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# The Brontë Attachment Novels: An Examination of the Development of Proto-Attachment Narratives in the Nineteenth Century

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# THE BRONTË ATTACHMENT NOVELS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTO-ATTACHMENT NARRATIVES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

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John Bowlby's work on attachment theory in the 1960s altered the cultural understanding of parent-child relationships. Bowlby argued that the ability for an individual to form attachments later in life, be that familial, romantic, or friendship is affected by whether or not that individual formed a strong attachment to a primary caregiver in early childhood. My thesis uses Bowlby's theory as a critical lens to examine three novels by the Brontës: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë. I use this theory in order to demonstrate that these novels are what I have termed proto-attachment narratives, which is to say narratives about attachment before formal attachment theory existed, and, further, that they work to bridge the gap between the contemporary nineteenth-century debate on child rearing and Bowlby's theory. In addition, I discuss how each of these novels exemplifies, complicates, and expands upon Bowlby's theory in its own way. *Wuthering Heights* demonstrates the cyclical nature of damaged attachments and works to find a way to break from that cycle. *Jane Eyre* gives a clear understanding of an individual's lifelong struggle with failed attachments and the importance of a balanced power dynamic to forming healthy attachments, and, finally, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* examines how even properly formed, healthy parent-child attachments can lead to development problems,

if the power granted to those parental attachment figure is not used responsibly. I further theorize that we can use these novels as a starting point to discuss how we might define attachment narratives as a genre, as they hold many similarities with more clearly defined modern attachment narratives.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Arwen, who always believed I could finish this thing, even when I didn't, and who pushed me through some of my toughest moments so that I could get it done.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

"There is abundant evidence to show that the kind of care an infant receives from his mother plays a major part in determining the way in which his attachment behavior develops" (Bowlby 203). This quotation from John Bowlby's 1969 work *Attachment and Loss* identifies what I argue is the fundamental principle of his theory, especially when applied to the study of literary works. Using Bowlby's theory as a lens, we can identify what I term "attachment narratives," which focus primarily on the causal relationship between the quality of a child's attachment-based upbringing and his or her emotional and mental development. Often, these narratives deal with children who are products of unhealthy attachment relationships, and they offer ways to remedy the children's damaged attachment modes. I argue that attachment-based narratives existed even before Bowlby developed a theory about attachment behaviors.

Even though Bowlby's theory about the mother/child attachment dynamic did not exist until the mid-twentieth century, during the nineteenth century much was written about proper child rearing and the importance of a child's emotional development. Though these writings do not directly refer to attachment, they reveal the beginnings of a societal fascination with the connection between a child's home environment and his or her development into an adult. The writings are broader in scope than Bowlby's theory—they look at both parents, for example, rather than only the mother—but they do highlight anxieties similar to Bowlby's. By examining Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* as examples of "proto-attachment narratives," we are able to see one community of writers' attempts to deal with a developing awareness of the importance that parental affection and attachment have on the emotional development of a child. As a community, the Brontës

simultaneously respond to each other and to a similar set of concerns and anxieties as Bowlby does in his work. Their works additionally show a link between attachment theory and the developing contemporary debate regarding complications with child development, which suggests a growing level of cultural awareness in the nineteenth century concerning the impact that familial attachment has on a child's maturation.

In order to examine the Brontës' novels as attachment narratives, it is essential to discuss John Bowlby's theoretical framework. Bowlby argues that attachment is a fundamental human mechanism: "Attachment behaviour is regarded as a class of social behaviour of an importance equivalent to that of mating behaviour and parental behaviour" (179). By comparing attachment to mating and parenting, Bowlby suggests that attachment is a natural human behavior. Further, he separates attachment from parenting, implying that they are distinct behaviors; parenting does not, necessarily, imply attachment. A parent can meet the physiological needs of a child and still neglect his or her attachment-based needs. What is significant when studying Bowlby's theory is the importance that he places on proper attachment. While Bowlby is specifically interested in the attachment relationships that children have with their mothers, it is important to examine the impacts that fathers have as well, since, like the Brontës, modern attachment theorists acknowledge both parents as important attachment figures.

The importance of attachment and attachment-based need fulfillment creates an emotional emphasis on the importance of mental stimulation in early childhood. Bowlby asserts, "there is abundant evidence to show that the kind of care an infant receives from his mother plays a major part in determining the way in which his attachment behavior develops" (203). Here, Bowlby emphasizes the connection between a child's emotional development and the emotional stimulation the child receives by having a stable connection with his or her caregiver.

The quality of mental stimulation that a child receives in early childhood similarly affects the ease with which that child learns later in life. That need for emotional education is what attachment theorists refer to as "attachment-based needs." Just as a child's mental development must be cared for in order to develop properly, his or her emotional health must be similarly fostered through healthy attachments with caregivers.

Additionally, Bowlby claims that attachment is not learned, but instinctual; however, like parenting and mating, attachment is dependent on another person, and if that person fails to fulfill attachment responsibilities, the child suffers: "By [age two] in most children the integrate of behavioural systems concerned is readily activated, especially by mother's departure or by anything frightening, and the stimuli that most effectively terminate the system are sound, sight, or touch of mother" (179). Bowlby suggests that children bond to their mothers in order to combat moments of fear. In turn, a mother's disappearance will trigger fear in her child, due to the loss of that comforting bond. One goal of attachment theory, then, is to explain the reason for a child's instinctual, fearful reaction to the absence of a parental figure. Bowlby's argument that attachment is a basic human system means that having that attachment severed, even temporarily, is traumatic for a child.

Once the significant impact of attachment loss is established, the long-term effects of that loss can be examined, which is why Bowlby's comment about the link between a child's development and the quality of the caregiver is important. If attachment is a vital human system and its loss triggers a violent, fearful reaction, then neglecting the attachment-based needs of a child—even if the child's basic needs such as food, water, and shelter are met—will damage and slow the child's emotional development. Bowlby illustrates this concept further when discussing children raised in non-familial environments:

> The development of infants in a depriving institution deviates progressively from that of family babies… [T]hey make fewer attempts to initiate social contact, their repertoire of expressive movements is smaller, and as late as twelve months they still show no sign of attachment to a particular person. (297)

The children in these institutions have their physiological needs cared for; however, their attachment-based needs are neglected, stunting the development of their attachment.

Children raised in institutional environments are the focal point of much of the nineteenth-century debate on child rearing. An 1849 article in *Fraser's Magazine* discusses the condition of children raised in workhouses. The author is primarily concerned with how emotional development and an emphasis on rational, independent thought are absent from the education of workhouse children: "The standard of education given in the school is, it appears, with few exceptions, of that barren and mindless kind which, though it teaches the elementary mechanics of schooling, leaves the understanding uninformed and the heart untouched" ("On Industrial Schools for Poor Children" 437). While the author acknowledges that educational institutions are capable of transferring basic knowledge, he or she finds it disturbing that such an education seems to come at the expense of the passion that should accompany a child's learning. The comment that these lessons are not reaching a child's heart comes from a concern for emotional, as well as factual, education. Such anxieties suggest an early attempt at discovering a connection between the quality of a child's upbringing and that child's ability to develop into an emotionally healthy individual, which is very similar to Bowlby's theory.

In addition to emotional education, some nineteenth-century authors also directly discuss the lack of familial connections workhouse school children possessed. In 1870, Florence Hill writes of children in workhouses, "Where the happy home, promising a bright future during

months of school work? and where the parents and sisters, whose sympathy and approbation are the reward for toil, and, maybe, hardship?" (244). Hill's questions about the lack of familial attachment in the lives of a child in a workhouse school places her in conversation with the work Bowlby would do almost a century later. Further, she indicates the necessity of that attachment in order to combat stressful situations, which is similar to Bowlby's theory that the presence of a child's attachment figure works to dismiss fearful or traumatic experiences.

In addition to the quality of emotional care that children receive in workhouses, nineteenth-century authors were concerned with children receiving proper familial care for their emotional and mental maturity at home. When discussing proper child rearing, Jessie Oriana Waller advises against corporal punishment, saying, "it is harmful for a mother to treat her child like an animal, it must no less harm the child to be treated as one, and to be governed by the feelings of pain and fear, instead of the higher ones of reason and affection" (664). Waller's reasoning is key to the examination of early attachment-based debates. She claims that corporal punishment harms children because it encourages the wrong emotions and dehumanizes them in a way that discipline anchored in positive reinforcement does not. Bowlby's attachment theory suggests a similar set of priorities. In Bowlby's estimation, mothers are associated with feelings of security and affection, as acknowledged in the quote about a mother's presence being the stimuli that best helps a child cope with frightening situations. Therefore, associating a mother figure with fear is counter to a child's inherent attachment behavior; the child no longer experiences the "higher" forms of feeling that Waller points to, instead replacing the affection associated with a mother's presence with "lower" feelings, such as fear. If a parental figure is a figure of fear, then the child has nobody to associate with the security that Bowlby argues must come from attachment figures.

I argue that the Brontës' novels contribute to this nineteenth-century debate on how the quality of a child's home environment affects his or her personal development. Their novels, additionally, go beyond that debate and offer a theoretical framework that acts as a precursor to the concept that Bowlby solidifies with attachment theory. It is important, then, to examine the ways that these novels exist as proto-attachment narratives by acting as both a response to the contemporary debate and a means through which we can see the foundations of twentieth-century attachment theory.

Studying the Brontës' novels in the context of attachment requires understanding developments in attachment theory since the publication of Bowlby's *Attachment.* Many of the attachment-based developments in the Brontës' novels occur past infancy, which is beyond Bowlby's original focus. Kathryn Kerns and Rhonda Richardson (more modern attachment theorists) claim that attachment complications after infancy still have an impact during young adulthood and even adulthood: "development is a lifetime phenomenon. This implies that parents, as well as children, develop as distinct individuals across life. Parents are as individually distinct as their children. Based on their own unique individuality, parents will differently react to the stimulation provided by the child" (25). By broadening attachment theory to allow for a person's attachment style to be influenced later in life, modern theorists provide for the application of the theory to the adolescent characters in the Brontë novels, and further reinforce the idea that attachment is a cycle. A parent is affected by his or her interactions with a child differently depending on that child's own personality and attachment mode, which means that parenting styles will differ based on prior attachment experience. This becomes especially evident with *Wuthering Heights'* Heathcliff.

My first chapter examines this novel's concern with the cyclical nature of attachment. Bowlby says that "the pattern of attachment shown by a child correlates strongly with the way his mother treats him," which suggests that problems with attachment are cyclical (361). By pointing to the link between parental treatment and a child's attachment mode, Bowlby implies that if a parental figure does not meet a child's attachment needs, the child will develop an unhealthy attachment pattern, which, in turn, will make the child more likely to become a detached parental figure. We see this in *Wuthering Heights*. Hindley's refusal to show affection for Heathcliff effectively robs Heathcliff of an attached parental figure. Heathcliff, who already possesses a fragile attachment pattern from being orphaned, develops into the novel's central figure of detachment, even going so far as to purposefully attempt to perpetuate the detachment cycle once he has custody of Hareton. Once Hindley has died, Heathcliff says to Hareton, "Now, my bonny lad, you are mine! And we'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!" (145). Heathcliff acknowledges his own damaged attachment mode and, further, the cyclical nature of detachment. Through Heathcliff, Emily Brontë is making similar claims to Bowlby's, but she also participates in the contemporary debate. She, like Waller, recognizes that neglect and unwarranted punishment foster negative associations between a child and parent, thus damaging the child's perception of parental figures. Hindley beats and neglects Heathcliff, raising him in an environment of fear and pain—like an animal, as Waller would say—and the result is that Heathcliff attempts to create a similar environment for Hareton.

Additionally, *Wuthering Heights* acts as a deeper study of child development through the inclusion of a variety of upbringings. By showing different parenting methods, Emily Brontë is able to examine how those methods change the ways in which children's attachment modes

develop. Cathy Linton, for example, is cared for but sheltered. And sheltering, Bowlby tells us, also damages a child's development: "Among characteristics of the over-controlled person are constrained and inhibited responses, reduced expression of emotion, and narrow restriction of the information processed" (363). Bowlby, here, does not distinguish between the types of control employed. Cathy is over-controlled, even if it's out of love. As a result, her ability to interact with the world is hindered.

The abuse that both Hareton and Heathcliff suffer is also a kind of control, but it's a result of neglect, which becomes evident when Heathcliff and Catherine run to Thrushcross Grange and Hindley tells Nelly "to bolt the doors, and [swear] nobody should let them in that night" (37). Hindley is a neglectful and abusive parental figure, so Bowlby's theory would hold that Heathcliff is an example of being both an over-controlled and under-controlled person, exemplifying many of the characteristics of the latter —"impulsiveness, distractability, open expression of emotion, and too little restriction on the information processed"—in addition to some of the effects of over-control, such as his reduced emotional responses (Bowlby 363). Emily Brontë, then, is attempting to navigate a complicated attachment figure without the language of a formal theory that will not exist for another hundred years and, further, she attempts to discuss the generational impact of the existence of such a figure within a family unit.

My second chapter discusses Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as a novel that follows an individual character through a series of unhealthy attachment environments, rather than multiple characters through multiple generations. As a result, *Jane Eyre* allows readers to examine the individual characteristics of a child with damaged attachments in greater depth. Jane's experience at the Reeds' house is a clear example of the neglectful parental behavior that Bowlby claims damages a child, because it robs the child of the safety associated with that

parental figure: “Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence” (8). Mrs. Reed’s neglectful refusal to acknowledge John’s abuse of Jane creates an environment for Jane that hinders what Bowlby identifies as a child’s attachment-based instinct to seek comfort in the mother’s presence.

More interesting with regard to the contemporary debate, however, is the fact that *Jane Eyre* examines the institutional upbringing so intriguing to Victorian writers. Charlotte Brontë, like her contemporaries (and like Bowlby), illustrates an inherent problem with those institutions, which is the absence of the affection and attachment necessary for emotional development. Mr. Brocklehurst, who runs Lowood school, describes it to Mrs. Reed in a way that highlights—and, in fact, celebrates—those shortcomings: “Consistency, madam is the first of Christian duties; and it has been observed in every arrangement connected with the establishment of Lowood: plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits” (28-29). His description mirrors the *Fraser’s Magazine* article’s concern with workhouse district schools that focus only on basic education and not on their students’ emotional development. That said, Charlotte Brontë complicates the discussion of institutionalized education through the creation of Miss Temple, who does have real affection for the girls attending Lowood. Miss Temple is, perhaps, the first adult figure in the novel to whom Jane develops a real attachment, and it is through Miss Temple acting as an attachment figure in an otherwise detached environment that Charlotte Brontë is able to more clearly display the failings of a purely utilitarian education. Jane’s continued struggle beyond Lowood to form a healthy attachment relationship shows an understanding on Charlotte Brontë’s part of the complications that arise from being the victim of

a detached parental relationship that goes beyond the contemporary debate and begins to move towards Bowlby's theory.

