuality. In the same way, for Irigaray, there is no way of figuring the female body outside the symbolic order because there is no other language available. Ambrosio is then mesmerized by the sexuality of Matilda’s body:

Oh! That was such a breast! The Moon-beams darting full upon it, enabled the Monk to observe its dazzling whiteness. His eye dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beauteous Orb. A sensation till then unknown filled his heart with a mixture of anxiety and delight: A raging fire shot through every limb; The blood boiled in his veins, and a thousand wild wishes bewildered his imagination. (51-2)

For Ellis, the strong and “monstrous” figure of Matilda “is reminiscent of misogynist constructions of femininity” and that her seductive powers invoke the misogynist ideology of women’s voracious sexuality and proclivity to carnal pleasure (Ellis 87). This idea has some sense especially if we think that at the end of the novel Matilda, in a second process of self-revelation, reveals her true nature, that of enchanter and devil-woman. I think, however, that Matilda represents a subversive model of femininity, one which is not passive and submissive, but active, confident and full of determination, qualities very uncommon in Radcliffe’s heroines, for example. She is undoubtedly one of the most

powerful characters in English literature and many critics and readers have been disappointed by her disclosure as Devil at the end of the novel.

And yet, despite her apparent submission to social conventions, Catherine is not fully domesticated by marriage. After her death, she lives on as a ghostly child who is bold enough to perturb the sleep of a modern and strange man, Lockwood, who has invaded her bedroom and scrutinized her diary to get glimpses of her personal history. In a scene in which the limits between subjective and objective reality are blurred, Catherine's ghost grasps Lockwood's hand with "a little ice-cold hand" (23). According to Armstrong, "such encroachment by a female upon the male consciousness turns the room into something resembling the scene of rape, only here the features of aggressor and victim are grotesquely confused along with the features of gender" (180). Thus, the illicit bond between Catherine and Heathcliff is what disturbs Lockwood's sleep.

This irruption, in turn, compels him to ask about the history of sexual relations of the house that signals Catherine's bond to Heathcliff as the triggering event of all the other disruptions in the house (Armstrong 179). Armstrong reminds us that such illicit desire is also "the ultimate truth" in both *Jane Eyre* and *Vanity Fair* (Armstrong 178). At the day of her wedding, Jane discovers that Rochester is already married to a madwoman and that this marriage was based on money and lust, and Becky's subversive sexual behaviour makes her seduce the husband of her friend, Amelia. Catherine, Jane Eyre and Becky Sharp not only bring disorder into the domestic domain, "they also give it female form" (Armstrong 183). Both Catherine and Matilda are images of female power; however, it is a power which can find no channel in the social world of both novels. Their power is more transcendental than material (Pykett 91).

5.5.3 The Gothic as a Release from Historical and Political Compulsion

The Gothic not only offers a representation in fiction of the social and political reality but also of hidden or inaccessible realities such as psychological interiority, sexual depravity, usurpation, pornographic violence, supernatural events, and ethnical otherness. This perfect orchestration of Gothic themes is above all a translation (or even a release) from historical and political compulsion. Duncan has suggested that this subversive unrest stands in ironic complicity with the allegorical scheme of which he is a symbol, i.e. with

the social and political background of the plot. In this sense, *Wuthering Heights* gives an interesting turn to this idea since Heathcliff's insurrection takes place through the appropriation of the normative conventions that at first went against him. Indeed, Fredric Jameson reads Heathcliff as an "actantial locus" whose aging "constitutes the narrative mechanism whereby the alien dynamism of capitalism is reconciled with the immemorial (and cyclical) time of the agricultural life of a country squirehood" (114). When critics appeal to the archetype of the "Byronic hero" to depict him, they are downgrading his particular historical significance in favor of a cliché of literature. I will develop Heathcliff's relation to history in the chapter "*Wuthering Heights* and *Shirley*: Condition of England Novels." According to Schmitt, the Gothic dramatizes "the shock of the new as well as the shocking persistence of the old" (Schmitt 306), and Heathcliff is undoubtedly the shock of the new in *Wuthering Heights*.

Heathcliff does not try to recover the anti-social and primitive community that he shaped with Catherine through a direct confrontation against the political and social institutions that tyrannically imposed on them, like matrimony, patrimony and the laws of inheritance. On the contrary, his target is to abolish the traditional community through the usurpation and dominion of the normative conventions (marriage, inheritance, etc.) that form this community, since only if he masters the rules of the game he will be able to prove the deficient and despotic character of these rules. That is to say, only *inside* this community and *with* its own rules will Heathcliff be able to defy it. This insurrection is then more subtle and elusive than the one we find in *The Monk*, since it is paradoxically sustained by a legalistic focus.

If Heathcliff is indeed a Byronic hero, he is one with a superior capacity to manipulate social institutions than Byron's heroes have. What makes his treatment of Isabella, his son and Cathy so horrendous is the legality which protects him, and even when he *does* break the law, no disciplinary force can punish him since he masters the law effectively and precisely; thus, he bribes the lawyer, Mr. Green, so that Edgar Linton should not be buried besides his wife, though he does not achieve this: "[...] for at dinner-time appeared the lawyer, having called at Wuthering Heights to get his instructions how to behave. He had sold himself to Mr. Heathcliff: that was the cause of his delay in obeying my master's summons" (284). He also bribed the sexton to remove one side of Catherine's coffin and one side of his so that they can decompose together:

“I’ll tell you what I did yesterday! I got the sexton, who was digging Linton’s grave, to remove the earth off her coffin lid, and I opened it. I thought, once, I would have stayed there: when I saw her face again - it is hers yet! - he had hard work to stir me; but he said it would change if the air blew on it, and so I struck one side of the coffin loose, and covered it up: not Linton’s side, damn him! I wish he’d been soldered in lead. *And I bribed the sexton to pull it away when I’m laid there, and slide mine out too*; I’ll have it made so: and then by the time Linton gets to us he’ll not know which is which!” (288, emphasis added)

Brontë demystifies the egotism and narcissism of the Byronic hero not by departing from institutional norms but by working in accord with them (Elfenbein 156).

5.6 Conclusion

If, as Hélène Moglen has argued, “from its inception, the novel has been structured not by one but by two mutually defining traditions: the fantastic and the realistic,” Emily Brontë’s most acute achievement has been the transfiguration of generic conventions (1). We have seen that *Wuthering Heights* deconstructs the opposition between Gothic and domestic novels by showing how the domestic realm is disrupted by extreme violence, revenge, replacement and subrogation, incarceration, insanity or even the supernatural. We also find disruptive characters and powerful and subversive female characters. According to Donna Heiland, while we can endlessly – and perhaps uselessly – discuss whether the Brontës “domesticate the Gothic or Gothicize the domestic” the true thing is that the combination of the Gothic and the domestic is essential here (Heiland 115).

Heathcliff, like Ambrosio, is an “uneasily bifurcated character” (Heiland 116). Like Jane Eyre, Heathcliff is an interloper in his first home. He is an uncanny presence in *Wuthering Heights* even when he becomes its master. He is related to forces that in Gothic fiction implicate a disruption of civilized society. This disruption can be understood in terms of race and ethnicity – like Father Schedoni in Radcliffe’s *The Italian*, Heathcliff is “dark almost as if it came from the devil” and, like the fortune-teller in *The Monk*, he is called a gypsy several times (Heiland 117), or in social terms – the first information that we have of him is that he was found as a vagabond in the streets of Liverpool and, besides, he is once called “beggarly interloper.” Heathcliff’s uncanny influence results less from this racial, ethnical and social portrait or from his overt violence and aggressiveness than

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

from “the consistently and quietly unsettling force of his presence” (117). In reduplicating the Gothicism of his own life by imposing similar experiences on Hareton, Heathcliff does not so much disrupt things as show how fragile they were in the first place.

Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel

Chapter 6

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

“So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
Farewell remorse; all good to me is lost.
Evil, be thou my good.”

(John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV. 108-110)

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to employ Lord Byron’s poem, *Manfred*, as a literary context which can, both formally and thematically, illuminate *Wuthering Heights*. This chapter is strategically placed here since I think it is important to see the evolution from Lewis’ *Ambrosio* to Byron’s *Manfred* and, finally, to Brontë’s *Heathcliff*. In fact, critics have seen *Ambrosio* “as an early type of the appalling genius later developed by Byron in *Manfred*” (Groom, xxv). Byron was indeed an insatiable reader of Gothic novels. He expressed admiration for *The Monk*, Schiller’s *Ghost-Seer*, *Frankenstein*, and *Vathek*; Gothic novels that include complex narrative structures, supernatural events, and sharp scenes. It is no secret that the Brontës were strong admirers of Byron. However, I justify my choice of *Manfred* as literary context for *Wuthering Heights* not only on the basis that the Brontës were deeply acquainted with Byron’s poems, but also because both Byron and E. Brontë experienced a literary fascination with Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, a great

influence for both. My contention is that both *Manfred* and *Wuthering Heights* possess an epic-dramatic component that goes back to Milton's masterpiece. Indeed, I think that one of the most unique qualities of the novel is what Muriel Spark calls a "pure drama of emotions" (267). Although my main objective is to analyze the parallels between *Manfred* and Brontë's novel, I will also enrich this comparison with other poems which were probably known by the Brontës, especially with Keats' masterpiece, *Lamia*, which portrays the mystical component which accompanies a community of lovers. It is worth quoting here David Cecil's claim that *Wuthering Heights* is "pure dramatic poetry" (183):

It is as though Emily Brontë's plot, gathering momentum from the passion stored within it, suddenly leaves the ground in an astonishing flight of poetical invention. This kind of poetry, pure dramatic poetry, is very rare among novelists; only Dostoevski has it to anything like the same degree. To find a parallel in English we must leave the novel and go to Shakespeare himself; to Lady Macbeth's blood-haunted sleep-walking, to Desdemona singing the songs of her childhood as she undresses for death. (183)

In his book, *Les Soeurs Brontë* (1910), Ernest Dimnet remarks:

One realizes that it is wrong to *Wuthering Heights* to call it a novel. It is a sort of Homeric poem where all the details are true, but in which, however, there is perceived something unreal. The truth, but not of this world. That is the fault in the book, a lack of equilibrium and harmony, something troubling like a dream or, too often, a nightmare. But this is also its magic. Emily has had the unusual power to believe herself and to make us believe in characters and events of which a fifteen-year-old boy could demonstrate the impossibility. (qtd. Spark and Stanford 235-6)

Similarly, Virginia Woolf said of *Wuthering Heights* that "is a more difficult book to understand than *Jane Eyre*, because Emily was a greater poet than Charlotte."⁵⁷ In his collection of critical essays, *Novelists and Novels*, Harold Bloom makes an interesting observation:

Wuthering Heights seems to me a triumphant revision of Byron's *Manfred*, with the revisionary swerve taking Emily Brontë into what I would call an original gnosis, a

⁵⁷ Woolf, Virginia. *The Common Reader*. South Australia: The University of Adelaide. 2015. <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91c/chapter14.html>

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

kind of poetic faith, like Blake's or Emerson's, that resembles some aspects (but not others) of ancient Gnosticism without in any way actually deriving from Gnostic texts (Bloom 132).

But of course, if *Wuthering Heights* is like *Manfred* it is because Heathcliff is like Manfred himself: "*Wuthering Heights* is *Manfred* converted to prose romance, and Heathcliff is more like Manfred, Lara, and Byron himself than is Charlotte Brontë's Rochester" (Bloom 134). Dante Gabriel Rossetti said of Brontë's novel that "it is a fiend of a book, an incredible monster, combining all the stronger female tendencies from Mrs. Browning to Mrs. Brownrigg. The action is laid in Hell, -only it seems places and people have English names there" (qtd. Bloom 133), and Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford state that "*Wuthering Heights* has affinities, not with the early Victorian novel, but rather with the work of great Romantic poets, with Blake, Byron, Shelley, Rossetti" (263). I want to focus then on the poetic quality of the most fervent and elegiac speeches in the novel – we cannot obviate that *Manfred* is a dramatic poem and that both Cecil and Bloom have highlighted the poetic quality of *Wuthering Heights* –, on the intimacy with a rough nature; on the transcendental communities of lovers; on the elegiac mournings; on Manfred and Heathcliff, two fatal heroes; and, finally, I hope to show how *Wuthering Heights* both exploits and criticizes Byronism at the same time.

6.2 Delimitation of the Context

To put *Wuthering Heights* in line with *Manfred* has an important implication: it includes *Wuthering Heights* within the Romantic Movement. Conventionally, the Romantic period in England begins in 1798 with the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, and ends in 1832, with the death of Sir Walter Scott and the enactment by Parliament of the First Reform Bill (Carter & McRae 197). The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* was a literary landmark. In the second edition, published in 1800, Wordsworth included a preface in which he discusses the theories of poetry which were so influential for his contemporaries. This preface has become "the manifesto of the English romantic movement, the signal for the break with the age of neoclassicism" (Wellek 130). In his wonderful study of Romantic poetry in England, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953), M.H. Abrams summarizes flawlessly the chief theses of romanticism in England: 1) poetry is the expression or overflow of feelings; 2) poetry is not opposed to prose but to inexpressive and factual assertions of science; 3)

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

poetry was born out of “primitive utterances of passion which were naturally rhythmic and figurative” (101); 4) Poetry can express emotions mainly by tropes and rhythm, “by means of which words naturally embody and convey the feelings of the poet” (101); 5) the language of poetry is spontaneous and genuine and not an affected and artificial expression; 6) the poet is blessed with a strong sensibility and a susceptibility to passion; 7) the chief function of poetry is to raise and complicate the sympathies and emotions of the reader. These propositions have persisted today as essential parts of an expressive aesthetics (103).

Wordsworth believed that there is a primitive language which is comprehensive to all men, and that often the educated and artificial poet deviates from it (Wellek 134). His objection to eighteenth century poetic diction and his defense of colloquial speech caused great controversy at the time and it was symptomatic of how the poetic devices of neoclassicism had become “outworn stereotypes” (Wellek 130). Moreover, central to Wordsworth’s vision of poetry is the impact of nature on the human mind. He celebrates the spirit of the individual living in communion with nature and away from the corrupt city (Carter and McRae 205). The Romantics created a new response to nature as a source of new feelings and as the grounds of human identity. They felt nostalgia for a lost identity connected to nature. Nature is then part of our moral constitution. The Romantics also modified the classical analogy of art with a mirror and added a significant alteration. The mirror is now reversed and reflects a state of mind rather than external nature (Abrams 50). In this sense, the poet becomes a lamp whose inner light brightens the external world. Thus, Shelley stated that poetry is “the expression of the imagination” and Byron claimed that “poetry is the expression of *excited* passion” (qtd. Abrams 49). Shelley made one of the most convincing defences of poetry:

Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world (Shawcross 179).

According to René Wellek, the Romantic poets “were prophets of a new age” who “were unconsciously contributing to the spiritual and political revolution which Shelley could foresee” (Wellek 129). Poetry acquired a social role and, consequently, was reintegrated

in society and history. Shelley's powerful defense of poetry became the new poetic anthem that dominated the nineteenth century.

Back to the Brontës, it is my claim that there surely is a legitimacy of influence between the Brontës and other *hybrid* Romantic writers who were great poets and romantic narrators at the same time, Sir Walter Scott being probably the most renowned. But not only were they acquainted with these hybrid writers; the Brontës, and especially Emily Brontë, were themselves another important example of hybrid writers. It is unquestionable that *Wuthering Heights* has a strong poetic contamination but what I want to show in this chapter is that: a) the deep structure of the novel is an epic drama whose protagonist is a Satanic and Byronic character; and b) it contains a constellation of themes which can be traced back to the Romantic tradition. To prove this I have chosen not only *Manfred*, but also other poems by Byron (*The Corsair*, *The Giaour*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, etc.); Keats' poem, *Lamia*, and Mary Shelley's last novel, *The Last Man*, works which portray a strong mysticism surrounding the community of lovers.

Although in this dissertation I am not discussing the role of Emily Brontë as poet, I think it is important to give here a few glimpses of her poetry to show how they display an arrogant and brooding poetic voice that reminds us of many of Byron's dark and dazzling characters. Charlotte Brontë was the first to assert that her sister's poems were "not common effusions" and not "at all like the poetry women generally write."⁵⁸ Oscar Wilde describes Brontë's poems as "instinct with tragic power and quite terrible in their bitter intensity of passion, the fierce fire of feeling seeming almost to consume the raiment of form [...]" (qtd. Gezari *Last Things* 11). In "A Day Dream," a solitary dreamer finds a world of "A thousand thousand gleaming fires" and "little glittering spirits" promising him happiness. Brontë emphasizes the outcast nature of the dreamer since the community has rejected him. Brontë's day dreamer resembles Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, who is also an unfamiliar and disruptive presence at a wedding. Besides, Brontë's "thousand thousand gleaming fires" echo Coleridge's "thousand thousand slimy things" which actually are water snakes which the narrator includes among the "happy living things." This captures the gloomy and solitary nature of *Manfred*: "There is a power upon me which withholds,/ And makes it my fatality to live,-/ If it be life to war within myself/

⁵⁸ "Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell," in Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. Ed. Ian Jack. Oxford: Oxford UP. 2008. 361.

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

This barrenness of Spirit, and to be/ My own Soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased/ To justify my deeds unto myself-/ The last infirmity of evil" (I.ii. 91-97)⁵⁹. In "Often rebuked, yet always back returning," we find another gloomy and tortured hero who, like Manfred, finds no comfort in nature:

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading:
It vexes me to choose another guide:
Where the grey flocks in ferny glens are feeding;
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain side.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell:
The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.

The line "The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling/ Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell," echoes Manfred's pessimistic words to the abbot,

Old man! there is no power in holy men,
Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form
Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,
Nor agony—nor, greater than all these,
The innate tortures of that deep Despair,
Which is Remorse without the fear of Hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself
Would make a hell of Heaven—can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense----
Of its own sins—wrongs—sufferance—and revenge
Upon itself; there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self—condemned
He deals on his own soul. (III.i. 66-78, emphasis added).

⁵⁹ Manfred's existentialist statement, "for I have ceased/ To justify my deeds unto myself" resounds and somehow anticipates Levinas's question, "How does Being justify itself?" in *Totality and Infinity* (86). For this philosopher, this is the fundamental question of philosophy.

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

In “The Visionary,” the poet awaits a divine vision whose powers are her “guiding star.” The silence of the night contributes to create a sense of expectation and passion, an excited anticipation of the arrival of “he for whom [she] awaits.” The poet leaves open the identity of the “angel” she is waiting for in a sort of sensuous way: “what I love shall come.” In Brontë’s poems and also in her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, there is an ironic and subtle critique of institutional religion that hints at alternative religious possibilities. They are poems about strong emotions produced in moments of epic crisis, a crisis whose generality encourages existential emphasis (Maynard 205). I introduced these poems here to show how all these Romantic themes were already present in Brontë’s poems before being present in *Wuthering Heights*. Actually, what is unique about *Wuthering Heights* and what binds together – not only Brontë’s poems and her novel but also *Wuthering Heights* and the Romantic tradition – is the proud, pessimistic and melancholy tone of the poetic voice. But I also want to illustrate how the central themes of Byron’s poems – the natural and rough settings; the extremes of feelings and passion; the eroticization of death; the humanized anti-heroes; and their spiritual and intellectual humanity – are themes which also prevail in Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. Byron was indeed the prototype of the Romantic poet and his poems are at the extreme of Romantic individualism. Hence many writers all around Europe were influenced by his poetry and fascinating personality. As it happens with Oscar Wilde, his poetry reflects his own persona and his personal statements are voiced by his own heroes. The term “Byronic” started to be used to describe his melancholy and solitary heroes who challenged social conventions and who were often imitated. Edna O’Brian defines Byronism as a word connoting

excess, diabolical deeds and a rebelliousness answering neither to king nor commoner. Byron, more than any other poet, has come to personify the poet as rebel, imaginative and lawless, reaching beyond race, creed or frontier, his manifest flaws redeemed by a magnetism and ultimately a heroism, that by ending in tragedy, raised it and him from the particular to the universal, from the individual to the archetypal.

(2)

Byron has always been considered to be “a partial inspiration” for Emily Brontë’s “brooding and thwarted hero” (O’Brien 14). Byron’s most clear example of the Byronic hero comes in *Manfred*.

6.3 Nature: “There is a Spirit in the woods”

Byron thought that *Manfred* was “of a very wild, metaphysical, and inexplicable kind” (qtd. Bloom, *The Visionary* 248). When we first encounter Manfred we find him in his castle in the vastness of the Higher Alps. In fact, the opening scene could not be more Gothic: a solitary Manfred in a Gothic gallery at midnight. The second scene takes place out on the cliffs the next morning. Manfred, alone again, makes a powerful soliloquy like Milton’s Satan on Mount Niphates. In this soliloquy, Manfred meditates on the beauty and grandeur of nature but, unlike Wordsworth’s characters, he can find no comfort in Nature’s overpowering splendor:

[...] My Mother Earth!
And thou fresh-breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
And thou, the bright Eye of the Universe,
That openest over all, and unto all
Art a delight—thou shin’st not on my heart.
And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent’s brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom’s bed
To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause?
I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;
I see the peril—yet do not recede;
And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:
There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality to live,—
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of Spirit, and to be
My own Soul’s sepulchre, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself—
The last infirmity of evil. Aye,
Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister,
[An Eagle passes]
Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Well may'st thou swoop so near me—I should be
Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets; thou art gone
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above,
With a pervading vision.—*Beautiful!*
How beautiful is all this visible world!
How glorious in its action and itself!
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mixed essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will,
Till our Mortality predominates,
And men are—what they name not to themselves,
And trust not to each other. [...] (I.ii. 8-48, emphasis added)

His fascination with the Alps is never more explicit as in this passage. And yet, as I have already anticipated, Manfred finds no satisfaction in this grandeur. His erotic trauma tortures and embitters him so much that he tries to escape from this torture in natural and asocial spaces. Manfred sympathizes with this rough nature because he attributes his embittered human emotions to this nature – what Ruskin called “pathetic fallacy.” Nature is also pervasive in *Lamia*, which has a fairy-tale beginning: “Upon a time, before the faery broods/ Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods” (I.1-2). When Hermes gives Lamia human form she goes to Corinth in search of her beloved Lycius and she rests in wild hills and cloudy racks:

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore;
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
The rugged founts of the Peraean rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passionèd
To see herself escaped from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils. (I. 171-184, emphasis added)

The first description that we have of Wuthering Heights is that it is “fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society” and that it is a “perfect misanthropist’s heaven” (1) in which we find a lonely Heathcliff. The name of the house is very revealing and Lockwood offers us a clear description of the harsh climate that surrounds the house:

‘Wuthering’ being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmosphere tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. (2)

One of the most fascinating and unusual themes in *Wuthering Heights* is that its characters, unlike most of nineteenth century characters, find solace and satisfaction in a violent and wild nature. It is worth noting that only Satanic subjectivities find relief in this rough nature. In her famous conversation with Nelly, Catherine tells her that she would be “extremely miserable” in heaven. For Catherine, heaven is on the top of Wuthering Heights, where she enjoyed so many hours of liberty with Heathcliff:

[...] I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. (80)

In her illness, Catherine yearns for her savage childhood in the hills of Wuthering Heights:

[...] Oh, I’m burning! *I wish I were out of doors! I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free;* and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed? why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? *I’m sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills.* Open the window again wide: fasten it open! Quick, why don’t you move? (126, emphasis added)

Her daughter, Cathy, has also inherited the Earnshaws’ delight in a rough and savage nature:

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

[...] That was his most perfect idea of heaven's happiness: mine was rocking in a rustling green tree, with a west wind blowing, and bright white clouds flitting rapidly above; and not only larks, but throistles, and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pouring out music on every side, and the moors seen at a distance, broken into cool dusky dells; but close by great swells of long grass undulating in waves to the breeze; and woods and sounding water, and the whole world awake and wild with joy. He wanted all to lie in an ecstasy of peace; I wanted all to sparkle and dance in a glorious jubilee. I said his heaven would be only half alive; and he said mine would be drunk: I said I should fall asleep in his; and he said he could not breathe in mine, and began to grow very snappish. At last, we agreed to try both, as soon as the right weather came; and then we kissed each other and were friends. (248)

In this sense, Catherine and Heathcliff's prelapsarian Eden diverts from Milton's Arcadian paradise: "A happy rural seat of various view;/ Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm,/ Others whose fruit burnished with golden rind/ Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true,/ If true, here only, and of delicious taste" (IV, 247-251). A rough nature and harsh climates frame Byron's poems and *Wuthering Heights*, giving them a Gothic atmosphere. Brontë's characters are only complete when in fusion with their lovers or, like Wordsworth's poetic subjects, in fusion with Nature, returning its gifts by communing with it: "Let him be free of mountain solitudes;/ And have around him, whether heard or not,/ The pleasant melody of woodland birds" (Wordsworth, *The Old Cumberland Beggar*). As we have seen, the brush-stroke of scenery that we find in *Wuthering Heights* is not achieved by meticulous descriptions of the landscape, but by highly evocative and symbolic images. It is precisely this symbolism – which is so characteristic of her poems – that shows Brontë as a unique nature poet.

6.4 Romantic Love: "I loved her, and destroy'd her"

"Romantic love has no fiercer representation in all literature", says Harold Bloom of *Manfred* (*The Visionary* 135). Strangely enough, Harold Bloom is not taking into account *Wuthering Heights*. In his poem, "The Recluse," Wordsworth states that his function as poet is to "arouse the sensual from their sleep of Death" and he would do this "by words which speak of nothing more than what we are." The extremes of feeling and passion are intensely expressed in both Byron's poems and *Wuthering Heights*. The Giaour offers the most clear definition of love as Byron and Brontë understood it:

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

The cold in clime are cold in blood,
Their love can scarce deserve the name;
But mine was like the lava
That boils in Aetna's breast of flame.
I cannot prate in puling strain
Of ladye-love, and beauty's chain;
If changing cheek, and scorching vein,
Lips taught to writhe, but not complain,
If bursting heart, and madd'ning brain,
And daring deed and vengeful steel,
And all that I have felt, and feel,
Betoken love—that love was mine. (1099-1130)

One of the main themes of Byron's poems was that passionate physical love was vital; that it should not be sanctioned by social conventions such as marriage; that the outside world exerts pressures to constrain it and thwart its development; that these pressures should be fought (Ingham 75). It is exactly the type of passionate love that Paquita exerts upon Henry de Marsay; an infinite and mysterious passion which is compared to the one described in Goethe's *Faust*, in Molière's *Don Juan*, or in *Manfred*:

Whatever the powers of the young man, and his casual attitude to pleasure, and however sated he was from the previous night, he found in the Girl with the Golden Eyes that harem which a woman in love knows how to create and which no man will ever abandon. Paquita was the answer to the passion for the infinite which all truly great men feel, that mysterious passion so dramatically expressed in *Faust*, so poetically described in *Manfred*, and which drove Don Juan to ransack the hearts of women, hoping to find there that limitless thought which so many people in pursuit of phantoms seek, which scholars think they glimpse in science, and which mystics believe resides only in God. The hope of having found the ideal being with whom the struggle might be constant, but never tiring, ravished de Marsay, who, for the first time in many years, opened up his heart. His nerves relaxed, his coldness melted, in the warmth of this burning soul [...] (*The Girl with the Golden Eyes* 130).

Heathcliff and Catherine are also victims of that "Betoken love" that burns and boils like the lava of a volcano. According to Bataille, "the love of Catherine and Heathcliff leaves sensuality in suspension" (Bataille *Literature* 17). Indeed, they only enjoy three intimate contacts in the novel: when they share a bed before the death of Mr. Earnshaw and two violent embraces before Catherine's death: "Heathcliff had knelt on one knee to

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

embrace her; he attempted to rise, but she seized his hair, and kept him down” (158); “An instant they held asunder, and then how they met I hardly saw, but Catherine made a spring, and he caught her, and they were locked in an embrace from which I thought my mistress would never be released alive” (160). Their physical assault and resistance to each other when they meet after Heathcliff’s three-year-absence and Catherine’s marriage to Edgar is intensified by the physical damage they do to each other. Embraces are always fatal in *Wuthering Heights* since they bring the lovers closer to a fusional death. Heathcliff and Catherine feel “imparadis’d in one another’s arms” (*Paradise Lost* IV. 506). As Bataille puts it, “the isolated being loses himself in something other than himself” (*Bataille Literature* 26). I think that Byron’s Satanic heroes and Catherine and Heathcliff result so fascinating precisely because they are so passionate in their search for an infinite passion.

Likewise, Manfred tortures the reader by identifying his relationship with Astarte as the “core of my heart’s grief” but he never discloses the exact nature of her suffering and death. We know, however, that Manfred is related to Astarte by blood. As Frederick Garber puts it, theirs is a narcissistic incest since Manfred describes Astarte as being almost his double both physically and internally:

She was like me in lineaments – her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But soften’d all, and temper’d into beauty;
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe: nor these
Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
Pity, and smiles, and tears – which I had not;
And tenderness – but that I had for her;
Humility – and that I never had.
Her faults were mine – her virtues were her own –
I loved her, and destroy’d her! (II.ii.105,117).

Byron sought his soulmate in blood relatives, “passions by which he would be thrown into ‘convulsive confusion’” (O’Brien 10). In his other poem, *The Bride of Abydos*, he narrates the doomed passion of Princess Zuleika and her half-brother Selim. In this case, Byron yielded to the pressures of society and agreed to remove the taboo of incest by

making them cousins (O'Brien 88). In contrast, biology does not determine the love between Heathcliff and Catherine and sexual transgression does not haunt them. Critics, however, have insisted in seeing Brontë's debt to Byron conveyed in the theme of brother-sister love "as a holy bond in an unholy world" (Davies *Emily Brontë* 24). When Nelly returns to the house after having been expelled, she hears that Heathcliff and Catherine have suddenly become "very thick" (36). This is indeed the representation of the relation between Eros and Psyche, who are frequently represented as embracing or gazing each other. This image captures the childlike unconscious state of both infant innocence and sexual unconsciousness (Doody, *The True Story*, 364).

Their symbolic incest is even more shocking than the real incest of the relation between Manfred and Astarte because "it is not conditioned by ties of blood" (Elfenbein 154): "It is as if the only true incest in the novel involves relations between selves that resemble one another not from mere heredity, but from deeper bonds" (Elfenbein 154).⁶⁰ Catherine describes her relation to Heathcliff in a significant way:

I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it. (82)

Catherine's "I *am* Heathcliff" is one of the most memorable avowals of love in literature. Even today readers are elated and overcome by the metaphysical dimension of this powerful statement, together with its innocence and authenticity. It is in this beautiful and outstanding speech that the novel reaches its climax of poeticity. These expressions of bounding are also found in Keats' *Lamia*, where the young Corinthian Lycius adores and prays to her beautiful Lamia: "Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see/ Whether

⁶⁰ In "A Fresh Approach to *Wuthering Heights*," Q.D. Leavis argues that Heathcliff was actually Mr. Earnshaw's illegitimate son and Catherine's half-brother. This would explain the natural sympathies between the children and why Catherine never considers Heathcliff as a potential husband; it would also explain why all the children share the same bed at the Heights till they reach adolescence (qtd. Bloom, *Blooms Guides* 46).

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

my eyes can ever turn from thee!/ For pity do not this sad heart belie – Even as thou vanished so I shall die” (I. 257-259) and in Shelley’s *The Last Man*, where Raymond, maybe the most Byronic character in the novel, avows his love for Lionel’s sister, Perdita:

I do not deny that I have balanced between you and the highest hope that moral men can entertain; but I do so no longer. Take me – mould me to your will, possess my heart and soul to all eternity. If you refuse to contribute to my happiness, I quit England to-night, and will never set foot in it again. (*TLM* 68)

Catherine’s declaration of love is more transgressive than Jane Eyre’s conventional assertion that Rochester is her “whole word; and, more than the world.” Whereas Charlotte Brontë wrote of unsatisfied desire, Emily Brontë represents the fulfillment of desire... and the unsatisfactory character of such fulfillment (Gezari 219). Her characters are always driven and dominated by the Romantic *Sehnsucht*, a craving for what is inaccessible and impossible, what goes “beyond the ‘little death’ of sexual gratification to the climax of the greater Death” (Gezari 219). Desire and forbidden desire engulf her characters. For Catherine, Heathcliff is an extension of her own being. Her statement that if Heathcliff would disappear, she would exist without an existence beyond her own is the novel’s boldest metaphysical predicament (Gezari 132). From her point of view, her marriage to Edgar Linton is not incompatible with her relationship to Heathcliff, since marriage is for her just a social and economic contract. As Gezari puts it, in the novel, “the pervasive vital principle that keeps the individual soul not just from dying but from being isolated and self-contained, adrift in an alien universe, is given human form” (Gezari 132-133).

Manfred and Astarte’s incestuous love would transgress implicit moral and social laws. This is probably why Manfred asserts that he has destroyed Astarte:

I loved her, and destroy’d her!
[...]
Not with my hand, but heart – which broke her
Heart –
I gazed on mine, and wither’d. I have shed
Blood, but not hers – and yet her blood was shed –
I saw – and could not stanch it. (II.ii.117-121)

Thus, Astarte dies by looking into Manfred’s heart. Her heart “gazed on mine and wither’d.” Heathcliff, on the contrary, blames Catherine for having broken *his* heart since,

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

in having betrayed herself, she has broken her heart and, consequently she has broken also his:

I have not broken your heart – *you* have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me that I am strong. *Do* I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you - oh, God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave? (161)

Heathcliff's claim, "would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?" echoes Byron's immolation in his poem, *The Dream*, "he had ceased/ To live within himself; she was his life,/ The ocean to the river of his thoughts" (29-31). Manfred's avowal that it is "[t]he deadliest sin to love as we have loved" (II.iv.124) is perhaps the most exploited Romantic dictum and death is the only possible consummation of this love.

In his *Philosophy of Composition*, Edgar Allan Poe rightfully summarized one of the most poetical leitmotifs in universal literature: "The death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover." The death of Astarte is a poetical representation not only of the death of Manfred's sister-beloved, but the death of an idea, an obsession, even an ideology (McGann 64). Astarte is Manfred's homunculus, his imagination and Manfred's triumph is his own death, a sign that it is possible to live without the Romantic tropes of living and loving which Manfred names, meaningfully, Astarte (64). The longing for a return of the dead will dominate Heathcliff and Manfred's lives after the deaths of their beloveds. Both of them enact an active denial of the power of death. Like the narrator of *Childe Harold*, Manfred and Heathcliff are stuck in a kind of death-in-life in which they can find no hope or meaning. Byron was himself fascinated with the interaction between love and knowledge and the Faustian idea that the possession of knowledge can distance one from love (Tovey 101). Thus, what he asks to the spirits is self-forgetfulness, that is, "to withdraw myself from myself" and to lose himself in nature. In *Lamia*, it is also knowledge – or what the poetic voice calls "the touch of cold philosophy" – that breaks Lycius' heart:

'A Serpent!' echoed he; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanishèd:
And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
On the high coach he lay! – his friends came round-

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Supported him – no pulse, or breath they found,

And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound. (II. 305-311, emphasis added)

In *Wuthering Heights*, it is not Heathcliff's knowledge that separates the lovers. On the contrary, it is Catherine's new knowledge about social pacts and laws that creates a barrier between them. This is especially evident in Catherine's attitude towards Heathcliff after her short stay at Thrushcross Grange. When Heathcliff reproaches her that she no longer spends time with him, she callously answers: "And should I always be sitting with you?" [...] 'What good do I get? What do you talk about? You might be dumb, or a baby, for anything you say to amuse me, or for anything you do, either!' (69). Heathcliff realizes of Catherine's alteration and replies: "You never told me before that I talked too little, or that you disliked my company, Cathy!" (69). She coldly ends the conversation with these scornful words: "It's no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing" (69).

According to Gezari, "*Wuthering Heights* isn't just about Heathcliff's reaction to Catherine's death; it is about how he lives his life in relation to her death" (Gezari 113). Manfred and Heathcliff remind us that the most natural human response to the assimilation of death into life is what Bataille calls a "naked anguish," and that guilt and suffering are part of the human condition. Manfred looks for "Oblivion, self-oblivion" (I.i.144) in order to escape from the torments of memory. He pursues this "self-oblivion" by summoning supernatural aid, by attempting to commit suicide and by communing with nature, embodied in the Witch of the Alps. However, he does not obtain it. His last and most desperate attempt is a confrontation with the ghost of the dead Astarte (Rawes 126). Heathcliff, however, searches for self-oblivion through vengeance. Vengeance is indeed what allows him to endure life:

"It is a poor conclusion, is it not?" he observed, having brooded awhile on the scene he had just witnessed: "an absurd termination to my violent exertions? I get levers and mattocks to demolish the two houses, and train myself to be capable of working like Hercules, and when everything is ready and in my power, I find the will to lift a slate off either roof has vanished! My old enemies have not beaten me; now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives: I could do it; and none could hinder me. But where is the use? I don't care for striking: I can't take the trouble to raise my hand! That sounds as if I had been labouring the whole time only

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

to exhibit a fine trait of magnanimity. It is far from being the case: I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing. (323)

Manfred and Heathcliff express this naked anguish in similar ways. Indeed, critics have noticed that Heathcliff's exhortation to the ghost of the dead Catherine echoes Manfred's plea to the ghost of the dead Astarte:

Hear me, hear me –
Astarte! my beloved! Speak to me:
I have so much endured – so much endure –
Look on me! The grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Though lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved (II.iv. 118-124).

These words reverberate in Heathcliff's plea to the ghost of Catherine: "Come in! come in!" he sobbed. "Cathy, do come. Oh, do – *once* more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me *this* time, Catherine, at last!" (27). However, similar as these words might be, Manfred and Heathcliff are not totally identical. The difference between the two can be seen in Heathcliff's "hear me *this* time" (27) and Manfred's "let me hear thee once!" (II. Iv. 121). His thirst of knowledge and his questions to Astarte betray an unacknowledged selfishness: "Am I forgiven?," "Say, shall we meet again?," "Say, thou lovest me" (II.iv.153, 154, 155). For Manfred, his dead lover's presence is not sufficient and he wants the ghost to speak to him. Nevertheless, Heathcliff's relation to Catherine does not require linguistic communication since merely to see her or even feel her would be enough for him (Elfenbein 152):

"Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living; you said I killed you – haunt me, then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers, I believe. I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always - take any form - drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!" (167)

Whereas no reunion happens for Manfred and Astarte, Heathcliff and Catherine's love has been so passionate and fanatical that they can reunite after death – at least in the popular imagination. This is indeed a legendary truth of which even the most popular character in the novel, Nelly Dean, suspects. Brontë is obeying here a Romantic dictum

since Heathcliff's union with Catherine is allowed a spectral existence *only* among the lower class, whose intimacy with the earth seems to allow them more access to the primitive energy of Heathcliff's love (Elfenbein 153).

But the country folks, if you asked them, would swear on their Bible that he *walks*. There are those who speak to having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house – Idle tales, you'll say, and so say I. Yet that old man by the kitchen fire affirms he has seen two on 'em, looking out of his chamber window, on every rainy night since his death [...] (336)

For both Bataille and Hillis Miller, Brontë's religion is fundamentally erotic and her conception of sexuality is so interrelated with death that we cannot imagine another consummation for the love of Heathcliff and Catherine except that consummation which takes place after their death. As Elfenbein puts it, “[n]ext to Heathcliff's love for Catherine, Manfred's love for Astarte seems a poor thing” (Elfenbein 153). The image of the two of them decomposing together in the tomb is, again, another common appearance of Cupid and Psyche. They assure the griever at the site of death that the soul lives on since “Divine Love gives perpetual life to the soul” (Doody, *TS* 365). We cannot know whether Heathcliff and Catherine have actually reunited after death, but what is certain is that Brontë's lovers have resurrected as a legend in the minds of readers.

6.5 Elegy: “I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!”

“If death consort with thee, death is to me as life”

(John Milton, *Paradise Lost* IX. 953-954).

