

**DYNAMICS OF ATTACHMENTS: PROXIMITY  
MAINTENANCE AND SEPARATION DISTRESS IN  
PELT'S REMARKABLY BRIGHT CREATURES**

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**Abstract**

The current study examines proximity maintenance and separation distress in *Pelt's* fiction (2022) focusing on the science of human and animal behavior. This study's primary goal is to highlight attachment bonds and separation of attached figure in the narrative. The tides of human connection and separation in *Pelt's* narrative ebb and flow, reflecting the ocean's restless dance in the form human feelings and emotions. The article examines the protagonist's two main emotional currents: the painful emptiness left by loved ones' absence, and the urgent desire to stay close to them. The intricacies of human connections are depicted as a delicate waltz between tides, with each tide approaching nearer and then moving farther away. Invisible threads of attachment bind the story's characters, each of whom is navigating their own seas of loss and longing. Tova, after losing her son, clings to routines as a lifeboat, and Marcellus, the mysterious giant Pacific octopus, represents a paradoxical combination of independence and connection. The article explores themes ripple through the lives of other characters, reflecting broader truths about attachment behaviors. Separation fuels the longing that shape's identity and resilience, while proximity acts as an anchor against the waves of loneliness.

**Keywords:** *Proximity Maintenance, Remarkably Bright Creature, Safe Haven, Secure Base, Separation Distress*

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## 1. Introduction

Pelt is renowned for her sensitive storytelling and subtle examination of emotions, she creates a story that is simultaneously endearing, funny, and very poignant. Pelt's narrative masterfully conveys the complexities of loss, healing, and human connection. Pelt demonstrates her ability to intertwine the lives of deeply relatable characters with poignant themes of loss and resilience, creating a story that resonates long after the final page. Walsh comments about Pelt and her novel as: A luminous debut that manages to be both heart wrenching and heartwarming. Pelt's skill at creating unforgettable characters shines, and the novel's focus of love, grief, and belonging is simply beautiful (Walsh, 2022). The tale is set in the made-up hamlet of Sowell Bay and centers on Tova, a careful widow who is dealing with the agony of losing her son thirty years ago. Marcellus, a perceptive large Pacific octopus kept at the neighborhood aquarium, is a part of her universe. Pelt examines the lingering wounds caused by isolation and the universal human yearning for connection via their improbable friendship. The text is a tribute to the little, unexpected experiences that can give our life purpose and closure, as well as a celebration of resiliency. Pelt brings immense charm and humanity to her story. It's an uplifting celebration of life's surprising connections. Pelt's story is deeply intertwined with the basic ideas of the theory is separation anxiety, the suffering that occurs when these relationships are broken, and proximity maintenance, the desire to remain near attachment figures. Haunted by the death of her son, Tova is a prime example of the human desire to stay close to loved ones even when they are not there. Her desire to impose order on a chaotic and unresolved emotional environment is symbolized by her thorough cleaning of the aquarium. In a similar vein, Marcellus's insights and deeds reveal a profound comprehension of the ties that bind people together, spanning species and going against accepted wisdom. This article explores the ways in which Pelt's story applies the ideas of attachment theory, looking at the dynamics of her characters' proximity maintenance and separation pain. It aims to provide light on the universal human urge for connection and the transformational potential of healing following loss through a deep, literary lens. Readers are reminded by Pelt's work that human ties fluctuate but continue to shape our lives, much like the tides in the ocean (Kinnavy, 2022).

Bowlby changed our understanding of human relationships with his early exposure to the emotional effects of loss and separation during childhood. An attachment figure

provides a secure base from which to explore and a safe haven to return to in times of distress (Ainsworth, 1978). Fundamentally, Bowlby's psychological framework of attachment theory can be used to interpret Pelt's narrative. Bowlby believes that people are compelled by their biology to develop close emotional ties because they give them a sense of stability and security. Key ideas that form the foundation of Bowlby's attachment theory are separation distress, proximity maintenance, safe haven and secure base. Bowlby says that "Attachment behavior is any form of behavior that results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 371). The natural human impulse to remain near an attachment figure someone who gives one a sense of stability and security is known as proximity maintenance. During infancy, when a child's dependence on a caregiver impacts their emotional and psychological development, this link is most noticeable. However, Bowlby's research shows that this dynamic endures throughout life, impacting adult relationships and grieving processes. In contrast, separation distress describes the pain that arises when these ties are jeopardized or severed. The empirical research of Ainsworth, strange situation tests demonstrated the various attachment styles as secure, anxious, and avoidant that arise from early encounters with caregivers, further supported his theories. "Attachment styles in adulthood reflect how individuals perceive themselves and others in relationships, resulting in secure, preoccupied, dismissive, or fearful attachment patterns" (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 227). Bowlby and Ainsworth's combined work shed light on how attachment affects not just personal growth but also the larger human experience of love, grief, and resiliency. The story offers a literary examination of the ties that bind us to one another by reflecting Bowlby's fundamental ideas of proximity maintenance and separation anxiety through the experiences of Tova and Cameron. Cameron disorganized attachment with his mother and others is due to his loss of family. "Disorganized attachment is a paradoxical combination of seeking proximity to the caregiver and simultaneously showing fear or avoidance" (Main & Solomon, 1986, p. 98). This discussion highlights that Bowlby's timeless truths are embodied in Pelt's characters by exploring the links between psychology and fiction.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