*Jane Eyre* additionally discusses how a child might work through the damage done by these abusive attachment relationships to his or her emotional development in order to later form healthy attachments. Just as Jane's problems with attachment arise from failures of authority figures, the solution to healing her damaged attachment mode is also an issue of authority. Brontë makes Jane an authority figure by placing Rochester in a subordinate position in which he must rely on her. By gaining that authority, Jane is able to create, with Rochester, a balanced and healthy attachment relationship.

Anne Brontë's *Tenant of Wildfell Hall,* the subject of my third and final chapter, is intriguing as a study on attachment, because unlike the previous two novels there are no obviously attachment-lacking parent-child relationships. Rather, this novel examines attachment relationships with problems beyond the presence of attachment. One example of this is the relationship between Helen and Arthur, which can be examined as an example of an overly attached parental relationship. What makes their relationship particularly interesting is that the society within the novel actually comments on how unhealthy such a strong attachment is for the child, which mirrors Bowlby's warning against a child being over-controlled, as with Cathy Linton in *Wuthering Heights*.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the novel in relation to attachment theory is Helen's reclusiveness, which creates a sense of detachment for her and Arthur from society out of fear. The results of this reclusiveness resemble what happens because of Edgar's overprotectiveness of Cathy in *Wuthering Heights*, which keeps her sheltered from the world. Further, Anne Brontë's creation of a drunkard parental figure in Arthur Huntingdon speaks to the

danger of substance-driven detachment, also paralleled in *Wuthering Heights*, with Hindley's drunkenness being his final failing. Through Arthur's fathering, Brontë shows that even if a parent creates an attachment to a child, as Arthur eventually does, the child's attachment mode can still be damaged if the parent does not use his or her granted authority to teach the child a healthy style of attachment. Arthur instead teaches his son to give in to vice, as he had. This, again, mirrors the Heathcliff-and-Hareton relationship from *Wuthering Heights*. However, unlike Heathcliff's intentions, Arthur's are not malicious, as he does not see his own behavior as flawed. Arthur feels real attachment to his son, but he does not know how to (or perhaps he does not care to) teach his son how to form healthy attachments because he is unable to do so himself.

*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* works to make readers understand attachment in a different way than *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. The fact that *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* shares many similar attachment themes with *Wuthering Heights* provides insight into its purpose within this community of writers by drawing a clearer comparison between two of the Brontës' studies of child development. While the themes are similar, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*'s examination of those themes focuses on overly-attached parents and the responsibilities of attachment figures that go beyond simply forming and cultivating parent-child attachments. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* argues that the authority granted to parents through their attachments to their children comes with a responsibility to teach children how to be healthy attachment figures. That argument expands and deepens the understanding of Edgar Linton's over-attached parenting style in *Wuthering Heights*, developed out of fear of Heathcliff, as well as giving a different perspective on the parenting style that Heathcliff uses when raising Hareton. Anne Brontë makes it clear that a child's attachment mode can be damaged even if his or her home environment is nurturing, rather than full of malice or neglect.

By studying their novels' response to the contemporary debate on child rearing and development, we see a strong movement within the Brontës' works toward formal attachment theory. What makes the study more interesting is the varied ways in which each of these novels works toward understanding the attachment-based needs of children and the complications that can arise when those needs either are not met or are met in an unhealthy manner. These novels together create a theoretical framework for the discussion and examination of attachment as a generational cycle, which explores, in depth, the impact that parental (or substitute parental) figures that refuse to fulfill their duties as attachment figures have on children. Additionally, we see the burden of responsibility placed on parental figures because of the authority that they have. In addition to being charged with forming an attachment to a child, a parent must also use that attachment to facilitate the child's healthy emotional growth. When *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are read with those themes in mind, they begin to emerge as a set of proto-attachment narratives that bridge the gap between the nineteenth-century debate on child rearing and John Bowlby's attachment theory.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Cyclical Nature of Detachment in *Wuthering Heights*

According to Jacqueline Banerjee's study of representations of adolescence in *Wuthering Heights*, "Modern readers, alerted by generations of psychologists to the problems of maturation, would seem to be much better equipped than earlier ones to empathize both with the author and her main protagonists" (17). I argue that the foundational elements of the psychological understanding that Banerjee is indicating here is, in part, influenced by John Bowlby's work on attachment theory. As a result of this more modern understanding of psychology, we, as readers, can see elements of Bowlby's work in *Wuthering Heights*. Emily Brontë identifies some of the same developmental problems associated with having damaged attachments in early childhood as Bowbly. She is, of course, not alone in writing a novel concerned with child development during the nineteenth century. According to Sally Shuttleworth, "The novels of Eliot, Dickens, and other writers opened up new ways of thinking about the child mind, and had an influence on the emerging sciences of child psychology and psychiatry. Their fictions helped to create a new sensitivity to the potential sufferings of childhood, and the life-long impact of these experiences" (213). Emily Brontë, like these writers, participates in and responds to the contemporary debate about the impact a child's environment has on development and health. In many ways, the novels of those writers, as well as Brontë's own *Wuthering Heights*, deal with attachment theory, which is why I am venturing to call them proto-attachment narratives.

*Wuthering Heights* is particularly interesting as a proto-attachment narrative because of its cyclical nature of weak or damaging parent-child attachments. Through the generational nature of her novel, Brontë is able to identify and highlight the effects that flawed attachments from one generation have on the next, such as how Hindley's treatment of Heathcliff contributes

to Heahcliff's development into a detached, malicious caregiver. The conclusion of the novel, then, poses an intriguing question: How is it that Cathy Linton and Hareton Earnshaw are able, as the novel suggests, to break away from this cycle of detachment? An examination of *Wuthering Heights*' view of imprisonment and the strong tie it has on the damaged attachment modes suggests that through the removal of the imprisoning nature of Wuthering Heights itself (which has existed since Hindley took over the house and even, to a lesser extent, before that), new, healthy attachments are once again free to be formed.

A study of *Wuthering Heights*' treatment of parent-child relationships reveals a strong connection to John Bowlby's attachment theory, starting with the effect that a missing mother figure has on children. According to Bowlby, "By [age two] in most children the integrate of behavioural systems concerned is readily activated, especially by mother's departure or by anything frightening, and the stimuli that most effectively terminate the system are sound, sight, or touch of mother" (*Attachment and Loss* 179). In *Wuthering Heights*, mothers are notably absent. Heathcliff is completely motherless, and Catherine and Hindley's mother dies early on. Banerjee points to the mother factor in *Wuthering Heights* when discussing the ghostly Catherine: "Might it not be that when this waif describes herself as twenty years an outcast, she is thinking, first and foremost, of the loss of her mother's love" (20). Her statement suggests that Catherine's ability to move on from that loss is somehow damaged and, perhaps, that her mother's death was the first thing to affect her ability to form healthy adult attachments.

Other mother figures in *Wuthering Heights* are also severed from their children. Catherine dies giving birth to her daughter, and Isabella (perhaps the most present mother for her child) dies out of view of the novel's main narrative before her son, Linton, is even introduced. Banerjee says that "the principal child characters in *Wuthering Heights* have an especially hard

time of it. They are both dealt severe blows at an early age, in the loss and denial of parental love" (19). She refers to Catherine and Heathcliff, but the loss of parental love, at least from mothers, is almost universal in this novel. Children do not have the ability to terminate their fears through motherly connections, which prevents them from seeing their mothers as safety figures in the way that Bowlby suggests they should.

Fatherly attachment, on the other hand, is somewhat more complicated in *Wuthering Heights*. Father figures are much more physically present but still contribute to a failure of attachment. According to Jean Mercer, "the emotional attachments of infants and toddlers to their caregivers were based on social interactions, not on physical gratifications" (23). While Bowlby suggests that a mother's physical presence is of utmost importance to parent/child attachments, Mercer argues that the physical experience is only important in that it contributes as part of that social interaction. Similarly, Banerjee says of Heathcliff, "Earnshaw does take pity on him; but Heathcliff is only rescued physically. He cannot shed his own psychic burden" (19). Heathcliff, here, experiences a level of "physical gratification," as Mercer calls it, but he is still psychologically damaged by his lack of parental attachment, which is never truly remedied despite Earnshaw's efforts.

Banerjee is informed by modern scholarship on child abuse and neglect from Oliver Tzeng, Jay Jackson, and Henry Karlson, who say, "Researchers have noted some similarities between the long-term symptoms, including personality characteristics, of abused children and the difficulties of children in adjusting to family breakup" (179). Tzeng, Jackson, and Karlson are drawing a link between poor post-family breakdown environments and child abuse. They go on to list a number of effects those situations have on children: "weariness of relations with adults, vicarious affection, depression and withdrawal, difficulties with trust… pseudo-

maturity… difficulties in intimacy, and psychiatric symptoms" (179). While Banerjee does not identify it as such, what we see in her observation about Heathcliff's persistent psychological problems is attachment theory at work, albeit in a less developed way than what Bowlby outlines in his theory. Earnshaw removes Heathcliff from his orphaned life in an effort to save him; however, that upheaval (and, we imagine, Heathcliff's life as an orphan) makes it difficult for Heathcliff to form strong, trusting attachments, especially with adults, and causes him to exhibit many of the characteristics that Tzeng, Jackson, and Karlson attribute to both abuse and an unhealthy home environment after the disintegration of a family unit. This is compounded by the fact that the disintegration of his family unit is, later, precisely what Heathcliff experiences.

Earnshaw does attempt to create a level of social and emotional attachment with Heathcliff, but he alienates his other children in the process. Nelly says that Earnshaw is "furious when he discovered his son persecuting the poor, fatherless child, as he called him. He took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said (for that matter he said precious little, and generally the truth) and petting him up far above Cathy, who was too mischievous and wayward for a favourite" (30). Earnshaw is protective of Heathcliff because he is an orphan and, as a result of this protectiveness, he begins to favor Heathcliff above his own children. Earnshaw's treatment of Heathcliff, therefore, fails in two respects as far as attachment theory is concerned. In the end, he fails to mend Heathcliff's inability to form healthy attachments, and, in his attempts to do so, Heathcliff is prioritized above his other children. This prioritization results in Earnshaw's children suffering a similar level of detachment and distrust as Heathcliff's. Nelly says of Hindley that "the young master had learnt to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges, and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries" (31). Hindley and Cathy, then, suffer from a failure of

attachment as well. Their father concentrates so much energy on attempting to remedy Heathcliff's damaged emotional system that he does not put energy into forming strong attachments to them.

Earnshaw's failure to maintain attachments to his children further demonstrates the ways that *Wuthering Heights* explores concerns similar to Bowlby's, by showing the damaging effects of a lack of parental social presence. "Attachment behavior," Bowlby says, in a statement I cited earlier, "is regarded as a class of social behaviour of an importance equivalent to that of mating behaviour and parental behaviour" (179). Since, as Bowlby points out, attachment is a social behavior, it is not enough for Earnshaw to simply exist physically and in close proximity as a father. He must also exist socially and emotionally by actively participating in the lives of his children and showing his affection for them, which he fails to do, therefore disrupting Hindley's and Catherine's attachment behaviors. Earnshaw's focus on raising Heathcliff to the exclusion of his children is also seen with regard to Hindley, especially the loss that Bowlby discusses when he says, "we held the view that the responses of… detachment that typically occur when a young child aged over six months is separated from his mother and in the care of strangers are due mainly to loss of maternal care at this highly dependent, highly vulnerable stage of development" (xiii). Hindley is not an infant; however, the concept of the loss of parental love (here identified as maternal love because Bowlby is primarily concerned with mothers) is a significant factor in Hindley's development as an attachment figure and father later in life.

Earnshaw's mistreatment of his other children in favor of Heathcliff is the beginning of the cycle of detachment that Brontë highlights. After Earnshaw dies, Hindley becomes the primary father figure for both Catherine and Heathcliff. Hindley also inherits a level of detachment that goes beyond even Earnshaw's. Nelly tells Lockwood, "He drove [Heathcliff]

from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead, compelling him to do so, as hard as any other lad on the farm" (36). Hindley's resentment over being robbed of his attachment to his father has manifested itself in his treating Heathcliff even worse than he, himself, was treated. Heathcliff has now lost his family; he is a servant rather than a son or brother. To understand the effect of Hindley's actions on Heathcliff, we must examine the damage that a break in attachment can cause to a child outside of early childhood.

Kathryn Kerns and Rhonda Richardson discuss the parent-child dynamic between the ages of 10 and 12: "not only does parental behavior influence child development but parent behavior and characteristics are also influenced by characteristics of the child" and, further, "parents, as well as children develop as distinct individuals across life" (25). This concept is particularly important in Hindley's and Heathcliff's relationship, as Heathcliff's primary source of positive parental attachment (Earnshaw) has been replaced with a parental figure who treats him with contempt and cruelty. Even Nelly claims that "[T]he master's bad ways and bad companions formed a pretty example for Catherine and Heathcliff. His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint" (51). The concept that a caregiver's neglect and mistreatment affects the development of the child is very closely tied to attachment theory, because mistreatment and neglect betray the responsibility that Bowlby claims attachment figures have as symbols of safety and security. Brontë, here, explores to what extent extreme levels of detachment and mistreatment damage a child's ability to form attachments later in life.

Hindley's abusive parental style is not specific to his mistreatment of Heathcliff, although that is certainly where he is most extreme. When Catherine and Heathcliff run away and cannot be found, Hindley orders Joseph "to bolt the doors, and swore nobody should let them in that

night" (37). Even as Catherine's caregiver, Hindley's temper and aggressiveness come through. He does not leave the house to search for them, nor does he seem to care about their health should they be locked outdoors in bad weather. In case the reader should miss that this is negligence on Hindley's part, when Mr. Linton finds Catherine he exclaims, "What culpable carelessness in her brother… I've understood from Shielders… that he lets her grow up in absolute heathenism" (40). Since the Lintons are, perhaps, the only parents in the novel whose children are not victims of weak parental attachment, it is reasonable for readers to assume that the novel is in agreement with Mr. Linton here. Hindley is a negligent caregiver to both of the children in his care.

