

“Can I stay after you have struck me?”

Destructive relationships in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*

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<p>Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan ihmissuhteita ja niiden tuhoisaa luonnetta Emily Brontë'n romaanissa <i>Humiseva Harju</i> (1847). Tutkimusmetodeina käytetään sukupuolentutkimusta ja väkivaltatutkimusta. Väkiältä vaikuttaa vahvasti lähes kaikkiin romaanin ihmissuhteisiin, sekä siinä esiintyviin henkilöihin. Tutkielmassa keskitytään erityisesti Heathcliffin ja Catherinen henkilöihin, ja pyritään näyttämään, kuinka väkivaltainen kasvatus ja elinympäristö ovat vaikuttaneet heihin lapsuudessa niin, että hahmot päätyvät kohtelemaan muita ihmisiä fyysisesti ja henkisesti kaltoin myös aikuisina.</p> <p>Heathcliffin ja Catherinen kokema väkiältä on peräisin erilaisista syistä: Heathcliff kärsii orpotaustansa, etnisyytensä ja kasvattajensa herättämänsä kateuden takia, kun taas Catherine rangaistaan, soimataan ja väheksytään oman sukupuolensa takia. Esseessä tarkastellaan myös yleisellä tasolla yhteiskunnassa vallitsevia sukupuolinormeja, jotka vaikuttavat suuresti sekä tyttöjen ja poikien omaan ajatteluun, että muun lähipiirin suhtautumiseen heihin.</p> <p>Heathcliffin ja Catherinen lisäksi tutkielmassa tarkastellaan myös muita keskeisiä henkilöitä, kuten Nellyä, Edgaria, Isabellaa ja Lintonia. Nellyn, Isabellan ja Catherinen välisiä suhteita tutkiessa kiinnitetään huomiota erityisesti siihen, kuinka henkilöihmot ja heidän keskinäinen dynamiikkansa edustavat stereotyyppistä kuvausta naisten välisistä ystävyyksistä, joita värittävät vahvasti kateus, huijaus ja kilpailu. Edgari ja Lintonin henkilöitä tarkasteltaessa käsitellään toksista maskuliinisuutta ja sitä, millainen maskuliinisuuden ihanne on yhteiskunnassamme, ja kuinka se vaikuttaa miesten kohteluun.</p> <p>Tutkielmassa tuodaan esille kolme erilaista keskeistä väkivallan muotoa: lapsiin kohdistuva väkiältä, naisiin kohdistuva väkiältä sekä lähisuhdeväkiältä. Kaikki nämä väkivallan muodot ovat vahvasti esillä <i>Humisevassa Harjussa</i>. Lähes jokainen romaanissa esiintyvä lapsihahmo kokee fyysistä ja/tai henkistä väkivaltaa, mikä kertoo myös siitä, kuinka lapsiin suhtauduttiin 1700- ja 1800-lukujen Englannissa. Lapsena koettu väkiältä tekee myös monesta hahmosta, kuten Heathcliffista, Catherinesta ja Hindleystä, erittäin julmia aikuisia.</p> <p>Naisiin kohdistuvaa väkivaltaa tarkasteltaessa keskitytään erityisesti Isabellan ja Catherinen tyttären, Cathyn hahmoin. Naisiksi nuoreksi romantiksi kuvailtu Isabella ihastuu Heathcliffiin, joka käyttää häntä hyväkseen tuottaakseen tuskaa Edgarille. Isabella päätyy naimisiin Heathcliffin kanssa, mitä seuraavina viikkoina hän tulee lähes päivittäin pahoinpidellyksi, nöyryytetyksi ja eristetyksi aviomiehensä taloon. Hän tulee todennäköisen raiskauksen seurauksena raskaaksi, pakenee ja joutuu muuttamaan yksin pois kotiseudultaan. Isabellan henkilökehityksessä kiinnitetään huomiota myös siihen, kuinka hänen lähipiirinsä suhtautuu paheksuttuun avioliittoon ja sitä seuranneeseen kärsimykseen. Isabellan veli Edgar katkaisee välinsä siskoonsa, ja Nelly paheksuu enemmän Isabellan avioliiton jälkeen siveettömäksi muuttunutta ulkoasua kuin Heathcliffin väkivaltaa.</p> <p>Cathy puolestaan elää lapsuutensa ja varhaisuoruutensa samassa turvatussa ympäristössä kuin Isabella, kunnes Heathcliffiin tutustuttuaan joutuu pakkoavioliiton, fyysisen väkivallan ja vapaudenriiston uhriksi.</p> <p>Lähisuhdeväkivaltaa esiintyy <i>Humisevassa Harjussa</i> erityisesti Catherinen ja Heathcliffin sekä Catherinen ja Edgariin suhteissa. Catherinen ja Heathcliffin suhteen väkiältä on molemminpuolista mustasukkaisuutta, pakkomieltä, omistamista ja fyysistä vallankäyttöä. Edgari ja Catherinen avioliitossa puolestaan on hyvin selkeästi nähtävissä tekijä (Catherine) ja uhri (Edgar). Vaikka molemmat ihmissuhteet ovat epäterveitä ja vaarallisia, ne ovat myös vahvasti romantisoituja romaanissa, mikä omalla tavallaan kyseenalaistaa väkivallan vakavuuden ja luo erityisesti Heathcliffista ja Catherinesta kuvan kirjallisuushistorian merkittävimpiä rakastavaisina.</p> <p>Tutkielmassa näytetään paitsi se, kuinka sukupuolinormit, naisten väliset suhteet, toksinen maskuliinisuus ja väkiältä näyttäytyvät Brontë'n romaanissa ja vaikuttavat sen henkilöihin, myös se, kuinka käsitellyt teemat ja ongelmat ovat olemassa ja yleisiä myös nyky-yhteiskunnassa, ja miten niiden tunnistaminen kirjallisuudessa on osa ongelmaa vastaan taistelemista.</p>		
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1. Introduction

In this thesis I will show how the relationships between the characters in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) are entwined, and how violence is presented in these relationships. I will also show that many of the factors that lead to a destructive quality in the relationships between these characters are consequences of their extreme suffering. I will use gender studies and violence studies to analyse the characters as well as their mutual relationships. The outline of this thesis is built around these two study fields, and in every chapter they will be connected to the analysis of examples from Brontë's novel. I will also use academic sources by critics who have studied the character dynamics and themes such as love, violence, gender and morality in *Wuthering Heights*.

Before proceeding to the study fields, I will introduce and analyse the two most central characters of the novel: Heathcliff and Catherine. It is essential for further examination to know and understand the origins of these characters, for they play a major role in their later development and behaviour. Besides this, I must distinguish two characters of the story from one another, them being the elder Catherine who grows up in *Wuthering Heights*, and the younger Catherine who is brought up in Thrushcross Grange. To distinguish the two characters from one another, I will use different forms of their name, depending on whom I am talking about. Thus, the full name *Catherine* is used when I discuss the elder Catherine (née Earnshaw), and the abbreviation *Cathy* when I refer to the younger Catherine (née Linton).

The main focus is on Heathcliff and Catherine, and the connection they share. I will discuss why these two characters have gained a position of worship in the literary history, even though their relationship does not appear healthy for the reader. It is obvious that Heathcliff and Catherine are morbidly obsessed, possessive and jealous of one another, they yearn for unity yet constantly make choices that makes it impossible for them to be together. Even so, they are viewed as one of the most romantic and iconic couples in popular culture. Their love and overflowing passion are glorified, and they have the role of tragic lovers in a cruel society. Still, when one looks closely at either Heathcliff or Catherine's character, they have very few qualities that make a person good or likable. Both share similar interest in sadistic behaviour, and the way they treat each other and the people around them indicate that they are passionate about only themselves. They lack morals in almost every aspect of life, and care little if others, even children, suffer in their way if it brings them closer to what they want.

However, in the character analysis of Heathcliff and Catherine I want to emphasize that the two are not innately evil or sadistic, but their maliciousness can be seen as a cause of an unhappy and traumatizing childhood and youth, and the lack of support and compassion from the adults who were responsible of them. It has been shown in studies multiple times that child abuse has consequences that can affect severely the victims' behaviour and personality as they reach adulthood, as I will later point out. Heathcliff and Catherine are surrounded by abusive adults who use violent language and imagery in the presence and relating children, they hear death threats, are told that they are unlovable and cause regret for their parents for ever having them. This is a very clever way of using narration by Emily Brontë, since it is how she draws sympathy for Heathcliff and Catherine from her readers.¹ Gender norms and stereotypes of 18th- and 19th-century also have an influence on the way especially Catherine and Isabella Linton are treated by their family and the household staff as young girls and women, but also how certain male characters are viewed in the story. Here I am talking about Edgar and his nephew Linton, who is born to Isabella and Heathcliff, and how their portrayal is coloured with toxic masculinity, as they appear seemingly weaker physically and mentally than Heathcliff, who in turn shows his masculine power very strongly, and sees it as an advantage and a weapon against them.

In addition to Heathcliff and Catherine, I analyse other characters and relationships in the novel as well. Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship cannot be analysed without noticing the presence of a third party, Edgar Linton, and the affect he has on their dynamics. Catherine and Edgar are married and in love, but Catherine cannot live her life wholly without the other important man in her life, Heathcliff. She forms a plan that would allow herself and the two men she desires to live together as a unit, but simultaneously she is the only one who does not see the scheme's impossibility, which eventually turns fateful for her. Besides the complex relationship between Catherine, Edgar and Heathcliff, Edgar plays a major role in Heathcliff's character development, too. Being born as an heir into a wealthy gentry-class family and having an appearance that suits the white-privileged society, Edgar causes envy in Heathcliff and is one of the factors that drive him towards his violent and ruthless revenge. Edgar is also the person who Catherine bullies perhaps the most, making him the male victim of intimate partner violence. However, Edgar's experiences of abuse are highly embellished and romanticized, just as Catherine and Heathcliff's, which is one of the reasons why especially the latter two

¹ Hagan, "Control of Sympathy in *Wuthering Heights*", 65.

characters' love story is considered as one of the greatest romances in literary history. Romanticizing of intimate partner violence is relatively common in media and entertainment, and it makes the recognizing of violence and its condemnation much more difficult.

Violence against women is also a great issue in the novel, and I will look at it through the characters of Isabella and Cathy Linton. Both women become acquainted with Heathcliff, Isabella as his wife and Cathy as his daughter-in-law, and they are abused mentally, physically and, in Isabella's case, sexually. They both are tools for Heathcliff in his seeking of revenge on Edgar, who took Catherine from him. The sexual violence that Isabella experiences in her marriage remains ambiguous, as Brontë does not mention the act directly in the novel. Moreover, marital rape was not recognized as a crime during the time of *Wuthering Heights*,² which means that in the eyes of law, Isabella was not a victim of sexual violence.

The dynamics between Catherine, Nelly and Isabella are also worth scrutinizing, for they represent the stereotypical image of female friendships that appear nowadays, too, for example in day-care, schools and workplaces: the relationships are full of suspicion, jealousy and conflict. Scheming and backstabbing is not an essential part of female relationships any more than it is of the relationships between men, but it has been instilled into girls and women's mindsets for so long that they inevitably start to pay more and more attention to the situations when women behave badly towards one another, which enforces the original idea even more. This is called a confirmation bias.³ The way in which the female relationships are portrayed in *Wuthering Heights* has not changed in the course of almost two centuries, and that supports the idea that the thought of women hating women is forcibly built, and that more attention must be paid on the issue and more conversation must be made about it.

² Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, 29.

³ Malinen, "Johanna Malisen kolumni: Naisten välisestä ystävyydestä toistetaan edelleen katkeransuloista tarinaa, jossa nainen on naiselle uhka", 2.

2. Background

The formation of especially the character of Heathcliff and the violent and stormy plot of *Wuthering Heights* has raised discussion and various interpretations among scholars. It has been wondered, how did Emily Brontë, who lived most of her life in an extremely isolated and unsocial environment, come up with such an intensive novel as *Wuthering Heights*. Some scholars claim that Brontë got the idea from a story of Jack Sharp, a former owner of Law Hill school, where Emily worked as a teacher for a brief time.⁴ Sharp was an adopted son of John Walker, the master of Walterclough Hall near Law Hill. John Walker, who had two sons of his own, favoured Sharp over the others, and eventually put him in charge of the family business, and simultaneously Walterclough Hall. After John Walker's death, his legitimate son and heir managed to dismiss Sharp from the family home, but only after he had removed most of its valuable items, and destroyed the rest. Sharp also apprenticed a Walker relative, Sam Stead, who was known for his appetite for drinking and gambling. Relatively fast and "with no apparent motive other than causing further pain and injury to the Walkers", Sharp systematically drove Stead into degradation by encouraging his alcoholism and gambling addiction. It is probable that Emily Brontë did hear this story and used it as an example when forming characters such as Heathcliff, Hindley and Hareton, and *Wuthering Heights*' plot line.