1. How does Pelt's Remarkably Bright Creatures illustrate the idea of proximity maintenance as a basic human need?
2. How does the story examine separation distress as a common reaction to the breakup of important attachments?

### **1.2. The Significance of the Study**

This study is important because it sheds light on how people behave when they are near and far from an attachment figure. Separated from loved ones not only disrupt a person's life, but it also affects other people's lives and has far-reaching effects. It has an impact on their social lives. This study also looks at how psychological suffering is transmitted from one individual to another. The value of intimate relationships is undeniable, even in America's ultramodern world. The core idea of attachment theory is that a person's social and emotional development is based on the quality of their relationships with connected figures throughout their life. In addition to enhancing our comprehension of the novel's characters and themes, this study unites the fields of literature and psychology by examining proximity maintenance and separation distress, highlighting how attachment dynamics shape human relationships and the bonds we form with the world around us. Fonagy illustrates that metallizing allows individuals to navigate attachment relationships by understanding their own and others feelings and intentions (Fonagy, 2001). By using attachment theory to these processes, readers can gain a deeper understanding of their own emotional landscapes, which promotes empathy and self-reflection. At a time when isolation frequently characterizes human experiences, the novel's depiction of attachment as a means of finding comfort and self-awareness strikes a deep chord. Additionally, the study adds to some larger conversation about loss and recovery.

## 2. Literature Review

By combining earlier research on attachment theory, proximity maintenance, and separation distress, a literature review not only confirms the applicability of work but also clarifies the gaps for analysis aims to fill. According to Gomez the fundamental message of his theory is that “Human beings are contact seeking and that our well-being rests largely on the condition of our relationships” (Gomez, 1997, p. 168).

Atonement explores attachment dynamics through the intricate relationships between Briony, Cecilia, and Robbie. Briony displays a disorganized attachment style, which is reflected in her need to maintain proximity through control and narrative manipulation. Her false accusation of Robbie disrupts the proximity between Cecilia and Robbie, causing profound separation distress. The novel is driven by Cecilia and Robbie's attachment to one another, which serves as a secure base for their hopes despite the physical and emotional separation brought on by war and incarceration. The enduring bond between Cecilia and Robbie highlights the devastating effects of attachment ruptures, with Briony's final attempt at atonement symbolizing her recognition of the harm caused by broken bonds (McEwan, 2001).

Where the *Crawdads* Sing explores Kya's avoidant attachment style in narrative shaped by early abandonment, which is the root of her attachment issues. After her family leaves, she experiences severe separation anxiety and turns to the marsh as a safe haven. In order to make up for human relationships that she believes would result in rejection, Kya maintains a close relationship with nature and animals. As he teaches her to read and builds her trust, Walker provides a glimpse of a solid relationship by acting as a secure base and a safe refuge. But Andrews' treachery highlights the weakness of her attachment system and encourages her avoidance. The book chronicles Kya's slow path to connection and trust, which ends (Owens, 2018).

The *Half Window* explores the deep emotional effects of loss and separation, which may be examined using the ideas of separation distress and proximity maintenance from attachment theory. The narrative follows the journey of a little child named Shahnawaz who is split from his family during a time of political upheaval, all set against the backdrop of the Kashmir conflict. Shahnawaz's relationship with his family serves as a stable foundation, therefore this separation causes him great emotional suffering. By referring to Shahnawaz's emotions as fragments of a broken memory, Ahmad illustrates the psychological damage caused by separation and the severe anguish experienced by characters (Ahmad, 2014).

Bashir explores the deep emotional toll of conflict by emphasizing the terrible consequences of loss and separation. Bashir explores the war-torn region of Kashmir, chronicles the story of Naseem, a mother who experiences separation grief in attachment theory as a result of her son's disappearance. The deep, innate need for closeness maintenance is shown in Naseem's unrelenting search for her child; she is unable to accept the death of her child and is constantly trying to reestablish contact with him, even if it is just through short-lived memories and made-up meetings. Her sorrow serves as a reminder of the psychological effects of separation, since the anguish she experiences upon losing an attachment figure permanently alters her sense of self. Bashir's use of figurative language, such as Naseem's heart being described as a cracked shell, poignantly illustrates the breakdown of both the physical and mental health (Bashir, 2018).

