

# **I Am No Angel**

*Struggles of identity in Jane Eyre and Wuthering heights*

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**Cecilia Ulriksen**

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## Introduction

Through the history of humankind, we have originated, developed and refined the spoken and written language in order to create communities with our fellow human beings, to understand each other and in order to achieve a higher ability to fathom the depths of our own complex inner lives. Although language is seen as an important aspect of conveying emotion, intention, and a plethora of other facets of everyday life, there exists a word which has, and still does, inspire countless debates and arguments over subjects such as how one would define its meaning. With millions of words available to describe even the most diminutive fraction of self-experiences, it is – perhaps ironically – the word used for describing what constitutes self, which sparks so much conversation. That word is “identity”. This word is supposed to hold all the characteristics which make a person precisely who they are. However, it is natural to ask; what are these characteristics? In the definition, the defining moment seems lacking, leaving it up to the individual reader to determine how they will fill in the meaning for themselves. Fascinatingly enough, one might see this as a perfectly captured definition of identity. It is idiosyncratic; it evades clear definition because identity is not something one can epitomize to the point where every single person will agree with it, because everyone will have different characteristics, different outlooks and different opinions.

The task of determining how one will treat identity, especially in the context of writing and analysing, can seem a daunting one. For centuries, authors have conceptualized their feelings on the subject in narratives which have survived to become important works on the subject, not because it is the defining text on the subject, but due to its ability to evoke a feeling of familiarity with its readers, where they feel a connection with the emotions the texts seeks to elicit. In the collection of works considered valuable and included in the canon, the Bronte sisters have produced several novels which can be considered to be incredibly useful on the subject of identity.

This thesis will utilize the marvellous works of the Bronte’s in order to explore not only how identity forms in literary characters, but also how it is either broken down or preserved. For this particular work, we will focus on Charlotte and Emily’s novels *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, with their respective main characters Catherine and Jane. The reason for omitting

Anne and focusing on her two arguably more successful sisters in terms of canon visibility is that the two novels chosen have a particularly engrossing synergy with each other and with the topic. This synergy will allow for a finer analysis, and the discarding of one of the three sisters is necessary for a deeper delve into the topic, avoiding the problems of shifting too often between works and instead being able to focus the argument in a clearer, more interesting manner for both writer and reader.

There is also the question of why one would pick the Bronte's to begin with, especially considering the large volume of research and analysis conducted around their works. One important reason is that The Bronte sisters existed in an intriguing time when considering the Victorian society's stricter conventions than earlier centuries, especially pertaining to women. Tony Tanner explores this in his article "Passion, narrative and identity in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*" where he notes how "They put on narrative masks and revealed feelings and problems and inner contestations which could never surface in *Haworth Priory*." In a society where women and men were expected to uphold certain virtues, Charlotte and Emily disguised themselves with male pseudonyms in order to explore characters that did not fit with the contemporary ideals, lending an even greater power to their narrative. In order to weave the intricate souls of the characters which have embedded themselves to such an impressive degree in the collective contemporary culture, a component of the core of their stories had to be left out for it to be initially published, namely identity.

These are a few primary reasons as to why these works were chosen to be paired with this specific topic. As mentioned earlier, while countless talents have contributed immense works which have a lot to say on the subject of identity, there is a resplendent understanding of human nature and desires present in these works, which lends it beautifully to be explored through this topic. When Jane passionately exclaims to Rochester "I am a free human being with an independent will" or when Catherine – close to dying - asserts that "I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all" one can truly feel how the desire to assert themselves has become a driving force behind their narrative. There is an ardent desire to hold on to their identities in a world which seems unrelenting in its rules and restrictions.

The question is then: which specific steps will the thesis take to demonstrate how Jane and Catherine build their identities, and how they have to strive to maintain them? Firstly, this will be accomplished through analysing narrative choices and characterization, specifically

how the women characterize themselves versus how they are characterized and treated by other characters within the narrative. With both novels lacking the third person omniscient narrator, there is a considerable sphere in which identity can play a significant role. Tanner comments on the narration choice in *Wuthering Heights* with the following statement:

“between us and the experience of Catherine and Heathcliff there is Lockwood's journal and Nelly Dean's voice - a text and a tongue, thus effecting a double translation, or refraction of the original story. Catherine and Heathcliff are as far as possible away from the narrative, and they recede into terminal dissolution when nothing can be narrated because nothing can be differentiated. They become rumour and legend as they cease to be corporeal identities”.

(Tanner, 2)

Thus, when one examines Catherine's character, she appears trapped in in a sort of nesting narratology where other characters control her characterization. Unable to manifest a healthy independent identity, her character succumbs to madness and a splintering of identity which ultimately kills her. Tanner has expertly pointed out that when a story cannot provide its characters with the ability to recount their experiences truthfully; those characters seem destined to fail within the story, subject to obliteration due to the agendas of other characters, leaving them, and especially Catherine, a ghostly, intangible being, both literally and metaphorically. When Lockwood spends the night at *Wuthering Heights*, he is subjected to an apparition of Catherine, but he also studies the many ways in which she has written her name. From the very start of the novel, it is made abundantly clear that Catherine as a character is one without that vital ability to maintain her own identity, and is seemingly being set up to fail from the beginning. She is never presented as a flesh and blood human, but rather as the result of what the narrative ultimately makes her.

On the other hand, the narrative choice in *Jane Eyre* might be what saves Jane from meeting a similar end to Catherine, as her first person narration differs greatly from Emily's novel.

There seems to be a general consensus that Jane always maintains the ability to defend herself because she retains control of the information available to the reader

There is an argument made by Tanner, where he claims that:

“ *Jane Eyre* - a potentially passionate girl with some experiences not unlike her creator's - tells her own story not only in but on her own terms. Her narrative act is not so much one of retrieval as of establishing and maintaining an identity. She survives. She is her book.”

Here, Tanner demonstrates how Jane survives much of the same pressure applied to her as it is to Catherine because she lives in her narrative in a way that Catherine does not, and cannot. A central component of being able to form an identity and keep it in any context would be to have a way of conveying one's specific thoughts or perceived truth on matters arising through one's life. When this ability is stolen from Catherine, her identity evidently buckles, having no outlet in the way that Jane is able to.

On that note, what does constitute the attacks on identity which befalls both of these characters? This is something I intend to demonstrate through analysis of the spaces which the characters exist in, their homes, what they wear and their social positions. I will aim to show how the two main female characters struggle to form and maintain a stable and truthful identity not only due to their position in relation to the narrator, but also because of their existence in a society where one's position sets the expectations for how they may be permitted to inhabit certain domestic or public spaces.

Victorian society was indeed a society which would undergo massive amounts of change not only with the industrial revolution being well underway, but also socially, with classes becoming more diffuse with the upcoming newly rich not based in nobility. There was also a shift in the way women were perceived in society. In his work *The Death of Christian Britain*, Callum G. Brown makes several sharp observations on the changing of women's roles in society and how it connects to their daily lives. While masculinity had reigned in religious imagery and was what anyone should aspire to be, the 1800's presented a shift in that thinking. Women and femininity became "highly pietised, and "In the context of the Enlightenment, urban-industrialisation and the formation of a class society, 'separate spheres' for men and women emerged to impose domestic ideology as a heavily religious and moral discourse on angelic confinement from the public sphere." (Brown, 59).

The conflict between wanting to be a free person while also being expected to conform to the new, feminine ideals can be seen very clearly in both Jane and Catherine. It is interesting to note that while Jane can be said to resist both male and female roles of the time, realizing that society wants her to conform to very limited ideals of womanhood. She longs for "action in life, like a man can have" and reads adventurous books, but also recognizes the value of feminine qualities such as it may be presented in characters such as Miss Temple. Inge

comments that in a society rife with paradigms “Jane cannot rely on conventional concepts and imagery to define her” (Junge, 15). Thus, instead of conforming to what is expected, however, she resists, and grows into the qualities which she deems defines herself in a more suitable way, which aids her in maintaining her identity, as her selfhood is not relying upon the idea of a woman being either or in their existence. As such, she very much follows the thinking of Beauvoir when she stated that “essence does not precede existence: in pure subjectivity, the human being is not anything” (Theory and Criticism, 1269).

Catherine, on the other hand, seems to get much more caught up in this struggle than Jane. This could largely be attributed to the fact that the reader is not privy to her true thoughts and feelings, having to discern them through two different narrators. Nevertheless, Catherine’s identity suffers greatly as she balances between the male and female ideals, much like Jane does. She rambles about with Heathcliff on the moors and behaves much like a boy, but her stay at the Linton’s mark a change in her character. Suddenly she is considerably more feminine, dressing better according to the standards of the time, and avoiding spending too much time with her former friend. Still, the question of how much of these behaviours reflects Catherine as a person remains open for discussion. Her marriage to Linton seems merely one of convenience, as she states that her feeling of love will always be with Heathcliff. However, Catherine does seem to enjoy the benefits of inhabiting the domestic sphere as expected of her, at least for a time. Her character is never fully at ease in this sphere, especially after Heathcliff returns. Catherine finds herself stuck between her own desires, but also her inclination to fall into the expected for the sake of protection, wealth and status. Her conflict with how to move through spaces designed to mould her into a certain image is a large part of what ultimately shatters her last remnants of identity, slinging her into apparent madness and ultimately death.

Similarly, there is also an important conflict occurring where a reader might not expect it. Surprisingly, Jane and Catherine have to constantly struggle to uphold themselves in the company of Heathcliff and Rochester. The person they supposedly love above all else is a constant source of their identity being questioned or attacked. While Tanner may have portrayed Catherine and Heathcliff as being together in the effacing of their identities, Heathcliff is not above engaging in what philosopher Hegel refers to in Phenomenology of Spirit as a battle for dominance, or a battle to the death with Catherine. The same can be said for Jane and Rochester. Both men proclaim that they see their partner’s soul better than

anyone else, that they are the only one capable of discerning their true identity. Paradoxically, they are also in a major part responsible for destroying or nearly destroying their loved ones. Rochester continuously refers to Jane as an elf, sprite or other unearthly being, effectively “othering” her while proclaiming to be only interested in her soul. Similarly, Heathcliff condemns Catherine’s choice of marrying Linton, exclaiming that she has damned herself by not choosing him. The reason why Hegel’s work *Lordship and Bondage* is being utilized to expose the dynamics between these four characters is because the work originates from the idea that for a self-consciousness to be fully realized, it requires acknowledgement from another self-consciousness.

Briefly put, the reason why both relationships have been argued by many to be destructive or toxic can be argued to be because all characters are striving to be recognized, but according to Hegel they will ultimately fail, and no equality can exist due to the fact that one party will always end up the dominant, while the other ends up subservient. This also plays back to the conflict of the feminine idealization, as women were expected to be placid and remain in their designated spheres. As a result, while recognition by another consciousness is not presented in this thesis as the only way of obtaining a stable, realized self, there are tendencies in the narrative which resonates strongly with Hegel’s argument.



## Chapter 1 – The importance of voice

A necessary question to ask before embarking on a rather extensive analysis of identity in these two Bronte novels is; how does one even handle the subject of identity? With so many definitions existing within several different fields, whether it is literature, psychology or even social science, which definition will be most appropriate to apply for this specific thesis? Considering that one of the main questions I will be exploring is the impact of performed versus lived identity, it seems most appropriate to use not only Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* for the way in which it deals with this specific topic but also an additional source, which talks about the nature of being a woman. For this initial chapter, we will not be relying heavily on Butler – her work will be more prevalent in chapter two - but rather on Simone De Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex*. In order to detail the impact performed identity has on the characters, it is vital to illustrate how the performed identity becomes entrenched in their lives at an early stage. To be able to do that in an applicable, comprehensible manner I will be utilizing Beauvoir's analysis of the process of, as she describes it, becoming a woman. For both Butler and Beauvoir, there exists no gendered core to inscribe identity upon; a woman or man is inherently nothing. Yet, for an unstable, liminal identity to be possible there would need to exist certain rules, norms or expectations which the person are meant to uphold or follow to a certain degree, which could include the upholding of the belief of a gendered core identity. Gender norms, especially as illustrated in Victorian society, are a large part of why identity was such a passionate subject for authors, especially female authors and the Bronte sisters. While this text is not primarily focused on a feminist analysis, using the texts mentioned will aid in the ability to illuminate certain gender dynamics that may or may not influence their character with varying degrees of negative severity.

Additionally, there is one important aspect of the novels, which it is necessary to include in this chapter, namely narratology. The framework in which these characters can or cannot express themselves has a tremendous impact not only on their expression of identity but also on how they are understood by the reader or exist within the story. It would be a quite logical assumption that if a character has difficulty expressing what is perceived to be their true and honest feelings that their identity is left open to being misconstrued by the reader or presented in an inaccurate light by other characters or narrators. This is why examining the framework of the novel in terms of narration can be meaningful to the overall thesis, as it can uncover

issues relating to expressing oneself which are bound in the very essence of the story. Who is telling the story, in what time and even to who can play a part in how identity is constructed, articulated and viewed by the reader, and it is, therefore, vital to view how these components play into the topic at hand.