Hindley's neglect serves to hinder the maturation of Catherine's attachment modes, just as it does Heathcliff's. Banerjee states, "As for [Brontë's] heroine Catherine Earnshaw, when she tries to accomplish the required transition from child to woman, the effect is utterly disastrous" (17). We see this because Catherine, like Heathcliff, is unable to form a healthy relationship later in life. Both her marriage to Edgar and her relationship with Heathcliff are shown to be unhealthy**.** In fact, Catherine's decision to marry Edgar is an excellent example of her damaged view of attachment. Nelly tells Catherine, "You love Mr. Edgar, because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful and rich and loves you" (61). Catherine agrees, stating only that she would not marry the multitude of other men who might fit those criteria because "If there be any, they are out of my way—I've seen none like Edgar" (62). Catherine's decision to marry, then, is not based on a healthy attachment. It is based on a misguided definition of love and implies, per Bowlby's theory, that the damage done by Hindley's mistreatment and her father's neglect has stunted Catherine's ability to understand and form healthy attachments. Pier Paolo Piciucco compares Catherine and Heathcliff as narcissists, pointing to Stevie Davies's reading in "Baby-

work: The Myth of Rebirth in *Wuthering Heights*" where Davies points out that "[Catherine] has gone straight through that invisible wall that separates our adult selves from our childhood selves" (119). Piciucco takes that blending of childhood and adulthood that Davies points to as being indicative of narcissism, saying, "Catherine's mental dynamics in her crucial phase as regressive, an instinctual, shielding attitude typical of narcissists," but Piciucco goes on further to say, "Similarly, when Heathcliff declares his right to act as an agent of nemesis because of the loss he had suffered in his youth, he is also showing narcissistic qualities" (221). Piciucco's point that Catherine and Heathcliff are both narcissists reveals a similarity in their attachment modes. What Piciucco identifies as narcissism has developed out of neglect from parental figures. The narcissism that Piciucco says motivates Heathcliff's justification for his treatment of Hareton is born out of detachment. Because Heathcliff had suffered from loss, he feels justified in his transformation into a destructive, antagonistic force. The link between Heathcliff's and Catherine's damaged attachment styles and their upbringing is further reinforced by Sandra Gilbert's judgment in "Looking Oppositely: Catherine Earnshaw's Fall" that unlike the original Earnshaws, "Hindley and Frances, on the other hand, the new Earnshaws, are troublesomely real though as oppressive as the step-parents in fairy tales'" (90). It is this oppressiveness that is indicative of their detached parenting and leads to the narcissism that causes both Heathcliff's and Catherine's inability to maintain healthy attachments.

Emily Brontë continues to highlight this detachment cycle by making *Wuthering Heights* a multi-generational novel. Not only does she show the effect that Hindley's mistreatment has on Heathcliff's and Catherine's abilities to form attachments, but she also provides an examination of the effects that those flawed individuals have on the next generation. Indeed, Wuthering

Heights as a location facilitates this detached environment. This is evident from Lockwood's description of Wuthering Heights in the first chapter:

> Wuthering being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. (4)

Even Lockwood, the eternal optimist, sees Wuthering Heights as a place tortured by nature, creating an exterior that mirrors the damage that the house's cold, detached environment has done to those who are imprisoned within it. That optimism, which Lockwood clings to as long as he can, continues to fail to penetrate the damaging nature of the house and its inhabitants. Even his decision to be friendly and pet the family dog is met with "a long, guttural gnarl" and a warning that "You'd best let the dog alone… She's not accustomed to be spoiled—not kept for a pet" (5).

Nowhere is the cyclical nature of detachment within the walls of Wuthering Heights more significant than it is with Heathcliff's treatment of Hareton. Once Hindley has died and Wuthering Heights has been left in Heathcliff's hands, he says to Hareton, "Now, my bonny lad, you are *mine!* And we'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!" (145). Heathcliff is calling on the same image that Lockwood witnesses when he first sees Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff views Wuthering Heights as the prison which twisted him into the detached figure he has become, just as the wind twists the trees outside of Wuthering Heights, and he intends to damage Hareton in the same manner. Banerjee describes this as a way to fill the void created by Catherine's death:

> Heathcliff is left with nothing but his own desperate unfulfilled need and the thoughts of revenge which have always been consequent to it—even after the most appropriate object of the latter (Hindley) has gone. His punishment of the young people of the next generation—"I know how to chastise children you see,"—he tells Nelly bitterly—hints strongly at the cycle of domestic abuse which is now familiar to social workers. (24)

This is a pivotal moment for the purpose of looking at *Wuthering Heights* as an attachment narrative. Brontë creates a moment of intentional shift in child development. Unlike Hindley's mistreatment of Heathcliff, which, while intentional and bred out of hatred, is not designed to manipulate Heathcliff's development, Heathcliff's raising of Hareton creates an actual attachment experiment. He intends to mistreat Hareton exactly as he has been mistreated and, in doing so, create an adult as damaged in his ability to form healthy attachments as Heathcliff himself. Through that experiment, Brontë grants the ability to examine the complexity of the formation of attachment modes, which Jean Mercer describes as "Attachment emotions and thoughts combine to form an *internal working model* of emotion and social relationships, a set of feelings, memories, ideas, and expectations about people's interpersonal attitudes and actions" (3). Heathcliff attempts to manipulate Hareton's "memories" (by altering the lifestyle he will have), "ideas" (by keeping him uneducated), and "expectations" (by degrading him to a servant position) to be similar to his own by creating for him an identical social relationship to the one Hindley and Heathcliff had.

We see the results of this experiment in the opening chapters of the novel, when Lockwood first gives a description of Hareton:

> His dress and speech were both rude, entirely devoid of the superiority observable in Mr. and Mrs. Heathcliff; his thick, brown curls were rough and uncultivated, his whiskers

> encroached bearishly over his cheeks, and his hands were embrowned like those of a common labourer. Still his bearing was free, almost haughty, and he showed none of a domestic's assiduity in attending on the lady of the house. (9)

Hareton's development here is intriguing when discussing attachment relationships as cyclical. He has been abused physically and socially, appearing and being treated as a slave, just as Heathcliff had; however, his inherent gentlemanly demeanor still exists. It is important, though, to recognize that Heathcliff has still damaged Hareton's ability to form attachments. Heathcliff tells Nelly, "I've tied his tongue… He'll not venture a single syllable, all the time! Nelly, you recollect me at his age—nay some years younger. Did I ever look so stupid, so gumless, as Joseph calls it?" (169). While Heathcliff was not able to completely rid Hareton of his gentlemanlike disposition and pride, he was able to keep him from the social education needed to learn how to express himself properly, which has hindered Hareton's ability to form meaningful relationships. Through Hareton, Brontë explores not just how children develop mentally and emotionally, but also how the inability to form healthy attachments can be manipulated and transferred. Bowlby describes the importance of a safe home environment for the development of a child's healthy attachment style: "by enabling him to explore his environment with confidence and to deal with it effectively, such experience also promotes a sense of competence. Thenceforward… personality becomes increasingly structured to operate in moderately controlled and resilient ways" (378). Heathcliff has worked to restrict Hareton's ability to confidently explore relationships by limiting his education and social interactions. According to Bowlby, Hareton should not be able to properly form other attachments or even interact properly with the world at large.

Heathcliff's manipulative, detached parenting is not limited to Hareton. He also manipulates his own son, Linton. Heathcliff tells Nelly, "Yes, Nell… my son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till I was certain of being his successor. Besides, he's *mine*, and I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendent fairly lord of their estates" (161). While parental figures are supposed to feel attachment for their children, Heathcliff does not. Though he does not wish Linton to die and struggles to maintain his son's health, Heathcliff's interest in his son is not one of fatherly affection or attachment. His ability to form connections of that kind is too damaged for that; rather, he sees Linton as another tool with which to exercise revenge. This is particularly apparent in his comment about death and successors. It is not that Heathcliff is sentimental about his son's death and cares for him out of parental attachment. He simply sees his son's inheritance as useful, so he must maintain Linton's health until that is secured.

Beyond that, though, Heathcliff's treatment of Linton is nearly the opposite of his treatment of Hareton, with Brontë creating an observable dichotomy of child development. When Linton first comes to stay at Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff asks Nelly, "What is his usual food, Nelly?" to which she says, "I suggested boiled milk or tea; and the housekeeper received instruction to prepare some" (162). Heathcliff's attention to Linton's needs and his efforts to meet them is indicative of his attempt to create a more gentlemanlike social situation for Linton than for Hareton, who was born into the same social class as Linton. The differences between the two children become most apparent after Heathcliff's plan to marry Cathy and Linton comes to fruition. Linton tells Nelly, "[Heathcliff] says I'm not to be soft with Catherine; she's my wife, and it's shameful that she should wish to leave me! He says she hates me, and wants me to die,

that she may have my money, but she shan't have it; and she shan't go home!" (213). Linton, perhaps more so than Hareton, has become very much like Heathcliff.

Through Hareton and Linton, Brontë exemplifies two different sides of the attachment environment system. Hareton, a naturally well-mannered and good person, has been twisted to become as damaged in his ability to form attachments as Heathcliff could make possible. On the other hand, Linton, who is naturally ill-tempered and has a weak constitution that has made him dependent on others his whole life, is also unable to form proper attachment relationships because he was given power in place of parental affection. He instead falls back on exercising his new-found control. In neither case were these children able to form a healthy attachment in early childhood. Hareton is manipulated by Heathcliff and before that raised by a drunken Hindley. Linton, on the other hand, is raised by Isabella in poverty and illness, presumably with affection, but then is forced to change caregivers to Heathcliff, who does not know how to properly form strong parental attachments because he had been robbed of them himself. Instead, Linton is given the one thing that Heathcliff values: power.

At this point, we must turn our attention to Catherine's daughter, Cathy. While she is not raised by Heathcliff or anyone else who was the product of a loss of parental attachment, Edgar's choices when raising her are affected by the novel's pervasive environment of detachment. Without the fear associated with Heathcliff's presence and the existence of the detachment-dense prison that is Wuthering Heights, Edgar would have no reason to shelter Cathy the way that he does. The discussion about Penistone Crags makes this sheltering evident. When Cathy asks, "Now am I old enough to go to Penistone Crags?" Edgar replies with "Not yet, love, not yet" (147). Edgar, indeed, never intends for Cathy to get that close to Wuthering Heights and goes to

great lengths to be sure she avoids contact with the novel's central figure of detachment—Heathcliff.

Sheltering Cathy, however, has a negative impact on her ability to form healthy social attachments. Later, when telling Nelly about her conversation with Hareton, Cathy recounts her response to his inability to make out the numbers on a sign: "'Oh you dunce!' I said, laughing heartily at his failure" (191). Cathy's inappropriateness is lost on her because of her sheltered upbringing. Even though she has an attentive primary caregiver, Heathcliff's very existence and the detached environment of Wuthering Heights lead to childhood development that damages her ability to create a personality that, as Bowlby says, "becomes increasingly structured to operate in moderately controlled and resilient ways, and increasingly capable of continuing so despite adverse circumstances" (378). The beginning of the novel shows an older Cathy in just such an adverse circumstance. Having been imprisoned at Wuthering Heights since her marriage to Linton, she responds aggressively to Lockwood's offers to help her reach the tea: "'I don't want your help,' she snapped, 'I can get them for myself'" (9). She is unable to interact with new acquaintances properly. And while her situation is certainly unfavorable, one of Bowlby's characteristics of a properly formed attachment personality hinges on the person's ability to deal with adverse conditions, which Cathy seems less capable of (378).

The end of *Wuthering Heights*, however, is devoid of these damaged attachments. Lockwood's description of Cathy and Hareton, and their relationship, is very different from how it was in the beginning of the novel. His description of Hareton is that of "a young man, respectably dressed, and seated at a table, having a book before him. His handsome features glowed with pleasure," and for Cathy, "her light shining ringlets blending, at all intervals, with his brown locks, as she bent to superintend his studies; and her face—it was lucky he could not

see her face, or he would never have been so steady" (234-235). This level of intimacy and attachment could not have existed before in *Wuthering Heights*, so the question becomes where did the change come from?

I argue that the reason Cathy and Hareton break the cycle of detachment lies within another theme of the novel: imprisonment. Jamie S. Crouse draws a parallel between the imprisonments in *Wuthering Heights* and control, asking, "What is the purpose of all of these instances of confinement? The most obvious explanation lies in understanding confinement as an issue of control" (179). Similarly, control is what allows Heathcliff to alter Hareton, Linton, and to a lesser extent, Cathy's ability to properly form attachments. He directly controls Hareton by raising him specifically as a servant, rather than a gentleman, and he manipulates Linton's and Cathy's relationship to maintain control of both houses. Further, his very existence limits Edgar's ability to raise his own daughter. Heathcliff manages all of this control through imprisonment. Crouse goes on to say that Heathcliff, "as an orphan and outsider in the Earnshaw family, learns early on to see himself in opposition to those around him. His need to establish dominance leads him to confine others, always keeping clear boundaries between himself and those within his control, a tendency that becomes destructive of others" (181). If we see Heathcliff's orphan status as a measure of his lack of early parental attachment, and that, combined with his mistreatment from Hindley, is the reason that he is unable to forge healthy attachment relationships as an adult, then his lack of parental attachment is also the source of the imprisonments he inflicts on others.

The novel's repeated connection between imprisonment and detachment starts (as many of the attachment problems in this novel do) with Hindley. Heathcliff's servant status, once Hindley is master of the house, serves as a kind of imprisonment. Catherine recounts that event

in her diary: “Poor Heathcliff, Hindley calls him a vagabond, he says, he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders” (18). By taking away Heathcliff’s and Catherine’s freedom, Hindley’s dictatorial parenting forces a level of imprisonment upon them both. Crouse discusses the link between Heathcliff’s and Catherine’s imprisonments and their desire to imprison others: “Catherine’s and Heathcliff’s tendency to exert control by confining others is developed during their childhood because they were controlled and confined by Hindley and Joseph” (182). While he doesn’t refer to attachment theory, Crouse is pointing out the cyclical nature of the control and confinement in this novel, which is mirrored by a cycle of damaging attachment relationships.

Confinement seems to be tied directly to the attachment issues outlined in the narrative. In fact, according to Crouse, Catherine

> seeks to find and maintain a place for herself within the web of relationships around her, particularly with Heathcliff, with whom she has the strongest attachment. The early loss of her mother may make her need to define her place relationally more acute… Her acts of confinement always include herself as she attempts to place literal boundaries around herself and others in order to keep a place for herself on the inside within safe emotional boundaries that maintain her relationships with others. (181)

Crouse argues, then, that Catherine’s imprisonments directly emerge from her need to forge attachment relationships: first with Heathcliff and later with others, such as Edgar. By marrying Edgar for the selfish reasons described earlier (because he is rich and handsome and loves her), she seeks to establish a place for herself, even if that place is confined to within Thrushcross Grange and with someone that she feels no real attachment to on the level that she feels with Heathcliff. Even Catherine’s line, “Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff,” denotes a level of confinement

within that definition (64). She feels she cannot escape from her feelings for Heathcliff, nor does she want to.

In this way, Heathcliff is distinctly different from Catherine, because he seeks to confine others out of a desire for both revenge and freedom from his own confinement. Partly, this difference is a result of the kinds of confinement that the two characters are subject to. As Crouse points out, Catherine's confinements are voluntary (with the possible exception of Hindley's treatment of her, but he does not make her a servant like he does Heathcliff). Heathcliff's freedom, on the other hand, is robbed from him instead of voluntarily given away, and that is what makes him seek revenge. Banerjee says, in fact, that "Heathcliff is not demonic in and of himself but as a result of the pressures to which his particular personality has been subjected at critical periods of his life" (25). Heathcliff's imprisonment is a part of those pressures.