Through its nuanced characters, Roy examines attachment dynamics, paying special attention to proximity maintenance and separation pain. Set in post-colonial Kerala, her work explores the relationship between Ammu and her twins, Rahel and Estha, whose early separation causes them great grief for the rest of their lives. Ammu's children's anguish is mirrored in her family's and society's emotional desertion of her, signifying the emotional damage caused by intense connection even when it is absent. Roy emphasizes

the widespread impacts of emotional distance, separation, and reconnection in forming the identities and destinies of the characters by fusing attachment theory with the realistic settings of personal pain (Roy, 1997).

The *Light Between Oceans* discusses attachment theory the lives of Tom and Isabel and their bond develops like a delicate thread in the remoteness of Janus Rock, are beautifully woven with attachment theory in narrative. At first, Tom avoids emotional intimacy and withdraws, a man shut off like a locked chest due to the horrors of war. After losing her children, Isabel yearns for a family and is pulled to Tom with the fervor of a flower seeking sunlight. Her nervous attachment style is reflected in her strong need for connection. They establish a temporary haven together, and baby Lucy serves as the thread that connects them to one another and to hope. But when they learn that Lucy is not really theirs, separation anxiety sets in, endangering the brittle ties they have built. Tom and Isabel are left adrift in a sea of grief, betrayal, and guilt after losing their kid, which seems like the breaking of an anchor stone. The book examines the relationship between love and grief as well as how the breakdown of strong ties may send a person into emotional exile (Stedman, 2012).

The *Elephant Keeper* explores attachment theory in a world where human ties are weak and disjointed, Tom's relationship with the elephants especially Jenny serves as a tether in narrative. Like a sailor to a lighthouse in a storm, Tom, who is emotionally cut off from people, finds solace in the elephants. His steadfast devotion to their care serves as a safe base for his attachment, and he looks for closeness maintenance. The elephants also display attachment behaviors, reacting to Tom with confidence and moving in a deliberate and gentle manner that soothes the commotion around them. (Nicholson, 2009).

*A Farewell to Arms* explores themes of proximity maintenance, safe haven, secure base and separation distress. The romance between Henry and Catherine in story blossoms in the desolate soil of war like a delicate flower. Their closeness maintenance becomes their lifeblood, and their relationship acts as a barrier against the mayhem around them. An undercurrent of separation sorrow runs through the book, rising to the surface whenever their tenuous bond is threatened by circumstance or battle. The bittersweet interaction between love and loss, where attachment offers momentary warmth in the chilly expanse of life, is captured in Hemingway's sparse yet powerful words (Hemingway, 1929).

Through the close relationship between Jack and his mother, Ma, writer examines attachment in *Room*. Because Ma serves as both his safe haven and stable base in a

cramped and stressful setting, Jack's relationship to her is securely developed while he is in captivity. Given that Jack depends on Ma for solace, order, and purpose in their small environment, maintaining their proximity is essential to his life and emotional health. Ma suffers from separation anxiety as she protects Jack from the truth of their predicament out of concern for the psychological effects of their confinement. Ma suffers from separation anxiety as she protects Jack from the truth of their predicament out of concern for the psychological effects of their confinement. Following their escape, Jack's attachment style is put to the test as he deals with the daunting outside world, while Ma struggles to reestablish their link while dealing with her own trauma (Donoghue, 2010).

In *Forbidding Mourning* Donne reflects on the emotional turmoil and yearning that occurs when physical proximity is lost, yet the attachment remains. The speaker reassures his lover that distance will not weaken their bond, using metaphors like gold to airy thinness beat to express the idea of love's enduring strength despite separation. This represents a secure base attachment, where the lovers' emotional connection provides comfort even when physically apart. Similar to proximity maintenance in attachment theory, Donne examines how love gives a sense of security and wholeness in *The Good-Morrow*. The metaphor of two lovers as a world unto themselves suggests that their emotional closeness can lessen any anguish brought on by external separations, and the speaker's vivid imagery, like 'My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears', highlights how the lover's emotional proximity is essential to their sense of well-being. The *Canonization* on the other hand, depicts the anguish brought on by outside forces that threaten to tear the lovers apart. The idea of being canonized implies that their love defies distance and outside influences and turns into a sacred bond in the face of social condemnation (Donne, 1633).