This chapter will look at Jane's childhood up until her leaving for Lowood and Catherine's childhood up until meeting the Linton's.

## Jane's voice

It is no surprise to anyone who has read *Jane Eyre* that Jane's childhood is mostly presented as an unhappy one. The very first page of the first chapter opens up on a scene with Jane being excluded from her aunts and cousins presence until she can prove that "I was endeavouring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and child-like disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner – something lighter, franker, more natural as it were" (Bronte, C. 9). Situated as early as in the first introduction of Jane as a character, there is a vein in the narrative that hints at her being unnatural. Upon asking what she has done wrong, Jane is met with the reply that "There is something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner" (Bronte, C. 9-10). Not only does this first page establish something central to the story, namely that Jane is excluded and alone, but also that she has no way to ascertain what she has done wrong in a manner that seems logical to her. From just these brief descriptions, the reader can see that Jane has a voice that is disapproved of, as it has left her outside the expected loving affections of family. The first four chapters preceding Jane's journey to Lowood all consist of a persistent attitude of animosity towards Jane seemingly no matter what she does. This behaviour includes being locked away, scolded, and called names such as bad animal, rat and mad cat (Bronte, C. 11-15). The negative prejudices towards Jane can be analysed in terms of her establishing her voice, but also in terms of the overall thesis concerning identity in several ways.

In her article *Jane Eyre's Childhood and Popular Children's Literature*, Judith Sloman analyses the view Victorian society held regarding children. She notes on how children were not believed to have complex inner lives, and that "Children were expected to be "agreeable" and in that attitude had definite functions: to be a source of diversion and entertainment, to create an atmosphere of relaxation and delight, and thus to soften the lives of the careworn adults who were supporting them" (Sloman, 108). Jane is certainly held to this standard by not only her aunt, but the servants of the house as well, as she is told by Abbott "it is your place to be humble and to try to make yourself agreeable to them" (Bronte, C. 16). Jane also spends a lot of time trying to discern the reason for her continued punishment. She muses "Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, forever condemned? Why

could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win anyone's favour?" (Bronte, C. 18). The Childhood chapter in Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* contains a reference to how children react to being cut off from their parent's love

in a bodily form he discovers finitude, solitude, and abandonment in an alien world; he tries to compensate for this catastrophe by alienating his existence in an image whose reality and value will be established by others. It would seem that from the moment he recognises his reflection in a mirror [...] he begins to affirm his identity. His self is merging with this reflection in such a way that it is formed only by alienating itself

(Beauvoir, 294)

Beauvoir theorizes that children, when cut off from their parents will inevitably lose something of themselves to a projected image, even if that image is of them as in a mirror. There is a situation in Jane's childhood, which relates in a particularly poignant way to this quote. When Jane is locked in her uncle's old room, before her troubled thoughts on why she cannot please

I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit

(Bronte, C. 18)

Her exclaiming, "All said I was wicked, and perhaps I might be so", follows this self-reflection (Bronte, C. 19). Jane is finding an image outside her to represent her character as others see it and she is seemingly beginning to internalize the image she is presented with day after day. Charlotte is presenting Jane as having a rich inner life but is also showing her struggling with living up to the standards set by adults that do not believe in it. Jane further comments that her reflection is like that of a half fairy, half imp (Bronte, C. 18). Her reality and value, as Beauvoir puts it, is fixed in an image of something not real or opaque. Although stories and books are Jane's refuge as a child, she cannot create a positive image for herself from them. While her reason deems her treatment as unjust (Bronte, C. 19), her imagined failing as a natural child has left her with an impression of being distinctively other. Her identity is thus conflicted and without much stability at this point in the narrative, because

Jane has not yet established the voice of independence she so famously utilizes later in the narrative and throughout the rest of the novel.

However, the question may arise of exactly why Jane is stamped as difficult and naughty by those around her. The answer to that question lies with the misguided conduct and clear resentment in Mrs. Reed. Although this is not expressed directly via words to Jane in her childhood years, Mrs. Reed's antipathy towards Jane is clear from her exclusion from the family, her being reduced to little less than a servant, and Mrs. Reed ordering her confinement in the red room. According to Sloman, "The adult's love is a reward for the child's proper behaviour" (Sloman, 108). It could be possible to make the argument that Mrs. Reed does not have as much responsibility for Jane's negative view of herself, as she is never explicitly shown either beating her like John Reed or scolding her as Bessie and Abbot do. Sloman seems to indicate that Mrs. Reed's guilt merely extends to "confuse her niece's individualistic character with the conventional image of the discontented genteel child, who in so many children's stories was presumed to be sinful and thus to deserve severe punishment" (Sloman, 111). While it may indeed be true that Mrs. Reed is operating under an accepted set of rules, which at their core is devaluing children having any form of identity, I would disagree and claim that Mrs. Reed's dislike of Jane is clearly born out of spite and jealousy.

This is made clear when Jane reaches adulthood and is called back to her dying aunt, whereupon Mrs. Reed reveals that she hated Jane from the moment she was brought into the family, exclaiming, "I hated it the first time I set my eyes on it – a sickly, whining, pining thing!" (Bronte, C. 267). Furthermore, Sloman also remarks that Mrs. Reed ignores any behaviour in her children which Jane is accused of, which departs her even more from the position of a misguided caregiver as she would surely be expected to at least to some degree uphold the same rules for her own children. Consequently, not only is Mrs. Reed central to Jane's early identity issues, her actions are not derived purely from societal expectations, but merely from unjustifiable hatred. Considering these were the emotions within Mrs. Reed when Jane was in her care, it is no wonder that Jane's image of herself is reflected as imaginary and hollow. She is being held to these specific standards not because it's what society deemed natural at the time, but because one woman needed an outlet for her intense dislike for a child. The abuse Jane endures is however not only rooted in ideas of ideal children or family scorn, but it also comes from a deep-rooted issue concerning female existence.



I would argue that Jane is not only disliked for her failure to appear as the natural child but also because she does not exhibit purely feminine Victorian qualities. Beauvoir writes in her *Childhood* chapter “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychological or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilisation as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called female” (Beauvoir, 293). While this idea is still debated, some research hints that Beauvoir may very well be correct in her assumption that there are no inherent differences between men and women, and that neither has a core at their self that matches their assigned sex. In a study done as early as 1997, researchers concluded, “On the surface, there do appear to be gender specific patterns of identity development. However, in reality, these differences may be most accurately described in terms of nuances rather than exaggerated terms of dichotomous gender differences” (Lytle, Bakken, Romig, 9). They also remark on how the expectation of certain gendered behaviours and stereotypes can hinder young girls in forming a balanced identity (Lytle, Bakken, Romig, 8). However, it is important to acknowledge that while modern ideas about gender have effaced some of the lines between what is female and male, in the Victorian society, this was not the case.

Expanding upon this idea, after Jane faints in the red room and is confined to her bed, she wistfully remarks about one of her toys

To this crib I always took my doll [...] I contrived to find a pleasure in loving and cherishing a faded craven image [...] I could not sleep unless it was folded in my night-gown; and when it lay there safe and warm, I was comparatively happy, believing it to be happy likewise

(Bronte, C. 35).

Jane is in a lonesome situation, without a friend to whom she can confide and receive any type of affection. To remedy this, she turns to her doll for comfort. Already beginning to believe that she is a wicked child, she seems to be connecting her happiness onto the perceived happiness of an object, in a way alienating herself like she did in front of the mirror, placing her identity in a situation where it is perceived as other. This type of behaviour

is detailed by Beauvoir, who claims that while boys can halt their alienating of themselves previously discussed by turning the focus onto their penis, but:

A little girl cannot incarnate herself in any part of her own body. As compensation, and to fill the role of the alter ego for her, she is given a foreign object: a doll. [...] The great difference is that, on one hand, the doll represents the whole body and, on the other hand, it is a passive thing. As such, the little girl will be encouraged to alienate herself in her person as a whole and to consider it as an inert given.

(Beauvoir, 303-4)

Thus, Jane's alienating of herself can be seen not only in view of her apparent failure to be an agreeable child but also her inability to conform completely to the Victorian feminine. In *The Death of Christian Britain – Understanding secularisation*, Callum G. Brown notes on Victorian society that “Women were the moral linchpin of society”, and brings up a news article from *The-Day Star* in 1855 which advised that “The best qualities to look for in a wife are industry, humility, neatness, gentleness, benevolence and piety” (Brown, 62). There was an agreement that a woman’s very essence was pious (Brown, 61), suggesting that there was a female essence which Victorian society saw as necessary to protect. This mind-set is displayed several times throughout the early chapters of *Jane Eyre*, for example when Jane overhears the following exchange between Abbot and Bessie “if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that.” To which the reply is “Not a great deal to be sure, agreed Bessie: at any rate, a beauty like Miss Georgiana would be more moving in the same condition” (Bronte, C. 31). Abbot and Bessie are here reinforcing the belief in the feminine being more sympathetic. Georgiana, who in many ways conforms to the ideal image of the feminine, not giving in to outbursts of emotion like Jane, and upholding a feminine exterior appearance has cemented herself as being the preferred female child.

Jane’s identity is certainly shown to be multi-faceted and not conforming to Victorian moral notions already in her childhood. When told that she has to speak pleasantly to be able to sit

with her aunt and cousin, Jane retreats to a sheltered window nook with a book about birds. While this may initially seem like genteel, Victorian type behaviour, her thoughts on the subject reveal another dimension to the situation

There were certain introductory pages that, child as I was, I could not pass quite as blank. They were those which treat of the haunts of sea-fowl; of the solitary rocks and promontories by them only inhabited; of the coast of Norway, studded with isles from its southern, the Lindenness, or Naze, or to the North Cape. Nor could I pass unnoticed the suggestion of the bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space

(Bronte, C. 10).

Her mind has halted shortly at these very specific images, recounted in almost excessive detail. What I believe is important about these pictures is the fact that all the places mentioned are cold, inhospitable, and bring to mind images of jagged, robust landscapes, places one would be hard-pressed to think of as expressly feminine. This quote serves to show the reader not only Jane's sensation of her place in the world, but also show how, while her outward appearance may sometimes seem to bend to Victorian ideals, it is not the whole story, and that underneath the surface are landscapes and spaces of an entirely different quality. When Jane is introduced to Mr. Brocklehurst, Mrs. Reed makes sure to note that she must be brought up in conformity to her position and prospects (Bronte, C. 42). No doubt this is intended as an assurance of her being imbued with more feminine qualities, as Patricia Thomson notes in her book *Victorian Heroines* that the establishment of colleges for educating governesses had the goal of "imparting female knowledge" (Thomson, 38). Mr. Brocklehurst, upon hearing that Jane does not find psalms interesting, furthers this idea by telling Jane that "you have a wicked heart and you must pray to God to change it: to give you a new and clean one: to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Bronte, C. 40). This indicates that Jane is viewed as a person whose nature has been compromised, and requires guiding back to what lies in her essence, which is corroborated by Brown, who writes that women's natural piety "only required judicious guidance and self-deliverance – a deliverance easily attained if women kept out of the world" (Brown, 61). What can be

ascertained from examining the conditions of Jane's early childhood is that her identity suffers under pressure from several fronts. She is neither a good child nor a good girl.

The complex inner life and thoughts which Charlotte imbued her with might be in risk of diminishing severely throughout the narrative, if not for the fact that Jane is able to establish her identity through two central means; the role of speaking and seeing narrator. Robyn R. Warhol notes in her article "Double Gender, Double Genre in Jane Eyre and Villette" that "two of the most basic questions for the narratologist to ask about any given text is "Who is seeing" and "Who is speaking?" (Warhol, 859). With first-person narration, Jane undoubtedly holds both positions, but she is also in the position of being an almost all-seeing narrator, as she is narrating the story as an old woman, with the added benefits of years of lived experience to put her childhood into a larger perspective. For example when the obvious older Jane remarks "Yes, Mrs. Reed, to you I owe some fearful pangs of mental suffering, but I ought to forgive you, for you knew not what you did" (Bronte, C. 25). Alternatively, when, in the same chapter where she laments her inability to please, the older narrator again steps in to note "I could not answer the ceaseless inward question – why I thus suffered; now, at the distance of – I will not say how many years – I see it clearly" (Bronte, C. 19). The benefit of the older Jane's narrating sometimes making its presence known is that it adds a deeper understanding of Jane's character, what she struggles with and how it has affected her as an adult. Although it is not present in these earliest chapters, the older Jane will eventually begin addressing the reader themselves, creating a direct line to a listener and an outlet for true emotion and identity where it might otherwise become diffuse.