Nevertheless, Heathcliff insists on perpetuating a cycle of imprisonment both by robbing Hareton of the same freedoms that Hindley robbed Heathcliff of and also by literally imprisoning Cathy at Wuthering Heights after she marries Linton. This perpetuates the idea that the house itself at Wuthering Heights has an imprisoning nature. According to Laura Berry, it "keeps turning into a penal colony. Coming to Wuthering Heights would seem to require transforming oneself into either prisoner or ward" (39). It would seem, then, that in order for healthy attachments to once again be free to be established, Wuthering Heights must lose its imprisoning nature. This change eventually happens at the end of the novel and allows Cathy's and Hareton's healthy relationship to form.

One would expect that Heathcliff's death would be necessary to remove the imprisoning effects on Cathy and Hareton, as he's the one who maintains their confinement, but this is not necessarily the case. Nelly recounts to Lockwood, "I was summoned to Wuthering Heights

within a fortnight of your leaving us… Mr. Heathcliff did not explain his reasons for taking a new mind about my coming here; he only told me he wanted me, and he was tired of seeing Catherine; I must make the little parlour my sitting room and keep her with me" (236). Heathcliff's change occurs as a result of a growing desire for his Catherine, which becomes more powerful as a result of Cathy's presence and the resemblance Hareton and Cathy have to Catherine. Nelly remarks on this, telling Lockwood, "Perhaps you have never remarked that their eyes are precisely similar and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw" (246). Heathcliff's obsession with Catherine leads to a growing dismissal of—and detachment from—reality, which becomes fully realized when Heathcliff says, "I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shapes on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day, I am surrounded with her image!" (247).

As soon as Heathcliff starts down this path of obsession, his identity as the warden of Wuthering Heights weakens. Nelly's arrival gives us one more look at Cathy's detached, cruel demeanor, indicative of her time as a prisoner, when she says of Hareton, "He's just like a dog, is he not, Ellen?" (237). However, when Nelly chastises Catherine for laughing at Hareton's attempts to read shortly after, she says, "I did not expect him to be so silly. Hareton, if I gave you a book, would you take it now? I'll try!" (237). This is the first time Cathy attempts to form an attachment to Hareton, and it is tied directly with the loosening of her imprisonment due to Nelly's arrival in Wuthering Heights. This dynamic continues, as Nelly says that "Mr. Heathcliff, who grew more and more disinclined to society, had almost banished Earnshaw out of his apartment… he became for some days a fixture in the kitchen… The consequence was, that, perforce, he was condemned to the fire-side and tranquility, till he made it up again" (238). Once again, Heathcliff's lost interest in maintaining his prisoners' incarceration allows them to

begin to form attachments to each other. It culminates with Hareton's admission that he had spoken in Cathy's defense, which causes her to say, "I didn't know you took my part… and I was miserable and bitter at everybody; but now I thank you and beg you to forgive me, what can I do besides?" (239). This is the moment that the house of Wuthering Heights ceases to be a prison and becomes more of a home to both prisoners, since their growing attachment to each other has lessened their desire to leave. As a result, the control that Heathcliff holds over them—control that's linked to their imprisonment—also begins to weaken.

Additionally, Cathy's and Hareton's relationship is evidence of a movement away from the need for voluntary confinement that we saw in Catherine Earnshaw. Crouse says that "Catherine's confinement at the Grange begins her confinement within the traditional female gender role that permanently alters her means for asserting control" (183). Crouse claims that in giving up Wuthering Heights for Thrushcross Grange, even for a temporary stay, Catherine allows herself to give up the freedom of the wild genderlessness she had enjoyed when with Heathcliff. Further, Crouse says, "Catherine returns to Wuthering Heights a different girl, and, significantly, her attempts at control through confinement will always include herself, since she must now control herself, while attempting to reclaim whatever sense of control she lost when accepting her new role as a woman" (183). This level of confinement is why she must marry Edgar and not Heathcliff. As a woman who wants to regain some control, she recognizes the need to marry someone wealthy, who loves her more than she loves him. She could not marry Heathcliff and retain her identity as a woman; that marriage would not help her regain power, and Heathcliff's lack of wealth would only serve to disempower her further. As a character who needs to have control, Catherine has no choice (as far as she is concerned) but to marry Edgar. Cathy Linton, on the other hand, does not need to marry somebody whom she does not love. The

division of the property is no longer an issue, with Heathcliff seemingly giving up his plan for the destruction of both families in favor of his rediscovered obsession with Catherine Earnshaw. As a result, Cathy is able to marry someone because he makes her happy. Nelly implies this when she says, "Earnshaw was not to be civilized with a wish; and my young lady was no philosopher and no paragon of patience; but both their minds tending to the same point—one loving and desiring to esteem, and the other loving and desiring to be esteemed—they contrived in the end to reach it" (241). In Cathy Linton's and Hareton Earnshaw's relationship, a healthy attachment forms that is neither based on the need for control, like Catherine's and Edgar's marriage, nor born from rebellion, as was Catherine's and Heathcliff's relationship. Cathy and Hareton have no need to be together to maintain control, and their one-time captor is seemingly absent from his duties so they have nothing to rebel against. As a result, the cycle of damaged attachment has been mended.

Heathcliff's death is almost an afterthought in terms of the attachment narrative; however, it does serve to clarify one thing that Nelly points out when describing Heathcliff's funeral: "Hareton, with a streaming face, dug green sods, and laid them over the brown mould himself" (257). Despite his mistreatment, Hareton did see Heathcliff as his caregiver and, necessarily, Heathcliff's death causes pain. But Hareton is fundamentally different from Heathcliff, because his ability to properly express his pain protects him from further damage to his attachment system. Banerjee addresses this difference when discussing the cultural awareness that Victorians would have of Heathcliff's damaged emotional state when he comes to Wuthering Heights. Banarjee points out, "The Victorians knew well what the loss of parents could mean, but it was not until this century that the burgeoning science of psychology drew attention to the consequences of a child being unable to express his or feelings about it," which

she claims is the case with Heathcliff (19). Hareton—thanks in large part to Cathy's tutelage—has the language and expression needed to grieve the loss of his caregiver, which is something that Heathcliff himself lacked initially (and one might say still lacked at the end, since he could never come to terms with the death of Catherine: the only attachment figure he seemed to care about).

*Wuthering Heights*' nature as a generational novel makes it inherently concerned with parenting and the development of children; however, the addition of attachment theory as a critical lens helps enlighten much of what Emily Brontë was saying with regard to the effects that different abusive environments have on the novel's characters. From the start, there is a sense of imprisonment and detachment. Few romantic relationships are based on love, and the ones that are, such as Catherine's and Heathcliff's, are incredibly problematic specifically because both lovers have been robbed of the ability to form healthy attachments by their primary caregivers. Hindley also experiences attachment problems, because he sees his father as being more attached to Heathcliff than himself. Further, the imprisonment aspect of the novel is also tied into these attachment issues. Heathcliff imprisons others out of revenge, because his mistreatment as a child has ruined his ability to develop healthy adult relationships, and, in the end, his death occurs due to an obsession with the relationship that he could not have and the loss he was never able to recover from. Only by shifting Heathcliff's focus from his prisoners can said prisoners find freedom, not just from the prison of Wuthering Heights but also from the cycle of detachment that controlled both families for two generations.

# CHAPTER 3

## The Power Dynamics of Attachment Relationships in *Jane Eyre*

Unlike *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* is not interested in the generational impacts of attachment relationships. Instead, it focuses on the development of one child raised in a series of unhealthy attachment environments. One of these, the Lowood school, is particularly interesting in regard to bridging the contemporary debate on child raising and Bowlby's theory, because it sheds light on the practice of raising children in an institution. According to Bowlby, "The development of infants in a depriving institution deviates progressively from that of family babies" (297). Bowlby argues here that young children from institutions not only develop differently, but at a slower rate of progress. This idea of an institutional upbringing being significantly different and, in fact, inferior to a healthy family upbringing is examined throughout Charlotte Brontë's novel, first through Jane's time at Lowood, when Brontë creates a stark contrast between the cold, detached Mr. Brocklehurst and the very attached, nurturing Miss Temple, and even earlier with Mrs. Reed, who, despite being the closest thing Jane has to a parental figure, does not work to form an attachment relationship with Jane. These unhealthy attachment environments have a negative impact upon Jane's ability to form healthy relationships throughout her life, including romantic relationships. What Brontë seems to be arguing concerning attachment and institutions—as well as attachment in more traditional familial environments—is that the responsibility to form a healthy attachment lies with the person in the position of authority. If that person fails to facilitate a proper attachment relationship with the child, then what Bowlby theorizes is the outcome of damaged parent-child attachments will happen: the child will not be able to form and recognize proper, healthy attachments later in life. Brontë takes this idea further, though, by acknowledging the

changeability of that negative impact, as Jane is ultimately able to form a healthy relationship with Rochester when she, herself, is put in a position of authority, by using that authority to construct a healthy attachment relationship.

Because *Jane Eyre* focuses on the development of one person's attachment mode throughout her life, it is important to examine that development through the novel's chronology, beginning with Jane's relationship with the Reeds. According to Chris Vanden Bossche,

> *Jane Eyre* appears to be a bildungsroman cast in the form of the narrative of the rise of a middle class that displaces an outmoded aristocracy. Its heroine begins as an orphan whose father leaves her neither name nor fortune and rises to become the wife of a gentleman whose status makes him eligible to marry the daughter of a peer. (56)

Bossche's observation highlights the importance of *Jane Eyre* as a novel about development. Jane begins the novel without mother or father, in a state devoid of attachment. She has been, in a sense, abandoned. Throughout the novel, Jane's relationship with authority is always problematic, and these problems seem to stem from her first authority figure: Mrs. Reed.

Jane's environment within Gateshead, with Mrs. Reed as her guardian, is one of abuse and neglect. When she describes John Reed's constant abuse, Jane says, "I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence" (8). John's abuse of Jane is cruel; however, the real source of negative impact as far as attachment theory is concerned is Mrs. Reed's disavowal of that abuse. She is aware that John abuses Jane, but pretends not to be. Rather, Mrs. Reed punishes Jane and, as a result, Jane's self-constructed identity is one of both victim and criminal: "Why was I always suffering, always

browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned?" (11). As a result, her relationship with Mrs. Reed reveals, early in the novel, the effect that an authority figure has on the development of an attachment relationship. When Mr. Brocklehurst asks Jane, "Well, Jane Eyre, and are you a good child?" Jane tells readers that it is "Impossible to respond to this in the affirmative: my little world held a contrary opinion: I was silent" (26). Gateshead, an environment constructed by Mrs. Reed's perception of Jane, has so shaped Jane's perception of the world that she cannot even bring herself to say the truth. She believes otherwise.

Even though Jane cannot think of herself as good, she also does not believe that she is in the wrong. She dismisses Mrs. Reed's opinion of her, yelling, "Deceit is not my fault" (31). Jane cannot ascribe the definition of a "good girl" to herself because that is something that she cannot define, and her attachment environment seems to define a "good girl" as something other than she is; however, deceit is a clearly defined fault from which Jane can remove herself. More important, Jane's outrage at being misrepresented to Mr. Brocklehurst marks significant progress in her rebellion against authority figures, which is a theme that characterizes attachment throughout this book. We see the relationship between rebellion and a failure of attachment more clearly later in that same conversation when Jane says, "I am not your dear; I cannot lie down: send me to school soon, Mrs. Reed, for I hate to live here" (31). Jane's response to Mrs. Reed's representation of her is an example of what current attachment theorists recognize as a product of a child's attachment environment. According to Kathryn Kerns and Rhonda Richardson, "Those children whose characteristics best fit with the demands of the setting will have the most adaptive development" (25). Jane's characteristics fit poorly with the demands put on her by the Reed-constructed environment. As a result, Jane links her detached feelings towards Mrs. Reed in specific and Gateshead in general to her aunt's failure as an attachment figure:

> "You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity. I shall remember how you thrust me back—roughly and violently thrust me back—into the red-room, and locked me up in there, to my dying day; though I was in agony; though I cried out, while suffocating with distress, 'Have mercy! Have mercy, aunt Reed!'" (30)

Jane identifies the red-room scene as the moment when Mrs. Reed fails in her responsibilities as an attachment figure and, therefore, the moment Jane loses her ability to feel any attachment for Mrs. Reed.

The trauma Jane experiences here correlates strongly with what Bowlby says about mothers and safe feelings in children: "in most children the integrate of behavioural systems concerned is readily activated, especially by mother's departure or by anything frightening, and the stimuli that most effectively terminate the system are sound, sight, or touch of mother" (179). During the red-room scene, Jane responds to a traumatic experience. Though the trauma is not precisely that of a mother's departure, Jane's instinct nonetheless is to plead for her mother figure's presence in order to terminate those feelings. Mrs. Reed's refusal to adhere to that responsibility causes damage, as Bowlby would suggest, to the development of Jane's attachment system.

Further, the red-room scene works to link contemporary Victorian debates with attachment theory. As mentioned earlier, according Jessie Oriana Waller in 1889, "if it is harmful for a mother to treat her child like an animal, it must no less harm the child to be treated as one, and to be governed by the feelings of pain and fear, instead of the higher ones of reason and affection" (664). Waller warns against the use corporal punishment because it alters children's emotional development towards associating their familial environment with pain

rather than affection—a very similar argument to Bowlby's. The difference is Bowlby specifically highlights the damage that emotional trauma without the remedying force of attachment can have on a child's ability to develop behavioral and mental strategies to deal with loss, while Waller focuses on the damage that can be caused to a child's ability to develop positive emotional responses to caregivers in general. Brontë works to bridge these ideas. Jane is certainly emotionally damaged by the incident in the red-room, as Waller would suggest she would be; however, her inability to see herself as a good child represents some of the damage that has been done to her own way of interacting with her environment, which exemplifies the negative effects that Bowlby suggests will happen if a child cannot remedy a traumatic event with the presence of an attachment figure.

Jane's detached upbringing, under the supervision of Mrs. Reed, leads to stunted emotional and psychological growth and, therefore, damaged attachment modes. Mrs. Reed has additionally failed in her duty as a mother figure, both through the loss of Jane's affections and through an actual oath that Mrs. Reed had made to Mr. Reed to take care of her: a betrayal that Jane highlights: "My uncle Reed is in heaven and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mamma: they know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead" (23). By focusing on the responsibility of authority figures in attachment relationships, Brontë mirrors much of what attachment theorist Douglas F. Goldsmith says, that "When attachment is understood as a dance between parents and children it becomes clear that therapeutic interventions must target the parent/child relationship; both the parent and the child contribute to the dance of attachment and thus both must be given equal consideration during the assessment and treatment of attachment issues" (5). Goldsmith is saying that attachment is both a parent's and a child's responsibility, and while *Jane Eyre* reinforces that notion (because Jane is both the

victim of failed parental attachments and also is unable to initiate healthy parent-child attachments on her own, as a result of her detached upbringing), the novel also broadens Goldsmith's definition by examining not just parental relationships but all attachment relationships with authority figures. Jane's underdevelopment as an attachment figure, then, is due to the failures of those authority figures to contribute properly to the treatment and maintenance of her attachment relationships.

