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Adverse Childhood Experiences and Identity Achievement in the Lives of Pip and Heathcliff

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1. Introduction

Begun by Goethe in the 1790s and popularized in the nineteenth century, the bildungsroman novel follows a character's development from childhood into adulthood while exploring all components of their growth, specifically the psychological and moral elements (Gottfried 122). According to this definition, both Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* are bildungsroman novels because they feature main characters grappling with the formation of their identities (Barr 75-76). This grappling stems from the harmful influence of those shaping their adolescent lives. Both Pip and Heathcliff are orphaned at a young age and soon find themselves living in unstable households under dismissive and callous authority figures who offer inadequate care. Other adult figures around them frequently reject and ridicule them too. Additionally, they live in or visit environments, such as Pip's marshes and Heathcliff's moors, that clearly communicate desolation, sorrow, and unpredictability. Their childhoods are upended by death, societal restrictions, and economic corruption, leaving them with only fantasies of a better life. Even when they supposedly find a path to happiness, like Pip's unexpected inheritance and Heathcliff's successful revenge, their struggles deepen. While these general settings, motifs, and struggles are indeed comparable in the two novels, perhaps the most similar aspect of all is that Pip and Heathcliff's identities are directly affected by adverse childhood experiences.

2. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs for short, are experiences that negatively affect a person's development. Jennifer Hays-Grudo and Amanda Sheffield Morris explain how ACEs were originally studied in the 1980s and a major case study related to the topic was later published in 1998 (4, 46, 49). The categories of ACEs include emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, domestic violence, household substance abuse, mental illness in the household, parental separation or divorce, and having a criminal or imprisoned household member (Hays-Grudo and Morris 8). Factors that increase the likelihood of ACEs are growing up in poverty and frequently changing residences (Hays-Grudo and Morris 10, 16). Sadly, those who have experienced one ACE are more likely to experience others. These forms of childhood harm result in stress levels capable of affecting "the developing body via the immune, metabolic, and endocrine systems… [to influence] brain development and, thus, cognitive, social, and emotional development and behavior" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 46). If these stress levels remain continually active, they potentially influence one's "executive function, threat and reward response, impulse control, emotion regulation, arousal, attachment, and language" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 66). Furthermore, those who have experienced ACEs as a child are sometimes more likely to face stress while parenting their own children, states Howard Steele et. al. (33). They may find themselves encountering "more punitive, less responsive, and less stimulating parent-child interactions" (Steele, et. al. 32-33). Thus, a generational issue with ACEs is possible, as these parents unintentionally create tense, ACE-filled homes for their own children.

Since they occur during an adolescent's formative years, ACEs are closely linked to identity development. This development is considered achieved when a child's moral code and ethical standards are settled, which ideally occurs when they "integrate their parents' values into

their own" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 35). Identity achievement—this strong settling of one's moral codes and ethical standards—is interestingly something that "continues into adulthood and… can [still shift] later in life" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 35). The abovementioned conditions reveal that Pip and Heathcliff most certainly suffered from some types of ACEs during childhood, and consequently struggled as adults to establish stable goals, relationships, *and* identities (Hays-Grudo and Morris 21). As Pip and Heathcliff fully experience adult life, the reader observes Pip attaining identity achievement and Heathcliff failing to do so.

3. *Great Expectations*

In the first few chapters of *Great Expectations*, the reader learns about Pip's unfortunate childhood involving physical and verbal abuse, a lack of education, and criminally associated guilt. Pip lives with his sister, Mrs. Joe, and her husband, Joe Gargery, and suffers under his sister's "hard and heavy hand" and harsh language (7). He describes how she calls him degrading names and occasionally grasps him by his hair to knock him around. The physical power of Mrs. Joe, and the injury symbolized by her forceful hands, gives her much authority within the home (Forker 281). She also engrains into Pip that he is nothing more than a burden and extra mouth to feed as she expresses "the illnesses [he is] guilty of… the high places [he] had tumbled from… the low places [he] had tumbled into… the injuries [he] had done… and all the times she had wished [him] in [the] grave" (25). Her friends likewise discuss him in negative terms. Mr. Wopsle, the church's clerk, and Uncle Pumblechook, the town's shopkeeper, emphasize how Pip ought to be appreciative towards his sister for raising him, and proceed to link this apparent ungratefulness to his alleged immorality. In this manner, Pip's sister and her friends verbally define him as merely a nuisance and miscreant. Another factor that hinders Pip is his minimal

