VICTORIAN LOVERS: CONSENSUAL SADOMASOCHISTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BRONTË NOVELS

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Applying the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, along with feminist theory, I plan to show how the primary romantic relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is sadomasochistic in nature, and how it influences and facilitates the secondary relationships. Alternatively, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, I will demonstrate how Mr. Rochester's relationship with his estranged wife Bertha Mason manipulates the relationship he forms with Jane: how it turns Rochester cynical, Bertha even more violent and insane, in turn corrupting Jane, almost to the point of insanity herself. Jane is certainly no stranger to this type of oppressive, sadistic relationship, and is immersed in another similar pattern with her cousin, St. John Rivers. Though the relationships in both novels are oftentimes physically violent, the emotional pain and distress is equally disturbing, as it also causes great obvious mental and physical deterioration.

There are many similarities between Heathcliff and Edward Rochester—two of the ultimate Byronic heroes. Mary Ellen Snodgrass explains the Byronic hero:

> A larger-than-life manipulator of public opinion, the Byronic hero is antisocial, in part because of self-scorn, an element of Byron's melancholy poems "Lara" (1814) and "My Soul Is Dark" (1815). The fallen romantic protagonist feels remorse for some unnamed misdeed, yet refuses to recount his wrongs or repent. Self-reliant to a fault, he is capable of chameleon-like shifts from brooding loner to celebrity, from self-mocker to strutting egocentric.
> As a lover, the Byronic hero intertwines love and hate to shape a destructive, all-consuming passion, the impetus to tragedy in the love affair of Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Whether a heartbreaker, sexual predator, bon vivant, or reckless rogue, the stereotype accommodates extremes of behavior, often for unconscionable reasons, as is the case with Charlotte Brontë's Edward Rochester, the guilt-wracked charmer in *Jane Eyre* (1847) who woos Jane while immuring his insane wife in an upper story of Thornfield. (Snodgrass 45).

Both Heathcliff and Rochester are cynical, brooding, passionate, sadistic, and unable to conform to traditional moral values, which cause them each to outwardly and inwardly suffer immensely. Similarly, the two heroines are headstrong, outspoken and also passionate. A significant difference, however, is in the appearance of these four characters. The *Wuthering Heights* lovers Heathcliff and Catherine are strikingly handsome and beautiful, respectively; their looks and relationship mirroring the picturesque moors they frolicked in as children. Meanwhile, their *Jane Eyre* counterparts Jane and Edward are plain, homely, ordinary, and unmemorable, but as their love grows stronger, their appearances appeal more to each other, as well.

Compared to their predecessors and even contemporaries, the Brontë sisters introduced a new, groundbreaking type of Victorian novel, each with a different kind of passion than the Jane Austen heroes and heroines, although still influenced somewhat by Austen. Is it merely a coincidence that both novels by these two hermitic sisters had Byronic heroes whom readers simultaneously loved and hated, and as a result, cheered on and maybe even lusted after? In contrast, while Jane Austen quietly penned Mr. Darcy, Mr. Knightley and Captain Wentworth—all proper, titled men of "true English style" (Austen 72) who would never dream of hanging a dog, throwing a knife at a lady, betting on an estate, or marrying a woman just to ruin her family and make another woman jealous—Emily Brontë, a mere thirty years later, conjured Heathcliff up from the dark, rainy, tempestuous moors, and Charlotte Brontë created a man who locked away his first wife, essentially throwing away the key, and allegedly had an illegitimate child. To further prove the contrast, the scene in which Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy confess their love to each other at the end of *Pride and Prejudice* is in effect, a "non-scene." The confession is not written or spoken, but alluded to: "…he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do" (Austen 239). "Sensible" and "warm" are not

adjectives that immediately come to mind when describing either Brontë hero, Heathcliff or Rochester; however, the phrase "violently in love" (Austen 239) is much more appropriate for the love shared between Catherine and Heathcliff than Elizabeth and Darcy. Austen wrote her love scenes so that the private, intimate, important conversations between the lovers stay just that; the Brontë sisters wrote in a way that every emotion and heartbreak was tangible, and completely felt by the reader—a raw, gritty, painful, *sadomasochistic* love. In her article "Manfred, The Brontës, and the Byronic Gothic Hero," Cristina Ceron states, "The difference between the two sisters' approaches to the Gothic is structural and meaningful: while Emily lets her admiration for the Byronic hero take hold of her, become real rapture and dominate the narration, Charlotte aims at writing a domestic novel with an ethical stance: true love and determination can redeem even a 'borderline character' like the Byronic Rochester" (Ceron 175). The description of the sisters is similar to the heroines themselves: Catherine allows Heathcliff and their love to consume her—the madness eats away at her; whereas Jane takes a stand against Rochester, and leaves him, which forces him to realize that he needs her purity and goodness in his life.

Both Heathcliff and Rochester are similar in that they are disturbed and mysterious. Heathcliff amasses a fortune of unknown origins; Rochester legally cannot commit to a relationship with Jane. Heathcliff desperately wants to make the other characters' lives miserable, to avenge Catherine's death and seek vengeance for Edgar's and Hindley's treatment of him; Rochester attempts to coerce Jane to be his mistress, knowing she is morally opposed to the idea. Both men enjoy torturing the women they love by either keeping them in limbo or simultaneously wishing perpetual haunting, and destroying the entire social order they have come to take comfort in.

The language between the female lovers exploring and explaining their feelings in both novels is comparable. The women are willing to fully give themselves to the men, for a price. The fact that both women so closely identify with their male counterparts- to the point where it is difficult for her to discern where she ends and he begins, is masochistic and narcissistic. Jane muses to herself: "'He is not to them what he is to me,' I thought: 'he is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine; —I am sure he is,—I feel akin to him,—I understand the language of his countenance and movements; though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him'" (C. Brontë 149).

Similarly, Catherine exclaims to Nelly: "'Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but, as my own being—so, don't talk of our separation again—it is impracticable'" (E. Brontë 64). The women both describe themselves and their lovers as being either similar, or one and the same. However, Catherine forsakes Heathcliff. She marries above her station, despite the declaration: "'I *am* Heathcliff,'" and she does not think him "good enough" to marry her. Jane loves Rochester and feels "'akin to him'" but does not feel that she is "good enough" to marry *him*. Insanity plays a role in both novels, as well. Catherine, not being able to control her feelings for Heathcliff, goes insane. Bertha Mason Rochester is already insane when the reader is introduced to her, and gets progressively more mad as the years pass.

As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, sadism is: "Enthusiasm for inflicting pain, suffering, or humiliation on others; *spec.* a psychological disorder characterized by sexual fantasies, urges, or *behaviour involving the subjection of another person to pain, humiliation, bondage, etc*" (emphasis mine). Also defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, masochism is: "The urge to derive pleasure, esp. sexual gratification, from one's own pain or humiliation; the

pursuit of such pleasure. Also in weakened sense: deliberate pursuit of or enthusiasm for an activity that appears to be painful, frustrating, or tedious. Cf. sadism n., sadomasochism n."

Richard von Krafft-Ebing was a psychiatrist and medical pioneer who invented the terms "sadism" and "masochism." The terms are derived from the names of the Marquis de Sade, a nobleman, and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, a writer, both of whom engaged in the practices described as follows by von Krafft-Ebing: Sadism: "the experience of sexual pleasurable sensations (including orgasm) produced by acts of cruelty, bodily punishment afflicted on one's own person or when witnessed in others…It may also consist of an innate desire to humiliate, hurt, wound or even destroy others in order thereby to create sexual pleasure in one's self" (53) and "masochism…the individual affected, in sexual feeling and thought, is controlled by the idea of being completely and unconditionally subject to the will of a person of the opposite sex; of being treated by this person as by a master, humiliated and abused" (86).

Additionally, from *the Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,* Sigmund Freud, a noted psychoanalyst writes:

> *Sadism and Masochism.*—The desire to cause pain to the sexual object and its opposite, the most frequent and most significant of all perversions, was designated in its two forms by v. Krafft-Ebing as sadism or the active form, and masochism or the passive form (Freud 31-32).
>
> It has also been claimed that every pain contains in itself the possibility of a pleasurable sensation…The most striking peculiarity of this perversion lies in the fact that its active and passive forms are regularly encountered together in the same person. He who experiences pleasure by causing pain to others in sexual relations is also able to experience the pain emanating from sexual relations as pleasure. *A sadist is simultaneously a masochist, though either the active or the passive side of the perversion may be more strongly developed and thus represent his preponderate sexual activity* (Freud 33). (emphasis mine).

For the purposes of this argument, the portion of Freud's theory in italics most appropriately describes Heathcliff, in that he clearly experiences great pleasure in causing the pain of everyone else around him, except—*or, maybe even especially*—Catherine. Even though the two share the sadist and masochist roles, it is obvious that he more closely identifies with a sadist. Below in further detail, it will be demonstrated how the lovers exhibit the traits of these definitions, and how their lives and relationships are adversely affected by the consequences their actions manifest. Robert Polhemus suggests that Emily Brontë herself had a touch of sadism: "Consider the question of Brontë's pervasive sadism: she seems to revel in rendering pain…Like Heathcliff, she behaves with a prodigal disregard of physical well-being, almost as though will and love could turn pain to pleasure—which is the point of libidinal sadism" (Polhemus 83). No matter how much Heathcliff and Catherine want to be together, their union is impossible, and only creates death and destruction.

Alternatively, in the beginning of his marriage to Bertha Mason, Edward Rochester is entranced by her dark and seductive beauty. He allows his thinking to be clouded by her aura, letting himself be tricked into the marriage by his father and brother. Once the spell is broken, he begins to hate and resent her, and then himself for allowing it to happen. As a result, he locks her away as a prisoner on the top floor of his estate, proving his sadism and penchant for anger. Rochester gives the illusion that he does not want to cause Jane any pain; however, the first and only heartbreak she ever experiences is at his hands: a direct result of his trickery and desire to make a fool of her in public.

Wuthering Heights

After an initial reading of *Wuthering Heights,* the most memorable aspect of the novel is the love story. Reading those words on the page that Catherine desperately and almost wistfully breathed to Nelly: "he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (Brontë 63)—could evoke feeling from even the most stoic of people. Despite the sadism, despair, destruction, death and ruin that envelope these two lovers as does the wind on the moors, the lovesick reader expects a happy, Hollywood ending. When no Hollywood ending comes to fruition, the reader in turn comes to the realization that no one writes that way anymore. Or, for that matter, loves in that way: that all-consuming, hedonistic, narcissistic desire for pleasure—and most likely never will love in that way again. Catherine and Heathcliff needed the fairytale, regardless of how they got it. They were meant to be together, no matter the cost. However, despite how much one may feel, will, or want it, love does not always end happily. It does not always work out the way it is expected or "supposed" to. Thus, getting to the bottom of the origin of Heathcliff was a priority. He would stop at nothing to be with Catherine—circumstances be damned!—without a worry for whose life he had to ruin in order to claim her for his own. His simultaneous hatred for and indifference to every other human being in their circle was fascinating. Why did Emily Brontë write such a character? *Where did he come from?* There was something so intriguing about him, and the lascivious, deviant love he and Catherine shared. It is not difficult to understand Isabella's fascination with him; it is obvious why Catherine just could not let go of her feelings: it was not over for either of them, regardless of their respective marriages, which, at that point, were just a formality to Catherine and Heathcliff, a worthless piece of paper tucked safely in the parish records, never again to be tampered with. Catherine was not in

love with Edgar any more than Heathcliff was in love with Isabella. Heathcliff was as magnetic as he was repulsive.

Andrea Dworkin asserts a position similar to this: “Heathcliff, was so mesmerizing, so grossly misread as a romantic figure, that the author’s repudiation of Heathcliff’s cruelty and violence has been overlooked or taken as insincere. After all, don’t women write romances and fantasize physically brutal heroes? How could she have created him without loving him?” (82). Is not the villain that much more exciting and desirable than the good guy? No one wants the Edgar Linton—they want the Heathcliff. However, one line of Dworkin’s could be a possible point of contention: the question of Heathcliff’s romanticism. Heathcliff, the central male protagonist, is seen as romantic, and the reader automatically forms an undeniable connection with him, be it favorable or otherwise. He has a specific function in that he offsets Catherine’s madness with his brooding brutality. He loves her, despite all of the terrible, inexcusable things he must do for that love.