The connection between the failure of an authority figure to adhere to his or her responsibilities and the underdevelopment of a child's attachment style becomes highly important in *Jane Eyre*. Much of Jane's development as an attachment figure occurs during her time at Lowood School when she is surrounded by authority figures, and, further, that kind of institutionalized education was a large concern for Brontë's contemporaries, as they were examining how to raise children properly. For example, as I quoted above from the 1849 *Fraser's Magazine* article on the problematic nature of schools for the poor, "The standard of education given in the school is, it appears, with few exceptions, of that barren and mindless kind which, though it teaches the elementary mechanics of schooling, leaves the understanding uninformed and the heart untouched" ("On industrial schools for poor children" 437). This sentiment mirrors the nature of education at *Jane Eyre*'s Lowood School. When Brocklehurst describes Lowood to Mrs. Reed, he says, "Consistency, madam is the first of Christian duties; and it has been observed in every arrangement connected with the establishment of Lowood: plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits" (28-29). What Brocklehurst's philosophy calls for is precisely the problem outlined in *Fraser's Magazine*. Lowood is a school dedicated to a minimalist education. Brocklehurst does not want Lowood's students to be shown compassion or attachment; rather, he wants them to live as

simple and repetitious lives as possible—a life that *Fraser's Magazine* would call "barren and mindless."

Additionally, Jane bases her code of ethics around how authority figures act within attachment relationships. She tells Helen Burns, "You are good to those who are good to you. It is all I ever desire to be. If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way" (48). Jane's theory of morality specifically targets authority-based relationships. She refuses to be "obedient" to people who do her an injustice. Since she, as a child, is expected to be obedient to authority figures, it stands to reason that Jane's opinion, like Goldsmith's, is that parents (and parental figures) have a responsibility to work at mending and maintaining attachment relationships. The reference to authority figures becomes clearer when, after Helen tells her to "love your enemies," Jane responds, "Then I should love Mrs. Reed, which I cannot do; I should bless her son John, which is impossible" (49). Jane's denial of love to those who have denied it to her suggests a level of early attachment theory wherein her difficulty in forming proper relationships originates from her only parental relationship being devoid of attachment or love.

Jane's damaged attachment mode may be clarified by a comparison between her and Helen Burns, who, in contrast, has a home she would like to return to. Helen tells Jane, "What a singularly deep impression her injustice seems to have made on your heart! No ill-usage so brands its record on my feelings" (49). Unlike Jane, Helen has developed into a healthy attachment figure. Helen's response to authority is not scarred by the fact that she has experienced a loss of attachment in early childhood. By contrasting these two characters so directly, Brontë shows readers that the environment that children are raised in affects their abilities to form healthy relationships later in life. Helen can understand and interact with

authority figures, even ones who are unjust, because her childhood experiences were not devoid of parental attachment. Jane, however, cannot.

The scenes in Lowood School further bridge the gap between the contemporary debate on child rearing with Bowlby's theory by focusing on one of the elements that both share: institutional education. Bowlby says of children who are raised institutionally, "they make fewer attempts to initialize social contact, their repertoire of expressive movements is smaller, and as late as twelve months they still show no sign of attachment to any particular person. This absence of attachment is especially noticeable when they are distressed: even then they rarely turn to an adult" (297). Brontë shows a very similar dynamic through Jane in Lowood. While Jane is clearly an older child, she exhibits many of the same problems that Bowlby suggests young children exhibit when raised in institutions. For example, when Jane is left to stand in front of the school by Mr. Brocklehurst, her attention does not shift to Miss Temple; instead she looks to Helen Burns, telling the reader, "What a smile! I remember it now, and I know that it was the effluence of fine intellect, of true courage; it lit up her marked lineaments, her thin face, her sunken grey eye, like a reflection from the aspect of an angel" (57). The reverence with which Jane describes Helen shows a level of comfort and attachment that, at this point in the novel, she does not assign to adults. She is, as Bowlby says, unwilling to turn to adults in her time of distress and turns, instead, to a peer for comforting thoughts.

Here begins Brontë's attachment-based critique of institutionalized education, particularly concerning the poor. According to James Phillips, "Jane, as an orphan, is friendless in the archaic sense. Not being born among friends, she has to make friends, yet given the diffidence and astringency of her conversation (and the lack of the wealth, power and physical attractions that might otherwise bind people to her, however tenuously) this does not come easily

to her" (214). I suggest that in the creation of a "friendless" heroine, Brontë makes a point even beyond the commentary on the physically and economical disadvantaged that Phillips is suggesting (both of which are disadvantages Jane received at birth). Rather, Jane's ability to make friends and form relationships is also impacted by her environment. In the case of Lowood, Jane deals with the disadvantage of not having had a healthy attachment relationship when she was a child, which means that she cannot easily make friends with strangers there. Additionally, Brocklehurst's efforts to "render [the students] hardy, patient, self-denying" enhance the hindering impacts of Jane's environment, which continue to prevent her from correcting her damaged attachment style (53). Brocklehurst, in short, wants to remove attachment and affection from the educational experience. By creating such an environment for Jane, whose childhood upbringing has already damaged her ability to form attachments, Brontë draws a parallel between the violent and clearly wrongful lack of affection seen in Mrs. Reed's treatment of Jane and the level of detachment inherent in the strict, institutionalized education in poor schools, represented by Lowood.

Brontë further addresses this matter in the character of Miss Temple, whose central personality trait, it would seem, is an affinity for attachment. After Jane tells the story about Mr. Brocklehurst's accusation to Miss Temple, we are told, "She kissed me… still keeping me at her side (where I was well contented to stand, for I derived a child's pleasure from the contemplation of her face, her dress, her one or two ornaments, her white forehead, her clustered and shining curls, and beaming dark eyes)" (60). There are two important things to note about this interaction. The first is that Miss Temple shows affection and attachment towards Jane. She gives Jane physical affection and a place of comfort and safety, both things previously denied by Mrs. Reed. Secondly, Jane's comment that she gets "a child's pleasure" from this interaction

highlights her underdeveloped attachment style. This is one of the first authentic attachment experiences that Jane has had with an authority figure and, as a result, she regards it as she would if she was a young child. For the first time, Jane is experiencing the sense of safety associated with a mother figure that Bowlby says is essential for all children.

Miss Temple additionally serves as a contrast to the strict, affectionless institutional education that Lowood represents. Jane recounts a subtle but important incident when Miss Temple is told that the housekeeper would not send up more food for tea: "she got up, unlocked a drawer, and taking from it a parcel wrapped in paper, disclosed presently to our eyes a good-sized seed-cake" (61). Miss Temple's actions highlight the importance of affection from someone in a position of authority, as she does earlier when she orders bread and cheese for the students who had burnt porridge. Her behavior in this regard is significant, because it creates a dichotomy between the attachment and affection necessary to foster healthy attachment styles and the cold abstraction of Lowood School—a coldness exemplified by Mr. Brocklehust's declaration that "when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children's mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls!" (33). Brocklehurst represents the passionless attitude of workhouse school management towards education that Brontë's contemporaries were concerned about, and Miss Temple stands in contrast, revealing the importance of attachment within that environment.

Miss Temple's affection, however, does not create a healthy attachment style. Jane's relationship with Miss Temple, while based in affection, is flawed because Jane is still a subordinate, and, therefore, their relationship is neither a natural parental relationship nor one of equality. When Miss Temple leaves, Jane reacts as though she lost a mother figure. She has never had experience with an affectionate parental attachment relationship, however, so she

doesn't know how to deal with that loss. As a result, the loss of her attachment figure is more traumatic to Jane, because Miss Temple is the first authority figure that she has received affectionate attachment from. When Miss Temple leaves, Jane says, "I had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple—or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been breathing in her vicinity" (72). Jane's source of safety and happiness has been Miss Temple, and, like the disappearance of a mother, Miss Temple's departure is traumatic. Jane cannot claim a permanent attachment to Miss Temple, because she is not what Bowlby calls "a natural mother":

> On the one hand, a substitute cannot be exposed to the same hormonal levels as the natural mother; on the other, a substitute may have little or nothing to do with the baby to be mothered until he is weeks or months old. In consequence of both these limitations, a substitute's mothering responses may well be less strong and less consistently elicited than those of a natural mother. (306)

Jane's lack of attachment to her birth mother or Mrs. Reed (while she is technically a substitute, the fact that Jane is under Mrs. Reed's care so early in her life categorizes her as a natural mother) causes her to have to rely on a substitute mother in the form of Miss Temple. Jane even goes so far as to say of Miss Temple, "her friendship and society had been my continual solace: she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and latterly, companion" (71). Miss Temple stands as a substitute for all of Jane's missing attachment relationships from childhood, but she is still only a substitute, and, as Bowlby points out, that kind of relationship puts limits on the level of attachment development that can be accomplished. Jane's development as an attachment figure is incomplete when Miss Temple leaves, and, as a result, Jane falls back on the only thing way she knows to deal with loss and trauma: escape.

Jane's penchant for escape is shown not just in the way she deals with loss and trauma but also in the way she deals with undesirable situations. We see her means of escape early in the novel when she is reading in seclusion in order to escape interaction with the other residents of Gateshead. Jane tells readers, "with Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my way. I feared nothing but interruption and that came too soon" (7). The fact that Jane derives happiness from escape is apparent, but what is also interesting is the fact that her happiness has limits. She feels the need to qualify her happiness. Just like Jane cannot define herself as a "good girl," she also cannot define herself as truly happy, even when escaping into a book, because she is missing something essential. That essential element is attachment. Jane does not desire company, because she feels detached from that company.

Jane's reliance on escape as a source of solace and happiness is once again brought to the reader's attention when Miss Temple leaves Lowood. Jane tells us, "A new servitude! There is something in that… I know there is, because it does not sound too sweet" (73). Jane once again calls attention to her subordinate role and her inability to imagine unqualified happiness for herself. According to Chris Vanden Bossche, "*Jane Eyre* invites analysis in terms of the repression model of ideology because it employs a narrative structure and thematics that encourage us to search for its repressed ideological subtext" (52). Vanden Bossche refers mostly to the limitations put on Jane's gender in the nineteenth century, but Jane's struggles to deal with her lack and loss of attachment figures in the novel follows a similar model. Jane represses her desire for long-lasting affection, because it is unfamiliar to her. Instead, she continues to place herself in the familiar role of servitude, which implies a limitation to the attachment she could expect because her superiors would, unlike Mrs. Reed, be under no oath to show her affection.

Jane's relationship with Rochester becomes an integral part of her development as an attachment figure since, ultimately, Jane's only successful attachment relationship is with him. Up until the novel's final moments, however, her relationship with Rochester follows the same formula as her previous failed attachment relationships. Specifically, Rochester represents another relationship that, like Mrs. Reed, betrays the expectations of an attachment relationship. Kearns and Richardson define attachment partners by saying, "they provide a psychological safe haven, especially when children are stressed or threatened, and constitute a psychological secure base that promotes confident exploration and mastery and that contributes to emotional self-regulation" (268). All of the aspects listed are things that Jane currently lacks as an attachment partner. She does not feel safe or confident in herself, and she finds it hard to regulate her emotional responses. We see her admit this when she is speaking with Helen Burns. Jane wonders at Helen's ability to endure discipline so calmly and says, "I could not comprehend this doctrine of endurance; and still less could I understand or sympathize with the forbearance she expressed for her chastiser" (47). Jane is definitely not a child, but I argue that what Kearns and Richardson say about the development of these relationships still applies to her: "to be sure, older children certainly develop close friendships characterized by support, intimacy, and exclusivity" (268). Though Kearns and Richardson do not necessarily define those later intimate relationships as "attachments," they appear to function in much the same way.

While the relationship between Jane and Rochester is an intimate one, it is also, at least initially, a relationship between an employer and employee, which necessarily means it's one in which power is unbalanced. Just like other attachment figures in positions of authority, Rochester's behavior towards Jane regarding her feelings of safety and support with him is essential to the development of her own healthy attachment style. Unfortunately Rochester, like

Mrs. Reed, betrays the trust that develops from their attachment relationship. Further, his ability to deceive and betray Jane hinges on his authority over her. When Jane first encounters Rochester, he says to her, "You live just below—do you mean at that house with the battlements?" (97). Rochester's feigns ignorance on the subject of Thornfield Hall during his first interaction with Jane; as a result, he is able to gain power over her from the beginning of their relationship by creating an imbalance of their knowledge between them. That imbalance is part of a power differential between Jane and Rochester, and it makes it impossible for them to form a healthy romantic attachment to each other. Jane is in a subordinate position from the start, and Rochester's actions only serve to widen the differences in their respective power.

The greatest of Rochester's betrayals, of course, is his attempt to marry Jane while still married to Bertha. Rochester attempts to justify of his actions by saying, "I wanted [Jane] just as a change after that fierce ragout. Wood and Briggs, look at the difference!... [T]hen judge me, priest of the gospel and man of the law, and remember, with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged!" (251). Rochester believes he is justified in his deception because he, like Jane with Mrs. Reed, has been placed in an attachment relationship with somebody he cannot love and who appears, at least, to not be attached to him. Like Jane, he wishes to escape that relationship. James Phillips says of this justification that "Rochester invokes a sentimental, rather than a legal right in order, nonetheless, to urge a new claim to the institution of marriage. The reasoning is sophistical, as Rochester well knows. He has no legal right to remarry and thus when he tries to remarry, it is on the sly" (204). Rochester must be deceptive, as the only justification he has for marrying Jane is one of his own affections, and, because Rochester is the authority figure of Thornfield Hall, he is able to ensure a level of secrecy to his betrayal. What is most important

about this event, though, is Jane's reaction to it, which places her attachment to Rochester within the confines of her previous damaged attachments. Her reaction is the same: to escape.

Brontë's description of Jane after she discovers Bertha implies a level of detachment: "Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent, expectant woman—almost a bride—was a cold, solitary girl again: her life was pale; her prospects were desolate" (252). The failure of Jane's attachment to Rochester has, once again, left her without a feeling of safety and security. She first responds by detaching herself from her environment and, later, by leaving. Jane says, "you shall tear yourself away, none shall help you: you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye: yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim; and you, the priest, to transfix it" (254). Left without an attachment partner, Jane once again sees herself as alone. She sees leaving Thornfield as her only recourse for the loss of her attachment, just as she had resolved to leave Lowood in order to deal with the loss of Miss Temple.

