Affective Boundaries and Replication in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

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Abtract: Although in the popular imagination *Wuthering Heights* firmly and instantly evokes an aura of a Gothic romance, in critical literature a confusion regarding boundaries and categorization pertains to *Wuthering Heights* on a formal, as well as a narrative and thematic level. In terms of genre, *Wuthering Heights* seems to occupy an ambiguous, liminal space; having generated a considerable amount of scholarly debate on whether it is a work of romance, or literary realism. Genre is important, as in settling this question, we also decide the manner in which we read the novel: Which of its aspects to highlight and foreground, and which to assign a lesser degree of importance. Conventional literary criticism has mostly adopted an either/or approach to the question and then, often, argued for a conciliatory midpoint between the two alternatives, which are eventually discovered to be not so diametrically opposed, after all. I propose that instead of attempting to stabilize *Wuthering Heights* in order to subject it to this standard, supposedly dialectical hermeneutics, we acknowledge its movement and fluidity, and provide a coherent reading beginning from this grounding. I further argue that affect theory is a particularly useful instrument in reading *Wuthering Heights*, as it prioritizes movement and continuity rather than distinctions and categorizations, and I draw from scholars such as Sara Ahmed, Teresa Brennan, and Brian Massumi in order to demonstrate how affect theory might be brought to bear on a reading of the novel. I argue that highlighting the aspect of affect theory which gives precedence to movement can resolve the problem of "meta-interpretation", or settling the mode of reading the novel, the background to which I introduce directly below.

Keywords: nineteenth-century literature; Victorian studies; novel; genre theory; gothic; *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë

Literature Review

The problem of boundaries and distinctions greets the readers of *Wuthering Heights* from a distance, even before they have had the chance to engage with the text on a narrative level. That it is a novel is universally agreed on, but what kind of a novel is it, and what genre does it belong to? The main competitors in the debate are literary realism and romanticism, or romance; as well as a range of sub-genres that are thought to be in these respective domains, such as the gothic novel, or domestic fiction. According to this formulation, however, the postulation of one genre being operative in the novel does not necessarily exclude the others. To this end, Nancy Armstrong claims, "if [...] a drably spiritless form of realism displaces the 'pre-industrial imaginative creativity' in Brontë's fiction, it is also true that 'the real world' is eclipsed by an earlier Romantic form of the imagination" (89). In Armstrong's view, such arguments for strict categorization in which romance and realism are constructed as mutually exclusive have not managed to "pin down the genre of *Wuthering Heights*" (89). Similarly, Lyn Pykett sees *Wuthering Heights* as "straddl[ing] literary traditions and genres": "[I]t combines elements of the Romantic tale of evil-possession, and Romantic developments of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel, with the developing Victorian tradition of Domestic fiction in a realist mode" (73). In addition to a tendency in critical literature to see the novel as more closely aligned with one genre or the other, then, there is

also this mediatory approach which reads it as partaking in both. The significance of this intermediate approach as a bridge between conventional literary criticism and affect theory becomes more evident below.

This "either/both" strain of argument regarding the genre of the novel is significant in that it reflects, or perhaps replicates, a similar problem of interpretation that attends the readings of the novel on a structural and narrative level. As J. Hillis Miller argues in *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982), even though a large body of criticism on the novel exists, all promoting itself as "the right way to read the novel as a whole", it is at the same time the case that "the many essays on the novel do not exist on a common axis of judgment" (49). He then proceeds to catalogue some of the preeminent examples, including Thomas Moser's Freudian interpretation and Terry Eagleton's Marxist reading among others.[1] Miller's argument is not that these interpretations are inaccurate, but that they account for the novel only partially: "[T]he error lies in the assumption that the meaning is going to be single, unified, and logically coherent", he claims (51). This statement makes clearer the parallel between the discussions of the novel's genre, and the debate on the correct way to interpret it: In both cases, some adopt a more specific, clearly defined, and delimited viewpoint, and others argue that a given approach is "correct" to the extent that it is comprehensive, and succeeds in accounting for the novel's polysemous nature. At the same time, however, it is important to keep in mind that the critics who read the text through a psychoanalytic, feminist, or Marxist lens, just to note a few examples, probably do not do so with the intention to engage in a partisan and partial interpretation. Rather, they think that this particular method of reading the novel is the one with the potential to say the most about it, in the most comprehensive way. The point is that there is a subjective margin even in determining the parameters, so even if we agree with Miller's argument, that "the best readings will be the ones which best account for the heterogeneity of the text" (51), it does not necessarily follow that there will be consensus on the best way to account for that heterogeneity. To elaborate, Miller also includes in his list Frank Kermode's reading of *Wuthering Heights*, and says that Kermode interprets the text "as an overdetermined semiotic structure which is irreducibly ambiguous by reason of its excess of signs" (50)[2]. From Miller's standpoint, Kermode's explanation, among others, is not wrong but "insufficient" in that it holds there is a "single secret truth" in the novel that "would be something formulable as a univocal principle of explanation which would account for everything in the novel" (51). In point of fact, however, in Miller's summary of Kermode's argument there is both the evidence of a comprehensive scope, as when he speaks of a "semiotic structure", and also of the resistance to reduce that structure to a "univocal principle"—Kermode cannot be positing a single secret truth and arguing for ambiguity and excess in the signs at the same time.