Patricia Meyer Spacks makes Heathcliff a contemporary—the epitome of the perfect man and a sort of Victorian Christian Grey—by throwing a leather jacket on him and imagining him straddling a motorcycle, which complements Dworkin to an extent. Heathcliff was “the bad boy,” the one every girl could not resist, the one she wanted deep down in her heart, but knew in her head that she should not have, because of the image he portrayed and how that would affect her own image. He was too vulgar, too foreign, too *other:*

> Heathcliff, who looks so much more ‘manly’ than Edgar, is as much as his soul mate an adolescent; more important, he is a projection of adolescent fantasy: give him a black leather jacket and a motorcycle and he’d fit right into many a youthful dream even now. Powerful, manly, mysterious, fully conscious of his own worth, frequently brutal, he remains nonetheless absolutely submissive to the woman he loves—if that is the proper verb. Around her he organizes his life. He provides her the opportunity for vicarious

> aggression, dominating her husband, tyrannizing over her conventional sister-in-law; when he turns his aggression towards her, though, she can readily master him. A powerful man controlled by a woman's power: when she dies, she draws him to her in death. (Meyer Spacks 138).

The last line of Meyer Spacks's quote is especially telling: Catherine is the only one able to control Heathcliff at any point in the novel. However, she never even has to force him—he willingly would do anything for her. Polhemus has a thought similar to that of Meyer Spacks and Dworkin: "…so the rhetoric of Emily Brontë's fiction might also persuade some with romantic tendencies that love is good and that it would be a marvelous thing to be a possessed lover like Heathcliff" (Polhemus 106). Regardless of whether or not that love is good, and regardless of how perverse it may be, it is ultimately still love, and although Heathcliff has difficulty with certain emotions, those that he does feel are heightened to the most extreme capacity.

In *Aspects of the Novel*, E.M. Forster states, "..the emotions of Heathcliffe and Catherine Earnshaw function differently to other emotions in fiction." He also points out that, "Great as the novel is, one cannot afterwards remember anything in it but Heathcliffe and the elder Catherine…even when they were alive their love and hate transcended them" (Forster 145). Even if one has never read the novel, one has heard something about the love story. If one has read the novel, the most vivid memory, first and foremost, is the relationship Catherine and Heathcliff share—not the hate, violence and revenge Heathcliff feels for every character, including Catherine and most importantly, himself. Heathcliff identifies with a masochist in his desire to be hurt by Catherine, and he is a sadist in that he desires her suffering, taking pleasure in it, and in the ruination of every other character in the novel. According to Richard von Krafft-Ebing, "When the association of lust and cruelty is present, not only does the lustful emotion awaken the impulse to cruelty, but *vice versa*; cruel ideas and acts of cruelty cause sexual excitement, and in this way are

used by perverse individuals" (57). Heathcliff is the epitome of this definition because he is cruel and perverse, desiring the destruction of everyone and everything around him.

The relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff is a friendship which blooms into a passionate, twisted, toxic love. From the moment Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff into the house, the two begin a whirlwind turbulent love affair. They often switch, trade, share and swap the sadist and masochist roles throughout by relishing in the other's sufferings, wallowing in their own and each other's pain, all the while their love repeatedly proving to be mutually destructive. Catherine is the sadist in the beginning of the novel, before she and Heathcliff form their friendship, and before they come to realize their romantic, then sexual feelings towards each other. She takes pleasure in the pain, embarrassment, and degradation she and her brother Hindley cause Heathcliff. Catherine scorns and taunts Heathcliff, while Hindley takes more pleasure in the physical abuse, constantly beating and terrorizing him, stemming from his jealousy of the favoritism and kindness often displayed towards Heathcliff by the late Mr. Earnshaw. Ensuingly, Catherine and Heathcliff become partners in crime, best friends, confidants and eventually, lovers—a seemingly natural progression of events between two young people.

As soon as Catherine falls in love with him, and Heathcliff hears her declaration to Nelly Dean of the degradation that would inevitably befall her in marrying him, without hearing Catherine profess her own actual love for him, Heathcliff becomes indignant. He runs away, and when he later returns a dangerously handsome, mysteriously rich, intelligent man, he fully intends to marry Catherine, only to find out she has married Edgar Linton. However, although devastated for himself, he relishes how painfully she suffers in her loveless, indifferent, dispassionate marriage to Edgar Linton for money and a more favorable, elevated place in the hierarchical social order. It serves her right, according to Heathcliff, for having the audacity to choose anyone else

over himself. These instances are a series of misunderstandings, all caused by Catherine herself: Heathcliff never hears her confess her love for him, because she prefaces it with her degradation at his expense, and it never occurs to Catherine that Edgar will never allow her to be Heathcliff's benefactress with the Linton family money.

Heathcliff attempts to mask his pain, although extremely unsuccessfully, by gambling with Hindley and winning the Wuthering Heights estate in a bet, biding his time until he has the chance to kill Hindley, finally sweep Catherine away from Edgar, prove that he is worthy of her love, or a combination of the three. He and Catherine each wish the other to be in pain, to suffer as a result of the love that never died, but was never consummated. That love, and extreme sexual frustration from said non-consummation plays an enormous part in the emotional S&M, and provocation of madness. Claire Jarvis agrees: "Instead, it's clear that while Catherine the Elder and Heathcliff expect and want consummation from the first moment of their sensual embrace, they also build the intensity of their relationship through a series of masochistically inflected, erotic scenes" (Jarvis 27). Not only do Catherine and Heathcliff expect this, but the reader does, as well. Every meeting of theirs is passionate, electric, and earth-shattering. They are cheered on throughout the novel to finally consummate their love, and there are even a few scenes where it could have—and might have!—happened, but to the reader's disappointment it never does. However, to satisfy the desire for these trysts there are several erotic novels written about *Wuthering Heights*, in which the Brontë plot is the same, but explicit, bondage/discipline/dominance/submission/sadism/masochism (BDSM) scenes are blended in, as well. These novels make Heathcliff even more sinister and domineering, but all that much more appealing.

Catherine and Heathcliff each desire the other to feel the pain they inflict on their own selves—a beautiful, pleasurable, rewarding, and satisfying pain; but a pain which is destructive in every aspect of their lives, including, but not limited to, every other relationship formed in the novel. Throughout, there are several obsessive passionate declarations of love and suffering, and an extremely palpable sexual tension between Catherine and Heathcliff. Heathcliff, not being sufficiently satiated with the pain Catherine's death has caused him, although consequently hurting as in her mind, he was partly the cause of such death, he begs and pleads with her ghost to haunt him for the remainder of his life:

> May she wake in torment!' he cried… 'Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! You said I killed you—haunt me, then! The murdered do haunt their murderers, I believe—I know that ghosts have wandered on earth. Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!'
>
> He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears.
>
> I observed several splashes of blood about the bark of the tree, and his hand and forehead were both stained; probably the scene I witnessed was a repetition of others acted during the night (Brontë 130).

Heathcliff is described in animalistic terms: a "savage beast" and because he "howled, not like a man." He is willing to physically harm himself because he has lost Cathy. However, he is numb to this physical pain of his own doing, the smashing of his forehead against the tree trunk, although it is nothing compared to the pain he feels at losing her. Thus, he assumes the masochistic role: he wants to be hurt, haunted and punished by her, just so that he may be reminded of her and can *feel* her presence, no matter how much pain the image causes him. Heathcliff does not want Catherine to rest—he is both a sadist because he wants her to have a tormented afterlife while she tortures him, and a masochist because he welcomes it. With the solicited haunting come memories

of their love affair: a plethora of emotions, including his requisite need for regret and desperation, which he would much rather feel at seeing the waif, than forgetting his misery—and Cathy—altogether. These feelings for Catherine and her ghost provoke violent anger in him. He wants and desires this reminder, physically *needs* to have it, so that he can survive, continue on with his mortal life.

There is no Heathcliff without Catherine, and vice versa. He wants to feel her presence and commemorate his unending love for her in some way, but this instead prompts him to use Isabella, Edgar, Hindley, and then later, Cathy II, Linton, and Hareton as outlets for that volatile anger, once again assuming the sadist role, taking pleasure in the physical and emotional distress and abuse he inflicts on his "submissives." The reader at once senses the painful dichotomy—he needs and longs to see the ghost to remember the love that would be impossible for him to forget, but those memories of her causes what is left of his heart to further break. He enjoys her torture, but also needs to feel this pain, which he transforms into the physical, by actually hurting himself as he does not know how to, or if he is able to, endure losing her.

Catherine, from a young age, knows the difference between love and marriage: "I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I do to be in heaven…it would *degrade* me to marry Heathcliff now, so *he shall never know* how I love him…" (Brontë 75) (emphasis mine). It would degrade her, and ruin him. The worst degradation to Catherine's teenage mind would be to live in absolute poverty. It would ruin Heathcliff to never know Catherine's true feelings. What she says about Heathcliff is degrading and appalling, but then turns into arguably one of the best declarations of love ever written in the English language. However, although she does love him, she never understands, nor does she have any concern for just how badly she hurts him, and that is her major downfall. She is too selfish, aloof and stubborn to care for anyone but herself.

Marianne Thormahlen describes it very simply, but appropriately: "As for Catherine and Heathcliff themselves, they have no tenderness or compassion for anybody, not even for each other…Sure of Heathcliff's and later Edgar's, unconditional devotion, she is basically uninterested in what anyone else might feel about her" (Thormahlen 184).

Catherine clearly has no regard for Heathcliff's feelings for her whatsoever, as is so obvious in the way she speaks to him throughout the novel. She feels as though she deserves his love, but he does not deserve hers: no one is good enough for Catherine, according to herself. This is a direct contrast to *Jane Eyre*, as Jane often questions whether or not she is worthy of Rochester. Does the mutual torture, sadism, pain, villainy—cause Catherine's (or in the case of *Jane Eyre*, Bertha's) madness? Or, is the sadism caused by madness? Catherine is under the illusion that she is so entitled to everything she wants. She complains ad nauseam about suffering, claiming she has suffered more than Heathcliff has. She is the cause of almost all of his suffering, with the exception of Hindley, yet she continues to blame him. She displays her sadism by wanting him to suffer, solely because she has suffered. She selfishly thinks that he must endure it also, and she does not care how he has suffered. She makes his feelings seem trivial, when in reality, he has spent—and essentially wasted—his life bettering himself to become a more acceptable partner in her eyes. Heathcliff escaped the physical abuse that he wordlessly and without defiance (and almost willingly, only for her benefit) endured from Hindley, to gain the wealth, education, and worldly experience that he returned from Gimmerton with:

> 'I wish I could hold you,' she continued, bitterly, 'till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn't you *suffer*? I do! Will you forget me—will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, 'That's the grave of Catherine Earnshaw. I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it is past…'
>
> 'Don't torture me till I'm as mad as yourself,' cried he (Brontë 124). (emphasis mine).

He is clearly annoyed with her ravings, and responds back, defending himself. At first, he has every intention to hurt her, and says harsh things because he himself has been hurt. She has ruined his life, her own, and Edgar's—although Heathcliff has no regard whatsoever for Edgar: "Edgar is his main obstacle to being with Catherine" (Przybylowicz 13)—without any remorse or concern for anyone but herself. Then, Heathcliff softens, and his words turn to forgiveness for all she has done to him, reflecting his masochistic nature, and falling into her trap, allowing her to make him feel guilty.

