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# **A Psychoanalytical Reading of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights***

An Analysis of the Defense  
Mechanisms of Some Characters

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## Introduction

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is one of the most famous books in English literature. Many literary critics have been fascinated by it. Linda H. Peterson argues that what made Emily Brontë win lasting fame is that *Wuthering Heights* is not only one of the most widely read books in English, it is a book characterized by its originality and power (3). Furthermore, the novel has always presented material for different critical approaches. As Alstair Everitt states: "*Wuthering Heights* has collected the most valid and contradictory criticism" (vii).

One of the most interesting approaches in this respect is the psychoanalytical approach. Peterson mentions that the Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud states: "If by understanding human psychology, . . . we can appreciate literature on a new level, then we should acquaint ourselves with his insight" (304). *Wuthering Heights* has always inspired critics to examine the novel from a psychoanalytical perspective. Margaret Willy argues that Emily Brontë reveals in her text some psychological insights which are "strikingly modern" (64). Many psychoanalytic critics have applied Freudian concepts to this novel, and numerous books and articles have been written from this perspective. Some psychoanalytic critics have employed the Freudian "dream work" to expose the hidden content of *Wuthering Heights*. As Melissa Fegan states, critics have been fascinated by how much the characters' dreams in *Wuthering Heights* reveal their personalities (6). Other critics have applied Jacques Lacan's theory concerning the mirror stage and the pre-Oedipal experience in this respect (Peterson 305-6).

In other words, Psychoanalytic critics have studied the characters of *Wuthering Heights* using various concepts and terms from Sigmund Freud's and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theories. The characters of the novel have inspired critics because of their ambiguity. Willy argues: "*Wuthering Heights* revolted many readers by the power with which wicked and

exceptional characters are depicted” (1). However, despite various psychoanalytical concepts being applied to the novel, no one has yet- to the best of my knowledge- approached the text explicitly from the perspective of defense mechanisms. Applying the concept of defense mechanisms to the characters will offer different interpretations and analyses regarding their motives. This will reveal their hidden feelings, something which will make the reader view them from a new angle.

Before applying defense mechanisms to some of the characters of *Wuthering Heights*, it is necessary to give a short introduction to some psychoanalytical terms. Sigmund Freud developed the idea that the human mind is dual in nature: being divided into the conscious and the unconscious. He states that the three part model of the psyche consists of the superego, the id, and the ego. The superego seems to stand outside the self. It is in the shape of a father, or an ideal model, or religious institution, making moral judgements and orders (Peterson 304-5). The id stands for the unconscious, which is in conflict with the superego; it seeks desire and follows instincts. The ego balances the superego and the id. It stands for the conscious self, seeks a balance between these two parts of the psyche, and it defends itself against the unconscious mind where the repressed thoughts and desires lie. In the defense of the ego, there are certain processes in the conscious human mind. These processes are the defense mechanisms which include repression, sublimation, denial, reaction formation, isolation, projection, regression, intellectualization (Michael Ryan 94-5). This essay will focus on denial, repression, sublimation and projection, and how they can be applied to the characters of *Wuthering Heights*.

When analysing some of the characters of the novel according to the Freudian concepts of defense mechanisms it is necessary to unveil the hidden thoughts and inner struggles which have affected both events and other characters in the novel. Critics, for example, have written a lot

about Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw, the protagonists of the novel, and they have disagreed on the issue of whether Heathcliff is a tyrant or a victim, whether to condemn him or to sympathise with him, and whether the reason behind Catherine's suffering after her marriage is Heathcliff or her longing for the house of Wuthering Heights. However, what is more important is to analyse first all the hidden motives in the character's conscious/unconscious minds in relation to the defense mechanisms. This will allow a more detailed portrayal of the characters, which will make it easier to offer a judgement concerning their motivations. What is needed is to look beyond what the characters say and do; that is to say, to look at the outcome of the struggle between the character's conscious and unconscious mind. This outcome is represented by the processes in the conscious mind which result in the defense mechanisms. Thereby, one can look at the characters in a different way, far from what he/she appears to be to the reader. This approach will exhibit the hidden intentions and motives of the characters which are kept in their unconscious mind unrevealed even to themselves.

This essay presents a portrayal of Heathcliff, Catherine and Isabella from a psychoanalytical perspective with regard to four defense mechanisms; namely, repression, denial, sublimation and projection in order to see how these defense mechanisms have affected the characters' decisions and behaviour, and led them to their destinations in life. It will include three major sections: repression in characters, denial in characters, and sublimation and projection in characters. These terms will be more clearly defined and explained in the subsequent sections.

*Wuthering Heights* has generated many various interpretations concerning its characters. Its most important character is Heathcliff, the protagonist of the novel. Some critics, such as Melvin R. Watson, consider *Wuthering Heights* to be a psychological study of Heathcliff, who is

claimed to be divided between love and revenge (89). Peterson states that another critic, Thomas Moser “sees sexual symbols throughout the novel and argues that ‘the primary traits which Freud ascribed to the id apply perfectly to Heathcliff: the source of psyche energy; the set of the instincts ‘particularly sex and death’ ” (Peterson 342). Therefore, concerning *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff has been the central focus of many psychoanalytic analyses. Most critics, like Charlotte Brontë, consider him a devil, a Ghoul, and an Afreet [an Arabic word which means demon] (Walter L. Reed 72). Other critics, such as Hayley R. Mitchel regard Heathcliff’s character as complex and the central problem of *Wuthering Heights*, claiming that analysing his character determines what the novel is about (27). However, regardless of whether Heathcliff is a devil or a human being, interpreting his character in relation to the defense mechanisms will make it clear why he has behaved in a certain manner concerning some events of central importance in the novel.