Deliberately or not, Byron's fatal heroes as well as Heathcliff frequently proffer the Romantic caveat with which Henri de Marsay threatens Paquita in Balzac's *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*: “If you are not to be mine alone I will kill you” (111). Indeed, in *Manfred*, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, *The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *Don Juan*, and *Wuthering Heights* an adulterous or incestuous affair ends in separation, a confrontation with a jealous husband, and, finally, in violent death. I want to recover here Poe's claim that “[t]he death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover.” Critics have noticed that the Byronic clichés that the Brontës most imitated were elegies, that is, when a hero mourns the death of his beloved. Elegies indeed might have

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

been quite familiar to them since their mother and elder sisters died when they were very young and they grew up surrounded by graves at Haworth Parsonage (Elfenbein 130). In fact, Heathcliff's fervent mourning is indisputably "the maximum figure of EB's poem" (Staten 164):

the hyperbole, perhaps transcending all other poetic hyperboles that have ever been conceived, almost unbearable to contemplate if one does not come well wadded against the memory of fresh mourning: the image of a person who grieves interminably with all the intensity of the original moment of loss. (Staten 164)

Both Heathcliff and Manfred experience death as a mystic event which they have been awaiting for a long time. Heathcliff senses a change is impending: "Nelly, there is a strange change approaching; I'm in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life that I hardly remember to eat and drink" (323). His greatest wish is to reunite with Catherine in death and he expresses it to Nelly in one of the most powerful and expressive speeches in the novel:

I have to remind myself to breathe - almost to remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending back a stiff spring: it is by compulsion that I do the slightest act not prompted by one thought; and by compulsion that I notice anything alive or dead, which is not associated with one universal idea. I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it will be reached - and soon - because it has devoured my existence: I am swallowed up in the anticipation of its fulfilment. (325)

This discourse is very close to Protestant religious poetry "though Calvin or Luther would have been horrified to contemplate it" (Bloom, *The Visionary* xvii). Lycius defends her love for Lamia in the same profane way as Heathcliff: "How to entangle, trammel up and snare/ Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there/ Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?" (I. 52-54). Likewise, Manfred also experiences a strange feeling of calmness after his reunion with the ghost of Astarte:

There is a calm upon me –
Inexplicable stillness! Which till now
Did not belong to what I knew of life.
If that I did not know philosophy
To be of all our vanities the motliest,
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret, the sought "Kalon," found,
And seated in my soul. It will not last,
But it is well to have known it, though but once:
It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,
And I within my tablets would note down
That there is such a feeling. Who is there? (III.i. 6-18)

Like Heathcliff, Manfred suspects that death is approaching: "My life is in its last hour, -*that* I know, / Nor would redeem a moment of that hour; / I do not combat against death, but thee / And thy surrounding angels [...] (III.iv. 110-113). Their wish to die is an inseparable part of the elegiac mourning. Death is eroticized; the point of departure is imaged as "sexual-spiritual consummation" (Gezari 223). In *Paradise Lost*, Adam's first reaction to Eve's revelation that she has eaten the forbidden fruit and is thus condemned to death is expressed in the following words: "[...] If death / consort with thee, death is to me as life" (IX. 953-954). Tellingly, it is Heathcliff, more than Adam, the one who takes these words to the extreme. In the famous farewell scene, Catherine egoistically enunciates her fear that Heathcliff might cease to mourn her and might find love in another woman:

Will you forget me – will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, "That's the grave of Catherine Earnshaw. I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it is past. I've loved many others since my children are dearer to me than she was; and, at death, I shall not rejoice that I am going to her: I shall be sorry that I must leave them!" (158-9)

The same fear that Adam might forget her is also voiced by Eve: "[...] What if God have seen / And death ensue? Then I shall be no more, / and *Adam* wedded to another *Eve*, / shall live with her enjoying, I extinct; / And death to think" (*Paradise Lost*, IX. 826-30).

The passion they feel for each other is the kind of eros that is always accompanied by death and this is the price that lovers must pay for their transgression. As Staten puts it, "nowhere else in literature is this price paid in a more extravagant fashion than in *Wuthering Heights*" (161). Lisa Wang has found a resemblance between Heathcliff's raving to the departed Catherine: "*do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!" (204) and the language that the speaker of Emily Brontë's poem "No coward soul is mine"

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

uses to describe God: “Though Earth and moon were gone/ And suns and universes ceased to be/ And thou wert left alone/ Every existence would exist in thee” (21-4). This similarity suggests that the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine is equal to the relationship between God and the believer (Wang 75). But Heathcliff’s craving, “I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!” also resembles the eroticized articulation of *The Prisoner of Chillon*’s expressions of suffering and solitude after his family has been martyred:

For I had buried one and all,
Who loved me in a human shape;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me:
No child, no sire, no kin had I,
No partner in my misery;

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida asserts that “*un fantôme ne meurt jamais, il reste toujours à venir et à revenir*” (163). Moreover, “the ghost recalls himself to the living not letting them forget” (*Of Hospitality* 4). In Byron’s poem, *The Gaiour*, the hero is haunted by the image of the drowned Leila, just as Heathcliff was haunted by the image of Catherine everywhere, as he tells Nelly in another extremely powerful moment:

for what is not connected with her to me? and what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped in the flags! In every cloud, in every tree - filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day - I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men and women - my own features - mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her! (324)

We can find the same sacrilegious tone in Heathcliff’s and in Manfred’s elegies: “So much the worse for me that I am strong. *Do* I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you – oh, God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?” (161), says Heathcliff, whereas Manfred’s lament is: “There is a power upon me which withholds, / *And makes it my fatality to live;* / If it be life to wear within myself / This barrenness of spirit, and to be / My own soul’s sepulchre, for I have ceased / To justify my deeds unto myself– / The last infirmity of evil” (I.ii.23-29, emphasis added). Heathcliff prays for Catherine’s apparition as a religious convert: “You know, I was wild after she died, and eternally, from dawn to dawn, praying her to return to me – her spirit – I have a strong

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

faith in ghosts; I have a conviction that they can, and do exist, among us!” (289).⁶¹ In *Manfred*, nevertheless, Astarte only appears because she is summoned by Nemesis, who is obeying Manfred’s orders:

Shadow! Or spirit!
Whatever thou art,
Which still doth inherit
The whole or a part
Of the form of thy birth,
Of the mould of thy clay,
Which return’d to the earth,
Re-appear to the day!
Bear what thou borest,
The heart and the form,
And the aspect thou worest
Redeem from the worm. (II.iv. 84-95)

“No one can mourn as Heathcliff mourns” Staten asserts. If one does not want to betray the dead, mourning *must* be permanent and inconsolable. Heathcliff embodies the trope that represents this extreme form of loyalty (Staten 165). There are two chief traditions of English poetry and “what distinguishes them are not only aesthetic considerations but conscious differences in religion and politics” (Bloom *The Visionary* xvii). One of these traditions is the radical Protestant, and Miltonic-Romantic; the other is the classical and conservative Catholic (Bloom xvii). Like the Puritans or Protestant individualists, both Byron and Brontë broke away from Christianity and formulated personal religions in their avowals of love. This strong individualism began with Spenser and Milton, continued with the chief Romantic and Victorian poets, and is strongly represented by Hardy and Lawrence in the twentieth century (Bloom Xvii).

⁶¹ In his book, *Spirit Becomes Matter: The Brontës, George Eliot, Nietzsche* (2014), Henry Staten states that Emily Brontë’s most breathtaking achievement is “to have conceived, in 1847, a protagonist who is as simply apart from Christian belief and Christian morality as a character from Greek antiquity. Like an authentic pagan, Heathcliff merely despairs in the wake of Catherine’s death, with no thought of any kind regarding transcendence” (132).

6.6 Fatal Heroes: “Evil, be thou my good”

“I would have torn his heart out, and drunk his blood”

(Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 148)

In his wonderful essay, “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” H.P. Lovecraft contends that Balzac had placed the figure of Manfred together with Molière’s Don Juan, Goethe’s Faust and Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer as “the supreme allegorical figures of modern European literature.”⁶² Critics have claimed that the poem’s main originality lies in the importance given to the powers of evil (Joseph 104). But if there is a figure which stands behind Manfred is Milton’s Satan, who is perhaps the greatest of all hero-villains. Shelley gracefully remarked that “[t]he Devil owes everything to Milton” and that whereas Dante and Tasso presented an unsophisticated and vulgar idea of him, “Milton divested him of a sting, hoof, and horns, and clothed him with the sublime grandeur of a graceful but tremendous spirit” (Shelley 390). Thus, Dante’s Satan is portrayed as an enormous monster with three faces and a pair wings attached under each chin:

The Emperor of the kingdom dolorous
From his mid-breast forth issued from the ice;
And better with a giant I compare

Than do the giants with those arms of his;
Consider now how great must be that whole,
Which unto such a part conforms itself.

Were he as fair once, as he now is foul,
And lifted up his brow against his Maker,
Well may proceed from him all tribulation.

O, what a marvel it appeared to me,

When I beheld three faces on his head!
The one in front, and that vermilion was;

[...]

Underneath each came forth two mighty wings,
Such as being befitting were so great a bird;

⁶² “Supernatural Horror in Literature.” *The H.P. Lovecraft Archive*. N.d. Web. 28 March. 2018.

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Sails of the sea I never saw so large. (Inferno. Canto XXXIV)

What this Satan lacks is the great personalities and the depth of pathos of Milton's Satan, Manfred, and Heathcliff. One characteristic of the Romantic period is that the most celebrated poets tried to rival or exceed Milton while also humanizing his Satan.⁶³ Indeed, the Miltonic Satanic influence on Byron's heroes is evident (Bloom, *The Visionary* xxiv). According to Jerome McGann, Milton's influence upon Byron can be summarized in two principal directions. The first one is related to "Byron's Satanism and the poetic tradition of the criminal hero," and the second one has to do with Byron's interpretation and creative use of Milton's life (McGann 19). Byron was indeed fascinated with Satan as a tragic and poetic figure. He expressed such fascination in a letter to Francis Hodgson, written from Ravenna in May of 1821, the same year he wrote *Vision of Judgement*, and *Cain*:

I must remark from Aristotle and Rymer, that the hero of tragedy and (I add meo periculo) a tragic poem must be guilty, to excite "terror and pity," the end of tragic poetry. But hear not me, but my betters. "The pity which the poet is to labour for is for the criminal. The terror is likewise in the punishment of the said criminal, who, if he be represented too great an offender, will not be pitied; if altogether innocent his punishment will be unjust"... Who is the hero of *Paradise Lost*? Why Satan... (qtd. Camilleri 73)

This sympathetic reading of *Paradise Lost* helped Byron to create his own famous criminal-heroes. Byron has been claimed to have brought to perfection the rebel hero, a descendant of Milton's Satan (Praz 63). This type of Satan can be identified in the Earl of Lovelace's portrait of Byron in *Astarte*, where he threw light on the nature of his grandfather the poet:

He had a fancy for some Oriental legends of pre-existence, and in his conversation and poetry took up the part of a fallen or exiled being, expelled from heaven, or sentenced to a new avatar on earth for some crime, existing under a curse, predoomed to a fate really fixed by himself in his own mind, but which he seemed determined to fulfill. At times this dramatic imagination resembled a delusion; he would play at

⁶³ In his essay, "Milton and his Precursors," Bloom asserts that Milton's influence upon the Romantics "become at once their starting point, their inspiration, yet also their goal, their torment" (556).

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

being mad, and gradually get more and more serious, as if he believed himself to be destined to wreck his own life and that of everyone near him. (Praz 63)

Byron's criminal-heroes, like Milton's Satan, are fascinating beings. He does not idealize his Satan but offers a humanized portrayal of him (McGann 21). According to McGann, Byron, like Shelley, made a difference between the divine revolts of Satan on the one hand and Prometheus on the other. His Satanic heroes are "errant on dark ways diverse," since they destroy themselves (23). In his conversations with Thomas Medwin, Byron acknowledges that Milton's great epic stimulates compassion for Satan:

His great epics...prove nothing... He certainly excites compassion for Satan, and endeavours to make him out an injured personage – he gives him human passions too, makes him pity Adam and Eve, and justify himself much as Prometheus does... I should be very curious to know what his real belief was. The "Paradise Lost" and "Regained" do not satisfy me on this point. (qtd. Lovell, *Medwin's Conversations* 77-78)

Byron defended his many dark heroes, like Cain or Manfred, as well as the most fascinating villains of Gothic literature, like Matilda, in the same way that he defended Milton's Satan: all of them seem humanized (McGann 22). In *Manfred* and several other poems of Lord Byron, "Milton helped Byron to explore the nature and extent of his downfall" (30). Similarly, Heathcliff has often been compared to Milton's Satan. In their analysis of the novel in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that despite the lack of explicit references to *Paradise Lost* in *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë's story does dwell on the places and persons of Milton's imagination (253); and Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford contend that Heathcliff "is Byron in prose dress" (40). The first critics of the novel also noticed how the character of Heathcliff is haunted by Milton's Satan; I would like to recall here Whipple's review in the *North American Review*:

He [Heathcliff] is a deformed monster whom the Mephistopheles of Goethe would have nothing to say to, whom the Satan of Milton would consider as an object of simple disgust, and to whom Dante would hesitate in awarding the honour of a place among those whom he has consigned to the burning pitch.

Charlotte Brontë said of him that he "exemplifies the effects which a life of continued injustice and hard usage may produce on a naturally perverse, vindictive and inexorable disposition" (14 August 1848, emphasis added). This description undercuts my claim that

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Heathcliff is a Rousseauian child morally corrupted by ill-treatment and abuse. She attenuates this idea when she argues that a better raising and education would have made of Heathcliff a “human being:”

Carefully trained and kindly treated, the black gypsy-cub might possibly have been reared into a human being, but tyranny and ignorance made of him a mere demon.

The worst of it is, some of his spirit seems breathed through the whole narrative in which he figures: it haunts every moor and glen, and beckons in every fir-tree of the “Heights. (14 August 1848, emphasis added)⁶⁴

The incident with the colt not only shows Heathcliff’s violent and vindictive nature, but also his cold self-control and acquisitiveness: “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” (37). When Hindley hits him with an iron weight, Heathcliff refrains from hitting him back and devises a much more sophisticated vengeance: “had not I prevented it, he would have gone just so to the master, and got full revenge by letting his condition plead for him, intimating who had caused it” (37). This self-discipline and avarice will later manifest itself in his urge to attain property and status as well as in his cold-hearted performance of violence: “He exerted preterhuman self-denial in abstaining from finishing him completely; but getting out of breath, he finally desisted, and dragged the apparently inanimate body on to the settle” (177). According to Staten, “[t]his side of his personality, which is rooted in his earliest childhood, is, along with his devotion to Catherine, the most consistent element of his portrayal” (141).

Like Lionel Verney in Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*, Heathcliff is an outcast whose “chief superiority consisted in power” (*TLM* 14). Like the savage child found by Mr. Earnshaw in the streets of Liverpool, Lionel also wandered “among the hills of civilized England as uncouth a savage as the wolf-bred founder of old Rome,” his only law being “that of the strongest, and my greatest deed of virtue was never to submit” (14). Like

⁶⁴ I would like to highlight here Charlotte Brontë’s use of the words “black gypsy-cub” to refer about Heathcliff. Did she imagine Heathcliff as a black gypsy or did Emily Brontë reveal to her sister Heathcliff’s true identity? We will never know that but what is true is that Charlotte Brontë’s use of these revealing words convey some hints about Heathcliff’s ethnic origins; hints that cannot be obviated. I will elaborate on this issue in the following chapter, “*Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel?*”

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Heathcliff, Lionel is also rejected by the community: “I hated them, and began, last and worst degradation, to hate myself” (19). It is the civilizing influence of Adrian that makes Lionel understand that true power is “not to be strong of limb, hard of heart, ferocious, and daring; but kind, compassionate and soft” (29). For Heathcliff, only the proximity of death and his reunion with Catherine assuage him:

‘Nelly, there is a strange change approaching; I’m in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life that I hardly remember to eat and drink. Those two who have left the room are the only objects which retain a distinct material appearance to me; and that appearance causes me pain, amounting to agony. About *her* I won’t speak; and I don’t desire to think; but I earnestly wish she were invisible: her presence invokes only maddening sensations. *He* moves me differently: and yet if I could do it without seeming insane, I’d never see him again! You’ll perhaps think me rather inclined to become so,’ he added, making an effort to smile, ‘if I try to describe the thousand forms of past associations and ideas he awakens or embodies. But you’ll not talk of what I tell you; and my mind is so eternally secluded in itself, it is tempting at last to turn it out to another. (323)

These powerful monologues by Manfred and Heathcliff echo Milton’s fallen angel:

There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality to live;
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of spirit, and to be
My own soul’s sepulchre, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself —
The last infirmity of evil. (*Manfred*, I, ii, 23–29)

Similarly, Heathcliff says: “So much the worse for me that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you – oh, God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?” (161). Like the speaker of *The Prisoner of Chillon*, these fatal heroes have “learned to love despair.” The critic W.B.C. Watkins has claimed that “passion is always stronger in Milton than reason” and I think that it is because passion is so superb in them that Manfred and Heathcliff are surely two successors of Milton’s Satan. Their misery – like Satan’s misery – consists in having been expelled from the kingdom of light to the darkness of Hell, and in thinking that they can recover that prelapsarian state in which they enjoyed the pleasures of love:

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won't let him sit with us, nor eat with us any more; and, he says, he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders. He has been blaming our father (how dared he?) for treating H. too liberally; and swears he will reduce him to his right place. (20)

As Merchant and Waters say about Dickens' novels, "the much-vaunted Eden of childhood might seem a terrestrial Paradise, but equally may turn into a graveyard of youthful hopes and dreams" (4).

Paradise Lost, *Manfred* and *Wuthering Heights* have as protagonists three Iliadic subjects who have to cope with the pain and loss resulting from an act of disobedience.⁶⁵ But Heathcliff also contains in his character the Achillean hero driven by a sense of wounded merit and the Odyssean hero of skill who undertakes a hazardous journey and returns to find his beloved married to another man (Lewalski 569). But if Heathcliff is an Achillean hero, he is a corrupted one. Like Satan, he claims equality with his sovereign, Hindley ("You must exchange horses with me: I don't like mine"), and his avowal of vengeance is in fact a temptation ("I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!"). As in the Trojan War in *The Iliad*, there is also a Homeric warfare, with single combats (Heathcliff against Hindley; Heathcliff against Edgar Linton), epic boasts and mockery of enemies ("I compliment you on your taste. And that is the slaving, shivering thing you preferred to me!"), and interchange of insults ("flaysome divil of a gipsy, Heathcliff!").

According to Simone Weil, the true subject of the *Iliad* is force and I think that force also plays an important role in *Wuthering Heights*: "Force employed by man, force than enslaves man, force before which man's flesh shrinks away" (Weil 5). In Brontë's novel,

⁶⁵ I want to highlight here that there actually *is* an epic subtext within the genre of the novel. In his preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Henry Fielding offers one of the most illuminating definitions of the hybrid genre of the novel, stating that "a cominc romance is a comic epic poem in prose" whose action is "more extended and comprehensive" and which contains "a much larger circle of incidents," and introduces "a greater variety of characters." Its fable and action is "light and ridiculous" and it introduces "persons of inferior rank, and consequently of inferior manners" (30). Thus, the epic component of *Wuthering Heights* lays in the romantic and vindictive quest of Heathcliff.

as in the *Iliad*, the individual is defined by its relation with force: he can be destroyed, blinded by the force he thought he could control, and hurt by the weight of the force he submits to (Weil 6). Thus, Hindley is paradoxically destroyed by the very force that he exerted upon Heathcliff, Heathcliff is blinded by the force he imagines he can control, and Hareton is hurt by the force that Heathcliff exerts upon him. If there is a particularity about Heathcliff is that he does not exert the force that kills. His force is much more varied in its processes, much more unexpected in its effects, the force that does not kill... yet. This force will possibly and finally kill, or perhaps it sneaks over the individual it can kill (Weil 7).

But this force has the effect of turning a man into a stone. He is alive and has a soul, and yet he is a thing (Weil 7). This is what occurs to Hindley, Linton Heathcliff and Hareton. Force is as merciless to the man who possesses it – or thinks he possesses it – as it is to its victims. It intoxicates the perpetrator and crushes its victim. But the truth is, Weil asserts, that nobody really possesses it (Weil 11). In both the *Iliad* and *Wuthering Heights* “there is not a single man who does not at one time or another have to bow his neck to force” (Weil 11). Achilles himself, the proud and undefeated hero, is desperately crying at the beginning of the poem, since the woman he loves has been taken by another man, and he has not ventured to oppose it (Weil 12). Similarly, at the outset of *Wuthering Heights* we also find a despairing Heathcliff who bursts “into an uncontrollable passion of tears” (27): “Cathy, do come. Oh, do – *once* more! Oh! my heart’s darling! Hear me *this* time, Catherine, at last!” (27).

Back to Milton, there are more echoes of *Paradise Lost* in *Manfred* and in *Wuthering Heights*, as we can see in Manfred’s graven “thunder-scars” (III.iv. 74-75), which are like the “deep scars of Thunder” of Milton’s Satan (*PL*. I. 594). Conrad, the hero of “The Corsair,” is also depicted with exotic and demonic features which “at times attracted, yet perplexed the view:”

Sun-burnt his cheek, his forehead high and pale
The sable curls in wild profusion veil;
And oft perforce his rising lip reveals
The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals.
Though smooth his voice, and calm his general mien,
Still seems there something he would not have seen:
His features’ deepening lines and varying hue

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

At times attracted, yet perplexed the view,
As if within that murkiness of mind
Worked feelings fearful, and yet undefined. (*TC*. I.ix. 203-212)

The serpent Lamia is also related to the Devil: “She seemed, at once, some penanced lady elf,/ Some demon’s mistress, or the demon’s self./ Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire/ Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne’s tiar;” (I. 55-58). Her mutation into a woman is vividly portrayed with devilish and Gothic connotations:

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foamed, and the grass, therewith besprent,
Withered at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fixed, and anguish drear,
Hot, glazed, and wilde, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flashed phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear (I.146-153)

Heathcliff’s façade has also devilish connotations. Mr. Earnshaw depicts him “as dark almost as if it came from the devil” (34) and Nelly frequently remarks Heathcliff’s fierce black eyes, “a couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting under them, like devil’s spies” (56). After his three-years-absence, Heathcliff still retains his “half-civilized ferocity” behind his eyes “full of black fire:”

His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton’s; it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. *A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire*, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though stern for grace. (95, emphasis added)

His very name, “Heath-cliff,” suggests heathen and animistic connotations (210). I want to call attention to the fact that the cliffs – and the Alps – play a significant role in *Manfred*. Manfred is frequently pictured alone in the cliffs and, moreover, he tries to spring from a cliff, but the Chamois Hunter “seizes and retains him with a sudden grasp” (775). The words “heath,” “heathen,” and “cliff” also appear in *Paradise Lost*. The word “heath” appears once: “As when Heavens Fire / Hath scath’d the Forrest Oaks, or Mountain Pines, / With singed top their stately growth though bare / Stands on the blasted Heath” (I. 612-615). Here Milton is comparing his devil-comrades, who are now

condemned, with naked and burnt forest oaks or mountain pines. Milton calls the pagan world, “Heathen world” (I. 375). The connotations of these words are also associated with Heathcliff, who is once called an “imp of Satan” (38).

Heathcliff refurbishes the role of the diabolical self of Gothic tradition suggesting an emanation of the Satanic, “dark almost as it came from the devil,” with a “devilish nature,” a “fierce, pitiless, wolfish man,” a “ghoul” or a “vampire” (210). All these intimations of demonism, vampirism and ghoulishness derive from his merciless vindictiveness and his sadistic pleasure in the suffering of his victims (Paris 68). But Brontë’s demonic hero has a quality that none of Byron’s heroes share, what Efelbein calls “anti-byronic realism” (158). Not only is Heathcliff a “ghoul” or a “vampire,” he also represents “an infiltration of the propertyless into the propertied world” (Gezari 210). A demonic quality also surrounds the spiritual bond of Catherine and Heathcliff. This evil force is however mitigated by the beauty and sympathy which arises from the fact that we have met them in childhood, sharing their sufferings and comforting each other. According to Gezari, Emily Brontë creates an unbalanced ambivalence between the aura of hell that surrounds Heathcliff’s lack of origins and name, which hints at the supernatural, and the little foundling, perhaps Irish, perhaps gipsy, perhaps African, found in the streets of Liverpool and reborn from Mr. Earnshaw’s coat, to whom our hearts tend to empathize (Gezari 212).

The Corsair and the Giaour have exactly the same dark features. The Corsair has a pale face and a high forehead, and, behind his appearance of calm, dark passions are hidden. The frequent change of color of his face astonish the eye which beholds it,

As if within that murkiness of mind
Work’d feelings fearful, and yet undefined;
Such might it be – that none could truly tell -
Too close inquiry his stern glance would quell.
There breath but few but few whose aspect might defy
The full encounter of his searching eye. (*The Corsair*, I.ix.209-216)

They are disruptive beings fated to commit evil and to face damnation: “There was a laughing Devil in his sneer,/ That raised emotions both of rage and fear;/ And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,/ Hope withering fled, and Mercy sigh’d farewell!” (*The Corsair*, I.ix. 223-226). Repentance is never considered by these heretic heroes. Thus, when the abbot tries to persuade Manfred to repent from having summoned “evil and

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

unheavenly spirits/ Which walk the valley of the shade of death” and to reconcile with the “true church,” he refuses: “I hear thee. This is my reply: whate’er I may have been, or am, doth rest between/ Heaven and myself. – I shall not choose a mortal/ To be my mediator. Have I sinn’d/ Against your ordinances? prove and punish!” (III.i. 53-56). Between Byron and God – as well as between Milton and God – there is no mediation. When the angel Abdiel, in Book V, reproaches Satan that Christ was God’s mediator in the Creation, Satan arrogantly replies: “Who saw/ When this creation was? Remember’st thou/ We know no time when we were not as now; /Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised/ By our own quickening power...” (Book V 856-860)

Nelly Dean urges Heathcliff to repent before a minister:

“You are aware, Mr. Heathcliff,” I said, “that from the time you were thirteen years old you have lived a selfish, unchristian life; and probably hardly had a Bible in your hands during all that period. You must have forgotten the contents of the book, and you may not have space to search it now. Could it be hurtful to send for some one - some minister of any denomination, it does not matter which - to explain it, and show you how very far you have erred from its precepts; and how unfit you will be for its heaven, unless a change takes place before you die?” (333)

Like Manfred, he rejects repentance: “Well, never mind Mr. Green: as to repenting of my injustices, I’ve done no injustice, and I repent of nothing. I’m too happy; and yet I’m not happy enough. My soul’s bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself” (333). This strong contention is surely very similar to Byron’s passionate words in the letter that he wrote to Augusta from Venice, in 1819, in which he proudly claims that he repents of nothing:

My dearest Love – I have been negligent in not writing, but what I can say. Three years absence – & the total change of scene and habit make such a difference – that we have now nothing in common but our affections & our relationship. – But I have never ceased nor can cease to feel for a moment that perfect & boundless attachment which bound & binds me to you – which renders me utterly incapable of *real* love for any other human being – what could they be to me after *you*?... we may have been very wrong – but I repent of nothing except that cursed marriage -& your refusing to continue to love me as you have loved me – I can neither forget nor *quite forgive* you for that precious piece of reformation – but I can never be other than I have been – and whenever I love anything it is because it reminds me in some way or other of yourself (from O’Brien 132).

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

According to Edna O'Brien, this is "the deepest testament of his feelings" towards Augusta (O'Brien 132). As it happens with Milton's Satan, there is not a genuine inner change in Manfred or Heathcliff. They are morally and emotionally arrested in their prelapsarian past. Unlike Hamlet, Macbeth, Edmund and Iago, they never reflect about their own utterances and deeds. On the contrary, when they perform their agonistic soliloquies, they either confirm or challenge the cause of their Fall but they never try to make a change in themselves (Bloom *Ruin* 111). They are an eternal poem about loss.

This spiritual and intellectual autonomy, the belief in private judgement in questions of morality and on the inner light of each soul and, above all, the dismissal of any intermediary between a man and his God are the chief characteristics of English religious dissent (Bloom, *The Visionary* xviii). It is in this spiritual autonomy that English Romanticism can be said to have internalized the quest-romance for therapeutic purposes, "because made in the name of a humanizing hope that approaches apocalyptic intensity" (Bloom, *Romanticism* 5). The Romantic poet borrows the patterns of quest-romance and transfers them to his own imaginative life (Bloom 5). He does not simply try to escape from society to find relief in nature; he tries to turn away from nature to what is more essential and vital, within himself (Bloom, 15). Thus, the final vision of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is a homage to the strength of his own imagination:

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine. (XIV. 444-454)

At the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, Milton plays with conventions and substitutes the epic invocation to the Muse with the summoning of the Holy Spirit of God, which "dost prefer / Before all temples th'upright heart and pure" (I.17-18). He is rejecting the ostentatious temples and offering instead his own heart as a much more respectable

dwelling place for God. The spirit of Byron and Emily Brontë – as well as the spirit of Hazlitt, of Blake, of the younger Wordsworth, of Shelley and of Keats – is a successor of the Miltonian spirit, as it can be seen in the obsession of Heathcliff and Catherine with their own individual feelings, in their lack of religious principles (their independent souls seek their own salvation outside the hierarchy of religious orthodoxy) and in their indifference to the social world. In their Romantic quest, these Promethean heroes end up alone, enclosed in their own towers, and victims of a passionate solipsism which suffocates them. The spiritual autonomy of Byron, Brontë, Blake, Keats and the others is an extreme version of Milton's individualistic temper which made him "a church with one believer, a political party of one, even at last a nation unto himself" (Bloom, *The Visionary* xviii-xix).

6.7 Conclusion: "The Tyrant's plea, excused his devilish deeds"

For a fresh reader of *Wuthering Heights*, it is probably not the density of its allusiveness that strikes him. However, as I hope to have shown, it is this allusiveness – whether it is implied, indirect, or hidden – one of the most distinctive characteristics of the text. In fact, covert allusions are the most sophisticated and effective figuration that a writer can use against his or her forerunners (Bloom, *A Map of* 556). I borrow Bloom's original expression about Milton, to say that by "troping upon [her] forerunners' tropes," Brontë enriches her text and makes it the outstanding monument that it is today (Bloom, "Milton and his Precursors," 560). She seems to know that there is no better way to examine and portray the real man than to study his monuments, and *Paradise Lost*, *Manfred* and *Lamia* are just three of these monuments (Bloom, *Romanticism* 15). And yet, by evading explicit references to other authors and works, Emily Brontë could write what Nietzsche called the primordial poem of mankind or, in this case, the primordial novel of mankind (Bloom, *Ruin* 100). According to Macherey, at the heart of a novel, there is some "latent knowledge" or "the unconscious of the work" and we need to account for it (Macherey 92). But at the heart of the novel – and at the heart of Heathcliff – there is also a "modification" which is neither fortuitous nor planned, and this is what makes the work singular (Macherey 50).

We feel a strong attraction towards Heathcliff not necessarily because we identify with him but for the same reason we like Milton's Satan and Manfred: all these hero-villains are awfully fascinating to us because of their "terrible inwardness" (Bloom, *Ruin* 106).

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

We find behind their savageness a self-obsessive subject who is extremely interesting (Bloom, *Ruin* 106). In fact, a common feeling of resentment and bitterness connects Satan with Heathcliff: “What though the field be lost? / All is not lost; the unconquerable Will, / And study of revenge, immortal hate, / And courage never to submit or yield: / And what is else not to be overcome?” (I. 105-109). Heathcliff voices his resentment towards Catherine in a similar manner: “And if you flatter yourself that I don’t perceive it, you are a fool; and if you think I can be consoled by sweet words, you are an idiot; and if you fancy I’ll suffer unrevenged. I’ll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while!” (112). It is the second Catherine the one who establishes the most accurate comparison between Satan and Heathcliff, stressing their common solitude, bitterness and jealousy:

Mr. Heathcliff *you* have *nobody* to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater misery. You *are* miserable, are you not? Lonely, like the devil, and envious like him? *Nobody* loves you – *nobody* will cry for you when you die! I wouldn’t be you! (288)

Both Milton’s Satan and Heathcliff contain within themselves their own hell and their own demons: “Me miserable! which way shall I flie / Infinite wrath, and infinite despaire? / Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell” (*P.L.* IV. 73-75). For Heathcliff, the world without his beloved would be hell: “Two words would comprehend my future – *death* and *hell*: existence, after losing her, would be hell” (149).

I think that we can apply to Heathcliff, Bloom’s superb contention that “Satan does not leave us surprised by sin; rather, we are surprised by Satan, because he is as uncanny as the Yahwist’s Yahweh, or as Shakespeare’s Edmund” (Bloom 108). Heathcliff is the perpetual poem within the novel; a poem of loss. Without him, there would be no *Wuthering Heights*. The novel exists because one day, an old man decided to pick up a child from the streets of Liverpool. Emily Brontë’s novel exists because of Heathcliff. It is this ghostly repetition of Satans which stands behind Heathcliff’s massive figure that gives support to the hypothesis which I have explored throughout the whole dissertation: that the deep structure of *Wuthering Heights* is an epic drama whose protagonist is a Satanic and Byronic character, and that it is by literary means (mainly covert allusions and narrative techniques) rather than by verbal artifice exclusively, that Brontë forces criticism beyond its limits; affords the reader a wide range of perspectives; and hints at a more complete understanding of human nature.

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem

Chapter 7

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

“The justice we do not execute, we mimic in the novel and on the stage.”

(John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, 1865)

7.1 Introduction

“If once the poor gather and rise in the form of a mob. I shall turn against them as an aristocrat.”

(Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, 225)

“A feeling very generally exists that the condition and disposition of the Working Classes is a rather ominous matter at present; that something ought to be said, something ought to be done, in regard to it.”

(Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, 2)

The leading twentieth-century strategy for interpreting and analyzing *Wuthering Heights* has been to recur to “the transcendent mystery of the text” (Kavanagh 3). This critical and convoluted strategy of turning *Wuthering Heights* into a kind of peculiar phenomenon, as

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

a stunning and incomprehensible “cosmic vision,” reaches its essence in Winifred Gérin’s analysis of *Wuthering Heights*:

Concerned with eternal principles of life, death, love and immortality, it has a timeless quality that puts it far nearer to such work as *The Faerie Queene* than to any contemporary Victorian novel. It has no concern for social questions, but is an expression of primitive passions, of the elemental forces in Man and Nature that the author shows as connecting all Creation. Hers is a cosmic vision that has little to do with nineteenth-century materialism. (Gérin 42-3)

It is Gérin’s claims that *Wuthering Heights* “has no concern for social questions” and that the novel is bound only to “the elemental forces in Man and Nature” that I am going to challenge here. Arnold Kettle’s assertion that *Wuthering Heights* is about England in 1847 and his strong statement that “[t]he people it reveals live not in a never-never land, but in Yorkshire. Heathcliff was born, not in the pages of Byron, but in a Liverpool slum” (Kettle 130) are the perfect introduction to this chapter since they are the most precise and forceful claims on the novel’s right to be read as a social novel.⁶⁶ For Kettle, Wilson and Eagleton the conflict of the novel is explicitly a social one and the novel articulates the tensions and conflicts of nineteenth-century capitalist society. Wilson had argued before Kettle that the social turmoil in the period of the Brontës was “far too near for the sisters to have lived the quiet and secluded lives that have been pictured. These events are at least as significant in their background, and as the springs of their emotions, as are the moor and heath” (Wilson 96). Both Wilson and Kettle picture the story of Heathcliff and Catherine as a metaphor of the social struggle of Brontë’s time, with all its brutality and animosity. I wish to place my critical position as fundamentally, and modestly, aligned to that of Eagleton. I agree with his observation that *Wuthering Heights* is an apparently mythical and timeless universe; a symbolic world which is, of course, ideologically based. The world of *Wuthering Heights* is indeed disrupted by internal contradictions (Eagleton *Myths* 97).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ I should add that the label “social novel” is not a conventional critical category but I think this is the category that best encodes my materialist reading of the novel and the four cases of sociological differentiation that Heathcliff represents.

⁶⁷ In *Spirit Becomes Matter* (2014), Henry Staten has contended that class subordination and class movement are highly relevant in *Wuthering Heights*, “but as something so fluid that it loses contact with

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

In this chapter I want to reformulate Fredrich Jameson's powerful statement that Heathcliff is "the locus of history" in the novel and to state that Heathcliff is indeed the displaced locus of *infrastructure*.⁶⁸ His condition of outsider grants him the capacity to integrate four different types of infrastructural alterities in the novel: the proletarian, the colonial subject, the soldier and, indirectly, the woman. All these four representatives of social minorities sustain the bourgeois system. Thus, through the character of Heathcliff, the novel is giving voice to four social minorities. In this novel, the subaltern can and does speak. To this purpose, I have divided this chapter in four sections and, this time, I have carefully chosen three different novels that allow me to read *Wuthering Heights* as a social novel dealing – or not – with four different types of infrastructure. Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* as the core text that best exposes the voice of the proletarian; that best represents "The Woman Question;"⁶⁹ and that would allow me to read *Wuthering Heights* as a "Condition-of-England" novel; *Jane Eyre* is the angle text from which I will read *Wuthering Heights* as a "colonial novel," and William Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon* would allow me to read Heathcliff's untold story as that of a soldier repressed by the social structure. Mine is then a materialist reading of the novel which focuses on contingent historical reasons: the proletariat versus the land-owner; the colonial subject versus the slave-owner; the woman versus the man; and the docile body (soldier) versus the state.

Although Emily Brontë's novel apparently retreats into the private and the familial, leaving social concerns behind, there is an obvious metonymic relationship between family and society, and this is what I will try to analyze in this chapter, focusing on

the friction of history" (134). It is precisely that "friction of history" that is apparently absent in the novel that engages me here.

⁶⁸ I use the term "infrastructure," as it was conceived by Marx. Marx conceived the structure of every society as constituted by two levels: the economic base, or *infrastructure*, which is "the 'unity' of the productive forces and the relations of production" (Althusser 8); and the *superstructure*, which is divided in two levels: the politico-legal (law and the State), and ideology (religious, political, legal, ethical, etc.). Furthermore, my incorporation of the adjective "displaced" refers to the Freudian idea of the symbolic fulfilment of unconscious wishes (*The Interpretation of Dreams* 469). What I want to stress is that Emily Brontë is symbolically displacing the meaning of these subaltern subjects on the figure of foundling found starving in the streets of Liverpool.

⁶⁹ In the section on "The Woman Question," I present feminist readings of both *Shirley* and *Wuthering Heights*. This section, together with the chapter on *Wuthering Heights* and *Pamela*, are the most explicit feminist readings in this dissertation.

questions that have been silenced or taken from granted: Where does Heathcliff come from? Why can't Catherine marry Heathcliff? How does Heathcliff obtain his fortune? What has Heathcliff done during his three-years absence? In other words, what is Heathcliff's untold history? These are insidious questions [*Hinterfrage*], "questions which come from behind, held in reverse, lying in wait, snares" (Macherey 87). Of course, I cannot provide an answer to these questions but I will try to overcome the silences surrounding Heathcliff's history and to analyze him as a roguish hero characteristic of picaresque fiction. I am also strongly indebted to Pierre Macherey, in his outstanding book, *A Theory of Literary Production*. The French Marxist critic contends that the discourse of a text comes from an important silence: "[T]he book is not self-sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by a *certain absence*, without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence" (Macherey 85). Thus, I think it is convenient and legitimate to ask of every text what it quietly implies and what it does not say, "for in order to say anything, there are other things *which must not be said*" (Macherey 85).

My intention, then, is to fill in the gaps – the spaces of time – between the separate events of this skeletal story; to pay particularly close attention to a selection of thematic silences and metaphors which palpitate in this novel; to set the novel in full context; and to shed new, important, and at times unexpected light on the social, political and ethnical issues at play in *Wuthering Heights*. I want to force the text to a *confession*. Emily Brontë's novel relies on the resources of Gothic fiction, melodrama and myth to resolve what Jameson sees as an impasse. Jameson argues that a narrative form is "an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (Jameson *Political* 64). All these aspects would seem to indicate that *Wuthering Heights* can be read not only as a domestic novel, a Gothic novel, or a poem, but also a novel belonging to the genre of social realism.