A different reason the appealing directly to the reader does not appear in the earliest chapters might be to allow the younger Jane a larger arena on which to grow, without the interference of the older, wiser Jane. In order to show how Jane establishes her voice, the older narrator needs to hold back in order to prevent impeding development in the younger Jane being apparent to the reader. With the older seeing narrator keeping herself mostly away from the centre of the reader's mind, young Jane can demonstrate how she balances her identity between all the rules and norms trying to mould her in a specific image. This battle may be best exhibited through her quarrel with Mrs. Reed. Although Jane has demonstrated what can be perceived as her aspiring true identity earlier, this argument is pivotal because it is where Jane, through clear and true expression rejects the image projected onto her right to the

source, namely Mrs. Reed. Her outburst begins with the line “Speak I must” (Bronte, C.43), indicating that Jane’s inner conflict has reached a crisis point, and if she does not bring her voice forth at this moment, it may be in risk of languishing and dying under the pressure she has been subjected to, and her identity will remain on uncertain ground. This argument is strengthened by her immediate reaction to her own words “Ere I had finished this reply, my soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, I ever felt. It seemed as if an invisible bond had burst, and that I had struggled out into unhoped-for liberty” (Bronte, C. 44). Jane’s boldness has rewarded her with a sense of independence, of being released from the bonds of Victorian ideas of what a child or girl should and ought to be. Although that does not mean she is completely free of their influence through the rest of the novel, it is an important step in realizing her selfhood and stabilizes her identity in a way that will aid her in future confrontations. All this is enhanced by the first-person narration, which grants the reader a necessary insight into Jane’s mind, both in present and in future.

However, not everyone sees Jane’s confrontation with Mrs. Reed as a liberation of identity and expression of something true. Sloman writes that “Jane’s precocious accusations of Mrs. Reed (if not her resentment itself) are less like what a child might have said than what an adult, remembering an oppressed childhood, might wish too late that she had been able to say” (Sloman, 107). It may indeed be prudent to consider the reliability of any narrator, and as such Sloman makes a valid point. However, she has forgotten a perhaps essential part leading up to Jane’s outburst, which I will discuss directly; the influence of Mr. Loyd. When he is called to check on Jane after her incident in the red room, Jane suddenly exclaims that she is miserable (Bronte, C. 28). His response is not to dismiss her emotions but instead asking her to articulate why she is unhappy (Bronte, C. 29). Jane’s response tells the reader a lot about her difficulties with forming a voice, as the older Jane takes over for a short while to say

How much I wished to reply fully to this question! How difficult it was to frame any answer! Children can feel, but they cannot analyse their feelings; and if the analysis is partially effected in thought, they know not how to express the result of the process in words. Fearful, however, of losing this first and only opportunity of relieving my grief by imparting it, I, after a disturbed pause, contrived to frame a meagre, though, as far as it went, true response



(Bronte, C. 29).

Even though the older Jane is seemingly in agreement with Sloman, there are a few key elements to consider. Firstly, Jane is being asked a complex emotional question for a child, and she may be very correct in stating that this was difficult for her childhood self to attempt to answer with such a short time to contemplate her answer. Secondly, although she cannot formulate an eloquent answer to this specific question, it is not unlikely that this prompting may have caused Jane to examine her emotions and thoughts with increased attention compared to before.

Mr. Loyd has seen a child in need, and has dispensed with some conventionality in an attempted to allow Jane to express herself without fear of reproach, and it would no doubt be easier for Jane to develop this skill after being met without inherent negativity. Lastly, she has three months from this meeting until her quarrel with Mrs. Reed to contemplate what Mr. Loyd has instilled in her, a need to formulate her emotions. Her words to Mrs. Reed are in addition not of lofty eloquence or particular beauty of expression. Jane calls her bad, hard-hearted, and exclaims she will tell "anyone who asks that the very thought of you makes me sick and that you treated me with miserable cruelty" (Bronte, C. 44). Her choice of words are direct, even showing signs of child-like construction with the choice of prefixing cruelty with an adjective which does not add anything to the meaning, and most importantly as Jane states, she is merely telling the truth (Bronte, C. 44). Bringing the argument back to Sloman again, it seems slightly ironic that in an article where she argues for the complex inner lives of children and their mistreatment by adults who cannot fathom that concept, she in a way perpetuates the same attitudes by suggesting that Jane is not capable of even expressing her emotions. Especially when considering that they are based on rather simple observation of what has been done to her, and her feeling of being mistreated.

## Catherine's voice

Examining Catherine's childhood and her possible attempts at establishing her voice as Jane does, is not something that can be undertaken in the same manner as I did in the previous section. This is primarily because *Wuthering Heights* does not lend itself easily to neatly sectioned paragraphs of analysis. Warhol claims, "A Victorian women novelist exploits possibilities for doubleness that narratology's categories can bring into the foreground" (Warhol, 858). Although she applied this analysis to *Jane Eyre*, I would argue that it is just as applicable, if not increasingly so, to *Wuthering Heights*. While the concept of doubleness is certainly a key aspect of this thesis, with topics such as performed versus lived experience, and falling between conventional characterizations, the narratology of *Wuthering Heights* exemplifies this subject in such a way that it is in many respects what leads to Catherine's unstable identity. Owing to this is the very dualities inherit in the focalization itself, as the story is told from two characters in the novel; Nelly Dean and Mr. Lockwood. An analysis of Catherine cannot be undertaken without examining how her possible identity is filtered through the first-person narration of these two characters.

Lockwood is the initial focalizer of the novel, and although it will be Nelly Dean who recounts large parts of the story, it is on him the novel opens. Tony Tanner notes in his article "Passion, Love and Identity in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*" that "Emily chooses as a narrator a figure who is in all crucial respects her opposite - male, emotionally etiolated, and a product of the modern city" (Tanner, 9). Lockwood is presented as a modern, average man who is about to become involved in a story not only as a listener but as a narrator. Tanner claims that

By showing us Lockwood and Heathcliff as inhabitants of the same universe, Emily Bronte it seems to me increases the impact of her story. Because part of the force of the

book comes from the fact that a passionate yearning for timelessness and placelessness is forced to inhabit time and place. 1801. By making us see Lockwood and Heathcliff existing in the same space, Emily Bronte can show how space can become uneasy, problematical, holding incompatibles.

(Tanner, 3)

Using Lockwood as a narrator does not just accomplish what Tanner suggests though. By focusing the narration through the eyes of a character such as Lockwood, Emily is illustrating not only incompatibles in space but incompatibilities of identity. On his first meeting with Heathcliff, Lockwood is certain that the man will become his new friend, and that he is an inherently amiable fellow, though Lockwood does reprimand himself slightly, admitting that “I bestow my own attributes over-liberally on him (Bronte, E. 6). In addition, the reader is also privy to Lockwood’s apparent inability to connect with women. He laments his reputation of heartlessness as he

was thrown into the company of a most fascinating creature, a real goddess, in my eyes, as long as she took no notice of me (...) she understood me, at last, and looked a return – the sweetest of all imaginable looks – and what did I do? I confess it with shame – shrunk icily into myself like a snail, at every glance retired colder and farther...

(Bronte, E. 6).

His behaviour proves him to be inept at discerning people’s inner lives; the narrative is instead focalized through Lockwood being unable to form an informed opinion about the identity of others, especially women. This can in part be seen when he misjudges the second Catherine’s relationship with the men of the house twice, and along with the quote on the woman he had affection for, he subsequently reveals tendencies which are discussed by Abbie L. Cory in her article “Out of My Brother’s Power”

The brief paragraph accomplishes several objectives. First, it suggests Lockwood’s objectification of women (“goddess.” “fascinating creature”) and their dehumanization through the absence of naming and description. The woman is a “creature” a “goddess” a “poor innocent”, but she is never referred to as a girl or a woman, nor is she named or physically described. To Lockwood, women seem at times little more than ciphers.

(Cory, 13)

Only after this build-up of the setting and seemingly misplaced narrator is the reader introduced to Catherine. As Lockwood is forced to stay the night at Wuthering Heights, he retreats into a cosy private area much like Jane does before being attacked by John Reed. However, while Jane's private space is utilized to illuminating facets of her identity and showing the workings beneath her perceivable external, Lockwood's situation is focused around his discovery of the existence of Catherine, and immediately struggling with the concept of her identity. When Lockwood is attempting to rest in the oak case, he discovers "a few mildewed books piled up in the corner; and it was covered with writing scratched on the paint: this writing, however, was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small – Catherine Earnshaw, here and there varied to Catherine Heathcliff and then again to Catherine Linton" (Bronte, E. 22). Upon discovering that Catherine has written in the margins of every book he finds, Lockwood asserts, "An immediate interest kindled within me for the unknown Catherine, and I began forthwith, to decipher her faded hieroglyphics" (Bronte, E. 23). Instead of having a character reveal their inner self to the reader, Lockwood becomes the translator, who instead decides that he will "decipher the hieroglyphs" by himself and read Catherine's so-called diary.

The continued display by Lockwood of referring to women in a way which does not promote their identity perpetuates what Beauvoir refers to as the myth of woman. She discusses how "to posit the woman is to posit the absolute Other, without reciprocity, refusing, against experience, that she could be a subject, a peer" (Beauvoir, 275.) Lockwood is certainly guilty of this behaviour, as he after his nightmare – in which he sees the ghostly apparition of Catherine - exclaims to Heathcliff that the house is "swarming with ghosts and goblins" and "that minx, Catherine Linton, or Earnshaw or however she was called – she must have been a changeling – wicked little soul!" (Bronte, E. 31). Even when given three names to choose from, Lockwood persists in a kind of dehumanizing of Catherine by linking her name to the supernatural. Beauvoir expands on this by noting "Of all these myths, none is more anchored in masculine hearts than the feminine 'mystery'. It has numerous advantages. And first it allows an easy explanation of anything that is inexplicable" (Beauvoir, 277.) No doubt disturbed by the nature of his dreams, Lockwood immediately retreats to the idea of woman presenting something indiscernible, as he refuses to meet the ghost's gaze as well.

Though it is difficult to say which novel was written to completion first, *Wuthering Heights* or *Jane Eyre*, it could be interesting to look at Catherine's scrawled diary entry, as a means to show the reader that her situation is not only sympathetic but also quite like Jane's. In the very

short while that Catherine is allowed to narrate in the novel, there are several similarities shown between her and Jane's situation. She calls Hindley a tyrant and notes how "we used to be permitted to play, if we did not make much noise; now a mere titter is enough to send us into corners!" (Bronte, E. 24). Hindley insists on natural childlike behaviour much like Mrs. Reed does towards Jane, and in addition, Jane calls John Reed a tyrant. Catherine also recounts how Hindley "seizing one of us by the collar, and the other by the arm, hurled both into the back kitchen; where, Joseph asseverated, "owd Nick" would fetch us as sure as we were living" (Bronte, E. 25). This scene is much like the one where Jane is locked in the red room, and Abbot threatens that "if you don't repent, something bad might be permitted to come down the chimney and fetch you away" (Bronte, C. 16). Like Jane, Catherine is able to show how she too suffers under the restraints of what a child should be. Sloman writes how "There is such disproportion between the child's misbehaviour and its consequences, that quirks of temperament or behaviour seem tantamount to sin, and that disturbing the peace within the family seems capable of disturbing the social fabric itself" (Sloman, 110). Indeed, physical violence coupled with the threat of being taken away by Satan for throwing a book seems to indicate that the strict rules imposed on children are being forced to a severe degree on Catherine. Still, like Jane, she seems not without the spirit to combat her treatment, as one of the first sentences Lockwood reads is "H. and I are going to rebel – we took our initiatory step this evening" (Bronte, E. 23). Through this rather constrained introduction to Catherine, the reader may discern that she and Jane hold similarities in character, as they both upset the social fabric, although in slightly different manners.

Furthermore, the irony does not go unnoticed that Catherine has inscribed her only narrative voice in the entire novel in the margins of books, whereas Jane has the ability to open a book in order to gain better insight into herself or reveal her character to the reader. Jane's identity is not resigned to the edges of novels. She is her book, as Tanner points out (Tanner, 9.) Warhol also remarks on the nature of Jane Eyre's first person narration with a quote from Genette "these novels present situations where the narrator cannot be an ordinary walk-on in his narrative, he can only be the star" (Warhol, 859). Jane is indeed the star of her own novel, and it can be said to be marked not only by her control of information but also her way of infusing other stories with herself at her own terms. Viewing Catherine's scrawlings, Lockwood asserts that "Catherine's library was select, and its state of dilapidation proved it to have been well used, though not altogether for a legitimate purpose" (Bronte, E. 23). It seems a little odd that while Lockwood will be recounting the whole story of *Wuthering Heights* - as



told to him by Nelly Dean – in his journal, that he should so call into question the legitimacy of writing a story, even if it is in the margins of other books. Beth Newman has an interesting addition to this line of thought in her article “gender, narration and gaze in *Wuthering Heights*”, when she says that

The role of onlooker, the conventional position of the masculine spectator with respect to the feminine spectacle, is in this novel precisely the situation of the narrator – specifically, of the narrator as voyeur defending himself against the threat of the feminine by objectifying a woman, by telling her story, writing it down in his diary, and seeking in his oblique way to make it – and her – his own.

(Newman, 1034)

Newman’s theory ties in wonderfully with Cory’s exploration of the female gaze, as her theory derives much content from Newman. Lockwood must establish himself as something more than an onlooker, and any way of invalidating Catherine’s own narration aids him in that goal.