> "'You teach me how cruel you've been—cruel and false. *Why* did you despise me? *Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. You deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears. They'll blight you—they'll damn you. You loved me—then what *right* had you to leave me? What right—answer me—for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart—*you* have broken it—and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me, that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you—oh, God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?'
>
> 'Let me alone. Let me alone,' sobbed Catherine. 'If I've done wrong, I'm dying for it. It is enough! You left me too; but I won't upbraid you! I forgive you. Forgive me!'
>
> 'It is hard to forgive, and to look at those eyes, and feel those wasted hands,' he answered. 'Kiss me again; and don't let me see your eyes! I forgive what you have done to me. I love *my* murderer—but *yours*! How can I'" (Brontë 126)? (underlining mine)

The above quote is rich with sadism and masochism. However, an important aspect to note is the use of the word "false" in the first line. Heathcliff is exactly right: Catherine has been false in every situation. She has denied her own heart and feelings by marrying a man she is not in love with, all the while attempting to solace herself, and the man she has slighted, with the justification that she will be able to aid his rise in the social hierarchy by using her newly obtained riches to do so. Assuming Edgar will allow this behavior is another one of her selfish, immature mistakes. In

the above quote, Heathcliff is finally able to chastise her, and because he is correct, he makes her realize she is wrong. However, rather than ever admit it, Catherine attempts to exact sympathy from him in her typical conniving manner by repeatedly harping on the fact that she is dying. Her death is a mortal sin: it is a sort of suicide in that she welcomes it, and wishes for it so willingly, desperately, almost to the point of killing herself by driving herself to insanity. She even has the audacity to say that he left her, as well, when she was the exact reason for his departure in the first place. Although, Heathcliff himself says that nothing could have separated them, *not even death*. The supposed love—"poor fancy," (126) as Heathcliff calls it—that she felt for Edgar would never be enough to sustain her for a significant amount of time, let alone their entire marriage. At this point, she has no defense other than to make weak excuses: Heathcliff's arguments are completely valid. He demonstrates his masochistic tendencies here, by insinuating how he is in love with Catherine, the woman who is slowly killing him, and how willingly he welcomes that death just so he can be united with her once again. He states that it is worse for him than her because he is the stronger of the two. He is not the one dying, so he must live on, without her, his "soul" (126). She is saved only by death; she is the lucky one, as she is able to escape. He, however, cannot.

Heathcliff genuinely recognizes that life without Catherine would not be worth living—in essence, a living hell. He tortures himself by trying to understand the nature of her feelings for Edgar, although his efforts are an exercise in futility. He is incredulous and will never be able to comprehend these feelings. None of the other characters are able to understand why Catherine does what she does. The lofty language Heathcliff uses below is similar to the language Catherine uses in her conversation with Nelly to justify her decision to marry Edgar instead of Heathcliff:

> "Two words would comprehend my future—*death* and *hell*; existence, after losing her, would be hell…<u>If he loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn't love as much in eighty years as I could in a day.</u> And Catherine has a heart as deep as I have; the

> sea could be as readily contained in that horse trough, as her whole affection be monopolized by him…It is not in him to be loved like me: how can she love in him what he has not'" (Brontë 117) (underlining mine).

His love is not necessarily pleasant, but essential: they need each other to sustain themselves. He is willing to endure these hardships (Heathcliff as masochist) if it means having her to himself, but she chooses money and status instead. Her selfish, sadistic nature prevents her from fulfilling her desire to be with the man she truly loves:

> "'Are you possessed with a devil,' he pursued, savagely, 'to talk in that manner to me, when you are dying? Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally, after you have left me? You know you lie to say I have killed you; and Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell'" (Brontë 124).

This quote is similar to another statement of his, where he claims that it is worse for him because he is stronger than she is. Heathcliff the masochist will still suffer while she is dead, and will only do things to perpetuate that suffering, rather than ease it, because he wishes to be miserable. He would rather die than live without her, and once she is gone, his existence is futile, worthless.

In *Miscellanies* by Algernon Charles Swinburne, he states:

> Twice or thrice especially the details of deliberate or passionate brutality in Heathcliff's treatment of his victims make the reader feel for a moment as though he were reading a police report or even a novel by some French 'naturalist' of the latest and brutallest order. But the pervading atmosphere of the book is so high and healthy that the effect even of those 'vivid and fearful scenes' which impaired the rest of Charlotte Brontë is almost at once neutralized—we may hardly say softened, but sweetened, dispersed, and transfigured—by the general impression of noble purity and passionate straightforwardness, which removes it at once and for ever from any such ugly possibility of association or comparison. The whole work is not more incomparable in the effect of its atmosphere or landscape than in the peculiar note of its wild and bitter pathos; but most of

> all is it unique in the special and distinctive character of its passion. *The love which devours life itself, which devastates the present and desolates the future with unquenchable and raging fire, has nothing less pure in it than flame or sunlight. And this passionate and ardent chastity is utterly and unmistakably spontaneous and unconscious. Not till the story is ended, not till the effect of it has been thoroughly absorbed and digested, does the reader even perceive the simple and natural absence of any grosser element, any hint or suggestion of a baser alloy in the ingredients of its human emotion than in the splendor of lightning or the roll of a gathered wave.* Then, as on issuing sometimes from the tumult of charging waters, he finds with something of wonder how absolutely pure and sweet was the element of living storm with which his own nature has been for awhile made one; not a grain in it of soiling sand, not a waif of clogging weed. As was the author's life, so is her book in all things: troubled and taintless, with little of rest in it, and nothing of reproach. It may be true that not many will ever take it to their hearts; *it is certain that those who do like it will like nothing very much better in the whole world of poetry or prose*. (269-270) (emphasis mine)

The phrase Swinburne uses, "the love which devours life itself," is especially descriptive, and entirely and absolutely appropriate. These lovers knew of nothing else but love, and to love each other, which was their ultimate mutual downfall. This tortured and toxic love between Catherine and Heathcliff was the cause of death for Hindley, Isabella, Edgar and Linton, as well as Catherine and Heathcliff themselves. Collectively, they ruined the lives of any person they encountered: every other character was collateral damage. It was all a contest, a sort of mortal combat in order to prove who loved the other more. However, as the last line of Swinburne's quote suggests, the novel is either loved or hated, and those that love it, love it for the transcendental, immeasurable bond between Catherine and Heathcliff. They simultaneously loved and hated each other, at all times. Only two such people could ever possibly do so. Polhemus describes just to what extent Catherine and Heathcliff are willing to go for their love: "Look at the mystical passion of these two: devotion to shared experience and intimacy with the other; willingness to suffer anything, up to, and including, death, for the sake of this connection; ecstatic expression; mutilation of both social custom and the flesh; and mania for self-transcendence through the other" (82). The two are willing to be caught in their last embrace by Edgar, sacrifice all of their separate

reputations in the incestuous societal circle just to be together one last time, and Heathcliff actually smashes his forehead against a tree when Catherine has passed away.

When Catherine confesses to Nelly, she reflects so eloquently and with such unexpected maturity on her relationship with Heathcliff. She describes him as a part of her, essential. Without him, she would be completely alone in the world. Neither can live without the other:

> 'My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees—my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but, as my own being—so, don't talk of our separation again—it is impracticable; and—' (Brontë 64).

This is an extreme masochistic statement from Catherine. She explains the differences between the two kinds of love she feels for both men. With Heathcliff, she wants to feel his pain. She is willing to be miserable for him: something she is definitely not willing to do for Edgar at any point in the novel. Although their love was doomed from the start, Heathcliff is vital to her- the love is unchangeable and unchanging, and it can only grow stronger as time progresses. She takes pleasure in the pain this relationship causes both of them. However, she contradicts herself later on in the novel while she is dying. Early on she wants to feel his pain, but then selfishly refuses to take on any of his suffering. Instead, she wants him to suffer because she thinks it is unfair that she is the only one enduring any pain. While they are younger, although it is true that she lives through Hindley's torture, banishment, and separation of the two as well, and she does participate in the skulking around with Heathcliff, she refuses to acknowledge his sufferings later on, especially after his marriage to Isabella.

The degradation by association that Catherine speaks of with regard to marrying Heathcliff is a direct result of her sojourn at Thrushcross Grange while her ankle is healing. Once immersed in the rich, lavish lifestyle of the Lintons, Catherine becomes aware of how her friendship with Heathcliff would affect and *degrade*—a word used very often by Emily Brontë—her potential marriage prospects. She made the *conscious* decision to marry for money, and not love, when she chose Edgar Linton over Heathcliff, the one true love of her life. As soon as she comes of marrying age she knows that she must marry Edgar in order to obtain a higher status in the social order. However, the decision is in no way an easy one for her to make, as Edgar Linton is not the man she is truly in love with. The moment she accepts his proposal, she is breaking all three of their hearts: her own and Heathcliff's because their love will never be realized, and Edgar's, because he will always be the fool married to a woman who is not in love with him. From the beginning, Cathy is violent and aggressive towards Edgar. The day he proposes to her, she "boxes his ears," shakes Hareton, who is just a child, pinches Nelly, and when Nelly makes a comment about it, Cathy blatantly lies in front of everyone. Edgar is exposed to and witnesses her ridiculous fits of rage, even being on the receiving end himself, but he still resolves to marry her. She only loves Edgar because she *thinks* she must; their union will *benefit* her. She loves Heathcliff because he inhabits her and is a part of her own being. However, Edgar is the masochist to her sadist in their marriage. He genuinely wants to be with her and will endure her violence for just that reason.

However, it is obvious that Catherine is not in love with Edgar. She may love him, but she is not ***in love*** with him. She displays to the reader just to what extent she is not in love with him in her conversation with Nelly:

> " 'First and foremost, do you love Mr. Edgar?'
> 'Who can help it? Of course I do,' she answered.

> …
>
> ‘Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?’
>
> ‘Nonsense, I do—that’s sufficient.’
>
> “By no means; you must say why.’
>
> ‘Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with.’
>
> ‘Bad,’ was my commentary.
>
> ‘And because he is young and cheerful.’
>
> ‘Bad, still.’
>
> ‘And because he loves me.’
>
> ‘Indifferent, coming there.’
>
> ‘And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighborhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband.’
>
> ‘Worst of all! And now, say how you love him.’
>
> ‘As everybody loves—You’re silly, Nelly.’
>
> ‘Not at all—Answer.’
>
> ‘I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says—I love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely, and altogether. There now!’
>
> ‘And why?’
>
> ‘Nay—you are making a jest of it; it is exceedingly ill-natured! It’s no jest to me!’
> …
>
> ‘I’m very far from jesting, Miss Catherine, I replied. ‘You love Mr. Edgar, because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you. The last, however, goes for nothing. You would love him without that, probably; and with it, you wouldn’t, unless he possessed the four former attractions.’
>
> ‘No, to be sure not—I should only pity him—hate him perhaps, if he were ugly, and a clown.’” (Brontë 61).

Catherine thinks Nelly is being ridiculous and poking fun at her—and how dare anyone question Catherine. This is earthly, ‘regular,’ ‘normal,’ love. However, even—and especially—Nelly realizes this “love” with Edgar is not sufficient for someone like Catherine. She *needs* the love with Heathcliff. This may be a sufficient response to someone, anyone else who does not know of the epic history between Catherine and Heathcliff. She is transparent to Nelly, and Nelly knows she loves Heathcliff in a way no two people have ever loved before, or ever will again. In

essence, what she "feels" for Edgar is a "fake" love for the purposes of this argument, something Catherine the actress and drama queen is definitely capable of, something she thinks others want to hear. Catherine is buying time in her responses because she does not know how to answer the valid questions Nelly is asking. She only knows what she thinks she is supposed to feel for Edgar. Catherine repeats herself and gives nonsensical answers—the reasons she supposedly loves Edgar are immature and only for her convenience—money, looks, and status. She wants the lifestyle and the surname, not the man. She thinks that just by responding to Nelly, "Nonsense, I do," (61) that she can avoid explaining herself. The difference is: Catherine loves Edgar on the surface, but she is in love with Heathcliff to the core—something she explicitly states when she discusses how her love for each man is changeable and unchangeable, respectively. Przybylowicz agrees, "Heathcliff is incomplete without her; Edgar cannot pull himself away from her" (Przybylowicz 15). However, anyone in the story besides Heathcliff (and Nelly) can be fooled into believing the nonsense she is saying in the above quote. The adjectives Catherine uses to describe her love for the two men differ so greatly that it is simple to discern which man Catherine would literally end her life for. She would rather persevere with the wrath and madness of Heathcliff than endure the inadequacies of Edgar Linton.