The final important attachment relationship of the novel is the one between Jane and her cousin St. John Rivers. In order to discuss that relationship, however, we must first discuss the matter of Jane's financial independence. Brontë grants Jane that independence through inheritance. Jane says, of the realization of her newfound wealth, "It is a fine thing, reader, to be lifted in a moment from indigence to wealth—a very fine thing: but not a matter one can comprehend, or consequently enjoy, all at once" (325). Jane's inability to easily comprehend her own independence is a reaction born out of a lifetime of servitude and dependence. As a result, from an attachment standpoint, the fact that St. John's offer of marriage is specifically for the purpose of taking Jane with him on a mission to India instead of out of affection threatens to work against Jane's development as an attachment figure. Since Jane has just recently attained

the independence needed to enter into an attachment relationship as an equal, entering into an unequal marriage would, necessarily, mean giving up her newfound independence.

She says, "He prizes me as a soldier would a good weapon; and that is all. Unmarried to him, this would never grieve me" (345). Jane's problem with accompanying St. John is entirely based on the construction of a false attachment. St. John's objectification of Jane as a useful tool is not offensive to her in and of itself; it is that she must be objectified as an attachment partner. She would be giving up her newfound independence for the same kind of incomplete substitute attachment that she has had her entire life. About Jane's refusal, Kelsey Bennett says, "Beyond the fact that Jane recognizes without any doubt that her own spirit will not conform to the same mould as her cousin's, it remains for her to discover a fitting alternative. While she is at Morton, natural affection has come for her to mean the joys of kinship" (24). Jane's feelings of kinship with her cousins are similar to the idea of a "natural mother" that Bowlby suggests as a powerful necessity in attachment development. Jane says to St. John, "You have hitherto been my adopted brother: I, your adopted sister; let us continue as such: you and I had better not marry" (345). Jane forms real and natural bonds with her family, which is why she is so resistant when St. John suggests an artificial alternative attachment.

In fact, Rivers' steadfast refusal to take Jane to India as a sister and embrace the attachment they have formed is what finally allows Jane to see him as imperfect and as an equal to her: "He had held me in awe, because he had held me in doubt. How much of him was saint, how much mortal, I could not heretofore tell: but revelations were being made in this conference: the analysis of his nature was proceeding before my eyes" (346). By seeing Rivers as mortal and not inherently above her, Jane is able, then, to examine their attachment from a new perspective of equality: "Having felt in him the presence of these qualities, I felt his imperfection, and took

courage. I was with an equal—one with whom I might argue—one whom, if I saw good, I might resist" (346). She chooses, indeed, to resist him. Now that she has reached financial independence and has gained an understanding of her relationship with her cousin, and, by extension, all men, she no longer sees herself as lesser or needing guidance. Instead, she is able to enter into relationships (or leave them, as she does in the case of St. John Rivers) as an equal.

Jane, therefore, must find the alternative romantic attachment that Bennett suggests, and she does so by returning to Rochester as an independent figure, armed with the financial stability and perspective on attachments necessary to make that relationship an equal one. Phillips says of Jane and Rochester's marriage at the end of the novel that:

> *Jane Eyre* places a great deal of weight on Jane's and Rochester's equality. Yet in what way are the husband and wife in an early nineteenth-century English marriage equals? Her property is his, but not vice versa. She is subject in her behaviour to his control, but not vice versa. (205)

I would argue, however, that there is a unique quality to the circumstances surrounding Jane's marriage to Rochester. Rochester's loss of sight is also a loss of power, which works towards evening the balance of power in their relationship. Rochester responds to Jane's opinion that she does not care about marrying him with "if I were what I once was, I would try to make you care—but—a sightless block!" (371). He links his loss of sight with a loss of power, and Jane notes a shift in their personalities as a result, saying, "He relapsed into gloom. I, on the contrary, became more cheerful, and took fresh courage" (371). It is Rochester's loss of authority that initiates Jane's renewed contentment. In short, she is able to form a healthy attachment to Rochester because, unlike her previous attachments (including her earlier one to Rochester), he needs her more than she needs him. In fact, Jane agrees to marry Rochester while he's blind, and

her rhetoric regarding the aftermath of the proposal continues to focus on her own authority: "I took that dear hand, held it a moment to my lips, then let it pass round my shoulder: being so much lower of stature than he, I served both for his prop and guide" (382). While Jane could still be said to be in service of Rochester, the nature of that service has changed. She lets him place his hand around her shoulder and she serves as his guide. These are the acts of a person of authority, and it because of her newfound authority that she is able to form a permanent attachment relationship. According to Bennett,

> Jane's return to Rochester is not in the capacity of servant to her master, but as an equal… And this return to completion is not simply a complacent affirmation of conventional domestic values. Rather, Charlotte Brontë makes that radical assertion that propensity and principle, spirit and flesh, may be reconciled through a superlative and compassionate form of the natural affections. (27)

An attachment grounded in "natural affection" and approached from a position of equality is what allows Jane to form a healthy romantic attachment with Rochester.

*Jane Eyre* as an attachment narrative is distinct from *Wuthering Heights* in a few key ways. The first, and most important, is the source of detachment within the novel. In *Wuthering Heights*, the central force of attachment is Heathcliff who is, himself, a product of the cycle of detachment present in the novel. Attachments are damaged, therefore, from within. In *Jane Eyre*, the focus is on a single character's struggle to maintain an attachment relationship amidst unhealthy attachment environments, which are created by negative external influences on Jane's attachment. Neither Mrs. Reed nor Rochester is the product of a failed parental attachment (at least that we are aware of), and, therefore, the struggle is far more individualized and easier to mend. Jane only needs to find a way to fix her own damaged attachment style. She does not have

the responsibility, as Hareton and Cathy Linton do, of stopping a generational cycle of detachment.

Jane's struggle to maintain a healthy attachment is almost always against authority figures. By focusing on hierarchical attachment relationships, Brontë highlights the inherent problems with three common forms of such attachments. Parental attachments are inherently hierarchical because parents have authority over their children; however, Brontë shows the dangers of a parent who does not recognize his or her own responsibility to foster the healthy development of a child's attachment style. Without the safety and security of a proper attachment figure, Jane is left with escapism as her only means of comfort and is unable to reconcile her own internal truths with those imposed by her environment. Similarly, in a school environment, the lack of affection, which is a topic that was being debated by Brontë's contemporaries, fails to foster the development of proper attachments. Jane is so damaged by the lack of attachments during her early time at Lowood that she is unable to view her attachment to Miss Temple in a healthy light. Rather than process the loss of her friend and substitute parental figure and continue in her occupation, Jane chooses to change her environment, just as she did when Mrs. Reed did not fulfill her authoritative responsibilities as an attachment figure.

Finally, Brontë's focus on the problematic inequality of marriage works to bridge nineteenth-century marriage politics and twentieth-century attachment theory. According to Phillips, "Jane is not prepared to embark on a future with Rochester with nothing more than a sentimental equality as surety. Without the equality in sentiments marriage is a husk" (204). Jane's initial refusal to attach to Rochester as his mistress is important because it marks a refusal to enter into an attachment relationship in which she is subordinate. Only once Jane has gained power as an independent and Rochester has lost power through a handicap is she finally willing

to enter into such an attachment relationship as equals. Therefore, Jane is unwilling to commit to a permanent attachment relationship until she has mended the initial problems of her upbringing—that of Mrs. Reed as an attachment partner in a position of authority who won't adhere to the responsibilities of her position—by being in the position of authority herself.

# CHAPTER 4

## Educating Through Attachment: The Responsibility of Attachment Authority in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

While *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* are concerned mainly with the negative impacts of failed parental attachments on the development of children, Anne Brontë's novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* takes the debate further. *Tenant* explores what responsibilities attachment figures have in their roles as sources of a child's identity construction beyond nurturing the ability to form attachments. Successful parent-child attachments abound in *Tenant* nearly universally; however, these successful relationships complicate the attachment narratives of the other two novels by providing readers with examples of relationships wherein children's developments into adult attachment figures are still be damaged even though attachments to caregivers are formed, because their parental figures failed to fulfill their attachment roles responsibly. Through its attachment figures, then, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* further complicates the attachment theory debate explored in the other two novels by adding a new layer of parental responsibility. Parental figures must not only exist for their children as attachment figures, helping their children develop proper attachment styles; they must also carefully employ the authority that their attachments grant in order to raise their children to be respectable attachment figures in their adult romantic relationships.

Brontë's novel offers three main parental figures: Helen, Arthur, and Mrs. Markham. Helen's parenting style is strict to the point that several characters—who believe she should be less overbearing toward her son—comment on it, and Mrs. Markham comes across as not severe enough, giving her children (especially her sons) far too much freedom. Like Mrs. Markham, Arthur, the primary father figure in the novel, fails to instill proper morals once he forms an

attachment with his son. Instead, he uses that attachment, as Heathcliff does with Hareton, to make his child as much like himself as possible. Arthur feels attached to his son, and young Arthur is attached to his father. The absence of attachment is not problematic in these cases; rather, the problem is that the father-figure abuses the existing attachment in a way that is damaging to the child.

Unlike *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, which focus on repeated failures to provide children with strong parental attachments early in life, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* presents examples of parental relationships that include strong attachments, adhering to many of the characteristics that John Bowlby associates with proper childhood attachment. However, *Tenant* also reveals how strong attachment relationships can still damage a child's emotional development. It is important, then, to explore how the parent-child relationships in the novel work within the confines of attachment theory before demonstrating how the novel works to complicate that theory.

The first relevant example of this dynamic is Helen Huntingdon. Helen's situation with her aunt and uncle is a comparable situation to that of Jane Eyre's. She, like Jane, has been left to be raised by her aunt and uncle rather than her parents. The major difference between the two situations is the level of attachment. Whereas Mrs. Reed is detached from Jane, causing Jane's ability to form attachments to be damaged, Helen's aunt and uncle have fulfilled their roles as replacement parental figures. When Arthur mentions asking Helen's father for permission to marry, Helen responds, "I always look upon my uncle and aunt as my guardians, for they are so, in deed, though not in name" (164). Though her father is still alive, the people that Helen acknowledges as parents are the aunt and uncle who have formed an attachment to her. Helen also sees her attachment to them as the source of her good upbringing. She tells her aunt,

"Thanks to you, aunt, I have been well brought up, and had good examples always before me" (140). As attachment theory would suggest, Helen's strong childhood attachments have been beneficial by providing a set of examples for her to follow and a nurturing environment in which she can develop as an attachment figure.

Helen's parental attachments become especially important when she raises her own child, because, as *Wuthering Heights* points out, a failure in childhood attachment can cause that child to continue that cycle of detachment with his or her own children. Helen, a product of a strong parent-child attachment, forms a strong attachment with her son, Arthur, which is an excellent example of what Bowlby theorizes about early childhood attachments. For example, Bowbly asserts that "during the early months of life an infant's mother-figure is by far the main source of whatever stimulation he receives" (297). Bowlby's idea that the mother acts as a child's first primary attachment and first learning tool is especially relevant with Helen and her son, to whom Helen says of her love, "Would that your father could share it with me—that he could feel my love, my hope, and take an equal part in my resolves and projects for the future" (229). Arthur as of yet feels no attachment for his son, so his son has no father-figure to form attachments with. Instead, as Bowlby argues, the child's first form of primary attachment lies entirely with his mother. Additionally, it is worth pointing out that Helen's discussion of projects here is a reference to education. "God has sent me a soul," she says, "to educate for Heaven" (228). Helen fulfills both roles that Bowlby claims are necessary in early childhood: she is both a source of attachment and a learning tool for her child. The question becomes whether her son experiences attachment in the way that Bowlby's theory asserts.

Bowlby's first test of proper attachment styles is how a child responds to the temporary loss of his or her mother, and to fear in general, with regard to a mother's presence:

> Once a child has entered his second year, however, and is mobile, fairly typical attachment behaviour is almost always seen. By that age in most children the integrate of behavioural systems concerned is readily activated, especially by mother's departure or by anything frightening, and the stimuli that most effectively terminate the system are sound, sight, or touch of mother. (179)

Bowlby's definition of "typical attachment behaviour" is especially important to the discussion of this novel as a proto-attachment narrative. It gives us a point of comparison, especially when considering the parental treatment of young Arthur. Helen says that "When the baby was brought I tried to amuse [my husband] with that; but poor little Arthur was cutting his teeth, and his father could not bear his complaints" (244). While the older Arthur is unwilling to act in the role required of him as an attachment figure, Helen does just as Bowlby says she should, acting as a comforting force in the face of her son's fear and pain and staying with young Arthur when his father cannot stand the child's crying.

Arthur does attach to his son after the child has fully established his attachment with Helen. At this point, young Arthur is now old enough to not be reliant on his mother's attachment. According to Bowlby, "Thenceforward in most children they become less easily activated and they also undergo other changes that make proximity to mother less urgent" (179). It is at this age when the mother and father can be more easily interchanged as attachment figures. With regard to young Arthur, he forms a stronger parent-child attachment with his father than with his mother. Helen describes a moment between her son and his father, saying, "My little Arthur was standing between his knees, delightedly playing with the bright, ruby ring on his finger… I caught him up in my arms and carried him with me out of the room. Not liking this abrupt removal, the child began to pout and cry" (311). This moment is important for two

reasons. First, it is the earliest moment of attachment between young Arthur and his father. Arthur is content to be near his father, and his father, unlike previously, does not feel the need to remove his son from his presence. Secondly, when Helen does remove Arthur from his father, the child begins to react the way that the earlier Bowlby quotation suggests an infant will react to being removed from his mother, which means that Arthur regards his father on the level of attachment that he once regarded his mother—so much so that even when his mother is the source of the removal, the separation is still frightening.

As important as it is to discuss Helen's upbringing as an example of a strong parent-child attachment, it is equally important to discuss Gilbert's. He is the opening narrator, and, therefore, the reader's first point of reference for the way the novel acts as an attachment narrative. Gilbert's mother, Mrs. Markham, is described by Kristen A. Le Veness as "a typical caring mother, she is demonstrative in her attentions to her children" (349). Mrs. Markham's openness with her affection is indicative of the parenting style that Bowlby would argue is necessary to develop proper attachment modes. Additionally, as Le Veness points out, Mrs. Markham's level of affection is what is expected of mothers in the nineteenth century. We see the caring quality that Le Veness refers to early in the novel, when we have our first real glimpse of Mrs. Markham. Gilbert recounts that "she had swept the hearth, and made a bright blazing fire for our reception" (10). Mrs. Markham's desire to make a comfortable environment for her children is indicative of acceptance of her role as an attachment figure. She must provide safety and security for her children, as Bowlby suggests. Further, her own attachment to her children is clearly shown when she says to her two sons, "I'm sure you must be starved;—and tell me what you've been about all day; I like to know what my children have been about" (10). Bowlby would suggest that Mrs. Markham's genuine interest in the lives of her children and desire to ensure

that they are well fed and cared for shows that she has created healthy parent-child attachment relationships with them. Anne Brontë's novel, then, works as an excellent example of how proper attachment relationships behave. Still, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* does complicate attachment theory, as do *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*. Anne just achieves complication through the way that children are raised within attachment relationships and the variations that can exist even within what might be termed healthy levels of attachment.