7.2 Delimitation of the Context

7.2.1 *Wuthering Heights: Condition-of-England Novel*

“Let us first explore the world of those who have nothing” (68) says the narrator at the beginning of Balzac’s *La Fille aux Yeux d’Or*. I think that this is a good beginning to this section. In his groundbreaking *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850: Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley* (1904). Louis Cazamian states that the term “Condition-of-England” refers to the intellectual movement which expressed the social agitation during and after the period of the Hungry Forties (Cazamian 3).⁷⁰ The term was coined by Thomas Carlyle in “Chartism” (1839), where he raised the famous “Condition of England Question:” “What means this bitter discontent of the Working Classes? Whence comes it, whither goes it? Above all, at what price, on what terms, will it probably consent to depart from us and die into rest? These are questions” (Carlyle 2). Condition-of-England novels advocated for a philanthropic reform of English social life, the restraint of violence exacerbated by poverty, and the conservation of a threatened public order. It was both “an idealist and interventionist reaction.” Early Victorian Condition-of-England novels appeared around 1830 and endured until the end of the century. They had a close relationship with political agitation. The social “novel with a purpose” emerged in 1830 until 1850. These novels took as their subject the serious problems which concerned society, discussed them and proposed vague objectives for the improvement of human relations. According to Cazamian, “the novel took on the emotional tone and generous idealism of the age in which dying Romanticism found a new lease of life in political and social aspirations.” In the mid-Victorian period appeared what Cazamian calls “the *roman-à-thèse*,” a judicious and scientific novel which criticized specific abuses.

⁷⁰ There is a great deal of critical exegesis on “Condition-of-England” novels, such as Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteenth-Forties* (1961); James Richard Simmons, Jr.’s article in the Blackwell *Companion to the Victorian Novel* (1999), “Industrial and ‘Condition-of-England’ Novels;” Josephine M. Guy’s *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel: The Market, the Individual and Communal Life* (1996); or James G. Nelson’s article on “The Victorian Social Problem Novel” in Baker and Womack’s *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2002). However, I have mainly relied on Cazamian to introduce “Condition-of-England” novels since I think it is the most comprehensive and informative study on this type of narratives. Though I refrain from quoting extensively, the French critic informs most of this section.

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

Dickens' *Hard Times* (1850) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) are the novels which best exemplify the artistic response to the social agitation of the period.

The emergence of these novels coincided with the accession of the middle class to power and the submission of Parliament to public opinion. Literary realism was indeed the best weapon that social idealists could use to confront these social problems. The social novel fostered realism in English literature since it exposed facts for their discussion. It was experimental and demonstrative, showing the way from experience to principle. Dickens, Disraeli, Gaskell, and Kingsley depicted the social turmoil around them, inspiring sympathy for the sufferers, providing their readers with actual experience and arising social awareness in them. For Cazamian, Disraeli was the only original thinker among these writers. For him, the other novelists assimilated ideas but did not propose new ones. The heroes of their novels are representative of their authors: "[t]heir feelings and reflections as they encountered new areas of society were to be instructive to readers who might undergo similar experiences (Cazamian 7).

Cazamian raises a relevant question to take into account when dealing with social novels: is every novel dealing with human customs a "social novel?"; Is *Pamela* a social novel? As Cazamian puts it, a social novel is a novel which has "a social thesis" and which has as its aim the improvement of human relations: "Central to our study, then, is the pro-interventionist novel in general, and any novel which suggested remedies for the ills of industrial anarchy in particular" (Cazamian 8). Finally, Condition-of-England novelists, such as Disraeli, Gaskell, Dickens, Kingsley, and others proved that literature is not created in a historical void but can reflect and influence social reality. Currently, the value of Condition-of-England novels does not lie in their fictional plots, social analyses or proposed solutions but in the direct observations of industrialism, class and gender conflicts.

As I already explained in the introduction to this chapter, my principal aim in this section is to fill in the gaps of the text and to ascertain Emily Brontë's debt to social realism. I will support my arguments with this specific quotation from *Wuthering Heights*: "He [Hindley] drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead, compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm" (44). This quote hides relevant information; it constructs an ideology which is somehow made silent, but the aim

of the critic is precisely to speak the truth, a truth which, though related to the text, is not the content of its discourse (Macherey 83). Louis Althusser, in *On Ideology*, argues that the State is “a machine of repression” which allows the ruling classes (in the nineteenth century the bourgeois class and the class represented by big landowners) to guarantee their control over the working class, thus permitting the former to subject the latter to a process of capitalist exploitation (Althusser 11).

7.2.2 *Shirley: A Condition-of-England Novel*

Critics have frequently been at odds when dealing with the political agenda of *Shirley*. For this reason, I find it necessary to make a brief outline of the most revealing discussions of *Shirley*. Louis Cazamian defines *Shirley* as “a lyrical love story, and a splendid study of finely-observed manners” (Cazamian 232). For this critic, the novel’s only purpose “is to protest, as *Jane Eyre* had done, against the prudish hypocrisy of a society which forbade the free expression of passion” (Cazamian 232). G.H. Lewes, the Victorian critic, disregards *Shirley* as a social novel and states that “*Shirley* cannot be received as a work of art:”

It is not a picture; but a portfolio of random sketches for one or more pictures. The authoress never seems distinctly to have made up her mind as to what she was to do; whether to describe the habits and manners of Yorkshire and its social aspects in the days of King Lud, or to paint a character, or to tell a love story. All are by turns attempted and abandoned; and the book consequently moves slowly, and by starts – leaving behind it no distinct or satisfactory impression. Power is stamped on various parts of it; power unmistakeable, but often misapplied. Curren Bell has much yet to learn – and especially, the discipline of her own tumultuous energies. (qtd. Linder 71)

In *Culture and Society* (1958), Raymond Williams excludes *Shirley* from a list of mid-nineteenth century social novels and Catherine Gallagher, in her illuminating *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form* (1985), also omits *Shirley* from her list of industrial novels on the grounds that “industrial conflict in *Shirley* is little more than a historical setting and does not exert any strong pressure on the form” (24).

In her essay, “Private and Social Themes in *Shirley*,” Asa Briggs claims that *Shirley* is “the nearest that Charlotte got to writing a social novel, but it is not, of course, a social

novel which falls into the same category as Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* or *North and South* (Briggs 206). Critics have generally tried to minimize the importance of the industrial side in this novel but this does not mean that this side is superfluous or non-existent. Cazamian, for instance, had to recognize that *Shirley* is interesting to the historian: "It describes scenes which make a valuable contribution to industrial history, and it is in itself a symptom of the moral movement of which *Mary Barton* was the most striking outcome" (Cazamian 232); Catherine Tillotson points out that *Shirley* belongs to an intermediate category since, as opposed to *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, it certainly has a "historical" flavour: "Charlotte consulted old newspaper files about the Luddite riots when she was writing *Shirley*; she consulted nothing but her own early memories [...] in writing *Jane Eyre* (Tillotson 93). Terry Eagleton contends that "the novel is much preoccupied with class-conflict" (Eagleton, *Myths* 45); and Simmons states that *Shirley* is both "an historical novel and an industrial novel" (Simmons 346).

Indeed, we must bear in mind that at the time Charlotte Brontë was writing *Shirley*, Elizabeth Gaskell and Dickens were writing novels concerned with working-class people and aiming at widening the readers' social conscience. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Reform movement, Evangelism, Chartism, and the Puseyite movement were common subjects in all the journals. Thus, *Shirley* is, of all of Charlotte Brontë's novels, the one which most adapts to the prevailing mode of writing of the mid-Victorian period. To say that *Shirley* conforms to the category of Condition-of-England novels does not denote that it is better than *Jane Eyre* or *Villette*, but that it should be judged from a different critical viewpoint, one in which the social theme prevails over the depiction of the inner life of the heroine or the Romantic affiliations between the protagonists (Linder 81). In this sense, *Shirley* is much more radical and groundbreaking than the much-admired *Jane Eyre* or *Villette*, and this is the reason why I have chosen *Shirley* as the best angle from which we can consider *Wuthering Heights* as a potential Condition-of-England novel.

To my mind, of all the critics who have tried to read *Shirley* as a Condition-of-England novel, I think that it is Heather Glen the one who comes closer to a more precise explanation. In *Charlotte Brontë: The Imagination in History* (2002), this scholar argues that *Shirley* cannot be totally equated with the Condition-of-England novels with which it is often compared since it is not another "clumsy or ideologically blinkered attempt" to deal with the questions with which novelists such as Gaskell or Kingsley were concerned (Glen 196):

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

The questions with which it engages are distinctively different from theirs. The 'story' to which its absence of 'moral' points is as subversive of that faith in 'progress' which shaped the world of mid-nineteenth-century England as any moral exposure of the consequences of industrialism. It is a 'story' not of progress and improvement, of medical authority and clinical control, but of the hidden, undermining experience of the imperiled body, with its inescapable message of the finitude of earthly life; not of the transcendent hope of an unquestioned faith, but of the open-endedness of unknowing; not of a triumphant project of social construction, but of ultimate impotence. Unsparing, ironic, unillusioned, refusing the consolations of politics or religion, it offers a vision of the nature of the social world that is sharply, suggestively different from that of any other novel published in England in these years. (Glenn 196)

Shirley is the only one of Charlotte Brontë's novels which has a third-person narrator. The narrator is in fact an observer and recorder of events in the novel, a fact that it shares with most social novels. The novel is set in Yorkshire during the final years of the Napoleonic Wars, against the background of the Luddite riots and the paralysis of trade. It depicts a society in deep disorder since the different social units are radically in conflict: workers with employers, the state with the industrial classes, clergy with layman, High Church with Low. Individuals are forced by the normative community to renounce their own inclinations (Bailin 53).

7.3 The Metonymic Domestic Ideology

In his fundamental *The Political Unconscious* (1981), Jameson argues that "all literature, no matter how weakly, must be informed by what we have called a political unconscious, that all literature must be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community" (Jameson 56). In most English novels, the different antagonisms that cannot be resolved in the social world are frequently reconciled in the private world of the family (Gallagher 114). In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Armstrong also links the history of British fiction to the rise of the new middle classes and to the production of the new female ideal. She questions traditional histories of nineteenth century England that separate political and cultural events (9). The way in which the realistic novel connects the private and the public spheres shows the fissure that exists between the two; realistic novels "often display a structural tension created by the simultaneous impulses to associate and to dissociate the public and private realms of experience" (Gallagher 114). Many industrial

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

novelists tried to overcome the dichotomy between individual free will and social determinism by choosing the private world of the family as the perfect setting for their novels (Gallagher 113). Thus, whereas it was difficult for them to imagine an individual trying to overcome the material and psychological constraints of modern society, the family circle seemed the perfect space since it was potentially exempted from those constraints; it was a space in which the individual could succeed. Therefore, the easiest solution for these novelists was to turn from an analysis of public issues to an analysis of private issues (Gallagher 113). This intersection of private and public concerns is explained by Raymond Williams in *The Long Revolution*:

The society [in realistic fiction] is not a background against which the personal relationships are studied, nor are the individuals merely illustrations of aspects of the way of life. Every aspect of personal life is radically affected by the quality of the general life, yet the general life is seen as its most important in completely personal terms. (278)

In *Wuthering Heights* and *Shirley*, the threat represented by the arrival of Industrialism to England is represented by Heathcliff and Robert Moore respectively, two emblems of proletarian otherness. Heathcliff arrives to a family circle, representing larger society, to disrupt it from within. He is generously welcomed by Mr. Earnshaw, who brings him to his home, by Catherine, and, afterwards, by his subrogate, Hareton. This acceptance does not imply a sort of socialist solidarity of the oppressed, but it does suggest that perhaps “one needs to stand somewhere on the margins of power before one can begin to see the working of power as determinate, lopsided and oppressive (as well as constructive)” (Khair 67-8). Robert Moore is also considered an outcast and outsider by his Yorkshire neighbours. He ventures to introduce machinery into the mill in order to save hand labour and to dismiss additional employees. This, Robert thinks, will easily remove the debt of the mill.

In *Claims of Labour*, Arthur Helps argues

that the parental relation will be found the best model on which to form the duties of the employer to the employed: calling, as it does, for active exertion, requiring the most watchful tenderness, and yet limited by the strictest rules of prudence from intrenching on that freedom of thought and action which is necessary for all spontaneous development. (Helps 156)

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

According to Helps and other nineteenth-century social paternalists, society could be improved by replicating the family hierarchy, that is, by using the family as a metaphoric equivalent. Thus, employers and employees will enjoy a productive relationship. If employers could act as kind fathers and workers as obedient children, hostility between the two would disappear together with the extreme poverty and class separation (Gallagher 117). Similarly, Filmer argued that the nation was a metaphoric family of which the king was the father since he was the direct descendant of Adam.⁷¹ Gallagher notices that both the metaphoric social paternalism and the metonymic domestic ideology entail a paradox: society can only be compared to the family only if the family is strictly separated from society (Gallagher 120).

This is exactly what happens in *Wuthering Heights*: the Earnshaws are severely isolated from the incipient industrialization of Liverpool and when Mr. Earnshaw arrives from Liverpool bringing with him a residual element of this city, Heathcliff, he [Mr. Earnshaw] cannot imagine the turmoil that Heathcliff would create in the family. Mr. Earnshaw welcomes this little alien with a generosity that betrays his openness towards difference: not only does Mr. Earnshaw recognize Heathcliff's otherness, he also embraces it. The rest of the family, however, only sees him as a threat to their organic community which constitutes what Tönnies calls a *Gemeinschaft*, whereas Heathcliff, like Robert Moore, is a member of *Gesellschaft*; both belong to the outside world. Robert Moore's disruption does not take place in a family, but in an equally organic community, that of a provincial West Yorkshire. He, an intruding foreigner, destabilizes the organic life of the people by trying to impose the mechanical constructions of the *Gesellschaft*. This contrast between the "real organic life" and the "mechanical construction," which is rooted in German idealism (Schelling, Hegel), has been widely exploited by the English Romantic poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and their likes, and has become "an exacerbated Romantic trope" (Jiménez Heffernan, "Togetherness and its Discontents" 16). This contrast sets up Tönnies' entire sociological axiology:

⁷¹ In *Patriarcha; or the Natural Power of Kings* (1680), the English political theorist, Robert Filmer, relates the origin of political power with the biblical story of the creation of man and argues that there is no possible origin for the legitimate power but the religious patriarchal power. Thus, Filmer makes an analogy between the political and the patriarchal power; an analogy that John Locke would later reject in his *First Treatise* (1689).

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

All kinds of social co-existence that are familiar, comfortable and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* means life in the public sphere, in the outside world. In *Gemeinschaft* we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk better or worse. We go out into *Gesellschaft* as if into foreign land. (18)

Therefore, according to Tönnies, community, like a family, is not an artificial device, but a natural or biological product, whereas society is based on convention rather than concord, on politics rather than custom, on public opinion rather than religion. Society derives from man's calculative and rational will, relies powerfully on commerce and positive law, and is spatially oriented towards metropolitan, national and international life (Jiménez Heffernan, *Community* 19). Going back to Robert Moore, his attitude towards his workers is not that of an affectionate father, and, obviously, they do not behave with him like dutiful children. Indeed, he is the victim of several complots to kill him. Both Emily and Charlotte Brontë, like Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park*, are synchronizing here domestic with broader national conflicts, making it plain that Heathcliff's rebellion is that of the worker who is both physically and spiritually degraded by the working-conditions of nineteenth-century society and that Robert Moore's attempt to impose machinery to the mill finds its parallel in the arrival of the Industrial Revolution to the textile industry, which was the first to employ new production methods.

7.3.1 Heathcliff: A Guest from Industrialism

Heathcliff's Otherness is not just ethnic but also sociological: "whether or not literature reflects society, it is written in that most social of all human creations: language" (Khair 16). It is from his arrival to *Wuthering Heights* that the narrative leads us back to the "origins" of Heathcliff: Mr. Earnshaw picks up starving off the streets of Liverpool a "dirty, ragged, black-haired child" who speaks a sort of "gibberish that nobody could understand (35)" This child will subsequently be baptized as Heathcliff. In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson reads Heathcliff as an "actantial locus" whose aging "constitutes the narrative mechanism whereby the alien dynamism of capitalism is reconciled with the immemorial (and cyclical) time of the agricultural life of a country squiredom" (114). When critics appeal to the archetype of the "Byronic hero" to depict him, they are downgrading his particular historical significance in favor of a literary cliché. For Jameson, Heathcliff is the "locus of history in this romance" (114). As I said

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

in the chapter on *The Monk*, Heathcliff is a byproduct of the emerging industrialism in nineteenth-century England. He is *not* like Bram Stoker's Dracula, i.e. a parasite and a visitor of the past that feeds upon the present, but an unknown and menacing present, the "shock of the new" (Schmitt 306) that threatens to erupt in a stagnated and organic community. Heathcliff is the disruptive agent that transforms a socio-ideological institution, the family, "by the pressures of insurgent capital" (Kavanagh 98).

Condition-of-England novels often depict working-class characters as victims of social conditions and incapable to control their own lives or to make rational choices (Gallagher 16). And yet, these narratives are rarely consistently deterministic since patterns of causality clash with hints of individualism. Indeed, their determinism contradicts a second major tradition that was prevailing in the corpus of industrial novels: "the Romantic and Arminian tradition that insisted on the inviolability of human free will" (Gallagher 16). Heathcliff combines indeed the figures of oppressed and oppressor in his same body. He is degraded by Hindley and forced to work "so hard as any other lad on the farm" (44). He then shifts from rural proletarian to rural bourgeois, cheating Hindley and turning into the owner of the Heights. Heathcliff becomes "a fierce, pitiless, wolfish" capitalist landlord and his next step is to dispossess Linton and Cathy of Thrushcross Grange: "He is associated with lower-class *ressentiment*, and with the disruption of social order and of cultural impediments to gratification" (Kavanagh 29). His free will is limitless.

Heathcliff dramatizes what Robert Moore fears most: a revolution from below. Robert Moore is depicted by the narrator as a "man of determined spirit" (29), who bears "the storm of unpopularity with gallant bearing and soul elate" (442). His nature is that of a selfish capitalist:

And if I stopped by the way an instant, while others are rushing on, I should be trodden down. If I did as you wish me to do, I should be bankrupt in a month; and would my bankruptcy put bread into your hungry children's mouths? William Farren, neither to your dictation nor to that of any other will I submit. Talk to me no more about machinery. I will have my own way. I shall get new frames in to-morrow. If you broke these, I would still get more. *I'll never give in.* (118)

Like Robert Moore's, Shirley's nature is also filled with structural contradictions. Although she is ruling class, she is told that she cannot hope to marry into aristocracy (Eagleton 56). Besides, she represents both ruling class and capitalist entrepreneurship

since half her income comes from owning a mill. Although her attitude to the mill is for the most part aesthetic and self-complacent – she is “tickled with an agreeable complacency when reminded of ‘all that property’ down in the Hollow” (180) – she is however determined to defend her property from the schemes of “the poor” (Eagleton 50): “If once the poor gather and rise in the form of a mob, I shall turn against them as an aristocrat” (225). Shirley’s preoccupation is finely expressed by Carlyle in Chartism: “Chartism means the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad, the wrong condition therefore or the wrong disposition, of the Working Classes of England. It is a new name for a thing which has had many names, which will yet have many” (Carlyle 2).

Heathcliff’s revolution is, however, much more intelligent than the violent upheaval that Robert Moore and Shirley fear so terribly. Heathcliff has tried to beat his enemy at his own capitalist game. According to Kettle, Heathcliff and Catherine’s affinity “is forged in rebellion” (Kettle 133). But this is a particular rebellion; it is a rebellion against the tyranny of the Earnshaws and, if we extrapolate the Earnshaw family to wider national constraints; it is a rebellion against the tyranny and oppression of the emerging capitalism of Victorian society. What Heathcliff does is to use against his enemies their own weapons: money, expropriation, arranged marriages, and inheritance. He de-romanticizes their own values and standards and exposes them in all their crudity. But if Heathcliff is the revolution from below, Eagleton asserts, “he is that revolution gone sour” (Eagleton, *Heathcliff* 20). By taking revenge on the oppressors through the adoption of their own standards, Heathcliff is betraying his humanity as well as reinforcing the effectiveness of these standards. He represents its triumph as well as its contradiction, “its right as well as its left wing” (Eagleton, *Heathcliff* 20). In this sense, Heathcliff is representing an emerging social class, the bourgeoisie.

The middle class had also an ambivalent nature in nineteenth-century literature. In fact, Gothic fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is marked by this tension by aristocrats at the same time powerful and decadent, and by the lower classes being energetic and oppressed as well as naïve, absurd or beastly (Khair 7). This mixture of tragedy and comedy, of which Shakespeare was a pioneer, had been criticized in the eighteenth century and accepted in many Gothic texts, such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (Khair 7). Thus, not only cultural, but also class otherness was prevalent, even if just implicitly, in most eighteenth and nineteenth-century English novels. In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff is the emblem of status inconsistency. He is

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

introduced in the family as a foundling with unknown origins and, although he has no surname or aristocratic pedigree to sustain him, Heathcliff obtains knowledge, money and power, and ends up as a capitalist landowner. He is one of the earliest upstarts and parvenus of Victorian literature. Heathcliff's social – and racial – anomaly has always been related to evilness: “What *is* he? He's a horror” (22), says the governess of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* when she sees the apparition of the dead Peter Quint. To usurp a gentleman's place without being a gentleman turns you into a horror, without additional need of ghosts or other supernatural effects.

The industrial novels of the 1840s often focused on the Chartists' demands for political freedom. In the 1820s, Cobbett reinforced the association between factory workers and slavery. He explicitly identified factory workers as “white slaves” and he attacked the doctrine of free labor (Gallagher 9). This metaphoric association helped to stress the oppressiveness of the factory owners and wished to divert some of the humanitarian vigor into this new project of reform (Gallagher 11). Humanitarian reformers like Robert Owen and S. T. Coleridge supported both the abolition of the slave trade and the eradication of the abuses and exploitations in the factories (Gallagher 11). It is in the context of this social criticism that industrial novels like *Shirley* must be viewed. Indeed, Caroline voices this humanitarian view after Robert Moore has read the first scene of *Coriolanus*, in which Caius Marcius delivers a “haughty speech” to the starving citizens. Caroline notices that Robert seems to sympathize with Caius Marcius' irrational pride:

“There's a vicious point hit already,” she said. “*You sympathize with that proud patrician who does not sympathize with his famished fellow-men, and insults them.* There, go on.” He proceeded. The warlike portions did not rouse him much; he said all that was out of date, or should be; the spirit displayed was barbarous; yet the encounter single-handed between Marcius and Tullus Aufidius he delighted in. As he advanced, he forgot to criticise; it was evident he appreciated the power, the truth of each portion; and, stepping out of the narrow line of private prejudices, began to revel in the large picture of human nature, to feel the reality stamped upon the characters who were speaking from that page before him. (78, emphasis added)

Indeed, Robert Moore's callous treatment of his workers acquires new light under Caroline's comparison of his cousin with Coriolanus. This comparison has social undertones: “I never wish you to lower yourself; but somehow, I cannot help thinking it unjust to include all poor working people under the general and insulting name of ‘the

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

mob,' and continually to think of them and treat them haughtily" (78). This passage is indeed homologous to the passage in *Wuthering Heights* in which we are first offered a hint of the infrastructural conditions which sustain the farm: "He [Hindley] drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead; *compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm*" (44, emphasis added). Hindley's despotic treatment of Heathcliff and his withdrawal of his education compelling him to work "as any other lad on the farm" points toward the hard working conditions of the farmers in *Wuthering Heights*. Passages like this one serve me to assert that both Charlotte and Emily Brontë were not just intending to write a rather conventional love story in the case of Charlotte Brontë or an impressively Romantic one in the case of Emily Brontë, but also to present to the reader with a novel of social realism in which he or she could learn about the main class conflicts of Yorkshire. Both Heathcliff and Robert Moore have internalized the behavior of the bourgeois; they behave as parvenus with a strong desire for success in a world based exclusively on social relationships of power and threat, and they show us how these relationships can be brought into perspective. They know perfectly well Vautrin's maxim in *Père Goriot*, "wealth is virtue" (74).

7.4 *Wuthering Heights: A Colonial Novel*

"What crime was this, that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion,
and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?"

(Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 210)

As we have seen, *Wuthering Heights* gives voice to the working class through the characters of Heathcliff and Nelly, however, there are still events "beyond the pale" of the ideological framework of the novel and which need interpretation. The fact that Heathcliff has been found "in the streets of Liverpool" is one of them. Like the "Portsmouth chapters" in *Mansfield Park*, Heathcliff's enigmatic origin constitutes an area of menace and otherness that the ideological framework of the novel silences and marginalizes.⁷² It implies an area of "unthinkability" which haunts the novel. History is

⁷² The "Portsmouth chapters" in *Mansfield Park* have been analyzed as an area of threat and otherness that the ideological agenda of the novel has designed to silence and marginalize (Musselwhite 11): "What

omnipresent in the nineteenth century and it appears in the least expected places. In *The Ends of History: Victorians and "the Woman Question"* (1991), Christina Crosby quite accurately argues that "history is constituted precisely by what it excludes" and that the heart of history "is predicated on the inessential and unhistorical" (Crosby 149). For Spivak, history is a catachresis, that is, "a metaphor without an adequate literal referent, in the last instance a model for all metaphors, all names" (Spivak, *The New Historicism* 157).

My aim in this section is to calibrate the signifying power of the references to racial infrastructure in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*; what are they doing there? Are they hinting at something? In my reading of these novels, I will mainly enter in dialogue with Edward Said, Tabish Khair, Gayatri Spivak, and Susan Meyer, whose names will intermittently appear through this chapter and whose contributions have illuminated the category of "colonial novels." Spivak, in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," argues that it is impossible to read nineteenth-century British literature without taking into account that imperialism was crucial in the representation of England to the English, and that literature played a major role in this cultural representation (Spivak 243). In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said connects several canonical novels, like *Heart of Darkness*, *Great Expectations*, or *Mansfield Park*, with the imperial process of which they are obviously a part and which has significantly been overlooked by criticism (Said xv). Khair, on his part, focuses on texts (*Wuthering Heights*, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, or *The Woman in White* among others) that discuss foreignness and colonial "Otherness" in a British setting (Khair 9).

In the novels by Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, or Collins, the empire is a place into which one of the protagonists disappears (as it is the case with Sir Thomas in *Mansfield Park*), or from which he or she comes back (as it is the case with Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White*). Indeed, the silence surrounding the colonial issue has never been more louder than in the so-much discussed and controversial passage of *Mansfield Park* in which Fanny reminds her cousin that, after asking Sir Thomas about the slave trade, "there was such a dead silence" (155):

Portsmouth represents, then, is that cluster of heterogeneity that cannot even be 'thought,' not even by, indeed especially not by, the languages of 'class'" (Musselwhite 11-2).

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

And while my cousins were sitting by without speaking a word, or seeming at all interested in the subject, I did not like – I thought it would appear as if I wanted to set myself off at their expense, by shewing a curiosity and pleasure in his information which he must wish his own daughters to feel. (155, MF emphasis added)

According to Said, this silence seems to suggest that there is no language for this matter (*Culture* 105). These silent or under-narrated and tense subjects usually constitute the base of the narrated “English” superstructure (Khair 25). Actually, the presence of colonial and racial Others was avoided and resisted in nineteenth and twentieth-century English literature, and the colonies, when they appeared, were just carelessly mentioned, as in Jane Austen’s novels, where the colonies are actually what sustain the wealthiest characters’ economy.⁷³ These intimations of alterity and otherness persist and haunt both England and “civilization.”

The “empire” is implicitly present in *Wuthering Heights* through the character of Heathcliff, a metaphor himself – or maybe a catachresis? – of the colonies. To the running question, “Who is Heathcliff? – a question fraught with manifold markers (white or not-white? Western or African? Gypsy or Indian? Native or alien? Victim or perpetrator?) – the novel gives no final answer. Heathcliff is that “dirty, ragged, black-haired child” (35) who can only repeat over and over again “some gibberish that nobody could understand” (35). When he is a bit downcast because of Catherine’s seeming preference for Linton, Nelly animates Heathcliff by especulating about his origins and associates him with Chinese and Indian ascendance:

“If you were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something worse than ugly. And now that we’ve done washing, and combing, and sulking - tell me whether you don’t think yourself rather handsome? I’ll tell you, I do. You’re fit for a prince in disguise. *Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen*, each of them able to buy up, with one week’s income,

⁷³ In *Atlas of the European Novel: 1800-1900* (1998), Franco Moretti challenges Said’s thesis arguing that it is dubious. For Moretti, the colonies “played certainly a significant, but not an *indispensable* role in British economic life” (25). In the much-analyzed case of *Mansfield Park*, if Mr. Bertram leaves for Antigua is not because he needs the money, but because Austen wants him far away for the sake of plot (the play, Maria’s adultery and the flirt between Edmund and Mary): “these fictional fortunes are so out of proportion to economic history that I suspect them to be there not so much because of reality, but for strictly *symbolic* reasons” (27).

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!” (56, emphasis added)

According to Deborah E. Nord, these stories of unknown or ambiguous identity are variations on the changeling plot and they “were clearly influenced not only by mysteries of Gypsy origin, but also by long-standing myths of Gypsy kidnappings, themselves the products of cultural anxieties about difference” (10). In fact, myths of kidnapping and child swapping had long been associated with Gypsies (Nord 10). It is also worth noting that the word “gypsy” comes from the Middle English dialectal form of *egyptien* “Egyptian,” and that this passage shows an Oriental sentimentalism that was present in earlier imperial narratives such as Samuel Johnson’s *Rasselas*; a sentimentalism that was socially accepted at the moment.

The theme of kidnapped children and the mutation of their social identities is also present in the chimney sweepers of Dickens’ *Sketches by Boz* (1836):

A mystery hung over the sweeps in those days. Legends were in existence of wealthy gentlemen who had lost children, and who, after many years of sorrow and suffering, had found them in the character of sweeps. Stories were related of a young boy who, having been stolen from his parents in his infancy, and devoted to the occupation of chimney-sweeping, was sent, in the course of his professional career, to sweep the chimney of his mother’s bedroom; and how, being hot and tired when he came out of the chimney, he got into the bed he had so often slept in as an infant, and was discovered and recognized therein by his mother, who once every year of her life, thereafter, requested the pleasure of the company of every London sweep, at half-past one o’clock, to roast beef, plumpudding, porter, and sixpence. (203)

As Galia Benziman has shown, this romanticized notion of the sweeps suggests “an ethical imperative” to confer on the child: “to be looked at and recognized as an equally valuable and individuated human being” (40).

If the character of Bertha Mason represents the imperialist “Other” in *Jane Eyre*, Rochester represents the paternalist colonizer whose social mission is to civilize this non-human Other. When he is telling Jane about his married life in Jamaica, Rochester meaphorically describes his imperial conquest as Hell:

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

One night I had been awakened by her yells – (since the medical men had pronounced her mad, she had, of course, been shut up) – it was a fiery West Indian night; one of the description that frequently precede the hurricanes of those climates. Being unable to sleep in bed, I got up and opened the window. [...]
[...]

“This life,” said I at last, “is hell: this is the air--those are the sounds of the bottomless pit! I have a right to deliver myself from it if I can. The sufferings of this mortal state will leave me with the heavy flesh that now cumpers my soul. Of the fanatic’s burning eternity I have no fear: there is not a future state worse than this present one--let me break away, and go home to God!” (307)

But it is the character of St. John Rivers who best represents colonialist ideology and euro-centricism since he has an explicit project of cultural colonization of the Other, “of carrying knowledge into the realms of ignorance:”

“Relinquish! What! my vocation? My great work? My foundation laid on earth for a mansion in heaven? My hopes of being numbered in the band who have merged all ambitions in the glorious one of bettering their race--of carrying knowledge into the realms of ignorance--of substituting peace for war--freedom for bondage--religion for superstition--the hope of heaven for the fear of hell? Must I relinquish that? It is dearer than the blood in my veins. It is what I have to look forward to, and to live for.” (374)

His ethnocentric mentality and his imperialist and patronizing view of the colonial Other is even reinforced in his final colonial expedition:

As to St. John Rivers, he left England: he went to India. He entered on the path he had marked for himself; he pursues it still. A more resolute, indefatigable pioneer never wrought amidst rocks and dangers. *Firm, faithful, and devoted, full of energy, and zeal, and truth, he labours for his race*; he clears their painful way to improvement; he hews down like a giant the prejudices of creed and caste that encumber it. He may be stern; he may be exacting; he may be ambitious yet; but his is the sternness of the warrior Greatheart, who guards his pilgrim convoy from the onslaught of Apollyon. His is the exaction of the apostle, who speaks but for Christ, when he says— “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” His is the ambition of the high master-spirit, which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth—who stand

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

without fault before the throne of God, who share the last mighty victories of the Lamb, who are called, and chosen, and faithful. (452, emphasis added)

Spivak reads these colonial missions as allegories of the “general epistemic violence of imperialism” (Spivak 251). The colonial subjects serve then as scapegoats for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer (Spivak 251) and it is precisely this allegory of the colonial mission that the Caribbean author, Jean Rhys, deconstructs in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Indeed, the most powerful idea in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is that *Jane Eyre* can be read as “the orchestration and staging of the self-immolation of Bertha Mason as ‘good wife’” (Spivak 259).

The organic domestic communities in both novels are threatened by the impulse of colonialism and demographic disruption. Fanny Price reminds her cousin that after asking Sir Thomas about the slave trade, “there was such a dead silence,” but, “can we make this silence speak? What is the unspoken saying? What does it mean? To what extent is dissimulation a way of speaking? Can something that has hidden *itself* be recalled to our presence?” (Macherey 86). According to Said, when reading novels like *Mansfield Park* – and we could include here *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*– “we have to see them in the main as resisting or avoiding that other setting, which their formal inclusiveness, historical honesty, and prophetic suggestiveness cannot completely hide” (*Culture* 115).

These “dead silences” or latent meanings that palpitate in both novels are what especially engage me, that is, all those motifs having to do with the outside brought *in*. This outside is unquestionably present in the evocations of the allusive, abstract, and metaphoric language; in the careless references that Heathcliff was found “starving and houseless” in the streets of Liverpool; that Mr. Earnshaw picked it and inquired for its owner (Did Heathcliff have an owner?); that he “repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand;” in the fact that he stops being “it” only when he is baptized with the name of “Heathcliff;” that he is referred to as “a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway” (48); and he is called several times a gipsy, a devil, a ghoul, a “regular black,” and even a vampire. According to Macherey, “the recognition of the area of shadow in or around the work is the initial moment of criticism” (Macherey 82), but I agree with Macherey that the most important question to ask is whether this area of shadow is in fact the pillar of an explanation or just the perfect excuse for an interpretation (Macherey 82).

7.4.1 Heathcliff: The Intruding Foreigner

The Other lurks in the very heart of eighteenth and nineteenth-century English novels. The list is almost endless: the character of Old Alice, the faithful and foreign servant of the Ravenswoods, who is also a kind of fortune-teller in Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*; Matilda in *The Monk*; Magwitch in Dickens' *Great Expectations*; Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, Little Em'ly in *David Copperfield*; Daniel Deronda and Mirah Lapidoth in *Daniel Deronda*, Anne Catherick in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*; or Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Sometimes, the Other just pullulates in the background of the text, as it happens in Jane Austen's *Emma*, when a party of gypsies interposes in a public road and the characters' most instinctive response is to flee.

Most of Brontës' novels engage with foreignness and Otherness in an English or Belgian setting, as it is the case of Frances Evans Henri in *The Professor*.⁷⁴ In *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, colonial Otherness enters and haunts the Earnshaws' house and Thornfield House, respectively. In his book, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (1995), Eagleton contends that "[i]t is clear that this little Caliban [Heathcliff] has a nature on which nurture will never stick; and that is simply an English way of saying that he is quite possibly Irish" (Eagleton, *Heathcliff* 3). Further on in his essay, Eagleton remarks that "Heathcliff is a fragment of the Famine, and goes on a sort of hunger strike towards the end of his life" (Eagleton, *Heathcliff* 11). Given the background of its author and the fact that Patrick Brontë was Irish, it is not implausible to argue that Heathcliff's origin is possibly Irish. Indeed, in August 1845, the Brontës' brother, Branwell, made a trip from Haworth to Liverpool. This was the year in which the Great Famine was at its peak, and the city was crammed with starving people. Three hundred thousand impoverished Irish had landed in the port (Eagleton, *Heathcliff*, 3). According to Gérin, "[t]heir image, and especially those of the children, were unforgettably depicted in the *Illustrated London News* – starving scarecrows with a few rags on them and an animal growth of black hair almost obscuring their features." A few months after Branwell returned from Liverpool, Emily Brontë began writing *Wuthering Heights*.

⁷⁴ Frances is a half Swiss and half English orphan who works in a girls' school in Belgium.

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

Although the Irish were characterized with similar racial and cultural Otherness that was employed to revile African and Asian people (Khair 23), Heathcliff's disruptive force cannot be reduced to his possible Irish ascendancy. He is referred to as "a little Lascar," "an American or Spanish castaway," a "gipsy," "a regular black" and "a little black thing." Nelly Dean's associations of Heathcliff with diabolical beings ("Is he a ghoul or a vampire?"), and her remark that he is "a creature not of my species" with his "half-civilized ferocity" (95), are connotations of racial Otherness: "But where did he come from, the little dark thing, harboured by a good man to his bane?" (330). Even Charlotte Brontë, in one of the letters to her editor, assumes that he is "a black gypsey-cub" (14 August 1848).

The Gypsy, like the Oriental other or the colonized subject, "was associated with a rhetoric of primitive desires, lawlessness, mystery, cunning, sexual excess, godlessness, and savagery – with freedom from the repressions, both constraining and culture building, of Western civilization" (Nord 3). Gypsies suffered oppression, abuses, and discrimination. They were the victims of persistent efforts to ban and destroy their way of life. They represented what was both feared and desired in the British cultural system: "Gypsies functioned in British cultural symbolism as a perennial other, a recurrent and apparently necessary marker of difference that, like the biblical Hagar and Ishmael, represented an alternative and rejected lineage" (Nord 3). But unlike colonial others, Gypsies were "a domestic or an internal other," and their vicinity and visibility were crucial in their transformation in literary and symbolic figures (3): "Their familiarity lent them an exoticism that was, at the same time, indigenous and homely" (3).

In her outstanding *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction* (1996), Susan Meyer states that, "in 1769, the year in which Mr. Earnshaw found Heathcliff in the Liverpool streets, the city was England's largest slave-trading port, conducting seventy to eighty-five percent of the English slave trade along the Liverpool Triangle" (Meyer 481). During the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, the empire was highly present in industrialized cities like Leeds and London and in port-cities like Liverpool, and this presence took sometimes the shape of tinkers, gypsies, and wanderer sellers who at times also entered in small villages and towns (Khair 8).

In addition, the number of servants, slaves, lascars, ayahs and soldiers from the United States who had fought for the British in the American War for Independence grew in

visible manner (Khair 8). There were also a growing number of Englishmen, Scotsmen and Irishmen who had travelled to the colonies and had returned, usually bringing with them living reminders of the empire (Khair 8). Black slavery in England was not abolished until 1834, when the English slaves were liberated by the same legislative act of Parliament which abolished slavery in the English colonies. In 1764, the *Gentlemen's Magazine* estimated that there were more than 20,000 black slaves in London. In Liverpool, a street was nicknamed "Negro Row," and slaves were sold at public auctions held in warehouses, coffee houses, and shops (Meyer 98-9). Newspapers also announced the slave sales and gave notice of their escape, offering rewards for their capture (Meyer 99). Interestingly, "mainstream English literature gives a rather muted account of this presence of the imperial 'periphery' in the 'centre' of empire all through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (Khair 8). William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) and Philip Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* (1839) gives us a personal account of "this penetration of Europe into non-Europe, the stories of 'us' with 'them' out there" (Khair 8).