Building on this argument is the fact that Lockwood sees the ghost of Catherine as a child. I would argue this is because, in the narrative sense, he has intruded on her chance of establishing her voice in childhood as Jane did. Considering the fact that Catherine is a main character, it is not unlikely for a reader to expect a certain presentation of her character, one that may make her identity at the very least tangible and consistent. Instead, her identity has been marooned to the sides of other stories. Again, in his dream he still cannot meet the gaze of the ghost, Cory notes that the situation “stands as another instance in the pattern of the disrupting nature of the female gaze, potentially reversing power relations between the genders” (Cory, 16). In response, Lockwood says that “Terror made me cruel [...] I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down...” (Bronte, E. 29). Tanner also writes “It is notable that he tries to keep her out by piling up books to block up the gap in the window, trying to use print to stem the penetration of passion. He dreads any possibility of emotional leakage, any threat to his snail’s shell.” (Tanner, 12). Although Tanner makes a fair point of Lockwood wishing to hold on to his current emotional state, I would argue that it is his fear of losing his narrative power, which drives him to commit a seemingly heinous and explicit act of violence, coupled with utilizing books in order to shield him from Catherine’s ghost. Even by describing his treatment of the ghostly Catherine in

detail, Lockwood asserts his dominance in the narrative. He shows no remorse over his treatment of the waif because his actions are a means to personal gain and protection for him. Cory claims that his actions “exposes the response of the dominant classes to gender and class based rebellion” (Cory, 15), and her line of thought resonates well with what has been discerned about Lockwood thus far. Lockwood is fearful of any disturbance to the role he is insistent on keeping, and will apparently go to any lengths to conserve it.

It is interesting that in projecting an image of the spectre child in his dream of Catherine, Lockwood creates an allusion, which is in many ways similar to what Jane sees as herself in her reflection when locked in the red room. A key difference to note between these two spectres is that while one character may see this image themselves and combat the image by asserting herself in the narrative, the other has it imposed on her by a man who is already adhering to static ideas of female and has no prior knowledge or insight into her character. Already this early on in *Wuthering Heights* it is made abundantly clear that the narrative style undermines Catherine’s identity. Lockwood being presented as a first-person narrator like this, the emotionally stunted English gentleman in rough country, is a fascinating example of how Emily exposes the constraints of female identity. Catherine is relegated to a sphinx-like mystery by Lockwood, her various names swimming before him, teetering on the edge of being told, but disappearing into the conventionality and othering of women common in Victorian England.

As the narrative reigns are being handed over to Nelly Dean, she asks Lockwood how he feels about her master, to which he replies "A rough fellow, rather, Mrs. Dean. Is not that his character?" (Bronte, E. 40), and she answers affirmatively to this, but the question is an interesting one. Just prior to it, Nelly Dean asks how Catherine (the second) is doing, intimating that she does not go to *Wuthering Heights*, and all she has told Lockwood so far is that she came to the house when her mistress was married. She says that Heathcliff simply retained her when he took over the property, which could well indicate that she has had little to no dealings with Heathcliff and has no real reason to have any insights into his character. The question thus seems like a small form of metalepsis, as if Lockwood is aware that he must now leave the primary storytelling to Nelly Dean, and is affirming that he has presented the right image of Heathcliff. While not pertaining directly to Catherine, this exchange marks a twisting of the narrative that could pose a serious threat to how Catherine is portrayed and

calls into question the honesty or intentions of those who control it, namely Lockwood and Nelly Dean.

As a narrator, Nelly Dean can certainly be said to conform to Victorian ideals. She makes sure the reader and Lockwood are aware of her accomplishments in the domestic sphere before she even deigns to introduce Catherine in any detail. When Catherine, Heathcliff and Hindley take ill, Nelly is quick to remark how she has "take[n] on the cares of a woman" (Bronte, E. 44), additionally, when the children recover, the doctor "affirmed it was a great measure owing to me, and praised me for my care" (Bronte, E. 45). Thus, Nelly has created an image of herself as a benign caregiver, an angel of the domestic sphere, the perfect Victorian Servant and exceedingly agreeable where female ideals are concerned. She furthers this impression by recounting the mischief Catherine and Heathcliff would get into, and how "many a time I've cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, and I not daring to speak a syllable for fear of losing the small power I still retained over the unfriended creatures" (Bronte, E. 54). Nelly is painting herself as a sort of Mrs. Reed type character, with her goal being only to correct behaviour in Catherine and Heathcliff, which was not deemed pleasing to the adults. Leicester Bradner seems to indicate that there are no issues with Nelly Dean as a narrator, remarking in his article "the growth of *Wuthering Heights*" that "Nellie Dean, kind-hearted but placid in her feelings, independent of the family but united to it by ties of loyalty, is exactly the person to tell the story of the fate of the Earnshaws" (Bradner, 145). There is some truth to Bradner's statement. As a demonstration of Emily Bronte's mastery of the novel as a medium, her expert skills at constructing narratives within narratives and convey a compelling story with several narrators, Nelly Dean is a great choice. I would respectfully disagree; however, by arguing that Nelly Dean as a focalizer shows some concerning tendencies towards Catherine, and joins Lockwood in suppressing her voice. Partly, this is because she fits some of the negative Mrs. Reed characteristics by displaying a dislike to Catherine that goes deeper than simply wanting to correct a child. She adds to this image by noting how "I've had many a laugh at her (Catherine) perplexities and untold troubles, which she vainly strove to hide from my mockery. That sounds ill-natured – but she was so proud, it became really impossible to pity her distress, till she could be chastened into more humility" (Bronte, E. 78). She also admits to Lockwood that "I did not love her, and rather relished mortifying her vanity" (Bronte, E. 82). Her actions to correct Catherine seems to spring mostly from the fact that she does not like her, and takes some pleasure in creating distress for

her. Furthermore, these first few chapters describing Catherine's childhood contain almost no sentences that are narrated in such a way as to be expressed by Catherine herself. Almost everything the reader learns about Catherine comes from indirect references or descriptions of her courtesy of Nelly. As such, Catherine is again barred from establishing a voice apparent to the reader at a critical moment of her development as a person.

In the first real detailed description of Catherine, Nelly seems to attempt to justify her behaviour towards her, as she narrates

Certainly, she had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before; and she put us all past our patience fifty times and oftener a day: from the hour she came down stairs, till the hour she went to bed, we had not a minute's security that she wouldn't be in mischief. Her spirits were always at highwater mark, her tongue always going – singing, laughing and plaguing everybody who would not do the same. A wild, wick slip she was – but, she had the bonniest eye, and sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish; and, after all, I believe she meant no harm

(Bronte, E. 48)

It would seem that some of Catherine's apparent flaws are mediated by the fact that she seems to exhibit qualities that appeal to the Victorian ideals. She is described as pretty and a skilled dancer, and it is only after dwelling on these qualities that Nellie Dean ascertains that she most likely meant no harm in her mischief. This is interesting when paired with the fact that Nelly can refer to almost no concrete situations where Catherine has behaved badly or caused mischief. One of her few remarks is that of Catherine “defying us with her bold, saucy look” (Bronte, E. 49), which again brings back the concept of the female gaze. The problem seems to lie not with clear proofs of reprehensible conduct from Catherine, but rather Nelly's reaction to facets of character in a person she strongly dislikes. Going back to her description of Catherine, it can be argued that it – when taking all my arguments into account - reveals a key issue with the narrative control of this novel, namely that although Nelly Dean strongly dislikes Catherine, she cannot fully commit to a negative presentation of her because her

conduct cannot be stated as beyond saving for Nelly's feelings and actions towards her to be justified. So as much as she might like to paint Catherine as the blackest villain, she still defers to certain key Victorian ideals to soften her impression and reinforce the image of herself as a positive parental figure, someone whose interest it is to preserve and support the positive aspects of Catherine's character. As such, there is a certain doubleness inherent in Nelly's narrative voice, which will be explored further in chapter two.

## **Chapter conclusion**

The morals and norms of Victorian society are quite apparent in terms of the struggles faced by Catherine and Jane, as their voices have trouble finding even ground amidst all the expectations heaped upon them.

I have shown how Jane is able to find her voice through several outlets, and has help in articulating the truth of her emotions which aids her in her ultimate control of the narrative. While *Jane Eyre* may be her book, she has shown how useful other books can be in establishing identity in a hostile environment, and how the genuine aid of others can be crucial in the maintaining of the self.

On the other hand, I have argued that Catherine's position in the narrative bars her from establishing her voice like Jane, and although the two characters seem rather similar from the little the reader is allowed to glimpse of Catherine's identity, Emily Bronte does not treat one of her main characters with the same consideration for identity that Charlotte bestows upon Jane.

The sources used in this chapter have helped illuminate underlying issues with both novels, be it on a technical narrative level, or in terms of abiding/transgressing against society norms. The idea of gender issues as an important aspect of identity being strengthened or weakened as it ties in with the roles prevalent in society is an important argument to keep in mind, as neither Catherine or Jane are free of its influence yet.

## Chapter 2 – Identity and Gender performativity

Now that a basis of how this thesis is handling the topic of identity and gender as an influence on the establishing of it in both novels, it is necessary to show how these topics continue to influence Catherine and Jane beyond the initial childhood years. While I have utilized Beauvoir to show how presupposed notions of gender affect the characters and their means of establishing and maintaining their identities, it is the goal of this chapter to show how the idea of gender itself as performance continue to impact the way in which Jane and Catherine are perceived and express themselves. To do this, I will be using Judith Butler's famous work *Gender Trouble*, which illustrates perfectly the issues of the presumption of gender and behaviour set to a certain standard to express that gender in a culturally appropriate and acknowledged way.

It is the goal of this chapter to explore how the first chapter's building or barring of the character's voices are elaborated upon when faced with the idea of gender being intrinsically linked with sex, meaning that what is perceived as a female form is culturally expected to perform female deeds. In the case of Jane, I will be examining how Lowood Institution upholds this idea of gender in terms with Victorian ideals and how Jane is able to see through the illusion, aided by Helen and Miss Temple, all the while building on her own voice. For Catherine, I will analyse how the gendered expectations for both masculine and feminine cement themselves in the narrative style of Nelly Dean, and how she continues to attack Catherine's identity with her own internalized ideas about what it means to be man or woman, and how that gendered identity best manifests itself in one's character. I will argue that Nelly Dean's insistence on a gendered core and matching behaviour is in part what fractures Catherine's identity to the point of no return, causing her to die midway through the novel.

## Applying Butler

Before undertaking any detailed analysis, it is important to attempt to ascertain exactly what it is Butler is trying to convey in her work, before attempting to apply it to the two novels. Since I have already used Simone de Beauvoir in my analysis, it seems prudent to begin with how Butler takes one of Beauvoir's concepts and builds on it for her own analysis. She states that

Simone de Beauvoir suggests in *The Second Sex* "one is not born woman, but, rather, becomes one." For Beauvoir, gender is "constructed," but implied in her formulations is an agent, a cogito, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principle, take on some other gender. Is gender as variable and volitional as Beauvoir's account seems to suggest? Can "construction" in such a case be reduced to a form of choice? Beauvoir is clear that one "becomes" a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. And clearly, the compulsion does not come from "sex". There is nothing in her account that guarantees that the "one" who becomes a woman is necessarily female.

(Butler, 11)

Here, Butler has laid the groundwork for her analysis of gender, suggesting that ideas of gender and sex do not necessarily match, and acts of female or male gender do not need to be expressed by a person with the corresponding sex. However, much of her analysis is concerned with the idea of this not being applicable to society, as society does not seem to hold with her findings in general. She goes on to argue "persons only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility" (Butler, 22). She furthers this argument by adding

Inasmuch as 'identity' is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender and sexuality, the very notion of 'the person' is called into question by the cultural emergence of those 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings who appear to be person but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined

(Butler, 23).

Like Beauvoir, Butler calls into question the legitimacy of ascribing certain behavioural patterns to a sexed body as their signifying identity. As I discussed in chapter one, where Lockwood cannot make out the identity of women, he is employing lines of thought rejected by both Butler and Beauvoir. The intelligibility and reluctance of Lockwood to acknowledge women on equal terms might be said to stem from his notions of feminine mystery, thus supposing a gendered core that men cannot penetrate. To both Butler and Beauvoir, the belief in such a core and gendered expression halts the perception of any identity, if anything a person does is simply put into the categories of conforming or not conforming to the gendered behaviour their sex suggests they should partake in. Butler explains this by writing

The substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed

(Butler, 34)

This does not mean that Butler believes the actions of any person are inherently a performance like that in a play, that any exhibition of particular qualities thought to be feminine or masculine is faked. What she means is that what is important is not to inscribe someone with an inherent gender, but instead look to his or her actions to make up the whole person, whatever qualities they may possess. Butler refers to Nietzsche's idea that "the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (Butler, 34). In her 1999 introduction to her book, Butler explains some of her theory in added detail

The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object. I wondered whether we do not labour under a similar expectation concerning gender, that it operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon it anticipates [...] Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration [...] The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered



stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what we take to be an “internal” feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures

(Butler, XV – XVI)

Butler thus argues that gender is in a way a self-fulfilling prophecy created by society. One might express certain gendered behaviours because of internalized expectations that are sustained over a period of time. The line between what we do because it is part of us versus what we do as a response to gender expectations can as a result be slightly blurred and not easily discerned. Having explored Butler’s theory, it will now be easier to apply its content to the narratives of Catherine and Jane in order to see how and if this theory may be applied to their construction of an identity. In addition, to what extent it might affect their identity and whether they manage to hold onto their selves without succumbing to believing, certain things are natural to them as a specific gendered body.