Heathcliff’s suffering throughout the novel has created a conflict between his conscious and unconscious mind. This suffering results in the adoption of defense mechanisms; these are repression, denial, sublimation and projection. Heathcliff has been influenced by these four types of defense mechanisms which have made him behave and act in a certain way. Moreover, these defense mechanisms have even affected other characters, such as his son Linton.

Another controversial character is Catherine Earnshaw, the heroine with whom Heathcliff is in love. Some critics consider that Catherine’s role is more important than Heathcliff’s in the novel. In this respect, Melissa Fegan and Steve Davies assert that Catherine is the central and primary figure in the novel (83). In fact, this character is as ambiguous as Heathcliff. The contrasts between what she says and how she behaves are clear and have generated different critical opinions. On the one hand Catherine says: “I am Heathcliff” (Emily Brontë 92 ), but, on

the other hand, she decides to marry Edgar Linton, the rich sophisticated gentleman who loves her. In this respect, Georges Bataille argues concerning Catherine: “Her marriage with Edgar Linton does, admittedly, retain an element of ambiguity” (19). When Catherine tells Nelly Dean, her maid: “it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff” (Brontë 91), and that she will marry Edgar Linton, it has been interpreted as the radical and crucial event which determines the events that follow throughout the novel. Here, Catherine’s decision is due to a certain conflict within herself, the thing which results in some of the defense mechanisms which make her, in the end, decide her approach to life. This event and other events that follow will be interpreted in relation to concepts of repression, denial, sublimation and projection. This will exhibit a side of Catherine’s character, unseen even to herself.

Isabella Linton, who subsequently becomes Isabella Heathcliff by marrying Heathcliff, is another important character in *Wuthering Heights*. She is Edgar’s sister and Catherine’s sister-in-law. Watson describes her as follows: “Isabella [is], as weak as Catherine is strong, as conventional as Catherine is unconventional, as superficially attracted to Heathcliff as Catherine was to Edgar” (93). As a matter of fact, critics have not given this character as much attention and analysis as they have given to Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw. Isabella is only considered as a tool used by Heathcliff to revenge her brother Edgar Linton because he has married Catherine, Heathcliff’s beloved. However, although Isabella might seem a clear character to the reader, there are certain feelings within herself which are the result of certain defense mechanisms, such as repression and denial, which have made her choose her approach and take the decisions that have determined her life.

Analysing these characters in relation to repression, denial, sublimation and projection will unveil the real motives behind their fatal decisions which have determined their destinies in

life. This essay will present a detailed interpretation in this respect, and furthermore, will discuss how their decisions and behaviour have affected other characters and events in the novel.

### **Denial in Characters**

Denial is one of the defense mechanisms outlined by Freud. “It is the simple refusal to face certain facts” (Baumeister, Dale, and Sommer 1108). For example, when a person tries to call his/her failure “bad luck” or “task difficulty”, he/she does not want to admit that he/she lacks ability or other personal traits (1108). Phebe Cramer defines denial as ignoring reality through the psychological or physical withdrawal from painful events (44). Cramer states: “denial is the failure to see what exists in reality. To not see or not hear what is ‘really’ there, . . . this not seeing can occur through the total withdrawal of attention from the event, or through a ‘negative’ hallucination” (44). Denial as a conceptual tool is often used and applied in psychoanalytical criticism.

In *Wuthering Heights* some characters show denial. One of these characters is Catherine Earnshaw, one of the protagonists of the novel. During her childhood and youth she has been fond of Heathcliff, whom her father, Mr Earnshaw has brought home in order to bring him up with his children Catherine and Hindley. Nelly Dean describes Catherine’s love for Heathcliff as follows: “She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him” (Brontë 53). When Edgar Linton, the rich young gentleman of Thrushcross Grange has proposed to Catherine, she has accepted him despite her avowed emotions of love towards Heathcliff. After Edgar’s proposal, Catherine tells Nelly that she has accepted the proposal and that she is unsure whether she has made the right or the wrong decision. For a girl of her age, Catherine should have found the utmost happiness after Edgar’s

proposal to her, but what makes her bewildered is her emotions towards Heathcliff. On the one hand, she claims she loves Heathcliff saying: “My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath” (91). On the other hand, she is ambitious; in her conversation with Nelly she says: “I shall like to be the greatest woman in the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband [Edgar Linton] ” (88). Robert Kiely states: “Catherine,. . . .betrays her own feelings, marries out of desire for social respectability and suffers wretchedly because of it” (33). Therefore, Catherine, here, is in a conflict between choosing Heathcliff and Edgar. She tells Nelly that her problem lies in her heart and mind, and that she would rather follow her mind by choosing Edgar although she feels she is making a mistake (Brontë 91). This conflict has led Catherine into denial by imagining that in marrying Edgar she is doing the right thing and that through this marriage she can raise Heathcliff, for Heathcliff at this time is poor and humiliated by her brother Hindley. She tells Nelly: “If I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother’s power” (92). Here, Catherine tries to convince herself that she is making the right decision in her life, whereas she should have known Heathcliff very well; that is to say, she must have known that in marrying Edgar she will destroy Heathcliff, for in the same conversation with Nelly, Catherine tells her: “I am Heathcliff” (92). In other words, she tries not to see the consequences of her marriage with Edgar regarding Heathcliff and herself. She has just created a false vision of the future, in which she will help Heathcliff by this marriage. In this respect, Arnold Kettle argues: “Catherine betrays Heathcliff and marries Edgar Linton, kidding herself that she can keep them both” (192). Moreover, Peter L. Rudnytsky and Andrew M. Gordon argue that in marrying Edgar, Catherine “denies any possible separation from Heathcliff” (145). Furthermore, Watson states: “when she [Catherine] makes her fatal confession to Ellen [Nelly Dean], not once does she consider the effect of her choice on Heathcliff. She

assumes that she can continue to rule both Edgar and Heathcliff” (93-94). Therefore, this denial has influenced Catherine’s life and Heathcliff’s as well; they both have become restless, for her choice to marry Edgar has made Heathcliff disappear for three years and come back with power and money to seek revenge over Linton and Hindley, whom he considers to be reason for his separation from Catherine, and as for Catherine, she has become restless feeling nostalgic for Heathcliff. Hagan argues:

When Catherine betrays her own and Heathcliff’s deepest self by marrying Edgar Linton she creates a disorder in their souls which spreads to the entire society around them. Tragically, by her misguided choice of Edgar as her husband, she places herself and Heathcliff in a situation which exacts from each the most atrocious frustration and suffering and, in consequence, brings out the worst in both of them. (318)

Furthermore, this denial has even affected other characters, such as Isabella, Edgar’s sister, whom Heathcliff marries to revenge Edgar, as will be explained subsequently.