In the beginning of her illness, Edgar does not see or speak to her, assuming the illness is just another of her contrived and crazy attempts to provoke his sympathy. They both know each other and their relationship extremely well for two people who have no business being married: "'No! I tell you, I have such faith in Linton's love that I believe I might kill him, and he wouldn't wish to retaliate" (Brontë 77). Catherine very astutely describes the type of relationship they have. If Catherine the sadist were to harm him in any way—and even *she* takes it to extremes by speaking of killing him—he would not seek revenge on her, and most likely even forgive her. She

desperately wishes that Edgar suffer while she is delirious and becomes extremely annoyed and offended when she finds out he is not more upset about her failing health: "'No, I'll not die—he'd be glad—he does not love me at all—he would never miss me'" (Brontë 94)! Further:

> 'Among his books!' she cried, confounded. 'And I dying! I on the brink of the grave!' … 'Why ma'am,' I answered, 'the master has no idea of your being deranged; and, of course, he does not fear that you will let yourself die of hunger.' … 'You think not? Can not you tell him I will?; she returned. 'Persuade him.' … 'If I were only sure it would kill him,' she interrupted, 'I'd kill myself directly!' … What in the name of all that feels, has he to do with books, when I am dying" (Brontë 94-95)?

To hurt him, she wants to kill herself. She thinks that by ending her own life, that will solve all of their problems, and get back at him. All of this ridiculous talk is just to evoke a reaction from him. She views this as a game, and relishes the fact that she is the one in charge. Although Heathcliff has most of the power throughout the entire novel, Catherine definitely holds the power among this trio. She constantly pushes the limits, knowing that both men will love her without question, no matter what she puts them through. She attempts to hide things from Edgar, blames others for her own wrongdoings, makes excuses for her abominable behavior, demands constant attention, and then has the audacity to claim she was "pushed to extremity" (92):

> 'Had Edgar never gathered our conversation, he would never have been the worse for it. Really, when he opened on me in that unreasonable tone of displeasure, after I had scolded Heathcliff till I was hoarse for *him*, I did not care, hardly, what they did to each other, especially as I felt that, however the scene closed, we should all be driven asunder for nobody knows how long! Well, if I cannot keep Heathcliff for my friend, if Edgar will be mean and jealous, I'll try to break their hearts by breaking my own. That will be a prompt way of finishing it all, when I am pushed to extremity! But it's a deed to be reserved for a forlorn hope; I'd not take Linton by surprise with it. To this point he has been discreet in dreading to provoke me; you must represent the peril of quitting that policy, and remind him of my passionate temper, verging, when kindled, on frenzy. I wish you could dismiss that apathy out of your countenance, and look rather more anxious about me' (Brontë 92)!

Cathy is so selfish, entitled and narcissistic that when she realizes she is not the center of attention anymore, she conveniently has a fit of violent rage or madness in order to regain control. She feigns indifference as to what happens to them, but she (not so) secretly loves the fact that she is creating more and more drama and pain for both men. She blames Edgar for being upset with her, and calls him unreasonable. She shows her immaturity by devising a ridiculous plot when she is not getting her way, and continuously bosses Nelly to do her bidding. Her nonsensical ramblings and demands for attention provoke Edgar's below question:

"'Will you give up Heathcliff hereafter, or will you give up me? It is impossible for you to be *my* friend and *his* at the same time; and I absolutely *require* to know which you choose'" (Brontë 93). Edgar demonstrates his propensity to act like a petulant child by attempting to make Catherine choose which man she would rather be with, which reinforces Heathcliff's beliefs about the weak Edgar all along. Edgar attempts to elicit what little conscience she has by forcing this choice upon her, thinking the odds will be in his favor. However, she dies peacefully, selfishly, finally having been able to see Heathcliff again, only to leave the rest of her world behind in a state of chaos. The fact that Edgar uses the word "friend" is indicative of their dispassionate relationship: she is his *wife*! Catherine is naturally drawn to the more masculine of the two, but *settles* instead for Edgar because he is not at all intimidating—however, he is easier to control. She is able to boss him around, hide the meeting with and letters from Heathcliff without Edgar knowing, and ultimately get what she wants.

Catherine's desire to hurt the two men in her life by hurting herself reveals her extreme sadomasochism, narcissism and selfishness. Once she is dead, her suffering ends. However, Edgar's and Heathcliff's sufferings are deepened, perpetuated by the loss of Catherine. Both Edgar and Heathcliff are reminded of Catherine each time they look into her daughter's face. She is

released from the pain, but it can be argued that theirs is only deepening, if not beginning.The dichotomy is extreme here, and very appropriate for Catherine. On one hand, she performs the ultimate act of masochism by desiring death to ease her pain and suffering—which she achieves. On the other hand, she performs the ultimate act of sadism by forcing both Heathcliff and Edgar to mourn her for the rest of their respective lives. Catherine is the only one of the characters who gets exactly what she wants, at every single point in the novel. Although, Heathcliff does attempt to restrain himself from physically hurting Edgar, only because he and Catherine are married:

"'Had he been in my place, and I in his, though I hated him with a hatred that turned my life to gall, I never would have raised a hand against him…The moment her regard ceased, I would have torn his heart out, and drank his blood'" (Brontë 116)! He claims even if their roles were reversed he would not try to harm Edgar, regardless of how deep his hatred is. The image is typical of Heathcliff: savage, animalistic, *other*, and in this instance, cannibalistic. Interestingly, he uses the word "regard" instead of "love," as Heathcliff comprehends that there is no way Cathy could possibly love Edgar the way she loves him. However, once Cathy is dead, Heathcliff is able to put his revenge plot against Edgar into motion. He explicitly states he is not (consciously) aiming to hurt Catherine:

"'I seek no revenge on you,' replied Heathcliff less vehemently. 'That's not the plan. The tyrant grinds down his slaves and *they don't turn against him, they crush those beneath them*. You are welcome to torture me to death for your amusement, only allow me to amuse myself a little in the same style, and refrain from insult, as much as you are able'" (Brontë 88). (emphasis mine). He does not want revenge on Catherine—he never has—but just wants her to be an innocent bystander and refrain from judgment while he seeks vengeance on every other person in their incestuous circle. However, there is a plan: he wants her to let him do this with no interference.

He believes they are all beneath him, and he is their master. He tries to crush Isabella, Hindley, Edgar, and later, Linton, Cathy II, and Hareton. With the first generation, he succeeds: he outlives all of his victims. He demonstrates again his masochistic tendencies by allowing Catherine to torture him in exchange for allowing him to torture Isabella (and later Linton, their son) only if she keeps quiet about it.

Heathcliff is powerless against the choice that Catherine has made. Instead, he attempts to handle the only thing he can control: his vengeance against the others. However, he states Edgar is not worth the violence, but that does not stop the desire to make his life miserable throughout the novel. Often he describes Edgar in feminine terms. Here, a lamb attempting, but failing, to be more ferocious: "'Cathy, this lamb of yours threatens like a bull!' he said. 'It is in danger of splitting its skull against my knuckles. By God, Mr. Linton, I'm mortally sorry that *you are not worth knocking down*'" (Brontë 90!) (emphasis mine). His tone is dripping with sarcasm and contempt when he speaks to Catherine of Edgar: "'*I compliment you on your taste: and that is the slavering shivering thing you preferred to me! I would not strike him with my fist, but I'd kick him with my foot, and experience considerable satisfaction. Is he weeping, or is he going to faint for fear*'" (Brontë 91) (emphasis mine)? The reader is able to physically picture the sneer on Heathcliff's face as he makes this statement. Heathcliff refuses to even touch Edgar, so he would rather kick him than raise a hand to him. Additionally, there is no competition between the two men when it comes to outward appearance, let alone Catherine's true feelings for each. Yet, Heathcliff is jealous that Edgar is the man she has married. He displays his jealousy early on, realizing it is futile: "But, Nelly, if I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn't make him less handsome, or me more so. I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as

well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be" (Brontë 45)! Clearly, Edgar is worth the jealousy which Heathcliff has held a grudge about since childhood, but not worth the violence.

The power struggle between Heathcliff and Edgar transforms into Heathcliff taking revenge on the Linton family, Cathy included, by wanting to torture Isabella. As Catherine reveals Isabella's feelings to Heathcliff, Heathcliff devises the plan to marry her and humiliate her, which will ultimately anger and hurt Edgar. However, Isabella *actually is* in love with Heathcliff, although she certainly has no idea what she is getting herself into when she runs away with him. Juliet McMaster refers to Isabella as "star-struck" (McMaster 1). At one point, even Nelly even attempts to persuade Isabella to forget about Heathcliff: "'Banish him from your thoughts, Miss,' I said. 'He's a bird of bad omen; no mate for you. Mrs. Linton spoke strongly, and yet I can't contradict her. She is better acquainted with his heart than I, or anyone else besides; *and she would never represent him as worse than he is*'" (Brontë 81) (emphasis mine). The fact that Nelly uses the phrase, "better acquainted with his *heart*" (81, emphasis mine) than either "intentions" or "character" displays that not only is she warning Isabella to stay away from Heathcliff because of his demeanor, but also because of his past romantic history with Catherine. Isabella is represented as very delicate earlier in the novel, a clear juxtaposition to the headstrong, willful force that is Catherine Earnshaw. It is obvious that someone like the dark, brooding, lovesick Heathcliff would never choose Isabella over Catherine, unless there were extenuating circumstances. Which, of course, there are.

Catherine will not marry Heathcliff because of the "degradation of an alliance with a nameless man" (79), the exact reason Edgar does not want Isabella associated with him. He had no idea that Isabella was the one who provoked Heathcliff into this liaison, that she was so completely entranced by him and actually wanted to be with him. Edgar imagined that it was

Heathcliff's deceptive and sadistic nature that ultimately tricked her, as some type of spell or wizardry. In his head, once a "gipsy brat" (Brontë 29) always a "gipsy brat" (29), and Heathcliff would never change the way he thought or acted, no matter how gentlemanly his appearance. Edgar is afraid of losing Isabella, and all of their fortune, to Heathcliff, and his dreadful mind:

> "Leaving aside the degradation of an alliance with a nameless man, and the possible fact that his property, in default of heirs male, might pass into such a one's power, he had sense to comprehend Heathcliff's disposition—to know that, though his exterior was altered, his mind was unchangeable, and unchanged. And he dreaded that mind; it revolted him; he shrank forebodingly from the idea of committing Isabella to its keeping.
>
> He would have recoiled still more had he been aware that her attachment rose unsolicited, and was bestowed where it awakened no reciprocation of sentiment;for the minute he discovered its existence, he laid the blame on Heathcliff's deliberate designing" (Brontë 79).