education. Since his sole exposure to education is found at a school for the poor, his knowledge of reading and writing is extremely basic. For example, it takes him an hour or two to compose a simple letter of forty-three words—mostly misspelled and illegible—to Joe. These circumstances, which threaten to keep him in his lower-class station, reflect the lacking resources and blatant inattention complicating Pip's life.

Pip also grows up with a sense of moral guilt after a confrontation with a runaway prisoner named Magwitch. While visiting his parents and younger brothers' gravesite one afternoon, the escaped felon orders him to find a file to remove the chain from his leg. Pip, terrified, does as asked and sets the man free. Later, Pip and Joe accompany soldiers in a chase to arrest this particular convict. Once caught, Magwitch keeps private Pip's role in the escape rather than divulging his secret. Still, the idea that he momentarily became a criminal's accomplice spurs Pip's feelings of guilt. The criminal, pursued by and evading the law, represents the ultimate symbol of disobedience and disgust so that Pip's impressionable mind connects Magwitch to everything unredeemable. As those around Pip continually discuss his immorality and corruption, his misdeed of aiding this wanted criminal seems to rationalize their words (Rawlins 674). Therefore, Magwitch's actions immediately remind Pip of his own inadequacy. Even though Pip's interactions with Magwitch were brief in comparison with the rest of his upbringing, these interactions nevertheless associate Pip with the criminal and heighten his feelings of shame. This association remains with Pip throughout his early adulthood and leaves a fixed influence upon his identity. As Elizabeth MacAndrew explains, the "brief incident from his childhood [creates] permanent feelings of association with the convict, a 'stain' of guilt" (67). Due to this, his decency and values are forever overshadowed by and intermingled with his supposed depravity (MacAndrew 90); in his own eyes, his identity is flawed. Pip does not want

to view himself from this negative perspective but his exposure to physical and verbal abuse, emotional neglect, violence, and criminalized relations, as well as the death of his parents and siblings, leave his identity floundering amid childhood traumas that are classifiable as ACEs.

Despite constant aggression from most adult influences, the one notable parental figure in Pip's life who provides some stability and relief from ACE-related stressors is Joe. He speaks kindly to Pip and often offers him encouragement and praise. For instance, after Pip writes him the aforementioned letter, Joe exclaims, "I say, Pip, old chap… what a scholar you are!" (41). This genuine compliment builds up Pip's beliefs in his own capabilities. Though not acknowledged or thought fundamental in the moment, Joe's support of Pip's accomplishments, even if small, provides him with an increased sense of dignity and self-esteem. Joe also mentions his wish that he could take all of Mrs. Joe's mistreatments of Pip upon himself. Because of the strong relationship established between these two figures, Joe is able to speak positively into Pip's life and teach him the importance of honesty, hard work, and gentleness. Much later in the novel, after years of little to no contact with one another, Joe even nurses Pip back to health and pays off his debts, thus symbolizing a true guardian's loving, nurturing, and generous hands. Therefore, Joe stands apart from this novel's typical adult archetype by challenging the world's unacceptable corruption (Rawlins 670). As his only sensible and compassionate influence, Joe ultimately molds Pip's understanding of right and wrong.

As he grows up and meets members of the upper class, Pip begins to view high society and wealth as ways to validate his own identity. The frequent opportunity to visit the spiteful, wealthy Miss Havisham leads Pip to equate the upper class with a chance for betterment. Although Miss Havisham's Gothic home (Satis House) and most household items are decaying and stagnant, Pip relates this past-engrossed place to his potential future. He views the people