Therefore, Catherine follows her own ambition, trying at the same time not to face the consequences of her marriage with Edgar. Rather, she creates a reason for this marriage; that is to help raise Heathcliff. Thus, by denial, Catherine attempts to falsify reality, for she knows very well that Heathcliff is fond of her, and that her marriage with Edgar will destroy Heathcliff. Had she faced reality, there would have been another destiny for her and for the other characters, such as Heathcliff and Isabella. In this respect, John Hagan argues: “Catherine’s acceptance of Edgar’s proposal is the necessary condition for all that happened subsequently” (310).

Another character who shows denial is Isabella Linton, Edgar's sister and Catherine's sister-in-law. After Heathcliff's disappearance for three years, he comes back to Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange as a rich handsome gentleman to enact revenge over the Lintons, for he considers them the reason for his separation from Catherine since Catherine has married Edgar Linton. After his return, Isabella is attracted to him and misguided by his appearance. Catherine warns her by saying:

Heathcliff is- an unreclaimed creature, without refinement- without cultivation; an avid wilderness of furze and whinestone. . . . He's not a rough diamond- a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic; he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. . . . and he'd crush you, like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge. I know he could'nt love a Linton; and yet, he'd be quite capable of marrying your fortune, and expectations. (Brontë 111-12)

Yet, Isabella does not want to believe Catherine, and regards her as selfish and a liar (112). Moreover, once, Isabella has seen Heathcliff hang up her dog, which is a sign of brutality; however, she does not want to believe Catherine's warning. Instead, she tells Nelly: "Mr Heathcliff is not a fiend; he has an honourable soul, and a true one, or how could he remember her?" (112). Here, Isabella means that since Heathcliff still remembers Catherine, even after her marriage, he has good traits. Fegan argues: "She [Isabella] is . . . convinced that Heathcliff's fidelity to Catherine even after her marriage to Edgar is a sign of nobility" (63). Moreover, in her defense of Heathcliff, Isabella admits that he still loves and remembers Catherine, but she looks at this love from a positive angle: that Heathcliff is loyal and faithful, the thing which makes her think that he has good traits. Yet, she neglects to judge the matter from another angle; that is to

say, she does not want to see the fact that since Heathcliff is still in love with Catherine, he can never love her.

Furthermore, Nelly warns Isabella against Heathcliff, describing him as “a devil” (Brontë 113), and saying: “Banish him from your thoughts, miss. He’s a bird of bad omen; no mate for you. . . . Honest people don’t hide their deeds. How has he been living? How has he got rich?” (112). However, despite all these warnings, and despite the fact that Heathcliff is still in love with Catherine, Isabella shows a two-sided denial: from one side, she does not want to believe that Heathcliff is brutal and devilish, and from the other side, she does not want to see the fact that Heathcliff can never be in love with her since he still loves Catherine, as Isabella knows and admits. Instead, Isabella tries to convince herself with another assumption, that Heathcliff is honourable and loyal, and that he might love her. She tells Catherine: “he might love me if you would let him” (111).

This denial in Isabella is what leads her to escape with Heathcliff and marry him against her brother’s will, and without realizing that she has helped Heathcliff to use her as a tool to revenge her brother Edgar. Her marriage to Heathcliff has changed her life for ever; it has been the starting point of her sufferings as Heathcliff, after their marriage, humiliates her. Further, this marriage, which is caused by denial, is the reason for her separation from her brother Edgar for the rest of her life.

After her marriage to Heathcliff, Isabella’s great misery lies firstly in Heathcliff’s inability to love her and his great love for Catherine who becomes her rival. After her marriage, Isabella is faced with the fact that Heathcliff disgusts her, and that Catherine is the only person who captures his heart. This disgust leads Isabella later on to claim that she has the feeling of hatred and disgust towards him. What tortures Isabella more is when he declares this love. Once,

he tells Nelly who has come to visit Isabella after the latter's marriage in *Wuthering Heights*: "Two words would comprehend my future-death and hell-existence, after losing her, would be hell. . . . If he [Edgar] loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn't love as much in eighty years as I could in a day" (155). Then, Heathcliff describes Isabella's feelings saying: "it wounds her vanity to have the truth exposed. But, I don't care who knows that the passion was wholly on one side, and I never told her a lie about it" (156). Here, Heathcliff asserts the fact that Isabella's pride and dignity has been injured after her realizing that her love for him is one-sided. Therefore, what hurts Isabella more than anything else is his disgust for her, the thing which contrasts with her love for him. Therefore, it will humiliate her if this love lasts, and that is why she has started declaring to herself and to Nelly that she hates him, and that he is a "Monster" and "not a human being" (180). Thus, Isabella starts to convince herself that she hates him, whereas in fact, she still loves him. What reveals this fact is when Hindley, Catherine's brother tries to kill Heathcliff in the *Wuthering Heights* house, which Heathcliff has won by gambling. Hindley, after losing his money, house and land by gambling with Heathcliff, has the desire to revenge and kill him. Hindley reminds Isabella that Heathcliff has hurt both of them, and that he wants to kill him. He has prepared himself with a gun and asked Isabella just to keep silent the moment Heathcliff enters the house, so that Hindley can kill him. But Isabella refuses saying: "I'll not hold my tongue! You mustn't touch him . . ." (183). Then she saves Heathcliff's life before he enters the house by warning him that Hindley wants to kill him. This incident indicates that Isabella still loves Heathcliff. Furthermore, Hindley announces this fact, after this incident, as Isabella narrates to Nelly: "Earnshaw [Hindley Earnshaw] swore passionately at me; affirming that I loved the villain yet" (183).

