

THE TREATMENT OF CHILDHOOD IN THE NOVELS OF
CHARLOTTE AND EMILY BRONTË

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I have dealt with Charlotte and Emily Brontë's representation of children in their novels, and the significance of childhood as it reflects or suggests the authors' attitudes to morality, character, and society. I have studied what Charlotte and Emily overtly or covertly say about children and the adults that they grow into, as a means of assessing the similarities and differences in the sisters' attitudes, taking into consideration as well, how these attitudes compare with contemporary images of childhood.

I have chosen to examine the published novels of Charlotte and Emily, and have used for my research both critical and biographical material written on the Brontës.

In chapter one, I introduce both writers vis-à-vis two major influences in Victorian literature, namely, religion and romanticism, comparing the extent to which the sisters are affected by these opposing traditions in their treatment of childhood. Chapters two and three deal separately with Charlotte and Emily and their novels. The final chapter offers a conclusion with regard to the similarities and differences between these authors, including the distinction between their narrative techniques that reflect their differing literary motives.

Unlike Charlotte, Emily wrote for personal catharsis and awareness rather than for didactic reasons. While both Brontës reveal their moral attitudes on the question of childhood, Emily, unlike her sister, remains non-judgemental. Also, although both sisters accept harsh reality, Emily seems to do so reluctantly compared to Charlotte who is quite unambiguous about it.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The treatment of childhood in nineteenth-century literature often suggests the conflict between Puritan restraint and Romantic freedom. A dominant feature of Victorian parent-child relationships is the mixture of warm affection with strict discipline often accompanied by "a brooding suspicion of sin."¹ This curious paradox is reflected in Victorian writing where two major opposing attitudes towards children are brought to light. One belongs to the evangelical tradition that "believed devoutly in original sin and the need to break the child's will."² The other attitude, triggered by the Romantic movement, "believed in the natural goodness of children" and advocated individual freedom and imagination.³ The moralists recommended "strict upbringing" and "unceasing supervision" while the Romantics upheld "friendship and kindness."⁴

According to Peter Coveney, "Idealization of the child's nature and cruelty toward the 'children of Satan' existed side by side in nineteenth-century society."⁵ The Romantic attitude was chiefly influenced by Blake and Wordsworth, especially the concept of "original innocence". The child became a symbol of Nature and Imagination, as opposed to the product of man's sin, and many novelists in the early decades of the Victorian era showed their appreciation of human innocence against the pressures of social experience. Great works like Oliver Twist, Jane Eyre, and Wuthering Heights reflect the strength of romantic sensibility in the authors' treatment of childhood.

The evangelical attitude linked parental and religious authority: "children should always submit to their parents ... because the Bible said so."⁶ The novels of Jane Austen, for example, suggest the influence of this school of thought. Where parent-child relationships are concerned, she appears to support "firmness, ... control

and supervision."⁷ Unlike the Romantics, Austen does not believe in childhood innocence and freedom.⁸ On the issue of upbringing, although she does not undervalue the significance of love, Austen seems to emphasize "firmly principled guidance"; from the young, she expects "submission and quiet."⁹

In contrast, the novels of Charles Dickens reveal the author's belief in the Romantic child. For Dickens, childhood "innocence and spontaneity should never be heartlessly quenched."¹⁰ He shares Austen's "respect for parental supervision and for filial obedience," but his emphasis on the question of nurture lies in loving the child and appreciating its imagination.¹¹ For Dickens, the child is a "symbol of sensitive feeling."¹²

The novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë suggest the influence of both religion and romanticism in the treatment of childhood. But Charlotte is more affected by conventional morality than Emily who is more of a romantic with a very personal religion of her own based on nature and love. While Charlotte presents the loss of innocence as a necessity, Emily accepts it with notable reluctance. This difference in attitude is brought to light through their narrative methods which reveal Charlotte's didactic tendencies in comparison with her sister's non-judgemental stance.

Having lost their mother when they were very young, the Brontë children were brought up by an aunt who was a strict Methodist.¹³ Aunt Branwell's influence on Charlotte is evident in the latter's suffering from religious despondency while trying to overcome her romanticism during her teaching career at Roe Head.¹⁴ Emily, on the other hand, was "the most recalcitrant" to the training of her prim, authoritative aunt.¹⁵ Thus, Charlotte's conscious effort to discipline her indulgence of romantic feeling is reflected in her novels, whereas Emily presents both romance and reality, leaving the reader to his personal response.

Nevertheless, both Brontës are aware of the potential danger of romantic egotism in a child. For them, the transition from childhood to adulthood involved the necessity to subdue one's natural egotism and passion in order to survive in the

inimical world. The failure to make this transition is shown to result in violence or destruction. For instance, Catherine and Heathcliff's inability to curb their childhood egocentricity causes tremendous misery in Wuthering Heights.

Both Brontës believe that people are largely explained by heredity and upbringing. Emily considers nature and nurture as the major factors in understanding the child and the adult that it grows into. Therefore, she does not pass judgement on her conventionally less likeable characters. Charlotte, on the other hand, often shows the difference between the virtuous and the wicked; her bias against certain types of humanity is frequently made clear in her treatment of childhood.

Nonetheless, Charlotte, like her sister, is critical of religious fanaticism and its effects on the young. The reader will always remember Charlotte's satirical delineation of Mr. Brocklehurst and Emily's derisive portrayal of Joseph.

Another theme on the question of childhood in the novels of the two Brontës is that of passion. Unlike her sister, Emily is slow to deny the beauty of unbridled emotion. Whereas Charlotte recommends a balance between passion and reason, Emily reveals her preference for spontaneous human feeling though she also acknowledges its potential destructive force. In this respect, Emily's relatively predominant romanticism is reflected in her imagery. Although both Brontës are fond of natural imagery, Emily is strongly attracted to wild nature that triggers her poetic intensity. Her emphasis on wilderness parallels her admiration of raw passion depicted in a major portion of her most memorable scenes in Wuthering Heights. As children, Catherine and Heathcliff have a romantic kind of kinship with the wild moors. The adjective "wild" pervades much of their description throughout the novel. In her delirium before she dies, Catherine's "wildness takes the form of yearning ... for childhood."¹⁶ Her last embrace with Heathcliff is "like that of wild animals."¹⁷ The "wild snow" blows as she is buried. Heathcliff eventually dies with a "wild" look on his face. Charlotte Brontë's response to her sister's poetic depiction of her fiery protagonists is that of horror, and she claims that Emily "did not know what she had

done."¹⁸ Charlotte's recurrent theme in her own treatment of childhood is that passion must be disciplined though not repressed.

Charlotte considers Heathcliff to be diabolical whereas Emily is able to appreciate the authenticity of his nature. Emily's central consideration is emotion while Charlotte is more concerned with morality. One of Charlotte's major themes is that of the child on a spiritual journey to discover self-integrity based on an equilibrium between freedom and discipline. This reflects the author's own struggle to achieve a balance between egotism and social responsibility. Emily, on the other hand, is not interested in a moral pilgrimage. Unlike her sister, she has "no interest in reproving, or 'improving,' either her characters or her audience."¹⁹

CHAPTER II : EMILY

Unlike many Victorian writers, Emily Brontë was not a blatant moralist. Her moral values may come to light in Wuthering Heights, but she never set out to be didactic. Like a romantic she worshipped wild nature and cherished individual freedom and imagination.¹ According to Charlotte Brontë, Emily's native moors were far more than "a spectacle; they were what she lived in, and by, as much as the wild birds, their tenants, or as the heather, their produce."² Emily Brontë's sheer passion for nature and liberty is reflected in her intensely poetic writing which has led critics to describe her as "a child of the Romantic movement."³ Her keen interest in the subjective and imaginative aspects of life is brought to light in Wuthering Heights where the power of natural and spontaneous feeling is deeply appreciated, and is contrasted with the mundane and frigid conventional attitudes of the narrators in the novel. Emily believes in allowing the natural human impulse to operate freely. However, she also faces the fact that this impulse often has to be compromised if one is to survive in the hostile world of adulthood.

For Emily, love is the primary emotion, the guiding principle, and man is determined by his urge to love and be loved. When love is thwarted, hatred results. For her "preoccupation with the subjective nature of reality" the author of Wuthering Heights has often been described as a "romantic novelist".⁴ Nevertheless, Emily Brontë is unique because she is also very much a realist. Although romanticism pervades her book, realism gains supremacy in the end, albeit with a sense of regret. Unlike a conventional moralist, Emily is non-judgemental. True to her romantic beliefs, she accepts human nature for what it is, and as a realist she sets out

to present character rather than to judge it: to show what shaped her people, causing them to become what they are and to behave as they do – not to apportion praise and reward to the 'good'

ones, blame and punishment to the 'bad'. None of the characters in Wuthering Heights is, in fact, either wholly good or wholly bad: each is made up of that inextricable mixture of both elements which exists in every living person.⁵

Unlike her sisters, Emily Brontë wrote for personal catharsis and awareness rather than for didactic reasons. She was neither influenced nor motivated by moral conventions.

I. Romanticism and Realism

The bulk of Wuthering Heights is concerned with the question of childhood; that of Catherine, Heathcliff, Edgar and Isabella, and later of Cathy, Linton and Hareton. According to W.A. Craik, Brontë regards "childhood as the age of spiritual understanding from which the rest of life is either development or falling away."⁶ Yet although Brontë shares the Romantics' esteem of a child's purity and innocence, and supports their belief in a child's right to individual freedom and imagination⁷, the author of Wuthering Heights also recognizes the dangers inherent in childhood egotism. Catherine and Heathcliff represent arrested development; as adults they fail to progress beyond the egocentricity of their early youth. Therefore, they are unable to shift into the responsibility of the adult world. It is this failure to make the transition from the ideal conditions of childhood to the harsh reality of adulthood that triggers a major portion of the violence depicted in the novel.

Much of the imagery in the novel reflects Emily Brontë's romantic attitude towards nature. It has been suggested that her use of the word "wuthering" implies "the warring of the elements," and that she compared "human passions" to "the ceaseless contention going on between the inanimate forces surrounding us, which follow laws of their own."⁸ The power of human feeling is often likened to the fierceness of animals and of the elements.⁹ As children, Catherine and Heathcliff share a romantic kind of kinship with the wild moors; "half savage, and hardy, and

free"¹⁰ is how Catherine describes their blissful childhood during her illness. Her last embrace with Heathcliff is like that of wild animals.

Heathcliff and Catherine are rather childlike characters; even as adults they are chiefly motivated by the impulse to love and be loved. They are dominated by a single urge which becomes destructive when unfulfilled. Such a trait is excusable only in children. Responsible adults who are disappointed in a particular desire eventually turn their attention to something new. But the emotional preoccupations of Catherine and Heathcliff remain unchangeable throughout the novel, extending even beyond death. Their love born as a childhood "togetherness," the kind that children share with each other when deprived of all other love, is certainly innocent and beautiful. However, although Emily Brontë exalts the power of human feelings, the realist in her is aware of the fact that it is not feasible for an adult to demand as much as a child may in the name of self-fulfilment and freedom. There must be "constraints and modifications out of respect for the conditions life itself imposes upon men, out of respect for other people with their different natures."¹¹ Emily deeply appreciates the passionate natures of Catherine and Heathcliff. But she also recognizes that unbridled passion is destructive. Catherine's passion frustrated, destroys itself, while Heathcliff's destroys others. In the end, after much violence, they fulfil their deepest desires despite restrictions imposed upon them by practical reality. However, their ideal love cannot be attained in the mundane world. Their happiness together is achieved only in the spiritual world. Thus, underlying all the splendid romanticism in Wuthering Heights is the lingering sense of cold reality.