It is not surprising that many eighteenth and nineteenth-century Gothic novels, or novels inspired by the Gothic, rely on the association of racial and diabolical features for their account of Otherness (Khair 45). This is highly present in the demonization of Melmoth, the Wanderer:

All day long I was exposed to the stare of horror, the shudder of suspicion, and worst of all, the hastily-averted glance of hypocritical commiseration, that dropt its pitying ray on me for a moment, and was then instantly raised to heaven, as if to implore forgiveness for the involuntary crime of compassionating one whom God had renounced. When I encountered any of them in the garden, they would strike into another walk, and cross themselves in my sight. If I met them in the passages of the convent, they drew their garments close, turned their faces to the wall, and told their beads as I went by. If I ventured to dip my hands in the holy water that stood at the door of the church, it was thrown out before my face. *Certain extraordinary precautions were adopted by the whole community against the power of the evil one. Forms of exorcism were distributed, and additional prayers were used in the service of matins and vespers.* A report was industriously diffused, that Satan was permitted to visit a favoured and devoted servant of his in the convent, and that all the brethren might expect the redoubled malice of his assaults. The effect of this on the young boarders was indescribable. *They flew with the speed of lightning from me,*

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

whenever they saw me. If accident forced us to be near each other for a moment, they were armed with holy water, which they flung at me in pailfuls; and when that failed, what cries, - what convulsions of terror! They knelt, - they screamed, - they shut their eyes, - they cried, "Satan have mercy on me, - do not fix your infernal talons on me, - take your victim," and they mentioned my name. (158, emphasis added)

In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë places the forces of disruption on a socially aggressive male who is also a cultural outsider. Heathcliff's Otherness is both "limit and menace" in Levinas' words (*Alterity* 56). As opposed to Wilson, Kettle, and Eagleton, Susan Meyer has seen as the novel's main concern not the social injustice within the domestic class system, but "the economic injustice imposed by British imperialism on the 'dark races' of the world" (Meyer 102). Thus, if we read Heathcliff solely as a dissatisfied worker, he does not seem particularly dangerous, since he neither raises a mob, as the millworkers in *Shirley* do, nor does he create social turmoil (Meyer 102). Heathcliff's is just an individual rise which, though vengeful, reinforces the ethics of capitalism (Meyer 103). But if we put Heathcliff in the context of imperialist history, "Heathcliff suddenly looks, as it were, collective – accruing associations with India, China, Africa, and the West Indies" (Meyer 103).

Bertha Mason, Rochester's "mad wife," is the character who bears the trace of foreignness in *Jane Eyre*. In the novel, she is described indistinctly as "a monster" (309), a "maniac" (291), a "beast," (293), an inhuman being, and a "strange wild animal" (293). Like Heathcliff, Bertha is a product of imperialism (Spivak 247) and, like Heathcliff again, her ethnicity is ambiguous from the beginning. Rochester's designation of her mother as a "creole," which, in the nineteenth-century, was used to both whites and blacks born in the West Indies, contributes to this ambiguity. Rather than resolving this ambiguity, the text enriches it. Bertha is the heiress to a West Indian fortune, her father is a West Indian planter and merchant and her brother is a "yellow-skinned" but socially white Mr. Mason (Meyer 67). Bertha is also considered a good match for the youngest son of an aristocratic British family. However, when she is first described in the novel, her ethnical markedness is made more explicit. When Jane sees Bertha's face reflected in her mirror, and describes that face to Rochester, she enhances her racial "otherness:"

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

“Fearful and ghastly to me – oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face – it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflammation of the lineaments!”

“Ghosts are usually pale, Jane.”

“This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brows furrowed; the black eye-brows wildly raised over the bloodshot eyes.” (284)

These references characterize Bertha as black. Gibert and Gubar have seen Bertha as Jane Eyre’s “darkest double,” and I think that this comparison is extremely accurate since Bertha represents the opposite of Jane’s Englishness: coming from Jamaica, Bertha is the racial “Other,” in *Jane Eyre*. In *Vanity Fair*, we also find a father who forces his son, George Osborne, to marry a wealthy Creole woman, Miss Swartz, who is described as a “good-natured young mulatto girl” (246):

“I ain’t going to have any of this damn sentimental nonsense and humbug here, sir [...] “There shall be no beggar-marriages in my family. If you choose to fling away eight thousand a year, which you may have for the asking, you may do it: but by Jove you take your pack and walk out of this house, sir. Will you do as I tell you, once for all, sir, or will you not?” (259)

George voices the same racial prejudices as Rochester but, unlike him, he defies his father’s authority: “Marry that mulatto woman?” [...] I don’t like the colour, sir. Ask the black that sweeps opposite Fleet Market, Sir. I’m not going to marry a Hottentot Venus” (259).

As Emily Brontë does with Heathcliff, Charlotte Brontë blurs the separation between human and animal in her description of Bertha:

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. *What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.* (293, emphasis added)

However, the most interesting passage is the one in which Mr. Rochester compares the fairness of his very English beloved, Jane Eyre, to the “demonic” features of Bertha Mason:

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

“That is *my wife*,” said he. “Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know — such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And *this* is what I wished to have” (laying his hand on my shoulder): “this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon, I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder — this face with that mask — this form with that bulk; then judge me, priest of the gospel and man of the law, and remember with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged! Off with you now. I must shut up my prize.” (293-4)

Heathcliff, Melmoth, and Bertha Mason are good examples of what happens to the Other in the context of empire, even if there is a “dead silence” around it. This “racialized” Other has the two main sources of negative Otherness: geocultural (“negroes” or “Jews”) and theological (the fallen Devil) (Khair 45). Gothic fiction, or fiction influenced by the Gothic could best articulate the hauntings, dreams, and anxieties of the penetration of the empire in the British countryside and the English metropolis (Khair 9-10). The colonies and the colonized are always surrounded by mystery, their origins are unknown and their motives hidden behind their actions are seldom revealed. Their humanity is constantly downplayed and most of the time they haunt the recesses of the narratives, like Bertha Mason, but some other times, they are central to the story, like Heathcliff. When the Other returns, as Heathcliff after his three-years-absence or Bertha Mason when Rochester and Jane Eyre are about to get married, they do so always surrounded by mystery, transgression, crime or revenge. In fact, the empire always returns with greater effects and causes deeper disturbances (Khair 34).

Some characters are more ready than others to accept otherness. Thus, Mr. Earnshaw, Catherine and, much later Hareton, do recognize Heathcliff’s difference but, as opposed to the rest of the characters, they do not see it in a negative way (Khair 67). Other characters, like Isabella, gets fascinated by Heathcliff’s Otherness and they tend to make “a romantic idealization of his difference” (Khair 67). Similarly, Rochester exoticizes Bertha when he first meets her – “I found her a fine woman, [...]: tall, dark and majestic” (305) – but, not being able to cope with her differences, he dismisses her because she does

not conform to the conventional model of feminine identity.⁷⁵ This romantic idealization, Khair asserts, is a typical Western response to the Other (Khair 67). As Godzich puts it, “Western thought has always thematized the other as a threat to be reduced, as a potential same-to-be, a yet-not-same.”⁷⁶ Isabella – and sometimes Nelly Dean – and Rochester perceive Heathcliff and Bertha respectively as this “potential same-to-be” to be later overcome by terror when they understand their “eternally unregenerate foreignness” (Khair 67). The flaw of these “Romantic” characters is that they deny the existence of someone really other, and not a mere imperfect version of oneself (Todorov 42). For them, Otherness is “at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity (Bhabha 67).

Heathcliff’s is a difference which has been however redeemed and avenged by civilization, education, capitalism and probably by imperialism as well. Although what Heathcliff does in his three-year absence is shrouded by mystery and speculation, Nelly’s question to Heathcliff – “Have you been for a soldier?” (93) – and her remark that “[h]is upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army” (95), suggest that Heathcliff might have become a soldier in the colonies. As it happens with Walter Hartright, Sir Thomas Bertram, and Magwitch, Heathcliff’s probable colonial expedition shapes his fortune and personality.⁷⁷ What he has learned and obtained in this interval helps him in England, a fact that complicates “a merely binary and negative notion of Otherness” (Khair 35). Heathcliff, like Bertha, has been taught English and has forgotten his gibberish; their “profit on’t is that they know how to curse.” Like Bertha again, he has been deprived of love, acceptance, language, and has been “hardened to ill-treatment” (36). They are like two slaves stuck to their owners, Catherine and Mr. Rochester respectively. Rochester’s decision to take Bertha to Europe is indeed quite noteworthy:

“‘Go,’ said Hope, ‘and live again in Europe: there it is not known what a sullied name you bear, nor what a filthy burden is bound to you. *You may take the maniac with you to England; confine her with due attendance and precautions at Thornfield:*

⁷⁵ In fact, feminist critics, like Gilbert and Gubar, and Spivak, have seen Bertha as part of Jane’s hybrid or fragmented personality.

⁷⁶ Godzich, Foreword, in Michel de Certeau’s *Heterologies*, p. xiii.

⁷⁷ Only M. Paul, the male protagonist of *Vilette* who is finally killed by a storm, does not return from his imperial mission in the West Indies to marry her Lucy, whom he significantly calls his “sauvage.”

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

then travel yourself to what clime you will, and form what new tie you like. That woman, who has so abused your long-suffering, so sullied your name, so outraged your honour, so blighted your youth, is not your wife, nor are you her husband. See that she is cared for as her condition demands, and you have done all that God and humanity require of you. Let her identity, her connection with yourself, be buried in oblivion: you are bound to impart them to no living being. Place her in safety and comfort: shelter her degradation with secrecy, and leave her.’ (308-9, emphasis added)

Catherine cannot conceive her life without Heathcliff and when Nelly reproaches her that in marrying Edgar Linton she will desert Heathcliff, Catherine imagines what Hillis Miller calls “a strange *ménage à trois*” in which her relationship with Edgar will help her to rise socially and her relationship with Heathcliff will satisfy her more genuine self (*The Disappearance* 191):

‘He quite deserted! we separated!’ she exclaimed, with an accent of indignation. ‘Who is to separate us, pray? They’ll meet the fate of Milo! Not as long as I live, Ellen: for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff. *Oh, that’s not what I intend — that’s not what I mean! I shouldn’t be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded! He’ll be as much to me as he has been all his lifetime. Edgar must shake off his antipathy, and tolerate him, at least.* He will, when he learns my true feelings towards him. Nelly, I see now you think me a selfish wretch; but did it never strike you that if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars? whereas, if I marry Linton I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother’s power.’ (81, emphasis added)

Like Prospero, Rochester and Catherine are asserting their ownership of their own peculiar Calibans: “This thing of darkness/ I Acknowledge mine” (*The Tempest* v.i. 289-290).

Bertha Mason and Heathcliff represent the embodiment of the desire for revenge on the part of colonized peoples, and the language in both novels implies that such a desire is justified (Meyer 69). As Meyer puts it, Jane Eyre’s question to herself, “What crime was this, that lived incarnated in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?” (210), suggests indeed the descriptions of the slave uprisings in the British West Indies (Meyer 69). In addition, when Bertha escapes from her

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

imprisonment to stab and burn Rochester alive, and to hang her “black and scarlet visage over the nest of my dove” (310), Bertha is “symbolically enacting precisely the sort of revolt feared by the British colonists in Jamaica” (Meyer 71).

To my mind, the ambiguous presence of the racial “Other” in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, reveals that imperialism and the colonial mission constitute the counterhistory of British society and that the novels’ appropriation of colonial Others for symbolic purposes bears a troubling relation to that counterhistory. Bertha Mason and Heathcliff function as the locus of racial infrastructure as well as the locus of the Brontës’ anxieties about the presence of imperial oppression in England; anxieties that, in both cases, motivate the plot of the novel (Meyer 66). However, whereas the conclusion of *Jane Eyre* resolves these anxieties by killing the character who embodies them, the conclusion of *Wuthering Heights* complicates rather than resolves the matter.⁷⁸ Heathcliff is what Frantz Fanon (1952), in his sociological study of the psychology of racism, calls “black skins [with] white masks.” He is ridiculed and humiliated when he arrives for the first time to Wuthering Heights so he tries to appropriate and imitate the culture and the society of the colonizer. He starts by mastering the language of the colonizer and, when he realizes that he has lost Catherine, his only resource is “the fetishisation of power” (Khair 70). Heathcliff obtains the other status symbols, education, capital, and a complete mastery of the English institutions. Nevertheless, Heathcliff’s appropriation of the English status symbols is not a simple emulation resulting from an inferiority complex, but a subtle and ironic representation of the internal contradictions that imperialism and the colonial mission incorporates.

7.5 *Wuthering Heights: A War Novel*

In his article, “‘At the Court of Bellona’: Political and Libidinal Usurpation in *Barry Lyndon*,” Jiménez Heffernan defines *Barry Lyndon* (1844) as “a novel of military subject that consistently refuses to portray the war” (Jiménez Heffernan *JNT* 184) and I think that

⁷⁸ In *Myths of Power*, Eagleton argues that Charlotte Brontë’s novels “negotiate passionate self-fulfillment on terms which preserve the social and moral conventions intact, and so preserve intact the submissive, enduring, everyday self which adheres to them” (16).

we could analyze the untold story of Heathcliff in the same way.⁷⁹ In addition, the dialectic present in both novels is how history has entered the story or, in other words, how an external war (be it the Seven Years' War or the American War of Independence) has penetrated the domestic. When he returns to Thrushcross Grange after his three-years-absence, a bewildered Nelly asks Heathcliff: "Have you been for a soldier?" (93). Indeed, where has Heathcliff been during this period and what has he done to obtain his fortune are two of the greatest mysteries of the novel, and Emily Brontë, like Heathcliff himself when he is inquired by Nelly, is astute enough to leave them unresolved. After that, Nelly describes his physical transformation, remarking that "[h]e had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man; beside whom my master seemed quite slender and youth like" (95). She depicts her countenance as "much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton's" and remarks that "it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation" (95).

However, his new façade cannot totally hide his former self: "A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though stern for grace" (95). Nelly also makes an interesting comment, reinforcing the idea that Heathcliff has been a soldier: "[h]is upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army" (95), and Heathcliff's words to Catherine that "I've fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice; and you must forgive me, for I struggled only for you!" (96) somehow support Nelly's suspicions. Indeed, Nelly's assumption might not be unfounded since between 1780 and 1783, Britain was involved in the American War of Independence and, if Heathcliff left *Wuthering Heights* in 1780, as critics have noted, it is not implausible to think that Heathcliff fought in this war. In his essay on *Vanity Fair*, Andrew H. Miller contends that

the translation of political revolution into domestic insurrection, understood as the desire of servants to discard the appurtenances of subjection and acquire the material possession of their masters, is one of William Thackeray's obsessive concerns in the late 1840s. (14)

⁷⁹ *Barry Lyndon* is Thackeray's first substantial work of fiction and, like *Wuthering Heights*, it also takes a first-person narrator, whom readers are led to distrust from the beginning.

I think that the importance of Heathcliff's potential under-plot as soldier to the global meaning of *Wuthering Heights* should not go unnoticed, since his domestic violence might be analyzed as a translation of political/historical compulsion.⁸⁰

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) the French theorist Michel Foucault, describes the evolution of the figure of the soldier in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the soldier was someone who could be recognized from afar since he bore signs of strength and courage, which were marks of his pride. Besides, movements like marching and attitudes of arrogance were part of the "bodily rhetoric of honour" (Foucault 135). In *La Milice Française*, Montgomery summarizes the signs to recognize a soldier:

The signs for recognizing those most suited to this profession are a lively, alert manner, an erect head, a taut stomach, broad shoulders, long arms, strong fingers, a small belly, thick thighs, slender legs and dry feet, because a man of such a figure could not fail to be agile and strong. (qtd. Foucault 135)

This description coincides with Nelly's depiction of Heathcliff as an "athletic, well-formed man." By the late eighteenth century, the soldier became "something that can be made; out of a formless clay" (Foucault 135). Their posture could be gradually corrected and they become accustomed to "holding their heads high and erect; to standing upright, without being the back, to sticking out the belly, throwing out the chest and throwing back the shoulders" (qtd. Foucault 135). In addition, recruits were taught

never to fix their eyes on the ground, but to look straight at those they pass... to remain motionless until the order is given, without moving the head, the hands or the feet... lastly to march with a bold step, with knee and ham taut, on the points of the feet, which should face outwards. (Foucault 136)

This might indeed be the explanation for Heathcliff's "dignified manner." The body becomes then "an object and target of power" since it can be "manipulated, shaped, trained" to "obey" and "respond" (Foucault 136). Foucault analyzes La Mettrie's *L'Homme Machine* as "both a materialist reduction of the soul and a general theory of dressage, at

⁸⁰ Similarly, in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Wickham's sub-plot of domestic usurpation in the Darcy family, acquires new light if we take into account that he has joined the military troops at Brighton in order to protect the coast from a potential French invasion.

the centre of which reigns the notion of ‘docility,’ which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body” (Foucault 136). Thus, a body that can be transformed, trained, manipulated and improved is a docile body (Foucault 136). These docile bodies were used by the State as automata or “political puppets,” that is, as “small-scale models of power” (Foucault 136). The disciplines which made possible the scrupulous control of the body and which assured its constant subjugation imposed upon the docile body a relation of docility-utility (Foucault 137). These disciplines were different from slavery because they were not based on the appropriation of bodies but in the elegance of discipline (Foucault 137).

This calculated manipulation of the movements, gestures and behavior was almost considered art; an art of the human body was being born. This “political anatomy” produced subjected and docile bodies since it strengthened the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) as well as it diminished these same forces (in political terms of subjection) (Foucault 138). Discipline separated power from the body and turned it into a skill or capacity while it also reduced the power that resulted from the body, turning it into a relation of severe subjugation (Foucault 138). Disciplinary power did not consist so much in the exploitation of the body but in the “coercive link with the apparatus of production” (153). Thus, instead of a mechanical body, we have a body composed of firm and calculated movements, “the image of which had for so long haunted those who dreamt of disciplinary perfection” (155). To sum up, - discipline creates four types of individuality: it is cellular (it is based on spatial distribution), it is organic (by the coding of activities), it is genetic (by the accumulation of time); and it is combinatory (by the constitution of forces) (Foucault 167). In addition, discipline also imposes four great techniques: it assembles tables; it prescribes and imposes movements; and it arranges “tactics.” Foucault defines tactics as “the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes, mechanisms in which the product of the various forces is increased by their calculated combination” (Foucault 167). This is the highest form of disciplinary exercise (Foucault 167). The army guaranteed civil peace not only because it was a real force, but also because it was a strict disciplinary technique that could subject the social body (Foucault 168).

The young Barry Lyndon’s military appeal is the result of a Romantic/Byronic idealization of war: “I sighed after a while (for I was beginning to melt), and said how much I longed to be a soldier” (27). For Barry, war is the most direct way to become a

“man of spirit,” to enter the court of Bellona, and to obtain “fame.” However, his entry into the army and his view of war heroism are accompanied by disappointment and, consequently, his Byronic mystification of war fails:

If people would tell their stories in this simple way, I think the cause of truth would not suffer by it. All I know of this famous fight of Minden (except from books) is told here above. The ensign’s silver *bonbon* box and his purse of gold; the livid face of the poor fellow as he fell; the huzzas of the men of my company as I went out under a smart fire and rifled them; their shouts and curses as we came hand in hand with the Frenchmen [...] Such kanves and ruffians do men in war become! It is well for gentlemen to talk of the age of chivalry; but remember the starving brutes whom they lead – men nursed in poveerty, entirely ignorant, made to take a pride in deeds of blood – men who can have no amusement but in drunkenness, debauch, and plunder. It is with these shocking instruments that your great warriors and kings have been doing their murderous work in the world; and while, for instance, we are at the present moment admiring the “great Frederick,” as we call him, and his philosophy, and his liberality, and his military genius, I, who, have served him, and been, as it were, behind the scenes of which that great spectacle is composed, can only look at it with horror. What a number of items of human crime, misery, slavery, to form that sum-total of glory! I can recollect a certain day, about three weeks after the battle of Minden, and a farm-house in which some of us enterned; and how the old woman and her daughters served us, trembling, to wine; and how we got drunk over the winde, and the house was in a flame, presently: and woe betide the wretched fellow afterwards who came home to look for his house and children. (69-71)

It seems that Thackeray wants to distance himself from the military novelists who had particular popularity in the 1840s, and he reaffirms this posture in the famous opening to chapter XXX of *Vanity Fair*: “We do not claim to rank among the military novelists. Our place is with the non-combatants. When the decks are cleared for action we go below and wait meekly” (361). Barry’s single preoccupation during his life as soldier is just with professional promotion and fear of degradation. His subsequent unromantic position – “I am not going to give any romantic narrative of the Seven Years’ War” (101) – is indeed characteristic of picaresque fiction and it has three related implications: that war is fundamentally unintelligible; that it is unnarratable; and that it promotes social chaos and moral entropy (Jiménez Heffernan *JNT* 193). According to Jiménez Heffernan, this critique has a further implication: “the essential impenetrability of war as a historical

phenomenon, the semantic occlusion of a notion that opposes all forms of textual reduction, whether historical emplotment or heroic narration” (187).

This, however, cannot be extrapolated to Heathcliff’s unwillingness to answer Nelly’s question (“Have you been for a soldier?”) and for Emily Brontë’s omission of Heathcliff’s acts during his three years-absence. I think that Brontë’s decision not to account for Heathcliff’s activities during his absence is in fact different from Thackeray’s. Even if our speculation is right and Heathcliff has been fighting in the American War of Independence, Brontë was highly conscious of her own limitations as a writer and knew perfectly well what she could or could not narrate, so it was sensible to omit this part of Heathcliff’s life. Apart from this, this omission has further implications since it suggests that Heathcliff’s childish mentality has not evolved. Heathcliff is still a hurt boy; haunted by Catherine’s offensive words when she first sees him after her stay with the Lintons: “Why, how very black and cross you look! and how - how funny and grim!” (52). What really matters here is that Heathcliff has probably been brutalized by the war and that historical violence has penetrated the domestic sphere. This domestic violence is indeed the greatest anomaly of *Wuthering Heights*.

A similar case can be found in Jane Austen’s inclusion of the militia forces at Brighton in *Pride and Prejudice*. The deployment of militia forces at Brighton was not a matter of providing extra men for the girls to dance in balls, but rather of defending the South coast of England from an invading French army since, after the eruption of hostilities in 1793, the menace was very serious (Stafford xiii). Indeed, militia regiments were deployed only when there was any kind of national emergency, so the very presence of the officers in Maryton hints at a wartime context and their going to Brighton implies a danger of an impending invasion (Stafford xiii). However, the narrative is only explicit in familial and personal conflicts and leaves the national threat unattended. For the sharp reader, these historical signs might be easy to detect but they are not necessarily easy to read. Rather than fixing the meaning of the text, “the ‘truth’ of historical details is often another means of opening up possibilities” (Stafford xiii). These handsome officers may not be fighting against the French but they result to be disruptive subjects; they are capable of destroying local families with their uncontrolled sexual drives, as it is the case with Wickham and Lydia Bennet (Stafford xv). Thus, although this tendency to avoid historical events might seem a sign of the author’s limitations, it might be a sign of bold insubordination indeed.

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

Barry's disturbing experience as a slave in the army and Heathcliff's traumatic experience as an abandoned child in the streets of Liverpool as well as his subsequent domestic enslavement by Hindley at Wuthering Heights have made them learn the Hobbesian lesson that "violence is removed with violence" and they put it in practice in both civil and domestic settings. Their manners have changed into those of an *automaton*, "a docile but resilient body that has introjected State discipline" (Jiménez Heffernan). Barry proves this theory with his own words: "Let the man who has to take his fortune in life to remember this maxim. *Attacking* is his only secret. Dare, and the world always yields; or, if it beat you sometimes, dare again, and it will succumb" (191). Barry applies this maxim when he carelessly describes his killing of a young French officer and, once dead, he has robbed his money:

I hate bragging, but I cannot help saying that I made a very close acquaintance with the colonel of the Cravates, for I drove my bayonet into his body, and finished off a poor little ensign, so young, slender, and small, that a blow from my pig-tail would have dispatched him, I think, in place of the butt of my musket, with which I clubbed him down. I killed, besides, four more officers and men, and in the poor ensign's pocket found a purse of fourteen louis-d'or, and a silver box of sugar plums, of which the former present was very agreeable to me. If people would tell their stories of battle in this simple way, I think the cause of truth would not suffer by it. (70)

However, whereas Barry attacks to displace another and to relocate himself in the social system, Heathcliff attacks to destroy: "Had I been born where laws are less strict and tastes less dainty, I should treat myself to a slow vivisection of those two, as an evening's amusement" (270).

Through his adventures as soldier in both the English and German service, Barry Lyndon has time to participate in the social disorder and moral corruption of military societies:

I descended gradually to mix with the sergeants, and to share their amusements: drinking and gambling were, I am sorry to say, our principal pastimes; and I fell so readily into their ways, that though only a young lad of seventeen, I was the master of them all in daring wickedness; though there were some among them who, I promise you, were far advanced in the science of every kind of profligacy. (72)

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

Barry even refers to the King of Prussia, Frederick II, as “a person of high family and known talents and courage, but who had a propensity to gambling and extravagance, and found his calling as a recruit-decoy far more profitable to him than his pay of second captain in the line” (85). Card playing was always a means of entertainment as well as the easiest way to earn money:

After dinner, you may be sure that cards were not wanting, and that the company who played did not play for love merely. To these parties persons of all sorts would come: young bloods from the regiments garrisoned in Dublin: young clerks from the Castle; horse-riding, wine-tipping, watchman-beating mean of fashion about town, such as existed in Dublin in that day domre than in any other city with which I am acquainted in Europe. (58)

Thus, card playing and gambling stand here as “civil versions of feudal dueling” (Jiménez Heffernan *JNT* 189).⁸¹

Heathcliff, like Barry Lyndon, is also a parasite of property. Catherine suggests that Heathcliff has obtained Hindley’s properties as well as *Wuthering Heights* through gambling and card playing, skills that he might have mastered in the military brotherhoods:

He said he called to gather information concerning me from you, supposing you resided there still; and Joseph told Hindley, who came out and fell to questioning him of what he had been doing, and how he had been living; and finally, desired him to walk in. *There were some persons sitting at cards; Heathcliff joined them; my brother lost some money to him, and, finding him plentifully supplied, he requested that he would come again in the evening: to which he consented.* Hindley is too reckless to select his acquaintance prudently: he doesn’t trouble himself to reflect on the causes he might have for mistrusting one whom he has basely injured. (98-9, emphasis added)

Like Becky Sharp and Henry Esmond later, Barry Lyndon and Heathcliff are two housebreakers that disturb domestic peace with political or libidinal energy (Jiménez Heffernan *JNT* 201). Their treatment of their wives, Lady Lyndon and Isabella Linton

⁸¹ According to Staten, “[c]ommon soldiers in the British army of this period were paid a bare subsistence wage, but there were various legal and illegal ways in which soldiers augmented their official pay, including “prize” money from military victories and, of particular interest in the present case, gambling” (Staten 139).

respectively, are “sad spectacle[s] of brutal oppression” where terror is inalienable from Eros – “Terror, be sure of that, is not a bad ingredient of love” (218). At one point of the narrative, Lyndon contends that “[e]very man imprisons his wife to a certain degree” (289). Heathcliff is indeed a master in these practices since he does not only imprison his wife, Isabella, but also Catherine’s daughter, Cathy, and compels her to marry his diseased son, Linton Heathcliff: “As to your promise to marry Linton, I’ll take care you shall keep it; for you shall not quit this place till it is fulfilled” (81). Isabella gives several accounts of Heathcliff’s brutal oppression:

The back of the settle and Earnshaw’s person interposed between me and him; *so instead of endeavouring to reach me, he snatched a dinner-knife from the table and flung it at my head.* It struck beneath my ear, and stopped the sentence I was uttering; but, pulling it out, I sprang to the door and delivered another; which I hope went a little deeper than his missile. (181, emphasis added)

On his part, in one of his metanarrative footnotes, Thackeray gives an ironic account of Barry’s mistreatment of Mrs. Lyndon:

From these curious confessions, it would appear that Mr. Lyndon maltreated his lady in every possible way; that he denied her society, bullied her into signing away her property, spent it in gambling and taverns, was openly unfaithful to her; and, when she complained, threatened to remove her children from her. (245)

Likewise, Heathcliff employs the same strategy of depriving Isabella of her son, Linton Heathcliff –“But I’ll have it, when I want it. They may reckon on that!”(182).

But Heathcliff is also comparable to Barry’s step son, Mr. Redmond Quin, who is a reincarnation of Barry himself. He is welcomed by Barry as “the worthy agent of the Castle Lyndon property” (294). Like Heathcliff after his three-years-absence, he is a domestic intruder, equipped with invisible patrimony (knowledge, education) and, like Nicolo (the protagonist of Kleist’s “The Foundling”) he turns against his step-father. The adult Heathcliff, after having acquired knowledge and capital, proves his mastery of the laws of inheritance and arranged marriages:

my son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till I was certain of being his successor. Besides, he’s *mine*, and I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendant fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children to till their fathers’ lands for wages. (208)

As usurpers and domestic intruders, Heathcliff and Barry Lyndon place themselves together with Julien Sorel, Becky Sharp, or Henry Esmond. To sum up, in both *Barry Lyndon* and *Wuthering Heights*, historical and political violence have been potentially exorcised and rechanneled through domestic violence. Their two heroes, Barry Lyndon and Heathcliff (or are they anti-heroes?), though drastically and potentially conformed by war, are forced to invest their libidinal energy within domestic realms.

7.6 The Woman Question

“Probably I shall be an old maid. I shall live to see Robert married to some one else, some rich lady. I shall never marry. What was I created for, I wonder? Where is my place in the world?”

(Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, 149).

The opening scene of *Shirley* is quite suggestive since it is full of political and social valency. Indeed, the allusions to food are pervasive through the first chapter and the interest is obviously in “who produces food and in how food is distributed and paid for” (Cavell 62). *Shirley* relates the hunger of unemployed men who cannot feed their families with that of middle-class women who do not know how to employ their time and whose lives are reduced to unfulfilled romantic attachments (Briggs 91). In *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), Nancy Armstrong claims that, with the Brontës, domestic fiction “struggles to socialize desires whose origin and vicissitudes comprised one’s true identity as well as his or her possibilities for growth” (Armstrong, *Desire* 198). In *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë brings to the fore the parallels between women and workers. Middle-class women, like the mill workers which Robert Moore so scornfully disdains, “are alike made redundant, transformed from valued producers into worthless commodities by the operation of economic factors over which they have no control” (Shuttleworth 184). For the “old maid,” this statement is even more accurate since they do not take part in the cycles of production and reproduction (Shuttleworth 184). “I am certain old maids are a very unhappy race,” says Caroline. Caroline believes that the only employment for “old maids” is “to do good to others, to be helpful whenever help is wanted” but she is somehow dissatisfied with this solution: “Is this enough? Is it to live? Is there not a terrible hollowness, mockery, want, craving, in that existence which is given away to others, for want of something of your own to bestow it on?” (149).

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

In the character of Caroline Helstone, Brontë is advocating the necessity of women's employment (Linder 88) and this is especially visible in Caroline's insistence on becoming a governess: "What an idea! Be a governess! Better be a slave at once. Where is the necessity of it? Why should you dream of such a painful step?" exclaims Shirley (203). When Shirley asks her whether she thinks that labour alone can make a human being happy, Caroline answers in the negative but she strongly asserts that "successful labour has its recompense" whereas "a vacant, weary, lonely, hopeless life has none" (193). Charlotte Brontë, through the character of Caroline, is anticipating here the modern thoughts of John Stuart Mill in his celebrated, *The Subjection of Women*:

With regard to women's fitness not only to participate in elections but themselves to hold offices or practise professions involving important public responsibilities: I have already remarked that this consideration isn't essential to the practical question under discussion, *because any woman who succeeds in an open profession thereby proves that she is qualified for it.* (Stuart Mill 31, emphasis added)

Like Caroline, Jane Eyre also voices a radically feminist philosophy:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (109)

In the character of Shirley, Charlotte Brontë is portraying another important topic regarding the "woman question:" the right for a woman to determine her own life, to decide whether she wants to marry and to whom. This subject is brilliantly represented in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, in which Lizzy Bennet vehemently rejects Mr. Collins' marriage proposal:

Upon my word sir, your hope is a rather extraordinary one after my declaration. I do assure you that I am not one of these young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so. (105)

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

Lizzy is giving prevalence to happiness rather than to economic security or social rank. After this unsuccessful proposal, Lizzy declines Mr. Darcy's marriage proposal in an even more forceful manner, disregarding his social and economic status:

From the very beginning – from the first moment, I may almost say – of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form the groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before *I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.* (188, emphasis added)

Fanny Price also resolutely says “no” to Henry's marriage proposal and she repeats her negation in front of Sir Thomas. Tanner states that Fanny is “a true speaker” since she does not hesitate to refuse a false discourse and a false economics of affection where marriage was subjected to the dominant ethos of market values (*Jane Austen* 6). I think that the same contention could be applied to Shirley – and to Lizzy Bennet – who rejects several advantageous marriage proposals on the account that “[b]efore I marry I am resolved to esteem – to admire – to *love*” (394). As Nancy Armstrong puts it, Shirley “becomes a rule breaker in the only way that can be morally authorized” (Armstrong, *How Novels* 45). Charlotte Brontë presents a woman who does not want to marry because she fears becoming a “spinster,” but who marries just for one reason: “To love with my whole heart. I know I speak in an unknown tongue; but I feel indifferent whether I am comprehended or not” (394). Love is precisely what exists between Shirley and her tutor, Louis Moore. Shirley would agree with Stuart Mill that when a man and a woman

are attached to one another and are not too unlike to begin with; the constant shared experience of the same things, assisted by their sympathy, draws out the latent capacities of each for being interested in the things that were at first interesting only to the other. This produces a gradual assimilation of their tastes and characters to one another, partly by the gradual modification of each but more by a real enriching of the two natures, each acquiring the tastes and capacities of the other in addition to its own. This often happens between two friends of the same sex who are much in one another's company in their daily life: and it would be common in marriage if it weren't that the totally different bringing up of the two sexes make it nearly impossible to form a really well-suited union. If this were remedied, whatever differences there might still be in individual tastes, there would usually be complete

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

unity and unanimity regarding the great objectives of life. (Stuart Mill, 56-7, emphasis added)

Shirley Keeldar is the emblem of the emancipated woman. She has wealth and an incredible amount of vitality. She is resolute enough to take the initiative in social welfare work among the villages; she lends money to Robert Moore to avoid a high rate of unemployment at Briarfield, due to the failure of his mill; she urges Caroline to go out late at night to see what the rioters are doing; she nurses wounded soldiers after the Luddite attack on Moore's mill, and she rejects several advantageous marriage proposals (Linder 85). As Mill puts it:

[...] the communities in which reason has been most cultivated and the idea of social duty has been most powerful are the very ones that have most strongly asserted the freedom of action of the individual — *the liberty of each person to govern his conduct by his own feelings of duty, and by such laws and social restraints as his own conscience can subscribe to.* (Mill 58, emphasis added)

Through these two heroines, Caroline and Shirley, Charlotte Brontë wonderfully reflects the two major problems of women in the mid-nineteenth-century: the necessity of women's employment and their right to determine their private lives. It is quite ironic that Charlotte Brontë's main concerns do not differ greatly from Jane Austen's. However, despite the strong appeal for the education and employment of women, the only destination that Charlotte Brontë can design for her heroines is that of marriage (Stoneman 60). Thus, both Shirley and Caroline lose their identities under the acquired titles of "Mrs. Louis" and "Mrs. Robert." In *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë is presenting a strongly individual view which runs against mainstream Victorian views. First of all, she is encouraging education and employment for women. Secondly, she is advocating for marriage founded upon love and not upon a dowry. Her vision of society is truly Romantic: she asserts the rights of individuals and believes that institutions are tools to improve the condition of humanity.

In *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (2005), Armstrong argues that the Victorian novel represents women who express extreme forms of individualism as "extremely unattractive," and chastises them so severely that what once led to satisfaction and the impression of a more just social order now produced the opposite consequences (Armstrong 79). Armstrong suggests that, where eighteenth-

century heroines from Moll Flanders to Elizabeth Bennet expanded the limits of individualism and self-expression, Victorian heroines narrowed those limits and “transformed individualistic energy into forms of self-management and containment” (Armstrong 79). I cannot agree with these severe contention since Charlotte Brontë, through the character of Shirley, is venting out an extreme individualism from a powerfully resolute woman. In *Wuthering Heights*, female characters do not pale before eighteenth-century heroines either. However, it is the second Catherine the one who challenges normativity more powerfully.

According to Stevie Davies, Emily Brontë does not favor any possible feminist reading of *Wuthering Heights*:

Emily Brontë strikingly and uniquely offered the nineteenth century no obvious means for using her gender as a way of dominating (and hence depreciating) the novel. Readers found there no feminist protest, no engagement with the woman question, and indeed no expression of authorial opinion on any topic (Davies *Emily Brontë* 4).

I agree with Davies that Emily Brontë was not offering an – at least conscious – ideologically feminist codification of her novel, but it is also true that the work that the author wrote “is not precisely the work that is explicated by the critic” (Macherey 7) and that there is a potential feminist reading of the behaviour and acts of the two Catherines.

Catherine Earnshaw’s diary shows her initial rebellion and dissatisfaction. In this text, she raises her voice against the domestic tyranny of her brother, Hindley, and the religious oppression of Joseph. She also speaks out her desire for insurgence: “H. and I are going to rebel” (18). However, whereas Catherine Earnshaw yields before societal conventions more easily – “It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him” – Catherine Linton is a strongly individualist character. Catherine’s fears to commit a *mésalliance* with Heathcliff and her final decision to marry Edgar Linton because “he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband” (78), is a strong reason to place *Wuthering Heights* under the category of “social novels.”

And yet, what makes *Wuthering Heights* departs from social conventions is the exposure of the consequences of the socially sanctioned choice since marriage does not bring happiness for Catherine, as it usually happens in domestic fiction. On the contrary,

her decision to marry Linton constitutes all of Catherine's problems and exposes the contradictions of the "economics of the affections." The return of Heathcliff exposes then the failure of a socially appropriate marriage and raises questions about how a genteel marriage can satisfy all the needs of a woman, and this is precisely what Shirley speaks out (Pykett 88). This is probably the reason why the adult Catherine yearns for the consistency of her childhood, a state that was alien to the self-divisions that her incursion into the social world entailed. As Pykett puts it: "If Catherine is an image of female power it is a power which is doomed to find no channel in the social world of the novel, and can only turn on itself" (Pykett 91).

Cathy Linton, on her part, rejects to marry her cousin, Linton Heathcliff but, like Richardson's heroine, Clarissa Harlowe, Cathy is imprisoned by Heathcliff and forced to marry against her will. Cathy, who suffers from the subjection imposed on her by the patriarchal legal system, has to resort to her own abilities to regain some power. Her education and book-knowledge empowers her against Heathcliff so she can have a witty battle of words against him and can take refuge in a book when she needs to give free rein to her imagination (Pykett 83). In addition, she empowers and civilizes Hareton by teaching him how to read and he, in turn, can reclaim his inheritance to Heathcliff (Pykett 83): "Cathy exercises one of the few forms of power available to the powerless, resistance" (Pykett 97). Even Isabella Linton, who is infatuated with Heathcliff and marries him out of a Romantic idealization, is determined enough to make two of the most powerful transgressions in nineteenth-century literature: to elope with the man she loves despite her brother's abhorrence of him and, subsequently, to escape from him and to start a new life in London with his son. These female characters differ from the heroines of sentimental fiction in being more desiring than desirable. They are figures "for malevolent passion wasting its own flesh in repeated acts of energetic opposition" (Gezari *Charlotte Brontë* 128). They stand "locked in struggle, rigid and in resistance" (*Villette*, 258).