This incident contrasts with what Isabella has told Nelly once about Heathcliff. Once, she says: “The single pleasure I can imagine is to die, or to see him dead!” (157). This means that Isabella does not really mean what she says. She wishes for him to die, but then she saves him. She declares what she does not feel. Therefore, one can conclude that Isabella denies the fact that she still loves Heathcliff. This denial combined with another defense mechanism which is repression- as will be explained in the next section- are the reasons behind Isabella’s escape from Wuthering Heights.

Heathcliff is another character who shows denial. His envy and hatred towards Edgar starts when he realizes how Catherine is attracted to him, being handsome and socially acceptable. Once, in his childhood, he tells Nelly: “I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be” (Brontë 67). This hatred increases when Catherine, Heathcliff’s only beloved, marries Edgar. Therefore, Edgar has become his rival, the thing which makes Heathcliff seize any chance to seek revenge and degrade Edgar. After Heathcliff’s marriage with Edgar’s sister, Isabella, and after her escape from him to live in London, she gives birth to his son. When Heathcliff hears from Nelly that his son has been named “Linton”, he says: “They wish me to hate it too, do they?” (189). After Isabella’s death, her son Linton comes to Thrushcross Grange to live with his uncle Edgar in accordance with Isabella’s will which she has written before her death. Heathcliff insists that his son must live with him in Wuthering Heights. In his first meeting with Linton when the latter is in the age of thirteen, Heathcliff tries to find any resemblance between his son and himself, but he finds nothing. Rather, he finds that Linton looks like Isabella and Edgar. Nelly describes Linton as: “A pale, delicate, effeminate boy, who might have been taken for my master’s [Edgar’s] younger brother, so strong was the resemblance” (206). A conflict starts in Heathcliff from the moment

he meets his son. On the one hand, Linton reminds him of Edgar Linton, the one who has taken Catherine from him many years ago. Heathcliff tells Nelly concerning his son: "I despise him for himself, and hate him for the memories he revives!" (214). Here, Heathcliff exhibits one side of the conflict in him. John Doheny argues that it is not the child in Linton that Heathcliff hates, but "it was more the Linton in Linton that Heathcliff hates" (2: 297). Looking at the other side of this conflict, one can notice that Heathcliff loves his son. He tells Nelly that all the comfortable means are prepared for Linton to live in Wuthering Heights, and that he has ordered Hareton, who is Hindley's son brought up by Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, to obey Linton. Heathcliff also tells Nelly: "I've arranged everything with a view to preserve the superior and the gentleman in him, above his associates- I do regret however, that he so little deserves the trouble- if I wished any blessing in the world, it was to find him a worthy object of pride" (214). Therefore, one can conclude that Heathcliff is in a struggle between two types of emotion: he hates his son because he resembles the Lintons, the thing which reminds him of the painful past; that is to say, his separation from Catherine. But at the same time, he loves his son and wishes to be proud of him.

The result of this struggle is denial. Heathcliff prefers to deny his love for his son, for he sees in him an image of Edgar Linton. Since he refuses to love and treat Edgar well, he cannot do the same with his son. But Heathcliff cannot ill-treat Linton and at the same love him; therefore, Heathcliff would rather deny the fact that he loves Linton. This denial is the real reason behind his ill treatment of his son, and even his indifference concerning the latter's illness, the thing which leads him in the end to neglect him, and refuse to call a doctor while he is dying. Heathcliff sees only the image of Edgar in Linton; he does not see his son. Thus, in helping Linton to survive, he considers that he is helping Edgar to survive. Therefore, Heathcliff turns a

blind eye to the fact that he loves his son. Moreover, this buried love is replaced with hatred and disgust.

### **Repression in Characters**

According to Freud, repression is one of the most common defense mechanisms. It is considered one of the most important concepts in Freudian studies of the psyche (Peterson 304). Repression is a process by means of which unacceptable thoughts, instincts and emotions which are in the conscious mind are suppressed and inhibited in the unconscious mind. While there, they stay alive and awake, and have an impact upon one's behaviour and actions (Nick Rennison 89). Peterson states that everything the ego and superego tell us not to do or think is forced into the unconscious mind (349-50). Repression involves turning something away in an attempt to keep it out of the conscious mind (Simon Boag 75). It is "selectively forgetting whatever is troubling" (Steven Lynn 178).

Heathcliff is one of the characters who exhibit repression in *Wuthering Heights*. For Heathcliff, Catherine Earnshaw is the only love he has known. Mitchell states: "Heathcliff's love for Cathy [Catherine] is more or less an obsession, which seems to have begun before he leaves the Heights on the evening of her betrothal to Edgar" (103). At that evening in which Catherine confesses her feelings to Nelly telling her that she will marry Edgar Linton, Heathcliff has been listening without Catherine knowing, for he has been behind the door of the kitchen in which Catherine has been talking. He listens when Catherine tells Nelly: "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff" (Brontë 91). After hearing this speech, Heathcliff disappears from *Wuthering Heights* for three years. His disappearance is a result of repression. He has escaped from the reality that Catherine has rejected him because of his inferior social status. F. H. Langman states:

“Catherine’s apparent withdrawal of this fundamental recognition, her rejection of himself in his degraded circumstances, drives Heathcliff to run away” (2: 324). The degraded circumstances Langman refers to here are Heathcliff’s poverty, low social status and Hindley’s ill treatment of him. When Heathcliff returns after his disappearance, he blames Catherine for her rejection of him saying: “I know you have treated me infernally-infernally!” (Brontë 121). Similarly, he blames her on another occasion saying: “Why did you despise me?. . . You loved me- then what right had you to leave me” (168). Here, he refers to Catherine’s rejection of him and her marriage to Edgar. Heathcliff has suffered greatly, the matter which has made him disappear in an attempt not to face the reality of being rejected by Catherine. He has tried to repress the thought that Catherine has preferred another man rather than him because of his inferior situation.