and home as having "something to do with everything that [is] picturesque" (100). This assumption, and a newfound fascination with Miss Havisham's adopted daughter Estella, leaves Pip striving to become a member of this prominent class. His obsession with wealth and image, which stems from his longing for value and respect, clouds his judgment. Pip was denied this feeling of importance throughout his childhood; after spending time with Miss Havisham, he begins to believe that it is automatically granted to the upper class. Since Pip associates the upper class with all that is "good" and encounters a combination of acceptance and welcome from Miss Havisham, he assumes that reaching this high status will grant him a secure identity. Pip's desire to be positively acknowledged by others and this misunderstanding about high society create his longing for economic prosperity. This obsession also changes his own disposition and moral code. After returning from Satis House, Mrs. Joe's friends ask him to share details about the place. Pip greatly elaborates and distorts the story of Miss Havisham's home in order to impress them. While this may appear to be simply a young child exaggerating a story, it shows how Pip delights in the fact that his voice is finally considered. Sharing knowledge that only he possesses may provide him with a sense of power or control as well; he finally has a captivated audience and basks in maintaining their attention for as long as possible. When he eventually admits the truth to Joe, Joe reprimands him and insists that "[i]f you can't get to be oncommon through going straight, you'll never get to do it through going crooked" (65). While Pip may eventually have come to realize the detriments of Miss Havisham's philosophies and his newfound obsession, an unexpected inheritance from an unknown benefactor and his move to London maintain his belief that wealth is the solution to validating his identity.

While this move and inheritance present Pip with the opportunity to better himself and transition out of his lower-class station, he soon develops a conceited demeanor. While some

things, such as his improvement in dress, are expected, the drastic change in Pip's behavior is not. He begins to place himself above other people and make choices that would have been uncharacteristic of his younger self. While child Pip admired Joe, adult Pip avoids him; he fears the embarrassing outcome of being seen with this lower-class man after working hard to separate himself from his old life. Although he rarely sees Joe anymore, on the occasions that they do run into each other Pip admits how he still would "have kept [Joe] away by paying money" if possible (199). While visiting his hometown, Pip also purposefully avoids meeting with Joe and instead sends him a gift, almost as if to appear apologetic or buy Joe's forgiveness. These decisions contrast his previous understanding of right and wrong and reveal how he is now more concerned about his "improved," adult reputation than his virtuous character. Moreover, he behaves rudely towards his errand boy. Even though Pip does not have much for this young boy to do, hiring such a servant shows off his wealth. For someone who experienced firsthand the harm of emotional neglect and the effects of being looked down upon, Pip offers the servant little respect, belittling the child's self-image. Pip refers to the child as "the avenging phantom" and "the Avenger" (200, 206). These dehumanizing references, along with the fact that Pip only hires the servant to flaunt his monetary capabilities rather than out of any true need, expose his newfound egotism. Pip's acceptance of "false values" like arrogance and self-centeredness symbolize how his hands selfishly reach for more and lead him away from wherever his moral compass may point (Forker 283). Pip evidently falls prey to money's corruptive power and acts greedily in pursuit of further materialistic gain (Barr 79; Forker 281). He not only shifts his attitude and persona but dangerously roots his already unsteady identity in a fallible source.

Although Pip has presumably escaped his ACE-filled childhood and found identity in his wealth, the effects of his guilt and shame linger and are exacerbated with the return of Magwitch.

First, when Pip accompanies a colleague to Newgate, London's primary prison, his past and present metaphorically increase in proximity (MacAndrew 67). He disturbingly reflects on how this brief interaction with criminals causes him to feel contaminated. Upon leaving the place, he says, "I beat the prison dust off my feet as I sauntered to and fro, and I shook it out of my dress, and I exhaled its air from my lungs…. I was not yet free from the soiling consciousness" (241). Entering this societal realm of right and wrong brings up Pip's painful childhood memories, as well as his unwarranted shame over aiding Magwitch. Later, when Magwitch himself reappears in Pip's home, the past and present truly collide. Pip immediately wishes for Magwitch to stay away from him lest the criminal's toxicity plunge him deeper into despair. However, the revelation that it was Magwitch who supplied his inheritance, and the ability to better himself at all, causes Pip to question everything. How could the criminal that forever justified Pip's negative self-image be the same man that saved him from poverty by offering him direct passage into the upper class? The revelation of this truth reinstates his "childhood feelings of rage, helplessness, and shame" (21) at the world, something Kay Puttock believes Dickens identified with and communicated extremely well throughout his writings (19). Discovering his strong association with the disadvantaged Magwitch prompts Pip to recognize how he has mistreated others and ignored his moral conscience. He now understands that without the criminal's economic assistance, he may be no better off than his own errand boy. Pip also confronts his "sharpest and deepest pain of all" (295): abandoning Joe, the only figure who ever truly cared, acted compassionately, and exemplified a virtuous character. This intermingling of the past and present lead Pip towards "a mature acceptance [of his moral wrongdoings] and sympathy for human weakness" (Puttock 21).