Other scholars claim that Brontë gained the idea for her novel from the stories of her own ancestry that she heard from her Irish father, Patrick Brontë.⁵ Patrick's own father, Hugh Brunty, was an adopted child and suffered from ill-treatment from his foster father, Welsh Brunty, who in turn had been discovered as an orphan child on a boat in Liverpool, and adopted by Emily Brontë's great-great-grandfather. Welsh Brunty banished the legitimate heirs of his foster father from the family home, and married his foster sister. There is a strong similarity between Welsh and Heathcliff, which supports the suggestion that the model for Heathcliff can be found from the Brontë family tree. However, Emily Brontë's extremely wild and original imagination must not be ignored, for it had almost as great an impact on the creation of *Wuthering Heights* as that of family histories and school tales.

Wuthering Heights is also a story of children being neglected by their parents or guardians, and this can be traced back to the Brontë family as well. It has been debatable between scholars

⁴ Frank, *A Chainless Soul: A Life of Emily Brontë*, 121-122.

⁵ Pykett, *Emily Brontë*, 72.

whether the Brontë children were deliberately abused or not, but it is clear nevertheless that their childhood could have been happier and safer. The family's father and aunt, who were the grown-ups that took care of the little Brontës' physical and educational needs, were cold, distant, not fond with small children, and unable to grant them with emotional support and safety they would have needed after losing their mother.⁶ Thus, the Brontë siblings were in little better position emotionally than orphans. These experiences of abandonment in early childhood affected Emily Brontë's writing throughout her life, as *Wuthering Heights* indicates.

⁶ Frank, *A Chainless Soul: A Life of Emily Brontë*, 41.

3. Heathcliff and Catherine – character introduction

3.1. Heathcliff

It has been suspected that one or both of Heathcliff's biological parents might have been Romani people, according to that he is described to be a "black-haired"⁷ and "dark skinned gypsy" (*WH*, 5) in the novel. The parents' fate, and the cause of Heathcliff being neglected, however, remains uncertain to the reader. It is unknown whether the mother and father merely abandoned their child for pursuit of income, suffered illness that made it impossible for them to look after Heathcliff, or had both died, making him an orphan. When Mr Earnshaw discovers Heathcliff in the Liverpool gutters, he tells his family in *Wuthering Heights* that he had tried to locate the boy's guardians without succeed: "[n]ot a soul knew to whom it belonged" (*WH*, 37). If this were true, Heathcliff was a lonely street-child, and it was Mr Earnshaw's responsibility to assure his safety.

Some critics claim that Heathcliff is Mr Earnshaw's own illegitimate son,⁸ that being the reason for his trip to Liverpool: to get his son to live with him. This is backed up by the notion that Brontë does not explain the reason for Mr Earnshaw's three-day trip to Liverpool in any way in the novel. When he eventually returns home with a strange, dirty child, his wife is "ready to fling it out of doors" (*WH*, 37). In the novel Mrs Earnshaw's harshness is explained with her refusal on having "that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed, and fend for" (*WH*, 37), but it is possible that there is another reason for her aversion. The cruel attitude towards a small child can be interpreted as suspicion of her husband's infidelity and anger for his decision to bring a product of this infidelity into their marriage and legal children's lives.

A lot of things can indeed be explained with the theory of Heathcliff being Mr Earnshaw's illegitimate son, such as his peculiar kindness and fondness for Heathcliff, and his insistence for Hindley and Catherine to treat him as a brother. He christens him Heathcliff, which had been the name of another son in the family, who had died in infancy (*WH*, 38), but does not grant him the surname Earnshaw: "The name thus signifies his acceptance but also his difference and implied inferiority: in lacking the family name, he lacks full membership in the

⁷ Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 36. Hereafter Brontë's novel is referred to as *WH*.

⁸ Solomon, "The Incest Theme in *Wuthering Heights*", 81-82.

family.”⁹ Thus, Mr Earnshaw wants to acknowledge Heathcliff as his son, but to make sure that people know he is not legitimate by denying him the right for the family surname. Perhaps this affects Heathcliff’s later obsession on becoming the master of Wuthering Heights, thus dethroning the Earnshaws from their mantel as a revenge for not being considered worthy of their name.

Of course, if Heathcliff indeed was Mr Earnshaw’s illegitimate son, that would make him the biological half-brother of Hindley and Catherine, which adds an incestuous quality in his and Catherine’s passionate relationship. Even if Heathcliff and Catherine were not brother and sister by blood, the incest theme is still present in the novel in minor forms, such as numerous marriages between cousins and in-laws: “Heathcliff marries his lost love's sister-in-law; his wife's son marries her brother's daughter; Cathy's daughter marries *her* brother’s son.”¹⁰ In addition, Heathcliff and Catherine have been raised together as foster siblings, which makes their relationship’s romantic and even erotic tension appear somewhat incestuous and perverse.

3.2. Catherine

Catherine Earnshaw is the complex main female character in *Wuthering Heights*. She is described as a difficult child and an erratic woman, whose moods ail from happy, loving and caressing to wicked, aggressive and cocky within the same moments. From Nelly’s point of view, the child Catherine is “never so happy” (*WH*, 43) as when she is scolded by all the adults of the household. Given the fact that Catherine is a small child who is left with little positive attention from her family, her apparent joy for being scolded might mean that she is happy to get any attention at all. Thus, her naughty behaviour only increases as she yearns to be noticed by the adults. She knows exactly how to irritate her father, and that is through showing him how much more obedient his favourite child, Heathcliff, acts with her than with him: “her pretended insolence ... had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness: how the boy would do *her* bidding in anything, and *his* only when it suited his own inclination” (*WH*, 43). However, Catherine’s ability to palliate combined with “the bonniest eye, and sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish” (*WH*, 42) is often profitable for her, as she can sometimes be excused by flashing a smile and providing the person whom she has harmed with her company and caresses.

⁹ Lamonica, “*We Are Three Sisters*” *Self and Family in the Writing of the Brontës*, 98.

¹⁰ Solomon, “The incest theme in *Wuthering Heights*”, 83.

When Mr Earnshaw says to Catherine “I cannot love thee” (*WH*, 43) she cries at first, trying to show regret, and attempts to make her father forgive and love her again. When she gets no notice from him, she turns arrogant and starts to sneer for the adults’ wishes for her to be a “good lass” (*WH*, 43). Catherine’s confrontation of rules leads to the way she is treated by her parents, and the pattern repeats itself because the adult Earnshaws seem to think that the way Catherine behaves is inherent, and not connected to their upbringing methods at all. In 18th-century, parents favoured the evangelical approach to upbringing, which was “characterized by rigorous and oppressive discipline intended to break the will of the child,”¹¹ and this is the upbringing clearly received by Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*.

Catherine’s strong bond and her self-identification to Heathcliff might indicate that she envies the freedom Heathcliff possesses because he is a man. As a woman, Catherine is not allowed to act as an autonomous being, but she must always be tied to a man. Catherine acknowledging Heathcliff as being more herself than she is means that she knows that as a man he can achieve things in life more freely than she ever could, and that is why she sees herself as Heathcliff.¹² Throughout the novel Catherine is dependent on a man, or her existence is in some other way tied to them: either she is the daughter of Mr Earnshaw, sister of Hindley Earnshaw, wife of Edgar Linton or the love interest of Heathcliff. The desire for freedom and acknowledging the narrow range of possibilities a woman possesses in her life can be seen in the writing of Charlotte Brontë as well. Her most famous female protagonist, Jane Eyre, expresses her frustration on being a woman in a man’s world:

[W]omen feel just as men feel ... 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 the piano and embroidering bags.¹³

Charlotte has also stated in a personal text regarding the three sisters’ career as authors that “we [Charlotte, Emily and Anne] had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise.”¹⁴ Clearly the Brontë sisters have thus been aware on the unfair position of themselves as women who are trying to build a career in 19th-century, only Charlotte expressed her views more clearly and eagerly than Emily,

¹¹ Vopat, *Children’s Rights and Moral Parenting*, 17.

¹² Lamonica, “*We are three sisters*” *self and family in the writing of the Brontës*, 103.

¹³ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 95.

¹⁴ Brontë, “Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell”, 135.

who was less direct with her attempts, but nevertheless determined to subvert the customs of romantic fiction and its association to something produced and consumed by only women.¹⁵

Some aspects in Emily's life beside her observations on the difficulties faced by women had also an influence on her writing and the formation of Catherine.¹⁶ She is a tragic character in a sense that she suffers from mental problems throughout the novel, possibly due to her rather unhappy and unsafe childhood environment. Interestingly, there can be observed some similarities between Catherine and Emily Brontë herself. Just like Catherine, Emily also lost her mother when she was very young, and though her father remained in her life for as long as she lived, the childhood of the Brontë children was reportedly a very lonely and isolated one, where the children were mainly left to take care of themselves.

Both Emily and Catherine also have the tendency to self-starvation in stressful or traumatic situations. At the age seventeen, Emily was sent to Roe Head school,¹⁷ after ten years of being casually home educated by her elder sister Charlotte. She was way behind other pupils of her age in grammar and geography, and thus was placed to study with girls much younger than her, which was a humiliating degradation. Being displaced from home to a strange place with different routines and people triggered in Emily an eating disorder, as she refused to dine with the other pupils and started to starve herself, causing distress and scaring Charlotte. It is suggested by some scholars that Emily's systematic refusal of eating was her way of calling out that she detested her new environment and wished to return home, and that she would deliberately harm herself by starvation if she would not be let go. It is also speculated that Emily was dreading the idea of adulting and her growing body, thus leaning on to self-exhaustion in refusing to grow up.

The same longing for home, distress for lost childhood and the feeling of being cornered also lead to an eating disorder in Catherine's case. During her illness she exclaims to Nelly:

[A]t twelve years old, I had been wrenched from the Heights, and every early association, and my all in all, as Heathcliff was at that time, and been converted at a stroke into Mrs Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger; an exile, and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world ... I wish I were out of doors – I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy,

¹⁵ Flint, "Women writers, women's issues", 174.

¹⁶ Thompson, "Infanticide and sadism in *Wuthering Heights*", 69.

¹⁷ Frank, *A Chainless Soul: A Life of Emily Brontë*, 97-99.

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 ... (WH, 125)

The talk of the heather on the hills refers to the environment Catherine grew up in, where she used to roam in with Heathcliff as children. Her ravings of lost childhood and the yearning to be a girl again indicates that Catherine fears growing up and the change she has gone through, and, like Emily, is determined to fight it back. From Catherine's speech can also be traced expressions of bitterness, as she reminisces how she was cast away from the environment and people that were familiar to her and should have taken care of her, placed in a world of strangers, and required to marry someone she hardly knew. This can be paralleled with Emily's life, as she was every now and then sent away from her home in Haworth, the place she loved the most and where she flourished, sometimes to school, other times to work as a schoolteacher or governess, in environments she hated and suffered in. Charlotte's noted on Emily during her stay at Roe Head school that "[l]iberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils; without it she perished ... In this struggle her health was quickly broken: her white face, attenuated form, and failing strength, threatened rapid decline. I felt in my heart she would die if she did not go home."¹⁸ This description proves even more how closely Emily parallels with Catherine: they both need the feeling of freedom to be happy and content, and are in agony if their liberty is caged and taken from them.

¹⁸ Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 90.

4. Gender studies

4.1. The ideal woman

For a modern reader it might be difficult to understand and internalize all of the norms and regulations laid on girls and women in 18th- and 19th-century England, when being a wife and a mother were the only two roles considered respectable and significant for a woman,¹⁹ and simultaneously she was not considered an independent person of her own, but merely a property of her father, husband or other male relative. The view of women as someone's possession²⁰ is intermediated in the very beginning of the novel, when Mr Lockwood arrives to Wuthering Heights and proceeds by expressing his assumption of Cathy being Heathcliff's "amiable lady" (*WH*, 13), and, noticing his mistake, turns to Hareton: "I see now; you are the favoured possessor of the beneficent fairy" (*WH*, 14). Heathcliff ends the matter by saying "we neither of us have the privilege of owning your good fairy," all the while Cathy herself is not noticed or asked anything of her marital status. The assumption seems to be that the man who has the legal control over the woman whom the discussion relates to, is the one to talk in her stead. Interesting is also the vocabulary that the men use when speaking of Cathy: words like "amiable", "beneficent" and "fairy" form an image of a woman as something extraordinary, someone who is always kind and a pleasure for the male gaze, but simultaneously devoted to pleasing with her inconspicuous manner. These social rules and expectations are central in *Wuthering Heights*, and in order to analyse the relationships concerning women in the novel, it is crucial to acknowledge them.