I would like to go back to Davies' assertion that "[r]eaders found there no feminist protest, no engagement with the woman question, and indeed no expression of authorial opinion on any topic" (Davies 4). Certainly, it is hard to find a commitment to the woman question or an explicit feminist agenda in *Wuthering Heights*. Female characters in the novel do not explicitly reject the inauthentic politicization of marriage as Shirley does, nor do they care about education or employment. However, the fact that the feminist

agenda is absent here is at least thought-provoking. Maybe we should ask ourselves whether Emily Brontë was identifying herself more with Heathcliff than with any of the two Catherines. We know that she felt a strong devotion for Byron and that she felt a strong admiration for the Duke of Wellington so maybe it is not incongruous to contend that Emily Brontë's approach was more aristocratic and Byronic. But of course, this is a mere conjecture. After all, the silence around the woman question in *Wuthering Heights* is not an absence to be remedied or a momentary silence that could be finally eliminated (Macherey 84). We must recognize the necessity of this silence because it is precisely the conflict of meanings that produces the singularity of the work: "[T]his conflict is not resolved or absorbed, but simply *displayed* (Macherey 84).

7.7 Conclusion

“Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken”

(Jane Austen, *Emma* 354)

We see then that *Wuthering Heights*' associations with a sordid history are not irrelevant or farfetched and that it would be irresponsible – and even hypocritical – to ignore them. Having read *Wuthering Heights* as a potential part of the structure of a colonial and industrial venture, one cannot simply accept that Emily Brontë's novel is “a kind of sport” or merely reinstate it to the group of “great literary masterpieces” – although it is certainly a literary masterpiece. Though modestly, the novel opens up a wide area of domestic and metonymic imperialist and industrial culture. As Michel de Certeau has noted:

Any autonomous order is founded upon what it eliminates; it produces a “residue” condemned to be forgotten. But what was excluded re-infiltrates the place of its origin – now the present's “clean” [*propre*] place. It resurfaces, it troubles, it turns the present's feeling of being “at home” into an illusion, it lurks – this “wild” this “ob-scene;” this “filth,” this “resistance” or superstition” – within the walls of the residence. (de Certeau 4)

Like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights* is a story “concerned with telling and retelling, with belief and disbelief, and with questions of how, when, and whether to tell the truth” (Stafford vii). Whereas an archetypal Condition-of-England novel, like *Hard*

Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel

Times or *North and South*, wears its historical affiliations more openly and explicitly, *Wuthering Heights* does not simply repeat experiences but encodes them; and it becomes a fascinating task to decipher them. The narrative imperatives of uncertainty, imaginative involvement, and plot work against an instant disclosure and the reader's mounting desire to know the truth is encouraged by the understanding that we are given only glimpses and distorted truths (Stafford x). The text constantly encourages and thwarts our expectations. To sum up, in this novel, the energies of resistance have a universal echo; they suggest the external and untamed energies that threaten the domestic order. In Macherey's words, in its expression and embodiment, the work displays and discloses what it cannot say and "[t]his silence gives it life" (Macherey, 84). Whether the historical context sheds new light on *Wuthering Heights* is still difficult to establish but what is clear is that we cannot neglect it. I hope to have shown that, rather than restraining interpretations, history tends to open up unlimited possibilities and interpretations, and that *Wuthering Heights* contains hints that allow us to read it as a social novel. As Tzvetan Todorov puts it in his theory of the fantastic, "the book closed, the ambiguity persists."

Chapter 8

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

(William Wordsworth, "My Heart Leaps Up," 1802)

8.1 Introduction

In *An Introduction to the English Novel* (1951), Arnold Kettle states that *Wuthering Heights* "is essentially the same kind of novel as *Oliver Twist*" (Kettle 131). According to Kettle, the novel is neither a romance nor a romantic novel and, though it is certainly not a picaresque novel or a moral fable, it has indeed a strong pattern of picaresque fiction (Kettle 131). This picaresque pattern, however, cannot be summarized in a single sentence as it happens with *Oliver Twist*, but its seed can be discerned as a significant theme in

Wuthering Heights.⁸² In this chapter, I would like to read the told – and untold – story of Heathcliff as a potential *Bildungsroman*, using some of Charles Dickens' novels (*David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Great Expectations*) and other nineteenth-century novels as core texts. Dickens was initiating a tradition when he decided to put a child as the protagonist of a novel for adults (Tillotson 50). This was virtually unknown when he wrote *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841).⁸³ In fact, in studies of Dickens' novels, "the figure of the child and the topic of childhood have always loomed large – and have sometimes even appeared to assume 'monstrous proportions'" (Merchant and Waters 1). Childhood is also highly prominent in *Wuthering Heights*, and critics such as Bataille have singled out Heathcliff and Catherine's pre-lapsarian state as the most significant part of the novel.

As Macherey puts it, "a narrative gives the impression of novelty in so far as it is a new story at every moment: other words might have been spoken, things might have happened differently" (47). This impression of novelty must give the impression that a new story with a different ending is conceivable (Macherey 47). Novelty lies in this continuous presence of possibility: "the narrative compels precisely because it *seems* that it might have been different" (47). However, this potential possibility is always combined with a certain opacity. It is precisely this combination of freedom and necessity that thrills us and makes us yield to the narrative. But it is the narrative which is determining and which has the function of saying something new and of bringing it into legibility (48). For Macherey, at the heart of the book remains what Moretti calls "a modification," an alteration which has not been intended (50). And it is my intention to account for this modification. Charlotte Brontë's defense of her sister against the charge of creating characters like Heathcliff is very appropriate here:

⁸² *Oliver Twist* is not strictly a traditional *Bildungsroman* since it does not fit in Bakhtin's classical definition of the genre: "an image of *man growing in national historical time*" ("The Bildungsroman" 25). In this novel, youth does not reach adulthood and does not fold youth's arrogance into a tranquil middle age. However, I use it within this corpus of novels because I think that the novel is deeply concerned with the arrival at identity and origins.

⁸³ I would like to point out here that, although we do not find any references by any of the Brontës to *Oliver Twist*, the resemblance between *Oliver Twist* and *Jane Eyre* is quite remarkable. In both novels, we find two ill-treated orphans who are sent to punishing institutions where they are starved and harassed, until they make their way.

Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know: I scarcely think it is. But this I know: the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master – something that, at times, strangely wills and works for itself (370).

Perhaps Emily Brontë did not intend to write a *Bildungsroman*, but Heathcliff's condition as outcast, his passage from "innocence" to "experience" – or from "oppressed" to "oppressor" –, his subsequent conversion into a *parvenu*, and his self-determination turn his "history" into a kind of *Bildungsroman*. It is this evolution from a natural state (childhood and "innocence") to a social state (adulthood and "experience") that interests me here.

8.2 Delimitation of the Context

A *Bildungsroman* is a European narrative genre which especially flourishes in Germany at the end of the eighteenth-century with the publication of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796), translated as *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* by Thomas Carlyle. This work becomes the prototype of the genre. The term *Bildungsroman*, however, was revived and widely promoted by Wilhelm Dilthey in his work *Leben Scheleiermachers* (1820), and it came into wider use in the twentieth century, first in German studies and then, as a common term in English (Maynard 280). The term was first adopted in English by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1910 and it now serves "as an open-ended marker for novels that seem specially to epitomize the openness of the novel itself" (Maynard 280). The conception of the *Bildungsroman* genre not only keeps expanding but also tends to develop and colonize other genres, ironically repeating in a kind of growing *mise en abîme* the original development of the novel form itself (Maynard 280). Literally, the term *Bildungsroman* refers to a novel (*Roman*) about human development and formation (*Bildung*).

In his groundbreaking *The Way of the World* (1987), Franco Moretti states that the historical progression of the *Bildungsroman* originates with Goethe and Jane Austen (Moretti 12). This genre arose from the particular historical and intellectual circumstances of eighteenth-century Germany (Abel, Hirsh and Langland 5). Martin Swales defines it as "a novel form that is animated by a concern for the whole man unfolding organically in all his complexity and richness" (Swales 14). Indeed, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* marks the birth of the *Bildungsroman* and Wilhelm Meister was followed by Rastignac, David

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

Copperfield, Jane Eyre, Renzo Tramaglino, Eugene Onegin, etc. All these characters share a common trait: their youth and inexperience, a necessary condition of the *Bildungsroman*. If youth has a symbolic centrality in the *Bildungsroman*, it is not only because Europe needs to assign a meaning to youth, but also to *modernity* (Moretti 5). This specific modernity is represented by the youthful qualities of mobility and internal restlessness: “Modernity as a bewitching and risky process full of ‘great expectations’ and ‘lost illusions’ (Moretti 5). Youth is indeed the best representation of modernity’s dynamism and instability (5). It is then the essence of modernity, the sign of a world that does not look back to the past but to the future (5). The *Bildungsroman* centers on “lived experience” and individual development and it eludes the historical turning points, “the crisis and genesis of a culture” (12). After all, it is the “transformation of the filler” that makes the nineteenth-century novel possible (Moretti, “Serious,” 375).

The European *Bildungsroman* is full of *parvenus*, that is, characters with no fixed place in society but who, whether successfully or not, raise in society. Some of the most famous upstarts are Rastignac in *Père Goriot*, Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*, or Pip in *Great Expectations*. These are characters with self-determination; *machine désirantes* who pursue a certain social status: “There are no such things as principles, only events; no laws, only circumstances” (102), says Vautrin to Rastignac in *Père Goriot*. Social mobility becomes an end in itself and the desire for success appears as natural (Moretti 120). In this world, values and principles are relative because they are based on unstable social relationships of power and threat: “It is a way of perceiving reality that has lost any ethical depth and finalistic impulse” (Moretti 131). There is then a fascination with an unlimited social mobility and with the prospect of becoming “anything.” It is the elation caused by this open society, where everything is dynamic and relative. Thus, although history was turbulent in the nineteenth-century, the *Bildungsroman* opted for the private sphere, with its persistent capacity to withdraw from political life (Moretti vii). The *Bildungsroman* is also at the transition between two social classes, between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. It is the story of the young merchant Wilhelm Meister, who is adopted by a group of intellectual landowners; of Elizabeth Bennet’s journey from Cheapside to Pemberley; of Jane Eyre’s conversion from governess to landowner; of the transition from the impoverished orphan David Copperfield to David the author; of Nicholas Nickleby’s ill-fated situation to his lucky change of fortune; and of Heathcliff’s evolution from supposedly abused child to prosperous landowner.

I would like to point out that the birth of the *Bildungsroman* and its concern with childhood is particularly related to historical evolution and to the theorization of natural rights. Natural morality was prior to social morality, which is the morality acquired from societal norms and religious education. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish chronicler, Bartolomé de Las Casas, became an early advocate of the universal human rights, establishing a relation between moral virtue and nature. His contributions to human rights is materialized in his work, *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (*A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*), published in 1552. This is the first modern report on human rights. In it he describes the atrocities the Native Americans suffered in the hands of Spanish conquerors:

Otra vez, este mesmo tirano fue a cierto pueblo que se llamaba Cota, y tomó muchos indios he hizo despedazar a los perros quince o veinte señores y principales, y cortó mucha cantidad de manos de mujeres y hombres, y las ató en unas cuerdas, y las puso colgadas de un palo a luenga, porque viesen los otros indios lo que habían hecho a aquellos, en que habría setenta pares de manos; y cortó muchas narices a mujeres y niños.⁸⁴

In his *Historia de las Indias* (*History of the Indies*) Las Casas developed his account on these massacres. Las Casas argued for their full humanity and against the brutality of slavery. In his argument with Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, he stated that “*todas las gentes del mundo son hombres*” [“All peoples of the world are men”], not beasts, natural slaves or retarded infants. He defended that the natives were rational human beings and, as such, possessed natural rights as well as political autonomy and human dignity. Las Casas contended that the cruelty in the customs of the Native Americans was not worse than the brutality one could find in the civilizations of Europe or in the Spanish past:

Menor razón hay para que los defectos y costumbres incultas y no moderadas que en estas nuestras indianas gentes halláremos nos maravillen y, por ellas, las menospreciemos, pues no solamente muchas y aun todas las repúblicas fueron más perversas, irracionales y en prabidad más estragadas, y en muchas virtudes y bienes morales muy menos morigeradas y ordenadas. Pero nosotros mismos, en nuestros

⁸⁴ De las Casas, Bartolomé. *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias*. 1552. Web. 20. Dec. 2017. <http://www.eumed.net/textos/07/fbc/v.htm>

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

*antecesores, fuimos muy peores, así en la irracionalidad y confusa policía como en vicios y costumbres brutales por toda redondez desta nuestra España.*⁸⁵

Before *Las Casas*, the English lawyer, Thomas More, published *Utopia* (1516), which depicts the religious, social and political customs of a fictional island placed in a rough New World. More describes the island of *Utopia* in the following way:

Two hundred miles across in the middle part, where it is widest, and nowhere much narrower than this except towards the two ends, where it gradually tapers. These ends, curved round as if completing a circle five hundred miles in circumference, make the island crescent-shaped, like a new moon. (41)

More condemns the greed and acquisitiveness of European civilizations as compared to the more sensible attitude of the inhabitants of *Utopia*: “Human folly has made them precious because they are rare. In contrast, Nature, like a most indulgent mother, has placed her best gifts out in the open, like air, water and the earth itself; vain and unprofitable things she has hidden away in remote places” (60). He also compares the Europeans’ absurd dependence on artificial laws and their reliance on deceitful lawyers with the simplicity of the Utopians’ legal system:

They think it practical for each man to plead his own case, and say the same thing to the judge that he would tell his lawyer. This makes for less confusion and readier access to the truth. A man speaks his mind without tricky instructions from a lawyer, and the judge examines each point carefully, taking pains to protect simple folk against the false accusations of the crafty. (82)

Thomas Hobbes and Samuel Pufendorf argued that man had a natural right to preserve his life. Of course, no one in the state of nature would willingly renounce this right, which was to be acknowledged in civil society and made the basis of legitimate political obligation (Coleman xvii). In this attempt to outline the history of human rights to the novel and the *Bildungsroman* in particular, Richardson has a central role. He was another important moralist who praised moral virtue above all mercenary rewards. This is very clear in *Pamela*, when the heroine’s father warns her against vanity and arrogance: “Be

⁸⁵ De las Casas, Bartolomé. *Historia de las Indias*. Documentación para la Didáctica – Libart. 14 April 2010. Web. 20 Dec. 2017.

<http://recursoslibart.blogspot.com.es/2010/04/debate-sobre-la-naturaleza-de-los.html>.

sure don't let people's telling you, you are pretty, puff you up; for you did not make yourself, and so can have no praise due to you for it. It is virtue and goodness only, that make the true beauty" (20). But never is his moral philosophy more present than in this Hamletian passage, where Richardson equates the humanity of "the richest of Princes" with that of "poorest of Beggars:"

This is a sad Letter, my dear Father and Mother; and one may see how poor People are despised by the Proud and the Rich; and yet we were all on a foot originally: And many of these Gentlefolks, that brag of their ancient Blood, would be glad to have it as wholesome, and as really untainted, as ours! – Surely these proud People never think what a short Stage Life is; and that, with all their Vanity, a Time is coming, when they shall be obliged to submit to be on a Level with us; and true said the Philosopher, when he looked upon the Skull of a King, and that of a poor Man, that he saw no Difference between them. Besides, do they not know, that the richest of Princes, and the poorest of Beggars, are to have one great and tremendous Judge, at the last Day; who will not distinguish between them, according to their Qualities in Life? – But, on the contrary, may make their Condemnations the greater, as their neglected Opportunities were the greater? Poor Souls! How I pity their Pride! O keep me, gracious God! from *their* high Condition, if my Mind shall ever be tainted with their Vice! Or polluted with so cruel and inconsiderate a Contempt of the humble Estate which they behold with so much scorn! (258)

Like Pamela, Clarissa also defends the supremacy of virtue and human dignity above fortune: "You know not the value of the heart you have insulted [...] You, sir, I thank you, have lowered my fortunes; but, I bless God, that my mind is not sunk with my fortunes. It is, on the contrary, raised above fortune, and above you" (797), says Clarissa to her lustful pursuer.

Richardson was indeed a great source of inspiration for Rousseau.⁸⁶ In all his novels, love is a "natural passion" and it can be erotic, social or divine love (Doody *A Natural*

⁸⁶ Balzac contended in *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or* that Rousseau was obviously inspired by the work of Richardson, although "he departs from it in a thousand details which make this monumental work splendidly original (121):"

What has guaranteed its survival over the years are its grand ideas, which we tend to overlook when, in our youth, we read this book seeking a vivid depiction of our deepest sensual experience, whereas in fact we are unaware that philosophers and other serious writers resort to such imagery only when they can find no

Passion 12). All these three passions and the characters that possess them have a great deal of psychic energy (Doody 12). In his *Discourse on Inequality* (1755), Rousseau insisted on man's natural "goodness." The word "goodness" refers here to the absence of any specific moral character in human nature. By using the term "goodness" Rousseau distinguishes himself from the pessimistic tradition of French moralists such as Pascal, who contended that the volatile nature of desire is a sign of man's fallen nature (Coleman xxi). For Rousseau, man in the state of nature has the capacity for pity, which is essentially the unwillingness to cause or witness suffering, and it is good just because it restrains violence and aggression (Coleman xxi). In the *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau makes a severe critique of modernity and stresses the moral and psychological decline of mankind:

There is, I think, an age at which the individual would like to go on unchanged; you are going to seek the age at which you would wish your whole species had remained. Dissatisfied with your present condition for reasons that presage even greater unhappiness for your unfortunate posterity, you might wish you could go back in time – and this sentiment must elicit the eulogy of your earliest ancestors, the censure of your contemporaries, and the fright of those who have the misfortune to live after you. (25)

The Genevan writer points out that what distinguished the first humans from animals was their system of organization:

In stripping the creature thus constituted of all the supernatural endowments he may have received and all the artificial faculties that he could have acquired only through a long process, and considering him, in short, as he must have emerged from the hands of nature, I see an animal less strong than some, less agile than others, but on the whole the most advantageously constituted of all. (26)

Like Las Casas, Rousseau correlates moral virtue with nature, and asserts that the "savage man" and the "civilized man" differ in the "depth of their hearts" and in their inclinations that "what constitutes the supreme bliss of the one would drive the other to despair" (83). He concludes that human nature has decayed with modernity. In *Émile, ou*

other way to express their deepest thoughts; and the experiences of Lord Edward represent indeed one of the most refined concepts in European fiction. (121)

De l'Éducation (1762), Rousseau expands this correlation and argues that moral virtue, nature and childhood are connected. For this philosopher, civilization has corrupted the natural goodness of man. It is a treatise which proposes a new form of “natural” education in order to prepare children for their entry into society and to protect them from its corruption. *Émile* is probably one of the first *Bildungsromane*, anticipating Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795). In the preface to *Émile*, Rousseau makes a powerful statement about the sovereignty of childhood:

Childhood is unknown. Starting from the false idea one has of it, the farther one goes, the more one loses one's way. The wisest men concentrate on what it is important for men to know without considering what children are in a condition to learn. They are always seeking the man in the child without thinking of what he is before being a man. (33-4, emphasis added).

The statement, “[t]hey are always looking for the man in the child without considering what he is before he becomes a man,” will have an influential impact on the English Romantics and is echoed in William Wordsworth's famous line “The Child is father of the Man,” in his poem, “My Heart Leaps Up” (1802).

Goethe (1749-1832) also values the power of virtue above intelligence or talents. Thus, in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), Werther claims that he can only be proud of his heart, “the one source of everything, all my strength, all my bliss, all my wretchedness. Oh, anyone may know the things I know – my heart is mine alone” (65). In *Werther*, Goethe emphasizes the “unpolluted” and genuine nature of children:

Yes, my dear Wilhelm, of all earthly creatures children are closest to my heart. When I watch them and see in their small forms the seeds of all the strengths and virtues that one day they will have such need of; when I perceive in their obstinacy a future resilience and firmness of character, and in their mischief the good humour and lightness that will help them slip through the dangers of the world, and all so unspoilt and whole, then over and over again I recall the golden words of the Teacher of Mankind: unless ye become as one of these. And yet, my dear friend, these our equals, who should be our models, do we not treat them as our inferiors? They shan't have minds of their own! – But don't *we*? And what gives us that privilege? – Our being older and wiser! – All God sees from His heaven are children, some old, some young, and His son told us long ago which He has more joy in. But they believe in Him and don't listen to Him – that's an old story too –and bring up their children in

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

their own image and – adieu, Wilhelm! I’ve no wish to harp on about it any longer.

(25-6)

We will see again this idealization of childhood and naiveté in his second novel, *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, and, especially, in the character of Mignon, who is described as a spirit, “so pure is she, so full of fervor, so disengaged from the clay of this world” (vii)

This is, again, a powerful Romantic dictum. Heinrich von Kleist also internalized Rousseau’s educational theories and his discontent with the inauthenticity of social life, as he explained in his many letters to his sister, Ulrike (Howe 14). Indeed, the pastoral ideals of *The New Héloïse* (1761) and *Émile* (1762) and the Rousseauian theory of the innate goodness of man are present in most of Kleist’s *Novellen*, where evil arises from the characters’ contact with civilization (Howe 61). Like Kleist, Wordsworth was also excited by Rousseau’s radical belief that man is naturally good but that society corrupts him. He agreed with Rousseau that the best education is through nature, and that the growing child should be protected from societal prejudices in order to preserve his goodness (Newlyn 61). In his *Prelude*, Wordsworth articulates that “love of nature leads to love of mankind.” Through *Terror and Beauty*, which metaphorically fulfill the vigilant role of Emile’s tutor, the child will achieve moral enlightenment (Newlyn 61). Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* is indeed concerned with how to avoid corruption from social vices and how to preserve goodness: “O who is he that has his whole life long / Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself? / For this alone is genuine liberty” (120-2).

After this speculative frame of the *Bildungsroman* and its correlation with the philosophy of moral virtue and childhood, I would like to add that I am strongly indebted to Franco Moretti’s contribution to the study of the *Bildungsroman*, and that I have mainly relied on his outstanding work, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (1987), for the organization of this chapter.⁸⁷ According to Moretti, whereas the continental *Bildungsroman* has been really sensitive to key historical changes, like the French Revolution, the post-Napoleonic Restoration, and/or the apotheosis of capitalism in the metropolis, the English *Bildungsroman* – from *Tom Jones* (1741) to *Great*

⁸⁷ Critics like Fredric Jameson have claimed that Moretti’s work on the *Bildungsroman* “remains the most stimulating and comprehensive discussion of this novelistic subgenre” (Jameson, “The Experiments,” 102).

Expectations (1861) – is characterized by the stability of narrative conventions and simple cultural assumptions (Moretti 181). Moretti accounts for this ideological conformity with the argument that the bourgeois revolution had taken place between 1640 and 1688, and England, which was never invaded by Napoleonic forces, was perhaps the only European nation for which the year 1789 did not seem the beginning of modernity (Moretti 181). As we have seen in chapter 2, *Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel?* the critic Ian Duncan brilliantly refutes this thesis. However, I have found Moretti’s delineations of the English *Bildungsroman* especially illuminating, and I have used them to determine whether or not *Wuthering Heights* fits this pattern. In fact, Moretti’s accurate study of the English *Bildungsroman* is even more thought-provoking if we take into account that he carelessly mentions *Wuthering Heights* only once, and it is as an instance of the fact that, in the English tradition, plot –and historical revolutions, for which plot provides a metaphor – is far from being the most significant characteristic of the novelistic form.

To conclude, I want to posit the grounds of my argument with Moretti. Some of these grounds will be historical – England was not as placid, dull and complacent as Moretti makes it sound but a more turbulent place – and based on my reading of *Wuthering Heights*, a novel which Moretti’s argument does not really do justice; (a) Heathcliff’s story is one of social mobility (but psychological arrest); (b) the oppositional paradigm between “good” and “evil” so representative of fairy-tales – though vaguely present at the beginning of the novel – is finally cancelled in the novel since Heathcliff ambiguously represents both the figures of hero and villain; (c) Heathcliff’s story of upward mobility shows his great individuality, proving that he is not a “common” character; (d) this social mobility takes place without the “recognition-inheritance pattern” so common in Dickens’ novels and via Heathcliff’s scheming control of the law; (e) the ideological legacy of *Wuthering Heights* might also be found in literature; and, finally, (f) Heathcliff’s unconscious revenge against the law betrays its very contradictions.

8.3 The Confinement of Youth

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o’clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously. (1)

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

This is the beginning of *David Copperfield*, a beginning similar to that of other well-known *Bildungsromane*, such as *Tom Jones*, *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, or *Jane Eyre*. Moretti points out that one of the main traits of the English *Bildungsroman* is the emphasis granted to the protagonists' childhood and even to their birth (182) and he rightfully selects this corpus to prove how the heroes' childhoods and births have great relevance. Moretti compares these novels to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, the epitome of *Bildungsroman*, and argues that, contrary to Goethe's novel, in the English novel the most relevant experiences are those which confirm the choices made in childhood naivety; thus he calls them "novels of preservation." In these novels of preservation there is a devaluation of youth, since it is damaged and undermined thanks to a very early institutionalization. Youth is also of heightened relevance in *Wuthering Heights*, and critics have agreed on the fact that Heathcliff and Catherine's main problem is that they are trapped in their childhoods. Thus, Heathcliff's energy and vitality are associated with youth and youth is itself connected to the past of Heathcliff and Catherine's childhood (Kavanagh 29).

Romantic writing in Britain situated individuals in time and chronology by retelling their own personal past. This account allowed for the formation of the characters and finally gave shape to the adult, as it occurs in *David Copperfield*. The "child within" was then the lost representation of a lost individual past and the past of a culture (Steedman 10). As Charles Taylor puts it in *Sources of the Self*: "identity is constituted in memory" (288) and "since the life to be lived has also to be *told*, its meaning is seen as something that unfolds through the events" (289). From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, complex ways of understanding childhood came into being and children were apprehended as "the first metaphor for all people, [...] a mapping of analogy and meaning of the self, always in shape and form *like us*, the visual connection plain to see" (Steedman 17-8). Children were thus regarded as projection of the adult. Rather than being novels of "initiation," the English *Bildungsroman* is more like a novel of "preservation," since the most vital experiences are those which confirm the choices that the characters made in the innocence of their childhood rather than those which modify their childhood perceptions (Moretti 182). This is clearly patent in *David Copperfield*'s (or Dickens'?) Rousseauian reflection about the "freshness" and "gentleness" of those adults who still *preserve* the power of observation of young children:

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

This may be a fancy, though I think the memory of most of us can go farther back into such times than many of us suppose; just as I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy. Indeed, I think that most grown men who are remarkable in this respect, may with greater propriety be said not to have lost the faculty, than to have acquired it; the rather, as I generally observe such men to retain a certain freshness, and gentleness, and capacity of being pleased, which are also an inheritance they have preserved from their childhood. (DC 13)

Dickens is indeed concerned with the *truth* of children's observation and of "childlike clairvoyance" (Moretti 183). As I suggested in the previous chapter, Heathcliff does not go beyond childhood emotionally. When he returns to Wuthering Heights after his three-year-absence, he is still the boy offended by Catherine's inconsiderate words about his disheveled look. He is not mature enough to forgive either, and he does fulfill his childish promise to avenge Hindley: "I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!" (60). Heathcliff does not forget this promise and he stands firm on his decision three years later:

And as to you, Catherine, I have a mind to speak a few words now, while we are at it. I want you to be aware that I *know* you have treated me infernally - infernally! Do you hear? And if you flatter yourself that I don't perceive it, you are a fool; and if you think I can be consoled by sweet words, you are an idiot: and if you fancy I'll suffer unrevenged, I'll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while! Meantime, thank you for telling me your sister-in-law's secret: I swear I'll make the most of it. And stand you aside! (112)

The figure of the child was used both to evoke and to express the past that stands behind each individual life: "what was turned inside in the course of individual development was that which was also latent: the child *was* the story wanting to be told" (Steedman 11). Thus, Heathcliff, the "sullen, patient child" who would stand "Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear" (36) will remember the pain and the bruises of these blows in his adulthood but, this time, he would return the blow.

But these are novels of "preservation" in another sense as well. These heroes' main concern is to keep safe from the hazards of the metropolis or from the cruelty of different types of authorities. In fact, writing about physical abuse on children's bodies was a practice described in nineteenth-century fiction and children frequently bear the marks of

adult cruelty in a strikingly visual manner.⁸⁸ In Dickens' novels as well as in the Brontës', we encounter traumatized heroes or heroines (David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, Smike, Pip, Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, Caroline Helstone) who have never known any parents at all, and who, as long as they can remember, have been unloved and despised by all the world (Hillis Miller, *Victorian* 36). Such desolation is perfectly articulated by the narrator of *Oliver Twist*:

He was alone in a strange place; and we all know how chilled and desolate the best of us will sometimes feel in such a situation. *The boy had no friends to care for, or to care for him.* The regret of no recent separation was fresh in his mind; *the absence of no loved and well-remembered face sank heavily into his heart.* (34, emphasis added)

Similarly, Mr. Earnshaw finds Heathcliff "starving" and "houseless" in the streets of Liverpool and, since "not a soul knew to whom it belonged," he decides to take "it" home with him. This fatherless child could only stare round and repeat "over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (34). According to Staten, the novel introduces him as a kind of "blank slate" with respect to his previous life (Staten 135). He appears to have been abandoned by his family and to have lost, or never fully learned the art of language.

The word "infant," comes from Latin *infantem*, "young child, babe in arms," noun use of adjective meaning "not able to speak," from *in-* "not" and *fans*, present participle of *fari* "to speak." In Giorgio Agamben's words, "infancy finds its logical place in a presentation of the relationship between language and experience" (*Infancy* 4). Heathcliff is not experiencing an impossibility of saying, rather, it is "an impossibility of speaking *from the basis of a language*; it is an experience, via that infancy which dwells in the margin between language and discourse, of the very faculty or power of speech" (Agamben *Infancy* 7). His initial failure of communication is indeed a sign of the unspeakable now verbalized, and of the damage that has been done to him.⁸⁹ We should

⁸⁸ Nineteenth-century fiction has accustomed us to children without provenance, illegitimate children out of the silences of fiction and bearing the physic and psychic marks of terrible traumas.

⁸⁹ In 1833, Walter Benjamin analyzed the "poverty of experience" of modern age and located its origins in the devastation of the First World War, from whose battlefields soldiers returned with shell shock:

note that these cases of verbal deficiency usually occur in contexts of physical isolation such as the one in which Heathcliff is found by Mr. Earnshaw.⁹⁰ This might have been a plausible beginning for *Oliver Twist*, since in chapter eight there is a significant reference to Irish boys confined in public-houses: “The sole places that seemed to prosper amid the general blight of the place were the public-houses, and in them, the lowest order of the Irish (who are generally the lowest orders of anything) were wrangling with might and main” (63). Heathcliff’s interior life is, like Oliver’s, formless, only surrounded by “gloom and loneliness” (*OT* 18). Loneliness and isolation are indeed a symbol of what the child represents (Steedman 126). Thus, the narrators seek these children to their homes or to the work-house to know them on the inside and to penetrate their psychology: “He seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment” (*WH* 36).

When we encounter these characters for the first time, they are in moments of extreme danger. According to Peter Brooks, by the nineteenth century, the *pícaro*’s scheming to survive has turned into ambition, a more socially defined form (Brooks 39). The fact that it takes ambition and getting ahead seriously rather than as an object of satire is indeed a characteristic of the modern novel and of bourgeois society. This ambition becomes the vehicle and symbol of Eros, “that which totalizes the world as possession and progress” (Brooks 39). Unlike Balzac’s heroes (Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré), our heroes’ main concern is not how to “succeed” or how to “rise in the world” but how to live in this world at all since neither the social world nor the world of nature will provide them with the

men returned ... grown silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience ... What ten years later was poured out in the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes from mouth to mouth. And there was nothing remarkable about that. For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body (“The Storyteller.” *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. Glasgow: Fontana. 1973).

It is not implausible to think that Heathcliff’s mutism and communication impairment result from undergoing traumatic experiences in an urban apocalypse.

⁹⁰ Indeed, communication impairment and selective mutism are always related to isolation and anti-social behaviors in the literary context of modernist and postmodernist fiction (Martín Salván 108).

means of life (Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens* 37). As the narrator of *Oliver Twist* offhandedly comments, these outcasts are likely to die of starvation or squashed by accident for the world totally neglects them: “Occasionally... there was some more than usually interesting inquest upon a parish child who had been overlooked in turning up a bedstead, or inadvertently scalded to death when there happened to be a washing” (7).

A constant theme in Dickens novels is that the hero's life and social position are repeatedly defined by external forces. Thus, Dickens' novels “obsessively examine the meaning of dependency and guardianship” (Stevic 2). There is little active volition in these children; they neither commit themselves to any project nor do they try to seize for themselves a place in the hostile world. Their volition is that of passive resistance (Hillis Miller *CD* 43). Thus, whereas Oliver is determined to survive – he resists all the attempts of the world to smash him or convert him into a thief – Heathcliff is depicted by Nelly as “a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment” who “would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt himself by accident, and nobody was to blame” (36). Similarly, Jane Eyre, accustomed to her cousin John Reed's abuse, “never had an idea of replying to it; my care was how to endure the blow which would certainly follow the insult” (10). And yet, it is when they exert some political resistance, as in Oliver's “Sir, I want some more,” or Jane's “Speak I must,” when these characters gain moral authority (Armstrong “The Fiction of” 355). All these children are “figures of knowingness” since they have already experienced too much ill-treatment and abuse (Bodenheimer 23). These children will try to find security and a sense of belonging to a community: Oliver in Rose Maylie's house, Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, and Jane Eyre at Lowood. However, this safety and sense of belonging will not last long. Oliver will understand that goods are not won without a price; Heathcliff will be downgraded, undermined, and mistreated by Hindley after Mr. Earnshaw's death; and Jane Eyre will see all his hopes of finding affection dashed.

These boys had to grow up prematurely by undergoing in silence the chastisement of a world which does not know what to do with them. They are undermined by very early disciplinary institutionalization, and frequently channeled into work-houses or boarding schools secluded from the rest of the world (Moretti 184), as it is the case not only of *Oliver Twist* but also *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre* or *Smike*, the companion of *Nicholas Nickleby*, who is not only deprived of name and surname, but also of both childhood and

adulthood. Although Heathcliff's situation might appear to be the opposite, for he is not confined to a boarding school and is allowed to run wild with Catherine, his freedom is nonetheless a parody of itself (Eagleton, *Myths* 104). By depriving him of education and culture, Hindley is inverting Heathcliff's potential freedom into "the non-freedom of neglect" (Eagleton 104). According to Eagleton, Heathcliff is deprived of liberty in two opposing ways: he is exploited as a servant and allowed to run wild at the same time. His liberty on the "outside," however, is merely the result of cultural impoverishment; it is the other side of oppression (Eagleton 104). Heathcliff will end up understanding this and he will turn the cultural weapon against Hindley's son, Hareton.

These hardships and confinements are the reason why, according to Moretti, the English youth cannot identify with the symbolic values which were the essence of the continental *Bildungsroman*: indefiniteness, and social and spiritual mobility (185). Moretti contends that the reason for this symbolic void is that the more a society perceives itself as an unstable and precariously legitimized system, the more powerful the image of its youth. Hence, if youth acts as a kind of "symbolic concentrate" of the qualms and strains of an entire society, and the hero's growth becomes the narrative convention or *fiction* that best explores these contradictory values (185), the English hero is condemned to childishness. Thus, Nicholas Nickleby, the young hero who leaves home in search of maturity and economic independence, remains, even despite his success in finding a living and a kind wife, emotionally tied to the past. When he takes the dying Smike to Devonshire, Nicholas thinks of his childhood as "the happiest years of his life" (758):

It seems but yesterday that we were playfellows, Kate, and it will seem but tomorrow when we are staid old people, looking back to these cares as we look back, now, to those of our childish days: and recollecting with a melancholy pleasure that the time was, when they could move us. (795)

Nicholas even tries to preserve and restore the past by his act of buying his old family home and maintaining "of the old rooms:"

The first act of Nicholas, when he became a rich and prosperous merchant, was to buy his father's old house. As time crept on, and there came gradually about him a group of lovely children, it was altered and enlarged; but none of the old rooms were ever pulled down, no old tree was ever rooted up, nothing with which there was any association of bygone times was ever removed or changed. (830)

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

Likewise, *David Copperfield* is another novel of nostalgic reminiscences. As David says at the beginning: “this narrative is my written memory” (796). Like Nicholas, David resorts to childhood memories when the present depresses him:

When I walked alone in the fine weather, and thought of the summer days when all the air had been filled with my boyish enchantment, I did miss something of the realization of my dreams; but I thought it was a softened glory of the Past, which nothing could have thrown upon the present time (629)

Like Nicholas and David, Heathcliff is also emotionally and morally arrested in his childhood. Heathcliff is indeed the only character in *Wuthering Heights* who does not mature.⁹¹ He remains loyal to his immature plans of revenge against Hindley and to his pastoral childhood with Catherine:

For what is not connected with her to me? and what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped in the flags! In every cloud, in every tree - filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day - I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men and women - my own features - mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her! Well, Hareton's aspect was the ghost of my immortal love; of my wild endeavours to hold my right; my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish – (324)

But his attachment to the past is never more patent than in Heathcliff's obsession with reducing Hareton to the pitiable state in which he found himself:

In that manner Hareton, who should now be the first gentleman in the neighbourhood, was reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy; and lives in his own house as a servant, deprived of the advantage of wages: quite unable to right himself, because of his friendlessness, and his ignorance that he has been wronged. (187)

Although he *does* evolve socially, Heathcliff remains psychologically the same vindictive child. His most intense emotion is that of apologetic loss: the loss of a wild childhood,

⁹¹ In such a broad and ubiquitous category as the *Bildungsroman* is, the youthful protagonists' growth is both central and visible, either as a narrative presence or a genuinely conspicuous absence (Esty 18).

the loss of his most dear playfellow, and the loss of his rights.⁹² In the traditional *Bildungsroman*, youth drives narrative impetus until adulthood arrives and replaces youth's vitality for an ordinary middle-age (Esty 18). In the case of Heathcliff, though, youth – or at least moral youth – retains its grip, dislocating the plot (Esty 18). Heathcliff's frozen youth rejects the *Bildungsroman* ideal of linear progress toward a final and integrated state (Esty 27). In this sense, Emily Brontë's novel *cannot* be called a novel of formation – “Well, never mind Mr. Green: as to repenting of my injustices, I've done no injustice, and I repent of nothing. I'm too happy; and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself” (333) – although it *is* a novel of upward mobility, as I will argue in section four. Nevertheless, I would like to add that English society in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was far from being stable and totally consolidated. As I hope to have shown in the previous chapter, the consequences of the Industrial Revolution, Chartism and the rise of the middle class shook this stability. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault tells us that the individual at the beginning of the nineteenth century felt “dehistoricized,” that is, “emptied of history” (402) but that he looked for meaning in the depths of his own being, “a historicity linked essentially to man himself” (402). I agree with Steedman's suggestion that childhood – and the child – is the most effective way to express the historicity “linked essentially to man himself.” It is also quite significant that this configuration of the past and the modern idea of history and modern conventions of historical practice appeared at the same time.

8.4 The White and the Black

In *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, Bruno Bettelheim argues that fairy tales “begin with the hero at the mercy of those who think little of him and his abilities, who mistreat him and even threaten his life” (Bettelheim 127). According to Moretti, the English *Bildungsroman* is, deep down, a fairy tale and, if we take into Bettelheim's definition of fairy tales we cannot help noticing that this is indeed the basic predicament of many Victorian novels such as *Jane Eyre*, *David*

⁹² I would like to clarify here that Heathcliff has two childhoods: his industrial childhood in Liverpool before he was found by Mr. Earnshaw, and his Romantic and naturalist savagery in *Wuthering Heights*. In fact, one could hypothesize that, due to his asocial life in Liverpool, Heathcliff is unable to fully accept the socialization that the Earnshaw family imposes on him. Hence, Heathcliff's only relief is to flee with Catherine to the moors.