As Pip begins to extend a helping hand towards those that previously disrupted his childhood, he slowly returns to his moral center. Pip hides Magwitch for quite some time and eventually aids him in fleeing the country; this is the only way to save Magwitch from the death penalty. While Pip begins with the egotistical intentions of saving his reputation and hiding the socially marring fact that his inheritance benefactor is a criminal, Pip, whether he consciously realizes it or not, faces his guilt and shame (MacAndrew 69). The escape plan ultimately fails and leaves Magwitch with two broken ribs and an injured lung (416). Pip hopes to remain as devoted to Magwitch as Magwitch was to him and does so by frequently visiting him in prison. As Magwitch nears death, Pip tenderly holds the criminal's hand and laments how he "had once meant to desert him" (419). Pip's action of stretching out his hand in comfort and kindness signals his newfound thankfulness for Magwitch's gift. Similarly, this apparent forgiveness to the one whose presence confirmed his feelings of his shame exhibits Pip's strides in accepting his childhood ACEs. While this trauma and its effects are far from being dismissed entirely, Pip's new outlook allows him to leave these past things behind and move in a more positive direction.

In another instance, Pip revisits Miss Havisham, the one who emphasized the significance of wealth, and learns of Estella's marriage to an upper-class citizen. Here, Miss Havisham apologizes for any heartbreak he feels over losing Estella. Rather than holding a grudge against her, Pip responds, "There have been sore mistakes; and my life has been a blind and thankless one; and I want forgiveness and direction far too much, to be bitter with you" (364). Pip's acceptance of Estella's marriage and quick reconciliation with Miss Havisham implies his maturation. Furthermore, when Miss Havisham sits too close to the fireplace and her dress erupts in flames, Pip immediately does all he can to help; only after the fact does he realize how

severely his own hands and arms were burned in the process. If, as Charles R. Forker suggests, "hands serve as a … unifying symbol or natural metaphor for the book's complex of human interrelationships and the values and attitudes that motivate them" (281), then the transition of Pip's hands from greedy and self-serving to comforting and sacrificial indicates the formation of an identity no longer strictly defined by ACEs: Pip has attained his identity achievement.

4. *Wuthering Heights*

In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff experiences much neglect, abuse, and death during his early years, all of which imply the presence of ACEs. The first description of Heathcliff describes his condition: "starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb in the streets of Liverpool" without a guardian in sight (37). This situation prompts Mr. Earnshaw, who is visiting the city on business, to bring Heathcliff home to the Yorkshire moors. Although he receives ample care, attention, and the occasional gift from Mr. Earnshaw, the majority of those in the household continue to view Heathcliff as a "dirty, ragged, black-haired child" (36). Mrs. Earnshaw, Hindley Earnshaw, and neighbors constantly speak of him in disgracing terms as well, such as "gypsy brat" (37), "dog," "imp of Satan" (39), and a "naughty, swearing boy" (55). These phrases indicate to the reader that those around Heathcliff have cultural assumptions about him, and these cultural assumptions suggest his racially mixed background. As he struggles through circumstances that already leave his life unstable, these cultural assumptions further marginalize his personhood and open doors for verbal abuses. His situation worsens when Hindley obtains authority over the home following the death of Mr. Earnshaw. Hindley, who always bullied and rivaled Heathcliff while growing up (Morris 162), uses this new power to his advantage. He removes Heathcliff from school and forces him to work hours of hard labor, often

punishing him with severe thrashings. Hindley's anger and rough attitude towards everybody increases after the death of his wife, and his temper and drunken states often lead to brutal clashes with those around him. Hindley's strict and cruel hand treats Heathcliff like a servant rather than a family member. These acts of violence leave Heathcliff's homelife dangerous and unpredictable.