Catherine is far from the ideal image of a calm and quiet girl or woman who is satisfied with knitting and cooking for her family, and that must be one of the reasons why she receives so little love and understanding from her male relatives and Nelly. Before getting acquainted with the Linton family, Catherine refuses to train for the traditional role of a woman in a patriarchal society and prefers to rebel with the aid of Heathcliff. During her first short residence in Thrushcross Grange after a failed adventure with Heathcliff, she gets a glimpse of a household where the women and girls follow the regulations for their sex, and in return enjoy the respect and admiration of the men in the household. Catherine has received only scolding and harsh words from her father and brother, and the desire to be treated kindly and adoringly drives her to her transformation.

¹⁹ Hurl-Eamon, *Women's Roles in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 32.

²⁰ Pykett, *Women Writers: Emily Brontë*, 80.

Before Catherine's accident and her residence in Thrushcross Grange, Hindley has been "entirely negligent" (*WH*, 46) of Catherine accompanying Heathcliff in his work at the fields, running in the moors from morning to night, and ignoring church on Sundays. Only when Mr Linton, Edgar and Isabella's father, pays a visit and reads "the young master ... a lecture on the road he guide[s] his family" (*WH*, 51) is Hindley ashamed of Catherine's behaviour and his own incapability to control his sister. Thus, he decides to keep Heathcliff away from Catherine as much as he can, whereas his wife undertakes to "keep her sister-in-law in due restraint" (*WH*, 52). When Catherine returns to Wuthering Heights after her 'training' in Thrushcross Grange, she is altered completely: gone is the "hatless little savage" (*WH*, 53) who is now replaced with a "very dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a cloth habit which she was obliged to hold up with both hands." Now Catherine has finally earned positive attention from her brother and his wife:

'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?'

'Isabella has not her natural advantages', replied his wife, 'but she must mind and not grow wild again here. Ellen, help Miss Catherine off with her things – Stay, dear, you will disarrange your curls – let me untie your hat.' (*WH*, 53)

Catherine has become almost a doll-like creature who is forbidden to move or undress herself without the assistance of someone else, or else she would spoil her good and groomed looks, and go back to her old, wild appearance. This dialogue implies that if Catherine looks and behaves like she is supposed to look and behave, she is treated nicely. If she fails in this and will "grow wild again" (*WH*, 53) she is back to being repelled and scorned by her family. Catherine tries her best to play the part of a decent young woman: she hardly dares to pet her dogs who bounce happily around her, "lest they should fawn upon her splendid garments" (*WH*, 53), refuses to hug Nelly as she is "all flour making the Christmas cake," and is immediately concerned only of her dress' cleanness after embracing the dirty Heathcliff, thus turning her back on her old liberal and care-free self. This shows how much the gender stereotypes and the image of a 'good girl/woman' affect a person's behaviour, the relationships between people, and how greatly women and girls' treatment by their family and household staff is dependent on their following the patriarchal gender norms.

In some patriarchal communities and societies, it is common to control the behaviour and social life of adolescent girls, as they start to reach womanhood and evoke attention from the male

sex. This behaviour, also recognized as *honour-related violence* appears in communities in which the honour of girls and women, as well as their family and relatives, is based on their ability to maintain the ideal chastity expected from them.²¹ This leads to controlling behaviour by the girls' relatives, which can be, for example, restriction of the girl's freedom and keeping an eye on her social relations. All this is done to prevent the girl's chastity being tainted before she is safely married.²² We can see the pattern present in *Wuthering Heights* as Catherine starts to mature and reaches teen-age. Hindley then starts to pay more attention to his sister's acquaintance with the young Edgar. As favourable as the union between the two teens would be, he still considers it his duty to guard Catherine's virtues and control their meetings by ordering Nelly to "make a third party in any private visits Linton chose to pay" (*WH*, 70). Should Catherine behave improperly or unchastely with Edgar, it would affect Hindley and the honour of the Earnshaw name as well. However, since Catherine is the younger female child of the Earnshaw family, the only possibility for her to have her own home and economic safety is through marriage, and the union between the Earnshaws and the well-respected and wealthy Lintons would be most welcome for Hindley (*WH*, 79), as it would restore and preserve his family's honour, and ensure his sister's economical security and a getaway from *Wuthering Heights* into a "wealthy respectable" (*WH*, 79) house.

Honour-related violence can be traced from the way how Edgar treats his sister Isabella, too. When Edgar finds out of Heathcliff's pursues to seduce Isabella, he proposes her a "solemn warning, that if she were so insane as to encourage that worthless suitor, it would dissolve all bonds of relationship between herself and him" (*WH*, 119). After Isabella has run away from Thrushcross Grange to marry Heathcliff, Nelly asks Edgar whether they should be trying to pursue Isabella to return home. To this Edgar answers coldly: "Trouble me no more about her – Hereafter she is only my sister in name; not because I disown her, but because she has disowned me" (*WH*, 133). Edgar sees Isabella's decision to marry Heathcliff as a terrible betrayal of her brother, because her choice of a husband is the man who Edgar hates the most. However, that is not the only reason for Edgar's revulsion for the marriage: he also sees it as a shame on the whole Linton family, because Heathcliff comes from a low social class, is a former "plough-boy" (*WH*, 95) and only newly rich, has the most suspicious appearance with his dark "gipsy" looks (*WH*, 37) and does not possess any known or remarkably honoured ancestry.

²¹ Lidman, *Väkivaltakulttuurin perintö*, 206.

²² Lidman, *Väkivaltakulttuurin perintö*, 199.

To keep Isabella inside the family and offer her support and kindness despite her moral aberration would, most likely, extort the Linton family from its valuation within the parish. Thus, Edgar is not interested in maintaining any sort of communication with his sister, and as a punishment cuts off all emotional attachment between them, even though he knows the violent nature of Heathcliff and that he will not likely prove to be a safe companion for Isabella. Even after Catherine's death, Isabella is not invited to her sister-in-law's funeral alongside Edgar (*WH*, 170). Surely Edgar, like his parents, would have wanted the only daughter of the Linton family to marry someone fit for their social status, a man born into a gentry-class family for honourable parents, educated, well-mannered and respected. As the senior Mr and Mrs Linton are both dead, it becomes Edgar's duty to do what he seems best regarding to Isabella.

4.2. Relationships between women

Catherine's relationship to the other important female characters of *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly and Isabella, is interesting in a way that it shows how strongly female friendship is associated with jealousy, betrayal and drama, and how it was considered a normal part of friendships in Emily Brontë's time, as well as it is in modern days. It is both fascinating and sad that this thought pattern keeps defining women and girls' relationships time after time.

In friend groups, adolescent girls tend to express aggression towards each other in ways that aim to strike them down socially: "aggressive behaviors include gossiping; social exclusion, isolation, or alienation; writing notes or talking about someone; and stealing friends or romantic partners."²³ Even though this study has been made observing adolescent girls in 21st-century, the behaviour pattern goes way beyond that. Readers of *Wuthering Heights* might notice that the same kind of social exclusion and backstabbing can be seen in Catherine and Isabella's friendship.

At the beginning of their acquaintance Catherine acts sweetly towards Isabella, thus gaining her admiration and affection. It is only after marrying Edgar and becoming the mistress of Thrushcross Grange when she starts to bully Isabella. Heathcliff has now returned to Catherine's life, and the more time he spends in the Grange, the more Catherine notices Isabella having affectionate feelings towards him. She jealously starts excluding her sister-in-law from her and Heathcliff's company, thus non-verbally claiming Isabella's romantic interest for herself

²³ Krothers, Field & Kolbert, "Navigating Power, Control, and Being Nice: Aggression in Adolescent Girls' Friendships", 349.

(*WH*, 102). This awakes envy in Isabella's part, and causes a row between the two (*WH*, 102-103). Catherine answers with exaggerated disbelief and mockery to Isabella's outburst that she is in love with Heathcliff and spends a good amount of time to assure her friend that Heathcliff is a "fierce, pitiless, wolfish man" (*WH*, 103), whose loyalty belongs to Catherine alone.

After the scene above, on the following day, Heathcliff arrives to Thrushcross Grange, where the sisters-in-law are sitting, aggressively not talking to one another. When noticing Heathcliff, Catherine gloats and starts to humiliate Isabella the minute he steps in the room:

Heathcliff, I'm proud to show you, at last, somebody that dotes on you more than myself. ... My poor little sister-in-law is breaking her heart by mere contemplation of your physical and moral beauty. It lies in your own power to be Edgar's brother! No, no, Isabella, you sha'n't run off,' ... 'We were quarrelling like cats about you, Heathcliff; and I was fairly beaten in protestations of devotion and admiration; and, moreover, I was informed that if I would but have manners to stand aside, my rival, as she will have herself to be, would shoot a shaft into your soul that would fix you for ever, and send my image to eternal oblivion!' (*WH*, 105)

Not only is this Catherine's outburst of concealed jealousy, but also her marking her territory. Humiliating someone by revealing their infatuation in front of its subject is perhaps one of the most devious and detestable things a friend can do to another. It is also a strong form of power-play, and here Catherine clearly signals Isabella: 'This is mine, back off.' She holds her sister-in-law with a "firm clutch" (*WH*, 106) on her arm, which Isabella breaks only by with the "use of her nails" which ornament "the detainer's [hand] with crescents of red". After Isabella's flight from the room, Catherine exhibits the marks of Isabella's nails on her hand to Heathcliff, exclaiming that "they are the instruments that will do execution – you must beware of your eyes," to which Heathcliff replies that he'd "wrench them off her fingers, if they ever menaced [him]," thus assuring Catherine that he detests Isabella as much as she does at that moment, and does not bear any romantic feelings for her. It seems impossible to think that after being humiliated emotionally and physically in front of a love interest, Isabella would forgive Catherine and consider her as a lovable friend. Still, after running away from home and marrying Heathcliff, Isabella tells Nelly how her heart is "full of warm feelings" for her sister-in-law (*WH*, 136).

Just as conflicted and dramatic as Catherine and Isabella's relationship is the one between Catherine and Nelly Dean. As we read *Wuthering Heights* mostly through Nelly's narration and

get a close look at her experiences and thoughts, her cold and scornful attitude towards Catherine is easily excused. A great deal of Nelly's story concerns Catherine and her behaviour as a child and adolescent, and Nelly does not think well of that. Nelly's dislike of Catherine comes from jealousy and grudge, caused by her unequal position in the Earnshaw and later the Linton family:

[a]fter Cathy's accident and stay at the Grange, Nelly - who had earlier complained of the child's wildness and tomboy habits now frets at "playing lady's maid" (chapter vii) to the changed girl, and recalls her better treatment - that is, her treatment as an equal to her employers - in the past.²⁴

For most of her life, Nelly has been considered as almost a member of the Earnshaw family, until Catherine becomes acquainted with the Lintons. After that, Nelly's days of leisure in *Wuthering Heights* end, and she is laid with the new role of Catherine's personal servant. This is a degrade for her, since she has previously thought herself as Catherine's equal, perhaps even superior to her given that she is a few years older and has had the right to scorn the girl. Nelly grows jealous and bitter, and these negative emotions drive her to act morally ambiguously in several situations, such as when Catherine confesses that marriage with Heathcliff would be a degradation, not knowing that Heathcliff is listening in the same room. Nelly notices Heathcliff leaving the room bitterly after hearing Catherine's words, and would have the chance to tell her companion to run after him and explain the situation. However, she chooses not to do this, until it is too late, and Heathcliff has left *Wuthering Heights* for good (*WH*, 83). It is fairly easy to sympathize with Nelly, and understand her decision in this situation: before, on the same day, she had been pinched and called names by Catherine (*WH*, 71), and no doubt she now seeks for an opportunity to teach her a lesson.

Another morally ambiguous act of Nelly that I want to point out is when Catherine breaks down mentally and falls severely ill after a conflict between herself, Edgar and Heathcliff. At first, Edgar expresses concern and alarm for Catherine's symptoms, but Nelly belittles and ridicules the situation, claiming that Catherine is only playing:

[...] she stretched herself out stiff, and turned up her eyes, while her cheeks, at once blanched and livid, assumed the aspect of death.

Linton looked terrified.

'There is nothing in the world the matter,' I whispered. I did not want him to yield, though I could not help being afraid in my heart.

'She has blood on her lips!' he said, shuddering.

²⁴ Hafley, "The Villain in *Wuthering Heights*", 204.