Other prominent critics of the novel, such as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) offer a more brief but similar review of criticism, and argue that even though there is much "critical disputation" on the novel, specifically "about the novel's genre and style", at the same time, "strangely there is truth in all these apparently conflicting notions" (258). For Gilbert and Gubar, *Wuthering Heights* is to be understood in terms of its literariness, "because Brontë approached reality chiefly through the mediating agency of literature", and the "conflicting notions" about the text can be seen as existing on a spectrum of unliterariness and literariness. They further claim that this is a spectrum that bends on itself: "As one of her better-known poems declares, she follows 'where [her] own nature would be leading,' and that nature leads her to an oddly literal—and also, therefore, unliterary—use of extraordinarily various literary works, ideas and genres, all of which she refers back to herself, since 'it vexes [her] to choose another guide'" (258). Instead of the centrality Kermode gives to the excess and ambiguity of the sign, Gilbert and Gubar center on the literariness of the signs and offer a feminist reading whereas Kermode's interpretation tends more toward structuralism.

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[1] See Moser, Thomas. "What is the Matter with Emily Jane? Conflicting Impulses in *Wuthering Heights*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 17.1 (1962): 1-19; Eagleton, Terry. "*Wuthering Heights*." *Myths of Power*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 97-121.

[2] See Kermode, Frank. *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983.

However, neither of these interpretations is necessarily "insufficient" merely because it looks at the text through the lens of a specific school of interpretation, such as feminist or structuralist criticism.

The idea that there exists the possibility of an unmediated encounter with the text is not what Miller is defending, but his criticism of various strands of interpretation directing their own specific questions regarding the novel, and positing the answers they arrive at as the "single secret truth", certainly implies that Miller believes there is a better way. A bad-faith interpretation of Miller's reading, incidentally, might be subjected to just the same kind of criticism; for instance, he writes that the text "produces its effect on its reader through the way it is made up of repetitions of the same in the other which permanently resist rational reduction to some satisfying principle of explanation", so perhaps the secret truth of the novel might be that it is resistant to unified, rational explanations (52). Clearly that is not his point, but this is an illustration of the futile nature of trying to arrive at a definitive conclusion down his particular avenue.

The Alternative of Affect

The problem does not lie with trying to make sense of *Wuthering Heights* as a coherent system, as Miller implies, but rather, with the way we formulate what a coherent system is, and the inevitable incongruencies which arise when the text does not comply with such standards. In "An Inventory of Shimmers", critics Seigworth and Gregg argue that "because affect emerges out of muddy, unmediated relatedness and not in some dialectical reconciliation of cleanly oppositional elements or primary units, it makes easy compartmentalisms give way to thresholds and tensions, blends and blurs" (4). This description of affect theory, which highlights in particular the way in which it is different from more conventional "critical-cultural-philosophical inquiry and theory" (4), hint at how we might be formulating what a coherent system is in the wrong way: We do so by insisting on the clear-cut divisions between signs prior to acknowledging their interplay, or by giving priority to "position [under]taken" rather than the "process always underway", as Seigworth and Gregg cite Brian Massumi (4).

I argue that highlighting the aspect of affect theory which prioritizes movement in the context of *Wuthering Heights* can resolve the problem of "meta-interpretation", or settling the mode of reading the novel, as introduced above. Rather than trying to stabilize the genre, the necessary mode of interpretation or the signifying structures of the novel in order to be able to comment on it, it is possible to acknowledge the movement and fluidity of the text as its *a priori* fact on all these levels, and to give a coherent reading proceeding from this recognition.