Copperfield and *Great Expectations*. The essential separation of “good” and “evil” is indeed a *conditio sine qua non* in these novels: a world polarized by ethical dichotomies cannot bear an ambiguous situation (188). Think, for example, in *Jane Eyre* at the mercy of her uncaring aunt and the bully of her cousin John:

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: *every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank when he came near.* (10, emphasis added)

Fairy tales are characterized for their lack of ambivalence and polarization of opposites:

The figures in fairy tales are not ambivalent – not good and bad at the same time, as we all are in reality. But since polarization dominates the child’s mind, it also dominates fairy tales. [...] One brother is stupid, the other is clever. One sister is virtuous and industrious, the others are vile and lazy. [...] One parent is all good, the other evil. (Bettelheim 9)

It is suggestive how frequently siblings attract the negative values of this radical emotional polarization (Moretti 186). Thus, the three Reeds are abusive and hard-hearted, Pip’s elder sister, Mrs. Joe, is quick-tempered and volatile, and Hindley is also detestable. With regards to parents in the fairy tales, they are often “separated into two figures, representative of the opposite feeling of love and rejecting, so the child externalizes and projects onto a ‘somebody’ all the bad things which are too scary to be recognized as part of oneself” (Bettelheim 70). This divergence is also symptomatic of our *Bildungsromane*: David Copperfield’s mother, Clara Copperfield, is caring and supportive whereas Mr. Murdstone, David’s stepfather, is despotic and cruel; Mr. Reed, Jane Eyre’s maternal uncle, is a kind-hearted man who adopts Jane when her parents die and who, in his last moments, asks Mrs. Reed “to rear and maintain [Jane Eyre] as one of her own children” (16), whereas Mrs. Reed abuses and neglects her, eventually sending her to Lowood School; Mr. Earnshaw is described by Nelly as a father with a “kind heart” (34) who “was determined he would not leave [Heathcliff] as he found it” (35) while Mrs. Earnshaw “was ready to fling it out of doors” (35).

This radical polarization requires then an equally radical and taxonomic conclusion, one that dissolves any residual uncertainty and irrevocably separates the hero and his alter ego: John Reed commits suicide; Mrs. Joe Gargery, is attacked by her husband’s

journeyman and is left disabled until her death; and Hindley ends up as an alcoholic crippled with debts. Although these just ends do not necessarily involve the happy ending of the novels, they constitute the taxonomical separation of “good” and “evil” so essential for fairy tales. However, as I have already shown, this oppositional paradigm loses its precision in most of our novels and, especially, in *Wuthering Heights*. We have started this section with the assumption that Heathcliff is the “hero” of the novel but, has he claims to this title? Is he not rather the anti-hero? The result is what Moretti calls “an in and out *paralysis of judgement*” (187) since it is extremely difficult for us to judge the ambiguous situations and questionable behaviors which prevail in the novel. This paralysis of judgment which pursues us when we encounter Heathcliff is encoded in Mr. Earnshaw’s first description of him as “a gift of God; though it’s as dark almost as if it came from the devil” (34).

The fairy tale dimension of these novels is also present in the ethical choices that the characters have to face. According to Moretti, “any *Bildungsroman* worthy of the name would have had Jane remain among the needles of Thornfield” (188). For him, the reason why Jane abandons Rochester – or Catherine does not elope with Heathcliff – is because that would mean becoming an adulteress and, in a world in which ethical taxonomies are pervasive, such an ambiguous situation would be intolerable (188). The solution would be then to start afresh with a new tale: with the wandering orphan taken in by two good fairies in the case of *Jane Eyre* (188), or with a re-born Catherine (Cathy) trying to convert and domesticate a subrogate of Heathcliff (Hareton). However, Moretti goes too far in affirming that whereas the continental narrative tradition has dealt with the theme of adultery, in England, “nothing – absolutely nothing” (188). This is a rather unfair contention because, although it is true that the English *Bildungsroman* represents a deviation of revolutionary energies, it *does* release these energies through highly sophisticated techniques, like metaphoric concentration, metonymic density, and intermittent allegations. As Jiménez Heffernan puts it, “English narrative *romance* is not a failure, but rather an extremely complex aesthetic-ideological structure which fostered the circulation of revolutionary energies while ensuring aesthetic pleasure” (Jiménez Heffernan *The Bride* 74). Is perhaps Heathcliff a fairy-tale character? Is he an ordinary and unsubstantial character? Is he totally committed to Evil? Bataille’s statement that

“[t]here is no character in romantic literature who comes across more convincingly or more simply than Heathcliff” challenges Moretti’s argument (Bataille *Literature* 20).⁹³

8.5 Very Common Persons

Chapter fourteen of *Nicholas Nickleby* starts with the statement that “[h]aving the Misfortune to treat of none but Common People, is necessarily of a Mean and Vulgar Character” (160). Moretti defines the mythical hero of the English *Bildungsroman* as a “normative character” (189). His only function is just to make the moral universe in which he lives “recognizable” for the readers and there is not much more that he can do (189). In this sense, they are not very different from the heroes of the European *Bildungsroman*. Vautrin confirms this as he says to Rastignac that “[f]ifty thousand young men in the same position as you are all trying to solve the problem of how to get rich quick. You are just one of all that number” (*Père Goriot* 97). To sustain this thesis, Moretti uses *Great Expectations*, *Tom Jones*, *Jane Eyre* and most of Scott’s heroes. Thus, whereas Wilhelm or Lucien de Rubempré see in being “acted upon by the spur of circumstances” the chance to improve and shape their identity, the English heroes see it as a threat to their identity (191-2). However, Pip and Heathcliff compromise Moretti’s thesis. After his first meeting with Estella, Pip regrets his ordinariness, stating “that she had said I was common, and that I knew I was common, and that I wished I was not common” (*Great Expectations* 69). Pip, who, like Rastignac, wants to “make his way,” recognizes the pejorative connotation of the term “common,” and tries to free himself from it. As for Heathcliff, although Emily Brontë omits this part of his life, we know for sure that he flees from

⁹³ Many are the writers who have ironized about the plainness of their heroes or heroines. In *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray makes fun of the idealized “Good Good heroines” (Fiedler) of sentimental novels by comparing them with Amelia Sedley’s physical appearance: “As she is not a heroine, there is no need to describe her person; indeed I am afraid that her nose was rather short than otherwise, and her cheeks a great deal too ground and red for a heroine” (7). In *Northanger Abbey* (1817), Austen playfully introduces her heroine in this manner: “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her” (1). In George Eliot’s *Adam Bede*, talking about Arthur Donnithorne’s “charming bride,” his grandmother warns him that “I won’t forgive you if she’s not handsome. I can’t be put off with amiability, which is always the excuse people are making for the existence of plain people. And she must not be silly; that will never do, because you’ll want managing, and a silly woman can’t manage you” (318).

Wuthering Heights to make his fortune and comes back as a wealthy gentleman. In doing so, these heroes are aligning themselves to the Balzacian heroes and alienating themselves from the prototypical English heroes. Another “common” heroine is Jane Eyre, whom everybody depicts as “plain.” She is also highly conscious of her plainness and she titles her self-portrait, “Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain” (161) but she is faithful to her common nature. Jane Eyre is conscious that, as Moretti puts it, if the English hero or heroine wants to make their way, he or she must retain these common qualities since, by rejecting them, like Pip, she will not make a fortune (190).

Think, for instance, of the full title of *Oliver Twist: The Adventures of Oliver Twist; or, The Parish Boy's Progress*. Is the protagonist an individual (Oliver Twist) or a type (the Parish Boy)? Some editions call Oliver as “a nameless” boy in the list of characters that is offered at the beginning of the novel (Bowen *Other Dickens* 95). Although Oliver and Heathcliff are extremely dissimilar characters, they share some social circumstances. Take, for example, Oliver’s pitiful birth at the workhouse:

What an excellent example of the power of dress, young Oliver Twist was! Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society. But now that he was enveloped in the old calico robes which had grown yellow in the same service, he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once — *a parish child — the orphan of a workhouse — the humble, half-starved drudge — to be cuffed and buffeted through the world — despised by all, and pitied by none.* (5, emphasis added)

Oliver’s status indeterminacy is expressed in the narrator’s statement that “he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar.” Similarly, Hindley calls Heathcliff “a *beggarly* interloper” (38) while Nelly frames high notions of his birth: “You’re fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week’s income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together?” (56). In addition, both receive the social categorization of “vagabond” by Mr. Fang and Edgar Linton respectively.

Like Heathcliff before being adopted by the Earnshaws, Oliver is “illegitimate.” As Galia Benziman has shown, “Oliver serves the parish authorities as a blank child, a cipher, a round O that charts the outlines of the hollowness of his identity; and the great theme

of the novel is the study of how this round blankness may be filled, then emptied out, then filled again” (37). Thus, Oliver preserves Bumble’s first inscription and Heathcliff usurps the name of a dead son and never gains a surname: he might be anyone. This absence of a legitimate surname implies that he is not officially adopted into the family. They are children of uncertainty. However, whereas Heathcliff never gains a legitimate name, Oliver recovers his noble lineage. And yet, we never learn Nancy’s surname whereas Fagin and Monks are surnames without names. These are “nameless names” (Bowen 95). This “common” nature makes them the ideal representatives of the middle class, which in the European *Bidungsroman* was related to the characteristic of youth: unsettled, mobile, and enterprising (Moretti 191). Diderot, who introduced the *genre sérieux*, in the *Entretiens sur le fils naturel*, places it between comedy and tragedy. This sharp perception reinforces the association between style and social class. Thus, between the aristocratic tragic passion and the plebeian comedy, we find the middle class, or what Galdós called “el *vulgo*,” or, “muchedumbre consternada:”

[...]En esta muchedumbre consternada, que inventa mil artificios para ocultarse su propia tristeza, se advierte la descomposición de las antiguas clases sociales forjadas por la historia, y que habían llegado hasta muy cerca de nosotros con organización potente. Pueblo y aristocracia pierden sus caracteres tradicionales, de una parte por la desmembración de la riqueza, de otra por los progresos de la enseñanza; y el camino que aún hemos de recorrer para que las clases fundamentales pierdan su fisonomía se andará rápidamente. La llamada clase media, que no tiene aún existencia positiva, es tan sólo informe aglomeración de individuos procedentes de las categoría superior e inferior, el producto, digámoslo así, de la descomposición de ambas familias: de la plebeya, que sube; de la aristocrática, que baja, estableciéndose los desertores de ambas en esa zona media de la ilustración, de las carreras oficiales, de los negocios, que viene a ser la codicia ilustrada, de la vida política y municipal. Esta enorme masa sin carácter propio, que absorbe y monopoliza la vida entera, sujetándola a un sinfín de reglamentos, legislando desafortadamente sobre todas las cosas, sin excluir las espirituales, del dominio exclusivo del alma, acabará por absorber los desmedrados restos de las clases extremas, depositarias de los sentimientos elementales. ⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Pérez Gadós, Benito. “La Sociedad Presente como Materia Novelable.” Discurso ante la Real Academia Española, con motivo de su recepción.

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

In fact, the beginning of *Wuthering Heights*, that of a foundling raised by a noble family is very common in comedies and picaresque novels. Is not that the case of Perdita, the heroine of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, who is raised as a shepherd but results to be the king's daughter? Is not that the case of Tom Jones, found in Squire Allworthy's bed when the latter returns from a business trip? The *Bildungsroman* follows then the "bourgeois reality principle" (Moretti, "Serious," 391). However, the common hero of the English *Bildungsroman* is "endowed with little courageous and a dim self-consciousness" (191). He is also "an essential component of a *democratic* culture" (191). If the English hero wants to prosper, he must preserve these "common" characteristics: anonymous and plain. In rejecting them, he are giving up his fortune (191). As de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill and Burckhardt explained, democracy does not aim to foster great individualities. On the contrary, democracy is quite antiheroic since it is based on universalistic values, around which it has to create consensus. In fact, the surname "Twist" is quite unheroic and readers often wonder whether he is a hero or a victim, one who twists to the good or twists to the evil (Bowen, *Other Dickens* 96). But the novel finally provides a full identity for the abused Oliver Twist since he is revealed to be the illegitimate son of a wealthy man called Edwin Leeford and his young mistress, Agnes Fleming. This deep-rooted story of the dispossessed heir has connections with fairy tales and religious allegories and, of course, with Fielding's *Tom Jones* (Hillis Miller VS 34). Like Oliver, Tom Jones is an illegitimate child who finally discovers his parents and recuperates his legal inheritance. Although Nelly flirts with the final *anagnorisis* that takes place in *The Winter's Tale*, *Tom Jones* or *Oliver Twist*:

You're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange* together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. (56)

Heathcliff's *twist* is much more heroic than Tom's or Oliver's. Though he does not offer any explanation about his change of fortune, Heathcliff does rise socially and economically. In doing so, he shows great individuality, proving that he is neither anonymous nor plain. He commits himself to his original and childish plan of revenge – "I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!" (60) – and devotes his entire libido in doing so.

Oliver's incorruptible goodness is indeed a result of the Rousseauian doctrine of the natural goodness of man. Nevertheless, though we are told that "nature or inheritance had implanted a good strong spirit in Oliver's breast" (7), Oliver, like Heathcliff, is far from being the incarnation of Rousseau's Child of Nature living in a pastoral world, and he is in fact much closer to William Blake's Chimney Sweeper, an innocent victim of the impact of the Industrial Revolution in the natural world. According to Carolyn Steedman, real children (chimney sweepers, factory children, acrobat children, street children, and stage children) fueled the imaginative paradigms that in their turn helped to explain the lives of children in industrial metropolises, the statistics of child labour, or the physical characteristics of children that were described in the child-care manuals of the nineteenth century (Steedman 5). Besides, these children were used to represent ideas about child nurture, education, and parental mistreatment of children (Steedman 16). Thus, what we find in *Oliver Twist* –and at the beginning of *Wuthering Heights* when Mr. Earnshaw picks up a child from the streets of Liverpool – is a Natural Child thrown into an urban apocalypse. But, unlike Oliver, Heathcliff is not endowed with natural goodness. It is worth citing again Charlotte Brontë's bold assessment of Heathcliff: "he exemplifies the effects which a life of continued injustice and hard usage may produce on a *naturally* perverse, vindictive and inexorable disposition" (14 August 1848, emphasis added).

In his preface to the third edition, Dickens stated that "I wished to show in little Oliver the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last" (Horne liii). This idea of the corruption of a good soul in an evil world is clearly derived from the traditional Christian view of man's lot or from the romanticized Christianity of Rousseau and Wordsworth (Hillis Miller 38 VS). Indeed, the full title of the novel, *The Adventures of Oliver Twist, or, the Parish Boy's Progress*, evokes Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a subtext which invites the reader to see Oliver's adventures as "the archetypal struggle between the forces of good and evil for the hero's soul" (Larson 538). However, Dickens' novel subverts the Bunyan parable because while the latter is dominated by a Manichean battle between Good and Evil and the Good and the Damned, *Oliver Twist* proves the failure of these moral coordinates (Larson 549). Hence, even if Dickens's characters are sometimes typical and ordinary, they also share Heathcliff's anomalous and transgressive status; transgressive not just because they are illegitimate but because they possess a rare spiritual energy which animates the role they have to play.

8.6 Anthropological Garden

Moretti argues that one characteristic of Dickens' novels is that he makes us see society "like a gigantic Foucaultian *tableau*, where an implacably detailed and yet conspicuous taxonomy confines every individual to his slot of life" (193), whether it is architectural, functional and/or hierarchical. He mentions Fielding, Scott and Sterne as writers who also see society as a Foucaultian *tableau*. Therefore, these "tableau vivants" constitute great sources of discipline since they transform "the confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 148). This is in fact the base for what Foucault calls the "micro-physics" of a "cellular" Power (Foucault 149). This motif is already present in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), where Burke attacks the French revolutionaries' attempt "to confound all sorts of citizens, as well as they could, into one homogeneous mass" (Burke 162). For Moretti, what typifies the vast majority of Dickens' characters is the impossibility "to escape from oneself" in a socially more fluid world. Most of his characters are stuck in a social or personal impasse. "Dickens succeeds in keeping alive the taxonomical rigidity of 'traditional-feudal' thought even *after* the erosion of its material bases, still fairly evident in Fielding's and Sterne's humour" (193). In this section, I will try to show how *Wuthering Heights* does not comply with this rigid taxonomy. Apart from this, Moretti reverses Bakhtin's theory that heteroglossia necessarily generates dialogue and argues that heteroglossia and dialogism are inversely proportional. It is true that the dramatic quality of *Wuthering Heights* does not allow for ideological conflict since there is no all-inclusive authorial dialogue, the kind that we find, for instance, in *Vanity Fair*; however, the novel's dramatic quality encourages a social transgression and allows for a multiplicity of voices.

Moretti contends that whereas narrative plot requires social mobility, changing interactions, and mutual hybridizations, the taxonomic order of the English society normally excludes these aspects. However, the automatism of a common protagonist in a stable world makes us feel that there must be something "socially *unnatural*, a monstrosity" at the origin of the English plot (194). In Dickens' works, this social "monstrosity" is present in characters like Magwitch, the transported criminal depicted as a "hunted dunghill dog" (315), or men like Fagin or Monks.⁹⁵ Fagin is constantly

⁹⁵ Magwitch's resemblance to Heathcliff is quite significant. After he regains his freedom in New South Wales, Magwitch, like Heathcliff, becomes wealthy and returns to England to confront his past.

associated with the devil. He is depicted as a “hideous old man” who looks like “some loathsome reptile,” and always “crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal” (153). Hillis Miller labels him as “the evil genius of the underworld” (Hillis Miller VS 39). Like Fagin and Magwitch, Heathcliff is socially – as well as ethnically – alien, once described as “a beggarly interloper” (38) and a “vagabond” (20), a parasite that contaminates a community. In these three novels, *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations* and *Wuthering Heights*, the characters form a strange confraternity with the monster. Take, for instance, Oliver’s first intimation with Fagin and his boys:

When the breakfast was cleared away; the merry old gentleman and the two boys played at a very curious and uncommon game, which was performed in this way. The merry old gentleman, placing a snuff-box in one pocket of his trousers, a note-case in the other, and a watch in his waistcoat pocket, with a guard-chain round his neck, and sticking a mock diamond pin in his shirt: buttoned his coat tight round him, and putting his spectacle-case and handkerchief in his pockets, trotted up and down the room with a stick, in imitation of the manner in which old gentlemen walk about the streets any hour in the day. Sometimes he stopped at the fire-place, and sometimes at the door, making believe that he was staring with all his might into shop-windows. At such times, he would look constantly round him, for fear of thieves, and would keep slapping all his pockets in turn, to see that he hadn’t lost anything, in such a very funny and natural manner, *that Oliver laughed till the tears ran down his face*. All this time, the two boys followed him closely about: getting out of his sight, so nimbly, every time he turned round, that it was impossible to follow their motions. At last, the Dodger trod upon his toes, or ran upon his boot accidentally, while Charley Bates stumbled up against him behind; and in that one moment they took from him, with the most extraordinary rapidity, snuff-box, note-case, watch-guard, chain, shirt-pin, pocket-handkerchief, even the spectacle-case. If the old gentleman felt a hand in any one of his pockets, he cried out where it was; and then the game began all over again. (70-1, emphasis added)

Fagin’s strategy to tempt and corrupt Oliver is to be friendly, kind and protective towards the poor workhouse orphan, who finds shelter and affection in “the merry old gentleman.” Pip’s similar confraternity with Magwitch goes the other way around. When he learns that Magwitch is his true benefactor, Pip voices his revulsion with a harsh statement: “The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him, the repugnance with which I shrank from him, could not have been exceeded if he had been

some terrible beast” (315). However, this first abhorrence mutates into affection and gratitude:

For now, my repugnance to him had all melted away; and in the hunted, wounded, shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, gratefully, and generously, towards me with great constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe. (441)

These social communities evoke what the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy calls “inoperative communities,” that is, communities defined by the proximity of death.⁹⁶

According to Nancy: “Each singularity is exposed, at its limit, to a limitless or abyssal outside that it shares with the other singularities, from the beginning, by way of their common mortality” (Nancy 16). Thus, as we cannot experience death in our own deaths, since death cannot be “experienced,” we experience it in the death of another, the death of a relative, a friend or a neighbor (Nancy 16). This is the community “of those without community.” Instead of individuals with self-enclosed subjectivities, Nancy puts singularities that are originally *partagés*, shared, open to an abyssal outside. In order to overcome total immanence, the inoperative community needs a relation between its members beyond “individualism,” what Nancy calls *clinamen*, a concept that he takes from Lucretius and which means “an inclination or an inclining from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other” (Nancy 3-4). The aim of this community is not a spiritual fusion or a transcendental communion but rather “being-together,” “being-in-common.”⁹⁷ This inclination towards the other is what makes Oliver enjoy the company of Fagin and his gang.

⁹⁶ I would like to remind the reader that I already introduced the theory of community in Chapter 4, “*Wuthering Heights* and Kleist’s *Novellen*: Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law” to analyze the characters’ strategies to disrupt the normative community.

⁹⁷ Joseph Hillis Miller was the first critic who applied Nancy’s theories on community to fiction. In his chapter, “Unworked and Unavowable: Community in *The Awkward Age*,” in *Literature as Conduct: Speech Acts in Henry James* (2005), Hillis Miller explores the relation of speech acts to community in *The Awkward Age*. In *The Conflagration of Community: Fiction before and after Auschwitz* (2011), Hillis Miller perfects his analysis and relates several novels dealing explicitly with the Holocaust to fictions that were written

The success of the *Bildungsroman* depends on the existence of a social context that will enable the development of inner capacities, leading the young protagonist from ignorance to experience (Abel, Hirsh, Langland 6). If, as I argued in the previous chapter, “*Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel?*” Heathcliff is the displaced locus of infrastructure as well as the embodiment of the eruption of the subversive force of the bourgeoisie in nineteenth-century England, the novel does not comply with the “comic taxonomy” of the English *Bildungsroman*. After being humiliated by Hindley and Catherine, Heathcliff voices his craving for social recognition and success: “I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!” (55), but he does not lie in wait for a *deus ex machina* who will grant his wishes. On the contrary, Heathcliff rises socially without “the recognition-inheritance pattern” (Moretti 205) so symptomatic of Dickens’ *denouement*. He turns from the abused and downgraded child to the ambitious and merciless entrepreneur.

Moretti contends that this “taxonomic imagination” of the English plot – an argument that I have just challenged – and its heterogeneous languages hinder the possibility of dialogism. According to Bakhtin, the novel organizes all its themes and ideas by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the different individual voices that are displayed under such conditions (*The Dialogic* 263). Authorial speech, the speech of narrators, the speech of characters and inserted genres are the central compositional unities which help heteroglossia enter the novel: each of them allows for a diversity of social voices and a wide variety of their more or less dialogized interrelationships (263). These distinctive interrelationships between utterances and languages, this oscillation of the theme through different utterances and speech types and its dispersal into the maze of social heteroglossia, its dialogization is the main distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel (Bakhtin 263). For Bakhtin, the internal stratification of language, the social

before and after Auschwitz to see the effects of the Holocaust on the possibility of community (Hillis Miller, *The Conflagration*, xiv). Following closely the analytical model articulated by Hillis Miller, the Spanish critics, Paula Martín Salván, Gerardo Rodríguez Salas and Julián Jiménez Heffernan have edited the book, *Community in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (2013), where they systematically explore the strategies of working and unworking, construction and deconstruction of communities in twelve twentieth-century novels. Finally, Hillis Miller’s *Communities in Fiction* (2014), where he reads six novels in the light of theories of community, is the culmination of this analytical model applied to fiction.

heteroglossia and the variety of individual voices in it are the prerequisites of authentic novelistic prose (264).

Moretti challenges Bakhtin's theory that "heteroglossia" necessarily produces "dialogism," that is, a constant interaction and mutual modification among different languages; a process of reciprocal communication in which different voices listen to each other and generate dialogue. He argues that heteroglossia and dialogism are "inversely proportional," since, if people do not speak the same language, dialogue is not possible. His main point is that heteroglossia is in fact "hostile" to dialogue (194). *Wuthering Heights* is a novel in which the speech of different narrators is interrelated with the speech of different characters and each of them allows for different social voices. However, contrary to what happens in *Shirley*, there are no discussions on ideological issues in *Wuthering Heights*.

Critics have often noticed the dramatic or poetic quality of the novel: David Cecil claims that *Wuthering Heights* is indeed "a poem rather than a novel;" and Harold Bloom asserts that "*Wuthering Heights* is *Manfred* converted to prose romance." Surely, the novel is more similar to any of Byron's dramatic poems than to any nineteenth-century English novel. And yet, this dramatic quality of the novel *prevents* rather than encourages heteroglossia since it does not allow for the confrontation of different ideologies. The system of languages in drama is organized differently. There is no all-inclusive language, dialogically oriented to other languages, and no all-inclusive authorial dialogue (Bakhtin 266). What we do find in *Wuthering Heights* is a constant declarative conflict and verbal violence (insults, threats, curses) which remains in the physical level, as we can appreciate in the extremes of verbal and physical violence in these passages:

'There, I've found it out at last!' cried Hindley, pulling me back by the skin of my neck, like a dog. 'By heaven and hell, you've sworn between you to murder that child! I know how it is, now, that he is always out of my way. But, with the help of Satan, I shall make you swallow the carving-knife, Nelly! You needn't laugh; for I've just crammed Kenneth, head-downmost, in the Black-horse marsh; and two is the same as one — and I want to kill some of you: I shall have no rest till I do!'

'You'd rather be damned!' he said; 'and so you shall. No law in England can hinder a man from keeping his house decent, and mine's abominable! Open your mouth.' He held the knife in his hand, and pushed its point between my teeth: but,

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

for my part, I was never much afraid of his vagaries. I spat out, and affirmed it tasted detestably — I would not take it on any account. (73)

The charge exploded, and the knife, in springing back, closed into its owner's wrist. Heathcliff pulled it away by main force, slitting up the flesh as it passed on, and thrust it dripping into his pocket. He then took a stone, struck down the division between two windows, and sprang in. His adversary had fallen senseless with excessive pain and the flow of blood, that gushed from an artery or a large vein. The ruffian kicked and trampled on him, and dashed his head repeatedly against the flags, holding me with one hand, meantime, to prevent me summoning Joseph. He exerted preterhuman self-denial in abstaining from finishing him completely; but getting out of breath, he finally desisted, and dragged the apparently inanimate body on to the settle. There he tore off the sleeve of Earnshaw's coat, and bound up the wound with brutal roughness; spitting and cursing during the operation as energetically as he had kicked before. (176-7)

This dramatic mode of *Wuthering Heights* is one of the reasons why critics have been ready to identify *Paradise Lost* as the most evident literary influence for Emily Brontë. The words "Evil, be thou my Good" are from that very poem and uttered by Satan himself. But *Wuthering Heights* is more than a drama; the whole novel is a sustained argument between characters. Not only does the pervasiveness of direct speech in *Wuthering Heights* hinder heteroglossia, but also the restricted communities – what Tönnies calls *Gemeinschaft* – that it portrays.⁹⁸ Accordingly, there is *not* a direct articulation of ideological conflicts. Tellingly, Eagleton can only justify his Marxist reading of the novel by resorting to biographical facts:

The Brontës, then, inherit both the turbulent and traditionalist aspects of the age which precedes them. As I try to show, they are both rebels and reactionaries, pious conformists and passionate dissenters; and this is more than simply a temperamental matter. It reflects the contradictory history they lived through, as well as the conflictive vantage-point from which they lived it. It also shapes the inner structure

⁹⁸ In his book, *Community and Civil Society*, Ferdinand Tönnies argues that

All kinds of social co-existence that are familiar, comfortable and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* means life in the public sphere, in the outside world. In *Gemeinschaft* we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk better or worse. We go out into *Gesellschaft* as if into foreign land. (Tönnies 18)

of their novels. It is not just a sociological fact, but a formative influence on their sensibility. (Eagleton xiii)

In Emily Brontë's novel, there are not ideological conflicts which generate dialogue since the dialogical mode of the text does not revolve around ideological issues. Despite the theatricality of the text, characters neither listen nor do they understand each other; they do not generate productive dialogue. This fact exposes – and this is my claim – the spiritual impasse of these characters, that is, the essential incommunicability of human beings. There are several passages where this communicative impasse is visible. We should remember that Heathcliff was found “starving, and houseless, and *as good as dumb*, in the streets of Liverpool” (34, emphasis added) and that he could only repeat “over and over again some gibberish *that nobody could understand*” (34). Catherine's unmerciful reproof to Heathcliff when he reproaches her that he does not spend time with him is also meaningful: “It's no company at all, when people know nothing and *say nothing*” (69, emphasis added). Heathcliff's mutism is also present in Hareton, whom Nelly describes as “*surlly, and dumb, and deaf* to every attempt at moving his sense of justice or compassion” (277, emphasis added). There are also moments when characters are silenced by other characters' threats and insults, as we can see in Hindley's sadistic advice to Isabella: “Treachery and violence are a just return for treachery and violence! [...] Mrs. Heathcliff, I'll ask you to do nothing; but *sit still and be dumb*” (175, emphasis added); or Nelly's account of how she was “*rendered dumb in the middle of the first sentence*, by a threat that I should be shown into a room by myself the very next syllable I uttered” (276, emphasis added).

Perhaps the right question to ask is where this ideological tension shows up in the novel – if it shows at all. My claim is that heteroglossia is not in the characters' statements but in the voice who *articulates* these statements: Nelly Dean. As I tried to show in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, “‘The Housekeeper's Tale:’ Nelly Dean and Pamela,” the originality of *Wuthering Heights* lies not in the ideological overdetermination of the characters' speeches, but in the fact that a socially inferior character, a housekeeper, narrates most part of the novel with a linguistic register that does not belong to her social class. Nelly's discourse is an example of linguistic usurpation since she appropriates and hegemonizes the language of the bourgeoisie. If the word in language belongs to someone else, it only becomes “one's own” when the speaker assumes the word, adjusting it to his own semantic and expressive intention” (Bakhtin 293). Before this, the word does not

belong to a neutral and objective language but rather to other people's mouths, contexts and intentions (293).

Nelly forces this bourgeois discourse to submit to her own semantic and expressive intentions. Emily Brontë notices Nelly's peculiar command of the bourgeois discourse and justifies it by making her an avid reader: "I have read more than you would fancy, Mr. Lockwood. You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into, and got something out of also" (61). In the novel, there is then a continuous hunting of a voice; a linguistic usurpation or mimicry of the bourgeois voice. The menace of mimicry is its double vision which exposes the ambivalence of hegemonic, bourgeois, and/or colonial discourse while it disrupts its authority at the same time (Bhabha 88). Nelly's vocal – and social – transgression simultaneously reproduces or mimics the thematic structure of the novel, that is, Heathcliff's parasitical game of domestic usurpation and legal appropriation.⁹⁹

Finally, *Wuthering Heights* does converse with other literary traditions, and *this* is precisely the novel's greatest and most groundbreaking achievement. The novel – like Nelly Dean with the bourgeois discourse – dialogically refracts the voices of the housekeeper, the proletarian, the colonial subject, the soldier, and the Byronic hero; the German tradition of the *Novelle*; the Gothic tradition; and the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*. With this we have come to a central point in my analysis; these dialogic encounters with previous novels and traditions are the main object of this dissertation.

8.7 "In this Enlightened age..."

"That boy... that these gentlemen have been talking of ... was your only son, so help me God in heaven!" (786). This is the final *anagnorisis* that occurs in *Nicholas Nickleby*, when Ralph Nickleby learns that Smike is actually his only son. According to Moretti, at the heart of the English novel, we find the same ideological paradox that permeates eighteenth and nineteenth-century England: widening democracy in the legal-political realm and a subservience to feudal status consistency within the civil society (196). When

⁹⁹ Heathcliff, who at the beginning of the novel did not even speak English, also ends up mimicking the language of the yeoman: "I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendant fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children to till their fathers' land for wages" (208).

these two opposing value systems coincide in the same text, they must be provided with a sort of mitigating device, otherwise these systems might contaminate each other (196). Dickens resolves this contradiction with the *anagnorisis* of which I talked at the beginning: the outcast searches for status and genuine identity; the same resolution that he also uses in *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* and that we find in *Tom Jones*. The “normality” of the novelistic hero is, according to Moretti, the most noticeable result of this political stability and ideological conformity. In this section, I will argue that the ideological legacy of many nineteenth-century English novels – and of *Wuthering Heights* in particular – might be found in literature and not only in the political revolutions that took place in Europe.

If the outcast is, in one sense, entirely repressed, in another sense, he is entirely free, unrestrained either by genealogical ties or by social duties. Dickens’ resolution, however, is essentially based on his self-deception and on a reluctance to face his anxiety *about* the world (Hillis Miller *CD* 84). Emily Brontë does not resort to this *anagnorisis* to resolve the enigma of the origin of Heathcliff – “But where did he come from, the little dark thing, harboured by a good man to his bane?” mutters Nelly (330). In any case, Heathcliff does not need this resolution; like Becky Sharp, he is the encroaching satellite of a family system, a domestic intruder who manages to obtain not only invisible property (learning, knowledge) but also visible property (money and subsequently, properties). We never learn about his genuine identity but what is true is that he forges his own social identity, mastering the rules of the outside world. Like Byron’s fallen heroes, Heathcliff is a disruptive being with self-determination. Like Manfred or the Giaour, he is fated to commit evil and to face damnation.

And yet, if he is a Byronic hero, he is a more elaborate one, since he exerts a greater manipulative control of social contracts (Elfenbein 156): “The novel demystifies the narcissism of the Byronic hero in part by suggesting that, far from departing from societal norms, it works fully in accord with them” (Elfenbein 156-7). If, as Northrop Frye contends, the chief interest of the *Bildungsroman* is “human character as it manifests itself in society” (Frye 308), the relationship between the individual and society must be characterized by clashes between individual volition and the restraints of social conventions (Abel, Hirsh, Langland 6). Thus, Heathcliff’s innocent desires of running wild with Catherine are restrained by Hindley’s degradation and by Catherine’s recently acquired social conscience – “It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now” (80). Like

the upstart of the European *Bildungsroman*, Heathcliff makes the passage from rags to riches. He inevitably connects past and future in his dispossession of Hareton. There is no escape from this compulsive (historical) repetition. This is the greatest irony of *Wuthering Heights*.

According to Hillis Miller, “[t]he present in *Oliver Twist* is characterized by a failure to know who one is or to attain any acceptable identity. It is also characterized by a failure to understand the outside world” (Hillis Miller CD 77). In *Wuthering Heights*, as in *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist*, identity – at least spiritual identity – is either connected to the past and to a prelapsarian state – “I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free” – or to a Romantic communion with the beloved – “I have not broken your heart, *you* have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine” (161). Similarly, David searches for some relationship to another person which will fill the void in his life as well as give him a substantial identity (Hillis Miller CD 157). When he realizes that it is Agnes the one who fill this void, David states: “I told her that [...] without her I was not, and I never had been, what she thought me” (795); “What I am, you have made me, Agnes” (821). David’s life is no longer “a ruined blank and waste” (793) since he stands in fusion to the woman who guarantees the solidity of his identity: “Clasped in my embrace, I held the source of every worthy aspiration I had ever had; the centre of myself, the circle of my life, my own, my wife; my love of whom was founded on a rock!” (844). David venerates Agnes in a similar way that Heathcliff venerates Catherine, with religious devotion: “David’s relation to Agnes is a late example of that transposition of religious language into the realm of romantic love which began with the poets of courtly love, and which finds its most elaborate Victorian expression in *Wuthering Heights*” (Hillis Miller CD 157).

To sum up, in such democratic world as the one we find in *Wuthering Heights*, there is *not* subservience to status consistency within civil society but an enormous oscillation of social positions. It is true, however, that Heathcliff’s social ascent is not conflated with getting an education, discovering his artistic vocation or producing a biographical book, which are the typical ambitions of the heroes of the *Bildungsroman* or *Künstlerroman* (Robbins “A Portrait” 411). Heathcliff’s rise aims at less honorable purposes: to obtain

his long-wished revenge against Hindley and to regain his beloved Catherine.¹⁰⁰ And yet, this does not obscure the fact that *Wuthering Heights* is a novel of upward mobility. Moretti is not capable of holding for a long time his thesis that English society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the most stable in Europe and has to recognize that “political revolution, however much excluded from novelistic representation, bequeaths to the latter a set of problems and attitudes – a sort of ‘primal scene’ that the novel will never be able to forget” (198). Bakhtin – a critic who articulates a comprehensive modern theory of the *Bildungsroman* – describes the genre as one in which “[man] emerges along with the world and ... reflects the historical emergence of the world itself” (13). The character of Heathcliff, who represents an emerging and problematic social class, the bourgeoisie, intrudes on the original family regime of the Earnshaws as an agent of an unsettling capitalist dynamic that pollutes and alters traditional family structures, reflecting the social and political upheaval of the time.

But perhaps we should not only look for this “primal scene” to which Moretti refers in the political revolutions that took place in Europe but also in the influence of an important British poet who became the epitome of the Romantic movement and whose influence on Emily Brontë I have already analyzed in Chapter 6, the figure of Lord Byron. In Edna O’Brien’s words: “They did bury him like a poet, but he resurrected as a legend” (215). His scandalous reputation made his readers eager to identify him in his Satanic heroes. Besides, Byron’s Romantic attachment to his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, with whom she had a daughter, and which culminated in his separation from his wife, Annabella Milbank, had an impact on his literary reputation. The separation scandal gave birth to numerous versions, from Byron’s alleged affair with an actress to the rumor that Lady Byron left him when he demanded anal sex. The separation was hotly discussed in newspapers as well as the virtues and immoralities of both Byron and his wife (Elfenbein 28). According to Andrew Elfenbein, Byron became a literary celebrity not only because his poems were widely read and well-known but because they were advertised as the author’s true subjectivity (Elfenbein 48): “Throughout the century, Byron was the model for a new authorial role as a ‘personality’” (Elfenbein 48). But not only his life, Byron’s fallen

¹⁰⁰ As Vautrin tells Rastignac in *Père Goriot*, what women really want in a man is ambition: “Ask any woman what sort of man she is after: it’s the man with ambition” (94). This is indeed another relevant premise for the novel of upward mobility.

heroes were also fascinating beings. The stories of Giaour, Conrad, Manfred, Cain, Lucifer etc. were true instances of guilt, suffering and damnation.

8.8 The Devil's Party

Another fundamental difference between the continental and the English *Bildungsroman* is that whereas in the novels by Balzac, Stendhal or Goethe, the plot is the product of an imbalance between the spiritual physiognomy of the protagonist and the values contained in the world in which he lives, the English novelistic tradition is dominated by the “insipid normality of the hero” in a stable and thoroughly taxonomic world (Moretti 199-200). He bases this strong assertion on *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre* and *Caleb Williams*. However, anyone who has read *Moll Flanders*, *Pamela* or *The Monk* – to name just a few – cannot agree with this unfair contention. But not only Defoe, Richardson, or Lewis, all of Dickens' novels include dysfunctional families, political corruption, mental illness, or professional failure (Jameson, “The Experiments,” 97). Moretti bestows upon the villain the privilege of generating plot; to “the Enemy who brings Death into even the best of worlds,” and he mentions Iago, Satan, Blifil, Lovelace, Falkland, Fergus, Murdstone, Bertha Mason, and Heathcliff among others (200). English fiction is indeed plagued with monsters – libertine, realistic, vindictive, gothic, etc. With time, their features have changed and we find characters like Falkland, Murdstone, Mrs. Havinsham, Ralph Nickleby... or Heathcliff. Nevertheless, the crucial point – and this is the strongest point of Moretti's argument – is that “the threat always comes from above or from below,” and never from the “middle,” that is, never from the social class to which the hero basically belongs (200).

Thus, whereas in *Pamela* and *Clarissa* the threat comes from a despot and libertine aristocrat, Mr. B. and Lovelace respectively, in *Oliver Twist* it comes from below, that is, from a gang of criminals who become Oliver's persecutors (Fagin, Monks, and Bill Sikes). The secret foundation of “realistic” fiction lies then in the persistent durability of the *ancien régime* into the nineteenth century (Moretti, “Serious,” 391): “Social relationships have roots deeply anchored in the past – in a temporal stratification that only the ‘thick’ realism of novelistic description can see and reproduce” (391). Thus, whereas in the novels by Dostoevsky, the middle class is always identified with social mobility and transgression, in England, the middle class is synonym of stability, security and honesty (Moretti, *TWW* 200). Honesty is certainly not the virtue of Rastignac, Julien

Sorel, or Lucien de Rubempré. In the English novelistic tradition, it is the villain who stands for social mobility and the one who is in charge of generating plot. The plot affects the hero only negatively: he only acts to prevent the disappearance of the established order. For this reason, Moretti asserts, plot – and historical revolutions – is almost absent in the English tradition (201). In *Wuthering Heights*, however, the labels of hero and villain are not easy to assign and this fact puts into question Moretti's thesis.