Wuthering Heights is full poetry that presents Brontë's "authentic world" as raw untamed nature. The ideal world is one which is very basic and innocent, untainted by civilization or society. But the ideal qualities admirable in childhood, such as complete emotional freedom, become unhealthy when carried too far in adulthood because a person who refuses to adjust according to social experience indulges in sheer childish egotism that hampers his survival in the real world. While Emily laments the loss of childhood innocence, she accepts its necessity. Catherine and Heathcliff refuse

to give up their private heaven that was formed when they were children. The life of Heathcliff has been described as "the revolt of the man accursed, whom fate has banished from his kingdom [of childhood] and who will stop at nothing to regain it."¹² In childhood, Catherine is his sole security. When she forsakes him for Edgar, thwarted love turns into fatal passion, and security is regained only through death. Such intense passion is movingly depicted by the author. Nevertheless, Brontë also reveals her awareness of its dangers. Heathcliff is admirable in the same way that a hurricane is admirable. So is Catherine. When Heathcliff returns three years after running away, they both ignore the changes that time has brought forth, and "persist in believing that their relationship, 'half savage, and hardy, and free,' can continue uninterrupted."¹³ Consequently, "in the context of a social maturity to which they refuse to adapt, the mores of their youth harden into destructive posture."¹⁴

Catherine's most outstanding attribute is her childlike emotionality. She is headstrong, extremely passionate, and capable of the deepest emotional attachments. There is much poetic beauty in her fiery individuality as delineated by Emily Brontë.¹⁵ However, Catherine is also egotistical and vain. Her passions govern her actions. The whip, a present she requests from her father when she is hardly six¹⁶, is an appropriate symbol of her imperious will. Her introduction to the Lintons leaves the reader with the image of a queen being worshipped and attended to:

... the woman-servant ... washed her feet; and Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of negus, and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood gaping at a distance. (W.H., pp. 45,46)

Like a queen, Catherine expects her wishes to be obeyed. She flies into a passion and becomes utterly unreasonable whenever she is crossed, ignoring the feelings of others, ignoring even reality if possible, and concerned only with maintaining her will. Her childish egotism prompts her to try to keep both Edgar and Heathcliff when the latter returns after a three-year absence, and she loses her mind upon failing to do so.

Critics have pointed out that Catherine, the child of Nature, needs Heathcliff as that part "within herself which is able to reach out and touch and be at one with the

primary energies of nature"; thus, "he is the ground of her being."¹⁷ Heathcliff seems to function as a projection of Catherine when she says:

... My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries if all else remained and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it I *am* Heathcliff. (W.H., p.75)

Catherine's emotional greed is insatiable. She refuses to make the transition from childhood to adulthood, as reality demands. She clings hungrily to both worlds. Catherine's tragedy stems from childish egotism which is excusable in a child but destructive in an adult. Her chief reason for marrying Edgar is to create a better life for Heathcliff and herself: "... if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars" (W.H., p.75). She holds on to Heathcliff because he sustains the essential part in her. Her sheer egocentricity is brought to light when she says, "How strange! I thought, though everybody hated and despised each other, they could not avoid loving me" (W.H., p.111). When Heathcliff speaks of her "infernal selfishness" during their final fiery confrontation, he is passing judgement on the nature which destroyed her own happiness and his. Thus, Emily Brontë's realism undercuts her romanticism. Her moral attitude is suggested unobtrusively through the responses of her characters to one another in the novel, allowing the reader to react as he pleases. While Emily admires the immense power of untamed, innocent human passion, cold reason is given significance in her portrayal of life. Man cannot survive in this world if childish instincts, which are basically self-centred, are allowed to triumph.

Catherine's stormy temper is part of her nature. But it is also part of "her determination to get her own way at all costs."¹⁸ During her first fight with Edgar at the age of fifteen, she exclaims: "Well, go, if you please - get away! and now I'll cry - I'll cry myself sick!" (W.H., p.66) and proceeds to do so. It is a child's method of revenge and self-protection. However, what is pardonable in early youth becomes her technique of domination in later life, leading her to starve herself into delirium and death.¹⁹ Following her last fight with Edgar before her death, Catherine interprets everyone's behaviour as an attempt to destroy her and, like a spoiled child, threatens

to make herself ill in order to gain sympathy and attention. She tells Nelly Dean: "... say to Edgar ... that I'm in danger of being seriously ill I want to frighten him" (W.H., pp.106,107). Nelly, understandably sceptical about a person "who could plan the turning of her fits of passion to account, beforehand" (W.H., p.107), remains detached as her mistress lies "dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth," and feigning unconsciousness (W.H., p.108). Thus, Catherine's subsequent illness is largely self-induced; she acts with the wilfulness of a "wailing child" (W.H., p.114).²⁰

Catherine's despair stems from her struggle to hold on to the wild freedom of her childhood, rejecting the responsibility of the adult world. For her, adulthood represents imprisonment: "I wish I were a girl again, half savage, and hardy, and free" (W.H., p.115). During her illness, the whole last seven years of her life leave "a blank" (W.H., p.115) in her memory. All she longs for is her childhood with Heathcliff, wild and carefree, roaming "among the heather on those hills" (W.H., p.115). The desire to return to innocence is a wish for death:

the thing that irks one most is this shattered prison, after all.
I'm tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into
that glorious world, and to be always there; not seeing it dimly
through tears and yearning for it through the walls of an aching
heart; but really with it and in it. (W.H., p.146)

For Emily Brontë, "the body is thought of as the prison-house of the tortured soul which can only find its fulfilment when totally unrestrained by limitations of any kind, social, moral, or physical."²¹ While the Romantic within Emily feels for Catherine, the author of Wuthering Heights is at the same time aware that such childlike ideals can only be attained in the spiritual world, not the mundane. Brontë cherishes the Ideal but sadly accepts the Real. Catherine, on the other hand, is very proud of her wish to die, to escape into that glorious world of imagination. She tells Nelly:

you think you are better and more fortunate than I you are
sorry for me - very soon that shall be altered. I shall be sorry for
you. I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all. (W.H.,
p.146)

Throughout the whole novel Catherine remains, fundamentally, a child. Even as a ghost she returns to Earth as one (W.H., p.22).

Heathcliff also represents arrested development in an adult. Like Catherine, he is a child who refuses to "grow up," who functions primarily on emotion and on a principle of self-gratification. His campaign of cruelty throughout his life is based on acts of personal vengeance. Hindley degrades him so he drives Hindley to degrade himself. He then takes Hindley's son and brings him up as Hindley had forced him to grow up. Edgar hurts him by marrying Catherine. Therefore, he takes revenge by marrying Edgar's sister and forcing young Cathy Linton into an unnatural marriage. Like a child, Heathcliff behaves according to the basic law of simple justice. In an infant, such egocentricity is innocent and natural, but in an adult it is sheer immaturity.

However, although Emily Brontë is conscious of Heathcliff's faults, she does not judge or condemn him as a typical Victorian moralist would. Instead, she tries to understand him by tracing the factors that shape his character. This will be dealt with in section III. Nature and Nurture.

II. Nature and Personality

Despite realistically unveiling the flaws in the characters of Catherine and Heathcliff, Brontë acknowledges and respects the authenticity of their nature. Heathcliff attains a kind of primitive nobility because of his tremendous strength of character. He loves as fiercely as he hates, and his passions are intensely powerful. Like Catherine, there is much poetic beauty in his tempestuous individuality as portrayed by the author. Brontë's romantic admiration for the natural emotional impulse is reflected in the depiction of her protagonists. Her treatment of the Earnshaw and Linton children shows her preference of raw nature to artificial civilization.

As a child, Emily was well-acquainted with "lurid true stories of [the Brontë] neighbourhood... family tragedies, suicide, even murder" with which Reverend Patrick

Brontë "was in the habit of regaling his young family at breakfast."²² Her brother Branwell also frequently brought home "dramatic recitals of violent feuds and passions" among the parishioners.²³ This was life in the raw country, as Emily knew it. Her authentic world was situated on the wild moors which she loved "with as passionate and intimate a knowledge as that which she endowed her heroines of Wuthering Heights, the two Catherines."²⁴ During the few times that Emily left home for school, she was miserable out in the "civilized" world.²⁵ In a letter to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte Brontë wrote:

Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils; without it she perished. The change from her own home to a school, and from her own ... very secluded, but unrestricted and inartificial mode of life, to one of disciplined routine ... was what she failed in enduring ... her health was quickly broken.²⁶

Emily thrived on the freedom of untamed life. Civilization and conventionality did not agree with her.

This preference for nature is brought to light in her treatment of childhood. Her delineation of the Earnshaw and Linton children of the first generation suggests a contrast between nature with its basic realities of life and civilization with its somewhat artificial refinements. The children of *Wuthering Heights* operate on instinct, the fundamental urge; Heathcliff and the Earnshaws behave "naturally" in that their conduct results from the free expression of feeling. In comparison, the conventional Lintons are governed by an external system of values; their behaviour is primarily regulated according to the laws of what is appropriate, dictated by society. The Earnshaws are vividly painted as dark, passionate, and wild whereas the Lintons are comparatively fair, mild, and cultivated. Emily Brontë's love for nature is revealed through the sheer liveliness in her depiction of the rough and natural children of *Wuthering Heights*.²⁷ The physical and spiritual differences between the families dramatize a basic conflict in the novel: that between a natural way of life and the civilized way.

Nevertheless, although Brontë's preferences are reflected in her characterization, she does not pass explicit moral judgement on the children in her

novel. She presents them as they are – vulnerable beings who may or may not make the transition into adulthood – unfolding both positive and negative attributes in each, leaving the reader to respond as he pleases while she experiences the process of gaining personal insight through her writing.

Hindley Earnshaw is naturally passionate and violent, capable of extremely deep love and hate. But he lacks the strength of will. Struck by tragedy in love, he loses all courage and simply surrenders to grief. Although hardy and strong as a child, Hindley is weak as an adult. This weakness is fatal to Hindley. In persecuting Heathcliff as a child he makes a formidable enemy, and later the stronger man crushes the weaker. Perhaps Emily feels that a certain degree of adult rationality could have saved Hindley. He, like Heathcliff, is obsessed with one love and becomes destructive upon losing it.

As children, Catherine and Heathcliff spy on the Lintons at Thrushcross Grange, and "the luxury they glimpse appears at first like the 'heaven' of their childhood fantasy."²⁸ However, upon witnessing the scene in which little Edgar and Isabella stand sobbing after nearly pulling a puppy apart in a violent show of selfishness over "who should hold a heap of warm hair" (W.H.,p.43), Heathcliff recoils and his attitude to this 'heaven' is determined for life.²⁹ Catherine, unfortunately, is drawn inside and is enchanted by the material and social values of the Lintons. Following her visit to the Grange, Catherine becomes torn between two opposing ways of life, one sophisticated, the other natural. With the Lintons she would not behave like Heathcliff whom they term a "vulgar young ruffian" and "worse than a brute"; whereas at home, she ceases to emulate the Lintons for fear of being laughed at (W.H.,p.61). Similarly, she is divided between Heathcliff and Edgar who abhor each other. In marrying Edgar and becoming the lady of Thrushcross Grange, where nature is accommodated to the artificial values of good taste, Catherine betrays her own heart. She has a deep natural love for Heathcliff, but is led to reject it by the attraction of Edgar's social position. In denying Heathcliff she denies the authentic life that is within her, and the rest of their story concerns the dire consequences of this choice.

Edgar and Isabella Linton compare poorly in spirit with the untamed and hardy children of Wuthering Heights. Besides their first introduction in the novel showing them crying after a fight over "who should hold a heap of warm hair," their first Christmas visit to the Heights also leaves the reader with a strong impression of frailty. When Heathcliff throws some hot apple sauce at Edgar's face in response to some insults, the latter bursts into tears while his sister starts "weeping to go home" (W.H.,p.53). Catherine is disgusted with such weakness: "Well, don't cry.... You're not killed," she tells Edgar. "Give over, Isabella! Has anybody hurt *you*?" she rebukes his sister (W.H.,p.53). As a lover, Edgar has his ears boxed by Catherine, and retreats "pale and with a quivering lip" (W.H.,p.65).

Nevertheless, as Emily Brontë realistically portrays her beloved children of Nature from the Heights, revealing both harmless and harmful attributes, she does the same with the Lintons. Isabella, though "civilized" and refined, expresses a bloodthirsty desire for revenge after being corrupted by Heathcliff's cruelty. Thus, a child brought up to be sophisticated and seemly is also capable of violence. An earlier example has been given in the scene involving the puppy.