In proposing to analyze the text primarily through the lens of affect theory, I have not completely let go of the conceptions of the linguistic turn in literary criticism, as my continued dependence on structures and signs in my approach to the text demonstrate. Arguably, in an unadulterated practice of affect theory, such concepts would not hold a position of authority or even validity, and Seigworth and Gregg argue that concepts such as "subject/object, representation and meaning, rationality, consciousness, time and space, inside/outside, human/nonhuman, identity, structure, background/foreground, and so forth [have] become decidedly less sure and more nonsequential" (4). However, I maintain that the "infinitely multiple iterations of affect and theories of affect" (4) the two critics posit instead of the existence of a "single, generalizable theory of affect" (3) also make it possible for affect theory to be combined with a more traditional semiotic approach, and to supplement, rather than negate it. Further arguing from Seigworth and Gregg's postulation, one might go so far as to say that the possibility of such a hybrid reading is inscribed in the affective approach. Accordingly, I will engage with the problem of boundaries and repetitions in *Wuthering Heights* from such a hybrid position, utilizing the ideas of affect theorists Sara Ahmed, Teresa Brennan and Brian Massumi on the movement of affect while at the same time maintaining a dialogue with the critical interpretations summarized above, which possess a more conventional theoretical approach. The affective approach has the advantage of not presupposing the existence of dichotomies or opposing categories, to resolve or reconcile which more conventional theory expends a lot of effort, and as such, it is free to explore the narrative on relatively fresh terms.

The Problem of Boundaries in the Narrative

As discussed above, boundaries present themselves as a problematic category in *Wuthering Heights* from the first moment, beginning with the question of genre. This problem is then repeatedly reproduced in the text, but to start with the most extensive, let us consider the narrative mode of the novel, which is in effect from the first page to the last: *Wuthering Heights* is a framed narrative in which the immediate story we are reading is not that of Heathcliff and Cathy's love, but the experiences of a gentleman named Lockwood, who inhabited Thrushcross Grange at the time of narration. And further embedded in Lockwood's narration is the narrative of Nelly Dean, who tells Lockwood the story of the romance between Heathcliff and Cathy, as well as the more mundane parts of their history. As such, even though romance is at the heart of the narrative, it is also the case that through the framing technique, it is doubly separated and distanced from the readers: First through Nelly's, and then Lockwood's narration. Critic Dorothy van Ghent claims that through this framing, "we see the drama through the eyes of Lockwood and Nelly Dean, who belong firmly to the world of practical reality", so that "the drama is oriented in the context of the psychological familiar" (17). According to this view, their narration is set up as a "technical bulwark" which stands between the sense of raw, unmediated experience evoked by the narrative, and the readers' reception of this experience. Even though the function of the narrators is to filter and relay this experience, the use of "bulwark" also implies that at the same time, they designate a boundary between the reader and the immediacy of Cathy and Heathcliff's story, "this nakedness from the web of familiar morality and manners" (17). The seemingly paradoxical position these two narrators, Lockwood and Nelly, occupy is that they both replicate the narrative in passing it along, and also separate it from the reader, in standing between them and the "original" events; although all narration requires at least one narrator, these two draw attention to their own presence as being particularly obtrusive. The double bind of boundaries and replication is at work in this process, and there is an awareness of the interconnection of these two concepts on a textual level, too; as when Lockwood finally decides to hear the story from Nelly, he says, "I, who had determined to hold myself independent of all social intercourse, and thanked my stars that, at length, I had lighted on a spot where it was next to impracticable [...] I desired Mrs. Dean, when she brought in supper, to sit down while I ate it, hoping sincerely she would provide a regular gossip" (42). The movement through which the desire to be kept separate from "social intercourse" transforms into a gesture of becoming part of it arrives; in this instance ostensibly because of Lockwood's "low spirits and solitude", and the reasoning might be questionable, but the fact that the movement does arrive is evident. Elsewhere, Lockwood also begins with a declared wish or intent to keep himself separate, and ends up being entangled in the story, replicating and relaying it in the process, as in the passage where he meets Catherine's ghost. In this instance, infuriated with his ill-treatment by the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights, but unable to go back to Thrushcross Grange because of the dark, the adverse weather conditions and his unfamiliarity with the surroundings, Lockwood has to make do with sleeping under Heathcliff's roof for the night. As the servant guides him to his room, Lockwood thinks that he is "too stupefied to be curious", and "fasten[s his] door" as soon as he is there (31). Inside the room, he notices Catherine's writings of the several variants of her name on the window ledge, and even though he says he wants to "dispel the obtrusive name", he ends up diving into her story through her marginalia (32). Catherine's story reenacts itself in Lockwood's portentous dream, Lockwood narrates both the story and his dream, Heathcliff learns of it and so do the readers: Again, the gesture of separation is turned on its head, resulting in a proliferation of that from which Lockwood meant to keep apart.