‘Never mind!’ I answered, tartly. And I told him how she had resolved, previous to his coming, on exhibiting a fit of frenzy. (*WH*, 118)

Nelly thus convinces Edgar to think that Catherine is only acting dramatic for attention, and after a few days she would get bored and go back to her normal, amiable self. This is not the case, as Catherine is in fact starving herself behind her bedroom’s locked doors and is very ill. Nelly notices her mistress’ altered behaviour and self-starvation but decides not to inform Edgar about it, not until he himself comes to Catherine’s room to see her. Even then, Nelly tries to belittle Catherine’s condition by saying that “it is nothing” (*WH*, 127) and that “[h]er mind wanders ... She has been talking nonsense the whole evening, but, let her have quiet and proper attendance, and she’ll rally” (*WH*, 128). Nelly believes that Catherine’s illness is caused only by her own “wicked waywardness” and that Edgar’s accusations on her for being heartless, keeping things a secret from him and encouraging him to distress her, are unjust. She then turns the blame on Edgar, scolding him for wishing to “foster [Catherine’s] fierce temper” and through that giving Heathcliff straight access to her. Perhaps Nelly prefers Catherine quiet and sulking, away from others, because that is relatively easier for her, as she is the one who must carry out all her moody wishes and orders.

Even though Nelly appears a character who tends to make morally questionable decisions, there is no character in *Wuthering Heights* that is either all bad or all good. The characters’ actions are consequences of sequences of unhappiness, jealousy, grudge and hopelessness. Nelly’s bitterness and irritated nature might come from the frustration of having spent years of her teenage and adolescence trying to curd two impossible children. She values virtuousness, piety and well manners, and even meeting shocked and distraught people cannot cancel out her needs for good and chaste behaviour, which is seen in the scene of Isabella’s flight from *Wuthering Heights* and her short stop at Thrushcross Grange, before heading to the south.²⁵ Isabella arrives at the Grange, breathless and laughing hysterically, shortly after Catherine’s death when the house is in mourning. Nelly is furious with Isabella’s behaviour, and despite her wet clothes and a bleeding cut under her ear, declares that “laughter is sadly out of place” (*WH*, 173) and demands Isabella to change her attire before hearing what she has to say. Nelly describes Isabella’s dress as “befitting her age more than her position; a low frock with short sleeves ... of light silk, and clung to her with wet” (*WH*, 172), her hair “streaming on her shoulders, dripping with snow and water” and her having “nothing on either head or neck” (*WH*, 172).

²⁵ Pike, ““My name *was* Isabella Linton”: Coverture, Domestic Violence, and Mrs. Heathcliff’s Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*”, 370.

Isabella's attire is "shockingly unrefined"²⁶ to Nelly and makes her think of her even more of a "slattern" (*WH*, 146) than before, revealing an aspect from her that values a decent and virtuous image of someone more than what lies below.

Nelly is a highly religious character, and keen to judge other people if they do not seem to base their understanding of morals on the bible as she does. An example of Nelly's religious scolds here is when Isabella has run away from Heathcliff and *Wuthering Heights* and confesses to Nelly how she had gloated to see Heathcliff in grief: "'Fie, fie, Miss! ... One might suppose you had never opened a Bible in your life. If God afflict your enemies, surely that ought to suffice you. It is both mean and presumptuous to add your torture to his!'" (*WH*, 181) Even though Nelly is keen on judging other people for their malicious talks, she is in no way a saint, as I have shown. She seems to expect others to follow the rule 'Do as I say, not as I do.'

The way Nelly especially talks of Catherine sometimes is harsh and malicious: to young Edgar Linton, she talks about her mistress as "wayward" and "marred" (*WH*, 72) girl, trying to drive him away from her. Curiously, I have noticed that her favourite person to speak ill of seems to be Catherine: she does not defend her when others have bad things to say about her, as she does with Heathcliff, for instance. When Edgar and Isabella visit *Wuthering Heights* as children, and Catherine ignores Heathcliff completely over them, Nelly shows pity for Heathcliff, and scolds Catherine in her mind (*WH*, 60). She belittles Isabella's outburst on his monstrous nature by hushing her: "'Hush, hush! He's a human being,' ... 'Be more charitable; there are worse men than he is yet!'" (*WH*, 174) even though she has herself witnessed Heathcliff's physical and emotional violence towards Isabella. In fact, the only female character in *Wuthering Heights* towards whom Nelly acts remarkably protective seems to be Cathy, the girl she has nursed and cared for since infancy, and who is almost a daughter to her. Even though Nelly knows the horrifying actions Heathcliff is capable of, she only stands up to him when he commits a violent act towards Cathy by striking her face several times: "[a]t this diabolical violence, I rushed to him furiously. 'You villain!' I began to cry, 'you villain!'" (*WH*, 271) At this she gains a "touch on the chest" and is "soon out of breath" by its force. Another episode of Nelly acting protectively towards someone else is when she hides little Hareton into a cupboard, away from his alcoholic and violent father's sight. Hindley then pulls Nelly "back by the skin of the neck, like a dog" (*WH*, 74), threatening to make her "swallow the carving-knife". Nelly decides to

²⁶ Pike, "'My name was Isabella Linton': Coverture, Domestic Violence, and Mrs. Heathcliff's Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*", 370.

attack or protect only the characters who are especially close to her: the children she has nursed and cared for as infants. The avoidance of protecting Catherine and Isabella from violence and thinking it more as the result of their own misbehaviour, might indicate that Nelly considers Heathcliff, or men in general, easier targets for forgiveness than women.

4.3. Toxic masculinity

If Catherine is scorned and frown upon for acting unladylike, her male equivalent can be found in the character of her nephew from her husband's side, Linton. The son of Isabella and Heathcliff is brought up by his mother until the age of twelve and is described by all who get the opportunity to portrait him a "delicate, effeminate boy" (*WH*, 200) who had the tendency to show negative emotions by crying. He is compared to a baby by Nelly, who notices his emotional and physical dependency on other people, especially Cathy and her father, and his weak and powerless physique as the very first thing when she sees him: "[h]e was asleep, in a corner, wrapped in a warm, fur-lined cloak, as if it had been winter" (*WH*, 200). He strongly resemblances Edgar, another figure whose feminine qualities had been mocked and his manhood questioned by others since his childhood, when he had the tendency to cry when hurt or irritated.

When Heathcliff attacks Edgar by throwing hot apple sauce on his face when they are children, Edgar lets out a wail that draws scolds and belittling from Catherine: "Well, don't cry! ... You're not killed – don't make more mischief – my brother is coming – be quiet!" (*WH*, 60) and counselling from Hindley: "Next time, Master Edgar, take the law into your own fists – it will give you an appetite!" Thus, Edgar is told that his reasons for crying are invalid and that he should not feel a certain way, that he is weak and shames others around him as well as himself, and that physical violence is a better way of solving conflicts than weeping. This is how children are raised to fit the regulations and expectations placed upon their gender: "[a] boy not only has to learn to behave like a boy, he also has to feel like a boy."²⁷ In Edgar's case one could say that the lesson is learned, for the adult Edgar we see is emotionally almost too stable, he shows neither emotions of furious rage, bursting sorrow nor fierce joy, but expresses everything in a flat, cool way that bars the explosions of feelings deep inside.

²⁷ Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*, 22.

The only two times Edgar notably shows his emotions in a stronger manner seems to be when he is locked in the kitchen of Thrushcross Grange with Catherine and Heathcliff, when he, for the first and only time in the novel, leans on to physical violence with Heathcliff (*WH*, 115), and another time when he is struck with Catherine's death: Nelly reports later that his "distraction at his bereavement is a subject too painful to be dwelt on; its after effects showed how deep the sorrow sunk" (*WH*, 166). However, Edgar reportedly does not cry, rage or show any other physical signs of emotion than his "hush of exhausted anguish" (*WH*, 166) and his spending of sleepless nights next to the coffin of Catherine before her funeral. Heathcliff, on the other hand, expresses frantic, physically violent sorrow over the news of his love's death, which Nelly witnesses: "'Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!' He dashed his head against the knotted trunk ... I observed several splashes of blood about the bark of the tree, and his hand and forehead were both stained" (*WH*, 169). The two men grieve in a very different manner, but one thing combines them: neither sheds a single tear, which would be the brand of unsuccessful masculinity.

As soon as Heathcliff hears that his son Linton has been fetched to Thrushcross Grange and is now in Yorkshire, he makes a claim for his "property" (*WH*, 207). Thus, Linton is taken to Wuthering Heights after residing only one night at Thrushcross Grange. The downfall for the young boy starts as soon as his father sets eyes on him, as he sees nothing but the delicateness and weakness of Edgar and Isabella in the petite Linton. Heathcliff and his man-servant Joseph immediately start mocking the boy:

'Sure-ly,' said Joseph after a grave inspection, he's swopped wi' ye, maister, an' yon's his lass!'

Heathcliff, having stared his son into an ague of confusion, uttered a scornful laugh.

'God! what a beauty! what a lovely, charming thing!' he exclaimed. 'Haven't they reared it on snails, and sour milk, Nelly? Oh, damn my soul! but that's worse than I expected – and the devil know I was not sanguine!'
(*WH*, 207)

The two men continue picking on Linton by calling him names such as "puling chicken" (*WH*, 207) in front of Nelly, making the situation extremely humiliating and traumatizing for him. Heathcliff and Joseph's remarks indicate that feminine and graceful look on a boy is not something to be proud of, and the boy who bears this appearance is a disgrace to his father. However, in his youth Heathcliff has been constantly reminded of his own inappropriate looks,

and had to tolerate Edgar, with his attractive looks and manners, wooing Catherine.²⁸ As a child, Heathcliff desires to look the same as Edgar, to have “light hair and a fair skin” (*WH*, 57), and perhaps seeing these qualities in the appearance of his son evokes in him the same hatred he has towards Edgar.

At this point of the novel, it is still somewhat easy to feel bad for Linton, but, as we will later notice, there is a spoiled and peevish side in him which makes him an unsympathetic and dislikeable character, and this is what makes him so interesting: Linton, unlike Heathcliff or Catherine, is not a character easy to pity on. He is portrayed as a tiresome, wicked and narcissistic figure with such skill by Emily Brontë that there would be a difficulty to find a reader who would genially say that they like Linton as a character.

The violent treatment that Linton receives from Heathcliff because of his ‘girlish’ qualities only enforce his own viciousness, as he creates a continuum of violence by punishing Cathy for his own suffering at *Wuthering Heights*. This supports sociologists’ view that aggressive behaviour is not necessarily innate, but that it is “acquired in a context in which men learn that it is both rewarding and expected to behave in an assertive way. Boys ... learn to be ‘men’.”²⁹ However, aggressive behaviour is not instilled in every man, as we can see from Edgar. He detests anything that has to do with violence, and shivers with the idea of having to fight with Heathcliff (*WH*, 115). Edgar is not taught to solve conflicts with his fists, which supports the idea that “[m]en will only behave aggressively if they have learned it is appropriate to do so.”³⁰ Edgar does not, however, refuse from committing a violent act completely: there is a point in the novel when he loses his temper and attacks Heathcliff, giving him a stroke in the throat, and rushes to fetch his men to batter him (*WH*, 115). In other words, Edgar considers it better to have several men against one than to fight someone himself.

It is evident that *Wuthering Heights* expresses ideals of toxic masculinity with its description of the treatment of Edgar and Linton, and it shows how men are categorized as manly or unmanly by their appearance and body type,³¹ their timidity when confronting other boys and

²⁸ Quinn, “Sexing the Male: Manifestations of Masculinity in *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Villette*”, 24.

²⁹ Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*, 7.

³⁰ Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*, 7.

³¹ Morrison, ““Whose Injury Is Like Mine?” Emily Brontë, George Eliot, and the Sincere Postures of Suffering Men”, 285.

men,³² or even their eating habits: Linton's constant desire for milk contrasts him with a suckling child, an unworthy man. Both Edgar and Linton are seen as something weak and unworthy by Heathcliff, and occasionally Catherine and Nelly. Their difference is that Brontë made Edgar a likable character with his gentle and caring nature, whereas Linton repulses the reader with his mean and devious behaviour.

³² Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*, 20.

5. Violence studies

5.1. Child abuse

The reason for Heathcliff and Catherine's tragic character development can be found from their childhood, when they were constantly neglected by adults, and lived without the parental care every child should receive. Parenting and childrearing in 18th-century, to which the events of *Wuthering Heights* are dated, was going through a convulsion. The idea of childhood as a unique and valuable phase in a person's development, instead of something to get fast over with, was introduced by scholars John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and it started a new approach in upbringing in 18th-century.³³

However, many parents did not immediately take in this new approach to childrearing, and continued to hold "the view that childhood was something to get through in order to be a productive member of the family or wider community"³⁴ as we can see the most parents in Brontë's novel doing. The children have to cope in life without the care and protection of either or both parents and face almost constant violence and sadism from the adults around them. The violent environment to grow up has evidently some effects on the children in the novel, as can be seen for example in the six-year-old Catherine's wish for her father to bring from his trip to Liverpool a whip for her, with which she could discipline the horses of the house (*WH*, 36). In many points of the story, the adult characters express tendency to support child abuse, or even infanticide,³⁵ out of whom Mr Lockwood perhaps commits the most appalling act of violence against the child phantom Catherine: "I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes" (*WH*, 25). Another example of vivid child cruelty is the scene of Heathcliff and Catherine being caught at the Linton estate, right before they are separated for the first time. The injured Catherine, being the young daughter of the Earnshaw family, is treated civilly and even gently, whereas Heathcliff is being despised, and Mr Linton declares that "to hang him at once" (*WH*, 50) would prove to be a service for their country.