Catherine, after her marriage, complains to Nelly: "I yield like a foolish mother they [Edgar and Isabella] are spoiled children, and fancy the world was made for their accommodation" (W.H.,p.90). [It is ironic that Catherine has the ability to perceive self-centredness in others but not herself.] To a large extent, Edgar is a very admirable character. He may often be easily reduced to tears, and to "a nervous trembling" (W.H.,P.105) when provoked by Heathcliff and Catherine, but he is commendable for his ability to care deeply. From his confrontations with the children of the Heights, Edgar acquires a mature kind of tenderness which his opponents never master. For instance, when Catherine boxes his ears in a fit of passion, he proceeds to leave because he is "afraid and ashamed" of her. But, upon perceiving how distressed she is he returns to make up with her (W.H.,pp.65,66). During Catherine's fatal illness, Edgar in his sheer anxiety for her forgets "her hated friend" Heathcliff who is found in her bedroom (W.H.,p.149).

Unlike Hindley and Heathcliff, Edgar does not become destructive when he loses his beloved: "Time brought resignation, and a melancholy sweeter than common joy. He recalled her memory with ardent, tender love" (W.H.,p.169). However, despite Edgar's admirable qualities, he comes forth as a mild and less impressive character compared to Heathcliff. He lacks the raw individuality that Brontë values in Heathcliff.

Nonetheless, although the author of Wuthering Heights shows her romantic preference for natural and spontaneous feelings in her treatment of childhood, as opposed to passive or tamed emotions, she presents her children realistically as vulnerable beings possessing a mixture of traits. Her aim is not to judge the children in her novel, but rather to attempt to understand the reasons behind their success or failure to make the necessary shift into the responsibility of adulthood. For her, heredity and upbringing are forces that operate on a child and affect the adult that he becomes.

III. Nature and Nurture

Emily Brontë believed that people were largely explained by heredity and upbringing.³⁰ Hareton Earnshaw and his father Hindley, for instance, exemplify this belief. For Brontë, nurture plays a very significant role in determining the kind of adult that a child eventually becomes. In her treatment of Hindley, she brings to light the danger of favouritism. Like his father, Hindley the child is a rough and hearty character; unfortunately, he is "spoiled by a boyish resentment which fastens upon his nature like a canker."³¹ Mr Earnshaw's treating his little foundling Heathcliff better than his own son breeds hatred and jealousy in Hindley's heart. Heathcliff is regarded as "a usurper of his [Hindley's] parent's affections and his privileges," and Hindley grows "bitter with brooding over these injuries" (W.H.,p.34). Then, when old Earnshaw dies, Hindley becomes the head of the household and wastes no time in abusing Heathcliff "enough to make a fiend of a saint" (W.H.,p.60). Later, when

Heathcliff cunningly succeeds as master of Wuthering Heights, the vicious circle continues as he degrades little Hareton Earnshaw.

Hareton, like his father and grandfather, is a warm and vigorous child, with some of his mother's capacity to be friendly. He is also a personification of the Romantic concept of "natural goodness" in children.³² After Hindley's funeral, Heathcliff seizes the unfortunate little Hareton and announces, "Now, my bonny lad, you are *mine*! And we'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!" (W.H.,p.171).³³ Out of vengeance, Heathcliff deals with Hareton as he himself was treated by Hindley. Thus the little boy develops into a crude and sullen youth. When young Cathy Linton shows her contempt for Hareton, Nelly rebukes her for being cruel:

Had *you* been brought up in his circumstances, would you be less rude? He was as quick and as intelligent a child as even you were; and I'm hurt that he should be despised now, because that base Heathcliff has treated him so unjustly. (W.H.,pp.,227,228)

However, Hareton does not grow as twisted as Heathcliff wants him to. As Laura Hinkley puts it, "in his essence Hareton is incorruptible."³⁴ His naturally sympathetic and benevolent disposition preserves itself, and in the end young Cathy's love helps to repair the damage that Heathcliff has done. In fact, it is Hareton who first extends a friendly hand to Cathy by offering to accompany her to Penistone Crag (W.H.,p.176).

Hareton has the ability to return good for evil. This reflects Emily Brontë's belief in the virtue of forgiveness. Despite Heathcliff's ill-treatment of him, Hareton has a kind of filial love for his guardian. Hareton alone weeps when Heathcliff dies. This capacity for love and forgiveness in Hareton's nature eventually saves him. When Cathy initially scorns and insults him, he is offended. But once she apologises and convinces him of her good intentions, he is all heart. Even Heathcliff shows a mixture of emotions for him, triggered by "the thousand forms of past associations and ideas [Hareton] awakens or embodies" (W.H.,p.295). Heathcliff hates Hareton because he is the son of Hindley, but also sympathetically sees in Hareton a repetition of himself – a product of oppression. Heathcliff also sees a reminder of his Catherine in

Hareton's eyes – a soul to be loved and feared. In response to Heathcliff's confusion of emotions Hareton returns an unspoken filial love that will not tolerate even Cathy speaking ill of his guardian.

Thus, Emily Brontë shows the effects of nature and nurture on the young. Hindley represents the Earnshaw heredity marred by inadequate upbringing and destroyed by lost love, both parental and marital. Hareton, on the other hand, inherits the best of his parents' attributes which preserve him through hardship, and is eventually nurtured by love back to a fulfilling life.

In contrast with Hareton is Heathcliff whose parents are unknown but assumed to have been gipsies. He is first introduced in the novel as a "gipsy brat," "dark almost as if it came from the devil" (W.H.,p.32). Before he is named he is referred to as "it" rather than "him." However, the author of Wuthering Heights believes "like Wordsworth, that 'the child is the father of the man,' ...that the way he is treated will condition ... the adult he will become."³⁵ Thus, Heathcliff's "unknown parentage may partly account for [his] ruthlessness, but much of the explanation of his later behaviour is to be found in his treatment as a boy."³⁶

Emily's sister, Charlotte, also believed in the influence of heredity and upbringing. In a letter to W.S. Williams, she wrote:

Heathcliff exemplifies the effects which a life of continued injustice and hard usage may produce on a naturally perverse, vindictive, and inexorable disposition. Carefully trained and kindly treated, the black gipsy cub might possibly have been reared into a human being, but tyranny and ignorance made of him a mere demon.³⁷

Right from his very first introduction to the Earnshaws, Heathcliff experiences immediate rejection, before he has done anything to deserve it. Mrs Earnshaw is ready to fling him out and Nelly puts him "on the landing of the stairs, hoping [he] might be gone on the morrow" (W.H.,p.33). After old Earnshaw's death, Heathcliff grows bitter under Hindley's humiliation and Catherine's uncertain affection. Forced by Hindley to work as a labourer, Heathcliff no longer enjoys the benefit of his early education. Gradually, he acquires "a slouching gait and ignoble look" (W.H.,p.62).

The reader feels deeply for him when he lets Nelly talk him into being clean and presentable in order to please Catherine, only to be cruelly thwarted by the derision of Hindley and Edgar. When his beloved Catherine rejects him in favour of Edgar, Heathcliff runs away, and returns three years later with a relentless scheme to wreck the lives of the Lintons and the Earnshaws.

Thus, neither heredity nor upbringing gives Heathcliff the advantage he needs for fulfilment in life. And the loss of his only love drives him to destruction, like Hindley.

Linton Heathcliff shares his father's plight in the disadvantage of nature and nurture. He is very much the child of Heathcliff and the weak, peevish Isabella. Linton is timid, fretful and selfish. He also has a cruel streak in his nature and will hurt others, even Cathy Linton who is good to him, in order to save himself discomfort. Nevertheless, his behaviour is understandable. It is not surprising that "a fatherless child (for the first twelve months; then motherless), unwanted by anyone, born while his mother was under severe strain" would be "ailing and peevish whatever his genetic make-up."³⁸ In addition to this, the unfortunate boy is also gradually dying and is being constantly terrorized by his own father. During the brief period that Edgar has his nephew at Thrushcross Grange, he says, "... he'll do very well ... if we can keep him" (W.H.,p.184). Had he remained at the Grange, where he would have been treated with kindness, Linton might have avoided sinking "from mild fretfulness to peevish malignity"³⁹ and death.

In comparison, Linton's cousin Cathy enjoys the full advantage of a childhood filled with love and care. The child of Edgar and Catherine is full of spirit, but is gentle as well. Her anger is "never furious; her love never fierce" but "deep and tender" (W.H.,p.172). As Linton's wife and widow under Heathcliff's savage control at the Heights, Cathy becomes sullen, vindictive and harsh, repelling Hareton's attempts at friendship. However, her natural benevolence, like Hareton's, soon reasserts itself and she reconciles herself to him.

Cathy Linton, like her mother, is lively, pert, affectionate, and proud. But the crucial difference between them is young Cathy's capacity to care about not hurting others, and to suffer without demanding retribution. When her father is ill, she tells Nelly:

I love him [Edgar] better than myself ... I pray every night that I may live after him; because I would rather be miserable than that he should be - that proves I love him better than myself.
(W.H.,p.211)

Her mother, on the other hand, felt that others should suffer as much as herself, even those she loved. When Cathy Linton does hurt a friend, she experiences sincere regret. In a quarrel with Linton Heathcliff, she pushes his chair and he is seized with a suffocating cough; Cathy then weeps with all her might, aghast at the mischief she has done (W.H.,p.218). Unlike her mother, she does not get angry with Linton for upsetting her. Cathy possesses her mother's proud spirit, but without the vindictiveness:

I'm sorry I hurt you, Linton! ... But I couldn't have been hurt by that little push, and I had no idea that you could, either - you're not much, are you, Linton? Don't let me go home thinking I've done you harm. Answer, speak to me. (W.H.,p.218)

When the sickly and peevish Linton becomes her husband, Cathy's selfless devotion reminds the reader of Edgar's tenderness to his wife in *her* decline.

During her bitter experience at Wuthering Heights, Cathy is able to work out her anger by quarrelling with her companions, whereas Catherine could only work herself up. Cathy notices what is happening to other people as she quarrels with them, whereas Catherine becomes preoccupied with her own rage and only sees that people are hurting her.

Upon discovering Hareton's filial affection for Heathcliff, Cathy ceases to criticize the latter and confesses to Nelly "her sorrow" for having "endeavoured to raise a bad spirit" between the two men (W.H.,p.293). Cathy, unlike her mother, is capable of self-education and magnanimity.

Like Hareton, Cathy reflects the best of her parents' traits and is sustained by love. She possesses Edgar's gentleness without his weakness and Catherine's spirit without her savagery.

Thus, Emily Brontë shows how a wholesome combination of nature and nurture brings forth a beautiful child that makes a promising adult. She also seeks to understand her "flawed" characters by finding the reasons behind their faults, which are chiefly rooted in heredity and especially upbringing.

The author of Wuthering Heights does not conceal her disapproval of ardent moralists who do not try to understand but seek merely to condemn people. Joseph functions as a sort of comic relief in the novel, interpreting the action from his own narrow point of view. A supposedly devout Methodist, he is devoid of true Christian charity, and Emily's portrait of him represents her mockery of extreme Victorian morality. Joseph's religion lacks genuine feeling. Brontë was well-versed, through her Aunt Branwell's "frequent homilies, in the grim, early-Methodist doctrines of damnation and the hellfire which awaited sinners." These doctrines "incited the rebellious Emily to mockery in her derisive depiction of the sermonizing servant, Joseph."⁴⁰ For instance, Mr Earnshaw, spurred by Joseph's relentless worrying him about "ruling his children rigidly" as religion required, attempts to tame little Catherine. But this only results in her "naughty delight to provoke him turning Joseph's religious curses into ridicule" (W.H.,p.37).

For Emily Brontë, her faith lies in the redeeming power of love.