To understand the logic of the recurrence of this dyadic transformation in the novel wherein the two concepts are continuously transformed into one another, therefore, becomes crucial. The transformation works both ways, not only from separation to participation and replication but also in the opposite direction. Early in the novel, Lockwood's attempts to engage with the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights are constantly foiled through their indifference or hostility, and also through his own misunderstandings. A popular way of

interpreting Lockwood's position in the novel is to see him as a stand-in for the reader in which his misreading and misinterpretation of the events surrounding him represent the reader's difficulties with interpreting the text; similarly, the magnetic pull Nelly's narration has on him can be read as a parallel—or prefiguration—of the relation between the novel and the reader.[3] This interpretation is not demonstrably wrong, but it is not very useful, either: In observing meta-commentary in the way Lockwood is constructed, it does not answer the question, but merely reconstructs it at one remove. The posited parallel between Lockwood and the readers delays, rather than answer the question why Lockwood is so at a loss, and why his intentions are thwarted. In trying to understand the transformation in terms of intentionality and agency, we are trapped in this circular reasoning, and the way out of this loop lies in considering that there might be other forces than intentionality, be it of the author, the characters, or the reader, at work in the narrative.

Affective Economy and Movement in the Text

That some other force than intentionality is at work in the narrative is the idea that the narrative operates not through agents, but through its own system and structure. The difference between the two, in this case, is defined in terms of subjectivity and intentionality, or their lack thereof. An affective theorist who explores the possibility of this lack of intentionality in her work is Sara Ahmed. In her discussion of affective economies, which she develops by combining psychoanalytic and Marxist theories, Sara Ahmed says that "psychoanalysis [...] offers a theory of emotion as economy, *as involving relationships of difference and displacement without positive value.* That is, emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an effect of its circulation" (45) (emphasis original). Ahmed does not bring it up explicitly, but a Saussurean interpretation of signs undergirds this account; as according to Saussure, meaning is not inherent to the signs in themselves, but rather, it is produced by the differences among the signs. Ahmed acknowledges the role of difference, but her emphasis is more on the circulative aspect: She argues that value resides not in signs or objects but that "the movement between signs and objects converts into" it (45). She is not always very clear on the distinction between emotion and affect as some other affect theorists are and she tends to use the terms interchangeably, but judging by the general consensus that affect denotes a more presocial and pre-/non-subjective concept than emotion does, it is safe to say that Ahmed is talking about the circulation and movement of affect, not of emotion.

The importance of this distinction is that when we talk about the movement of affect instead of emotion, the subjectivity (and, to some extent, intentionality) associated with emotions fades into insignificance—it might be there, but it does not signify in this context. This is the way out of Lockwood's dilemma between the desire to separate and the desire to participate/replicate, and by extension, the mechanism in the narrative by which the framing both separates the reader from the original events, and also replicates them. It is not up to Lockwood as an individual character to determine which action he's going to undertake; it is up to the narrative structure, and that structure takes the form of what Ahmed calls an affective economy: In the act of narration objects and signs circulate in it, between Catherine's diary and Lockwood, between him and Nelly, between Lockwood and the readers, and they, in turn, become "commodities" of this circulation as well, as it is perfectly embodied in the instance where Catherine is represented to Lockwood through a book. The signs or commodities do not have any agency or intentionality of their own; it is the movement of affect that drives the narrative forward in its dual impulse of separation and repetition.

Lockwood is a latecomer to the milieu of Wuthering Heights, however, and it may be argued that the ineffectuality of his intentions and decisions are the result of his unfamiliarity with his social and physical surroundings rather than being a demonstration of the affective movement through the framed narration. He

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[3] Among the critics who endorse or analyze this view of Lockwood as a stand-in for the reader are Carl R. Woodring, "The Narrators of *Wuthering Heights*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* II (1957): 298-305; Clifford Collins, "Theme and Conventions in *Wuthering Heights*," *The Critic* I (Autumn 1947): 43-50; Michael S. Macovski, "*Wuthering Heights* and the Rhetoric of Interpretation," *ELH* 54/2 (1987): 363-383.

remains an outsider for the duration of the narrative, and this removal operates in both directions: Even with Nelly, presumably the person he has the most interaction with in either household, he does not share anything that might be thought of as personal. He is an outsider both in the sense that his social milieu is inscrutable to him, and also that he keeps himself apart from the members of the household. One of the very few facts we are made aware regarding his life before he came to Thrushcross Grange is the story of an aborted romance that is very similar in its structure to his "transformed" intentions or desires discussed above. Lockwood offers a brief summary of his experience as follows:

> While enjoying a month of fine weather at the sea-coast, I was thrown into the company of a most fascinating creature: a real goddess in my eyes, as long as she took no notice of me. I "never told my love" vocally; still, if looks have language, the merest idiot might have guessed I was over head and ears: she understood me at last, and looked a return—the sweetest of all imaginable looks. And what did I do? I confess it with shame— shrank icily into myself, like a snail; at every glance retired colder and farther; till finally the poor innocent was led to doubt her senses, and, overwhelmed with confusion at her supposed mistake, persuaded her mamma to decamp. (21)