The intricate dynamics of connection, especially the themes of proximity maintenance and separation anguish, are frequently explored in Plath's poetry. Plath examines the emotional upheaval brought on by physical and psychic separation from loved ones. *The Lady Lazarus* depicts a fight for independence and self-reliance from distressing bonds. The speaker's statement 'I have done it again' points to a continuous cycle of renewal and separation, revealing a complicated relationship with maintaining contact in which emotional detachment can lead to both relief and suffering (Plath, 1965). Plath examines attachment through the prism of loss and separation anxiety in her work. The speaker expresses intense emotional longing through her mourning for her father's colossus, which may represent an unachievable bond. As though unable to sustain the emotional closeness required for healing, the figurative language in 'I shall never get you put together entirely' suggests the agony of feeling incomplete. The anguish of emotional fragmentation upon separation is reflected in the poem's picture of disintegration (Plath,

1960). Plath examines the conflict between preserving attachment and the overwhelming yearning for distancing. As the protagonist recovers in the hospital, the speaker must deal with a metaphorical separation from her loved ones and her former life. Plath's writings depict the ease and anguish that come with preserving or breaking emotional bonds, reflecting a delicate dance with attachment and explores that love, grief, and separation upset the psychological equilibrium of maintaining proximity through rich imagery and powerful emotion (Plath, 1961).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Bowlby's attachment theory, which Ainsworth expanded upon, offers a powerful framework for comprehending human behavior, especially the strong emotional ties that keep us alive. "Contact comfort is crucial to the formation of an infant's attachment, more so than feeding or heeling other basic physiological needs." (Harlow, 1958, p. 673). People are compelled by their biology to develop attachments to other people as a survival strategy that promotes security, emotional control, and personal development. These ideas shed light on Pelt's narrative complex examination of connection, loss, and the universal yearning for intimacy.

#### 3.1. Maintaining Proximity/ Emotional Tethering

Proximity is the invisible thread that keeps us close to our loved ones even though we are apart from them like the characters of narrative express their wish to remain close to attached figure. "To remain close to a few caring people is a basic survival instinct of the human species" (Bowlby, 1988, p. 27). In Remarkably Bright Creatures, proximity maintenance shows up as a motivating factor for the feelings and behaviors of its characters, particularly Tova, Marcellus and Cameron. The nightly custodial labor at the Sowell Bay Aquarium provides Tova, a widow struggling with loneliness, with a sense of purpose and comfort. Her developing bond with Marcellus, an octopus and Cameron with exceptional insight serves as an example of the need of emotional intimacy even in nontraditional partnerships. After losing her son Erik and her husband, Tova's relationship to Marcellus serves as an emotional anchor and quietly satisfies her subconscious need for connection. A deep-rooted, instinctive desire for intimacy with an attachment figure is represented by proximity maintenance. Proximity seeking behavior are not random but are directed toward specific figures who provide care and comfort (Parkes, 1972).

### 3.2. Safe Haven

A safe haven is a person or location that offers consolation, assurance, and a feeling of security when people are stressed, afraid, or distressed. Attachment ties enable people to seek support from their attachment figure in times of danger or overwhelm. For instance, a caregiver can act as a child's safe haven by comforting them when they're angry. Close relationships, like a partner or friend, or even symbolic places or rituals that arouse emotions of security and serenity, might serve this function in maturity. Knowing that your partner is emotionally available and responsive is what makes them a safe haven for you (Johnson, 2008). The idea emphasizes how crucial it is to have a safe and accommodating presence that one can rely on in times of need. The figurative safe haven in narrative refers to the emotional support that characters go for when they are in trouble. In line with attachment theory's emphasis on security and comfort during times of separation distress, these components, together with developing relationships like those with Cameron and Ethan, highlight the novel's depiction of safe havens as sources of emotional stability and resilience. "The attachment figure acts as a sanctuary during moments of stress, providing a sense of calm and safety" (Siegel & Hartzell, 2003, p. 72).

### 3.3. Distress from Separation/Bonding Disruption

Separation distress described as a soul stretched thin, pulled by the ache of absence, symbolizing the emotional strain and deep longing that occurs when separated from someone deeply cherished. The pain of separation is not just about physical absence, but also the disruption of the emotional connection (Mahler, 1975). The story is plagued by the shadow of separation anguish. The persistent anguish of unresolved loss has characterized Tova's life; the death of her husband and the disappearance of her son decades ago have left emotional scars that influence her interactions and sense of self. The agony that attachment theory describes when bonds are broken without closure is embodied by this unrelenting grief. Bowlby says that the fear of abandonment underlies much of the anguish experienced during prolonged separation (Bowlby, 1973). Tova's rigorous routine cleaning the tank late into the night can be viewed as an unconscious attempt to manage the discomfort of separation, seeking solace in order and control. Tova's existence in novel is influenced by her ongoing separation anxiety after her spouse passed away and her son Erik vanished for no apparent reason. The fear of separation and loss can create a psychological crisis, underscoring the critical role of continuity in caregiving relationships (Winnicott, 1965). She feels a calm tempest of loss that pushes her to look for connection and purpose in the world. Cameron separation from his parents and its impact on his personality was alarming when he was without parents support at the time

of need. The most influential interactions come down to the quality of care, attunement, and protection that a parent provides to a child in times of need (Houghton, 2005).