While physical and verbal abuse, emotional neglect, the death of his key supporter, and household substance abuse are enough ACEs to disadvantage Heathcliff's childhood, the details of his earliest days in Liverpool remain undisclosed; the reader never discovers what happened to his parents or what other ACEs he had endured before joining the Earnshaws. Yet, Nelly, the story's narrator, family's servant, and children's caretaker, comments how Heathcliff "seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment" (38). This sad statement supports the idea that Heathcliff's "passive acceptance of these insults" (Morris 162) results from this appalling treatment being commonplace in his life.

In spite of all his ACEs, Heathcliff finds solace and "emotional security"—an emotional security that relieves him from the emotional neglect of ACEs—in Catherine Earnshaw (Morris 163). If Hindley serves as Heathcliff's adversary, then Catherine serves as Heathcliff's ally. Catherine, described as high spirited and mischievous, grows extremely fond of Heathcliff. After Mr. Earnshaw's passing and Hindley's rise to power, Heathcliff and Catherine begin to comfort one another and play together on the moors. This time with Catherine provides Heathcliff with momentary feelings of safety and real childhood. In this sense, as Thomas Vargish expounds, Heathcliff and Catherine lean on each other out of mutual need (9). They both seek validation confirming that they are known and loved, so, by being there for one another, they give each other meaning, only increasing the importance of their friendship. Additionally, Heathcliff

briefly turns to the servant Nelly for advice, showing that he is sufficiently comfortable with her. However, even though Nelly offers some guidance or relief by filling a motherly position, she is unable to provide Heathcliff complete deliverance from the home's terrors and abusive authority figure (Berry 50). For example, a conversation with Nelly is interrupted by Hindley's arrival home; her influence is not so effective that it reverses the damage already done or hinders more from occurring. Nonetheless, Heathcliff more closely connects with Catherine, as someone his own age, and finds security in his attachment to her. This attachment is not one-sided either; Catherine says, "Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" because "my great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning" (81, 82). Marielle Seichepine explains that this fundamental statement "shows to what extent their respective identities are now blurred" (211).

Heathcliff's identity as an individual is clearly rooted in his friendship with and love for Catherine, but this precarious reliance on her leaves him feeling abandoned and emotionally inconsolable when they grow apart. As Catherine grows up, she becomes close to the neighboring Linton family. Her interests shift as she becomes more of a proper lady and, while in the presence of the Lintons, she refers to Heathcliff as merely a servant. While this hurts and confuses Heathcliff, he remains attached to her and they are "constant companions still" (68). His continuous dependence on Catherine despite the inconsistency of their relationship proves just how much his identity rests on this connection; her friendship offers some form of balance to his unpredictable life. Catherine, however, soon marries Edgar Linton with the intentions of finding economic stability (something impossible if she were to marry Heathcliff, whom she really loves) and freeing Heathcliff from Hindley's power. Before she is able to clarify her reasoning to Heathcliff, he hears of her marriage plans and hastily runs away, devastated. Years

later, Heathcliff returns to "settle [his] score with Hindley" (97). In an interesting dichotomy of feeling, Heathcliff harbors anger against Catherine for betraying their friendship by marrying another but also admits that she drove him to work towards acquiring his wealth and education. Before true reconciliation occurs, Catherine dies in childbirth. Heathcliff's past attachment to Catherine and the present circumstances leave him "in a vortex of grief, loss and pain [where he] perceives revenge as his only way out" (Morris 163). Upon receiving the news, he cries out, "Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! … Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! … it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!" (169). Heathcliff's escalated misery over the loss of Catherine intensifies his revenge to the utmost; if his persona was once described as devilish, his furious and impulsive actions now support this statement through his unwavering pursuit of revenge.