*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* suggests that these variations occur because of how parents in parent-child attachment relationships use the authority that these attachments grant them. Helen comments that she has benefited from her parental figures leading well by example; however, she believes that "[Arthur], most likely, has not" (140). While we, as readers, are not privy to the exact circumstances of Arthur Huntingdon's upbringing, both Helen's assertion that there is some deficiency in his education and her aunt's claim that he is "a man who [is] deficient in sense or principle" lead us to believe that there has been some level of failure within his childhood attachment environment (140). Since he makes no mention, as Helen does, of a loss of parental affection, we can assume that the deficiency lies with his disciplinary education. While ordinarily it may be risky to use an unwritten history of a character as a point of analysis, this novel does suggest that, in Huntingdon's case, the absence of his parental history is a significant detail. Further, it is a detail that Brontë's contemporaries would be concerned with. Jessie Oriana Waller writes in an 1889 article that "As soon as a child is old enough to develop a will of its own, the first thing it does is to try and get its own way, and one of the earliest lessons it has to learn is that it can only have its own way when it is compatible with the comfort and rights of others" (663). Waller places the responsibility of ethical instruction on parental figures; however, she also suggests that "the child should be made to feel that the punishment is the natural result

of his bad action, and not mere venting of anger and annoyance on the part of the parent" (663). Waller, whose late Victorian approach to the novel remains surprisingly modern, highlights the balance that *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* suggests needs to be struck between affectionate parental attachment and disciplinary education. That absence of that balance is, as Helen and her aunt suggest, what Arthur Huntingdon experienced as a child. As a result, his behavior towards attachment figures later in life lacks the stability one would expect.

Arthur first exhibits signs of unhealthy attachment through his jealousy. He is jealous of Helen's devotion to God, but, more relevantly, he is jealous of her attachment to their son. He tells Helen, "I may go or come, be present or absent, cheerful or sad; it's all the same to you. As long as you have that ugly little creature to doat upon, you care not a farthing what becomes of me" (230). Arthur chastises Helen for giving more attention to their child than to him, yet when Helen is upset with him for affectionately taking and kissing the hand of Annabella Lowborough, he says, "It is all nonsense, Helen—a jest, a mere nothing—not worth a thought. Will you *never* learn?" (223). This quotation demonstrates the imbalance in Arthur's perception of what is expected in a romantic attachment. His self-centeredness indicates a failure to properly develop a healthy view of attachment in childhood. Kathryn Kerns and Rhonda Richardson say that "children who demonstrate hierarchical organization of preferences [in attachment figures] would have more confidence about how to manage situations in which their attachment systems are activated" (85). While Kerns and Richardson reference the development of children in middle childhood, the link between properly prioritizing attachment figures and the ability to deal with situations in which one's attachment systems respond to a threat is relevant to Arthur's situation. His inability to prioritize his attachment to Helen over his attachment to Annabella, for whom he is developing an attraction, mirrors his inability to understand why his wife would

prioritize their son's needs over his own. All of this suggests that Arthur's lack of moral education from his own attachment figures in early childhood has damaged his ability to make healthy attachment decisions in his adult romantic relationships.

Arthur's hypocritical sense of romantic attachment culminates in his affair with Annabella Lowborough. Helen points out his hypocrisy, saying, "how can you call it nothing—an offense for which you would think yourself justified in blowing another man's brains out?" (224). Arthur sees adultery as punishable by death only if he is not the adulterer. His self-centered hypocrisy in this situation is evidence of his unhealthy understanding of romantic attachments. Christine Colón identifies this moral dynamic as one of the major themes of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: "In Anne's novel, individuals are repeatedly threatened by the evil that surrounds them, and many succumb to its temptations. Anne proposes that these dangerous patterns will only begin to change when people learn to value community and begin to care for their neighbours" (21). It is the ability to value community that Arthur lacks, and I would argue that his inability to care for others in a way that allows him to break from temptation is the result of what Helen earlier indicated as a fault in his childhood upbringing.

Additionally, Arthur's jealousy coincides with his refusal to place value on the happiness of others, which manifests not just in his romantic relationships but also his role as a father. When his son is an infant, Arthur tells Helen, "I can't *love* it—what is there to love? It can't love me—or you either; it can't understand a single word you say to it, or feel one spark of gratitude for all your kindness. Wait till it can shew some little affection for me, and then I'll see about loving it" (231). Arthur's assessments of his own attachments, even to his son, are couched in his self-centeredness. He refuses to show affection if he cannot see proof of affection in return. The immorality of this mentality is made more obvious because, unlike Arthur, Helen adheres

strongly to a code of ethics that values others people's happiness, even above her own. When Arthur shows unrealistically strong jealousy of his son, Helen responds, saying, "It is false, Arthur; when you enter the room, it always doubles my happiness… when I think about our child, I please myself with the idea that you share my thoughts and feelings, though I don't speak them" (230). Helen constantly concerns herself with the happiness and thoughts of those she feels an attachment towards, which the novel argues is almost certainly a result of her own upbringing. On the other hand, while Arthur's lack of attachment perspective is certainly influenced by his upbringing, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* suggests that another way in which someone who has experienced proper attachment-based affections in early childhood can still fail to adhere to the principles of healthy attachment relationships is with the introduction of an external force of detachment. In the case of Arthur Huntingdon, that force is alcohol.

Arthur's alcoholism is a major component of his relationship with both Helen and his son. Contemporary attachment theory has tied alcoholism to a deficiency in attachment style. According to research on the topic by Ann De Rick, Stijn Vanheule, and Paul Verhaeghe,

> These results indicate that in our study, most of the alcoholic inpatients show moderate to high deficiencies in their attachment system, as a consequence of which we can hypothesize a lag in self-development and affect regulation. They are missing the capacity to form mental representations of self and others and as such lack the capability of interpersonal interpretation and affect regulation. (105-108)

Arthur Huntingdon has already demonstrated an inability to internalize proper representations of others' emotions, which De Rick, Vanheule, and Verhaeghe suggest would result in an increased likelihood of substance abuse. Further, one of the effects of Arthur's substance abuse is continued detachment from his adult romantic relationships—specifically his attachment to

Helen, whose description of Arthur's alcoholism highlights its detaching effects: "In this time of weakness and depression he would have made it his medicine and support, his comforter, his recreation, and his friend,—and thereby sunk deeper and deeper—and bound himself down for ever in the bathos whereinto he had fallen" (249). Arthur's alcohol abuse is both a product of failures in his own attachment system and an instigating factor of his continued failure to form healthy attachments. It acts, therefore, as a detaching force, which the novel presents as another means through which attachments can continue to be damaged, even if the attachment figure in question has not had traditionally dysfunctional childhood attachments.

An additional and vital effect of Arthur's alcoholism is its impact upon the raising of his son, whom he strives to bring up to be as much like himself as possible. This immediately places Arthur in comparison with Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights*, who attempts to do the same thing with Hareton. The difference (and it is a significant one to this analysis) is motivation. Heathcliff is motivated by revenge. We see this in Heathcliff's declaration of "twisting" Hareton's development the way that his has been, and Nelly reinforces the notion that Heathcliff has hindered Hareton's development by saying, "Hareton, who should now be the first gentleman in the neighborhood, was reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy" (145-146). The fact that Heathcliff is Hindley's enemy is important to the comparison between Heathcliff and Arthur, because it underlines the malice of Heathcliff's motivation. Heathcliff feels no attachment for Hareton and, therefore, is still acting within Bowlby's theoretical framework for how a lack of healthy attachments (like Heathcliff experienced) will negatively influence a person's ability to attach themselves to others. Arthur's motivation, in contrast, is actually born out of attachment. Helen establishes Arthur's affection for his son, saying, "He has won his father's heart at last; and now my constant terror is, lest he

should be ruined by that father's thoughtless indulgence" (232). It is important to note that Helen identifies the danger in Arthur's parenting as thoughtlessness. Arthur would not and does not see his son's mimicry of himself as negative, because he lacks the empathy necessary to identify his own behavior as negative. So, while Bowlby's theory would suggest that Arthur and his son's mutual attachment would lead to a stronger emotional development for young Arthur, Arthur lacks the recognition of his own immorality necessary to properly raise his son. As a result, Arthur misuses the authority granted to him by his attachment to his son and does not provide the emotional education that Bowlby asserts such attachments should offer.

In fact, the environment in which young Arthur is raised under his father's care is permeated by the immoral aspects of Huntingdon's character. Colón describes the culture surrounding the Huntingdon household as "a very flawed community that is held together primarily because the men who form the core of the group enjoy carousing together" (25). That flawed community includes Arthur's method of raising his child. Helen tells readers, "My greatest source of uneasiness, in this time of trial, was my son, whom his father and his father's friends delighted to encourage in all the embryo vices a little child can show, and to instruct in all the evil habits he could acquire—in a word, to 'make a man of him' was one of their staple amusements" (334). Arthur and his friends are intent on raising young Arthur to be as much like themselves as possible. While this is similar to how Heathcliff raised Hareton, Arthur—unlike Heathcliff—does not see his own development as flawed. In fact, he sees it as necessary to being "a man."

What is most intriguing about this novel as an attachment narrative, though, is that the way that Arthur raises his son dramatizes the idea that parental attachment is tied to authority. Young Arthur becomes more attached to his father than to his mother. The increased level of

attachment even results in his father holding more authority. “He was never willing to go,” Helen says of her son, “and I frequently had to carry him away by force; for which he thought me very cruel and unjust; and sometimes his father would insist upon my letting him remain;—and then, I would leave him to his kind friends” (335-336). Young Arthur prefers to be with his father, and because of that he views his father as the primary authority figure. Helen says that young Arthur “came down every evening, in spite of his cross mamma, and learnt to tipple wine like papa, to swear like Mr. Hattersley, and to have his own way like a man, and sent mamma to the devil when she tried to prevent him” (335). Brontë’s novel, here, resists Bowlby’s assertion that the level of attachment that a child receives from a caregiver necessarily leads to healthier attachment development. Instead, Brontë creates a link between attachment and authority, and in Arthur’s case, authority results in him working to raise his son in an emotionally unhealthy environment—even though the environment is based in attachment. The parent/child dynamic here reveals that even if a child has a strong attachment to a primary caregiver, that caregiver can damage the child’s attachment system through a misuse of the authority granted to him or her as an attachment figure.

While Young Arthur is certainly an example of the kind of damage that can be done to a child’s development, even when attachment is present, when he or she is allowed (and encouraged) to be extremely self-centered and indulgent, he is not the only example in the novel. Mrs. Markham, like Arthur’s father, is a parent who does not accept the responsibility to use her given authority to instill a code of ethics that discourages self-centeredness in her children. Mrs. Markham spoils both of her sons. Gilbert even comments that “[Helen] was evidently prejudiced against me, and seemed bent on shewing me that her opinions respecting me, on every particular, fell far below those I entertained of myself… Perhaps, too, I was a little bit spoiled by my mother

and sister" (32). Gilbert's opinion of himself is high because his mother and sister have made it so, and, like Arthur, he has not learned to temper his self-image with perspective. He even goes so far as to think that the only way that Helen would not hold him in as high esteem as he holds himself is if she is already inclined towards disliking him. According to Le Veness,

> Mrs Markham displays many basic mothering skills, yet pointedly Anne also highlights her excesses as a way to criticize parental overindulgence and lack of control, a repeated theme in The Tenant. Specifically, Anne treats seriously the question of how a mother should raise a son, particularly with an absent father figure. (349)

Here, Le Veness points out Mrs. Markham's participation in the theme of overindulgent parents and, further, identifies the centrality of that theme to the narrative. What is more interesting for examining the way *Tenant* relates to attachment theory, however, is not how this overindulgence relates to a son being raised by a single mother, but, rather, the fact that the two most overindulgent parental figures are a father and a mother, thus removing gender dynamics from the equation. It is not the fact that Mrs. Markham is a single mother that makes her an overindulgent parent. Rather, it is the fact that she does not exercise a responsible use of her authority as an attachment figure. Just as Arthur's irresponsible parenting is dangerous because it fails to instill a perspective that places a proper amount of value on the happiness and well-being of others, so is Mrs. Markham's.

Gilbert, at several points in the novel, rejects the immorality of hurting others in his adult attachment relationships. For example, when he kisses Eliza Millward, both leading Eliza—a girl he does not intend to marry—on and upsetting his mother, he cannot bring himself to promise to avoid doing so in the future. The most that Gilbert can manage to say is "I'll promise never to—that is, I'll promise to—to think twice before I take any important step you seriously disapprove

of" (41). As a result of Gilbert's overindulgent upbringing, he has developed into an attachment figure with little regard for the wishes of others. He even refuses to avoid actions that upset people that he has formed strong attachments with, such as his mother or Eliza, who he claims to have genuine affection for. Tess O'Toole compares Gilbert to Arthur Huntingdon: "Gilbert, like Arthur, has been spoiled by his mother and has an inflated ego, and he subscribes to all the standard Victorian stereotypes about female nature and female merit" (716). The end result of Arthur's and Gilbert's irresponsible upbringings is that they both find it difficult to resist their own personal pleasures for the sake of others. The culmination of this behavior for Gilbert is the violent beating of his friend, Mr. Lawrence. Gilbert, recounting the event, says, "It was not without a feeling of savage satisfaction that I beheld the instant, deadly pallor that overspread his face, and the few red drops that tricked down his forehead" (109). Gilbert's joy at having hurt his friend, for the sole reason that Gilbert believed that Mr. Lawrence succeeded with Helen when Gilbert himself had failed, parallels Arthur's hypocrisy when he deems the act of infidelity between himself and Annabella as punishable by death—but only if another man were to do such a thing with Helen. Both Arthur and Gilbert, therefore, have a damaged sense of adult attachments that has emerged as a result of irresponsibly lenient parenting. It is important, then, to examine the outcome of the opposite approach: the strict way that Helen brings up young Arthur.

Helen's desire to leave her husband with her son is partially a result of the danger that young Arthur's environment poses to the development of his attachment-based morality. Le Veness highlights Helen's effort to counterbalance her son's negative moral development with too much severity: "Young Arthur's only chance of breaking the cycle of male aggression and self-indulgence passed down by his father rests with the rigid moral training of his mother. Helen

must counteract Arthur Huntingdon's self-gratifying, indulgent behaviour" (349). Particularly of interest here is the way in which Le Veness describes Arthur's moral development as "self-indulgent" and the product of "self-gratifying" behavior. The primary problem that Le Veness points to is the lack of acknowledgment of the value of others, which is, at its core, a problem of attachment.