## **Jane in gender performance**

As discussed in chapter one, Jane has already been able to battle with the notions of female gender behaviour and core identity. On some level, she has managed to come out victorious, as seen in her argument with Mrs. Reed. Still, it seems very a very natural addition to Jane’s narrative so far when Arnold Shapiro writes in his article “In Defense of Jane Eyre” that “One of the things Charlotte Bronte is protesting against most in this opening section of the novel is

prejudging, imposing an identity on someone, so that his individuality is lost” (Shapiro, 685). While Jane has established her identity in a way that Catherine has not been able to, she will still face several threats to her emerging self. Although Jane has resisted some ideas of gender, one of the biggest obstacles to her growing voice presents itself in the form of Lowood institution and Mr. Brocklehurst.

Having endured through the isolating years of living with the Reed family, Jane is being moved to a new location with new gender norms. Mrs. Reed repeatedly asks Mr. Brocklehurst to ensure that Jane is “brought up in a manner suiting her prospects” or “trained in conformity to her position and prospects” (Bronte, C 41-42). Nilay Erdem Ayyildiz explains the concept of gender expectations in the paper “From the Bottom To The Top: Class And Gender Struggle in Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*” with the following observation

the status, rights and duties of women cannot be generalized since they varied according to the social class they came from. It indicates that social class determines the traditional ways of women’s lives, because the Victorians believed that each class has its own standards and people were expected to conform to the roles of their classes

(Ayyildiz, 147).

Although Jane in part belongs to an upper social class due to her relation to the Reed family, Mrs. Reed is anxious to place her in a sphere below what she has been accustomed to, though not benefitted from. Making Jane a part of Lowood Institution marks a social change, which will in turn generate new gendered expectations.

While Mrs. Reed has been attempting to fracture Jane’s identity by lamenting how she falls short of expectations for both a child and a girl of her social standing, Jane has not been broken or made placid by her experiences. Instead, Jane has seemingly grown bolder, less fearful of the consequences of letting her voice be heard, as is established in chapter one. Since Mrs. Reed cannot control her via the standards in her own social sphere, she has opted to alter Jane’s position and to misconstrue her identity before the new position is obtained. When Mr. Brocklehurst responds to Mrs. Reed’s concerns by saying “plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits; such is the order of the day in the

house and its inhabitants” (Bronte, C 42). In this situation, he is alleviating her worries by confirming that what is expected of girls in his institution is radically different from what would be expected of her own. Thus, Mrs. Reed takes Jane’s journey to a new social sphere as an opportunity to slander her identity one last time, and to make it harder for Jane to achieve the happiness and companionship she craves. She tells Mr. Brocklehurst that the less said on the subject of Jane being a good girl, the better (Bronte, C 39), to which Mr. Brocklehurst responds with the line about Jane having a heart of stone which I also quoted on page twelve of chapter one. While I argued in chapter one that Jane’s core nature is seen as compromised, I would like to additionally claim that she is also being presented as someone who does not belong in either social sphere. Her heart of stone puts her at odds with the Christian beliefs and modes of teaching followed in Lowood, and as such Jane does not meet the requirements and must be guided onto the right path, being singled out for harsher treatment before she can even navigate the new sphere. This acts as a prelude to the gendered behaviours Jane observes in her new situation, and how she responds to them.

As Jane arrives at Lowood, one of her first descriptions are of the plain attires the girls are required to wear. She notes “Above twenty of those clad in this costume were full-grown girls, or rather young women; it suited them ill, and have an air of oddity even to the prettiest” (Bronte C 56). The use of the word costume I think is noteworthy. While there may not be anything inherently wrong with the clothes, Jane is here expressing how – to her - it is slight absurdity to force the same clothes on everyone, and that the lack of self-expression renders it a costume, or a performance. This is furthered by a visit of Mr. Brocklehurst, where he expresses clear disappointment with a girl’s curly hair, and he exclaims

Naturally! Yes, but we are not to conform to nature. I wish these girls to be the children of Grace: and why that abundance? I have again and again intimated that I desire the hair to be arranged closely, modestly, plainly [...] my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh, to teach them to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel”

(Bronte, C 76).

There is a slight ironic moment, as Jane observes Mr. Brocklehurst’s wife and daughters enter the room a moment later, as she observes that they were “splendidly attired in velvet, silk and

furs” (Bronte, C 77). What this scene does perfectly is illustrate how even Mr. Brocklehurst to some degree knows that he is striving for a certain gendered performance. He is not interested in the girls as people, but rather as gendered forms, which he is at liberty to inscribe certain expectations upon relating not only to gender but also to certain ideals and social positions. The contrast between the girls of Lowood and his own family displays this dissonance of the gendered expectations in different social spheres in an almost humorous manner, as Jane is allowed to witness it first-hand and relegate it to the reader. Furthermore, there is another instance in which Jane rebels against the outward inscribing of the girls, but readers may easily overlook its importance. Tanner writes on Jane’s identity

Jane Eyre has to write her life, literally create herself in writing: the narrative act is an act of self-definition. Given her social position the only control she has over her life is narrative control. She is literally as in control of herself as she is of her narrative”

(Tanner, 15).

The reason why this quote is important is because as Jane is moved to Lowood, she is again in danger of losing her identity or having it fracture under an entirely new set of expectations. She solemnly states after having been at Lowood a few days “I had only been a spectator of the proceedings at Lowood. I was now to become an actor therein” (Bronte C 63). By becoming an actor, as she puts it, Jane must somehow begin to conform or risk punishment. These expectations are also set forth by a person she cannot openly engage with as she has done with Mrs. Reed. The absolute power enjoyed by Mr. Brocklehurst puts him in a position where no one socially inferior to him may question his decisions or management of the school. Therefore, even though Jane has narrative control, she does not have the power to utilize said control against Mr. Brocklehurst in a manner that will not lead to severe punishment. Thus, to bring the argument back to the Tanner quote, Jane does one of the few things she can do in this situation, namely to bring the attention away from Mr. Brocklehurst and back to her apparent narrative control. Taking the gaze away from the girls’ attires or Mr. Brocklehurst’s admonishments, Jane instead elects to focus on Miss Temple, describing her appearance in detail

Seen now, in broad daylight, she looked tall, fair, and shapely; brown eyes, with a benignant light in their iris, and a fine pencilling of long lashes round, relieved the whiteness of her large front; on each of her temples her hair, of a very dark brown, was

clustered in round curls, according to the fashion of those times, when neither smooth bands nor long ringlets were in vogue; her dress, also of Spanish trimming of black velvet; a gold watch (watches were not so common then as now) shone at her girdle. Let the reader add, to complete the picture, refined features; a complexion, if pale, clear; and a stately air and carriage, and he will have, at least as clearly as words can give it, a correct idea of the exterior of Miss Temple

(Bronte C 57)

The reason why this detailed quote is so important consists of two primary reasons. Firstly, a woman of Miss Temple's status would to some degree be able to choose for herself what to wear, and it is this choice that Jane is in part calling attention to. While Miss Temple may be following the trends of the day, there are no words such as "costume" or "performance" present in Jane's description, indicating that Miss Temple has in some ways undermined the idea of gender performativity by making certain choices about her outward self. As I stated in the introduction to this chapter, Butler does not believe that all actions that conform to expected gender behaviours are false. An action, which conforms to the expected gender expression, is not inherently a fake expression. Thus, Miss Temple's attire is described by Jane in a positive light, rendering the gendered impression a positive one rather than an example of performativity, as Jane is showing how the simple element of choice negates to some extent the idea of a performance. Secondly, it is during this description that Jane refers to the reader for the first time. She will do this several times throughout the novel, but the fact that this aspect of the novel is introduced here holds certain significance. As Tanner remarked, Jane's narrative control is integral to the novel, the novel could not exist as it does without Jane's voice being a clear and tangible aspect. Therefore, when she is moved to Lowood and finds herself in a situation that represents a whole new danger to her identity, she is able to alleviate some of that pressure by reminding the reader of her control of the narrative by directing their gaze to a woman who has more control of her situation than Jane currently does. This aids Jane not only in reaffirming whose story the reader is partaking in, but also removes the focus from the performance and onto identity control.

On the other hand, Jane does not only have to defend herself against mere outward gender expectations. While she may have subverted the gender performance as far as clothing and

hair goes, one of the biggest threats to her identity stems from the accusations carries over from Mrs. Reed to Mr. Brocklehurst. To Jane, truth is, as I noted in chapter one, essential to her personhood. Jane needs to be able to tell the truth in order to defend herself from attacks on her identity, and to maintain her control of the narrative. Thus, when the accusation comes that she is a liar, it is perhaps one of the direst accusations that can be made against her, at least in her own opinion. When Mr. Brocklehurst places her on a chair in front of the entire school, and declares triumphantly that Jane is a liar and that, she is “not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien” (Bronte, C 78.) Crushed by finding herself in a strange place where no one has cause to believe her, Jane faces a possible crisis. Although her present self always has the possibility of reaching out to the reader to maintain control, that does little good for her past self, who now believes that she can never rise again and “I wished to die” (Bronte, C 81.) The young Jane cannot hope to speak truth to those around her with any measurable means of success, as Mr. Brocklehurst seems to her to be an impermeable authority figure. However, Helen Burns offers her companionship to Jane, as she is also excluded by the teachers and has the ability to see that Jane might be more than what Mr. Brocklehurst proclaims. She tells Jane “If all the world hated you, and believed you wicked, while your own conscience approved you, and absolved you from guilt, you would not be without friends” (Bronte, C 82.) What Helen does here is twofold. One, she is the one who teaches Jane about the importance of knowing the truth for yourself, and leaning on it when nothing else sustains you. Secondly, she reminds Jane that it can sometimes be vital to reject outer inscription on ourselves to salvage our identity from possible attacks.

Jane retroactively applies this to her narration, as she proves the effects of this teaching in a description of Helen before they have properly spoken about Jane’s solitude

“Helen Burns wore on her arm ‘the untidy badge’; scarcely an hour ago I had hear her condemned by Miss Scratcherd to a dinner of bread and water on the morrow, because she had blotted an exercise in copying it out. Such is the imperfect nature of man! Such spots are there on the disc of the clearest planet; and eyes like Miss Scratcherd’s can only see those minute defects, and are blind to the full brightness of the orb”

(Bronte, C 80.)

Here, Jane is renewing and building on the ideas of Helen Burns. She is effectively denying the inscribing of a specific gendered expectation that her society operates from,

and professes that it destroys the ability to the whole of identity when one is only looking for, as Butler puts it, a gendered core to match a sexed body. Although Both she and Helen have faults under the eyes of Lowood institution, Jane is able to slowly build again the control she exerted against Mrs. Reed in order to liberate herself and safeguard her identity from becoming separate to herself or destroyed. Jane also witnesses what the expectations of Lowood does to Helen, as she becomes gravely ill, but says to Jane “By dying young, I shall escape great sufferings. I had not qualities or talents to make my way very well in the world: I should have been continually at fault” (Bronte, C 97.) Helen finds herself in a situation much like Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, where she has exhibited traits not fitting with the expected assumed gender core, and is therefore pulled between different aspects of her identity, where her lived experience is being chastised for not morphing itself to the ideal part of her performed identity. Thus, Helen turns to her belief in God to be her true escape from her circumstances, and tells Jane not to worry, as she is going to God (Bronte, C 97.) Witnessing what the struggle between lived and performed identity can do to a person, Jane is able to recognize how the illusion of a gendered core can affect one’s existence negatively, and Helen’s friendship and subsequent death is vital to Jane’s continued growth as a person, and is a key reason why she manages to keep her selfhood intact for the rest of the narrative. As long as she feels she is living according to her conscience, she is at least living her lived self, not imbuing the performed identity with herself in a harmful way.

### **Chapter 3 – Love and identity**

We have seen in the previous chapters how minor characters can have a significant impact upon identity or identity performance depending on where they are situated in relation to our female main characters. Our question of how early connections render identity in a young or adolescent mind has provided interesting analysis and discussion. But, a question far more

dangerous to the concept of identity could be said to be: How does one's very innermost being respond to the delirious highs and consuming fires of romantic love? For both Emily and Charlotte's characters, their yearning to be with the man they love can be said to persist as the greatest challenge to their identity, up until the very ends of their respective narratives. The love stories are at the core of the novels, and make up most of its content. The mind may reel at the suggestion of love posing a threat to identity, as love is supposed to – in conventional terms - nurture and unfold identity with an intimacy reserved only for one recipient. Love should be creating a dynamic in which one can reveal their true self to at least one person without fear of being asked to change.