Gilbert and Gubar read this scene as a demonstration of the power dynamics at work between men and women: "Since even the most cultivated women are powerless", they argue, "women are evidently at the mercy of all men, Lockwoods and Heathcliffs alike. [...] if literary Lockwood makes a woman into a goddess, he can unmake her at whim without suffering himself" (289). However, from the text it does not appear as if Lockwood is attempting a power play as such; his avoidant behavior comes as a surprise to him as it does to the woman, and his shame and self-reproach imply that he is not proud of his actions. Interpreted from this perspective, Lockwood's interactions with the woman at the sea resort anticipate the many instances in the text, discussed above, where he intends to do one thing and ends up doing something quite else. In this instance, too, he sets out with an intention to connect to another individual, only to end up being quite separated from her, for some self-defeating reason unknown to him. What appears to him as his subjective intention is thwarted once it is reciprocated—but perhaps the key here in understanding this scene is to notice that what initially moves Lockwood is not his subjective intention, or emotion per se: He stresses that his advances, such as they were, never occurred "vocally"; they were strictly nonlinguistic. And once they threaten to become intrapersonal—or social—through the woman's reciprocation, they disappear. These two qualities of being non- (or pre-) linguistic and non-social are also attributes of affect as well, especially in the context of its contradistinction to emotion. What moves Lockwood, and moves through him in this instance, as in the previously discussed ones, is affect rather than male privilege or a taste for power play, if we are to go by the evidence offered to us by the text. And the importance of this encounter with the movement of affect, within the confines of the narrative but outside of Lockwood's experience at the Heights, is that it shows that his unfamiliarity with his surroundings and his outsider status do not entirely account for the ineffectuality—and irrelevancy, even—of his intentions and wishes. There is always a surplus, such as the failed romance, that cannot be accounted for by anything other than the totality of the narrative structure, and that structure is constructed through the movement of affect.

Nelly Dean, the other narrator of the novel, is a useful counterpoint to Lockwood in discussing the effect of affect on the novelistic structure in terms of the framed narration, because unlike Lockwood, she is also an integral member of the household at the time of Catherine and Heathcliff's youth in addition to her function as a narrator. As such, her position is the opposite of Lockwood's in that whereas he is too little involved with the events, she is perhaps too caught up in them as an "actor" in her own right to be able to also serve as a narrator— in other words, there is for her a conflict of interest at stake where there is none for Lockwood. And indeed, that Nelly is, or might be, an unreliable narrator is a recurrent topic in analyses of the novel's form; that whatever she is telling Lockwood (and the reader), which amounts to the majority of the text, is filtered through her own subjective point of view. What, then, is exactly at stake when Nelly's reliability as a narrator is questioned? Is it the possibility that she might be fabricating events wholesale, or else intentionally omitting crucial ones from her

narrative? Or is it that she is sticking to a version of events as they actually happened, but interpreting them as she sees fit, ascribing motivations to people, providing explanations and so forth? Because if it is the first alternative, and her credibility as to reporting the events that happened (Heathcliff running away, or Isabella eloping, for instance) is questionable, then there is no reason that the same doubt should not be extended to Lockwood, and to the novel as a whole: It might be two people making things up as they go, to pass the time or for some other reason. If it is the second alternative, however, and her unreliability is argued through her wilful or unintended misinterpretations of events, again, there is not much to distinguish her from the other narrator; for as we have discussed, Lockwood is subject to enacting similar misinterpretations through a narrative force quite out of his own hands. In either case, Nelly's function as a narrator, and her potential unreliability in this role cannot be held separate from the totality of the narrative structure.

Nelly, just like Lockwood, is caught between the inextricable movements of separation and replication, and her attempts to establish boundaries are continuously thwarted, yielding the opposite of the results for which she aims. Her role in the budding romance between Catherine II and Linton Heathcliff is an example of this: when she becomes aware of their connection, through the discovery of the love letters Linton sent to her, she is adamant that they stop it. After threatening to inform her father, she burns all the letters in the fireplace and appears to convince Catherine II to stop corresponding with Linton (195). However, after some time elapses, they encounter Heathcliff during a walk in the moors; he convinces Catherine II that Linton is dying of his love for her, and Nelly ultimately ends up taking Catherine to him herself. "What use were anger and protestations against her silly credulity?" she asks, and adds: "[W]e parted that night—hostile, but the next day beheld me on the road to Wuthering Heights, by the side of my wilful young mistress's pony" (200). In some ways this subplot is a repetition of one that took place years earlier in which Heathcliff persuades Isabella to elope with him, despite Nelly's warnings that "he's a bird of bad omen: no mate for [Isabella]" (98). Even though Nelly occupies a position of more influence than Lockwood does in terms of her familiarity with the family, she cannot exert her wishes—it is because, as Ahmed says, her influence or intention, which is a "positive value", has no place in this affective circulation; only this back-and-forth movement does (45).