### **3.4. The Secure Base**

Secure base allows us to venture out with confidence to take risk, explore and grow. The secure base provided by attachment figures fosters emotional regulation, promoting resilience during challenges (Carter, 1998). A foundation for healing Attachment theory also highlights the significance of a secure base, an attachment figure who provides a foundation of safety and reassurance, allowing for exploration and growth. Despite being out of the ordinary, their relationship serves as an example of how a strong base can change things. Pelt encapsulates the core of what it is to pursue intimacy, bear separation, and find comfort in the most unlikely places in the relationship between Tova and Marcellus. We all need someone who can hold space for us, someone who provides a sense of calm and safety amid the storm of life (Brown, 2012).

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1. The Storm's Anchor for Protagonist**

Attachment is the deep emotional bond that connect one person to another, enduring across time and space (Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2010). In the narrative Protagonist suffers the whole life for attachment bonds with loved ones due to lose of her son and later her husband. Her friendship with Ethan is clear example for connection. She often comes to Ethan and share her disturbing emotions with him as: "Tova arrives at Ethan's house. It is not a date. The glass bottle is cool on her bare arm as she tucks it in the crook of her elbow, the way one might very awkwardly hold an infant" (p. 268). Tova's visit to Ethan's home in narrative exemplifies proximity maintenance, a key idea in attachment theory. Despite not being Tova's love partner, Ethan serves as a dependable, balancing influence in her life, providing emotional stability as she deals with her loneliness and unresolved grief. Tova overcomes the emotional distance she frequently maintains from other people by deciding to see Ethan. Her presence at his door is a subliminal protest against the seclusion she has forced upon herself and reveals her dormant craving for human interaction. She finds a haven a brief reprieve from her emotional isolation in her need for closeness to Ethan, illustrating how attachment, even in its most subtle manifestations, keeps her alive. Ethan is her friend but in her insecure attachment behavior she seems confused at relation as: "What harm could come from taking an evening off to share a meal with a friend? With a friend? Is Ethan her friend?" (p. 268). Tova's question about whether Ethan is a true friend in novel highlights her cautious approach to relationships, which is

influenced by attachment styles she established during a lifetime of loss and independence. This instance highlights Tova's internal conflict over vulnerability, which is a defining feature of attachment theory. Here, proximity maintenance the natural urge to stay near people you can trust flinches hesitantly.

Tova, s relationship with Marcellus is shown by narrator as: “She can feel each individual sucker clinging to her. Reflexively, she tries to yank her arm away, but the octopus tightens his grip to the point where it’s almost uncomfortable. But his strange eye glints playfully, like a naughty child’s” (p. 14). When examined through the prism of attachment theory, namely proximity maintenance, this scene on demonstrates the developing relationship between Tova and Marcellus the octopus. More than just a physical bond, the octopus's hold signifies an emotional bond, implying that even when Tova initially feels the need to pull away, Marcellus continues to maintain a level of relational intimacy similar to a caregiver's unwavering assurance. His playful eye gives their encounter a warm, purposeful quality that is almost human. The clinging quality of attachment, where connection offers reassurance even in the face of discomfort, is metaphorically reflected in the octopus's suckers.

Tova, s innate desire to remain close to her son in law is very clearly depicted in narrative. Although she was unaware of her relationship with Cameron yet wants a love connection with him as writer says: “She doesn’t mention that she also rather likes spending time with the boy” (p. 211). The statement, she doesn't mention that she also rather likes spending time with the boy from Pelt's narrative captures Tova's innate need for proximity maintenance, which is a fundamental tenet of attachment theory. The drive to stay physically or emotionally near attachment figures is known as proximity maintenance, and it stems from a deep-seated need to promote safety and connection. Here, Tova unconsciously finds herself drawn to Cameron, the boy, in search of a connection that satisfies her need for intimacy and a sense of belonging but which she does not yet completely comprehend. This quotation highlights her function as Cameron's mother figure, creating a complex web of unrecognized relationship that adds poignancy and serendipity to the story

Tova’s attachment with her son Erik is showed by writer as: “A few days before Erik disappeared, Tova had made an almond cake for his eighteenth birthday. The house carried that marzipan smell for days after. She still remembers how it lingered in her kitchen like a clueless houseguest who didn’t know when to leave” (p. 24). Through the prism of attachment theory, Tova's analysis of the almond cake she made for Erik's eighteenth birthday in novel sheds light on the strong, long-lasting relationship between a

parent and kid. Described as a clueless houseguest, the lingering marzipan aroma symbolically represents Tova's desire for closeness to her kid, even when he is not around. The sensory memory evokes the pain of attachment broken by loss, acting as a stand-in for physical intimacy. The human need to remain close to loved ones as a source of security is highlighted by attachment theory.