However, in this chapter we will explore how the relationship dynamics in the novels can be perilous to the preservation of identity. Specifically, we will examine how Catherine's relationship to Heathcliff can be said to be largely responsible for her fractured identity and untimely demise, and whether or not Jane is truly able to hold on to her authentic self in her seemingly successful relationship with Rochester. In order to do this, we will be utilizing a chapter from Frederick Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, namely his master/slave dialectic. The dialectic details how the formation of self-consciousness and ego leads to the self being stuck in a kind of liminality between wanting to view itself as the one true self-consciousness, and craving true recognition from another self-consciousness in order to become fully realized. According to Hegel, this process is doomed to end in a battle to the death between two consciousness's, which ends with the two forming a lord/bondsman dynamic, ultimately denying or being denied full and honest recognition.

While the relationships cannot be said to fit completely with the dialectic, it is ideal for illuminating dynamics in the relationships which can be argued to be hazardous to the preservation of one's identity.

### **Applying Hegel**

As has been done in the two previous chapters, it is necessary to examine the romantic relationships in a mostly chronological fashion. This is done to better illustrate how the



dynamic may change over the course of the novel, and to gain better understanding of the growth of the characters. It is also useful viewed in tandem with the shifts of their dynamic in accordance with Hegel's dialectic.

The relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff differs greatly in some ways from that of Jane and Rochester. One of the significant ways it differs is in the fact that Catherine and Heathcliff meet as children and spend most of their childhood and adolescence together. Their characters are woven together in a way which Jane and Rochester are not, finding solace in each other despite their mismatched positions in life.

When Hegel discusses the manner in which two self-consciousness's strive for recognition, but are also compelled to engage in a battle to the death, he notes on the outcome:

“they are unlike and opposed, and their reflexion into unity has not yet come to light, they stand as two opposed forms or modes of consciousness. The one is independent, and its essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent, and its essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter the Bondsman.”

Here, Hegel marks how self-consciousness stagnates into an unequal dynamic - be it in terms of relationships or otherwise - masquerading as recognition, as the desired realization through another. While the self-consciousness engage in a battle meant to risk everything, only one participant needs to risk life for the lord/bondsman relationship to commence. Ultimately, the battle seems to Hegel only the means in which the distribution of power within the dynamic is created. One may therefore doubt if the one supposedly risking everything is actually risking anything at all, as Hegel states that a self-consciousness is engaged in “showing itself as a pure negation of its objective form, or in showing that it is fettered to no determinate existence, that it is not bound at all by the particularity everywhere characteristic of existence as such, and is not tied up with life.”

Arguably, in order to risk everything in the pursuit of freedom, self-consciousness should ideally have experienced at the very least a fragment of true recognition. The battle would then be concerned with risking everything to awaken the same fragment in the other consciousness, leading to full recognition through the eyes of another. The battle would then

in essence attain true meaning and the outcome would have proper gravity. Instead, as Hegel remarks, self-consciousness is decided to appear unaffected by existence tethered to anything living or material. Thus, when the battle is ended and the lord emerges, Hegel writes:

“The master is the consciousness that exists for itself; but no longer merely the general notion of existence for self. Rather, it is a consciousness existing on its own account which is mediated with itself through an other consciousness, i.e. through an other whose very nature implies that it is bound up with an independent being or with thinghood in general.”

The lord/master obtains both the illusion of recognition and of being disinterested in life, as the bondsman is not recognized as an independent living being, or even a being at all. Paradoxically, the master wants to be surrounded and adored by another while seeming indifferent to material or living things. Interestingly, the nature of this dynamic could well be used to describe the distribution of power between those of higher and lower social standing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A person of higher social standing or with more wealth may easily exert some sort of power over the person of lower social standing, whether that be employing their services or continually reminding them where they stand in relation to them or others. The higher standing person may befriend the other, but continually keeps in mind their difference, and so the lord/bondsman dynamic may exist well before any actual battle is commenced. The battle itself can thus be said to be nothing but an exertion of pre-existing power by the person of higher social standing in order to cement the already progressing relation. Although it is important to keep in mind that even though it is referred to as a battle by Hegel, it need not be a physical confrontation, but should rather be thought of as a grave situation which may have dire consequences for those involved depending on how it ends.

## Love and Identity in Wuthering Heights

In their first meeting, Catherine and Heathcliff can surely be said to be different in social spheres. The Earnshaw's may not be the most prominent or wealthy family in the area, but they are nevertheless wealthy enough to employ servants, educate their children and afford fine things and gifts, as Mr. Earnshaw takes requests from his children before departing for Liverpool on business. Stevie Davies remarks in his work "Three distinct and unconnected tales: The professor, Agnes Grey and Wuthering Heights" how Catherine is "a dictatorial, self-willed lass whose first recorded desire is for a whip" (Davies, 90). Having a need for a whip could possibly insinuate a need or opportunity to punish something or someone. Or perhaps the wish for a device with which control becomes easier. Although the whip in this instance is intended for a horse, it nevertheless presents an image of Catherine as a lord type character.

Coupling this with our previous study of her independent and wilful nature in previous chapters, the image is yet carved deeper of someone who delights in affirming herself above everyone else, and seems to render it as truth as far as the family dynamic goes. This introduction contrasts her greatly with her romantic interest, as Mr. Earnshaw Returns from Liverpool with Heathcliff, it is abundantly clear that Heathcliff's position in the world is almost as low as possible. Liverpool at the time was a slave trade town, and Heathcliff is described as a "dark skinned gypsy" (citation needed). The difference between him and Catherine is seemingly decided from the beginning in favour of Catherine becoming the lord of the relationship.

Despite this introduction to Catherine and Heathcliff, the one who remarks on the difference between them is not Catherine, as should be expected. Due to her lack of control in the narrative as discussed in chapter x (either one or two), the one who makes their disdain with Heathcliff quite apparent is Nelly Dean. Upon her first meeting with him, she remarks her antipathy by referring to Heathcliff as an object, exclaiming "Mr. Earnshaw told me to wash it, and give it clean things, and let it sleep with the children" (page number needed).

While this othering is something Hegel proclaims is a behaviour which should come from the lord, seeing it in Nelly Dean is one of the aspects which make it difficult to pin either Catherine or Heathcliff as specific roles in their relationship. Nelly Dean also says the following about Catherine “We had not a minute’s security that she wouldn’t be in mischief” (page needed), and seems utterly surprised by their newfound friendship when she comes back to the house after being punished for letting Heathcliff sleep on the stairs. From this moment on, she thinks of the two of them as always together, and always causing more mischief than before, and notes “One of their chief amusements to run away to the moors (...) They forgot everything as soon as they were together.” (page needed).

What is interesting about Nelly Dean’s reaction is how it pertains to the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff, and what it means for their struggles and Catherine’s struggles with her identity. We discussed in chapter two, how Tony Tanner remarks on the effacing of these two characters by the narrative, and how they do not amount to anything because they are not allowed to be anything. Considering his line of thought, the person effacing them in many cases (Nelly Dean) is also the person who seemingly brings them together, at least in the eye of the viewer. It is to Nelly Dean which Catherine confesses her love for Heathcliff, and it is through Nelly that Heathcliff receives information about Catherine, most importantly her death. Their identities – especially Catherine’s – are filtered through Nelly Dean, meaning that the battle for lord/bondsman has an intruding third party into the dynamic.

This strange triangle of characters where one has inherently more control than the other two may be part of why Catherine and Heathcliff’s battle for lord/bondsman is so complicated, and why they seem to drift between the positions throughout the novel.

Additionally, Davies notes on their relationship “These orphaned children, whose passion awes readers with its power, are bonded in panic-stricken symbiotic dependence” (Davies, 93). This notion seems to work well in tandem with Hegel’s theory of dependence and what we’ve discovered so far. While their early, intimate friendship seems to defy the roles Hegel decrees is all but impossible to avoid, the narrative frame can be said to be characterizing them in a way which disallows any genuine, authentic growth in them both. Thus, they are trapped in a battle which is not only concerned with establishing a stable dynamic, but also a battle to avoid ending up in said dynamic. Both become stuck in a sort of liminality, which

ultimately reflects Catherine's identity rather accurately. As we've established earlier, she is already struggling with performed versus lived identity, finding it difficult to exist as her authentic self when she is expected to exhibit certain behaviours which are seemingly not in her innermost nature.

In order to expand this line of thought more comprehensively, let us look at how Catherine and Heathcliff engage in a battle for dominance, or seemingly attempt to elect certain roles for themselves. As they mature and reach adulthood, Catherine and Heathcliff seemingly gets stuck between professing undying love for each other, while at the same time engaging in what Hegel refers to as "othering". The concept of othering is based on one or both parties engaged in a battle to the death attempting to establish themselves as the lord/master, and viewing the other self-consciousness as a mere object aids in denying the freedom needed to view each other as independent individuals.

After Catherine befriends the Linton's, Heathcliff becomes increasingly enraged with what he perceives to be her abandonment of him, and shows her a board where he has kept record of her time, saying "The crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me" (page needed). Now, his behaviour might easily stem from an emotion as simple as jealousy of Edgar Linton rooted in his love for Catherine, but if we take Hegel into account their confrontation takes on a slightly different nature. A bondsman's chief pleasure upon becoming the bondsman is to produce or be useful to their lord. Heathcliff's insistence on being dissatisfied with how Catherine spends her time could indicate that he is othering her by expecting her to produce time for him, despite what she may want.

Furthermore, Nelly Dean remarks that Heathcliff seems puzzled by the notion that he is merely envious of Catherine's new friends. Not considering jealousy as a possible reason also strengthens the idea that he is othering Catherine, as being envious of her seems foreign to him. This could indicate that he does not see her as worthy of being envious of, i.e. she is inherently seen as below him. His reply to Nelly powers this argument even further, as he learns that he has made Catherine cry, he replies "Well I cried last night, and I had more reason to cry than she" (page needed). Heathcliff has placed himself as the rightful lord in the

relationship, and is seemingly doing what he can to render Catherine the subservient bondsman he desires.

On the other hand, we have the following quote from Catherine “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” (page needed). Now, one might argue that Catherine is simply attempting to view herself through Heathcliff as a lord might, gaining the false sense of recognition the lord takes satisfaction in. However, examining her choice of words leads the argument elsewhere. She expressly states that his primary function in relation to her is not to be of use or pleasure. He is no more a pleasure to her than she is able to find in herself, which seems to indicate that she sees him as more of an equal than he does.

Consequently, Catherine seems to be engaged in an attempt to fully recognize Heathcliff, but finds she is unable to proceed due to his apparent engagement in battling for dominance over her. Heathcliff might have started the battle due to jealousy towards Edgar, Linton, whom he might have perceived as a threat to their general relationship, or because Victorian society deemed it necessary for women to be subservient to men, and Heathcliff is expecting this behaviour as a result of his being taken into the family. As he has been made equal to Catherine by Mr. Earnshaw, he has made himself the most important person of the two, denying recognition for what seems like selfish reasons.

However, Catherine is not completely void of behaviour indicating her as viewing herself as the lord in the relationship. Upon returning from her stay at the Linton, some of her first words to Heathcliff are remarks on how odd and dirty he is (citation needed). Although we discussed this scene in chapter two in tandem with lived versus performed identity, viewing the interaction here could indicate that Catherine is establishing herself as above Heathcliff. Still, her outburst could be nothing but her difficulties reconciling her love for him versus her newly created image as a proper lady. This is furthered when she tells Nelly Dean that it would degrade her to marry Heathcliff, but at the same time utters her famous quote on the difference of love she feels towards Heathcliff and Linton. If we assume that Catherine’s feelings for Heathcliff are truly genuine, as most critics would agree, then Heathcliff is not only destabilizing her trust in her own feelings by attempting to become lord and not seeing her genuine self, he is also pushing her towards an increased performed identity.

These factors contribute to Catherine choosing to marry Edgar Linton. Her lived identity has crashed spectacularly with her budding performed identity, and Heathcliff leaving has left her with no other option than to attempt at being the obedient wife. As her feelings for Edgar are not part of her soul, not part of that fraction of herself she sees as true, she has not the same wish to be recognized by him the way she would be recognized by Heathcliff. Whether or not she views Edgar as a separate self-consciousness is dubious, but their relationship does not match Hegel's dynamic perfectly either. While Linton dotes on Catherine, he is not above asserting his authority as the man of the household, and although Catherine does not cherish the strongest affections for him, she seeks out his approval while at the same time keeping a certain rebellious streak. There exists in their relationship a similar tension as was between Catherine and Heathcliff.