The division of the novel into two distinct timelines, one concerned with the older and the other with the younger generation, is another structural feature of the novel, just as the frame narrative, that is shaped by the movement of affect. Dorothy van Ghent's summary of this structure is interesting in that in addition to showing how the divided timelines work in conjunction with the framed narration, it also gives further insight into why the genre discussions are important. She writes:

> The first of [the novel's] actions is centered in what we shall call a "mythological romance"—for the astonishingly ravenous and possessive, perfectly amoral love of Catherine and Heathcliff belongs to that realm of the imagination where myths are created. The second action, centered in the protracted effects of Heathcliff's revenge, involves two sets of young lives and two small "romances": the childish romance of Cathy and Linton, which Heathcliff manages to pervert utterly; and the successful assertion of a healthy, culturally viable kind of love between Cathy and Hareton, asserted as Heathcliff's cruel energies flag and decay [...] Binding them also is the framing narrational convention or "point of view": the voices of Nelly Dean and Lockwood are always in our ears. (17-8)

Van Ghent's choice to call the first set of actions a "mythological romance", as well as her description of the love between Catherine II and Hareton as the "healthy" and "culturally viable" kind, is indicative of the basis on which discussions of the novel's genre revolve. To the extent that the values connoted by the "mythological romance" in the first plot are dominant in the overall narrative, the novel can be seen as a product of Romanticism. However, if the "healthy" and "culturally viable" love of Catherine II and Hareton is definitive of the novel's value system, it follows that the text is aligned more closely with literary realism, and at the same time, some of its subgenres such as domestic fiction. It is evident that these two sets of values, or perhaps worldviews, exist simultaneously in the text. However, the question remains–which is the dominant one? In

setting out to answer this question, one of the first things that we notice both in van Ghent's summary and in the novel itself is that Heathcliff himself is present in both halves. He is, in fact, a constant presence from the beginning to the end. Characters from the older generation are dead in the second half, most of the younger generation is not yet born during the first, but Heathcliff is there from the first page to the last. Nancy Armstrong, also noticing this crucial position occupied by Heathcliff, observes that "any attempt to classify the novel, even if this entails making it a kind unto itself, rests upon Heathcliff and how one describes his character" (90). Yet at the same time, Armstrong is resistant to the idea of aligning Heathcliff with one set of values over the other:

> Heathcliff actually problematizes the literary categories that depend upon these oppositions, namely, the distinction between romance and realism. [...] Rather than understand Heathcliff as a "both/and" device for symbolically closing the gap between cultural codes, it is more accurate to consider him as an impossible third term, an empty category by which Brontë rejected the conventional alternatives for resolving a work of domestic fiction even while she could not imagine anything beyond these alternatives. (90)

Armstrong then proceeds to analyze the "impossible third term" represented by Heathcliff in terms of Hegel's concept of the Absolute Spirit, describing Brontë's "dilemma" as an "order of relationship between text and context [that] can occur whenever history fails to provide the adequate materials for imaginative representation" (90). However, the distinction between the two timelines as well as the genres they imply might also be read in terms of affect.

At this point, a germane question is that if affect is a presocial and prelinguistic entity as we have maintained so far, then how can it be brought to shed light on a categorization that is primarily based on historical differences? Is not affect, by its definition, an ahistorical concept? In *The Transmission of Affect*, Teresa Brennan answers this question by offering a brief summary of the ways in which our perception of affective states has changed throughout history. Stating that the earliest "vocabulary" we have had for affective states has been one of "demons of doubt and guilt and despair", she traces the transformation of our perceptions and their attendant vocabulary thus:

> Insofar as we understand these demons and sins as affective states operating according to their lazy laws, rather than as maliciously independent entities, their burden on the psyche is less onerous. But that light burden cannot be perceived for what it is when the world is viewed in terms of subjects and objects, perceived in ways that sever and objectify the means for perceiving affects (the feelings) and assigns the affects themselves to a purely endogenous place. Yet, prior to the eighteenth century, affects generally were not perceived this way. When they were not styled as demons they were regarded as passing passions that gripped the soul but were not equivalent to the soul. Demons, passions, and affects were entities that visited the psyche, rather than entities that originated within it. (97)