This repression in Heathcliff leads him to another defense mechanism which is sublimation, as will be explained subsequently. Furthermore, this repression is the starting point for the change in Heathcliff’s life, for it leads to other events, such as the wealth Heathcliff returns with, though its origin is mysterious

Another character who exhibits repression is Catherine Earnshaw. When Catherine faces a conflict between choosing Heathcliff and Edgar, this conflict leads to two defense mechanisms. The first one is denial, where she denies the fact that in marrying Edgar she will lose Heathcliff, and the second one is repression in which she represses the fact that she will never be happy after her marriage with Edgar. Peterson argues that according to Freud, repressed thoughts and fears in the unconscious mind emerge sometimes in dreams and language, the latter called “Freudian slips” which may sometimes be produced in neurotic behaviour (350). Therefore, when Catherine has dreamt of being unhappy in Heaven and that she wept to come back to earth

(Brontë 91), it means that heaven is a symbol of Thrusgcross Grange or Edgar, and the earth is a symbol of Wuthering Heights or Heathcliff. As James Fotheringham argues commenting on Catherine's dream: "marriage with Linton seems a kind of heaven" (1: 304). This means that Catherine knows deep inside that she will never be happy with Edgar, but she represses this thought because it is overwhelmed by her ambition to be the wife of a rich handsome gentleman, such as Edgar Linton.

Therefore, this repressed thought of becoming unhappy in Thruscross Grange after Catherine's marriage is forced into her unconscious mind by repression. She does not want to think about this fact, but it has appeared in her dream as a "Freudian slip". This repression, in addition to another defense mechanism which is denial, as mentioned earlier, are the reasons behind Catherine's decision to marry Edgar Linton. Moreover, trying to deny and repress these facts does not make her happy, for they are suppressed deep in her unconscious mind, and the ambition she has achieved in marrying Edgar is just false happiness. After her marriage, Nelly describes her as follows: "Catherine had seasons of gloom and silence, now and then: they were respected with sympathising silence by her husband, who ascribed them to an alteration in her constitution, produced by her perilous illness, as she was never subject to depression of spirits before" (Brontë 101-02).

However, after Heathcliff's disappearance due to her fatal decision to marry Edgar and after her realization that Heathcliff intends to seek revenge, and that she can no more control him as in the past, Catherine never confesses her fatal mistake concerning her marriage. She tries to repress this thought, for she is too proud and selfish to face it. Yet, deep inside her unconscious mind, she knows this fact; that is, she has chosen the wrong approach in her life, and that she has been mistaken in thinking that she can keep both Edgar and Heathcliff. Elizabeth R. Napier

argues about Catherine: “her symbolic attempt to join Heathcliff and Linton on Heathcliff’s return to the Grange is at once an act of aggression and a desire to erase the choice she has made by enforcing their union” (104). Therefore, Catherine tries to correct her mistake, which she tries not to face, by her attempt to oblige both Edgar and Heathcliff to be friends. Once she faces the fact that this union between them can never happen, she is shocked, especially after the quarrel between them (Brontë 124). Instead of confessing that she has been mistaken in imagining she can keep both Edgar and Heathcliff, she accuses Edgar of being “mean and jealous” (125) because he refuses the possibility of he and Catherine being friends with Heathcliff.

Equally, after Heathcliff’s return, Edgar tells Catherine: “will you give up Heathcliff hereafter, or will you give up me? It is impossible for you to be my friend, and his at the same time; and I absolutely require to know which you choose” (126). Catherine is put into the situation of choosing between the two men once again. Having failed to choose in the first time, and having repressed the thought of that failure in her unconscious mind, she tries, as some critics see, to escape being put in the same situation again. She does not want to face it; she says: “ ‘I require to be let alone! Exclaimed Catherine, furiously. ‘I demand it!’ “ (126). Catherine, here, avoids choosing again between the two men. She is afraid of making another mistake with her second choice. She would rather escape from this reality into a hysterical status of hallucination and then to die. Napier states: “Cathy cannot choose, and that inability to choose thrusts her back with vehemence upon herself” (105). Thomas A. Vogler states that Catherine cannot live without possessing the two men, Edgar and Heathcliff (66). Moreover, Hayley R. Mitchell states: “forced with this dilemma, Catherine becomes ill” (125).

Thus, this bewilderment leads Catherine to repression, which is described by Lynn as: “selectively forgetting about whatever is troubling” (178). This repression leads Catherine to a

status in which she wishes for death, and escapes from reality into hallucination (Brontë 130-32). Moreover, in her hallucination, her old repressed longing for Wuthering Heights has appeared when she imagines her old room and Heathcliff as if she were still a child (134). Therefore, although Catherine has been offered another chance to choose again between Heathcliff and Edgar, she has refused this offer because of repression, and has preferred to die.

Isabella Linton is among the characters who have experienced repression. She is infatuated by Heathcliff, but after her marriage to him, she discovers that he has used her as a tool to revenge her brother Edgar, and that Heathcliff is still fond of Catherine. Heathcliff exhibits to Nelly that Isabella's pride is injured by this discovery; that is to say, she is wounded, for her love for Heathcliff is one-sided since he still loves Catherine (156). Furthermore, although Heathcliff humiliates Isabella and keeps on mentioning and describing his love for Catherine, the former still loves him despite the fact that she denies this love, as explained earlier. Moreover, once, before her marriage with Heathcliff when Isabella confesses to Catherine her love for him, Catherine tells her: "you are an impertinent little monkey!" (111), and tries to prevent any relationship between Isabella and Heathcliff, in addition to the fact that she reveals Isabella's secret to Heathcliff in her presence in a cynical and mocking fashion (114).