Being thus maltreated, threatened and abused, Heathcliff and Catherine create a safe space for just the two of them, and divide the residents of *Wuthering Heights* very strictly to 'us' and

³³ Vopat, *Children's Rights and Moral Parenting*, 17.

³⁴ Vopat, *Children's Rights and Moral Parenting*, 18.

³⁵ Thompson, "Infanticide and sadism in *Wuthering Heights*", 69.

‘them’, and rebel against the social norms and adults who they consider enemies. When Catherine is attacked by the Lintons’ dog and has to recover in Thrushcross Grange, and eventually returns home transformed into a respectable young lady, she breaks away from the space she and Heathcliff have built, and starts to crave for the luxuries of Thrushcross Grange and the admiration of the handsome and polite Edgar, who is the complete opposite of her childhood friend. This is the moment when Heathcliff’s dreams and alliance with Catherine are broken,³⁶ and as he is struck with the fear of losing her, the need to possess her grows stronger. Because Heathcliff and Catherine face isolation and lack of emotional support as children, “neither ... have the opportunity to develop social dexterity or coping skills.”³⁷

Heathcliff’s behaviour is connected very closely with violence. Even as a little boy he is used to it, though then the abuse is mostly aimed at him, making him the victim. Even though Heathcliff is tormented by Hindley and Nelly as a small child in *Wuthering Heights*, he does not seem to mind, and later Nelly describes him as “hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment: he 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” (*WH*, 38). Heathcliff’s past before the events in the novel has undoubtedly been a violent one, and he has probably been told not to show his pain when being hit. After being brought to *Wuthering Heights* with Mr Earnshaw, Heathcliff is still lacking the protection from the adults around him, as his foster-father, even though growing “furious when he discover[s] his son persecuting the poor, fatherless child”, cannot guard him constantly, and his wife is not interested in taking care of Heathcliff even on the occasions when she sees him being bullied by Hindley and Nelly.

Scholars have proved that children who are physically abused often adopt the behaviour of their abusers as adolescents and adults.³⁸ When Heathcliff grows older, his own violent behaviour starts to be seen. At the age of thirteen, the abuse he has experienced has affected him in a way that he desires to be the one committing the violent act. He confesses to Nelly that “flinging Joseph off the highest gable, and painting the house-front with Hindley’s blood” (*WH*, 49) would be amongst the few things in life that would be a pleasure to him. This shows that from a very young age Heathcliff is used to extremely violent language and imagery, and that for

³⁶ Thormählen, “Marriage and Family Life”, 316.

³⁷ Goodlett, “Love and Addiction in *Wuthering Heights*”, 319.

³⁸ Turner & Rogers, *Child Abuse: Indicators, Psychological Impact and Prevention*, 7.

him they act as fantasies, desirable possibilities that would enable him to be the one with the power. At thirteen, with Hindley being the master of Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff is still socially the lowest one can be, and cannot stand against his oppressor. Only after Heathcliff's mysterious three-year absence from Wuthering Heights can he begin his revenge by oppressing the alcoholic and indebted Hindley.

Studies have shown that continuous aggressivity and lack of emotional presence “will lead to pathological consequences such as anxiety, depression, interpersonal violence in relationships, and potentially the development of personality disorders”.³⁹ In the light of this research it can be assumed that some of Catherine's aggressive outbursts and mental problems could have possibly been avoided if she had received more kindness and empathy in her childhood and had someone to listen and guide her in her dark moments. She never had any: the only adults and guardian figures she had in her life as a child were her mother, father, Joseph, Hindley and Nelly, none of whom reportedly showed any interest to understand the reason for her actions. The male members of the household see Catherine as a disobedient girl, an opposite to the image of an ideal female child of the era and was constantly scolded for being naughty and told that she is unlovable.

Hareton and Cathy face child abuse in *Wuthering Heights* as well. Both are born out of love, but their births are shadowed with the death of their mothers. Cathy, who is the pampered and loved child of Edgar and the whole household of Thrushcross Grange, spends the first hours of her infancy ignored and “unwelcomed” (*WH*, 166) and she “might have wailed out of life, and nobody cared a morsel”, only because she happened to be born a girl, being ‘responsible’ for his father being left heirless. After a little while Cathy is, however, turned into her father's pet and the favourite of Nelly and the other servants in Thrushcross Grange, making her childhood considerably happier than her cousin Hareton's.

Hindley and Frances' son is a victim of physical and emotional abuse by his alcoholic and impulsive father, with whom “in one he r[uns] a chance of being squeezed and kissed to death, and in the other of being flung into the fire, or dashed against the wall” (*WH*, 74). Hindley undoubtedly experiences some kind of affection towards his son, and expresses it with “wild-beast's fondness” (*WH*, 74) that frightens Hareton, and next rages that his son “deserves to be

³⁹ Turner & Rogers, *Child Abuse: Indicators, Psychological Impact and Prevention*, 15.

flayed alive for not running to welcome me, and screaming as if I were a goblin” (*WH*, 74-75). After receiving no kiss from his son, Hindley swears to “break the brat’s neck” (*WH*, 75) before carrying him by force on the stairs, eventually dropping the child: Heathcliff, who manages to catch his enemy’s son by accident, is appalled by his deed. Nelly later reports that “had it been dark ... he would have tried to remedy the mistake by smashing Hareton’s skull on the steps” (*WH*, 75). Suffering from years of violence and the losing of his care-giver Nelly clearly has its effects on Hareton, and at the age of five or six he is accustomed to committing violence himself, too, and is portrayed throwing a rock at Nelly (*WH*, 109), and “hanging a litter of puppies at a chair back” (*WH*, 183). Hareton’s behaviour is, then, moulded by the abuse he faces as a child, and later as an adolescent under the oppression of Heathcliff.

One more character in *Wuthering Heights* who is brutally abused as a child, is Hindley. Even though being a bully himself, his growing hatred towards Heathcliff can be seen as a cause of his father’s constant preference of the orphan boy from Liverpool, and his underestimation and chastisement towards his own son. Hindley is fourteen years old when Heathcliff arrives to *Wuthering Heights*, and still in need of valuation and affection from his father. He grows jealous of the admiration Heathcliff receives from Mr Earnshaw and takes revenge by giving the intruder a frequent thrashing. Instead of recognizing in Hindley’s behaviour suffering and a plead for attention, Mr Earnshaw feeds his son’s bitterness by punishing him with beating and scolding, making him “to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend” (*WH*, 38). Hindley does not receive any sort of respect or fatherly pride from Mr Earnshaw, who finally sends him away from home to college, even then noting that “Hindley was naught, and would never thrive as where he wandered” (*WH*, 41). The physical and emotional violence of his father, combined with the partiality he showed with Heathcliff, has a deep effect on Hindley, and strengthens his desire to banish Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* as soon as his unjust and detestable father would pass away.

5.2. Grudge and revenge

Heathcliff’s violent attitude towards Hindley is easily explained by his previous experiences, when he was socially inferior to the young Earnshaw, and had to tolerate physical and mental abuse from him. As a child and with Mr Earnshaw living, Heathcliff enjoys a somewhat safe environment, as he can blackmail Hindley to get whatever possession he wants from him:

‘You must exchange horses with me ... 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 ... you will have to, and if I speak of these blows, you'll get them again with interest.'

'Off, dog!' cried Hindley, threatening him with an iron weight, used for weighing potatoes and hay.

'Throw it ... and then I'll tell how you boasted that you would turn me out of doors as soon as he died, and see whether he will not turn you out directly.

Hindley threw it, hitting him on the breast, and down he fell.' (*WH*, 39)

When Hindley is sent from home to college, Heathcliff's life becomes easier for momentarily. Nevertheless, Mr Earnshaw eventually dies, bringing Hindley home to fulfil his promise to drive Heathcliff out, making him live among the servants of the house, and work as a farm labourer instead of continuing his studies with Catherine, with whom he is forbidden to socialize. I believe that the physical torture in Heathcliff's childhood, the emotional abuse of secluding him from the company of his "heart's darling" (*WH*, 28) in adolescence, and the degradation from Mr Earnshaw's favourite to a mere stable boy affect Heathcliff significantly, leading to his vicious vengeance as an adult.

Interestingly, Heathcliff is also keen on destroying his neighbour Edgar, towards whom he does not seem to have any valid reasons for hatred and grudge, other than that Edgar is socially acceptable and more suitable partner for Catherine. Heathcliff's low position in the surrounding society altogether, and the fact that Hindley and Edgar have been lucky enough to be born into the privileges he himself is so blatantly denied, provokes his grudge towards them, even though the ultimate problem lies within the structures of the society.⁴⁰ It can, however, somewhat blur the line between moral good and bad in the reader's mind and make it easy to sympathize with Heathcliff, and see his attitude and actions understandable and in some light even justified. However, Heathcliff is not satisfied with being able to cause pain just to Edgar and Hindley: he goes on to extend his revenge to their children, Hareton and Cathy, who he molests and tyrannizes, even though they have never done any harm to him. Heathcliff's methods are just as reprehensible and objectionable as the way Hindley treats him.

The only reason why Heathcliff is so keen on having his own son to live with him is not that he cares for the boy or his wellbeing: his motives are purely selfish and calculating, as he declares that "he's *mine*, and I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendent fairly lord of their estates; my child hiring their children, to till their fathers' lands for wages" (*WH*, 208). Since Edgar and

⁴⁰ Hagan, "Control of Sympathy in *Wuthering Heights*", 60.

Isabella's father had secured his estate for his daughter in case of Edgar would be left without a male heir (*WH*, 166), Linton Heathcliff would be entitled to take over Thrushcross Grange after Edgar's death, thus having the power to oppress his daughter Cathy. This is not, however, Heathcliff's ultimate goal, as he says that he does not wish his son to perish "till I was certain of being his successor" (*WH*, 208). Should Linton die unmarried, Thrushcross Grange would become the property of the last member of the family, Cathy: Heathcliff needs the two cousins to marry, because that would make him the legal guardian of his daughter-in-law after his son's death, thus owning everything that would otherwise belong to her. He disguises the plan by apparent generosity to Edgar, and a want to help his daughter out of disinheritance: "his young chit has no expectations, and should she second my wishes, she'll be provided for, at once, as joint successor with Linton'" (*WH*, 215). However, it has never been Edgar, Cathy nor Linton's profit Heathcliff is seeking; it is that of his own, and other people are merely tools for him.

5.3. Violence against women

When Heathcliff returns to Wuthering Heights after his absence, he soon begins to court Isabella Linton, making his way to the later ownership of Thrushcross Grange, and ensuring that his revenge would strike Edgar especially painfully. The reader, just as Catherine and Nelly, sees through Heathcliff's intentions, but Isabella does not. She is infatuated by his dark and handsome looks, and expresses her feelings to Catherine, who in turn exposes them to Heathcliff. What he later says to Catherine alone already reveals his violent fantasies regarding Isabella: "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" (*WH*, 106). Heathcliff clearly feels nothing but hatred and revulsion towards Isabella, but almost immediately points out that "[Isabella is] her brother's heir, is she not?" (*WH*, 107) Catherine responds that should Edgar not have male children as his heirs, the property would be Isabella's after him (*WH*, 107). Heathcliff realizes that "[m]arriage ... is the quickest way to usurp a woman's position in the line of inheritance and thereby claim her inherited property,"⁴¹ which drives him to use Isabella's defiling as a way to torture Edgar and, assuming that no male heir would be born for him, deprive him of his land and house.

Heathcliff thus begins to court Isabella in secret, but is witnessed by Nelly when he approaches Isabella outside Thrushcross Grange:

⁴¹ Lamonica, "'We are three sisters': self and family in the writing of the Brontës", 115.