Heathcliff's quest for authority over the remaining Earnshaws and Lintons is characterized by his destructive behavior and compromised impulse control. Considering that the prefrontal cortex, something often altered by ACEs and physical maltreatment, is "important in emotion regulation and decision-making," it is quite possible that Heathcliff suffers from legitimate changes to his "socioemotional development and cognitive functioning" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 63). These changes would help explain his rage and heartlessness towards everyone around him; while he once "rarely told a lie and tolerated abuse quietly and patiently," the crumbling of his identity following Catherine's death removes any inkling of sympathy from his personality (Morris 164). Heathcliff begins by directing his rage towards Isabella Linton and Hindley. His manipulation drives Isabella to marry him but he fills her life with misery and fear, as he often locks her in the bedroom, does not allow her any autonomy, and acts roughly towards

her in speech and action. She questions, “Is Mr Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” (136). Isabella eventually comes to realize that their marriage strategically establishes Heathcliff as next in line after her brother Edgar to inherit their home, Thrushcross Grange. In other words, their marriage launches Heathcliff’s revenge plot. Similarly, Hindley gambles away his money into the hands of Heathcliff but continues to fight for authority over his home. He exclaims how Heathcliff “knocks at the door, as if he were master [of Wuthering Heights] already!” (177). This fight for the role of master leads to several verbal and physical altercations between Hindley and Heathcliff. Heathcliff ultimately succeeds in authority over Hindley when the latter dies of alcoholism and despair over his poverty. Both scenarios exemplify how Heathcliff acts rashly in pursuit of his revenge, and his damaging hand symbolizes this determined chase for power and revenge. Heathcliff’s tale, as described by Patrick Morris, “is the sad and powerful story of the abused becoming the abuser and the consequences that has for… those around him” (165).

Heathcliff’s abuse deepens as he enacts a guardianship over the younger generation that reflects a generational cycle of ACEs and poor parent-child relationships (Steele, et. al. 36). While adoptive custody is typically thought of as something protective and beneficial, Laura C. Berry clarifies that Heathcliff utilizes it as a way to imprison other characters under his supervision (32). He specifically enacts this control over Hareton, Linton, and Cathy.

First, he molds Hareton (Hindley’s son) in the image of his own childhood. When Hindley dies and Heathcliff gains ownership of the home, Heathcliff gains authority over the servants and other household members. Upon meeting Hareton, Heathcliff immediately recognizes a similarity between the boy’s childhood and his own: he is disregarded and treated poorly by his father just as Hindley treated Heathcliff poorly. Shortly after Hindley’s funeral,

Heathcliff declares, “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!” (187). Here, Heathcliff is determined to make Hareton’s childhood an uneducated and arduous one of servanthood, as he is now completely dependent on Heathcliff for his livelihood. Heathcliff’s custody and influential hand over Hareton allows him to gain revenge on Hindley.

Second, Heathcliff has a negligent relationship with his own son Linton. These two never form a strong bond and Heathcliff typically speaks of Linton in a disapproving manner. Linton, a sickly child, is often left to care for himself. One particular statement from Linton reveals his personal perspective: “Papa talks enough of my defects, and shows enough scorn of me, to make it natural I should doubt myself – I doubt whether I am not altogether as worthless as he call me, frequently; and then I feel so cross and bitter, I hate everybody! I *am* worthless, and bad in temper, and bad in spirit, almost always” (253). Further, Linton enters a kind of flight-or-freeze mode in one instance when he believes that his father is nearby. After awaking from a nap, he cries, “I thought I heard my father… You are sure nobody spoke?” (263) He later adds, “my father threatened me… and I dread him – I dread him!” (267). Linton’s self-doubt and shame clearly comes from the gap which exists between him and his father, and his fearful reactions support that this distance is a result of his father’s callousness towards him. Heathcliff’s authoritarian custody of both Hareton and Linton show the ways in which he victimizes rather than protects the children under his care (Berry 53).