For all these reasons mentioned above, Isabella must feel that she is defeated, not only by Heathcliff, but also by Catherine. That is why she does not want Catherine to know about her defeat, for it injures her pride. When Heathcliff describes to Nelly his love for Catherine, he, at the same time humiliates Isabella. The latter tells Nelly: "Promise you'll not mention a syllable of his infamous conversation to my brother or Catherine" (157).

When Isabella escapes from Wuthering Heights after her marriage with Heathcliff, she goes first to her old house in Thrushcross Grange to take some of her property before leaving for

London. Catherine at this time is dead, after giving birth to her daughter Catherine- or Cathy, as she becomes known. Isabella knows from Nelly that Edgar has forgiven her for her mistake in marrying Heathcliff, and that she can come back to live in Thrushcross Grange as before. Isabella refuses the offer claiming that Heathcliff will not stop following her in order to enact revenge on Edgar. When she meets Nelly in Thrushcross Grange, she tells her: "You sit down opposite me, and put poor Catherine's baby away. I don't like to see it!" (178). Here, Isabella tries to avoid seeing Catherine's daughter whose name is also Catherine. After a while, Isabella insists that the child must be kept away. She tells Nelly: "Listen to that child! It maintains a constant wail- send it out of my hearing, for an hour; I shan't stay any longer" (179). It is clear that Isabella neither wants to see the child, nor wants to hear it. This child is what reminds her of her rival Catherine, the one who has captured Heathcliff's heart. As mentioned earlier, repression is the process of turning something away in order to keep it out of the conscious mind (Boag 75). Thus, when Isabella tries to avoid seeing and hearing Catherine's child it is an example of repression in that it is an attempt not to see the image of Catherine in that child. Therefore, since Isabella avoids seeing and hearing the child in that short time- which is only an hour- in Thrushcross Grange, it is impossible for her to accept her brother's offer concerning her living in the house, as she did before her marriage. Therefore, her repression is reason enough to make her decide to live in London, the thing which makes her unable to see her brother for the rest of her life.

Thus, it is clear that repression has led Heathcliff, Catherine and Isabella to choose the approaches in their lives. It has strong influence upon their decisions, even unconsciously. In other words, repression has a great impact on their fate.

### **Sublimation and Projection in Characters**

Sublimation is “the unconscious mental process by which instinctual, socially unacceptable energy . . . is transferred to a non-instinctual, socially acceptable activity” (Rennison 89). Peter Barry defines it as the process by means of which the suppressed or inhibited thought is promoted into something nobler and socially acceptable (93). Sublimation is the process in which an instinct is expressed without showing a relation to its original aim. It means “taking a fundamentally antisocial or unacceptable desire and channelling the energy into socially valued activities” (Baumeister, Dale, and Sommer 1103).

After Heathcliff’s disappearance for three years, he returns back as a rich gentleman. Nelly describes him:

I was amazed, more than ever, to behold the transformation of Heathcliff. He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man, beside whom my master [Edgar] seemed quite slender and youth-like. His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army. His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr Linton’s; it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows, and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness though too stern for grace. (105)

This new look and noticeable transformation of Heathcliff is after his disappearance from Wuthering Heights when he hears Catherine say: “It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff” (91). As mentioned earlier, Heathcliff’s disappearance is a sign of repression. This repression is

followed by three years of absence, after which Heathcliff comes back as a sophisticated person advanced in appearance and wealth. Fegan states:

Susan Meter points out that Heathcliff's absence occurs between 1780 and 1783, during the last three years of the American Revolutionary war: 'By suggesting that Heathcliff has been in the American Army in the years he was away, Brontë associates him with the archetypal war of successful colonial rebellion, one in which England was even at one point in fear of invasion'. (80)

In addition, in his first meeting with Catherine after his return, Heathcliff tells Catherine: "I've fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice, and you must forgive me, for I struggled only for you" (Brontë 106). Here, Heathcliff refers to the three years of his absence during which he mentions that he has suffered and struggled through a bitter life, just for Catherine. All these reasons suggest that Heathcliff has experienced sublimation. As Baumeister and others call sublimation: "channelling the energy" into something socially valued (1103), Heathcliff has channelled his reaction and emotion after realizing Catherine's rejection for him; he has channelled them in the army to appear after these years of disappearance as a refined and wealthy man. Mitchell argues: "Confronted with Catherine's rejection of him [Heathcliff], . . . Heathcliff leaves with the express intention of remaking himself into an image that will satisfy Catherine. . . . He returns several years later, a polished, wealthy man" (125).

In other words, Heathcliff has experienced sublimation, which is the reason for his noticeable transformation in appearance and financial standing; these are the means by which Heathcliff gets hold of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Thereby, Heathcliff has

an influence upon other characters' destinies, such as Isabella who is attracted to his improved appearance, and Hindley Earnshaw, from whom Heathcliff has gained Wuthering Heights.