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 on 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. (WH, 111)

This is the only time when any sexual intimacy is described between Heathcliff and Isabella, and even then, it is featured with force and deliberate harassment, as Heathcliff prevents Isabella from exiting the situation that apparently feels humiliating for her. After this incident, Heathcliff proceeds to pursue Isabella to marry him against her brother's wishes, which she does in infatuation, and is soon to become the first female character in the novel to experience his physical and sexual violence in addition to the emotional. She is called "a mere slut" (WH, 149), humiliated, nearly killed (WH, 182-183) and most likely sexually assaulted. Even though marrying Isabella had been first and foremost a part of Heathcliff's plan to avenge Edgar his victory over Catherine's affection and social advantages, a new motive comes in the form of Catherine's illness, which Heathcliff is sure to be the fault of Edgar. Distraught over his love's upcoming death, Heathcliff declares that Isabella "should be Edgar's proxy in suffering, till he could get a hold of him" (WH, 144).

Isabella and Heathcliff's son, Linton, is conceived during her stay at Wuthering Heights. After two months of marriage Isabella sends Nelly a letter and confesses that "my heart returned to Thrushcross Grange in twenty-four hours after I left it" (WH, 136) and later Heathcliff tells Nelly that "the very morrow of our wedding, she was weeping to go home" (WH, 149), which indicates that she might have been raped that night. Isabella's rape is portrayed in a 1998 film adaptation of the *Wuthering Heights*, where it is parallelized with the scene of Catherine's hair being cut off.⁴² The forcible cutting of the hair is a humiliating act and takes away a person's dignity, and here it reflects the trauma and shame that come from a rape. Of course, in 18th century England, Isabella would not have been legally recognized as a victim of rape, because the act was committed by her husband, to whom her consent was considered a permanent part of their marriage.⁴³ However, violence within marriage "in all its forms" was sexualized and the sexual assault against a wife was identified, even though a husband could not be legally accused of marital rape.⁴⁴

⁴² McKay, Skynner, *Wuthering Heights*.

⁴³ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, 29.

⁴⁴ Foyster, *Marital Violence: an English family history, 1660-1875*, 36-37.

Raping as a means of terror and control has been part of interpersonal conflicts and war throughout history, and it can be seen in *Wuthering Heights* as well. Studies on rape have shown that in war, the winning soldiers felt they had permission to possess the conquered nation's female citizens, "partly as booty, partly as a final symbolic expression of their victory and their enemy's humiliation"⁴⁵ and that they "must prove their newly won superiority – prove it to a woman, to themselves, to other men."⁴⁶ This sounds familiar as we look at Heathcliff's actions with the Linton siblings. Edgar is his arch enemy, the man who stole his love interest and had better luck in his early life than him. He starts a war on Edgar, sets foot on his territory and seduces his sister into a marriage that will scar her for life. For Heathcliff, Isabella is nothing more than a means to humiliate and dethrone his enemy, and raping her strengthens Heathcliff's view of himself as Edgar's defeater.

Besides committing an act of sexual violence, Heathcliff also tortures Isabella through other means than himself. When leaving Thrushcross Grange together, Heathcliff forces Isabella to watch him hang her pet dog, and recalls that "when she pleaded for it, the first words I uttered were a wish that I had the hanging of every being belonging to her" (*WH*, 150). Thus, Isabella's delusion of Heathcliff as a good man is shattered, and her hatred towards him begins to construct. Living in an unsafe environment where every day is a battle drives Isabella to fantasize about revenge and violence where she herself is the oppressor, as she examines a pistol Hindley plans to use on Heathcliff some day: "[A] hideous notion struck me. How powerful I should be possessing such an instrument! I took it from his hand, and touched the blade. He looked astonished at the expression my face assumed during a brief second. It was not horror, it was covetousness" (*WH*, 140). Isabella dreams of violence as a way to avenge herself and to be free from Heathcliff.⁴⁷

Isabella's fantasies of committing an act of violence, even murder, as a revenge of the cruelties inflicted upon her by her husband resemble the motives of Heathcliff to lean on force and sadism as a punishment. In *Wuthering Heights*, just as in real life, violence evokes violence. In Isabella's case, however, it is even more notable than in Heathcliff's, because she is a gentry-class woman who is not expected to show any feelings of aggression or desires for violence. In

⁴⁵ Frederick et. al. *Rape: Weapon Of Terror*, 5.

⁴⁶ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, 33.

⁴⁷ Pike, "'My name was Isabella Linton': Coverture, Domestic Violence, and Mrs. Heathcliff's Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*", 371.

fact, in the Victorian era women who were capable of physical violence, especially murder, were abhorred, and “simply were not women at all. The born offender ... was in the last analysis not even an aberration of femininity, but rather a man.”⁴⁸ Her reflection on these thoughts in a letter she sends to Nelly reveals that they were not just passing her head in the heat of the moment,⁴⁹ but that she carefully calculated what it would mean for her to be in the possession of a weapon, which makes her an enormously transgressive character.

After enduring violence from her husband, Isabella refuses to stand before him quietly and submissively, and starts to confront him verbally, as she cannot do it physically. The last discussion that occurs between the married couple includes Isabella’s strong speech that almost costs her life:

“[I]f poor Catherine had trusted you, and assumed the ridiculous, contemptible, degrading title of Mrs Heathcliff, she would soon have presented a similar picture! *She* wouldn’t have borne your abominable behaviour quietly; her detestation and disgust must have found voice.” ... [H]e 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. (*WH*, 182-183)

The last sentence of the quote suggests that Isabella did not only remain as the victim of a knife-attack, but that she also became one to commit a counteraction. The gentleness and naivety of Isabella that the reader becomes accustomed to in the beginning of the novel is now gone, as harshness and bad experiences place their affect upon her.

However cruelly and maliciously Heathcliff might treat Isabella, he is at the same time calculative and careful, and knows the limits for his actions: he makes sure he does not break the law when abusing his wife. “I keep strictly within the limits of the law – I have avoided, up to this period, giving her the slightest right to claim a separation” (*WH*, 150). Because Heathcliff is a man in a patriarchal society, he has the law on his side, as “the legal situation of a married woman in the early and mid nineteenth century amounted to total subjugation under her husband’s authority.”⁵⁰ In addition to that, Heathcliff and Isabella’s outer appearances support

⁴⁸ Hart, *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression*, 30.

⁴⁹ Pike, ““My name was Isabella Linton”: Coverture, Domestic Violence, and Mrs. Heathcliff’s Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*”, 362.

⁵⁰ Thormählen, “Marriage and Family Life”, 312.

Heathcliff.⁵¹ Nelly, when visiting Wuthering Heights for the first time after their wedding, describes Heathcliff to look like “a born and bred gentleman” (*WH*, 146) whereas Isabella looks nothing like her old, stylish and ladylike self, but more like a “thorough little slattern” (*WH*, 146). Nelly’s remark on Isabella’s appearance combined to Heathcliff’s comment that she “degenerates into a mere slut” (*WH*, 149), and her coarse notion that “[t]he single pleasure I can imagine is to die, or to see [Heathcliff] dead” (*WH*, 151) leads to a situation where Isabella would have very little credibility in front of court, compared to her well-mannered and gentlemanly husband, should she try to file him for divorce. This is comparable to a phenomenon that is nowadays recognized as ‘slut-shaming’ which can be determined as a “societal process that is predominantly directed at women, where individuals are publicly exposed and shamed for their “perceived sexual availability, behavior or history.”⁵² As Isabella’s virtue and chastity is seen tainted by her physical appearance and language, it is probable that she would be considered responsible for her suffering, and that it would have perhaps even been Heathcliff’s ‘duty’ to teach his wife better manners and “take care she does not disgrace [him] by rambling abroad” (*WH*, 149).

What gives Heathcliff even more credibility as a just husband is that he swears he is not keeping Isabella in Wuthering Heights against her will, that “if she desired to go she might” (*WH*, 150) but would eventually “come sighing and wheedling to [him] again”, thus portraying Isabella as a masochistic figure who stays in her violent marriage out of her own consent. Heathcliff acts as if it is his responsibility to take care of Isabella as “you’re not fit to be your own guardian ... and I, being your legal protector, must retain you in my custody” (*WH*, 151), when his real motif for keeping her from running away is the humiliation it causes for Edgar. Isabella knows this and exclaims to Nelly: “Don’t put faith in a single word he speaks. ... I’ve been told I might leave him before; and I’ve made the attempt, but I dare not repeat it! ... [H]e wishes to provoke Edgar to desperation – he says he has married me on purpose to obtain power over him” (*WH*, 151). Isabella is, thus, incarcerated to Wuthering Heights and kept there with fear for violence she has already experienced over an attempt to flee.

When Isabella finally manages to escape her marriage, one can only speculate what kind of life she lived afterwards, because after running away her existence is almost completely erased from

⁵¹ Pike, ““My name *was* Isabella Linton”: Coverture, Domestic Violence, and Mrs. Heathcliff’s Narrative in Wuthering Heights”, 367.

⁵² Webb, “Shame transfigured: Slut-shaming from Rome to cyberspace”, 2.

the novel. Her escape is nevertheless an extremely bold and daring, as she is pregnant, alone, has no money and no career. It is fantastic to think that Isabella, a pampered daughter of a gentry-class family, who has never done work or lived alone in her life, has the courage to pursue a life on her own and to give birth to a baby alone in a large city. It remains a mystery how Isabella's life eventually turns out as a lonely fugitive wife, and later a single mother. The reader is provided with Nelly's guessing of Isabella having moved to the southern England, close to London, and that "a regular correspondence was established between her and [Edgar] when things were more settled" (*WH*, 183). It is argued that Isabella might have received financial support from her brother after her escape:⁵³ however, it is not known for certain, which leads to Isabella becoming "far more marginalized in terms of her social and economic position." It is sadly likely that Isabella might not have been socially acceptable or respected because of her shameful abandonment of her home and husband, to whom she should have been loyal and submissive for the rest of her life. However, even in the patriarchal society of 18th-century England, all violence a husband inflicted upon his wife was not looked at approvingly. A man was permitted to chastise his wife with physical violence, but if it "endangered 'life, limb or health', then it was thought that the law should be enacted to protect one spouse from the other."⁵⁴ Isabella's injuries upon her escape are severe, as she has received a bleeding cut behind her ear, which gives her a valid reason to separate from her husband, and perhaps gain acceptance for her decision from society as well.

Another female character besides Isabella to whom violence is directed especially cruelly is Cathy, who Heathcliff forces into marrying Linton by imprisoning her into Wuthering Heights and refusing to set her free until the marriage is tied (*WH*, 272). By doing this Heathcliff does not give Cathy a chance to refuse or to consent free-willingly. A marriage without free or full consent of both parties is considered forced marriage and thus an abuse on the human rights.⁵⁵ Once again, Heathcliff is driven by his grudge against Edgar and desire to humiliate him by abusing his daughter and taking his estate, just like he took Edgar's sister from him and the affection of his wife. After marrying Linton, Cathy cannot move back to her father in Thrushcross Grange, and must remain a prisoner in Wuthering Heights because the matrimonial laws recognize her no longer as a daughter belonging to her father, but a wife belonging to her

⁵³ Pike, "My name was Isabella Linton": Coverture, Domestic Violence, and Mrs. Heathcliff's Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*", 379.

⁵⁴ Foyster, *Marital Violence: An English Family History, 1660-1857*, 41.

⁵⁵ Gangoli, Chantler, Hester & Singleton, "Understanding forced marriage: definitions and realities", 26.

husband.⁵⁶ Both Edgar and Linton die soon after Cathy is married, which means that Thrushcross Grange is transmitted to Heathcliff, and the widowed and fatherless Cathy is now the legal property of her father-in-law. By claiming Cathy, and before her Isabella, as his possession, Heathcliff secures his own position as the owner of the two women's property as well, that being Thrushcross Grange.⁵⁷

Living in Wuthering Heights, Cathy suffers from both her father-in-law and husband's violent behaviour, for Heathcliff has taught his son to "not to be soft with Catherine" (*WH*, 279). Heathcliff also makes sure that his son is aware of "his prerogative as Cathy's husband over her body and her property, both of which are legally the objects of male ownership."⁵⁸ The news of Edgar's illness and upcoming death, and its result of Linton becoming the master of Thrushcross Grange, cause him great satisfaction: "uncle is dying, truly, at last – I'm glad, for I shall be master of the Grange after him – and Catherine always spoke of it as *her* house. It isn't hers! It's mine – papa says everything she has is mine" (*WH*, 280). Eventually, Linton does not get the chance to enjoy his position as master of the Grange for long before he is struck with the illness that takes his life. Thus, Heathcliff's scheme is carried out, granting him with the status he has pursued since his childhood years.