According to Brennan, then, it is not affect itself that changes in the course of history, but people's perception of it, and their way of formulating what it is. The shift in vocabulary, from the terms of demons and sins to those of psychoanalysis, is the most readily observable change, but it represents a deeper transformation, from an understanding where affects were seen as external to the psyche to one in which they originate in it. In this passage and elsewhere, Brennan points to the eighteenth century, or the Enlightenment, as the time in which this change came about. Speaking broadly, the internalization of affect is a product of modernity whereas its previous perception is more closely aligned with premodern times. At this point, the description of the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine as a "mythological romance" takes on a new significance. For both terms of this description are connotative of a decidedly premodern genre; mythology and romance are not products of modernity. And even though Romanticism is, in a historical sense, the product of modernity and the Enlightenment, it is also important to remember in which sense it is so: As a reaction, or as a challenge to both, rather than through uncritical acceptance of their values such as reason and progress. And the fault lines along

which the two halves of *Wuthering Heights* are separated are constructed on these distinct perceptions of affective states, rather than on a merely chronological difference of the older and the later generations.

Catherine and Heathcliff are not particularly vocal about their love, seeing it as a given thing that does not require linguistic bulwarks; yet there are instances in the narrative, especially at critical junctions, where they attempt to describe the way they feel for each other. Through these passages, it is possible to observe their perceptions of their own affective states. One such musing occurs on Catherine's part when she is discussing her feelings for Heathcliff (and also for Linton) with Nelly, and she says that she loves Heathcliff, "because he's more [Catherine] than [she is]" (80). She goes on to say, "whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" and further on, she claims: "[M]y love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath [the foliage]: [A] source of little visible delight, but necessary" (80-1). The noteworthy common element of these attempts at definition is that in both instances, Catherine is describing her affective states (her soul, her love and so on) in terms of something external to her: The stuff that their souls are made of, or the "eternal rocks". This love is not something she can have any kind of control on, because it does not originate in her; in Brennan's terminology, it is something that "visits" her. Very shortly before her death, during his last visit to her, Heathcliff levels an interesting accusation at Catherine. He says, "misery and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart—*you* have broken it—and in breaking it, you have broken mine" (144) (emphasis original). In talking about the failure, or collapse of their love, Heathcliff also signals the passage from that affective realm in which things are "inflicted" or visited on persons to the one in which they act out of an internalized affect—the sealing or closure of that first realm through Catherine's betrayal also dooms their love, a love which cannot survive in that other affective realm which the betrayal ushers in.

Although Heathcliff survives in the brave new world which is defined in terms of internalized affect, he is not able to successfully bring his own affective world view to it. The attempt on his part to do so is perhaps most clearly encapsulated in the case where he plots for the marriage of Catherine II and Linton. Heathcliff intends this relationship to be a parodical replication of the love between Heathcliff and Catherine, that original romance. To Catherine II, he says: "[Linton] was in earnest: in love, really. As true as I live, he's dying for you; breaking his heart at your fickleness: not figuratively, but actually" (199). The tenor of intensity he attributes to Linton's love, as the unfolding events display, has nothing to do with Linton's insipid feelings towards Catherine II, which are for the large part manipulated by Heathcliff. But they do recall the original Catherine's feelings on the days leading up to her death; she dies of childbirth, it is true, but she also more or less dies with a broken heart over her love for Heathcliff. Heathcliff's attempt to farcically replicate that love, and to see it carried through the end is cut short by Linton's death, and then the stage is cleared to make way for that "culturally viable" relationship between Hareton and Catherine II. Just like any other character in the narrative, Heathcliff is ultimately ineffectual in the face of the movement of affect: Even though he survives Catherine into the second part of the novel in a sort of after-life, he cannot replicate the affective realm of the first half.

Affect defines the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff not just in terms of its transmission and movement, but also through its autonomy, a state in which it is at the same time embodied and disembodied as Brian Massumi describes it. Massumi says,

> Affects are *virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them. The autonomy of affect is its participation in the virtual. *Its autonomy is its openness*. Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect. [...] Something remains unactualized, inseparable from but unassimilable to any *particular*, functionally anchored perspective. (35) (emphasis original)

Even though defining the autonomy of affect through its embodiment and disembodiment at the same time sounds paradoxical at first, Massumi's explanation goes some way towards explaining how it is possible. He argues that while affect needs to be "anchored in the actually existing" things, it is able to perform only insofar as it "escapes" from them. While embodiment—whether in the subject or object, a distinction that Massumi does not pay heed to much—is the prerequisite of its existence, a degree of disembodiment is also required for its movement and transmission. It is a bit like a guard dog on a leash: The leash both ensures that the dog stays where it is supposed to stay, but it also gives it a freedom of movement in a given space.