Cameron's attachment with his mother while searching her luggage as: "There's something stuck in the bottom. He shakes it, and the thing finally dislodges and tumbles out. It's a wad of paper . . . but it's too heavy to be a wad of paper. No, it's a crusty old photo, folded around a big, chunky class ring. Bringing it inches from his face, he reads the engraving" (p. 87). This scene in Pelt's book is a crucial realization for Cameron that is intertwined with the ideas of attachment theory, namely proximity maintenance. Cameron's hunt for his mother is a symbolic attempt to find a connection, stemming from his disjointed conception of belonging and family. This emotional divide is filled when his father's class ring is found concealed in a picture. The ring represents a material connection to his father, who is no longer with him, providing an unanticipated means of intimacy. Cameron is actively looking for information regarding his mother, but the ring introduces a new, albeit remote, kind of connection by shifting his attachment emphasis toward his paternal lineage. This intensifies his quest for belonging and identity. Cameron, s search for father is portrayed by writer as: "The picture that was wrapped around the ring. Could that really be his father?" (p. 109). This moment reflects Cameron's intense need for identification and connection, which can be analyzed via the prisms of proximity maintenance and attachment theory. According to attachment theory, people have an inbuilt need to be near their caregivers or other attachment figures, especially when things are unclear. Cameron sees the picture as a possible link to a father he has never met, representing the desire to satisfy this innate urge to be close to a dependable, defining presence. By symbolically holding his father near and bridging the gap of separation with the flimsy prospect of reunion, the picture enclosed in the ring shields Cameron from the irreversibility of loss.

#### **4.2. The Reverberation of Absence in Pelt's Narrative**

A recurring subject in Pelt's Remarkably Bright Creatures is separation anguish, which highlights the characters' deep emotional ties and the suffering they experience when those ties are threatened or severed while also examining their relationships and responses to loss and absence. Grief is the price we pay for attachment, a natural reaction to the breaking of an affectionate bond (Bowlby, 1980). Writer describes Tova's grief of separation as: "Tova knew there was a bottom to those depths of despair. Once your soul

was soaked though with grief, any more simply ran off, overflowed, the way maple syrup on Saturday-morning pancakes always cascaded onto the table whenever Erik was allowed to pour it himself” (p. 26). Tova considers the overpowering nature of grief following the death of her son, Erik, in this passage from novel. By using the metaphor of maple syrup spilling out of control, the author illustrates how grief reaches a threshold at which no more suffering can make it worse. Tova's emotional battle to cope with her loss is emphasized by this use of metaphorical language, which illustrates how memories of Erik, which were previously tender and treasured, suddenly burst into uncontrolled grief. According to attachment theory, Tova's sorrow is a prime example of separation distress, which is the intense emotional upheaval that occurs when a stable attachment figure is gone. By depicting mourning as both physical and psychological, the embellished language of saturation and overflow reflects the all-encompassing intensity of her emotional suffering while also providing a glimmer of resilience as Tova realizes that there is a bottom to this depth of sadness.

Writer exposes her condition at loss of loved ones as: “The only topics that surface is off-limits: dead brother, dead husband, dead son. Sheesh. He’s still in shock she brought Erik up a moment ago, but clearly that moment has passed” (p. 76). This quotation, which has its roots in attachment theory, captures Tova's intense sense of separation sorrow in narrative. When ties essential to emotional stability are broken, separation pain develops, resulting in emotions of loss and confusion. In the past, these connections provided her with stable bonds and a sense of security. Her sadness is portrayed as an uncharted sea vast, intimidating, and better left unexplored by the dramatization of her emotional agony. She maintains her delicate equilibrium by concealing the memories, but the underlying current of unresolved grief persists and draws her back into the waves.

Marcellus is close friend of Tova and knows her conditions of loss and grief very clearly as he says: “You know, as do I, that the woman has no surviving heir. You know her only child died thirty years ago. You know, too, of her grief. Grief that has molded her life. Grief that, for the time being, drives her into seclusion. Eventually, I fear, it may drive her to something worse” (p. 196). Marcellus examines Tova's ongoing sorrow over the death of her son Pelt's Remarkably Bright Creatures, bringing attachment theory to life via the prism of separation pain. According to attachment theory, people form strong emotional ties with one another and experience psychological distress when these ties are broken. As Marcellus explains, Tova's grieving is a prime example of the aftereffects of unresolved separation anxiety, in which the death of her kid upends her identity and feeling of security. Her seclusion is portrayed as a haven and a trap, a place where unresolved anguish festers. This portrayal highlights the universal human experience of loss and

shows how an individual's emotional landscape can be shaped by unresolved relationship ruptures. Because Marcellus not only sees Tova's suffering but also describes its intensity and the possible repercussions of unresolved sadness, his point of view lends the story an almost sympathetic omniscience.