In *Nicholas Nickleby*, however, things start to become more complicated. Let us take the case of Ralph Nickleby, Nicholas' greedy and wealthy uncle. Although he is an extremely wealthy man, Ralph does *not* entirely come from above. He is not a nobleman and the narrator explains in detail how he devoted himself to obtaining money: "Ralph, the elder, deduced from the often-repeated tale the two great morals that riches are the only true source of happiness and power, and that it is lawful and just to compass their acquisition by all means short of felony" (3). As to Ralph's profession, the reader is left to consider whether Ralph is a businessman or not; the most accurate impression that we get of him being that he is a money speculator:

Mr. Ralph Nickleby was not, strictly speaking, what you would call a merchant, neither was he a banker, nor an attorney, nor a special pleader, nor a notary. He was certainly not a tradesman, and still less could he lay any claim to the title of a professional gentleman; *for it would have been impossible to mention any recognized profession to which he belonged.* Nevertheless, as he lived in a spacious house in Golden Square, which, in addition to a brass plate upon the street-door, had another brass plate two sizes and a half smaller upon the left hand door-post, surrounding a brass model of an infant's first grasping a fragment of a skewer, and displaying the word "Office," *it was clear that Mr. Ralph Nickleby did, or pretended to do, business of some kind.* (6, emphasis added)

Therefore, we are told how Ralph Nickleby has nurtured a love for money since he was a young boy and how he has devoted his life to increasing his riches, even if it is never made clear whether he has a profession. This fact challenges two of Moretti's most powerful arguments: that in the English *Bildungsroman* there are no *parvenus*; and that the threat always comes from above or below but never from the "middle" in these novels. Although all along the novel, he is a detestable and greedy prosperous man, we know that Ralph comes from a humble middle-class family who has undergone economic difficulties before coming across Fortune in the form of an inheritance. Ralph is then a

real example of status inconsistency. Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord Frederick Verisopht, on the other hand, are two minor villains who bear the aristocratic titles “Sir” and “Lord” before their names. They are Dickensian replicas of Mr. B. and Lovelace. Let us now take Wackford Squeers, the cruel Yorkshire schoolmaster who mistreats and starves his boys terribly. Squeer, like Murdstone and the hypocritical Uriah Heep, does not truly belong to below, as Fagin does, but to the middle class.

What is the case in *Wuthering Heights*? Through this chapter, we have been assuming that Heathcliff is the hero of this novel – an assumption which is not unfounded since the narrative starts with his arrival to the Heights as a child and finishes with his death. In fact, it is Lockwood’s question to Nelly – “Do you know anything of [Heathcliff’s] history? – that triggers Nelly’s narrative. Apart from this, despite the novel’s narrative disproportion, Heathcliff’s Satanic nature blossoms spontaneously, like the Goethean formula of organic growth, cumulative and gradual (Abel, Hirsh, and Langland 5). One of the greatest accomplishments of Emily Brontë is that she manages to conjoin the figure of the hero and the villain in the same character. Heathcliff represents “the bourgeois terror of proletarianization” (Jameson, “The Experiments,” 97). His social status is one of the most complex issues in the novel. He is depicted by Lockwood as “a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman” (3). He forces his way into society by expropriating his expropriators and, in this sense, he is acting like a contemporary bourgeois class expropriating landed property (Eagleton 115). And yet, his is a parody of capitalist activity: Heathcliff exacts revenge from the Lintons precisely by extravagantly endorsing their perverted priorities, becoming a threateningly satirical commentary on conventional values (Eagleton *Myths* 113). As Eagleton puts it, Heathcliff represents “a turbulent form of capitalist aggression which must historically be civilized – blended with spiritual values, as it will be in the case of his subrogate Hareton” (Eagleton *Myths* 115).

The language of the villain stands for “social mobility in a world that does not acknowledge its right of citizenship” (Moretti 201). He must resort to disguise and hypocrisy to obtain personal profit: in a rigidly classified world, a social climber might be considered as “a monster *inside* an unyielding system” (201). Like the protagonist of George Gissing’s *Born in Exile* (1892), he belongs “to no class whatever” (296).¹⁰¹ But

¹⁰¹ George Gissing. *Born in Exile*. Ed. David Grylls. London: J.M. Dent. 1993.

this is precisely what generates narrative since the villain's actions cause instability, irregularities, and suspense (201). It is also what makes Lockwood beg Nelly to tell him how Heathcliff made his fortune:

With all my heart! [...] Come and take your seat here. Keep your fingers from that bitter phalanx of vials. Draw your knitting out of your pocket - that will do - *now continue the history of Mr. Heathcliff, from where you left off, to the present day.* Did he finish his education on the Continent, and come back a gentleman? or did he get a sizar's place at college, or escape to America, and earn honours by drawing blood from his foster-country? or make a fortune more promptly on the English highways? (90, emphasis added)¹⁰²

However, not even Nelly, the most knowledgeable character in the novel, knows how to provide an answer to these questions, maintaining the enigma that surrounds Heathcliff:

He may have done a little in all these vocations, Mr. Lockwood; but I couldn't give my word for any. I stated before that I didn't know how he gained his money; neither am I aware of the means he took to raise his mind from the savage ignorance into which it was sunk. (91)

The villain generates plot only with his existence (201). Thus, *Wuthering Heights* cannot do without Heathcliff, in the same way that *Nicholas Nickleby* needs Ralph Nickleby or *Oliver Twist* Fagin to pull the action. For the hero and his allies, plot represents then "violence and coercion" and they only take part in it to prevent the disappearance of the established order, like the consummation of the subversive marriages between Uriah and Agnes (*David Copperfield*), Jane Eyre and Rochester (*Jane Eyre*) or between Madeline Bray and Arthur Grime (*Nicholas Nickleby*); to object to the performance of indecorous theatricals (*Mansfield Park*); or to prevent the destruction of the reputation of a helpless boy (*Oliver Twist*). If we want this condition to apply to *Wuthering Heights*, we need to assign the role of hero to another character, Edgar Linton, for instance. With his marriage proposal to Catherine, he prevents the unnatural marriage between Catherine and Heathcliff and, in addition, Edgar Linton averts (or tries to avert) Heathcliff's anomic irruption into his matrimony with Catherine. In the English narrative

¹⁰² I cannot help noticing that the immigrant's "coming-to-America" story is also concerned with reaching greater economic goods and a forging a social status.

tradition, “plot – and historical transformations of which plot is a metaphor – is far from being the most significant aspect of the novelistic form” (201).

Plot is what results from disguise and hypocrisy and it condemns the hero to “non-being” (201). This is the reason why Edgar Linton, and even Hareton, pale before the anomic and devastating force of Heathcliff, and that is precisely what Heathcliff reproaches Catherine: “I compliment you on your taste. And that is the slaving, shivering thing you preferred to me! I would not strike him with my fist, but I’d kick him with my foot, and experience considerable satisfaction. Is he weeping, or is he going to faint for fear?” (113). Heathcliff is that Other which represents what Sartre called a vital alienation of my Being (qtd. Jameson, “The Experiments,” 122). He is a kind of autonomous substance, which occasionally comes into brief or violent contact with others but whose being is not essentially altered by the being of others (Jameson, “The Experiments,” 122). When his Otherness seems to call into question my own being, then a new social dimension has been exposed, “which is the microcosm corresponding to the new macrocosms of collectivity on the level of cities and social classes” (Jameson, “The Experiments,” 122). We are forbidden to judge him, even if his contemporaries do so.

Another structural peculiarity of the English *Bildungsroman* is the unbalanced distribution between the “narrative function” of generating events, which carries out the villain – Bertha Mason, Heep, Faulkland – and the “evaluative function” which is usually carried out by the hero – Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, Caleb Williams (Moretti 201). This focalization induces the reader to adopt the point of view that makes the text clear to him or her. It prevents us from understanding the reasons for a different way of behaving and what strikes us is therefore the affront to the established order. The reader unavoidably desires that the order is reestablished (202). Thus, the reader immediately sympathizes with Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, and Caleb William’s misfortunes while she feels discontent with the Reeds, Murdstone, or Faulkland. As I contended in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, “The Housekeeper’s Tale: Nelly Dean and Pamela,” contrary to most Victorian novels that present heroes in a favorable light whereas villains are presented as totally unsympathetic, *Wuthering Heights*, through Nelly’s sympathy of attention, puts readers in the uncomfortable situation of not knowing how to assign the label of hero or villain unequivocally.

8.9 The Hero in Exile

Do you know what it is you have done? To gratify a foolishly inquisitive humour, you have sold yourself. You shall continue in my service, but can never share my affection. I will benefit you in respect of fortune, but I shall always hate you. If ever an unguarded word escape from your lips, if ever you excite my jealousy or suspicion, expect to pay for it by your death or worse. It is a dear bargain you have made. (136)

This is one of the turning points in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams, or, Things as They are*. These threatening words are Faulkland's warning to Caleb Williams after the latter has discovered that Faulkland really murdered Mr. Tyrrel. I have chosen this passage because it epitomizes perfectly how, in the *Bildungsroman*, the threat is always directed towards the protagonist. As in every detective novel, we need a victim and some kind of crime. The victim is usually the protagonist whereas the crime is usually an unfair accusation leveled against him or her (Moretti 202). The thesis is simple: "a story is worth telling if a rule is broken" (Moretti "Serious" 370). This innocent protagonist is therefore sentenced to exile. Unlike Wilhelm Meister, Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré or Frédérie Moreau, who are eager to leave their childhood homes, or Julien Sorel and Fabrizio del Dongo, who are forced to leave because they have challenged their world, our English heroes – Tom Jones, Caleb Williams, David Copperfield and Jane Eyre – are always forced to leave against their will (203). The journey is never an option but an obligation and the changes of the hero during this journey are frequently hostile to his nature (203).

Like Caleb Williams, Jane Eyre is unjustly accused of deceit by her aunt, Mrs. Reed:

Mr. Brocklehurst, I believe I intimated in the letter which I wrote to you three weeks ago, that this little girl has not quite the character and disposition I could wish: should you admit her into Lowood school, I should be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, and, above all, *to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit*. I mention this in your hearing, Jane, that you may not attempt to impose on Mr. Brocklehurst. (33, emphasis added)

This is also the case of Nicholas Nickleby, who asks his uncle: "of what do they – or of what does he – accuse me?" (251). Ralph Nickleby perniciously answers: "First, of attacking your master, and being within an ace of qualifying yourself to be tried for murder" (251). Similarly, David Copperfield is accused of biting like a dog by Murdstone

– “Take care of him. He bites” (74) – and Oliver is accused of stealing Mr. Brownlow’s handkerchief – “It wasn’t me indeed, sir. Indeed, indeed, it was two other boys” (78). Heathcliff, on his part, is (unjustly?) accused by Hindley of usurping the place of the legitimate son in the family (we cannot forget that Heathcliff is named after a dead son); of usurping Hindley’s place in Mr. Earnshaw’s affections; and of being a potential usurper of Hindley’s rightful inheritance:

“Take my colt, gipsy, then!” said young Earnshaw. “And I pray that he may break your neck: take him, and he damned, *you beggarly interloper! and wheedle my father out of all he has*: only afterwards show him what you are, imp of Satan. - And take that, I hope he’ll kick out your brains!” (38, emphasis added).

Thus, the pattern is simple: an innocent protagonist is unjustly accused of some crime and unable to defend himself or herself (202). What follows is that the protagonist is either sentenced to exile or compelled to escape (202). Thus, Caleb decides to escape to London; Jane is taken to Lowood by Mr. Brocklehurst; David is sent to Salem House by Murdstone; and Nicholas and Smike travel to Portsmouth where they befriend the theatrical manager Vincent Crummles and join his acting company. Heathcliff, after being cast out by Hindley, deprived of education, degraded to the status of farm-labourer, and rejected and humiliated by Catherine, is forced to flee in order “to make his way in the world” and to return with social weapons in order to carry out his revenge. This journey is indeed “the most common narrative metaphor for youth” (Moretti 203). Whereas Wilhem Meister, Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré, or Frédéric Moreau freely leave their homes, our English heroes are always forced to escape, without having deserved such exile (203).

This journey is not conceived as a promising opportunity “to try out new identities” (Moretti 203). It is more of “a long and bewildering detour in which the roles they play in the course of time are merely disguises – unnatural, and sometimes repugnant – dictated by necessity” (203). This is perfectly exemplified in Nicholas Nickleby, who is hired as an actor in a theatrical company by Mr. Vincent Crummles, who asserts that “[t]here’s genteel comedy in your walk and manner, juvenile tragedy in your eye, and touch-and-go farce in your laugh” (628). Like Nicholas’ transformations during this period as stage actor, the transformations of the hero during his journey are alien to his nature (203). This is also symbolized in Nicholas’ adoption of a false name, Mr. Johnson; in the theatrical disguises of Caleb Williams when he flees to London; and Jane’s conversion to Jane Elliot

when she lives with the Rivers. The case of *Oliver Twist* is all journeys, “a pattern of repetitions and attempted repetitions, of substitutions and displacements, where each figure, place, or journey seems to echo and invoke a double” (Hillis Miller *OD* 93). Heathcliff returns from his three-year journey travestied as a gentleman as Lockwood remarks that “[h]e is a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect, in dress and manners and gentleman” (3) and Nelly even refers to “the transformation of Heathcliff” but she cannot avoid noticing that, though subdued, he still preserved “a half-civilized ferocity” in “the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire” (95).

Taking Jane aside, the place where the strangest and most unnatural things happen is the metropolis, the seats of mutable identities (203). Thus, it is in London where Caleb realizes that he is surrounded by “a million of men in arms against me” (270); it is also in London where David suffers his most shocking childhood experience, his job in a bottle factory (203); and it is in the streets of Liverpool where Mr. Earnshaw sees Heathcliff “starving, and houseless, and as good as a dumb” (35). But the English voyage, like Heathcliff’s, is always “eerie, confusing, sterile, dangerous” (204). Youth remains then “an empty segment” (204) or, in Bakhtin’s words “an extratemporal hiatus between two moments of biographical time” (Bakhtin 90) and the hero remains “completely passive, completely unchanging” (Bakhtin 100). Thus, despite being “in dress and manners a gentleman,” Heathcliff is still “a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect” with “half-civilized ferocity.” He thus can be easily recognized for what he has always been.

8.10 Ur-Novel

My mother’s name was Eyre; she had two brothers; one a clergyman, who married Miss Jane Reed, of Gateshead; the other, John Eyre, Esq., merchant, late of Funchal, Madeira. Mr. Briggs, being Mr. Eyre’s solicitor, wrote to us last August to inform us of our uncle’s death, and to say that he had left his property to his brother the clergyman’s orphan daughter, overlooking us, in consequence of a quarrel, never forgiven, between him and my father. He wrote again a few weeks since, to intimate that the heiress was lost, and asking if we knew anything of her. A name casually written on a slip of paper has enabled me to find her out. You know the rest. (384)

The bulk of his property he divided into two equal portions — one for Agnes Fleming, and the other for their child, if it should be born alive, and ever come of age. If it were a girl, it was to inherit the money unconditionally; but if a boy, only

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

on the stipulation that in his minority he should never have stained his name with any public act of dishonour, meanness, cowardice, or wrong. He did this, he said, to mark his confidence in the other, and his conviction — only strengthened by approaching death — that the child would share her gentle heart, and noble nature. If he were disappointed in this expectation, then the money was to come to you: for then, and not till then, when both children were equal, would he recognize your prior claim upon his purse, who had none upon his heart, but had, from an infant, repulsed him with coldness and aversion. (433)

The “recognition-inheritance pattern,” which is nearly absent in the European *Bildungsroman*, is the most typical English happy ending since it implicitly gives aristocratic features to the bourgeois theme of social mobility (Moretti 205). The idea that wealth should be inherited through wills and that it should pass from generation to generation, rather than being generated from scratch is typical of the landed aristocracy (205). This is the reason why the hero is given bourgeois features: “the more neutral his social identity, the easier will he “fill” the role which awaits him, and which takes him back to his birth” (205). Tom Jones, Jane Eyre, Oliver Twist and Heathcliff are stripped of determinate social relations. Their circumstances are so ambiguous that they can be accepted or rejected simply for themselves, laying claim to their human status rather than to the social one (Eagleton, *Myths* 102). These inheritances return their rights to Oliver Twist and to Jane Eyre. They do not only consist of a great sum of money or a vast rural estate, but also of a title; a title which constitutes their genuine identity: “their identity as *people endowed with rights*” (Moretti 205). They have been deprived of their own rights and restoring these rights to them is just an act of justice (205). This conclusion endows the novel with “a sense of social and historical redemption” (Jameson, “The Experiments,” 98). And yet, the case of Heathcliff is slightly different from that of Tom Jones, Oliver Twist or Jane Eyre. His resolution and active volition compromises Moretti’s thesis.

Emily Brontë does not fully reverse this fairy-tale justice so typical of “family romances.” It is true that in *Wuthering Heights* we do not find a generous uncle or aunt who functions as “donor” (Propp) or as a fairy godmother in the same manner as Jane Eyre’s or Oliver’s uncle does. However, would we have a story worth telling if Mr. Earnshaw had not found a starving child in the streets of Liverpool and decided to pick him up? It is indeed the generous act of an initial benefactor, Mr. Earnshaw, that triggers

the plot, a highly fairytale-like beginning by the way. In this sense, Mr. Earnshaw's charitable act is comparable to Mr. Brownlow's, another child-rescuer, or child-redeemer, who takes Oliver in his house. With this generous action, Heathcliff passes from being a foundling to acquiring important rights. However, this situation changes when Mr. Earnshaw dies and Hindley snatches Heathcliff's rights. Whereas most Dickensian heroes – Oliver Twist aside – are in a more or less comfortable situation and do not need to exert a lot of self-determination, Heathcliff finds himself in a much more unfortunate situation.¹⁰³

Unlike the other orphans, Heathcliff does not passively wait for his rights to be returned to him. These rights are not the well-deserved reward of a *deus ex machina* but his *lawful* rights as Mr. Earnshaw's adopted son. Heathcliff looks upon these rights as something he deserves and he claims for them in a much more primitive and, though it might seem paradoxical, in a more sophisticated manner than any of the others. It is primitive because it is the result of a primitive desire of revenge which he has nurtured since he was a child but it is sophisticated because Heathcliff's revenge on the normative community is carried out through the parodic usurpation of the speech acts of this very community. After his return, Heathcliff attempts to conceal his true intentions behind a veil of apparent sincerity and uses language, not primarily as a means of intercommunication, but as a way of forcing people to act in the way he desires. He uses language performatively, as a way of doing something with words (Hillis Miller *Literature as Conduct* 114). Thus, let us analyze Heathcliff's most decisive masterstrokes to regain Wuthering Heights and to become the owner of Thrushcross Grange:

The guest was now the master of Wuthering Heights: he held firm possession, and proved to the attorney - who, in his turn, proved it to Mr. Linton - *that Earnshaw had mortgaged every yard of land he owned for cash to supply his mania for gaming; and he, Heathcliff, was the mortgagee.* In that manner Hareton, who should now be the first gentleman in the neighbourhood, was reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy; and lives in his own house as a servant,

¹⁰³According to Aleksandar Stevic, the *Bildungsroman* hero of Dickens' novels is raised from his unfortunate condition by external forces that act as agents of care. Consequently, "active search for one's place in the world is displaced, marginalized, and sometimes completely suspended" (78).

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

deprived of the advantage of wages: quite unable to right himself, because of his friendlessness, and his ignorance that he has been wronged. (186-7, emphasis added)

His first stroke is to make Hindley mortgage Wuthering Heights, that is, to make him *promise* that he will give up his house if he is unable to pay back the money he has loaned in gaming.¹⁰⁴ In *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin details the conditions that must be met for a speech act to be performed felicitously: “There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances” (14). Heathcliff’s legal agreement with Hindley functions as a felicitous speech act. It establishes a social game that has real consequences: Heathcliff’s final acquisition of Wuthering Heights.

Heathcliff’s next blow is to court Isabella and to marry her:

He then stepped across the pavement to her, *and said something*: she seemed embarrassed, and desirous of getting away; to prevent it, he laid his hand on her arm. She averted her face: *he apparently put some question which she had no mind to answer*. There was another rapid glance at the house, and supposing himself unseen, the scoundrel had the impudence to embrace her. (110, emphasis added)

This second speech act is not felicitous because it does not fulfill the sincerity condition, that is, the speaker is not in the psychological state that his speech act expresses. This act is, more precisely, an abuse because Heathcliff is breaking the sincerity condition quite consciously. Far from loving Isabella, he loathes her: “You’d hear of odd things if I lived alone with that mawkish, waxen face: the most ordinary would be painting on its white the colours of the rainbow, and turning the blue eyes black, every day or two: they detestably resemble Linton’s” (106). Not happy with lying to Isabella, Heathcliff carries to an extreme his “conscious perjury” (Hillis Miller *LAC* 22) and finally marries Isabella. This speech act does not misfire but it is still less than felicitous. Heathcliff has made the correct marriage vows, but the act is not felicitous because it is not sincere. His act is what Austin calls “an abuse,” because although it is a speech act it fails to fulfill the sincerity condition, the most important condition for the felicity of speech acts: Heathcliff is not in

¹⁰⁴I would like to highlight that Emily Brontë does not spend many words to explain how Hindley has been so naïve to make Heathcliff his mortgagee. This fact makes Heathcliff’s fair retribution quite doubtful and fairytale-like.

the psychological state that his speech acts made in his courting of Isabella and the speech acts made in his marriage vows express.

Austin recognizes in *How to Do Things with Words* that a lie or a perjury can have a performative function if they are believed by those who hear it, as it is the case with Isabella. This lie or perjury is then a way to do things with words (Hillis Miller *LAC* 229). Perjury, on the other hand, is essentially public since it means lying before other witnesses (Hillis Miller 229). Thus, Heathcliff's speech acts of courting and marrying Isabella have made her believe the lie. It has created an illusory world for her. Heathcliff signs his marriage contract in bad faith: not only is he in love with another woman, he is also marrying Isabella as part of a carefully designed revenge. Nevertheless, Heathcliff's performatives do perform something and create a context that can be understood. His lies are not invalidated in their effect by the knowledge that the other characters have that he is committing perjury. This is the triumph achieved by Heathcliff's conscious perjury.

And yet, where can we find genuine marriage vows in most nineteenth-century English novels? "If Mr. Joseph Sedley is rich and unmarried, why should I not marry him? I have only a fortnight, to be sure, but there is no harm in trying" (23), says Becky Sharp, the true heroine of *Vanity Fair*. When George Osborne, outraged, confronts Becky and sarcastically reminds her how she had tried to seduce and marry Joseph Sedley, she frankly and playfully answers: "How severe of you! Well, *entre nous*, I didn't break my heart about him; yet if he had asked me to do what you mean by your looks (and very expressive and kind they are, too), I wouldn't have said no" (174). These are just two of Becky's several ironical comments about marriage. Similarly, Mr. Collins' famous proposal to Elizabeth Bennet is another example of a hypocritical proposal of matrimony – though paradoxically he is being quite honest:

My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly – which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. (103).

Elizabeth's answer, however, advocates for a marriage based on genuine and honest feelings:

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

I do assure you, Sir, that I have no pretension whatever to that kind of elegance which consists in tormenting a respectable man. I would rather be paid the compliment of being believed sincere. I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible. My feelings in every respect forbid it. Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart (106).

Like Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Eyre also rejects St. John's proposal of marrying him and going with him to India: "I scorn your idea of love. [...] I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer: yes, St. John, and I scorn you when you offer it" (408). Therefore, if we can blame Heathcliff for committing conscious perjury in his marriage vows is only because we have witnessed an anomalous passion in his strange relationship with Catherine and because Heathcliff's hidden motivations behind Isabella's courtship are far from being honorable.

Both the acquisition of Wuthering Heights and the marriage with Isabella are two performative acts within the judicial and legal frame. The first one turns Heathcliff into a master and landowner and the second one into a husband and a father, the titles that sustain the family and the two basic pillars upon which the traditional community maintains itself (patrimony and matrimony). Thus, Heathcliff tries to perpetuate both his genealogy and his landed property by compelling Cathy to marry his son, Linton Heathcliff – "As to your promise to marry Linton, I'll take care you shall keep it; for you shall not quit this place till it is fulfilled" (274). In doing so, Heathcliff legally acquires the whole property of the two families:

[...] my son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till I was certain of being his successor. Besides, he's *mine*, and I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendant fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children to till their fathers' lands for wages (208).

According to Moretti, whereas the French Revolution is haunted by the paroxysms of ambiguity, opportunism and disloyalty, the English revolution advocates for the respect to, and even the sanctity of, laws and contracts (206). This revolution is not regarded as "a politico-institutional break," but as "the supreme act of legal *continuity*, and of respect for the rules of the game" (207). This is an "immature" revolution that aims at the restoration of the "original contract" and does not believe in utopias (207). It does not

establish its validity on the politico-institutional contents of later revolution. On the contrary, it is based on the domain of the law as justice, the least “modern” and least “bourgeois” of domains (207): “To see the revolution as a ‘legal’ act implied an inevitable weakening of its ‘revolutionary’ aspects” (207). However, it encouraged the stable evolution of a culture of justice, of a pride in the inalienability of one’s rights, and it guarantees security against the abuses of political power (207). Heathcliff’s revolution is an act of justified power. He acts in the spirit of the ruthless business dealings and the unscrupulous acquisition of the capitalist bourgeois. It is both a lawful taking of power and an unethical one. Like Napoleon, he uses everybody, including his own son as well as his beloved’s daughter, as instruments of ambition. In this sense, Heathcliff has a Vautrin-like sense of opportunism.

8.11 The Great Tribunal of the Law

In *Whigs and Hunters*, Edward P. Thompson argues that

[t]he rhetoric of eighteenth-century England is saturated with the notion of the law... immense efforts were made ... to project the image of a ruling class which was itself subject to the rule of law, and whose legitimacy rested upon the equity and universality of those legal forms. (qtd. Moretti 208)

The final socialization of the individual only results convincing if it is symbolically legitimated, that is, it must be justified with values which, as Thompson has pointed out, congregate around the practice of the law (208). This is the distinguishing framework of the *Bildungsroman* (208). *Caleb Williams*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *Tom Jones*, *Waverley*, and *Jane Eyre* offer ample evidence of this. These novels portray the supremacy of the law in the English symbolic universe. Moretti, however, does not take into account *Wuthering Heights*, a novel in which the protagonist proves to have such a Machiavellian control of the law. *Caleb Williams* is totally permeated by law and trials. Overwhelmed by Mr. Faulkland’s incessant persecution and threat, Caleb Williams voices his disenchantment about the justice and efficacy of the law:

For myself, I felt my own innocence; and I soon found, upon enquiry, that three fourths of those who are regularly subjected to a similar treatment, are persons whom, even with all the superciliousness and precipitation of our courts of justice, no evidence can be found sufficient to convict. How slender then must be that man’s

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

portion of information and discernment, who is willing to commit his character and welfare to such guardianship! (182-83)

He talks about “the tyranny of the courts of justice” (224). This tyranny is totally exposed when Caleb, out of despondency, seeks favor with the law and a merciless magistrate states that:

Whether or no the felony with which you stand charged would have brought you to the gallows, I will not pretend to say: but I am sure this story will. *There would be a speedy end to all order and good government, if fellows that trample upon ranks and distinctions in this atrocious sort were upon any consideration suffered to get off.* (276, emphasis added)

This argument of the magistrate is consonant with Moretti’s claim that the English revolution “appeals to a ‘pedigree’ of privileges, while disregarding normative and universal principles” (207). Paradoxically, despite his expostulations against the iniquitousness of the law, Caleb inwardly knows that as long as the law does not condemn him, he is innocent: “I expostulate with warmth upon whom the law as yet had passed no censure, and who therefore, in the eye of the law, was innocent” (197). Caleb’s last resort is indeed to obtain justice from a court in England:

I was resolved to go through with the business, if justice were to be obtained from any court in England. Upon what pretence did he refuse my deposition? I was in every respect a competent witness. I was of age to understand the nature of an oath; I was in my perfect senses; I was untarnished by the verdict of any jury, or the sentence of any judge. *His private opinion of my character could not alter the law of the land.* I demanded to be confronted with Mr. Falkland, and I was well assured I should substantiate the charge to the satisfaction of the whole world. If he did not think proper to apprehend him upon my single testimony, I should be satisfied if he only sent him notice of the charge, and summoned him to appear. (317, emphasis added)

Sir Walter Scott’s *The Heart of the Midlothian* (1818) and *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) are two great narrative enactments of legal disputes in the history of modern English fiction. *The Heart of the Midlothian* deals with a judicial case and is saturated with judicial arguments. The moral dilemma of the legendary Helen Walker is mirrored in the story of Jeanie Deans, who is in the impasse of saving her sister with a perjury in the court or condemning her with the truth. Like Helen, Jeanie is loyal to the truth: “[...]”

it is impossible for me to swear to a falsehood; and, whatever may be the consequence, I will give my oath according to my conscience” (4). *The Bride of Lammermoor* is a juridico-political drama whose main theme is the expropriation of the Ravenswood patrimony (Jiménez Heffernan “Communal Imagination” 79). Offended by this expropriation, Edgar Ravenswood refers to William Ashton as the “possessor,” not proprietor of the “alienated mansion of my fathers” (75). Ashton defends the legitimacy of the contract with this brilliant contention: “what has been between us has been the work of the law, not my doing; and to the law they must look, if they would impugn my proceedings” (52). Ravenswood’s only comfort is to make an elegiac praise of a lost feudal Scotland ruled by tradition and family lineage: “Those from whom we won our ancient possessions fell under the sword of my ancestors, and left lands and livings to the conquerors; we sink under the force of the law, now too powerful for the Scottish chivalry” (160).¹⁰⁵

In his novels, Dickens sardonically describes the fate of those whose life becomes entangled with the legal profession. In his *Uncommercial Traveller* essay “Chambers,” Dickens depicts Gray’s Inn as “one of the most depressing institutions in brick and mortar known to the children of them” (qtd. Douglas-Fairhurst 56). One gains the impression that the law not only generates paperwork and dust but also loneliness and despair (Douglas-Fairhurst 57): “It may have been fussy, arcane, and dull, but it was also a world he knew inside out, and his writing about it accordingly took especially savage glee in treating it either with plain disrespect or, even more witheringly, a sarcastically inflated respect” (68).

David Copperfield’s first occupation is at the Commons and, at the end of the book, we find Uriah Heep in prison: “[...] Mr. Creakle directed the door of the cell to be unlocked, and Twenty Seven to be invited out into the passage. This was done; and whom should Traddles and I behold, to our amazement, in this converted Number Twenty Seven, but Uriah Heep!” (831). According to Jameson, Dickens always locates the theme of money on the famous trial, which allows him to condemn the psychological corruption

¹⁰⁵ Dickens’ decision to pack his fiction with lawyers and clerks was a way of drawing on his own experience since in 1827 he started to work as a junior clerk in the solicitors’ firm of Ellis & Blackmore. According to Douglas-Fairhurst: “It was a steady job with regular pay, eventually rising to 15 shillings per week, but it was not quite a career, and the prospects for self-advancement were slim” (52).

of expectation (Jameson, "The Experiments," 120). In *Bleak House*, the Court of Chancery is harshly represented. The novel opens with the fog and the mud pervading the atmosphere. The fog symbolizes not only the real Court of Chancery and all the corruptions of the law, but "all authorities in all places under all names soever" (519) – all the injustices of a deceitful society. The law is represented as one of those concealed interests that ransack society, that hinders general welfare, and that benefit from the miseries of the poor:

This is the Court of Chancery, which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire, which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse and its dead in every churchyard, which has its ruined suitor with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance, which gives to monied might the means abundantly of wearing out the right, which so exhausts finances, patience, courage, hope, so overthrows the brain and breaks the heart, that there is not an honourable man among its practitioners who would not give — who does not often give — the warning, "Suffer any wrong that can be done you rather than come here!" (15)

As Edgar Johnson puts it, "*Bleak House* is thus an indictment not merely of the law but of the whole dark muddle of organized society. It regards legal injustice not as accidental but as organically related to the very structure of that society" (Johnson 135).

Law also plays an important part in *Jane Eyre*. Indeed, the climax of the novel takes place when the priest utters these words:

I require and charge you both (as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed), *that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony*, ye do now confess it; for be ye well assured that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow, are not joined together by God, *neither is their matrimony lawful*. (288, emphasis added)

And a lawyer answers: "The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment" (289). From this moment on, Jane proves to have fierce confidence in the law and, when she is inwardly yielding to Mr. Rochester's proposal of living together, she decides that she must overcome that temptation:

Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman

Still indomitable was the reply — “*I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? They have a worth — so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane — quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs. Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot.* (317)

Once living in Moor House and working as a village-schoolmistress, Jane muses on her decision to leave Rochester: “Yes, I feel now that *I was right when I adhered to principle and law*, and scorned and crushed the insane promptings of a frenzied moment. God directed me to a correct choice: I thank His providence for the guidance!” (360). And yet, despite her self-sacrifice, Mr. Rivers warns Jane of the “lawless” and “unconsecrated” interest that she still cherishes for Mr. Rochester (414).

The presence of the law is far from negligible in *Wuthering Heights* as well. It is quite ironic that the first time law is mentioned in the novel is when Hindley advises Edgar Linton to “take the law into your own fists” (58) the next time that Heathcliff abuses him. Ironically again, it will be Heathcliff the one who will follow his advice, to Hindley’s own detriment. Heathcliff, who proves to exert a thorough control of the law, refers to it for the first time when he reveals to Catherine his initial plan to take revenge upon Hindley:

I heard of your marriage, Cathy, not long since; and, while waiting in the yard below, I meditated this plan - just to have one glimpse of your face, a stare of surprise, perhaps, and pretended pleasure; afterwards settle my score with Hindley; *and then prevent the law by doing execution on myself*. Your welcome has put these ideas out of my mind; but beware of meeting me with another aspect next time! (96, emphasis added)

Though some characters such as Nelly threaten Heathcliff with the law – “Let him dare to force you. There’s law in the land, thank God! there is, though we be in an out-of-the-way place” (274) – Heathcliff’s knows how to maintain himself within the limits of what

is legal. Thus, to justify his cruel behavior towards Isabella, Heathcliff argues that he “keep[s] strictly within the limits of the law” (151). But never is Heathcliff’s respect for the law more patent than in this powerful claim: “Had I been born where laws are less strict and tastes less dainty, I should treat myself to a slow vivisection of those two, as an evening’s amusement” (270). This claim summarizes perfectly Heathcliff’s true Satanic character. Heathcliff’s manipulative control of the law is so accurate that characters start to doubt that there is indeed law or justice, as we can see in Joseph’s prayer – “Oh, Lord, judge’em, for there’s norther law nor justice among wer rullers!” (308). For him, only when “the lawful master and the ancient stock were restored to their rights” does law become tangible (335). Nancy Armstrong highlights Heathcliff’s manipulative subversion of the law with this precise statement:

A competitive principle rooted in the accumulation of capital provides the transforming agency that moves Heathcliff from the margins of society to its very center. Once there, he displays all the vices that have accompanied political power, the Lintons’ sophistication, their veneer of civility, as well as the Earnshaws’ brutality. (Armstrong 370)

Rule then “prescribes everywhere” (210). For Moretti, any conflict of interests or ideas is translated into the fairy-tale realm of “right” and “wrong” (210).¹⁰⁶ If this is the case, evaluation becomes unnecessary (210). This, however, could not be further from the truth. If “justice is as simple as truth,” as Moretti asserts, in *Wuthering Heights* truth is far from being “simple” since it confronts its readers with what Pykett calls “an alarming sense of disorientation, a feeling of finding themselves in different novels” (Pykett 74).¹⁰⁷ According to Moretti, it is the rhetorical choice that shapes the narration in a singular way. The distorted narration of the *sujet* results in the deception not only of the reader but also of all the other judges in the novel.¹⁰⁸ The *sujet* is then “a true counter-*fabula*” who hinders us from discerning the original truth (210). *Jane Eyre* proves perfectly Moretti’s thesis. Through her critical stance she claims the moral center by condemning the people

¹⁰⁶ For Moretti, what is “legal” and “illegal” would correspond to what is “right” or “wrong” in the fairy-tale dialectics.

¹⁰⁷ Moretti uses the word “truth” here with an empiricist sense, that is, as a recoverable representation of reality.

¹⁰⁸ Viktor Shklovsky introduced this distinction between *fabula*, the chronological order of the events contained in the story, and *syuzhet*, the way a story is organized.

who have confined her to the periphery (Armstrong “The Fiction of” 377). Thus, the only chance to have a timid glimpse of truth is “the all-pervading spatio-temporal dispositive of reversal: the return *back*, to a place, a time, a character or an event which enables the restoration of the truth about oneself and one’s life” (210). Hence Nelly’s offhand comment that Hindley’s mistreatment of Heathcliff “was enough to make a fiend of a saint” (65). When a plot has been originated around deceptions and misunderstandings, once the truth has been re-established, nothing more is important (211).

However, I cannot fully agree with Moretti’s contention since one of the greatest accomplishments of the novel is to offer so many versions of the same story. Like *Oliver Twist*’s, Heathcliff’s life is a sequence of twists and turns; he is a combination of the lowest of the low and a gentleman, a wronged innocent and a criminal; a victim and a perpetrator; a hero and a villain, and so on (Bowen 96). The novel leaves us wondering whether we have read about a villain or a victim, or whether it perhaps awkwardly twists the two together. It also tests our idea of identity – a name, a home, a family, the institutions that allow a message or individual to be integrated within the system and acquire a sense of identity (Bowen 96). This is different for “the abject poor,” in a way that challenges our notions of character and identity (Bowen 96). Emily Brontë’s novel never assuages these doubts, as *Tom Jones* or *Oliver Twist* do; it never resolves the enigma of Heathcliff’s genuine identity, so he has no other option but to create a new social identity. In *Wuthering Heights*, there is then not a return to origins but an arrival. As in most English and European *Bildungsromane*, the plot culminates with the hero’s accommodation to society (Abel, Hirsh, Langland 8). Thus, Heathcliff, who is introduced in the novel as a foundling, dies being the landlord of two properties, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange.

8.12 “Narratio” versus Novel

The English *Bildungsroman* endorses the ideology of justice and endeavors to prove, in an overtly egalitarian manner, that everyone – bastard child, outcast, prostitute, drunk, fugitive, servant, or indigent – has the right to tell his or her side of the story, to be listened and to obtain justice (Moretti 213). But not only do these novels maintain that everyone has a right to justice, they also prove that everyone receives justice, and this is precisely what highlights their symptomatic fairy-tale-quality (213). Whether the fairy-tale form may be the most suitable narrative genre for the promotion of a beneficial culture of

justice is open to question (213). What is clear is that childhood, and its lasting residues, is “the stage of life most suited for absorbing such a clear-cut and unquestionable value structure” (213). According to Moretti, “the cooperation of literature and law in the symbolic legitimation of the existing order is inscribed and articulated in the very *rhetorical structure* of the *Bildungsroman*” (212). This answers Hillis Miller’s question in *Topographies*: “I ask rather whether a work of literature can in any sense be conceived to be law-making. Can literature inaugurate or establish law? Can literature not only preserve the law or break it, but posit a new law?” (Hillis Miller 83). And my question is, does Heathcliff’s manipulation of laws and contracts sustain the legal system or rather expose its unavailability?