IV. Love

In Wuthering Heights love is the strongest impulse. When it is thwarted, hatred results. But when it is unopposed it flourishes and brings happiness. Once the atmosphere of hatred and disharmony surrounding Hareton and Cathy is dissipated, love, the natural urge, grows freely. Cathy's love, selfless compared with Catherine's, repairs the damage to Hareton's nature which Heathcliff's hatred had wrought. She

educates him and treats him with respect and, consequently, his natural goodness emerges from beneath the degradation. While hate makes a brute of Hareton, love brings forth his better qualities and saves him.

Catherine loves Heathcliff but chooses to marry Edgar because if she marries Heathcliff they would "be beggars" (W.H.,p.75). She asserts, "...if I marry [Edgar], I can aid Heathcliff to rise" (W.H.,p.75). Catherine's reason for choosing the rich youth is to create a better life for Heathcliff and herself. This is Catherine's tragic mistake that leads thwarted love on the road to destruction. Cathy, on the other hand, places her love for Hareton not "within a self-created environment, the glorification of the will," but "within human society, the modification of the will."⁴¹ Nelly describes the young lovers:

Earnshaw [Hareton] was not to be civilized with a wish, and my young lady was no philosopher, and no paragon of patience; but both their minds tending to the same point - one loving and desiring to esteem, and the other loving and desiring to be esteemed - they contrived in the end to reach it. (W.H.,p.288)

While Catherine tends to dominate in her relationship with Heathcliff, Cathy works towards equality with Hareton.

Emily Brontë's romantic theme of innocence is also brought to light in her treatment of "child-lovers." The lovers in her novel are young and innocent, making their transition from childhood to adulthood, experiencing first love. Brontë's depiction of lovers who achieve maturity, like Cathy and Hareton, and those who fail to do so, like Catherine and Heathcliff, shows both her romanticism and realism. Egocentricity, an essential characteristic in a child on account of his innocence, appreciated by the Romantics in the name of individual freedom and imagination, is revealed in Wuthering Heights as a destructive attribute for an adult if he seeks to survive in this world. According to T.E. Apter, Emily Brontë's novel is

a study of romantic love undertaken by a Romantic imagination, but it contains a serious study of the destructive elements within the magnetism of anguish and passion alongside a potent expression of their value, and projects a far more original and useful resolution of irrational passion and morality than death while nonetheless expressing sympathy with that old Romantic solution.⁴²

Catherine loves Heathcliff because they are soul-mates: "Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (W.H.,p.74). The Romantic child within her, with all its egotism and passion, struggles to keep both Heathcliff and Edgar. Upon failing, she seeks to re-enter the glorious kingdom of childhood freedom through death. For Heathcliff, his whole life of suffering is owing to a passionate obsession with Catherine. He wants to die in order to be with her. Their love, "generated within a Romantic vision, is suffering love" that attains peace and ecstasy only through death.⁴³

Although Brontë is immensely touched by romanticism, her novel illustrates her acceptance of the cold hard truth. According to Keith Sagar,

the honesty and depth of Emily Brontë's vision forces upon her the recognition that it is natural for a human being, in his deepest humanity, to need to modify and control his passions in understanding and sympathy in order that he might experience that deepest fulfilment which depends upon fruitful human relationships and those co-operative human activities which go to make a civilization.⁴⁴

Thus, Brontë presents the flourishing love between Cathy and Harston as an alternative to the idealistic love of Catherine and Heathcliff that can only be fulfilled in the spiritual world. The surviving lovers have succeeded in crossing the threshold into happy adulthood while preserving the best part of their childhood within themselves, fighting neither nature nor civilization. Nevertheless, the reader senses the tension between the romantic and the realist in Emily Brontë. Although the author recognizes that romanticism is idealistic, a pragmatic view of life does not exactly appeal to her. Brontë accepts cold reality with notable reluctance. This is reflected in the comparative lack of spirit in the surviving generation in contrast to her more impressive and fiery protagonists.

CHAPTER III: CHARLOTTE

According to David Grylls, there were two main schools of thought regarding childhood during the Victorian era. One tradition, triggered by the Evangelical movement, believed in "the need to break the child's will; distrusting specifically juvenile ways, it preached the importance of weeding them out and replacing them as quickly as possible with the sober habits of age."¹ Grylls calls it "the Puritan attitude to children".² The other tradition which he terms as "Romantic" recommended "friendship and kindness" rather than "strict upbringing" and "unceasing supervision".³ The romantics argued for more freedom, less severity, and believed that children were capable of wisdom and sensibility. They asserted that the ways and ideas of the young should not be suppressed; childhood was a special period of innocence, spontaneity, and imagination. The romantic attitude was greatly influenced by Wordsworth who considered childhood as "the 'seed-time' of the 'soul'" and "saw the development of the human mind as organic through infancy and youth to maturity."⁴ The moralists, on the other hand, insisted on strict discipline, self-restraint, and "strove to make children fit into the world of pious, responsible adults."⁵

Charlotte Brontë's treatment of childhood in her novels reflects her attempt to achieve some compromise between romantic individualism and freedom, and social and moral responsibility. Having lost their mother when they were very young, Charlotte and her brother and sisters were brought up by a prim, authoritative aunt who instilled a strong sense of religious duty in them. Aunt Branwell was a "woman of little emotional warmth" and with a "strict Methodist conscience".⁶ Both Miss Branwell and the Reverend Patrick Brontë never encouraged the children to express their emotions.⁷ Charlotte and her sisters grew up believing it proper to hide their feelings, but their passions existed, though repressed. The young Brontës led a

secluded life at Haworth. They were forbidden to mingle with the village children. Consequently, they clung together and entertained themselves by creating tales of love and adventure when they were not occupied with domestic duties. Their literary fantasy world began with the Young Man's Play in 1826 when Charlotte was ten, Emily eight, Branwell seven, and Anne six. This first play "was inspired by a gift from Reverend Patrick Brontë to Branwell of a box of wooden soldiers."⁸ From the young Brontës' plays evolved the imaginary kingdoms of Angria and Gondal. Emily and Anne created the Gondal saga and chronicled passionate struggles for power and love, whereas Charlotte and Branwell became obsessed with the world of Angria. Charlotte spun romantic escapades with Byronic heroes while Branwell focused on war and violence.⁹

However, while teaching at Roe Head at the age of nineteen, Charlotte's experiences in the real world triggered a deep interest in the human psyche. Her Angrian stories, retaining their romanticism steeped in egotism, began to concentrate on the development of character. Charlotte also became increasingly depressed when she found her duties as a teacher extremely monotonous and frustrating, and guiltily sought refuge in her fantasy world. She suffered from severe religious depression, feeling sinful for indulging in her passionate Angrian visions, and had to resign from Roe Head in 1838.¹⁰ 1839 saw Charlotte bidding "Farewell to Angria" and starting to move away from romanticism towards realism based on personal experience. As she "saw more of life, especially during her years in Brussels," Charlotte's writing reflected her effort to seek some sort of balance or middleground between romantic ideals and moral values, between egoism and social responsibility.¹¹ In her novels, she attempts to curb her childhood romanticism, aiming towards a preferred equilibrium with realism. Her protagonists are often shown struggling between passion and reason, suggesting the author's search for a compromise between freedom and discipline.

In her novels, Charlotte Brontë presents childhood as the crucial period in life when the development of individual moral integrity begins. A child's upbringing has a tremendous influence on his adulthood. Therefore, parental or adult guidance plays a

very important role because, like the Romantics, Charlotte's treatment of children in her writing suggests a belief in "natural goodness"; corruption comes from society rather than original sin.¹² In this respect, Brontë clearly opposes the Victorian puritan attitude. She also criticizes the cold, hard approach to discipline which produces gloomy miniature adults like Mark Yorke in Shirley. Mrs Yorke the puritanical mother is unfavourably portrayed. In Caroline Helstone's indirect recommendation that Mrs Yorke should love her children¹³, the reader senses Charlotte Brontë speaking as well. Similarly, through the Yorke girls, the author speaks against strict and loveless parenting. In allowing the girls to speak their mind despite their mother, Brontë reveals her disapproval of the traditional Victorian notion that children should be seen but not heard. Wordsworth asserted that a child was essentially wiser than an adult, and Charlotte, who was quite familiar with his works, recognized this potential quality. In depicting children like Victor in The Professor and Rose in Shirley, Brontë suggests that a child has every right to speak up and is often capable of making as much sense as an adult. Her writing unveils a marvelous ability to enter into the child's psyche.

Although she appreciates childhood innocence, Charlotte Brontë does not lament its loss through the pressures of experience as much as the Romantics do in their writing. In her novels, the ideal child is one who possesses the strength to survive harsh reality, who is able to face the outside world that is pervaded with hostility. The child must experience some adversity in order to grow, to emerge as a wise and strong adult, and the sooner it prepares itself for independence, the better its chances for surviving as an adult in the real world. Charlotte advocates an early cultivation of social and moral responsibility in children. At the same time, her treatment of childhood illustrates her concordance with the Romantic attitude that argues for individual freedom and imagination. The child should not be stifled or dictated to. Nevertheless, adult guidance and assistance should always be rendered, with warmth and affection, because solitude is not conducive to the character development of a child. Loneliness would transform him into an extreme specimen of romantic egotism.

Little Jane Eyre, for example, displays intense passion and destructive egotism when she has to suffer alone at Gateshead, without caring people such as Miss Temple to help alleviate her pain. Bessie tends to provide some comfort, but she lacks the authority to assist Jane through her traumatic experiences.¹⁴ In short, Charlotte Brontë recommends blending the best of both the Romantic and Puritan worlds, aiming for a well-balanced childhood that would promise to bring forth better adults than those who are nurtured via either romanticism or puritanism. As she suggests in her novels, children who are subjected to extreme methods of upbringing often do not encounter a favourable destiny.

Brontë delineates approvingly, children who show a capacity for both natural childlike behaviour and potential adultlike sensibility and responsibility. She is aware of the danger of extremes in children like Helen Burns (Jane Eyre), Mark Yorke (Shirley), and Lucy Snowe (Villette) who are quite stoical, and in those like Jane Eyre and Jessy Yorke who tend to be too passionate. Also, parental figures such as the puritanical Mrs Yorke and the passionate Yorke Hunsden appear to be dealt with unfavourably, or dubiously, by the author.

I. The Professor

In The Professor, Mrs Frances Crimsworth is portrayed as the perfect teacher whose

general demeanour towards [her pupils] was serious; sometimes benignant when they pleased her with their progress and attention, always scrupulously refined and considered. In cases where reproof or punishment was called for she was usually forbearing enough; but if any took advantage of that forbearance, which sometimes happened, a sharp, sudden, and lightning-like severity taught the culprit the extent of the mistake committed.¹⁵

Similarly, Frances is also a good mother to little Victor "who knits such a formidable brow when sitting over a book that interests him," who "though still, ... is not unhappy - though serious, not morose," who "has a susceptibility to pleasurable sensations almost too keen, for it amounts to enthusiasm" (P,p.233). Victor is depicted positively as a

rather well-balanced boy, precocious and thoughtful as well as capable of childish attachments and emotions. He is satisfied with his toys for which "he seems to have contracted a partiality amounting to affection; this feeling, directed towards one or two living animals of the house, strengthens almost to a passion (P,p.233).

Although William Crimsworth offers a favourable description of his son, he seems anxious about the child's "enthusiasm" and "passion." His odd behaviour throughout the novel reflects Charlotte Brontë's ardent attempt to renounce her childhood romanticism. In her preface to The Professor, the author reveals her determination to avoid "the wild, wonderful, and thrilling - the strange, startling, and harrowing"; in her sheer vehemence to adhere to "the real" she creates a protagonist who believes in emotional repression.¹⁶ Also, through Crimsworth's anxiety over his son's passionate nature Brontë is perhaps hinting at the potential danger of intense feelings, if allowed to grow unchecked. Like the Romantics, she advocates individual freedom, but she also perceives the necessity for some restraint.