The speech Catherine gives to Nelly, which culminates in the famous "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff" utterance, bears witness to this dual movement of affect that necessitates both embodiment and disembodiment (81) (emphasis original). Graeme Tytler claims that this utterance has been interpreted as "a manifestation of perfect love" by "many a literary scholar", and goes on to say that at the same time, other scholars "have used it as a basis for re-assessing, not to say impugning, a relationship that has all too often been considered almost sacrosanct" (167-8). As Tytler also draws attention to the fact, it is important to keep in mind the context in which this exclamation is voiced: It arrives at the end of a discussion in which Catherine is weighing the merits of getting married to Edgar Linton against being together with Heathcliff. Two currents run through her entire reasoning, one in which she is arguing for her absolute identification with Heathcliff regardless of how separated by mundane physical reality they might be, and the other in which she argues for her essential separation or difference from Edgar even in the case of their marriage and physical union. The point Massumi makes about the autonomy of affect in terms of its virtuality strikes a relevant chord here: The affect embodied in Catherine toward Heathcliff (to the extent that affect can be said to be oriented toward any particular object) is able to survive and perform without Heathcliff actually being there. It may even be the case that it does so even more freely as long as Heathcliff is not physically there: The entire speech (and its attendant reasoning) takes place in a period of time during which Heathcliff has been absent from the Heights. His virtual presence in Catherine's mind is enough for affect to feed on. And conversely, as Catherine reasons—and later, in her marriage, experiences—Linton's physical proximity to her proves the same point from the opposite direction: Affect is not necessarily a result of embodiment.

In the same speech, Catherine also makes a cryptic statement which is in fact not any less important than the famous declaration, "I *am* Heathcliff". To Nelly, in trying to justify her marriage to Edgar, she says: "This is for the sake of one who comprehends in his person my feelings to Edgar and to myself" (81). As she has been arguing that her marrying Edgar will actually be of benefit to Heathcliff up to that point, it is reasonable to assume that the person in question is Heathcliff. How exactly does Heathcliff "comprehend in his person" Catherine's feelings not just to herself, but to Edgar as well, though? Thanks to the dual meaning connoted by "comprehension", it might mean that Heathcliff will understand whatever Catherine is feeling, or it can mean that those feelings are embodied in him. But then perhaps the two meanings are not so different from each other, and for Heathcliff to understand Catherine's affective state is to embody it. And either or both cases, for Catherine, mean that she does not have to be with Heathcliff for this affect to survive: Quite contrarily, she has to be apart from him, and together with Edgar, for the sake of their love. Their love is autonomous from their physical bodies or actual union.

As these interpretations of a variety of narrative structures in *Wuthering Heights* in the light of the ideas of several prominent affect theorists show, in affect theory, the decentered but coherent system of the novel finds a corresponding analytic approach. Even though it is not possible to conflate the ideas of Ahmed, Brennan and Massumi into one monolithic theory of affect, in their divergent analyses there is an element in common, and that it is the emphasis they place on the movement of affect. In Ahmed, it manifests itself in her idea of circulation, for Brennan it is the idea of transmission whereas Massumi analyzes it in terms of embodiment and disembodiment—none of their interpretations can be reduced to one another. Yet, they are able to complement and fortify one another all the same, and at the same time, to bring a clarity to the text of *Wuthering Heights* in a comprehensive way that the structuralist and post-structuralist accounts we discussed have not been able to. As

Seigworth and Gregg argue, this is enabled through the way in which they formulate what a system might be: A structure made up of movable and moving parts, that is itself in movement, and not something in stasis. Circulation, transmission and embodiment, in an affective reading, become key concepts through which otherwise baffling or out-of-joint features of the narrative are accorded a fresh and persuasive place in its overall structure. The posited unreliability of Lockwood and Nelly's frame narratives, since their statements and actions never actually line up, is difficult to resolve in either direction. However, Ahmed's theory of circulation, in which subjectivity and intentionality is divorced from the functioning of the signs in the text, renders the issue of reliability null. Brennan's concept of transmission, in contrasting the transmitted affect with the internalized affect, both sheds light on the nature of Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship, and illuminates the relationship between the two seemingly disparate halves of the novel in which different genres appear to prevail. And finally, Massumi's theory of embodiment/disembodiment further illustrates how the seemingly incomprehensible dynamics of the passionate yet avoidant relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine actually do make sense, and that their Gothic romance remains a constant even where it appeared to fail. Considering the intimidatingly extensive body of *Wuthering Heights* scholarship, no observation regarding a particular aspect of the novel can be wholly new; however, in adopting a relatively unexhausted framework such as affect theory, a new sense might be thus made of these disparate elements, where the overall affective emphasis on movement shows the old under new lights.

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