Hillis Miller states that, when we read one of Kleist’s stories, “we are reading a story about the disastrous legal consequences of storytelling and storyreading” (Miller 83) and I think that the same can be applied to *Wuthering Heights*. Like Michael Kohlhaas, Heathcliff takes the law into his own hands but, while Kohlhaas and Karl Moore prove to have a subversive and reformist ideology, Heathcliff is not moved by a utopian will to reform or expose the unkindness of the legal system. He is just a possessive individualist who has been forced to understand the wise of the world. When he has finally achieved all his carefully planned purposes, Heathcliff, instead of articulating a powerful reformist dictum, expresses his despondency:

“It is a poor conclusion, is it not?” he observed, having brooded awhile on the scene he had just witnessed: “an absurd termination to my violent exertions? I get levers and mattocks to demolish the two houses, and train myself to be capable of working like Hercules, and when everything is ready and in my power, I find the will to lift a slate off either roof has vanished! My old enemies have not beaten me; now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives: I could do it; and none could hinder me. But where is the use? I don’t care for striking: I can’t take the trouble to raise my hand! That sounds as if I had been labouring the whole time only to exhibit a fine trait of magnanimity. It is far from being the case: I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing.” (323)

This “poor conclusion” has nothing to do with Karl Moor’s powerful final speech in Friedrich Schiller’s *The Robbers* (1781):

Oh, fool that I was, to suppose that I could make the world a fairer place through terror, and uphold the cause of justice through lawlessness. I called it revenge and

right – I took it upon myself, O Providence, to smooth the jagged edges of your sword and make good your partiality – but – oh, childish vanity – here I stand at the limit of a life of horror, and see now with weeping and gnashing of teeth, that *two men such as I would destroy the whole moral order of creation.*” (159)

Moor identifies the injustices he has suffered with the crimes of humanity and, like Heathcliff, decides to take justice into his own hands; however, in doing so he becomes, as he recognizes in this final pronouncement, as great a rogue as his brother Franz, the perpetrator of his original misfortune. Both Karl and Heathcliff want to take revenge on the institutions, the law, the state and society; and both of them are ultimately in their rebellion driven to despair. The key difference between them is that whereas Karl exerts a conscious revolt against the law, Heathcliff’s rebellion is not driven by revolutionary or reformist energies; on the contrary, Heathcliff’s revenge is more rudimentary and instinctive.

Nevertheless, even if Heathcliff seldom expresses a subversive ideology, Emily Brontë does establish an understated game of subversion. Unlike Kohlhaas, Heathcliff does *not* return to a state of nature, initiating therefore a new social contract. On the contrary, Heathcliff assimilates the social system, reduplicating its very laws and contracts. But in doing so, he, though unconsciously, proves the unavailability and failure of the law, inaugurating the law of the absence. Ironically, the repetition of the law becomes itself an affront to justice. Unlike Pip’s climbing, Heathcliff’s social climbing does not happen under the sign of democracy, mutual benefit and responsibility (Robbins “A Portrait” 420). Whereas most of the protagonists of the English *Bildungsroman* betray their society of origin in order to make it into the society of destination, Heathcliff instinctively betrays the society of destination, showing its contradictions. This ironic disclosure – and all the more ironic because it is unconscious – is far from being fairy-tale-like.

8.13 Conclusion

Moretti’s central argument that the French Revolution and the post-Napoleonic Restoration exemplify the true bourgeois attempt to achieve ethico-political universalism seems to me defective since it demeans the importance of the English Civil War (1642-1651) and its aftermath, the Leveller movement, which came in London in 1645-6. This movement set out the principles of natural equality and the natural rights to constitute government by consent. The Levellers have been called by historians radical democrats,

liberal democrats, social democrats, constitutional democrats, Christian democrats, and petty bourgeois (Sharp, xii). For English historians, they are similar to other movements like the Wilkites of the 1760s, the radical reformers of the 1770s and 1780s, and the Chartists (Sharp, xii). This critique aims at a wider, and more relevant, issue. It implies that Moretti's thesis of a fairy-tale plot made of normative and submissive characters who represent the polarization of Good and Evil, submit to the social system, and ignore the violent havocs of history would have to be rejected: "Before any other novelistic tradition, eighteenth-century English fiction put in circulation a very unsettling socio-political energy" (Jiménez Heffernan "Communal Imagination" 75).

However, the most important political event in early-nineteenth-century England was one that was unsuccessful: the repetition in London of the revolution carried through by Parisians. The London of the last decade of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century is the London depicted in Blake's poem, *Songs of Experience*: an oppressive city in which the most basic liberties – liberties of free press, free speech, and the rights of petition and assembly – were denied (Bloom, *The Visionary* xiv). It was a country already traumatized by war and anarchism; the social unrest that had overthrown the French social order was beginning to be noticed, and the British ruling class responded to this challenge by an effective repression (Bloom xiv). Tom Paine and the philosophical anarchist Godwin tried to confront this repression. Godwin's philosophic materialism was vital for the early Wordsworth and the young Shelley, though both poets move away from Godwin in their maturity (Bloom xiv). The peak of popular revolt and government brutality came with the Peterloo Massacre at Manchester, which took place in August 1819. Mounted troops charged a large group that was demanding parliamentary reform, killing and hurting many defenseless activists. For a moment, England stood at the verge of revolution but the lack of popular and charismatic leaders who would organize the indignation of the mass foiled it. So the political energies of the age were irrelevant in England: the idealists living in England during the first three decades of the nineteenth century considered that a new energy had been born but then died in its infancy (Bloom xv).

In *Wuthering Heights*, the oppositional paradigm between "good" and "evil" loses its accuracy since one of the greatest accomplishments of the novel is to conjoin the roles of hero and villain in the same character. In leaving *Wuthering Heights* and initiating his outing in order to forge his social identity and to make his fortune, Heathcliff alienates

himself from the prototypical English hero and aligns himself with Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré or Frédéric Moreau. His ambiguous social nature makes him the perfect embodiment of the middle class, which in the traditional *Bildungsroman* was related to youth: unsettled, mobile, and enterprising (Moretti 191). His Byronic self-determination and his social and economic rise to a merciless entrepreneur show his great individuality, proving that he is not an ordinary and unsubstantial character. Like the upstart of the European *Bildungsroman*, Heathcliff's passage from rags to riches is complete. His assimilation of the social system proves its very contradictions, betraying the unavailability and failure of this very system.

Since the concept of genre is crucial to the understanding of literary texts, I have employed the subgenre of the *Bildungsroman* to explain, at least partially, Emily Brontë's novel. This does not mean that the novel falls perfectly into this category – in the same manner that it does not flawlessly fit into any of the other genres that I have used as comparative frames – but that it is possible to illuminate some parts of *Wuthering Heights* through this perspective. Thus, if the essence of any genre is the interrelationship of general expectations and specific praxis, of theory and its individuated application in an actual work (Swales 11), I want to stress that Emily Brontë's novel galvanizes and invigorates those general expectations in order to call them into question, to contest or even to parody them. But what is irrefutable is that in a modest but unavoidable fashion, the specter of the *Bildungsroman* haunts *Wuthering Heights*. Then there comes the persistent pressure of a new story – a new account of Heathcliff's story – or a new meaning for it. Having analyzed the common traits that this child shares with *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre*, etc., we are in a better position now to discern the shadow of the *Bildungsroman* behind Heathcliff's story.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

Mrs. Griffin, however, expressed the need for a little more light.

“Who was it she was in love with?”

“The story will tell,” I took upon myself to reply. (...)

“The story *won't* tell,” said Douglas; “not in any literal, vulgar way”

(Henry James. *The Turn of the Screw* 3)

This epigraph is Douglas' answer to Mrs. Griffin's question of whom was it that the governess of his tale was in love with. The vulgarity that Douglas – or James – is referring to is that of a language whose discourse is straightforward and direct and which tries to eliminate its intrinsic silence, that of a text inherently incapable of silence. Douglas' powerful statement could be easily applied to *Wuthering Heights*. Indeed, that could be Nelly's answer to Lockwood's inquiries about Heathcliff's whereabouts and his passage from rags to riches during his three-year absence. As I stated in the Introduction, Emily Brontë does not resort to many literary references or allusions in her novel, but that does not mean that these literary references are not there, lurking and sneaking around the text. *Wuthering Heights* contains within itself bits and pieces of previous stories. In his book, *Plato and Platonism*, the late Victorian writer Walter Pater argues that in Plato “there is nothing absolutely new,” and he speaks of Plato's literary inheritance through three beautiful tropes. Plato's writings are like “minute relics of earlier organic life in the very stone he builds with,” or like a palimpsest, that is, “a tapestry of which the actual threads

Conclusions

have served before,” or like the animal frame itself, “every particle of which has already lived and died many times over” (7-8).

What Walter Pater says of Plato cannot only be equally said of *Wuthering Heights* but also of the hybrid nature of the category “novel.” *Wuthering Heights* stands then as an emblem of the porosity of this blurry category. In my readings of Brontë’s novel, I have shown that *Wuthering Heights* is a sedimented text which contains many layers of heterogeneous strata: *Pamela*, Kleist’s *Novellen*, *The Monk*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *Manfred*, *Lamia*, *Shirley*, *Jane Eyre*, *Barry Lyndon*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*... In this dissertation, I have tried to do what most critics have never (consciously) attempted: to interrogate *Wuthering Heights* and to enrich the heterogeneity of the novel by examining its dialogic relationship with previous novels, novellas and poems in order to confirm that Emily Brontë’s text is *not sui generis*. My premise is perfectly summarized by Edward Said: “Literature,” he says, is “an eccentric order of repetition, not originality” (*Beginnings* 12). Therefore:

In Chapter 3, “*Wuthering Heights*: ‘The Housekeeper’s Tale’” I place *Wuthering Heights* within the context of domestic fiction inaugurated by Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*. I argue that the originality of *Wuthering Heights* is that a character of the lower class, a housekeeper, is permitted to *tell* the story, a fact that is quite uncommon in Victorian fiction. Thus, Nelly simultaneously occupies a position of social subalternity and moral authority in the house. Her sympathy of attention brings to the fore the perspectives that social hegemonic discourses have silenced and allows the readers to stand in different ideological positions, a fact that brings the novel closer to modernist and postmodernist fiction.

In the following chapter, “*Wuthering Heights* and Kleist’s *Novellen*: Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and Performative Subversion of the Law,” I argue that *Wuthering Heights* was quite consistent with the German tradition of the *Novelle*, and, especially, with Kleist’s narratives. In order to escape from a corrupted civilization which thwarts their most genuine feelings, the characters in both Kleist’s *Novellen* and *Wuthering Heights* resort to one (or all) of these strategies: a) to escape to a natural setting which promotes authenticity and Christian confraternity; b) to form erotic and anomic communities of lovers; c) to subvert the normative community by replicating it.

Conclusions

In the chapter entitled, “*Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel*,” I compare *Wuthering Heights* with Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, among other novels. My aim here is to analyze how *Wuthering Heights* appropriates Gothic motifs to explore questions of fragmented and contaminated genealogies, foundlings, revenge, subrogation, violence, insanity, the supernatural and historical/domestic compulsions. I base my comparison on formal, thematic and ideological motifs and I argue that *Wuthering Heights* deconstructs the opposition between domestic and Gothic novels by proving how the domestic is based on acts of violence.

The purpose of Chapter 6, “*Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem*,” is to employ Lord Byron’s poem, *Manfred*, as a literary co-text which has, both formally and thematically, illuminated some parts of *Wuthering Heights*, and to prove that both *Manfred* and *Wuthering Heights* possess an epic-dramatic component that goes back to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. I focus on the poetic quality of the most fervent and elegiac speeches in the novel; on the characters’ communion with a wild nature; on the transcendental communities of lovers; on the eleical mournings; on the Satanic heroes; and on how the novel simultaneously exploits and criticizes Byronism. My conclusion is that the deep structure of *Wuthering Heights* is an epic drama whose protagonist is a Satanic and Byronic character.

In Chapter 7, “*Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel*,” I do a materialist reading of *Wuthering Heights* which focuses on contingent historical reasons. My aim is to confront Gérin’s claim that *Wuthering Heights* “has no concern for social questions” (42). Thus, I align myself with Eagleton’s remark that *Wuthering Heights* is ideologically based and I try to prove that Heathcliff is the displaced locus of infrastructure. His condition of outsider grants him the capacity to integrate four different types of infrastructural alterities that are present in other nineteenth century English novels: the proletarian (*Shirley*), the colonial subject (*Jane Eyre*), the soldier (*Barry Lyndon*) and, indirectly, the woman (*Shirley*). Thus, through the character of Heathcliff, the subaltern speaks back.

In the final chapter, “*Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman*,” I read the told – and untold – story of Heathcliff as potential *Bildungsroman*, using some of Charles Dickens’ novels (*David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Great Expectations*) and other nineteenth-century novels as core texts. I argue that Heathcliff’s condition of outcast, his passage from “innocence” to “experience,” his conversion into an upstart, and his self-

Conclusions

determination turn his “history” into a kind of *Bildungsroman*. I prove how Heathcliff’s story of social mobility (but psychological arrest) shows his great individuality, demonstrating that he is not a common and insubstantial character.

Disjointed and vestigial, the existing text of *Wuthering Heights* looks like the ruined remnants of a fuller story. As Italo Calvino puts it in his essay, *Why Read the Classics?* “A classic is a book that comes before other classics; but anyone who has read the others first, and then reads this one, instantly recognizes its place in the family tree” (131). But in tradition there is always an element of freedom. It does not persist in time because of the inertia of what once existed: “it needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated” (Gadamer 282). The blank spaces which intervene at the beginning, middle and end of this skeletal history – which is, after all, Heathcliff’s history – are complete voids; gaps which shadow, permeate and puncture the main events in the story. What Gadamer says about history can be easily applied to literature and, more specifically, to the changing genre of the novel. For him, historical consciousness “is always filled with a variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard” (285). Modern historical research is “the handing down of tradition” and in it we have “a new experience of history whenever the past resounds in a new voice” (285).

And yet, although there certainly is a tradition concealed behind *Wuthering Heights*, the novel retains its own palpitating singularity, what Emerson calls an “alienated majesty,” that keeps unsettling us (Self-Reliance 7). Said argues that the beginning of a text consists in “*making or producing difference*; but – and here is the great fascination of the subject – difference which is the result of combining the already-familiar with the fertile novelty of human work in language” (*Beginnings* xxiii). Therefore, if as Hillis Miller asserts, any novel “is a complex tissue of repetitions and of repetitions within repetitions,” perhaps the right question to ask is not so much which is the point of departure or the original source from which the text derives, but rather what keeps resurfacing throughout the different configurations of the characters and motives and which are the images to which Brontë’s novel keeps returning (*Fiction* 2). What I have tried to do through this dissertation is to force the text to a *confession*. My main effort as analytical interpreter has been to extract the secret of the text, to force the language of the text to avow or to confess; to search for its fossils; the threads that pull it back to its origins... since the text does not reveal them, “not in any literal, vulgar way.”

Chapter 10

Work Cited

a) Primary Sources: Literary Works

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Ed. Fiona Stafford. London: Penguin Books. 2003.

Austen, Jane. *Emma*. Ed. Fiona Stafford. London: Penguin Books. 1996.

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. Ed. John Davies. Oxford: O.U.P. 1998.

Balzac, Honoré de. *The Girl with the Golden Eyes and Other Stories*. Trans. Peter Collier. Oxford: O.U.P. 2012.

Balzac, Honoré de. *Père Goriot*. Trans. A.J. Krailsheimer. Oxford: O.U.P. 2009.

Baudelaire, Charles. *Fusées III in Journaux in Times*. Paris: Georges Cres. 1919.

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. Oxford: O.U.P. 1998.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Charlotte Brontë: Selected Letters*. Oxford: O.U.P. 2010.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Shirley*. Ed. Sally Shuttleworth. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Ed. Sally Shuttleworth. Oxford: O.U.P. 2000.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Villette*. Ed. Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten. Oxford: O.U.P.

- Byron, George Gordon. *Selected Poems*. Eds. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. London: Penguin. 2005.
- Dickens, Charles. *Nicholas Nickleby*. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Ed. Philip Horne. London: Penguin Classics. 2003.
- Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. Ed. Nicola Bradbury. London: Penguin Classics. 2003.
- Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield*. Ed. Nina Burgis. Oxford: O.U.P. 1999.
- Dickens, Charles. *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan. Oxford: O.U.P. 1998.
- Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*. Ed. Margaret Cardwell. Oxford: O.U.P. 1998.
- Dickens, Charles. *Sketches by Boz*. Ed. Dennis Walder. London: Penguin. 1995.
- Diderot, Denis. *The Nun*. Trans: Goulbourne. Oxford: OUP. 2005.
- Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. Ed. Margaret Reynolds. London: Penguin. 1985.
- Fielding, Henry. *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*. London: Penguin Books. 1999.
- Gaskell, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. London: Dent. 1974.
- Godwin, William. *Caleb Williams*. Ed. David McCracken. Oxford: O.U.P. 1998.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*. Trans. Thomas Carlyle. London: Robson and Sons. 1874.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Trans. David Constantine. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2012.
- James, Henry. *The Tragic Muse*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1982.
- James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*. London: Dent. 1975.
- Kleist, Heinrich von. *The Marquise of O. and Other Stories*. Ed. Reeves and Luke. London: Penguin Classics. 1978.
- Lewis, Matthew. *The Monk*. Ed. Howard Anderson. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.

- Maturin, Charles. *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Oxford: O.U.P. 1973.
- More, Thomas. *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought: Utopia*. Eds. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006.
- Richardson, Samuel. *Pamela*. Ed. Thomas Keymer. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa*. Ed. Angus Ross. London: Penguin. 2004.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Julie, or, The New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*. Trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché. Hanover: Dartmouth College. England. 1997.
- Schiller, Friedrich. *The Robbers*. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey. 1996.
- Scott, Sir Walter. *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Ed. Fiona Robertson. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Scott, Sir Walter. *The Heart of the Midlothian*. Ed. Claire Lamont. Oxford: O.U.P. 1982.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. London: Penguin Books. 2003.
- Shelley, Mary. *The Last Man*. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Thackeray, William. *Vanity Fair*. Ed. Andrew Sanders. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Thackeray, William. *Roundabout Papers*. New York: Harper and Brothers. 1916.
- Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads*. Eds. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones. London: Routledge. 1988.

b) Secondary Sources: Criticism

- Abel, Elizabeth, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland (Eds.). *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. Hanover: University Press of New England. 1983.

Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford: O.U.P. 1971.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*. Trans. Liz Heron. London: Verso. 1993.

Allan, Séan. *The Stories of Heinrich von Kleist: Fictions of Security*. London: Camden House. 2011. 2001.

Allen, Maggie. "Emily Brontë and the Influence of the German Romantic Poets." *Brontë Studies* 30 (2005). 7-10.

Alliston, April. "Transnational Sympathies, Imaginary Communities." *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel*. Eds. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever. Princeton: Princeton UP. 2002.

Allot, Miriam. "Wuthering Heights: The Rejection of Heathcliff?" *Essays in Criticism*. 8.1 (1958): 27-47.

Althusser, Louis. *On Ideology*. New York: Verso. 2008.

--- "Contradiction and Overdetermination." *Notes for an Investigation, part III of "For Marx."* Trans. Ben Brewster. London: Penguin Press. 1962.

Andriano, Joseph. *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press. 1993.

Armstrong, Nancy. "The Fiction of Bourgeois Morality and the Paradox of Individualism." *The Novel*. Ed. Franco Moretti. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University. 2006. 349-288. x

--- *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2005.

--- *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1987.

--- "Emily Brontë In and Out of her Time." *Genre* 15.3 (1982).

Attridge, Derek. *The Singularity of Literature*. New York: Routledge. 2010.

Bailin, Miriam. *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction. The Art of Being III*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1994.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism." *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1986. 10-59.

--- *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: U. of Texas. 1981.

Baldick, Chris. "Introduction." *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Oxford: Oxford OUP. 2008.

Barreca, Regina. "The Power of Excommunication: Sex and the Feminine Text in *Wuthering Heights*." *Sex and Death in Victorian Literature*. Ed. Regina Barreca. London: Macmillan. 1999. 227-240.

Barthes, Roland. *Criticism and Truth*. Trans. Katrine Pilcher Keuneman. London: Continuum. 2007.

Bataille, Georges. "Emily Brontë". *Literature and Evil*. Trans. Alastair Hamilton. London: Marion Boyars. 2006. 21-32.

--- *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. Trans. Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights Book. 1986.

Bejamin, Walter. "The Storyteller." *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. Glasgow: Fontana. 1973.

Benziman, Galia. "Who Stole the Child?: Missing Babies and Blank Identities in Early Dickens." *Dickens and the Imagined Child*. Eds. P. Merchant and C. Waters. Aldershot: Ashgate Press. 2015. 27-40.

Bersani, Leo. "Desire and Metamorphosis." *A Future for Astyanax*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1984. 189-229.

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Harmondsworth. 1978

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London; New York: Routledge. 2004.

- Blanchot, Maurice. *The Unavowable Community*. Trans. Pierre Joris. Barrytown (NY): Station Hill. 1998.
- Bloom, Harold. *Novelists and Novels*. New York: Checkmark Books. 2007.
- "Milton." *Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present*. Harvard: Harvard UP. 1991. 91-113.
- "Milton and His Precursors." *A Map of Misreading*. Oxford: Oxford U.P. 1975. 125-143.
- *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1971.
- "The Internalization of Quest-Romance." *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*. New York: WW Norton. 1970. 3-24.
- Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. "Dickens and the Knowing Child." Eds. P. Merchant and C. Waters. Aldershot: Ashgate Press. 2015. 13-26.
- Boone, Joseph Allen. *Tradition and Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1987.
- Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1961.
- Botting, Fred. *The Gothic*. Cambridge: The English Association. 2001.
- Bowen, John. *Other Dickens: Pickwick to Chuzzlewit*. Oxford: OUP. 2003.
- Briggs, Asa. "Private and Social Themes in *Shirley*." *Brontë Society Transactions*. 13:68. 1958. 203-19.
- Brockmeier, Jens. "Narrative Psychology." *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*. Ed. T. Teo. New York: Springer. 1218-1220.
- Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: Vintage. 1984.
- Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Ed. J. G. A. Pocock. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. 1987.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge. 2008.

--- *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York; London: Routledge. 1997.

--- *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge. 1993.

Calvino, Italo. *Perché Leggere i Classici*. Milán: Mondadori. 1995.

--- *The Literature Machine: Essays*. Trans. Patrick Creagh. London: Vintage Books. 1987.

--- *The Uses of Literature: Essays*. Trans. Patrick Creagh. London: Harcourt Brace. 1986.

Camilleri, Anna. "Byron, Milton, and the Satanic Heroine." *Byron's Poetry*. Ed. Peter Cochran. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2012. 70-81.

Carlyle, Thomas. *Chartism*. London: James Fraser. 1840.

Carroll, John (Ed.). *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1964.

Carroll, Joseph, "The Cuckoo's History: Human Nature in *Wuthering Heights*." *Philosophy and Literature* 32, (2008): 241-257.

Carter, Ronald and John McRae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland*. New York: Routledge. 2009.

Cavell, Stanley. *Themes out of School: Effects and Causes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1988.

Cazamian, Louis. *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850: Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley*. Trans. Martin Fido. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1973.

Cecil, David. "Emily Brontë and *Wuthering Heights*." *Early Victorian Novelists: Essays in Revaluation*. London: Constable and Co. 1934. 147-193.

Claeys, Gregory. *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2007.

Coetzee, J.M. *Stranger Shores: Essays 1986-1999*. London: Vintage. 2002.

Coleman, Deirdre. "Imagining Sameness and Difference: Domestic and Colonial Sisters in *Mansfield Park*." *A Companion to Jane Austen*. Eds. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. 2009. 292-304.

Crosby, Christina. *The Ends of History: Victorians and "the Woman Question."* London: Routledge. 2003.

Davies, Stevie. *Emily Brontë: Heretic*. London: Women's Press. 1994.

--- *Emily Brontë*. Great Britain: Harvester. 1988.

De Certeau, M. *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press. 1997.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *L'Anti-Aedipe. Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*. Paris: Editions de Minuit. 1972.

Derrida, Jacques and Anne Dufourmantelle. *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*. Stanford: Stanford UP. 2000.

Derrida, Jacques. *Spectres de Marx*. Paris: Galilée. 1973.

Dimnet, Ernest. *Les Soeurs Brontë*. Paris: Bloud. 1910.

Doody, Margaret Anne. *The True Story of the Novel*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University. 1997.

--- *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*. London: Oxford University Press. 1974.

Douglas-Fairhurst, Robert. *Becoming Dickens: The Invention of a Novelist*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2011.

Duncan, Ian. *Modern Romance and Transformation of the Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005.

Dunn, Richard J. "Backgrounds and Contexts." *Wuthering Heights, by Emily Brontë*. New York: A Norton Critical Edition. 2003. 259-351.

Eagleton, Terry. *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2005.

- *The English Novel: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2005.
- *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*. London: Verso. 1996.
- Elfenbein, Andrew. *Byron and the Victorians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1995.
- Ellis, Markman. *The History of Gothic Fiction*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh. 2007.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Emerson's Essays*. London: Dent. 1976.
- Esty, Jed. *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2011.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markman. London: Pluto Press. 2008.
- Farrell, John Philip. *Revolution as Tragedy: The Dilemma of the Moderate from Scott to Arnold*. London: Cornell University Press. 1980.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1982.
- Filmer, Robert. *Patriarcha; or the Natural Power of Kings*. London: R. Chiswel. 1680.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge. 2005.
- "Society Must Be Defended." *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. Eds: Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana. Trans. David Macey. New York: Picador. 2003.
- *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. London: Routledge. 1997.
- *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage. 1995.
- Frank, Frederick S. "The Gothic Romance – 1762-1820." *Horror Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide*. Ed. Marshall Tymn. New York: Bowker. 1981. 3-175.

- Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans: James Strachey. New York: Basic Books.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1991.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Continuum. 2006.
- Gailus, Andreas. "Form and Chance: The German Novella." *The Novel*. V.2. Ed. Franco Moretti. Oxford: Princeton University. 2006.
- Gallagher, Catherine. *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1985.
- Gamer, Michael. *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000.
- Garber, Frederick. *Self, Text, and Romantic Irony: The Example of Byron*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1988.
- Gargano, Elizabeth. "The Education of the Brontë's *New Nouvelle Héloïse* in *Shirley*." *SEL* 44:4 (2004). 769-803.
- Gezari, Janet. *Last Things: Emily Brontë's Poems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007.
- *Charlotte Brontë and Defensive Conduct: The Author and the Body at Risk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania. 1992.
- Gérin, Winifred. *Emily Brontë*. Girona: Atlanta. 2008.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University. 1984.
- Glen, Heather. *Charlotte Brontë: The Imagination in History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002.
- Goulbourne, Russell. "Introduction." *The Nun*. Trans. Russell Goulbourne. Oxford: OUP. 2005.

Groom, Nick. "Introduction." *The Monk*. Ed. Howard Anderson. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008. 7-38.

Guy, Josephine M. *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel: The Market, the Individual and Communal Life*. Houndmills: Macmillan Press. 1996.

Hafley, James. "The Villain in *Wuthering Heights*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 13:3 (1958). 199-205.

Hammond, Brean and Shaun Regan. *Making the Novel: Fiction and Society in Britain, 1600-1789*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2006.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.

Heiland, Donna. "Confronting the Uncanny in the Brontës." *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2004. 114-128.

Helps, Arthur. *The Claims of Labour: An Essay on the Duties of the Employers to the Employed*. London: William Pickering. 1844.

Hillis Miller, J. *The Conflagration of Community: Fiction Before and After Auschwitz*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press. 2011.

--- *On Literature*. New York: Routledge. 2008.

--- *Literature as Conduct: Speech Acts in Henry James*. New York: Fordham University. 2005.

--- *Others*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2001.

--- *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth Century Writers*. Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois. 2000.

--- *Topographies*. Stanford: Stanford UP. 1995. Print.

--- *Victorian Subjects*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1990.

--- *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1982.

--- *Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1970.

Hoever, Diane Long. *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 1998.

Hogan, Patrick Colm. *The Mind and Its stories: Narrative Universals and Human Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 2003.

Holderness, Graham. *Wuthering Heights*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. 1985.

Homans, Margaret. "The Name of the Mother in *Wuthering Heights*." *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1968. 68-83.

Howe, Steven. *Heinrich Von Kleist and Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Violence, Identity, Nation*. New York: Camden House. 2012.

Huff, Steven R. *Heinrich von Kleist's Poetics of Passivity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013.

Ingham, Patricia. *The Brontës: Authors in Context*. Oxford: OUP. 2006.

Jacob, Carol. *Uncontainable Romanticism: Shelley, Brontë, Kleist*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP. 1989.

Jacobs, N. M. "Gender and Layered Narrative in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*." *The Brontës*. Ed. Patricia Ingham. Great Britain: Longman. 2003.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Art*. N.Y.: Routledge. 2008.

--- "The Experiments of Time: Providence and Realism." *The Novel*. V.1. Ed. Franco Moretti. Oxford: Princeton University. 2006. 95-127.

--- "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." Whitney Museum Lecture in fall. 1982. Web. 10 March 2018.

Jiménez Heffernan, Julián. "'Under the Force of the Law': Communal Imagination and the Constitutional Sublime in Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*." *Liminal*

Discourses: Subliminal Tensions in Law and Literature. Eds. Daniela Carpi and Jeanne Gaakeer. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co. 2013. 73-95.

--- "Togetherness and its Discontents." Introduction to *Community in Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Ed. Julián Jiménez Heffernan, Paula Martín Salván, Gerardo Rodríguez Salas. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013. 1-47.

--- "Pamela's Hands: Political Intangibility and the Production of Manners." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 46:1 (2013). 26-49.

--- "At the Court of Bellona": Political and Libidinal Usurpation in Barry Lyndon." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 44.2 (2014). 183-211.

--- "The Phonetic Archive. Vocality and Locality in European Regional Fiction from Maria Edgeworth to Ismail Kadaré." *Contemporary Developments in Emergent Literatures and the New Europe*. Eds. César Domínguez & Manus O'Dwyer. Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela. 2014. 227-256.

Johnson, Edgar. "The Anatomy of Society." *Dickens: Bleak House*. Ed. A. E. Dyson. London: Macmillan. 1969. 135-156.

Joseph, M. K. *Byron the Poet*. London: V. Gollancz. 1964.

Kavanagh, James. *Emily Brontë*. London: Blackwell. 1985.

Kermode, Frank. *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change*. N.Y.: The Viking Press. 1975.

Kettle, Arnold. "Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*." *An Introduction to the English Novel*. 1951. Reprint: New York: Harper. 1968. 130-45.

Keymer, Thomas and Peter Sabor. *Pamela in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge: C.U.P. 2005.

Khair, Tabish. *The Gothic, Postcolonial and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2009.

Kiely, Robert. *The Romantic Novel in England*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1972.

- Kilgour, Maggie. *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London: Routledge. 1995.
- Kinkead-Weekes, Mark. *Samuel Richardson, Dramatic Novelist*. London: Methuen. 1973.
- KirchKnopf, Andrea. "Character Constitution in Heinrich von Kleist's *Der Findling* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*." *The AnaChronisT*. 10 (2004): 31-45.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press. 1982.
- Larson, Janet. "Oliver Twist and Christian Sculpture." *Oliver Twist*. Ed. Fred Kaplan. New York: Norton Critical Edition. 1992.
- Leavis, F.R. *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*. New York: Faber and Faber. 2011.
- Leavis, Q. D. "A Fresh Approach to *Wuthering Heights*." *Wuthering Heights*. London: Macmillan. 1993. 24-35.
- Lenta, Margaret, "Capitalism or Patriarchy and Immoral Love: A Study of *Wuthering Heights*," *Theoria: A Journal of Studies in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 62: (1984).
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Alterity and Transcendence*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Columbia: Columbia University Press. 2001.
- *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 1991.
- Lewalski, Barbara. "The Genres of *Paradise Lost*: Literary Genre as a Means of Accommodation." *Milton Studies* 17. Ed. R.S. Ide and Joseph Wittreich. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1983.
- Linder, Cynthia A. *Romantic Imagery in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë*. London: Springer. 1978.
- Lovell, Ernest J. (Ed.). *Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron*. Princeton: Princeton U.P. 1966.

Macherey, Pierre. *A Theory of Literary Production*. Trans. Geoffrey Wall. London: Routledge. 1989.

Martín Salván, Paula. "Our Offering is Language": Speech and Communication Disorders in the Narrative of Don DeLillo." *Literature and Psychoanalysis*. Ed. F. Pereira. Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada: Lisboa. 2008.

Mathison, John K. "Nelly Dean and the Power of *Wuthering Heights*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 11.2 (1956): 106-129.

Maynard, John R. "The Bildungsroman." *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Eds. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing. Malden: Blackwell. 2005. 279-301.

McGann, Jerome. *Byron and Romanticism*. Ed. James Soderholm. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002.

McKeon, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel*. London: Johns Hopkins University. 2002.

Merchant P. and C. Waters (Eds.). *Dickens and the Imagined Child*. Aldershot: Ashgate Press. 2015.

Meyer, Susan. *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian's Women Fiction*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1996.

Miller, Andrew. "Vanity Fair through Plate Glass." *Modern Language Association* 105.5 (1990). 1042-1054.

Mitchell, Juliet. *Women, the Longest Revolution*. Michigan: Pantheon Books. 1984.

Moglen, Hélène. *The Trauma of Gender: A Feminist Theory of the English Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2001.

Moretti, Franco. *Atlas of the European Novel: 1800-1900*. London: Verso. 2011.

--- "Serious Century." *The Novel*. Ed. Franco Moretti. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University. 2006. 364-400.

--- *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. Trans. Albert Sbragia. London; New York: Verso. 2000.

- Morris, Pam. *Literature and Feminism*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1996.
- Morris, Rosalind C. *Reflections on the History of an Idea: Can the Subaltern Speak?* New York: Columbia UP. 2010.
- Musselwhite, David. "Wuthering Heights: The Unacceptable Texts." *Partings Welded Together: Politics and Desire in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*. London: Methuen. 1987.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Inoperative Community*. Ed. Peter Connor. Trans. Peter Connor et al. Foreword by Christopher Fynsk. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota. 2008.
- Nelson, James G. "The Victorian Social Problem Novel." *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Ed Baker and Womack. Connecticut: Greenwood. 2002.
- Newlyn, Lucy. "The Prelude." *Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth*. Ed. Stephen Gill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003. 55-69.
- Nord, Deborah Epstein. *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2006.
- Norrick, N.R. "Conversational Storytelling." *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. Ed. D. Herman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007. 127-141.
- Nünning, Vera. "The Ethics of Fictional Form: Persuasiveness and Perspective Taking from the Point of View of Cognitive Literary Studies." *Arcadia* 50.1 (2015): 37-56.
- Nussbaum, Martha, "Wuthering Heights: The Romantic Ascent". *Philosophy and Literature* 20 (1996): 362-82.
- O'Brien, Edna. *Byron in Love*. Great Britain: Phoenix. 2009.
- Paris, Bernard J. "Wuthering Heights." *Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature*. New York: New York University Press. 1997. 240-261.
- Pater, Walter. *Plato and Platonism*. London: Macmillan. 1895.
- Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006.

- Praz, Mario. *The Romantic Agony*. Trans. Angus Davidson. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1970.
- Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. London: Longman. 1980.
- Pykett, Lyn. *Women Writers: Emily Brontë*. Maryland: Barnes and Noble. 1989.
- Rawes, Alan. "1816-17: *Childe Harold III* and *Manfred*." *The Cambridge Companion to Byron*. Ed. Drummond Bone. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2004. 118-132.
- Reeve, Clara. *The Progress of Romance*. 2 Vols. New York: Garland. 1970.
- Reeves, Nigel. "Introduction." *The Marquise of O and Other Stories*. Trans. David Luke and Nigel Reeves. London: Penguin Classics. 1978. 1-15.
- Rena-Dozier, Emily. "Gothic Criticisms: *Wuthering Heights* and Nineteenth-Century Literary History." *ELH*. 77 (2010): 757-775.
- Richetti, John. *The English Novel in History (1700-1780)*. New York: Routledge. 1999.
- Robbins, Bruce. "A Portrait of the Artist as a Social Climber: Upward Mobility in the Novel." *The Novel*. Ed. Franco Moretti. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University. 2006. 409-435.
- *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below*. Durham: Duke University Press. 1993.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse upon the Origin and the Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind*. Trans. Franklin Philip. Oxford: O.U.P. 2009.
- *Emile or On Education*. Trans. Allan Bloom. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1991.
- Rudnik-Smalbraak, Marijke. *Samuel Richardson: Minute Particulars Within the Large Design*. Leiden: University of Leiden Press. 1983.
- Ruskin, John. *Sesame and Lilies*. London: Electric Book. 2001.
- Said, Edward W. *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. London: Granta Books. 1997.
- *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage. 1994.

- Schmitt, Cannon. "The Gothic Romance in the Victorian Period." *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Eds. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing. Malden: Blackwell. 2005. 302-317.
- Sharp, Andrew (Ed.). *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought: The English Levellers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2004.
- Shawcross, John (Ed.). *Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism*. London: O.U.P. 1909.
- Shuttleworth, Sally (Ed.). "Introduction." *Shirley*. Oxford: O.U.P. 2008.
- Scholes, Robert. *The Rise and Fall of English: Reconstructing English as a Discipline*. Yale: Yale University Press. 1998.
- Shore, Bradd. *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture, and the Problem of Meaning*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 1996.
- Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*. London: Virago. 1987.
- Simmons, James Richard. "Industrial and 'Condition of England' Novels. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Eds. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing. Malden: Blackwell. 2005. 336-351.
- Spark, Muriel and D. Stanford. *Emily Brontë: Her Life and Work*. London: Arena. 1985.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Reflections on the History of an Idea: Can the Subaltern Speak?* Ed. Rosalind C. Morris. New York: Columbia UP. 2010.
- "The New Historicism: Political Commitment and the Postmodern Critic." *The New Historicism*. Ed. H. Aram Veveser. New York: Routledge. 1989.
- "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Enquiry*. 12.1 (1985): 243-261.
- Stafford, Fiona (Ed.). "Introduction." *Pride and Prejudice*. London: Penguin Books. 2003.
- Staten, Henry. *Spirit Becomes Matter*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2014.

- Stevic, Aleksandar. "Fatal Extraction: Dickensian *Bildungsroman* and the Logic of Dependency." *Dickens Studies Annual*. 45 (2014): 63-94.
- Steedman, Carolyn. *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press; London: Virago. 1995.
- Steinitz, Rebecca. "Diaries and Displacement in *Wuthering Heights*." *The Brontës*. Ed. Patricia Ingham. Great Britain: Longman. 2003.
- Stoneman, Patsy. *Charlotte Brontë*. Devon: Northcote House Publishers. 2013.
- "Introduction." *Wuthering Heights*. Oxford: University of Oxford. 1998.
- "The Brontës and Death: Alternatives to Revolution." *The Sociology of Literature*. (1978). 79-96.
- Stuart Mill, John. *The Subjection of Women*. Ed. Jonathan Bennet. 2009. <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/mill1869.pdf>
- Swales, Martin. *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse*. Princeton. Princeton University Press. 1978.
- Tanner, Tony. *Jane Austen*. Houndmills: Macmillan Press. 1986.
- Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2009.
- *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham (Australia); London: Duke University Press. 2004.
- Tillotson, Kathleen Mary. *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1971.
- Todorov, T. *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*. Trans. R. Howard. New York: Harper Colophon Books. 1985.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand. *Community and Civil Society*. Ed. Jose Harris. Trans. Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 2001.
- Tovey, Paige. "Betwixt Love and Knowledge." *Byron's Poetry*. Ed. Peter Cochran. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2012. 97-103.

- Wang, Lisa. "The Holy Spirit in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Poetry." *Literature & Theory*. 14.2 (2000): 160-173.
- Watkins, Daniel P. "The Dramas of Lord Byron: *Manfred* and *Marino*." *Byron*. Ed. Jane Stabler. London: 1998. 52-65.
- Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. London: Penguin. 1957.
- Weil, Simone. "The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force." *Chicago Review*. 18.2 (1965): 1-26.
- Wellek, René. *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*. V.2. Yale: Yale University Press. 1958.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. London: The Hogarth Press. 1991.
- *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia University. 1983.
- Wilson, David. "Emily Brontë: First of the Moderns." *Moderns Quarterly Miscellany* 1. (1947): 94-115.
- Woolf, Virginia. *The Common Reader*. South Australia: The University of Adelaide. 2015. <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91c/chapter14.html>
- Zweig, Stefan. *Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche: The Struggle with the Daemon*. London: Transaction Publishers. 2011.