Even though Heathcliff advises his son to treat Cathy harshly, and Linton thinks that Cathy deserves to be chastised (*WH*, 281), he is in bad health and not strong enough to use physical force on his wife. Heathcliff, on the other hand, uses it on the behalf of both, as Nelly witnesses when the two women are locked in Wuthering Heights and Cathy tries to take the key from Heathcliff's fist:

Heathcliff glanced at me a glance that kept me from interfering a moment. Catherine was too intent on his fingers to notice this face. He opened them, suddenly, and resigned the object of dispute; but, ere she had well secured it, he seized her with the liberated hand, and, pulling her on his knee, administered, with the other, a shower of terrific slaps on both sides of the head, each sufficient to have fulfilled his threat, had she been able to fall. (*WH*, 270-271)

The threat to which Nelly refers to, is Heathcliff's earlier promise to knock Cathy down if she would not end her endeavours to get the key from him. The fact that Cathy is the daughter of a

⁵⁶ Pykett, *Women Writers: Emily Brontë*, 77.

⁵⁷ Lamonica, "'We are three sisters': self and family in the writing of the Brontës", 115.

⁵⁸ Lamonica, "'We are three sisters': self and family in the writing of the Brontës", 115.

woman Heathcliff has loved for his whole life, and shares considerable similarities with her looks, does not stop him from hurting her. Perhaps it even provokes him, as can be deduced from his following remark after striking Cathy: “[Y]ou shall have plenty of that – you can bear plenty – you’re no weakling – you shall have a daily taste, if I catch such a devil of a temper in your eyes again!” (*WH*, 271) It is known that Cathy has inherited her mother’s dark eyes: perhaps Heathcliff caught a glimpse of Catherine from their depths, it being unbearable for him. It is likely that Heathcliff wants to punish Catherine from choosing another man over him, but since she is dead, he chooses to punish her daughter instead.

5.4. Intimate partner violence

In any healthy relationship the partners show unconditional love and lift each other up without stripping their partner from freedom. Heathcliff and Catherine’s addictive love “differs from a healthy attachment by the lover’s need to possess the other being, regardless of the effect this might have on the latter.”⁵⁹ Heathcliff and Catherine are both selfish with their love, and violence or brutality does not have an effect on it.⁶⁰ Heathcliff is so obsessed with the idea of owning Catherine that he does not care if Catherine could be better off with Edgar in Thrushcross Grange. Catherine, on the other hand, has the power to send Heathcliff away and refuse to receive him any more at the Grange. Still she does not, because she is possessed with the same obsession as Heathcliff. Catherine needs to own Heathcliff just as much as she needs to have the wealthy life in Thrushcross Grange and be worshipped by Edgar. With their own choices to cling onto each other no matter what, Heathcliff and Catherine make their lives diabolical, and are considered “perpetrators of their own unhappiness.”⁶¹

Emotional and physical violence in Heathcliff and Catherine’s relationship is not represented in a simple way, as it is strongly connected to love, affection and passion that the two share, and thus the abuse is embellished. When Heathcliff comes to Thrushcross Grange to see Catherine for the last time before her death, their reunion is anything but tender and romantic, as Catherine forcibly keeps Heathcliff in a kneeling position by holding him by the hair, and declares that “I wish I could hold you ... till we were both dead! I shouldn’t care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn’t you suffer? I do!” (*WH*, 160) Before letting go, Catherine tears “a portion of the locks she had been grasping”, and Heathcliff returns

⁵⁹ Goodlett, “Love and Addiction in *Wuthering Heights*”, 324.

⁶⁰ Kinkead-Weeks, “The Place of Love in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*”, 88.

⁶¹ Caldwell, “Mental Health”, 349.

the act of violence by grasping Catherine's arm, leaving "four distinct impressions left blue in the colourless skin" (*WH*, 161). This behaviour indicates that the emotion between Heathcliff and Catherine is not merely love, but also hate.⁶² All this, however, is softened with the expressions of Heathcliff and Catherine's love and passion for one another: they call each other names such as "darling", "my life", "mine" and "dear" (*WH*, 160-162), Catherine tells how she "wish[es] [them] never to be parted" (*WH*, 161) and Heathcliff describes the kissing of Catherine being a "blessing on [his] lips" (*WH*, 164). A study on intimate partner violence in modern day music videos observes a similar thing that can be made when reading *Wuthering Heights*: "representations of intimate partner violence place a high value on a passionate relationship that often conflates power with love and violence with passion,"⁶³ even though passion and romance should not be connected to intimate partner abuse, for violence should always be recognized and treated as it is, violence.

Heathcliff and Catherine's, as well as Catherine and Edgar's, relationships can be associated with the term *coercive controlling violence*. In coercively controlling relationships a partner abuses and dominates the other partner by, for example, frightening, manipulating and humiliating them.⁶⁴ When Catherine is lying ill in bed and Heathcliff comes to see her in Thrushcross Grange, she tells him that "[y]ou and Edgar have broken my heart ... and you both come to bewail the deed to me, as if you were the people to be pitied! I shall not pity you, not I. You have killed me – and thriven on it, I think" (*WH*, 160). By manipulating and casting guilt over Heathcliff, Catherine ensures that she will hold the power over him even on her deathbed. With Edgar, on the other hand, Catherine's abusive behaviour is as bad, if not worse. She attacks him physically by a slap on the face when the two are teenagers, and tries to put the blame on him for trying to leave her afterwards:

'You must not go!' she exclaimed energetically.

'I must and shall!' he replied in a subdued voice.

'No,' she persisted, grasping the handle; 'not yet, Edgar Linton – sit down, you shall not leave me in that temper. I should be miserable, all night, and I won't be miserable for you!'

'Can I stay after you have struck me?' asked Linton. (*WH*, 72)

⁶² Kinkead-Weeks, "The Place of Love in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*", 88.

⁶³ Brommer, "Love and fire: the role of passion in representations of intimate partner violence", 209.

⁶⁴ Regan, *Close Relationships*, 232.

As it eventually turns out, Edgar stays, forgives Catherine and even asks her to marry him (*WH*, 73-78). This is a vivid example of Catherine's power to manipulate and convince other people that however abusively she acts, the blame is on someone else.

When Heathcliff returns to Catherine's life after being absent for three years, their reunion causes a conflict in Catherine's marriage with Edgar. Catherine wants to keep both men in her life, and orders that Edgar "must get accustomed to [Heathcliff], and he may as well like him" (*WH*, 99). As it turns out, neither Edgar nor Heathcliff accept the "Edgar-Catherine-Heathcliff bond"⁶⁵ that seems so natural for her, but see the other man as a threat for their proprietary rights over Catherine. After all the effort Catherine has put to make the two men like each other, Edgar merely considers it "disgraceful that she should ... force [Heathcliff's] company on [him]" (*WH*, 113), whereas Heathcliff sees Edgar "in danger of splitting [his] skull against [his] knuckles" (*WH*, 114). Catherine is severely distressed by the fight between Heathcliff and Edgar in the kitchen of Thrushcross Grange, and expresses her anger for their "blind ingratitude" (*WH*, 114) towards her "indulgence of one's weak nature, and the other's bad one".

When the conflict is over and Heathcliff is banished from the house, the furious Catherine orders Nelly to tell her husband that "I'm in danger and being seriously ill – I wish it may prove true ... I want to frighten him ... if I cannot keep Heathcliff for my friend – if Edgar will be mean and jealous, I'll try to break their hearts by breaking my own" (*WH* 116). She seems to think that if she cannot possess the two men simultaneously, neither of them shall possess her either. Nelly, however, does not do Catherine's bidding, but lets Edgar enter her room, where he proposes her with a question: "Will you give up Heathcliff hereafter, or will you give up me? It is impossible for you to be *my* friend, and *his* at the same time; and I absolutely *require* to know which you choose" (*WH*, 117). Hearing this, Catherine is struck with a fit of rage, and exclaims to her husband that he should leave her alone. She shuts herself in her room and starts starving herself, carrying out a "self-destructive revenge"⁶⁶ on the men who she wants to possess, wishing it would destroy them. It could be argued, then, that the "fate of Milo" (*WH*, 82), which Catherine has threatened would wait for anyone who might try to separate her from Heathcliff, is carried out in a backward manner, leading to her death. The Greek athlete Milo tried to tear an oak-tree in two, but is eventually trapped as the trunk closes around his hands,⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Lamonica, "'We are three sisters': self and family in the writing of the Brontës", 108

⁶⁶ Lamonica, "'We are three sisters': self and family in the writing of the Brontës", 108.

⁶⁷ Nestor, "Notes", 9 /347?

leaving him to be eaten alive by wolves: Catherine attempts so hard to unite herself with Heathcliff and Edgar, and to become inseparable with them, that she is eventually torn apart and destroyed by it.

When Edgar, despite his wife's absence, does not come to her panicking and begging for her forgiveness, but spends his time in the library reading, Catherine is enraged, swearing that "[i]f I were only sure it would kill him ... I'd kill myself directly!" (WH, 121) Suicide threats occur frequently in coercive controlling relationships,⁶⁸ and this will not remain Catherine's last. When Edgar eventually realizes that Catherine is seriously ill, he is shocked and alarmed. Hearing Catherine's confused talk of her upcoming death and the place for her grave away from the Linton family tomb, Edgar tries one more time to draw an answer from her: "'Am I nothing to you, any more? Do you love that wretch, Heath –'" (WH, 128) Catherine cuts him off instantly, refusing to hear any more: "You mention that name and I end the matter, instantly, by a spring from the window!" (WH, 128) By promising to kill herself when hearing things that she does not want to hear, Catherine maintains the power she has over Edgar who truly loves her, controlling his speech and actions towards her. Alongside suicide threats, she distresses Edgar by telling him how his affection and remorse come too late for her now: "You are one of those things that are ever found when least wanted, and when you are wanted, never! ... I don't want you, Edgar; I'm past wanting you ... Return to your books ... I'm glad you possess a consolation, for all you had in me is gone" (WH, 128). This, of course, makes Edgar attach himself to Catherine even tighter, taking care of her day and night, giving her the attention and devotion that she yearns for.

Catherine also uses humiliation in front of household staff and Heathcliff to control and oppress Edgar. Catherine locks herself and the two men in Thrushcross Grange's kitchen so that Edgar would not be able to fetch his men to dismiss Heathcliff, because she considers her husband's aim cowardly. Desiring to see the two men fight each other, Catherine tries to provoke Edgar: "If you have not the courage to attack him, make an apology, or allow yourself to be beaten. It will correct you of feigning more valour than you possess. ... I wish Heathcliff may flog you sick, for daring to think an evil thought of me!" (WH, 114-115) Eventually, Edgar does try to take the key from Catherine by using force, but when she throws it into the fire he is "taken with a nervous trembling, and his countenance [grows] deadly pale" (WH, 115), and covers his

⁶⁸ Regan, *Close Relationships*, 233.

face in humiliation. Edgar most likely realizes that a physical quarrel with Heathcliff would end up veritably bad for him, and desires to avoid that conflict in any way he can. Catherine finds this disgraceful, and she starts to jeer her husband: “Heathcliff would as soon lift a finger at you as the king would march his army against a colony of mice. Cheer up, you sha’n’t be hurt! Your type is not a lamb, it’s a sucking leveret” (*WH*, 115). With the mention of a lamb, Catherine refers to Heathcliff’s earlier ridiculing remark of Edgar, when he told Catherine that “this lamb of yours threatens like a bull” (*WH*, 114), after Edgar’s endeavours to dismiss Heathcliff from Thrushcross Grange by using verbal demand.

By comparing Edgar to a rabbit cub, Catherine diminishes his dignity as both a man and a human being. She non-verbally declares him a wretch and a weakling, and Heathcliff keenly joins the mockery: “I wish you joy of the milk-blooded coward, Cathy! ... 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” (*WH*, 115). Refusing to have the effort to strike Edgar with his hands, but to use his feet on him, indicates that Heathcliff considers Edgar not worthy of his blows, and sees himself as superior to him, thus fulfilling his sixteen-year-old self’s desire. The use of the term ‘milk-blooded’ refers to how Catherine had earlier compared Edgar to a sucking leveret. Heathcliff’s physical power over Edgar is emphasized through the novel: whereas Edgar is associated with a lamb or leveret, Heathcliff is compared to a wolf, the beast who hunts and eats the weaker species, such as the Lintons (*WH*, 103). Catherine and Heathcliff’s behaviour here resembles that of a group of wicked children, whose superiority over a lonely outsider enable them to oppress the victim without having to fear of being taught,⁶⁹ and emphasizes the toxic masculinity of the society.