Another character who exhibits sublimation is Catherine Earnshaw. As mentioned previously, she has been in a struggle between two choices: Heathcliff and Edgar. The former is her love from her early childhood. Derek Traversi states: "The relationship between these two [Heathcliff and Catherine] is based, no doubt, on the familiar romantic conception of irresistible passion" (2: 172). Langman describes Catherine's love for Heathcliff as follows: "she loves him because she must: it is deepest impulse of her nature, it is 'necessary'. Through her feeling for Heathcliff, Catherine discovers her own identity" (2: 322). On the one hand, Catherine has a deep passion for Heathcliff, and describes her love for him as being as strong as the rocks (Brontë 91), and claiming that she is "Heathcliff" (92). However, on the other hand, she realizes that she can find wealth and social position only with Edgar. Traversi argues: "The figure of Linton may be held, in a certain sense, to symbolize the superficial graces of civilized life, in which Heathcliff is totally lacking. It is perfectly natural that Catherine should feel herself attracted to Linton. Courtesy, charm and urbanity are all qualities worthy of admiration" (2: 174-75). Therefore, the conflict within herself between her heart and her mind- as she describes it to Nelly (Brontë 91)- has the outcome that she follows her mind. She considers reason which has won over her passion. Debra Goodlett argues:

To Catherine, psychological security means having not only a partner, but having one that is wealthy and socially acceptable. According to 19th-century custom, a woman was not 'complete' unless she married successfully. Heathcliff is barely

capable of supplying himself with food and shelter, and so Catherine's eyes stray towards Linton. (124)

Therefore, Catherine has sublimated her love and passion to respectability. Sublimation has made her channel her desire towards reasonable behaviour concerning her choice of Edgar. Thus, this sublimation, combined with denial- as explained previously- are the reason behind Catherine's fatal decision to marry Edgar Linton which subsequently leads to the destruction of both.

Projection is another defense mechanism relevant to the novel. Projection is "seeing one's own traits in other people . . . [it is] perceiving others as having traits that one inaccurately believes oneself not to have" (Baumeister, Dale, and Sommer 1190). Maner and others argue that Freud defines projection as attributing one's own traits and emotions to someone else (64). Cramer states that Schafer defines projection as something that is "unrealistically attributed to another person . . . instead of being recognized as part of one's self" (71). Cramer argues that in projection, one thinks that there is something wrong with the world, not with him/her. Further, he states that projection occurs when the individual attributes his/her unacceptable thoughts to someone else. In other words, it is putting the blame on others in order to avoid being lamented (73).

Catherine Earnshaw has experienced projection during her illness, especially, when she meets Heathcliff in her house at Thrushcross Grange. She puts the blame of her suffering on Heathcliff and Edgar because of their quarrel a few days ago, the thing which has resulted in Catherine's illness. She tells Heathcliff: "You and Edgar have broken my heart. . . . You have killed me- and thriven on it" (Brontë 166). Here, Catherine claims that the reason for her

suffering is Edgar and Heathcliff. She does not confess that the real reason is her own choices and decisions in life; that is to say, she has chosen to marry Edgar, live in Thrushcross Grange, and sacrifice Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights; therefore, she has to suffer for this. However, instead of recognizing her fault and the consequences of being ill, she tries to put the blame on others to free herself from any sense of guilt. Heathcliff answers her by saying: “You know you lie to say I have killed you” (167). Heathcliff, here, faces her with the fault she has tried to impose on him. He tells her: “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” (168).

Thus, projection is one of the defense mechanisms Catherine has experienced in the last days of her life. In addition to denial and repression, Catherine has used projection as a means in order not to face herself with her fault which has made her unhappy. As mentioned earlier, in projection people think that the fault is not in them, but something external. This is what Catherine feels. As Michelle A. Masse states, Catherine is convinced “that something is awry with the world and not with her” (148).

Heathcliff, too, exhibits projection. As mentioned earlier, Catherine is Heathcliff’s only beloved till the last day of his life. After her death, he tells Nelly: “it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!” (Brontë 175). In this respect, Hillis Miller comments: “After Cathy’s death Heathcliff’s whole life is concentrated on the suffering caused by his loss, and on the violence of his desire to get her back, for she is his soul, and without her he grovels in an abyss of nothingness” (21). Therefore, after Catherine’s death, Heathcliff starts to see her in everything and everywhere. He sees her eyes in Hareton’s eyes and in her daughter’s eyes. Heathcliff describes this to Nelly:

his [Hareton's] startling likeness to Catherine connected him fearfully with her . . . what is not connected with her to me? And what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree- filling the air at night, and caught by glimpse in every object, by day I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men and women- my own features- mock me with a resemblance. (Brontë 324)

In this consideration, Miller argues: “everything in the universe is a reminder that Cathy has existed and that he [Heathcliff] does not possess her” (23). Heathcliff, here experiences projection; he projects his own desire of Catherine on those who are around him by imagining her existence. One day, he wants to hit Catherine the junior, but he stops the moment he looks into her eyes which remind him of her mother Catherine. Ronald B. Hatch comments: “Quite clearly Heathcliff is prevented from hitting Catherine this time because of something he sees in her eyes- the same thing he saw earlier in Hareton's eyes- a resemblance to his own Cathy. Nelly, it will be remembered, comments that Hareton and Catherine Linton have eyes that ‘are precisely similar, and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw’ (Brontë 323)” (53). This projection in which Heathcliff sees Catherine everywhere and in some faces increases his torment and suffering, for it keeps reminding him of her.

Furthermore, Heathcliff does not only see Catherine in her daughter's eyes, he sees himself in Hareton, because the love between Catherine junior and Hareton reminds Heathcliff of his love towards his beloved Catherine. In other words, the desire which he holds and wishes to fulfil with Catherine he sees it in the passion between Catherine's daughter and Hareton.

Heathcliff tells Nelly: "Hareton's aspect was the ghost of my immortal love, of my wild endeavours to hold my right, my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish" (325). Kettle describes the situation when Hareton stops Heathcliff hitting Catherine junior one day as follows: "It is when Hareton, who loves him, comes to Cathy's aid when he strikes her that the full meaning of his own relationship with Catherine comes back to him and he becomes aware that in the feeling between Cathy and Hareton there is something of the same quality" (197). This projection of Heathcliff's need for the re union with Catherine on Catherine junior and Hareton results in a change in Heathcliff's behaviour; that is to say, he stops seeking revenge. In this respect, Kettle argues: "From the moment that Cathy and Hareton are drawn together . . . the change begins. For now for the first time Heathcliff is confronted not with those who accept the values of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange but with those who share . . . his own wild endeavours to hold his right" (197-98). Graham Holderness states: "Heathcliff has come to see the emptiness of his triumph: he has recognized that Hareton is himself; Catherine's daughter, Catherine" (32). Therefore, the wish and desire he projects on Catherine junior and Hareton results in the change he has in his personality; that is to say, Heathcliff becomes calmer and loses the wish to go on with revenge.