Third, Cathy’s special case of living with a loving father before falling under Heathcliff’s hateful authority juxtaposes the positive and negative effects of these two, opposing parenting styles. Cathy’s early and idyllic years are spent with her father Edgar at Thrushcross Grange; though she is often spoiled and seeks to get her own way, Cathy, more than any of the other child

characters, retains innocence (Seichepine 214). By educating her himself and spending quality time together on walks, Edgar ensures that his daughter grows up in a peaceful household where she is cared for and happy. Cathy reciprocates this love for her father, frequently speaking of how much he means to her; "I care for nothing in comparison with papa," she says (231). However, her peaceful life is changed during her mid-teen years when Heathcliff, who believed that Cathy died along with Catherine in childbirth, discovers her existence. His revenge plan then escalates once he determines that Linton and Cathy should get married to provide him with a combined ownership over the properties of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights. While this is Heathcliff's explanation, Vargish argues that "in forcing the marriage of Cathy and Linton he provides a parodic comment on what he has always seen as the grotesque mismatch of his [Catherine] with Edgar Linton… [and] makes their condition comment upon his own past" (14). Just as Heathcliff molds Hareton's childhood to reflect his own, he wants Cathy and Linton's marriage to mirror his own unfulfilled desires with Catherine. The marriage would also guarantee that Cathy comes under Heathcliff's official custody (Berry 40), allowing him to gain revenge on Edgar for taking Catherine away from him. Through manipulation and force, Heathcliff assures that the marriage takes place, and Cathy finds herself also experiencing his physical, verbal, and emotional abuses. In a fit of anger, for example, Heathcliff administers "a shower of terrific slaps on both sides of [her] head" (271) and begins to refer to her as a "witch" (288). His psychological exploitation occurs with the purpose of causing her greater pain. He attempts to remind her that her mother died during her birth by saying, "[your father's] happiest days were over when your days began. He cursed you, I dare say, for coming into the world" (274). Heathcliff additionally hinders her from returning to her father until right before his death. In time, Cathy's bitterness for the ongoing injustices erupt into an attitude of hostility and

resentment (Seichepine 214). Compared to Edgar's supportive and fatherly approach, Heathcliff's influential hand creates an inexcusable atmosphere. By causing ACEs in the lives of Hareton, Linton, and Cathy, Heathcliff shows how he fully transitions into the abuser figure and how his revenge negates all possibilities of valuable relationships with these characters.

Hinging his identity on Catherine and then on revenge leads Heathcliff to becoming unsatisfied. Edgar, Isabella, and the second generation all die or come under his custody in the years to come; as a means of continuing his revenge, Heathcliff does everything in his power to confirm that Hareton and Cathy's lives remain miserable. He continues down this path with unexpected results: in an ironic twist, Heathcliff causes Hareton and Cathy to fulfill a mutual need for one another in the same manner that he fulfilled a mutual need with Catherine during his own childhood (Vargish 9). Even though they despise one another at first, Hareton and Cathy eventually grow to enjoy each other's company. Hareton occasionally offers Cathy his help with odd tasks and Cathy recognizes Hareton's desire to read and educate himself. Through their time spent together and an act of reconciliation, the "enemies… [become] sworn allies" (315). The friendship has positive effects on both of them, as Hareton's rude demeanor is no more and Cathy's childlike sincerity returns. With Cathy "loving and desiring to esteem; and [Hareton] loving and desiring to be esteemed," their friendship is founded (316). The extent of this devotion is most prominently displayed during an argument with Heathcliff. In an attempt to defend each other, Hareton mutters, "It was me" (318), while Cathy claims, "I'm the only person to blame" (319). This defense leaves Heathcliff threatening the children with their separation. As Vargish says, "By working through the second generation… [Heathcliff] puts himself in danger of depending on them" (14), in danger of using their unhappiness as the basis of his success at revenge. Anguish and futility set in though with Heathcliff confessing, "I have lost the faculty of

enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing" (323). His revenge path has undoubtedly reached a dead-end, leaving his revenge-rooted identity nonexistent.

Heathcliff's tendency to hyper-reflect on the ACEs of his childhood and his constant striving to gain revenge "ultimately culminate… in [his] premature mortality" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 49). This early death surely correlates to Heathcliff's ACEs. While some may argue that this type of death does not typically happen as early in one's life as Heathcliff's (Hays-Grudo and Morris 49), his refusal to eat and his choice of total isolation are identified as "leading causes of premature mortality" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 103). With "revenge los[ing] its primacy as the source of value and meaning" (Vargish 14) in his life, Heathcliff sees nothing left to live for and succumbs to the hopelessness that initially defined his youth. Heathcliff is never able to achieve a stable identity beyond his ACEs: his identity achievement is unsuccessful.