Victor enjoys the privilege of having two father-figures. There is William Crimsworth whose chief concern is to ensure that his son does not lack "the art of self-control" (P,p.235). He asserts:

[Frances] sees, as I also see, a something in Victor's temper - a kind of electrical ardour and power - which emits, now and then, ominous sparks; Hunsden calls it his spirit, and says it should not be curbed. I call it the leaven of the offending Adam, and consider that it should be, if not *whipped* out of him, at least soundly disciplined. (P,p.235)

Then there is Yorke Hunsden who possesses some remarkable romantic qualities that reminds the reader of Brontë's Angrian characters. Hunsden has a tremendous sense of individual worth and freedom. Crimsworth observes that he is "an original-minded man" (P,p.32) and Frances thinks "he looks so original" (P,p.204). Charlotte's vivid portrayal of Yorke Hunsden in contrast with her relatively stoic protagonist seems to reflect the author's reluctance to wholly relinquish her romanticism. Hunsden, who laughs "as mockingly, as heartlessly as Mephistopheles" (P,p.185), is admirable for his ability to spur the Crimsworths into asserting and expressing themselves. He evokes

their spontaneous and authentic reactions; they become less repressed and more genuine individuals around him. His influence triggers Crimsworth to stand up to his bullying brother and to broaden his horizons overseas. Even the mild Frances reveals a powerful spark in her personality in her debates with Hunsden. However, Brontë realises that Yorke Hunsden's character is perhaps too unrestrained and carefree. Therefore, Victor's attachment to him worries the boy's parents who fear that their friend's passionate nature is a bad influence on their son. The mother disapproves of Hunsden's "mutinous maxims and unpractical dogmas" (P,p.232) and wishes that he "had children of his own, for then he would know the danger of inciting their pride and indulging their foibles" (P,p.236).

Nevertheless, if Hunsden represents one extreme force affecting childhood upbringing, Crimsworth can be said to represent the other extreme. William notices that Victor hardly ever smiles (P,p.232) and regrets that "the sunshine breaks out so rarely" (P,p.236) for his son. This is probably the result of constant parental stifling of his "spirit." It is highly probable that without Hunsden's tempering influence on Crimsworth's strict discipline, little Victor would grow up to be just like his father whose "response to life is essentially negative" and phlegmatic.¹⁷ One is almost quite sure that the boy smiles more often when he is with Hunsden than with William.

While working towards a compromise between romanticism and realism in her writing, Charlotte Brontë apparently learnt that passion should be controlled but not suppressed. In her treatment of childhood she seems to suggest that the child should be encouraged to be aware and in control of the attribute rather than have it crushed. At the end of The Professor Frances, the more affectionate parent who reasons with her son and treats him with "a forbearance, a congenial tenderness" that her husband appears to disapprove of (P,p.235), steps "into the limelight" with Hunsden while William Crimsworth "remains back in his study, almost as a mere transcriber of events."¹⁸ As the novel comes to a close, Hunsden emerges as a more sympathetic and appealing character whereas "William's rationality is beginning to look somewhat sinister,"¹⁹ especially in his recommendations for his son's education:

the lad will someday get blows instead of blandishments - kicks instead of kisses; then for the fit of mute fury which will sicken his body and madden his soul; then for the ordeal of merited and salutary suffering, out of which he will come (I trust) a wiser and a better man. (P,p.236)

Between his father on one extreme and his friend on the other, not forgetting his loving mother somewhere in the middle, Victor's consequent foundation in life will probably contain a fair blend of ideals; a basis on which he shall build his own individual definition of social and moral values out of his experiences away from home. Exceedingly anxious and cautious though his parents may be, they are nevertheless granting him the freedom to seek his own moral truth in the outside world. Victor is possibly Brontë's most optimistic portrayal of childhood. He has a very promising future. Already he shows a healthy disposition, demonstrating a capacity for both natural childlike behaviour and mature reasoning. He may be "lost in a passion of the wildest woe" (P,p.233) for the death of his dog, but "to reason" he is also "ever accessible" (P,p.236). Victor's father sees "in the garden of his intellect" the potential for "a rich growth of wholesome principles - reason, justice, moral, courage" (P,p.235).

II. Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre has been described as a "Cinderella figure ... without the beauty of a Cinderella, but with all the sympathy such a figure draws through being pushed aside, ill-treated and ignored."²⁰ Mrs Reed represents the evil step-mother who "thwarts her dead husband's wish that Jane should be treated kindly."²¹ However, maintaining her resolution to avoid fantasy for the sake of realism, Charlotte Brontë's "Cinderella" is not beautiful and does not marry a handsome prince. The protagonist undergoes a desperate struggle against all odds to achieve her own sense of identity and moral integrity. This is the story of Jane's spiritual journey from innocence to experience.²² The whole range of Jane's experiences from childhood to adulthood prepares her for the happy reconciliation between passion and duty at Ferndean with the man she loves.

The theme of an "orphan" struggling to survive in an inimical environment is a popular one in Charlotte Brontë's novels. The child's spiritual development is often suggested to begin when he leaves his family to venture forth into the outside world. This reflects Brontë's belief in the individual worth, in the importance of seeking one's own moral truth through the personal experience of harsh reality. In *The Professor*, William Crimsworth is determined that his son should face the necessary pain and suffering just as he has done in order to attain self-identity and fulfilment. At the end of the novel, William is safe, but for Victor there is no guarantee of triumph; "William's battle must be fought again by his son."²³ Although Crimsworth's recommendations sound disturbingly severe, the point lies in the necessity to promote the child's inner strength through experiences in the hostile world.

Young Jane Eyre is not as fortunate as Victor because she is literally a poor, lonely, deprived orphan from the very start of her life. Brought up by a cold and distant aunt whose children constantly bully her, Jane seeks refuge from her misery at Gateshead by indulging in fantasy. She savours Bessie's tales of love and adventure, and her fervent imagination relates to the romantic imagery in Bewick's *History of British Birds*. She sees symbols of her own emotional life in

... the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray ... the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast ... the cold and ghastly moors glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking ... the quiet solitary churchyard with its inscribed headstone....²⁴

These are images of isolation and despair.²⁵ In addition, Jane shows an inclination towards an "imaginative heightening and distortion"²⁶:

Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains, but strangely impressive....

The two ships becalmed on a torpid sea, I believed to be marine phantoms.

The fiend pinning down the thief's pack behind him, I passed over quickly; it was an object of terror.

So was the black, horned thing seated aloof on a rock, surveying a distant crowd surrounding a gallows.

Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting.
(JE, pp.8,9)

Alone in an adverse environment, Jane becomes an egotist. Her response to the injustice she suffers at Gateshead is manifested in the form of violent passion and demand for retribution. The "red-room" episode signifies her confrontation with the sheer intensity of her feelings and imagination; its powerful impact causes her to have "a species if fit" (JE,p.18). This fainting fit triggers off the end of romantic innocence and the beginning of real experience.²⁷ The "bird of paradise" on Jane's favourite "brightly painted china plate" which has often stirred her enthusiastic admiration now seems in reality "strangely faded" and unappealing (JE,pp.20,21). Her favourite book, Gulliver's Travels, which used to arouse her ardent imagination fails to delight her; Gulliver appears to her "a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions" (JE,p.21). Nonetheless, Jane does not sink into despondency. For the first time she stands up to her aunt and, "in defying her tyrant, Jane elicits from Mrs Reed, for a brief moment, the respect one adult would give another."²⁸ Jane's bold defiance of Mrs Reed sees the fall of childhood innocence and the beginning of the "awakening consciousness" of cold reality.²⁹

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre reflects the author's struggle against sheer romanticism and movement towards realism. The cruelty of the Reeds seems almost monstrous when described in a sentimentalized manner by the ten-year-old Jane. However, undercutting the poignant presentation, is the objective reflection of the mature Jane:

I was a discord at Gateshead-hall: I was like nobody there: I had nothing in harmony with Mrs Reed or her children.... They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathize with one amongst them.... (JE,pp.15,16)

Brontë uses the double narrative technique "not to discount the young Jane as a narrator but to remind us that [young Jane's] reactions are those of a partially unformed mind."³⁰ The reader's sympathy for the lonely child is checked by "the more sober judgement of the mature Jane."³¹ For example, the autobiographer Jane admits:

I was ... a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or adding to their pleasure; a noxious thing, cherishing the germs of

indignation ... of contempt I know that, had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child ... Mrs Reed would have endured my presence more complacently; her children would have entertained for me more of the cordiality of fellow-feeling. (JE,p.16)

Thus, Charlotte Brontë prevents the sentimentalization of Jane Eyre.³²

When Jane arrives at Lowood, she is still brimming with extreme emotions. She tells Helen: "‘when we are struck at without reason, we should strike back again very hard ... so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again’" (JE,p.58). Describing her experience at Gateshead, Jane proceeds "forthwith to pour out ... the tale of [her] sufferings and resentments. Bitter and truculent when excited," she speaks "without reserve or softening" (JE,p.58). Helen functions as the voice of logic and a disciplining influence on Jane’s passion. In contrast with Jane’s preference for books "about fairies" (JE,p.50) Helen reads Rasselas and the bible. She offers Jane wise advice:

‘Would you not be happier if you tried to forget [Mrs Reed’s] severity, together with the passionate emotions it excited? Life appears to me too short to be spent in nursing animosity or registering wrongs.’ (JE,p.59)

Helen, unlike Jane, does not sentimentalize her own suffering. Their relationship gradually subdues the young protagonist’s egotism as the older girl’s rationality produces a tempering effect on her. When Jane asks, "‘Helen, why do you stay with a girl whom everybody believes to be a liar?’" Helen replies,

‘Everybody, Jane? Why there are only eighty people who have heard you called so, and the world contains hundreds of millions.’ (JE,p.69)

When Helen tells Jane that many of their fellow-pupils pity her, Jane says, "‘How can they pity me after what Mr Brocklehurst said?’" and Helen replies,

‘Mr Brocklehurst is not a god....’ (JE,p.69)

By the time she tells Miss Temple about her sad childhood at Gateshead, Jane is "mindful of Helen’s warnings against the indulgence of resentment" and infuses "into the narrative for less gall and wormwood than ordinary" (JE,p.71).

Like Frances Crimsworth in The Professor, Miss Temple serves as the ideal teacher and mother-figure in Jane Eyre. According to Helen, she is

‘... full of goodness she sees my errors, and tells me of them gently; and if I do anything worthy of praise, she gives me my meed liberally....’
(JE,pp.56,57)

Both Miss Temple and Helen provide the affectionate guidance that Jane needs in order to discipline her passionate nature. Through the exercise of reason, Jane gains self-control; by learning to see things in perspective, she overcomes egotism.

Charlotte Brontë's notion of the necessity to aim for an equilibrium between romantic and puritan ideals is a major theme in her treatment of childhood. While young Jane at Gateshead represents sheer passion, Helen at Lowood can be said to illustrate extreme stoicism. For a child of "thirteen or upwards" (JE,p.52), Helen's moral and intellectual capacity is remarkable. The Victorian puritans would find her saintliness highly commendable. However, Charlotte's depiction of her reflects the author's reservations regarding puritan principles. Helen's holiness is unrealistic. Her doctrine of perfection is not feasible for survival in a harsh world. Therefore, she dies quite soon in the novel. Brontë is perhaps suggesting that an absolute epitome of goodness is most vulnerable to the inimical forces of mankind. In fact, any human endowment used in extreme would wear itself out.

The characterization of Mr Brocklehurst has been described as an attack on extreme Evangelicalism, which suggests part of the author's stance with regard to conventional religion.³³ Through him, Charlotte criticizes some Victorian religious practices and their effects on the young. Many critics claim that Brocklehurst is modelled after the Reverend William Carus Wilson, superintendant of the school at Cowan Bridge where Charlotte and her sisters suffered deprivations and abuse like those of the children of Lowood.³⁴ Brocklehurst uses religion to justify cruelty. He asserts that the bible says, "if ye suffer hunger or thirst for [the Lord's] sake, happy are ye" (JE,p.63), which is supposed to justify his starving the children and letting them freeze in the winter. His pompous preaching against "braided hair and costly apparel" is ironically interrupted by the appearance of his own family "splendidly attired in

velvet, silk, and furs," wearing fashionable hats and French curls (JE,p.65). Brontë clearly opposes religious extremism and hypocrisy. According to Tom Winnifrith, "the difference between Mr Brocklehurst's treatment of his own family ... and the girls at Lowood ... is a pointer to the different treatment of the rich and the poor which was one of the less attractive features of Evangelicalism."³⁵

III. Shirley

Charlotte Brontë's third novel, Shirley, offers more examples of the danger of absolutes and the importance of a sound upbringing. In her treatment of the Yorke children, the author shows a vast diversity in character and personality amongst siblings, demonstrating that child development is influenced by both innate and external factors.³⁶ As in her other novels Brontë depicts favourably the child who shows a capacity for both childlike behaviour and adultlike sensibility.