Edgar does not realize yet just how much influence and control Heathcliff has over both women, and just how little he, himself possesses. Neither Catherine nor Isabella can be controlled by Edgar. However, Catherine is able to control others—after all, she is the one who reveals Isabella's feelings for Heathcliff, and attempts to mask her jealousy and justify embarrassing the girl by stating she wanted to punish her for being brazen:

> 'I'd *wrench* them off her fingers, if ever they *menaced* me,' he answered, *brutally*…
> 'I wished to *punish* her sauciness, that's all. I like her too well, my dear Heathcliff, to let you *absolutely seize and devour* her up.'
> 'And I like her too ill to attempt it,' said he, 'except in a very *ghoulish* fashion. You'd hear of odd things if I lived alone with that mawkish, waxen face: the most ordinary would be painting on its white the colours of the rainbow, and *turning the blue eyes black*, every day or two: they detestably resemble Linton's'" (Brontë 100). (emphasis mine)

Heathcliff's statement that he likes Isabella "too ill" (100) seems that he only tortures those he loves. His statement corresponds with Isabella's later comment about him to Nelly: "'After all, it is preferable to be hated than loved by him'" (Brontë 140). Isabella's statement is contradictory. It matters not whether he loves or hates—he is equally destructive. He treats those he hates much

worse than those he loves: her statement is masochistic in that she likes the torture. However, with Isabella, he has an ulterior motive. The violent, graphic words Heathcliff uses to describe how he would, and eventually does, treat Isabella is indicative of his sadistic nature. He enjoys imaging how he would torture her, even before he has had a chance to really consider her as a possible ploy to pique Catherine's jealousy, and Edgar's anger, although which he enjoys more is difficult to discern. He and Catherine discuss Isabella like she is a pawn in their S&M chess game: however, Catherine only wants Isabella out of her own way, so that she is no longer competition to Edgar's—and most importantly, Heathcliff's—hearts.

He is more lenient on Catherine than everyone else, although she is the direct cause of his pain. The reasons Heathcliff treats Isabella so badly and wants to destroy her are threefold and listed in order of importance: (1) she is not Catherine; (2) the deep-seeded hatred he harbors for the Linton family; and (3) he desires her inheritance and estate. The first reason is his disappointment that he will never have Catherine, so everyone else close to her must suffer for that. Isabella does not resemble Catherine, is not is strong as her, does not love him the way Catherine does, and never would be able to—plus, she is a *Linton*. Isabella represents everything he hates about why he is not the one married to Catherine. Heathcliff wants to torture Isabella to torture Edgar, which indirectly tortures Catherine.

Isabella realizes very shortly after the marriage that Heathcliff is not a man of this world: "'Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil? I shan't tell my reasons for making this inquiry; but I beseech you to explain, if you can, *what* I have married'" (Brontë 106) (emphasis mine). He is constantly described in demonic, satanic, animalistic terms. She further explains how he deliberately tries to make her hate him, and although she contradicts herself by

saying he terrifies her, but that her wonder overpowers her fear: she is in awe of and can almost appreciate his ability to wreak havoc:

> '…he is ingenious and unresting in seeking to gain my abhorrence! *I sometimes wonder at him with an intensity that deadens my fear: yet, I assure you, a tiger or a venomous serpent could not rouse terror in me equal to that which he wakens.* He told me of Catherine's illness, and accused my brother of causing it; promising that I should be Edgar's proxy in suffering, till he could get a hold of him' (Brontë 114) (emphasis mine).

In the above quote, Isabella is a stand-in for Edgar: Heathcliff tortures her until he is able to get to Edgar directly. Initially, she is in awe of him, but then that awe morphs into an eerily calm acceptance of both of their natures: his, and her own brand new attitude about him:

> 'I've recovered from my first desire to be killed by him. *I'd rather he kill himself*! He has extinguished my love effectually, and so I'm at my ease. I can recollect yet how I loved him; and can dimly imagine that I could still be loving him, if—no, no! *Even if he had doted on me, the devilish nature would have revealed its existence somehow*. *Catherine had an awfully perverted taste to esteem him so dearly, knowing him so well.* Monster! would that he could be blotted out of creation, and out of my memory'" (Brontë 134)! (emphasis and underlining mine).

This is a sort of revelation. Isabella demonstrates growth and maturation in her quote above. She no longer wants to feel hurt, but, she now wants to be the one to hurt someone else: namely, Heathcliff. She no longer wants to be Heathcliff's victim. Isabella is much smarter than she lets on, or gets credit credit for from the other characters. She evolves from a meek, almost embarrassingly lovesick girl who loves Heathcliff to the point of self-degradation, to a woman similar to himself—one who takes pleasure in the idea of causing pain and destruction to someone else. She wishes he would kill himself, be obliterated from any memory of hers, and is no longer afraid of him, but is instead fascinated by him, and the things she has learned from him, whether or not she intended to:

> ‘But what misery laid on Heathcliff could content me, unless I have a hand in it? I’d rather he suffered *less*, if I might cause his sufferings and he might *know* that I was the cause. Oh, I owe him so much. On only one condition can I hope to forgive him. It is, if I may take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; for every wrench of agony, return a wrench, reduce him to my level. As he was the first to injure, make him the first to implore pardon; and then—why then, Ellen, I might show you some generosity. But it is utterly impossible I can ever be revenged, and therefore I cannot forgive him’” (Brontë 140). (underlining mine)

Isabella flip flops between sadist and masochist here. She was blindly in love with Heathcliff before she truly knew all he was capable of, even claiming she ‘owe[s] him so much.’ (140). She has a fairytale, romanticized image of him in her head prior to knowing the real man—which does not take long for her to uncover. However, within the same breath, she wishes she could be the cause of his sufferings—jealous of Catherine, here, only because she knows she will never have the same effect upon him—‘reduce him to [her] level,’ (140) *degrade* him, as she has been so degraded *by* him. Even she is *almost* surprised by her transformation.

Dana Medoro and Juliet McMaster explore both sides of the dichotomy of Isabella’s feelings: “Perceiving that her desire for him involves masochistic self-delusion, he asks her, ‘Are you sure you hate me? If I let you alone for half a day, won’t you come sighing and wheedling to me again?’ (Medoro 141) and “She has been studying how to torment Heathcliff as he has tormented her, and as she succeeds she manages to join his species” (McMaster 3). Although Isabella does love him, and although her almost blind worship of him at the beginning seems insane to the reader, she does begin to turn into Heathcliff. The very thing she claims to hate about him, she begins to do *to him*. Heathcliff seems almost a combination of amused and exasperated by Isabella. Andrea Dworkin comments, “He knows the points of pain and never misses. He causes pain in such a way that those he hurts become cruel against others according to his purposes and plan; he makes them his accomplices in inflicting pain on others and in degrading themselves”

(Dworkin 76). Isabella's masochistic desire to love him and be with him morphs into the sadistic tendency to become *like* him, act in a manner similar to his: "'*I experienced pleasure in being able to exasperate him*: the sense of pleasure woke my instinct of self-preservation, so I fairly broke free, *and if ever I come into his hands again he is welcome to a signal revenge*'" (Brontë 134) (emphasis mine). Initially she did love him, but once he revealed himself to her, she wanted to exasperate and annoy him. He turns her into a sadist, and she enjoys it. However, she willingly, masochistically welcomes his revenge at the end of her statement, with only one caveat: he must catch her, first.

Isabella is momentarily upset for the pain and sadness he has caused her, but immediately afterwards, she snaps out of that, and reverts back to her newfound anger, sadism and desire to exasperate him. She further explains to Nelly how she no longer cares for him because he has since destroyed her ability to feel: "'I gave him my heart, and he took and pinched it to death; and flung it back to me. People feel with their hearts, Ellen: and since he has destroyed mine, I have not power to feel for him: and I would not, though he groaned from this to his dying date, and wept tears of blood for Catherine'" (Brontë 134)!

It is no secret that Cathy and Isabella are not fond of each other, and compete for the attention of both Heathcliff and Edgar throughout. Isabella is jealous of Catherine's relationship with Heathcliff; Catherine, even at a young age, is jealous of Isabella's position in the social order and the Linton family's wealth, but neither are necessarily jealous of the other's actual person. As a result, Catherine warns Isabella not to fall in love with Heathcliff. "I know he couldn't love *a Linton*" (Brontë 81) (emphasis mine). Catherine's statement is both contradictory and humorous: as she is attempting to insult Isabella, she is reinforcing the fact that Heathcliff does actually love a Linton: herself. Catherine explains Heathcliff's nature to Isabella—a foreboding for her not to

get involved with him. This warning of Catherine's is more selfish than for Isabella's own good as she attempts to assert her authority over Isabella. This authority takes the form of Heathcliff's friend first and foremost, and then as Edgar's wife, as an afterthought. Catherine insinuates that she can say these harsh things, because she is his friend, that she knows him better than anyone—a sentiment that even Nelly, the supposed voice of reason in the novel, affirms.

There is definitely selfishness in Catherine's admonition, however: although she is married and cannot be with Heathcliff, she does not want anyone else to have him, either. "'You are a dog in the manger, Cathy, and desire no one to be loved but yourself!' … 'I love him more than ever you loved Edgar; and he might love me i*f you would let him*!'" (Brontë 80). - (emphasis mine) The italicized lines above reflect the power and control Isabella recognizes that Catherine has over Heathcliff. Her statement is as true as it is false—it may very well be that she loves Heathcliff more than Catherine loves Edgar, but there is absolutely no way that Heathcliff would love Isabella even if Catherine would let him, ask him to, or force him to for one of her ridiculous schemes. However, what Isabella has yet to find out, is that Heathcliff will never love another, as he loves Catherine. Isabella is naive, but not naive enough that she cannot perceive from very early on Catherine's motives and shenanigans.

Catherine furthers her warning:

> …and he'd crush you, like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge. I know he couldn't love a Linton; and yet he'd be quite capable of marrying your fortune and expectations. Avarice is growing with him a besetting sin. There's my picture; and I'm his friend—so much so, that had he thought seriously to catch you, I should, perhaps, have held my tongue, and let you fall into his trap (Brontë 81).

Catherine explains, rather violently, to the seemingly naive—in her opinion—and lovesick Isabella, that Heathcliff, the real, physical man, is not the romanticized version she pictures in her

head. The images she uses show how easily and carelessly Heathcliff would ruin Isabella: that he will *never* love her, mainly because of her surname, but that does not mean he would not marry her for her money and estate. He would endure all of that—the Linton name, her relations: ridiculous, effeminate brother and completely self-absorbed sister-in-law who also just so happens to be the love of his life, just to gain access to her inheritance, estate, and for the opportunity to humiliate said effeminate brother. Catherine knows this, and as Heathcliff's friend—especially significant— she is Heathcliff's friend first, before she will ever admit to being Isabella's sister-in-law, let alone her friend. Catherine foreshadows this before Heathcliff can even explain his plan to Nelly. Heathcliff and Catherine are the only two characters in the novel who are morally able to marry for a motive other than love. Catherine's loyalties lie more strongly with Heathcliff than the Linton family—into which she married—even if she must expose his character here and risk his wrath, in hopes to selfishly dissuade Isabella from loving Heathcliff and thwart the marriage.

She deliberately tries to keep them apart by attempting to get into both Heathcliff's and Isabella's heads, knowing the feelings Isabella has, however naïve, worshipful, misplaced and immature those feelings are. Catherine humiliates Isabella by revealing these feelings to Heathcliff himself, which Catherine loves, relishes, and thinks a joke. Catherine laughs at her, mocks her, scoffs at the idea of a relationship between the two. Heathcliff in turn runs off with Isabella, however, with a blatant disregard for her: he is still in love with Catherine and always will be. His main motives are to steal Isabella's inheritance and ruin Edgar, and he will stop at nothing until he achieves his goal. Persistence, along with his excellent brooding, ominousness, and penchant for inflicting punishment, is one of Heathcliff's main virtues throughout.

Heathcliff also hangs in wait in order to take revenge on Hindley Earnshaw, Catherine's older brother. The two men have never gotten along, and Hindley harbors a deep-seeded hatred

for Heathcliff that dates back to the moment the late Mr. Earnshaw brought Heathcliff home from Liverpool. Heathcliff was favored by Mr. Earnshaw, and eventually won the affections of the family's beloved Catherine. Hindley displays his own sadism as a child, beating Heathcliff and taunting him to no end as a result of his perpetual jealousy of the outsider. However, Hindley is never given the title of resident "bad boy" as Heathcliff is. As Samantha Przybylowicz notes in "(Dys)Function in the Moors, Everyone's a Villain in *Wuthering Heights*", Hindley's acts go unnoticed and unpunished by everyone except Heathcliff:

> "As a child, Hindley is described as degrading and abusing Heathcliff on a regular basis, often because of Heathcliff's otherness and Hindley's sense of having been displaced by Heathcliff. The violence inflicted upon Heathcliff can be described as villainous; yet Hindley is not often blatantly described as being malevolent, especially early on in the novel. This is likely because he is not one of the characters in the central love triangle" (Przybylowicz 8-9).