5. Protective and Compensatory Experiences (PACEs)

While ACEs are childhood experience with negative effects, PACEs, or protective and compensatory experiences, are childhood experiences with positive effects. Homes tend to create either ACEs or PACEs; both types of experiences are rarely prevalent within the same household. Many categories of PACEs revolve around authentic relationships and include love from a parent or guardian, a solid friendship, involvement in a community or social group, and supportive figures besides family members (Hays-Grudo and Morris 24). A similar focus is suggested for those recovering from ACEs. It is recommended that these victims receive "safety… trustworthiness and transparency… peer support… collaboration and mutuality… [and] empowerment" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 140). This stable, social connectedness may be found by "having or being a mentor" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 103).

Amid the vast number of ACEs that Pip endured, there were a few PACEs experienced in his relationship with Joe, suggesting one of those rare cases where ACEs and PACEs coexist within a household. From encouraging Pip's educational autonomy to demonstrating empathy and values, Joe stands as the one and only parental influence that truly and continuously cherishes Pip's wellbeing. After the return of his moral compass, Pip visits Joe, exclaiming how he was always "so good and true" and asking forgiveness for past wrongdoings (438). This, of course, Joe graciously gives. Pip then begins working abroad with a business partner but still "maintains a constant correspondence with" Joe and his new wife, again displaying Joe's concern for Pip's safety and welfare (438). Meanwhile, Pip understands that their business is "not in a grand way [but has] a good name" (439), showing the permanence of his humble mindset and the steadfastness of his moral identity. Eleven years later, Pip meets Joe's son; Pip spends quality time with the boy and finds himself very happy, believing that they understand "one another to perfection" (439). This mentor-type friendship, with its ability to "deepen and expand individuals' knowledge of themselves as they seek more authentic ways to engage with others as they recover from traumatic childhood relationships" (Hays-Grudo and Morris 103), provides Pip the exposure to another PACE. When it comes to redeeming Pip's identity and fully reaching his identity achievement, the forgiveness from Joe seems to hold all the "restorative powers" (Forker 289) needed, providing the reader with a story representative of the hopes, sacrifices, and bonds "that go beyond… the most fragile of life's situations" (Nagergoj 99).

In contrast, Heathcliff has absolutely no exposure to PACEs. Mr. Earnshaw was in Heathcliff's life for a brief moment and his friendship with Catherine ended in heartache; these temporary relationships were apparently not substantial enough to combat the effect of the staggering ACEs. Furthermore, neither of these characters ever offered Heathcliff moral

direction, or a sense of right and wrong, as Joe did for Pip. When it came to his own authority over Hareton, Linton, and Cathy, he had only neglectful and authoritarian parenting styles as models and revenge as his motivator (Hays-Grudo and Morris 34). The lack of humanity shown to Heathcliff triggers his inhumane treatment of others, and his hopelessness drives him to conclude that death—the place of his and Catherine's reunion—will be his real relief (Morris 164; Vargish 14).

6. Conclusion

Both Pip and Heathcliff suffered from physical and verbal abuse, emotional neglect, and violence during their formative years. Pip's identity achievement is witnessed through his humble business, renewed and enduring friendship with Joe, and mentorship of Joe's son while Heathcliff's lacking identity achievement is best displayed through his hyper-reflection on the past. This hyper-reflection is fueled and categorized by Heathcliff's impulsive anger, dissatisfaction, need for control, and revenge plot. The reader observes Pip's clear escape from his ACE-influenced identity and Heathcliff's lifelong entrapment by this identity, leaving him unsuccessful in the area of identity achievement. Why? Why did Pip transition from egotistical to kindhearted but Heathcliff transitioned from the abused to the abuser? There is only one significant explanation and reasonable answer: Pip had a positive authority figure helping him reach his identity achievement and Heathcliff did not.

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