Like a friend Marcellus's sympathy is with Tova and he describes her condition as: "He glances down at her, struck by how tough this tiny little lady is, how much grief her ninety-pound frame has endured. And now she's absorbing some of his, too" (p. 286). Marcellus's assessment of Tova in narrative highlights her character's deep emotional depth and tenacity. This instance serves as an example of how attachment figures can serve as safe havens despite extreme discomfort, according to attachment theory. An unexpected comforter, Marcellus, sees the fortitude in Tova's petite form, which has been tempered by years of loss and sadness. Her fragility is highlighted by the term tiny little lady, her size contrasts with the emotional loads she bears, suggesting the fortitude required to bear such suffering. Tova's grief is representative of the separation anguish that attachment theory aims to alleviate. It also implies that, in spite of her own history of separation, Tova might be giving Cameron an implicit sense of security by taking on his grief. Even in times of personal adversity, the metaphorical language used here to describe her as absorbing sadness highlights how intricately entwined their emotional lives have become.

Tova's, emotional turmoil at loss of her son as she says to ocean about him maintains: "I wish you could tell me, she says to the bay. She will always wish this. But even knowing what happened that night can't bring him back. Nothing can" (p. 298). Tova's request to the bay in this moving passage from narrative represents her underlying want for explanation and closure, which is based on separation grief, a fundamental idea in attachment theory. In its quiet, the water symbolizes an inaccessible link to Erik, her child who has vanished. The attachment relationships that are created in early life, where the loss of a loved one, particularly a child, causes severe emotional and psychological suffering, are echoed in Tova's comments. She wishes for the impossible restoration of the lost attachment in addition to an explanation of what transpired that evening. More figuratively, the bay turns into a symbolic secure base, where Tova might have sought comfort or wisdom in the past but now just hears the echoes of her loss. Even when it's obvious that no answer will be forthcoming, the visual of wishing as if sending her thoughts to the bay suggests an attachment behavior. This highlights the emotional challenge of balancing the desire of the mind with the knowledge that a wound cannot be healed. The poignant gap between her current reality and her unfulfilled emotional desire is accentuated by the quiet of the bay.

Tova's agony of separation from her family and restlessness is shown by writer as: "Tova had spent hours alone at the kitchen table, late at night, trying her best to sort it out. Who would repay her the favor when her time came? would the onslaught of paperwork simply shuffle off into an heirless void" (p. 136). Tova's silent reflection at the kitchen table in this scene from *Remarkably Bright Creatures* captures the eerie realism of her loneliness, which is further emphasized by attachment theory. According to attachment theory, having a stable attachment to other people provides solace and continuity. But without a safe base to anchor her to, Tova finds herself on the brink of a last, unavoidable separation. The agony of separation is heightened by the anxiety of 'the onslaught of paperwork' as a hollow echo of her existence, culminating into an heirless void, which implies her emotional detachment from the entire notion of receiving care during her time of need. A deep-seated desire for reciprocity and connection, which is at the core of attachment needs, is reflected in the fear that no one will repay her the favor when her time comes. Tova is mourning the loss of a legacy someone who would have made room for her in the same manner that she may have wished to care for others rather than just the practicalities of dying. The void she expects to experience is more akin to a chasm, an emotional abyss where attachment formerly existed, than it is to an empty space. Her concern reflects the core of separation distress, which is the innate fear of dying without the solace of belonging to others. Her mourning at grief of losing her legacy is portrayed by narrator as: "Will they find her on the kitchen floor? Summon an ambulance to take her to the hospital? Who will fill out the admit forms, clipped to their clipboard? And that will merely be the beginning" (p. 137). The quote in Pelt's novel captures Tova's anxiety and anguish over her future while also revealing a profound sense of vulnerability. This instance demonstrates Tova's separation distress, or the emotional upheaval that occurs when she considers being by herself or without assistance, as seen through the prism of attachment theory. Figurative language, like finding her on the kitchen floor, evokes a sense of powerlessness and implies Tova's anxiety about losing her independence or sense of safety. This invokes the metaphorical idea of emotional abandonment, in which she fears not just physical isolation but also an emotional separation from the people she cares about, and her future appears uncertain. Tova's existential anxiety of being reduced to a forgotten, faceless person who is alienated even at times of difficulty is further reflected in this, which highlights the coldness of an institutional reaction to her personal issue. Her mental and bodily suffering are depicted by author as: "Tova doesn't like to think about the incident. That wasn't Will's norm. But then, nothing is normal when you lose a child" (p. 149). This passage from novel captures Tova's intense emotional suffering after losing her child, illuminating the intricate and agonizing mechanics of attachment theory.