Because Hindley becomes depressed at the unexpected loss of his wife and sudden state of single fatherhood, he demands a certain type of sympathy. However, Heathcliff's state is a different sort of heartbreak, and perhaps the reader is able to sympathize more with him than Hindley to a degree, as Hindley was the original torturer. Unable to forgive and forget, Heathcliff resolves to get back at Hindley for all of the torture and torment he has caused him over the years. He wishes to feel the effects of his punishment on Hindley, and tells Nelly so. Nelly responds:

> 'For shame, Heathcliff!' said I. 'It is for God to punish wicked people; we should learn to forgive.'
>
> 'No, God won't have the satisfaction that I shall,' he returned. 'I only wish I knew the best way! Let me alone, and I'll plan it out: while I'm thinking of that, I don't feel pain' (Brontë 48).

Heathcliff wishes to, and attempts to assume the role of God and punish Hindley. After a time, Heathcliff does not feel the pain Hindley inflicts on him, only because the revenge plot he is devising takes his mind off of it. Hindley falls into a deep depression and slips into alcoholism once his wife dies, and leaves him alone with Hareton. He no longer cares for his own self, let alone Hareton, his sister, or anyone else. Heathcliff is ecstatic to see Hindley fall apart, and aids in his downfall in any way possible: "He delighted to witness Hindley degrading himself past redemption; and became daily more notable for savage sullenness and ferocity" (Brontë 51). Thus, Heathcliff is able to trick Hindley and win the estate in a game of cards, all the while mocking and taunting him. This is just phase one of his plan. Richard von Krafft-Ebing describes it thus:

> The instinct to fight and destroy, so important an endowment in prehistoric conditions, is long afterwards operative; and, in the ideas engendered by civilization, like that of "the criminal," it finds new objects, so long as its original object—"the enemy"—still exists. That not simply the death, but also torture of the conquered is demanded, is in part explained by the sense of power, which satisfies itself in this way, and in part by the insatiableness of the impulse of vengeance" (von Krafft-Ebing 84)

The second phase of the revenge plot involves his own son, and Cathy II, Catherine and Edgar's daughter. The moment Cathy II meets Heathcliff, he holds her hostage and exposes his evil plan to Nelly: Cathy II is held while Edgar is dying and Heathcliff forces her to marry Linton, selfishly ensuring that his proprietary affairs are in order before Cathy II becomes the heir to the Linton fortune and estate. Once their marriage is settled, Cathy II is able to see Edgar before he dies, and Heathcliff has effectively secured Thrushcross Grange, in addition to the Heights, which he has already won from gambling with Hindley. He deliberately tries to hurt both Cathy II and Linton for his own financial and proprietary benefit. Heathcliff hates that his son is so weak: such a miserable, sickly, sniveling creature, and so completely unlike himself. He is unable to ever overcome the disappointment, and it does not bother him at all that Linton is about to die.

Heathcliff tries to take revenge on the late Isabella by torturing their son, whom she has deliberately named "Linton," further ensuring the rift between father and son, as Heathcliff could "never love a Linton" (Brontë 81). His only connection left to Isabella is Linton; his only connection left to Catherine is Cathy II, both of whom he hates, because they remind him of their respective mothers. He figures he can torture Edgar by attempting to ruin his sister's child, Edgar's own nephew- a child who identifies more with Edgar than Heathcliff, a child who Edgar most likely loves more than Heathcliff himself does.

Heathcliff is able to singlehandedly ruin families and lives. By forcing Linton and Cathy II to marry, he is effectively ensuring their misery. Cathy II resents him because she is barely able to see her father on his deathbed, and Linton is genuinely afraid of disappointing and angering him, to the point where he begs and pleads with Cathy II to obey Heathcliff because he does not want to endure the inevitable wrath and punishment. McMaster takes the position that Heathcliff is a sort of rapist, in the sense that he is forcing himself on Cathy II, and facilitating the consummation of the marriage between her and Linton, using both himself and his son to "deflower" the girl:

> "It is not Linton who achieves the defloration of his wife, but his father—or rather, both. …To follow through the suggestions of the imagery here is to understand Catherine's experience as partaking the horror both of gang rape and of sexual abuse by the father-in-law. Linton's agency in the consummation, such as it is, is in keeping with his status as infantile and a mere subordinate to his dominant father" (McMaster 10).

Heathcliff forces Linton to keep communication open with Cathy II for his own benefit. He is embarrassed at how weak Linton is, how he always needs assistance, and how he is always whining and complaining. He punishes Linton as a result of his unending disgust. Linton and Heathcliff resent each other, but Linton needs Heathcliff to facilitate the courtship/marriage as he

is unable to hold Cathy II's interest by himself in the long run. He is attempting to evoke contrived sympathy from Cathy II for all of Linton's obscure illnesses and weaknesses. Alternatively, Heathcliff needs Linton to marry Cathy II in order to own both estates. It is a collaborative effort to marry the unfortunate, unsuspecting girl. According to McMaster, "Catherine is being wooed by son and father together. And when the time comes, the marriage is consummated by the same team" (7), and "Linton is called at one point 'only a feeble tool to his father' (205). In the sexual context he becomes a sort of human dildo, which his father issues to rape and degrade the second Catherine, the child bride whose birth caused the death of the Catherine whom Heathcliff loved" (McMaster 2). Cathy II is also a tool Heathcliff uses, in addition to Linton, and Isabella for that matter, to gain access to the Linton family funds. Cathy II and Linton have an argument, wherein Linton reveals the secret that her mother was in love with his father. Cathy II is in disbelief, and denial, as she does not believe it could ever be true. Przybylowicz notes: "Cathy condemns Heathcliff by stating he cannot feel love, not knowing he has probably felt the deepest, truest love in the novel. She chooses to ignore the fact that reportedly her mother had loved Heathcliff" (Przybylowicz 11). As stated earlier, regardless of how perverse the love between Heathcliff and Catherine is, *it is love*, nonetheless. Cathy II is unable to imagine her mother and this sort of man in love: she only knows the gentle, weak, defeated nature of her father. However, she has no idea that most of his weakness and indifference to life is a result of the perverse relationship between her mother and Heathcliff.

In addition to the relationship with Linton, Cathy II is exposed to a relationship with Hareton, Hindley's son, who Heathcliff raises as his protege. Heathcliff attempts to turn Hareton against Hindley, and his aim is to torture him as Hindley has tortured Heathcliff in the past, in addition to desiring to gain Hareton's affections. According to Medoro: "Heathcliff's obsession

with vengeance then occurs in a narcissistic and aggressive identification with Hareton and Catherine that sadistically repeats his and Cathy's experiences" (Medoro 278). However, Hareton is saved by Cathy II before Heathcliff can completely ruin him. The beginning of the relationship between Cathy II and Hareton is reminiscent of Catherine I and Heathcliff: at first, they are hateful and violent towards each other, in both words and actions. Cathy II thinks him a servant, and becomes very indignant and incredulous when she is told that he is her cousin. They quarrel and Cathy II teases him, verbally abuses him, and even strikes him while she is teaching him and he is not paying attention to her lesson. She views the connection as a degradation; he views her as a haughty rich brat. As they spend more time together, they become friends, eventually falling in love, in the same vein as Catherine I and Heathcliff. However, only they are able to live out the unfulfilled married life of the first two tragic lovers. Although the novel ends before Cathy II and Hareton are able to consummate their marriage and before the reader is able to indulge in the satisfaction of their union, (as they are engaged with an impending wedding), Cathy II and Hareton have the potential to be the "good" reincarnation of the "tortured/toxic" love of the Catherine I and Heathcliff. Their love turns out to be the the only one that is pure and genuine in the novel: "the structure of the novel provides the opportunity for readers to predict the outcome by working in reverse to get Cathy and Hareton to match the idyllic state of Catherine and Heathcliff as they were in their youth" (Przybylowicz 17).

Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre endures so many hardships and degradations, losses and injustices one after another—unlike those which her quasi-cousin and fellow Brontë heroine Catherine Earnshaw boasts about persevering through to anyone who will listen, or anyone unfortunate enough forced

to listen—but *actual* trials and tribulations. Jane does what she deems necessary in order to survive. She becomes a governess to make a living, but she *chooses* to do so: she is not forced into the exact position. She is able to put out an advertisement, and she chooses her own life plan. She has the opportunity to stay at Lowood and be a teacher there, but she desires more. The difference between the two heroines is that Jane is a sort of feminist, in a way that Catherine never could be: Jane stands up for herself, chooses her own path, and only conforms to societal standards when it is essentially a last resort, as opposed to deliberately choosing it from the outset, ie. marrying a man for money instead of love. Catherine has the choice between misery and riches with Edgar versus poverty but ecstasy and eternal happiness with Heathcliff, even beyond the grave: yet, she chooses the former. Catherine's hardships are self-imposed; Jane's are societal impositions. Still, both of these seemingly strong, intelligent, capable women fall in love with controlling, sadistic, manipulative men. Although she is still in love with him, Jane ultimately leaves Thornfield because she morally refuses to be Rochester's mistress, and although the choice is difficult for her to make, she realizes it is something she must do. She willingly puts herself though that pain and heartbreak—in addition to the pain and heartbreak she has already endured at Rochester's expense, that he has willingly and knowingly inflicted on her—to become a stronger woman. She refuses St. John's subsequent proposal of a business transactional marriage because she desires love, knows that she deserves it, and will not deny herself the happiness she is sure will befall her if only she allows it to happen.

There are many other strange goings on at the Thornfield Estate that Jane questions: the brooding but alluring Mr. Rochester, the phantom laughter and illusions of monsters in the attic before the eventual reveal of the actual mad wife held hostage. *What could possibly be happening in that house*? How could Rochester consciously lock up another human being, his wife, no less,

in a physical prison—let alone in a land and estate foreign to her, which estate eventually turned into a prison of her own mind as she slowly but gradually lost it—while he had numerous affairs, the one with Jane quite literally under her nose? This poses the question: Which Rochester is the real monster trapped in Thornfield Hall? Rochester's wife in name only, Bertha Mason Rochester is able to eventually exact revenge on her estranged husband in some way at the end of the novel, by burning down the estate, which includes her own literal and figurative prison, although she blinds him and commits suicide in the process.

Before Jane falls under Rochester's spell, she lives with her aunt and cousins Reed, all whom either physically or verbally abuse her. John Reed and Jane Eyre have never gotten along, and at one point after John provokes her, Jane strikes him, knocking him down. It is obvious that this one violent episode from Jane is a culmination of other similar events, to the point where she can no longer stand being tortured by her bully of a cousin. From an early age, it is obvious that her efforts are futile to continue defending herself against John and her aunt. She is powerless against the family to which she is indebted, constantly being reminded of their "charity" to her by taking her in, and being reprimanded and chastised for trivial matters. She does not enjoy the abuse, *but she endures it*. After this altercation with cousin John, clearly uncaused by Jane, she is locked up, as a sort of prisoner in a red room with no food or water for hours as punishment, and ultimately falls sick and delirious after having imagined the room haunted—the same room in which her Uncle Reed had passed. Aunt Reed, knowing that Jane has had an episode, still keeps her locked in the room. All of the Reed children treat Jane badly, as an outsider, constantly teasing and taunting her. Aunt Reed sees Jane as an annoyance and burden that she must contend with as a result of her late husband's good nature. She reminds Jane of the financial strain it puts on the

family to include her in their household. Jane is treated as a basic servant, and must even live and sleep in the servants' quarters.