Arthur Huntingdon has made efforts towards training his son to undervalue others and to be concerned only with self-satisfaction. Young Arthur's only hope of developing into a balanced attachment figure, then, is to be removed from his father's influence and put wholly within the influential sphere of Helen, whose rigid adherence to Christian morality is the antithesis of Arthur's indulgence. As such, the novel seems to suggest that the level of strictness with which Helen chooses to raise her son is, at least, preferable to Arthur Huntingdon's and Mrs. Markham's indulgent parenting. This is further indicated though Mrs. Markham's disapproval of Helen's child rearing choices. Mrs. Markham says of Helen's refusal to allow Arthur to drink wine, "Well, Mrs. Graham… well, you surprise me! I really gave you credit for having more sense—the poor child will be the veriest milksop that ever was sopped! Only think what a Man you will make of him" (28). Mrs. Markham's belief that Helen's actions will not make a proper "man" out of her son calls back to Arthur and his friends' attempts to do so by perpetuating a cycle of indulgence and self-centeredness that was devoid of proper respect for romantic attachments. As a result, it would seem that Helen's parenting style, since it diverges so strongly from the immoral teachings of the two irresponsible parental figures in the novel, is the solution to the problem of the self-centered childhood upbringing that leads to an attachment system that does not properly value adult romantic attachments. However, Helen's parenting style also falls short in respect to one important element of parent-child attachment: empathy.

Even Helen sees finds fault with her lack of empathy as a mother: "I am not well fitted to be his only companion, I know; but there is no other to supply my place. I am too grave to minister to his amusements and enter into his infantile sports as a nurse or a mother ought to do, and often his bursts of gleeful merriment trouble and alarm me" (313). Helen is concerned that her strictness as a mother, without some leniency to balance Arthur's education, will be problematic. Modern attachment theorists would agree. According to Douglas Goldsmith, "Insightfulness treatment focuses on helping the parent gain an improved and more accurate understanding of the child's underlying motivation in order for the parent to respond to the child from a more empathic perspective" (7). It is extremely important for a child to feel emotional support from a parent when that child is in the process of developing a healthy parent-child dynamic. In Helen's case, her severity does not allow her the level of empathetic understanding necessary to relate to her son's more childish tendencies, and, as a result, her parenting style also lacks the balance necessary for her son to develop into a healthy adult attachment figure. Just as her severity is needed to balance the damage done to young Arthur's development by his father, another figure of attachment needs to balance Helen's severity, though not to the extreme that her husband did. The ending of the novel suggests that the appropriate attachment figure is Gilbert Markham.

Le Veness argues that Helen works to rectify the self-centeredness that has resulted from Gilbert's spoiled upbringing: "Gilbert must outgrow his mother's spoiling if he desires a fulfilling relationship and a successful future. Helen actually succeeds in counteracting this spoiling and thus demonstrates her abilities as an educator and a maturing presence in Gilbert's life and presumably young Arthur's" (349). According to Le Veness, the redeeming force at the end of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*'s attachment narrative is Helen's work to redeem Gilbert's

damaged attachment style with her own story, which grants him perspective. She is not wrong. It is certainly true that when Gilbert finishes reading Helen's account, the value that he places on others is increased. He quickly returns to Frederick Lawrence and admits, "The truth is, Lawrence… I have not acted quite correctly towards you of late—especially on this last occasion; and I'm come to—in short, to express my regret for what has been done, and to beg your pardon" (393). While Gilbert's apology is clumsy, the fact that he feels the need to apologize at all shows growth in his attachment behavior.

Le Veness does not, however, acknowledge that Gilbert also acts as a remedying force to balance out Helen's severity. I would argue that he does. Gilbert describes his occasional meetings with Helen and young Arthur as "I rather liked to see Mrs. Graham, and to talk to her, and I decidedly liked to talk to her little companion, whom, when once the ice of his shyness was finally broken, I found to be a very amiable, intelligent, and entertaining little fellow" (47). Unlike Helen, who cannot relate to her son's excitable tendencies, Gilbert finds them entertaining. Further, the moment that Gilbert and Helen become engaged, Gilbert's affection towards Arthur becomes that of a parent: "In great good humour, I sat down to examine the book and drew the little fellow between my knees. Had he come a minute before, I should have received him less graciously, but now I affectionately stroked his curling locks, and even kissed his ivory forehead" (469). This scene mirrors the scene where Arthur is seated beneath his father's knees as a child. The difference, though, is one of balance. Here, as a result of Helen's influence, Gilbert has gained the perspective necessary to form healthy adult attachments, and, as such, he is able to step into the role of Arthur's father in a way that both balances Helen's severity with empathy and lenience and does not reject her authority, as her first husband had.

While *Wuthering Heights* works to show the cyclical nature of detachment and *Jane Eyre* demonstrates, in great detail, the negative impact that a lack of attachment can have on the development of children, especially those raised in institutions, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* warns that the presence and affection of an attachment figure is not enough to ensure the development of proper attachment modes later in life. Those who are in positions of authority in attachment relationships must use their authority responsibly. Anne Brontë's novel also argues for the importance of balance and perspective in attachment relationships. Ultimately, the major problem with parent-child attachments in this novel is that the authority in relationships always comes from one source and one style of child rearing. Either Helen has sole authority over Arthur's emotional education, imposing a strict set of guidelines, or his father has control and uses it to teach self-indulgence. Similarly, Mrs. Markham's tendency to spoil her children is left unchecked, and the results are dangerous. Laura Berry says of the novel's critique of marriage that "most readings of the novel have tended to see Brontë's fulminations against [Arthur and Helen as a couple] as a critique of brutal masculinity and the socially-informed power relations that give that brutality a legal and cultural sanction" (43). It makes sense, then, that the only way *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* can resolve the cultural problem that it highlights as an attachment narrative is to reform Gilbert's own brutal masculinity through Helen and allow her to influence her child's development in tandem with, instead of in spite of, his parental influences on young Arthur.

# CHAPTER 5

## Conclusion: Looking Forward at Genre Definition for Attachment Narratives

Attachment theory has been mostly avoided as a critical lens in literary analysis, but I would suggest that it could be a significant one. Like other cultural lenses, attachment theory helps us, as readers, gain a greater understanding of how texts resonate with our understanding of our culture. What I have termed "attachment narratives" focus on an important societal concern. By identifying novels that comment on and complicate attachment theory, we are able to better understand the way those novels work to interact with societal concerns about childhood development, parental affection, and caregiving.

While attachment theory was not developed until John Bowlby's work in the 1960s, the same concerns about childhood existed long before the theory itself. If we are to begin to study attachment narratives as a genre, we must identify works that were dealing with the same concerns as Bowlby's. I have termed these works "proto-attachment narratives," and the Brontë novels that I have analyzed are excellent examples. They demonstrate the movement from debates on child rearing to what I would argue are early discussions on attachment; additionally, they work to complicate formal attachment theory.

Victorian debates on childcare and education come very close to attachment theory, but the Brontë novels push them even closer. For example, through an examination of *Wuthering Heights* we can see a link between nineteenth century theorist Florence Hill and Bowlby. Hill argues that it is important "to preserve family ties, and to enable the young soldier to form, before he enters the battle of life, relations of affection, friendship, and sympathy, which shall support and shelter him in future difficulty or sorrow" (243). Hill theorizes that there is a causal link between the affection a child receives growing up and their ability to deal with sorrow later

in life. This feels like an early attempt at attachment theory. After all, Bowlby says that "there is abundant evidence to show that the kind of care an infant receives from his mother plays a major part in determining the way in which his attachment behavior develops" (203). *Wuthering Heights*, then, works as a bridge between these texts. Brontë moves beyond the contemporary debate by addressing the cyclical nature of attachment that Bowlby mentions in the above quote. This examination, I argue, categorizes *Wuthering Heights* as an early example of an attachment narrative.

Looking at these novels as works from a community of writers helps bring to light a conversation about attachment between the texts. That conversation not only bridges Victorian anxieties about parenting and Bowlby's theory, it also works to highlight some of the staples of the attachment narrative genre. We can see those characteristics reflected in contemporary attachment narratives, therefore allowing us to categorize the earlier texts as proto-attachment narratives. Much of what Bowlby theorized has become a part of our cultural understanding, but that was not the case when the Brontës were writing. Yet, when analyzed with our cultural understanding of attachment theory in mind, we see a similar societal commentaries as those of more modern attachment narratives emerge in the Brontës' novels.

The same ideas are reflected in, for example, *Lunar Park*, by Bret Easton Ellis. Bret, the protagonist, feels detached from his children and even, at times, from the world. During his worst period of drug use, Bret recounts, "One afternoon I woke up and realized I didn't know how anything worked anymore. Which button turned the espresso machine on? Who was paying my mortgage? Where did the stars come from? After a while you learn that everything stops" (32). Bret's drug and alcohol use is consistently tied to detachment in the novel, but his disconnectedness did not start with him. He developed his detachment as a way to deal with his

own father's lack of attachment to him: "My father had always been a problem—careless, abusive, alcoholic, vain, angry, paranoid" (6). His father is an extreme example of a detached parent, and Ellis makes it very clear that his father's influence negatively affected Bret's personality development, as Bret says, "As much as I wanted to escape his influence, I couldn't. It had soaked into me, shaped me into the man I was becoming" (7). Bret's father's detached parenting makes Bret, himself, a detached parent. When he is first told about the existence of his son, he responds with fear and a desire to detach himself from the situation, saying, "Children had voices, they wanted to explain themselves, they wanted to tell you where everything was—and I could easily do without witnessing these special skills. I had already seen what I wanted and it did not involve children" (20).

In many ways, *Lunar Park* is the perfect example of an attachment narrative. It shows, in a direct and clear way, the influence a child's relationship to their attachment figures has on his or her formation of attachment styles in adulthood. In many ways, it also parallels the dynamic in *Wuthering Heights. Lunar Park* describes attachment as a cycle that can either foster healthy attachment styles or continue a trend of detachment. Further, the narrative is more specifically focused on the effects of that detached parental relationship than *Wuthering Heights*, because it was written at a time in which Bowlby's theory has permeated our culture. *Wuthering Heights*, as I mentioned earlier, also concentrates on a detachment cycle. Heathcliff is, at least in part, a product of his detached upbringing, and the result is he becomes a detached parent, just as Bret does. While Emily Brontë doesn't have the cultural understanding of attachment theory necessary to make the direct references to attachment and detachment that Ellis does, many of her themes are the same, and the cyclical nature of attachment relationships that I focused on in

the chapter on *Wuthering Heights* parallel the cycle of parental detachment that we see in *Lunar Park*.

Similarly, the parental neglect demonstrated in *Jane Eyre* is presented in a much more explicit way in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Harry, like Jane, is left with his aunt and uncle and, like Jane, is the victim of a series of abuses from both of his parental figures and their son. What is interesting about this parallel, though, is that while both of these narratives explore a failure in attachment, Rowling's comments about attachment are more direct. In *Half Blood Prince*, Rowling has Albus Dumbledore chastise Harry's aunt Petunia and uncle Vernon for their failure to be proper attachment figures, saying, "You did not do as I asked. You have never treated Harry as a son. He has known nothing but neglect and often cruelty at your hands" (55). Dumbledore, and the *Harry Potter* series in general, is very concerned with the impact of parenting like the kind that Harry has received from his aunt and uncle. Harry is constantly searching for surrogate parental figures to give him the attachment and admiration that he did not receive from his aunt and uncle growing up.

Attachment theory's cultural significance means that authors writing in a post-Bowlby world, like Rowling, are much more likely to explicitly point out the direct, causal link between unaffectionate, detached parents and the quality of a child's emotional well-being. It is much easier and more obvious to categorize these novels as attachment narratives; however, the fact that Jane's narrative in so many ways mirrors Harry's is indicative of the level of attachment concern that exists in *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte Brontë, too, was writing an attachment narrative, but her language is less clearly connected to Bowlby because she did not have the cultural understanding of attachment that Rowling does. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane says to her aunt, "You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have

no pity" (30). Jane's concern may be kindness rather than being treated as truly one of her aunt's children (which is more Harry's concern), but it focuses on a similar concept. Mrs. Reed, like Vernon and Petunia, has failed in her role as a primary caregiver because she actively avoided forming an attachment to Jane. The similarities between these two narratives firmly classify *Jane Eyre* as an attachment narrative, and they allow us to use it as a starting point for discussing the formation of the attachment narrative genre.

Additionally, just as *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* works to complicate these proto-attachment narratives by demonstrating that the presence of an attached caregiver does not necessarily equate to proper caregiving, there are modern attachment narratives that similarly, and more obviously, make the same argument. One example is Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Chbosky creates a scenario in which the protagonist, Charlie, is extremely attached to his aunt Helen. Early on, Charlie says, "My Aunt Helen was my favorite person in the whole world" (5). Charlie's memories of her caregiving are some of the most detailed in the novel. Like Arthur in *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Aunt Helen has a responsibility as a caregiver. And, like Arthur, she misuses the power given to her when she molests Charlie as a child. Once Charlie realizes that, his attachment to Helen is tainted. He says, "And even if she were here, I don't think I could talk to her either. Because I'm starting to feel like what I dreamt about her last night was true" (205). Charlie's dream of his Aunt Helen molesting him creates, for him, a vacuum. He no longer has anybody, living or dead, that he feels a strong enough attachment with to confide in. The only reason he feels he can confide in the person he writes to is because of their lack of attachment: "I will call people by different names or generic names, because I don't want you to find me. I didn't enclose a return address for the same reason" (2). Aunt Helen, even though she was physically present and created an emotional attachment, ignored her

responsibility as an attachment figure and abused her position, leaving Charlie without the ability to form healthy attachments. While Chbosky's novel uses much more direct language to handle attachment issues, it still addresses some of the same thematic problems with parent/child attachment behavior as *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. In this way, I believe we can see *Tenant* as a novel that attempts to make some of the same arguments as *Perks*, but without the cultural understanding of attachment theory necessary to argue as explicitly as Chbosky does in his novel.

The Brontë novels' early moves towards attachment theory categorize them as proto-attachment narratives, and they bridge the gap between the early, nineteenth century debate and formal attachment theory. We can see this bridge—which helps show a trajectory of theory and genre—in the parallels between these early attachment narratives and modern, more explicit attachment narratives. Victorian theorists were concerned with the varying levels of parental involvement in a child's life and what effect that involvement, or lack thereof, would have on the child's development. The Brontës took those theories further, coming close to the fundamental elements of Bowlby's theory and creating some of the first novels we could categorize as attachment narratives. The fact that we can see such strong parallels between these novels and more recent ones suggests that a more in-depth analysis of the development of attachment narratives could result in a clearer definition of attachment narratives as a literary genre that has existed for over a century and is continuing to develop with its own set of expectations and genre characteristics.

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