Said tension is demonstrated when Heathcliff returns, having made his fortune and being able to perform the identity of a gentleman. It is notable that in order to uproot Catherine from her seemingly performed identity, Heathcliff has taken on his own performance purely for her benefit. At this point in the narrative, Catherine is essentially fated to fail. She is trapped between two men, neither of whom can see her true self, and having effaced a certain degree of her own identity in order to conform, her selfhood is wasting away with every confrontation lacking a positive outcome. As mentioned earlier, Catherine's liminality is in this part of the narrative coming to its apex, with her inability to choose between her husband and Heathcliff. She is also still effectively being denied an authentic relationship not only by the narrative, but due to the dynamic in her relationship with Heathcliff being undecided and troublesome, which also furthers her alienation from her selfhood. Heathcliff demonstrates this in his intrusion into her life despite the fact that she is married. On their first meeting upon Heathcliff returning, Catherine tells Nelly Dean "Set two tables here Ellen; one for your master and Miss Isabella, being gentry; the other for Heathcliff and myself, being of the lower orders" (Bronte, 111). Although she has according to Ellen quite enjoyed being married and managing a household, the appearance of Heathcliff causes Catherine to bring herself and Heathcliff into the same sphere, even though they have both seemingly moved from beyond that sphere which she refers to in terms of both wealth and status. Heathcliff's demeanour towards Catherine also seems noticeably warmer, as he states that he was planning to commit

suicide, but “Your welcome has put these ideas out of my mind (...) I’ve fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice, and you must forgive me, for I struggled only for you!” (Bronte, 113).

Her joy at his return, and his apparently altered behaviour all indicate that they may now rekindle the effort to recognize each other as self-consciousness’s and view each other through the other in the way one is supposed to according to Hegel. This is further strengthened by a conversation between Catherine and Nelly, where Nelly states that Edgar is just as capable of being obstinate as her, upon which Catherine replies “And then we shall fight to the death, shan’t we Nelly? (...) 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.” (Bronte, 115). Here, Catherine seems to express knowledge pertaining to her chances at being recognized by Edgar, seemingly equating their chancel to nil, as he seems more occupied in the role of a bondsman, though whether Catherine has put him there could be debated. However, Catherine’s chances at a newfound stable and authentic identity slowly comes undone.

Heathcliff’s actions and humours quickly turn to again antagonizing those around him, especially Catherine. As Edgar expresses his displeasure with Heathcliff’s coming to the Grange, Heathcliff seeks to attach himself to Isabella Linton, teasing Catherine with the line “I’m not your husband, you needn’t be jealous of me” (Bronte, 131). He also declares

“I seek no revenge on you (...) 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 in the same style”

(Bronte, 132).

While Heathcliff’s wish to amuse himself in the same style may be referring to his intended torment of Isabella, it could also be that his intended pleasure is in vexing Catherine. One could argue that he has again taken up his desire for the two of them to engage in a battle to the death, as he is denied entry into her life to the extent he might wish it, as she is already married. His behaviour is especially poignant considering Catherine’s response of “I begin to be secure and tranquil; and, you, restless to know us at peace, appear resolved on exciting a



quarrel – quarrel with Edgar if you please, Heathcliff, and deceive his sister; you’ll hit on exactly the most efficient method of revenging yourself on me” (Bronte, 132). Catherine may have sought a reconciliation between her authentic and performed self, finding solace and security with Heathcliff’s friendship while maintaining her marriage to Edgar, but Heathcliff seems intent on disturbing the chance they had at mutual recognition, as he cannot render her compliant through continued frustration, he will elect to continue his path until it is too late.

As tensions between Edgar and Heathcliff rise, Edgar exclaims to Catherine “it is impossible for you to be my friend, and his at the same time; and I absolutely require to know which you choose” (Bronte, 138). Her reply is a fierce “I require to be let alone!” (Bronte, 138).

Catherine is thus left with no one to turn to, having estranged herself from her husband and not receiving what she had so longed for from Heathcliff. Neither can she leave Linton without abandoning her performed identity, a behaviour pattern that she has grown accustomed to over the years Heathcliff has been gone. This liminality between a performed and lived identity is ultimately, what breaks down her physical and mental health, rendering her a ghost of herself. She has realized that in order to obtain some measure of freedom, she must as ascertained by Hegel, fight to the death, and death will in her circumstances be unavoidable.

What adds to the sombre tone of her last hours in the novel is that she seems to continue to seek recognition from Heathcliff. One of her first words to Heathcliff during their final encounter is “You and Edgar have broken my heart, Heathcliff!” (Bronte, 188) upon which she immediately remedies her anger by exclaiming, “I’m not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff! I only wish us never to be parted – and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me!” (Bronte, 190). Catherine still presses the idea that they are the same, that they belong together, and initially, Heathcliff seems to finally utter agreement with her, as he cries “Oh, Cathy! Oh, my life! How can I bear it?” (Bronte, 188) Although his expression seems to at last place her beside him as an equal, note that his deeming her his life, his foremost concern is how he will bear it, bringing himself in as the most important as the two, as her dying is only tragic because it will cause him distress. It becomes clear he still will not acquiesce to her earnest wish, as he almost immediately following says, “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." (Bronte, 191).

Catherine seemingly comes to the realization that even in risking everything she has not obtained what she desires, and solemnly declares "the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. (...) I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all" (Bronte, 190-191). To this fateful utterance, Heathcliff's best reply is "I forgive what you have done to me" (Bronte, 192). However, when Catherine dies, Heathcliff seems to revert his thinking, exclaiming, "I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!" (Bronte, 199) and additionally "You said I killed you – haunt me, then! The murdered do haunt their murderers!" (Bronte, 199). Interestingly, as he only hours earlier in the novel claimed that Catherine had killed herself, Heathcliff has abandoned his quest to make Catherine the bondsman, but far too late.

In the end, Catherine's presence throughout the novel is mostly relegated to a haunting presence, permeating Heathcliff's existence with the painful reminder of his actions, and how his refusal to truly and honestly recognize Catherine has splintered her identity to a fatal outcome. The unquiet earth is imbued with whatever small fragments remain.

## Love and Identity in Jane Eyre

Where the relationship between Jane and Rochester differs most noticeably from that of Catherine and Heathcliff in terms of Hegel's theory, is in the way the novel seemingly presents them as being able to fit much easier into the respective categories compared to the lovers in *Wuthering Heights*. This tendency is created as early as their first encounter, when Rochester falls off his horse, and he declares to Jane "necessity compels me to make you useful" (Bronte, C. 136). Considering that Jane is in his service and that Rochester's status is higher than hers in terms of income, status and power, invoking the term useful brings to mind the bondsman's pleasure of producing for their lord. This image is furthered by the fact that Jane's thoughts prior to this encounter were concerned with her wish for action, and after helping Rochester she remarks "My help had been needed and claimed; I had given it: I was pleased to have done something; trivial, transitory the deed was, it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive" (Bronte, C. 136). It may seem like a potential threat to Jane's identity that just as she is experiencing feelings of restlessness and wishing to be useful, a man of much higher rank than she enters her life and immediately renders her as such.

Another interesting aspect about their first encounter, which also lends itself to Hegel's theory, is Jane's reaction to Rochester's brusque behaviour. When she first offers her help, she notes how "If even the stranger had smiled and been good-humoured to me when I addressed him; if he had put off my offer of assistance gaily and with thanks, I should have gone on my way and not felt any vocation to renew inquiries: but the frown, the roughness of the traveller set me at my ease" (Bronte, C 134.) Hegel has described the Lord as someone whose primary goal in an interaction with another self-consciousness is to receive their labour and adoration or affection without having to treat them as a separate and equal being. While Rochester does not immediately claim Jane's help for his own benefit, it can look concerning in analysis to see that his abrupt manner makes her more comfortable and willing to help, that being treated with little consideration does not seem off putting to her in the slightest, although she has stood up against anyone who has treated her unfairly thus far in the narrative, whether that be to confront them directly, as with Mrs. Reed, or expose their foul soul to the reader as with Mr. Brocklehurst. The entire encounter seems to further the impression that they are placed in their respective roles much clearer from the start.

This initial interpretation can be expanded upon in a different way during their first proper conversation in Thornfield. As Rochester again greets Jane with the same cold barebones civility, Jane's response gives the opportunity to look at their first meeting in a different light. She remarks that "A reception of finished politeness would probably have confused me: I could not have returned or repaid it by answering grace and elegance on my part; but harsh caprice laid me under no obligation; on the contrary, a decent quiescence, under the freak of manner, gave me the advantage" (Bronte, C p 141-142.) With this quote in mind, one could argue that Jane does not respond positively to Rochester because his manner emulates that of a Lord, and she has some innate wish to become the bondsman, as she says, on the contrary, his manner is to her a means to retain control as she feels under no obligation to produce a certain level of civility for his pleasure. His frankness leaves her free to express herself increasingly on her own terms. Her behaviour thus far is therefore not primarily concerned with anything specifically bondsman related, and instead focuses on keeping her own against someone who appears rather formidable when compared to other people she has encountered this far in the narrative.

Although Jane has, the matter of producing comes back in an important way during one of their discussions in the next chapter. To understand the importance of how this discussion plays into the Hegel theory, there is a need to recount most of their exchange in order to properly analyse it. As Rochester exclaims that he is disposed to be communicative with Jane, one of his first remarks is "Then, in the first place, do you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, abrupt, perhaps exacting, sometimes" (Bronte, C 157.) This could be read as Rochester attempting to establish himself as Lord based on the qualifications of being her superior in age, experience and social standing, reminding her that there is a gap between them which should be paid attention to. Jane's response immediately seeks to end this specific categorization, as she replies "I do not think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have; your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience" (Bronte, C 157.) Even though she is experiencing a new social dynamic, Jane does not let Rochester decide that he is inherently above her based on any reasons he might have to justify it. Her identity has been made too solid during her earlier confrontations and experiences with the result of servility just for compliances sake, as I discussed in chapter two, and her interactions with Rochester are much the better for it. She almost immediately sets specific boundaries and does not let herself get lost in the joy of finding a new role or dynamic to explore. As

Rochester replies to her “I mentally shake hands with you for your answer” (Bronte, C 158) they seem to have avoided setting specific roles for themselves, and instead allow their relationship to exist on an equal a ground as possible without completely upsetting the social norms of the time. This in turn partially subverts the lord/bondsman dynamic in a way which Catherine and Heathcliffs relationship could not, as Jane and Rochester are able to come to a better understanding of each other through open and respectable conversation on a one on one basis, where in *Wuthering Heights*, as previously stated, Heathcliff and Catherine are always seen and heard through a lens curated by someone else.

As their relationship progresses, this positive development towards mutual recognition between Jane and Rochester as opposed to falling into a battle to the death seems to bring them both the sort of pleasure usually reserved for the Lord. During another conversation, Rochester notes “The more you and I converse the better; for while I cannot blight you, you may refresh me” (Bronte, C 168) and Jane’s admitting that “The ease of his manner freed me from painful restraint: the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him. I felt at times as if he were my relation rather than my master” (Bronte, C 171.) These quotes provide valuable insight into how they are combating the dynamic Hegel describes, at least for a while. Jane seems to trust both Rochester and herself enough to allow herself to experience an attachment and level of trust, which she has not come close to since Helen Burns died. Now however, she is slowly becoming free from some of the reserve, which has been painful to her, and does not seem to consider their dynamic to be in any way a danger to herself at this point in the narrative. Rochester also does not seem to be interested in making himself the only recognized self-consciousness, as he clearly states, he cannot blight her, suggesting that he is not interested in damaging her identity for personal gain, but rather acknowledging how beneficial her open and equal demeanour has been to him.

Another example of this is when Jane saves Rochester from the fire in his room, and his response to being rescued is to exclaim

You have saved my life: I have a pleasure of owing you so immense a debt. I cannot say more. Nothing else that has being would have been tolerable to me in the character of creditor for such an obligation: but you: it is different – I feel your benefit no burden, Jane

(Bronte, C 176)

This is in some ways pivotal to their relationship, as hereto Rochester has mainly been the one seeking out Jane, and though he has mentioned not wanting to cause her harm, she has to some extent been producing for his contentedness via their continued interactions, even though she has also benefitted from them. But Hegel does specify that the bondsman does derive pleasure from producing for their Lord. Here however, Rochester is more than happy to offer her, and only her, an immense debt, without feeling dejected or deprived of any sort of status hitherto established. He continues his speech by saying how he has “heard of natural sympathies” and that Jane’s eyes “Did not strike delight to my very inmost heart so for nothing” (Bronte, C 177.) Again one is privy to their relationship coming ever closer to mutual recognition, as Rochester’s choice of language clearly illustrates that she strikes a chord with his inmost heart, which could easily be seen as Rochester acknowledging that they are equals. This also creates a different approach to the question of gaze in acknowledging self-consciousness than the one we see in *Wuthering Heights*. With Jane and Rochester, he seems to almost immediately be able to meet her gaze fully and see her inner self as she would like, while on the other hand Heathcliff is not able to fully “look” at Catherine until she is already close to dying and the gesture coming too late in their relationship to salvage a meaningful recognition. I would argue that it is this almost early recognition between Jane and Rochester which ultimately allows them to have the sort of happy ending many critics found frustrating, which will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. One aspect that hinders them from becoming fully realized to each other is the fact that Jane is unsure about the possibilities of their relationship from a social standing point of view. She remarks after the fire incident “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” (Bronte, C 186.) There is no question of Jane not having recognized Rochester at this point, as her love seems honestly sincere, and she has been able to make him admit that she has struck his inner core in a way no one has previously, indicating that although, for propriety’s sake, she might not want to admit to the recognition, Rochester has strongly implied that it has taken place, at least partly.