In other words, projection has played a role in Heathcliff's behaviour and acts. It is the reason for his torment and suffering after Catherine's death since he sees her everywhere and in every face in an attempt to project his need for her on objects and people. Moreover, in the end, he sees his love for Catherine in the love between Catherine junior and Hareton, the thing which makes him stop seeking revenge, for he sees in them what he needs and desires with his beloved Catherine.

## Conclusion

As has been argued, defense mechanisms have influenced much of the behaviour and decisions of important characters in *Wuthering Heights*. Therefore, these defense mechanisms have an impact on their destination in life. Furthermore, each character's defense mechanisms have influenced other characters, and consequently they have an impact on the events in *Wuthering Heights*.

Heathcliff has been under the impact of repression, sublimation, denial and projection throughout the novel. Repression has resulted in his disappearance. However, repression in Heathcliff is the starting point for the change in his life, for escaping from Wuthering Heights makes Heathcliff see another world- it seems that he may have joined the army- which has given him the possibility to re-build his character.

Sublimation is another defense mechanism which follows repression in Heathcliff's character. After his disappearance, his sublimation is represented by his reconstructing his identity. Therefore, through sublimation, Heathcliff obtains the power by means of which he becomes able to come back to Wuthering Heights and play a dominant role in controlling other characters' destinies.

Furthermore, Heathcliff's repressed passion towards his son Linton has made him, in the end, lose him. Denial has made him ill-treat Linton and refuse to call a doctor for him while Linton is dying. He reacts indifferently in this respect. And the last defense mechanism is projection which has changed Heathcliff's behaviour concerning seeking revenge. When he projects his needs of Catherine on others by seeing her eyes in their eyes and by seeing his love for Catherine in Hareton's and Catherine the junior's love, this tames and controls his unleashed desire for revenge.

Therefore, repression, sublimation, denial and projection have played an important role in Heathcliff's behaviour and destination. Heathcliff has been under their impact throughout the novel. Moreover, these defense mechanisms have influenced other characters, such as Isabella, his son Linton, Catherine the junior and Hareton.

Catherine Earnshaw, who becomes Catherine Linton, is also influenced by defense mechanisms, namely, denial, sublimation, repression and projection. These defense mechanisms have a great impact upon her decisions in life, and are the reason for her suffering. Furthermore, these defense mechanisms have affected, subsequently, Heathcliff; that is to say, his miseries start the moment Catherine takes her decision to marry Edgar, the decision which is the outcome of denial and sublimation.

Denial and sublimation in Catherine are the starting point of the events that follow Catherine's decision to marry Edgar. In other words, they are the reason for this marriage, the thing which makes Heathcliff leave, followed by Catherine's repression and the events that follow. Denial and sublimation are the first two defence mechanisms in Catherine, and are the reason of the following events that occur in the novel. When Catherine denies the fact that Heathcliff will suffer and react against her marriage to Edgar, she makes a fatal and crucial decision concerning the marriage, by claiming and trying to convince herself that she can help Heathcliff by marrying Edgar. Moreover, this denial is combined with sublimation. Being ambitious and proud, Catherine sublimates her passion and love for Heathcliff by following her mind in deciding to marry Edgar to obtain a socially acceptable position in society.

As a consequence of Heathcliff's disappearance, Catherine represses; that is to say, she inhibits and suppresses the fact that she has made a mistake in marrying Edgar. This repression

reaches its peak when Edgar offers her a chance after Heathcliff's return to choose between him and Heathcliff. This repression leads Catherine, in the end, to her death.

Furthermore, projection in Catherine is another defense mechanism which is added to denial, sublimation and repression. On the last day of her life, Catherine still acknowledges no direct responsibility for her mistake regarding her marriage to Edgar. Rather, she puts the blame of her illness on Heathcliff, the thing which makes him suffer more.

Isabella has taken her approaches in life under the influence of defense mechanisms, namely denial and repression. Denial is the reason behind her marriage to Heathcliff. Had she accepted the facts as told to her by Catherine and Nelly concerning Heathcliff's real character, she would have re-considered her decision concerning the potential marriage. Furthermore, she would have not married him had she faced the fact that since Heathcliff is still in love with Catherine, Isabella's love for him is one-sided. Therefore, denial has played a great role in Isabella's destination concerning her marriage.

Moreover, as Catherine is offered another chance by Edgar to choose between him and Heathcliff, Isabella is offered another chance- also by Edgar- to stay and live in Thrushcross Grange after her escape from Heathcliff. Yet, repression prevents her from taking this chance. She would rather live in London faraway from her brother than stay and live with what reminds her of Catherine; that is to say, Catherine's child.

Thus, one can notice that denial has affected both Catherine's and Isabella's wrong choice of marriage. These choices result in misery. Also, repression in both these characters has played a role in preventing them from making other decisions which could correct their mistakes. In other words, they are both offered another chance. Catherine is offered the possibility to go

back to Wuthering Heights and Heathcliff, and Isabella is offered the chance to go back to Thrushcross Grange to live with her brother. Yet, both characters are misled by repression.

Therefore, it is clear that denial, repression, sublimation and projection in *Wuthering Heights* have a great influence on its characters, namely Heathcliff, Catherine and Isabella. They have not only affected the characters' behaviour and destiny, but they have also influenced other characters, and consequently, the events in the novel.

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