There are two instances where Jane can no longer endure the torture inflicted on her, and she stands up to her mean and cold-hearted Aunt Reed. The first follows the incident with her cousin John, and the second is right before she is sent away to Lowood. Aunt Reed tells John that Jane is "not worthy of notice" (Brontë 22), and that he and his sisters should not associate with her any longer. Jane fires back: "They are not fit to associate with me" (22). Jane then proceeds to tell her Aunt that her uncle Reed, and both of her parents can see how horribly she is being treated. In the second instance, Jane is much more vocal in her disgust with and hatred of her Aunt: "I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed" (30), and, "'I am glad you are no relation of mine: I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty'" (30). Until these two outbursts from Jane, she has endured the abuse from the Reed family in all its forms with no complaint, as she had no other choice. Although possibly frightening, these two scenes are extremely cathartic for Jane, and the reader cheers her on the whole while.

Aunt Reed has acted as an evil-stepmother all the way up until her death—and even then, upon Jane's last visit, was cold and unappreciative of the girl who handled the affairs after her death even more carefully than did her own spoiled and silly daughters. Mrs. Reed even admits in her delirium on her deathbed that she hates Jane, disliked Mrs. Eyre, and wishes Jane had died at Lowood: "'I have had more trouble with that child than any one would believe. Such a burden to be left on my hands—and so much annoyance as she caused me…She, however, did not die: but I said she did—I wish she had died!'" (Brontë 197) and "'I had a dislike to her mother always; for

she was my husband's only sister, and a great favourite with him: he opposed the family's disowning her when she made her low marriage'" (197). She punishes Jane for something her mother has done, something neither Jane nor Mrs. Reed had any control over—the marriage to Jane's father, and her own selfish jealousy over her husband's relationship with his sister. Mrs. Reed was the motivating force for Jane's transplantation to Lowood. Her sadism, lack of consideration and refusal to assume any accountability or responsibility for her poor orphan niece repeatedly proves her horrible, villainous character. She casts Jane off as easily as an unwanted, out of style garment with no remorse or second thoughts, to Mr. Brocklehurst, and the Lowood School.

From the outset, Brocklehurst is her savior in the beginning, albeit a twisted sort, only in that he is the one to offer her a place in Lowood, a faraway escape from the tortured childhood she experiences. However, she is in store for a different type of torture at his hands, the only solace coming from her friendships with Helen Burns and Miss Temple. Jane is in a position of weakness, and has no hope. She has no relations who care for her, no finances, and no options. Brocklehurst is able to use her situation, and those of the other girls, to his advantage. Adrienne Rich describes the school and Brocklehurst as follows:

> It is a school for the poor controlled by the rich, an all-female world presided over by the hollow, Pharisaical male figure of Mr. Brocklehurst. He is the embodiment of class and sexual double-standards and of the hypocrisy of the powerful, using religion, charity, and morality to keep the poor in their place and to repress and humiliate the young women over whom he is set in charge (Rich 94).

Brocklehurst reveals his sadism by taking pleasure in publicly humiliating all of the young girls, starving them, purposely not providing them adequate healthcare or accommodations. In front of all of the other girls and teachers, he places Jane in the middle of the room and calls her a liar, telling the children to avoid her and the teachers to disbelieve and question every word she

says, based on the account given to him by Mrs. Reed, whom he calls "charitable" (Brontë 56) for having been her caregiver thus far. Jane does not correct him or talk back, allowing him to soil her reputation, all the while hurt and inwardly seething. At an early age, Jane knows the difference between right and wrong, and understands that she is being oppressed and treated unfairly by her elders—those whose care she is put under, those whom she is supposed to trust. Jane discusses her thoughts on injustice with Helen Burns:

> "'If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way; they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse. When we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard; I am sure we should—so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again'" (Brontë 48)
>
> "'I must dislike those who, whatever I do to please them, persist in disliking me; I must resist those who punish me unjustly. It is as natural as that I should love those who show me affection, or submit to punishment when I feel it is deserved'" (48).

Jane, even as a child, is very level-headed and wholeheartedly believes in justice: those who commit wrongs should be punished; those who are attacked should be able to defend themselves against their attackers; and good people do not always have to like and want to please bad people. However, later on in the novel, through her stays with both Rochester and St. John, she begins to act in the opposite manner her earlier words. She tries very hard to please the cold and rigid St. John, desperately wanting his acceptance, all the while knowing that she does not love him or want to be his wife.

There are very many layers to the sadism and masochism in Jane's life. Her childhood hardships and the life experience gained at Lowood, more than the education received there, prepare her for the verbal sparring and intellectual aspect of her relationship with Edward Rochester. She is able to endure many things in her early life, however, there is no actual way for

her to prepare herself for the second part of what inevitably awaits her at Thornfield Hall, in the form of Bertha Mason Rochester, the embarrassing and painful broken engagement, and the subsequent indecent proposal that Edward offers. Throughout their courtship and exploration of each other, Jane is able to match his wit and intellect, unlike any other woman he is accustomed to. However, he tortures her purposely, putting her through many tests to ascertain whether or not she is a suitable match for him.

Rochester pretends to court and even fakes the intention of marrying a very beautiful young woman in public at a party he hosts. Blanche Ingram and her family are also collateral damage in this scheme, as they were under the impression that she would be the future Mrs. Edward Rochester. He attempts to evoke jealousy in Jane, an emotion to which she is not normally accustomed. She claims she could never be jealous of Blanche, although what pains her the most is the lack of passion Rochester has for her. Jane is upset and embarrassed, as she thinks she has imagined he has reciprocated her own feelings for him. Jane acts as a masochist, and allows her mind to wander, torturing herself. She chastises herself for ever thinking that Rochester would possibly even consider falling in love with her. He has everything that she does not: riches, a prominent family name, and an estate: "It does good to no woman to be flattered by her *superior*, who *cannot possibly* intend to marry *her*; and it is *madness* in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must *devour the life that feeds it*" (Brontë 136-137) (emphasis mine). Jane relates unrequited and unreciprocated love between a male superior and a female inferior to madness, and assumes that it will destroy the female if she allows herself to get carried away with it. Although Rochester is rich and he is her employer, Jane automatically views him as her superior. However, she is his intellectual equal, and he admittedly views her as such on more than one occasion.

At this same party in which he flirts with Blanche and flaunts their non-existent relationship, he reveals himself to Jane as having played the fortune teller, a scheme to teach her a lesson about love and jealousy, and she forgives his former transgressions. Rochester knowingly and deliberately causes Jane unnecessary pain and potential heartbreak, in addition to putting her in danger of being hurt physically and emotionally by his estranged wife later on in the novel. When Jane moves to Thornfield and the relationship forms between the two, Bertha becomes jealous and progressively more violent. Although insane, she is the sadist to his masochist with regards to her violent outbursts. The wounds inflicted on him are endured because of his "duty" to her as her husband. However, his first, ultimate sadistic act was locking her up in the attic to begin with. He did not want to be married to her, did not want to deal with her illness/madness, and by locking her up, he thought he could get rid of it.

Bertha Mason Rochester is prone to physical violence, causing danger to all living in the estate, and ultimately herself, when she commits suicide after the second, this time successful, attempt at arson on Rochester's estate at the end of the novel, blinding him in the process. According to himself, Edward Rochester is forced into this marriage with Bertha for financial reasons by his father. It is beneficial for the Rochesters, as the Mason family in the West Indies is wealthy. Bertha is also a symbol of "otherness," in that she has darker skin, dark, thick hair, and a very voluptuous body. However, Bertha is mad, and gets progressively more insane as time passes, and with the move from the Caribbean to England. Naturally, she becomes aggressive and violent towards Edward, and ultimately, he locks her in the attic of his Thornfield estate, staying away as much as he can in hopes of forgetting the burden of his ward. Because of his disappointment, embarrassment and selfishness, he hides her, instead of seeking out the proper, adequate help she needs. Placing her in the care of Grace Poole, he is able to come and go as he pleases, *forgetting*

his marriage to the "lunatic" (Brontë 264), and in no way does he take any responsibility for holding this woman hostage. Adrienne Rich describes the situation:

> In his long account of the circumstances of his marriage to Bertha—a marriage arranged for financial reasons by his father, but which he undertook for Bertha's dark sensual beauty—Rochester makes no pretense that he was not acting out of lust. Yet he repeatedly asserts *her* coarseness, 'at once intemperate and unchaste,' as the central fact of his loathing for her. Once she is pronounced mad, he has her locked up, and goes forth on a life of sexual adventures…Rochester's story is part Byronic romance, but it based on a social and psychological reality: the nineteenth-century loose woman might have sexual feelings, but the nineteenth-century *wife* did not and must not; Rochester's loathing of Bertha is described repeatedly in terms of her physical strength and her violent will—both unacceptable qualities in the nineteenth-century female, raised to the nth degree and embodied in a monster (Rich 99-100).

Rochester goes through with the marriage. He is a prominent male, in a position of greater power than she was, and might have had the chance to prevent the wedding from going forward. However, he did not, as he was intrigued by Bertha's physical attributes: "'…Miss Mason was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty: and this was no lie. I found her a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram; tall, dark, and majestic'" (Brontë 260). He regrets not having prevented the marriage, and is filled with disappointment and disgust with what he has married. Thus, he resents her for the entirety of their marriage, and the rest of her life.

Bertha is extremely violent as a result of her years of captivity in solitude and insanity, and possible anger towards Rochester. The physical attacks that she performs are fourfold: she first tries to set fire to Rochester's bed, she bites her brother, shreds Jane's veil, and lunges at Rochester after her existence (to Jane) is finally confirmed and revealed, and that they are still legally married. Similar to Heathcliff during his fits of rage, she is described in animalistic, bestial, savage terms. However, she is never portrayed as a human being, she is only displayed as a monster. When she bites Richard Mason and tears his flesh from his shoulder, Rochester has no sympathy for him. He

originally tells Mason to wait, and they will go up and visit with her together. Mason disregards Rochester's warning, and visits his sister on his own, getting attacked in the process. Originally Rochester describes her in a way that she is a monstrous, maniacal, slavering invalid, but as the reader is able to discern from Mason's encounter with her, she is able to articulate exactly how she plans to hurt him: "'She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart'" (Brontë 181).

Bertha is seeking revenge not only on Rochester for locking her up, but also on her brother for allowing her to be whisked away to England from Jamaica. Rochester is almost burned alive in his sleep, his estranged wife's intention obviously to inflict harm and possibly death to avenge her banishment to the attic, and mutually unfair union to Rochester. There is extreme violence in their relationship, and she attempts to create friction between Rochester and Jane, as well. Bertha's jealousy of Jane causes the violence with the tearing of the bridal veil. The veil is brutally torn and destroyed before Jane's eyes, the nuptial symbol is a foreboding that the impending marriage between Jane and Rochester will not come to fruition; at least, not at this time. However, the ultimate burning of the estate is her deep-seeded anger towards Rochester for locking her up, keeping her suppressed, and because of how badly he has hurt her by being engaged to someone else.

Jane recounts a dream-that-is-not-really-a-dream to Rochester, in which Bertha sneaks into her room and destroys the veil Rochester has bought for her, tearing it to shreds, but not before trying it on, herself. Rochester never reveals his secret to Jane: he lets her think she has seen a "'Vampyre'" (Brontë 242), and when she confesses she originally thought it was one of the other servants, he even agrees with her, knowing the whole while it was actually his wife. He deliberately lies to Jane to protect himself, and skews her perception of him so that *he* remains the victim, so that she takes pity on him. Snodgrass agrees:

> Jane Eyre's night vision turns to confrontation with a true evil, the insane wife who dwells in the third floor of Rochester's mansion. The phantasm rustles near the wedding dress and veil, listing a candle to reveal a dark-haired woman with savage, discolored face set with red eyes and blackened features. Brontë increases meaning with damage to only one part of the nuptial costume, the veil, which conceals the truth from the bride-to-be. Jane continues the litany of ghoulish details, 'the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes' (Brontë, 270). Jane identifies the woman as a German vampire. The approach of evil shocks Jane into unconsciousness, but does not jolt Rochester into a confession of wrongdoing in keeping his crazed wife locked away. (Snodgrass 93).