During the visit of Blanche Ingram and the large party, we come to a point in the narrative in which both Rochester and Jane have grown so intimate that they both seem to fear a little for their self in their relationship, making them drift back into the ideas of Lord and bondsman once more. After helping with the injured Mr. Mason, Rochester tells Jane that

“If I bid you to do what you thought wrong, there would be no light footed running, no neat-handed alacrity, no lively glance and animated complexion. My friend would then turn to me, quiet and pale, and would say “No sir; that is impossible: I cannot do it, because it is wrong” and would become immutable as a fixed star. Well, you too have power over me, and may injure me: yet I dare not show you where I am vulnerable, lest, faithful and friendly as you are, you should transfix me at once”

(Bronte, C 250-251)

Fearful that Jane should discover he is already married, Rochester has set out to ascertain whether she would be able to exist in a dynamic closer to that of the Lord/bondsman and still be content, as he goes on to describe in detail having found an instrument to cure his erring past (Bronte, C 252) obviously referring to Jane without her knowledge. However, when Jane rejects his idea of finding a cure via another person, and exclaims that “reformation should never depend on a fellow-creature” (Bronte, C 252) he becomes frustrated, and immediately makes it out that he is marrying Blanche Ingram. In this interaction Jane has made it clear that no one should sacrifice their identity to be thought of as someone else's instrument of cure, essentially rejecting the idea of the Lord/bondsman dynamic. Although she takes pleasure in being useful to Rochester, it is apparent through their dialogue that Jane is not willing to destabilize her identity for anyone, not even someone she loved. She has fought too hard to resist rules and regulations put upon her by several authority figures to let herself slip away completely under the overwhelming feeling of romantic love.

Thus, as we come to the proposal part of the story, it is clear that Rochester is becoming afraid of losing Jane if he tried to reveal his absolute full self, and that Jane has reinforced that she will elude his grasp, should he try to fully make her a bondsman. This is reinforced when Rochester tries to calm Jane seconds before the actual proposal, and the following exchange happens between them, where Rochester says “Jane, be still; Don't struggle so, like a wild frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation.” To which Jane's famous response is “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you” (Bronte, C 293.) Rochester's small attempt at othering Jane, which Hegel notes is common for the Lord to try to do, only upset Jane and prompts her to declare her independence to him, risking no harm to her identity on his account. This seems to cause Rochester to revert to his previous attempts at full recognition, by uttering “My bride is here, because my equal is here, and my likeness” (Bronte, C 294)

which seems to be a step in a good direction, but almost directly below on the same page he says “You – you strange, you almost unearthly thing! – I love you as my own flesh” (Bronte, C 294). While Rochester has called Jane by many names which might constitute othering or attempting to make her appear less human, such as sprite, elf, sorceress etc.. He seems to be treading some sort of middle ground in this scene where he professes to love her as an equal while still maintaining the sort of “othering” language he has used so far throughout the novel.

The new social frame of being husband and wife has now, instead of bringing about a final recognition, instead started them on the path to what will ultimately end up as Jane and Rochester’s version of the fight to the death. On the morning following their engagement, Rochester erupts in a manner of speaking which makes Jane ill at ease. Firstly, he calls her eyes hazel instead of green (Bronte, C 298.) Though Jane excuses him directly to the reader by saying they were possibly new-dyed to him (Bronte, C 298) it is still concerning that Rochester, who has had a fixed and honest gaze where Jane is concerned suddenly mistakes such an easy trait to remember. He follows up on this behaviour by saying how he will adorn her in jewels (Bronte, C 299) and how when they are married and traveling “I shall revisit it healed and cleansed, with a very angel as my comforter” Bronte, C 300.) Jane has become clearly uncomfortable, and responds with “I am no angel, and I will not be one till I die: I will be myself” (Bronte, C 300.) The lord/bondsman dynamic is here seemingly coming back with a force previously unseen and it comes to its climax after Jane discovers Bertha Mason. Determined that she will not stay with Rochester, he becomes exasperated to the point where he delves into an attempt at making her a bondsman as he has not previously tried, exclaiming “I don’t know what sphinx-like expression is forming in your countenance. You are to share my solitude. Do you understand?” (Bronte, C 348.) There are no sweet words to soften the clear impression that this is Rochester issuing an order, and expects it to be obeyed. When met with silence and dissent, his temper escalates to the critical moment, where he whispers “Jane! Will you hear reason? Because, if you won’t, I’ll try violence” (Bronte, C 349) Now this is not to say that Rochester has completely denied all progress towards mutual recognition. Rather, his attempt at making her bondsman is an act fuelled by fear of losing her, and I would argue that on some level he knows he will lose, and knows he has to lose, for to render her in such a state would destroy the person he loves. Jane On the other hand, has, considering the potential danger of the situation, an impressive inner monologue in response “I was not afraid: not in the least. I felt an inward power, a sense of influence, which



supported me” (Bronte, C 349.) Although some critics have analysed this scene in tangent with Jane relying on her belief in God to support her through a personal crisis dangerous to her sense of self, I would argue that in this moment Jane realizes that by refusing Rochester in this moment she will break all possibilities of becoming a bondsman, having stood at the verge of losing herself to his dominance and still resisted, she will be forever safe from his influence without having to experience an actual death, as she does not feel afraid, but rather display to Rochester how little power he has when attempting to command and control her in something she does not deem proper. As their confrontation de-escalates and returns to a stage of grief instead of anger, Rochester utters “Oh Jane, this is bitter! This – this is wicked. It would not be wicked to love me” (Bronte, C 364) to which Jane coolly responds “It would be to obey you” (Bronte, C 364.) This drives a final nail into the argument that Jane has held onto her identity through the crisis, and has put an end to any sort of producing she might have done out of affection for Rochester before. To surmise, when the relationship between them bordered on a proper Lord/bondsman dynamic, Jane instantly pulled away and severed the connection, as she leaves the very next day.

Still, as every reader of the novel knows, that is not the end of the story. After her stay with St. John and his sisters, where Jane finds companionship and purpose again outside of Rochester, something she has not had since her passionate declaration mentioned in chapter two before his entrance in the story. As Jane recounts after discovering that the three of them are all related “This was wealth indeed! Wealth to the heart! – a mine of pure, genial affections. This was a blessing, bright, vivid and exhilarating” (Bronte, C 444.) Her identity is stable, nourished and able to draw on family for support like she never thought possible.

Yet, all that changes as soon as St. John begins to tutor Jane with the intent of taking her to India as his wife. While she is undergoing her tutorage, Jane mentions “As for me, I daily wished to please him; but to do so, I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature” (Bronte, C 460.) Here again the lord and bondsman dynamic makes themselves apparent, as Jane strives to produce for someone who has no real regard for her. Jane again resists its pulls by denying St. John of becoming his wife, and only agreeing to go to India if she may go free (Bronte, C 467.) Subsequently becomes increasingly apparent that St. John is attempting to establish himself as Lord when, as he is pleading with Jane to come to India, he says “It is the cause of God I advocate, it is under His standard I enlist you. I cannot accept on his behalf a divided allegiance: it must be entire” (Bronte, C 468.) By putting himself as a direct middleman to God, it is clear that St John is using language to create the image of

himself as a person she should obey, and to his mind eventually will. However, Jane eventually refuses him in a manner which cannot be misunderstood, as she exclaims “If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now” (Bronte, C 475.) Jane knows that if she enters into a proper battle to the death with St John that she will inevitably lose, on account of the loss of love and affection she must endure, along with the never ending attempts of having to please his Christian sensibilities of what a wife should behave like, fitting perfectly with Brown’s assessment of women as the moral linchpin of society. So another potential crisis of identity is averted by Jane, as she instead hears the voice of Rochester, and is determined to travel to see him.

Upon arriving at Rochester’s new abode and making herself known to him, his reaction differs slightly in language to what he has previously used. In his initial response there are no words life elf or sprite, instead he remarks that he is in the presence of her voice, her shape, and that she is his living darling (Bronte, C 500.) Such language immediately offers a way back into the full recognition, which both characters are in a much better position to embark on, as Jane has inherited a fortune from her uncle in madeira, and is an independent woman. She need not feel any inferiority based on social standing anymore, as they would both be free to choose each other without any societal remarks. There is also a common analysis that Rochester’s injuries and subsequent blindness makes him more of an equal to her, as it makes him more feminine (Quote here) I would respectfully disagree and instead argue that it is time apart from her physical form which has finally made Rochester realize that her solid identity cannot be infringed upon, even in desperation and fear as he had attempted to do. This is why he chooses this specific language upon her return, making sure she realizes that he appreciates her full presence, and is not fooled into thinking she is any type of angel anymore. She is Jane, living Jane, and he loves her. Although the reference to her as a fairy creeps into his dialogue as they exchange lively conversation, the importance of the first reaction nevertheless remains, and is partly what gives Jane the courage to ascertain that he does wish to marry her, and she wishes to marry him. Marking a contrast to St. John, whom Jane has felt immense pressure under, she notes on Rochester that “Violent as he had seemed in his despair, he, in truth, loved me far too well and too tenderly to constitute himself my tyrant” (Bronte, C 507.) Even facing a direct threat of violence as she does from Rochester, Jane has never expressed the kind of fear to her own self as she does when faced with the dilemma presented to her by St. John. Thus, this quote proves that Jane recognizes Rochester’s true self, she feels her selfhood utterly at peace and safe in his company and that their reunion is

fast on the way to becoming a permanent one. This seems cemented in one of their final exchanges, as Rochester proclaims he wants a bride, to which Jane responds “Choose then, sir – her who loves you best” and the reply “I will at least choose – her I love best. Jane, will you marry me?” (Bronte, C 512 – 513.) Again there is no talk of an angel companion, and instrument of cure, only the person they each love and have now fully recognized, as is vividly painted by clear and simple language. Any apprehension the reader may have about the dynamic coming back to haunt the couple is put to rest by Jane in the final chapter of the novel, which opens on the direct and plain statement “Reader, I married him” (Bronte, C 519.) By reaffirming her control of the narrative again here, Jane calmly reminds the reader that she chooses for herself, and that her ability to speak up has never been lost, although it may have been in danger at certain moments. Her continued description of their marriage removes any doubt of whether they are now equal, as she states “I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth [...] All my confidence is bestowed on him, and all his confidence is devoted to me” (Bronte, C 519.)

Therefore, at the close of the novel, Jane cannot say more about her relationship, because all that needed to be said has been said. She has remained in control of her story, been allowed to speak her truth, and finally recognized and been recognized by the man she loves most. Their union is now one of peace and understanding, free of uncertainty. There is no unquiet earth between them, only a bright and hopeful future.

## **Conclusion**

The impact that Charlotte and Emily Bronte have had on literature cannot be understated. Their works have shocked, caused uproar, and cemented themselves as exquisite works of art, which continue to find common ground with people almost two centuries later. It has been the goal of this thesis to demonstrate how time, place, circumstances and even those we place our most tender feelings with can potentially undo our very selves. When looking at the conclusion to the lives Charlotte and Emily devices for their female characters, it is abundantly clear how important your voice is. The agonies one can go through if that voice

disappears or is disrupted can cause irreversible damage, as Emily displays in such a marvellous, yet tragic character as Catherine ends up becoming. Where Jane can find companionship, honest conversation and means of self fulfilment while never losing her place in the narrative or narration, Catherine can only find a broken lens with which to attempt to speak through the fissures of, in the end failing to reach anyone, or to provide solid ground for herself. Thus, the only solid ground she can possibly find comfort in, is the earth of death, finite, if not for Heathcliff and Lockwood, then at the very least for herself. The conjured ghost at the beginning of the novel is a testament to the mistreatment of her identity throughout, as it is introduced as something translucent, and meets the end without finding anything solid from which to draw strength. No true friendship, no genuine love nor a steady voice.

Jane's blissful marriage can only come about due to her ability to constantly support herself in the structure and in other people. She looks in the mirror as a child, fearful, seeing herself on the path to a fate similar to Catherine, but she steps carefully around the path, utilizing her voice to find common ground with others, lifting the voice when it is low, strengthening her when she is weak. Marrying Rochester becomes at the end the ultimate defiance yet also concretizing of herself. Choosing the person she loves best, not the person proclaiming to be loved by God, or a path she feels no vocation to, but knows the societal benefits of.

While the novels have such different outcomes, there is a value to their stories. We see the tragedy in Catherine, for it shows us how we all fear to be perceived, as an unintelligible form others can inscribe their desires or hate onto. On the other hand we find comfort in Jane's marriage because it gives us hope of finding somewhere we are also seen as a cherished living being, a human with flaws, but still respected as an equal. At the end, these novels, in different ways, teaches us how precious we must hold our existence to ourselves, and build our identity not with the goal of satisfying everyone, but with the goal of finding kindness alike to ours, and from there grow.

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