Mr Yorke is portrayed as a man of experience who advocates objectivity and avoids romanticism, who asserts his authority but is kind and amiable to his workmen. He is a loving father who admires originality in people. He is also a shrewd businessman who counsels Robert Moore to marry the wealthy Shirley Keeldar for financial gain. Mrs Yorke is presented as a puritanical mother and wife, "grave as Saturn ... morning, noon, and night".³⁷ Between the affectionate father and the stern mother, emerge an interesting assortment of Yorke children, all asserting "their separate independence and individuality."³⁸ This reflects Charlotte Brontë's belief in the Romantic concept of individual freedom and imagination. It also suggests that she shares her sister Emily's belief that people are largely explained by both heredity and upbringing. The Yorke children inherit different traits from their parents and are affected by their upbringing in varying ways.

Matthew, the first-born, is described as possessing a "sinister" visage that reminds one of "the eruption of Vesuvius" (S,p.150). His soul seems to be filled with "Flame and shadow ... no daylight in it, and no sunshine, and no pure, cool moonbeam

ever shone there" (S,p.150). He seems above the influence of his parents who appear to be rather intimidated by him:

... Matthew is never to be vexed, never to be opposed: they avert provocation from him as assiduously as they would avert fire from a barrel of gunpowder. "Concede, conciliate," is their motto wherever he is concerned. (S,p.150)

Matthew's extreme nature is predicted to trigger trouble in the family. Mr and Mrs Yorke

are fast making a tyrant of their flesh and blood. This the younger scions know and feel, and at heart they all rebel against the injustice: they cannot read their parents' motives; they only see the difference of treatment. The dragon's teeth are already sown amongst Mr Yorke's young olive-branches: discord will one day be the harvest. (S,p.151)

Like her sister Emily, Charlotte's treatment of childhood also reveals a warning against favouritism in the family.

Mark, the second child, is also an extreme character disapprovingly delineated in the novel. His role is that of a miniature adult played to the hilt. He is probably the son most affected by his mother's puritanism. He is

exceedingly calm; his smile is shrewd he is too still, unmoved, phlegmatic by the time he is five-and-twenty, he will wonder why people ever laugh, and think all fools who seem merry. Poetry will not exist for Mark ... enthusiasm will be his aversion and contempt. Mark will have no youth: while he looks juvenile and blooming, he will be already middle-aged in mind. His body is now fourteen years of age, but his soul is already thirty. (S,p.151)

Mark reminds us of young Tom Gradgrind in Dickens's Hard Times. The "little grown-up" who swears by Facts assumes to correct Mr Moore:

' ... you perhaps think it was a compliment on Miss Helstone's part to say you were not sentimental.... For your benefit, Mr Moore, I've been looking up the word "sentimental" in the dictionary, and I find it to mean "tinctured with sentiment" On examining further, "sentiment" is explained to be thought, idea, notion. A sentimental man, then, is one who has thoughts, ideas, notions; an unsentimental man is one destitute of thought, idea, notion.' (S,p.159)

The destinies of Matthew and Mark Yorke are pessimistically envisaged to be destructive and gloomy. Their immoderate personalities foreshadow the possibility of

the older boy growing up to become a bad-tempered bully like Mr Malone, and the younger one like the cold, detached Mr Helstone.

Charlotte Brontë prefers a well-balanced child, neither wild and passionate nor still and phlegmatic, but a healthy blend of both. For instance, the author's attitude is brought to light when Caroline Helstone tells young Henry Simpson:

‘ ... generally I don't like schoolboys Little ruffians ... killing and tormenting birds.... you are so different, I'm quite fond of you. You've almost as much sense as a man.’ (S,p.462)

Like Victor in The Professor, Henry is spirited and emotional as well as sensible and thoughtful.

Similarly, Martin Yorke is also favourably portrayed. Like Henry, Martin serves as the ideal type of child in contrast with the older Yorke boys. In his nature there exists a healthy blend of spirit, passion, sensitivity, intelligence, strength and courage. His life

will certainly be brilliant: he will pass through all its illusions, half believe in them, wholly enjoy them, then outlive them. (S, p.151)

This passage reminds the reader of Crimsworth's recommendation for his son at the end of The Professor, although less harsh because it reflects the author's belief rather than the conviction of an excessively stern father. Brontë accepts the necessity of moving from innocence to experience. She also suggests that there is no such thing as a permanent mould; one cannot be too sure how a child would turn out:

[Martin] will want all that the world can give him, both of enjoyment and love; he will, perhaps, take deep draughts of each fount. That thirst satisfied - what next? I know not. Martin might be a remarkable man: whether he will or not, the seer is powerless to predict: on that subject there has been no open vision. (S,pp.151,152)

Experience will determine the child's future. Also, the transition between childhood and adulthood can be a very volatile period. An example is shown in Martin's initial opinion of women defeated by his subsequent infatuation with Caroline Helstone: " ' I mean always to hate women; they're such dolls'" (S,p.158).

All in all, Brontë's Martin Yorke is a promising boy. He has inherited the positive attributes of his parents and manifests a fortunately balanced effect of upbringing, considering the much varied personalities amongst his family members. Martin is "destined to grow up an original" (S,p.586), thanks to a somehow blessed combination of nature and nurture.

The Yorke girls, Rose and Jessy, have a rather difficult childhood because, according to Victorian standards, females are regarded as the inferior sex. Therefore, they are frequently being subjugated. Although they are appreciated and encouraged by their father, who recognizes the intelligence of all his children and respects their freedom, the girls' lives will involve a hard struggle against the kind of people who "take notice of the boys" but "never Rose and me [Jessy]" (S,p.155). Their own mother plays the role of oppressor. Nevertheless, as highly intelligent and outspoken girls, they project the author's attitude against the Victorian tradition of reducing women to household drudges. Rose's awareness of "the horror of women's conventional fate"³⁹ is shown when she tells Caroline:

'... I am resolved that my life shall be a life: not a bleak trance
like the toad's, buried in marble; nor a long, slow death like
yours in Briarfield Rectory.'
(S,p.399)

Reflecting Brontë's compromise between realism and romanticism, Rose desires a balance between discipline and freedom. While she accepts domestic duties, she also wants to progress beyond them, to explore life beyond the home.⁴⁰ However, Brontë seems to feel that there is no place for feminism in England.⁴¹ Therefore, Rose Yorke ends up surviving in a foreign land.⁴²

Like her brother Martin, Rose has inherited the best of her parents' traits and shows a healthy equilibrium of paternal and maternal nurture. She is another example of Charlotte Brontë's ideal child, "a young soul yet, but it will mature ... and neither father nor mother have a spirit to compare with it. Partaking of the essence of each, it will one day be better than either" (S,p.148). Charlotte's solution of "blending the best of both worlds" is thus embodied in Rose Yorke.

In contrast with Rose is the somewhat too passionate Jessie Yorke. Rose's "will daily [bends] itself to that of the impetuous little Jessie On all occasions of show and pleasure, Jessie [takes] the lead, and Rose [falls] quietly into the background" (S,p.155). Rose's face is described as "more regular-featured than that of the piquant little Jessie" (S,p.156), which suggests that Rose is the one who has more self-control. The younger girl shows a tendency to get over-excited whereas her sister usually remains calm. Rose will be better-equipped to survive in the outside world that is pervaded with adversity and hostility. Jessie's extreme nature would probably cause her to suffer. Sheer passionate feelings are harmless in a child. However, as she grows older these feelings could become rather agitating and destructive as the child discovers the severity of life in the real world. It is thus quite significant that the final narrative of Jessie's early death immediately follows the description of her passionate opinions on religion and politics (S,pp.406,407). Perhaps the juxtaposition of these two images suggests some sort of a link. Uncontrolled passion often leads to sheer frustration in the face of harsh reality, and sheer frustration often weakens the body and soul.⁴³

IV. Villette

Charlotte Brontë's treatment of Lucy Snowe in Villette reflects the danger of the other extreme opposite excessive passion – utter repression. Fourteen-year-old Lucy believes that in order to avoid pain, one must repress one's emotions. This conviction is confirmed as she witnesses the misery of the exceedingly affectionate Polly Home upon being separated from her loved ones. Although little Polly tries to put up a brave front for the other members of the Bretton household, Lucy notices the extent to which the little girl suffers because of her intense feelings: "I watched Polly and ... heard her weep."⁴⁴ When Mr Home leaves his daughter to go to Europe, Lucy observes the little girl's agony:

[Polly] went through ... emotions such as some never feel; it was in her constitution: she would have more of such instants if she

lived Mrs Bretton ... shed a tear or two I, Lucy Snowe,
was calm. (V,p,79)

In the first few chapters of the autobiography, the reader finds Lucy in the midst of her transition between childhood and adulthood. Considering Lucy's vivid recollections, the fact that she never mentions her parents, stating only that her "permanent residence" is with "kinsfolk" (V,p.62), suggests that her childhood is devoid of parental love. In addition, what little she says about her "kindred" (V,p.94) does not imply the presence of any happiness living with them. It is obvious that Lucy prefers visiting her godmother, Mrs Bretton. According to Margaret Blom, Lucy's "despairing belief that she will never be the object of deep affection" is revealed by her contentment with the "unemotional kindness of her godmother."⁴⁵ With the exception of her initial response to little Polly, with whom she "talked in little fond phrases" (V,p.64), Mrs Bretton is "not generally a caressing women" and "her manner [is] rarely sentimental" (V,p.64).

Lucy Snowe, who must have been a lonely child deprived of warmth and tenderness, becomes a miniature adult at the age of fourteen. She practises objectivity and detachment constantly. For her, the capacity to feel deeply and to show emotions is considered a curse (V,p.69). An orphan "robbed of hope and made fearful by circumstances over which she has no control, Lucy exacerbates her situation by retreating into negative passivity."⁴⁶ She expects very little and appreciates whatever comes. It is her way of avoiding pain. She behaves stolidly not because she is incapable of intense emotions, but because she does not want to feel too much.⁴⁷ Charlotte Brontë's disapproval of Lucy's extreme repression is brought to light when the protagonist suffers its consequences in later life. Thus, the author shows how an unbalanced childhood devoid of a sound upbringing produces a neurotic adult. Unlike young Jane Eyre, the orphan Lucy does not have a "Miss Temple" to guide her with hope and encouragement. The lack of nurture leaves her with her own excessive method of self-protection.

At the Bretton house, Lucy takes on the role of a distant "looker-on" observing little Polly's new attachment to Graham following Mr Home's departure:

One would have thought the child had no mind or life of her own, but must necessarily live, move, and have her being in another: now that her father was taken from her, she nestled to Graham, and seemed to feel by his feelings: to exist in his existence. (V,p.83)

Lucy feels the danger of such an absolute devotion and she takes note of its consequences when Polly's "feelings received a severe shock" (V,p.83) one day through the painful experience of rejection (V,p.84). Soon after that, Polly undergoes another sorrowful experience, this time of having to leave Graham. Lucy, in her own distant manner, comforts the little girl. And as Polly slumbers in her arms, Lucy wonders:

‘How will she get through this world, or battle with this life? How will she bear the shocks and repulses, the humiliations and desolations, which books, and my own reason tell me are prepared for all flesh.’ (V,p.93)

In Lucy's reactions to Polly, the reader senses that the protagonist is vicariously involved with the little girl's feelings. Therefore, it seems Lucy is really expressing her own fears about emotional involvement.⁴⁸ Thus, she enters upon adulthood bent on self-repression.