Child's relationship with their primary caregiver has a significant impact on their mental health, and separation distress develops when that tie is broken, whether as a result of trauma, loss, or separation. Tova's unwillingness to consider the event perfectly captures the emotional avoidance that frequently accompanies unresolved loss. The statement 'nothing is normal when you lose a child', captures the deep sense of upheaval in her life, where the security and stability she had previously experienced have been destroyed.

Cameron's distress at lose of his mother at his childhood is very disturbing for him as his condition of family lose is depicted by narrator in these lines: "He can barely remember his mother's face. He was nine years old when Aunt Jeanne picked him up from his mother's apartment after she'd told him to pack his bag to stay with his aunt for the weekend. In itself, this wasn't unusual. He often stayed overnight there. But this time, his mother never came to retrieve him. He remembers her giving him a hug goodbye, tears running inky trails of makeup down her face. He recalls, with clarity, that her arms felt bony" (p. 39). The protagonist's memory of his mother's farewell in this excerpt from narrative is rife with emotional ambiguity and the lingering effects of early attachment disruption. Attachment theory, which examines the relationships between children and their caregivers, emphasizes the critical need for secure attachment to feel safe and understood. The mother's farewell, characterized by bony arms and smudged makeup, conveys a sense of fragility, both physically and emotionally, indicating a lack of stability and comfort, leaving the child with an ambiguous memory of his mother a mix of tenderness and distance. In particular, the 'tears running inky trails of makeup' are important. While the smudge of the makeup represents the mother's loss of composure, which is a sign of instability, tears are a clear expression of emotional pain. This depicts a mother who is unable to provide her kid the safe, reliable comfort they require due to emotional instability, which may be related to her own unresolved difficulties. In addition, the youngster's recollection of the mother's bony arms arouses feelings of physical separation, which is a subtly potent metaphor for the emotional separation he probably experienced even as a small child. This chapter exemplifies the onset of separation distress, which is the psychological and emotional pain that results from a child's desire for stability and connection being interrupted by the mother's incapacity or refusal to offer it.

## 5. Conclusion/Findings

By combining Bowlby and Pelt this article created a sense of emotional wellbeing of people living in south west America particularly and generally in West. The personal experience of both the writer and theorist offers significant connections with their works and contribute in literary psychology. In Pelt's narrative proximity maintenance is

portrayed through the subtle but powerful bonds between characters. Like two stars orbiting each other in a quiet, solitary galaxy, their connection is unspoken yet constant, a tether in the vast emptiness of their respective lives. Tova's need for Marcellus, and his silent, ever watching presence act as emotional lifelines in an untethered world. Separation distress is woven into the fabric's journey, surfacing whenever she faces the threat of losing the bonds that keep her grounded. It is as if the very air around her thickens, a weight pressing down the space between her and those she loves begins to stretch too far. Each moment of distance becomes a painful ripple, echoing deep, raw ache of being disconnected from the heartbeats that once defined her. This article develops a prominent critique on postmodern prevalent trends of western society which is depriving their near and dear ones from them in the name of modernity and development and sometimes war.

Pelt's narrative illustrates the idea of proximity maintenance through the complex relationships among its characters. The characters' efforts to maintain emotional and physical closeness to their secure bases offers a distinction of their emotional attachment and wellbeing. Tova's relationship with the aquarium and her bond with Marcellus illustrates her need for routine and connection following the deaths of her husband and son, while Cameron's quest for his father and his developing bond with Tova underscore his desire for family and belonging. This encapsulates the growing broken family system and the urge of human beings to reconnect and bond with attached figures. The Institute of Family Studies (2019) provides figures of 35 % of children who are deprived of their parents when they are highly need of them. These connections highlight the need for closeness to others who offer solace, empathy, and a feeling of belonging. Pelt highlights the significant role that emotional and physical intimacy play in healing, self-discovery, and creating lasting relationships by incorporating these links throughout the story.

However, Pelt's Remarkably Bright Creatures examines the issue of separation pain by depicting loss and the desire for connection. When important ties are broken, the characters' struggle with separation pain, a concept that has its roots in attachment theory. Following the deaths of her husband and son Erik, Tova struggles with grief and a persistent sense of unfulfilled. She tries to fill the emotional gap left by their absence by maintaining a strict cleaning schedule at the aquarium. In a similar vein, Cameron's journey is largely driven by his sentiments of his mother's departure, demonstrating how the anguish of separation molds his personality and decisions. Even the observant octopus is aware of his approaching demise and is upset about it, highlighting his relationship to Tova and the environment. The common human feelings of sorrow and yearning for lost relationships is highlighted by these cases of separation pain. In the end, Pelt shows how

facing and dealing with this pain can result in making connections with animals and absurd items present around the particular character and a renewed his sense of purpose in life. This is what a dangerous aspect of human life which we must address within the spectra of time.

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