Even though Catherine and Edgar’s relationship is as inflicted with violence than Catherine and Heathcliff’s, a similar phenomenon of romanticizing and softening of the worst parts can be seen in both relationships, as I previously showed with Catherine and Heathcliff. From the very beginning of Catherine and Edgar’s marriage, Catherine seems “almost over fond with Mr Linton” and Edgar takes thorough care that nothing might irritate his wife, for he has a “deep-rooted fear of ruffling her humour” (*WH*, 92). Thus, it is clear that Edgar cannot forget the incident at Wuthering Heights some years back, when he received a slap on the face from the furious Catherine (*WH*, 72), but his love for her overcomes his fears, and even after being

⁶⁹ Davies, *Emily Brontë: The Artist as a Free Woman*, 129.

mentally and verbally assaulted and abused by his wife in front of Heathcliff (*WH*, 115), Edgar chooses to take care of his sick wife with such ardour that “[n]o mother could have nursed an only child more devotedly than [he] tended her” (*WH*, 134). He puts tremendous effort in soothing his wife’s tantrums, sits beside her bed and watches her sleep, and when her condition seems to be healing, Edgar knows “no limits in gratitude and joy”, while Catherine shows tender pleasure to her husband’s affective escorts (*WH*, 134). This romanticizing and embellishing of the beautiful moments blind the reader from seeing the Lintons’ marriage as it realistically is: a mentally and physically abusive relationship.

Interestingly, some scholars do not view Heathcliff and Catherine’s relationship as sexual, though it is passionate and somewhat incestuous.⁷⁰ My interpretation is that their relationship indeed is sexual, even though the most evident forms of sexual relations, such as flirting, marriage and intercourse, are absent from it. However, romantic and sexual tension can be detected in their relationship ever since the days they are teenagers. When she is fifteen years old, Catherine already imagines what would it mean being married to Heathcliff: “It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now” (*WH*, 81). Even though she does not see it as a possible future for her, she still recognizes the desire for it, and decides to use her marriage to Edgar and his high social position and economical power in Heathcliff’s benefit. For Catherine, Heathcliff is a necessary part of her life, without whom “the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger” (*WH*, 82), and whose miseries are her miseries. The way how Catherine continuously compares her love for Edgar to that for Heathcliff, and is incapable of marrying Edgar without considering Heathcliff as well, indicates that the two teenagers are not merely foster-sisters or playmates anymore, that romantic feelings have developed between them.

The existence of Heathcliff’s romantic feelings are, however, questioned by Catherine, even though she recognizes of having them in her own heart. She is uncertain whether Heathcliff even “know[s] what being in love is” (*WH*, 81), but receives from Nelly the following response: “I see no reason that he should not know, as well as you ... 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!” Nelly is certain of Heathcliff’s sentimental feelings towards Catherine, and warns her that to marry Edgar would be the betrayal of Heathcliff and that it would inevitably separate him from her. To this Catherine replies with fierce passion:

⁷⁰ Matus, “Sexuality”, 330.

Who is to separate us, pray? They'll meet the fate of Milo! 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! ... Nelly, I see now, you think me a selfish wretch, but, did it ever 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. (*WH*, 82)

Catherine is not marrying Edgar out of pure love for him, but for her selfish desire to have Heathcliff in her life without it causing her social or economic degradation. However, this proves that the feelings Catherine has for Heathcliff, as unhealthy as they may be, contain qualities of romantic desire and love.

While Catherine is planning a double-life for herself, where she would live as a respected gentry-class wife on the one hand, and as a wild and passionate lover in the other, Heathcliff cannot bear even to live with Catherine after overhearing that marrying him would be such a devastation for her. He then decides to run away from Wuthering Heights, not to disappear for good, but to return as a wealthy gentleman worthy of Catherine, and a rival of Edgar. What Heathcliff feels can be determined with the term *sexual jealousy*, which is defined as “psychological or emotional state that (1) arises when an important romantic relationship is threatened by a third party (a rival) and (2) motivates behavior designed to counter the threat”.⁷¹ Emotions commonly experienced by people who suffer from sexual jealousy are rage and hostility,⁷² which are familiar emotions for Heathcliff as well. His jealousy and bitterness for Catherine choosing another man over him motivates him to avenge Edgar by causing him as much misery as he can through Catherine, and later the younger generation.

⁷¹ Regan, *Close Relationships*, 225.

⁷² Regan, *Close Relationships*, 225.

6. Conclusion

What I have shown in this thesis is that the characters in *Wuthering Heights* and the dynamics between them are complex and affected by multiple factors, such as childhood experiences and trauma. Heathcliff grows from a ragged foundling into a rebellious teenager, who decides to run away from his home, only to come back to avenge his oppressor and the man who stole the love of his life. I have shown how the violence Heathcliff goes through in his childhood plays part in making him the man who marries and molests Isabella solely for revenge on her brother, almost commits a murder by kicking and dashing the alcoholic Hindley's head against the flagstones so many times that he almost dies (*WH*, 178-179), and throwing a dinner knife at his wife (*WH*, 182-183). All of this applies to Catherine as well, as she grows up to be malicious and ruthless as a wife to Edgar, friend to Isabella and Heathcliff, and an employer to Nelly. The neglect and abuse in her childhood leads to her suicidal and self-destructive behaviour in her adolescence as well. Physical and mental violence in childhood has led to the incapability of both Heathcliff and Catherine to express positive emotions or channel their anger and bitterness through healthy ways.

I have proved that gender norms and attitudes in the patriarchal 18th-century England affect the relationships between the characters in *Wuthering Heights*. The neglect and emotional abuse that Catherine faces as a child have strongly to do with her going against the societal expectations on her as a girl and a woman. Gender regulations related to girls and women's sexuality is also noticeable: as orphan adolescent girls, Catherine and Isabella are also the subjects for their brothers' guardianship and the protection of their chastity, and with it the family reputation. Hindley watches that Catherine does not taint her virtue premaritally with Edgar, who in turn cuts out Isabella after hearing that she has tied an inappropriate and shameful marriage with Heathcliff. The ruin and shame coming from unchaste behaviour or deprecated marriage thus does not regard the young woman alone; it brings their whole family to devastation as well.

Female-female relationships in the novel follow the same pattern that relationships between women stereotypically do, and they are full of dispute and unreliability.⁷³ Catherine humiliates Isabella in her jealousy over Heathcliff, orders Nelly around the house and punishes her

⁷³ Besag, *Understanding Girls' Friendships, Fights and Feuds: A Practical Approach to Girls' Bullying*, 3.

violently for not obeying. Nelly, perhaps as a revenge, consciously makes decisions that will harm Catherine, the girl she has spent her childhood and adolescent with. She also shows little compassion for the abused and battered Isabella who abandons her good manners and virtuous appearance after marriage to Heathcliff, and thus counters Nelly's views on 'good' femininity. From Nelly's point of view, it seems that, to lose one's chastity and virtuous dignity is a greater evil than to be beaten, molested or raped. This shows that the toxic images of female friendships, shaming on women and victim-blaming have a history that goes beyond centuries.

The gender norms and stereotypes in the novel do not only limit the lives of the women, for we see aspects of toxic masculinity and harassment of men as well, in Edgar and his nephew Linton. The two male characters have similar appearance: slender, fair and elegant, and the perfect target for bullying for the more masculine characters of the novel, such as Heathcliff, Hindley and Hareton. The norms of sex are very strict in *Wuthering Heights*, as they are in Western society altogether, where a person's gender is the main determiner of their life; a boy is not encouraged to do "things that girls do ... as he is not supposed to be timid when playing with other boys."⁷⁴ A male child or adult who breaks these rules, such as Linton does with his demands to stay indoors, be set up on a sofa instead of a chair, and be offered tea in a saucer (*WH*, 201) which are all things associated to idleness or women's life inside the home, or Edgar with his cautious avoidance of physical conflict with another man (*WH*, 115), will be ridiculed and scorned for cowardly and effeminate behaviour, and compared to girls, infants or baby-animals. This phenomenon does not appear only in the time when *Wuthering Heights* was written, but it is a deeply rooted part of raising boys and treating men in nowadays culture as well, which can be seen for example in playgrounds, schools, workplaces, advertisements and cartoons. Children are divided into two genders (boys and girls) and separated from each other with different treatment and upbringing. It is important to recognize this division and the causes it effects, for it enables the reducing of harmful methods in raising children of different gender, and in the long run helps to create a safer living environment for both men and women.

Besides gender studies, I have shown how violence studies can be applied when analysing *Wuthering Heights*, as it is a novel full of physical, mental and even sexual violence. The abuse in the novel is targeted mainly towards children, adolescents, and women. Child abuse especially is described as extremely cruel, as the children in the novel are chastised with

⁷⁴ Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*, 20.

physical trashing and slapping, but also emotional belittling and neglecting, and the effects of violence are visible through the victims' whole character arch. Heathcliff and Catherine face physical and mental violence as children, the other because of his low social class and ethnicity, and the other because of her gender and her 'failure' to exceed the expectations placed upon her. Child abuse occurs in the treatment of Hareton and Cathy as well, both of whom are left with a grieving father due to maternal mortality. They are both neglected: Cathy, even though only briefly, because of her gender making her father heirless, and Hareton because of his father's increasing alcoholism and hatred for the world. Children's deaths and infanticide are discussed in a mundane manner by adults, some even hoping for the death of an unfit child.

Intimate partner violence occurs in almost every marriage and romantic relationship in the novel: Catherine abuses physically and mentally her husband Edgar and Heathcliff, torments them with accusations of them causing her illness and upcoming death, threatening with suicide, beating, grasping and humiliating them. Heathcliff abuses Catherine back, leaves marks of physical violence on her skin, rages and curses at her; Edgar, on the other hand, bears Catherine's fury patiently and in silence, not raising his hand against her. However, in *Wuthering Heights*, the violence in intimate partner relationships is not portrayed completely realistically, for it contains features of romanticizing and embellishment that take away its abyss. Catherine expresses her feelings of love towards both Edgar and Heathcliff with burning passion, and receives love and caresses from them as well. These scenes portray people who love and cherish each other, and thus violence should not have room in these partnerships. This is a prominent problem with portraying abuse in intimate relationships: it almost always contains vivid descriptions of physical and emotional love,⁷⁵ thus confusing the reader or viewer from seeing the violence as it is.

Gendered violence, especially towards women, is seen in the character arches of Isabella and Cathy. Isabella appears first as a pampered girl who believes in true love, and in this naivety ends up in a marriage with Heathcliff. This is a turning point in her life, for now Isabella lives with a man who rapes, threatens, diminishes and tries to kill her. Eventually it turns Isabella against Heathcliff and the tender, peaceful and virtuous image of a gentry-class woman she has brought up to be, as she starts consciously fantasizing of abusing her husband with the help of a weapon (*WH*, 140), and ends up throwing a knife at him before fleeing *Wuthering Heights*

⁷⁵ Brommer, "Love and fire: the role of passion in representations of intimate partner violence", 209.

(*WH*, 182). In 18th-century England, a woman facing marital violence had little possibilities to stand up against her husband, and this is the case with Isabella as well: the law is on Heathcliff's side.

Cathy, on the other hand, becomes a victim of forced marriage, when Heathcliff demands her to consent to marry his son, Linton, under circumstances that give Cathy no other choice than to yield. Being thus imprisoned in *Wuthering Heights*, Cathy's life resembles that of Isabella's: she is bound to live with a physically and mentally violent male relative, although this time it is not her husband, for Linton dies within a short time in their marriage, but her father-in-law, Heathcliff. Isabella and Cathy's stories collide in several other ways, too, since they both are brought up in the protective environment of Thrushcross Grange and coddled with loving affection, and later get acquainted with the residents of *Wuthering Heights* and become victims of Heathcliff. Brontë's description of these two women and their experiences in *Wuthering Heights* objects the romantic image of a middle-class family life and shows how "even in the nineteenth century, homes can turn into Gothic castles, imprisoning young women."⁷⁶

Even though *Wuthering Heights* is a novel full of descriptions of unhealthy gender norms, destructive relationships, violence and child abuse, it is argued that Emily Brontë did not write the story with an aim to change the society on these matters. She was reportedly a very private person, and not as interested in ideologies or using her talents to promote a common cause⁷⁷ as her sisters Charlotte and Anne were. However, Brontë clearly had been aware of the issues related to gender, and the problems that a female author might have to face if she decided to publish a book with her own name. Thus, *Wuthering Heights* was published under the pseudonym Ellis Bell. However, hiding the author's identity and gender did not stop critics from looking into the situation, it only encouraged their want to expose the author.

Even though Emily Brontë was not keen on promoting women's rights through her literature, it does not mean that her novel cannot be read as a tool to recognize the problems related to violence and gender inequality in society. Many of the things apparent in Brontë's novel, such as forced marriage, child abuse and intimate partner violence, are still part of everyday life for millions of people, and this shows that the qualities in culture and society that maintain,

⁷⁶ Pike, "“My name *was* Isabella Linton”: Coverture, Domestic Violence, and Mrs. Heathcliff's Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*", 381.

⁷⁷ Nestor, "Introduction", xix.

normalize or even romanticize violent behaviour are deeply rooted in human history and individuals. To recognize and understand this is essential in taking action to reduce the violence-accepting traditions and paradigms.

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