Bertha puts Jane's veil on her own head and looks into the mirror, an indication to the reader that she wants once again to be in Jane's position. The fact that the veil was the article destroyed is interesting, as well, as Snodgrass points out above, it "conceals the truth from the bride-to-be" (Snodgrass 93). Rochester purposely hides the existence of a wife from Jane for so long, that another individual must reveal it—he never willingly offers the information until he is provoked, and put on the spot on the wedding day, and even then he is indignant and annoyed first and foremost that his secret was unearthed, and only secondly that the wedding was interrupted. Both Jane and Bertha are sub-consciously jealous of one another as Thaden points out: "As the current possessor of the position Jane covets, Bertha represents Jane's subconscious dread of marrying Rochester; Bertha's beastliness represents Jane's fear of sexuality and unrestrained passion; her imprisonment represents Jane's secret dread of being absorbed into Rochester's will" (Thaden 161).

If Jane accepts his "indecent proposal" and stays with him, there is a chance that she could turn in to Bertha. The pressure that she would be under and the control he would exercise over her would be inconceivable until she would be able to legitimately become Mrs. Rochester: there is no other choice for her *but* to leave. Alternatively, Rochester made the decisions for Bertha after their own marriage: she had no say in anything once he found out she was mad. Although she is

insane, Rochester takes away what is left of her freedom, first by moving her to England, second by locking her in the top floor of his estate. He defends his sadistic reasoning to Jane:

> "'You may take the *maniac* with you to England; *confine* her with due attendance and precautions at Thornfield: then travel yourself to what clime you will, and form what new tie you like. *That woman, which has so abused your long-suffering—so sullied your name; so outraged your honor; so blighted your youth—is not your wife*; *nor are you her husband*. See that she is cared for as her condition demands, and you have done all that God and Humanity require of you. *Let her identity, her connection with yourself, be buried in oblivion: you are bound to impart them to no living being*. Place her in safety and comfort: *shelter her degradation with secrecy, and leave her*'" (Brontë 263) (emphasis mine).

Rochester again plays the victim, acting like locking Bertha up and throwing away the key is the perfect solution to the problem. He blames Bertha for ruining his name and honor, and stealing his youth. She had absolutely no control over what befell her, something that Jane points out to him: "'…you are inexorable for that unfortunate lady: you speak of her with hate—with *vindictive antipathy*. It is cruel—she cannot help being mad'" (Brontë 257) (emphasis mine). It seems as though Jane is disgusted at how he has treated this woman, and takes pity on her rather than seeing Rochester as the victim. His motive for the sadistic act of locking Bertha away is completely selfish. He is embarrassed of her and thinks she will bring dishonor to the Rochester name. In contrast, Heathcliff was driven by revenge and jealousy, and an obsessive, morbid, wonderfully passionate love for Catherine. Rochester continues to describe his estranged wife in a frightening manner, in hopes that Jane will realize just how dangerous and insane she is. He assumes that by scaring Jane with these comments and stories about his wife, she will agree to his indecent proposal to move away with him:

> The lunatic is both cunning and malignant; she has never failed to take advantage of her guardian's temporary lapses; once to secrete the knife with which she stabbed her brother, and twice to possess herself of the key of her cell, and issue therefrom in the night-time.

> On the first of these occasions she perpetrated the attempt to burn me in my bed; on the second she paid that ghastly visit to you (Brontë 264).

It is revealed on their wedding day that Rochester is in fact still married to Bertha, and that she has been locked in the attic. Rochester makes another proposition to Jane, one that includes living with him as his mistress, in the South of France, away from Thornfield Hall and his mad, savage wife. Unable to agree to such a preposterous, oppressive scenario, she resolves to leave him.

Esther Godfrey, in her article, "'Jane Eyre,' From Governess to Girl Bride," discusses the difference in age between Jane and Rochester, noting the dominant/submissive nature of the relationship:

> They appear to reinforce the subservient role of the female as child, as student, as victim, and the dominant role of the male as father, as teacher, and as aggressor, just as, on the surface, working-class positions appear powerless while middle-class positions seem powerful. Much of the psychoanalytical criticism regarding these relationships assume that this power dynamic exists and that the young woman either faces and Oedipal crisis of attraction to a lost father or is the victim of metaphorical or literal sexual interest from a domineering father figure. (Godfrey 860).

Because of the twenty years between the lovers, there is an automatic assumption that the male is dominant, and the female is subservient. Based on Godfrey's quote, Jane falls into this category: she has lost her father, and perhaps seeks comfort in the form of an older man for a lover—one that will guide, control, and influence her, whether or not she desires those things, or realizes she needs to be guided. However, the difference between Jane and most other female protagonists of the Victorian period is that she is a feminist, and an independent woman.

Jane finds herself in another sadomasochistic relationship once she leaves Rochester. She stays away from him for a year, and lives with her cousins St. John, Diana and Mary. Ultimately, St. John proposes marriage to her, attempting to convince her to become a missionary and travel with him to India—not because he loves her, but because it is her "duty." He uses a myriad of phrases in order to coerce her into doing something she has no intention of doing. He belittles her, telling her she is not meant for love: "'You are formed for [physical] labour, *not for love*. A missionary's wife you *must—shall* be. You *shall be mine*: I *claim* you—not for *my pleasure*, but for my Sovereign's *service*'" (Brontë 343). (emphasis mine, brackets added.) All of his comments to Jane reflect a master/slave dynamic, while he attempts bully Jane to submit to his will, to force her into a loveless marriage that he tries to justify under the guise of religion.

The dominant/submissive language used is indicative of his blatant misogynistic disregard for women in general and his blind worship of God for the greater good: "'…and *do not forget* that if you reject it, *it is not me you deny, but God*'" (Brontë 348) (emphasis mine). He denies his own romantic and sexual feelings for Rosamund Oliver, and assumes that Jane will deny her own desire for love and happiness to become a missionary with him. He attempts to guilt and bully Jane into a relationship that she does not want, one that she knows she is not meant for. He forces her for months to learn a language she will never use in order to train her to be the missionary she will never become. She has refused Rochester's unorthodox relationship proposal at this point, and she is strong enough to deny another. However, his efforts are futile, as Jane is intelligent and possesses enough self-awareness to realize that she will not be happy if she accepts St. John's proposal, just as she knew she was unable to agree to be Rochester's mistress until Bertha dies. As Thaden suggests, "Jane then understands that a loveless marriage is more of a sacrilege to her than passion

outside of marriage" (Thaden 161). Jane is able to recognize later on that although Rochester's proposal is unsavory, she would rather be with him than St. John.

Once she denies St. John, he becomes even more cold-hearted, and ignores her. Jane becomes upset, but her masochistic statement shows that she would rather have the physical abuse than the emotional and mental torture: "I would much rather he had knocked me down" (Brontë 349). She discusses how his ignoring her makes her feel: "…and during that time *he made me feel what severe punishment* a good, yet *stern*, a conscientious, yet implacable man can *inflict* on one who has *offended* him" (Brontë 349). (emphasis mine). He purposely makes her feel guilty for refusing him, wants her to feel as though she has offended both him, and God for not following him to India. However, this situation leads to the question: Is Jane's emotional abuse more difficult to endure than physical abuse? Physical wounds can heal, and are able to be hidden. With the physical abuse, there is the possibility of scars, but how is one about to determine what is worse? There is always a time when physical abuse can end. The physical abuse may be controlled to a certain extent, but mental and emotional abuse may stay with a person longer. She yearns for the physical abuse as opposed to the emotional. However, Jane is afraid of St. John, in a way she never is of Rochester. She is genuinely afraid of making him angry. The situation escalates to the point Jane wishes he actually would be violent with her (Jane as masochist) so that it would be a more justified reason for his treatment of her, rather than the way he is ignoring her. She tries very hard to please him, but in doing so, she realizes that she must lose a part of herself: "As for me, I daily wished more to please him: but to do so, I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent, force myself to the adoption of pursuits for which I had no natural vocation" (Brontë 339); whereas, in her relationship with Rochester, they are able to grow together, despite his assertion of his authority and superiority

over her. Although there is a master/slave, superior/inferior dynamic between Jane and Rochester, to an extent, he views her as an equal. St. John views Jane as subservient, a lowly wife that must perform duties to his satisfaction in the name of God:

> I found him a very patient, very forbearing, and yet an exacting master: he expected me to do a great deal; and when I fulfilled his expectations, he, in his own way, fully testified his approbation. By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind: his praise and notice were more restraining than his indifference…I fell under a freezing spell. When he said 'go,' I went; 'come,' I came; 'do this,' I did it. But I did not love my servitude: I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me (Brontë 339).

This ridiculous and degrading attempt by St. John to control her and convince her of a feminine, moral and religious duty is *almost* successful, although Jane cannot stay away from Thornfield when she hears Rochester calling to her, as if in a dream—similar to *Wuthering Heights,* wherein Heathcliff sees Catherine's ghost, and hears it speaking to him. Rochester demonstrates in this instance the control and influence he continues to have over Jane, which is greater than any other, even St. John, who tries to force his beliefs and occupations on her, and she is compelled to return to Rochester. Because of her romantic feelings for Rochester, she is able to set all of the previous events aside, emotional pain and (non-disclosure of) a mad wife included, and "Reader, [she] married him" (Brontë 382) (brackets added). Adrienne Rich describes it as such: "After some time she returns to the manor house to find it has burned to the ground, the madwoman is dead, and her lover, though blinded and maimed by the fire, is free to marry her. Thus described, the novel becomes a blend of Gothic horror and Victorian morality" (Rich 97).

Jane and Rochester are able to achieve a conventional marriage, something that she would never be able to have with St. John, and something that Heathcliff and Catherine are never capable of doing. The relationship between Jane and Rochester turns from duty to love: she begins as an

employee, a governess to Adele—and slowly finds herself falling in love with him. However, Jane and Rochester are only able to marry once Rochester experiences a violent act. He must sacrifice and experience a physical pain/hardship—in exchange for all of the pain and hardship he has caused both Bertha and Jane—in order for his union to Jane to take place. He must lose something in order to gain Jane as a wife. Additionally, she must give him up and experience the relationship with St. John before she can be with Rochester. Jane, the strong, independent—yet at times, masochistic—woman, recognizes that her happiness lies in her own hands, and that only she can control her feelings once she returns to Rochester. Ceron explains Charlotte Brontë's ideas on Jane: "She wanted Jane to be admired and sympathized with by the reader, not in spite of her irrational and fiery soul, but because of it, as if to demonstrate that the dark—at times Gothic—side of the human being is not necessarily dangerous and shameful, but that it can render a woman strong and indomitable, if kept duly at bay" (Ceron 177). With her relationship with St. John, it is the opposite. She loves him and is grateful that he was kind enough to take her in, but the relationship then morphs into one of duty, wherein St. John expects Jane to fulfill his own wishes and accompany him to India and be a missionary. She is not necessarily a servant to Rochester, although she is employed by him—but she is treated like a servant by St. John, and just expected to do as he says. Rochester often speaks of his feelings for Jane and her words/treatment towards him that wound, torture, hurt him. Jane is uncomfortable with the inequality between finances, but once she obtains the inheritance from her uncle, she is able to contribute somewhat to their marriage.

The central relationships in both Brontë novels are at once sadistic and masochistic, wherein the protagonists share and swap roles. Heathcliff and Rochester identify with Freud's and von Krafft-Ebing's conclusions regarding sadism and masochism. The two men are clearly

disturbed, narcissistic individuals—however, they are motivated by the love they have for Catherine and Jane, respectively, and are willing to do anything they must in order to achieve their goals of obtaining their beloveds. Heathcliff, even though the love is mutual, fails at doing so, although not before bringing down an entire generation in their social order; Rochester is victorious in attaining Jane's affections, and eventually marrying her, although not without hardship: Jane's abandonment of him because of his immoral suggestion to her, and the death of his first wife. Heathcliff's and Rochester's desire to cause pain because of the perverse love they harbor, and the desire of the women to feel that pain is proof that the relationships in the Brontë novels are sadomasochistic in nature.

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