In contrast with Lucy is the relatively more favourably depicted Polly who is capable of both natural childlike behaviour and potential adultlike sensibility. Unlike the older girl, who is constantly trying to stifle her emotions in order to avoid suffering, little Polly participates fully in the vicissitudes of life and learns to adjust according to personal experience. For instance, although she is extremely affectionate she learns, from the pain of separation and rejection from loved ones, to subdue her feelings; she does not remain utterly detached as Lucy does. Polly is passionate but she also exercises self-control, whereas Lucy is always striving to deny her passion for the sake of discipline and reason. In the touching scene where Mr Home bids his daughter farewell, little Polly holds up "quivering lips" but does not burst into tears because she has promised not to cry (V,p.79). Later, after being rejected by her beloved Graham for the first time, Polly shows that she is deeply hurt and realizes the

hazard of excessive emotion. She ceases to "seek him, or follow him, or in any way solicit his notice" (V,p.85). Nevertheless, she continues to respond to him whenever he reaches out to her. Thus, Polly moves from extremity to moderation. She is another example of Charlotte Brontë's ideal well-balanced child, through whom the author also suggests the importance of both nurture and experience. Polly is more fortunate than Lucy in that she has a loving and caring parent who provides a stimulus for her unselfish nature.

Lucy, on the other hand, having lost her kinsfolk and lost touch with the Brettons, ends up nursing an invalid who serves to reinforce the protagonist's repression and resignation. According to W.A. Craik, "Miss Marchmont is Lucy's temptation to retreat from life's challenge, and indulge in her emotional cowardice."⁴⁹ Miss Marchmont's suffering because of love aggravates Lucy's fear of emotional involvement. The lonely, deprived orphan clings on to her surrogate mother for sterile security:

... I had wanted to compromise with Fate: to escape occasional great agonies by submitting to a whole life of privation and small pains. (V,p.97)

But "Fate would not be so pacified; nor would Providence sanction this shrinking sloth and cowardly indolence"; Miss Marchmont dies and Lucy is "stimulated into action" (V,p.97). Charlotte Brontë's disapproval of the protagonist's "cowardice" is reflected in the critical tone of Lucy the mature autobiographer. In addition, Lucy's character comes alive in the novel only when she starts responding to life in Vilette.⁵⁰ There, her pent up passions gradually emerge to battle with cold reason.

In Vilette, Lucy's doctrine of pure objectivity crumbles when the "powerful impulses, desires and fears that are not subject to the control of her rational mind ... threaten to drive her into madness."⁵¹ She commits herself to the role of "a mere looker-on at life" (V,p.211), but when "the prop of employment [is] withdrawn" (V,p.228) during the long school vacation, "all her long suppressed desires and fears burst forth, and she suffers a physical and mental breakdown."⁵² Nonetheless, kindled by Paul Emmanuel's love, Lucy eventually emerges from her traumatic experiences,

reconciling passion and reason instead of fighting against one or the other. Only when the protagonist succumbs to painful experience and gains a more realistic and balanced attitude towards life, do we sense the approval of Charlotte Brontë; the reader sees Lucy becoming a more substantial character when she stops fleeing from emotional involvement. In addition, the suggestion of Paul's death leaving Lucy to continue surviving independently brings to light the protagonist's triumph at the end of her spiritual journey. Lucy Snowe achieves an equilibrium between reason and passion, and ceases to evade suffering by suppressing her feelings. The conclusion of her autobiography shows her acceptance of the existence of both pain and pleasure in life. Apart from this, Paul's death also reflects Brontë's acceptance of the potential cruelty of reality.

* * *

The fruits of Charlotte Brontë's effort to move away from sheer romanticism towards realism are brought to light in the treatment of childhood in her novels. Her search for a compromise between passion and reason is reflected in the spiritual progress of children on their journey to adulthood. Brontë realizes the danger of excessiveness and believes that a blending of human principles is essential for survival in an inimical world. On this point, both nature and nurture play an important part in determining the kind of adult that the child becomes. The author stresses the significance of upbringing, experience, and balance in her presentation of childhood which she believes to be the crucial period in life when the development of individual moral integrity begins. Charlotte shows that harsh experience in the outside world is necessary for a child to attain his own sense of identity and moral truth which includes a combination of freedom and discipline, of egotism and social responsibility.

Brontë believes that solitude is not conducive to the character development of a child because loneliness would transform him into an extreme specimen of egotism. A

recurrent theme in her treatment of childhood is the destructiveness of excessive egocentricity. For instance, Jane's acute sense of injustice towards herself serves primarily to aggravate her misery; Victor reacts too passionately for his own good when concerned only with his own suffering upon losing his dog; Lucy's obsession with protecting herself against suffering only causes her more pain in later life. This is why the question of upbringing and adult guidance is especially important to Charlotte Brontë.

The author also reveals that there are different methods of approaching the young. A peculiar child should not be regarded with aversion or suspicion, but should be granted his portion of imaginative freedom and individuality. Conflict can be avoided if both parties, namely adults and children, learn to adjust and accommodate mutually. Caroline Helstone provides a commendable example in her reaction and response to a reserved Rose Yorke at Hollow's cottage:

... Caroline had tact, and she had fine instinct: she felt that Rose Yorke was a peculiar child, - one of the unique: she knew how to treat her. Approaching quietly, she knelt on the carpet at her side, and looked over her little shoulder at her book

Caroline read on with her, making no remark: presently Rose showed her the attention of asking, ere she turned a leaf, -

'Are you ready?'

Caroline only nodded.

'Do you like it?' inquired Rose, ere long.

'Long since, when I read it as a child, I was wonderfully taken with it.'

'Why?'

(S,p.398)

Thus, a conversation begins, followed by friendship. Similarly, Mrs Bretton shows no prejudice against Lucy Snowe just because the girl is unusual. She offers kindness and appreciates Lucy for herself. A wise adult recognizes the child's individuality. In contrast, Mrs Reed fails to do so with Jane Eyre.

Charlotte Brontë takes the concept of romantic individualism a step beyond the ideals of the Romantics who mournfully accept the loss of childhood innocence through experience. She perceives the necessity of experience without lamenting the loss of innocence. For her, a sound upbringing provides the child with a solid basis on which he should build his own individual definition of social and moral values. In

order to progress in life, the child must venture out and face the hostile world; his individual worth and moral truth can be attained only when his inner strength is put to the test against harsh experiences away from home. Victor Crimsworth must encounter "blows" and "kicks" before he can emerge "a wiser and a better man" (P,p.236). Likewise, Jane Eyre has to leave Lowood and venture out into the real world in order to discover her self-identity and her own moral vision. Charlotte Brontë's appreciation of experience is summed up by Rose Yorke:

Better to try all things and find all empty, than to try nothing and
leave your life a blank.' (S,p.400)

CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION

During the nineteenth century, literature involving the question of childhood showed the conflict between Puritan restraint and Romantic freedom. The novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë suggest the influence of both religion and romanticism in their authors' treatment of childhood, though Charlotte comes forth as a moralist more affected by conventional religion than Emily who is more of a romantic with a very personal religion of her own. Nevertheless, both sisters are realists. Charlotte seems resigned to cold reality and the loss of childhood innocence through experience, whereas Emily accepts the cold hard truth with notable reluctance.

Charlotte strove to seek some sort of balance between romantic ideals and moral values, between egoism and social responsibility. Her writing reflects a conscious effort to break away from her Angrian romanticism in favour of realism. Emily, on the other hand, shows a lack of struggle between romance and reality. Undoubtedly, the reader senses some tension, but the author objectively presents both the romantic and realistic attitudes in her novel, leaving the reader to judge for himself. Thus, morality is not a predominant issue in her treatment of childhood. Unlike her sister's novels, there is no presence of authorial commentary in Emily's Wuthering Heights. She keeps her distance through the technique of double narrators. Nelly is a kind-hearted woman, but lacks the sensitive understanding of character; Lockwood fails to win the reader's sympathy owing to his insipid conventionality. As a result, "the reader is placed in a vacuum of opinion, forced to make his own judgement and to fix sympathy where he thinks best."¹

In contrast, Charlotte's narrative method reveals the author's didactic inclination. Whether through her autobiographical technique in The Professor, Jane Eyre, and Villette, or through the omnipresent narrator in Shirley, Charlotte Brontë's

moral views are frequently brought forth. The conflict between right and wrong, or the difference between the virtuous and the wicked is often suggested in her writing. Unlike her sister, Charlotte's prejudice against certain types of humanity is apparent. Thus, she is comparatively the more subjective writer who uses the first-person narrative to persuade the reader "with forceful rhetoric and intense emotional statements," showing him the author's moral attitude.² Charlotte's notion of the ideal type of child and her disapproval of extreme behaviour is made clear in the treatment of childhood in her novels. Emily, on the other hand, remains ambiguous and non-judgemental. While Charlotte seems to recommend the appropriate kind of upbringing and to offer her ideas on favourable adult guidance for children, Emily allows the reader to draw his own conclusions. Emily's sole detectable recommendation is love.

Both sisters regard childhood as the crucial period in life when the development of individual worth begins, and both believe that people are largely explained by heredity and nurture. However, while Emily considers nature and nurture as the chief factors in understanding the child and the adult it grows into, thereby not passing moral judgement on her "flawed" characters, Charlotte often asserts her moral views through the judgemental tone of her narrators who represent the voice of experience.

On the question of upbringing, both sisters are aware of the danger of favouritism triggering tension and conflict amongst siblings as shown, for example, in the case of Heathcliff and Hindley in Wuthering Heights, and Matthew Yorke and "the younger scions" in Shirley. However, where adult guidance is concerned, Charlotte seems to emphasize the necessity for the child to break away from its family and undergo harsh experiences in the outside world in order to emerge a wiser adult. One of her major themes is that of an "orphan" on a spiritual journey to seek its own sense of identity and moral integrity, achieving the balance that Charlotte herself struggles for, the equilibrium between freedom and discipline, between passion and reason. Emily's treatment of childhood, on the other hand, lacks the feeling of a moral pilgrimage. There is no conscious effort to prove the necessity of experience, although

the author sadly accepts it and recognizes that the loss of innocence is part and parcel of life in the mundane world.

In varying degrees, Charlotte and Emily share the Romantics' esteem of childhood innocence and support their belief in a child's right to individual freedom and imagination. Nevertheless, both Brontës acknowledge the dangers inherent in childhood egotism, though Emily does not condemn it as her sister appears to.

On the subject of passion, Charlotte believes that it must be controlled but not suppressed. She especially opposes extreme passion in a child. In contrast, Emily sees poetic beauty in the sheer intensity of powerful emotions. She does not conceal their potential destructiveness, but neither does she try to convince the reader that they must be disciplined. Emily's most memorable children, Heathcliff and Catherine, are completely controlled by passion, and she presents them as more vivid and fascinating than characters who are governed by reason. Charlotte's disapproval of this is evident in her preface to Wuthering Heights.

The central consideration of Emily's novel is emotion, as opposed to morality. Great outbursts of naked feeling pervade her writing, whereas Charlotte's novels frequently demonstrate the need for balance and control. Charlotte clearly believes in the ideal combination of passion and reason while Emily "makes no attempt to soften her preference for extreme emotion as the deepest expression of man's identity."³ Although Emily's novel ends with the triumph of rational as opposed to passionate love,⁴ the reader "cannot be sure that Hareton and Cathy's quiet domestic love outweighs the wild, powerful passion of Heathcliff and Catherine."⁵ Therefore, although Emily accepts cold reality and admits that her fiery romantic protagonists, who idealistically refuse to relinquish their childhood egotism, cannot survive in the real world, she is slow to deny the beauty of wild, passionate love. Charlotte's description of this passion, on the other hand, includes adjectives such as "inhuman," "evil," and "infernal."⁶

While Charlotte suffered from religious depression because she felt sinful for indulging in romanticism, Emily had a more independent moral vision. Charlotte was

influenced by conventional religion,⁷ whereas her sister had a very personal religion founded upon Nature, with a strong faith in the power of love.

Nonetheless, in their treatment of childhood, both Brontës are highly critical of religious fanaticism and hypocrisy and the effects on the young. A classic example of Charlotte's attitude is her satirical depiction of Mr Brocklehurst in Jane Eyre. Similarly, in Wuthering Heights Joseph, "for whom everything natural is wicked," represents "the worst excesses of nineteenth-century puritanism which Emily Brontë knew so well."⁸ Another point of view which the two Brontës share with each other is that of forgiveness as a sign of maturity. Just as Jane Eyre's ability to eventually forgive Mrs Reed represents a landmark in her spiritual progress, Hareton Earnshaw's capacity to return good for evil comes forth as a definite virtue.

However, although both authors reveal their moral views on the question of childhood, Emily is non-didactic in comparison with Charlotte. In addition, while Charlotte fully accepts the loss of innocence through necessary experience, Emily remains ambiguous on this issue. Charlotte's conscious effort to discipline her indulgence of romantic feeling in favour of realism is reflected in her writing. Emily, on the other hand, presents both romance and reality, allowing the reader to sense the author's preference and to draw his own conclusions.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

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4. Ibid.
5. Peter Coveney, Poor Monkey - The Child in Literature (London: Rockliff, 1957), introduction, p.xiv.
6. David Grylls, p.83.
7. Ibid., p.114.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. David Grylls, p.140.
11. Ibid., p.152.
12. Peter Coveney, p.74.
13. See, for example, Margaret Blom, Charlotte Brontë (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977).
14. See Winifred Gérin, Charlotte Brontë (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), chapter 7. See also Enid C. Duthie, The Brontës and Nature (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), chapter 1, and Christine Alexander, The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë (Oxford: Basic Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1983), chapter 1. Despite being an Evangelical clergyman, Mr Brontë had a "liberal view of education"; therefore, the Brontë children were exposed to the works of Byron and Wordsworth in addition to their regular bible study.
15. Leavis and Leavis, Lectures in America (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), p.98.
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17. Ibid.
18. See Charlotte Brontë's Preface to Wuthering Heights.
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CHAPTER II: EMILY

1. See Enid L. Duthie, The Brontës and Nature (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986). The Brontë sisters were well-acquainted with the works of Byron and Wordsworth.
2. Charlotte Brontë's Preface to Wuthering Heights. The moors gave Emily an infinite sense of freedom and joy.
3. See, for example, Meg Harris Williams, A Strange Way of Killing: The Poetic Structure of Wuthering Heights (Perthshire: Clunie Press, 1987), p.183.
4. See, for example, Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972). In the Introduction, Emily Brontë is compared with Rousseau.
5. Margaret Willy, Brontë: Wuthering Heights, p.72.
6. W.A. Craik, The Brontë Novels (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969), p.8.
7. See David Grylls; see also, Peter Coveney.
8. Bruce McCullough, Representative English Novelists (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p.186.
9. For example, Heathcliff's grief at Catherine's death is described as follows: "He ... howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast"; Catherine's passionate nature is often compared to fire: her "fiery temper" and eyes that "flash" are a recurrent image in the novel.
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11. Keith Sagar, "The Originality of *Wuthering Heights*," The Art of Emily Brontë, ed. Anne Smith (New York: Barnes & Noble Bks, 1976) pp.151,152.
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14. Ibid.
15. Byronic and Wordsworthian influence. See, for example, Enid L. Duthie, The Brontës & Nature and M.H. Williams, A Strange Way of Killing. Despite Emily's romanticism, though, she was conscious of cold reality.
16. W.H., p.32.
17. See, for example, Keith Sagar, p.147.
18. Margaret Willy, p.61.
19. See Leavis & Leavis, Lectures in America (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), p.116.

20. Nonetheless, most readers tend to continue sympathizing with Catherine. Nelly the narrator is a kind-hearted woman, but she lacks the sensitive understanding of character that Brontë admires. Nelly rarely troubles herself with subtle emotional considerations. She is depicted by the author as a practical person who represents the attitude of mundane society. Also, the tension between Catherine's romanticism and Nelly's realism seems to reflect Brontë's own tension. Nevertheless, she presents both sides and leaves the reader to his personal response.
21. Keith Sagar, p.151.
22. Margaret Willy, p.6.
23. Ibid., p.7.
24. Ibid., p.5.
25. See John Hewish, Emily Brontë : A Critical & Biographical Study (New York: St Martin's Press, 1969). Emily was a pupil at Roe Head when Charlotte was teacher in 1835; she was a teacher at Law Hill in 1837; finally, she and Charlotte went to Brussels as pupils in 1842.
26. Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey, 2 July, 1835.
27. See Enid L. Duthie, p.224.
28. J.F. Goodridge, Emily Brontë : Wuthering Heights (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1964), p.22.
29. Ibid.
30. See Geoffrey Tillotson, A View of Victorian Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp.209,210.
31. Phyllis Bentley, The Brontës (London: Home & Van Thal Ltd, 1947), p.98.
32. See David Grylls, p.24, and Peter Coveney, introduction.
33. This also reminds the reader of the title of Wuthering Heights. "Wuthering" is "a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which [the Heights] is exposed in stormy weather one may guess the power of the north wind ... by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs ... and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun" (W.H., p.2). According to Mark Schorer in his Introduction to Wuthering Heights (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1950), "the application of this landscape to the characters is made explicit" in Heathcliff's announcement to little Hareton at Hindley's funeral.
34. Laura Hinkley, Charlotte & Emily (London: Hammond, Hammond & Co. Ltd, 1947), p.261.
35. Margaret Willy, p.53.
36. Ibid.
37. Charlotte Brontë to W.S. Williams, 14 August, 1848. However, unlike Emily, Charlotte was an overt moralist. Although she also believed in the influences

of nature and nurture, Charlotte took moral and social responsibility very seriously. In her Preface to *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte's disapproval of non-moral characters like Heathcliff and Catherine is reflected in her defence of Emily: "Having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done." Charlotte passes explicit moral judgement on Heathcliff.

38. Keith Sagar, p.153.
39. Phyllis Bentley, p.99.
40. Margaret Willy, p.7.
41. Robert McKibben, "The Image of the Book in *Wuthering Heights*", *A Wuthering Heights Handbook*, eds. Richard Lettis and William Morris (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1961), p.236.
42. T.E. Apter, "Romanticism and Romantic Love in *Wuthering Heights*," *The Art of Emily Brontë*, ed. Anne Smith (New York: Barnes & Noble Bks Ltd, 1976), pp.205,206.
43. T.E. Apter, p.219.
44. Keith Sagar, pp.158,159.

CHAPTER III : CHARLOTTE

1. David Grylls, p.39.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Peter Coveney, p.30. See also, Enid L. Duthie, chapter 1.
5. David Grylls, p.42.
6. Margaret Blom, *Charlotte Brontë* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p.15.
7. See Lawrence & E.M. Hanson, *The Four Brontës* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.38. Patrick Brontë was an Evangelical clergyman. See also, John Hewish, *Emily Brontë : A Critical & Biographical Study*, p.24.
8. Mark Schorer, *Introduction to Wuthering Heights* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, Inc., 1950), p.vi.
9. See Christine Alexander, *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd, 1983).
10. Margaret Blom, p.23.
11. Christine Alexander, p.244.
12. However, although Charlotte believes that corruption came from society, she still appears to pass moral judgement on the characters in her novels. While Emily's consideration of the effects of heredity and upbringing stirs the reader's sympathy towards her characters, Charlotte's awareness of the

influences of nature and nurture does not do so. For Charlotte, there is still no excuse for the individual who neglects moral and social responsibility.

13. Charlotte Brontë, Shirley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.402; hereafter cited as S.
14. Bessie is modelled after the Brontë children's nursemaid, Tabitha Ackroyd or "Tabby," the only person who provided friendship in a home devoid of parental affection. See Margaret Lane, The Brontë Story (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1953), pp.59,60; see also Laura Hinkley, Charlotte & Emily (London: Hammond, Hammond & Co. Ltd, 1947), pp.10,11.
15. Charlotte Brontë, The Professor (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1922), p.222; hereafter cited as P.
16. See Margaret Blom, chapter 3.
17. Ibid., p.65.
18. Judith Williams, Perception & Expression in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë (London: UMI Research Press, 1988), p.16.
19. Ibid., p.17.
20. See Norman Sherry, Charlotte & Emily Brontë (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1969), p.52.
21. Judith Williams, p.21.
22. Ibid., p.19.
23. Margaret Blom, p.79.
24. Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre (Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 8,9; hereafter cited as JE.
25. Helene Moglen, Charlotte Brontë : The Self Conceived (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1976), p.110.
26. W.A. Craik, The Brontë Novels (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1968), p.77.
27. See Helene Moglen, p.111; see also Judith Williams, p.24.
28. Judith Williams, p.24.
29. Ibid.
30. Robert B. Martin, The Accents of Persuasion (London: Faber & Faber Ltd, 1966), p.60.
31. Ibid., p.65.
32. See also W.A. Craik.
33. See, for example, R.B. Martin, p68; see also Tom Winnifrith and Edward Chitham, Charlotte & Emily Brontë (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1989), p.34.

34. See, for instance, Winifred Gérin, Charlotte Brontë : The Evolution of Genius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
35. Tom Winnifrith, The Brontës (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1977), p.122.
36. The Yorke family are partly based on the Taylor family with whom Charlotte Brontë was acquainted. See, for example, R.B. Martin's and Helene Moglen's chapters on Shirley.
37. Charlotte Brontë, Shirley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.147; hereafter cited as S. According to Winifred Gérin, Mrs Yorke is based on Mrs Taylor who "was cordially disliked by Charlotte and not particularly loved by her daughters, whose life she oppressed with her gloom and tyranny" (Charlotte Brontë, p.71).
38. W.A. Craik, p.150.
39. Judith Williams, p.73.
40. Rose Yorke is based on Mary Taylor whose friendship contributed to Charlotte's "feminist consciousness" (see Helene Moglen, p.155). See also, Judith Williams, p.73.
41. See Helene Moglen, p.169.
42. Mary Taylor emigrated to New Zealand to start a new life.
43. Jessy Yorke is based on Martha Taylor who died of cholera in Brussels at the young age of twenty-three (see Winifred Gérin, p.211). While pondering on the deaths of her family members and friends during her lifetime, Charlotte probably often thought about causes; even though the deaths were all brought about by illness, somehow, Charlotte might have drawn the conclusion that "excessiveness always leads to some kind of a burn-out or death, whereas moderation and balance would promote survival." For instance, her sister Maria was very saintly; Martha Taylor was extremely passionate; Aunt Branwell was a rigid Methodist; Branwell and Emily were too passionate; all of them did not live very long. Such was the possible state of Charlotte's thoughts by the time she was writing Shirley.
44. Charlotte Brontë, Villette (New York: Penguin Bks Ltd, 1979), p.65; hereafter cited as V.
45. Margaret Blom, p.137.
46. Ibid.
47. See Helene Moglen, p.198.
48. See, for example, Annette Tromly, The Cover of the Mask : The Autobiographers in Charlotte Brontë's Fiction (Victoria, Canada: English Literary Studies, 1982), p.75.
49. W.A. Craik, p.168.
50. See W.A. Craik, p.160.

51. Margaret Blom, p.142.
52. Ibid., p.143.

CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION

1. Jenny Oldfield, Jane Eyre & Wuthering Heights : A Study Guide (London: Heinemann Bks Ltd, 1976), p.92.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p.73.
4. The image of the young lovers, Cathy and Hareton, coming together over a book "serves as a symbol of reason against unbridled passion"; see Jenny Oldfield, p.81.
5. Jenny Oldfield, p.83.
6. See Charlotte's Preface to Wuthering Heights.
7. See Winifred Gérin, Charlotte Brontë, chapter 7.
8. Keith Sagar, "The Originality of *Wuthering Heights*," The Art of Emily Brontë, ed. Anne Smith (New York: Barnes & Noble Bks, 1976), p.145.

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